

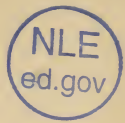


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**O'BRIEN
PURCHASE**



THE
FINLAND FAMILY;

OR,

FANCIES TAKEN FOR FACTS.

A TALE OF THE PAST FOR THE PRESENT.

BY

MRS. SUSAN PEYTON CORNWALL.

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Preface.

“**MEN** are but children of a larger growth,” says the poet. The sentiment finds many an illustration in the public history and social life of mankind in general. And it is, as yet, far from being set at naught by a general conformity of any people to the example of the great apostle, who, when he became a man, put away childish things. Whether this fact indicates, upon the whole, a culpable departure from the dictates of reason and religion, it is not necessary here to inquire. It is, at all events, one which must not be wholly overlooked, in any efforts to improve the character or advance the happiness of rational beings. I has been kept in view in the preparation of this volume, on a plan of which it will not be amiss to say by way of preface, a few words.

The writer's aim has been to illustrate the beauty and value of practical piety, by an attractive exhibi

tion of its salutary influence amid the daily duties and cares and common incidents of life. For this purpose, she has selected an interesting phase of mental habits, which, though combining some of the most striking points of strongly-marked characters in every class and station, is very frequently overlooked, as if it were to be observed only in the past, in the history of some almost forgotten age, or some inferior generation. The intelligent reader, therefore, will not be surprised to find, in the sketches here presented, such a combination of pure examples and crude specimens of life and manners, as to the unreflecting may seem almost inconsistent with the time and place to which it is ascribed.

It is unquestionable, that even now, as well in the most refined as in the least cultivated circles, a careful observer, conversant with the modes of thought current among different classes, may daily detect, in the vain reliance of many persons upon cherished omens of good fortune, and their vain resistance to superstitious fears of imaginary ills, a base counterfeit of the first principle of practical piety, faith in Divine providence. And it is one of the remarkable features of the present time, that some theories, which lay claim to a place among principles of science, have an obvi-

ous tendency to carry back the minds of many to confidence, not only in hurtful superstitions, but also in some of the blasphemous deceits of ancient heathenism; which, in the various forms of necromancy and witchcraft, were the source of all superstitious signs or omens that still prevail, in some degree, in Christian lands. Scientific speculation, assuming the name of philosophy, has impiously pretended even to invade the recesses of the invisible world, and to give a tangible reality to the fancies of heathen fiction, with its fabled *shades* of the departed. It has thus set up, in a refined materialism, a new form of the strange error, which has heretofore extensively connected important events of divine providence, as in a permanent arrangement, with some of the meanest of visible objects; such, for instance, as an old horse-shoe, a pin falling on its point, or an odd egg in the nest of a fowl. And thus the rash efforts of modern science, in some of its lower manifestations by unfledged physiologists, to put itself in the place of faith in the word of God, as a medium of communication between the visible and the invisible, are in fact, nothing else than a revival of the vain struggles of old superstition, in impious and idle rivalry of revealed truth. The follies of such superstition, therefore, afford a proper basis for an illus

tration of the real nature of religious faith, adapted to the present state of science.

Some readers of this volume may think, that the influence of true religion, in correcting the errors of superstition, should be more conspicuous; or that a more direct effort should have been made to inculcate the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. So the writer also thought, at the outset; but was led to believe, as the narrative proceeded, that such examples of calm and consistent piety as are exhibited in the conduct of several of the characters introduced, might prove more effectual than much moralizing, to lead some readers to the esteem and love of true religion, the essence of which is

TRUST IN GOD.

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I.

The Pet Lamb.

NOT far from one of the most beautiful villages in New England stands an ancient habitation, remarkable as one of the oldest in the country. It is situated upon an elevation overlooking rich meadows and extensive woods, and the windings of the beautiful Connecticut, with the blue hills in the distance.

This antiquated mansion was some forty years since inhabited by the family of Mr. George Finland, an English gentleman, better known to his old friends by the name of "Easy George;" a title which his mildness and good-humor well merited. Mr. Finland was one of the best of neighbors, accommodating and obliging; his friends never hesitated to ask favors of him, and he never refused his aid when it was in his power to assist any one. It is no wonder that such a character was a general favorite. Mrs. Fin-

land was the exact counterpart of her husband in almost every respect. Benevolent, in the true sense of the word, her chief wish seemed to be, to make every one about her comfortable and happy. She was not born in England; but her parents were originally from that happy land. And although in the struggle of our country with Britain her father, Mr. York, had espoused the cause of the United States, yet when the long war was over, his love of home revived, and its early scenes were as dear to his heart as ever. He had not been dead many years, and the older children of his daughter still remembered their good old grandfather. Mr. and Mrs. Finland, though possessing everything temporal that might contribute to their comfort, were often silent and gloomy, even when by their every action it was evident that they wished to see others happy.

The superstitious would say, they were too much alike to live long together. Alas! how much evil has been done by blind superstition; the strange, unfounded dread of something undefinable; something which may never come to pass. The light of the Gospel has not yet entirely dispelled those gloomy clouds which in the days of our forefathers

darkened the minds of many, and were the cause of much suffering. The darkness of superstition still shrouds the minds of multitudes in this favored land. Mr. Finland's mind had been, from his earliest youth, imbued with superstitious notions, and in his maturer years he suffered the evil consequences of such erroneous education. In this respect, Mrs. Finland was indeed too much like her husband. Their dream-book—for some families have such books, though our more enlightened readers may doubt the fact—was as often consulted as their almanac; and these otherwise intelligent parents thought it part of their duty to explain dreams and omens to their children, and to teach them what days were lucky or unlucky, and the happy or unhappy position of moles, &c., &c.; thus instilling into their young minds that poison of vain superstition which has caused much misery to many, in spite of their convictions of its falsehood.

Four bright children blessed the home of Mr. and Mrs. Finland. George, who was eighteen, was a noble, open-hearted youth: the favorite of his friends, and the idol of his family. Mary, next in age to George, was full of playfulness and wit, and would have

been always happy if some unlucky dream, or some troublesome sign, had not occasionally darkened her brightest days. However, she always appeared cheerful; for the bright hopes of her young heart would soon dispel the gloomy mists of superstitious fears. Elizabeth, a sweet girl of fourteen, was Mary's opposite in everything but affection. Her loving heart clung to every friend with devoted fondness, and her mild eye had a tear even for dumb animals when they suffered, and the curse of superstition took deep hold upon her mind. Little William, though four years old, was still called the baby. He was the joy of every heart, and too young as yet to imbibe many of the strange notions of this otherwise amiable family.

We must not omit, before proceeding further with our narrative, to introduce the domestics of the family of Mr. Finland. Har- dicus and Judy were negro slaves; for the population of New England was not then entirely composed of freemen! Judy had been born in America, and from early childhood had been in the possession of Mr. York's family. She had always been truly attached to her young mistress, who was now Mrs. Finland, and to whom Mr. York gave her soon

after the marriage of his daughter. She was married young to Hardicus, who was much older than herself; a negro whom a neighbor, Captain Mason, had brought from the West Indies, and whom Judy persuaded Mr. Finland to buy after he became her husband. Little Patty was their only child, and though scarcely ten years old, had learned to be very handy about the house. She always called herself master Willie's maid; for she had watched him when a little baby, and followed after his tottering steps when he was just learning to walk, and had saved him from many a fall by preventing him from climbing. And Patty said she would *always* live with Master Willie; for like other children, little Patty had her day-dreams, and *would* build castles in the air. The little cabin where Hardicus lived was a few yards from the 'great house,' as he always called the old family mansion. It consisted of two rooms; one of which was occupied by the old man and his young wife, (Patty always sleeping in the great house), and the other was fitted up for the poultry, with a wooden partition between the two. Our readers may therefore readily imagine that Hardicus and Judy were early risers.

> * * *

One fine morning in spring, George remembered that there were some fruit trees which Mr. Finland wished to have transplanted, and reminded his father about them. It was agreed to set them out directly. George brought them from the cellar, where they had been deposited the day before. Mr. Finland told George he thought they might have a warm rain after the mild weather, and that would settle the earth about the roots and secure them. They had just made all their arrangements to begin the work, when Mrs. Finland hastily came out of the house to inquire what they were doing. When told, she exclaimed, "Oh! Mr. Finland, how *can* you be so forgetful? This is Friday!"

"Sure enough," said he, "so it is. How strange that I should forget! Well, I am glad, my dear, that you told me before we had planted them; for nothing would tempt me, George, to set them out to-day. Lay them close by the fence, my son, and cover the roots with some earth, and they will be handy to get at to-morrow, and if it does rain to-night, they will be all the better for that."

George did as his father directed, but felt sorry that the work must be put off, as he had promised to go a-fishing early the next morn-

ing with some friends ; and in that case, Hardicus would be obliged to leave his work in the garden to assist Mr. Finland. George was much troubled, and almost wished in his heart that there was *no* Friday. He followed his parents dejectedly into the house, and spoke of his engagement for the next morning. His father said it was no matter ; for Hardicus could put off planting until the next rain.

“ But suppose we should have the rain to-night ? ” George modestly intimated.

“ Well then it would be a pity,” said his father, “ to take Hardicus from the garden ; and I think you had better give up the fishing.”

George assented, and wrote a note to his friend, Donald Mason, that the fishing party must go without him. After he had despatched little Patty with the note, he wandered out in search of some employment. He found Elizabeth finishing a mat which she had been braiding of strips of cloth, and quietly seated himself and began to help her.

“ This is already begun,” said he to her, “ and it will not be bad luck to finish it ; so we will work together, Lizzy, and you will soon have it done.”

“ O ! that is just like you, George, you

are the best brother in the world ; and I can't tell how I love you ; and now if we only had the book, you could find out my dream."

" Well, what was it ?" asked George. " Perhaps I can remember enough from the book to explain it to you."

" I dreamed," said Elizabeth, " about my pet Sylvia ; but there was nothing distinct enough for me to tel. you. It was about flowers and sheep, and trees and water, but all the time something seemed wrong with Sylvia."

" Was it soon after you went to bed, Lizzy ? or in the morning ?"

" I think it was in the morning. Yes, I know it was ; for I was still dreaming when Patty touched me and told me I bid her wake me early."

" Well then, Lizzy, it is all very good ; for if your dream troubled you, and you are *sure* it was a morning dream, then you may know there is something pleasant to take place ; for morning dreams are always interpreted *contrary*."

" I am very glad to hear you say so ; for I shall be happy now, and we will work so fast together, that we shall have this tedious mat finished to-day !"

Mr. Finland sat quietly down to his newspaper; thinking that as he had no work *begun* he would have abundant leisure to read.

This dull day at length drew to a close, and the soft clouds shut in the evening. At midnight the gentle showers descended, and early the Finlands awoke, rejoicing in a bright spring morning. And now George feels his disappointment keenly; the time for the fishing party to start has passed; and he prepares, after breakfast, to plant the trees. He saunters towards the spot where he so carefully deposited them, and finds his father there before him. He wonders to see regret and displeasure upon his open and expressive countenance. But soon his wonder ceased; when coming near he found that the bark had been nibbled off from almost all of the trees by Elizabeth's pet lamb.

"Oh!" exclaimed George, "I felt sure yesterday that something would happen to these trees. I wish we had not touched them."

"It is now too late to regret this sad accident," replied his father, "there are a few still safe, and these we will plant at once; and the lamb must be kept out of the yard. Come here my daughter, take Sylvia into the meadow. The weather is s - mild now, that

she will get no harm by sleeping in the open air."

Elizabeth took her pet in her arms, and they were soon frolicking together on the banks of the clear stream, which wound beautifully through the green meadows towards the river. She was delighted to find some early flowers; and taking the ribbon from her hair, she tied it about Sylvia's neck; and then gathering the flowers and interweaving a delicate green vine among them, she had nearly completed a beautiful wreath for her pet, when she was startled from her sweet employment by a shrill voice, crying out, "O! honey, you swate little cratur, niver put your wee bit of a hand upon it. 'Tis the most unluckiest of all the yarbs that grows!"

Elizabeth turned and saw Bess, the witch of the neighborhood, standing a short distance from her.

"What! which?" she exclaimed in affright.

"The green—the green—never tetch it, darlint—take it off—never tetch it." z

And Elizabeth tore off the beautiful wreath, which she had just thrown over Sylvia's head to see how becomig it would look when quite complete.

"Poor lampkin!" the hag continued, "if

ye be dead in the morning, I shan't marvel."

Elizabeth's sweet face was pale as death, and she stood motionless with horror, while Bess went on with her talk.

"But come along home wi' me, honey dear, and I will give ye a yarb to rub your hands wi', and the lampkin's neck, and then no harm shall come till it."

"Oh! no, no!" said Elizabeth, looking at the brawny speaker with superstitious awe. "I cannot go through that thick wood with you."

"And why not, honey? I'll never harm ye."

But Elizabeth did not wait to hear her farther. She ran towards home as fast as her trembling limbs would allow; followed by Sylvia, with the ribbon about her neck and a few torn flowers dangling from it. They had just reached the door step, when Elizabeth fell fainting into the room. Mary ran towards her, and Mr. Finland raised her in his arms. She soon revived, and finding the family about her she asked for Sylvia; and looking round saw the little lamb in George's quiet as if nothing had disturbed its kind mistress.

“O! Sylvia, my sweet pet, I have killed you!”

Mary laughed heartily at the thought of a lamb looking so bright after it was killed.

“Jump down, pretty pet,” said George, “and let Elizabeth see that you are more alive than she is. See,” he continued, “she is as fresh as the morning;” and leaping from his arms the little animal began to caper about as usual.

“Yes,” sighed Elizabeth, “I see she *seems* just the same, but she will soon, soon, be dead! Ah! George you remember my dream”—and the poor girl put her hands over her face and sobbed aloud.

Her mother at length persuaded her to tell all that had occurred. While Elizabeth did so, their countenances expressed their uneasiness for the lamb; and when she concluded, her mother said,

“I trust, my child, that nothing will happen to Sylvia; but when you bought that ribbon the other day I intended to tell you that green was an unlucky color; but knowing how nervous you are, I concluded to say nothing to you about it. I never like green, and I hope you will never make choice of it again.”

“I wish I had been with you, Lizzy,” said George, “and then we would have gone with Bess for the herb she spoke of. I wish I knew where to find it.”

“Perhaps she will be around here this evening,” said Mary, “she does come sometimes, and seems as hungry as a bear. I wonder that witches should ever be hungry. I should think they could always get everything they want.”

Elizabeth did not recover her spirits that day; and at sunset she placed some nice straw close behind the gate that opened into the meadow for Sylvia’s bed; and saw her reposing sweetly there just as the night closed in. She had scarcely entered the house when Mr. Finland jumped up from the window and whispered something to Mary, who ran into the kitchen and soon returned with a nice fat chicken, which had been prepared to be cooked the next morning.

“What is the matter?” asked Mr. Finland, who had observed his wife and daughter.

“Bess is coming towards the house,” said Mrs. Finland, “and we want to have something ready for her. Perhaps she is bringing that good herb which she spoke to Elizabeth about this morning.”

Mr. Finland looked steadily in the direction

his wife pointed, and saw a black figure coming stealthily along through the dim twilight, which he soon knew to be Bess by the great dog that always followed her. The dog stopped near the lamb; Bess said whist! and he turned about and crept close to the woman's heels. She came into the yard, and directly under the open window, raised an old horse-shoe, as if intending to dash it against the glass; but when she saw Mr. Finland, she made a low curtsey and crossed herself.

"O! I am so frightened," said the trembling Elizabeth.

"Turn your dress wrong side out over your head, and then she can't harm you," whispered her mother; who did so herself, and Mary too, while Mr. Finland threw the loaf of bread and the chicken out of the window. Bess snatched up the things eagerly, and made towards home like a hungry tiger. Mr. Finland took Lizzie on his knee, and quieted her fears by saying that Bess was pleased now, and would do them no harm.

The next morning, Elizabeth's first thoughts upon waking, turned towards her little favorite; and stepping to the window and looking out, she saw that Sylvia had left her bed earlier than her mistress.

She dressed herself hastily, and was running to look after her pet, when she met George, who asked her if she did not think that the lamb had gone to make a breakfast on the flowers.

“Dear brother, will you go with me to look for her, I am so afraid?”

“Why, Lizzy! afraid in the daytime—that is too bad.”

“I am afraid I shall not find her,” said Lizzy, ashamed to acknowledge the real cause of her trouble. “She is nowhere to be seen.”

“Well I will go, Lizzy; but don’t despair quite yet; let us go around the barn first, she may be with the others. Come along and don’t tremble so, my little child; don’t cry before you’re hurt.”

Then putting his arm around her waist he hurried her on.

“There they all are, eating the fodder—one—two—three—four.”

“Ah! *she* is not among them,” said Elizabeth. “I shall never see her again.” And she began to cry.

“Never mind, never mind, Lizzie; don’t give up so soon. I promise you I’ll find her, dead or alive. If we don’t find her among the bushes in the meadow then, perhaps, she

found her way through the bars and has got among neighbor Howe's sheep. Ah! Sylvia is a cunning little one after all, you find. Even pet lambs will ramble if you give them a chance."

So away they ran over the field, searching in every thicket and by-corner, and over the hills, to look among the lambs of Mr. Howe's flock—but nowhere could they find her.

"Well," said George, "there is one place more. I do believe now that old Bess can tell us where she is; and she will, too; for Mary says mother was so kind as to give her a nice present last night."

"O dear, George, I can't go with you; and I am afraid to have you go alone. Who *will* go with you?"

"Come along, Lizzy, and don't act like a silly child. No! you may stay, and I will go alone."

"Pray listen to me, brother," said Elizabeth. "Father will go with you. Come home with me and ask him. I know he will go."

"No, I will not trouble father. Do you think I am afraid of any woman? No, not even of an old witch, in the daytime."

"But her dog—O, George, she could make him kill you."

“I will take a good club and *kill him*, if he comes near me. I don't like to make Bess mad with us, or I would have shot him before this time.”

So saying, he ran into the wood, while Elizabeth went home, filled with sad apprehensions.

George soon arrived at the mud hut of Bess, into which no one had entered for years, except its present inhabitant and her dog; the undisputed possessors. The wood in which it was situated was part of Mr. Finland's estate; but neither he, nor any of his neighbors, knew exactly when or how Bess took possession of the place.

The hut seemed to be the remains of an Indian wigwam, and as Bess was believed in all the country around to be a witch, no one dared to molest her. Her appearance truly corresponded with the idea one might form of such a character, as she strolled about at twilight, in search of food, followed by her large black dog, the terror of all the neighborhood. Every door was closed at her approach; but every one threw something out of the window for her, so much did they fear this grisly visitant. Few had courage to speak kindly to her, or to treat her as a human being; except Mr.

Heaton, the worthy minister, who had recently taken charge of the parish. But Bess never went near his residence if she could find food elsewhere. She seemed amazed the first time that good man spoke to her. She turned and hastened from the house as if terrified by the sound of a human voice speaking kindly to her; and always from that time she avoided him as much as possible.

When George arrived at the hut, he stood a few paces from the door, apparently afraid to approach too near, and called out "Mrs. Nisbey," for so he had heard her called by those to whom she had introduced herself.

Hearing him, she slowly opened the door, and putting out her head and long, tawny, uncovered neck—

"Be sure now," she said, "and is it ye, mither George? I know jist what ye be wanting—but come now, tell me what ye be afther?"

"Have you seen," begun George—

"Seed! seed!" interrupted the hag, "I've seed many and many a thing. I've crossed the great wathers, and Bess has been a ledly in her day. But now I am a queen, and this is my throne, and ye be all of ye my slaves—and I laugh to see ye tremble when I come among ye. Yes!" she cried, raising her voice

to a higher pitch, "I've seed as much as ever a woman did. I've seed king George,—God bless his majesty,—face to face; and I've seed, aye, I see now yer poor little lampkin, after what ye be coming. But ye shall never have it any more."

"Mrs. Nisbey," said George, in a faltering voice, "I will thank you very much if you will only tell me where to find the lamb."

"Ah! my dearie," she said, raising her frightful form and standing upright, with the door wide open, "I tell ye, I have it here; right here; but ye shall never have it!"

"But I will," said George, as he brandished his formidable club, "dead or alive. Hand it to me this moment."

"Whist! now be aisy. Give me your hand, my dearie. You are a fine, handsome young jintleman; and I should like to sit down by your side a bit. Let me hand ye in, and be sated, and I will make ye a lord; for ye be too grand-looking to be your daddy's ploughboy. Take my hand," she continued, extending her brawny, uncovered arms, "and I will sate ye on my throne, close by my side."

George stepped back in alarm, saying, "I cannot come in; just give it out here to me, if you please, and I will pay you."

“I want none o’ yer money!” she replied, “the flesh is swather ’an money—the bones is swather ’an money—the skin is softer ’an money—the blood is swather ’an money—and I tell ye agin, ye shall *never* have it!”

“I will try then,” said George, “what this good club can do!”

“Come ye on thin,” said Bess, stepping back into the hut. but appearing again in an instant, she threw a sheep’s head at George, saying,

“Look ye there, is that it?”

Distressed and exasperated, at finding that the head was really that of poor Sylvia, he threw the club at Bess with great force; she avoided it, however, and springing towards him, cried out, “Now, now, I’ll have ye!”

George gave a leap and escaped her outstretched arms, and while he looked about for a stout stick to defend himself, she stepped back to the door of her hovel, saying, “I would na tetch ye for the univarse!”

“Oh! you vile, wicked hag,” said George, “how dare you kill that lamb? If you had taken any other I should not have been so angry with you. I’ll have you burnt for a witch.”

This passionate threat seemed to bring the wretch to her senses ; and she said very kindly, “ Now dearie, be aisy ; and I’ll tell ye the whole truth on’t. Look now ! this great ugly dog and I went over the hills last night lookin’ up yarbs. The dear wee bit of a lampkin was fast for sleep in the bed what the mistress made for it. We just stopped a wee bit to play with the darlint, but the dog played too hard, and so quite squazed the breath out of the poor little cratur. I was sorry, but ye know I could na bring back life’—there was no use to thry. So I took up the swate pet and brought it here, and I’ve tasted its mate, and I tell ye it’s tender and swate as chakin”.

George did not stay to hear anything more from her ; but taking up the head he hurried home. He thought at every step how he should best communicate this great trouble to his sister. When within a short distance from his home, he concealed the head in the bushes, and walked on slowly and thoughtfully. He was so lost in thought that he did not observe Mary and his father coming towards him, until Mary called out to him,

“ George, have you found Sylvia ? We have been wondering what had become of

you ; for it is a long time since Lizzy came home. You seem to have forgotten that this is Sunday. Pa and I are on our way to hear the new minister."

George was glad to have this opportunity of speaking to his father without Elizabeth. He, therefore, gave a full account of what had just transpired between himself and Bess.

Mr. Finland seemed both grieved and angry ; and said that her dog ought to be shot, but he would have no hand in killing it for the world.

This event was a great grief to Elizabeth. She was quite inconsolable, reproaching herself for causing the death of her sweet Sylvia ; and wondered at the strange wisdom of Bess in *foretelling* it ; not recollecting that the cunning woman felt bound to bring to pass what she had predicted.

The fate of the lamb affected Elizabeth's spirits for a long time. Her brother and sister exerted themselves to win her thoughts from the sad remembrance of Sylvia ; but no one endeavored to convince her that the act of placing the innocent green vine about its neck had nothing to do towards killing her pet.

When the first excitement about the lamb had passed, the whole family began to fear that George had offended the witch, and that she might lay some fatal charm for him. George felt very little concern about the matter, and said that the first good chance he had he would shoot the dog, if he could do it without shooting the old woman too. His father told him he could not kill *her* without a *silver* bullet; but said that perhaps he could kill the dog with lead. At the same he charged him that he should not attempt to do so, but try to do something to please her.

II.

The New Comers.

EVEN in these days of boasted intelligence and 'march of mind' there still exist many popular superstitions with regard to silly signs. How often, for example, do ignorant nurses, and injudicious mothers, endeavor to frighten children into obedience or carefulness, by bugbears, under the name of *bad signs, omens of ill luck, &c.*; thus bringing up multitudes of youth under a course of education but little calculated, amid the troubles of life, to lead them to cast all their care upon the true source of comfort.

Superstition was even more prevalent at the period to which our story relates than it is now. However, the regard which is frequently paid at this day to silly signs is extremely ridiculous. But to continue our narrative.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Heaton came

to spend the afternoon with the Finlands. According to the simple, social custom of those days, they brought the baby also, to the great delight of the girls and little Willie. Mr. Finland gave their new pastor a hearty welcome; and Mrs. Finland, taking Mrs. Heaton's bonnet and shawl into the next room, observed to Mary,

"I told you when the cock crew right in the door, this morning, that we should have company."

"Yes," said Mary, holding the babe in her arms, "I am so glad. Run up, Patty, to the garret, and bring down the cradle. O! Lizzy, what a sweet little darling he is. Come here, Willie, and kiss this dear little baby."

Willie ran delighted to his sister, and after kissing the baby rather roughly, began to admire his little hands and feet. He then capered about and danced all over the room, and wanted to hold the baby himself.

But Mary said, "Here comes Patty with the cradle, and after I put him in, you shall look at him all the afternoon, if you promise not to hurt him."

So Mary put the little fellow safely in, and Willie had the privilege of sitting by on his own little chair to rock him. But the babe

would kick out his feet, and Willie would jump up to take hold of them, and at length got into such a frolic that his gentle sister Elizabeth thought he would turn the cradle over. "I will hold him now," she said, "and you may stand by me."

"O! how he can scratch," said Willie. "Cut his nails, sister Lizzy, will you?"

"Yes! that we will. Mary, hand over your scissors, and we will soon have his nails short."

"Lizzy," said her sister earnestly, "you must never cut little babies' nails. They say it will make them rogues."

"O! I wouldn't make a rogue of this dear precious little fellow for the world," said Elizabeth. "You must keep out of the way of his nails, then, Willie. But don't rock the cradle when the baby is not in it; for they say it makes babies cross to rock their cradles when they are not in them."

Willie, however, did not understand anything about such signs. At all events, he did not heed; until Mary told him that the baby would cry if he did not stop. Just then the little babe screamed out. His mother ran in, and taking him from Elizabeth's arms, said

"Poor little fellow, he is not accustomed to

any noise, and is afraid of strangers sometimes ;” and Mary whispered to Willie, that he must wait next time until the babe was in the cradle before he rocked it.

Willie said yes ; though it was evident he did not know why rocking the cradle could make such a little baby cry, any more than it could his cat.

While Mrs. Finland and Mrs. Heaton amused and entertained each other with domestic matters, the young lady gaining many important ideas from Mrs. Finland’s experience, the gentlemen strolled out to see the improvements going on in the garden and orchard.

Little Patty was very active in assisting Miss Mary to arrange the tea table in the nicest manner.

“ You must have a table spoon, and don’t forget the pepper and salt, Patty, for Judy has fried some chickens, and very fine indeed they are. You can take care of the baby for Mrs. Heaton, while we are at tea. Will you hold him very safely ?”

“ Yis mam,” said Patty.

“ I am sure you would not hurt him for anything ?”

“ No mam,” said Patty, eagerly.

At length all necessary preparations were finished and the hour for tea arrived. Every one was cheerful and happy. Willie was made to take his seat as usual at the table, though he wished to stay with Patty and the baby. But Mary thought he might be tempted to rock the cradle again, and then she believed there would be an end to the baby's comfort.

The company praised the warm biscuits and the nice chicken. The tea, too, was peculiarly good, and all went on most joyously until George, in handing the salt to Mr. Heaton, very awkwardly turned the salt cellar upside down.

"O! George!" exclaimed his mother.

"That is very unlucky," said his father.

Mary's face turned red, and Elizabeth's pale, and George was much confused, till Mr. Heaton said good-humoredly,

"It is of no consequence, George. The salt is just as good now as it was before. You may be glad, Miss Mary, that it is not the cream-pot turned over. Such accidents are very common."

All smiled for a moment; but a change came over the Finlands. They exerted them-

selves to appear still as cheerful as they really had felt before the unlucky accident.

Mr. Heaton returned heartfelt thanks to the Giver of all good after the plentiful repast. He made use of these few expressive words of fitting prayer, "that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light;" words which were for many weeks sounding in the ears of George; until he would oftentimes ask himself seriously, "What are the works of darkness?"

The good minister and his wife felt quite happy with their new friends, and after tea, as the babe was sleeping sweetly, they extended their visit through the evening. Elizabeth sat down by the cradle. She loved to look at the sleeping child; and whispered earnestly to Mary, that he looked as innocent as Sylvia.

They were all enjoying the evening together, except George. He at length came in looking very thoughtful.

"I was so unfortunate," said he, after a little while, "as to step on a toad, and killed it."

"Ah!" said Mary, "I thought *something* would happen, for you turned back for the book you intended to take to Donald. It is bad luck to turn back, you know."

Mr. Heaton could not avoid a slightly satirical expression of countenance as he said,

“I often think that there should be no such word as luck among Christians. I am sure, Mary, it was much worse for the poor toad, than for your brother.”

Mr. Heaton's ideas were quite new to this family; and as they could not comprehend him, they remained silent.

“Cast away the works of darkness,” came into George's mind. Willie, coming close to his brother looked up and began to talk about the young ducks that had just come to life.

The baby then awoke, and the company made themselves ready to depart. Mr. Finland took up a candle to light them to the door; but seeing a bright spark in the wick, he stopped to take it out, saying,

“We shall have a letter from some friend to-morrow, so go early to the Post Office, George, for I have long been expecting a letter from my dear sister.”

“Alas!” said Mr. Heaton to his wife, after they had left this kind family, “alas! that such amiable people should be blinded by such superstitions and unfounded notions. I must become better acquainted with them and take every opportunity to eradicate this

evii How pitiable is the state of such persons. Did you observe how I intended to leave the house by the back way, which would have led us through the garden and across the next field, so making, at least, a quarter of a mile less in our walk? But because I had entered the front door, it would have been, in the eyes of these friends, 'bad luck,' if we had left it at any other! I fear these kind people have very little trust in God."

The next morning George did, indeed, bring a letter for his father; and they all felt confirmed in their belief of the sign in the candle the night before; forgetting how long they had expected a letter. When Mrs. Finland saw that it was sealed with black, she exclaimed,

"This brings my dream to mind. I dreamed I was obliged to have one of my teeth drawn."

"That is a sure sign of death," said Mr. Finland, "but hand me the letter, George."

He read it through, and was greatly grieved to hear of the death of his only sister.

This letter was written by the bereaved husband, who, with christian kindness, endeavored to administer consolation to others, when it was evident that his own heart was almost breaking.

He said he had determined to leave England; and that nothing now would afford him so much satisfaction, as to be with the brother of his dear wife. He requested Mr. Finland to write whether it would be agreeable to himself and family to have him as a resident in their house.

Mr. Finland wrote immediately to his brother, Mr. Bland, expressing his grief and deep sympathy; and assured him, that nothing would give them all more comfort than to have him among them. He said he hoped that Mr. Bland would live with them the rest of his life; and that nothing would satisfy them but his promise to do so.

Mr. Finland felt more composed after he had sent this letter; for his grief at the loss of his only sister was extreme.

The voyage from England to this country was far from being so easy then, as it is now; and it was not until the beginning of autumn—four or five months after Mr. Finland's invitation was sent—that Mr. Bland arrived. He was received with the warmest affection by the whole family; while Mr. Finland and the good old gentleman wept in silence.

A large chamber had been appropriated to his use. It had been a lumber room for many

years ; and as there were some strange stories connected with this room, where Mrs. Finland's mother died, no one had occupied it since the time of her death. But as it was one of the largest and best rooms in the house, and the only one that could well be given up by the family, Mr. Finland had it handsomely repaired, and a small apartment added to it for a library ; hoping that since Mr. Bland knew nothing of the history of the chamber, he would have no prejudices against it. Mrs. Finland charged her older children, never to tell Mr. Bland anything they had ever heard about that room. And in this beautiful apartment, after a few days, George helped his uncle to unpack, and arrange the contents of his trunks. He was delighted to find that there were so many more books coming into the house ; and he begged the privilege of placing them in the library. Mr. Bland wished to know if a box containing some articles of no great value could be stored in the garret, where, he said, he could open it at his leisure, at some future time.

“ I think,” said Elizabeth to her mother, “ I shall love uncle William—he looks so pale and sad.”

“ That is a strange reason for loving him,”

said Mary. "He looks too melancholy to be a pleasant companion."

"But I love him already," said her sister. "I saw him looking so earnestly at me yesterday, and his eyes were full of tears. I want to do everything that will be pleasant for him."

"Your father has often said," remarked Mrs. Finland, "that you much resemble his sister; and no doubt your uncle has observed the resemblance. You will find him very kind, my dear children, and if not a very cheerful friend, at least one who is capable of advising you; and I hope you will do all in your power to contribute to his comfort and enjoyment. He is a true Christian, and knows where to look for comfort; and I hope he will be the means of leading us all in the right way."

"I wish I was a good Christian," said Elizabeth thoughtfully; "and then I think I should be happy."

"You are happy, my dear," said her mother, "though you are not conscious of it. You have nothing to make you unhappy."

Elizabeth sighed, but said nothing; and Mrs. Finland continued.

"Your uncle has made himself a favorite

with his little namesake already. Willie begins to love him dearly. He is a kind-hearted man I know, by the mole on the left side of his forehead."

"How beautiful," said Mary, "his room looks, now he has everything arranged in it. He says he expects several birds soon, and a pet cat; which were left in the care of a friend in New-York. I shall like the birds very well; but uncle says the cat is perfectly black. I say a real witch cat, and I shall not like to have it sneaking about the house, I know."

"I never would have a black cat," said Mrs. Finland, "unless it had a white spot under its chin. They say, if you have a black cat with a white spot under its chin, you will never want for money."

"Do you think, mamma," asked Elizabeth, "that I might be alone in uncle Bland's room in the daytime, without being frightened? He has so many books and pictures, which I should like to examine; but the only time I have is before school; and then uncle always takes his walk, and I should sometimes be obliged to be alone. I do not like to take Willie there; for he might do some mischief."

"If you were not so nervous, Lizzy, I don't think you would find anything to disturb you;

but you had better ask your uncle to allow you to bring such things as you like into your brother's room."

"I did ask him once, and he said I was not at all in his way, and that I might look at everything that would amuse and interest me. So I could say nothing more; for you know, I could not tell him my real reason."

"Then you will find plenty of opportunities while he is in; for I would not like you to be there alone."

"Uncle does not mind having such large children in his room as we are," said Mary, "and I do think we will have some very pleasant hours there; particularly if uncle Bland ever grows more cheerful. Perhaps he will be more so after his birds come; particularly if they sing much. He says one is a parrot, and can say many things. I never liked a parrot. It is so unnatural for a bird to speak. I don't think parrots can be *real* birds."

"How horrid it will be to hear a bird talking in that room. I shall ask your uncle to let it hang in our dining-room, that we may all become accustomed to it."

"O do, mamma," said Elizabeth, "and then Willie can see it every day."

After a few weeks the birds were safely brought, and the cat. Mr. Bland said he had had it only two years; that it was found one morning under the steps at the front door of his house, so cold that it could scarcely mew; that his wife had nursed it with the greatest care, and after it began to grow it had amused them for hours with its pretty tricks; and that even now it would play like a kitten. The young people were much amused as soon as the cage was opened, in which the cat was kept for safety, to see it jump into Mr. Bland's extended arms, and rub its head against his face, and seem as happy as a lost child restored to its parent.

Old Hardicus, who brought the cages from a neighboring town, stood eagerly looking on; and when he saw the cat manifest so much sense and affection, exclaimed, "Ah! massa Bland, dat cat got too much sense for a dumb critter. I hope he won't git nigh me in de night."

Mr. Bland, for the first time since he arrived among them, laughed aloud at the old negro's speech, and assured him that Leo should never trouble him in any way.

The canaries, four in number, were presented to Mary and Elizabeth, with the re-

quest that they might hang in their uncle's room, during cold weather. The parrot was for little Willie Bland, and was carefully hung in the dining-room, where it could sun itself every day.

"What a dear good uncle," said Willie, "to give me a talking bird. Uncle says it can say Willie," and the bird, hearing the child, repeated "Willie."

The little boy clapped his hands in an ecstasy of joy. Elizabeth looked disconcerted, and Mary put her arm about her waist and whispered, "We shall get used to it after a little while, Lizzy."

"Come, come along, sister Mary and Lizzy, and see us hang up Poll," said Willie; and crowding himself between them, he took a hand of each, and hurried them along to the room, where George had carried the bird.

"O what pretty bright feathers, sister Mary," continued the child, "and how he looks down on us over his great crooked nose."

"That is his bill," said George, "and I think he may peck you very hard, if you put your fingers near enough. You must never plague him, and then he will love you."

"I never *will* trouble him any way. He

shall have some of my cake every time, and all my playthings !”

Every one laughed at the little boy's idea of being kind to the parrot.

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that I left on my bed, and bring them safe to me. Don't drop them, for that might break the corners."

"Shall I not go with him, sir?" asked George, feeling a little disturbed that Willie should be sent to *that* room alone. "I fear he will get into some mischief."

"No!" said Willie, "I will not touch anything."

So away he went up the stairs. He did not return for some time. The girls seemed quite restless, and wondered why the child did not come. They presently heard his voice, and George stepped into the hall to hear why he was speaking. The girls sat in breathless silence. Mr. Bland was employed very thoughtfully, examining a rare shell.

"I *will* have them," George heard Willie say, very distinctly; and then again, "get away, I tell you; now stop."

Who could be there, thought George, as he came back again quietly into the room. The girls asked what Willie had said; and their uncle wondered to himself why they appeared so anxious upon the child's account. Presently his little feet were heard running hastily along, and soon down the stairs he comes at full speed.

“What now, what now, Willie?”—and the parrot screamed out “Willie!”

The little fellow clapped his hands, and jumped up and down before the cage with great glee before he could answer his uncle.

The girls and George sat mute; eager to hear what their little brother had to say.

“I couldn’t get the books, uncle, indeed I could not. He would *not* let me have them.”

The girls looked absolutely wild with expectation, while Mr. Bland said, “Who, Willie?” and the bird again said “Willie.” “Who,” continued Mr. Bland, “would not let you have my books?”

“Why, that great cat of yours was on the bed, close to the books; and at first when I put my hands out to take them, he would strike at me. Then I called him; but he would not come. Then I tried again; but he would strike at me very hard. So I got on the bed and thought, now I shall have them; but he lay down on the books, with his face right towards me, and he looked so cross when I tried to pull them from under him, and growled and grinned, and showed his claws so that I began to think he would scratch and bite me too. So I ran off. I am not afraid of an owl, uncle; but I should

not like that great cat to scratch my eyes out."

Mr. Bland was much amused at Willie's account, and the young people felt somewhat relieved; though rather confirmed in the idea of its being a witch cat. George asked if it was the cat he was speaking to; and the little boy laughed and said "Yes."

Mr. Bland then called "Leo, Leo, Leo!" and down came pussy, looking as important as possible, and jumping upon Mr. Bland's knee looked inquiringly into his face.

"I have nothing for you to eat; but I want Willie to get the books; so do you stay here."

Leo curled himself up in his master's lap, quite contented, while the child went up stairs again. He soon returned with two beautiful Bibles; one bound in green, and the other in red. He looked very exultingly at puss, who took no notice of him; and handing the books to his uncle, stood before him, with his hands hanging by his sides, quietly waiting to hear what uncle had to say. Mr. Bland presented one to Mary, and the other to Elizabeth.

"Oh! uncle," they both exclaimed, "I thank you very much."

"I have long wished for a Bible," continued Elizabeth, "but I never had one before.

But why did you choose such a cover? Green is an unlucky color, you know."

"I know no such thing, my dear niece," said Mr. Bland, earnestly. "How can one color be more unlucky than another?"

Elizabeth made no answer; but Mary said, "I don't know why it is, but *so* it is. I have known unpleasant things happen to persons dressed in green."

"Well, let me assure you, Mary, that the same things would have happened to these persons if they had been dressed in white."

"Ah! no, uncle," said Mary, "for white is a lucky color."

"Well, my dear niece," replied Mr. Bland, "I hope to speak much with you upon this subject at some future day. The color of the outside is of little consequence. The inside of that precious book contains a never-failing fountain of wisdom. I pray that the earnest study of it may enable you to 'cast away the works of darkness,' and give you 'joy and peace in believing.'"

"Cast away the works of darkness," repeated George to himself.

"And, dear Elizabeth," continued Mr. Bland, "all I ask in return from you is, that you will sometimes read in yours to me."

“Yes, sir,” said Elizabeth, “I will, with great pleasure. I have never read much in the Bible; but now I have one of my own, I will read it through.”

“And so will I,” said Mary, “if you will be so kind, uncle, as to explain those parts which I find it hard to understand.”

“It will give me pleasure, my dear girls, to assist you in the study of that sacred word of God. I now derive more comfort and pleasure from that, than from anything else in this world.”

“I knew,” said Mary, after their uncle had left the room, “I knew I should get a present; for the palm of my hand has been itching all this morning.”

“And I knew I should too,” observed Elizabeth, “for I happened to cut my nails on Monday, and that is a sure sign.”

“Well, girls,” said Mrs. Finland, coming into the room, “go and see that everything is in order in the parlor; for my nose has been itching.”

“Yes,” replied Mary, “we will, mamma; for you know that George’s fork stuck right up in the floor this morning, when he dropped it at breakfast; and that is a sure sign of company.”

“‘Works of darkness,’” said George, aloud, as his sisters left the room. “‘Works of darkness,’” again he repeated, in a louder tone. Then thinking to himself, “What are ‘works of darkness?’” he thus continued his soliloquy, “I must consider this matter more earnestly. Uncle has just repeated the very words that Mr. Heaton used, ‘Cast away the works of darkness.’”

No sooner had George again repeated the last words of his thoughts aloud, than he heard a voice respond, “works of darkness;” and turning about with surprise, he saw the parrot eying him closely; so soon had the curious bird learned those three words.

For experiment, George repeated the words; and the bird said them over very accurately every time after him. George wished that the bird had not been quite so ready to catch the very words which so much troubled him.

“But I will speak to uncle upon this subject,” thought he, “the first good opportunity I have.”

George then strolled away into the woods with his gun; soberly reflecting upon what Mr. Bland had said in regard to the Bible, and resolving that he would read much in it during the approaching winter. He had not

wandered far, and had been thinking too deeply to look for game, when a low voice, close to his ear, whispered,

“Master George, please shoot that owl in yon tree, what scared ye all so last night.”

He turned and saw the wild form and haggard face of Bess, close at his side.

“See,” she continued, pointing to a high stump, almost covered with bramble; “see, his eyes is shot, for he can’t look at the sun; now give him a dose.”

George was almost too much startled to hold the gun firmly; but looking in the direction in which Bess pointed, he saw the great owl, which seemed to be quietly dreaming of its last night’s ravages. In another moment the gun was fired, and the bird fell lifeless among the brambles.

“It’s mine! it’s mine,” shouted Bess, springing forward towards the spot. “Catch him there, Brutus,” said she; and the dog leaped upon the stump, and springing down in the midst of the thicket, disappeared from sight. He soon again appeared with the owl in his mouth, and came and put it down at his owner’s feet.

George had retreated some distance from the spot, and stood gazing upon the strange

scene. Bess snatched up the bird, and without saying another word to George, hurried on towards her home.

George's inclination for gunning had by this time quite left him ; and he retraced his steps homeward ; musing, as he went, upon the strange creature he had just encountered, and wondering how she could know that his sister had been so much frightened in the night by an owl ; not thinking that the night was the time for Bess, as well as for the owl, to prowl about in search of food, and that the last night was very bright, and a large owl very easily seen. He did not for a moment suspect that Bess had been under the windows at the same time the owl was there ; nor consider how she had been too cunning to mention any one in particular who had been frightened, but merely said, "the owl that scared ye all." But thinking that she meant Mary, he was confirmed in his belief that Bess was a witch.

These occurrences of the morning were related to the family, as soon as he disposed of his gun. They all felt rejoiced that the owl was killed ; really believing that it was the same that Mary had heard in the night, because Bess said it was. Alas ! that the human mind is so ready to believe a lie.

The same day at twilight George was so unfortunate as to see an owl fly into the garret window. He shuddered at the sight; firmly believing that it was the ghost of the one he had shot, come to haunt them for his cruelty. He never thought—so blinded was he by his superstitious fears—that in all probability the owl had found mice there more than once; and that it was for that purpose he was then entering the window; the garret of that house being a very secluded place, where no one of the family ever ventured to go at night. He had prudence enough not to mention this circumstance to any of the family; since Mary had been so unhappy the night before, and all seemed to feel so glad that he had shot the owl in the morning. But whenever he was awake in the night he imagined that he heard strange sounds in the garret.

He had begun to be ashamed to let his uncle know that he had any fears of this kind; and determined to consult him about such matters whenever he found a suitable occasion

He felt much mortified the next day, when Mr. Bland ridiculed Mary for saying it would rain because the cat sat with her back to the fire. Mary really believed that to be the

reason why it would rain ; until Mr. Bland tried to convince her that because it was going to rain, and the atmosphere more chilly, the cat—for cats always suffer from cold,—had felt the change, and knew that the chimney-corner was a warm place.

But, thought Mary still, why did she turn her *back* to the fire ; not reflecting that her back, which was least protected from the air, was most sensible of the change in the atmosphere.

For fear of his uncle's ridicule George became very cautious ; though he had never yet been convinced by his arguments that all such signs were erroneous. He thought, however, that it was best to be prudent ; for he did not wish to be laughed at, especially by one whom he esteemed so highly as he did his uncle Bland.

George greatly enjoyed Mr. Bland's society. He would often take much delight in listening to the conversation of his father and uncle, and hearing vivid descriptions of English life and scenery. Thus time passed pleasantly with all ; and although Mr. Bland was never gay, yet his cheerfulness had returned to him, and he was a pleasant companion even for little Willie.

As the cold weather approached, and all drew round the fire in the evening, the young people felt happy to think that they had such a kind and intelligent companion added to their circle, to help to enliven the long, cold winter nights, and make the time pass pleasantly and profitably.

Mr. Bland, too, felt happy to think how comfortably he was established with the brother of his much lamented wife; and rejoiced to think that it was in his power to contribute to the enjoyment of his **interesting young friends.**

IV.

Winter Scenes

WE pass rapidly by the inclement season of winter : with its biting frosts and chilling snows ; its leafless landscapes, and its ice-bound streams. Even at this season the young and happy enjoy life greatly. What cares the ready skater for the keen north wind ? The colder the better for his sports ; with his soft, warm mittens, and the fur of his cap buttoned tightly over his ears ; his face glowing with exercise and health, and his merry laugh ringing over the frozen waters. Thus was George equipped and employed one cold, bright evening of fierce December. He had gone on foot during the afternoon several miles from home upon business, and determined to take his skates and gun and return on the river. He found night overtaking him before he could gain the place where he wished to take the ice. The full moon rose bright and clear,

and was reflected with unusual brilliancy from a hundred banks of drifted snow. The river was smooth as glass and sparkled in the moonbeams gloriously. Carefully buckling on his trusty skates, and tying the warm straps of his fur cap closely under his chin, George drew on his mittens; and clasping his loaded gun in his arms, started briskly on for some three miles of solitary skating. All was perfectly calm. Not even a flying leaf, or snow-flake driven by the wind, broke the magic stillness. The cold was so intense, that the breath of the skater froze wherever it touched. Yet George was warm from his constant exertions to proceed rapidly; and away he glided smoothly on, with no sound to attract his ear but the swift rushing of his skates. His thoughts were calm and happy, and not even a sigh escaped his peaceful breast. But suddenly the howl of wolves was heard; and far over the snow-covered meadows two black spots attracted his eye. He quickened his speed, and as he had already travelled more than a mile, he hoped, by keeping on the smooth, slippery part of the river, to reach his home before the wolves could overtake him. The cunning animals knew that their only hope was to keep on the snow

as long as possible. And now they come on at a rapid rate. George has flown on without a pause; yet the beasts are nearly opposite to him on the shore. Another mile, thought he, yes, another mile yet before I can feel safe. But already had he begun to call aloud for his good dog Fleet; for he might possibly be in search of his master, and should he succeed in making him hear, he would surely come to his aid. Now, thought George, again, in a few moments they must be upon the river; for I have nearly passed the meadows, and the banks beyond rise so high that they can keep sight of me no longer.

“O! if they were only on the ice, I might hope to escape in safety.”

Thus the young man kept a brave heart. When it comes to the worst, thought he, I may kill one with my gun, and perhaps I may beat the other off after his mate is dead. Still he whistled and called aloud for Fleet. And now with one bound the wolves leave the snow, and make at the object of their pursuit on the ice. But they slide and fall at every attempt to run. Now they stand firmly, and take their steps short and quick, and cautiously. George left them in the distance at first, and now with half a mile further he

is safe. But no, they gain on him. He hears their panting breath, but never turns for a moment from his course. On, on they come, with steady, rapid trot ; and George begins to make ready to turn and defend himself, when just from the wood on the right springs upon the ice in front of them the great black dog of Bess. He stops and waits for the pursuers ; and as they come up, George is only a few yards in advance. The dog springs upon one of the wolves, and soon brings him down in deadly conflict. George turns and sends the contents of his gun into the breast of the other. The combat is ended by a few blows from the heavy end of the gun. And as Brutus comes growling towards George, the form of Bess is seen stealing out from the thicket. Down upon the river she runs, snatches up the smallest wolf, and throwing it over her shoulder, makes her way back again without a word. George leaves the other for a repast for the hungry dog, and pursues his way slowly and safely home ; where he is welcomed with a good supper, and many entreaties to come to the fire and get warm. But remarking that the contest he had been engaged in had warmed him quite through, he hastens to relate his fearful adventure to the family ; who felt very

thankful to the witch's dog for his timely aid, and resolved never to allow any one to molest Bess or her dog in future.

Mr. Bland, however, could not approve of any such resolutions. He pointed them to the mercy of God, who had sent this wonderful deliverance to their dear George; and hoped that this thrilling event would be gratefully remembered, as another instance of their Heavenly Father's watchful care.

The event was long remembered by the elder members of the family; and often talked over by the younger ones; and Willie thought it the "prettiest story" he ever heard. And when it was too old a story to afford any more amusement, they turned to their good uncle, whose abundant resources of information were ever ready to instruct and enliven them during those days when the weather kept them entirely within doors.

George was his uncle's constant companion; and his friends could see that his mind and manners were much improved by intimacy with this good friend. Elizabeth, however, seemed to engage more of Mr. Bland's tender care. Her health was quite delicate; and her mild countenance and timid manner, which were very prepossessing, readily gained

for her the warm friendship of her kind and sympathizing uncle. She, on her part, was charmed by his intelligent and amusing conversation; and found sufficient employment for every leisure hour in his well-stored library; even forgetting at times that she sat alone in *that* room; so sunbright and cheerful did the place seem, enlivened by the gay singing of the beautiful canaries.

Mary also took great pleasure in her uncle's society; and during the winter, as she had promised, read through her Bible.

She did not, however, at that time, lay up its precious truths in her heart, or in her memory. Curiosity was her chief motive in this first perusal, and a desire to please Mr. Bland; who kindly conversed with her upon every difficult passage. She promised him to begin and read it again with more leisure. And he begged her to pray for aid from on high, to enable her to treasure its sacred truths in her heart.

Elizabeth had read hers differently. She had learned this truth, which before she was ignorant of; that all men are born in sin. This discovery of her own corrupt nature fixed itself in her mind, and spread a gloom over her feelings. She had not derived that

enjoyment from reading her Bible which she anticipated ; for the more she read the more anxious and thoughtful she became. The "Sun of righteousness" had not yet shone upon her, to give her joy and peace in believing ; and she told her uncle one day, in gloomy despondency, that she did not think she would read in it again. Mr. Bland asked her reason for such a strange decision. She told him that she had expected to be cheered, and encouraged in doing her duty, by reading the Bible ; but instead of that she had been filled with great sorrow and was very unhappy. After much conversation upon this interesting subject, Mr. Bland concluded by saying,

" Yes, dear child, you have found out from God's holy word, that you are tormented by a disease, of which before you were not conscious. Now promise me, Elizabeth, that you will read your Bible again, with prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit, and you will find a balm to heal you. Yes ! I may promise you this. Experience has taught me, that there is a way of escape for the vilest sinner, and balm to heal a broken heart."

Thus did this faithful Christian affectionately administer counsel to his young friends. And he felt sufficiently rewarded and en-

couraged by the deep attention which they gave to all he said.

Nothing of much importance occurred during the rest of the winter, except that little Willie was for some days extremely ill. After ten days the physician pronounced him convalescent; though his poor mother still insisted that he would die, because the dog had howled dreadfully all night; and in her distress she threatened to have the poor beast killed. When Mr. Bland heard this, he promised to take effectual means to prevent the dog from howling.

“I fear,” he said, “you will think I intend to turn witch this time; but there will be nothing mysterious in the matter. So come with me, George, and I will show you how to make dogs quiet at night.”

And now the wonder was, what their uncle could mean. Mary and Elizabeth both followed, as George went out with Mr. Bland towards the dog's kennel. George began to fear that his uncle intended to kill his faithful friend. But Mr. Bland assured him he had no such intention; but wished him to see for himself how Fleet's fidelity was rewarded. Then stooping down, he looked into the kennel.

“Ah! George,” he said, in a tone of mild reproof, “it is just as I expected; full of snow, and the cracks all open. I will go and get some tow, while you bring a plenty of dry straw.”

They soon returned, bringing also a hoe and broom. George dug out the hard snow and ice, while Mr. Bland stuffed tow into every crack. The broom was then used to take out all the light snow; and after George had spread it thickly with straw, Mr. Bland brought his arms full of soft hay, and covered the straw, until the girls laughed, and said it looked too nice for a dog.

“And now, where is Fleet?” said Mr. Bland.

“Fleet, Fleet!” called out George; and the poor animal came shivering up to him, with his head and tail drooping, and not much fleetness in his step. George said that the poor creature’s looks reproached him; and Mr. Bland, patting the dog on the neck, said—

“Now, my good Fleet, we shall have no more of your nightly complaints. We shall find that you like a warm bed better than a cold one; and, George, you must remember, that he will need a good supper to help to

keep him warm until the long, cold nights are over."

And Mr. Bland was right; for after Fleet had been thus kindly cared for, there were no more nightly howlings from him. Willie, too, improved rapidly, notwithstanding his mother's sad apprehensions.



The Young Gardener.

THE approach of spring was hailed with joy by the young people ; and the older ones saw its return with pleasure. Many were the plans formed for enjoying it ; and all began to talk about preparations for the coming summer.

Elizabeth talked of her poultry-yard. Mary thought it would be time, in a few weeks, to put her dairy in readiness for warm weather. George said he would have an early garden, as the spring promised to be open ; and little Willie made his uncle promise to show him how to make his garden. The fond parents anticipated much pleasure from everything that made their children happy. And good Mr. Bland was always delighted when he saw others enjoying themselves.

Hardicus and Judy began to bustle about, making up large brooms of twigs, for sweep-

ing the yards, and putting aside the loose lumber, which had been thrown about during the winter. Little Patty had already begun to pull up the weeds as fast as they made their appearance; and Jim said that the meadows would soon be green enough to turn the cattle in.

Vegetation, however, did not advance so rapidly as their young hearts had anticipated; and the cold nights in April were not very favorable to the gardening which George had commenced.

But time passed rapidly. May came; and George, with the help of Hardicus, had his garden completely made.

Mary's flower-beds, too, were neatly laid out; and the poultry-yard swept and the hen-house whitewashed by Judy, and made almost as nice as the adjoining apartment, her own pleasant home.

"Well," said George, seating himself one mild, bright morning between his father and uncle, "I hope I shall have good luck with my garden this year, as I have had some of your experience and advice in planting it, uncle."

"Luck!" repeated Mr. Bland, "you can do very well without luck. In planting a gar

den, prudence and industry are all that is wanting."

"Yes, uncle, but I mean that I am so unfortunate in everything I undertake. If I plant seeds, not more than one in ten comes up; or, if I set out a tree or shrub, it almost always dies."

"George," said Mr. Finland, "you should be careful to plant everything in the right time of the moon."

"I do not believe, brother," replied Mr. Bland, "that the moon has much effect upon vegetation. From my own observation, I never found that it had; and the experience of many of the most noted agriculturists goes to prove that there is more of superstition than of reason in most notions about the moon's effect upon plants. You are not an old gardener, George. You must bear some disappointments before you will possess experience. Perhaps you do not plant your trees and shrubs deep enough; and the seed you sow, if good, would invariably spring up, if not planted too deep or too shallow. There are rules for all these things, and they must be observed in order to insure success. I will go with you, and help you to transplant those

lilacs. They will look beautiful in a year or two, shading Mary's dairy."

"Thank you, sir," said George, as he turned to go with his uncle. "I dreamed last night that I saw those lilacs in full blossom."

"Ah, George," said his father, "you know the old saying, 'You will have trouble out of reason, if you dream of flowers out of season.'"

"But this is almost the season of flowers," returned George, "even in our cold climate, and I fear it is almost too late to transplant the lilacs."

"Never mind the dreams, George," said Mr. Bland. "If you have no sorrow, except what shall arise from your dreams, you will never be greatly troubled. But when trouble comes, as come it will to all, then be ready to cast all your care upon Him, who has invited the weary and heavy-laden to come unto him."

"I have been," replied George, "more than once, made very unhappy by my dreams."

"That was only because you allowed yourself to be so. You anticipated what never came to pass, and so became a coward, and a slave to your imagination. That which should be a source of pleasure to you, has become a torment; and unless you endeavor to curb it

now, it will in a few years be uncontrollable. I will not tell you, George, never to let me hear you speak again of dreams or signs; but on the contrary, I wish you always to communicate to me every thought you have on this subject, that your reasonings may be examined, and if false, confuted."

"But do you not believe in any signs, uncle?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Bland, "there are some signs which I believe; for instance, that when it is cloudy all round, it *may* rain; or that when the sun sets clear, the next day will be fair; that the east wind will bring rain, and that the errors of youth, if not corrected, will lead to shame and misery. Such signs I believe in, though not implicitly; for every one of them has been known to fail. My rule of faith is in the word of God alone. In that I cannot err. But I expect to have many opportunities of arguing this point with you; so come now, and let us go to work. There are not so many here to transplant as I thought; but we will put off part of the work until to-morrow; because to-morrow will be Friday, and I remember what you told me about the fruit trees, and want to convince you, that those which we plant to-morrow will

thrive as well as those we are now planting.”

“Well, sir,” returned George, “as it is of little consequence whether they live or die, we will try the experiment; but to say what I think, I never knew anything that was done on Friday that went just right.”

“Have you,” asked Mr. Bland, “ever known things to go *just wrong* on Friday, more than on any other day?”

“Yes, uncle, many things. I remember that on Friday your sad letter reached us. And I know perfectly well, that it was on Friday that Jim turned the colt into the meadow, where he was killed by trying to jump over the paling by the barn. Yes! and only last Friday, you know, uncle, we were at the trouble of taking a long ride to see a friend, and found no one at home. And on Friday—”

“Yes! on Friday,” said Mr. Bland, interrupting him, “God created part of this wonderful world; and what part, dear George, do you think it was?”

“I can’t tell, sir, but there seem to me to be many things created that are of no manner of use; and I suppose such are the things that were created on Friday.”

“You have some very strange ideas, my

dear nephew ; but you cannot prove that there is anything in nature formed for no purpose ; though to our understanding it may appear so. But at all events, God blessed that which was created on Friday as well as the work of the other days, 'and God saw that it was good.'"

"What you say, uncle, I believe is perfectly true ; but I have always been led to believe, that no good luck could happen on Friday, and have often wished that there was no Friday in the week. Sometimes I have wished to begin a piece of work, but when I thought what day it was, I have put it aside, even when that time seemed the best and only time to attend to it. And I promise, that if the lilacs we plant to-morrow thrive as well as these, I shall begin to be convinced that one day is as lucky as another."

"If, George, you were as careful to note down the unpleasant events of other days, you would find that just as many occur on some other of them as on Friday ; and as many good things on this day as on any other. What day was it when you broke your arm ?"

"I don't remember, sir."

"But," said Mr. Bland, "if it had been Friday you would not have forgotten ; tell me honestly, George, would you ?"

“No sir; for I never forget anything that goes wrong on that day.”

“What day was it, when the horse ran away with you, and you were so wonderfully preserved from being killed?”

“I remember perfectly well, that it was Monday; for I had taken Elizabeth to school, where she stayed until Friday. I was returning alone, when the accident happened. I know it was not on Friday, for then it would have happened as I went; for she always came back with me; and you know I was alone at the time. It was on my way home on Monday, I am almost sure.”

“And thus, George, I could mention many other accidents, that did not occur on this innocent day, which has acquired such a bad name with many. But the truth is just as you say; you always carefully remember things that go wrong on Friday.”

“One thing I do remember, that occurred on Sunday; the death of Sylvia. You remember what we told you of that sad business?”

“Yes, indeed I do; and no little incident of the sort ever made a deeper impression on me. It was shocking, that the innocent little lamb should be sacrificed, to bring to pass the prediction of a worthless hag.”

“Do you really think she killed it, uncle? She said the dog did.”

“I suppose the dog did as she made him do. I have no doubt that it was done designedly, as I before told you. I hope I shall some day have an opportunity of meeting with this miserable creature.”

“Sure enough,” said George, “you never have seen her. She will almost frighten you. She looks so strange. I will try to let you know the first time she comes in sight.”

“Yes, I must see her, George, and talk with her too. If it is possible to reclaim and civilize her, it ought to be done. At all events, I shall make an attempt to do so.”

Here they were interrupted by Elizabeth, who came to ask if her uncle would tell her where to find the atlas he wished her to look at.

“It is on the large box in the garret, my dear,” said Mr. Bland.

Elizabeth looked beseechingly at George, who understood her perfectly.

“I will go with you, Lizzy,” he said.

“It is not so heavy as to require two to carry it,” said Mr. Bland, smiling. “I will go for it myself.”

“No, no, uncle, I will go alone,” said

George. "Do you stay here, Lizzy, and I will soon be back."

"And what can be the reason, Lizzy," asked her uncle, "that you could not go alone for the atlas?"

She blushed and hesitated, and before she made any reply, George came running back with the book, quite out of breath, and looking as if he had been chased by a bear. He whispered to Lizzy, while Mr. Bland opened the atlas; "I am glad you did not go alone, for you would have been scared to death. It was right on the book, and I had to remove it before I could get the atlas. I assure you it made me shudder when I touched it."

George was so excited that he had spoken louder than he intended; and his uncle had overheard every word. He looked up in much surprise, as George concluded; and seeing Elizabeth's colorless face, asked what he had found in the garret that made him look so wild. George now began to think how strange his conduct must appear to his uncle. He felt quite ashamed, and went on to explain matters, by telling him that the human skull, which he had taken from his box, had been a terror to everybody; that no one would ven-

ture into the garret except himself and his father; and even they would not go there at night.

Mr. Bland was grieved and surprised at what George had said.

“O, my poor children,” he said, “and is it possible that a harmless bone has so tormented you? What is the reason you did not tell me sooner? I would have put it at once out of your way. True,” he continued, “that head was once a terror to many; for the man was a robber and murderer; but now it is as harmless as this stone. You shall all, some day, examine it with me, and see how curiously and wonderfully it is put together.”

George shrunk back at the thought, and Elizabeth, in breathless fear, hastened into the house.

Mr. Bland and George had just completed their work when Mary came to thank them for their trouble; and remarked, at the same time, that she was glad they had transplanted an odd number, for that was lucky.

“There it is again,” said Mr. Bland; but Mary begged he would not mind her signs this time, for she came to invite them to partake of a nice repast, which she had prepared with her own hands for them.

VI.

The Evening Walk.

It was a calm, warm evening of lively spring; the sun had just disappeared in the veiled splendor of his vernal glory, shedding forth still, like cheering smiles of heaven, varied hues of purple, gold, and brilliant gems, on many a gorgeous fold of twilight drapery, far up the deep-blue sky; the quiet air was enlivened with exhilarating fragrance of early rose, and violet, and hyacinth; garden and orchard glowed with rich promise, in an exuberant bloom of peach, and apricot, and cherry, and opening buds of later fruit: and the shooting foliage of the forest here and there fore-shadowed other beauties, soon to be added to such scenes, by the preserving and perpetuating influence of creative power and goodness; when Mary, animated by the lovely prospect of the landscape, spreading out its charms on every side, proposed to her sister a walk to Mrs. Mason's pleasant dwelling.

Elizabeth gladly consented, and with bonnets and capes in hand, and prepared for a later hour, arm in arm they started from the door, with unusual cheerfulness. It will not be dark for a long time, they thought, and George would come for them if Donald Masor was not at home to see them safely back.

“See, Lizzy, we have a bright twilight, and there is the young moon peering through the fleecy clouds.”

“It is, indeed, a lovely evening,” said Elizabeth; and turning, the moon shone softly in her face.

“My precious sister!” exclaimed Mary, “this is the first time you have seen the new moon since it changed, and that was over your left shoulder. That is a very bad sign, you know.”

“Yes, indeed,” sighed the poor girl. “Why did you not think to tell me, Mary, that I might have turned my right shoulder that way?”

“I did not think, until it was too late,” said Mary. “What shall we do? come, let us go back.”

“O no, Mary, it is as bad luck to turn back, as to see the moon over the left shoulder; but I shall have no comfort all the way. What a

pity it is that we are ever timid. However, it is still light, and we need not be afraid now • but let us hasten, and get through the wood before it is dark. Suppose we should meet old Bess in the woods. O! what should we do?"

"Sure enough, what should we do? But let us not think about her now. It is a charming walk; and when we are through the wood, it will still be light, and we will have time to gather some wild flowers for Mrs. Mason. When we get in sight of her house, we will not be afraid. Anna will be very glad to see us, and I love to hear Mrs. Mason talk, she is so intelligent and pleasant."

"And so cheerful too," added Elizabeth. "We always find some rational amusement there; Anna has so much time for reading."

O! she is a dear creature," said Mary, "and I think she likes us as much as we do her. Lizzy, don't tell Mrs. Mason our trouble about seeing the moon over our left shoulder; for you know she always laughs at such signs."

"I promise you to say nothing about that," replied Elizabeth. "See the beautiful sky; it is still light, and there is Mrs. Mason's beautiful old mansion"

Once through the wood, they began to feel quite safe.

“This is a very good path through the meadow,” remarked Mary. “I am glad we have on thick shoes, for the dew has already fallen; but the grass is very short. Here are some pretty violets; and, what is that white flower? Let us gather it; for Mrs. Mason can tell us its name. There are very few flowers in blossom yet. It is too early.”

“Did you not hear something?” asked Elizabeth, standing still, and seizing her sister by the arm, while with breathless attention she listened.

“We have no time to *stop*,” said Mary, as she started from her, and hastened along the path.

“Mercy!” she exclaimed, “Lizzy, look at that great toad in the path. How shall we pass it? What shall we do?”

They both stood gazing at the poor, harmless creature, as if held by a charm. With clasped hands Elizabeth whispered,

“It is too late to go back alone. O! Mary, what *can* we do?”

At length Mary summoned sufficient courage to throw something at it, and the poor little frightened toad hopped into the grass

to hide itself. "Come," exclaimed Mary, and away they went at full speed.

When they reached Mrs. Mason's yard, they were quite overcome with fear and fatigue, and almost breathless, sank down upon the grass.

Anna had seen them from the window, and hastened down the long avenue to meet them. She was shocked to see how pale they both were.

"Dear girls," she asked, "what can be the matter? Mary dear! Elizabeth! Have you seen a wolf?"

"O! no," replied Mary, the first to recover herself, "it was only a great toad."

"Poor, dear little toad," said Anna, laughing heartily, "no doubt he was more frightened at you great creatures, than you were at him. I have quite a mind to beat you both with this stick for scaring me so. I thought surely your house was on fire, or that something dreadful had happened."

"We were not only frightened, Anna," said Elizabeth, in much agitation, "but, you know, it is *such* a bad sign for a toad to cross one's path!"

"I know no such thing, and you cannot make me believe your foolish signs. But

come into the house ; it is too damp out here ; get up off the ground ; you are not quite lifeless, I find. I will make mamma laugh heartily at you."

The girls could not help laughing at Anna's sarcasm ; and jumping up, begged that she would not tell Mrs. Mason how silly they had been.

"O ! I must," she said.—"I love to see mamma laugh. It does me good, we find very little in this quiet place to laugh at ; though we are always cheerful and happy."

"Pray," said the girls, "don't say a word to your mamma. We will try to make her laugh in some other way. Now promise us."

"Well," returned Anna, "if you promise to be better girls hereafter, I will promise ; but come, turn aside, and let us walk in the garden, and then you will have time to get your right looks again, before mamma sees you ; for you certainly look like a couple of frightened sheep."

Anna's cheerful raillery had a good effect upon her young friends ; and they strolled about in the garden until it was nearly dark. When they entered the house they met with a warm welcome from Mrs. Mason. She extended a hand to each and said, "I have

been expecting you in for some time. How you young people love to linger in the twilight. Why did you not hurry them in sooner, Anna?"

"Because, dear mother, they had hurried themselves out of breath before I met them."

"Ah! what hurried you so much?—but never mind, it was growing dark, and I know how timid girls generally are when walking alone. All I used to be afraid of when I was young was cows. I have climbed over many a fence to get out of the way of them, and have gone twice the distance of my road to avoid them. I now can see how foolish this was; for persons are very seldom in danger from cows."

The girls felt happy to think they were safe with their friends, and had quite recovered their good looks and spirits, by the time the lights were brought in, though Mrs. Mason observed that Elizabeth was whiter than usual. But Anna said it might be the fatigue of running, and the contrast of her dark hair with her beautifully fair complexion.

Kind words were exchanged, and pleasant inquiries made on both sides. Anna said she was very glad they had come; for Donald had gone to the city, and they began to fee

very lonely. Time passed on so happily, that when the clock struck nine, they could not believe it was so late. The girls began to fear that their brother had some engagement which would prevent him from coming for them; as they knew he was not at home when they started, though their mother had promised to tell him where they had gone. They began to feel quite uneasy, and Mary offered to start without him.

“O! I cannot do that,” said Elizabeth, “for if there was nothing else, I am afraid of wolves; for I heard father say they had been quite troublesome this spring.”

“That is true,” said Mrs. Mason, “and unless you could defend yourselves, you might be in great danger. If George does not come, you can just as well stay all night; and if he does come, I do not think I will allow you to go back so late. It is quite cool to-night, and the meadow very wet with dew.”

The girls felt quite complimented by Mrs. Mason’s cordial invitation, but said they were afraid their parents would feel anxious about them. Anna thought it was not yet too late to expect George; but said he would have to go back alone, for she would not let Elizabeth go so far in the night air.

They had scarcely settled these arrangements, when George entered. He appeared quite flurried; and after a look of inquiry from all the company, Anna clasped Mary's hand significantly, and asked him if he had seen any frogs in the meadows.

"No," said he, "but I have had another encounter with a wolf; the largest, I think, I ever saw. I had armed myself, you see, before I left home, with this good club. He kept creeping up towards me, and I would brandish my good weapon, and strike it upon the ground and trees in such a manner as to intimidate him. If he had had a companion, I should certainly have been attacked."

They all listened with horror, and trembled to think of his narrow escape. He said he thought his sisters had better remain; and Mrs. Mason tried to induce him to stay also; but as he could not do so, she told him she had some old torches, and he could light one, and then the beast would not approach too near. George thought that a very good idea; and said he was sorry that Donald was from home, for they must have a hunt for the wolf in the morning.

As George was in a hurry to go, Mrs. Mason had several torches brought, and with a

ighted torch in one hand, and his huge club in the other, he bade them good night and marched off quite bravely.

Elizabeth wished he had brought Fleet with him, and Mary and Anna looked quite anxiously after him, as his light wound along the meadow path, until it disappeared in the wood. Mrs. Mason told the girls not to be anxious; for she had known persons to defend themselves from fiercer animals in this way.

“ Ah !” sighed Anna, giving the girls a significant glance, “ I wonder that any persons should be frightened at seeing a toad, when they should feel thankful they had not met a wolf !”

The girls both blushed ; and began to fear that Anna would yet betray them ; especially when her mother asked what led her to make such a remark.

“ Why, mamma, did you never hear of persons who were seriously troubled because a toad had crossed their path ?”

“ Yes. I have not only heard of such, but have known such persons. I once had a very dear friend, who made herself miserable about many such foolish signs ; and although she was well educated, and became truly pious, yet she never entirely overcame those super-

stitutions which had been taught her in childhood. I have known persons to make themselves perfectly miserable, if a looking-glass was broken in their house; not for the loss of the mirror, but because they thought the accident 'a sure sign of death.' I once heard a lady ask another, if she did not know that she never would get rich until she had worn out all her wedding clothes. I have known persons who would not put a candlestick with a lighted candle on a bed, for the world; not for fear of setting fire to the bed-clothes, but because it was to them 'a very bad sign;' and nothing would induce them to let a candle burn down and go out of itself in the candlestick; not for fear of fire, but because they thought it 'a sign of death.'"

"My dear mamma," said Anna, "do intelligent people ever really believe such strange things?"

"The impressions made on childhood's tender memory are very lasting. I remember well, that when I was a very little child, my nurse used to tell me, that angels fed on the fair flowers that bloom and flourish bright in Paradise; and after that, I saw an engraving in my mother's Bible, of an angel descend-

ing upon a cloud, and holding in one hand a flower. Then I thought that what my nurse had said was surely so. And even now, the sight of beautiful flowers brings to my mind very dear recollections; and I have some times thought that my great fondness for these 'smiles of God,' as some good man has termed the flowers, was imbibed from impressions thus made on my childhood's tender memory. And if my nurse had been like some of those superstitious creatures, who are allowed to have the chief care of many children, the impressions made upon my young mind might have been very pernicious. I was always very particular in this respect with my own children, and once dismissed a nurse for telling ghost stories to Anna."

"Indeed," said Anna, "I feel very thankful to you, my dear mother; for I do greatly pity those who are fearful of what they cannot see, and are really afraid of old Bess."

"She certainly is a witch," said Mary. Anna clapped her hands and laughed heartily; while Elizabeth asked Mrs. Mason earnestly, what she thought of Bess.

"She is certainly a very strange mortal, and, I fear also, a great sinner; perhaps a

convict escaped from justice. If she were only poor and miserable, she would be thankful for kindness, and willing to admit those benevolent persons to her hovel who have attempted to do her good. But she is so profane and thievish as to deserve no pity. She has done some things for which she really deserves to be punished; and I fear that she will yet come to some dreadful end. But the idea of her being a witch is too absurd for me."

"Then you do not believe in witches, Mrs. Mason," said Elizabeth earnestly. "We read of them in the bible. Were they not really witches?"

"Yes; as far as wickedness could make them such. And I will not undertake to say precisely what influence Divine Wisdom permitted evil spirits to exert on earth, before the dispensation of the gospel was established. But the truly wise and good never pretended to any such thing as witchcraft. Many have imposed upon the ignorant and credulous, and made them believe a lie; affecting secrecy and mystery, to conceal the vanity, folly and infamy of their pernicious arts. Their witchcraft consisted chiefly in cunning tricks, or in the knowledge of some natural secrets, un

known to the generality of mankind. They always preferred the night for the practice of their black art, and dreaded nothing so much as the open day, and the scrutiny of the intelligent and virtuous. God condemned in the Holy Scriptures of the law of Moses, those who thus pretended to look into futurity, by their sinful arts; yes, condemned them even to death. Such pretensions are exceedingly wicked, and those who encourage them are always to be blamed. Men never begin to consult witches and fortune-tellers, while they have any real trust in God. It was after King Saul had wandered from the Lord, and rejected His commandments, that he went to consult the wicked witch of Endor as a *medium* between him and the deceased prophet Samuel. And how can any one believe that the pure and holy God would conceal his will from his true, devoted servants, sober-minded Christians, who endeavor to obey his laws in all things, and reveal it to vagabonds, who break the laws of God and man? The blessed word of God will tell us what to do, or not to do, better than any witch, or conjurer or superstitious sign. And those who err under the light of the Gospel, by believing in such things, deserve to be deceived. They madly

choose the dim twilight of heathen fiction in preference to the bright mid-day of Christian faith."

"Then do you believe that all such signs are foolish?" asked Mary with much surprise

"Yes, my dear, I think them not only foolish and useless, but sinful. They are foolish, because they are false, and only imaginary. And they are sinful, because they are presumptuous attempts to look into futurity without the help of Divine inspiration. Those who regard superstitious signs are really much to be pitied. They are often very unhappy. Almost everything is a source of uneasiness, and even of torment to them. They cannot enjoy the beauties of nature, nor take such pleasure in anything as they would, if free from their constant and disturbing apprehensions of evil, foreboded by some unlucky sign. I hope, my dear girls, that you are not inclined to believe in such things, yet as I have before said, I have known persons who had their minds so early and deeply imbued with superstitions, that all their learning in after-life did not entirely obliterate their errors. Nothing but true religion, which leads its possessor to put himself and all his concerns into the hands of an All-wise God, can make any

one perfectly easy and unconcerned about his future destiny ; whether in this life, or in that which is to come. It is God alone that rules our destinies, and He will do all things well.”

Mary and Elizabeth felt self-condemned, and resolved to exert all their powers in future, to overcome what they now began to think childish fears. But alas ! they depended only upon their own good resolutions ; forgetting that the grace of God alone can wholly eradicate such errors.

VII.

The Rapping.

MRS. MASON, who has just been introduced to the reader's notice, was a woman of eminent piety and uncommon intelligence. She was very highly esteemed by all her neighbors, and most truly was she worthy of their regard.

The house in which she lived was her native home ; and she felt attached to it by the many ties, which had been strengthening from her childhood, and constantly increasing. There her parents had lived and died, and there she had been married to her worthy husband ; from whom, however, she was obliged to be separated the greater part of the time, as his business was trading with the East Indies. In consequence of this his children were left chiefly to the guidance of their mother, in whom they enjoyed a very competent guardian. Much care had been taken to give

them every advantage in education which the country then afforded, and to instil into their hearts that piety, for which their mother was distinguished, and which would render them in after-life useful and happy. They were now everything that the fondest parents could wish ; and Captain Mason saw with heartfelt delight, the last time he visited his beloved home, that his children were all that his heart could desire.

He looked forward with pleasure to the period when he should be no longer separated from his family, and prayed fervently that the time might not be far distant.

His last parting with them was so tender and solemn, that some of the neighbors thought it a sign that he had parted from them forever ; and when George saw the beautiful knife, which Captain Mason had given his son for a keepsake, before he went away, he told Mary that he knew the captain would never return. But he had now been absent nearly three years, and was still living, and it seemed that all the '*true signs*' were likely this time again to prove false.

Donald was a manly youth, highly intelligent, and refined in his manners. He was the light and happiness of his only sister, and

a great source of comfort to his mother. He had for several years taken nearly all the charge of the farm upon himself, during his father's absence ; thus relieving his mother of many cares. Many said he was too sober-minded and thoughtful for one so young. Yet with his mother and sister he was always cheerful and truly happy. The thought of the far-distant father would often cast a shade of serious thought over his fine features, and he would sigh for the return of his revered parent ; and daily were fervent prayers heard on high from his young heart for the safety of that beloved one.

Anna was altogether such as she appears in the preceding chapter ; lively and cheerful, and at times so joyous as to make those who did not truly know her think her volatile. But this was far from being the case. Young as she was, she knew that in their retired residence, remote from neighbors, and much separated from her father, it was her duty, as much as possible, to enliven her home, and brighten the sober length of time which must elapse during the absence of the 'good captain,' as his friends called him. Yet Anna had a loving, trustful heart ; and truly pious thoughts of God's over-ruling providence and

care. She was so beautiful, in the eyes of her mother, that only her presence was necessary to dispel any gloom which might hover around her almost widowed heart. And Mrs. Mason blessed God for giving her child a joyful, happy spirit. Anna was very thoughtful of her brother's wants and wishes; and studied his enjoyment more than she did her own. She was his model of all sisterly affection, and he often found himself, when from home, contrasting others with her. She was truly the pride and the life of this quiet home.

From the hospitable dwelling of this interesting family, Mary and Elizabeth started early the next day on their way home.

Nothing worthy of notice took place during their walk, except that Elizabeth found a horse-shoe, which she took carefully home, saying that she would have it nailed on the door of her hen-house, "to keep the witches out." Mary asked her where had gone the good resolutions she had made while she listened to Mrs. Mason's reasoning. But Elizabeth said there could be no *harm* in having the shoe put on the door, and it might do good.

They were glad to find their brother safe at

alone, and preparing to go with several others in search of the wolf. Old Hardicus had armed himself with a pitchfork, and promised Judy, that she should have the skin for a warm cape. She would have gone too, but little Patty begged her not to go ; for if the wolf should kill "daddy and mammy" both, what would she do. Judy at length yielded to the entreaties of her child, and took the horse-shoe as Elizabeth directed, and nailed it upon the door of the hen-house.

The party engaged in the hunt returned after an hour or too, with the glad tidings that the wolf was killed. He was found by another party of hunters in the thicket, near the spot where George had seen him, and was so surfeited with the feast he had seized from an unguarded fold near by, that he was unable to make much resistance, and so became an easy victim to his pursuers. Hardicus was as much disappointed as little Willie, when he found that the wolf was claimed by "neighbor More," who had been the first to discover his hiding-place, and who was the chief loser by him. Judy seemed to care less for the loss of the skin than for Willie's disappointment ; who, however, appeared quite satisfied, when George took him by the hand that after-

noon, and asked him to go over to Mr. More's, to see the wolf. He said he had seen a fox, and now he would be glad to see a wolf too. Mr. More had promised not to skin the beast until some of his neighbor's children had seen him ; for though wolves were not uncommon, in those days, yet so large a one was a strange sight to some children.

George was hurrying Willie along, and they had reached the long lane which led to Mr. More's house, when he saw Old Bess crouching in a corner of the fence. Her dog lay near her, and she was digging in the ground with the horse-shoe which she always carried with her, while she muttered something to herself. She had placed some long straws across each other directly in the path. These George kicked aside, as he passed ; remembering what his uncle had said about this pretended witch. He did not intend to speak to her ; but when she saw the indignity offered to her charm, she sprang on her feet, threw up her arms in a violent manner, and shouted so loud that George started, and Willie screamed with terror.

'Arrah now, Misther George, woe betide ye ; for there be more nor one wolf in the wood ; and ye shall rue the day ye be sich

an infidel, as to bresh yer foot over my charm !”

“Be stil., you hag,” replied George, “I kuow you now better than I did a year ago. I am not afraid of anything that you can do.”

Bess trembled with rage, and Willie, with fear, as she went on with her threats.

“A poorty misther ye be, to call a poor body a hag. And didn’t I save yer life, too, on the ice that day in the night, when yer dog wadna come nigh till ye? But niver mind ye, my lad, ye shall rue the day, I tell ye, that ye bresh yer foot over the charm.”

George was now really frightened, as the frantic wretch shook the horse-shoe at him, and looked as though she would kill him if she could. He dreaded the idea of being forced to give her battle; and for fear of having to defend himself, he took up the little boy in his arms, and ran along the path as fast as he could go, while Bess screamed after him, “Ah! ye may run, but be sure it will find ye out. My curse always follows close after ye. It will sure ‘an catch ye.’”

Thus she continued until he was too far off to hear her words.

His old superstitious fears came over him,

and he shuddered at the thought of the evil she threatened, and returned home by another way in order to avoid her.

He did not intend to mention the circumstance to the family; but Willie looked so pale and seemed to have something to trouble him so much that his mother asked if he had been scared by seeing the wolf. He said no, but he was "afraid of the old woman."

George was then obliged to tell what had happened; the recital of which filled his mother and sisters with dreadful apprehensions.

Elizabeth said she was glad she had made Judy nail the horse-shoe on the hen-house door; and Mary pasted a leaf of an old bible on the inside of her dairy door; so soon had they both forgotten the wise counsels of their good friend, Mrs. Mason.

As the night drew on, George secured the sheep early, in the best way he could; and gave Fleet a good supper, telling him to be very watchful.

Mrs. Finland took the precaution to burn some tar in the chamber before she put Willie in bed, and made Patty come from her own little room and sleep on the floor in Willie's room.

After all these arrangements were made, and the night, dark and cloudy, closed in, they gathered around the stand where Mrs. Finland sat at work, and wished their uncle and father were at home; but they did not expect them until late, for they had gone to watch with a sick neighbor. They tried to talk and laugh as usual; but all would not avail. The curse of old Bess still sounded in George's ears; though he said not a word about it. Willie grew sleepy, and while his mother took him off to bed, the smell of the tar, as it burned, startled the girls, and they looked aghast at each other. They knew very well, that their mother had done this before "to keep the witches out," and her apprehension of evil made them more afraid than ever. Mrs. Finland returned, and sat quietly down at her work; but a gloom overspread her countenance, and she leaned her head upon her hand. She sat motionless for some time. George was reading, and Mary almost asleep, with her head in her sister's lap. The clock struck eleven; and Mrs. Finland said it was time they were all in bed, but that George must sit up until his father came; for she was afraid to leave the door unlocked. The girls

kissed their mother and retired, and Mrs Finland soon went to her own bed-room.

When left alone, the fears of early childhood came fresh and fast before the mind of George. It was near midnight. All was perfect stillness, while he sat quietly wishing that his father and uncle would come, and trying his best to fix his mind upon the book he was reading; but the more he tried, the more his mind wandered to the past, and a dread of the future came over him. The clock struck twelve. George became drowsy, and leaned back in his chair for a nap. Before he succeeded in composing himself to sleep, he was startled by a rapping noise. He jumped up, and listened attentively, but all was as quiet as possible. He sat down again, took up his book and tried to read. He sat perfectly still, and drowsiness came over him again. Then, *rap, rap, rap*, was heard. He started up—listened—walked to the window—looked out—and at last opened the door; thinking it might have been his father who knocked. All was still as death; and George was much agitated. He walked the room for a long time; and not hearing the noise again, he began to persuade himself that being half asleep, he had only imagined it. Just then

the parrot, unaccustomed to hearing such sounds at that late hour of the night, and startled by the noise George made in shutting the door, spoke out with its clear, shrill, piercing voice, "works of darkness." Poor George! this was almost too much for him. He absolutely looked at the bird in horror, while the unconscious little prisoner turned first one eye and then the other at the nocturnal intruder, as he appeared to consider George, and seemed to threaten him with his sharp beak, if he came any nearer. Again George went to the window, rubbed his eyes, and whistled; and composing his mind as much as possible, looked out an amusing book and again began to read. All was perfectly quiet. He heard the clock strike *one*. Now, he thought, his father and uncle would surely come soon, and he began to forget his fears. But presently a louder and longer rapping than he had before heard, broke the deep silence. George was at first too much agitated to move; and after a pause, *rap, rap, rap, rap, rap*, resounded again on the stillness of midnight. He sprang upon his feet—his hair stood on end—and he trembled all over. Just then the door opened; for George, in his confusion, had forgotten to lock it after he had

looked out ; and in walked Mr. Finland and Mr Bland.

“ Why are you still up, my son ?” asked Mr. Finland, in a tone of inquisitive surprise.

“ Yes, sir,” stammered out George, without thinking what he said.

The father looked in wonder at his son ; and Mr. Bland asked George what had frightened him, and if he was afraid because he was alone ?

“ No, sir,” George answered ; recovering from his terror, since his father and uncle had really come, and feeling quite ashamed of his conduct. “ I was not afraid to be alone, but I have heard something that has startled me very much.”

He then told them of the strange knockings he had heard.

“ Ah now, brother,” said Mr. Finland, turning and speaking in a triumphant manner to Mr. Bland, “ do you hear what he says ? I know there are sounds which neither you nor any one else can account for.”

“ Well, well,” returned Mr. Bland, “ let us keep entirely still, and perhaps we shall hear it again.”

They waited a long time in breathless si-

lence, and at last the same *rap, rap, rap*, was heard.

“Keep quite still,” whispered Mr. Bland; and after it was repeated once or twice more, he traced the noise to the pantry, which was adjoining the room where they were sitting. The door had stood ajar, all the night; and Mr. Bland walked noiselessly to it with the candle, and pushed it wide open; but the noise had ceased, and he stood perfectly still, while George whispered, “I do believe it is a rat in that old trap.” They all listened, with their eyes steadily fixed upon the trap; and truly there was the end of the mystery; for while they looked, the little prisoner—a poor rat in the trap—raised the lid as far as it could, and let it fall two or three times in quick succession, making a clear, rapping sound, which George acknowledged to be the very thing that had so much frightened him.

“Now, George,” said Mr. Bland, “I hope you are satisfied that all sounds may in some way be accounted for. I have endeavored to convince you, that there is nothing that cannot be seen, which a man need fear, except the sin of his own heart, and the holy God, who hates sin. If I had not quietly investigated this matter, and traced it to its source,

you would never have been convinced that there was not something supernatural in this knocking; and a famous ghost story might have been founded upon it."

"Here Leo," said Mr. Bland to the cat which had followed his master in, "take care of that little ghost that has frightened Master George almost to death;" and raising the lid of the trap, the rat sprang into Leo's paws, who soon put him out of all his trouble.

"Well, my dear uncle," said George, "you have thoroughly convinced me of my error this time; but when I was alone, and all was still, it did sound very strangely."

"It certainly did," said Mr. Finland, "even when we were all here together; and I don't wonder that George was frightened by it when all alone."

It was two o'clock when George went to his bed. He slept soundly for two hours; and waking up, found that it was past four o'clock, and broad daylight. He tried to compose himself to sleep again, as he had retired so late, and it was still earlier than he usually got up. But the events of the preceding night presented themselves so clearly to his mind, that he found sleep would not return, and he dressed himself slowly, and

went to look after the sheep. To his great consternation the first thing that met his eye was the calf, a few weeks old, lying apparently lifeless, with a rope tied about his neck. He sprang towards it, and the little animal struggled violently. He hastened and cut the loop, and raising the little creature was glad to find that it could still stand. He then opened the gate and the old cow ran bellowing towards it. He watched them with pleasure, and soon saw the calf sufficiently revived to help itself to a hearty breakfast. He felt happy to think he had just saved its life by rising a little earlier than usual.

When he returned from the barn, he was surprised to find his sisters out so early ; and told them of the narrow escape of the calf. And now the question was, who tied the calf. George thought that surely his father had not done it, and they concluded that either the boy Jim, or the old man Hardicus had.

“Some very stupid body did,” said George, “and the great wonder is, why during the long night the little animal had not strangled itself to death. Let us ask Hardicus about it, and see what the old fellow will say ; for there he is just creeping out of his door.”

The old man went to the bench outside the

door, where Judy always kept a tin pan for his wash basin, and began his ablutions.

The young people approached just in time to see the water wiped from his smooth, glossy face and gray, woolly head.

He made them a very respectful bow, and wondered what had brought Master George and the young Misses out so early. George told him in what a condition he had found the calf, and asked if he could tell him how it had happened.

Hardicus raised his hands and rolled up his eyes in such a manner as to excite their mirth. " 'Taint nottin to laugh at, Massa. I nebber tie de calf. I don't tink old Massa did neder. I tink de witches mus a' do it; for I hear great noise in de win, last night, and dey bin ride my broomstick berry hard; for see, it brok in two."

" See," said Elizabeth, pointing to a broken broomstick, " was it not broken yesterday? It looks as if it was done on purpose!"

" Oh no, Missey. It nebber was dat way afore. I sure I hear it thump round last night."

" Why, Hardicus," asked Mary, " did you ever see any such thing as a witch?"

" O! yis, Miss Mary I bin see sum."

“And pray,” asked Elizabeth, “what do they look like?”

“Well, Missy, sometime um look like old Bess—sometime like great black cat—and sometime jist like nottin!”

“He, he, he,” laughed Judy, coming to the door with the milk-pail in her hand. “I never see no witch yet—and ’m not a bit feard o’ none of ’em!”

“You git along, Judy,” said Hardicus, “you *is* feared—”

“But,” said George, interrupting the old man, and rather impatiently, “I want to know who *did* tie the calf.”

“I tell you, Massa George, I no know. I nebber did. It mus bin de witches.”

“I know that father didn’t tie it; for after he went over to neighbor Morgan’s, I was here, and the calf was loose; but I will ask him.”

“I tell you agin, Massa George,” said Hardicus in a troubled manner, “it was’ent me dat tie him.”

“I believe you,” said George, “but some one did.”

“Yis, Massa, yis, yis!”

“We are going to my dairy, George, wil you go with us?” asked Mary.

“Yes,” said he, “for I dreamed it was burned down.”

They soon reached the pretty stream, and crossing on a board, entered the low, stone building, and were astonished to find the shelves and walls all daubed with mud, and several large stones in the shallow part of the spring, which had been carefully cleaned out to make a place for the cream jar. Mary almost cried with vexation, and wondered who could have been so vile as to serve her such a trick, after she had had it whitewashed and the shelves cleaned.

“The witches, surely, Mary, or the fairies have been sporting here,” said George, “but I think they must have had dirty hands, and some strength too, to bring these great stones here. Here is the print of a bare foot in the mud, and a dog’s foot too—yes, more than one—too large for Fleet.”

“Ah!” said Elizabeth, “I was much troubled all night about what Bess said to you.”

“Yes,” exclaimed George, clapping his hands, “I believe that old Bess is at the bottom of all this mischief.”

“What shall we do to please her?” asked Mary, much troubled. “I fear when I put

my milk or butter here that she will destroy it."

"That is very likely; but the best way is to let her alone, and be kind to her, the first time you have a chance."

"I am afraid," said Elizabeth, "to go to my poultry yard; though it all seemed right while we were talking with Hardicus, and I see that he has let out the fowls."

They asked Hardicus, as they met him on his way to the garden, if all was safe; and he said he thought so. But they went and looked into the hen-house for themselves, and found the nests full of new hay, and the old lame duck quietly sitting in the corner, as if keeping watch. This they thought very strange; and Mary said,

"Elizabeth surely must be a favorite with the witches and fairies."

Elizabeth said she was glad that the horse-shoe had been put on the door; adding significantly, "I wonder what uncle will say of all this."

"Pray don't tell him," urged Mary, "he is so grave, when he gets upon this subject."

"I certainly shall," said George, "if I find a good opportunity; for I am determined if there is no truth in such things, to be con-

vinced of it, if possible. I have so often been deceived by trusting to signs, and have suffered so much from them, that I should be glad indeed if they had no more power over me ; and moreover, I am under a sort of promise to communicate to uncle all my thoughts upon this subject."

"But, uncle Bland never satisfies me," said Mary. "He only conjectures how such things happen. We might do the same, and yet be very far from the truth."

"That is true," replied George, "yet there is always much probability in his conjectures, and reasons too. I am determined to consult him about the events of last night, and hear his opinion. But come, Patty is calling us to breakfast."

When they were all assembled at the table, they were so quiet and grave, that their father asked what made them so sober. Mrs. Finland made an excuse for them. George had not slept much ; and the girls were up too early.

Mr. Bland, contrary to his usual custom, was quite silent. Even Willie did not smile and chatter as usual ; until the parrot, eyeing them earnestly, screamed out "works of darkness." These words seemed to rouse every

one, Willie laughed heartily ; George looked at the bird, with the same expression of wonder, that he always felt when Poll brought out these words ; and his heart trembled when he remembered how the bird's voice had thrilled through his nerves in the stillness of the last night.

Mary and Elizabeth started, and felt vexed that the bird had learned those words so exactly.

“These are the very words I had in my mind, as Poll spoke,” said Mr. Bland. “And now tell me, George, did you hear the dog bark about three o'clock this morning?”

George said he had not heard him ; but his father remarked, that he heard him bark in a very fierce manner ; but that he did not look out to see what was the matter.

“I did,” said Mr. Bland, “and I saw gliding across the yard, a dark figure, followed by what I thought was a dog. It was bright starlight ; yet I could not distinguish whether this figure was a man or woman. Fleet did not stir from his kennel ; but barked and growled terribly.”

“It was old Bess !” exclaimed Mary, “for I know no one else, who would be about in the dark with a dog. I now believe with you,

George, that she has made all the trouble of last night.”

George then told his uncle of his encounter with Bess, the day before; and of the calf and the dairy.

“I am very glad, George, that you have told me these things; and as I have promised, so I will make everything as clear as I can for you. When I saw that person in the yard last night, I thought it could not be for any good purpose. She—for now I feel convinced that it was your reputed witch—came from the direction of the barn, and no doubt she tied the calf, with the hope that it would draw the noose, which she made in the rope, so tight as to choke it before morning; but the little animal, not being accustomed to roam about in the dark, doubtless lay quietly down again after she left it, and its struggles could not have begun much before you got there, or it certainly would have died. This was done for revenge; as well as to make good her prediction, that you should rue the day you scorned her charm.”

“What you say, uncle, is very reasonable,” remarked George, “and as none of us tied it—for I believe Hardicus tells the truth—she certainly must have done it. And now do

you think she made such work at Mary's dairy?"

"I certainly do," replied Mr. Bland, "for yesterday morning I was up very early, and attracted by the beautiful appearance of the east, before the sun rose, I stood gazing at it from my window. The whole prospect was truly charming. From the sky my eye fell upon its bright reflection in the beautiful river, which was still and as clear as a mirror; and then ranged along the woods and meadows, until it rested upon Mary's pretty dairy, and there was rivetted, by seeing a hag-like creature, peeping in at the window. I remained motionless, with my eye fixed upon her. She entered the door and after a few seconds came out, and hurried towards the wood."

"But," said Mary, interrupting Mr. Bland, "my dairy was perfectly clean last evening, for mamma and I looked in as we walked along by."

"Grant it, my dear," he replied; "and do you not think that she, too, saw that it looked very nice? and do you not believe that it would give pleasure to such a character as Bess, to put things in disorder, and give you as much trouble as possible? She, no

doubt, did it as much to excite wonder, as to gratify her love of mischief, and to carry out her revenge towards George still further. I do not believe there is another person in the neighborhood, that would do such a thing."

"It certainly is the most natural conclusion we can make," said George, "and has reason on its side too. I believe I should have thought of it myself, if I had seen Bess standing there, as uncle did."

"But now, uncle," said Mary, "I think the most difficult part is yet unexplained."

"Yes," began Elizabeth, interrupting her, and speaking in rather a confident tone. "I believe uncle will find it harder to say, why there was no mischief done to my hen-house."

"I see no difficulty in that, my child. Perhaps she did not even think of it. But the most satisfactory conclusion is, that as the hen-house is under the same roof with Hardicus' cabin, and there is only a thin partition of boards between them, she might have thought that the noise of the fowls would waken the old man and his wife, and lead to a discovery of her villainy."

"Just so," said George. "I never thought

of that. I begin to think that Bess is bad enough for anything."

"What I have said, my dear children," added Mr. Bland, "is more than probable, though it cannot be proved; and even if I could not have explained these things so much to your satisfaction, yet, believe me, they never were accomplished by any supernatural agency."

"We are much obliged to you, brother," said Mr. Finland, "for taking so much pains to explain these things to the children, and to quiet their fears; and I hope that in future they will endeavor to find out the causes of such things without troubling you."

"I never consider it a trouble to speak with them on this or any other subject; and all that I ask of them is, that whenever they feel so disposed, they will communicate their thoughts freely to me."

Before the close of that day, George and his sisters found that they had still more reason to think that their uncle's conjectures were true; for while George was looking about the barn-yard, he discovered a rusty horse-shoe hanging on that corner of the fence where the calf was tied. Every one believed that Bess had placed it there, while she was

occupied in tying the calf, and in her hurry had gone off and forgotten it. This circumstance, connected with the prints of the feet of a large dog, in the mud by the dairy, fully justified all that Mr. Bland had conjectured.

VIII.

The Repulse.

THE house of Bess, in the wood, had been a place of terror to the timid for many years. It was situated upon a little rising ground at the end of the wood which formed one extremity of Mr. Finland's estate. As we have before said, it was supposed to be the remains of a wigwam; for there it had stood "time out of mind." It was built of heavy stones heaped, in their rough state, one upon another, and covered with logs, which looked as if they were selected for their durability. The ends of these logs stuck out irregularly. The turf, which had been put there to keep out the cold, now looked smooth and green as a hillock, except that here and there upon it was a bramble or some other wild bush. A small maple-tree had grown on the top near the front of this strange abode. Long grass and vines hung from the ends of some of the logs,

and the stony sides were covered with moss ; and here and there could be seen the remains of birds' nests sticking in the crevices. It appeared as if it had originally been plastered inside with something to keep out the cold ; and at this time there might be seen innumerable old rags, corn-husks, and grass sticking between the stones. An old tree had been blown down, close by the side of the building, and its long roots reached above the top. Underwood and brambles almost concealed the hut from view ; and no one would have supposed that a human being lived there. A rude door still hung upon heavy iron hinges ; and this feature made many dispute the notion that it had been built by Indians. But as this point was never settled by the wise people of that day, it would be worse than useless to attempt now to throw any light upon the question.

Mr. Heaton, the good minister of the village, who had made an attempt to interrogate Bess, said she certainly must have been very handsome in her youth. Though often called " Old Bess," he thought she could not be more than forty ; as her hair, though kept in a perfect mat, was not at all gray. Her features were finely formed, but thin and sharp

from want and sin, and her teeth perfect. She was very tall, and in her movements more resembled a man than a woman. Her skin was burned brown, and her hands, though small, were coarse and hard. She was active and strong; climbing a fence as nimbly as her dog, and throwing a sheep over her shoulder with much ease. Her chief employment in summer seemed to be to provide against the cold of winter; for heaps upon heaps of bushes, chips, and even well cut wood, which she would carry off from any yard that she passed in her nightly rambles, were piled about, at convenient distances from her door. One reason why some believed her to be a real witch was, that she had been seen at a neighboring town, dressed so decently that but for her dog, which was with her, she would not have been recognized.

Mr. Heaton, as he had determined, invited Mrs. Mason one day to accompany himself and Mrs. Heaton to the hut of Bess; to satisfy themselves whether anything could be done for her.

The day was bright and beautiful, when these benevolent ladies and their guide reached the end of their long walk. They found Bess seated upon a large stone near the door

of the hut, with a man's hat on her head, and smoking a pipe. She took the pipe from her mouth and looked in wonder at them. The log sprang towards them, but a word from Bess brought him to her feet, where he lay quietly down.

"And what be ye all afther?" asked the hag.

"We came," began Mr. Heaton, "to see if we could not persuade you to leave this gloomy place and take a room in the village, which we will prepare for you."

"Ye be very kind, but—"

Here she stopped,—and Mr. Heaton went on.

"We will find constant employment for you, and you can have an opportunity of living more as a Christian should do."

"Ye be very kind, sure," again she began

"I am very glad to think you are so sensible of kindness shown to you, and we wish you to make up your mind to leave this place as soon as possible. I will send a cart for you and anything you have here that you may wish to take with you."

"Saints above," exclaimed Bess, "do hear the man, sure the very old——"

"That is not a very respectful way for you

to speak to a minister of the gospel," said Mrs. Mason gently. "But it is so long since you associated with your fellow-creatures, that I suppose you ought to be excused."

"Ha—ha—ha—" laughed Bess, as Mrs. Mason concluded; and her loud laugh rang through the wood. "I have seed a praist afore now; and I know all the saints in the calendar; and I know ye too, my lady; and if the captain ever comes back alive, ye may wonder!"

"When shall we send for you, Mrs. Nisbey?" asked Mr. Heaton, anxious to determine that part of the business.

"Whin! whin?" exclaimed Bess, in a loud tone, "why, whin the stars fall from the heavens! whin the trees dance round the meadows! whin the dead rise from the grave! whin I am a fool, and whin Brutus has no teeth! thin ye may send for me, yer riverence."

"We are sorry to hear you speak in that way. We have come to do you good; and if you knew how much better it would be, for your body and your soul, to live like a Christian, you would immediately accept our offer."

"By my showl, now honey, I blave ye do think I am a born fool. And for what would I lave my nate little home here, and be lavin

poor Brutus to die? for ye could na get him away nohow. And for what would I be stuck up in a room with a set of fools coming in to spake to me every day; and yer river ence a preaching to me too? And for what would I be afther lavin ye, my pretty pet?" she continued, as she drew a long black snake out of her bosom and curled it round her naked arm.

Horror-struck, the ladies almost shrieked; but remembering that such snakes are very harmless, they kept quiet; looking in amazement at Bess, as she caressed the glossy reptile, which seemed to be much pleased, and after a few moments glided back into her bosom.

"These are my friends," she continued. "*That* I have had from a pup—and this," laying her hand on her bosom, "I have raised from the egg. Yis, an I love 'em, and would not lave 'em for all iv ye."

"We should be glad to help you through the rest of your earthly course," continued the patient man of God, "and will still try to convince you, that you are breaking the laws of God and man by living so."

"The laws of man," exclaimed Bess interrupting him, "I hate; and love to break 'em. I was free-born, and I have lived free, and

will die free; yes, die where and when I please. And as for His laws, why should I care for His laws? He forsook me long and long ago; and thin I was lost; and now I care naught for Him, or his laws. He can never find me here."

"O! miserable creature," said Mr. Heaton, "cease your blasphemy. I fear it is casting pearls before swine, to try to convince you of His goodness, and His mercy which waits to save even such a sinner as you."

"Whist!" cried the hag, "now by all the saints, yer preachin, but it won't do. Ye may as well be still; and if ye please, I will be glad to see ye goin."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mason, "we will not stay any longer with such a hardened sinner; but when you are left alone, I hope you will feel sorry for your disrespect to our good minister, and repent."

"Repint?" repeated Bess, apparently alarmed, "and for what shall I repint? What do ye know of me? Does the captain go to ould England! But never a bit will he come back again to tell ony tales. The waves will kiver him. The sharks will eat him, body and shawl, and the devil will keep him safe, till he gets ye too."

“Come, come,” said Mrs. Heaton, in dismay, “let us hasten away from this horrid place. I cannot bear to hear her. Mrs. Mason, do come. My dear husband, say no more to her!”

“Ah! my swate pet, now I hear ye spake for the first time,” said the woman, addressing Mrs. Heaton, “but give me yer hand, and I will tell yer fortin. How will ye live whin yer dear husband is dead? Ye canna come to the wood like me, for there are yer childer; and what will ye do thin? I will give ye a home here, but I won’t have yer childer. No, I will drive off the childer.”

Mrs. Heaton turned from her in horror, and went some distance from the spot; while Mr. Heaton and Mrs. Mason remained a little longer. Mr. Heaton again spoke earnestly to her; and as she did not interrupt him, he began to hope that his words might, after all, make some good impression upon her. After he concluded, Bess made a low curtsey, and told him she hoped that was the last ‘sarmon’ she would ever hear him ‘praich;’ that her heart was as hard as a rock, and that she had already forgotten all he had said. He told her if she was ever in want of anything she must come to him, for notwithstanding what

she had said, he would cheerfully assist her if he could. Bess told him that she wanted none of his help; that she could help herself; that she was as well and hearty as the best of them, and that she would die sooner than she would ask a favor of any one.

They left her, in despair, feeling, indeed, as if God had forsaken her.

Mr. Heaton thought it was not proper that such a lawless creature should be allowed to go at large in any community, and said that he would ask the opinion of some of the gentlemen of the neighborhood. Mrs. Mason related to him several things that Bess had done, for which she ought to have been punished, for several of them could have been proved against her; adding that so many seemed to dread offending her—as she was almost universally considered a witch—that nothing had as yet been done.

They then joined Mrs. Heaton, and walked homeward. They called at Mr. Finland's on their way, and chatted and rested an hour or two, and told their friends where they had been and what had occurred.

Mr. Bland said he would take some opportunity of seeing Bess himself; for as yet he had never happened to meet her.

IX.

The New Terror.

ONE day, as Mr. Bland and George were walking, he pointed to the dairy and said, "See, George, the four lilacs on this side, which were planted on Friday, look as flourishing as the others."

"Yes, sir," answered George, "I have looked at them before ; and I now begin to think that Friday is just like other days. Last Friday I went hunting, the first time that I ever went on that day. I shot eight out of the first flock of quails that I started. Fleet performed his part better than usual, and really I never had greater success."

"It was on Friday, George, that I left my old home in England, more than a year ago, and no calamity has befallen me since."

Mr. Bland and George sat down on the seat under the old tree by the door, where Mary and Elizabeth joined them. Mr. Bland seated

one at each side of him, and putting an arm around each, told them they were not to run away until he gave them permission. The girls were quite pleased and amused by such imprisonment; and Mr. Bland called to little Willie, who came running towards them, his countenance beaming with pleasure and expectation.

“Go, my little man, and bring me the bone that you will find on the chair by my bed.”

“Yes, sir,” said the child, and ran away, delighted to execute his uncle’s commands.

The girls now wondered what uncle Bland could be at; but George understood what was to take place. He sat down on a large stone at his uncle’s feet, and with an anxious face awaited the return of his little brother.

“I don’t like to look at bones,” said Mary, “it always makes me feel so strangely. I wonder what kind of a bone you have found, uncle.”

“Oh, Elizabeth and George know,” replied he, “and I promised some time ago, to let them examine it for themselves, and to make a few interesting explanations.”

Now the truth flashed upon the mind of Elizabeth, and she made an attempt to spring

from her uncle. This he had expected, and was prepared to prevent her.

Just then Willie came to the door holding in both hands the human skull before mentioned. George drew back, while Mary screamed so loud, that Willie, in his surprise, let the skull fall from his hands, and stood motionless.

Mr. Bland reproved his nieces more severely than they supposed he could, and soon succeeded in making them quiet.

“Why, my little man,” said he, addressing himself to Willie, “why did you let my bone fall down so hard? Pick it up and hand it to uncle.”

“Because Mary screamed so,” said Willie; and stooping down, he soon had it safe again in his hands, and stepping forward placed it upon Mr. Bland’s lap.

“That is a man; now kiss me.”

Willie did so, and then stood quietly by, to hear what was to be said.

Mr. Bland began, “This curious piece of God’s wonderful workmanship, is, I well know, quite a new sight to you all. But if you will quiet your absurd fears, and listen, you cannot fail to be enlightened and interested.”

“I never had an opportunity of examin-

ing anything of the kind before," remarked George, as he looked at it from a distance.

"Come near, child," said his uncle, "or you will not be able to see distinctly all its perfections."

"Perfections!" repeated Elizabeth to herself, "horrors, he had better say."

Yet they both kept still, so afraid were they of displeasing their uncle by another attempt to escape.

"Look," said he, as he took the skull into his hands, "we have not only the skull, but the lower jaw, perfectly joined to the upper by these curious hinges."

"O, uncle, do all our heads look like that?" asked Mary.

"Not just now, my dear, but a time will come, when there will be nothing left of our heads, but the bones which now enclose our brains, and these which mark the outlines of the face. All the animated beauty of the human countenance must pass away and be forgotten; but the beauty of the soul is immortal."

"See," he continued, "these sockets, they were once the most expressive part of the face, now how vacant."

"It does not seem possible," remarked George, "that the eye and what pertained

to it would be sufficient to fill so large a space."

"Oh uncle," said Elizabeth, "do let me go!"

"Not just yet. You will be pleased and interested, when you examine the different parts of which it is composed. See how nicely and perfectly these saw-like edges fit into each other. Some of the points are very irregular, yet each exactly corresponds to its fellow. And thus the skull is composed of distinct and separate bones, so exactly fitted together that it looks, at a superficial glance, like one entire and solid bone."

"And so I always thought it was," said Mary, in surprise.

"And what was here, uncle?" asked Willie, putting his fingers into it.

"There the brain was securely enclosed. See how large a place it occupied. In childhood the skull is constantly expanding to accommodate the growth of the brain."

Thus did Mr. Bland continue his remarks for some time; explaining the position of the several parts, and throwing in occasional remarks adapted to lead the minds of his youthful auditors to suitable reflections upon the wisdom and goodness of the Creator; until

the girls recovered, in a great degree, from their childish fears, and were even induced by their uncle to take the dreaded object into their hands.

“He had no teeth,” remarked Willie.

“Yes, he had, my dear,” replied Mr. Bland, “but they fell out when the gums were destroyed. See, here are the places where the teeth once were.”

“Where did you find it, uncle?” asked the child.

“It was given to me, my dear, by a friend at Oxford. He was a surgeon, and this was once the head of a murderer. I have never had any particular use for it; but when I first received it, it was as great a curiosity to me as it was to you. The events of this morning have been very pleasing to me, and I hope, also, profitable to you. I will put it in some place where you can see it every day, and so become accustomed to the once dreaded thing. Where shall it be placed, George?”

“In the hall, if you please, uncle, just behind the door. And when the door is shut during the day, it would often be in our view there, and would not be observed by friends as they enter, so as to startle them.”

Mr. Bland placed it carefully behind the

front door, where it remained only until the next day; for Mrs. Finland, going into the hall, and not knowing what had been done, was so startled and alarmed, that she told George he must remove it instantly; for she would not have it in the house. He took it, therefore, into the summer-house, which was a beautiful bower, in the middle of the garden; and placed it carefully overhead among the branches, but where it could be distinctly seen. To that place the young people often resorted, and sometimes the girls had tea there for their parents. Here, too, was Elizabeth's favorite retreat, where she delighted to read her Bible, and secretly to offer her prayers for that Divine assistance which she felt that she greatly needed.

She had gone through the New Testament the second time; and had begun to experience, that there is a sweet and precious hope for those who search aright, and earnestly seek for heavenly wisdom. She had not yet, however, entirely conquered her childish fears, and would oftentimes, while alone in this shady, quiet spot, even with the word of life in her hands, start and tremble, if a leaf fell at her feet, or a cricket hopped upon the bench.

On the very evening after George had so carefully placed the skull in the bower, she retired to this dear retreat, without knowing that he had done so. The sun had not yet sunk beneath the horizon. All nature was lovely and animating; and the feathered songsters gladdened the heart of Elizabeth, as she came running along with an unusually cheerful air. She stooped to pluck a flower, which attracted her eye just at the entrance of the bower. As she did so she repeated the words from Isaiah, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Opening her bible to the passage, she was soon so much engaged in reading the prophet's wonderful language, that she did not observe that the sun had gone down, and that the twilight too was fast passing away. At length it became too late for reading. She closed the book and sat musing. She was preparing to leave the bower, when the fluttering of a bird, as he sought a place of safety for the night, caused her to raise her eyes.

To her horror she then, for the first time, saw the skull. She shrieked so loud, that her father, hearing her, ran in haste to the spot, where he found her on the ground. He car

ried her into the house, but it was some time before she recovered, and then only long enough to express her fear, and again swooned. Her friends were much alarmed; and after she again revived, Mr. Bland advised that she should take an opiate; and that, if possible, she should be kept quite still until morning. With much persuasion, she was at length induced to swallow what was offered to her; shrieking out as she did so, "Death! death!"

"Ah, that is it," whispered Mrs. Finland to her husband. "I knew what would happen when the candle went out of itself, last night."

The soothing draught soon put Elizabeth into a deep sleep. Her father laid her quietly upon her bed; where George and Mary kept watch by her all night.

She was a lovely object, as she lay in her deep repose. Her beautiful features were as still as death, and almost as pale; and her rich, dark curls fell profusely about her neck and temples.

A lamp burned brightly upon a little stand, and a vase of flowers, which Elizabeth had placed there, scented the warm summer air. The windows were entirely raised, and George and Mary walked occasionally upon the ve-

randa to beguile the tedious hours. Happily for them their mother did not retire until nearly midnight, and from that time till four, when the morn began to break, the time did not pass very heavily ; for Mr. Bland came in at two, and felt the sleeper's pulse. He said she would be quite well in the morning. Leo came softly in, two or three times, as if to be satisfied about his master's favorite. Once he jumped into a chair close by Elizabeth's head, and gazed intently into her face.

"Does not he look like a witch?" asked Mary, in a whisper.

"I can't tell," answered George, "for I never saw one ; but there is truly something very knowing in that cat's face. See, while he looks so intently at Elizabeth, he scarcely seems to breathe. You cannot hear him purr. Did you see him come in with uncle?"

"Yes," whispered Mary, "and I did hope we should not see his black face again to-night ; though really he helps to keep our eyes open ; for I am sure, if I were ever so sleepy, I could not go to sleep while that strange animal was in the room."

Leo at length curled himself up in the chair and appeared to be sleeping.

"How I hate that cat," said Mary, and

speaking louder than before, Leo opened his eyes and looked her full in the face.

“Did you see that?” asked George, in a very low tone. “Leo will not forget that you hate him. He certainly heard you, and looked as if he understood.”

“That was strange, indeed,” remarked Mary, “I hope he will take himself off before Elizabeth wakens.”

When the clock struck four, Mary was surprised to hear a few soft notes from the birds at that early hour; for in the house it was perfectly dark; but going to the door, they saw a faint light in the east. Leo, too, seemed to hear the birds, and rising up, he jumped from the chair and walked briskly out into the morning air.

“I will leave you now,” said George to Mary; “and when Elizabeth wakens, she will not wonder when she finds only you beside her.”

Elizabeth slept on until the breakfast-bell aroused her; and then she asked her sister why she let her sleep so late. Mary said she was a lazy girl; and so sleepy that she went to bed with her clothes on. Elizabeth was truly puzzled, when she found that she had

indeed slept all night just as she was dressed the day before.

“What does all this mean?” she asked her sister in surprise; for the events of the last evening had at that time entirely vanished from her mind; and their uncle had told them that if, on waking, she did not remember what had occurred, it would be best not to remind her of it. Just then Patty came to tell the young ladies that the bell had rung, and would they please come out to breakfast.

Nothing was said by the family, which made any allusion to the cause of Elizabeth’s fright; and she went through the duties of the day as usual. But when evening came, she bent her steps again towards the bower.

George saw her going that way, and suspecting what had caused her alarm, ran after and soon overtook her, and said that she must turn aside and see how beautiful his vines were. They did look very flourishing, indeed, Elizabeth thought, and told her brother he must go now with her, and see how shady and quiet the bower was. George consented, and on their way, told her that he had forgotten to mention that he had put the skull there.

“The skull!” she repeated; and then told

George that now she remembered all that had happened. She said she was now not afraid, since she knew he had placed it there; but that it seemed to look at her last evening, and she was horribly frightened.

George thought it prudent that she should not see it again so soon; and told her he thought the evening too damp for her to be out; and taking her arm in his, gently led his beautiful, but fragile sister back again to the house.

When they reached the house, they observed their uncle looking intently over the meadows, as if expecting to see some interesting object. They looked at him in surprise, and asked what he found to excite his attention.

“I have just seen,” he replied, “what has interested me very much; for it is rarely that I have seen an *Ignis fatuus*, or in plainer terms, ‘Jack-o’-lantern,’ or ‘Will with a wisp;’ for the most of my life has been spent in town.”

“That is one reason, uncle,” remarked Elizabeth, “why you enjoy the country so much; and if you look over these meadows every evening, you will sometimes see the strange light you speak of.”

“Yes,” said Mary, who was with her uncle,

“*that* meadow,” pointing to the one that must be crossed before reaching the wood where old Bess lived, “is famous for ‘Jack-o’-lanterns.’ We used to call them ‘the witches’ lamps;’ and, indeed, we used to think *they* were real witches.”

“That is true,” said George, “and there are very few in this region that will pass along there at night, even in the winter, when there are no such lights to be seen.”

“There, there!” said Mr. Bland, as a light rose slowly from the marsh. “See that—how steadily it rises—now it skims along close to the high grass. We would think it one of the many fire-flies that are sporting there, if its light did not continue so long. There it goes. Ah! now it has vanished.”

“Perhaps old Bess blew it out,” said Elizabeth, playfully.

“I hope, my dear children,” said Mr. Bland, “that none of you now think there is anything supernatural in such lights.”

“We do know better,” replied George, “yet even now a strange feeling creeps over me, when a ‘Jack-o’-lantern’ first rises. I saw one, uncle, rise and continue to ascend, until it reached nearly to the tops of the trees in the wood; and then it went out. Oh! come

here, Willie," said he, turning to his little brother, "we are trying to see another of your bright namesakes."

"I know," said the child, "it is that pretty light you to'd me once was 'Will with a wisp.' I wish they would come every night; but I suppose he thinks there is no use for his lantern, now the fire-flies are so thick."

"That is the very time to look for him, Willie," said Mr. Bland. "He always comes in hot weather; and do you know what that light really is?"

"No, sir," answered Willie, "but I know it is not a man; for even a giant could not hold his lamp so high as that one brother George and I were looking at. It went almost as high as a shooting-star."

"A shooting-star is a very different thing, I would have you to know, my dear little brother," said George, tossing him up in his arms.

"Yes, Willie," said Mary, "they are large meteors, high up in the air. They almost always seem to come down, instead of rising up. You will learn more about them when you begin to study."

"That is true Willie," said George. "but what is the real meaning of *ignis fatuus*, uncle?"

“The term itself,” replied Mr. Bland, “is composed of two Latin words, which signify ‘*foolish fire* ;’ or according to a second meaning of the word *fatuus*, ‘*insipid fire*.’ The light is meteoric, and generally seen over marshy grounds. It is supposed to be caused by some inflammable or luminous gas ; generated by the decomposition of vegetable or animal substances. I have heard of persons mistaking it for a lamp carried by some one ; and following on, until led into the swamp, they have completely lost their way ; and some are said to have lost their lives by walking into quicksands and mire. The name is a very appropriate one—*foolish fire*—*insipid fire* ; for its light is without heat, and therefore a harmless or insipid fire. For the same reason, the term *ignis fatuus* is applied to anything that deceives one under the appearance of false light ; flashing up from time to time, and leading astray the heedless and infatuated ; but never fulfilling, in real value, what is expected by its votaries, from the promise of its first appearance.”

“I have heard that these lights are oftener seen in grave-yards, than anywhere else,” remarked Mary, “and some people call them ‘lamps of the dead.’ ”

“I do not believe they appear oftener there than anywhere else,” replied Mr. Bland, “for when grave-yards are upon high and dry grounds, they are seldom if ever seen. The locality for the *ignis fatuus* must be damp, as the gas from the decomposition of animals would not be luminous, as it passed off, if unmixed with the damp vapors which arise from meadows and marshes. But the sites for burial-places are very often selected in low moist grounds; because such ground is more easily dug. I have known some ignorant people that would not go through such places at night for anything you could offer them; and would go much out of their way to avoid them.”

“What for, uncle,” asked little Willie, who had been listening attentively to all that had been said.

“Only because they are silly, and do not understand a little more of natural science. But you, my dear boy, will study such things, and then you will be able to give a reason for everything you see.”

When Mrs. Finland knew what had frightened her daughter so much the evening before, she begged Mr. Bland to take the “horrid thing,” and bury it; for she was really

afraid to have it in the house ; and, moreover, she thought it wrong that any part of a human skeleton should be so publicly exhibited.

Mr. Bland readily yielded to her entreaties ; and the next day placed the skull in the ground, where it was never discovered.



The Revenge.

FOR many days after Elizabeth's fright, her mother was very anxious about her health.

She continued to look very pale, and was more serious than usual. Mary said she sometimes talked in her sleep, and was often very restless. Her daily duties, however, were as punctually attended to as before.

Still Mrs. Finland watched her with a mother's anxious eye, and every kind attention was shown this darling child. Mr. Finland proposed taking her to the sea-side, with Anna Mason for company. To this arrangement Mrs. Finland cheerfully acceded; and determined to find out whether Anna would accompany her, before she spoke to Elizabeth.

But alas! the next morning this pleasant plan was entirely changed by an unlucky raven, which Mrs. Finland was so unfortunate as to see flying over the house. This, she said,

was "a sure sign of death;" and her solicitude for Elizabeth was greatly increased.

She communicated her sorrows to her kind husband; but he only confirmed her sad forebodings, by saying that a little bird flew in at the window a little while before, and not seeming to regard him in the least, perched upon the looking-glass, and after a few moments flew directly out. This, this, they said, was dreadful; "the surest of all signs that there would soon be a death in the family;" and they actually wept together, and mourned over their dear child, as if she were already dead.

Mr. Bland could not but observe the gloom that clouded their faces, and hoped his brother would communicate his troubles to him; but not a word was said upon the subject. The young people, too, seemed to feel the trouble which depressed their parents, and went more quietly and softly about than usual.

But their solicitude was after a few days turned to another object, when George came home one evening quite sick with a fever. All was consternation and alarm with these doting parents; and now they discovered that 't was their beloved son they were about to lose. Under this melancholy impression, they gave themselves so entirely up to despair,

that they were incapable of rendering him any assistance; and but for Mr. Bland's calmness, and judicious and timely prescriptions, their worst fears might have been literally realized. A physician was immediately sent for; and Elizabeth, with patient attention, stood ready to assist her uncle in administering to her brother's comfort. The Doctor soon arrived, for Jim had been a swift messenger this time. He approved of Mr. Bland's prescription, and left medicine to be administered through the night.

"But where is Mary?" asked Mr. Bland of little Patty, who stood ready to execute any command.

"Yes, where is she?" asked Elizabeth anxiously.

Mary, to whom her mother had communicated her sad forebodings in the morning, believed that the time had really come for their fulfilment. She had never sincerely endeavored to overcome her superstitious feelings; and it now occurred to her, that Bess might tell her of some charm, or herb, or something else, that would benefit her brother. Accordingly she hastened to old Hardicus, and asked him if he would go and see "the witch" for her.

“Lors a’ marcy, missy,” said the old negro, “you aint in arnest? I nebber git back agin from dat ar place—de”——

“Now you talk very foolish,” said Mary, interrupting him, “I did not think a man like you would be afraid of a woman.”

“No, missy, I no feard of woman, but I feard of witch!”

“Will you go if your wife will go with you?” asked Mary, anxiously.

“No, no, Missy; for Judy be black jis like me.”

When Mary found that neither by entreaties nor bribes nor threats, she could move the old man, she declared with much impatience, that she would go by herself.

“Way tru dat ar long, dark woods, Missy?” asked Hardicus.

“Yes,” answered Mary, “for my brother is very ill, and it will not do to wait any longer, because it is sunset now.”

“Lors ’a marcy, Miss Mary,” said Judy running from the house towards them. “I aint one bit afeard. I’ll go long o’ you!”

“You git long, Judy!” exclaimed the old man. “You shan’t go not a step widout me. I’ll go long too, cause if wolf come, he scar you, but I no be feard o’ wolf.”

“What den *is* you feard of?” asked Judy, laughing heartily.

“Ob de witch, to be sure, and so Judy feard too, Missy, but she won’t let on.”

“If dat’s all,” said Judy, “come along, we’ll see.”

Away they all went at a brisk walk; for old Hardicus could step as quick as any one. They had a bright twilight to guide them; and Mary hoped to return before it was quite dark, and before they would miss her at home. As they passed through the meadows and entered the thick wood, they began to imagine that they heard strange sounds, and saw shadows flitting among the trees.

“What was that?” asked Mary, as she stopped to listen.

“O nottin but a tree-toad!” said Judy. “Come ’long, Hardicus, you look jis as if you thought the debble was a-comin; what you stop dar for? cause you feard to come any further? he, he, he.”

“You git out de way yourself, you black nigger,” said the old man, “Judy, I say stop!”

“What *is* the matter?” inquired Mary, looking back, for she had out-walked them both. “I’ll wait for you. Come along, Hardicus, come Judy, pray don’t laugh any more.”

“I can’t help it, Miss Mary. Hardicus is sich a fool, he! he! he!”

“Do you know the way to her hut?” asked Mary anxiously. “It is so long since I was there, that I fear that I shall not be able to find it.”

“I know de way,” said Hardicus, “for I come here last week wid massa Keene, to cut a log for de saw-mill; close by old Bess’s hut.”

They hurried on, and as they turned from the path through the wood in the direction of the hut, her great dog leaped towards them with a thrilling bark, which made Mary tremble like a leaf.

“Off there,” cried a shrill voice, which they all well knew; and presently Bess crept from behind a cedar bush, and raising her brawny form, she eyed the party as if puzzled to determine who or what they were.

She, however, was the first to speak, and asked what they were after.

“Don’t you know us, Mrs. Nisbey?” asked Mary, in a faltering voice.

“Know ye! Be sure I know ye; but what be ye looking afther at this time o’ day? There be no lampkins here now.”

“Ah, no!” said Mary, faintly, “we come

to get your help for something dearer than all the lambs in the world. My brother—”

“Well, I knowd it afore ever ye spake. Did yer mither sind ye?”

“No,” answered Mary, in a more confident voice, “I came of myself; for I know that you have more knowledge of herbs than any other person; and”——“Yis, yis,” said Bess hurriedly, “more than any other body in this univarsal world.”

“I know dat,” said Hardicus, for the first time feeling sufficient courage to speak. “You git dem to help you dat won’t help nobody else. Yis, yis: I know.”

“Hush yer black mouth,” said Bess, with much contempt. “I wonder what *ye* know about *me*!”

“O! nottin, ma’am, nottin,” muttered out Hardicus, as he wiped the huge drops from his face.

“What did ye bring these black fools along wi’ ye for? They look jist like imps. Did ye think I would run off wi’ ye, if ye come alone? Yer a beautiful gal, and so was I once, but”—— And she began to sing with much *furor* a wild, startling strain.

Mary, now truly anxious to be on the way home, began again to mention her business.

“I want to get your advice.”

“There now,” exclaimed the cunning woman, interrupting her, “didn’t I know he was sick?”

And Mary wondered how she could have known; forgetting that she had just told her.

“’Tis massa Georgie; not massa Willie,” said Judy.

“I say I knowd it, ye great fool. Do ye think ye can tell *me* ony thing?” yelled the woman, raising a long stick which she had in her hand. Then turning to Mary, she continued; “Poor misther George! he is a blessed young man; and may the saints presarve him—and saint Patrick keep him—and the holy mither nurse him—and the priest absolve him—and may he be git well afore he is sick—”

“He is very sick,” said Mary, interrupting her in this effusion of good wishes, “and if you know of anything to stop his fever, I will give you money for your trouble, if you will get it soon for me.”

“I want none o’ yer money, yer gold, or yer siller; the de’il may have it all, and to purgatory is it I wish it was. Poor, poor, dear misther George—a blessed name of good king George—O! he’s a beautiful young man, he is; and I will give ye a yarb for him, and he

will never be sick ony more. I was jist afther getting it when ye come. It grows behind yon bush ; but ye must be aisy here till I gits it ; for ye must not see where it grows."

So saying, she strode away, over the bushes and brambles, with Brutus at her heels.

"She *is* de debble," whispered the old negro ; "but I glad she lub massa Georgy ; for she kin make him well, I know dat."

"Hush ! dar she comes," said Judy ; and Bess was soon with them, bringing something wrapped up in large mullin leaves. She stood a few yards from them, and sprinkled something over the plant, muttering a low incantation all the time.

"Now, mind ye," she began, "ye must do jest as I tell ye. Don't let nobody tetch it, no, not even yer own hand. Ye must put it into a pint of wather, and bile it down to a little cup full ; and then do ye give it him wi' yer own hand, and don't ye let him be done till he gits it all down. May all the saints be wi' ye, and make him drink the whole on it ; and I promise ye, he will never be sick ony more."

"Here's a dollar for your trouble. And shall I put in these mullin leaves, too ?" asked Mary.

“No, no!” answered Bess, angrily. “The de’il take yer money. Can’t ye know what I say? Ye be no fool. Can’t ye remimber? Shake out what’s in thim mullin leaves, and stir the pot with this stick.”

Saying this, she broke a crooked stick from a bush of witch-hazel, which grew near, and handed it to Mary, who took all eagerly from her skinny hand. And giving her many thanks and promises of reward, they were just turning to leave the spot, when Brutus came from the thicket, with the long pet snake entwined about his neck and its head stretched out over his ear, as if endeavoring to find out what was going on. Mary and Judy screamed aloud and ran off; while Hardicus stood as if turned to stone. “Be off wi’ yer sel,” squalled the hag; “be off, I say, or Brutus ’ill help ye off.”

When Judy heard Bess, she hurried back, and taking Hardicus by the hand, wheeled him round suddenly, and he, as if just awaking, started off with his wife as fast as she could wish. Mary had reached home before them, and was trying, with Patty’s help, to kindle a fire; for the evening was warm, and the fire had been allowed to go out. Old Hardicus sat down on the door-step of the

kitchen, and as soon as he got breath he began to speak, while Judy went in and assisted to make a fire.

“I teld you, Judy, dat she is kin to de debil; for dint you see de old sarpent hisself, roun dat black dog’s neck? I tell you dis nigger nebber go dar agin! I knowd it—I knowd it—I knowd it!”

“Git ’long home, man, and go to bed,” said Judy. “You scard half to death. I be ’long byme by.”

“I don’t go to bed dis night ’afore you, I tell you. I stay here till you go ’long too.”

“He, he, he,” laughed Judy, in a low, soft, subdued tone; while she hung a little pot, containing a measured pint of water, over the fire, which was now blazing brightly.

Mary had sat down, while the fire kindled; for her fatigue and anxiety had much exhausted her strength.

“Come, Miss Mary,” said Judy, “put in de yarb.”

“No, not till the water boils—that is what she said—in a pint of boiling water.”

“Dat she did,” said the old man.

“I dint *hear* say dat, ’deed Miss Mary,” said Judy.

By this time it was quite dark; and Mr.

Bland, hearing voices in the house, went into the kitchen, hoping to find Mary. His unexpected entrance threw her into a complete flurry. She sprang up as he approached, and covered the mullin leaves with her bonnet.

“ Ah! Mary,” said he, “ are you here? I am glad to see you; for your sister and I have been wondering much what had become of you. How could you be so unfeeling, as to leave us to take the whole care of George? Elizabeth is not very well; and your parents are so overcome with their fearful apprehensions, that they have shut themselves up in their bed-room, and are utterly unable to assist us. Your brother has a high fever, and I fear he will be very sick. He is now, however, asleep, and Elizabeth is watching him.”

“ O! uncle,” said Mary, with much warmth, “ pray do not call me unfeeling. I have not been idle, though absent.”

Her words, and the earnest manner in which she spoke, surprised Mr. Bland; and he said very kindly, “ Well, dear, where have you been, and what have you been doing?”

This was an inquiry which Mary would gladly have avoided; and hesitating, she answered, “ I have been getting some herbs, to cure my dear brother.”

“Where are they, my child? Are they in that pot?” asked her uncle, with much earnestness.

“Not yet, sir,” she stammered out.

“Then let me see them, Mary, and I will help you to prepare them, if they are really medicinal.”

“I am sorry to appear rude to you, my good, kind uncle,” said Mary, almost in tears; “but I would rather you would have nothing to do with them.”

“This is strange, my dear,” remarked Mr. Bland. “Do you suppose that I shall allow anything to be given to your brother, without first knowing what it is?”

“There is a little secret about this,” said Mary, coaxingly, “and I hope my dear uncle will trust to my judgment this once; and if George is not better to-morrow, I shall bear the blame.”

“There can be no harm,” said Mr. Bland, good humoredly, “in my *looking* at the herbs. Where are they?”

“Well, you may see them, if you promise not to touch them.”

“I do promise, if by doing so I shall injure them.”

“Promise,” said Mary, earnestly.

“I have given all the promise I can. I must see the herbs,” replied Mr. Bland.

Mary then, reluctantly, took up the mullin leaves; and shaking them, the plant fell upon the table, spreading out, fresh and beautiful, and full of shining berries.

Mr. Bland examined it for a few moments, with his eyes only, as Judy put a light on the table; and then said calmly,

“How are you to prepare this? I suppose that after it is steeped in the hot water, you are to make an outward application of it, to produce perspiration.”

“Oh no, dear uncle!” said Mary, confidently, “it is to be boiled in that pint of water, down to a small quantity, about a tea-cup full, and that George is to drink.”

“Drink!” exclaimed Mr. Bland, “oh, Mary, how thankful I am that I came here in time. Poor, dear child, who has thus imposed upon you?”

“De debble,” said old Hardicus.

But Mary, disregarding the old man, and not at all alarmed at what her uncle had said—so great faith had she in the famous herbalist from whom she had procured the plant—said, “My dear uncle, just wait until to-morrow, before you decide upon the virtues

of this plant. When it is prepared, you shall administer the draught yourself; and then, when you see the effect, you may pass your opinion. The water is boiling and it must be in."

So saying, with the little crooked stick which Bess had given her, in one hand, and a spoon in the other, she took up the plant, and was about depositing it in the pot, when Mr. Bland stepping before her, snatched it away.

It is easier to imagine than to describe the horror and disappointment depicted in the poor girl's face. All her trouble had been for nothing. The charm was broken—the plant had been touched by human hands—it was now of no use. She sat down with such an expression of despair upon her features, that Mr. Bland's feelings almost unnerved him, as he looked at her.

"My beloved Mary," he said, "under what fatal delusion are you laboring? I insist upon knowing who has designedly or ignorantly imposed upon you?"

"Dar now, dint I tell you so?" chimed in old Hardicus.

"This plant," continued Mr. Bland, "is the deadly nightshade; one of the most

poisonous plants in the world. A small quantity would put your poor brother beyond all earthly suffering very soon. Yes, my poor child, I don't wonder that you are pale and mute with horror. A merciful providence has prevented you from destroying our beloved George. But tell me, my child, where you found this plant, and how you gathered it without knowing what it was?"

Mary looked as one struck dumb. The blood had entirely left her cheeks, which a few moments before were glowing from exercise and hope. She burst into tears, and for a while her sobs prevented her from making any reply.

Judy cried out, and old Hardicus blew his nose, and wiped his eyes; while little Patty stood gazing on, in utter amazement. At length, when Mary had become sufficiently composed, she communicated to her uncle all that has been related of her visit to "the witch."

"My poor, dear child!" said Mr. Bland, sitting down by her, and kindly taking her hand; while Judy snatching off the pot, threw out the water from it with much energy, and set it away; and Hardicus got up, shuffled about, and coming close to Mr. Bland, stood

up with his back against the wall, to hear what his "good massa" had to say.

"I see through the whole of it," continued Mr. Bland. "The wretch has been actuated by revenge—a murderous revenge. You remember how your brother once offended her; and this proves that she never has forgiven him. Her pretended sympathy, when you told her he was sick, and her flattering praises of him, were only meant to deceive you; and by telling you not to let any one touch the plant, she thought to keep it from being seen by any one who would know what it was, and thus felt sure of her victim. No doubt she is at this moment exulting in her malicious schemes. True, indeed, was one part of her story; that he would never be sick again."

"Yis, yis!" murmured Hardicus.

"Oh! my good uncle," Mary at length sobbed out, "how shall I ever thank you for preserving my precious brother from such a horrid death?"

"Thank God, thank God, my poor child. Yes! if ever you felt thankful in your life, it should be this night. But, my dear, you have learned a lesson which I hope you will never forget; that is this, not to trust the advice of such a poor wicked hag, when you have pa-

rents and friends to ask counsel of. What has passed this evening we had better not mention ; and I will put this plant in water, to preserve it fresh until morning, and then you shall read a description of the night-shade, and if it does not correspond in every particular with this, then you may say that I am an ignorant old man."

Mary felt grateful to think that her uncle would not expose her folly.

Mr. Bland observed with pain her fruitless attempts to compose her feelings ; and after kissing her, advised her to retire for the night ; saying that he intended to stay with George until morning.

When Elizabeth entered her chamber, she found Mary upon her knees. Her face was covered with her hands ; she seemed earnestly engaged in prayer, and her convulsive sobs almost alarmed her gentle sister. Elizabeth's steps were so light and noiseless, that Mary was unconscious of her presence. She therefore left the room ; and falling on her knees in her own little closet, prayed earnestly for every blessing for herself and for every one dear to her ; particularly commending her precious brother to the kind mercy of her Heavenly Father.

A long time elapsed ; and when she again entered the chamber, Mary was sleeping. She undressed quietly, and stole softly to bed. Mary started ; and raising herself up, said " O it is only you, my sweet Lizzy ;" and throwing her arms around her neck said, " Let me weep here, and tell you all my trouble."

She then communicated to Elizabeth all that had taken place. Elizabeth was shocked and grieved, and trembled as Mary proceeded. At length, she wept and laughed by turns, until Mary began to be more concerned for her sister than for herself, and repented that she had troubled her with the startling story.

" Praise the Lord, O my soul !" at length ejaculated Elizabeth, " Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Mary lay down quietly by her side, and Elizabeth went on—

" Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul."

And soon these lovely and loving sisters had forgotten all their troubles, and were sweetly sleeping in each other's arms.

Hardicus and Judy went to their cabin. Mr. Bland had told them that he did not wish

them to tell any one of what Bess had done, until George was well enough for something to be done in the matter. The poor old man, Hardicus, was too much frightened to go to bed very soon. He went to the barn and got the pitch-fork, and placed it with the points up in the chimney of his room ; and burned some tar on a shingle, and carried it all about under the bed and in their little cupboard. He then turned his shirt wrong side out, and placed his shoes together, with the heels towards the bed. He felt provoked with Judy, because she laughed at him, and because she *would* go to bed with her clothes right side out. But Judy knelt at her bedside before she went to sleep, and then felt safe and happy, until the chickens, their nearest neighbors, began to crow and cackle.

Early the next morning, Mr. Bland called Mary to his room. He had put the plant in water to preserve its freshness. He handed her a book with a leaf folded down, and placed the plant on the table before her. He told her that he wished her to read the description of the plant and satisfy herself.

“ O my kind uncle,” she replied, “ I am perfectly satisfied with what you have said. My head aches so severely that I cannot read.

I trust entirely to your word ; and if I had known before that you had studied Botany, I should have saved myself a long walk, and much misery and shame.”

“ Well, Mary, it is said, that dear-bought experience is the best ; and yours has truly been dearly bought. I hope you will hereafter be more ready to confide in those who are capable of advising you, than to put your trust in ignorance and vice. But this wicked creature shall not be allowed to go at liberty, to molest the neighborhood, and injure and destroy property, and to fill with terror the weak-minded. I shall take some fit opportunity to bring her to punishment ; and if I could prove that she designedly gave you that poisonous plant, it would be a crime deserving the utmost severity. I will consult some of the gentlemen around, and then we shall do her justice, I promise you. She has become insufferable, and something must be done with her. Her viciousness, in endeavoring to destroy the calf, ought not to have been overlooked ; and the death of Lizzy’s lamb I can never forget. I have no doubt but others have quite as much cause of complaint against her as we have.”

“ Yes, I know they have,” said Mary, “ I

have heard neighbor More, and others complain of her very much. She helps herself to turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens ; and even little pigs, if she likes. But we have always been afraid to speak to her, or to punish her in any way, so much has our superstitious dread of her prevailed over our better judgment. If she could be removed from among us we should all have great cause to rejoice."

"I will have her attended to," said Mr. Bland, "as soon as George recovers. But I wish, when your head is better, that you would read the description of this plant. It would interest you very much, and might perhaps give you a relish for a delightful science, of which you are now ignorant ; and I will help you to study Botany, with much pleasure, Mary, if you choose."

"I should be very much pleased to do so, sir, and I hope I shall never forget the feelings I experienced last night, or your kindness ; and particularly the merciful interposition of Divine Providence, which prevented me from rashly dealing death to my beloved brother."

Here she burst into tears, and her uncle left her.

XI

The Recovery.

WHEN the family assembled at breakfast the next morning, there were others who looked pale besides Elizabeth. She looked calm and patient; with a beautiful smile illuminating her mild countenance and lovely features. Mrs. Finland looked like despair personified. She said she had had no rest; for when she slept her dreams were so frightful, that she exerted herself to keep awake, rather than sleep and have such dreams. She was very careful not to tell them before breakfast; fully persuaded that if she did they would "certainly come true."

Mr. Finland's care-worn and anxious countenance told plainly, that he had not slept enough to dream; and Mary had such cause for grief as she had never before known.

Mr Bland was calm and collected; though he had not closed his eyes to sleep. He found

that George's fever was still high, and anxiously awaited the arrival of the physician.

Mr. Finland thanked his brother, almost with tears, for his kind attention to his poor George; hoping that everything might be done for him, while there was any hope; that they might not have to reproach themselves for any neglect, after his dear son's death.

Mr. Bland spoke soothingly to him and told him, that as yet he saw no reason to apprehend any serious result from George's illness, and that every attention should be paid him that was in the power of medical skill or good nursing.

But all did not seem to remove, in the least degree, from Mr. Finland's heart or countenance, the deep gloom with which superstition always burdens its votaries.

George's fever had increased, when the Doctor arrived; and more active medicine was resorted to. Mr. Bland now felt more anxious concerning him, and never left his bedside during that day. Mr. and Mrs. Finland did not give way to their feelings so much during the daytime; for they had various duties which required their attention. But no sooner were the pressing cares of the day at an end, than their superstitious fears came upon them with increased weight; for

then they found time to relate and compare all the signs and ill omens which had been observed during the day. Then they gave vent to their grief and despondency; and it would be tedious and useless to enumerate all the signs and omens, which they seemed to remember in order to torment each other. Had these mistaken parents known how to pray for their beloved child, during those hours which were spent worse than idly, in believing a lie rather than in trusting to the goodness of an All-wise God, they might have found the comfort which their hearts needed, and been prepared for the worst, and resigned to the will of Heaven. But alas! this was not the case: nor did they experience the blessed and holy hope, which springs from trust in God, until long after this time.

George's fever continued very high for several days, and Mr. Bland had many anxious moments about him. He feared that George was not prepared to die, and earnestly prayed that he might be restored to health. His anxiety, however, was counterbalanced by entire trust in the wisdom of Him, who "doeth all things well;" and his unwearied attention and calm deportment told plainly upon whom he had cast his care.

Donald Mason was also very assiduous in attending upon his sick friend ; thus greatly relieving the good Mr. Bland, and comforting George, who was very anxious, lest his kind uncle should do too much for his own strength. We must not omit to mention that the very night after Mary's visit to Bess, as Mr. Bland and Jim were bathing the patient's burning hands and feet, the boy nodded to Mr. Bland, and pointed to some object in the yard. The full moon made everything distinctly visible ; and creeping along close by the lilacs that led from the meadow-gate to the back-door, there was a dark figure, tall, and tattered in appearance. Nearer, and nearer, with noiseless step it advanced, until, close under the window where the sick youth lay, it paused and skulked among the thick shrubbery that grew abundantly by the side of the house and near the open window. Mr. Bland's attention was again attracted to the meadow-gate, over which a great dog bounded and was in a moment checked in his further approach by a low murmur from the form under the window. The sound was so low, that Mr. Bland wondered how it could have been heard even at that short distance. The dog, however, seemed to understand perfectly, and crouched

down in the grass. All was now still ; and if Mr. Bland had not felt sure, from the terror expressed in Jim's countenance, that he too had seen all that passed, he might have thought that he had only imagined it.

" Bess !" said the boy, trembling.

" Be perfectly still," whispered Mr. Bland ; but even that soft whisper aroused the half-sleeping patient, who called loudly in his delirium for " Water, water—I'm burning—burning—put me in the water—take away the fire—what was it—who?"

Thus he continued, until sufficiently aroused to drink plentifully of the cooling draught, which his uncle held to his lips.

Mr. Bland's whole attention was now engrossed with George ; but when after a long time he again became quiet, and fell into a troubled sleep, his uncle's thoughts once more turned to the object that had so much interested him. Jim had been sent, while George was awake, to replenish the oil in one of the lamps, and had returned with that and a little tea and bread and butter, which Mary had directed him to hand her uncle about midnight. Nothing was seen of the strange figure again, that night. *When* she left her hiding-place, or *how*, no one knew, and what

was her reason for coming Mr. Bland could not conjecture ; unless it was to find out for herself, whether her deadly prescription had done its work.

The next morning Mr. Bland asked Jim what he thought Bess could have wanted there.

“I dun no, sir ; ’spose she lookin arter chickens. I ’spec she dident find none, cause uncle Hardicus lock ’um all up since she tie de calf.”

But Mr. Bland was confirmed in his opinion that she came to satisfy herself respecting George, when Jim, brushing about in the room that morning, handed him a roll of leaves, which he had found on the floor near the window, under which Bess had concealed herself. A woodbine had climbed nearly over this window ; and it was an easy matter, while George was calling for all the attention of his uncle, for Bess to peep in and take some safe opportunity to let fall the soft leaves upon the carpet, without being observed. There was no other way to account for this roll, which when opened proved to be a fresh supply of the poisonous plant, which she had the night before given Mary.

When Donald was told of this strange af

fair, he expressed quite as much surprise as Mr. Bland felt.

After some days Mr. and Mrs. Finland, finding that their son still continued to live—notwithstanding all the “*true signs*” that had occurred to convince them that there was to be a death in the family—began to hope that he might yet be better. They both remained longer each day in his room, until they found that he rather grew better than worse, and then nothing could exceed their devoted attention to their darling child. Now the terror of *seeing* him die had left them, and they watched his gradual improvement with a thrill of gratitude they had never before experienced. Mr. Bland had the comfort, too, during George’s illness, of having all his directions particularly attended to by Mary and Elizabeth, who were devotedly attached to their dear brother.

Elizabeth’s delicacy of constitution would often oblige her to retire early; but Mary, whose health was very firm, was enabled to persevere unceasingly in her attentions. Her slow and cautious step, and sad expression of countenance was not unmarked by her kind uncle; and he would cheer and encourage her as much as he could, reminding her how

thankful she should be, that George was still living.

“ True, true,” the poor girl would say, “ but when I remember how I would have murdered him, if it had not been for you, my precious uncle, I cannot yet forgive myself ;” and then the tears would come, and she would go quickly away, and remain for a time shut up in her own room.

Several times Donald observed this extreme sensitiveness in Mary ; while the gentle Elizabeth was calm, and apparently unmoved by the illness of her brother. He wondered much at this, as he had always thought Mary almost too gay and thoughtless. Now she seemed entirely changed, and this change made her tenfold more attractive in his eyes, than she had ever before appeared. Once when she was with him in her brother’s room, and Donald had a good opportunity while George slept, he asked her why she appeared so completely miserable ; but all that Mary answered was, “ Don’t ask me—I dare not tell you”—and abruptly left the room, weeping. This strange conduct only made the youth wonder still more, and Mary was always in his mind.

Anxiety and hope alternately prevailed in the hearts of these loving friends of George,

until the Doctor pronounced him convalescent. Donald's assistance was no longer needed, at night; but he was particularly careful to step in every day, to inquire about his friend, even after George had become quite well; so that the neighbors began to hint that it was "the lily or the rose"—as these sisters were sometimes called—which attracted him still that way.

Mary's kind attention to George was still remarked by every one, particularly by Donald; but no one knew the cause of this devoted fondness, except her good uncle and her sweet sister. Even after he was thought to be out of danger, and watchers were no longer required, she would rise softly from her bed in the stillness of night, when every one else was sleeping, and go into the room of her brother, to find out if he was resting quietly.

One morning before George was well enough to leave his room, his uncle stepped in, as usual, to ask how he had rested; and was surprised to find him tossing upon his bed, with a flushed cheek and a wild look. He spoke to him, but at first received no answer. He then shook his hand gently, saying, "My dear boy, I am sorry to find you so restless this morning. When I left you last night, you were entirely

free from fever, and sleeping as sweetly as ever you did in your life."

"Yes, my dear uncle, I felt almost well last night; but I am miserable now; yes, very wretched indeed, this morning."

His voice and manner had a certain mysterious expression, which quite startled Mr. Bland; and feeling his pulse, he found, that although it indicated no fever, yet it was irregular.

"My dear George, has anything happened during the night, to frighten you? You look not quite like yourself; and, certainly, do not act like the the good, patient George, that you were when very sick."

Before George had time to reply, Mary entered with Patty, bringing in a rich bowl of coffee, and some little dainties, which she had prepared with her own hand for his breakfast. She expressed her wonder that he had not attempted to wash, and comb his hair, as he had done for several days past; and laughingly asked, what her dear uncle had been telling him, to make him look so sad?

"Ah! Mary," said he, "I cannot taste your nice breakfast. I am not getting well so fast as you think. I now begin to feel sure that I shall not live."

So saying, he covered his face with his thin, pale hands, and turned toward the wall. Not a word was spoken for some time, and George lay perfectly still.

At length Mary, with an effort, said,

“What can make you think so, my dear George? I am sure you are much better than you were some days ago; and I hope in a few days you will begin to recover your strength, if you will let me be your cook.”

“I hoped so yesterday,” he replied, in a solemn and dejected manner. “I thought so too; but now I know I shall never be well again!”

“This conduct, my dear George,” said his uncle, “is very strange; and if I did not hope and believe that you had conquered your early superstitions, I should think that something of this kind was tormenting you.”

George turned, and looked so earnestly in Mr. Bland’s face, that the good man now felt convinced that he had struck upon the true cause of his nephew’s disquiet. However, the poor youth said not a word, and his sister again offered her delicious repast; but George motioned her away, saying it was of no use, he could not taste it.

“Well,” said Mr. Bland, “if you intend

really to starve yourself to death, you can very easily do so in your present weak state of body ; but if you will act like my own good George again, and take your old uncle's advice, you will not thus slight your sister's kindness."

George groaned, but said nothing ; and Mary addressing her uncle, remarked,

"I was afraid I should not find George so well this morning, for he was talking in his sleep last night, and—"

"True, true," said George, interrupting his sister, "and no wonder that I did. Ah ! if you knew the cause !"

"And why can't we know the cause ?" asked his uncle. "What objection can you have to telling us ?"

A flush passed over George's pale face, as Mr. Bland spoke, and Mary thought he shuddered.

"Ah !" said she, tenderly, "I was fearful that something troubled you ; and so when I heard you talking last night, I thought, perhaps, you were awake and wanted something ; but when I came up to your bed, and found by the dim light of the lamp, that you were sleeping, I did not speak to you, but went away more softly than I came."

“Oh!” exclaimed George, grasping his sister’s hand, as she sat on the side of the bed by him, “Oh! was it you, Mary? pray tell me truly, *was* it you?”

“I!” exclaimed Mary, startled by his sudden earnestness, “where? when? George, really you frighten me. My dear uncle,” she whispered to Mr. Bland, “is George in his right mind?”

“Was it you, Mary,” again began her brother, “who came softly to my bed, and looked in my face last night? Tell me! tell me!”

“Yes, George,” she answered, while her eyes glistened with emotion. “I did, and what of all that?”

“Much, much, oh! everything, Mary. My poor, weak mind changed you into the ghost of Capt. Mason. When I saw the apparition, as I supposed you to be, approach so near as to breathe on my face, I closed my eyes, and when I opened them again, it was just gliding out of the door. I thought you were as tall as a man, and your head and all looked to me as white as a sheet. I heard not a step; for the blood seemed to rush into my brain, and I felt entirely confused. I could not have spoken to save my life.”

Mary covered her face and burst into tears, as she sobbed out, "How unfortunate I am! Oh! how unfortunate! I fear I shall be the death of my precious brother, yet."

It was now George's turn to look surprised; as he turned and asked his uncle, why Mary felt so deeply.

"Mary will feel quite satisfied," he replied, "if you will partake of the nice breakfast she has brought you." And Mary, wiping her eyes, and again presenting the nice things, smiled contentedly; while George accepted them, and relished every morsel. He felt much refreshed and benefited by his breakfast; and before his uncle left him he said earnestly to him,

"I should be inclined to ridicule you, George, if I did not know that the weak state of your body has some effect upon your mind; and therefore I will keep both my sarcasm and my lecture until you recover your strength."

George's pale face was covered for a moment with a rosy blush, while his uncle addressed him, and then he begged that his folly might be once more forgotten; promising that it was the last trouble of that sort he would ever make.

Mr. and Mrs. Finland were quite astonished at their son's recovery. They could not at once bring themselves to believe that he would really get quite well, after all the "*certain signs*" which they said they never knew to fail before. They both regained, in some degree, their former cheerfulness, and a momentary feeling of gratitude to God touched their hearts, as they reflected upon their dear son's deliverance from a dangerous disease. They even began to hope that there was not so much truth in signs as they had supposed; and as Mary, in her penitence and sorrow, after her mistaken visit to Bess, had burned the dream book, they had now nothing to refer to, and almost thought it might be best to forget what they did remember of this blind guide.

They were, moreover, often present when Mr. Bland reproved the children for their superstitions, and sometimes felt ashamed of the thought, that they once deemed it part of their duty, to guard their children against certain days, signs, and dreams.

Mr. Bland observed this change in their feelings with much pleasure, and determined to improve the first opportunity of conversing seriously with them upon this subject. He felt it his duty to do so, since he had seen

how miserable they made themselves during George's illness, and how their idle fear had unfitted them for that attention to their son, which would necessarily have devolved upon them, if he had not been there, and which it was their duty to discharge rather than his.

When George was strong enough to walk into the next room, the first salutation he heard was, "works of darkness." He smiled very pleasantly, and told Poll he was happy to find he was not forgotten by his old friends. The parrot eyed him closely for some time; turning first one eye at him, and then the other, and as if quite satisfied flapped his wings and repeated "works of darkness."

Leo, too, who had often called in with his master to see the patient, now came and rubbed his head against George's knee, put his paws upon his hand, and purred with much satisfaction.

Little Patty was all smiles, and stood ready to turn in any direction to gratify this general favorite. She disappeared for a few moments when George first came out, and very soon old Hardicus and Judy presented themselves, to congratulate "Massa George."

"I is very glad to see you out agin, Massa George," said Judy. "He, he, he, I is so

glad ; poor Miss Mary is so glad too ; he, he, he.”

“ I declar, massa,” said the old man, “ you look *far* as Miss Lizzy ; you got not a bit color in your face. I amazin glad to see you, massa. I hope Bess ’ill die afore you, arter all.”

“ Poor Bess,” said George, who now felt kindly towards every living thing. “ We must forgive her for plaguing us and stealing our things ; and we must try to do something for her.”

“ Dear, massa !” exclaimed Hardicus, “ you sure ain’t in arnest. I nebber forgib her while a bit of me hang togedder. La, Massa George, she try agin to kill you.”

“ Pshaw ! Hardicus, that is nonsense. I am not at all afraid of old Bess ; and you shall go with me to call on her when I am strong enough.”

“ He, he, he,” laughed Judy. “ Yes, Massa Georgy, Hardicus will go, I know. Won’t you, Hardy ? he, he, he.”

“ You nebber catch dis nigger dar agin, no how, I tell you. Git alog, Judy, din’t Massa Bland say you mus hole your tongue ’bout sich tings ? Come ’long home. You tun

Massa George's head crazy. Come 'long, I say."

"Sure I nebber said a word 'bout it," replied Judy. "It was you, you own self. Now mind, I tell Massa Bland 'bout you. You see if I don't."

"You hush, you nigger, now," said Hardicus. "I *nebber* tell."

"What do you mean?" asked George, now for the first time observing that his sable friends were not only in earnest, but quite excited. "What are you both so angry about? I thought you felt very happy to see me."

"So we is, Massa George," said Judy, "he, he, he. I hope you will soon be well enough to go see old Bess. I'll go wid you, anyhow; he, he, he."

She then kissed George's hand, and hastened away. Hardicus followed her with his eyes, until she was out of hearing, and then said softly to himself, "What a nigger dat is! She laugh at ebry ting. But I wish you thousand blessins, Massa George, and hope you soon want Hardicus to dribe you out in de coach."

So saying, he shook George heartily by the hand, and took his departure.

This was a day of great rejoicing to all in

the house. Mr. Bland looked very happy, and so did Mary, though she was very quiet. The two sisters, indeed, seemed to have exchanged characters. Elizabeth talked and laughed, and did all she could to amuse her brother; while Mary seemed to watch him with her whole soul, and anticipated all his wishes, but scarcely said a word. Mr. and Mrs. Finland were quite relieved from anxiety, and their cheerful smiles told how happy they felt. Willie, too, was there, as gay as a bird; and to crown all, Donald came over to spend the day with his friend.

Mary sat quietly at one side of her brother's chair, with her sewing; but evidently she was thinking only of him. Elizabeth brought fruit and cakes for her friends, and Willie danced quietly about the room, whenever he heard his brother speak. The canaries, too, sang more sweetly and oftener than ever; and Poll would now and then have a word to say. Donald had brought with him an amusing story to read to George, which he had found in a newspaper, just received from his father. Mary took much interest in the story, and laughed so much as she used to do, that Donald felt much pleased to see her appearing more like herself again.

Thus happily passed that afternoon to all; and Mrs. Finland made Donald promise to bring his mother and sister to visit her, as soon as George was well enough to see company.

The first time that George walked in the garden after his recovery, his uncle went with him, and took particular care to point out the trees and roots which he had planted in "the wrong time of the moon," and on Friday. Some of them were more flourishing, and some of them less thrifty, than those planted at other times; but the difference could always be accounted for by the nature of the soil in which they grew, or their situation with respect to the sun.

George candidly confessed that his garden and fruit-yard were never in so fine a state before. He did not take the least credit to himself; but said that if he had not had his uncle's wisdom to direct him, his plants would have grown no better than formerly. He also made some wise resolutions with regard to his old superstitions; and with his uncle's watchful eye ever upon him, he hoped to adhere to these good purposes.

His illness had made a very serious impression upon his mind; and he resolved not to

delay turning his thoughts to the study of the scriptures ; from which alone, his uncle assured him, he could derive that heavenly light, which would enable him to cast away the works of darkness, and conduct him safely through the vicissitudes of life, to the haven of eternal rest.

Elizabeth, whose religious principles would no longer allow her to harbor in her bosom such anti-christian feelings as were produced by the superstitions which she formerly regarded, had become so fearless as to stoop to examine a toad, or to pick up a pin which had the point turned towards her when she found it ; or even to speak a word of kindness to Bess, when she came under the windows for food. Upon one of these occasions she asked her if she knew how ill her brother had been, and told her he was then almost well. Bess growled and frowned at her like a tigress, and shook her club in such a threatening manner, that Elizabeth left the window in alarm.

Her health also became much better, as her mind was freed from those idle, tormenting fancies, which had greatly affected her nervous system.

Mary, too, had profited by her sad experience ; and she promised her sister that she

would strive earnestly to overcome her long cherished but false notions; but added, that she could not promise to be quite so familiar with toads as her sister, or to speak pleasantly to old Bess; for Mary had a feeling of horror whenever she even heard the name of that miserable creature.

Willie was now his uncle's favorite. He had never understood any signs, and was not afraid of anything except being a bad boy. He would walk, ride, and sometimes sleep with his good uncle, and was to him as a son.

XII.

The Pleasant Ride.

THE long-wished-for day at length arrived, when Donald was to bring his mother and sister to visit his friend George. It was on a bright, mild morning of September, that Mrs. Mason's carriage was seen rolling briskly along the highway. Mary wondered why they should ride, when the path through the wood and meadow was so pleasant at that season, and so much shorter.

"Ah! I know now," she said to her sister, "I think that Donald wants to take George to ride, and indeed I wish I could go too."

"Well, we will see about that," said Elizabeth, as the carriage drew near and stopped at the gate.

George went out to meet and welcome these friends, whom he had not seen since his illness.

"I am extremely happy to see you," began George.

“And so am I to see you, my dear George, looking so much better than I expected,” said Mrs. Mason, tenderly embracing her young friend, as he helped her out of the carriage; and hoping that he felt as well as he looked.

“Ah! how glad I am to see you, again, George,” said Anna, while her beautiful face glowed with pleasure.

“We do not intend to stop yet,” said Donald, “we wish you and your sisters to take a ride with us, this beautiful morning. Come, it will do you all good; particularly you, Mary.”

“Yes,” said Elizabeth, “Mary must go. A ride will be the best thing for her to-day. So run, Molly, and get ready.”

“You must go, too, Lizzy,” said Anna. “This old carriage will hold as many as we choose to put in it, and the horses will not object to you, my light little lily.”

“I must be with mamma to-day,” answered Elizabeth; “but how late you are. It is almost eleven; and if you go far, you will not be here to dine with us. Pray stop now, and we will have an early dinner, and then you can have all the afternoon for your ride.”

“Yes, yes, that is much better,” said George, “then we shall not be obliged to hurry; and then Lizzy can go with us.”

“That will be much better,” said Mary; and Donald and Anna said they thought so too; and jumping down, they ran into the house, while Jim drove the carriage from the door.

As Elizabeth promised, the dinner was over before two, and preparations were made for the ride. Jim was ready with the carriage at the gate, and the young people came out in fine spirits to enjoy the beautiful afternoon.

“I am sorry, Lizzy dear, that you would rather stay at home with the old folks, than ride with us,” said Anna.

“It would not do for both Mary and myself to leave home to-day. I care very little about riding, but it will do Mary good; she had so much care while George was sick.”

“We are sorry to leave you, Lizzy,” said George. “But jump in, Molly, and don’t hesitate any longer; Anna is waiting for you to get in first.”

“I intend to ride in front, for I like to see everything,” said Mary, “and Donald has promised to teach me to drive. So, Anna, we intend to stow George in behind, because he is not quite as hardy yet as Donald; and I am afraid he might find the air rather cool while riding.”

"I like the arrangement very much," said George, springing into the carriage and seating himself on the back seat by Anna; while Donald assisted Mary in, and taking his seat, put the reins in her hands.

"Hold them just so, Mary. O! your little hand is not half large enough; but here we go. You must do exactly as I tell you."

"I don't fancy you for a driver, Molly," said George. "If you turn us over, you shall be fined a thousand dollars."

"Why, George," said Mary, laughing, "I never could pay all that. It would be better for me to break my neck in the fall, than to get so much in debt."

"That is a shocking idea," said Donald. "I should wish my neck broken too, at the same time."

"Do take the reins again, Donald. I cannot drive with George in the carriage," said Mary; and that strange, anxious expression passed over her face that Donald had observed with so much anxiety, during his attendance at the sick-bed of his friend.

"Mary dear," said Donald, "tell me now what has given you so much trouble."

"Hush! not for the world," said Mary in a low voice as she gave up the reins to Don-

ald. "I will drive another time, but not now."

"You are soon tired, Molly," said Anna. "I thought you would not like the trouble long."

"I am glad to see the reins again in your hands, Donald," said George. "Mary has been too much confined to the house, of late, to know anything about driving two horses; but you are going a different route from that you intended when we started. This road is very rough, you know."

"Sure enough," answered Donald, "I am in the wrong road; but I must blame you for it, George."

"Me! Donald, you are crazy," said George in surprise. "I shall have to take your place there, if you make any more mistakes. Come, turn back; we will get into some trouble if you don't mind."

"I will, I will now," said Donald. "We are only a short distance from the right road. I will turn round and soon get on that. But do you mind your own affairs, my good fellow," continued Donald playfully. "I wish you and Anna could entertain each other, and not be all the time interfering with us."

"I should like to know where you would

have taken us, if George had not interfered. Over Crane rock, I do believe, before you discovered your mistake."

Donald and Mary laughed heartily at Anna's wit, and they both promised to take better care for the rest of the drive.

"Why, Anna," asked George, "did you stay away all the time I was sick?"

"Because Donald would not let me go to see you," answered Anna.

"Do you hear that, Donald? I will thank you, sir, the next time I am sick, not to keep my friends from calling when they wish to do so."

"The nurses and physician know what is best for the patient," answered Donald. "Anna would have seen you every day, if I had not said her visits would do you more harm than good. Mamma would not come, for the same reason. Moreover, they heard particularly how you were every day, from me, and that was all that was necessary."

"Draw your cloak about you, George," said Mary, "for the air is almost too cool for an invalid."

"He is no invalid now," said Anna. "He begins to look well again. O! I was so anxious about you while you were sick."

"About me?" asked George. "That was strange, I did not suppose you ever had an anxious thought on my account."

"O! George, you ought to be ashamed to talk so. You were very ill. And have we not always been the very best neighbors in the world? O! if you had died, what would Donald have done!"

"Ah! that is true," said Donald. "But what are you thinking over those old troubles for? You will not let Mary and me feel happy, while you talk about them. Do you wish to stop at the widow Gray's, Anna?"

"Yes; I have a little bundle here for her," answered Anna, "and I have a message from Mamma, too."

"That is the poor woman whose husband died last winter; is it not, Anna?"

"Yes. She has three little children and is very poor. Have you ever been to see her, Mary?"

"No, Anna dear; I wish you had told me you were going there; for I could have brought something for her. But I have a dollar in my purse, which papa gave me last spring. I once tried to get rid of it," continued Mary, sighing; "but I could not. Since that time I have hated the sight of it, and

will be very happy to give it to one of the little children."

"You are a queer girl, Molly," said George. "You have hated the sight of the dollar, because you could not get rid of it. I wish, in future, you would give me all the dollars that you can't get rid of."

"You need not laugh, George," said Anna. "I wish that you and Donald cared as little for money as Mary does. If you did, you would each give Mrs. Gray as much as she intends to give."

"Well, Donald, old fellow, do you hear what Anna says? Come, let us see how much I can scrape together; and then you must try how generous you can be. Look, here are two half dollars, with a hole through each. These I am going to give. I have a little more, if you want to borrow."

"Like Mary," said Donald, "I have but one piece, and that is a crown. With this I shall crown the whole, after the rest of you have given. I am the most awkward hand in the world to give money. How shall I contrive it?"

"There is no need of being so very modest," said Anna. "The poor woman is so accustomed to receiving charity, that she will not

feel half as much when she takes it, as you will when you give it."

"A pretty good story, Donald," said Mary. "I did not know before that it was so hard for you to part with your money."

"I believe you have got the laugh on me," said Donald, laughing heartily. "But never mind, you will see how I will contrive to *crown* the whole."

Thus happily these young friends chatted, until they turned into a shady lane which led to a neat little cottage near the pleasant village of W——.

"There is Kate, with little Robby, gathering grapes. Let us stop and ask if Mrs. Gray is at home," said Anna. "Come here, Kate," continued she, as the carriage stopped. "Is your mother at home?"

Kate made a low curtsy, and pulling off little Robby's hat, said quickly, "Yis, mam."

"Is any one there besides your mother?"

"No, mam, only Julie."

"Well, we are going there to see your mother."

"Yis, mam"

They drove on. Kate set down her basket, and taking Robby by the hand, scampered on after the carriage as fast as possible

Mrs. Gray came to the door as the carriage stopped. She curtsied to the strangers, and so did Julie; and politely asked them in. She sat down quietly after the rest were seated, and asked Anna kindly about her mother's health, and when she had heard from her father.

"We cannot stay long," said Anna, after they had been a few minutes in the house. "We called to deliver a message from mamma."

"Those peaches look very fine, Mrs. Gray," said Mary. "I should like to take some of them home with me."

"I have only this one tree," said Mrs. Gray, "but you are welcome, mam, to as many as you like."

"You have a basket in the carriage, Anna, will you lend it to me?" asked Mary.

"Certainly," said Anna, "but it is quite small."

"Yes, it is quite too small," said Mrs. Gray, as she took the basket and began to fill it with the best peaches on the tree.

"This is Julie's tree," she remarked, as she took the basket and placed it in the carriage.

Anna went into the house with the bundle which she had taken from the basket, and

put it upon the table ; and coming out again, asked Mrs. Gray if she still kept bees.

“ Yis, mam, my hives have done very well this summer. I have some nice and fresh in the comb now, in the house. Will you eat some ? I should be very glad if you will.”

“ We cannot stay long enough for that,” said Anna.

“ That will not take long,” said the widow, and ran briskly in, and in a few moments appeared at the door and invited them in again.

“ This is the nicest honey I ever saw,” said George, as he spread a fresh slice of rye bread thick with it and handed it to Anna.

“ The bees are all mine,” said Kate, who had been eyeing them with much pleasure, as they were enjoying her honey.

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Gray, “ they all claim something. The cow is Robby’s. He is a good boy, and picks up all the chips for me.”

“ Come,” said Mary to the others, “ we must get home now as soon as possible. Good bye, Mrs. Gray. I am much obliged to you for the peaches.”

Then taking the dollar from her pocket, she went to the little girl Julia, and said, “ Here, Julia, I want you to take this to remember me by.”

The child looked at Mary in wonder, and her mother said, "No, mam, it is quite too much."

"But she shall have it," said Mary. "I will not take it again;" and she slipped it into the girl's bosom, who made a low curtsy and said, "Thanky, mam."

"We have been eating your honey, Kate," said George, "that was not fair; and you must let us pay you. Get me a thread—that's a good little child."

Away ran Kate, and soon returned with a ball of yarn. George broke off a piece, and turning from them, put the half-dollars on the string, and then hung them around Kate's neck. The child blushed and smiled, while her mother said the gentleman was very kind.

"Where is your cow, Robby?" asked Donald. "I should like to have a glass of milk after eating that nice honey."

"Yis, sir," said the little fellow; and away he trotted after his mother.

"Now for the crowning scene," whispered Mary.

"Yes, yes," said George.

"I am all impatience," said Anna, "to see how it will end. Here comes the little fellow; now for it Donald."

Robby came creeping along with a nice glass of milk; holding it with both hands, and spilling it down on his jacket at every step. Donald went to meet him, and drank it all down without a word.

“Is it good?” asked the little boy.

This question amused the strangers very much. They all then shook hands with Mrs. Gray and the children, and after Robby had shaken hands with Donald, he found a piece of silver in his sleeve. By this time they were all in the carriage. The little boy ran and showed it to his mother, who raised both her hands and said, “God bless ’em,” while her tears filled her eyes, and Julia and Kate came close to her as the carriage drove off.

“That was very well done, Donald,” said George, “but your face turned as red as a girl’s, while you were shaking hands with Robby.”

“Poor woman,” said Mary, “did you see now much she seemed to feel?”

“Yes,” replied George. “Truly we have felt to-day that ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’ I am glad we have found out this worthy woman, for we can often assist her.”

“Do take some of these nice peaches,” said

Mary. "They are very sweet and ripe, and fresh from the tree. Here, Anna, this is a beauty. Help yourself Donald; and you, too, George."

"I was quite amused, Mary," said Donald, "to see how you contrived to get more than any of us for your money. I wonder that you will eat anything you bought with *that* dollar."

"Donald," said Mary, looking him earnestly in the face, "what do *you* know about *that* dollar?"

"O! nothing, except that you said you had hated it ever since you tried to get rid of it, a few weeks ago."

"You must not speak so strongly in future, Molly," said Anna, "if you don't wish your words to make an impression. We shall always remember that the money you paid for these nice peaches was a *hateful* dollar."

"I hope," said George, "that my dear sister's pocket feels lighter since she gave away what she so much hated. I hope it will do more good to the child than it ever did to my sister Molly."

"I hope so, too," said Mary, earnestly. "But you are all too bad, to laugh so much at my troubles. You do not know how glad I

feel when I think that dollar may yet do good to some one."

And Mary looked so grave, that not another word was said upon the subject of *that* dollar; the very one she had offered to Bess for the herbs for George.

The beautiful autumnal day began to draw to a close before the young people returned home from their ride. They regretted very much that Elizabeth had not been with them; and Mary said she would not let them go home until late, because Anna had scarcely seen her sister; and that Lizzy should have some of the nice peaches.

"Yes," said George, "and we will give her an exact account of our adventures, and then she will feel perfectly satisfied; for Lizzy is a dear little body, and would never stir from mamma of her own accord. Mary really had to beg her, the other day, to go with her to take tea at Mr. Heaton's. She only consented at last, because she remembered how closely Mary had been confined at home for several weeks. She first tried to get mamma to go too. And I believe that on Mary's account mamma would have gone, if Lizzy had persisted much longer."

"She is the best sister in the world," said Mary.

"Except mine," answered Donald. "She is the very best."

"Certainly," said Anna. "I believe you think so, Donald; and I am sure I can with truth return the compliment."

"I deny that, Anna," said George. "I do not think he is half so good a sister as Molly. He said you were the best *sister*; and you said you could return the compliment, that is, you could say that he is the best *sister* in the world."

"That is just like you, George," said Donald. "How you do like to laugh at the girls."

"O! we never care," said Mary, good-humoredly. "We like to see him enjoying himself. We laugh at him, too, sometimes. I never felt really provoked but once when George laughed at me, and that was—"

"If you don't wish to be laughed at again for the same thing," said George, "you had better not repeat it to Anna and Donald."

"Well, say no more about it, Molly dear," said Anna, "for we do not wish to laugh at you."

"Here we are," said Donald, "almost home:

but what is that smoke? It rises like the smoke of a barn burning. It is just in the direction of Mr. Hook's. See, see how thick and black the smoke looks, as it winds over the hill. It is not more than three miles from here. It really does seem to be a large fire, and just in the direction of Mr. Hook's. I hope it is not his house. If it is only his old barn, it will be no great loss; for it was too bad to put his grain in, this summer."

"Is it not in the direction of our house, Donald?" asked Anna.

"Yes, but farther. I know by that high hill, that it is either at Mr. Keene's, or Mr. Hook's."

By this time they had reached the next turn in the road; which, after a little while, brought them safely to Mr. Finland's gate, where they all alighted with much pleasure, and found their dear friends and a good supper waiting for them.

XIII

Sweet Sympathies.

GEORGE had now recovered his health and good looks ; but the constant visits of Donald seemed still to be essential to his comfort.

When two days would intervene between his calls, George would wonder what could be the reason that he had not come.

For three evenings in succession, he had gone to rest disappointed and anxious, because his friend had not called ; and on the morning of the fourth day he determined to ride over to Capt. Mason's, to learn the cause of his long absence.

When he reached the house, he saw Donald busily engaged in the orchard ; and tying his horse, he came up to him so quietly and unexpectedly that Donald was startled and surprised.

“ Ah ! is it you, indeed ? ” he exclaimed, as George caught him in his arms “ I am

very glad you have come. I thought you would be here, if I left off my visits to you, for a few days. Come, let us go in, mamma and Anna will be very glad to see you."

Then taking George's arm, he hurried him toward the house. Mrs. Mason met them at the door, and warmly welcomed him once more to her house. Anna, with a glow of pleasure upon her cheek, frankly offered him her hand, and expressed much satisfaction at seeing him look quite well again.

George felt an undefinable sensation of thrilling pleasure, which he had never before experienced, when he saw the lovely Anna express so much pleasure on his account.

When this heart-felt reception was over, and the usual inquiries about the health of all had passed, a long silence ensued, and a gloom seemed to hover around, which was not usual in this old mansion. George felt embarrassed; and turning abruptly to Donald, asked if anything unpleasant had occurred? Donald hesitated, and looked towards his mother, who replied:

"Ah! George, we have great cause to feel anxious; but we put our trust in God, who doeth all things well; and we can sometimes feel a calm confidence in his unerring wisdom,

happen what may. We received, three days since, a letter from a friend of Mr. Mason, stating that he was too ill to write; that he had been reduced to the brink of the grave by a malignant fever; but that it was now the opinion of the physicians that the greatest danger was passed, and if no relapse occurred, he might, with great care, recover so far as to set out on his voyage homeward after a few weeks. We have, however, many anxious moments, because we cannot hear from him again for a long time; but we try to be patient, while we hope for the best, and endeavor to be prepared for the worst."

George felt the deepest interest in what he had just heard. He always loved captain Mason; and the pleasant occasions of his return to his home, were among the brightest of George's remembrances. He tenderly sympathized with his friends, and endeavored to administer comfort to them; saying, that there was more reason to hope than to fear, now that the crisis was past, and captain Mason was yet living when the letter was written.

George, however, remembered the knife—Captain Mason's last gift to Donald—and

thought to himself, "we shall never see him again." But in a moment, his better judgment prevailed, and he exerted himself to banish this superstition from his mind. He endeavored to be cheerful, and succeeded in making his friends so too; and he parted with them in good spirits, after Donald had told him that in future he would expect him to return all his calls.

Several weeks passed after this visit, and still no intelligence was received concerning captain Mason. Donald had called several times and began to appear quite dejected. Mrs. Mason, however, still hoped that as they received no letter he might be on his way home, and this was quite a comfort to their anxious hearts.

One morning Mrs. Finland said she had heard the death-bell ringing in her ears all night, and that she was afraid to hear from Mrs. Mason, for she felt sure they had heard bad news.

Mr. Finland confirmed what his wife had said, by stating that all the morning, while seated at his writing desk, he had heard the death-watch.

"Now, my dear brother, and sister," said Mr. Bland, "I cannot let this piece of super-

stition pass without a gentle reproof, or at least an attempt to account for your delusive signs. You, my dear sister, complained last evening of being unwell. Your cold, and your feverish symptoms, caused the ringing in your ears, which is a very common thing. I myself have it very often ; and if some dear friend should die every time this bell-ringing in my ears troubles me, I should very soon have not a friend in the world left."

Mrs. Finland admitted that she believed the ringing in her head to proceed from her cold ; yet she said it sounded so much like a bell that it was really alarming ; and she had always been accustomed to believe that she should hear of a death soon after experiencing what she did last night. She however hoped there was to be no truth in the sign this time, and trusted that captain Mason would soon return to his family ; though she could not entirely dismiss her sad forebodings.

"We must not be too anxious about anything, my dear sister," said Mr. Bland, "but commit all our care to that wise and good Being who never errs. And as to the death watch, it is merely a little harmless insect, which we can find concealed somewhere about the writing desk, if we look carefully for it.

The ticking noise it makes so exactly resembles a watch, that I was once entirely deceived by it; and searched a shelf which was covered with old books and papers, peeping first under one book, then between two or three, and lifting the old papers with much care, for fear I should throw down my watch which I thought I had by mistake laid carelessly down somewhere on the shelf; and though I thought I remembered leaving it in my room, yet I could not be convinced until, in my search for the watch, I saw a little insect, and then I found out my mistake. I took the little thing up carefully, and kept it some days; and amused my friends with its remarkable noise. This harmless little insect, the weak-minded have supposed to prognosticate death; and from this circumstance it has derived its name."

Mr. Finland answered that he knew very well that the death-watch was an insect; but as it was heard so rarely, its strange noise might be reasonably considered a death-token.

"For my part," said Mr. Bland, "I cannot comprehend, why anything which happens rarely, but from the nature of things, may occur at any time, and which doubtless often

takes place without being observed by any person, should be considered ominous. And though I cannot, on this occasion, say with the Psalmist, 'I have hated *them* that regard lying vanities,' yet I will say I hate *all such* lying vanities, as your superstitious signs, good and bad omens, and other lying wonders; and I hope the day is not far distant when you will feel just as I do upon this subject."

Mr. and Mrs. Finland did not altogether like to be thus reproved in the presence of their children; but as Mr. Bland had truth upon his side, they were obliged to bear the rebuke in silence.

Little Willie said he would go and look for the death-watch, and Elizabeth said she would go too; for she had never seen one. They began the search in earnest, and were soon gratified by finding the little creature, whose unmeaning noise had filled a man with terror. Willie put it into a little paper box, and kept it some time; and showed it to Donald and Anna, and every one who chanced to come in while he had it.

Soon after these occurrences, Mr. Finland said he was going in the direction of Captain Mason's, and would call there before he returned, and ask the news.

The time passed tediously that morning; for the conversation which had passed between Mr. Bland and his friends cast a sober feeling over Mrs. Finland and her children.

Mr. Finland did not return until noon; he came in smiling and looking so happy that they all exclaimed, "good news!"

"Tell us, tell us," said one.

"Is captain Mason well?" asked another.
"Has he written himself?"

"Has he got home?" asked George.

"George is right," answered Mr. Finland.
"He is safe home."

Then Willie danced, though he had no recollection of the captain; but he always would dance when he saw others happy. Mary's face glowed with pleasure, and Elizabeth's brightened with smiles. George could not express his delight in words. Mrs. Finland was much surprised; and Mr. Bland looked on with pleasure.

"I have been talking with him for an hour," continued Mr. Finland. "He looks much better than I expected to see him. He returned night before last; but Donald was prevented by the unceasing rain of yesterday, from coming over to give us the joyful news. They all appear very happy, and

Anna is more beautiful than ever, George and it is evident that her father thinks so."

George's face was flushed with pleasure, as his father addressed this last remark to him, and he caught little Willie, and kissed and hugged him, until the little fellow looked up in wonder at his big brother. In the midst of the fluster Poll cried out, "works of darkness;" while George shook his fist at the bird, and told him those words recalled sad thoughts, and that they were no longer needed; but the parrot, louder than ever, screamed out the same words at him; which brought a smile to every face, and made Willie clap his hands with delight. Their pleasure was still more increased, when Mr. Finland said that Mrs. Mason had invited them all to spend a long day with them to-morrow.

"It will not be a long day to any of us, I promise you," said Mary.

"No," observed Mr. Bland, "not even to me; for I shall enjoy the happiness which my dear friends experience."

No one was more pleased upon the return of captain Mason than Hardicus, who came, smiling, to ask permission to go over that afternoon to see "old Massa," and ask "how he leab his brudder."

On the morrow, the sun rose bright and beautiful, and so did the young Finlands; and began, after an early breakfast, to make preparations for spending a long day with their neighbors. They knew nothing of the fashion of the present time, and would have laughed at any who should go out on a visit in the afternoon, and say they went to spend the day. This was not the way with the honest, simple-minded, and intelligent forefathers of New England. These friends knew that by nine or ten o'clock Mrs. Mason would be expecting them.

The young people were ready to start by eight; but their parents, who took things more coolly, were not ready quite so soon; and little Willie, who was more impatient than usual, thought they had waited an hour for the rest. They all intended to walk, and anticipated much pleasure from this part of their day.

Little Willie ran on before the rest of the party, but stopped so often to gather flowers, or to chase butterflies, or to speak to those behind him, that he did not arrive at the end of the walk any sooner than the others.

Mr. Bland said he would turn aside and make Mr. Heaton a call; for he had not seen

the good minister at home for some time ; and he wished to consult him about the best plan to be adopted in order to civilize the poor vagrant, Bess, who was growing more thievish and destructive every day. Before the Finlands reached captain Mason's, they saw her coming towards them through the wood. Descrying them at a distance, she stopped and crept into some thick bushes, until they came up. She, however, kept herself concealed, and they passed on, and did not let her know that they had seen her.

When they arrived at the old mansion Mrs. Mason and Anna were waiting to receive their guests, and gave them a hearty welcome. Captain Mason embraced each of his young friends tenderly, while they wished him a long and happy visit to his home ; and they were overjoyed to learn that he intended now to remain with his beloved family, and make no more long voyages. He examined the face of each of the young people, and commented upon the great change produced in their appearance in so *short* a time as three years. He wondered most at Willie, and seemed scarcely to think that this big boy was the little baby he had last seen him. He could see no change in Mr. and Mrs. Finland.

He said they looked exactly as they did the last time he parted with them. Willie told him of the good uncle who had come to live with them, and many other things.

Mr. Bland did not arrive for more than an hour after the rest, and little Willie ran out to meet him, while Elizabeth, taking captain Mason by the hand, said she wished to have the pleasure of introducing him to her good uncle, who gave him a warm welcome, while he said he felt almost personally acquainted with him ; as he had heard so much said about captain Mason, and his expected return.

Various were the employments and amusements, which served to make this day a happy one to all who were present at the old mansion.

Sober, entertaining conversation engaged the more serious part of the company, and the more thoughtless, too, for a time. Donald brought out a large collection of rare things which his father had brought this time, and which were all new to his visitors. Mary took up a volume of plants, beautifully pressed. The most of them retained their color, and interested her exceedingly ; as they were all in their proper classes, and she had, under her uncle's tuition, become very fond of the

study of botany. The shells seemed most to interest Willie ; and he amused himself with them long after the others had left him, for a stroll through the garden, the orchard, and meadow, as sportive and joyous as the birds that delighted them with their notes.

Elizabeth and Anna kept side by side, amusing themselves with many an innocent jest with George ; while Donald and Mary, hand in hand, bounding along over the meadows, soon reached the bank of the river ; where seating themselves on the grass, they united their voices in a plaintive little air, which sounded very sweetly to the others, who were bending their steps more slowly in the same direction.

Here they all rested a long time, in a beautiful spot, shaded by ancient trees, under which Mr. Heaton had made some rustic seats, as it bordered upon the grounds of his parsonage. The grass was beautifully green on the bank of the river, and ornamented by a variety of rich flowers, mosses and ferns. The young men gathered the flowers, and the girls made themselves tasty wreaths.

“ Here,” said George, playfully, “ I have brought some chestnut burrs, to make a necklace for Anna. Let me measure your neck

with this piece of grass, for I wish to make it just long enough. You will know when you lose it, if it is tight."

"Oh! you are very kind," said Anna starting up. "but I will have no necklaces I don't like ornaments of any kind. I'll tell you what to do with them. Open them and press them out, and next week I will make you a pair of mittens, with the smooth side out. The cold weather will be coming on soon, and they will be very warm."

"Yes," said Mary, "nothing does George like better than to have good, thick gloves when he drives in the winter."

Donald laughed heartily at his friend, and said, "I think you stand a chance, George, to get the mitten, in a way that you will not much relish."

"I think so, too," returned George. "I will take care how I offer to make *jewelry* again for you, Miss Anna."

"I hope you will," replied the charming girl, making a graceful courtesy to George; and looking too much pleased with him to be offended.

"I shall make a more tasty necklace for your sister," said Donald, "and shall not be obliged to take the measure of her neck either.

When I complete it, you shall all see how beautiful it will be, and how much taste I have."

Saying this, he ran down the bank; while Elizabeth, finishing a beautiful wreath, placed it upon Mary's head.

"Oh, how sweet she looks," exclaimed Anna.

"I am making mine for you, Lizzy," said Mary.

"I was making mine for Lizzy, too," cried Anna, "and now, what shall be done?"

"I think Lizzy had better take back that one she just gave Mary, and then she will have enough for one little lady," said George.

The girls laughed at his wit; and after awhile Donald came, with his wreath hanging on his hand. It was made of bunches of berries and leaves, tied together with grass. It was very tastily put together, and very much admired by all except Mary, who said she could not put it on her neck, while a deeper glow suffused her cheek, and tears filled her eyes, and Donald saw with surprise the same expression on her countenance, as she looked earnestly at George, that had given him so much uneasiness while his friend was sick. They were all amazed, and wondered at Ma-

ry's refusal of so tasty a wreath for her neck—except Lizzy, who took it playfully from Donald, and hung it on a branch of one of the trees; saying, it might perhaps be found by Bess before it withered, and she knew the use of herbs so well, that she would be glad to find them gathered, ready to her hand.

Donald felt mortified and hurt by Mary's conduct; and the poor girl, observing this, could scarcely refrain from weeping. She sat down by Anna, and put her head in her lap. Lizzy saw and felt her dear sister's trouble, and determined to speak to Donald, but could not do so where Mary was. She, therefore, said she was going to look for some grapes—hoping that Donald would offer to help her—and as he had nothing now that much interested him, he followed, and soon overtook this kind sister and sympathizing friend. She found the grapes just where old Hardicus had told her they grew; and while Donald assisted her to gather them, she related the strange story to him about Mary's visit to Bess. Nothing could exceed the surprise and horror that the young man felt, as Elizabeth went on with the recital; and he no longer wondered at Mary's remarkable manner towards George during his illness, or

her aversion to his unfortunate selection of similar berries for the necklace. His heart was entirely relieved; for he had often endeavored to find a sufficient reason for Mary's singular conduct, when he once spoke to her upon the subject of her sadness, during his friend's illness. Soon all was plain; and he begged Lizzy not to trouble herself any more about the grapes; saying he would have them gathered and sent to her the next day. They returned to the rest of the party, and Mary soon observed, from Donald's manner, that her sweet sister had told him the fearful tale.

Donald came, and sitting down beside her, whispered in her ear, "I think we will carry home the necklace, and make sweetmeats of the berries for old Bess."

Mary covered her face with her hands as he spoke.

"What is that about old Bess?" asked Anna. "Did you say you would tell her what a naughty girl Mary was, to refuse you tasty present?"

"Who got the mitten, that time?" asked George, laughing heartily, when he found that Donald had again become good-humored.

"Come, come," said Lizzy, "the declining sun warns us to return."

“How poetical my dear little sister is,” said Mary, as she kissed the lovely girl, and took Donald’s offered arm, while they bent their steps back to the house. When they reached the old mansion, Mary had entirely recovered her good spirits, and the glow upon her cheek was brighter than ever.

Little Willie ran out to meet them, and said, “Come along, they are all in the garden, and you must go there too.”

They soon saw their kind parents; and Donald, playfully leading Mary forward, introduced her as “one of the graces.”

“And here are the others,” said George, as he presented Anna and Elizabeth.

The girls curtsied gracefully, indeed, and their parents smiled, delighted at their harmless wit.

“Their heightened beauty,” observed Mr. Bland, “makes them resemble Faith, Hope, and Charity, more than any heathen divinities.”

“That is true,” remarked captain Mason, “but, beware how you plant vanity in their young hearts. Remember!” he added, addressing the girls, “that it is only the beauty of holiness which can stand the test of time and eternity ”

This remark sobered the whole party, and cast a shade of charming thoughtfulness into the sweet expression of their happy countenances.

Supper being ended, the guests were soon prepared for their walk homeward. Donald and Anna accompanied them part of the way, and Willie begged them to go quite home with him and stay all night. But this, they said, they would not do this time ; so the little fellow was obliged to be contented with a loving kiss from Anna.

The evening was closed by them, as usual, in hearing Mr. Bland read the Holy Scriptures, and uniting in prayer and praise to that good Being, whose kind providence had brought them safely through this happy day.

XIV.

Strange Things.

THE beautiful autumnal morning which followed the happy day spent at the old mansion, saw George out early and looking after matters of business and daily care.

The sun was just smiling over the horizon upon all the charming works of God ; enlivening and illuminating with his beams each beauteous scene of richly variegated landscape, placid river, and distant, towering hills. "How splendid!" thought the young man, as he paused to gaze upon the landscape. The trees were tinged with almost every variety of color ; and George remembered what his uncle Bland had said about the impression made upon his mind by the variety of colors in the foliage, the first autumn that he spent with them in New England. This scene was not new to George, who had observed the gradual change of the trees from spring to winter for nearly twenty years ; but still

he gazed upon the beautiful prospect with even more pleasure than he had found in it when a child. All the beauty of nature was before him, and all the joys of life he anticipated in the future. With him, happiness was on the wing, undamped by care, and hope smiled before him, unchecked by disappointment.

From the house he slowly directed his steps towards the barn; where he saw Hardicus standing still and looking steadily upon something at his feet. When he drew near he discovered that it was Fleet.

“What is the matter with him?” asked George, in alarm. “Ah! my poor Fleet! I do believe he is dead.”

“Yis, he dead, Massa George; he stone dead. I no hear him all night—an’ I go look in he house—he no dar—so I hunt roun’ an’ here I fine him, stone dead.”

“O! my good friend, my poor, dear Fleet. I thought you looked very well yesterday; and I wanted to take you with me, but I was afraid that the new dog which Captain Mason brought home would quarrel with you.”

“Massa, dey no use tockin to ’um. He no hear you now—he nebber hear you no more.”

“Do you think he looked sick yesterday?” asked George.

“I no know, Massa—he no be sick when you go way—but old Bess she come ’loig arter dat. Fleet growl hard at her—she trow de dog sometin’—he go take it up—he eat it.”

“What was it?” asked George, much excited. “What did it look like?”

“I tink it look like chicken leg—I sure ’twas meat. Bess no know I see her. I peep tru de crack ob de door. I be feard to speak.”

“O what an old coward you are,” said George impatiently. “Where were Judy and Jim? I think all of you together might have kept Bess out of the yard in the day-time.”

“Massa George, now don’t be mad—massa don’t. I tell you, Massa George, Judy and Patty dey gone arter de turkeys, kase if Bess fine ’um she take just as many on ’um as she like. Jim, he go ride ’way. I no know what Jim ride ’way fur—but he go—I nebber ax him.”

“And pray,” asked George, in the same vexed and impatient manner, “what other mischief did you let her do?”

“Now, massa, I no let Bess do nottin. She go roun’ de house—I go out to peep arter her—she look in dem ar winders—she try an’

git in at de do'—she can't do dat—den she try at the cellar do'—she can't git in dar nedder—den she cus you all holler—I nebber hear nobody cus like old Bess."

'O! she is a wicked old wretch," said George, "and I will ask uncle to go with me to her hut, this very day."

"Massa, she kill you!"

"Never fear, I am not such a coward as you, Hardicus. I am not afraid of the vile creature, now I am grown."

"Now Massa is mad wid dis poor old nigger. 'Deed, Massa George, I tink Bess bewitch me if I cross her—dat all I feard ob. I no be coward. But I don't like dem ar old witches."

"Ah! my poor Fleet," said George, looking again at his favorite; and turning, he went back to the house, where he related to his father and uncle what had happened.

Mr. Finland said she should live no longer on his premises, if he could get her away, but he did not like to drive her off.

"I will take care of her," said Mr. Bland. "I have put off this unpleasant business too long; and although I have been residing here so long, yet I have never had an opportunity of speaking to this creature, for she seems always to avoid me. Mr. Heaton says he fears

that nothing can be done for her ; that he never met with such a hardened sinner. I will go there with or without you, George, to-day ; just as you please."

"I wish very much to go with you, uncle. Some one must ; for alone you could never find the place."

"I shall just go to her hut to-day," said Mr. Bland, "and tell her that we know the extent of her evil deeds ; and tell her plainly that she shall be brought to justice and lodged in prison ; for the community has borne with her evil ways too long already."

Mr. Bland and George started upon this unpleasant business early in the afternoon. The glorious sun which George had seen rising brightly that morning was now overcast with clouds, and a gloomy shade spread over the meadow and wood ; while they silently pursued their walk in the direction of this abode of misery and vice. When they arrived there, Mr. Bland could not help wondering at the strange abode, almost concealed by trees and brambles. The front was quite clear of bushes ; and the vines and mosses which crept through and hung down the sides of the stone but looked really beautiful. The leaves of the little tree which grew on the top of the

grass-covered roof were of bright scarlet and orange; and the crimson and purple vines, and yellow brambles, made the strange place look very rich and gay.

They found the door fastened, and Bess was not there. The stump of an old broom lay by the door, and the gravel and leaves had been swept to one side. "This looks more decent than I expected," said Mr. Bland. "I suppose she takes off a broom whenever she happens to find one."

"Yes," replied George; "we have missed more than one broom from the porch, and have wondered what became of them. Har-dicus would tell us, that he had seen the old witch ride the broomstick home over the meadow, and into the wood."

Mr. Bland clambered about on every side of this odd building; and said he thought it might have been built more than a century. They then sat down on the trunk of the great tree which had been blown down near by, to wait for Bess to return home.

They had not waited long before they saw her sombre figure gliding through the thickest part of the wood, followed by her dog. She carried a goose in one hand, and had a bundle of sticks under the other arm.

The dog sprang forward upon seeing them and growled horribly. "Off there," cried Bess, and coming up, she stared at them wildly for a moment, and then said, with evident agitation,

"What in the name of saint Pathrick be ye wanting?"

"We wish to speak a few words to you, Bess," said Mr. Bland, mildly.

"Will, make speed thin! Do you know me? My name is Mrs. Nisbey—"

"I only know you as the plague of this neighborhood. You plunder hen-houses, steal geese, kill lambs, steal pigs, poison dogs,—yes, and this young man would have fallen a victim to your revenge, if the Almighty had not interposed;—and now you will be brought to justice."

George looked more surprised than Bess, at that part of his uncle's remarks, which had reference to himself; while the hag, standing upon her toes, and stretching out her tawny neck, and with the utmost anxiety depicted in her haggard face, began,

"And for what will ye do me so? a poor, friendless cratur? And how shall I live, if I don't help myself? would ye have a poor cra-

tur starve? It's kilt I am, anyhow, to go all day wi'out a bit to ate."

"You should have enough of everything," replied Mr. Bland, "if you would take the advice of the good minister and the good ladies, who offered you a home and work, so that you could live honestly; but this you will not do; preferring to live your lawless life. You will, therefore, be taken away from this hovel, to-morrow, and lodged in prison, where justice will be done to you, I assure you."

"Ah! now I know ye know me," exclaimed Bess. "Ye say ye know me not, but ye lie! ye lie! Ah! sir Walther, ye canna harm me in this frae counthrey. Mистер George, ye musna hear what I say. Be off, be off." Then lowering her voice, as George retreated, she continued. "Now what's the matther, Sir Walther, that ye came all the way till this counthrey, sarching afther Bess to murder her? We are no more in ould Ireland, where I done all my deeds to ye and yer dead leddy. I was sorry I kilt her, but ye canna harm me in this free land."

"What is justice in old Ireland, is justice here," said Mr. Bland, mildly. "But I am not the person you take me to be, I have only

seen you prowling about the meadows and woods ; but I never spoke to you until now."

"Now but ye did!" replied she, earnestly, "ye forget me, now I be old, Sir Walther, no wonder—no wonder. I was young and tidy and smart, and handsome as yer own leddy, when ye kissed me and called me yer poorty Bess, and made yer leddy mad. I was sorry when I saw she was dead ; and then I flew off from ould Ireland, far away to this frae counthrey. I wad tell no man this but ye—for ye know'd it all the time. Och! ye be the root of all my sin!"

"I am not the person you think me," Mr. Bland replied. "I never was in Ireland. I am an Englishman, and was never out of England, until I came to this country. But from your own confession you are a much greater sinner than I before thought you, and for your crimes you must suffer."

"As I suffer, so shall ye suffer ; for ye be the root of all my sin. Ye needna say, ye never was in ould Ireland—ye lie! for I know ye, Sir Walther—I know ye, tho' ye be gray and the wrinkles be on yer face, and ye be pale wid care and sorrow—Ye look ould and full of trouble, and ye have cause to be so."

"You are a poor, mistaken wretch," said

Mr. Bland, feelingly, "and I pity you, because you have been so great a sinner; but justice has overtaken you at last. God will not always spare the guilty."

"Ow! ye murderin ould villayn," she screamed, as she threw up her arms wildly, "I'll tache ye how to ruin a honest body. I'll pizen ye afore mornin, I will."

"I am not afraid of you, Bess. It is not I who will make you suffer for your crimes; but the laws of this land will condemn you. I shall say no more to you, but earnestly beg you to repent of your past sins and prepare for your certain doom."

"Well then, by the blood of the hooly marthys, I curse ye," she cried out frantically. "Then may the praiست curse ye, Sir Walther! may all the saints in the calendar curse ye! may all things be a curse to ye! when ye ate an drink an slape, may ye be cursed!"

Thus did this poor wicked creature go on from one horrid imprecation to another, until her profanity became so shocking to Mr. Bland that he turned from her and hurried away. When he related to George what Bess had confessed, he felt more horror of her than he ever did before; particularly after his

uncle explained to him what he alluded to, when he told Bess that his life would have been sacrificed to her revenge, if God had not mercifully interposed. George now saw the necessity of having her imprisoned, and brought to trial ; and determined to have her arrested the next morning.

When they returned home, they found Donald at the house, and told him all that passed during the interview with Bess, and of their determination to remove her from the neighborhood, and have her safely lodged in prison.

Donald said he was truly glad to find that there was something to be done in this matter at last. He mentioned how his mother had tried every way to reform her, when she first learned that there was such a poor woman in the neighborhood. She used every persuasion to induce her to enter the service of a farmer, who wanted some one to attend altogether to his poultry. His mother, also, offered to fit her out with clothing to enable her to appear more respectable, in order that she might begin an honest way of living ; and promised to give her all the advice about the care of poultry that she could, whenever it was needed. But Bess said she preferred

her vagabond life, "frae life," as she termed it, and loved her "royal rags" better than all the silk gowns the lady could give her, and concluded by saying, that she "wad niver be the farmer's nigger, for all his mony."

He said, moreover, that his mother did not give up her benevolent endeavors to reform the poor creature, though Bess refused this offer, which was the best she could make; but as often as opportunities occurred, she endeavored to bring her to a right sense of the unprofitable, and sinful, and dangerous manner in which she was passing her days. At first she listened with attention and respect, but after a while manifested great impatience; and the last time his mother had an opportunity to speak to her, she behaved so improperly, and was so profane, abusive and violent in her threats, that she concluded to let her alone, until she should become sick and in want of human sympathy and aid. "But I begin to think that will never be. She has never been known to be sick while she has lived there, and she seems as hardy as a pine knot. But since that time," continued Donald, "she has done all she could to injure us; but we keep such good guard, that she has, as yet, never greatly harmed us. Some-

times she takes a goose out of the meadow ; which her dog is as expert at snatching up as a cat is at catching a mouse. Sometimes she will knock down a turkey out of the tree, or pick up a stray chicken ; but these things we never care much for, because if she will live such a vagabond life, the poor creature must not starve."

"Yes," said Mr. Bland, "she is a poor, pitiable wretch. Yet, we are to blame for allowing her to live this depraved life. And from her own confession, she must now be imprisoned and brought to trial. It is too late in the evening now to arrest her ; as your nearest magistrate is 'squire Keene. But he must be spoken to in the morning."

"I will see him myself," said Donald, "as his house is nearer to us than to you, and will come here with him."

"Yes, do," said George. "I shall go with 'squire Keene and uncle, and should be glad to have you with us too."

When Donald informed his parents of the confession of Bess to Mr. Bland, they were shocked and astonished. Mrs. Mason said she always thought she must be some fugitive from justice ; because she was so hardened.

Captain Mason wondered when he heard

that "the old plague," as he always called her, was still alive. He said he thought she would have been frozen to death before this time; for he had often heard of Mr. Finland sending hands there in the deep snows, "to dig the poor wretch out;" and all the thanks she ever gave them was, to threaten that "Brutus should see them off if they didn't make speed."

The next morning, as soon as Donald could find time, he went over to 'squire Keene's, and informed him of what Bess had confessed to Mr. Bland. The 'squire was enraged, and said he had often spoken to "the select-men" of the town about Bess, and that at one time there was a majority for punishing the impious old wretch, and now, the time had come at last; and that for his part, he would take as much pleasure in roasting her, as he would in "smoking a raccoon out of an old tree."

"As soon as I get through my breakfast I promise you I'll be coming along. Mr. Bland, do you say? Ah! yes; that's the gentleman that stops with 'Easy George' so long. He's a fine old English gentleman, I know; but there comes Hook. You're the very man I wish to see."

“I be, hey? Now du tell what you want to have of me.”

The 'squire then related to Mr. Hook all that Donald had just told him.

“Wal—there now, you don't say! that vile old witch! Wal, I'm the one to help put fire to the fagots, I tell you. I've ben a thinking on it ever since my barn was burnt. Nobody set fire to my old barn but that are critter. It was lucky nothing was in't but three turkeys. I was a coming over yesterday to talk about that are business.”

“We must all meet at Easy George's house, for she lives on his premises; and some o' them will go with us. It will be a hard matter to get that good easy soul to help to punish even such a witch as Bess.”

“You really do not think her a witch, 'squire?” said Donald.

“What's the reason I don't? She's bewitched many a thing for me; my sheep and one of my horses. My sheep have acted like wild after she's been along; and my black horse will no more go by that great stone near the corner that turns to the path that leads to the grave-yard, than he will climb to the moon; and the day after I took the oxen to that wood near by her hut, where Hardicus

helped to cut the log for the saw-mill, I say, the next day the critters acted like mad."

"I want to know!" exclaimed the constable. "Du tell! Your oxen's most allers very gentle; but critters remembers witches better than people du. Wal, I'm a goin' that are way this mornin', and I feel jest in the mind to give her a warmin'. I'll meet you then about ten o'clock, 'squire; good day."

When the hour arrived, the magistrate and constable with Mr. Heaton, colonel Newbold, deacon Framer, and two or three more of the leading men of the town, met at Mr. Finland's. Mr. Bland and Mr. Finland, misconstruing some expressions of the constable and 'squire Keene, began to protest, at the outset, against cruel treatment. Mr. Heaton had nothing to say; and seemed to be waiting to find out first what the rest would determine. 'squire Keene and Mr. Hook were determined to have things their own way; and said they had a majority of the select-men on their side.

"I insist, at least," said Mr. Finland, "that she first be imprisoned and have a trial."

"Wal," said the constable, "we will first take her to prison; but as to a trial, that's no use. She's condemned already by a majority

of the select-men, and that's all that's required. Aint that so, 'squire?"

"Yes," answered 'squire Keene; "that's just the case—no judge or jury required with witches. In the town where they have carried on their black arts, the people have the power to take, condemn and burn them, with the consent of a majority of the select-men. But to satisfy our easy neighbor, we will first put her in prison, for we couldn't very well burn her in her den; for them stones and logs would take a great sight of wood to make 'em go off."

"You cannot condemn a witch to be burned by the laws of these United States without a trial," said the colonel, with pomp. "Such a law would pass a hundred years ago. But freedom has opened our eyes; and cruelty without justice will not now be allowed among freemen, not even towards witches."

"Part of your decision," said Mr. Heaton, "I like. That she should be imprisoned is safest and best, and the sooner she is secured the better; but that she should be condemned and burned without a trial is unjust, and I protest against any such proceedings. The poor wretch may be a crazy woman, escaped from some place of confinement; and her confession to Mr. Bland only a fabrication of an

unsettled mind ; for, you know, she would insist that he was Sir Walter, whom perhaps she has only dreamed of ; or at most he may be an imaginary personage.”

“Wal, there aint no use, Mr. Heaton, sir,” said the constable, “we all know Bess to be a witch. She may or she may not be a murderer—that aint the question. She’s a witch, and it’s for that she desarves to be burned. There aint no use in tryin’ to hang her. She’d never die by hangin’. There aint no other way that a witch can be killed but by burnin’.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Deacon Frammer. “But let us be going. This business must be done up to-day. I am afraid she may yet slip through our fingers.”

Donald and George accompanied their friends, with the other gentlemen and the stern justice and constable, as they bent their steps towards the abode of this poor, forsaken sinner. The idea of her really being burned was dreadful for them to think of, and they began to regret that they had had any hand in the matter ; and determined that they would do all they could to have her doom changed to hanging.

“But,” said Donald, “the ’squire really be-

lieves, with Mr. Hook, that it is not possible to hang a witch."

"Yes, so he does. But what nonsense. It does seem strange to me now that such people can believe such absurd things. Let us propose having some silver bullets made, and get the 'squire or constable, to shoot her."

"Agreed; we will try even that, before we will have her burned."

By this time they came in sight of the hovel, and George and Donald were amused to see the squire and constable Hook, and the colonel too, fall behind, and let Mr. Bland and Mr. Heaton approach the hut before them.

Mr. Heaton knocked at the door, which was shut; but no answer was given. By this time the rest of the party came up.

"There is no need of knocking," said the magistrate. "Just lift the latch, gentlemen, and walk in."

"We had rather be excused," said Mr. Heaton. "I feel more afraid of the dog than of the woman. I was always afraid of dogs, but never of witches."

"Wal now, it's jest the other way with me," said Mr. Hook. "I want to know, 'squire, if you will jest go in yourself fust."

"Why—yes," replied the 'squire, hesita

ting. "I say, Bess, open the door, or we'll knock it down. Hallo! there come out, you divel!"

"Softly, softly," said Mr. Heaton. "She is a woman, 'squire; only a poor, miserable woman. I will try the door."

Mr. Bland then stepped forward and tried hard to open the door, but it was fastened securely.

"What is to be done?" asked he.

The 'squire's face was perfectly colorless, and the constable's teeth absolutely chattered. George and Donald exchanged an arch smile; while Mr. Bland and Mr. Heaton looked really troubled.

"Let me try," said Mr. Finland, coming forward and putting his knee against that part of the door where the hinges were; and at one powerful effort both hinges gave way, and the heavy door tottered and fell.

"Du tell!" exclaimed the constable, as the contents of the dismal place caught his eye.

"You don't say!" responded the 'squire.

Mr. Finland staggered and almost fainted, while George and Donald, who were foremost of the party, clasped their hands and recoiled in horror from the sight.

"O Lord! vengeance is thine," ejaculated

Mr. Heaton ; while Mr. Bland stood gazing into that apartment of sin and crime like one whose thoughts were looking into the future.

“The way of transgressors *is hard*,” at length he said ; while the tears rolled down his mild, expressive face. The first object that presented itself, when the door fell, was Bess ; suspended from a beam by a short piece of rope ; —her long neck stretching out to such a length as to make the toes of her bare feet almost touch the ground ; her wild eyes starting from her head—but we will not shock the tender feelings of our readers by a further description of that awful sight.

“Cut her down,” ordered the ’squire.

“I want to know who’ll do’t,” said the constable.

Mr. Finland, Donald and George retreated some paces ; while Mr. Heaton and Mr. Bland went forward into the horrible place ; and one taking hold of the feet, the other held the shoulders, and cutting the rope, they laid the miserable form upon the fallen door.

She was entirely dead, and perfectly stiff, as if she had done the awful deed the day before ; perhaps shortly after Mr. Bland’s interview with her, when her violent frenzy drove

him from her, sooner than he had intended to leave.

What most struck the justice of the peace with wonder was the manner in which the corpse was attired. She looked as if she had dressed with the sole purpose of exciting the wonder of those whom she had to expect on the morrow to convey her to prison.

She had on what had once been a rich blue damask silk ; but time and the dampness of her cell had faded it, and spotted it with mould. A rich veil of brussels lace, mildewed, stained, and torn, enclosed her shaggy hair ; and, fastened together behind with a short clasp of coral, fell down over her shoulders. Wide linen cambric ruffles, trimmed with lace which had once been costly, hung from the hems of the sleeves, which were tight to the elbow. There stretched upon the door, lay that strange and awful corpse ; thus decorated for the grave.

Mr. Heaton took hold of one end of the veil, and drew it over the ghastly features, so as entirely to hide them from view.

“Gentlemen,” began this good man of God, “a coffin must be obtained as soon as possible, to bury this miserable corpse.”

“Let the divel burn her !” exclaimed the

'squire. "Who but the old 'un could have dressed her after that fashion? Now, I hope, my good sir, you'll be convinced that Bess was a witch."

"Wal!" exclaimed the constable, after looking earnestly into the hut, "if thare aint Satan himself in that 'are corner, I may never!" pointing in a certain direction, where might be seen the huge black snake, which has been before described, coiled in several folds. There it was, with its head entirely severed from its body. Mr. Finland was sitting on the fallen tree, while George and Donald had returned to the fearful scene.

Mr. Bland put a stick under the body of the serpent, and raising it up, brought it carefully out, and threw it as far into the thicket as he could. In a dark recess, under a huge rock in one corner of the hut, lay Brutus, with his throat cut. A sharp knife lay in the middle of the floor, where, from the profusion of blood, she must have done the cruel deed; and traces from that spot to the kennel under the rock were marked with blood, as if the poor brute had crawled there to his bed to die. A stout pole was stuck into the stone wall, from one corner of the room to the other, upon which were thrown several good

blankets, one sheet, and a bed-quilt, with the old rags, that Bess used to wear, and which she boasted that she loved so much. A clean place on the ground, covered with leaves and straw, with an old cloak spread upon it, seemed to have been the bed of the poor outcast.

The fear of the 'squire and Mr. Hook seemed to give way to their curiosity, as Mr. Heaton and Mr. Bland went on in the examination of the hovel; particularly as the "old sarpent" had been removed. They ventured quite in, and eyeing the bed-clothes on the pole, Mr. Hook exclaimed,

"Wal! if there ain't my wife's blanket. It hung out all night last week to dry, and in the morning it was clean gone. See here, M. H., Minerva Hook, that's the very identical blanket. This 'ere sheet too. I'm sure I can't tell when that 'are went; but there's M. H. on that 'are too; these 'ere's mine, anyhow."

"That bed-quilt certainly looks like one of my mother's," said Donald, "but I will not be too sure about it. Perhaps some kind soul gave it to the poor wretch, as the cold weather is approaching."

"That's my whip in that corner," exclaimed the squire. "It was taken out of my

wagon two nights ago, when I was in meeting. What the old witch wanted with a whip I'm sure I can't tell; but this is my new whip, and I can take oath to that. I bought it at Simon's store a week ago. You may compare it, gentlemen, with some he has there now just like it. This whip I claim for my property."

"If you are not afraid, gentlemen, to touch anything which the reputed witch has handled, you had better take these things home with you," said Mr. Heaton, "for they appear quite clean, and have only been hung up for winter use."

"To be sure—to be sure," said the Deacon.

While these gentlemen were claiming what evidently belonged to them, Mr. Bland had dragged out an old chest from behind the door. He was much surprised to find it locked; but looking about, he saw a rusty key sticking in the stone wall.

"Gentlemen," said he, "if you will assist me to remove this chest into the open air, where we can see more distinctly, and with your permission as justice of the peace, Mr. Keene, I will unlock it and examine its contents."

Mr. Heaton lent a helping hand, and when the box was removed from the apartment into

the light, Mr. Bland unlocked it. A heap of rubbish filled it; with apparently nothing of any value. Dusty, mouldy, mildewed rags, an antiquated bonnet, and a ragged silk cloak were taken by Mr. Bland from the chest and laid upon the ground. A large old muff came next; which had been the nursery, for years, of hundreds of moths, which crept about everywhere, while the fur flew around in every direction, as it was thrown upon the ground. Under these things, in confusion appeared odd gloves, stiff with mould, and an inkstand of pure silver, battered and empty. A small roll of rags and papers, tied up, was next thrown upon the ground.

“I’ll open this ’ere,” said Mr. Hook. “We might as wal see what’s in’t.”

“I vum!” he continued, as he shook them out, “here’s somethin’, I guess; a little box nailed down with these ’ere great iron nails—all the veneerin’ broke off with ’em—no, what is’t?—ebony?—it aint ivory, anyhow—it’s mahogany, I guess. Yes, that’s it—come, hand over that ’are knife thare, with the dog’s blood on’t. We’ll see into it quicker—”

“Not much worth seeing, I guess,” interposed the squire. “Let’s see.”

“Du tell!” continued Mr. Hook, as he

drew out a small gold watch and chain, with various trinkets attached to it. "And, golly! if here aint finger-rings and breast-pins like a jeweller's shop—but they'm all as black as if the old sarpent had brought 'em through brimstone and fire—but they'm gold, every one on 'em; I can tell by the *heft*."

Mr. Hook handed the things over to the magistrate; who, after examining all, to make sure of their value, pronounced them pure gold, though cankered and bent and broken. He then handed them to Mr. Heaton and Mr. Bland, who quietly sat down by Mr. Finland on the fallen tree to examine them. George and Donald placed themselves behind those gentlemen, and minutely looked at the various articles, as they were handled by their friends.

"This," said Mr. Heaton, "was once a splendid watch; of a suitable size for a lady; and it evidently once belonged to one, from the trinkets attached to the chain. Here are the initials A. L. on it."

"Here," said Mr. Bland, "is a pure diamond ring. The gold is cankered; but I have been rubbing it upon my sleeve until it begins to show that it is pure gold. The stone is as brilliant as ever. Here is A. L. in the inside of this also."

“These old mouldy beads are pearl—real pearl—but they are ruined—they are entirely ruined,” said Mr. Heaton, holding them up to view. “These breast-pins and ear-rings must have cost a great deal of money. And now see—only behold—the bruised, miserable, cankered things; the perishing pomps and vanities of this wicked world.”

“Here is a plain, gold ring, brighter than the others; a broad, heavy ring; beautiful still,” said Mr. Bland, examining it closely. “And look at this with your young eyes, George. What is engraved in it here?”

George took it from his uncle’s hand, and after minutely examining it, said—

“Sir Walter Roy, Married to Anne Lord,
June 25, A. D., 1778.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Mr. Bland, “this certainly is sufficient reason for believing the confession of that poor, miserable wretch.”

“She was the devil’s own,” said the squire. “Mr. Constable, bring out the rest of the stuff. I guess we’ll find something to throw more light yet on this tangled yarn.”

Mr. Hook, now that he thought something might yet be made out of old Bess—seeming entirely to have forgotten that the things

might be bewitched—went to work, and soon brought out all the old shoes, odd gloves, old scraps of stockings, comb-teeth, two rusty razors, in an ivory case, mildewed and black, and an old woollen stocking tied up, which felt so heavy, that he could not refrain from untying it at once. And opening and shaking the old purse, he scattered about among the stones more gold than the 'squire himself had ever before seen.

“Count 'em, count 'em,” exclaimed the 'squire. “These goes to the town. They must be divided among them that's been the greatest losers by that old rogue. I guess she stole half the worth of 'em from me.”

“Wal,” said the constable, “I guess she stole as much as the other half from me, counting the things she bewitched in the number.”

“Poor wretch!” said Mr. Bland. “You remember, George, she always said she wanted none of our money. True, she had enough laid by for years ; but—” and the good man wiped his eyes.

“You will take these valuables into your possession, gentlemen,” said Mr. Heaton to the office-bearers ; “and you will return here this afternoon with a coffin, and bury this

woman in the ground. I cannot attend the burial of such a suicide. There will be no ceremony necessary.”

Upon this they all left the desolate spot ; to which, after a few hours, suitable persons were sent to do the last offices of humanity for this poor outcast. * * * *

This horrid end of a miserable life Mr. Bland took care to comment upon to his young relatives and friends, and spoke wisely to them of the guilt, folly, and danger of superstition, and the baneful effects which it produces upon its victims.

The young people at Mrs. Finland's were shocked and grieved at this sudden and awful termination of such a wretched life ; and the very word superstition ever afterward sounded to them like *murder and suicide*.

XV

Marvels of Science.

ON the following Sabbath, Mr. Heaton took occasion from the tragical event, to impart to his startled parishioners, in a discourse of unusual interest to some of them, many wise counsels on topics suggested to his highly cultivated and somewhat speculative mind, by an occurrence so strange and lamentable. In the spirit of true benevolence, he very kindly remarked, that the deplorable scene at the hut in the wood might, after all, be charitably regarded as the termination of a very mysterious and mournful course of mental derangement. Thus regarding it, he spoke with great judgment and much feeling, of the mistaken views of many, by which miserable maniacs, especially those who still retained sufficient reason, at intervals, to be capable of doing much mischief, were, in those days, generally subjected to harsh treatment, of cruel confinement, and separation from the

gentler influences of humanity; or left to follow, too long, the delusions of their own bewildered fancies, in the pursuit of dangerous eccentricities of opinion and habits. He also urged upon his hearers the importance of kindness and generosity towards all who, as "strangers and foreigners," might be brought within the sphere of their influence, and become, in any station, members of their favored community. He then made some striking observations on the evil influence of superstition, and the folly and sin of cherishing any of those relics of heathenism which still existed in Christian communities in the form of lucky and unlucky signs; and alluded instructively to the singular history of witchcraft in New England and other parts of America, and in Europe also, about a hundred years before that time. Proceeding farther to a very intelligent notice of the important discoveries which had recently been made by Dr. Franklin and others in electricity, and of interesting experiments then in progress in galvanism and magnetism, and some wonderful performances related of some of the European philosophers, similar to those which have since been attributed to animal magnetism, he suggested that future discoveries or inventions in elec-

tricity, and kindred branches of natural science, might bring to pass facts still more marvellous. He showed how, in such an advanced state of science, wicked, and even conceited—though well-meaning—men might be led astray, and delude others, by “science falsely so called;” expecting, and sometimes even pretending, to bring within the range of human sciences, “the secret things which belong to God;” and overlooking the real nature and high claims of divine inspiration, prophecy, and miracles. He also reminded his hearers, with reference to the confidence of many in vain signs, that all influence of such error, in any degree, would tend to keep the minds of some always prepared for the deceits of impostors; who might yet again, by cunning craftiness, bring about periods of temporary delusion, as mysterious and mischievous as that of Salem witchcraft or ancient necromancy itself. He added, that cordial trust in God, according to the merciful and cheering revelations of His holy word, would always be found the surest safeguard against a credulous and delusive reliance upon the impositions of deceivers; and concluded with fervid exhortations, which made a deep and abiding impression upon many of his hearers;

and especially upon his intelligent and thoughtful young friend, George Finland.

The next day brought about such a singular association of incidents, as to a superficial observer, is liable to appear almost unseemly; and gave an amusing, and even farcical, relief from the gloom which an event so shocking as the suicide of a poor, forsaken outcast could not fail to cast over the well-ordered community of a New England township of that period. It was "Training day;" the grand holiday of the autumnal parade of the militia; and according to the usage of the time, Mr. Heaton had, at the request of the commander of the day, offered prayers, about the middle of the afternoon, in the open air, in the midst of the soldiers, drawn up in a hollow square, in due order of the military art; when, at the suggestion of an enthusiastic drummer, who was somewhat in advance of his comrades, in science as well as in military position—being, in addition to his other accomplishments, an approved teacher of common schools for winter—it was determined that Mr. Heaton should exhibit to the soldiers a new "electrical machine," which had a short time before been procured for the academy of the village. Accordingly, the "wonderful

thing” was brought forth and placed at one corner of the hollow square; and after Mr. Heaton, in few words, had stated some of the curious facts and phenomena that might be shown by the apparatus—meanwhile arranging and charging the machine as he was talking—he requested the soldiers all around to join hands. Then, nodding gently to the scientific drummer, who stood at one extremity of the line of soldiers, he caught the hand of the dignified commander at the other extremity, on his left, and touching the little knob with the tip of his finger, as if he were only making a signal to the drummer, who had just clasped the jar with his left hand,—before the boys standing around had time to think how it was done,—there were the broken ranks of bold soldiers, some on one foot and some on the other, with their arms thrown up in very comical positions, and looking, in general, much like Robinson Crusoe’s man Friday, when he first put his fingers into boiling water. A few were actually laid sprawling on the ground; and hardly one of them could have been more amazed, if he had been really rapped on the knuckles or head by invisible imps; especially as some of them—under the influence of their third or fourth dram of

ardent spirits, which had just been dealt out at the public cost, according to the mistaken custom of those days,—doubtless had, at that moment, many an image of such tormenting attendants, dancing about their brains.

At first many of the military men were much enraged; and in the excitement of their chagrin, at having their ranks broken so unceremoniously by “the parson,” were ready to make an assault upon the innocent man, and the equally innocent machine. But happily their muskets had been all stacked, before prayers, at some distance from them, on the other side of the parade-ground. And when they regained their arms, remembering what Mr. Heaton had said about the wonderful power of electricity, to run “like lightning” on a rod of iron or steel, and having no silver bullets ready to shoot at “the witch,” they thought best to keep at a respectful distance from “the critter;” as the more eloquent had already begun to term it, with an exalted idea of its powers and faculties.

Just then, however, the good old physician of the village came riding along, on his return from a visit to a distant patient; and alighting from his carriage, and beginning to handle the thing very familiarly, performed

some amusing experiments, for the entertainment of the grinning boys and gaping men, who still stood looking in wonder at the "curious" conqueror of the militia. And learning, much to his own amusement, what the parson had been doing, with a few humorous remarks, he soon reconciled even the offended soldiers to the good minister; and did not a little to strengthen the confidence of young and old in the ability and skill of "the doctor," as well as in the expediency of "*occasional* innovations upon the old order of things," in science and the useful and fine arts.

At a later hour that evening, amid the beauties of autumnal twilight, there might be seen a man of thought, with placid brow, and gentle mien, pacing the winding path of a rural retreat, evidently engrossed with meditations of deep and absorbing interest, but cheering and animating, in a high degree. It was the earnest and faithful man of God, reflecting with lively hope, and confidence in heavenly truth, upon the significant emblem which his own hands had a few hours before developed, in the scene at the parade-ground, of the final triumph of the gospel of peace and good-will. He thought with joy of the blessed time when the word of God should enlighten all the

earth ; when men beating their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, should learn war no more ; when nation should not lift up sword against nation, but the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, in peace. He rejoiced in the thought of increasing facilities for the extension of the gospel, to be afforded by farther inventions in useful arts, and discoveries in sound science, ever the handmaid of true religion. He found much satisfaction in anticipating, in such visions of the future, a wide sphere of usefulness, appropriate to the intelligent and zealous of the gentler sex, who might be animated by a desire to elevate the position of woman, and advance the happiness of the down-trodden of the earth. And his cheerful countenance glowed with ardent faith, and hope, and love, as ejaculations of fervent praise and prayer, and solemn resolution, broke from his lips, and were registered on high.

XVI.

Relations Changed.

YEARS passed on ; but not without some changes in the families of Mr. Finland and captain Mason ; the saddest and most deeply affecting of which was the death of Mr. Bland. He seemed to have been sent by Divine Providence into the family of Mr. Finland, for the purpose of enlightening and guiding the interesting relatives of his lamented wife. A lengthened account of this good man's illness and death is not necessary. Suffice it to say, that he died as he had lived, so full of faith and trust in God, that many, when they heard the particulars of his last moments, were led to exclaim, " Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like *his*." His large property he directed to be divided equally among Mr. Finland's children ; with the exception of a legacy of a thousand dollars to Mr. Heaton.

George had been the constant companion of this good uncle during his last illness, and had observed with wonder his patience, humility and triumphant death.

The loss of this beloved friend was long felt and sincerely mourned, by his relatives and acquaintances. The afflicting dispensation made a deeper impression upon George, than upon any other member of Mr. Finland's family. It confirmed him in the truth and value of the blessed religion of the gospel, while it convinced him of the shortness and uncertainty of human life.

As time passed away, domestic happiness, in the families of Mr. Finland and captain Mason, continued to increase. The good captain remained at home with his beloved ones; diligently adding the important influence of a faithful and judicious father to that of a tender and watchful mother, to confirm his precious offspring in all uprightness and piety. Meanwhile the increasing attachment between Donald and Mary was remarked with heartfelt pleasure by both families.

The time had at length arrived when Donald was no longer to be a happy youth at home; daily relying upon the wise counsels of his pious mother, and the generous support

of his father. Stern 'twenty-one' announced the time for him to leave the parental roof, and seek in the bustle and turmoil of the world a support for himself. Donald had become an excellent manager of affairs; his diligence and perseverance were universally known among his friends and acquaintances; and his solid education had well fitted him for a mercantile life. Captain Mason had acquired an ample fortune; but Donald had too much independence of character to stay at home, and quietly, in selfish ease, enjoy the hard-earned gains of his generous father, whose daily thought and wish, in the acquirement of wealth, had been that his wife and children might reap the fruits of his toilsome life. Donald now made known the wishes of his whole life; first, that his parents would consent to his union with Mary, at some future day; and that they would encourage his wish to be established in business for himself. To the first request they responded promptly and cheerfully; for Mary was almost as dear to them as their own daughter. But the second required more deliberation. They had never thought of such a separation from their beloved son; and though he could be established in one of the large cities not

very far distant from them, yet to be deprived of his society,—accustomed as his mother and sister had been for years to see him every day—was a trial, from the very thought of which they shrank in sadness. A few days of deliberation ensued, during which Donald saw his sister's eyes often red from weeping, and her tender manner towards him was affecting in the extreme; while his mother would go about so quietly, and gaze at him so tenderly, that he began to feel that such a separation would be to himself a greater sacrifice than he had imagined. His father, too, had been very reserved and thoughtful, and when he told him one day that he wished to walk with him, Donald began to hope that the suspense which had agitated them all for some time would prove the hardest part of the trial. But his hopes vanished, and his heart sank, when his father thus addressed him as they walked slowly on, in the direction of the house of his beloved Mary..

“My dear child,” began this good parent, “we do not know how to be separated from you. To me the trial would not be so hard; for I well remember how I have been strengthened and supported in my past life, when obliged to leave my dear wife and young chil-

dren for years. I could give my consent to your being so short a distance from us ; but how to say yes, when your mother and sister feel so much opposed to it, I do not know. They have not *said* a word in opposition to your wishes ; but their looks, their tears, their tenderness towards you, wring my heart, and I cannot decide that it is best for you to leave us."

"I have deeply felt all you have said, my father. I have observed with agonized feelings the deep, heartfelt love of my mother, and my almost angel sister ; and I tremble when I fear that I am their idol. O ! it is fearful thus to love any earthly object. But my dear father, if I ever get into business for myself, the sooner I begin the better."

"That is so, certainly ; but, my son, there is no need of that--none in the world. I have enough for us all. Bring Mary among us. It will only add to our happiness, to have her always with us. She is very, very dear to us."

"Ah ! my beloved father, you are kind, indeed. But I love Mary too much to let her feel dependent even upon such a generous parent as she would find in you. No ! I must feel independent myself. I am young and

healthy, and you have, up to this time, had nothing but expense and trouble with me. I have passed my time here at home much as my sister has done, and I feel that I cannot *think* myself a man until I have exerted myself to live like one."

"You are right; I know you are quite right, Donald. I had just such feelings myself, at your age; and if *you* will soften this matter to your dear mother and Anna, I will no longer withhold my consent. I will, moreover, establish you handsomely in business, and your life as an active man shall have a good start. You will feel more self-respect I know, my son, and without a feeling of that kind no honest man can be happy. You will, as you have said, feel more independent and manly after you have been more from home; actively employed in business. But your mother and sister, and Mary, too, what will they think, if I allow you to leave us?"

"Ah! it is only my loving mother and Anna that I am to reconcile to this separation. Mary has long since known all my dearest wishes, and loves me more for my earnest desire to help myself. She will be perfectly contented and happy at her home, which she has determined not to leave until George re-

turns from college. Your consent has removed a weight of care from my mind, and *I* can persuade mamma and Anna to anything, even to sending me away."

Donald looked more happy and cheerful when they arrived at Mr. Finland's, than he had done for months. A stroll in the garden with Mary completed his happiness; though it left a shade of sadness upon her beautiful face which lingered there a long time.

Donald did not find it an easy or a pleasant matter to induce his sister and mother to part with him. They acknowledged, however, that his wish to be actively employed was very natural and proper; and said that they reproached themselves with selfishness for wishing to detain him at their quiet home; and after much earnest conversation, they promised to overcome their feelings and make every preparation that their beloved one should require for his comfort. The scene of parting, at the last, was too touching for feeble pen to portray. * * * *

Captain Mason saw his son liberally established in New York, and felt confident from his education and habits that he would prosper. * * * *

George was still at college, where he be

came more and more convinced that it was his duty to become a student of divinity. Some events in his early life had made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind; particularly the conversations and advice of his lamented uncle Bland. He was soon to graduate, and was determined, with the consent of his friends, to enter at once upon his theological studies.

After the lapse of a few months, George is again with his beloved family. He has closed his course at college with many honors, and is quietly enjoying himself with his friends.

“Ah! George,” said Mary, “we thought you would feel satisfied with study after you graduated, and now you think of devoting yourself for years to theological studies.”

“Yes, my dear sister, that is my determination; and with the help of God, I hope for success. He has shown me many mercies, and I will do what I can in my Master’s service.”

All his friends seemed pleased at this decision of George; particularly Mrs. Mason. She had often thought this the very calling for one who was a ready writer, and such a fluent speaker as her friend George. Anna expressed nothing in words, except the pleas

ure she knew it would give Donald to hear of this determination ; saying how happy he would be when he visited home, always to find George ; for Mr. Heaton had consented to take charge of his studies ; and truly the poor minister was glad to have this opportunity of adding something to his scanty support, even in those days when the salaries of clergymen, in general, were more nearly equal to their need than at present. Donald had now become well-established in business, and promised to spend a few days at home before George again gave his mind to his books. And when the letter came to Anna saying when they might expect him, all was joy and excitement in the two families. Willie, when he heard that Donald would come to see him the next day, began to clap his hands and dance about the room as he used to do when a very little boy, and would still do when excited with pleasure. The parrot screamed and made so much noise that his father begged the child to sit down until the bird was still.

Willie sat down by him and began talking quite soberly, "Did Donald get home to-night, father ? and will he be here to-morrow, *really ?*"

“Yes, Willie, your mamma has invited them all to spend to-morrow with us, and I think we will be very happy.”

“Ah! but suppose it should still be raining as it is now, what should we do? For I have so many things to show Donald.”

“Never fear, my boy, even if it should continue to rain, they will come over in their close carriage; and when we once get them here we can find enough to amuse ourselves and our friends, even in the house.”

The morning came; the sun broke through the dark clouds and shed his golden rays over trees, hills and meadows. The glittering drops of rain which hung upon every leaf and blade of grass, like diamonds, were warmed and then chased away, until not a drop was to be seen of the evening shower. But the freshness and beauty of the landscape were most charming to behold.

George rose early, and determined to surprise his friends by breakfasting with Donald. He dressed in haste, and drawing on his thick boots was soon on his way to the old mansion, where he arrived just in time for a warm breakfast.

“Ah! George,” said Donald, “how glad I am to see you; if I had not overslept, I should

have met you half-way ; for I determined last night, if it were clear this morning, to breakfast with you."

"You shall not be disappointed then, you *shall* breakfast with me ; for if I breakfast with you, it is just the same as if you breakfasted with me."

"Ah ! George," said Anna, "now you talk just as you used to do when it gave you so much pleasure to ridicule and laugh at your sisters and me."

"He *is* still the same dear George, though he is so devoted to his books, and I am very glad that he knew that I wished to breakfast with him," said Donald, still keeping up the joke.

"Anna has grown so reserved herself," said George, "because she knows I am to be a minister, that she thinks the change is in me. But Donald, you know me better, you will not find me changed in that respect, except that my friends are dearer to me than ever."

Donald put his arms about his friend ; while Anna turned toward the window to hide a strange emotion, which had of late tormented her whenever George addressed a word to her. Just then the good captain came in, and shaking George heartily by the hand, said,

"How glad I am to see you so early. This

lazy chap intended to pop in upon you this morning just as you have done here ; but you know he is a city gentleman now, and I suppose he would not get his boots wet for the world. However, I really did not think we should see the sun this day, for the moon does not change until the day after to-morrow."

"Take care, my dear sir," said George, "I think I shall be obliged to recall the parrot's salutation, 'works of darkness' to your mind, if you do not leave off your dependence upon the moon."

"But, my dear boy, we sailors always consult the moon to find out the weather. You don't suppose that you can teach an old sea-captain anything about the weather, do you?"

"Perhaps not about the weather ; but I begin to think that I know as much about the moon as any sea-captain."

"Well, what do you know about the moon ? Come, my boy, let us have it. I have travelled more than you, that is certain ; but perhaps I have never got any nearer to the moon, after all."

"I think," said George, very modestly, "that the light of the moon may have some effect in dispelling clouds. But there is never any reason for attributing a change in the

weather to that change in the moon, which is commonly supposed to take place between the several quarters of the moon's course; while it waxes and wanes from month to month. The truth is, that the moon changes every day and every hour continually. It changed as much yesterday as it does to-day, and as much also the day before yesterday. And it will change no less to-morrow, and the day after, and so on, through the whole month and year."

"Well done! well done! quite like a book," said the captain. "I know that every word you have said is true. And I have often asked myself why any sudden change in the weather should be expected from the moon at any particular time, since the changes of the moon are so constant and gradual. But the moon certainly has some effect upon the tides, George. What say you to that? How did you learn so much about the moon, my boy?"

"From books, my dear sir. You can learn everything from books; from the researches of persevering, wise men, who have made their names immortal. Yes, I believe all agree, that the tides are affected by the moon. As to the actual influence of the moon upon plants and animals, through its reflected light,

and indirectly through the tides and vapors, which are somewhat dependent on its position, from time to time, nothing can be said with entire certainty. Science and observation only enable men to make vague conjectures concerning the moon's influence; which, by some unaccountable error, has been magnified in the minds of many, into the chief source both of good and evil to animal and vegetable life."

George paused; and captain Mason said, "Very well read, very well, indeed. I should think you had committed it to memory from some of the wise books of which you speak. But come, we have kept you too long from the table. Sit here; that is Donald's place, you know, when he is with us."

The good captain then raised his heart and words to God, for a blessing upon the repast, which was cheerfully enjoyed by this happy circle.

All was hurry and preparation, at Mr. Finland's, for the expected friends. Patty, who was now nearly grown, was dressed in her neatest; and looked as bright and happy as a bird. She was ready to run, walk, or stand, just as the directions should require, and was truly one of the most serviceable members of

the household. Jim, who was still in the service of his easy master, and knew exactly what part he was to take in this dinner party, felt as consequential as any one, and looked perfectly satisfied with himself. He had learned to bow in the most approved style, and could open the door of the coach, and take down the steps with as much grace as any footman in the world. And there was Judy,—faithful, happy Judy,—with her cheerful face and ready laugh, her head crowned with a pure white handkerchief, wound around like a turban, and made to stand as high as possible; setting off her glossy face and dancing eyes to perfection. She was still not old, and was the best cook in the neighborhood. She and Hardicus had received from Mr. Finland a legal emancipation, and, for their fidelity and services, a small house, and a few acres of land, about half a mile from the “great house,” but near enough for Judy to come over every day and take her place as formerly in Mr. Finland’s family; for so accustomed was she to living with “Miss Fanny,” as she still called Mrs. Finland, that it would have grieved her “almost to death” if another cook had been taken in her place. As to Hardicus, he seemed entire-

ly satisfied with his freedom. He would work a little in the garden at the "great house," when he felt like it; and when he received, now and then, a few shillings from Mr. Finland for his work, he invariably said, "Pshaw! massa, 'taint wof while; dis nigger nebber want nottin while you lib." His own little home he kept in perfect order. His chickens and cow were great favorites with him; and he would sit still for hours on the sunny side of his house, smoking his pipe, and musing on his happy lot. Jim, who had become a great favorite with the old man, had called in the night before, to invite "uncle Hardicus" to come over to the great house the next day; for "Mr. Donald" was coming with the rest, and he was sure Mr. Donald would feel quite disappointed if he did not see "uncle Hardicus." The next day the old man dressed himself with the utmost care. His gray beard was closely shaven, and his white locks were brushed back from his forehead. His clothes were new and clean, and his shoes as bright as a brush could make them. His "Sunday hat" was put on; and with the handsome cane in his hand, which captain Mason had brought him as a present from his brother, he started slowly on his way, followed half the distance

by his flock of chickens. The company were all assembled, when he reached the "great house." Jim did not wait for him to go "round to the kitchen," but met him at the gate, and then ushered him into the parlor, as he had been previously directed to do, by Mr. Finland. At the door Jim took his hat and his cane from him, and stood looking on with the utmost pleasure, while Hardicus, entering the room with his best bow, was gratified by receiving the smiles of the company, and a hearty shake of the hand from Donald.

"'Deed, massa Donald, I so glad to see you; you welcome home agin, I's sure. Old massa, you real glad dis day; dat I know. And massa, how does you do? and massa George too? You look up agin, now massa Donald git back. You not a bit happy when massa Donald gone. The ladies all well I hope;" and bowing respectfully to them he again stood erect and silent. They all expressed their pleasure at seeing him; and Donald said that "uncle Hardicus" seemed to stand still, and that he did not look any older than he did ten years before. Hardicus felt quite flattered by this remark, and after a little more time spent in the parlor, shuffled off briskly to look "arter Judy."

And there, too, were the Rose and the Lily; the Rose more beautiful than ever, but with a dewy sadness sometimes beaming from her eyes; for Donald had come to claim her for his own, and to take her from the loved paternal home; and in a few days she would be in a great city, with but one beloved friend near her. The Lily looked drooping; though evidently striving to enjoy the sunshine of happiness around; while Willie, who had become rather more sedate, sat quietly observing all that was going on. Mr. and Mrs. Finland looked perfectly contented with themselves, and with every one else. There was Leo, too, creeping soberly about. The traits of the kitten had left him, and it sometimes seemed quite an exertion for him to catch a mouse.

The canaries sang as merrily as ever. But Poll was old and stiff, and had quite forgotten the salutation to George, who had been so much from home for several years.

The dinner being ended, all retired for a few hours; the gentlemen to such amusement as they fancied, and the ladies to make preparations for the evening; when Mr. Heaton was to come and unite Donald and Mary in that bond which death alone should sever.

Swiftly flew the hours away. The friends

were again assembled. The holy man of God was there with his loving helpmate. The parties stand; the vows are made; the hands are joined, the pledge is given; the benediction said, and Donald and Mary are man and wife.

The next day many friends and neighbors were invited to meet at the 'old mansion,' and many happy faces were there, and an old-fashioned merry-making followed.

"How can we let her go?" said Anna to George and Elizabeth, as they strolled away at sunset from the merry company.

"Ah! how can we?" echoed Elizabeth.

"It will be hard indeed," sighed George.
"But *you* must now be sisters."

He stopped abruptly, while a deep glow suffused his face, as Anna's hand trembled on his arm. Elizabeth looked up at him with an arch smile; but observing his evident emotion she did not speak. For some time she had remarked a strange reserve between Anna and her brother. Their confiding, child-like manner had given place to a polite attention. Those who had always lived with them observed this with unfeigned regret. George would speak of this change in Anna,

while she seemed to feel that the change was only in himself.

They did not wander far, but soon returned and joined the merry guests. * * * * *

A few days elapsed ; and after a tender parting with loving relatives, kind friends and devoted domestics, Donald and Mary took their seats quietly in a stage and were hurried away to the new home which had been purchased and furnished for the bride.

Months passed—George meanwhile devoting himself to his studies. He found in Mr. Heaton an able and pious guide. The study of the holy scriptures occupied much of his time, and his way was made plain before his face. Letters came every week from Donald and Mary ; which were very cheering to the loving hearts at home. Anna was making preparations to spend some weeks with them, though she felt sad at the thought of leaving her dear parents even for so short a time ; and made Elizabeth promise to see them every day, and that when she could not go, George would.

Weeks passed away after Anna's departure, and a quiet so strange rested upon the inmates of the 'old mansion,' that captain Mason begged his friends to give Willie to him un-

RELATIONS CHANGED.

til Anna should return. The child was lighted at the proposition, and was led off in triumph by the captain, who soon found him an effectual means of driving away the stillness. A few letters passed between George and Anna during her absence, and brought peace and happiness to them both. And when she returned, Elizabeth kissed her tenderly and whispered softly "my sweet sister." A few months more, and friends are earnestly looking forward to the time when George would enter on his sacred duties. A calm and peaceful feeling fills his mind, and an earnest wish to do all for his Master's glory.

Mr. Heaton knows him to be truly pious and can give full testimony to his thorough preparation for his labors. He cheers and encourages him to the last, and breathes a prayer of thankfulness as George plights his vows of faithfulness in God's service.

But a gloom is spread over this happy circle; and not only among those with whom the reader has become acquainted, but over the whole parish. Mr. Heaton had been called to a more eligible and important situation; for which he was peculiarly qualified, and where he would have more ample opportunity of imparting his knowledge to others. Exertions

were made to retain him. The good man sought counsel from the Lord ; and duty bade him go.

One more act of kindness George required at his hands before they parted ; to meet him in the house of God, and unite him to his chosen, worthy helper, the gentle and judicious Anna. This last act of kindness done, sad hearts attend the good man on his way, and many weep at his departure ; none more sincerely than the Finlands, to whom, from the first visit to their hospitable dwelling, he had been a messenger of good. Even Hardicus and Judy, and Patty and Jim, as well as little Willie—now a very manly boy—shared in the general regret. And throughout the whole community, from the bold colonel, the intelligent physician and the good sea-captain, to the port-constable and the new farmer—a warm-hearted son of the Green Isle, whom captain Mason had brought from New York, when he left Donald there—few could be found, who were not ready to acknowledge, in grateful remembrance, their obligations, under God, to the good minister, for the salutary influence of his brief residence among them, and his constant, cordial interest in the temporal and spiritual welfare of all.

George was desirous to devote himself to the blessed work of missions to the heathen ; which was already exciting the attention and sympathy of many Christians. He earnestly cherished the conviction, that the best security against the prevalence of hurtful superstitions in Christian lands was to be found in the influence of lively sympathy for degraded and benighted pagans, and zealous efforts for their conversion. Anna, also, had been enthusiastic upon this subject, even from the time when her father sojourned in foreign lands. But situated as she was, she felt that duty to her parents must prevent her from accomplishing the cherished wishes of her heart in this respect. She was always ready, however, with her exemplary parents, to second every effort of her zealous and judicious husband ; who, with a singular forecast, devoted himself, and much of his ample property, to the important object of extending among young men of talents and piety a suitable preparation for that great work of Christian benevolence.

It had become, with him, a leading sentiment, among the thoughts by which his practical piety was directed that the prevailing indifference of Christians of the nineteenth century, to the spiritual wants of the benight-

ed pagans still overspreading the earth, was nothing else than a dull twilight of Christian love and zeal at the very mid-day of religious light and knowledge. With his view of the manifest claims of the destitute and degraded heathen upon the earnest sympathy and zealous efforts of their fellow-creatures blessed with the light of the everlasting gospel, he thought it not incredible, that the just judgment of the All-wise might yet leave many of the ungrateful inhabitants of favored Christian lands to be sadly deluded, in spiritual things, by fancies taken for facts. And with regard to every worthy object of benevolence, whether connected with the temporal or the spiritual interests of men, he strove, not only by casting away the works of darkness, but also by putting on the armor of light, to be an effectual example of TRUST IN GOD.

THE END.



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