



O'BRIEN
PURCHASE

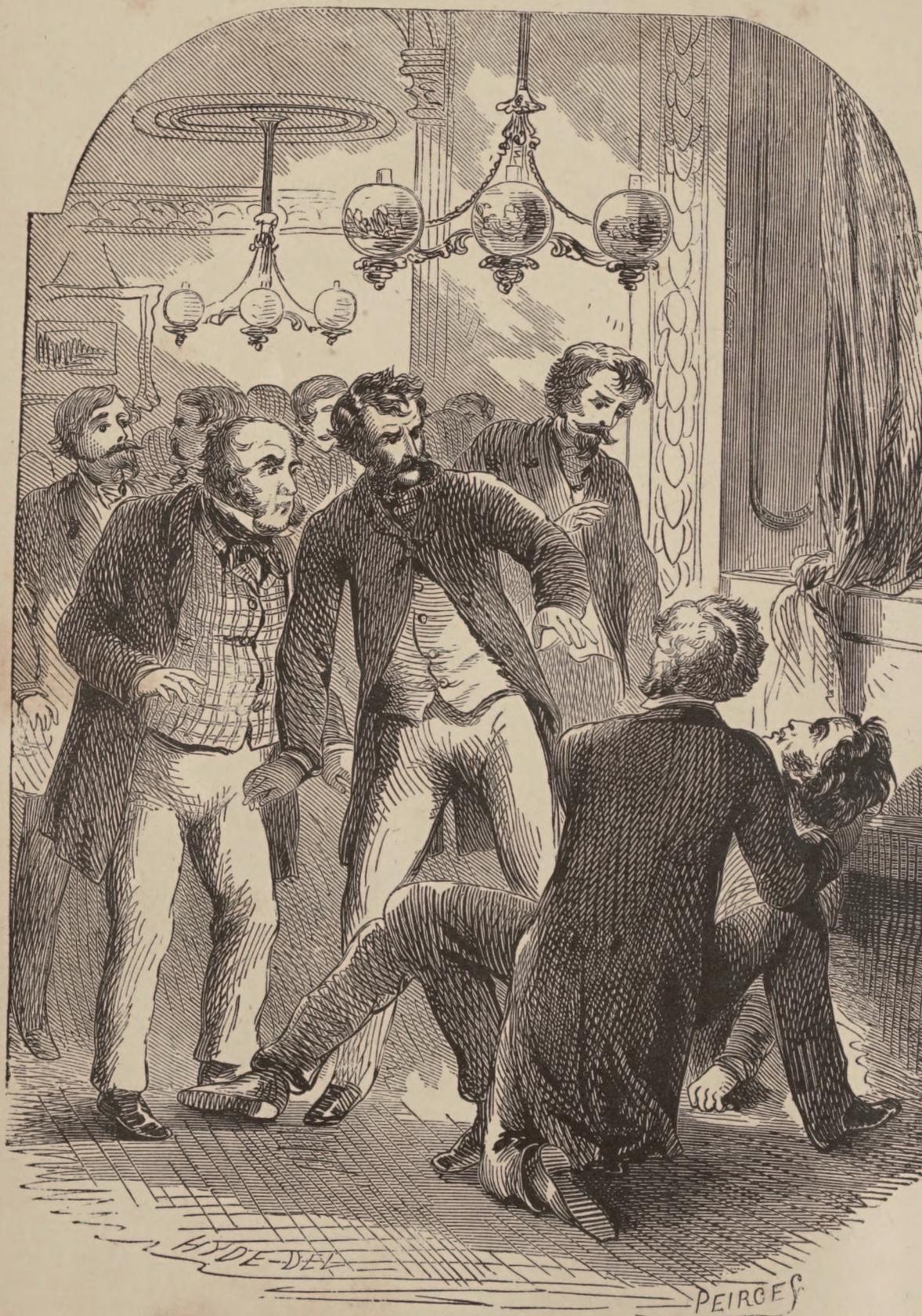


963

Louey E. Stinson

From Brother Frank
Stinson

Brims
C93
C93



"BACK, BACK, I SAY!"— P. 128.



THE
LESLIE
SERIES OF JUVENILE.
RELIGIOUS
WORKS.

BOSTON.
HENRY HOYT.

REIACE

1 - FEB 27
1914

Baker, Harriette Newell Woods

Tim's Sister:

OR,

A WORD IN SEASON.

BY

MRS. MADELINE LESLIE,

AUTHOR OF "TIM THE SCISSORS GRINDER;" "THE BOUND BOY;"
"THE PRIZE BIBLE," AND OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL BOOKS.

"Them that honor me I will honor; and they that despise me
shall be lightly esteemed."



BOSTON:
HENRY HOYT,
NO. 9 CORNHILL.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The subject of this sketch is called "Tim's Sister," not because any natural relation existed between them, but because Fanny and Tim possessed kindred spirits, both of them being richly imbued with the grace of God, active and earnest Christians, each eminently successful in winning souls to Jesus. Their only relationship to one another was spiritual, being an illustration of the Saviour's words: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Tim still lives to do good, while Fanny has entered into her heavenly rest.

THE AUTHOR.

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TIM'S SISTER:
OR,
A WORD IN SEASON.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY TRIALS.

FANNY! Fanny! Father has come home! Where are you, Fanny?"

There was no response to this repeated call; and Mr. Ray, after waiting a moment in a listening attitude, began to ascend the stairs, when he heard a voice at the back door:

"I do declare, that child is the torment of my life. Such a fuss as her father makes if one but speaks a cross word to her. Jest as soon as I've kindled my fire, I must go and

let her out afore he gets home, or he'll rave like a mad man."

She threw down an armful of wood, the noise of which prevented her hearing a quick bound up the stairs, or her husband passing along hastily through the upper hall.

Once before this, had poor little Fanny been confined for some childish misdemeanor, in a dark, low closet under the eaves; now he sprang thither, his heart burning with indignation. The door was buttoned on the outside, and all was so quiet that for one instant his pulse stopped beating with the fear lest the close air had suffocated her.

She was seated on the floor, her cheek resting in her dimpled hand, fast asleep. With one quick, eager glance, the father saw it all; the large tears quivering on the eye-lashes, the marks of deep sorrow which had convulsed her breast; and also the sweet smile which seemed to say, "though I have grieved, I am happy now."

Yes, the stern man gazed until his own eyes were dim, but suddenly he clinched his hands as he murmured, "this treatment must and shall be stopped. Fanny, Fanny, wake up! Father's come home; wake up, my darling!"

At this moment heavy steps were heard ascending the stairs, and presently Mrs. Ray screamed out, "Goodness me! when did you come in, Mr. Ray? I declare you're enough to frighten an honest woman out of her wits, stealing upon one so. Well, Fanny, now your father's let you out, I hope you'll behave."

The husband and father turned upon her angrily, but as he felt the touch of those soft arms around his neck, he forcibly restrained himself, and merely saying, "Come, Fanny, father will protect you now," carried her into the spare bed-room and locked the door.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he placed the child gently in a chair, and began to pace the floor. A dreadful tumult was raging in

his breast, and quite unconsciously to himself, his anger found vent in words.

“ Only one year to-day since my poor Frances died. Yes, she died blessing me for making her life so happy ; but God has cursed me with a wife, whom I cannot love. Fool, fool, that I was, to believe that she would ever be a mother to my poor motherless Fanny. Oh, how I have been deceived ! ”

He had quite forgotten the presence of his child, and was startled as a soft voice called, “ father, I love you ; and I’ll try to be a good girl. ”

“ You are good,—you’re the only comfort that is left to me, ” he cried, straining her to his heart.

“ And wont you look in that dreadful way any more ? It makes me frightened, father. ”

“ What did she put you in there for ? ” was the quick response.

Fanny’s eyes fell, and a bright flush spread all over her face — “ I was in the garden, and

she called me to bring in a basket of chips, and I caught my foot in the mat, and they all went on her clean floor."

His face was sterner than ever, and he was about to give utterance to his anger, when he caught the expression of her large wistful eyes, and checked himself.

"When she put me in there, I was afraid of rats, 'cause she said they'd come and eat me all up; but after I prayed, then I wasn't angry; I was only sorry, and I fell asleep, and you see the rats didn't come at all."

The features of Mr. Ray's countenance worked convulsively, as he remembered who had taught his child to pray. To hide his emotion, he kissed her again and again. Presently, when he could command his voice, he said, "You were right, my dear. Your mother used to pray; and I know she always found comfort in prayer."

His voice was so tender that it filled her heart with joy, and she exclaimed,

“If you’ll please to kneel down, father, I’ll pray for you too. I guess it will make you feel a good deal better.”

He yielded to her wish simply because it was such, but was so much moved by her simple words, that he bowed his head on his breast, and wept as he had not done for many a day.

With folded hands and closed eyes, she said :

“O, my good God! I asked you to take care of me in the dark closet, and you did. I thank you for it. I ask you to love my father, just as you used to love my dear mother, before she died and went to heaven; because I expect to go there before a great while, and I shall not want to leave him here alone. Will you please, good God, to make him feel sorry when he’s been angry, just as you did me, and help me to keep my promise to be a good girl, and mind what my new mother tells me, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.”

When they arose from her short prayer, Fanny was almost frightened at the violence of her father's emotions. She took her tiny handkerchief and tried to wipe away his tears, while he, for the first time in his life, breathed a petition for himself:

“O God, help me to live so that I may be prepared to leave the trials of this world and join my blessed wife in heaven.”

His feelings were softened and subdued so that, when shortly after, he obeyed the summons to tea, his wife who had prepared herself for a storm of reproaches, found him unusually quiet.

At the table, she helped Fanny so generously to her favorite cake, that the child, after an earnest look in her face, said softly, “I'm sorry I spilt the chips over your clean floor.”

Mrs. Ray frowned as she darted a quick glance at her husband, but except a slight twitching about the mouth, he took no notice of what Fanny said, and she busied herself in pouring the tea.

After supper, Mr. Ray left the house, taking Fanny with him, for a walk. But he did not talk with her as usual, and only for an occasional pressure of her hand, she would have thought herself forgotten. But in truth, his mind was too agitated for conversation; he was revolving many plans for her benefit. Wholly unfitted as he felt himself to be, to fulfil his promise to his dying Frances, to train up their child to love and honor her Saviour, he asked himself, "Can I bear to part with her; to place her where she would be thus taught? Could I live on day after day, without seeing her who is all that reminds me of what I have lost?"

The hour for Fanny to retire to bed came, and yet this question was not decided. They returned to the house, when he as usual went with her to her chamber, and saw her laid in her little cot, listened mechanically to her form of prayer, and then left her to walk up and down the street until a late hour. Oh, how

many times during after years did he regret that his decision to send her to her maternal grandmother, was not then made!

CHAPTER II.

FANNY, A CRIPPLE.

 ABOUT nine months after the decease of Mrs. Ray, the family with whom her husband and little girl had boarded, was broken up, and it became necessary for him to resume house-keeping.

Sarah Raymond was highly recommended as an excellent person to take care of his family. She was a capable, active woman, member of an evangelical church in the place, and reputed to be very fond of children.

The latter trait was the inducement with Mr. Ray to hire her, and so truly did she seem attached to the sweet little motherless Fanny, as she lovingly called her, that in less than two months after she first came to them, Mr. Ray consented to the wishes of his nu-

merous friends, and gave her the legal title of mother to his child.

Scarcely a week had passed before he would have given all he was worth to be free from this new tie. He found that for purposes of her own, his wife had assumed a character totally unlike her real one; that now she had thrown aside the mask, she was coarse and harsh in feeling toward him, while toward his child, she was irritable and even cruel.

As it was principally in defence of her rights, hard words had arisen between them, Mrs. Ray grew to be jealous of her influence, and at last really to dislike her, and took every opportunity to vent her ill-will.

The night following Fanny's confinement in the closet, Mr. Ray talked a long time with his wife upon the folly and wickedness of her conduct. He represented to her that she was weaning his affection, and that if she continued in her course, he fully intended to leave her, and join his brother in the West.

This threat was so effectual, that for a week or two her treatment of Fanny was all that he felt he had a right to expect, though far different from what he had hoped previously to his marriage.

About this time, the little girl was made very happy by an invitation to a birth-day party of one of her friends. Mrs. Ray grumbled some at the extra work it would cause her to prepare the child's clothes; but as her father insisted she should not only go, but be neatly dressed, there was no other course for her, but to comply with his wishes.

On the afternoon in question, Mr. Ray staid an hour after dinner from his work to see and enjoy Fanny's delight at the expected visit. He saw her dressed in white, her wavy hair parted smoothly from her forehead, and then went out to purchase a sash of blue ribbon, intending afterwards to leave her at the appointed place.

To the expectant, impatient little girl, the

minutes seemed like hours. She ran to the gate, then back again, remembering that she had still to bring her doll from the shelf, in the best room. She ran up stairs singing gaily, pushed a cricket into the closet, mounted the lower shelf; but just as she had reached the doll, her foot slipped, and down she fell, tearing a great rent in her dress on a projecting nail. Her cry of fright brought her step-mother quickly to the scene.

“You naughty, wicked girl!” she exclaimed, as soon as she saw the condition of the frock. “You tore it on purpose; I know you did, just to make me work. I’ll soon cure you of such tricks,” and catching the child by the shoulder, she shook her violently, pulling her along roughly, toward the door. “There, you wicked child!” she shouted, as she stopped for want of breath, “let me see if you’ll dare to do so again;” then pushing her from the room, she caught up the doll and thrust it into a drawer. One mo-

ment more, and the sound of a heavy fall down the steep stairs, followed by a piercing scream, caused her heart to beat with terror.

Dizzy and faint with the shaking, Fanny had tried to reach the stairs, but unable to sustain herself, fell from top to bottom. There she lay apparently senseless, when her father came hastily up the path from the gate, exclaiming in a loud, cheerful voice,

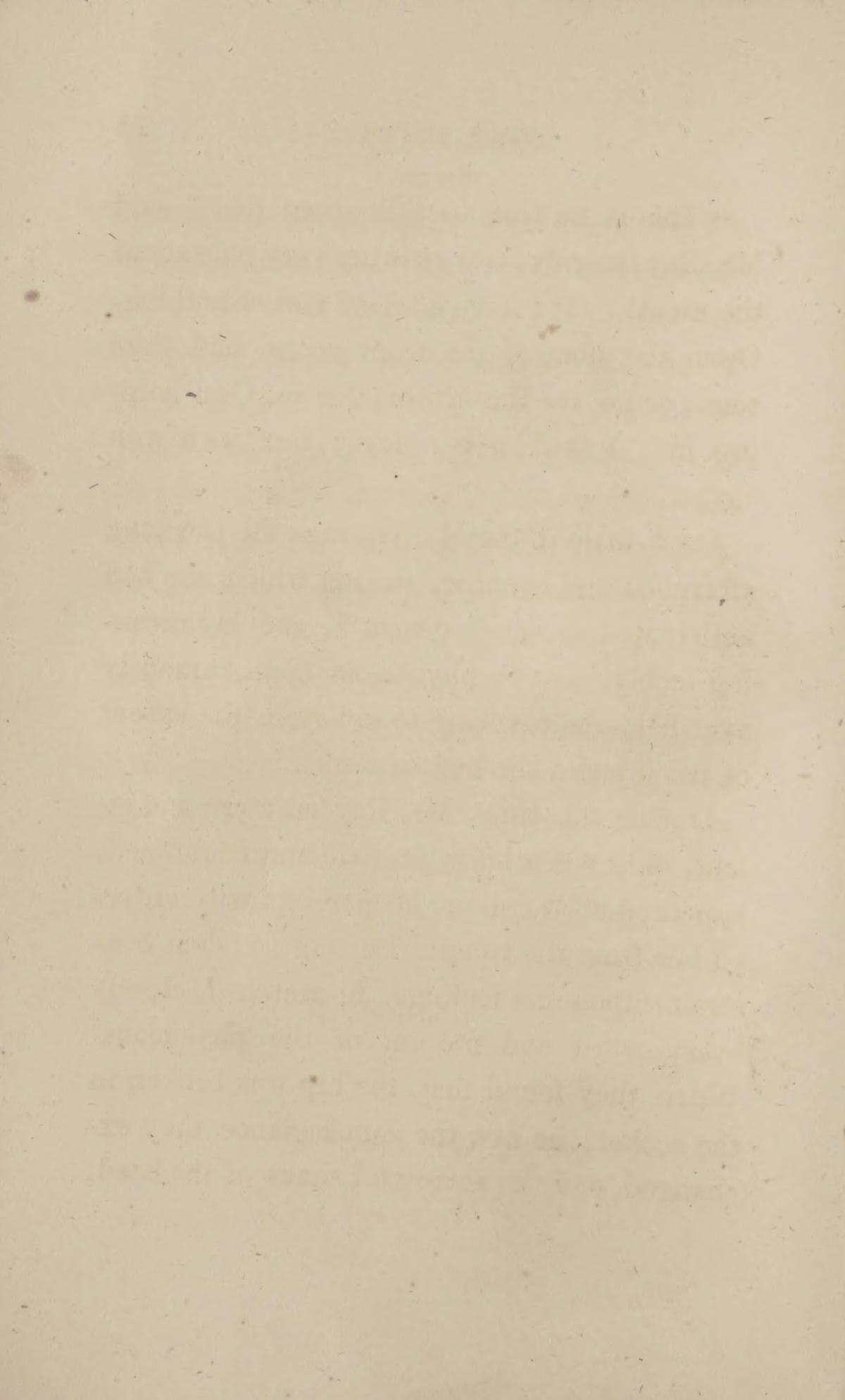
“Here’s your sash, Fanny. Come, I must be off.”

His scream of terror as he saw her lying senseless on the carpet — his loud angry tones as he demanded of his wife the meaning of the scene, were all unnoticed by the poor girl. But when he lifted her gently from the floor, she moaned as if in great pain.

“I didn’t do it; she fell down stairs. Ask her, if you don’t believe me. She went up for her doll,” repeated Mrs. Ray, crying from fright, — “perhaps she isn’t hurt much, perhaps she’s only fainted.”



THE CASUALTY.—P. 22.



“This is no time to talk about that,” said Mr. Ray, sternly, and growing very pale about the mouth. “I have accused you of nothing. Open the door of the front room, and then send, or go for the doctor, for so, God helping me, I will never leave her with you again.”

Poor little Fanny! Through all the long afternoon and evening, during which she had anticipated so much pleasure, she lay moaning feebly, as two physicians bent anxiously over her, endeavoring to ascertain the extent of the injuries she had sustained.

During this time, Mr. Ray sat stern and silent, only when his wife, pale and frightened, appeared at the door, he peremptorily ordered her from the room. Putting a violent constraint upon his feelings, he watched closely every word and motion of the physicians. When they found that the hip was broken in the socket, he saw the quick glance they exchanged, and the sorrowful shake of the head,

of their own family doctor, who had known and loved little Fanny ever since she drew her first breath. He understood, though they did not intend it, the increased tenderness of their tones, as they said — “Poor little creature, it will be a sad thing for her.” When they turned from the bed, after having done all that could be done for her present comfort, he knew as well as if they had told him, that his precious little Fanny, his poor motherless child, was a cripple for life.

Under the influence of a powerful anodyne, the child slept, and taking advantage of this opportunity, Mr. Ray went down stairs, passed the table upon which his wife had placed the supper, unlocked the closet, poured a cup half full of whiskey, kept for purposes of medicine, and then turning to his wife, said in a hard, cold voice, “Now I want an explanation of this.”

“I know you think I threw her down,” she answered, beginning to cry again. “It’s hard you wont believe me.”

“Tell what did happen. Her arm was pinched, and — but you shall have a chance to explain.”

His eye flashed as she had never seen it before. In the midst of her tears she confessed that she had been in a passion, and shaken Fanny severely, and that she pushed her to the door, “but as sure as I’m alive,” she added earnestly, “I did not mean to hurt her so, and I’m really sorry for her.”

Mr. Ray turned his pale face toward her with a sneer, as he retorted,

“When you’ve made my only child a cripple for life, it’s poor consolation to say you’re sorry.”

Without another word he walked up stairs to the bed where poor Fanny lay unconscious of her sufferings, while her father gave himself up to a perfect abandonment of grief.

Day after day passed; the doctor came and went, and still the father kept his unwearied watch by the bed side of the patient sufferer.

Even the good physician who had known him for many years had not expected to see so much tenderness as he now exhibited. At any hour of the day or night, at the slightest call from that feeble voice he was ready to raise her gently, to hold the cup to her parched lips, or soothe her by stories from the Bible, made familiar to both by the frequent repetition of them from the sainted mother.

But toward his offending wife he maintained the most perfect indifference; indeed he actually ignored her existence, passing the few moments occupied at his meals in profound silence.

Sometimes this seemed to Mrs. Ray a trial greater than she could endure. In vain were all the most tempting viands placed before him; in vain she exerted herself to the utmost to prepare the few articles of diet ordered by the physician for little Fanny; not one word of praise, not one look even of commendation did they elicit from the hard, stern man whom

she called her husband. Conscience too loudly reproached her for her conduct toward the lovely child, and she felt that she would sacrifice a great deal for one word of forgiveness.

CHAPTER III.

FORGIVENESS.

THREE months later let us look in again upon Fanny. She is seated in a large stuffed chair, with a little table drawn close up in the front of her. In her hands she holds a crotchet needle and some high-colored worsteds, but her face is eagerly fixed upon the countenance of an old lady, who, with an open Bible before her is endeavoring to win her beloved grandchild to the feet of the Saviour so precious to her own heart.

On one side of the room, but seated so that his face is shaded from view, sits Mr. Ray, who accompanied Fanny to her new home as soon as she was able to be removed with safety, and has never yet left her. He is

now apparently absorbed in the contents of a book lying on a table near him, but the varying emotions depicted on his countenance prove that he loses not a word of the conversation.

Many and earnest have been the discussions between him and this aged relation in respect to the duty he owes his wife. He contends that she has forfeited all claim to his affection or support. She urges that the solemn vows which have passed between them cannot be made light of.

On this account the subject this day chosen by Mrs. Arnold was peculiarly fitted to interest her son-in-law. The chapter read was the twenty-third of Luke, containing that most precious assurance of Christ's readiness to forgive his enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"How trifling and insignificant seem the offences we commit against each other," she continued "compared with those which our

blessed Lord so readily forgave. His love for us is so great that the moment we turn to him with desire for pardon it is granted us. There is only one condition mentioned in the Bible, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

"Oh I wish," cried Fanny, "there was some one for me to forgive, but everybody is so kind to me, I—"

"Do you forget that you have a mother living?" inquired Mr. Ray, starting up and standing before her.

"No, indeed," was the smiling reply. "I printed a letter to her yesterday, and I pray for her every morning and every night."

He turned suddenly and left the room. When he re-entered it an hour or two later, he came dressed for a journey.

"Fanny," said he, "you have conquered

your father. I have made up my mind to return home. Once every month I shall come to see you for the present, and shall write you very often."

Tears gushed to the young girl's eyes. She covered her face, and for a few moments seemed quite overcome.

"Are you sorry, my dear?" asked her grandmother.

"Oh, no indeed! I am not wholly sorry; I am glad because I know he ought to go; he has been with me a great while. But what shall I do without you, father? Who will read to me and make pretty pictures on my slate, and do all the kind things you have done? I ought to be more glad, but its very hard."

"Well, my child, you shall decide for me. If you say so, I will unpack my trunk and remain longer."

She wiped away her tears, glanced alternately at him and at her grandmother's

anxious face, and then said, resolutely, "I want you to go, and carry my letter. You wont see any more tears from me."

When seated in the cars, he ventured to open the little epistle which was as follows :

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I am able to sit up now, and am learning to make houses and ponds on the slate. It is very pleasant to have father here with me ; but I can't help thinking of you staying there all alone. Grandmother thinks he will go soon. She says this is to be my home for a long time if it pleases God to spare her life ; but whenever I go to live with you, I shall endeavor to be a good girl. I am trying every day to do what is right because I have begun to love the Saviour, and Grandma says when children are good and kind, he is pleased and it honors him. I pray for you every night.

"Your little FANNY."

The lady occupying the seat by the side of Mr. Ray in the cars, was somewhat surprised to see with what interest the reserved man read and re-read that little note, and at last how many tears were dropped upon it as he

carefully folded the paper and replaced it in his pocket-book.

After her father left, Mrs. Arnold invited a little girl, the child of one of her neighbors, to come in frequently and amuse Fanny, but notwithstanding this and all the kind attentions from her grandmother and the faithful Bessie who lived with them, the poor child pined for her father. She had become so accustomed during these long months to have him near her anticipating every wish, that it was the greatest trial she had yet known to be deprived of his society.

One morning, when she looked unusually pale, her grandmother inquired, "what are you thinking about, my love?"

"About father," said the child, tears trembling on her eyelashes. "I know he misses me and needs me at home."

"Shall I write and tell him you had rather not act as he thinks best; that you cannot be contented where he has seen fit to place you;

that the trials your heavenly Father has visited you with are greater than you can endure?"

"Oh, Grandma! no indeed. It would grieve him so, I would not have him know it for anything."

"Do you suppose he would be better pleased to think his little girl was trying to be cheerful and contented, striving to fit herself to be useful to him when God restores her to health?"

Fanny's face was covered with smiles as she answered, "yes, ma'am, I think he would admire to hear that."

"Well, my dear, you know the Saviour looks into your heart, and knows every feeling cherished there. We will suppose he says, 'here is a child for whom I shed my blood. I gave her a praying mother and a fond, loving father. I have surrounded her with blessings ever since she was born, and if she has had some trials they were no more

than I thought for her good. Lately she has begun to love me, and I want her to show to others around her; to her father and her young companions what a blessed thing it is to love me and enjoy my favor. I want her to let her light shine so that others may be won to love me too. I want her always to remember one verse in the Bible and act upon it as long as she lives. It is this, 'Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'"

Fanny looked very thoughtful while her grandmother was speaking, and remained so lost in thought that Mrs. Arnold resumed her sewing in silence. At length the child's face brightened, as she exclaimed,

"Grandma, I do want to honor the Saviour, but I thought while I was sick, confined to this chair, I couldn't. I mean I haven't much strength, you know, and you and Bessie have to wait upon me. Mustn't I stop until I am well before I honor him?"

“No, my dear, few little girls have so good an opportunity to honor him as you have now. If you were well and able to run about as you were before you fell, it would not be strange that you should be cheerful, grateful and obliging; but now that you are, and probably will be for a long time debarred from active enjoyments, if you can by God’s grace keep your heart from murmuring and repining; if you can feel that God loves you, and sent this affliction upon you for your profit; if from the heart, with sweet submission you can say, ‘it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight; shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?’ or like the Shunamite woman, when her only child was taken from her can say, ‘it is well;’ if you can show your young companions, that though it would be very pleasant for you to run about and enjoy the fresh air as they do; yet you can be cheerful and contented when your heavenly Father

sees fit to afflict you, then you will honor him and honor your Saviour, and he will assuredly honor you with his love and favor."

"I will try to do so," was the low response.

"It may be in that case, that God would honor you by making you the means of winning your friends to Christ. If they should ask, 'how can you be so contented, Fanny, having to stay in this room day after day, and being moved only from the easy chair to the bed, and from the bed to the easy chair,' and you should be able to reply :

'It is hard, but I know it's best for me, because my heavenly Father has ordered it, and he helps me to bear it patiently ;' would not they think there was a comfort in religion which they would wish to enjoy, and would they not be likely to strive after the same peace?"

That night the little girl could not sleep, but lay reflecting upon all that her grand-

mother had said. She confessed with tears that by her murmurings and complaints she had dishonored the dear Saviour whom she was striving to love. She feared she had offended him, so that he would withdraw his favor from her. Then she lifted up her heart in prayer that this sin and all her sins might be forgiven, and grace given her so to live that Christ might be honored, and her dear companions won to his service.

After this a sweet peace filled her mind; she repeated all the verses and hymns she had learned sitting at the side of her mother, and with a heart full of love and gratitude she fell quietly asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

FANNY AT SCHOOL.

 AM sorry we cannot stop to describe many events which occurred during Fanny's long confinement, nor the struggles by which she overcame her murmurs when at length she understood that her lameness was for life. It cost her frequent sharp pangs and many bitter tears before she could say in view of her affliction, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

But Fanny soon found that she was not left alone to conquer her great enemy. In the midst of her cries for help, she often experienced aid, as if an arm of Almighty strength were placed about her, and then songs of victory burst from her lips.

These inward conflicts greatly affected her health so that it was not until nearly a year and a half after her fall that she was able to attend school.

She could not walk without the aid of crutches which her father had contrived for her with the utmost care, the weight of the lame side coming upon a rest in the crutch just below the knee.

It was a dreadful trial to the poor cripple to be ushered at once into the presence of strangers, but she was most agreeably surprised to find they were all friendly, even eager to do her a favor. Her story was well known throughout the village, and many hearts beat warm with sympathy for her helpless condition. They were well aware, too, that Fanny had given her heart to the Saviour, and some of them could bear testimony to the consistency of her daily conduct. Others thought when a young girl became pious she considered it wrong to laugh or

enjoy life. These were greatly astonished, to see that Fanny, lame though she was, entered into the sports at recess with a zeal and enthusiasm equal to any of them. Indeed in a short time she became the life of every game, sitting sometime in the midst of her companions planning and animating their sports, but more often on the steps of the school house where her musical laugh echoed through the whole grounds.

There were two or three of the larger girls who watched her closely: "I don't see," said one of them, "that she is any different from us. We are just as pious as she is." But before they had known Fanny many weeks they confessed to themselves and to each other that there was a governing principle about her that they were not possessed of. Indeed, Fanny's truthfulness and conscientiousness in rendering in her reports to the teacher, her cheerful, even temper, her readiness to oblige, prepared the way for her affec-

tionate efforts to lead them to the Saviour whom she loved. And thus, even in her school days she was enabled to honor Christ.

At the age of fifteen she made a public profession of religion in company with several of her young friends, one of whom ascribed her interest in serious things to the consistent character of her lame schoolmate.

From this time until she was seventeen, she continued to attend school, the last year at an academy, where she made rapid advances in the various branches to which she gave her attention. She wrote with great ease and fluency both prose and verse. She had never learned instrumental music, but possessed a voice of great power and sweetness. This talent she early consecrated to God, and many could bear testimony that the fervor with which she sang the songs of Zion, added much to their devotion.

In appearance the crippled girl was rather below the common height, but during the

last year her general health had become so confirmed, that she had grown both taller and stouter than during any previous year since her accident. She had now become so much accustomed to the use of her crutches that they occasioned her but little inconvenience. Indeed her companions often used to say with a laugh, that notwithstanding her lameness, Fanny could cross the common on the way to school quicker than any of them.

There were warm discussions among her mates with regard to her looks, those who knew and loved her best maintaining that she was by far the handsomest girl in town; others that her nose was too aspiring and her mouth too wide for perfect beauty. Still all agreed that there was a singular charm about her earnest, truthful eyes, closely shaded by their sweeping lashes, and that there was a loftiness and purity of expression in her whole countenance not often seen.

“ If I had a sister I would rather she should

resemble Fanny Ray," remarked a young man after being introduced to her, "than any young lady I ever saw. One glance assures you she is true to herself and would be so in all the relations of life."

Though Fanny still resided with her grandmother, yet her father allowed her a liberal sum for the supply of all her wants. She was always dressed neatly and in good taste; indeed, by her companions she was regarded quite as a model in this particular. When she was not more than fifteen, she commenced cutting and fitting her own dresses, and so well did she accomplish this, that no one in the school was more tidily arranged than she was.

As her grandmother's eyes were failing she soon assumed the entire care of the old lady's wardrobe, often sitting up quite late at night to finish a garment she thought Mrs. Arnold might need while she was at school.

During all this time her father had been

constant in his visits to her, though of late years not so frequent as at first. He had become gloomy and careworn, so that if her grandmother's infirmities had not greatly increased, Fanny would have felt it her duty to return home and endeavor to lighten his burden. Of his wife he seldom spoke to her, but she knew from her grandmother that her temper was a great trial to him, and that he had never ceased to regret the haste with which he had assumed this new tie.

When on one or two occasions Fanny had alluded to her wish to be with him more constantly, he expressed himself with great decision, that by his consent she and her step-mother should never reside under the same roof.

Lately, Fanny had thought him more reserved and gloomy than ever. Her heart yearned over him, and many hours when her grandmother thought her sleeping, were passed in supplicating the throne in his be-

half. She felt a natural hesitancy in talking with him; but she could not rest until she had told him how earnestly she longed that in his trials he might experience the comforts of religion. She watched her opportunity, and when he was about to leave after one of his regular visits, slipped a small envelope into a bundle of shirts she had been making for him. It enclosed the following note.

“MY DEARLY LOVED FATHER,—

“I feel quite certain you will excuse your little Fanny for addressing you on the most important of all subjects, the subject of religion. When I remember how my dear mother used to pray that we might all meet at God’s right hand in the last great day, I cannot help praying, too, that you and I may be prepared to follow her to that bright world.

“Dear father, you have been very, *very* kind to me; I am sure no child ever had a more tender, loving and indulgent parent, but sometimes as I lie in bed at night, the question occurs to me, ‘is he a Christian? If his summons were to come suddenly would he be ready to meet it?’ I think, dear father, if I could be assured that this

was the case : if I could know that you were trying to live near to God, and were in the enjoyment of his favor, I should be the happiest creature in the world. Oh, you cannot imagine the peace that flows into the heart when one resigns himself into the hands of his heavenly Father ! All the cares and trials of this life seem as nothing when compared with the joy which fills the soul.

‘ Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee
O, Lamb of God, I come, I come !

Just as I am, though tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without,
O, Lamb of God, I come, I come !’

“ Will you not, dear father, adopt this as the language of your heart ?

“ Your loving, praying daughter,

FANNY.”

CHAPTER V.

MRS. ARNOLD'S DEATH.

T was near the close of the summer term, the last one Fanny expected to attend school, that she was one day hastily summoned home in consequence of her grandmother's sudden illness.

Upon entering the chamber she found the physician bending over the bed, where lay the old lady, her face drawn one side, her loud unnatural breathing, all that proved her to be still living.

She was inexpressibly shocked, and hurried from the room to give vent to her grief.

After a few moments a hand was laid gently on her shoulder; "I did not expect this of you, Fanny," said the kind voice of the phy-

sician, "You must be calm for your grandmother's sake. She needs your services."

The young girl started to her feet; "What can I do? Will she live, then?" she eagerly inquired.

The doctor replied, "She has had a severe shock of paralysis. I will not say she cannot survive, but in all human probability she will not live many days, perhaps not hours."

Fanny wept.

"It will be a glorious exchange for her," added the good man. "She has had her lamp trimmed and burning ready to meet the bridegroom. The summons has come; and she will go forth joyfully to meet him."

"But will she not be conscious?" Fanny asked in a trembling voice. "Will she not recognize me and give me her parting blessing?"

"It is frequently the case that consciousness returns just before death. But now you must summon all your fortitude, my poor

girl, for with you I must leave my directions."

"In one minute I will be there."

She flew into her own little chamber, and there sought help and strength in this her sorest hour of need. Presently when she joined the physician at the door of her grandmother's chamber, there was an expression upon her countenance that told of the elevation within.

Under the influence of the powerful remedies, the loud breathing had nearly ceased, and the pulses began to beat more regularly. Fanny was little used to sickness of any kind, and cast her eyes from one to another in a helpless desire to do something for her grandmother's relief. As they had not been able to force any medicine between her teeth, there was nothing to be done except to remove, as often as might be necessary, the drafts upon the feet, and to continue the vigorous chafing of the limbs.

The poor girl's tears fell fast upon the dear hand which had so lovingly ministered to her wants, now cold and lifeless. She kissed it again and again, while her heart was lifted up in prayer that if possible this beloved relation might be restored to her.

One of the neighbors volunteered to remain with Bessie through the night, but Fanny insisted that it was her privilege to take care of her grandmother. "There is nothing," she urged, "that I cannot do. If I need any help I will call you."

As the doctor had predicted, the consciousness of reason beamed in the eye of Mrs. Arnold for a short time before she expired. She recognized Fanny and made a great effort to speak, but in vain. Bessie was hastily summoned from a couch in the next room, and understood from the painful signs of her mistress that she wished papers lying in a drawer to which she pointed. These the old lady placed in the hand of Fanny, with a glance of

such tender affection that the poor girl needed all her fortitude not to be wholly overcome. She then made a feeble wave with her hand to show that she was done with earth, and raised her eyes as if in prayer.

Fanny instantly fell on her knees by the bedside, and there in that solemn midnight hour, commended the dying soul to that gracious Friend, who has promised when we walk through the valley and shadow of death to be with us, that his rod and his staff shall comfort us.

Even while she prayed the messenger came, and the waiting spirit took her glad leave of time, and silently departed to enter upon the untried scenes of eternity.

Four days later, as Mr. Ray and his daughter sat together after their return from their last sad offices for the dead, she put into his hand the will of her grandmother, by which, after a small legacy to the faithful Bessie, the entire property, consisting of the house and a few thousand dollars was conveyed to her.

She was quite at a loss to account for the fervor with which her father, as he glanced hastily over the legal document, uttered the words, "Thank God!" He leaned his head on his hands, but presently roused himself, and in a husky voice said, "Now that you are secure from want, Fanny, I can have courage to tell you that I have lost all I am worth. I am a beggar."

She clasped her arms fondly about his neck, as she exclaimed with a smile, "But you shall not be a beggar long, dear father. Accept this first gift from your loving, grateful child. Oh, how happy I am that it is in my power to return some of your kindness!"

Mr. Ray was deeply moved. For a time all his reserve vanished; and he lavished upon his daughter every fond caress which his heart had been treasuring up for her; but no entreaties on her part could induce him to touch one cent of her property.

"No, no!" said he, "I care not for myself.

Now that you are provided for I can meet reverses with a bold front."

They then conversed about the future. It was Fanny's earnest wish to return to N—— at once with her father.

"I think," said she, "that I know a family who would be glad to move here at once, and who would take good care of the place. They would be glad of Bessie too, for they know how invaluable her services have been to dear grandma. Some of the articles of furniture I should like to keep, and the others could readily be disposed of at auction. Grandma was so well known and loved, that many would like some articles as a memento of her."

Mr. Ray listened in astonishment. He had heretofore considered his daughter as a mere child, helpless from her infirmity, to be cared for as a sacred treasure. Now he saw her calmly making her plans, which he could but acknowledge were wise ones, and assuming the office of his comforter and adviser.

“Fanny,” said he, with glistening eyes, “You were naturally one of the most impulsive children I ever saw. Where did you learn such self-control? I dreaded to return from the funeral. I expected you would be overcome with grief.”

“I have met with a loss,” said Fanny, her lip quivering, “which can never be made up to me. But now that she has gone to enter upon her eternal rest, I wish to bear in mind her teachings, and as far as I can, govern myself by them. Now my first duty is to you, and if you will only consent to let me live with you, I hope you will find, dear father, that I shall prove myself not only an obedient but a loving child.”

The next morning Mr. Ray wrote his wife that he should return home accompanied by Fanny, at the expiration of two weeks.

CHAPTER VI.

FANNY'S FRIENDS.

THE town of N—, was a flourishing place, containing about fourteen thousand inhabitants. The religious society with which Mr. Ray was connected, and with which church his wife had been a member, had within a year settled a new pastor—a young man, by the name of Sheldon, ardent in his profession, and exceedingly active in its pastoral duties. He had a wife and one child, two years old, at the time Fanny returned from S—.

It was more than a year since Mr. Ray had been to church, but when he saw his daughter preparing to go, he would not allow her to enter a strange church alone, and therefore made haste to accompany her, in order to ward

off as much as possible the annoyance and curiosity he knew her novel appearance would create. But as he turned from time to time to glance at her, as they made their way slowly through the streets, he could see nothing of the nervousness and fear which would be so natural on such an occasion. To be sure, there was a brilliant flush on her cheeks, for Fanny was human, and had had a great struggle with her pride, at the bare idea of encountering so many curious and perhaps impertinent glances; but in her small closet she had conquered, and now as her father gazed, he acknowledged to himself that religion must be a more powerful influence than ever he had imagined, since it could thus transform his timid little girl.

“Oh, Evarts! did you notice that beautiful girl who came into church with crutches?” inquired Mrs. Sheldon, in an enthusiastic manner, as soon as they had started for home.

“Yes, my dear,” was the smiling reply; “I

saw her and heard her too ; and if you had not been so impatient to leave the slip, you would have been introduced to her, as I was."

"I'm so sorry, but who is she? I never saw a more interesting countenance. What a pity she is lame. She looks distinguished, too, somehow ; and what a wonderful soprano she sings. I wish we could have her in our choir."

"Possibly we may, for she has come home to reside. She is the daughter-in-law of that Mrs. Ray, in Elm-street, upon whom we called some months ago. That was her father who was with her. I saw he regarded her with uncommon tenderness."

"Can it be possible, Evarts, she is the one we heard had been injured for life by the spitefulness of her step-mother? There you see I was right again. I always am in my impressions of character ; and you know I took a violent prejudice against that woman."

"And said you would never call again."

Now you will be debarred the pleasure of Miss Ray's acquaintance."

"No, indeed, I shall call at once. My promise only referred to Mrs. Ray herself. How I do pity her to be obliged to associate with so low minded a person."

"If I do not mistake, she loves the services of the Sabbath," rejoined Mr. Sheldon. "She is a good hearer, at any rate."

Early Monday evening, Fanny was delighted to receive a call from her pastor.

Mrs. Sheldon was even more favorably impressed than at church. In her deep mourning dress, there was a peculiar call upon one's sympathies in the earnest appealing look of those large gray eyes shaded so quickly with their long black lashes. Then her face, usually so pale, was flushed with excitement, while her manners were so composed and yet child-like and artless.

After expressing their sympathy in her late affliction, Mr. Sheldon questioned her as to

her own hopes, and was delighted to meet with so ready a response. She frankly stated that she was connected with the church in S., and should deem it a privilege to remove her relation to N., and be under the pastoral care of Mr. Sheldon. She also confessed in answer to Mrs. Sheldon's inquiries, that she had been accustomed to sing in church, and should be willing to join the choir here.

When they rose to go, after a prolonged call, during which Fanny had received repeated invitations to visit the parsonage frequently and familiarly, with the hope she would be so contented in N., that she would not wish to leave it again, she replied,

“If I am to be contented, I must have something to do. I miss the Christian companionship I enjoyed in my grandmother. I want to be doing something to honor my Saviour.”

There was an earnestness in her manner, and a depth of feeling in her moistened eyes,

which woke a thrill of joy in these Christian hearts. As they returned home, they thanked God for sending Fanny to them as a co-worker in the cause to which they had devoted their lives.

Little did they imagine, however, how much Fanny was destined to administer to their comfort. In a few weeks she was as much at home in their own house as at her father's. The sound of her crutches on the brick-walk up to the house, was the sign of rejoicing to every inmate of the parsonage. Even little Emma ran joyfully to meet aunty, who told her such funny stories, and sung her such beautiful songs.

Tried almost beyond endurance by the constant annoyances to which she was subjected, and especially by witnessing the daily and hourly vexations which rendered her father's life a burden, it was a most welcome relief to the poor girl to run away from all care, to the congenial atmosphere of the pastor's house.

There her piety was strengthened, and she was enabled to bear more calmly whatever afflictions were in store for her.

She had gradually become aware that her father's pecuniary affairs were in a sad condition; and she had repeatedly urged him to make use of at least part of her property that he might be able to start in business again.

For his sake, she had borne many taunts from her step-mother, in silence, allusions to daughters living upon fathers, and not trying to exert themselves. One condition of her returning home with him being profound secrecy with regard to her having received any property, Mrs. Ray was therefore not aware that the small sum her husband weekly gave her for house-keeping was what his daughter insisted on paying for her board. But now, as Fanny saw him, pale and haggard, returning day after day, she once more urged him to accede to her wishes.

“ I will only ask you to take what I can

well afford to lose, if worst should come, to worst," she said with a winning smile. "Oh, father!" she added affectionately, taking his hand, "how little you know my heart. You refuse this trifling request because you think it might subject me to a sacrifice of comfort; and yet you will not comply with those desires which would make me supremely happy. You must be aware, dearest father, that to see you bear the trials of life cheerfully, because they are ordered by a wise and holy God, — one who looks upon us with pity, as an earthly father does upon erring children, and chastens them for their good; if I could be sure that you meekly submitted to your daily and hourly burdens because he sent them, I should welcome poverty. I could be cheerful in a hovel."

Mr. Ray slowly opened his pocket-book, took from it a neatly written note, and holding it for a moment before her, said in a voice scarcely articulate,

“ I have read that letter many times. It has saved me from — I cannot tell you what I should have been without it; but it has convinced me there is a God, and that there is truth in the Bible. Oh, my child! I have found there is a difference between talking religion and acting religion. What is the use of going to church with the pretence of serving God whenever the meeting-house is open, if one is to serve the devil all the rest of the time; aye, and compel others to serve him too,” he added in a lower tone.

“ Fal-de-ral!” called out Mrs. Ray, opening the door of the parlor abruptly. “ Fine times these. The kitchen isn’t good enough for some people to sit in. To my mind, Christians had better act up to their profession, and not be so stuck up with pride and the vanities of this life.”

Fanny’s cheeks flushed crimson, while her father started as was his wont on such occasions, to leave the room; but as he caught a

glimpse of his daughter's distressed countenance, he turned upon his wife with a defiant air, exclaiming, "You may say what you please to me, Mrs. Ray. It is a just punishment for my folly; but never will I allow any flings, recriminations, or reproaches, at my daughter, or at her religion."

He stopped, but seeing a scornful smile on her countenance, added in a loud, harsh tone, "You may as well know it now as any time, the property for which you married me, has all gone; I am literally a bankrupt; and but for means supplied me by that poor, abused girl, I and you might have starved."

Mrs. Ray sank into a chair, and extended her arms as if for help to bear this dreadful blow.

"And more than that, I have just refused the proffer she has been urging upon me, of cash sufficient to set me up in business again. Why I have done so, you can easily tell, if you will listen for a moment to the reproaches of your own conscience."

Poor Fanny had sat with her face covered to conceal the tears which were trickling down her cheeks. She heard her father's retreating footsteps, and her step-mother's violent exclamations of mingled anger and disappointment. She was profoundly astonished that Mrs. Ray had been left till now in ignorance of that which so nearly concerned her. She acknowledged to herself that although the conduct of her step-mother was calculated to rouse her father's anger, yet he might have pursued a milder course, and perhaps with better effect on her temper.

“Oh, that this unhappy contest might cease!” was her silent prayer. “Oh that the dove of peace might brood over this household, and all the inmates be brought under its blessed influence!”

“Now, Fanny Ray, I'll tell you, I don't believe one word of what he has been saying. He's is no more a beggar than I am, not a mite. He's only aggravating me. You don't know nothing what I've had to bear with that

man. If it hadn't been for my meetings and religious privileges, I shouldn't have held out half the time. But if that's his game, I'll be up with him, that's one comfort."

Fanny hastened to assure her that the fact was too true; that he had lost all his property. "I was aware of it before I left S.," she added hastily, "and after that nothing could prevent me from coming home so as to help him all that was in my power. I am very sorry he will not allow me to do what I wish. He has been a most indulgent father to me, and it would delight me to be able to repay him."

"That's true enough," responded Mrs. Ray earnestly. She rose, walked across the room to the mirror, adjusted her cap, and then in rather an awkward manner turning to Fanny, asked, "how much is your property worth, now?"

Fanny blushed as she recalled her father's prohibition, and said quickly, "the business is not fully settled, I think. Father can tell

you better than I can ; but even if we are poor, it need not prevent our being happy. The world is to us just what we make it ; perhaps our heavenly Father has sent this trial upon us for our good. If we each determine to act our part well, how much we might enjoy."

The young girl was emboldened to say more than she had ever said, by the earnest gaze fixed upon her. A hope sprang up in her heart that this hour might be the beginning of better days ; but she was greatly disappointed when Mrs. Ray asked suddenly,

"Did you ever speak in a meeting, Fanny? Your talk would sound real pretty there."

"No, I never did." The young girl was humbled and cast down. She left the room, and presently her mother heard the pat-pat of her crutches as she went down the street.

Approaching the window, she said to herself, "There, I'll lose my guess if she hasn't gone to the minister's again." Then with a heavy sigh, "well, if this doesn't beat all.

Who would have dreamed of his failing, and Fanny having property left to her. I must change my tactics right away. She's simple, and I can get round her easy, if the old man don't get scent of the game. I wonder if she gives the minister's folks presents. 'Twould be a shame while her father and mother are suffering."

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRANGE PROPOSAL.

WHILE Mrs. Ray pursued her meditations upon the fruitful subject so suddenly brought before her, and concocted her plans for the future, her daughter-in-law, unconscious of the designs on her good nature and on her purse, bent her steps toward a retired cottage where resided a young boy in the last stages of consumption.

Calling for a moment at the grocer's she purchased some oranges, and then went on endeavoring to calm her own mind by a contemplation of the scene before her.

On knocking at the door she was instantly recognized as the young lady who came before with the pastor's wife, and was joyfully

ushered into the common sitting room, where stretched on a low couch lay the object of her visit.

His eye brightened as it met hers, and he extended his emaciated hand with so cordial a smile that she felt at once he was to be envied.

After some questions about his health she asked, "are you reconciled to your situation? Are you willing to lie here and suffer?"

A brilliant flush for a moment beautified his pale face as he replied frankly, "I would not change places with the President, nor with Squire Holland's sons, who ride by on their fast horses every morning, nor with anybody you could name."

Fanny smiled.

"He used to be mighty fond of horses before he was taken sick," remarked his mother with a sigh.

"I am now," exclaimed the boy, whose name was Rufus. "Mother lifts me up to

see them prance along so haughty ; I love to see them ; but I should soon tire of that, while the happiness I enjoy in my Bible and in thinking of my Saviour will last forever. I don't sleep very well," he added, as she did not speak, "and have abundant time to think. Oh, sometimes it does seem to me as if I could describe the peace and joy I feel, the blessedness of having Christ for my Friend, so that every body in N—— would want to secure it right off. Everything seems so different when one knows he must soon die."

"And have you tried to describe this happiness to your young friends? Have you tried to honor your Saviour by exhibiting his love, and showing how willing it has made you to give up all for the sake of living with him?"

"Yes, Miss, indeed he does nothing else," urged his mother quickly. "When his mates come in he talks his breath all away trying to persuade them to give up their hearts to Christ, while they are well, so that they can

have the comfort when they come to die, of feeling that they have done something for him."

"That's what troubles me more than any thing else about my sickness," said Rufus; "When I think that I must die before I have an opportunity to do anything to show my Saviour I love him. Perhaps the minister told you what a gay, thoughtless fellow I was before I was sick; now if I only had those early days to live over again, why just with the money I've spent for candy and toys that did me no good, I might have bought tracts; you know a tract first led me to Jesus. Oh, I wish I had, and given them to all the boys and girls I know!"

"Why, Rufus," said Fanny, putting her hand on his head, "you are just in the situation to serve your Saviour. Every time your companions or friends come in to see you, if you show them that though life once seemed pleasant, yet you esteem it far better to go

to Christ and be in his presence forever; If they see you bearing patiently pain and confinement because he sends it, — this will honor him in their eyes, and you remember the precious promise, ‘them that honor me I will honor.’”

“Yes, I guess I do, that’s one of my favorite texts; and this is another: ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.’ Some days when I can’t talk much, mother bolsters me up and I find a lot of ’em for her to read over to me. See how many marks I’ve put in.” He pointed to a Bible which lay on a table by him, where on a narrow slip of paper was penciled the particular chapter and verse he thought suited to his own case.

She opened to one marked John 14: 12.

“This is a precious chapter,” she said, “If you like I will read it through before I go.”

When she closed the book he said softly, “will you please to pray, too?”

Fanny hesitated; but one glance into his eager countenance decided her, and leaning forward toward his pillow she breathed forth her simple petitions for the youth so soon to exchange the trials of earth for the glories of heaven. She prayed, too, that his example might strengthen her in the path of duty; and that they and all their friends might meet around the throne of God and join in songs of redeeming love forever and ever.

She had scarcely resumed her bonnet before she heard a footstep in the entry, and with a light knock, Mr. Sheldon entered.

Fanny was greatly embarrassed, but tried to cover her confusion by taking the oranges from her pocket. She thought Mr. Sheldon might consider it improper for her to offer prayer in the presence of a young man.

“I see I am quite too late,” remarked the gentleman, pleasantly; “my rival, or colleague has done all that it was my privilege to do. Now, Rufus, you must rest, and I will

come again. I will only ask one question, have you thought upon that subject?"

"Yes, sir," he answered with a beaming smile, "and she has been talking about it too. I hope you will come again, Miss, and I thank you for the oranges."

Mr. Sheldon only waited to whisper a few words to the youth as a subject for thought, and then hastened to overtake his young friend.

"I hope you are going direct to the parsonage," he said with a peculiar smile. "Louisa has been watching the windows all the morning, and I could not persuade her to accompany me to see Rufus because she feared you would come while she was out."

Fanny laughed as she said, "I determined when I left home not to go there to-day. I am so inclined to stop when dear little Emna urges me so prettily. I intended to call upon old lady Weems."



“ SHE'S TOMING MAMMA, ! ”—P. 77.

“Excuse me, but that is my destination this morning; and I cannot consent to your usurping the hearts of the old people whatever you do with the young. No, Louisa is earnestly expecting you. But seriously,” he added, as he saw she looked perplexed, “I am very glad both for your sake and for theirs, that you are inclined to visit the poor and the afflicted. Such ministrations bring a blessing to one’s own heart.”

“They do indeed. Now if you say I must, I shall turn my steps to the parsonage.”

“I shall tell Mrs. Weems that I proposed to you to postpone your visit to her till another day.”

“She’s toming, mamma! She’s toming!” cried Emma, who had been set to watch while her mother performed some unfinished household duties.

“What a very tardy person you are growing to be, Fanny,” exclaimed the lady, advancing to meet her guest; “Here have I been

spending half my time running to the gate to see if you were in sight."

"I didn't intend to come at all to-day," began Fanny.

"But didn't you receive my note?"

"No, I left home soon after breakfast to call upon Rufus Blake."

"And did you see Evarts? Did he tell you anything?"

"Only that you were expecting me. From your excited, earnest manner, I begin to suspect something."

"You can never imagine what I have to tell you. I am so glad Evarts is away and I can have you all to myself. I have had a letter from home, and it is all about you."

"About me?"

"Yes; I suppose you thought I asked you all those questions concerning your lameness, for nothing but curiosity. I wrote all about you to my sister in Philadelphia, and asked her to consult Dr. B ——. He is the most skilful

physician there, and he says that the case, as I represent it, is a very hopeful one; but he cannot give advice, of course, till he has seen you, and mother has invited you to accompany me home, and stay as long as Dr. B — thinks it necessary for you to be under his care. I wasn't expecting to go for a month or two yet, but Evarts says if I choose I may go at once. Isn't he kind? Now what do you say to my scheme?"

But Fanny had not a word to say. It was so sudden and overpowering. "Can it be possible?" she asked herself, "that I shall be freed from this affliction?" She sat with her eyes fixed in wonder upon her friend, her varying color giving evidence of the depth of her interest in the subject.

"You'll go, of course," continued Louisa, tenderly kissing Fanny's cheek. "Oh, should not I be glad to see you throw away those everlasting crutches!"

"They have been good friends," spoke the

cheerful voice of Mr. Sheldon, coming in from the study; "Without them we could not see Fanny at the parsonage. Crutches are not to be despised."

"No, of course not, if they are necessary; but I know they are not to you, dear. There Emma, kiss aunty, and tell her what a nice time we shall have at grandmamma's."

Fanny caught the child and hid her burning face in the white neck.

"I dare not believe it. It seems too great a blessing to be true," she murmured in a broken voice. "I never expected to be independent of these supports. I didn't know how much pride there was left in my heart to be conquered."

She cast a glance at her kind friends so full of humility and self-reproach, that they were deeply moved.

"Let us hope," said Mr. Sheldon gently, "that they have done the work God intended to accomplish by them. It is right to be re-

signed to the will of providence, to acquiesce cheerfully in God's dispensations to us ; but we ought not to refuse proffered blessings. I agree with Louisa that I should like to see you well enough to walk without the use of crutches ; but I am not quite so sanguine as she is whether even Dr. B ——— can work a cure. There is enough of encouragement, however, to give him a fair trial, and no one, unless it is your father, will be more rejoiced to welcome you back to N ———, able to walk on your own feet."

CHAPTER VIII.

FANNY'S FIRST JOURNEY.

IT is not my purpose to describe Mr. Ray's delight at the bare possibility of his daughter's being free from her infirmity; nor the haste with which her preparations were made for her extended visit. Neither can I stop to narrate the zeal of Mrs. Ray in her step-daughter's behalf, which seemed to open a new leaf in her character. I will only say, that under the influence of these happier days, the father consented to invest a small sum in a new partnership, and which offered a fine profit; and that the wife not unwillingly accepted a handsome present from the daughter, as a return for her services.

They reached Philadelphia in safety, but with so much fatigue to poor Fanny, owing mainly to the excitement with which she looked forward to her first interview with Dr. B., that she was glad to retire to bed. In the evening she was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, parents of her friend Mrs. Sheldon, and also to the Misses Emma and Mary Hamilton. After an hour of pleasant conversation, the bell was rung for family prayers. The servants entered quietly and took their seats. Emma took her place at the piano, when they all joined in singing a hymn.

“ So let our lips and lives express
The holy gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all divine.

“ Thus shall we best proclaim abroad,
The honors of our Saviour, God;
When the salvation reigns within,
And grace subdues the power of sin.”

Mary then opened the large Bible, and read the chapter in course, after which Mr. Hamil-

ton committed himself and family to the care and protection of a covenant-keeping God.

“ Oh, what a happy family yours is ! ” exclaimed Fanny, with deep feeling, as at a later hour she and Mrs. Sheldon were sitting together, in the chamber of the former.

“ Yes, Fanny, it is truly so. We have had many trials, some sudden reverses of fortune, but there is one blessed tie, besides the dear link of natural affection, which unites us in one bond. All who were present to night, even to the old family servants, could, I trust, unite from the heart in the sentiment expressed in the first two lines of that precious hymn we sung. Emma and Mary have professed Christ since I left home. They are very different in their religious experience. I want you to study their characters, and do them good.”

“ Me ? ” responded Fanny, with a humble glance. “ Surrounded as they are by such influences, there is little I can do. Oh, Loui-

sa, whatever may be the result of my visit here, I hope I shall grow in the heavenly graces. It will be my own fault if I do not. I scarcely dare confess even to my own heart, how much I desire to be free from my infirmity. Would you believe it, even when your sister Mary rose during family prayers and walked across the room to the table, the wicked thought rose in my mind, 'how awkwardly, Fanny, you would have looked limping across with your crutches.'"

The poor girl hid her face, blushing violently.

"It is foolish, I know, to repeat such thoughts," she added presently, "but it pains me to have you deceived in me. Really, dear Louisa, you think far better of me than I deserve."

"Well, if it will please you, I'll grant all that," was the smiling rejoinder; "but somehow, I can't help loving you though you are so dreadful." Mrs. Sheldon kissed her affec-

tionately, and said, "I am almost as impatient as you are, to see Dr. B—. I shall delay my letter to Evarts, till after his visit. I don't believe you half know what a friend you have in him."

Fanny smiled, and then said as her friend's inquiring look demanded an explanation,

"Excuse me, dear, but I have often thought the same thing of you. You need not raise your hand in such a threatening manner. I know you are aware that he loves you more than all beside; but do you realize what a true friend he is, how thoughtful of your happiness, how self-sacrificing with regard to his own, how tender of your little failings, how anxious to help you to amend them, and become what he knows you wish to be, a perfect Christian woman."

"Yes, I think I do realize it. With my impulsive temperament, what should I do without Evarts? He is always ready to make allowances, and to give me the full meed of

praise which I deserve. Then his example of steady, persevering effort in the cause to which he has devoted himself, will, I hope in time, modify my inconstant, uncertain aims. I do indeed, long to be a perfect Christian; but I have many sloughs to wade through, many hills of difficulty to climb, many lions to encounter and overcome, before I attain to that eminence.

“Emma, as you will soon perceive, is very like me in temperament. I hope in due time, God may send her an Evarts. But here I am keeping you from your sleep, which I know you much need. So, good-night once more.”

Precisely as the clock struck eleven, the next morning, Dr. B.'s low-hung buggy stopped at the door. With one quick motion he threw the weight upon the side-walk, attached the other to the horse's bit, and then ascended the steps to the house. He was an old and valued friend, and with a bound of pleasure, Mrs. Sheldon caught up her little Emma, and advanced to meet him.

Though poor Fanny sat in the back parlor, trembling with excitement, trying to calm her mind by a short prayer to her Father in heaven, she could plainly hear the heartiness of his greeting, and was reassured by it.

The next hour was devoted to an examination of her case, — the physician listening patiently to her account of the accident, and the medical treatment she had afterwards received. After he had personally inspected the limb, he looked so grave that the poor cripple's countenance paled, until Louisa became alarmed.

“You can't judge at all from his countenance,” she whispered, “he always looks sober when he is thinking.”

Dr. B., who had walked abstractedly to the window, turned suddenly, and asked, “How long can you remain in Philadelphia?”

“Just as long as you wish her to do so,” replied Mrs. Sheldon, quickly. “Oh, doctor, do give us a little encouragement! We have depended so much on you.”

He seemed scarcely to hear her, but returned to his seat on the sofa, and taking Fanny's hand with the tenderness of a father, said,

“In some respects your case is a peculiar one. I think there is no doubt but there might have been a cure if proper means had been resorted to at once.”

“But now?” faltered Fanny, trying to feel and speak calmly.

“Yes, now,” he repeated in a cheerful tone, “Now we must do what we can, and hope for the best. I trust you know who orders every step in our path.”

“Yes, sir,” she answered, her face brightening, “and I know that if He thinks it best for me, He will bless the means you use.”

“That's the right view to take, child,” giving her hand a warm grasp. “I shall wish to consult one of the hospital surgeons before I resort to any particular course of treatment. But as you know where to look for help to bear it, I may as well tell you that probably you will have to suffer considerable pain.”

“ Which I will try to do patiently, and even cheerfully, doctor.”

He nodded approvingly, gave her hand a parting shake, as he said, “ to-morrow, then, at eleven,” and bowed himself from the room, followed slowly by Louisa, who exclaimed eagerly, “ Doctor, do be frank, and tell me if you hope to effect a cure? She is so good and gentle, she dared not ask herself; but I know her so well, I saw her watch every variation of your countenance, to discover your opinion that — ”

He laughed heartily.

“ But couldn't make out the old, hard features. Is that what you mean? ”

“ But, doctor, she wont be able to rest a moment to-day, or sleep to-night, in such suspense.”

“ Excuse me, child,” he said with emotion; “ but I honestly think you are mistaken. I really believe that your friend is at this moment seeking strength to bear whatever God

in his providence may send, and I know that if she does thus seek, she will find."

Louisa grasped the hand he extended, and was sure she saw a tear glistening in his eye, as he hastily left the door. With an undefined sinking of the heart, she turned slowly back to the parlor, almost dreading to meet her friend.

To her surprise, Fanny's face was lighted with animation. "I am so glad it is over," she cried in a cheerful voice; "I dreaded so much this first interview, and now I have given it all up into His hands who has always ordered my path in great mercy."

Mrs. Sheldon kissed her cheek in silence.

"I have been thinking," added the lame girl, "that perhaps if I were to be entirely cured, I might become vain or proud. I can readily see I should be exposed to many temptations which now I am free from, and which I might not resist as I ought; and I'm really, truly pleased to leave it with One who knows

what is best for me, far better than I can judge for myself."

At this moment, Emma Hamilton and her little namesake came in to hear the opinion of their good doctor, and after that the conversation turned upon other subjects.

The next morning Dr. S. accompanied Dr. B.; when the examination of the crippled limb was repeated. He was wholly unlike the family physician—younger, but rough and off-hand in his manners and address. His movement of the limb was not so tender, and caused the poor girl to utter an exclamation of pain.

To the indignant Louisa, he seemed to regard her friend as a mere machine which had no feeling; but when she saw how after the first involuntary scream, Fanny nerved herself to endure the long and trying examination to which she was subjected, she felt ashamed to exhibit her emotion.

The physicians retired to the farther end of

the room for a few moments of earnest consultation. When they turned back, Dr. S. walked quickly to the sofa and frankly said, "you have borne our rough treatment so well that we are induced to try a remedy which we hope may work a cure, though it will be attended with pain. I should advise some weak wine and water to restore the color to your face and lips." Then with a low bow he turned hastily from the room.

Mrs. Sheldon left the apartment to procure the cordial, while Dr. B., seating himself near her, said in a low tone, "I think my poor child, you must have suffered much, but God sustained you, because you sought his favor."

"Only the thought of his presence enabled me to endure without murmuring," was Fanny's tearful response. "I hope he has adopted me as his child, and will not allow me to suffer one pang more than is for my good."

As Mrs. Sheldon presented the wine, the doctor explained to them the course of treat-

ment he meant to pursue. He said, "Dr. S. agreed with him that there was a ground for hope, but that it would be necessary for her to take every means, such as the air and nourishing food, to keep up her general health."

CHAPTER IX.

PATIENCE UNDER SUFFERING.

URING the weeks which followed, our young friend had ample opportunity to honor her Saviour by her patience, her sweet submission to the will of her heavenly Father, and by her desire to do good to those around her.

The small iron cup or plate which Dr. B. had fastened to her hip-joint, occasioned her constant suffering, and before the end of the month, made such sad ravages with her health and spirits, that Dr. S. was once more called for consultation.

He said it was doing its work well, but — turning abruptly to the patient, “what do you say? Are you willing to bear longer the pain consequent upon wearing the support?”

With a smile she answered: "Whatever you and Dr. B. think best, I am willing to do."

Dr. S. gazed a moment in her face, held up to the light her thin, transparent hand, and then in a brusque way, turning to Dr. B., said, "I wish we had more such submissive patients."

Presently he walked to the window where, for nearly five minutes he stood whistling in an abstract manner, when Dr. B. joined him.

"I have been thinking," said the former, "whether a slight alteration in the form of the cup might not lessen the suffering, without lessening the support. In this form for instance," bending a stiff card he took from the table, to illustrate his purpose.

"Capital," replied the other. "Try it by all means. In the mean time we must give something to restore our patient's appetite. She is losing her strength more than I like to see."

Mrs. Sheldon, who was to leave Philadelphia the next day, now approached them and said, with deep feeling,

“ You know Dr. B., it was through my influence Fanny was induced to try and be cured of her lameness. I want you to assure me before I go back to her friends, that the treatment will not permanently affect her health.”

The physicians glanced anxiously at each other; Dr. S. laid his hand on her arm as he said, gravely, “ I can only assure you that such a result shall be guarded against. Does she continue to ride regularly?”

“ Yes, sir, but of late it seems to do her no good. She comes home dreadfully exhausted, and is obliged to lie prostrate for some hours before she rallies. I have twice postponed my return to N., for I cannot bear to leave her in so feeble a condition.”

Dr. S. shook his head in a decided manner, and then left suddenly, saying, “ I will call in with Dr. B., to-morrow.”

Louisa Sheldon and her sister, Emma Hamilton, inherited the warm, impulsive temperament of their father, while Mary, the younger daughter, was timid and self-distrustful, like her mother. The peculiar traits of the daughters were modified but not changed when they became experimental Christians.

In the ardor of her first love, Emma longed to do something to show her zeal for the cause of Christ. Not content with small, every-day duties, she craved the opportunity to make a martyr of herself, to lay down if need be, her very life for the Saviour, who had done so much for her. She planned vast schemes for visiting the poor, for the distribution of tracts, for the formation of Sabbath Schools. When her father represented the difficulties she would have to encounter, instead of feeling discouraged, her eyes would sparkle and her whole countenance beam with animation. But unfortunately, she was so bent on performing some great work, that many, what she called

trifling duties, remained unperformed. As the eldest daughter at home, she was expected to relieve her mother of much care in the household—to interest herself in the right ordering of the servants, and in various ways to promote the general comfort of the family.

During Mrs. Sheldon's visit, she passed most of the morning in the room with her friend; indeed, Fanny's chamber was a favorite resort with the whole household. One day Emma came in with a flushed, anxious face, exclaiming, "I believe I never shall be able to accomplish anything. I intended to-day to go with Mrs. Cumming's to visit some families, and distribute tracts, but cook has one of her tearing headaches, and Kate must do her work, so I shall be obliged to stay at home, and turn chamber-girl." She then threw herself down in the chair, and seemed wholly discouraged.

Fanny, who was lying on the bed, gazed at her a moment, and then said softly, "God

never expects us to do more than he gives us time and strength to perform."

"But I have both time and strength," was the quick reply.

"No, Emma, not as I understand it. Neither time nor strength this morning, for has He not appointed other duties for you? Would you feel it to be right to neglect the comforts of your parents, and of the family?"

"No, that was not what worried me," replied Emma, blushing violently. "It was that when I had made all my arrangements to go this morning, all these vexatious things should happen."

"Poor Adeline would doubtless have been glad to do her own work in preference to suffering from her head-ache."

"Of course, no one is to blame," exclaimed Emma, starting up quickly, "I mean nobody but myself. I am beginning to think I have acted very foolishly. Do you believe, Fanny, I shall ever learn to be patient under

little trials? I am pretty sure I could be under great ones."

"I am sure there is One who will help you, if you ask Him."

Mary Hamilton was on the contrary, shy and timid in the expression of her own feelings; indeed it was with trembling she ventured to indulge a hope that she had been accepted by Christ.

She had lately consented, after much urging, to take a class in the Sabbath School, but confessed one day to Fanny that she must give up the charge. "I feel that I do wrong every week that I keep it," she urged as she was pressed for a reason.

"I cannot yet understand your motive," remarked Fanny, with a smile.

"Why, one of the girls has for a few weeks seemed more than usually interested in religion. I could perceive that her whole manner was changed; and I really suffered from fear lest she should ask my advice. How can I,

who am so imperfect myself, tell another how to find peace? Why, every day I am oppressed with doubts lest I am after all deceiving myself."

"It is a great and important duty," answered the lame girl, seriously, "to examine ourselves thoroughly, but we ought to be careful lest we fail to give God the praise which is his due. If he has really adopted you into his family; if the Saviour has really cleansed you with his precious blood; if the Holy Spirit has really begun a work of sanctification in your heart, how can you without sin, debar them from the glory which is their due?"

Mary looked at her friend in surprise, and presently murmured, "I never thought of it in that light. I was only afraid I was thinking too well of my own situation and prospects for eternity."

"That is not your danger, dear Mary. To one of Emma's sanguine temperament it might be; but you naturally take the worst view of

a subject, and must therefore guard against undue distrust of yourself. If you see the graces of piety working in your own heart, and helping to form your character, why should you not believe in them and rejoice that they are bestowed upon you?"

"But about the Sabbath School," urged Mary, after a pause, "while there are so many better fitted than I am, ought I to stand in the way?"

"Do you mean to ask whether you ought to try to do any good, because you cannot do as much as some other persons?" inquired Fanny, with an arch smile, "because if that is the question, I will answer in the words of the poet:

‘What if the little rain should plead,
So small a drop as I
Can ne'er refresh yon thirsty mead;
I'll tarry in the sky!
What if a shining beam of noon
Should in its fountain stay,
Because its feeble light alone
Was not enough for day?

‘Doth not each rain drop help to form
The cool refreshing shower?
And every ray of light to warm
And beautify the flower?
Go then, and strive to do thy part,
Though humble it may be;
The ready hand, the willing heart,
Are all Heaven asks of thee.’

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY RESULT.

HE proposed alteration in the supporter for Fanny's hip was made at once, and was found to answer the purpose better than they had dared to hope. As the pain decreased her appetite and strength gradually returned, so that in a month after Mrs. Sheldon left, she was able to walk comfortably about the room, and even a short distance on the side-walk.

It was found, however, that on the lame side the muscles had contracted so much that it was necessary for her to wear one shoe with a much thicker sole than the other. But to this difference Dr. B. told her she would soon become accustomed.

At the end of another month, her kind physician told her she was well enough to dismiss him if she wished to do so, "otherwise," he added with a laugh, "I have become so attached to a pair of large grey eyes beaming a cordial welcome upon me, that I shall probably continue my visits."

Fanny's eyes glistened, as she warmly replied, "I never shall dismiss you, doctor. I never can have the courage to deprive myself of the real comfort I experience from your daily call. Even when you were causing me so much pain," she added with her own bright smile, "I longed for you, and welcomed the hour when you would come."

Dr. B. laughed as he stroked his long white beard. "I suppose," said he, "that I am indebted to my advanced age for the frankness of your confession; but I am grateful. Physicians as well as other people, have a right to indulge in luxuries once in a while; and it has been a real pleasure, child, for me to at-

tend on you. I have had my pay for every visit as I went along, in seeing for myself how the love of Christ could sweeten affliction, and render every pang a fresh cause for gratitude."

The poor girl's tears flowed so fast she could not command her voice to reply, and when in answer to Emma Hamilton's remark, "Now, I suppose the first thing she will be packing up her trunks," he said. "not till I give her leave," she could only catch his hand as he presented it for a parting shake, and press her lips warmly upon it.

The next day he dropped in, he said, because his horse would not go by, and gave her permission to write her father that she would return with him if he could make it convenient to come for her.

She followed him into the hall, determined to speak of her indebtedness to him, and say she could not consent to be under so great an obligation.

The moment she adverted to the subject, he drew from his pocket-book a receipted bill which he presented her, saying, "I got this from Dr. S., telling him I thought you would like to pay it before you left the city. If you wish you may entrust the amount, thirty dollars, to me, and I will forward it to him. As for myself, child, I can well afford the luxury of a little pleasure once in a while, and if, in the mean time, I have done you any good, why so much the better. You are most heartily welcome to my services."

Fanny's lips quivered, and she tried to choke down a sob as she busied herself in selecting bank bills from her purse for Dr. S.

"Remember," said he, as he grasped her hand, "that if you have any return of your lameness, I shall expect to be called upon. Doctors are very sensitive about their old patients. And now, my child, may God bless you and keep you in all your ways."

She tried to speak, but her voice was chok-

ed, and her tears were blinding her, and before she could at all recover herself, he had gone down the stairs, shut the outer-door and driven off.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hamilton would consent to receive any compensation which Fanny's generous heart prompted her to offer them for their hospitality, during her long visit. She could scarcely get them to consent that their daughters should accept the handsome presents it was her delight to purchase for them. When her father came to accompany her home, they assured him they parted from her with great regret, and would gladly urge her to prolong her visit, had she not seemed so impatient to return to her duties in N.

Mr. Ray could scarcely express his delight as upon hearing his well-known voice inquiring for her, his daughter came unaided quickly down the stairs and threw herself into his arms.

“For years I have not been so happy,” he

said again and again. But after they had taken leave of their kind friends, and were on their way home, Fanny did not think her father happy. When he was not speaking to her, he relapsed into the same gloomy, reserved state. She longed to ask him about her step-mother, but dreaded to broach what might be a painful subject. She inquired in a cheerful tone concerning his business, but he was evidently disinclined to answer, and from the fact that he with many apologies asked her for money to pay the expenses of their journey, she inferred that it was not so prosperous as she had hoped.

Mrs. Sheldon had written by Mr. Ray to say, that she should expect Fanny to come directly to the parsonage, and when she showed her father the letter, he had said, "yes, I promised it should be so."

As they drew nearer home, his manner became still more gloomy. Sometimes when she addressed him, he gave a start as if his

thoughts were so much absorbed he had forgotten her presence. She was greatly perplexed, and they rode on side by side through long miles of woods, then suddenly emerging into a village or town, and without a pause to take breath on into the woods again. She passed in review all he had been to her from the time she, a little wee thing, used to run to meet him, when with a merry laugh he would catch her in his arms or toss her on his shoulder, and bound away through the garden walks. Then after her own dear mother had been laid to her rest in the quiet church-yard, she remembered how he seemed to have united in himself the tenderness of a father with the loving, anxious care of a mother. Again she was a child, and could see his bright, handsome face bending over her bed as she repeated the little prayers her mother had taught her. She recalled to mind the many times she had prayed for dear mamma after he had told her in a trembling voice that

mamma had gone to the happy world, and there was now no need of praying for her. Then came the dreadful accident which had so affected her whole life, and how attentive, how loving, how kind, how patient he had been, no words of hers could describe. All these reminiscences called up such a rush of tenderness and gratitude on her part, that she instinctively turned toward him to give vent to her feelings by expressing them. One glance, however, into his face brought her quickly from the past to the present. Though the weather was cool, the perspiration stood in great beads on his forehead, and his eyes had a wild, staring look as if he saw monsters in the distance.

“Father! father!” she exclaimed, touching his arm, “father, are you ill? What is the matter with you, father?”

He tried to smile, but it was worse than in vain. And though after this he resolutely shook off his reserve, and was kind and at-

tentive as ever, she felt that sinking of the spirits which seemed to foretell coming sorrow.

Of her friends in N., he was ready to speak. Rufus, she knew had gone to his heavenly home. He told her that on the last day before his death, at his request Mr. Sheldon had called in Squire Holden's two boys as they came riding by, — that he thanked them for the pleasure they had given him, for of late they had seen his interest, as his pale face watched them so earnestly from the cottage window; and then with almost his last breath told them he enjoyed happiness far greater than theirs could be; and if they would enjoy it, when they came to die, they must choose Christ as their portion, and honor him by their lives.

He told her, too, that on the day of the funeral it was affecting to see, directly after the mourners, the two boys on their horses trimmed with mourning knots, marching in the

procession, as if they were glad to pay this last token of respect to their young companion.

Mr. Ray spoke also of their joy at the parsonage, when he carried the letter containing the news of her first unaided walk,—how eagerly Mrs. Sheldon had exclaimed, “I was sure Dr. B. could cure her. Don’t you remember, Evarts, that I told you I was quite sure?” Mr. Ray did not tell, for he did not know himself, why Mr. Sheldon had smiled so archly, as he remembered that she had been far from sure on her return from Philadelphia; and that she had shed many tears as she described the low state of health which had followed Dr. B.’s first visits. He was too kind to remind her of this now, and rejoiced as thoroughly as she wished, in Fanny’s recovery.

But Mr. Ray told how Mrs. Sheldon had described his daughter’s patience and sweetness of temper which had endeared her

to every one, and that she had even brought little Emma to kiss him, and say how she loved aunt Fanny.

While he was talking of her and her friends, he seemed like a different man, and again his daughter said, to herself, "what can it be?" and again she lifted up her heart in prayer that whatever evil was to come upon them, God might bring out of it the great blessing she desired, even the salvation of her father's soul.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DELUDED GAMBLER.

FANNY'S reception by her friends at the parsonage, was quite as cordial as even her own warm heart could desire. Louisa was at the gate holding Emma in her arms, at the first sound of the coach turning into the street. Mr. Ray assisted his daughter to descend the steps, when Mr. Sheldon gave her his arm to the front door, where a few moments were devoted to affectionate embraces between the friends, the pastor meanwhile surveying the scene with a complacent air. He then quietly gave Fanny his hand, saying,

“ This has been a pleasure we have had so long in anticipation that I can scarcely realize it has come at last. God be praised that you

have returned to your home in safety and in health."

His deeply solemn manner so oppressed the poor girl, whose heart was already full to overflowing, that she cast down her eyes to conceal the tears.

At this moment the sound of the coach driving from the door, startled her, and looking wildly from the window, she exclaimed, "Oh, where is father? I must see father."

Mr. Sheldon hastened to the door, but the coach was already out of sight. When he returned, Fanny was seated on the sofa, her face concealed by her handkerchief, weeping bitterly.

The pastor, who suspected at once the cause of her grief, advanced to her side, saying, "If it is necessary for you to see him at once, I will follow him to his home and ask him to come to you."

"But he wont be there," sobbed Fanny. "I heard him make an appointment with a

dreadful man. I can't understand it, and I must go to him."

Her feelings changed when she saw Louisa quietly wipe her eyes as her husband gently led her from the room. She made a powerful effort to compose herself, and when he presently returned, said in a faltering voice, "I ought not to have come here to disturb dear Louisa. Oh, Mr. Sheldon, I am so anxious about my father!"

"What do you know to cause such anxiety?" he asked in a peculiar tone, that arrested her attention.

"Nothing, certainly, but he is so unlike himself. I am sure there is something weighing on his mind. I tried to hope that it might be concern for his soul; but at the depot an ill-dressed, sinister looking man came up to him, and after a few words of low, earnest discussion, I heard father say,

'Well, if it must be so, I'll be there; but remember this is to be the last time.'

“Father then left him to give the checks for my baggage to the hackman, but I saw the man turn back and laugh, and shake his fist at the retreating form. I determined to ask on our way here, what it could mean, but to my surprise father got up to the seat with the driver, making an excuse that the inside of the coach would be full.”

Mr. Sheldon rose and walked to the window, and then slowly returned to the sofa.

“I am sorry,” he began, “that your return to N., should be disturbed; but it will be in vain to conceal long from you that your father, being driven from his home by the bad temper of his wife, and not being in any regular employment, has come into the habit of visiting a gambling saloon, at first, I suppose, merely for curiosity, until now it is said, he has had heavy losses.”

Fanny started. “That can hardly be,” she cried. “He has nothing to lose;” but presently the blood rushed into her face as she

thought, "I gave him unlimited power over mine; but oh, not for this did I give up dear grandmother's legacy."

"I am glad if that is the case," answered Mr. Sheldon, after fixing on her varying color a searching gaze. "It is generally true that such reports are exaggerated. I was going to say that Louisa begged me for your sake to see Mr. Ray and warn him of the well-known profligacy of his associates!"

"And did you do so?"

"I went twice to his house; but Mrs. Ray frankly said she didn't know where he spent his time—he certainly did not spend it at home; and I had just determined to follow him to the gambling saloon if I could not find him elsewhere, when your welcome letter came summoning him to Philadelphia."

Fanny wept, but more calmly. After her dreadful suspense in the cars, it was a relief to know exactly the trial she was called upon to meet.

“Louisa would most gladly come to soothe you,” he remarked, scarcely knowing what to say, “but in her excitable state I begged her to absent herself until you were able to control your feelings. I suppose, though, I ought to tell you that your mother-in-law is far from well. No doubt she is extremely worried about her husband’s affairs.”

“Is she?” inquired Fanny, in an absent manner. She resolutely wiped away her tears, and after breathing a prayer for help to bear these new trials, said in quite a firm tone, “my duty is plain, father in trouble, and his wife sick, my place is at home. I think I can control myself to bid Louisa good-bye, and then I will go.”

“I have no authority to say you shall not,” answered the pastor with a smile, though his voice sounded very decided; “but I can strongly advise you to remain here quietly to-night, and endeavor to get rest after your long journey. To-morrow morning as early as you desire, I will accompany you home.”

“But Louisa,” murmured Fanny, “I ought not to intrude my sorrows upon her.”

“Louisa shall speak for herself on that point,” he answered in a cheerful tone.

Fanny did not wish to act in direct opposition to the advice of her friends, and therefore consented to remain till morning. Having done so, she determined to be as cheerful as possible. She begged her friend to leave her a few minutes alone, when she endeavored to throw her care upon the Saviour, and asked him to bear it for her. The thought that she had still a heavenly Father who was unchangeable in his goodness, wisdom and love, soothed her, and after bathing her eyes and making a slight change in her dress, she returned to the parlor, calm and almost cheerful.

While Ann, the only servant, prepared tea, she gave an account of the kindness of Dr. B., and delivered many messages of love from the home circle she had left.

Little Emma, too, claimed her full share of

attention ; and at last was only won from the lap of aunty by the permission to ride around the rooms on one of the disused crutches, which Fanny had brought from Philadelphia, with much care.

“ They are to serve as a warning against pride,” she answered, laughing, as Louisa wondered at her wish to retain them.

During their repast, Mr. Sheldon took care to lead the conversation to pleasing subjects, and when afterwards she knelt with them at the family altar, and heard her dear pastor present her case to her Father in heaven with such an assurance of a blessing, not only for her, but for her misguided parent, she felt greatly strengthened to meet whatever trials were before her.

Soon after this exercise, he rose to leave the house, having obtained a promise from his wife to retire early, that Fanny might do so ; explaining that business called him away, and might detain him until a late hour.

Something in his countenance as he glanced at her, gave Fanny the impression that he was going in search of her father, and her heart followed him with silent prayer that he might be the means of restraining him from greater sin. She said nothing to her friend, but for a few moments found it difficult to sustain her part in the conversation, and was relieved when it was proposed that they should adjourn to the chamber and put Miss Emma to bed.

In the mean time, let us follow Mr. Sheldon. For some weeks the conviction, not a pleasant one, had been forcing itself upon him, that it was his duty to remonstrate with Mr. Ray upon the course he was now pursuing. He was well aware that the interest they had manifested in his daughter, gave them great hold on the man's heart; and now, sympathising deeply in Fanny's distress, he determined to visit the gambling saloon, and make one strong appeal to Mr. Ray's conscience.

As was usually the case, the house in front

was dark, and seemed deserted, but on going into a side alley, he could perceive glimmerings of light through the closed shutters. He stopped a moment out of sight, to plan a method of gaining admittance. His person was so well known through the town, he could not suppose that he should fail to be recognized. There was something extremely repulsive to him in the thought of disguising himself, so the hat which he had instinctively pulled down over his forehead was pushed back again, disclosing his broad, high brow, with the clear, full eyes, flashing underneath, for he well knew he might have some reckless characters to deal with.

“My purpose is a good one,” said he to himself. “Our Saviour entered the abode of sinners to do them good, and I, one of the humblest of his followers, need not hesitate to do the same; I will go forward boldly, and God will take care of the result.”

“Once, again and again, he knocked at the

barred entrance, and was meditating what farther steps to take, when the door opened suddenly, revealing by a flash of light from within, a long room set out with tables for card-players. He had no time to take notice of anything but this, for it was evident that the door had not been opened for him, but that something unusual and alarming had occurred. A young man ran against him with such force as almost to knock him over, exclaiming, "he'll die! he'll suffocate! I'll run for Dr. Clark."

"Do it, if you dare," screamed a surly voice from the room, "he'll come round presently. Do you suppose we're going to have a doctor in here?"

"Carry him outside, then."

"I give you my word it's too late; he's off now, stone dead."

In the midst of these exclamations, which were interspersed with many oaths and curses, Mr. Sheldon walked forward into the saloon.

The noise and hubbub was almost overpowering. The men had all left their gaming, and were pressing toward one corner of the room.

“I say Blood is a cheat and a villain, too,” shouted a poor wretch, violently brandishing his hands.

“Nonsense!” cried a haggard, bent old man. “He only showed his hand too soon. If he'd kept dark, he might have cleaned his new bird all out, feathers and all.”

Making his way with some force through the group, and noticing as he did so, that one man whom he had often seen loitering about the stores and taverns, was busily collecting the piles of money into heaps, and pushing the cards into the drawers, Mr. Sheldon at last drew near enough to see that a man looking very black in the face, was lying at full length on the sofa, the froth oozing slowly from his mouth.

Hastily pushing a chair out of his way, he cleared a table at one bound, and came down

just at the head of the wretched man, whom he at once recognized as Mr. Ray.

I cannot pollute my paper by describing the awful oaths which run through the room when the parson seemed to fall from the roof into their midst. Some looking as if the blood would spirt from their faces, sprang at him to put him out; but he was like a roused tiger. He flung his arms about him with so much force, that they shrunk away in cowardly fear.

“Back, back, I say!” he shouted, “give the man air. He’s in a fit!” Then turning to the youth who had opened the door, he commanded him to go instantly for the doctor. Another man he ordered to call a carriage to take Mr. Ray to his home. Then he raised the senseless gambler sufficiently to untie his neck-cloth, and taking the head and shoulders in his lap asked if they had any kind of restorative at hand.

As there was nothing but rum and brandy,

Mr. Sheldon was obliged to content himself with holding the convulsed hands, and preventing the wretched man from doing himself injury.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURNING PRODIGAL.

 REALIZING as he did, that Mr. Ray might die unless relief was speedy, every moment of delay seemed an hour, but at length a carriage was heard dashing up to the door, and the doctor rushed into the room.

He gave a start of horror when he saw who was his patient, and a wild stare of surprise at finding his pastor in the midst of such a scene. But no time was to be lost in administering to the necessities of the sick man.

“I can do nothing here,” he exclaimed in a loud, angry tone; “he must be got home, and the quicker the better.”

But they had still to wait fifteen minutes

for the carriage, though another messenger had followed the first; then Mr. Sheldon and the physician, assisted by two others, lifted the insensible man into the rude vehicle, and drove slowly away.

It was near midnight when Mrs. Sheldon, who after a wearisome watch for her husband, had at length fallen asleep, was awakened by a pebble thrown against her window. She sprang from her bed, and there in the moonlight saw her husband beckoning to her to come below.

“Be calm,” said he, entering cautiously. “Where is Fanny?”

“Asleep, long ago.”

“That is right. I have been with her father, who was taken suddenly and violently ill. I must remain with him through the night. Don't be alarmed, I am well. I could not justify it to my conscience to leave him, even if he were not the father of our friend.

“But how am I to tell her? How can I?” urged poor, sympathising Louisa.

“Go to bed, and try to get some sleep. I will come back in time to see to that. Poor girl!” as she shivered and put her hands to her head. “I am sorry to tell you all this. Now you shall get me a glass of wine, for I really am faint with these dreadful scenes, and I must be back at my post; Mrs. Ray isn’t fit to be left with him. There she is crying and wringing her hands, and lamenting over him as if the most tender relations had existed between them.”

Unfortunately for the carrying out of Mr. Sheldon’s plan, Fanny, greatly fatigued by her journey and the excitement of the evening, had fallen into a sound sleep the fore part of the night, and woke refreshed at an early hour. She rose, therefore, and after her usual bath, sat down to take advantage of this quiet hour for communion with her own heart. She reviewed God’s dealings with her, and with joy and gratitude confessed that thus far her afflictions had worked out her good. “Yes,”

she murmured, “ I can truly say it has been good for me that I have been afflicted. I can surely trust my heavenly Father that if he sees it necessary to send another stroke, he will send with it the consolations of his Spirit. Oh, if my father could be brought to the feet of his Saviour by the loss of all my property, how gladly would I surrender it ! ”

Then after reading a portion of Scripture she knelt down and supplicated God's favor in all the events of the day, — that if she were to be cast down, he would uphold her by his almighty strength — that he would tranquilize her thoughts, and give her grace in all her actions to honor him before men. She prayed too that she might not be lifted up by foolish pride, now that her bodily infirmity was removed, and that at night she might lie upon her pillow with the assurance of God's love and blessing.

Little Emma, who had shared her bed, was still asleep, so she went cautiously down to

the parlor, when finding it earlier than she expected, she suddenly determined that she would select such articles of clothing from her trunks as she should need at once, and surprise her father by appearing at breakfast with him.

She had just arrayed herself for her walk, and said good-bye to Ann in the kitchen, when she heard Mrs. Sheldon's voice at the stair-way, softly calling "Evarts."

Surprised that he had already left his room, she answered the call, saying, "good morning, Louisa, I am glad of the opportunity to say good-bye. I knew you would understand why I should wish to go home early."

"Have you seen Evarts, then?" said Louisa, in her nervous state, beginning to shed tears.

"No, not this morning. Did he wish to see me?"

"Yes, yes, indeed. You mustn't go till he comes home. He said expressly he should come and tell you himself."

“I don't understand you,” faltered Fanny, now becoming really alarmed. “Where is your husband?”

Louisa tried to compose herself, and evaded a reply.

“Don't be afraid to tell me all,” urged the poor girl, her countenance growing very pale, “God will give me strength to bear it.”

“Your father is very, *very* sick. Evarts was with him all night.”

Fanny sank down on the stair where she had been standing, and for a moment did not reply. But not in vain had she approached the mercy-seat. There rushed into her soul such an assurance of God's love, and his willingness to bless her and all dear to her, that when she lifted her eyes to her friend's face, her whole countenance was illumined by a holy trust.

“If I do not see Mr. Sheldon,” said she, rising, “tell him I am sure God will reward him for his kindness both to my father and to

me. Now, dear Louisa, for my sake, and that I may not be anxious about you in addition to my other trials, will you promise me to lie in bed for several hours?"

"I had much rather be with you, but will do as you request. Remember this is your home, and come to it as soon as you can."

Notwithstanding that Fanny was intensely anxious concerning her father; yet the short walk from the parsonage to her own home, was one of the most delightful she had ever known. Never had she so realized the presence of God and his readiness to answer prayer. Again and again, she repeated two lines of a hymn she had often sung:

"This is the time to trust my God,
And rest upon his arm."

Never had God appeared so glorious in his holiness, and yet so condescending in his love and pity toward the children of men. Earnestly, more earnestly than ever she had done it before, she yielded herself, her friends, her

all, to his care, assured that whether joys or sorrows were her portion in this life, they would be what was for her best good.

As she approached the house, she saw the sulky of Dr. Clark standing before the gate. The outer-door was wide open, and she entered. Hastily throwing off her outer garments, she went directly up the stairs, where in the room in which she had so long been confined, her father lay pale and haggard upon the bed.

Mr. Sheldon started when he saw her, and tried to motion her back; but she went toward the bed calmly, with a determined air, as if to say, "this is my place and I shall never leave it."

Mr. Ray had during the night seemed utterly unconscious. When he came out of the dreadful fit in which his pastor had found him, he lay with his eyes closed, wholly exhausted. But when Fanny stooped forward and kissed his damp forehead, he opened his eyes, and

for a instant regarded her with a glance of affection. But this was quickly succeeded by an expression of such intense pain, that she turned from the bed to wipe away an unbidden tear.

The doctor beckoned her to follow him into the next room, where after her assurance that she was well enough to take care of her father, received from him full directions for so doing.

It was not until much later in the day, Mr. Sheldon imparted to her the facts already known to the reader; and it was not until many months later that she knew of the measures he had taken for the arrest of a man by the name of Blood, who was supposed to have dealt falsely in the black-art, by which he had enriched himself and impoverished his victim.

It was now Fanny found the comfort of having kind friends. Mrs. Ray had a dropsical affection which caused her feet and lower limbs to swell, and was therefore unable to go up

and down stairs without great pain. Mrs. Sheldon, though she could not gain her husband's consent to be with Fanny, rode three miles to procure Ann's sister,—a smart girl of sixteen, to assist her; and many times in a day she sent over either to inquire for the sick man, or with some dainty she had prepared to tempt the appetite of her afflicted friend.

Many of the neighbors too, came in and made a cheerful offer of their services. The thankfulness with which the young nurse accepted their kindness, so different from the response of Mrs. Ray, that "'t isn't likely we shall need help for the short time he'll hold out," quite won their hearts and made them still more anxious to serve her.

Mr. Sheldon too, often visited the sick chamber, and never without whispering a few words to Fanny, which strengthened her in the hope that this sickness would be the means of eternal good to the poor suffering man.

Once when the doctor feared a return of the convulsions, poor Fanny's faith almost failed. She tore a slip of paper from a letter in her pocket, and wrote a few words which she gave her pastor as he was about to leave the room. They were simply these: "Oh, do pray for him, for the health of his body, and the health of his soul!"

For two days and two nights the devoted daughter remained by his side, watching for the first return of consciousness. She felt no fatigue. Her whole soul was absorbed with the one engrossing desire that her father might, even at this eleventh hour, accept the pardon Christ offered him. Often when he seemed to be asleep, she leaned her head on his pillow, and with his hand clasped in hers, plead fervently for this great blessing. As he appeared to be sinking, she grew still more importunate, and besieged the mercy-seat with cries and groans of anguish.

The second night was almost spent. She

stood gazing into his pallid face, tears unconsciously streaming down her cheeks, when he suddenly opened his eyes, and in a faint voice repeated her name.

“Dear father,” she cried, “I am here, your own loving Fanny.”

He gazed in her face a moment with an expression of pain, and then softly said, “All is lost! All, *all* is lost!”

Her heart gave one great bound of joy as she thought that at last he realized his lost and ruined state as a sinner.

“No, father, no!” she exclaimed in a glad tone — “not lost but found. God is willing to forgive you; Christ is ready to embrace you, as the fruit of his death on the cross. The Holy Spirit yearns over you. Not lost, father, but found by redeeming love.”

While she spoke he seemed perplexed, and tried to lift his hand to his head; but when she had done, he murmured, “Yes, lost! I have squandered it all.”

She now understood him to refer to her

property, and lifted her heart to God in prayer that he would put words into her mouth that she might win him from thoughts of this world to his own condition as a dying man.

“Dear father,” she cried, bathing his hand with the tears which rained from her eyes, “Do not think of that now. I am well, and can earn my own support. I shall consider its loss the greatest blessing that ever happened to me, if it will only lead you to think of his love that can be purchased without money and without price. Oh, do come to him! Believe your dear daughter. Believe your departed wife. He is ready and willing to receive you. He will be more to you than fortune or friends.”

“And can you really forgive me, Fanny?”

The words came forth trembling from the white lips.

She leaned forward and kissed him repeatedly. “Even so, father, I forgive it all.”

“And will God forgive me, too?”

He gasped rather than spoke, and his daugh-

ter trembling from head to foot, answered earnestly, "Yes, he has promised it. 'Come unto me,' he says, 'Come all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

He lay quiet for a moment with his eyes closed, and then his lips moved. She bent over him, but could only distinguish a word now and then. But she sent up a quick note of praise to God as she caught the words "sinner" and "pardon" and "helpless."

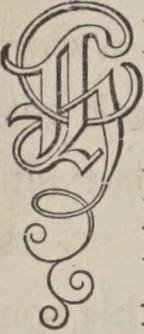
He grew so pale that she feared his soul was passing away, and flew to the other side of the room for a few drops of brandy. It was with difficulty that he could swallow, and then he fell back and seemed to sleep from exhaustion.

Fanny sat holding his hand, and thinking what a wonder of mercy it would be if God should answer that feeble, broken prayer, when he began to repeat in a more distinct tone, the precious words :

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRIST THE ONLY PLEA.

E repeated these words with an emphasis which proved to his rejoicing, praying daughter, that they were the language of his heart; then after a moment's pause, he said, "I couldn't begin to tell him what a sinner I have been all these long years."

"He knows it all, and will forgive it all for Christ's sake," whispered Fanny.

"Yes, He knows it all, and will forgive it all," he repeated slowly, as if pondering every word. "Can it be that Christ will intercede for me? How can I have a claim to his favor?"

"By acknowledging your need of it," murmured Fanny, making a great effort to con-

trol her emotion. “ You know, dear father, we do not send for a physician until we confess ourselves to be sick ; so we don't apply to Christ for pardon until we are ready to own that without it we are lost ; undone forever. Our Saviour gave himself up to the cruel death of the cross, that he might by taking our sins become a mediator between sinful man and his offended God. All those who will accept the pardon thus offered to them, are freely forgiven for his sake.”

He bowed his assent again and again, and then remained quiet so long, that overcome with her long watching, she fell asleep on his pillow.

In this position her pastor found her about an hour later. A sweet smile was playing around her mouth as if even in her sleep she realized that the gracious Spirit was present.

As he cautiously drew near the bed, Mr. Ray suddenly opened his eyes. It was the first time he had seemed to recognize his pastor, but now he called out in a clear voice,

“I have found a plea! *I have found a plea!* For Christ’s sake.”

Mr. Sheldon was dumb with surprise.

“For Christ’s sake,” repeated the sick man.

“God can pardon all my sins.”

“And will pardon them.”

“Yes, for Christ’s sake, he *will* pardon all my sins. He knows them all.”

Fanny, who had started to her feet at the first sound of his voice, tried to choke down her sobs, but the fountain was too full and would overflow. She hurried from the room, while Mr. Sheldon fell on his knees by the bed-side to give thanks to God for his unspeakable gift.

“Tell him only for Christ’s sake,” faltered Mr. Ray. “I have no other plea—I want no other plea.”

Through the day his mind seemed to rest upon this one idea—Christ’s willingness to save him, and the sufficiency of his plea, “for Christ’s sake.” Many times when his daugh-

ter thought him sleeping, she caught the whispered words, "that is all my plea; vile, sinful as I am, I need no other. God for Christ's sake, can and will pardon me. Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me."

Then he would wake up with a smile, such as Fanny remembered in the days of her childhood. He had never again adverted to his sin against his daughter in squandering her property, and she had not a thought upon the subject; but one day he told Mr. Sheldon that he wished to see him alone, and begged Fanny to take some rest.

During this interview, he confessed to his pastor that for months he had been at times in such agony of conviction on account of his sins, that he would resort to any means to drive them off. "I tried to convince myself," he said, "that there was no reality in religion. But I knew better. I was growing very hard when Fanny gave me a little note. I

have been bad enough, but I feel sure I should have been worse without it. Many a time when I've been goaded almost to death by trouble in my business and contention in my family, I'd go up stairs by myself and read that little note. I seemed to cling to it as my last hope; but even that didn't save me when temptation came. I consented, after much urging from my daughter, to use a part of her little fortune to set me up in business. Just at that time Blood came to N. I needn't explain all the particulars; but after a while he persuaded me to visit his gambling saloon just for one night, he said. I was charmed, fascinated with the excitement. I longed for night to come. I had no more strivings of the Spirit, no more reproaches of conscience. I won large sums, and every thing looked as if I should soon be a man of independent means again.

“But at last the tide began to turn; nearly half of the sum Fanny lent me was lost,

and I told Blood I would venture no more. Then she sent for me to go to Philadelphia and accompany her home. I vowed to myself I'd confess all to her, and be done with cards forever; but on reaching N., the first one I saw as I stepped out of the cars, was Blood. He called me mean and dishonorable to leave with my pockets full of money won from him. He ridiculed me, he sneered at my objections, he goaded me almost to madness; and at last I promised to meet him once and for the last time. I have now no doubt, there was a plan among them to ruin me — that they were convinced I should keep my word, and that night take leave of them forever, and determined to fleece me while I was in their power. I have only an indistinct remembrance of that dreadful evening. I had but just parted from my daughter. I knew what was the dearest wish of her heart. I loved her more than my own life; and yet I was about to do what would make her miser-

able. Do you wonder I was wretched? Do you wonder I drank glass after glass of some mixture my comrades urged upon me, in order to forget myself?"

"Oh!" said the poor man, when after a pause of overwhelming emotion, he again tried to go on with his story, "what a wonder, a miracle of mercy I am, that Christ should still offer pardon and salvation, after that dreadful hour; for then I deliberately turned from the voice of nature, the voice of conscience, the voice of God, all calling loudly upon me to beware, to take heed of my ways, to turn and live. Since I have lain here, I have often thought those poor wretches must have drugged my brandy, for it had an immediate effect to make me wild, reckless, almost ungovernable. I know I refused more, and that Blood laughed at my weakness, and urged it upon me. While in this state they drew me to the table, where Blood and I began to play. I lost the rest of what Fanny gave me,

and had sense enough left to say I had no more; but again they sneered, called me a coward, and by some means induced me to put my name to a paper. I suppose it was to use the rest of her little fortune. By this time I was desperate, and remember nothing, except that some one shouted, 'he's done for,' and then there was a horrid din of laughing and shouting, and I suppose I became insensible."

This account was not given without great exhaustion, many interruptions and groans of anguish, nor without many sympathising tears on the part of his hearer.

Mr. Sheldon then informed him that he had immediately taken measures for the arrest of Blood, and by the advice of a lawyer had written to persons in S., where he had learned from Fanny that her money was placed, not to pay any orders until farther notice.

All this time Fanny had seen but very little of her step-mother. As long as she considered

her husband in a dying condition, she controlled her impatience, talked more freely than ever of her religious experience, and even shed some tears at the prospect before her of being a widow. But as Dr. Clark, when he came to the kitchen day after day, to prescribe for her, reported his patient to be no worse, she thought it quite time to relate her own grievances. Henceforth every one who came in was assured that she married Mr. Ray when she might have done much better, that she was moved to compassion toward the motherless child, and that she had been most unhappily deceived in the character of her husband.

Poor Lizzie avoided the kitchen as much as possible. It made her wretched to be obliged to listen to all this, and to taunts about Fanny's piety. She far preferred when there was nothing to be done for her young mistress, to sit on the stair close by the chamber door, and listen to the sounds within. She thought the Bible had never seemed so interesting as

when in Fanny's low, clear voice, she read to her father. She thought prayer had never seemed so much like a child's talk to his Father in heaven, as when Mr. Sheldon knelt by the bed, and poured out his heart before his Maker.

But though this dutiful daughter had been prevented from personal intercourse with her step-mother, she thought much of her in her really suffering state of health, and longed to test her father's new-born piety by the effect it would have on his feelings toward her. In the quiet chamber they could often hear her voice speaking loudly and irritably to persons below, and at such times Fanny could see that her father shut his eyes, and sometimes appeared to be engaged in prayer.

One day when he was feeling more than usually comfortable, he asked Lizzie what Mrs. Ray was doing, and whether she would be able to come up, because, he added, "if she is, I should like to see her a few minutes."

The young girl wondering, went to carry the message, and presently they heard the woman slowly mounting the stairs, muttering that if he had anything to say, he might wait till he was well enough to come to her.

Fanny was startled to see how ill she really looked, and set a chair for her near the bed, with anxious attention.

Mr. Ray glanced at his wife, sighed deeply, and then motioning Lizzie from the room held out his hand to her.

“ You look better’n I expected to see you,” said she, scarcely knowing what to say.

“ And you look really ill, I am sorry to see,” he replied in a subdued voice. “ Do you see Dr. Clark every day?”

“ La, yes! but all the doctors in town couldn’t help me while I have such a weight on my mind.”

He paused—he evidently was hesitating how to proceed.

“ I suppose you’ve got quite use to walk-

ing about without your crutches," remarked Mrs. Ray, turning to Fanny.

"Yes," was the smiling answer, "I am becoming quite skilful in the use of this," holding up her high shoe. "At first my ankle turned over very often."

"Sarah," began the sick man, calling her by a name she had almost forgotten, "as I may never have another opportunity, I want to tell you that I realize now that we might have lived much happier together if I had done my duty as a husband."

"I wish you'd found it out afore," she said, beginning to sob. "You've a'most broke my heart with your temper and your moods. I'm sure if I hadn't had religion to ha' held me up as 'twere, I should ha' been in my grave long ago."

Mr. Ray grew intensely pale, and shut his teeth firmly together. The old anger was rising in his heart. He paused to breathe a prayer for strength to resist this enemy, and then said softly,

“I’m going to die soon, Sarah; I feel that I cannot live many days. Will you forgive me that I have not set you a better example, and for all the unhappiness I have caused you? It would greatly relieve my mind, lying as I do on my death-bed, if you can tell me that.”

The woman took her apron from her face, and gazed earnestly at him. She seemed for a moment to feel that perhaps she, too, might have some faults to confess, but after a searching glance, she said quickly,

“La, Mr. Ray, I shouldn’t a mite wonder if you got well and lived years yet. I’ve seen people a sight worse’n you are, get round again.”

“No, Sarah, that can never be. I feel certain that I cannot live many days. I hope God has forgiven my numerous offences against him, and it would give me comfort to have you say, you forgive me.”

The color flew into her face; she glanced alternately at him and at Fanny, who was weep-

ing behind the bed, and then said rather reluctantly,

“ Yes — I forgive yer.”

“ Thank you,” said he again, extending his hand.

“ ’Sposing you should be taken away, which to my mind don’t look at all likely, what arrangements have you made ’bout your affairs. Bein’ your wider, I oughter be looked after.”

Mr. Ray groaned aloud, and Fanny exclaimed, “ Oh, mother, don’t talk so !”

At this moment the doctor’s voice was heard below, and the woman slowly rose, and without another word, made her way down the stairs.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIUMPH IN DEATH.

SONLY once more was this subject referred to between father and daughter, and that was on the day following Mrs. Ray's visit to the sick room.

“There is only one thing,” said he, “in my married life, that I can reflect upon with pleasure. When my circumstances were good, I was in the habit of giving your step-mother a certain sum every week for family expenses. She complained after a time that it was not large enough. I gave her more, though wondering that my comforts should decrease when my expenditure was larger than ever before. It was nearly two years later I ascertained that she had always laid by a part of that sum, and placed it in the

hands of a brother, who gave her regular interest for it. Still, though aware of this, I continued the same allowance, and now am rewarded in knowing that she is not wholly destitute."

The opinion of Dr. Clark confirmed that of Mr. Ray, concerning the shortness of the time allotted him on earth. His strength failed rapidly. The irritation in his stomach increased so that he could retain no nourishment, and every symptom denoted approaching death.

When Mr. Sheldon informed him of this fact, he answered, "it is no news to me. I praise God that he has left me nothing to fear; that his grace is sufficient for me. Yes," he added with a strong emphasis, "even for me, the very chief of sinners. If it were his will, I should have been glad to live long enough to honor my Saviour; but I am ready to go when he calls for me. But, oh, if I could live my life over again; if I could have realiz-

ed as I do now, what a work Christ has done for sinners, how I would have sounded his name in the ear of every poor wretch — how I would have urged them to try his love, to taste his favor, and then see if husks would satisfy them.”

It was scarcely day-light the next morning, when after a short doze he woke, and seeing his daughter sitting by him, said, “I feel much better. I am afraid my summons will not come to-day.”

After a minute he said suddenly, “Will you call Lizzie?” Then added,

“Run to Mr. Simon’s house, and to Mr. Ball’s, and ask them to come to my chamber. Stay — call in all the neighbors, I have something I must say to them. Be quick, or it will be too late.”

Fanny became alarmed. In his eagerness her father had partially risen from his pillow, and his eyes were protruding from their sockets. She began to remonstrate, but he ex-

claimed: "While I have strength let me tell the wondrous tale. Man a sinner — Christ a Saviour!"

In a moment, he cried out, "Raise me up! Call Sarah! Call your mother!"

She ran to the head of the stairs, and in a voice which trembled from fear, summoned Mrs. Ray from below.

"Sarah, wont you come to Him?" he said earnestly, as she entered, "throw away all your hopes of heaven which have never been strong enough to wean you from the world. Come to Jesus, he will give you the true peace. We can't live in this world always; the doctor says you may not live long; will you love Christ now? Oh, what comfort it would give me to know that you would seek him!"

"Sarah," he added, taking her hand, as she stood gazing at him in wonder, "Riches never made us happy; and now those are gone, and life is almost gone, think what have you

to depend upon for eternity. God wont take fair words; he looks into the heart. Ask yourself, when I am gone, if he sees his image there."

She burst out crying, and was turning to leave the room, when he called out, "Farewell, till we meet at the judgment-bar. Oh, Sarah, meet me at God's right hand!"

He closed his eyes, and for half an hour seemed to doze, but even in his sleep he murmured the names now more precious to him than all the world beside, "Jesus, my Saviour!"

The noise of footsteps on the stairs aroused him.

Fanny ran to the door with her hand upraised, to enjoin silence.

"Come in, friends!" he said, raising his voice. "Come and hear a dying man tell what God has done for his soul."

It was a strange spectacle — those hardened men roused at break of day from their

slumbers, some of them only half dressed, grouping themselves around that bed, on which lay one so lately strong and full of life, now standing where time with him was past, looking forward into eternity.

Fanny, who was closely watching him, saw a slight spasm contract his features.

“Father,” she said, “let them go, you are not able to see them.”

He pointed to the cup, and she gave him a teaspoon full of brandy and water.

“God will give me strength,” he said, glancing from one to another: “Friends, look at me. You see a man, a sinner, a vile, polluted sinner. You all know how I have lived. Some of you have known me from boyhood. I tried to lead a moral life and climb into heaven that way. But I found that the path I was walking led to quite another place. Then I became desperate, and began to gamble. You all know how I came to be lying here. You, and you, and you,” pointing to

one and another, “ have been kind neighbors ; we have called each other friends ; but, would it be friendly for me to leave you walking over the brink of a precipice, and not warn you of your danger. No, it would not. I cannot part with you to-day, without imploring you to prepare for such an hour as this. You have tried living without God, and if you would speak the truth, you would say you have not found the happiness you expected. Come to Christ ; accept as I have done, the ransom he shed his blood to give. Oh, don't delay till you are on your death-bed. You may never have a death-bed. You may be struck down in the cars or in the streets. You may at any moment be called to stand before God. Will you?”—

He sank back ; his eyes became fixed ; one great throe of expiring nature, one convulsive shudder, and his spirit fled away to its home in the skies.

Fanny started forward with a shriek She



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laid her hand on his forehead. It was still moist and warm. But life had departed.

The men, glancing at one another, slowly left the house of death. Only two remained, and those had grown up with him from boyhood. Mr. Simons softly approached and laid his finger on the pulse of his friend.

“It will never beat again,” he said.

Fanny threw herself upon the corpse and wept aloud.

The men retired to the entry, and talked together in low solemn tones. Mr. Ball then returned and wiping his eyes, said softly, “You’d better leave him with us now. He’s been a good friend to both of us and we’ll see that respect is paid to his remains.”

Poor girl, she stared wildly at them. It seemed hard indeed, that she must be torn from him so soon. She could not realize the necessity for such haste.

“It is best; indeed you must leave him with us,” urged Mr. Simons, re-entering.

With one lingering look she went out, shut herself up in her chamber, and locked the door.

“He has gone,” she cried, “gone without one parting word, or even a glance to his poor, sorrowing child.”

Throwing herself on the bed, she wept without restraint; but after a time, overcome with her long, anxious watchings, she fell asleep.

When she awoke, Mrs. Sheldon was bending tenderly over her. She did not instantly remember what had occurred, and said quickly, “You here, Louisa? What has happened?”

But before she had finished speaking, her tears began to flow again, as she remembered, “I am an orphan.”

Truly it is a sacred thing to weep with those who weep, and so Mrs. Sheldon felt it to be, as they sat side by side, — the poor weary girl with her head resting on her friend’s breast.

“Oh, how I wanted to see him once more!”

the lady exclaimed at length. "Mr. Simons has been telling us of the wonderful scene this morning. He says he shall never forget it as long as he lives. He seems very deeply impressed."

"God grant it may be the means of good," sobbed Fanny. "Dear father, all he regretted in his death was, that he could not do something to show his love for Christ."

After Mrs. Sheldon left her, poor Fanny stole into the darkened room, all quiet now, and stood for a long time gazing upon the marble countenance lying so peacefully in its last sleep. Reluctantly at last came the conviction, that to the living she now owed some duties. She reverently folded back the white covering, let fall the curtain, and went out. Pausing a moment at the head of the stairs, she heard the sound of weeping below, and with a heart almost sinking beneath her own load of grief, she slowly made her way to her mother's room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PATIENT NURSE.

FOUR weeks later, we find Fanny still occupied in administering to the comfort of her step-mother, who has had a long and dangerous illness. Fretful and complaining as her patient was, and disheartened almost beyond endurance, as the poor girl often felt; yet she insisted that her place was by her mother's side, and from this nothing could move her.

But now Mrs. Ray was pronounced by the physician, able to be removed to her brother's, with whom she was to live; and her self-devoted nurse, only the shadow of her former self, was to return for a while. to her friends at the parsonage.

During the month they had been so constantly together, Fanny had often tried to test the feelings of her step-mother on the subject of personal godliness. As I have already stated, Mrs. Ray could talk long and fluently upon the general subject of religion. To use her own expressions in the class-meetings, she would often declare that she could never have endured the trials of life, without its "beautiful, its happifying influence," yet to those who, like her husband's pastor, wished to talk with her of her own personal experience, she could give no reason for the hope that was in her.

After the solemn, earnest appeal from her dying husband, to cast away all dependence on her own righteousness, and prepare to meet her God, the young girl noticed this one difference, an unwillingness to talk at all upon the subject, and far more readiness to listen to others. Mr. Sheldon and his wife often visited her, and in the presence of the sick woman, discussed the subject so dear to them,

in many of its bearings on the human heart. They insisted upon the Bible rule as a test of piety, "by their fruits ye shall know them." "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Always, after these calls, the young nurse found her patient more querulous and hard to please; but for a long time she did not connect this with the influence of the subjects discussed.

On this last day, Mrs. Ray seemed more softened than her daughter ever remembered to have seen her, and while Fanny sat by her side, tastefully arranging her mourning caps, and putting in order her wardrobe, she appeared struggling to conceal some tender feeling.

At length, as the young girl held up the last one before her, and said in quite a cheerful tone, "There now, mother, your caps are all finished, enough to last you for six months," the sick woman suddenly covered her face and began to cry.

For a long time Fanny urged her to tell what gave her pain; but she only shook her head. The caps were replaced in the box and carried to the entry with the trunks which were already packed, when she burst out,

“ I'm sorry, Fanny,—I've felt a great while that I didn't do my duty by yer; nor what I led yer father to expect. I might ha' had real comfort with yer, and p'raps yer father'd been alive now.”

Here the sobs choked her voice, and this time her daughter wept with her. Presently she went on,

“ I s'pose I needn't tell you I've got naturally an awful temper, and somehow my religion don't work on my disposition as 't does on yourn. I may as well make a clean breast on't, and tell yer right out, I ha'n't been happy in my mind ever since your father died.”

For the first time since she could remember, Fanny approached her step-mother and voluntarily kissed her cheek. Her heart was

too full for words, but there rose from that small room a silent offering of gratitude to God, whose Spirit had touched this proud woman.

“Why, child,” she went on greatly moved by this token of affection, “never a night passes without yer father appearing bodily before me. I lie in bed with my eyes shut, for now I know what to expect; and there he stands right at the corner by the bureau. Sometimes he looks black in the face, just as he did when they brought him home in a fit, and tells me I’ve been dragging him down, *down*, ever since he married me; but most always he looks pale and strange, like the day he died, and keeps a calling out, ‘Sarah, meet me at God’s right hand!’ I pull the bed-clothes over my head and stop my ears; but the sound rings through the room till I’m ready to die with fright. Yer know, child, I’ve been a professor a great many years; but somehow, I’ve never felt as your father did;

nor yet as I've heard say your own mother did when she came to die."

She looked earnestly in her daughter's face, as if for comfort, and Fanny eagerly embraced the opportunity so long waited for, to urge the necessity of looking away from ourselves to the righteousness and sacrifice of Christ, for our salvation. In the plainest, but most affectionate language, she begged her to be thorough in the work of self-examination, reminding her that professing religion is not possessing it; but to search her own heart, and as her dying husband had expressed it, see if she found the image of Christ reflected there. She begged her to ask herself such questions as these — "does my religion, upon which I am building my hopes of heaven, lead me to my Saviour for communion with him? Does it help me to perform my duties in all the relations of life? Will it give me peace and support and joy, when I come to die?"

As she repeated each of these questions, the

self-condemned woman mournfully shook her head.

“Then,” said Fanny, resolutely, suppressing her own emotion, “if your religion neither gives comfort to you, nor honor to your Saviour, throw it away; cast it off as worse than useless. It is what the Bible calls filthy rags. Come anew to Christ, who will clothe you with his own righteousness. The Spirit will help you to overcome all evil, and your soul will be filled with such peace as the world cannot give nor take away.”

“I do declare!” exclaimed Mrs. Ray, catching a glimpse of a carriage through the window, “if there isn’t my brother come to carry me home. I never was sorrier to see him than I am this minute.”

Fanny arose sighing heavily, and was about to leave the room, when her mother called out,

“Don’t breathe a word of what I told yer, to any living soul.”

“And will you promise to think of what I have said, and read your Bible?” asked the young girl in an earnest, hurried manner.

“Yes, I'll promise. Now settle my cap right, will yer? James, he's awful pertickular about caps. And so he is about everything. I sha'n't have my way with him as I always did with Mr. Ray.”

This last was muttered in an undertone, as Fanny was opening the door.

When the carriage containing her mother-in-law, drove away, poor Fanny felt that now indeed her home was broken up.

After her father's funeral expenses had been paid, it was found that there was nothing left for his widow. The house was hired upon a lease, but as it stood on the most public street, she had easily found a person ready to take it off her hands. A few pieces of furniture had been selected by Mrs. Ray, to furnish her room at her brother's, and Fanny still retained those which had been her grandmother's.

The rest was to be sold at auction to pay the expenses incurred during her father's sickness, and that of her step-mother.

Lizzie, the young servant girl, had remained with Fanny until now, and had proved herself a great comfort during her hours of trial and sorrow.

Wearied and worn both in mind and body, poor Fanny sometimes felt that now her work was done, and it would be sweet to lie down by her father and mother in the village graveyard. For her step-mother she had toiled even beyond her strength. She had labored for her conversion; now she must leave her in the hands of God, praying that his Spirit might never forsake her until she was found humbled and penitent at the foot of the cross.

Concerning herself and her own future, she had been far too much occupied to expend a thought. But now, as she sat alone by the fire, in the home of her childhood, on this last night of her stay there, she began to realize

that if her small fortune had been swept away, she must contrive some method of self-support. She knew not at this time, of any measures Mr. Sheldon had taken to secure at least a part from the clutches of the gambler, but from her father's words, "all is lost," she supposed even the house had been allowed to pass from his hands.

Poor girl! she sat for a long time indulging her grief at her lonely condition, shedding bitter tears at this early blighting of all her prospects. She even seemed to hear her grandmother's voice speaking in a chiding tone,

"It was not to enrich sharpers, Fanny, that I bequeathed to you all my little estate."

Many events combined to render this the darkest hour she had ever known. She sank down on a low cricket, and leaning her head on her departed father's favorite chair, wept afresh. But not long was she left to mourn. Her Father in heaven was watching her, and presently began to suggest cheering thoughts

to her mind. It seemed as if she heard an audible voice, saying, "when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." There rushed into her soul such a sense of nearness to God who had thus promised to take her as his own child, that she could scarcely contain herself.

Then the thought occurred to her that her heavenly Father had already prepared her for self-support by curing her bodily infirmity, and various ways began to suggest themselves to her mind by which she might earn a comfortable living. She knew well, and thanked God for it, that her friends at the parsonage would gladly share their home with her; but no, she never could be a burden to them. Mr. Sheldon's salary was but just sufficient to supply their necessities, and there was an increasing family to be provided for. Heretofore she had often pleased herself with the idea of living with them, and by the sum she paid for board add something to their comforts, but that was all past now.

It was near midnight when she knelt down there by the light of the smouldering embers, and thanked God that while father and fortune had been taken from her, his kindness and love still remained unchangeable.

She quite startled Lizzie as she crept cautiously past her door on the way to her own chamber. As she lay down on her pillow that night, she matured a plan for the future, which must, however, be reserved till the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

FANNY'S NEW HOME.

RS. SHELDON at this time was in very delicate health, and therefore, her young friend postponed from day to day, the announcement of the new plan which she was sure would meet with violent opposition. But the more she thought of it, the more she was sure she was in the right, and she only waited a convenient opportunity to commence her new business of dress-making. For this her native taste and her self-acquired skill well fitted her; and as during her visit in Philadelphia, a fashionable dress-maker had spent more than a week in the house making up dresses for Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters, she had obtained many hints which she now foresaw she could turn to good account.

She had been at the parsonage a fortnight; had quite recruited her strength, and renewed her acquaintance with her young friend Emma, and now thought it high time to mention her contemplated undertaking. So as Mrs. Sheldon was rather more comfortable than usual, she improved the opportunity while they were busily employed with their needles, and Emma playing near them with her toys, to say,

“Do you know, Louisa, I am going to be a dress-maker?”

“I think you are already. I have several garments both of my own and Emma's in proof of the fact. I only wish you could cut coats as well, for Evarts sadly needs a new one.”

This was said with a laugh, not dreaming of any seriousness in the case.

“But really, Louisa,” urged the young girl, blushing painfully, “I am intending soon to be one in earnest; to enter upon the business for my support.”

“Nonsense!” cried the lady, dropping her work and gazing into the flushed face before her, “when Evarts and I both, so cordially offer you a home. I am sure you wouldn’t treat me so ill, and just now when I am depending so on you for company, and Emma gets along so finely under your care, I don’t esteem it kind at all for you to think of such a thing.”

She had gradually wrought herself up into a state of excitement, and only by an effort restrained her tears.

“Dear Louisa, don’t feel so. I wanted to talk with you calmly about it. You know there is a necessity laid upon me to exert myself. If I should be ill, I have little to pay the expenses of sickness, and I cannot expect to find another Dr. B. I had looked forward to being a member of your dear family; but it was when I thought I could be a profitable one.”

“You know,” exclaimed Mrs. Sheldon, in

a reproachful tone, “ that neither Evarts nor I ever thought of such a thing. You know how impatiently I waited for Mrs. Ray to be well enough to be carried away, and that Evarts comforted me by saying, that after she left you would be all our own. You knew all this; and yet, Fanny, you have been deliberately making a plan to go away.”

The tears which had been held back, now flowed freely. Poor Fanny was distressed beyond measure, and but for the conviction that Mrs. Sheldon's better judgment was influenced by the peculiar state of her health, she would have promised at once to relinquish her project.

“ Dear Louisa,” she began in a trembling voice, “ If you and your husband are so generous as to forget the shortness of your purse, it is so much the more necessary for me to remember it. I know that even one person adds considerable to the expense in a family, and I cannot consent for any length of time —”

“Didn’t you hear Evarts say this morning, that you scarcely eat more than the pigeons?” inquired her companion indignantly; “and I am sure there is nothing else you will allow any one to do for you except to put on an extra plate and cup. This gives Ann more pleasure than all her other duties. I can’t sew any now,” she added, folding her work. “You have set me into a dreadful headache. Evarts wouldn’t believe it if I should tell him how you’d been treating me.”

“Evarts can scarcely credit the evidence of his own senses,” said a cheerful, manly voice from the hall. “What can it be; this dreadful treatment which calls for such a heart-rending tone?”

One glance at the friends told him this was by no means a joke. Louisa sat holding her hand to her head, her flushed countenance expressing both grief and resentment.

Fanny was sitting on the opposite side of the room trying in vain to steady her hands to

her work, upon which large tears were continually dropping. When Mr. Sheldon came in she rose hurriedly to leave; but his wife said, "Don't let her go, Evarts. This had better be settled at once. I shall never be easy in mind till it is."

But Fanny was far too much distressed by her friend's opposition to be able to remain, and Mr. Sheldon, wondering whether she had been charging his wife with stealing, or his wife had been charging her, sat down to hear the story, he saw she was so impatient to tell.

"Wait one moment only," said he, suddenly running below and overtaking Fanny, just as she was closing the door to the sitting-room.

"I have not the most distant idea what has passed," said he hurriedly. "It is only justice to Louisa to remind you that she is not strong now, and that she has never wavered in her attachment to you, whatever she has said to distress you."

Fanny could only answer with her tears, and presently she heard him shutting the door of the sewing-room.

Finding that she could not readily compose her thoughts, and really calling herself unkind in her treatment of so dear a friend, she summoned Emma, and started out for a walk. When she returned an hour or two later, Mr. Sheldon came smiling from his study, and accompanied her at once to his wife's room. She had been reclining on the couch, but now sat up wearing a cheerful face.

“Did Evarts tell you it's all settled?” she said eagerly. “I was so foolish not to think of it myself. I only wish you had an Evarts. Everybody needs one. He plans so nicely. We've consented to the plan.”

Mr. Sheldon laughed aloud. “I believe our consent was not asked,” he remarked.

“Well, it ought to have been. Fanny is far too young to be making plans for herself, and you know I have adopted her as my eldest daughter.”

They all laughed now, and Emma jumped up and down in her glee.

“So we’ve concluded to let you make dresses or bonnets or coats, just as you fancy, only on one condition—you must always make them here. Evarts soon convinced me I was growing selfish,” she went on as Fanny was too much moved to reply at once. “He reminded me that by and by, you’d want dresses and bonnets for yourself, and though we should be so glad to purchase them for you, unfortunately we’re rather poor. So he proposed that plan, and I saw at once it would do nicely. Your room looks so prettily now, that your furniture is in it, that you can take all the ladies up there, and so it’s all settled, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is settled, dear Louisa, this first and last difference between us. I am sure God will afford me some way to return the kindness of such generous friends.”

Louisa then called her for a kiss, which ex-

ample Emma immediately followed, and Mr. Sheldon shook hands with her most heartily, and thanked her for conforming to their wishes, and thus the matter was settled, at least, for the present.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PASTOR'S SORROW.

FOR several weeks following this conversation, Mrs. Sheldon was increasingly ill. The next day she rode with her husband to a distant part of the town, to visit a sick parishioner, and sat in the carriage while he went in and made a prayer. When she reached home she was thoroughly chilled; and this was succeeded by a violent attack of influenza.

At the end of three months from the time Fanny came to them, she grew suddenly worse, and after giving birth to a little boy she quietly breathed out her soul to God.

To her husband this affliction was overwhelming. Though she had often talked with

Fanny of the uncertainty of all earthly expectations, and in various ways had endeavored to convince her that she considered her own condition alarming; yet to her husband she had never breathed such a suspicion until the hour he was called in to see her expire.

Her head was lying on his breast that she might breathe more easily, while her eyes were fixed calmly on his face.

“Evarts,” she whispered, “you have been a precious husband to me; but now I must leave you. I know you will mourn. I love to think you will miss me, but don't mourn too much. You know there is a mansion prepared for me, and I shall be happy with my Saviour. ‘I know in whom I have believed.’”

His breast heaved as he gazed at her, lying even now in the cold embrace of the grim messenger who stood near, awaiting his victim.

“I never thought I could be so calm at such an hour,” she added after a pause, dur-

ing which her husband repeatedly pressed his lips on her damp forehead. "How true it is that God gives dying grace to his children when they need it. I used to dread the thought of dying; but now it only seems like going home to my Father and my Saviour."

"Fanny," she said, as she heard her weeping bitterly, "I want you to write my parents and sisters; give my parting love to them; and tell Dr. B., I always loved him for his kindness to you. And I want you to promise me to take my baby-boy for your own, if God should spare his life. I hoped that if it was His will to have my little one with me in heaven; but He knows what is best. I want you to be all that you have been to darling Emma. I should like to think of her as being taught by one who loved her mother,—but He knows what is best—I will leave it to Him."

Ann was called to the bed and received the thanks of her young mistress, for her faithful-

ness in the discharge of her duties, and then the dying wife lay quietly awaiting her summons to depart. Her countenance was so tranquil, like a tired infant going to its rest, that it was difficult to tell exactly when she ceased to breathe.

At length, Mr. Sheldon, struck by the profound stillness, started forward and placed his fingers on her pulse, when with one cry of anguish, he rushed from the room and shut himself in his study, that he might pour his grief into the sympathising ear of his Saviour.

Four days later, the funeral services were held in the church. The dying wishes of Mrs. Sheldon were fulfilled, and the little bud was transplanted to bloom in the paradise of God. Poor Fanny's heart ached afresh that she was called to give up her precious charge. Among the large concourse of people assembled to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of their pastor's wife, few could look upon the young mother and infant arrayed for the tomb,

without a tear of regret that her labors among them had ceased forever.

The pallid countenance and sunken eyes of the pastor, proved to all how heavily the blow had fallen upon him, but not even his dearest friends could enter the sanctuary of his grief, or realize to what a conflict the walls of his study bore witness, before he could adopt the inspired words, "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." But at last, by divine grace he came off conqueror, and appeared before his people, "like silver refined in the furnace."

Mr. Hamilton and his two daughters remained for a few days after the funeral, until some arrangements could be made for his comfort. But when they consulted Mr. Sheldon, he remarked, that for some months he feared he should not be able to preach, and therefore, was about to propose to his people, that he should have leave of absence, and go

abroad. He readily consented to Emma's request that while he was away her little namesake should be confided to her care. Of any arrangement beyond the present, he could not even think for a moment.

In the mean time, Fanny, though often obliged to retire to her own room to struggle with the sorrow which almost overwhelmed her, went quietly on in the performance of the duties she has of late assumed in the family. Under her careful supervision the pastor lost none of his usual comforts, while his guests were hospitably entertained.

Coming suddenly upon her one morning, as she was assisting Ann in preparing breakfast, and seeing her pale, wan countenance, the proof of a sleepless night, he seemed to realize her value at such an hour.

“Fanny,” said he, in an unsteady tone, “I fear we have been selfish in our grief. You ought not to be left with so much care.”

With one quick glance into his sorrowful

face, she answered softly, "I find it a blessing, to have some employment."

The parish readily complied with Mr. Sheldon's proposition, and realizing the value of his services, voted that they would supply the pulpit during his absence of eight months, and allow his salary to go on as usual.

At his request also, Emma Hamilton remained until his speedy arrangements could be completed, and thus he was able to offer Fanny a home until the moment of his departure. Indeed he wished her to remain with Ann, in his house during his stay abroad; but though he urged many reasons for her compliance, such as the better state of the parsonage on his return, and his necessity of packing away many articles unless she did so, she firmly refused.

To his proposition, however, that she would teach the class of young ladies in the Sabbath School to whom he had occasionally given instruction, and would visit among the sick and

afflicted, she yielded a ready assent, delighted that she could in this case accede to his wishes without violating what she felt to be the laws of propriety.

Mr. Sheldon delayed his journey two days, though he did not inform her of the fact, in order to receive answers to his letters concerning the state of her property, and was rewarded by being able to put into her hands one hundred dollars as interest on what was still left her, the last quarter for her house-rent not being quite due.

Fanny was now in her nineteenth year, though more mature than most young ladies of that age. The sickness and sorrow through which she had passed, had been blessed to her rapid advancement in the Christian graces. She was eminently humble, prayerful, and desirous of honoring her Saviour; of following his footsteps in doing good.

She had already engaged board in the family of one of their own parish, having for some

time hesitated whether to remain in N., or return to her old home in S.

Mr. Sheldon, however, recommended this place so highly, and was so earnest to be assured that she would be comfortably situated, that she concluded to make N. her home for the present.

And now came the parting between her and the loved husband of her deceased friend. Emma clung to her neck, just beginning to understand that dear aunt Fanny was to be left behind, and quite resolute that she would not go even to dear grandpa's, unless aunty could go with her.

Mr. Sheldon, after trying in vain to soothe her, turned suddenly from the painful scene, for Fanny too, was weeping bitterly, and did not come back until the energetic Miss Hamilton had removed her by force to the carriage which was in waiting. He then approached the sobbing girl, and giving her his hand, said tremulously, "God bless you for-

ever, Fanny, for the comfort you have been to me and mine.”

She raised her sorrowing eyes to his, tried to articulate some words, received a warm pressure of the hand, and was left alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WORLDLY PROFESSOR.

HOUGH our young friend was now relieved from the fear of absolute want, and knew that with strict economy she could live upon what still remained of her little fortune, yet she determined to enter at once upon her new business of dress-making.

After the opposition of Mrs. Sheldon, she had never again proposed leaving the parsonage; indeed Louisa's failing health would have been sufficient reason for her not doing so, but in order to satisfy her friend, she had undertaken a few dresses in her own room. These had given such complete satisfaction, that Fanny had only to announce her readiness to take work, in order to have as much as she could accomplish.

Most ladies find it a great convenience to have a dress-maker in their own houses, and thus our friend found herself early one pleasant morning, seated in the chamber of a lady by the name of Scott — the materials for a rich dress lying on the table before her.

She had not left her chamber without an earnest prayer to her heavenly Father that he would guard her lips from evil-speaking and tale-bearing, to which her employment particularly exposed her.

At first, it was rather difficult for her, with her mind ever reverting to the sorrowful scenes through which she had so lately passed, to give sufficient attention to the different fashions for cutting and trimming which Mrs. Scott was so warmly discussing; but knowing that if she would do her duty to God, she must be faithful to her business, she resolutely entered upon the task before her, and soon convinced her employer that her taste was as exquisite as her judgment was good.

Before the day is over, Fanny is puzzled to know whether it can be true that Mrs. Scott is a professor of religion. As they sit together busy at their work, the young girl tries to draw her into an expression of her feelings. But most skilfully are all such efforts evaded, and the conversation kept upon the different styles of dresses, mantillas, bonnets, &c., which the ladies of her acquaintance have patronized. Every faculty of her mind seems to be absorbed in this important subject, and her young dress-maker for the first time learns the valuable lesson, that with Mrs. Scott and such as she, the worth and standing of a lady is estimated by the style and richness of her dress.

As she slowly folded her work for the night, there was a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with herself. Her expectations had not been realized; and not all the warm encomiums bestowed by Mrs. Scott, who declared that she had never found a dress-maker who gave her

such entire satisfaction, could convince her that she had done all her duty.

“I have not let my light shine,” she said to herself, as she bent her steps homeward. “For any influence which I have exerted, I might as well have been an atheist or an infidel.”

It seemed refreshing to banish all thoughts of sleeves, bodies and flounces, to feel the cool evening breeze fanning her brow, and realize that her heavenly Father sees into her heart, and judges her not by her actions only, but by her motives. Fanny knew it was her cherished desire to carry her religion into her daily life — to show those around her that it was the governing principle of her conduct. This day’s experience taught her that she should not always find persons ready to sympathise with her, or respond to expressions of religious sentiments.

While they sat at breakfast the next morning, a messenger came from Mrs. Scott re-

requesting Miss Ray, if not too inconvenient, to postpone finishing her dress for one day, as her daughter who was away at school, had suddenly returned in consequence of sickness.

Fanny, who had promised Mr. Sheldon that she would not confine herself steadily to her new employment, determined to take advantage of this opportunity to visit two or three sick persons her pastor had left in her care.

It was one of the most delightful day's experience which she had ever known. She read the Bible to an aged sufferer, whose heart was hungering for the bread of life. She soothed the sorrows of a young girl who had been bereft of father and mother. She mingled her tears with many who were weeping over the loss of their spiritual guide. She pointed a poor youth, fast sinking under disease, to the great and good physician, and kneeling by his bed-side, supplicated for him the richest of heaven's blessings, even eternal life, through Christ our Lord.

She reached home just in time for tea, wearied in body but strengthened and refreshed in spirit. In the evening she commenced a journal in compliance also, with the request of her absent friend, in which she kept an account of the visits she made among the people, and the state of mind in which she found them. This she was to transmit to him as opportunity might occur.

The next morning she returned to the residence of Mrs. Scott. She had incidently learned that this lady was a member of Mr. Sheldon's church, and determined that she would if possible on this occasion obey the inspired command, and stir up the lady's mind by way of remembrance.

"Yes, I am a member of the church here," answered the lady in an absent manner, as Fanny reverted to the fact. "I joined before I was married."

The young dress-maker's heart beat high. She was just about to remark that a blessing

was pronounced upon those who choose God in their youth, when Mrs. Scott said suddenly, "I like the style in which you have trimmed the sleeves better than the pattern. See how becomingly it falls over the arm, showing a little of the wrist and not too much."

Presently, Marion, the sick daughter, loitered into the room, and without waiting for an introduction to Fanny, threw herself languidly on the lounge.

She started up again and blushed, as her mother said, "My dear, didn't you see Miss Ray?" and she met those large earnest eyes fixed wistfully upon her.

For more than an hour she lay watching those busy fingers as they skilfully plaited or folded trimming for her mother's dress. There was a perfect fascination to her in those occasional glances which the young dress-maker directed to herself, and in the low musical voice which ever and anon replied to some remark.

At length, the lady was called from the room, and left advising Marion to return to her bed.

But this the young Miss quickly refused, saying, "I feel a great deal better here, mother, where I can see what is going on."

"Can I do anything to make you more comfortable?" asked Fanny, after a quick thought, "now perhaps I can say a word for Christ."

"There is one thing I should like," was the blushing reply, "but perhaps it would be too much trouble. I have heard you sing in the choir, and should admire to hear a tune now."

Fanny smilingly assured her, she would gladly give her pleasure if it would not disturb her mother down stairs."

She then commenced the tune set to these words :

"Come ye disconsolate."

"How sad your voice sounds," said Marion with a sigh. "I could scarcely keep from crying. Now will you please to sing a livelier one?"

A tear rose to Fanny's eye, as she glanced at her black dress.

“No, don't,” cried the young girl, “I mean, I ought not to have asked you.”

“The words I sang,” answered Fanny after a moment's pause to arrange her work so that she could talk without interrupting her sewing, “are not sad to me. They point us to the only true source of comfort. I suppose you expect to have trials sometime as well as the rest of mankind; and this tells us where to find comfort in our sorrow.”

“I don't see any use in thinking of gloomy things when we are not obliged to,” urged Marion with a heightened color. “People that are pious are always thinking about death, and such dreadful subjects. I suppose I shall have to attend to the subject and join the church sometime, if I want to go to heaven when I die; but I mean to enjoy myself just as much as I can, while I am young.”

“It is right for us to wish to enjoy our-

selves," was the earnest reply, "but in order really to do that, we must feel that we possess the favor of God. I am sorry you think Christians are gloomy. I had two dear friends who were devoted to their Saviour, who were the most cheerful persons I ever knew."

"Well, I never met any such. Miss Norris, one of our teachers, belongs to the church, and she's the most disagreeable person in the whole establishment. She is just as stiff and set in little things, that are neither good nor bad, and always delights to catch any of us tripping. I do believe she thinks nobody will get to heaven but herself. I'm sure I hope I sha'n't have much of her company there. I know one thing, if she don't lie or steal, she bears false witness, and all the scholars know it too."

"Then, Marion, just as far as she does those things, she does not act out her religion. She just proves that she has need of the softening, purifying influences of the gospel. Christ's

teachings enjoin love, charity, and good-will, in all the relations of life; and if we do not act according to his commands, we show that we are very imperfect disciples. I think you yourself understand that it is not the way to do honor to a friend to render him and his teachings as disagreeable as possible. So if we wish to honor Christ, we must make our religion pleasing, in the hope of winning others to the cross."

"Well, I never was acquainted with any such. I mean those who really cared much about it. Now, Ma is a professor, and she's real lively. She says she considers it a duty to be so, for Pa's sake and mine. When she joined the church she was very young, and says she had no idea of all she should have to give up. So those must take the responsibility who urged her in. There's time enough to give up parties and balls when she's a good deal older. Isn't that your opinion, Ma?" she inquired, with an arch glance as she saw her mother lingering in the entry.

“Nonsense, child!” exclaimed the lady angrily. “You don’t know what you’re talking about. Do you want me yet?” she asked, turning to Fanny.

“Yes, ma’am, I am ready any time. I have the sleeves almost finished too; perhaps I had better put them in first.”

The lady took up the work and looked much pleased. “I heard Marion’s tongue running so incessantly,” she said, “that I was afraid you couldn’t accomplish much.”

“Oh, no indeed; she hasn’t hindered me in the least,” replied Fanny, glancing at her young companion with a pleasant smile. “She has given me one good lesson which I hope I shall always remember; and that is, that Christians in order to honor Christ and win others to his service, must be cheerful and consistent.”

“That is my doctrine exactly,” remarked the lady with much complacency.

“You need not have been so angry, then,

Ma, for that was what I was just telling her. Pa says your religion will never harm anybody. It isn't strong enough."

She laughed aloud, and her mother laughed; though she said, "do be still, child!" but Fanny sighed deeply, and rose from her seat to cut work at the table, to hide the pain such remarks gave her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FAULTS OF CHRISTIANS.

LONGER acquaintance with Mrs. Scott proved her to be one of that class of professors whose lives, according to a late writer, seem to be a standing apology for their being in the church at all; who seem to consider their going to meeting and paying outward attention to religion a kind of penalty they must incur for the sake of getting into heaven when they are obliged to leave the world.

For a long time after she retired to rest the night following her work at Mrs. Scott's, Fanny lay revolving plan after plan, whereby she could interest her and the lively Marion in the things pertaining to their everlasting peace.

“ I can pray for them at least,” she said at length, “ and perhaps during my next engagement I can show them that Christians are not always gloomy and disagreeable. Oh, why is it?” she thought, “ that those who really love Christ and wish to advance his cause, do not make more earnest endeavors to root out sin from their own hearts, that they may present themselves before the world richly endowed with the fruits of the Spirit,—faith, hope and charity.”

The next morning found our young dress-maker bending her steps toward the residence of Mrs. Thomas, a lady who had long known and loved her own mother. The cordial grasp and the pleasant “ good morning, my dear,” of the kind lady, seemed to expand her heart at once ; and acting upon her new formed resolutions, she returned the salutation in a more cheerful tone than was her wont of late, then gave her attention for a few moments to the smiling group of children gathered to meet the stranger.

But before she had been in the house an hour, Fanny ceased to feel like a stranger. She found her first duty was to fit dresses for the little girls, Rose and Florence, a pair of sweet-tempered twins. Mrs. Thomas had as yet, no experience in Fanny's skill, and wisely concluded to allow her to commence with the children, before she had a rich black silk fitted for herself.

Unlike Mrs. Scott, this lady seemed to care little who of the fashionables, as she termed them, had their dresses cut in this style or in that. From the prevailing modes she selected such as she considered comfortable and tasteful, was particular to have the garment fit the figure as neatly as possible, in order, she explained to Fanny, with a smile, "that when it is completed, I may bestow upon it no more care nor thought."

Rose being a few hours older than her sister, shyly approached, glancing up from her long lashes to see the lady whose mother was

once a little girl with her mother, and used to play at dollies with her.

Fanny's winning manner always ensured her the love of the children, so that by the time Rose was dismissed, Florence was quite impatient to take her place.

When the dresses were cut and basted, they were laid aside to be sewed with a machine; and Mrs. Thomas fully satisfied as to the competence and good judgment of her young friend, brought forward her own dress.

“It is an expensive silk,” she remarked as Fanny began to test the quality, “far more expensive than I should have chosen; but my husband bought it in a recent tour, and of course,” she added with a smile, “I ought to be much pleased.”

She then gave directions as to the mode she wished to have it made, leaving some parts entirely to Fanny's taste, after which, dismissing the little girls to their play, she sat down to have a chat concerning old times.

When they were called to an early tea, our young friend could scarcely believe it to be night, the hours had flown so quickly. She had found in her employer a kindred spirit, one, who amidst all the cares, trials, and joys of the present life, looked forward to the greater joys of the world to come: One whose steady, prayerful aim it was to lead her husband and children into the fold of the good Shepherd.

To Mrs. Thomas, Fanny could with confidence talk of the way the Lord had led her; the many afflictive events which of late years, had clustered around her path; and to her, also, she could speak of the humble hopes which had sustained her.

Their joint affection for the pastor and his motherless child, was a new bond between them, and Fanny now found for the first time that with Mr. Thomas originated the proposition of allowing Mr. Sheldon's salary to be continued during his absence. She related to

her sympathising listener, many instances of self-denial and sacrifice on the part of both the pastor and his wife, for the good of their people, and was rewarded by strong assurances of firm attachment on the part of the Society.

As Mrs. Thomas resided some distance from Mrs. Stuart's, where Fanny boarded, she was urged to remain over night, as one day more would be required for her work.

In the evening, she had some conversation with the husband of her friend, and found him as unlike her as possible. He was frank almost to bluntness; but if ever so warm in an argument, his good humor never failed.

“If your dress-making is as good as your singing, Miss Ray,” was almost his first remark, “you'll be sure to give satisfaction in N—. Why, young Ames, the new store keeper, told me that now Mr. Sheldon was away he should not go to church, if it was not for the pleasure of hearing you sing.”

“ I am sorry,” said Fanny, blushing deeply, “ that he has no worthier motive.”

“ I believe you are a church-member, Miss.”
She bowed.

“ And you believe that by standing in the aisle, and signifying your assent to certain articles of faith, you will get a free ticket for heaven?”

“ Now, wife, you needn't shake your head, and look as if you thought I was far along in the opposite road. I feel an interest in Miss Ray for many reasons, and I want her to explain her views. I dare be bound she makes no secret of them.”

Fanny became very much confused, and Mrs. Thomas hastened to say, “ I shook my head because as Fanny is a perfect stranger to you, I fear she will misinterpret your want of reverence.”

“ Let me explain then at starting, Miss,” he added with an arch glance at the young girl's flushed face, “ that no one can have a

greater respect for true piety, or real religion wherever it can be found. Now, will you answer my question?"

"I do not believe standing in the aisle, or any other act a sinful human creature can perform, will gain one an entrance to heaven."

"What, not the most dutiful conduct to one's afflicted father — not the most tender care of an ill-tempered step-mother — not the patient endurance of the loss of fortune — nor even the exercise of ones vocal powers to fill the otherwise empty pews?"

Fanny smiled, though painfully confused.

"No," she replied, "not all that, nor a great deal more, would weigh one farthing in the balance against indwelling sin. One needs a richer price, a more costly sacrifice, in order to free the soul from guilt, and prepare it for the joys of heaven. How grateful we ought to be that we are not left to win our entrance to that blessed world by our own deeds, which would certainly fail us; but

that one drop of Jesus' blood can wash our stains away."

Mr. Thomas paused a moment, opened and shut a book lying near him, many times, and then said frankly, "You have disappointed my expectations, for I hoped to have the pleasure of an argument with you; but you coolly knock away my underpinning, and I have not an inch of ground left to stand upon."

Mrs. Thomas looked greatly pleased at this confession, though she wisely forebore to say so, and as Fanny made no reply, he went on.

"I have been watching the conduct of professors for more than twelve years, and do believe that many, I may say the greater proportion, appear to me to be only 'name Christians,' as Mar Johanna, the Nestorian Bishop called them. Certainly they are only Sabbath-day Christians, while they live for the world, and the god of this world through the week. My mother was a godly woman who squared everything by the Bible. When I used to ask

permission to do this or that, down would come the good Book, and she would say, 'We'll see, my son, what rule God has given us.' Oh, how many times she has read me the words, 'enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.' Or she would ask, 'how can you repeat the Lord's prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and then rush deliberately into danger?'"

"Then if my wife were not present," he added with an affectionate glance toward her, "I should say, she is one of the few who are acting Christians. All the good there is left in me is owing to my mother's teaching and my wife's prayers; but still I say that I believe thousands of souls will be lost because those who enter the church and ought to act as examples to others, live such inconsistent lives."

"I am afraid," rejoined Fanny in a cheerful tone, "that you have forgotten one of your good mother's Scripture rules. Paul

tells us those who ‘compare themselves among themselves, are not wise.’ There is a standard of holiness which we are commanded to strive after. Christ is our perfect exemplar. If we are occupied, as we ought to be, in examining our own lives, and endeavoring to form ourselves after this glorious pattern, we shall find no time to stumble over the faults of lax believers. As you are so frank, I know you will wish to have me equally so; and I beg of you to come at once to Christ—to leave all the examination into the characters and actions of the church, until you have a realization of the evils of your own heart, and then while you pity as well as blame them, you can show them by your own life what good a consistent, working Christian can do.”

While she was speaking, Mr. Thomas rattled the newspaper, drummed on the table, and showed in various ways that he considered himself as having the worst side of the ar-

gument, but when she ceased, he rose suddenly from his chair as he exclaimed, "I think you must have taken lessons of the parson, for you are more personal than my wife, even, and she always pushes me against the wall. I'm determined on one thing; I never will enter the church till I can do about right."

"I hope," said Fanny softly, "to see you, and that before long, come out before the world, and declare yourself on the Lord's side. I hope and expect this, because I know God hears and answers the prayers of his people, and there are many recorded for you, above."

The gentleman went quickly from the room on the pretext of answering a call at the door. When he returned, he said, "I give it up. I see I can make no head-way at all against you, because," he added in a softened tone, "your actions, as far as I know, correspond with your words; but I will say one thing,

and I do it reverently : If God can save sinners in spite of the inconsistencies of his professed followers, it would appear to me like a greater exhibition of his power than the creation of a world."

Fanny shuddered, while Mrs. Thomas said, "Oh, husband, don't talk so !"

Presently, the outer door was shut, and they heard Mr. Thomas hurrying down the street.

A few hours later, when they were about to retire, the lady reverted to his remark, and begged him not to repeat it. "If you would only think upon what Fanny has said."

"Never fear," he answered in a voice he tried to render jocose. "She plunged the daggers into me without mercy, and there they stick."

"Heigh ho !" he cried after so long a time that she supposed him asleep ; "I suppose after all, it's no use to harp upon other people's failings, while we have such a plague in our own hearts."

CHAPTER XX.

THE AGED BELIEVER.

HE next morning Mrs. Thomas, who had spent half the night in pleading for a blessing on her husband, that the Gracious Spirit might not depart from him until he had accepted Christ as his Saviour, begged Fanny to lose no opportunity to pursue the subject with him.

She repeated the remark he had made the previous evening, and exclaimed with deep emotion, “Oh, how grateful I should be if he could be brought to feel the truth in his own heart!”

Fanny's beaming countenance shone with pleasure. She promised to do all in her power to promote the good work she hoped was begun in his soul, but hesitated whether it would be best to say too much.

At breakfast, the gentleman appeared much more lively than the day before. He tickled Jamie, who sat by his side, and joked with Rose and Florence upon their rosy cheeks. He complimented his wife and Fanny on their bright appearance, and even Rhoda, the table girl, on the tenderness of her steak; and at length announced that he should not be home to dinner, possibly not until late in the evening.

He glanced quickly from his wife to the young dress-maker, to see whether they suspected any particular reason for his absence; but Fanny looked at him with her clear, full eyes, until his own fell beneath the glance.

They did not see him again until Fanny was just leaving the house, and then he insisted that it was too late for her to walk alone, and turned around to accompany her.

They went on a few moments in silence, and then she purposely led the conversation to some improvements that were being made

in the public streets. This was a subject which greatly interested him, and for a few moments he explained to her where the new squares were to be laid out, and the variety of shade trees to be placed in them.

As they drew near her boarding-house he turned the subject abruptly, and said, "what a wonderful change that was in your father, Miss Ray. Mr. Simons, who was present, gave me an account of his death. He says he's tried to live a different life ever since."

"It was indeed," cried Fanny, "a most wonderful instance of divine grace. Nothing short of that could have led a reserved man like my father, to speak as he did. "And just such grace," she added, as they stood a moment at the gate, "he is ready to give every one who asks for it."

He wrung her hand without speaking, and turned away toward home.

A few evenings later, on her return from her work, she found Ann, her old friend from

the parsonage, waiting to see her. She had gone for a time into the family of Mr. Alger, and came to see Miss Ray on account of her mistress.

“She’s ailing, you know,” said the girl, “and wants a loose-gown made. I told her what a real beauty you fixed up for Mrs. Sheldon, out of an old dress. She thought you wouldn’t come because she’s not rich; and she says you go round among the ’stocricy. But I told her you wa’n’t a mite proud, but often helped me to get breakfast with your own hands; any way, I’d make bold to ask you.”

“Tell her, I’ll go with pleasure,” said Fanny, in an earnest tone. “When does she want me?”

“Oh, she’s not perticular, if so she have it soon! She’ll be right glad I came.”

The young lady named the day she would be at liberty, and then inquired for Ann’s sister Lizzie.

“Feth, ma’am!” exclaimed the girl laugh-

ing, "I came near forgetting meself. And when did you hear from our little pet? I s'pose there's no chance of hearing from himself, at present."

Fanny smiled as she assured her that she had received a letter from Miss Hamilton, who said Emma was well and happy, though she often talked of mamma, aunty and Ann.

"The pretty child!" faltered the faithful girl, putting her apron to her eyes, "and sure there's no one wishes her better luck than myself, and that's true for ye, ma'am."

"Miss Hamilton says," Fanny went on, "every night I have to tell her stories about mamma and baby up in the sky with Jesus; papa away off on the ocean, aunty in her pretty room at Mr. Stuart's, and Ann making up cakes for some little girl's breakfast."

Ann shouted with delight, and again exclaimed, "the pretty creature! It'll do my eyes good to look at her the day she comes back to us."

“ I hope you like your place,” said Fanny, as her visitor rose to leave, “ and that you try to remember all Mr. Sheldon told you.”

The color flew into Ann’s cheeks, as she declared, “ It is not just easy to do that when one stands ready to fling my failings right in my face.”

“ What do you mean? I am sure Mrs. Alger cannot be severe with you.”

“ Oh, feth! no ma’am. It’s himself that has the passionate temper. The mistress is just like a worn out lamb, trying to go to sleep.

“ Stop, Ann, it is not right for you to talk so about your employers.”

“ And sure wont it be worse, ma’am, for me to be kapeing it shut up in my breast, and making me angry like? Oh, there’s not many gintlemen the likes of Mr. Sheldon; there’s niver a night but I cry the eyes out of me, mourning for the pretty wife he had! Ah! it’s a bad heart Mr. Alger has, and himself a professor, too, that ought to know better.”

“Do your duty faithfully, and God will take care of you,” urged her young friend. “You can tell her I will be there on the day I mentioned, unless I am hindered by sickness.”

The day following, Fanny was made very happy, by receiving a note from Miss Hamilton, enclosing one from Mr. Sheldon to her mother, which he had requested them to forward to N., and was as follows :

“MY DEAR MOTHER :—

“My heart swells almost to bursting, as I hasten to bid adieu to you, the mother of my sainted Louisa, and to the land on whose soil reposes her precious remains. When I realize that I may never see you more, I cannot restrain myself from giving expression to my gratitude for all your love, and for the considerate kindness you and yours have manifested toward me since the decease of my dear wife. I can never —

“*Ship Unicorn, 11 o'clock.* I was summoned on board ship before I had finished my letter, and now have time only to write a few parting words before the pilot returns to the shore.

“Farewell, dear friends. Farewell, darling little Emma. Farewell, sisters Emma, Mary and Fanny. May our Father in heaven guard and protect you, so that if it is His will, that we meet on earth once more. Pray for me that this dreadful affliction may work out the fruit for which it was sent.

“Please forward this to Fanny, as I cannot delay the pilot longer.

“Don’t let Emma forget her absent papa, whose heart is full of love for her, nor the teachings of her dear mamma.

“EVARTS SHELDON.”

On Sabbath evening Fanny went as usual, to read for an hour to Mrs. Cahill, an aged woman, now in her ninety-seventh year. She enjoyed the use of all her faculties except her eyes, which had failed her so much that she could read but a few words even of the coarsest print.

To our young sempstress there was a perfect charm about this old lady. There was a depth and richness to her religious experience which she had never before witnessed. To

her the Bible was no sealed book, but every word full of life and salvation. Though so familiar with its contents that you could scarcely mention a passage which she could not quote by chapter and verse, yet she listened to its pages with all the interest of a child. "It's always new and fresh to me," she said to Fanny. "Something comes right up into my mind that I never thought of before. Oh, what a wonder of wonders that book is! I lay last night where I could see the stars shining in all their brightness; and I kept repeating the beautiful words: 'When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him.'"

"Shall I read your favorite chapter again," inquired Fanny, with a smile.

"Yes, child, read it again. How can I tire of hearing about the rest of heaven—the rest I've been longing for, nigh seventy years

— the rest ‘ that remaineth for the children of God.’ ”

When Fanny had finished the fourth chapter of Hebrews, she said,

“ I shall always think of you, Mrs. Cahill, when I read this chapter, I’ve read it to you so many times.”

“ Well, child ! ” answered the old lady, her eyes sparkling, “ The Lord will come before long, and take me home. It will be a comfort to you, may be, to think of me enjoying that rest, with Abram, and Isaac, and Jacob, and David, and Paul, and John, and many others whom we have known and loved here.”

“ My mother and my father will be there,” murmured Fanny, “ and our dear Mrs. Sheldon.”

“ And our glorious risen Saviour,” added the old lady. “ No tongue can express the joys which he has reserved for those who love him.”

At the end of the hour Fanny rose to leave,

but said, "I have heard from our pastor. He wrote on board the vessel just before he sailed."

"I shall never look on his face again," said Mrs. Cahill, gazing with perfect composure into the countenance of her young companion; "but I want you to tell him from me, that if he wishes to draw his flock into the fold, he himself must keep close to the good Shepherd; he must sound the alarm fearlessly when they are in danger of straying; he must win them with the cords of love, lest if he falter another shepherd step in and teach them to climb into heaven some other way. Tell him I've had a warning, and I'm going soon; but I'm not afraid. Christ is the door, He whom my soul loveth, and He will surely let me in."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PASSIONATE CHURCH MEMBER.

IT was a pleasant morning when Fanny started to meet her engagement with Mrs. Alger. She had now become so much accustomed to her high shoe, that it gave her no inconvenience. The limp in her gait was scarcely perceptible, so that she was ready to respond fully to Dr. B—'s frequent inquiries through the Hamiltons, that she was quite well. She still, however, wore the supporter, as she found it greatly strengthened the weak member.

She had scarcely rung the bell before Ann, who had been watching, smilingly opened the door and ushered her into a room on the lower floor, where Mrs. Alger was still reposing on the bed.

Fanny noticed at a glance that both mistress and maid looked flushed and excited as if something unpleasant had occurred, and that the room had not an air of tidiness and comfort.

Ann introduced Miss Ray, and then began to bustle about and gather up clothes from the chairs, and put in order the work lying on the table.

“I'm not quite as strong as usual, this morning,” began the lady in an apologizing tone. “I calculated to be up earlier, but —” She stopped, and glanced anxiously at Ann's indignant face.

“Feth, ma'am, it's no use bothering with an excuse. I'll give Miss Ray the dress, and you'll be better after a little nap.”

“Yes, Mrs. Alger,” repeated Fanny, in a cheerful tone, “Ann and I are old friends. I dare say we shall be able to manage without you for sometime yet. But Ann, where did you put my bag? You have carried away my patterns.”

“ In here, Miss Fanny. Mistress thought you'd be more comfortable in this little room.”

The moment the door was closed Ann approached nearer and said, “ If it wasn't for mistress' being sick, I'd give warning this very day. It breaks the heart of me entirely, letting alone that, it makes me forget that he's my master, to see himself so awful.”

“ Stop, stop !” cried Fanny, “ it will only make it worse for you to tell me. I really had rather not hear about it.”

“ Then I'll pack my trunk, and be ready to leave with yees,” exclaimed the excited girl. “ Sure I thought ye'd be a friend to me for the sake of the dear saint that's gone to glory.”

“ I am a friend, my poor girl. No one would be more glad than I, to do you a kindness.”

“ Feth, I'm sure of that. Well, thin, I must be axing your advice. I was cooking a steak for breakfast when the chamber-bell rang. I

started at wonst, for she expected yees, and wished to be ready; and sure I wasn't away the smallest part of a minute, when I heard himself shouting after me to come back for the breakfast was spiled. I wouldn't have cared what he'd say to me, for I'm strong — but he pounced right into her room, and began to abuse her awful. The steak wasn't done too much after all; and when he got over his passion he ate a lot of it; but the mistress cried herself into 'sterics, and I wouldn't leave her to go to prayers. I'll tell what's true for ye, Miss, I got real angry myself, and whin he called me to leave the poor sufferin woman and come at wonst, I told him the likes of his prayers, as ccouldn't hold his temper, only hardened my heart, and I wouldn't hear'em no more while I lived in his house; and that's the truth, Miss. Himself 'll kill her with his horrid ways."

"Ann," called a feeble voice from the next room, "I'll try and eat an egg, and then I must get up."

“If you’ll tell me how you’ll like the sleeves made,” said Fanny, “and Ann can find a dress for me to measure by, I shall not need you for several hours. You’ll feel better if you can fall asleep.”

“Can you get a dress out?”

“Oh, yes, there is an abundance of the material, and it will be very pretty, too! If you have any pieces of high colored silk for trimming, it would be more becoming from the contrast.”

“Would crimson look well with drab?”

“Yes, it would be very tasteful.”

“I have an old crimson skirt. I haven’t seen it for a good while, but Ann can find it, and iron it out. I don’t wear silks much now.”

The last words were said in such a tone of hopeless sorrow, that the young lady was much affected.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PASSIONATE HUSBAND.

 LITTLE before noon, with Ann's ever ready assistance, Mrs. Alger arose from her bed, and paid more than usual attention to her toilet. Her delicate complexion was slightly tinged with pink from the excitement of having a visitor, and Fanny could easily see, that when in the enjoyment of health and happiness, she must have been very beautiful.

The dress fitted her emaciated figure quite as well as could be expected, and she had just pronounced her satisfaction, when the outer door opened, and a gentleman walked through the hall, slammed one or two doors, and then entered his wife's room.

“Hoity, toity!” was his sneering exclamation, as he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Alger, dressed and sitting in an easy chair. “Hysterics didn’t last as long as usual, I reckon.”

As there was no reply to this, he went on: “I thought you were going to have company to-day; but you look more as if you were dressed for a party.”

“Miss Ray is in the sewing-room,” Fanny heard her say in a meek, resigned voice.

“Why didn’t you tell me so at first?” he asked angrily, though in a much lower voice.

Ann presently came in to say that dinner was ready, and to ask what her mistress would have.

“I suppose I ought to try and go to the table,” said Mrs. Alger, with an appealing glance toward the sympathising servant.

“Don’t be bothering on her account,” cried the girl good-naturedly; “she’ll not be wishing you to make a stranger of her.”

Fanny, who had heard the summons to din-

ner, came into the room, and was introduced to Mr. Alger. She then hastened to beg the lady not to leave her chamber on her account.

She found Mr. Alger a very different man from what she had imagined him, tall, portly, and would have been handsome had it not been for an expression of discontent which seemed to be settled upon his features. He entertained his young guest with the news of the day, and Fanny, whose heart was fully bent on restoring happiness to this divided family, exerted herself so effectually to be agreeable, that Ann, who was waiting upon the table, regarded her with astonishment.

He led her on by degrees to speak of herself, wondered that she should have chosen the employment of dress-maker, when she might have been a school-teacher, or an instructor in music; made many inquiries regarding Mr. Sheldon, (he was himself a professor, though in a neighboring church,) and then introduced the subject of religion.

Here Fanny was surprised at the real interest he manifested in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, the zeal he expressed concerning the children of the village, and the desirableness of gathering them into Sabbath Schools.

She had long finished her dinner; but he still lingered, and she could not rise without absolute rudeness. Her feelings toward him had insensibly changed, and she began to pity as well as blame him for his unfortunate temper.

At last she rose, saying with a smile, "my time is not my own," when to her surprise he followed her into his wife's room.

The meek, almost heart-broken air with which she met his glance, again roused Fanny's indignation.

"I hope you enjoyed your dinner," she said in a cheerful voice.

"I have very little appetite," was the low response. She seemed to be under a ban when her husband was present.

Fanny saw him gaze at her, and as she was measuring for a sleeve she was sure he sighed heavily. The color flashed into her face as she asked herself, "have I no duty toward this man? Can I witness their unhappiness and not strive to alleviate it?" Then she gazed in his hard face, and felt that she could not subject herself to a conflict with such a character.

"Well, I must be going," he said, rising, to Fanny's intense relief. "Wife," he added, "I advise you to have Miss Ray here as long as you can prevail upon her to stay. I'll engage to find you material for dresses if you will exert yourself to wear them. I haven't seen you look so bright for months."

"I wish I could be more like other people," was the poor wife's sad remark, when they were alone.

Fanny had now brought her sewing, and was sitting near the lady, determined to try and present before her a more cheerful view of life and its duties.

“ We ought to have a higher standard than our neighbors,” she replied with a beaming smile. “ We each have our part to act on the stage of life, and all that is required of us is, to do our duty for to-day. There is no one so feeble or afflicted, but he can do good to those around him, if he has the disposition to do so.”

Mrs. Alger slowly shook her head. “ I can do nothing,” she said mournfully, “ nothing for my husband—nothing for my children; my husband feels only contempt, and the children, though young, have learned to imitate him.”

Fanny sighed as she said, “ We are only answerable to God for our own offences, and not at all for those of others. Do your duty faithfully, and you will have such peace in your own soul as will enable you to bear every affliction with patience.”

There was a long pause, during which Fanny's busy fingers skilfully plaited and puffed

the crimson trimming. At last, Mrs. Alger said softly, "I don't think I understand you."

"Do you feel that Christ is your Saviour?"

The question startled her, but she reluctantly replied,

"If you mean whether I am a church-member, I am not."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Alger, that is quite another question. Many, I fear at the present day, are members of the church who are not members of Christ's family. I mean, who are not truly regenerated. There is but one rule by which we are allowed to judge — 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'"

The sound of a suppressed cough in the adjoining room, startled them both, and for a few moments the conversation was suspended. After a while, as they heard nothing more, the lady said, in a apologizing tone, "It was Ann I suppose, dusting the parlors."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. ALGER'S AFFLICTION.

I HAVE seen a good deal of religious people," Mrs. Alger went on, "but I never thought religion would be much comfort to me. Mrs. Alger, my husband's mother, lived with us after we were married. She was a zealous professor, and used to urge me to become a church-member. She said my husband and I should never live happily together until we sympathised in our religious feelings. I was young and smart then, though you wouldn't think it now, and couldn't see how I should be any better off. Her religion didn't prevent her from stirring up trouble between her son and me, and it didn't prevent either of them from giving way to their passions on the most tri-

fling occasions. You see I was naturally amiable, and I used to compare myself with them, and think I was a great deal more pious than they were. Then I had a dreadful trial, (I've never had any health or spirits since my baby died.) A woman lived here as house-keeper. She was a member of the church where Mr. Sheldon preached, and talked religion by the hour together, but she was so bigoted and uncharitable, and would scarcely speak well of any one who did not believe exactly as she did, that I became at last quite satisfied with myself, and felt sure if those around me went to heaven, I could. That was a good many years ago. Somehow, I've never since felt interested in religion."

"I wish you could know old lady Cahill," exclaimed Fanny. "You would see how religion has supported her through all the trials of ninety-seven years, and how it supports her now in the prospect of death. She is one of the most even tempered, cheerful, hoping

Christians that I ever knew; joyfully and calmly waiting her summons to leave this world, and enter upon her heavenly rest."

Mrs. Alger began to weep. "Oh, I can't bear to think about death!" she sobbed. "I lie awake night after night, and dread it until I am drenched in perspiration. I know I am not prepared to die."

Fanny was greatly affected by this frank avowal, so that it was a minute or two before she could say,

"Christ came to take away the fear of death." She then related a number of instances among her own friends, where, through Christ, the sting of death was removed, and the soul of the believer filled with joy and peace.

"I wish I could feel so," faltered the sick woman, "but you see I've never had any true Christian friend; one who cared enough for my soul, to tell me how to find peace."

Again Fanny was startled by a sound in

the next room, but this time Mrs. Alger was so absorbed, she did not notice it. She went on :

“ Sometimes at night I've been so distressed, that I would think I must awake my husband and ask him what I should do ; but I did not dare. He might not like to be disturbed, you know, and then I don't think he is one of the kind of Christians you describe.”

After another pause, she said, “ He does a great deal for the church where he belongs, and has the largest Bible class in the Sabbath School ; and I know as long as I could go out, I used to be proud that he was my husband, when I saw how much he was looked up to ; but ever since my dreadful affliction, I've never felt much interest in anything. I suppose it's my own fault, as he says, and that I might overcome my melancholy if I chose ; but though it's six years ago, my trouble is always fresh to me.”

“ To what affliction do you refer ? ” inquired Fanny.

The lady shuddered. "It's a sad story, Miss Ray; but perhaps it would do me good to tell it."

She sighed heavily as she began: "We have two boys, Meriam and Jonas, but for a long time we had no daughter. Oh, how I longed for a girl! Mr. Alger was proud of his boys, and claimed the right of training them as he chose. I did not like many of his plans, even their names did not please me; but he said he should always do as he thought best with the boys,—when we had a girl I might name her, and bring her up to be as listless as I pleased.

"Six years ago last June, I had a daughter, the loveliest babe I have ever seen. They said she had my features, and her father's eyes. I never was really happy nor grateful till then. I used to sit with her lying across my lap, and gaze at her, and wonder what her future would be, and sometimes I used to say a little prayer for her, that she

might grow up a good woman. Mr. Alger wanted to have her called Charlotte, for his mother; but I remembered his promise, and insisted that her name should be Annie. For three months neither my husband nor his mother interfered much with us. I gave up all care or interest in the family, and just remained in this room with my precious baby.

“But one day she seemed a little ill, and his mother insisted I was ruining her health by confining myself so much from the air. I said I would go out more, and I began to draw her in the wagon, the others had used. Somehow the old lady never loved my little Annie, and even her father used to say, when I showed him how beautiful she was growing—‘Pooh, Martha, it’s only a girl!’ I can’t remember how it was that he first forbid me to draw the wagon. I know there was a good deal of talk about it, and his mother said the neighbors thought it strange that I never could stir out of doors without being tied to

the baby. So they insisted I should leave Annie with her, and go out to church, and to make calls. He said he wouldn't have his wife talked about as an injured woman.

“Two or three times I came home and found my baby crying dreadfully. Even when I had soothed her to sleep, her lip would grieve for hours. His mother said she was cross, and was old enough to be made to mind; but I knew she was afraid. Poor little thing! She was too much like her unhappy mother. Meriam and Jonas used to come into the nursery, but their loud voices would start her from sleep, or they would slyly pinch her and make her cry. I grew almost to hate them, but it made no difference, for I had never been allowed to fondle them, or do anything for them, as I wished.

“When Annie was almost five months old, one of my schoolmates was married to a friend of Mr. Alger, a widower; there was to be a great party; I of course was invited, and if

I could have taken Annie, I should have admired to go ; but I determined at once not to leave her. Three days before the wedding, Mr. Alger asked what I was going to wear. I told him I shouldn't go. He was very, very angry. As soon as he would hear me, I told him how much Annie cried when I left her.

“ ‘ Whip her, then, till she stops,’ he said. I had never dared to be so firm before, and I don't think he would have done as he did, if his mother had not urged him to it.

“ The next day he brought home a silk dress, and said he had engaged a woman to make it up in time for the party, for go I should at any rate.

“ The dress came home ; but I begged and pleaded with him to let me stay, for the baby had seemed dull all day ; and I had cried until I wasn't fit to be seen ; but the more I urged the more his mother told him not to yield. She said he had spoiled me already by

humoring me. I can't tell you how dreadfully I felt; but the carriage came, and they made me go. Two or three times in the course of the evening, I went to my husband, and told him I felt as if I couldn't stay any longer. Once I thought I would run away by myself. Oh, how I wish I had! But no, he met a great many old friends, and perhaps he thought I was foolish.

“ At last, I heard a loud ring at the bell, and some strange voice asking for Mrs. Alger. I rushed to the door; I was almost wild.

“ ‘ You'd better go home as quick as you can,’ the man said, ‘ the doctor thinks your baby is dying.’

“ I gave one loud scream, and then I remember nothing more until I reached our own door, and flew to my room. The baby was lying quiet now. She was almost gone.”

The mother's voice was choked with sobs. “ I kneeled down by the crib where they had laid her, and put her little hand on my face. She opened her eyes and smiled.

“Oh, Doctor!” I cried “can't you save her?”

“Hush!” he said. “She has ceased to breathe.”

“I threw myself on the floor and prayed God that I might die too. It was a long time before I found out that after I left for the parlor, my poor baby had cried for me, and her grandmother whipped her. She went into convulsions and then she died.”

When Mrs. Alger ceased speaking there was a long pause. Fanny dared not trust her voice to utter words of comfort; and so she wiped her eyes and went on with her sewing. After an hour the two boys, Meriam and Jonas, came home from school. Shutting the outer door with a bang, they rushed through the hall to the kitchen, calling out to Ann, “I'm hungry.” “I want some pie.”

“I'll tell pa of you,” shouted one voice, “you didn't give me half enough dinner.”

“And so I didn't have enough,” echoed the other.

Mrs. Alger glanced toward her guest whose eyes seemed fastened to her work.

“They are rude boys,” she said presently in an apologizing tone.

Our young friend had no time to reply, for with a rush the little fellows came into their mother's apartment.

“I'm going over to Jim Mudge's to play ball,” exclaimed the eldest.

“I had rather you wouldn't play with that boy,” expostulated his mother, in a feeble tone.

“Pa lets us,” was the quick retort.

“I'm going, too,” rejoined Jonas, whose mouth had till that moment been too full to speak.

The lady sighed, but said no more. She seemed relieved when the door was shut and they had gone out of hearing.

Presently Ann came in, her face flushed with anger. “I declare to my heart, Miss Alger, those boys are enough to provoke a

saint. I had just taken a mince pie from the oven for to-morrow's dinner, and they have come in and dug half of it right out."

She caught a glance of Fanny's directed to the pale countenance of her mistress, and went abruptly from the room, muttering "them boy's 'll be the death of her some day."

CHAPTER. XXIV.

HONORING THE SAVIOUR.

NOTWITHSTANDING their ill-mannered conduct, Fanny's heart was drawn out toward these boys to a degree that surprised herself. They had inherited both their father's and mother's beauty, were fine healthy lads, with a peculiarly open expression of countenance. She could easily see that with a firm, consistent discipline, they might be sons of whom any parents would be proud. Now they bid fair to grow up a trouble to themselves and to all connected with them.

As delicately as possible, she said this to the mother, adding that in her opinion, no circumstances could excuse parents in throwing off the responsibilities of training their children for God.

“My life would soon be the sacrifice if I were to attempt to restrain them,” was the hopeless reply.

It was nearly six when Ann again appeared at the door, and addressing her mistress, inquired,

“Did ye hear himself say what time he'd be in till supper?”

The lady shook her head.

“He took an uncommon long nap on the sofa,” Ann went on, “so I wouldn't wonder if he made it late to-night.”

The lady started and glanced with almost a look of terror at Fanny, who now could easily account for the noise they had heard in the adjoining room.

It was not without some little fluttering at her heart, therefore, that a half hour later she heard Mr. Alger's voice in the hall, calling to know if the boys were at home, and if tea was ready. But his appearance did not indicate any unusual emotion, which she thought

could not possibly be the case if, as his wife feared, he had overheard their conversation.

Meriam and Jonas seated, one on each side of their father, behaved rather better than she had expected. Perhaps they were somewhat restrained by the presence of a stranger; but Fanny soon entered into conversation with them, inquired in an animated tone about their school, their lessons, and their plays, and was confirmed in her first impression that they were uncommonly bright boys.

It was probably from this cause that their father was not so talkative as at noon, though he was assiduous in attending to the wants of his guest. Once or twice she caught his eye fixed inquiringly upon her face, and at last he asked rather abruptly, "Shall you finish the work you are engaged upon, to-night, Miss Ray?"

"Not finish it," she replied, "but any one can easily sew a dress when it is fitted."

She imagined he looked disappointed which

led her to add, "If she is not in a hurry, I can, perhaps, come another day before long. To-morrow I am otherwise engaged."

"I shall recommend her to wait," he rejoined seriously.

As the tea hour had been delayed, it was soon time for Fanny to leave. In the presence of their father she invited the little boys to walk part way with her, a proposal which gave them great delight.

Mr. Alger sent them to the closet for their Sunday caps, and cautioned them to behave like gentlemen. He was present, too, when she approached Mrs. Alger to bid her good night, so that for a moment she was tempted to refrain from saying what she had intended; but the thought that, perhaps God would permit her to be the means of bringing honor to his name, decided her.

"I shall think much of you," she said, cordially extending her hand, "and pray for you, too," she added, in a lower tone. "I think

you would find great comfort in reading the Bible, and perhaps as you are so feeble, your husband would read it aloud in your room."

The gentleman made no reply, except by a grave bow of assent; and smilingly taking an offered hand of each of her young companions, she said "good bye" to Ann, and left the house.

On reaching home, she found a message had been left for her, requesting her to go to Mrs. Cahill as soon as possible, as the old lady seemed to be insensible. Without a moment's delay, therefore, she retraced her steps, and soon found herself by the old lady's bed. But the spirit had taken its flight to regions above the skies. Without a moment's warning, the messenger came and summoned her to her everlasting rest.

She had been out in her garden in the early part of the day, and at two o'clock, a neighbor called to pay for some socks the old lady had knit; she appeared as well as usual, but

said as she placed the money in an old leather purse, "I shall soon be where I shall need no more of this." The young girl who lived with her made the fire for an early supper, and then Mrs. Cahill as usual, put the tea in the pot, and set it to draw. Before it was ready, she said suddenly, "Help me to the bed, I feel faint." The only words she spoke afterwards were, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly?"

And her Lord did come, and her rapt spirit joyfully put off its earthly coil, to be clothed in the pure and spotless robes he had prepared for her.

Fanny could not weep, as she gazed upon that marble countenance, on which still lingered the smile with which the departed had welcomed the long expected messenger. She rejoiced rather as she said to herself,

"Yes, the Christian's course is run;
Ended is the glorious strife;
Fought the fight, the work is done;
Death is swallowed up of life;

Borne by angels, on their wings,
Far from earth her spirit flies,
Finds her God, and sits and sings
Triumphing in Paradise.”

Week after week had passed and now our young dress-maker was anxiously expecting a letter from Mr. Sheldon announcing his arrival at Smyrna. From this place he was to proceed along the Mediterranean, and then visit the Holy land.

He had volunteered a promise to Fanny that he would make her a medium of communication to the Church, the letters to be read by one of the deacons at some evening meeting. She had heard again from Philadelphia. Emma continued well and happy. But the important news was that Mary Hamilton was engaged to be married to one of the teachers in their Sabbath School. He was a young merchant, just commencing business, so that their marriage would be delayed for several months.

At the bottom of the sheet, there was a short postscript from Mary to this effect :

“ I found my friend while in the discharge of the duties to which you urged me. I thank the Lord and you, every day, for the pleasure of his acquaintance.”

About this time, too, Fanny received a visit from a gentleman she had long known in T ——. Indeed at one time she had attended an Academy where he was the teacher, and knew him to be a moral, upright man, prepossessing in appearance, and amiable in temper. He engaged board at the principal hotel, and invited his former pupil to ride with him to some places of interest, in the neighborhood. She complied without hesitation, but finding his attentions were becoming marked, she avoided his society as much as was in her power.

The subject of marriage, as far as it concerned herself, was a new one. She had always considered her lameness as an obstacle, and now that this cause was almost wholly removed, she had never found occasion to

dwell upon it, not having met any gentleman with whom she should wish to unite her lot. Mr. Newell, however, was in earnest, and her shyness, as he believed it, only led him to be more ardent in the pursuit.

Fanny now felt that it was time for her to question her own heart. She acknowledged to herself that her friend was possessed of many excellent qualities, such as would probably render her life with him a happy one. Then his figure was tall and erect, while his countenance was open and expressive. After a rigid examination of her own feelings, Fanny, with many blushes, came to the conclusion that she could love him ; nay, that she had even begun to do so. But there was another, and to her all important point to consider, “ Is it right ? ” she asked herself, “ for me to marry a man, who makes no professions of interest in Christ ; whose only hope of salvation is in his moral integrity of character ? How can I bind myself to him by the dearest

of earthly bonds, when the tie of Christian love does not unite us? Would it help me in my upward career, to be in constant association with a man who has no aim beyond this world?"

These were most trying questions, and poor Fanny could not at once decide that duty required of her to sacrifice the dearest wishes of her heart. While in this state she met him again, when he in a formal manner, made an earnest avowal of his affection, and entreated her to say that she would reciprocate it.

Though painfully embarrassed by the conflict she was undergoing, Fanny strove to answer him with the frankness his conduct deserved.

"I will not deny," she said with downcast eyes, "that I regard you, as I never have any other gentleman. I—don't thank me," as he began to speak, "I was going to say that to me the subject of marriage has ever seemed

a most solemn one, involving as it does not only the happiness of the parties in this life, but also the growth, or decay of their spiritual affections. If I were to consult my feelings, at the present moment, I should accept, without a moment's hesitation, your generous proposal; but—”

“I shall claim this hand, then,” he exclaimed joyfully, “notwithstanding that terrible conjunction, for as you confess I am not indifferent to you, I can soon convince you that all your scruples are needless.”

But Fanny knew her own weakness too well to allow him to do this. She insisted that she must have time to think upon the subject, and pray over it.

The more she sought direction of God in prayer, the more she felt that it would be sinful for her to risk the advancement of her piety, by placing herself under the influence of a man, who had no love for her Saviour, and no realization of the evils of his own

heart. To make her trial more severe, she was constantly receiving long and earnest letters from Mr. Newell, promising that her views, though differing ever so much from his own, should be held sacred by him; that all he craved was her love, and not that she should give up opinions or feelings on any subject which was dear to her.

The conflict was so severe, that it began seriously to affect her health. She longed most earnestly for the return of her pastor, or of some Christian friend, upon whose judgment she might rely; but at last the time came, which she had herself appointed when she would give her final decision. On her knees in her little closet, this decision was made, "I must sacrifice my dearest earthly prospects to the desire to honor my Saviour. Can I do this as I ought if I consent to marry a man, whose thoughts and affections are wholly of this world?"

Now, for the first time for many weeks her

soul was at peace. The precious promise came with new force and beauty to her mind, "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PASTOR'S LETTER.

 AT this very time when she most needed something to turn her thoughts from herself and from the pain which she had so reluctantly caused her friend, Fanny received a long letter from Mr. Sheldon. He had reached Smyrna, and was stopping for a few days in the family of one of the American missionaries there. He wrote his church :

“ In all my travels — midst all the various scenes through which I have passed, my heart turns fondly toward my home in N—. My church, my parish, the children in the Sabbath School, never seemed so precious to me as when I compare them with the formal worshippers of this far off city. With God's grace

helping me, I hope to be more earnest and successful in winning souls into the fold of Christ, than I have ever been before. Pray for me, dear brethren and sisters; pray fervently as I continually do for you, that this separation may be blessed to our growth in spiritual knowledge and grace; pray that I may be kept from murmuring against God, that he has removed from my sight, the beloved companion of my life; and that He in his infinite mercy may use this affliction for my eternal good."

After a description of his voyage, and some incidents with regard to the mission in Smyrna, he wrote a few lines to Fanny on a separate piece of paper:

"I long to receive the first sheet of your journal concerning the parish. I hope you write everything in full, for the most minute particular has interest for me; and you must remember you promised our dear Louisa you would put confidence in her husband. Write

your own thoughts and feelings on whatever concerns you. How is old lady Cahill? Does the Bible Class continue to flourish? I hope you still sing in the choir. I need not tell you that I long for the time when I shall be again in N—, laboring among my people. Indeed I had scarcely sailed out of sight of my native land before I became restless and impatient to return. God forever bless you, Fanny, for the comfort you were to my departed wife, and the blessing you are to me.”

Saturday afternoon, Fanny called at the house of the senior deacon to give him the letter. She found Mr. Loring, the gentleman who was for a few weeks supplying the pulpit, stopping there, and at length accepted the cordial invitation of Mrs. Wareham to remain to tea, and accompany them to the evening meeting.

“We have just been speaking of a friend of yours,” said the lady, glancing archly at her young guest. “Mr. Newell, is an acquaintance of Mr. Loring’s.”

“A former class-mate,” added the gentleman, “and a fine, warm-hearted man he is, too.”

Poor Fanny blushed painfully as she met his curious gaze, but she exerted herself to speak in a natural tone.

“He was formerly my instructor, and I have every reason to speak highly of him.”

“If he was only a Christian,” added Mr. Loring, “what a useful minister he would make.”

“It is not too late for him to become a Christian,” urged Fanny, with unconscious warmth. “God’s grace can convert him in answer to his friend’s prayers, at any moment.”

Mrs. Wareham presently left the room to attend to her domestic duties, when the conversation turned upon the probable length of Mr. Sheldon’s absence, and afterwards upon her favorite subject, the duty of Christians in their every day walk and conversation, to honor Christ.

In the evening as they were leaving for the prayer-meeting, the clergyman said, "Miss Ray, you have given me a topic for a few remarks this evening, the duty and the reward of honoring God, the certainty that He will punish those who do not honor him."

To Fanny, it was a most interesting theme ; and she hoped a most profitable one. Her only regret was that it had not been on one of the public services of the Sabbath, that many beside herself might also have been there to profit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FANNY'S FAITHFUL WARNING.

T was some months after this that Fanny was walking home one evening from her work, when she met her old friend Ann. After some words regarding herself, the girl burst out,

“Whatever may be the rason of it, Miss Ray, himself is just a changed man entirely. Indade, Miss, it's very low he is, and the church is daling with him, too.”

“What can you mean?” inquired Fanny.

“Why, he used to be a great man among them, exhorting and praying, and such like. All of a sudden he gave it up, and wouldn't open his mouth on no account. Then the church sent men to dale with him, to find out the rason of his conduct. I'm going to tell

you the whole truth, Miss," she added, blushing crimson. "I heard 'em talk to him, and he never spaking at all, till they'd done with him."

"Oh, Ann, I'm afraid you listened!" cried Fanny, "and indeed I can't hear it. You did very wrong."

"It's the truth, Miss, and no use hiding it. So now, I've told you the worst. I'll tell you the best, though I cried like a baby when I heard it. Himself said he'd found out the iniquity in his own heart; and it ill became him to exhort others as was himself an unconverted man. There, Miss, there's the whole truth for you. When I heard him so humble like, I would have gone down upon my knees to confess all my hard thoughts of him. You may be sure I told mistress. The only thing that troubles me is, that now I've taken back my promise, and I'm ready to hear him pray, he doesn't pray at all."

"Oh, Ann, I'm sorry for that!" exclaimed

Fanny, "can't Mrs. Alger ask him to make a prayer in her room?"

"And that's what I was forgetting to tell yees, the mistress is as puzzled as I am with him. She says he's tenderer of her than he ever was; but he don't talk much. Even when the boys are rude, if he begins as he used, to snap them up, he stops himself quick and sighs. Mistress hinted to him that she wished he'd see the doctor. Between you and me, she's afraid he's going into a galloping consumption."

"I hope, rather," said Fanny, "that he is just beginning to live aright."

From her seat in the choir, Fanny saw that Marion Scott was again at home from school. From being a young girl in short dresses, she had suddenly emerged into young lady-hood; and now, on this first Sabbath of her vacation, with her fashionable hat and feathers, her rich silk dress and expensive furs, was conscious of attracting much attention. There was an

air of levity about her, a total absence of all the seriousness becoming the house of God which gave poor Fanny a thrill of pain; for let me tell you, reader, since that first interview with Marion, our young sempstress had borne her often in the arms of faith to the mercy-seat, humbly beseeching a blessing on her soul.

Mrs. Scott was there too, and turned often in her seat to regard her daughter with a look of pride.

On her way out, Fanny encountered the ladies, when Marion, with the ardor which was a part of her character, pressed forward to take her hand.

“I’ve begun to take lessons in singing,” she exclaimed at once, “but my teacher’s voice isn’t half as good as yours. If it wasn’t for my needing dresses so much, (I have gone into long clothes now,)” she said in a low voice, “I should urge you to become a music teacher. By the by, Miss Ray, when can you

come to our house? I shall need you a whole week."

Wholly unconscious that she herself was the cause of Fanny's deep blushes, she turned suddenly around to see who was near.

"If you will send to Mr. Stuart's early to-morrow morning, I can tell you," was the hesitating reply. I think you forgot that this is the Sabbath."

Marion colored with surprise. "I'm sure I didn't think there was any harm in that," she urged with a little pout, "Ma talks about dresses and fashions all day on Sunday, and she's a professor, you know."

On their way home she repeated the remark to her mother. Mrs. Scott replied, "She is over-strict, my dear; but we can't afford to displease her because she is the best dress-maker in town; and she is not at all particular to keep the exact hours. If a garment is not completed she often works an hour or two beyond time, without an extra charge."

During the week Fanny spent at Mrs. Scott's, she was continually on the watch for occasions to instil into the heart of the susceptible Marion the truths she herself so dearly loved. There was a warmth and enthusiasm about the young girl which rendered her a great favorite; and Fanny could easily see that were these traits sanctified by divine grace, Marion would be a bright and shining light in the church. But now flattered and indulged by her mother on account of her beauty, petted and caressed by her friends; hearing only of the pleasures in store for her in society, it would indeed require a miracle of grace to turn her affections heavenward.

“I mean to attend to the subject of religion by and by. Of course I shall,” was her answer to Fanny's entreaty that she would choose Christ for her friend; “but now I'll put it to you, wouldn't it be too much to expect that just as I'm starting in life, while every thing looks fair and bright I should bind myself down to

unstarched robes and mob-caps ; that I should refuse to go to parties and balls, and become a stiff-laced, bigoted orthodox !”

“ I hope you never will become that, Marion. You would be as far from being good as you are now, for if you could not live the religion of Jesus without making it unpleasing or disagreeable to those about you, you would bring dishonor upon his cause. But would you call me a true friend if I should see you drinking from a well which, however sweet the taste may be for a moment, is sure to introduce poison into your blood, when I knew that near by is a fountain of which the water is not only pleasant at the time, but will bring eternal life to your soul ?”

Marion sat for nearly five minutes absorbed in thought, but at length as she heard her mother's step, sprang up exclaiming, with forced gayety, “ If I do go to ruin, Miss Ray, I'll absolve you from all blame, for you've done your best to prevent me, and if all were



"IF GOD SPARE YOUR LIFE MARION."—P. 285.

like you, perhaps I'd try it,—Ma," she added, as Mrs. Scott entered, "I think I shall put off becoming pious till I'm about forty. You're not forty yet, are you, Ma? and then I'll turn right about and be as good as you please. I'll astonish even you, Miss Ray."

"If God should spare your life, Marion."

Ah, did not those words strike a dart of undying remorse through that worldly mother's heart, as scarce a year later, she stood by the side of that beautiful daughter, around whose future so many fond, bright anticipations were clustering, clad in robes of white, decorated with flowers, not for a party but for the tomb?"

But we must not anticipate. As the words met her ear, the lady turned with a smile upon her child, the bloom upon whose cheek betokened the most perfect health.

Marion herself danced gaily toward the mirror, and stood there descanting upon the fashion of a low-neck bodice she was to have

made, while to Fanny's mind occurred the inspired words, "Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE STRANGE MISTAKE.

IT was a sad disappointment to our young friend when Mr. Sheldon's leave of absence was by vote of the church, prolonged to a year; but in the constant exercise of her duties, the time seemed to fly on wings, and now only a month must elapse before he was expected home. Beside the letters to the church which at regular intervals he had sent, Fanny had of late received quite a treasure in the way of correspondence. He had begun a private journal, he told her, for her especial benefit, and one sentence in his last, wherein he connected her with himself in all his plans for the benefit of his people, caused a thrill of happiness through her whole frame.

Just at this time she received a letter from Mary Hamilton, containing a pressing invitation for her to come to Philadelphia, and remain until after her own marriage which was appointed to take place as soon as her brother-in-law reached the country.

“ I own,” she added at the close, “ that I am somewhat selfish in my invitation, for beside the pleasure of your company, I hope to reap some benefit from your taste and skill in my bridal preparations. Enclosed you will find a bill of twenty dollars to pay the expenses of the journey.”

One week later Fanny sat with her kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, in their home in Philadelphia, listening to Emma Hamilton, who with burning cheeks was reading a letter just arrived from Mr. Sheldon. He thought it would be safe for him to promise, that by the blessing of God, he would be with them at Christmas, now only three weeks distant, when he should be most happy to assist

in joining Mary Hamilton and Edwin Fearing in the holy bands they contemplated.

Though Fanny was well aware that Miss Hamilton was impulsive and enthusiastic, yet this did not wholly account for the fervor with which she suddenly caught up and pressed little Emma to her breast, whispering, "Papa is coming, my darling; Papa will be here to see us soon."

She retired to her room as soon as she could do so, and there unfolding the precious epistle, perused, for perhaps the fiftieth time, the words at the bottom of his last letter. "Shall it not, dear Fanny, be the object of our future lives to labor more earnestly for the people God has placed in my care? Will you not unite with me in carrying out the wishes of our departed Louisa. That this may be the case is the dearest earthly wish of Evarts Sheldon."

"Can it be?" she asked herself, pressing her hands to hide her blushing cheeks, that Miss

Hamilton has given him her love unsought; or have I deceived myself? A sharp pang shot through her as she realized the possibility of this. She sat a few moments reviewing the past, and dreaming of the future, and then having sought strength to meet trials, if trials were before her, where she had never sought in vain, she returned with a clear, calm brow, to the group below.

Presently they began to discuss arrangements for the wedding, which, now that they might expect Evarts so soon, need not be longer delayed.

There were to be four bridesmaids, "You, Emma, will stand first," said the bride elect, "and Evarts, of course, with you," (casting an arch glance at her sister), "unless he takes part in the ceremony. In that case you must choose somebody else for the time."

"I don't see that that need make any difference," answered Emma, her face glowing like fire, "he would leave his place to make a

prayer and then return to it again. It would be so awkward for me to stand with any body else."

Poor Fanny, who had been feeling rather unhappy that her name had not been even mentioned in Mr. Sheldon's letter, now felt her heart sink within her. She was obliged to summon all her pride to her aid to keep back the unwelcome tears. "It must be an understood event that he will marry Emma," she kept repeating to herself; "and I will conquer my own foolish affection. How absurd I have been to cherish a hope that he thought of me, even for a moment."

The next day, in the confidence of friendship, Mrs. Hamilton hinted that probably she should soon lose her other daughter. When Fanny in a scarcely articulate voice inquired whether Mr. Sheldon and Emma were engaged, she answered, "Oh, no! matters have not gone so far as that, but his affections have become fixed on her, as you will see from this letter."

She drew one from her pocket ; not the last, but the one before it. Near the beginning he said,

“ After being tossed about here and there for nearly twelve months, you can easily imagine, dear mother, that I am looking forward with great delight to being once more in my own sweet home ; and, though God has been pleased to remove my dear Louisa to a better land, yet I hope he may grant me another companion who will be a faithful helpmeet in my sacred calling. I shall be favored indeed, if I can continue my dear child in the care of one who was so beloved by her deceased mother.”

Mrs. Hamilton, as with glasses carefully arranged, she slowly perused the remaining sheet, little imagined the conflict of feeling in her apparently calm companion. Not one word more did Fanny hear. The description of some scenes he had witnessed were nothing compared to the settlement of the questions which were rushing through her mind. “ May

not Emma be deceived in thinking he refers to her? Was not I beloved by her mother? Oh, how foolishly fond my heart is!"

It was well for Fanny that she had early learned self-control, for the trial she underwent for the next few days was almost more than she could endure. By the family, constant allusions were made to the preparations which would so soon be necessary for Emma, and the young dress-maker was urged to consent to remain until after the second wedding, which she could see was peculiarly acceptable to the parents. Then the little Emma who had begun to attach herself strongly to her old friend, was fondled and caressed by her aunt in such a way that no doubt could be formed that the child was loved for her father's sake as well as her own.

On the fourth day after her arrival in Philadelphia, when Mr. Hamilton came home to dinner he tossed a letter, post-marked N—, into Fanny's empty plate.

Little imagining what that thin envelope contained, she ate her dinner calmly, and then excusing herself, ran to her chamber to read. Wondering who could have written so soon, she carelessly tore off the cover, when the sight of a foreign post-mark made her heart beat wildly. The letter had been sent by the same vessel as that to Mrs. Hamilton, but had been directed to N—, and was there re-mailed. Before she had read many lines Fanny lay down the paper to thank God. Her doubts were all at an end now. She need no longer restrain the warm impulses of her loving heart. In the most explicit terms Mr. Sheldon avowed his attachment, and asked her to share the place in his home and in his heart made vacant by Louisa's death.

“Why, Fanny, what has come over you?” exclaimed Emma Hamilton, as the young girl, her countenance radiant with happiness, sprang across the room to her customary seat by the window.

Fanny smiled, as she quickly cast down her eyes.

“She’s had a letter, and perhaps it contained some tender lines,” added Mary, with an arch glance at the blushing face before her.

“Shall I tell them?” queried Fanny with herself. “Oh, no, I can’t! Not yet!” and so she smiled on, and said nothing.

Preparations for the wedding were now hurried on apace, as only one week remained before Christmas. Twice Fanny felt that duty to her friends demanded of her an explanation of her happiness upon which they often commented;—Once, when the question was under discussion whether Mary should board at home;—Mr. Fearing had been disappointed in arrangements he supposed completed, and a proposition was made by Mr. Hamilton that they should constitute one family.

“If Emma is to go to N—,” said Mary earnestly, “I should feel very much happier

to be here, than to know that you and mother were alone."

Poor Fanny pressed her hands tightly together, and felt that she ought to speak, but to her intense relief, Mr. Hamilton replied, "That is all in the future. It will be time enough to contemplate that subject when Evarts has asked Emma to marry him."

"I do think," continued Mr. Fearing, who was present, "that the gentleman might have been a little more explicit about his feelings. It would have relieved us from some embarrassment."

Fanny stayed to hear no more. Passing through the hall she caught little Emma in her arms and carried her to her own room. Of late she had scarcely dared speak to the child, lest she should betray her own feelings; and now the little girl was amazed at the conduct of aunty, who kissed her and cried by turns.

The second time was only two days before

Christmas, when at rather a late hour Miss Hamilton knocked at the door of her room, and finding her still up, came and whispered, "I must talk with somebody, Fanny; are you too tired?"

"Wouldn't it be queer if I — if we should live in the parsonage again? for of course I should want you to be with me as you were with Louisa."

To hide her painful embarrassment, poor Fanny held down her head, and presently murmured, "You are very like Louisa, as I first knew her."

"Yes, my friends tell me so," was the animated reply, "and that is why — I mean, perhaps Evarts has noticed it, too."

"Your mother read the letter to me," said Fanny, at last convinced it was wrong for her to be silent — "I don't know whether I ought to say it; but I think he had better not have written that part."

"Why?" cried Emma, staring at her in surprise.

“ You know Mr. Fearing said he ought to have explained himself better. I think so, too ; or that he ought to have said nothing.”

“ Well, he will be here soon ; and we all shall know what his intentions are ; but I don't mind telling you, Fanny, that I could love Evarts better than any gentleman I have ever seen.”

“ I hope you will be happy with whomever you are united, dear Emma, faltered the poor girl, rising to put an end to this interview. “ I know one thing, that you have always been a good friend to me, and that I love you dearly.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VISIT TO THE PARSONAGE.

THE next day was drawing to a close, and still no Evarts. But at last Mr. Hamilton came in from his office with a quick step, and seeing his little grand-daughter in the hall, called out in a cheerful voice, "Ask aunty to put on your best bib and tucker, Emma, for papa will be here presently."

The news soon spread through the house. Emma Hamilton with a heightened color, flew from the room to see whether all was in order to receive the wanderer, while poor Fanny scarcely conscious what she was doing, repeatedly put her hand in her pocket to see whether it really contained the letter which had given her so much joy. She longed and

yet dreaded to meet Mr. Sheldon. "Oh, how much I wish I had gone back to N—," she kept repeating to herself, "but I must control myself, it is too late now."

Presently Emma Hamilton bounded into the room, leading her niece by the hand. She looked handsomer, with her sparkling eyes and beaming features than Fanny had ever seen her.

"Haven't you dressed yet?" she exclaimed, "Why, the steamer arrived in New-York this morning, and we expect Evarts every moment. Doesn't the child look pretty?" she whispered, glancing toward her niece.

"Yes," answered Fanny with a faint smile, "and the child's aunt, too."

Miss Hamilton leaned forward and kissed her, whispering, "I wish you felt as happy as I do."

Ten minutes more, and our young friend having earnestly sought the blessing of her heavenly Father upon the coming interview,

started to go below, when she heard the outer door open, and the sound of many voices announcing "Evarts has come!" Trembling so much she could hardly stand, she heard the welcome, the earnest salutation of the traveller, the joyful shout of little Emma, even the laughing remark of Miss Hamilton, "Why, Evarts, you are brown as an Arab," and then she thought they were about to enter the parlor. But presently the mother's familiar voice asked, "Where's Miss Ray? She ought to be here to welcome you."

"Fanny Ray? Is Fanny here?" cried Mr. Sheldon, in an excited tone. "Where is she?"

Before any one could answer, he bounded up the stairs. He paused before her for one earnest glance into her eyes, said softly as he held her hand, "Is this to be mine, Fanny?" then as he caught the whispered word, "Yes," he pressed her for one moment to his heart, and then hurried her below. Leading her di-

rectly to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, he said, in an impassioned tone, "Here is the wife I have chosen to succeed your departed daughter, one whom my precious Louisa loved, and with her dying breath commended to my affection."

Poor Fanny dared not raise her eyes. For one moment there was a solemn silence, and then Mrs. Hamilton drew the trembling girl to her side and kissed her, while Mr. Hamilton said softly, "You have chosen wisely; and that God will bless you in your union I have no doubt."

In the excitement of her own feelings it was sometime before the young girl noticed that neither Emma Hamilton nor her sister were present.

"I must explain to them," was her first thought, and she was hastily leaving the room for that purpose, when she saw Mr. Fearing standing near the door regarding her with a most amazed glance.

“You have kept your secret well, Miss Ray,” he said quietly, as she quickly passed.

She found Mary Hamilton knocking at her sister's door. It was locked, however, and no answer was returned.

“Oh, Fanny!” she cried, “Do you think you have done quite as you would be done by! Only think what a terrible mortification this will be to poor Emma.”

In return, Fanny drew her into her own room, and there stated that she had herself first become aware of Mr. Sheldon's wish by a letter received since she came to them. That even then she had given him no answer, and that when on several occasions she had felt it to be her duty to speak, her courage had absolutely failed.

“Plead my cause with dear Emma,” she exclaimed tearfully, “for it would be hard indeed to lose her friendship. Tell her that the secret, if such she calls it, shall be forever confined to my own breast.”

To Mrs. Hamilton alone did she communicate the fact, that only a few hours before her death, Mrs. Sheldon had tried to win a promise from her that if Evarts asked her hand she would give it to him; but that she had begged her dying friend to trust her husband and child in the hands of a merciful Father who would surely provide for them.

Now, dear reader, we must pass over several months, and once more visit the pleasant parsonage. A bright wood-fire is burning in the grate, and before it are seated Mr. Sheldon, his mother-in-law, Mrs. Hamilton, and his sister, Miss Emma, holding her namesake in her lap. Mrs. Sheldon had just left the room, and the old lady who with her daughter had just arrived from Philadelphia, says warmly, "I see Fanny has made no change here."

"No," he responded, "It is her delight to do what Louisa would have wished. Even in so small a matter as the selection of a dress

for Emma, she deferred to Louisa's taste, saying with a smile, 'that was one of the few subjects on which we differed. She preferred pink and I preferred blue, so pink Emma's frock must be.'

"Louisa chose wisely for you," remarked Miss Hamilton, looking up without a blush.

"Every day convinces me of that," he responded, "and I thank the Lord that he inclined my heart toward one whom she so fully approved. I was amazed on my return to find what an influence she had acquired among my people. It gave them real pleasure when I brought her to the parsonage."

"To what particularly do you ascribe this influence?" inquired his mother.

"To her consistent Christian character. One gentleman, Mr. Thomas, who has recently made a profession of religion, told me that in the course of his life many persons have talked with him on the subject of religion; but he had always been able to pick some flaws in

their own conduct, some inconsistency between their profession and practice which served as a quietus to his own conscience; but when, as he quaintly expressed it, ‘Miss Ray that was, began to probe me as to my depravity, and then without mercy hammered the truth into my awakened soul, I could but acknowledge that in her own life she exemplified the doctrines she professed to love. And when on a later occasion she found me still harping on my favorite theme, the faults of Christians, she said, in her calm, earnest tone, ‘If they then are but scarcely saved, who are struggling against indwelling sin, how can you expect to enter heaven, who constantly resist the Spirit of God; who fight against the influence of your godly mother’s prayers, the example of your lovely wife, and the stings of your own conscience?’

“These were home trusts that I could not parry off, for quiet and gentle as she appears she handles a sinner without gloves.”

“ I should scarcely have believed her to be so courageous,” said Miss Hamilton; “ she seems so very humble.”

Fanny at this moment opened the door, and said, with a smile, “ I am sure you will feel refreshed by your tea, which I have made earlier than usual.”

“ But you are not alone? Where is Ann?” were the earnest inquiries.

“ Only for a few days,” was the cheerful reply.

“ Ann has got a darling little baby,” exclaimed Emma Sheldon; “ and she’s going to ask the lady, to let her bring it to me.”

“ Let me explain,” said Mr. Sheldon, after they were seated at the table; “ while I was abroad, Ann lived in Mr. Alger’s family. She is now very ill, and her infant daughter, only a few weeks old, was greatly in need of care. Fanny learned the circumstance, and at once offered to let Ann go to their aid, until some regular nurse could be procured.”

“ Will the lady recover?” inquired Miss Hamilton.

“ That is still very doubtful. Her’s is an interesting case ; you must get Fanny to relate it to you. Mr. and Mrs. Alger are her parishioners, for they do not go to my church ; indeed, when they were inclined to do so,” he added with a smile, “ she advised them to make no change.”

“ That was rather disloyal. Wasn’t it, Fanny ? ”

“ She was already a member of an Evangelical church,” was the quiet reply, and I thought it his duty to remain there. Evarts fully coincided in the opinion.”

“ I used occasionally to work in the family, cutting dresses for the lady, who was not only a great invalid, but much oppressed with melancholy. The husband was an overbearing man, whose whole affection seemed centred in his two boys. I have heard that he was quite gifted in prayer, and that

he was very active, not only in the church business, but in the conference meetings. Lately he has fallen into a state of depression, indeed he fears he has committed the unpardonable sin. I don't know how he will endure the affliction in store for him?"

The next morning, while the family at the parsonage were seated at breakfast, Ann's face appeared at the door. She was pale and trembling with excitement. Mrs. Sheldon hastily excusing herself from her guests, rose and left the room.

Ann threw her apron over her face, and with a burst of tears, exclaimed, "Oh, Mrs. Sheldon, I know 'tisn't right for me to call you away, but Mrs. Alger's dying, and she does want to see you, to—"

"I'll go at once," was the instant reply.

"I'll take care of every thing at home," exclaimed Emma, who had followed to the door.

"Are you able?" said the pastor, grasping

warmly his wife's hand ; “ It will be a trying scene.”

She bowed, but could not speak.

He accompanied her to the gate. “ God's blessing go with you, my dear Fanny,” he said softly ; “ and may you be the means of directing the dying soul to Christ ! Send at once, if you think my presence desirable.”

“ Pray for me,” was her only response.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

INTO the same apartment where Fanny had first met Mrs. Alger, Ann, weeping bitterly, now softly ushered her. Near the bed, with his back toward the door, stood the once haughty, overbearing man. His head was bowed on his breast, while he listened to the dying words of one he had sworn to cherish and love, but toward whom he had for years manifested indifference and contempt.

“She is a tender flower,” murmured the low voice; “one that I would have cherished fondly. Will you name her, Annie, and love her as you once loved her poor mother? I hope, Meriam and Jonas, you will be kind to your little sister, if God should spare her life;”

and that you will be good boys and prepare to meet me in heaven.”

She stopped, as if exhausted, when perceiving that Mrs. Sheldon was in the room, a smile lighted up her countenance. The lady approached, and stood opposite Mr. Alger, whose form seemed to writhe in his agony.

Bending over the bed, Fanny kissed that pale cheek; “I did not think you were so soon to leave us,” she said, forcing herself to speak calmly.

“Yes, my hour has come to die; but I do not find it dreadful as I once feared. I have peace here,” she said, putting her hand feebly on her heart. “Christ is very precious.”

Tears gushed from Fanny’s eyes, while with a groan of anguish, the conscience-stricken husband rushed from the room.

The dying woman gazed after him with a look of tenderness. “Pray for him, dear Mrs. Sheldon, when I am gone,” he said softly; “pray that he may find peace as I

have, in laying my burden on Christ. Tell him how I have loved him, and that if there was ever any harshness, it is all forgotten now. Tell him, I wish I had been a better wife to him, and a better mother to my children."

"Stop—oh, stop, Martha!" cried Mr. Alger, coming forward and throwing himself on his knees by the side of the bed. "Stop, if you do not wish to kill me; I am a poor hypocrite, who have crushed you to death. I have professed religion and never possessed it. My life has been thrown away; aye, worse, it is the thought of my wicked, wasted life that will prove the undying worm to my soul throughout all eternity. You say you can forgive me, who promised to make you happy, but have embittered your whole life. Yes, it is easy for you who are just about to enter heaven to say that; but oh, the sharp tooth of remorse has begun to pierce my soul! Never; no, never can I say I forgive myself. Never will God forgive me."

He wiped the great drops of perspiration from his face. "Before you die, I must tell you, Martha, that I have deceived myself. I verily thought I was serving God when I was pandering to my own lusts, to my pride, and ambition; but though I exhorted others, and was often in public prayer, I could not talk to you and endeavor to lead you to Christ. I knew that I did not bring my religion into my family as I ought, but oh! I did think I was a Christian! Believe me, Martha, I did not wilfully leave you to grope your way in darkness; and there have been times when I would gladly have talked with you of your salvation, but I was ashamed to do so; and of late I have felt that I had no right, that I was not worthy to take his name on my lips. She put her hand caressingly on his face, "Dear husband," she murmured, "I would like to live with you and our dear children; but my Saviour is calling me home. We are not parting forever; through his love we will meet again never more to part."

“ Oh, Martha, Martha, how happy I might have made you ! Oh, my ungovernable, my passionate temper ! Oh, my self-deluded soul ! Oh, these dreadful stings of remorse ! ” he groaned aloud, and hid his face in the pillow.

Mrs. Sheldon bathed the forehead of the dying woman. Presently she saw that a change had passed over the features. Quickly she approached the bowed form, and gently touching his shoulder, pointed to the fixed eyes.

He sprang upon his feet, and bending over her, in a passion of grief exclaimed, “ Martha, my poor abused wife, say once more that you forgive me ; that you forgive me for the death of our child.”

It was too late ; those eyes so lately beaming upon him with the tenderness of returning affection, were now covered with a glassy film ; that voice which had once and again assured him that her life-long wrongs were all forgotten, was silent now and would silent be forever more.

Three days later when Mrs. Sheldon with her husband attended the funeral, she was shocked at the change in his appearance. His face was haggard and ghastly pale, while his eyes were wild and bloodshot. Not a tear moistened his burning eyeballs while the clergyman read words of comfort to the afflicted, and besought strength and support for the mourner in his hour of sorrow. He sat with his head bent listlessly as if he were crushed with grief, taking no notice either of his motherless boys, or of the many friends who afterwards pressed about him.

Instead of following the procession to the cemetery, Fanny had promised to take charge of the motherless babe, and there Mr. Alger found her on his return.

Softly she arose when he had seated himself, and laying the sleeping infant in his arms, said, "For her sake you must cherish this little treasure; and for her sake too, accept the love which Christ is now offering you,

the love that made her dying hour so full of peace.”

And she went out leaving him to commune with his own heart, and with his God.

One scene more, dear reader, and I have done.

It was a dull and cheerless morning, nearly a year later, when the wife of the pastor was summoned to the residence of Mrs. Scott. She found the lady seated in an arm-chair, in front of the fire, a large shawl folded closely about her figure. Her rich, abundant hair was drawn back under a mourning cap, and every article of dress betokened that sorrow had come to the home and the heart of the bowed woman sitting there.

Yes, Marion, the bright, beautiful Marion, was lying in the tomb, and the mother's heart was heavy with the weight of her grief. In her hours of prosperity she had not sought God, and now she was left to bear her sorrow

alone. Though she had early professed to love Christ, yet by her pride, her worldliness, her indifference to his cause, she had greatly dishonored him. The sudden death of her only child had opened her eyes to the folly of expecting happiness from the richness of her attire, or from the society of her fashionable friends. She determined to win heaven by the strictness of her seclusion from the world, and by the mortification of her own spirit.

She had advanced as she supposed, rapidly in the road to eternal bliss, when she invited Mrs. Sheldon to visit her.

“You find me much changed,” she said, greeting Fanny with a sad smile. “The world for me has lost its charm. I only wish to live long enough to prepare to follow my lost Marion to heaven.”

Fanny’s eyes kindled with pleasure. “Dear Mrs. Scott,” she said warmly, “affliction has indeed been blessed to you, if you can say that.”

“Yes,” added Mrs. Scott, with a self-complacent air, “I have lived to see the vanities of the world fade into smoke. Let my stay here be longer or shorter, I shall never enter upon them nor enjoy them more.

The tone of voice and the manner puzzled Fanny more than the words. After a moment's silence she said, with a smile, “I remember when I was a child my grand-mother taught me the ‘Assembly's Catechism.’ The first answer was, ‘Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.’ I have often thought of it since, when I have heard people talk about their own salvation as being the great aim and object of life. I suppose above every thing else we ought to desire to glorify God; then our own bliss in heaven in his presence would be sure.”

“I am sure,” returned the lady in rather a vexed tone, “I have endured trial and mortification enough in this life, I ought to be happy hereafter. As for this talk of many

who call themselves Christians, about the joy they have in their religion, I never had any thing of it, and never believed it to be any thing but talk. I have been in the church almost twenty years, and I ought to know.

“Dear Mrs. Scott, pardon my frankness,” said Fanny with a sigh. “If you really know nothing of the peace which comes to a believer when he has given himself up into the hands of his God, trusting in Christ alone for salvation, I fear you are like the man who built his house upon the sand. I fear you have placed too much dependence on the mere form of professing Christ, without having felt his love in your heart. Believe me the storms will come and dash to pieces the expectations of all who have not founded their hope on the rock Christ Jesus.” The apostle Paul tells us, ‘for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’”

Before Mrs. Sheldon had finished, Mrs. Scott arose and rang the chamber bell.

“Bring some more wood,” she said, “to make a bright blaze, I expect Mr. Scott in presently.”

“I should be happy to have you or your husband call when convenient,” she added, as Fanny rose to leave. “You and I never did agree on the subject of religion, and we had better avoid it in future.”

And now, reader, that I have finished this narrative of one who years since entered upon her eternal rest, will you not lay the truths I have, however imperfectly, set forth to heart. If you have professed the name of Christ, will you not endeavor to honor him in your life and conversation; and so to walk that those around you may be won to the service and enjoyment of the Saviour.

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