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FIERY TRIALS,

—OR—

A STORY OF AN

INFIDEL'S FAMILY,

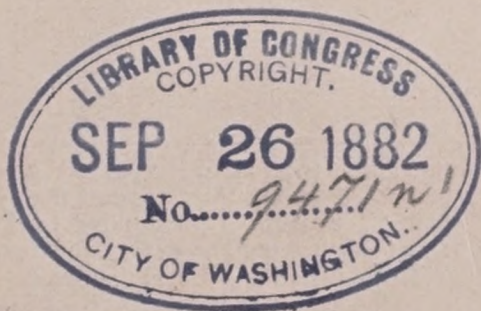
BY

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# FIERY TRIALS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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“Who is that, Milson, dancing with such elegance?”

“That is a very indefinite question, Mr. Bertram, as there are a dozen or more on the floor, who are, in my opinion, dancing with elegance. Which one do you mean, and is it a lady or a gentleman?”

“I mean that lady who is dancing with such supreme excellence. There is not another in the room equal to her. Why, she is as handsome as a picture, and her motions are simply perfect. She moves with the grace of a Goddess. Such eyes! and such hair! She is the peer of Venus. Who is she?” And the speaker gazed at the beautiful girl with feelings of admiration depicted in every feature.

“Who is she? Tell me.”

“Well, I declare,” said Milson, “you are extravagant in your admiration. But you will have to be a little more explicit. Point out the one to whom you allude—the one who seems to have



made such an impression on your mind—and I will endeavor to enlighten you.”

“I mean the one with the raven black hair and black eyes, and tall form. There is not another lady in the house like her. She is pre-eminent in beauty, grace and elegance. Why, your cultivated taste ought to suggest to you at once whom I mean. She is dancing with Mr. Wm. Jones.”

“Oh, yes,” answered Milson; “that is Miss Paine, Miss Egeria Paine.”

“Egeria! bravo! the name suits me. It ought to have been Juno or Venus.”

“Well,” said Milson, laughing, “her sister’s name is Juno, for a wonder.”

“Indeed! well, that is strange. Here we have a nymph and a goddess in modern times. I hope the Goddess may be even superior to the spouse of old Jove. But never mind. Where do they reside. Tell me all about Miss Egeria. I could wish that my name were Numa.”

“Upon my word,” said Milson, slightly coloring, “it seems that Cupid has not missed his mark.”

Oh, pshaw!” answered Bertram, “I am a lover of beauty in any and all forms, especially in the form of a woman. Where is the man so phlegmatic that his finer sensibilities cannot be aroused by the charms of a nymph? But I declare, Milson, seriously, Miss Paine is the handsomest young lady I ever saw. Where does she live?”

“She lives three miles from town.”



“Well, her family?”

“Her father is Col. Thomas Paine.”

“What about him? his profession?”

“Well,” said Milson, “he is a large planter, owns more than a hundred negroes, and makes five or six hundred bales of cotton annually.”

“So far, so good. What else?”

“Well, I don’t know, unless I inform you that he is an intelligent man, and a man of infidel proclivities.”

“Infidel?”

“Yes, an Atheist. He believes there is some sort of indefinable force in the universe which is the cause of all things. He says that man sprang from an oyster.”

“Good!” exclaimed Bertram. “I am of that school myself, leaving out the oyster. I should hate to admit that my grand father was nothing but a stupid oyster. But still, if Col. Paine can establish the fact I will acknowledge my ancestry, even if they are oysters and monkeys. The question which puzzles me is, who made the oyster?”

“Col. Paine,” said Milson, “would tell you that Force made the first oyster.”

“But,” asked Bertram, “what is force, and how did it originate?”

“Force,” Col. Paine says, “is force, and that ends the matter.”

“Does his daughter, or rather do his daughters hold to the same views?”



"I don't know; I never talked with them on the subject."

"So, you visit there," said Bertram, looking searchingly into the face of his companion.

"Oh," answered Milson, assuming an air of nonchalance, "I call there sometimes and chat with the young ladies awhile. They are good company."

"Yes? Where is Miss Juno? In the room?"

"That is she, just in the rear of Miss Egeria. She is now raising a glass of water to her lips."

"She does not resemble her sister at all."

"No; but she is not ugly."

"Well," said Bertram, "she is not horrible. Indeed I may say she is passable. But certainly she does not exhibit the grace and elegance which her sister does. And yet," continued Bertram, after closer inspection, "she has a rather striking face; a serious, thoughtful expression. She by no means belongs to the common herd."

"She is very intelligent," replied Milson, "and something of a poetess."

"Save me from literary women!" flippantly exclaimed Bertram. "They always did appear to me to come under the head of anomalies."

"Well, I differ from you."

"You have a right to your opinion, and I shall not now attempt to combat it. Come, Milson, have the kindness to introduce me to the young ladies."

"I will with their consent."



"Of course," said Bertram. "I would not push myself forward. I have no desire to form the acquaintance of the young ladies unless it is perfectly agreeable to them. I flatter myself, however, that they will not refuse the attentions of a friend of yours."

"May be not," replied Milson, "I will soon see."

He left Bertram standing where they had been conversing, and advanced across the room to where the ladies were now sitting, the dance having temporarily ceased. We may here state that the occurrences related in this chapter transpired in the town of Holly Springs, in the courthouse, there being at the time our story begins, no town-hall nor any other place suitable for a ball. I suppose it is not necessary to describe this little city, as it may now be called, with any great particularity. It is situated in Marshall county, Mississippi, in the northern portion of the state. Whatever it may be now, it was once an old-fashioned town, built according to the model which was in vogue before the days of railroads and telegraphs and other improvements which have characterized the latter half of the nineteenth century. Then no locomotive whistle awoke echoes which had slumbered for ages in the hills and hollows that surrounded the town of Holly Springs. The stage-driver's horn sent forth the loudest peals which at that day and time betokened the arrival of a public convey-



ance. The stage was a huge carriage, generally painted red, capable of seating six persons with comfort. This was the style in which our ancestors traveled when they discarded their own private conveyances. It was the stage with its prancing steeds, that brought out the inhabitants, not to the depot, but to the post-office, to hear the news. The present generation will laugh at such a mode of transportation. But they were peaceful days,---halcyon days of innocence---when there were no collisions, and no deaths resulting from the downfall of long bridges, and from defective tracks and the like. Blessed days ! gone forever !

The town of Holly Springs peacefully nestled among the hills, some of which, being sandy, were considerably disfigured by deep gullies. It was modeled, as we have already hinted, after the old style of architecture, in regard to which, there seemed to be only one idea. There was what was called the public square, in the center of which, stood the court-house. This building, being in those happy days almost the symbol of civilization, constituted the grand rallying point for the population of the country. Here the people assembled on court days, and muster days. Around this building, at a convenient and respectful distance, in the form of a square, stood the storehouses, and other places of business. Eight streets stretched out from the public-square, on both sides of which stood the dwell-



ling houses. Coming into the town, along any of these streets, it was useless for the traveler to ask for directions. All the streets terminated on the public-square.

We suppose the reader may form from this brief description a tolerably clear idea of the town of Holly Springs, where the author of these pages spent some of the happiest days of his life. We will now resume the thread of our story.

Before proceeding further, however, it may be advisable to give our reader at least a brief history of the two young men who are destined to figure conspicuously in these pages.

Eugene Bertram had recently settled in the town of Holly Springs, and had hung out his "shingle" bearing in glittering letters the words, Attorney at Law. Whence he came, it matters not. He was as fine a specimen of physical beauty as one would wish to see. His mental attainments were also far above mediocrity. He was rather quick in his movements, and quick of speech. His whole manner indicated a well-bred, well-educated man of the world. As to his moral and religious character, he was emphatically a man of the world. Judging from his actions and conversation, no one could have supposed that a serious thought in regard to eternity, ever found even a temporary resting place in his head. He was an Infidel—an infidel rather from thoughtlessness or innate depravity, than from any settled conviction, resulting from a thorough in-



vestigation of the claims of Divine Truth. Yet, Bertram was regarded as a rising man. It would not be amiss to say that he was not at all ignorant of his personal accomplishments. In fact, they made a deep impression on his mind, and inflated his heart with pride and vanity. Believing himself to be a man of superior parts, he had the utmost confidence in himself and his abilities—a quality which, however, is necessary to a lawyer—especially a young one.

With such qualifications as these, it is not to be wondered at that he was a general favorite in female society — particularly that portion whose time was spent in the pursuit of pleasure. So he was considered among the fair sex what was called a “catch.” Such in brief, was Bertram.

John Milson was a young man of about twenty-four. He had been born and reared in the town of Holly Springs, though he had received his education at Yale College. His parents had died when he was only a child. In consequence of this sad calamity, he was left to the guardianship and care of an uncle. The child was left in what we would call in the South, “comfortable circumstances ;” that is, he was neither rich nor poor.

Young Milson had chosen the profession of law, and at the time our story begins, had just received license to practice. We cannot say of him what we have said of Bertram. In many



respects, the two were almost antipodes. There was nothing particularly striking in the appearance of Milson. His natural disposition made him quite reticent in promiscuous company. Besides, he was rather bashful and awkward. It required time to discover his real character. Those who were not intimately acquainted with him, mistook his inclination to shrink back, for pride, or rather haughtiness. In mixed company he seldom had but little to say; but he listened with an expression upon his face, of sad thoughtfulness. At times, however, when his feelings were deeply moved, he found a voice, and then he spoke with warmth and eloquence. Only a few were acquainted with the young man, and knew upon what a solid foundation his character stood. He had no disposition to make a display of his attainments, by parading them before the public. The consequence was, he did not pass for his real worth. Few were acquainted with the fact that high and noble qualities were obscured by the young man's disposition to shrink back from public notice. And such was the character of John Milson.

Though Bertram had been a resident of Holly Springs but a few weeks, yet Miss Egeria Paine had heard of him, and had seen him on the streets two or three times. She was struck with his appearance. She had cast more than one sidewise glance at the two young men as they stood talking in the ball-room. From their looks, she had



the vanity to suppose that her own beautiful self constituted the subject of their conversation. When, therefore, she saw Milson coming in the direction of her position, she at once divined his purpose; and when he proposed to introduce Bertram, she assented with secret joy; and yet said,

“Do you vouch for his moral character, John?”

Milson gave her a searching look. Miss Paine, laughed and repeated her question in a low tone. Milson still earnestly gazed in her face as if he did not exactly comprehend.

“Why, John, what makes you look at me so inquisitively? Did’nt you understand my question?”

“To be sure I did,” slowly answered Milson. “The truth is, I am not intimately acquainted with him. He has but recently removed to town. I cannot, therefore, shoulder any responsibility in the matter.”

“Oh, well,” said the young lady, “introduce him; I’m not at all squeamish. He appears to be a gentleman.”

Milson then turned sorrowfully away in order to comply with Bertram’s request.

The object of Bertram’s admiration which was so emphatically expressed in Milson’s ears, was well calculated to arouse the ardor of anyone who could be attracted by mere external graces. She was admitted on all sides to be a beauty, and was the acknowledged “belle” of all the



country, including the town of Holly Springs, along whose streets there never walked a fairer and more perfect form. The most fastidious critic could not point out a single corporeal defect or blemish. She was now in her twenty-first year, a picture of physical vigor and health, and presenting to the view queenly traits of external character. As a matter of course she had many admirers. Among these none was more enthusiastic, as our reader has doubtless surmised, than John Milson. For several years he had loved the fair Egeria with all the warmth of his nature. They had known each other from childhood, and the young lady still persisted in calling the now grown man by his given name. Milson had dared to hint his passion to the object of it; but he met not with the success which he so vehemently desired. Miss Egeria was too politic or too fond of admiration to reject him, even if his feeling was not partially reciprocated. Whatever may have been her actual sentiments toward the young man, she did not choose to commit herself. When Milson threw out hints as to the existence of the wild emotion which thrilled his heart, owing to his natural timidity, she found it quite an easy matter to practice evasion. The consequence was he was kept in a state of miserable suspense, which all understand who have gone through the same ordeal. This wretched state was destined soon to be intensified. A pang of jealousy shot through Milson's breast



when he introduced the dashing, handsome Bertram, to the idol that had so long absorbed the noblest and tenderest feelings of his breast.

The two parties met face to face, and Bertram acknowledged the introduction with an easy, graceful bow. There was not discoverable in his manner, the slightest perturbation, or the least indication of awkwardness. In his address he exhibited the coolest self possession imaginable.

After the customary exchange of civilities, Bertram said :

“Are you engaged for the next set?”

“No, sir.”

“May I then have the pleasure of dancing with you?”

“Certainly sir; it will afford me pleasure.”

“It has been so long,” said Bertram, “since I have been in a ball-room, that I fear to dance with a person like yourself, who understands the art to perfection.”

“Now come, Mr. Bertram, none of your flattery. You gentlemen seem to believe that ladies must be flattered to be pleased.”

Miss Egeria said this with a gracious smile, which she meant to be bewitching, and which, nevertheless, betrayed the fact that she was delighted with the compliment. The smile was not lost on Bertram. (Oh, the power of a little smile under some circumstances.)

“Upon my honor, Miss Paine,” replied Bertram, looking serious, “I am not given to adula-



tion. I never saw more grace displayed on a ball-room floor, than was exhibited by yourself."

"Perhaps," said Miss Paine, with the same bewitching smile playing over her beautiful features, "as you say you have not been in a ball-room in so long a time, your taste may be a little deficient."

"I think," said Bertram, "I am a reasonably fair judge. To-night, it is true, is the first time I have been in a ball-room in five years, I believe; but prior to that time I was very fond of the amusement. I took lessons from the very best masters of the art, and I do myself the honor to assert, that in my opinion, I am not deficient in taste."

"You have not been a resident of Holly Springs any great length of time?" said Egeria, in a tone of inquiry, endeavoring to change the topic of conversation.

"Not very long—about two months, or may be not so long. It is strange," said Bertram, with one of the most significant looks, of which his countenance was capable, "that we have not met before. I have been the loser however, by the fact. Do you reside in town?" continued Bertram speaking as if he had never heard of the young lady before.

"No, sir; we live two or three miles in the country. Sister and I only occasionally come in."

"You have a sister, then?"



“Yes, sir; here she comes now. I will introduce you.”

“If you please.”

Accordingly, as soon as Miss Juno Paine approached, Miss Egeria said, “Sister Junie, this is Mr. Bertram.” The parties bowed politely, and then the young lady passed on to another part of the room.

“She does not resemble you at all,” said Bertram. I never would have taken her for your sister,” said Bertram, with an emphasis on the word ‘your,’ which might mean a great deal, if the person addressed chose to put upon it the construction which was in the speaker’s mind, though he meant no disparagement to the younger lady. Miss Juno was now nearly nineteen years of age.

“We are unlike in many respects.” Then she quickly added, “sister Juno is much better than I am, Mr. Bertram.”

She purposely left way open for the easy passage of another compliment. But Bertram did not take advantage of the opportunity to pay homage to her dazzling beauty. He merely said,

“She has a classical name.”

“Yes, father is fond of classical names. He said that none of his children should ever have any of those horrid Bible names—like Rebecca, and Sarah, and Moses and Aaron.” But quickly checking herself, she said, “perhaps you are a believer in the Bible, Mr. Bertram?” And she



gave him a look in which he detected a slight foreshadowing of regret on her part, in case he should answer in the affirmative. Bertram was a shrewd man, and he determined to discover what impression he was making. It is said that "straws show which way the wind blows;" and in discovering the nature of a lady's sentiments toward himself, Bertram was very quick to find even the smallest "straws." So after a brief pause he said with feigned seriousness.

"The Bible is a good book, Miss Paine."

The young lady looked confused, and a slight blush passed over her face which made her appear all the more lovely, at least in Bertram's eyes. He seemed to enjoy her confusion, but he appeared to be well satisfied with this little ruse, which he had not the slightest idea the object of it would detect. He was correct in his estimation of the young lady's character. Miss Paine had never met before just such a schemer as the man who was now conversing with her. She looked really disappointed. But Bertram at once came to the rescue.

"Well, seriously, Miss Paine, I consider your insinuation almost an insult to my intelligence."

"Why?" She asked looking at him inquiringly.

"I should have a poor opinion of my intellectual abilities if I believed in the silly nonsense of the Bible."

"Why," said the young lady brightening, "did



you not say just now that it is a good book? You contradict yourself."

"Begging your pardon, I say not at all. It is a good book in some respects. In some parts of it I admit there is good advice. But the historical portions of it are simply absurd. I concede that Jesus Christ was a good man, and that most of his precepts are not destitute of merit; but the idea of his being a God is just preposterous: and this is what I meant by 'silly nonsense.' I hope I have made myself understood."

"Yes, I accept your explanation. But to tell you the truth, Mr. Bertram, I have never read it. I can't say on my own personal knowledge whether it is a good or a bad book. I don't like the ways of Christian people; because they are opposed to all amusements. They would never have us laugh. The only objection I have to my mother, whom I dearly love, is that she is a Christian. Her religion makes her gloomy. These church people want us to go with our heads bowed down, and want us to put on long faces as if we expected every day to be the last. I don't want any such religion as that. My motto is, if I am correct in the Latin, *dum vivimus, vivamus*." Miss Egeria appeared to be well pleased with the manner in which she had delivered this little speech. Bertram cried out:

"Bravo! I heartily approve of your sentiments. The present is all we have, and we would be the veriest simpletons to trouble ourselves in regard



to our state after death when we have such slight data on which to base an opinion. But they are ready to dance." The music struck up, and gay young ladies and young gentlemen began to whirl in the mazes of the dance. We will not tax the reader's patience by detailing further conversation that took place in the ball-room between Miss Paine and Bertram. Egeria was delighted with her partner. She thought in her heart that two kindred spirits had met. When they parted that Thursday night it was understood that Bertram had permission to call at her house on the following Sabbath.

"Sunday" she said "is a big day at our house, Mr. Bertram. We do not remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Christian people call us very wicked" she said with a laugh; "but father does not believe in gloom and horror. We try to pass the time pleasantly at our home."

"I shall be delighted to form the acquaintance of your father, and to be with persons whose views are similar to my own." Bertram saw Miss Paine with her sister to their carriage. Then they parted mutually pleased. Egeria thought that Bertram was decidedly the most handsome gentleman she had ever met in all her life. Take him altogether he was far superior to any of the beaux that had bowed at her feet. Thus she was thinking as the carriage rolled homeward. All who have passed through the ordeal of love, and few have escaped, know what a pleasingly pain-



ful wound the golden arrow inflicts. No other arrow can produce such throbbing, thrilling sufferings, of which the victim would not be relieved for the world. Alas! Miss Egeria, whether she knew it or not was hopelessly smitten. Here was a case of "love at first sight." So the hours between Friday and Sunday morning dragged heavily by.

The intervening time was spent more disagreeably by none than John Milson.

"Of all

Our passions, I wonder nature made  
The worst, foul jealousy, her favorite;—  
And if it be so, why took she care  
That everything should give the monster nourishment?  
And left us nothing to destroy it with."

Poor Milson was held fast in the clutches of the "yellow fiend." He had observed closely what took place in the ball-room, and that which he saw converted him into a miserable young man. His former state of suspense was bad enough; but now the wretched youth had to stagger under a sort of "Ossa piled upon Pelion." He was filled with gloomy forebodings. He was anxious for the next Sabbath to dawn; and yet he dreaded its developments. Alas! poor foot-ball for Cupid and the "green-eyed monster!"



## CHAPTER II.

“ Hail Sabbath! thee I hail, the poor man’s day.  
The pale mechanic now has leave to breathe  
The morning air pure from the city’s smoke,  
As wandering slowly up the river’s bank,  
He meditates on Him whose power he marks  
In each green tree that proudly spreads the bough,  
And in the tiny dew-bent flowers that bloom  
Around the roots: and while he thus surveys  
With elevated joy each rural charm,  
He hopes, (yet fears presumption in the hope,)  
That heaven may be one Sabbath without end.”

Such is the hope of many a one bowed down with care and sorrow. Blessed day! day of rest! type of that eternal rest which is promised only to the pure in heart.

It was the holy Sabbath; and the sun rose in dazzling splendor, and poured forth floods of light on the little city of Holly Springs. To some it was to be a day of “fun and frolic,” and they were preparing to indulge in day-light dissipation from the mildest to the lowest grade. To others it was to be a day of mere corporeal rest; and they turned over in their beds for another nap. To others, the few we regret to say, it was a day given up to spiritual devotion. To all classes it was to be a day which would bring them nearer to the shores of eternity.



After a while the church bells began to send forth their solemn peals inviting the people to the house of prayer. Some gave heed to the invitation; and soon many little children were wending their way to the different churches where they were to receive instruction in regard to Him who said "suffer the little children to come unto me."

About 9 o'clock Bertram took his seat in a buggy and rapidly drove out of the little city. A three-mile drive brought him to the front of a large old-fashioned farm-house. Everything about it, however, presented an appearance of comfort; and the person who entered the spacious rooms with their elegantly carpeted floors, could not but feel that the owner was capable of dispensing a magnificent hospitality.

Bertram knocked at the door, and was shown into the parlor by a servant. In due time Miss Egeria made her appearance, looking as radiant as all her skill, which was now called into requisition, could make her. She extended such a welcome to her visitor as sent through his frame a thrill of delight, and made him feel that he was "master of the situation." His vanity whispered that he could win this charming creature if he chose. We may here say briefly, by way of advice, that it is highly necessary to all transparent young ladies to study the art of giving opaqueness to their emotions that they may not too easily betray the most tender feelings that



belong to human nature. Egeria was one of the transparent kind who could be read without much difficulty by such a one as Bertram.

"I am glad you have come Mr. Bertram," she said. "Without company we generally have a lonesome day."

"I shall be highly gratified, Miss Paine, if I can be at all instrumental in preventing such a misfortune as that. I know something of the feeling of which you speak; especially have I had a rather sad experience in this respect since I came to Holly Springs. I find here so few congenial spirits. On Sundays I have been compelled to devote the hours to reading."

"That ought to be a pleasant way to kill time" said Egeria seeming to forget, or not to notice that the word "ought" which she had employed disclosed the fact that she was not devoted to reading.

"So it is," replied Bertram; "but one becomes tired of incessant reading. I often want some one to talk to, who can enter into my feelings and sentiments—some one who is capable of leaving the dull earth and mounting to those untrodden heights where angels bashful look. I would rather be alone than to associate with people whose thoughts plod along on the ground, and never rise above the level of their heads. Ugh! odi profanum vulgus et arceo."

This was all very pretty talk; but Bertram was not telling the strict truth. If he had been



as transparent as the young lady to whom he was speaking, she would have discovered under this polished exterior as great sensuality as ever degraded a human soul. He had read novels and poems about the more elevated regions of purity; but he knew nothing of such regions from his own experience. He never soared up there on his own wings.

“I am afraid,” said Egeria, “that you are too sentimental for us common people, Mr. Bertram.”

“Do you not like to read?” asked Bertram.

“Oh, yes, when I can get interesting books and magazines. But sister Junie is the book-worm of the place. She spends most of her time in the library. She reads the works of the old philosophers and poets. If you were to go in the library now, just as apt as any other way you would find her poring over that horrid old Virgil which I never could endure at school. I plodded along through, because I had it to do. But sister seems to like the old heathen.”

At this Bertram laughed.

“I expect I will have to call sister to ascend with you to the ‘heights where angels bashful look.’”

Egeria had an object in view in making this remark.

“I cannot suffer you,” said Bertram quickly, “to do yourself such gross injustice. I am but too happy in your company, and would regret to interrupt your sister in her intellectual employ-



ment." Egeria looked pleased on the utterance of the last sentence. She was on the point of saying something when she looked through the window and discovered John Milson approaching in his buggy. She felt inward vexation. Under ordinary circumstances she would have been pleased with Milson's company; but to-day she had hoped that he would not put in an appearance. What must she do? Her plan was soon formed. Sister Junie must come to the rescue, and must take charge of Milson to-day. She felt sure that Junie would not like much to do this, but thought that she might be induced by motives of politeness and civility to come into the parlor. In a moment she said,

"I see Mr. Milson coming. If you will excuse me I will notify sister." Then she went straight to the library where she found Junie as usual, engaged in reading.

"Sister," said Egeria hurriedly, "I do wish you would lay aside your books for one day, and come into the parlor and entertain John Milson."

"Did he ask for me?"

"No but there is no impropriety in your coming without being asked for. It is nobody but John Milson, and I know you don't care a fig for what he may think. Will you go?"

"Well, for your accommodation I will. It is no pleasure to me though."

"I know that; but Mr. Bertram called to see



me to-day, and I don't want to be troubled with John."

The two then entered the parlor. Egeria spoke very cordially to Milson who had come in while she had gone after her sister. But she immediately took her seat near Bertram. At this the "green-eyed monster" gave John a stroke which produced a sensation that caused the young man to feel his heart sinking. He was not master of himself. Suspense and jealousy were conjointly producing in his frame a feeling that seemed to make his blood creep with unhealthy sluggishness along his veins. He wished himself away; he wished that Bertram were in the bottom of the sea; he wished that Egeria were subject to the same pangs which he was now suffering: he wished that he were an old Buddhist who had attained to the happy state of Nirvana in which it is impossible for the "yellow fiend" to pierce the heart; he wished that he had never been born; he wished that he were an angel, at least temporarily, hovering over Egeria, if he could only cause her for awhile to tread the thorny path of unrequited love. What strange and clashing thoughts rush through the minds of people who are goaded on to desperation by the "green-eyed monster." There are many troublesome passions in the human breast.

"Yet is there one more cursed than they all,  
That canker-worm, that monster, jealousy,  
Which eats the heart and feeds upon the gall,



Turning all love's delight to misery,  
Through fear of losing his felicity."

It would be difficult to enumerate all the strange, wild wishes that followed each other in rapid succession through the harrowed bosom of John Milson as he sat on his chair in a state of confused anguish. His inward perturbation manifested itself in his very face. The glaring of the fierce fires of a smothered volcano could be perceived above the crater. Poor John felt as if he could rush out of the room and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth. To a strong man, like him, earnest in his devotion, such a feeling is too intense to be portrayed by human language. Egeria could not but observe the cloud which was passing over Milson's face, and she thought she divined the cause, and she really pitied him; and yet she felt proud that her own lovely self had reduced him to this miserable state. Bertram noticed it; but he was too well-bred to appear to do so. Miss Junie, having thus far escaped all the shafts of the celebrated "blind God" was an utter stranger to such a storm of wild emotions as were now surging through the heart of John Milson. There he sat pensive, moody, and silent. Junie looked innocently at the young man, and perceiving that he did not wear his usual expression, she said,

"Are you not well, Mr. Milson?"

"Oh, yes—well, no, not exactly—quite well, I thank you."



“Why, Mr. Milson, how strange you talk! You say you are well, and not well in the same breath.”

“Did I? You misunderstood. I said I am well, perfectly well. I never enjoyed better health in my life.” And then he relapsed into silence, hardly treating the young lady with civility. Egeria and Bertram were talking and laughing as if no one else were present. “Oh jealousy! “Thou wondrous yellow fiend!”

Presently Junie said,

“I have been troubling my brain over a passage in Horace, which I confess I do not understand very well.”

“Horace?” said Milson with a little start; “he is well”

“Why Mr. Milson, how you talk! what is the matter?”

“Matter?” Nothing in the world. I told you that Horace is well, in answer to your question.”

“Why, he is not even living,” exclaimed Junie opening her eyes in astonishment.

“Not living? You must be mistaken; I met him yesterday, and he appeared to be well.”

“Why, Mr. Milson! are you perfectly demented? You know that Horace died more than eighteen or nineteen centuries ago; and still you affirm, with seriousness that you met him yesterday. How ridiculous! what is the matter?”

“Upon my word!” said Milson, “I thought you inquired after your friend Horace Townsend.”



“Why no; I did no such thing. I spoke of Horace the Latin poet.”

“Please pardon my absence of mind,” said Milson making an effort to restore his equilibrium, “I was thinking of something else. What was it you said?”

“I forgive; but I want you to help me out of a difficulty. I have found a passage in Horace which I do not exactly understand.”

“Well, let me see it. I will do the best I can; though I have paid little attention to the classics since I left college.”

“I will get the book” she said, and immediately left the room. She went into the library and in a few moments returned to the parlor where Egeria and Bertram were chatting away, seeming to be oblivious of all earthly surroundings. They ignored the very existence of Milson, who, during the brief absence of Junie, was in a “brown study,” and gazing gloomily through the window into the forest that stretched out in front of Col. Paine’s residence. The young lady approached with the open book and pointed to a passage in one of the odes. Milson looked at the open page for a moment, and then began to translate aloud, and continued till he finished the entire ode, and then asked,

“Where is the difficulty, Miss Junie?”

“There is none now,” she replied, “your admirable rendering has removed it. Will you have the kindness to read some more?”



The request was a relief to Milson as it gave him an opportunity to recover himself. So he began, and read ode after ode translating so correctly and elegantly that Junie listened as if entranced. At last Milson closed the book.

Then Miss Junie said,

“I declare, Mr. Milson, you ought to be professor of Ancient Languages in some College. There is no doubt you would soon become famous.”

At this point Miss Egeria cried out,

“What book is that Junie, over which you and John seem to be so deeply interested?”

“Horace,” she replied.

“Oh, Horace,” exclaimed Miss Egeria. “I would about as soon read the Bible.”

Then she broke into a little merry laugh. “John,” she said after a moment “do you like those old heathen poets?”

“To be sure he does” quickly answered Junie: “he is as familiar with Horace as you are with Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver’s Travels.”

Junie said this with a laugh, by which she meant no disrespect at all.

“I own up,” replied Egeria. “I have no partiality for dead languages, and dead things generally.”

“Mr. Bertram,” suddenly exclaimed Junie, rising up and approaching him with the opened book “please afflict my sister by translating this short ode.”

Bertram took the proffered book, and looked



on the page for two or three minutes, and then said,

"I don't believe I can translate it without the aid of a Lexicon."

"Lexicon? Why Mr. Milson read for half an hour without a Lexicon, and without hesitation."

Bertram made no reply at once, and seemed to be at a loss for an answer. Yet he betrayed no emotion or vexation at the remark which she did not intend to be cutting or offensive. It may have been a little rude, but she spoke with childish innocence. Egeria gave her sister a "cross-eyed" look. John, though he did not overrate himself, could not help but feel just a little grateful to Junie for instituting this comparison in which he appeared to advantage. Yet the thought was somewhat painful, that while his classical superiority to his rival might elevate him in the estimation of Miss Junie, it would not have the slightest weight with the one around whom gathered all the affections of his heart. How he wished that Egeria had Miss Junie's fondness for the classics. Presently Bertram said to Junie,

"I do not pretend to be a classical scholar; and besides I have little time to devote to literature of any sort, as my attention is almost wholly engrossed with the law. I beg therefore that our friend Milson will comply with your request."

"Oh, never mind," said Junie taking the book which was politely held out, "we will dismiss Mr.



Horace for the present.” Then she returned to her seat.

We will not weary the reader with further details of the conversation of these young people on that Sabbath morning as they sat in the elegant parlor of Col. Paine. Bertram rattled away with the easy carelessness of a man who had been accustomed all his life to fashionable society. It was no trouble to him to make himself agreeable. In this respect he was far superior to Milson who knew not how to get off the pretty nothings which serve to kill time among young people. His consciousness of deficiency in this regard made his awkwardness more apparent in female society. Some of the young ladies of the more thoughtless class voted him a down-right boor, because he had such a small stock of silvery nonsense. There seemed to be only one with whom Milson cared to converse; and of course that one was Miss Egeria Paine who was too light-headed to appreciate his worth. If John had not been so hopelessly smitten he could have perceived that Junie was her superior in all the elements that make up the true woman's character. But, alas! the little “blind boy” had obscured his vision. Egeria's very faults appeared to him as amiable graces, or to say the worst, as lovely and becoming frailties. Anyhow John Milson loved to madness, and under such circumstances as were calculated to drive him to despair.



“ A mighty pain to love it is,  
And 'tis a pain that pain to miss;  
But of all pains, the greatest pain  
Is to love, but love in vain.”

Alas ! poor John Milson.

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### CHAPTER III.

Miss Egeria Paine had given commands to the cooks to prepare an elegant dinner, not that she was excessively addicted to delicate viands ; but she desired in every possible way to make an impression on the mind of her visitor. For this purpose she had determined to make use of all the resources, both of a physical and intellectual character, that the place afforded. She seemed to be acting on the presumption, whether it was well-founded or not, that the sight of a goodly meal, enhances, in the estimation of a hungry man, the value of the woman who has had even the general superintendence of it, or by whose order it was gotten up. Alas ! people who are in love, young or old, do have a great many thoughts, which are called foolish by those who have emerged from that condition, or whose anticipations have been gratified, or whose tender sentiments have been chilled by the stubborn



storms of life. Old people must not forget that they were once young, and were guilty of many little acts of folly. Anyhow Miss Egeria had ordered the cooks to do their best; and in consequence of this order they had been busy all that Sunday morning. About half past twelve o'clock the result of their efforts was announced. Col. Paine then went into the parlor where he received an introduction to Bertram. As this gentleman is to occupy a prominent position in our story it may be well here to give him such notice as he deserves.

He was a rather tall man with dark hair and eyes. A mere glance discovered the striking resemblance between Egeria and her father. The Colonel (and he was called Colonel because it was the fashion in the South at that time to honor every man with some sort of military title who made a goodly number of bales of cotton) had advanced considerably on the downward slope of time. Though he was really between fifty and sixty years of age, yet a careless observer would not have taken him to be much over forty-five. Time had handled him with tenderness. There was an uneasy, unsatisfied expression on his face, such as is seen in all men who hold to the views which he advocated. Our reader has already had a hint as to the character of these views. There is certainly nothing in the principles of Atheism to make a person look, much less to feel happy. Such a one is on a stormy sea in a leaky ship



without rudder or compass. The darkness of night settles around him. While he is dashed amid the breakers no light-house is in view. There is no objective point to which he may steer his sinking ship. The storm rises and rages around him, and he is like a mere little cork on the waves tossed and driven he knows not whither. Turn in what direction he may, all is Egyptian darkness. Not the first ray of light straggles through the clouds. Not the slightest glimmering of hope relieves the blackness and horror of the lowering tempest. Under no circumstances can he find a grain of comfort in his principles. Especially in the death chamber is Unbelief powerless to offer consolation. Listen at the wild, despairing, yet eloquent wail of Robt. G. Ingersoll as he stood over the corpse of his brother, himself performing the only obsequies that his principles would allow. He said :

“My friends, I am going to do that which the dead promised he would do for me. The loved and loving brother, husband, father, friend died where manhood’s morning almost touches noon, and while the shadows still were falling toward the west. He had not passed on life’s highway the stone that marks the highest point; but being weary for a moment, he lay down by the wayside, and using his burden for a pillow, fell in that dreamless sleep that kisses down his eyelids still. While yet in love with life and raptured with the world, he passed to silence and pathetic



dust. Yet after all it may be best, just in the happiest, sunniest hour of all the voyage, while eager winds are kissing every sail, to dash against the unseen rock, and in an instant hear the billows roar above a sunken ship; for, whether in mid-sea or 'mong the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck must mark at last the end of each and all, and every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love, and every moment jeweled with a joy; will at its close become a tragedy as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death. This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock, but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights, and left all superstition far below, while on his forehead fell the dawning of a grander day. He loved the beautiful, and was with color, form and music touched to tears. He sided with the weak, and with a willing hand gave alms. With a loyal heart, and with the purest hand, he faithfully discharged all public trusts. He was a worshiper of Liberty, a friend of the oppressed. A thousand times have I heard him quote the words: 'For justice all place is a temple and all season summer.' He believed that happiness was the only good, reason the only torch, justice the only worshiper, humanity the only religion, and love the only priest. He added to the sum of human joy, and were every one for whom he did some service to bring



a blossom to his grave he would sleep to-night beneath a wilderness of flowers. Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no sound ; but in the night of death hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath 'I am better now.' Let us believe in spite of doubts, dogmas, and tears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead. And now to you who have been chosen from among the many men he loved, to the last sad office for the dead, we give his sacred dust. Speech cannot contain our love. There was, there is no gentler, stronger, manlier man."

Thus talked Robt. G. Ingersoll in the presence of death. While we admire the beautiful utterances, we cannot envy him on account of his principles, which could afford not a ray of comfort or hope in the hour of trial. We pity the man. While standing "between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities," striving in vain to peer through the surrounding darkness, crying out, and receiving as answer only the mocking echo of his own trembling voice, we would tell him and his sympathizers, that a "still small voice" can be



heard by the ear of faith even above the din of life's storms, uttering the cheering words in the accents of weeping love: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." There is nothing in the principles of Unbelief to produce a happy look. So Col. Paine did not wear a happy look. He was an infidel—an infidel from native depravity. He loved vice in some of its forms, and this love made him hate the Bible which required him to restrain his evil passions. He was decidedly a sensualist. Yet he was no dwarf in intellect. He had read and studied much, and still kept up his studious habits. He claimed to be related to Thomas Paine the celebrated infidel. Hence the "Age of Reason" was one of his favorite books. We will do him the justice to say that he was master of the usual arguments that are adduced against Christianity. He was a man of easy address and agreeable manners; and he was very fond of popularity. Hence he had considerable influence in his neighborhood, and also in the town of Holly Springs. To say that his influence had a bad effect on all who came within its scope, would be nothing more than a legitimate expectation. At least some of the young men were led astray by his pernicious doctrines. They looked up to him as their leader, and they delighted to follow in his footsteps. Col. Paine also took pleasure in having followers. Hence he let no opportunity slip that could be made to promote the cause of infidelity. "His life" he said, "was



a better argument than any words he could use. The God of the Bible had made many promises to the so-called Righteous and many denunciations against the wicked. Yet" he said, "in spite of all these magnificent promises, we see that the Righteous do suffer. Now, here I am a wicked sinner; I do not worship the Christian's God; and still I am prosperous; I never had a serious misfortune in my life. Notwithstanding all the harsh things which the Bible says in regard to the ungodly, I am not cursed. If so I am unable to perceive or feel it. I deny the existence of the Christian's God. Now if there is such a being, and he has made all these threats against the wicked, why does he not execute them? Why does he not strike me down in my high-handed wickedness, and thus show that he is not trifling with mankind?"

Thus would Col. Paine talk. The statements which he made seemed to the unreflecting portion of his hearers to be sustained by facts. For nobody could deny that "many are the afflictions of the righteous." Col. Paine's own career, according to his own affirmation appeared to be guided by the hand of prosperity. He enjoyed good health, and he possessed an abundance of the world's goods. Therefore those who looked only to this little earth could not dispute his assertions. If they did he would not have to go far to find a practical illustration in the form of some good and pious man who was suffering all the



hardships of poverty and the pangs of disease. The consequence was there was a vein of poison in the public religious sentiment of Holly Springs and vicinity.

Col. Paine, viewed merely on the outside did not appear to be a bad man. No one could accuse him of any crime or any violation of the civil law. He did not appear to drink to excess. Nobody could say therefore that he was a beastly sot. His profanity did not manifest itself in the ordinary "slang" oaths in vogue among the less refined classes of society. He seemed to have no relish of slang phrases of any sort. So, he passed for a polished gentleman

Col. Paine had the tact to make it appear in every controversy that he was acting on the defensive. He would never seem to be the aggressor, if he could possibly avoid it. He thus appeared to have no desire to obtrude his infidel sentiments on any one. Yet he was so shrewd that he would lead the conversation in such a way that he would appear to be drawn out. Then, when he had said all that he wished, he would add "this controversy is not of my seeking." He tried to put himself in the attitude of the persecuted party, well knowing that if he could place himself before the community as a persecuted man it would add strength to his cause.

Such was Col. Paine — a fair-spoken, smooth, oily man.

"With smooth dissimulation skilled to grace —  
A devil's purpose with an angel's face."



After the introduction of Bertram and Col. Paine, and the customary exchange of civilities, the parties advanced to the dining room, Milson having to escort Miss Junie, to his inward vexation. In the dining room Bertram was introduced to Mrs. Paine. Bertram took his seat at the table by the side of Miss Egeria—a circumstance which caused another keen pang of jealousy to pass through Milson's love-smitten heart. The "green-eyed monster" seemed to follow him like an avenging Nemesis. The young man did not have much appetite. The "yellow fiend" appeared to be working on his very liver, and promised soon, if this state of things continued, to turn him over to the disciples of Aesculapius.

The parties paused a moment after they had taken their seats, preparatory to paying their respects to the elegant dinner which smoked before them. Col. Paine said with politeness,

"If I knew that you were a Christian, Mr. Bertram, I would request you to invoke a blessing on 'what we are now about to receive.'"

Though this was said with civility; yet there was concealed sarcasm under it.

"I am no Christian" quickly replied Bertram, with a laugh, and looking at Mrs. Paine, "I never expect to be."

"Then, Annie" the Col. said to his wife "you may as well proceed to help our plates. We will have to dispense with the blessing unless John will favor us with a short grace." He said this



as a mere pleasantry. But to the astonishment of all present Milson said,

“Yes, if you please.”

All looked sober and surprised, and then gazed at their plates, waiting for John to begin. Milson looked around in utter amazement, Then after a momentary pause Col. Paine said,

“Proceed, John, if you please.”

Milson with a face as red as scarlet cried out, “What do you all mean?”

All broke into a laugh except Mrs. Paine who was inwardly grieved at such mockery and irreverence.

“We were waiting” said the Col. “for you to say grace for us.”

“Grace?” exclaimed Milson; “did you ask me to say grace?”

“Certainly I did; and I thought you were going to comply with my request. We were waiting for you to begin.”

“I misunderstood you” answered John still blushing to the roots of his hair. “But you would better say grace yourself I think,” he continued, scarcely aware of what he was saying, so fast was he held in the clutches of the “green-eyed monster.” Col. Paine looked at him with an amused expression, and was about to make some reply when Bertram said,

“You do not seem to be much of a Christian yourself, Colonel?”

“Not much,” he answered now turning his at-



tention to Bertram who had thus drawn him out. "I do not go through the form of worship which my neighbors do."

"May I ask then," said Bertram "if you have any regular system of worship?"

"Why, yes. In my way I worship nature. I do not bow down my knees to show her reverence. Nature is not a God so exacting that she delights in the genuflections of her subjects. She requires no servile flattery of that sort, and no corporeal degradation of her creatures. This worship, as the Christians call it, is dictated by cringing fear."

At this Bertram quickly glanced at Mrs. Paine who was now doing the honors of the table. She caught his eye, and a deep blush spread over her features. The Col. continued :

"I will not sacrifice the dignity of manhood, and my independence and my liberty by bending the knee to any being. I read nothing in the book of nature which requires such slavish homage. It is the Bible which insists on the cultivation of the grace of humility, which grace I think is the vice of cowardice. Nature teaches us nobler principles. She tells us to go with head erect, and to fall in the dust before no one. I say no grace over my food, because I work for it and honestly obtain it. Therefore I am not under obligation to any God. If I have any one to thank it is myself."

"Well, Colonel" said Bertram, "I am of your



way of thinking. I never did believe in worshipping a kind of God that is the mere creature of the human imagination. It does seem that if there is such a being as Christians worship, he ought sometimes at least, to visit this terrestrial ball of ours, and come in visible form, and thus place his existence beyond all dispute. If he has promised to protect the righteous, he ought to make good his promises. I am acquainted with some righteous people who are the most miserable beings in the world; and on the other hand I know some who are called wicked that really enjoy life. Why should we have a religion that only makes us miserable?"

Quickly Egeria looked at her mother's face. Mrs. Paine sat still in painful silence, not daring to say a word.

Miss Egeria then said, "that is what I say Mr. Bertram. I don't want a religion which is full of gloom."

"Now come, Mr. Milson," suddenly cried Bertram, "let us have your voice. Is there a God or not?"

Milson was a little out of humor with himself and everybody else. He was just a little provoked. So his pent-up feelings at last found vent and even relief in utterance. He would place himself in antagonism to Bertram at all hazards. The "yellow-fiend" had produced anyhow a strange kind of feeling towards his rival. So he was in a condition to talk with emphasis



when he did start. His embarrassment seemed all at once to leave him.

“Mr. Bertram,” he said slowly and solemnly while Mrs. Paine gazed at him searchingly and wistfully, “I believe there is a God.”

“You mean a Force?” interrupted Bertram.

“That is it, John,” said Col. Paine also, “just simply a Force—a power. That is your meaning.”

“No, sir,” exclaimed Milson with an emphasis that brought all parties to a listening attitude, “I mean just exactly what I say. I believe there is a personal God in the universe. You may apply the term ‘Force’ if you will: that is another name for the same thing. That Force, if you prefer the name, is in my opinion an intelligent Power. That ‘force,’ I think, has conscious existence, and is endowed with thought and will. That power you call ‘Force.’ I prefer the designation God. I believe that God is the Creator of all things. It was His plastic hand that formed the skies and the earth. From His hand fell the beautiful worlds above us, like showers of glittering gems. All that grand panorama over our heads is no work of chance, and no product of blind thoughtless force. I have only to look at my own body to convince myself that there is a personal God—‘a Divinity that shapes our ends.’ “That hand” he said dropping his knife, “that hand exhibiting such a beautiful adaptation of means to ends, is no effect of chance. The eye, so delicately organized, is not the mere outgrowth



of gradual development and improvement. That sweet flower" said John pointing to a vase of roses on the table, "diffusing its grateful fragrance through this room, that flower so delicately painted, that flower exhibiting such rich and gorgeous hues, did not just happen to spring into existence; nor did it come into being by a happy, fortuitous combination of circumstances attributable to the laws of Nature. Who made this metal?" he asked holding up in his left hand a silver fork. "Do you believe that Force without intelligence did it? No: that is the work of a personal God. Why all the philosophers of earth with the accumulated wisdom of ages, and with all the resources that science affords cannot make a single blade of grass. Am I then to believe that the whole earth, to say nothing of the numberless worlds that float in illimitable space, was formed with its streams, oceans, mountains, hills and vales, and was clothed with beauty and verdure, by some indefinable force destitute of thought, feeling and intelligence? My very reason revolts at such a conclusion."

While John was thus speaking Mrs. Paine could not repress her tears. One little ray of hope at last broke through the thick gloom which had for so many years overshadowed her pathway. She tried with all her power to conceal her emotion; but the crystal drops noiselessly chased each other down her cheeks. It was the first time for many long, cheerless years she had heard a word



spoken for God in her house. She thanked John in her heart; and would have risen from her place, and put her hands on his head and blessed him; but she dared not.

“But, Mr. Milson” spoke up Bertram, “who said that this Force was blind, thoughtless, destitute of intelligence?”

“Whenever,” replied John, “you admit that Force, as you call it, has intelligence, you at once surrender the question and abandon your position; for you certainly have the conception of a personal God.”

“No, not a personal God; but not a blind Force subject to no law.”

“Well,” said Milson, “do you say that Force is endowed with intelligence?”

“I say that force acts in obedience to law” quickly responded Bertram who was somewhat like a drowning man catching at straws.

“That only removes the difficulty one step farther back,” answered Milson. “For then you make the law a personal being.”

“No,” said Bertram, “Not a personal being.”

“Well, what then? What is law?”

“Law” said Bertram with some hesitation “is merely the mode of doing things.”

“You speak of ‘doing things,’ who or what is the Doer?” asked Milson.

“The doer is a combination of Force and Law” answered Bertram.

“Where is the thinking power in this combi-



nation? You say it is not in the Force, and not in the Law, where is it then?"

Bertram hesitated as if at a loss how to answer the question.

"Now, Mr. Bertram," cried Junie with a pleasant laugh "you seem to be driven to the wall."

Bertram was too well-bred to manifest the vexation which he really felt. But at this point Col. Paine spoke up pleasantly. For he thought a great deal of John Milson, and really admired the way in which he had just acquitted himself.

"Why, John," he said "have you become a Christian?"

"No sir; I have not."

"Do you believe in the divine origin of the Bible?"

"No sir; I cannot say that I do. To tell the truth, I have never investigated the claims of the Bible. That is not the question now at issue. Whether there is a particle of truth in the Bible or not, my reason teaches me that there must be,—that there is a personal God. I can no more get that idea out of my mind than I can ignore my own existence. Why, in the very denial of the being of a God, you are bound to have the conception of a God—a personal God in your mind."

"Not I, Mr. Milson," quickly spoke up Bertram who was not altogether satisfied with the part which he had played in this brief controversy, and who was looking for some loop-hole of escape



through which he might beat an honorable retreat, if he could not gain a victory.

“Not I, Mr. Milson ; I say that I have not the conception of any personal God in my mind.”

“Well” said Milson with deliberation, “suppose we grant that you have not, will you be so kind as to tell me what caused the universe?”

“I have already told you it was force under the control of law.”

“What did you understand me to say is the cause of the universe ?”

“I understood you to say a personal God.”

“Well, what did you understand me to mean by a personal God ?”

“Why you said” replied Bertram, “a conscious personal being endowed with intelligence and power.”

“If that be so” answered Milson, “you have the very same conception of a God in your mind that exists in mine, or you could not have used words to define the conception.”

“There, Mr. Bertram” cried Junie “you are caught again.” But Milson not seeming to notice the interruption continued, speaking loudly,

“In spite of men’s denial, the very idea of a personal God is interwoven with the very fibers of their mind. They may have vague notions, it is true ; but if they are endowed with ordinary intelligence they cannot divest themselves of the idea that there is a great, superintending cause by whatever name they may designate that cause.



They may apply the pronoun It or He; but the conception is in their minds in spite of them."

"But that conception" said Bertram, "does not establish the existence of a personal God."

"You said Mr. Bertram, that you had no conception of a personal God. I think you are bound to admit now that you have. Well, not to spring a new question, I will say that the conception shows the natural tendency of the human mind to attribute the work of creation to some sort of personal intelligence. It is difficult to suppress the idea of a Being."

Bertram made no reply. Even Col. Paine with all his fondness for controversy did not care to continue this discussion. Not that he felt Milson was any match for him. But he evidently perceived that he would have to make a more elaborate effort than he cared about making at that particular time. So he merely said,

"I will lay a wager, John, that in less than ten years you will be a preacher."

"I have not the remotest idea of such thing, sir."

"But, suppose, John," said Mrs. Paine with timidity "you should hereafter feel it your duty to preach."

"Well, ma'am" was the reply, "if I ever should become a Christian, and should feel convinced that the path of duty runs in that direction, I shall not hesitate. In spite of ridicule I shall follow my convictions of right."



Mrs. Paine said no more; but from her heart she silently sent up a petition that this young man who seemed to be "not far from the kingdom of heaven," might yet be a herald of the Cross.

"Well, John," said Col. Paine with a laugh, "I do not often go to church; but when you get ready to preach, I will hear your first sermon, if I am in reach of you."

"We will get him up a large congregation, won't we?" said Bertram, who was now glad of this opportunity to withdraw from a discussion which made him appear to such disadvantage. He now plainly perceived that he had underrated Milson's intellectual abilities. Under that awkward exterior and reticence he discovered that there was a logical mind of no ordinary power. Even Col. Paine was somewhat surprised at the young man's fluency.

It is said, with much truth, that circumstances make the man. There are thousands of persons who have lived and died in obscurity who were capable of doing great things. But the state of things which existed in their day and generation was not adapted to their mental peculiarities. Hence no occasion ever called them forth to act, and they passed from the stage without attracting the least attention. We frequently accuse such persons of a want of energy, when in fact their inactivity is to be attributed to a lack of adjustment of circumstances.



“If ever I get to preaching” said Milson in answer to the remarks of Col. Paine and Bertram, made in polite mockery, “I shall be glad to have you as a part of my audience.”

At this point Bertram very adroitly changed the topic of conversation. He introduced subjects with which he was more familiar than the existence of a personal God. After a little the dinner was finished, and the young people retired to the parlor to amuse themselves as they might think proper.

“Leaving them for a few moments we will call the reader’s attention to a party with whom he has only a very slight acquaintance: and that is Mrs. Paine. Poor lady! she had a hard time in this world. Surrounded with all the comforts and luxuries which wealth could procure, she was, nevertheless a miserable woman. In the days of her girlhood she had given her hand and her heart to Col. Paine, whom she loved with all the tenderness of a pure woman’s nature. She had been trained up by pious parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Col. Paine, during the happy days of their courtship made no allusion to his infidel sentiments, if they were at that time fully developed. He was too politic to reveal his religious principles at such a time, if they were not orthodox. He was rich, handsome and well-educated; and seemed to be perfectly devoted in his attentions to the idol of his heart. When with impassioned fervor he made known



his love in beautiful language, what more could she desire? She could not but predict for herself a life of unalloyed felicity with such a man for a husband.

It is a blessed thing for us that we cannot raise the veil of the future, and foresee the path which we are destined to tread. We would be paralyzed into sluggish stupor, or would rise up in active rebellion and endeavor to prevent the occurrence of the events which our foresight would reveal. As a proof of the assertion, we have only to review the scenes of life that rise up from the rubbish of memory as fixed, sad, unchangeable realities. If we had it in our power we would "roll back the tide of time," and would give it such a direction that we would escape the commission of many a deed which is now written down with an iron pen on the pages of the past, and we would substitute many a deed unperformed, in regard to which we can only whisper in the secret sadness of our soul "it might have been."

"Foreknowledge only is enjoyed by heaven ;  
And, for his peace of mind, to man forbidden ;  
Wretched were life, if he foreknew his doom :  
Even joys foreseen give pleasing hope no room,  
And griefs assur'd are felt before they come."

They were married and Mrs. Paine was happy. For a year after their marriage Col Paine made no objection to going to church with his wife ; but still he said nothing about his infidel creed. When she urged upon him the claims of religion as a personal matter he merely laughed ; and she



thought him like the rest of mankind, only careless and disposed to procrastinate. But in the course of time he politely refused to accompany her to church any more. When she asked him to assign a reason for his refusal he gave her a cross answer that went like a jagged arrow through her heart. She said nothing more to him on the subject; but attended church alone. Thus matters went on till Egeria made her appearance in the world. When they were selecting a name for the child, then it was that Col. Paine began to discover his true character. His wife wished to call the infant just plain "Mary."

"No," he said sternly, "I have made up my mind that no child of mine shall ever wear a name which is to be found in the Bible."

"Why?" she asked, while a fearful suspicion crept into her mind.

"Because" he said "that book is nothing in the world but a tissue of falsehood. It is an imposition on the human race, I will not honor the vile production by perpetuating the names of its characters."

"Why, my dear husband!" she cried in utter anguish, "is it possible that you are an unbeliever to such a dreadful extent as that?"

"Dreadful, indeed?" he said with a sneer. "I am surprised that any one can have so little sense as to believe such a string of ridiculous absurdities as runs through that book from beginning to end."



Mrs. Paine was deeply affected. She was afraid of her husband : that is, having found out his violent temper she feared to arouse it. So she had to submit without a murmur.

Well does the Apostle say "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It is good advice authorized and sanctified by the Divine Mind. Let a Christian woman surrender herself to an infidel in the capacity of a wife, and she may as well bid adieu to happiness so far as this world is concerned. So Mrs. Paine found it.

Their second daughter Col. Paine said should be called "Juno." Mrs. Paine offered a feeble objection on the ground that the name was lacking in euphony.

"If a celebrated Goddess" he said, "could bear it, certainly an earth-born child should not be ashamed of it."

The wife again had to submit.

The Colonel was anxious that his son should bear the name of the man whom he so much admired, and to whom he claimed the honor of relationship by the ties of consanguinity—Thomas Paine, author of the "Age of Reason." But he would forego that pleasure, because the name "Thomas" occurred in the Bible. So he named the boy "Romulus." This lad at the time our story begins, was about sixteen years of age. These three were all the offspring of the wedded life of Colonel and Mrs. Paine.

When Miss Gerie as Egeria was called for



short, was old enough to talk, then the Colonel forbade his wife's going to church; and more, he forbade her to teach their child the Christian religion. Then he burned up every Bible which he could find about the house. What was the poor woman to do in the hands of this strong and violent man? She was the "weaker vessel," and was not at all disposed to contend for her rights. With sadness she yielded for the sake of peace. When there was nothing said by her in regard to religion, not a note of discord jarred the atmosphere of their home. But she could not be happy. She felt that she was failing to confess her Lord and Master before men. This thought like a horrid vulture preyed on her vitals and caused her frequently to institute a comparison between herself and Judas Iscariot. So the poor lady lived on in silent sorrow. She dared not complain. She saw her children trained up in the awful belief of their father, and she could not enter a protest. She frequently reproached herself for not discharging her duty in spite of opposition: but she trembled at the thought of engaging in a contest with her husband. She saw her darling children taught to believe that there is no God: she saw them apparently in the road to Eternal Ruin, and she had not strength to prevent their destruction. Well then did the Apostle write for the good of all ages "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."



## CHAPTER IV.

When the young people had been in the parlor a short time, and the conversation began to flag somewhat, Bertram thought it would be a decided relief to take the young ladies out riding; and he made a proposition to that effect. To this proposition Miss Gerie gladly consented. It was so much more pleasant, she thought, to carry on a conversation as the buggy rolled along through the forest. The scenes bordering the roadside would tend to stimulate one's colloquial powers. Besides, she would be alone with Mr. Bertram, and there was no telling what he might say. We must do Gerie the justice to say that this was an ill-defined thought—just a sort of little ripple on the surface of her mind, which scarcely attracted her own notice. She had too much self-respect to seize on the flashing thought and give it distinct shape, or to let the little ripple become a huge wave. But the plain truth is she was perfectly infatuated with the superficially brilliant Bertram, who managed to pass for a great deal more than he was worth in an intellectual point of view. Even on so short an acquaintance she was ready, (if the reader will par-



don us for telling it) to listen to a proposal which she was in hopes, and which she believed, he would make. This was the unvarnished truth in regard to the matter.

There was no course for Milson but to offer Miss Junie a seat in his buggy. He did not at all fancy the situation: but he could not exactly control circumstances.

Junie had been so much absorbed in her books for the past three or four years that she had never really thought about what relation there might be between her sister and John Milson. It had never occurred to her that Milson had the same tender sentiments toward Egeria, that Miss Gerie had toward Bertram—in reference to all of which she seemed to be as thoughtless as a child. Mr. Milson had been for a long time a friendly visitor at their house—a sort of play-fellow of Gerie's; and that was about the extent of her thoughts concerning this important matter. Whether the reader may think it strange or not she was perfectly ignorant of the “tender passion” herself; therefore she was not quick to detect it in others. She was not acquainted with the symptoms. It did not, consequently occur to her that, so far as a buggy ride was concerned, Gerie's company should be any more agreeable to John Milson than her own. So when Milson made the proposition to go riding, though it was done with a rather bad grace which did not escape the notice of Miss Gerie, she very readily



assented. If she had had more experience she would have rejected it with maidenly indignation. She would not have imposed her company upon any one who really did not want it. But Miss Junie was in blissful ignorance: she was as unsuspecting as a child, and had no idea that Milson's heart was thumping and fluttering like a poor bird in a cage beating and bruising itself against the bars in the vain effort to find a place of egress.

In a few moments the parties were seated in the two buggies and were traveling in the direction of Holly Springs.

When they had fairly started Junie said,

"That was a brave speech you made at the dinner table, Mr. Milson."

"Why?" asked John.

"Because it was the first time I ever heard any one oppose father's notions to his face. I was surprised that he did not get into a hot discussion with you. But you completely silenced Mr. Bertram. I was glad of it too, because I think he is so full of self-conceit."

"Is that your notion in regard to his character, Miss Junie?" asked Milson, manifesting a considerable degree of interest.

"Why certainly it is. I could not but think of the verses which I have read somewhere,

"This self-conceit is a most dangerous shelf,  
Where many have made shipwreck unawares;  
He who doth trust too much unto himself,  
Can never fail to fall in many snares."



In your discussion with him I noticed that he fell into several snares. He is so full of vanity that he cannot conceal it."

"Miss Gerie," said Milson slowly and with hesitation, "seems to be fond of his company."

Junie thought nothing of this remark which it cost Milson an effort to make.

"Oh, yes, sister does seem to like him" she said, not thinking that the word "like" might have, under some circumstances, a deep signification. The little word caused a sensation in Milson's breast.

"But, Mr. Milson," she exclaimed changing the subject, "I don't know but you have converted me to your opinion as to the existence of a personal God."

"Do you hold to your father's views?"

"Well the truth is" replied Junie "I have never seriously reflected on the subject, and I have never read the Bible. Father has always told us that it is the work of men who desired to take away our rights and liberties. He says there is no God; and that all we have to do here is to enjoy life: and that when we die there is an end of the matter. I rather like his notions (Oh! Miss Junie! how deep and dark is the depravity of the human heart!) and opinions, because they leave me free to do as I please. But I find that I have in my mind the conception of a personal God, as you so clearly proved to Mr. Bertram that he had. I had never thought of the matter with



any seriousness till to-day. But the mere conception does not satisfy me ; I want to know of his existence just as I know my own."

"It seems, Miss Junie" said Milson slowly, "that cannot be. Why, I do not know. But yet ocular demonstration, according to my way of thinking, is not necessary to establish the belief in the existence of a personal God. You see that piece of machinery," he continued taking out his watch, "you see that piece of machinery with its little wheels and springs, and you see that it has regular motion by which we are enabled to ascertain the hour of the day. Now can you believe that these wheels made themselves, or were made by some blind force, and were arranged by some unthinking power so as to correctly mark the seconds, minutes, and hours?"

"Of course I cannot," said Junie.

"It is evident" continued John "that some thinking being constructed it—a being that had a definite purpose in his mind."

"That is true," replied Junie.

"There cannot be" said John "a design without a designer : there cannot be an effect without a cause. Well now, if this little watch proves so clearly that it had an intelligent maker, is it possible to believe, that this vast world with its beautiful adaptation of means to ends, and with its arrangements for the comfort and happiness of all living creatures—this world which is a thousand times more complicated than a watch,



sprang into existence as an effect of blind force? The world must have had an intelligent Creator. I am bound by my own reason to believe it. I can no more doubt it than I can doubt that I am alive at this moment. That Creator is a personal, intelligent Being."

"I see the force of your reasoning" said Junie "and I cannot deny the correctness of your conclusion. But this conclusion is not altogether satisfactory, Mr. Milson. I want to know something more about God than his bare existence."

"There comes the trouble," said John.

"Can you find out nothing more about God than what you have said?" asked Miss Junie showing by her manner that she was deeply interested in this conversation.

"The book of Nature perplexes me," replied John thoughtfully. "The leaves, like the Sibylline oracles, seem to be scattered, and I cannot find precisely what I want. I can read in the pages of that volume, however, that God is a Being who has a most exquisite and perfect taste. That is displayed in whatever direction we may turn. It is shown in the azure sky studded with twinkling stars, and in the forest with its magnificent array of trees and brilliant flowers. Then I arrive at the conclusion, also, that he is a Being of goodness from the fact that there are ample provisions made for the happiness of all living creatures."

"This is true" said Junie as some glimmerings



of light were now beginning to break into her mind, "but there is something else I would like to know."

"What is that?"

"I can hardly tell: but I should like to see a Being, who is so powerful, refined, and good. Where does he reside?"

"Now, Miss Junie, you puzzle me," said Milson pleasantly; "I am not preacher enough to tell you."

"Preacher!" exclaimed Junie. "I have seen preachers, but never talked with one. Can they tell me all I want to know about God?"

"Why, Miss Junie, is it possible you have never been in a church, and never heard a sermon?"

"I have never been in a church in my life," she said. "Father would never let us go. I have no idea what a sermon is."

"Well, I do declare" answered Milson laughing, and talking to Miss Junie as if she were only a child, "I did not think there was anybody in all this broad land living in such a state of ignorance as that."

"I am just that much behind the times," replied Junie in a tone which indicated that she was not very much pleased with Milson's last remark. In a moment she added, "I do wish I could go to church just once and hear a sermon. Sister Gerie went several times when father did not know it. I asked her about it, but she said



they had such a dull time she did not want to go any more. So, I have never had much inclination to go. But if the preachers can answer such questions as I want to ask in reference to the God, who, I am now constrained to believe, does exist, I am sure I should like to meet them, and talk with them. But if you have heard them, Mr. Milson, why can't you answer my questions?"

"Now you puzzle me again, Miss Junie. See here" suddenly exclaimed John, "if you say so I will take you to church some Sunday, and let you see and hear for yourself. What say you?"

"Oh," she cried eagerly "nothing would afford me more pleasure. Let us go the very next Sunday?"

"Very well," said John. "But will your father consent for you to go?"

"I suppose he would not. I will not ask him. He needs not know where we are going."

"We will go next Sunday then."

As soon as Milson had said this he regretted it. The image of Egeria came flashing into his mind. He thought he would be willing to go with her to church or anywhere else. But he had placed himself in such a position that he must lose the pleasure of her company next Sunday. It was too late to retract what he said without being downright rude to Miss Junie. He could not withdraw his own proposition, without either



betraying the secret of his heart or assigning a reason which was not true.

What a strange thing is human nature ! Here was Milson commiserating the ignorance of this innocent young girl, while he with his superior knowledge was in a very little better condition than she was. He had been to church often ; he had heard many a sermon ; and yet he seemed to know but little about the true character of God. He had never read the Bible in such a way as to derive benefit from it. While he had a horror of Atheism, yet he himself was nothing more than a Deist. He knew not the God of the Bible ; and he really needed instruction as much as did the young lady at his side.

Presently he said,

“Miss Junie, you have met with Christians, of course ?”

“Why yes ; I have often met with people said to be Christians. Some few of my acquaintances say they are Christians. Several times they have said I ought to do better ; but I did not understand them. The most of them appear to be just like all other people. I find them in the ball-room, and all other places where I go, and they talk just as anybody else. But why do you ask ?”

“I thought probably some of them might have told you something in reference to God.”

“No. I never asked them.”

“But did none of them ever say anything to you in regard to religion ?”



“Well, I met old Mrs. Bangor one day in Holly Springs, who began to talk to me about heaven, and the tears commenced streaming down her cheeks. She said something about Jesus and salvation. But the old woman talked in such a way as led me to believe she was a little crazy or at least fanatical. She was suffering so with rheumatism that I thought her mind to be somewhat affected. I have heard persons say that she was a good Christian. But she differed from all others with whom I have met. I came to the conclusion that the church was some sort of society where they met to amuse themselves.”

“Well,” said John, looking at her with surprise; “but it is no use to talk. When you go to church next Sunday, you can see for yourself.”

As John said this they reached the suburbs of Holly Springs. They drove in silence through the town on the other side of which was one of those deep gullies which we have already mentioned. The road ran within a few feet of the edge of this gully which was at least forty feet deep. Bertram’s horse suddenly took fright at a flock of geese just ahead in the road, and he commenced backing. The buggy was now almost on the very edge of the deep gully that yawned in a fearful manner. Bertram was trying with all his might to urge the horse forward; but this only made the animal worse. Milson had been driving in the rear. Now perceiving the imminent danger



to which Gerie was exposed, he gave the reins of his own horse to Junie, telling her not to be alarmed, and hastened to the assistance of Bertram. The horse was utterly unmanageable. He soon discovered the only way by which Egeria could be saved, and that way required prompt action. Springing upon the axle of the hind wheels, he cried to Bertram to jump out; and then he seized Miss Gerie and dragged her from the seat, and placed her on the ground upon her feet. It was a rough way, but justifiable under the circumstances. No sooner had he performed this brave feat, at the risk of his own life, than the horse, no longer feeling the reins, became quiet just in time, as it happened, to prevent the catastrophe of horse and vehicle being precipitated down the almost perpendicular declivity. In a few seconds after Miss Gerie's rescue the hind wheel next to her seat, was hanging over the little precipice. Bertram and Egeria, when they saw the situation, became as pale as human beings in the enjoyment of good health well could be. Miss Junie recovered in a moment from her fright, and John looked as though he had done nothing which should call forth wonder or admiration. Bertram exclaimed with a very palpable shudder,

“What a narrow escape!”

“You may thank Mr. Milson” cried Junie “for saving your lives. If he had not acted so promptly, you and sister both would have gone



to the bottom of that ugly gully."

"Upon my word, Milson" said Bertram, "I do feel grateful to you for the preservation of my life,—but especially the life of Miss Egeria" he added in a tone which considerably marred the pleasurable emotion that thrilled Milson's heart at the thought of saving the life of one for whom he felt willing to die.

"I, too, thank you, John" said Gerie with more solemnity than was usual. "I never was so near death's door before. Had it not been for your strong arm I would now be a corpse or a cripple for life." And her earnest manner aroused a happy feeling in Milson's breast. At that moment how his swelling heart yearned to relieve itself of its pent up emotions! How he wanted to kneel at the fair one's feet and offer her the only, or at least the most valuable gift in his possession—that was his own humble self! How he longed to tell her that he desired above all things, the privilege of being her legitimate protector all along the journey of life! It required a small effort on his part to prevent such a foolish course in the presence of Bertram and Junie. But he choked down his surging emotions and endeavored to assume a calm exterior. Then with quietness he said,

"I beg you and Mr. Bertram to consider yourselves released from any obligation which you might suppose you are under to me. I deserve no thanks for simply performing my duty. I



would have done the same for anybody." While this was true, John thought it rather cool, and so he added: "but of course, Miss Gerie, my long acquaintance with yourself and family had a tendency to hasten my movements. Circumstances sometimes——" He paused in considerable embarrassment. But Bertram finished the sentence for him whether he uttered what was in Milson's mind or not, by saying,

"—— are of such a nature that they stimulate us to greater exertion. For instance we fly more readily to the assistance of our friends than of strangers."

"Certainly," said Milson. "But let us be going." To start back at once was the most practicable way of hiding his embarrassment. So they got in their buggies again and passing through Holly Springs turned their faces in the direction of Col. Paine's residence. As they were going along Junie was the first to break the silence.

"Mr. Milson, you are a real hero."

"What do you mean by a hero, Miss Junie?"

"Oh, I have read about heroes; but you are the first one I ever saw. How I thank you for saving Gerie's life."

"I beg you to say no more about it," said Milson. "You are bestowing more gratitude than I deserve. Any one could have done the same thing."

"Why didn't Mr. Bertram do it then?"



"His situation" said John, "was such that he could not."

"You are entirely too modest Mr. Milson. I was looking at you both, and he seemed to be frightened out of his wits while you were as cool as any one could be under such circumstances. You had the presence of mind to do the right thing at the right time. It was just a little amusing to see how gallantly you snatched Gerie out of the buggy. I expected to see all of you go over into the gully; and you would have done so, if you had not acted with such promptness. I tell you, you are a real hero: and if I ever should write a novel, I will have you for one of the principal characters.

John laughed at this idea. But Miss Junie continued.

"I tell you, I will make you the hero of my story, and I will describe you in such glowing colors that you will scarcely recognize yourself."

"I suppose I should not" answered John with a laugh, "if you present me in the garb of a hero. I guess I would make a sorry figure in your story."

"No sir," she said merrily, "I will manufacture such circumstances as will make you appear to advantage in every scene. It would not do for the hero to render himself ridiculous."

"But sometimes, Miss Junie, we do render ourselves ridiculous" said John, thinking of the blunders which he had made during that very



day. "It will not do" he continued, "to put in your story what I said about Horace, and then at the table what I said about the grace, you know."

"Well," she added, "that was merely an exhibition of absent-mindedness. And that feature would only make you the more interesting in the story. I imagine that a hero should not be like ordinary people."

And Miss Junie kept rattling on in this style till they reached home. When they had gotten out of the buggy she said very innocently in the presence of Bertram and Gerie,

"I have really enjoyed this day, Mr. Milson, and I suppose I shall dream to-night about the hero of my novel. You must not forget your promise in regard to next Sunday."

John blushed: why, he could not tell. Bertram looked at Miss Gerie and then at the other two with a significant expression which might be interpreted as meaning "they would be a nice couple." Egeria look at Junie inquisitively. Then the latter said,

"Mr. Milson is going to take me to church next Sunday."

"Perhaps, Miss Gerie," said Bertram quickly, "you would like to go too. If you would I should be more than delighted to act as your escort."

"No doubt" replied Gerie "we may find some amusement at church. So, Mr. Bertram, if you



will call next Sunday morning you will find me ready to go."

It was now growing late and both young men took their leave. Their state of mind may be as easily imagined as described.

When the young ladies entered their mother's room, they found her in tears. Egeria said with some sharpness in her voice,

"What is the matter now, mother?"

They had often seen her in this condition; and when they urged her to divulge the cause of her trouble she was under the necessity of making evasive replies. But now drying her tears she spoke plainly and directly,

"I have been particularly sad to-day, my children, and especially on your account, my dear Gerie."

"And why on my account, mother?" asked Gerie with a slight frown.

"Because of the visit of that Mr. Bertram," she said plainly and sadly.

"And what about him?"

"My child," answered Mrs. Paine in a solemn manner, "I am not often deceived in my estimate of people's characters, even if they are strangers."

"Mother," cried Gerie in vexation, "what are you talking about?"

"My daughter," said the mother sorrowfully, "don't be cross. You are young and inexperienced, and are liable to be deceived in your estimate of



men's characters. This Mr. Bertram is not the gentleman you take him to be."

"How do you know, Mother, he is no gentleman. What do you know about him anyhow?"

"Nothing, except what I have seen with my own eyes; and I tell you he is not what you take him to be."

"How do you know what I take him to be?" said Miss Gerie with flippancy.

"I am satisfied my daughter would not be seen in the company of any man whom she did not believe to be a perfect gentleman."

"Of course," said Gerie with a blush, "I believe Mr. Bertram to be just what he appears—a really refined gentleman, and more polished than John ———; " but Gerie could not finish the name; for at that moment she remembered the fearful gully.

"More polished than John Milson?" said Mrs. Paine.

"Yes," cried Gerie in half-angered confusion, "if you will make me say it, more polished than—

"The man," cried Junie springing to her feet, "more polished than the man who not more than three hours ago saved your life." Then with considerable animation, she related the circumstance in reference to the gully with which the reader is acquainted.

At this Mrs. Paine turned pale and then the tears flowed down her cheeks afresh. Then as soon as she could control her emotions she said,



“God bless the noble boy! he is worth a dozen such as Bertram.”

“That is all you know about it,” said Gerie with a curl of the lip.

“Mother” cried Junie, “Mr. Milson is a real hero.”

“Then marry him yourself,” quickly interrupted Gerie with flashing eyes.

Junie had really never thought of marrying any one. But now for some reason which she did not know how to analyze she thought she would not like to see Gerie the wife of John Milson. He appeared to her only as a hero; but in the little novel which she thought she was capable of producing, she had not made John anybody’s husband. When Gerie used his name in connection with the word marry, she discovered that the thought of his marrying any one made her feel a little—just a little uneasy. At that time she could not tell why.

“I never thought of marrying anybody in my life,” meekly said Junie.

“Of course, you never did; but now as you have found a real hero, my advice is not to let him escape you.”

Gerie said this a little sarcastically; but Junie looked at her with wondering eyes, as if she did not understand.

“You should not talk” said Mrs. Paine, “in a disrespectful manner of the person who saved your life.”



“Saved my life! I will never hear the last of that. If that is to be eternally thrown up to me I wish I had gone over into the gully, and —”

“Stop Gerie, dear! don’t say it.”

“Well,” said the young lady moderating her tone somewhat, “of course I feel thankful to John for what he did; but that is no reason I should marry him. I have told you before, mother, that I do not think enough of John to marry him.”

Junie was some how glad to hear her sister say this, and she began to wonder if Mr. Milson wanted to marry Miss Gerie.

“Now, mother” said Gerie “I hope you will never mention this subject to me again. I tell you once for all that I will never be the bride of John Milson.”

“I pray God, my child,” cried Mrs. Paine with energy “that you may never be the bride of Bertram. I tell you he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. If he does not have the mark of a villain, I never was more deceived in my life. Oh! my child, beware! beware!” And again she burst into tears.

“I will not stay” cried Gerie suddenly rising up “to hear a gentleman slandered in such a way as that.” And she hastily left the room.

Poor Mrs. Paine! as she neared the shores of eternity the shadows around her seemed to grow darker. The idea of seeing Gerie the wife of an unbeliever—an unbeliever whose obliquity of



moral principle she thought she could perceive under that polished exterior, was too much for her delicate nerves. She very easily saw Gerie's infatuation, and judging from Bertram's actions she could divine his intentions. A fearful picture rose up in her imagination, rendered darker by her self-accusations. She felt that she had neglected her duty till now it was too late to perform it. Her children were beyond her control. She had let the season pass for making good impressions.

That Sunday night she went off to a secret place and poured out her very soul to God in prayer. She asked to be forgiven. She prayed for her children. She prayed for John Milson who she could not help feeling would yet come into the light. In her thoughts Milson now appeared as the only nucleus around which her tottering hopes could rally. The way he had talked that day made a rift in the clouds, and let through one straggling sun-beam. Therefore she prayed that he might build up a grand superstructure of Christian character upon the foundation which she believed to be solid.

Mrs. Paine, as the reader has already doubtless concluded, was a rather weak-minded woman. She was greatly to be pitied. True, circumstances which it was impossible to control, had shaped her course of action contrary to her own will. She had not strength of body or mind to rise up in opposition to her husband. She yield-



ed, neglected her duty ; and now she was reaping the sad consequences.

“ ’Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears,  
Our most important are our earliest years ;  
The mind impressible and soft with ease  
Imbibes and copies what she sees,  
And through life’s labyrinth holds fast the clue  
That education gives her, false or true.  
Plants raised with tenderness are seldom strong ;  
Man’s coltish disposition asks the thong :  
And without discipline the favorite child,  
Like a neglected forester runs wild.”

It was true in the case of poor Mrs. Paine. It will be true in every case till the world shall come to an end. It is an old and a true saying “as the twig is bent the tree’s inclined.” Leave children to follow the bent of their own mind, free them entirely from the reins of wholesome discipline, and they will prove to be sources of disappointment and sorrow. Therefore says Holy Writ, “train up a child in the way he should go.” Wo to that parent who pays no heed to this advice ! Ere long he will writhe under the stings of conscience. He will have reason to weep over his neglect. But too late ! The past is beyond recall. He can only stand in helpless, hopeless agony, looking on as his offspring rush toward the dark abyss of ruin. May the Divine Spirit arouse all parents to a just sense of their responsibility, and breathe upon them, that they may appreciate their duty and discharge it !



## CHAPTER V.

The ancients were wise in their day and generation. They had some good thoughts and some wise proverbs. Among other sayings was "Know thyself." Did they ever take time to think that this was much "easier said than done?" Who can know himself? Of all knowledge this undoubtedly is the most difficult of acquisition. We may say without much hazard that we cannot know ourselves. Many who thought they had attained to this very desirable sort of knowledge, and acted on that presumption, have found out to their sorrow and mortification, that they made a most egregious mistake, and that after all their study over the labyrinthine intricacies and complications of self they had only a limited acquaintance with themselves. We do not know our powers, and still less our own weaknesses. We are not very apt to under-estimate our abilities; but we are never in much danger of magnifying our intellectual infirmities. We may imagine that under given circumstances we would pursue a certain course of action; but let us be placed under those circumstances, and we would, ten to



one, act in a very different manner from what we supposed we would. So certain are we that we do know ourselves, how ready are we to give advice to other people, and tell what they ought to do in view of certain things. Few men think themselves incapable of giving good advice; and all advice is given upon the positive assumption that they, the givers, have an intimate acquaintance with themselves. How easy it is to give wholesome and wise counsel to persons who are struggling and staggering under a mountain of difficulties! Some of our readers no doubt think that they could have given John Milson good advice. Some would tell him that he and Miss Gerie Paine were not kindred spirits at all, and that he would better banish her image from his heart, and crush down his wild affection; and that if he were determined to renounce the miseries of single-blessedness, he would better turn his attention to Miss Junie Paine, who they have already concluded was the better woman of the two. Others would tell Milson to let Gerie alone at all hazards. They are doubtless surprised that a young man of his turn of mind should be so infatuated with love for one who was so much his inferior, and was unworthy of the affection which her external charms had inspired. They would tell him that he might plainly perceive that his violent feelings were not reciprocated by the fair Egeria; therefore he should have too much independence to sacrifice the dignity of



manhood by allowing this beautiful "butterfly" to absorb the thoughts of his heart. All this might be very good advice. Probably the young man did sometimes wish that he could follow it, or something similar to it. But he might have replied to some of these advisers in the language of a great poet, who had probed to the bottom of human nature :

" Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,  
Thou wouldst go kindle fire with snow,  
As seek to quench the fire of love with words."

A person who has been smitten by the little blind god does not have full control of himself. Love, as is abundantly established by experience and observation cannot be regulated by the human will. Many a one has tried by force of will to free himself from the golden fetters ; but in most cases it has been a fruitless struggle. We cannot love and hate whom we please. However human philosophy may try to account for it, the fact is demonstrated by the experience of almost everyone. So, John Milson was not his own master. Probably he would have regained his liberty, if he could. But whether he could, or not, he was a wretched young man. That Sunday night was spent by him in sleepless anguish. There was a struggle between Morpheus and the "green-eyed monster," and the "yellow fiend" gained the victory. When he would close his eyes in desperation and try to coax sleep, he would imagine that he could see the beloved Gerie falling down



some awful precipice, holding up her hands and imploring help; and he would almost start up in order to fly to the rescue. Then, again he would see her arrayed as a blushing bride, and then who should walk out to lead her to the altar but Eugene Bertram; and this picture was provoking, maddening. Such a multitude of clashing thoughts and imaginings drove Morpheus clear out of his room.

The next morning the sun rose in splendor; but Milson rose not at all refreshed. What should he do? How could he escape from torture? Such questions he propounded to himself a hundred times. But at last he resolved that he would see Gerie that very day, and put an end to his suspense. He would tell her plainly of the existence of his consuming feeling, and at once learn his destiny from her sweet lips. At the same time he dreaded this course; but then he thought it was almost death to remain in his present condition. It seemed that he could not sleep nor eat. Some people would have heartily laughed at him, and others would have pitied him, if they could have witnessed the fierce storm raging in his breast. But he desired to quell the storm if it could possibly be done. So Monday evening he got into his buggy and started out of town. He had often traveled the same road and to the same place; but now it seemed to him that everybody was watching him. But his mind was fully made up; and as he applied



the lash to his horse and drove Jehu-like in the direction of Col. Paine's, some few of his acquaintances met him on the way, but he hardly spoke to them. It now appeared to him that everybody could see what was going on in his heart. In a little time his rapid rate of travel brought him to the spot which was the dearest to him on earth. At once he was shown into the parlor, and asked for Miss Egeria, who soon made her appearance.

Here we will have to record the conversation which took place; not that it in itself is of so much importance, but that our reader may form a clearer idea of the characters of the persons whose history we are writing. Often in historical works a better idea of the characters can be gained from the words which they utter than from many pages of description. We offer this by way of apology to those of our readers who may not have a fancy for the kind of talk which John and Egeria had that Monday evening. Some may consider it a very interesting conversation. Anyhow we give it as it occurred.

When Miss Gerie entered the parlor she spoke to Milson as if she were really glad to see him. But she could not help noticing his haggard look.

"John," she exclaimed with some show of sympathy, "you are not well?" Then she gazed at him with so much apparent tenderness that Milson really began to hope that the result of his



visit would be such as he so ardently desired. So at once he brightened up.

“Yes, I am well, Miss Gerie, though I confess to some stupor, resulting from a sleepless night. I—I—I could not sleep for thinking of the peril you were in yesterday.”

“I am sorry, John, that I should have given you so much trouble. I dreamed about that adventure myself last night; and I dreamed how you snatched me out of the buggy,” she said laughing. “I declare John, I did not know how much I am indebted to you till I got to thinking about it last night.” But Miss Gerie did not tell all she thought about. She did not reveal the fact that Bertram appeared in her dreams as the chief actor. If John could have seen this, he no doubt would have taken his leave without making known the object of his visit. But it was the cause of some little happiness to know that he had been in Egeria’s mind, and he could have wished that she might come near falling into a deep gully every day if he were close by to save her life even at the risk of his own. But John was becoming a little desperate, and he scarcely knew what to say. So he relapsed into a somewhat painful silence. Gerie looked at him in surprise, and began to wonder what it was that brought him out on Monday. He had never made such a visit before. She too became silent. It seemed to be a sort of Quaker meeting. Seeing Milson look so sad and pale Miss Gerie suddenly said,



"John, you must be sick. I never saw you look so bad before. What is the matter?"

"Nothing, Miss Gerie. I am not at all sick."

"Well" said the young lady "it must be something extraordinary which brings you here on Monday."

"Miss Gerie," said John when he saw that he must speak and make some explanation, "it is something extraordinary: and no; not extraordinary either. Miss Gerie" he exclaimed in a tone that almost startled the young lady, and then immediately lowered his voice, "I can no longer endure the suspense which is sapping my very life."

"Why, John," she cried in some surprise, "what is the matter? I never saw you act so before. You must be sick?"

"Do not mock me, Miss Gerie."

"I would not mock you for anything in the world. You do look sick," she said with seriousness.

"Oh, Gerie, Gerie," he said not noticing the fact that he had dropped the prefix of Miss, "I do wish you would not feign ignorance. You ought to know what is the matter with me. Whatever it may be, you are the cause of it."

"I, John, I the cause of it? How should I be the cause of it? What do you mean?"

"Gerie." he said with forced deliberation while the blood was surging hot through his veins, "I have been visiting you for years. I have hinted



to you more than once that you are the center of all my thoughts and dreams ; but you have never given me reason to think that you entertained for me anything more than a sentiment of friendship. For these three years I have been in suspense which I could bear ; but now circumstances are such that suspense is no longer tolerable. Gerie, I have loved you, and I still love you with all the fervor of my nature. Your image is in my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. Oh, I feel the utter poverty of language when I attempt to express the consuming affection I feel for you. I wish you could only look into my heart and see the throne which your image occupies. I wish you could see without my telling it the intensity of devotion with which I bow down to the one idol of my heart. You know, Gerie, that I love you. I have fondly hoped that my love is not in vain. I have endeavored to persuade myself that you would not treat my suit with indifference. Tell me, am I mistaken ?”

“Why John,” quickly answered Gerie, “I do not think I have ever even hinted by word or act that I looked upon you as anything more than a friend.”

“Oh, Gerie, Gerie, will you, can you tell me that I am nothing more than a friend ?”

“I did not say that. I said that I have never given you reason to believe that I regarded you in any other light.”

“No ; you have not. But can you not tell me



that I am something more than a friend? If you can, I will be a new man. I will take a fresh start in the race of life. I will from this moment make it the one purpose of my life to anticipate all your wishes. I will be your slave, I will be your protector; I will devote all my energies to securing your happiness. Oh, may I dare to hope that you love me?"

Miss Gerie knew that she did not love John. She had respect for him. But, for two reasons she determined to keep him in suspense for a while longer. One was that she did not care to witness the effect which a positive rejection might have on Milson. The truth was she really liked John; his noble qualities of mind and heart called forth her esteem; but then, she said to herself that she could never love him as she did Bertram. Yet, Bertram, while he had given her some reason to believe that he entertained the same feeling for her that she had for him, had not said so. She did not know what she might do in case Bertram should fail to make a proposal. Under these circumstances she thought it would not be politic to discard Milson. She had said positively and in half anger to her mother that she would never marry him, but then young ladies frequently make bold assertions which they can find reason to retract. She was fond of admiration anyhow. It was flattering to her pride to know that she was the sole object of Milson's affection. So she at once determined upon her line of policy.



“John,” she said thoughtfully, “you have taken me so by surprise that I do not know what reply to make. I was not looking for such a declaration as you have just made.”

This remark caused the young man’s heart to seemingly leap into his very throat. He began to believe, that in spite of his fears his suit would be successful; and he began to feel that he would be repaid for his devotion during so many years of suspense.

“Gerie,” he said with deep earnestness, “you might have seen for years that I love you. You have been out of my mind for scarcely a single moment. I could not have banished your image even if I had tried; but I have not tried. It is a pleasure to me to bear your image in my heart. And now will you not speak just one word to repay me for years of devotion?”

“How do I know John,” she said with an arch smile, “that you are in earnest? I have heard gentlemen speak in this way before.” And involuntarily she straightened herself up with pride. But John did not notice her manner, so intent was he upon eliciting some confession or word that would confirm his hopes.

“I will dare say that none of them ever loved with the same deep earnestness that I have. It is impossible that they could. Gerie,” he added with blushing energy “I would die for you.”

“Oh, come John, you are too extravagant.”

And she broke into a merry laugh. Milson,



poor simpleton! might have perceived that she cared nothing for him, if he had only stopped to reason in regard to the matter. But he would, or could not call reason into exercise.

“I cannot express half what I feel. Oh, Gerie, send me not away still to suffer in suspense. It is intolerable. Tell me, that I have not hoped in vain. Tell, me that I may be something more than a friend.”

“What else would you be?” she asked as if determined to wring from him every secret of his soul.

“I ask you plainly, then, be mine. Give me your heart and hand. Give me the privilege of watching over you through life and of gratifying all your wishes. I will be your slave, Gerie. You will have only to command. You cannot now misunderstand me.”

“I would be very simple, indeed, John, if I could not understand such plain language,” she said with another laugh.

“Well, then you understand me, what is your answer?” he asked gazing into her face as if to read her thoughts.

“Suppose, John,” she asked with an inquisitive look, “I should say that I do not love you?”

“Oh, Gerie, if you say that,” he cried springing to his feet, “I fear I should be driven to madness. I cannot endure the thought that such sincere devotion as mine is unrequited. You



will not be so cruel as to tell me that all my hopes must be at once blasted."

"Well," she said laughing, "if you would think me cruel, I will not say it."

"Thank you, dearest," he cried with a beaming face, "I—"

"Hold, John!" exclaimed the young lady, "not so fast! I do not want you to assume too much. I only said, I would not say that I do not love you—that was all. Your declaration has taken me by surprise. You must give me time to consider. It will not do to be too hasty. We would better wait a while, and not suddenly take a step which both of us might regret."

"I will never regret it; and I will so act that you can never regret it," said John.

"No doubt, you now think so, John," said the young lady with a serious air. "But we will lose nothing by waiting a while."

"Will you not then give me one word to hope that the consideration which you promise to give the subject will terminate in a manner favorable to my wishes?"

"I will not say more," she answered with some little firmness, "than I have already said. I will think over the matter."

This was all that Milson could induce the idol of his heart to say upon the subject which was the dearest to him of all others.

She had other reasons than those which we have already assigned for her treatment of him;



but we will not trouble the reader with them.

The young man soon took his leave. He was in a better frame of mind than when he came. He had now unbosomed himself; and this process itself was some relief. He had done all that he could, and he felt better satisfied—like a man who had discharged his duty. Somehow he could not bring himself to believe that he was an object of indifference to the fair Egeria. He flattered himself with the conclusion that she was too modest to tell him plainly that she loved him; and he blamed himself for having so vehemently urged her to do so. So he went back home a little more happy. The “yellow fiend” granted him a short respite.

When Milson had taken his departure Miss Junie came into the parlor where Gerie still remained, looking a little more thoughtful and serious than was usual.

“Sister,” said Junie in a kind of matter-of-fact way, “what did Mr. Milson want?”

“Well I will tell you” she said laughing, “if you want to know: He came here to ask me to marry him.”

“He did!” exclaimed Junie in a tone which caused Miss Gerie to look at her in wonder.

“Why certainly he did. What is there surprising in it. He has loved me for years, so he says, and I believe him.”

On hearing this a little shade of sorrow passed over her face. Junie thought, for some reason, she



would not like to have John Milson for a brother-in-law ; not that she did not like John : she had respect for him, and thought him a noble young man, and somewhat of a hero ; but somehow she did not want him for a brother-in-law.

“What did you tell him ?” was the timid inquiry of Junie.

“What do you want to know for ?” cried Gerie. “I never knew you to take so much interest in my affairs. I shall not tell you,” said Gerie as if to tantalize her. And at once she went out of the parlor.

Miss Junie could not tell, poor thing, why this information should give her the least pain. John Milson was nothing to her. But she kept thinking about it ; and somehow she felt a little vexed that Milson should have asked Egeria to marry him. Alas ! who knows himself ! Who knows herself !



## CHAPTER VI.

The Sabbath again dawned. Milson and Bertram were both at Colonel Paine's, according to previous agreement, having arrived at about nine o'clock. About ten o'clock the parties got into the two buggies, and took the road leading in the direction of Holly Springs. Col. Paine saw them as they were preparing to start; but he asked no questions as to where they were going. It did not occur to him that they would that day enter a house which he despised from the bottom of his heart. He had no good reason to believe that Bertram, with whom he was charmed, had any love for sacred places. So he supposed that the young people were merely going out riding.

We will not take up our reader's time by entering into details of the conversation that occurred among the young people on the way. But we will allow the reader some latitude for the exercise of his imagination, while we hasten on to relate matters which we think of more importance.

In due time they arrived, entered the church, and were soon comfortably seated. In a little



time a man was seen to enter the pulpit. It was the minister—the Rev. Aaron Archer, D. D. He was a man about fifty-five years of age, well-built, stout, and of commanding appearance. A glance at him was sufficient to disclose the fact that he was no ordinary character. Dr. Archer had followed the profession of Law till he was about thirty-five years of age. Then feeling that it was his duty to engage in a higher vocation, he gave up a profession in which he was accumulating wealth, and entered upon the more exalted work of saving human souls. It needs hardly be added that he was a man of deep piety. None but a man of fervent devotion, strong faith, and glowing zeal would pursue such a course. Whatever might be said of others, none could assert that he was influenced by mercenary motives or craving for worldly distinction. He had been a great lawyer; and so he became a great preacher. He was an orator of the first rank. The consequence was that on the Sabbath day he generally addressed a large audience.

At the time our story begins, he was endeavoring to counteract the poison of infidelity which we have already informed the reader infected the religious atmosphere of Holly Springs. For this purpose he frequently preached on the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and kindred subjects. As a specimen of his manner of preaching we give in the present chapter the entire sermon which he delivered on the Sabbath that Bertram



and party attended church ; which sermon we respectfully ask the reader to peruse with some attention, as it may throw some light on subsequent events, and is perhaps necessary to the accomplishment of the purpose which has prompted us to undertake the present story.

Dr. Archer made no effort to be grand ; but he spoke plainly, and to the masses. But his whole manner was grand and impressive. Few could listen to him without becoming interested in what he was saying. There was an electric influence about the man which it was almost impossible to resist. While there may not have been anything very profound in his sermon, yet his very manner was attractive, and generally secured the undivided attention of his congregation.

Dr. Archer, in beginning the exercises of the hour, read in a very impressive way that familiar old hymn :

“ All hail the power of Jesus’ name !  
Let angels prostrate fall :  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of all.”

The hymn was sung by the congregation without the aid of an organ. It was grand. Junie, especially, had never heard anything like it before. It caused a feeling at least akin to solemnity to steal into her mind. After the singing Dr. Archer read the twenty-second chapter of Matthew ; then he offered up a fervent prayer, which was the first that Junie had ever heard in her life. Of course this was strange ; but she



listened with marked attention. Dr. Archer then preached the following

### SERMON.

“What think ye of Christ?” Matt. 22 : 44.

“The Christian religion is worth everything ; or it is worth nothing at all. There is no half-way ground. The Bible is either the book of God ; or it is a downright imposition. We cannot take the position as some do, that it is partly divine and partly human ; and is partly true and partly false. It is all inspired, or none of it is inspired. It is wholly true, or wholly false. There is no possible middle ground. It will be admitted by all men that if the Christian religion is true, it is the most important thing that can possibly engage the attention of a human being. It is our solemn duty to investigate the evidences upon which it rests ; and if we find the evidences sufficient to establish its divine authenticity, then it is our duty to embrace it at once, and to use all our influence in persuading others to follow our example. But on the other hand, if any man, after a fair, candid, and honest investigation, arrives at the conclusion that its claims are without foundation, then as a rational being he is bound to reject it. But it ought not to be rejected without mature deliberation. No man should cast the Bible aside as a book unworthy of credit so long as there is room even for the suspicion that it is a Divine Revelation. If you reject the Bible without the clearest proof of its falsity, you cannot be happy. You will be tossed about like a cork on the waves ; and you will be haunted by the fearful suspicion that you may have made a mistake ; and you will be tormented by that ‘certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation’ of which the Apostle speaks. Of course no man in such a condition can enjoy peace.

The question, then, which constitutes our text, is one of vital importance—What think ye of Christ?

In answering the question I remark that only three opinions can be formed in regard to Christ, so



far as his public acts were concerned; it is not possible to conceive of any other opinions. We are limited to just these three hypotheses:

1st. He was a fanatic; 2d. He was an impostor; 3d. He was the Son of God.

Men, in their investigations of this subject have always been confined to these three views.

Now let me lay down some incontrovertible propositions as a starting point.

If it can be proved that Christ was neither the Son of God, nor an Impostor, then the logical conclusion is he was a Fanatic. Again, if it can be shown that he was neither the Son of God, nor a Fanatic, then he was an Impostor. Again, if it can be established that he was neither an Impostor nor a Fanatic, then he was the Son of God.

No one, whether Believer or Unbeliever, will deny that these propositions are in accordance with the strictest rules of logic; indeed, they are self-evident.

If you desire to feel the force of the argument which I shall advance to-day, I beg you, keep in mind, that it is not possible to form any other opinions of Christ in his public character, than the three which I have just mentioned. This being granted I shall undertake to prove that Christ was neither an Impostor nor a Fanatic; and if I do this, then it will follow as a necessary, logical consequence that he was the Son of God.

Skeptics are so fond of reason that I shall make an attempt to meet them on their own ground.

First, then, I shall endeavor to show that Jesus Christ was not a Fanatic. As I desire all the younger portion of the congregation to understand me clearly and fully, it may not be amiss to say that a fanatic is one who is affected with excessive enthusiasm, especially on religious subjects. Now some men have entertained this opinion of Christ; and some now entertain it. They admit that he was a good man; but they affirm that he was a dreamer, and that he was mistaken in his views as to the Messiahship. They say that he was laboring under mental



hallucination—that he merely imagined he was the Son of God. They say he claimed to be something which he was not ; and, though he was sincere in the claim, yet he was deceived and mistaken about it. I may here say that if Christ was mistaken in his views, he was a very crazy fanatic ; he exhibits down-right insanity of the most glaring character. Sometimes private men imagine themselves to be kings or great military chieftains. Some take themselves to be Napoleon Bonaparte or George Washington, and they assume airs which they think become such characters. Now what impression do they make on us ? Why, we regard them as utterly insane. They are sent to the Lunatic Asylum. Now, how surprised you would all be if I should stand up here, and in the most solemn manner proclaim that I am the Son of God—yea, that I am God himself. Some of you would come forward, and promptly put an end to my preaching. You would say, ‘ That man has a burning fever—he is out of his mind—he is crazy.’ Suppose I should for days, and months, and years, persist in this claim, and should continue to affirm that I am the Son of God. You would pronounce me hopelessly insane. Now, then, do you not see that if Christ was mistaken at all in his views, he was laboring under mental derangement which would at once have become apparent ? If he was a dreamer, or a fanatic at all, he was the most hopelessly insane fanatic that ever did live in the world. If he did make a mistake it was the most glaring mistake that was ever made by a human being.

Let us look at the facts in the case. Here comes along a man by the name of Jesus, born of poor parents in an insignificant village. He comes from a town which was held in contempt by all who knew anything of its history. He has the bearing of an ordinary laborer, and is an uneducated man. That man faces great crowds of Pharisees and Sadducees and the learned men of the Jewish nation and calmly says ‘ I am the son of the living God.’ When the people heard such strange language, of course they



watched him narrowly. But they discovered no symptoms of fanaticism, I want you to remember if Christ was a fanatic at all, he must have been the most crazy, or at least as crazy as any fanatic that ever lived on the face of the earth. Now when he said 'I am the son of God—yea I am God himself,' why did not the people cry out 'that man is crazy?' I ask why was he not arrested as a crazy fanatic. If he was insane he deserved pity instead of contempt and abuse; he deserved protection rather than punishment. Is it not strange that if Jesus was a fanatic, he was not accused of insanity by his enemies? Why should great crowds gather, day after day, follow a crazy fanatic and listen with the most rigid attention when he proclaimed himself the 'bread of life and the son of God.' How will we account for it that men abandoned their professions and followed him? Why was it that great crowds of learned men congregated around him and engaged in discussion with him? Why did they not suspect him of fanaticism and insanity? When Christ declared that 'before Abraham was I am,' why did the people take up stones to kill him? Was this the proper way to treat a crazy fanatic? The plain truth is they never suspected him of fanaticism and insanity. If they had they ought rather to have pitied than attempted to kill him. Suppose we could to-day call up those who crucified him—the members of the Sanhedrin and Pilate, and ask them the question, 'did you think Jesus was insane? did you think he was a mere fanatic?' Every one would reply, 'no: we took him to be of sound mind: we never would have crucified a crazy fanatic.' Not one would admit the charge of fanaticism. It is as plain as anything can be that Jesus did not make the impression on the minds of his cotemporaries that he was crazy. Not one would admit the charge of fanaticism; and those who lived at the same time with him, and were personally acquainted with him were the best judges. It will not therefore do for any man at this day to prefer the charge of fanaticism against Christ, when



such a charge at the time he lived would have been denied by all who were acquainted with him. Here then, we have a strong unanswerable argument that Jesus Christ was not a mere fanatic. He was not thought to be such by his cotemporaries.

Again, a fanatic is always guilty of some extravagance. His excessive zeal is certain to run him into error; and he is sure to make the most glaring blunders. Now, apply this test to Jesus Christ. In no instance did he ever make a mistake. He never announced a false principle of ethics; but he displayed the greatest wisdom in all his teachings. He was followed by Pharisees and Sadducees learned in all the principles of the law; and they proposed difficult questions with the express purpose of entrapping him; but in every instance they were foiled. They did their utmost to betray him into some expression of disloyalty to the Roman government; but they were completely discomfited. You remember they asked him the direct question if it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. They thought his answer would get him into a dilemma from which he could not extricate himself. They were under the impression that his reply must be offensive to the Jews on the one hand, or the Romans on the other. How surprised they were when the answer came without the least hesitation, 'render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things which are God's.' When the sinful woman was brought to him by persons who cared nothing for the crime of which she was guilty, how appropriate was his answer, given as it was to a set of hypocrites, 'let him that is without sin cast the first stone.' Again the Sadducees proposed a question in regard to the resurrection. They did not believe in any resurrection. There was a woman, they said who had seven husbands, now whose wife should she be in the resurrection? To them this presented a serious objection to the doctrine of a resurrection. But how soon the Lord solved the knotty problem: "in heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage," No



fanatic could have answered as Jesus did. See how easily he threw them into confusion whenever he proposed a question. He asked them in the language of our text, 'what think ye of Christ?' whose son is he? They thought this a very simple question, and they answered with great promptitude 'the son of David.' 'If so' said Jesus, 'how could David call him Lord?' They could not answer. Again, he said 'tell me, the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?' They dared not answer. In many instances Jesus proved his superiority in wisdom to the most learned men of the Jewish nation. Well then might the people exclaim in astonishment 'whence hath this man such wisdom?' It was impossible for a fanatic to display the wisdom which he did.

Again, if Jesus had been a fanatic, his disciples would have caught his spirit, and in their writings they would have given some evidence of his fanaticism. They were with him every day for several years; they learned their doctrines from him, and of course they would reflect the character of their teacher. This is perfectly natural. If he had been a fanatic, he would have made fanatics of them. All history shows that whenever a man founds a new party, his immediate followers are certain to become imbued with his spirit. Unconsciously and involuntarily they reflect the character and sentiments of their teacher. Now then, examine the writings of the evangelists, and where is the evidence of their fanaticism? If they were not inspired men, they were the most remarkable persons that ever handled a pen. Sometimes I am filled with astonishment and overwhelmed with a sense of awe, when I read the history of Jesus as given by the sacred writers.

And here are one or two considerations to which I desire to call your attention—considerations that are sufficient to affect anyone with surprise who is inclined to think Jesus was a fanatic.

The first is that the sacred writers never indulge in any eulogies on their great teacher. They never



hold him up as a hero ; never praise one of his deeds ; and never attempt to magnify anything which he did. They never say one word in regard to his personal appearance. They never utter a word in defense of his character. His enemies called him emissary of the Devil, and brought up the gravest charges against him, and yet his disciples, who have given us a history of his life, never took the trouble to refute any of these charges. On his trial he was accused of blasphemy and sedition ; and the sacred writers make no attempt to falsify the accusation. They never complain of the great injustice with which his enemies treated him. They seem to have been so overwhelmed by his astonishing works, and were so impressed with the majesty of his character, that they never thought it worth the while to deny a single charge made by his enemies. They felt that such a one as he was stood in no need of defense from men. His life was enough.

A second consideration is that the sacred writers never abuse the enemies of their Lord. They make no effort to exalt the character of Jesus by crying down his opponents. It is evident that Jesus was put to death without any just cause ; and his disciples therefore had a right to complain. They could reproach Pilate for his baseness and cowardice ; but they do not condemn the course which he pursued. They certainly had reason to do so. But they say not a disrespectful word about him. They might have spoken in unmeasured terms of reproach in regard to that mob clamoring for the blood of an innocent man. But Peter only said to them on the day of Pentecost when his heart was fired up with the Holy Ghost "ye have with wicked hands slain the Son of God."

Again, there was Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ ; but the sacred writers say nothing in regard to the atrocity of his crime ; they make no effort at all to impress us with a sense of his villainy. They had good reason to hold him up to the scorn of all honest men ; yet the harshest thing they say of him



was uttered by Peter, who merely said that Judas 'went off and hanged himself and went unto his place.' I ask you is this not remarkable? Is it not remarkable that the sacred writers never defend the character of Christ, and never speak evil of his enemies? They merely relate naked, unvarnished facts without concealing or palliating a single circumstance. Whenever I think of these facts, the impression comes over me with overwhelming force like it did over the Centurion of old, and I cannot but feel, surely this was the Son of God." No crazy fanatic could ever have trained up followers who could write such a history. I think then we have established the fact that Christ was not a fanatic.

Now then it remains to be proved that he was not an Impostor. Let us, for the benefit of the younger people, settle clearly what is meant by an impostor. An impostor is one who assumes a character for the purpose of deception. An impostor in religious matters is one who assumes the character of a preacher or a prophet without any divine authority. He pretends to some extraordinary commission. Thus Mahomet pretended to be commissioned by the Almighty to deliver a divine revelation to men. An impostor then is a hypocrite. He makes high pretensions to religion while in his heart he is utterly wicked. He is like a 'whited sepulchre beautiful without,' but within full of all uncleanness. Jesus Christ was, and is to this day regarded by many Jews and Infidels as an Impostor.

Now the first argument to prove that he was not such a character is founded on the fact that he did not pursue the course of an impostor. If he was not what he pretended to be, it is evident that he would have relied on human agencies exclusively for the achievement of his purposes. He could not expect the assistance of heaven. If he knew that he was not the Messiah, he must adopt a line of policy that would unite, as far as possible, all the Jews, and enlist all their influence for the accomplishment of his object. We can very easily see how an



impostor, who pretended to be the Messiah, ought to have acted. Finding out what were the opinions of his countrymen in reference to the expected deliverer, he would of course assume a character in accordance with their views. He would be very unwise indeed to assume a character that would only call forth reproach and contempt from the very classes on whom he most depended for success. Now Jesus well understood what kind of Messiah the Jews were expecting. They were looking for one who would restore the kingdom to Israel. They expected him to be a great prince who would lead them on to victory over all enemies. They had no idea of a spiritual kingdom to be established on earth; and they felt no need of a spiritual saviour. They desired nothing but political redemption. Now what were the elements that presented themselves to one who pretended to be the Messiah? Why here were the Pharisees and Sadducees—two powerful parties among the Jews. They differed widely from each other in regard to theological doctrines; but still, they could have been easily united in a common cause against their enemies. They controlled public sentiment among the Jews. They constituted the influential classes representing the wealth and intelligence of the nation. If Jesus were an impostor it is evident that he would have made an effort to conciliate these two classes. He would have said nothing in regard to the views on which they were so much divided. He would have pandered to their tastes and prejudices. Then he would have proposed to them to raise a great army in order to throw off the Roman yoke. There were impostors who claimed the Messiahship; and this was the precise course which they pursued. Indeed, this is the course adopted by all impostors. But Jesus pursued a different course from this. He did not go to the Pharisees and Sadducees, and tell them he had come to establish a temporal empire, and urge upon them the necessity of sustaining his claims. On the contrary, from the very beginning of his ministry, he denounced



them and their evil practices and false doctrines in such terms as to call forth the bitterest hate and resentment. The current language of the times could not afford more withering words than Jesus applied to them. Thus he made them his mortal enemies. It is as plain as anything can be that Jesus made no effort to court the favor of the Pharisees and Sadducees. An impostor, with any wisdom, would have gone to these very classes, and would have flattered and cajoled them, and winked at their vices. He could have entertained no hope of success without their co-operation. He would not have cared whether their religious doctrines were true or false, just so he could unite them in the support of his cause. As political success would be his only aim, he would have used any means by which it could be attained. Such a character as a really pious impostor is unknown in the history of the world. An impostor is always a hypocrite. If then Jesus was an impostor he was not a good man; and he would have employed Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes—anything in order to secure recognition as a political Messiah. Bear it in mind that an impostor who would attempt to play the part of the Messiah, could have only one object in view; and that was the establishment of a political empire. But Jesus never did one thing to indicate that he had such a purpose in view. If he had contemplated any such purpose he would have pursued a course somewhat similar to that of Mahomet. That impostor, or fanatic, whichever you may please to call him, labored for years before he could persuade scarcely anyone to believe that he was the prophet of God. But after awhile he acquired political power; and then he forced his religion at the point of the sword. In order to make his religion attractive he appealed to the very worst propensities of human nature. He made promises of earthly good; and promised such a heaven as was suited to the most sensual wretch on earth. But Jesus adopted a course far different from this. In the first place he deliberately rejected the only means



by which he could hope to insure success as a political Messiah. Instead of calling on the influential classes of the Jews, he went to the so-called lower circles of society; and instead of appealing to their ambition by promises of earthly promotion and prosperity he calmly informed them that if they espoused his cause they must expect to renounce all hope of earthly glory, and must expect suffering, persecution, death. All his promises of reward had reference to the eternal world. He never in a single instance held out the most distant hope of honor in this world. It was always poverty, blood, fire in this life, and eternal happiness in the life to come. Now I ask you, in the name of reason, was this the proper course for an impostor to pursue? Remember that an impostor seeks only earthly honor and glory. If he makes any show of piety at all it is only as an auxiliary to insure the success of his earthly projects. It is therefore as plain as anything can be that the kingdom of Christ, to use his own language, 'is not of this world.' He flatly refused all earthly honors, and he took not the first step to establish a temporal empire. How then can any man charge him with being an impostor?

But besides this let us consider another argument. The purity and excellence of his precepts are sufficient to refute the charge of imposture made against him by his worst enemies. Eighteen centuries have rolled away; and still the Christian religion has never been improved. The wisest men of this earth are incapable of improving it. They can add nothing to it that would make it better; nor can they take anything from it without making it worse. An impostor would certainly have set forth some false principles of morals. He would have run into some glaring error, or would have uttered some expression in conformity with the superstitions of his time. Mahomet made mistakes of this sort in the Koran. They are so palpable that they excite the contempt of those who have been elevated by Christian civilization. Any one who will take the trouble to read the Koran



will be convinced of the absurdity of Mahomet's pretensions. Only compare his teachings with those of Jesus Christ, and you will be satisfied that the doctrine of Christ alone can lay claim to divine inspiration. If then all the wisdom of men can suggest no improvement upon the principles delivered by Jesus, it is a strong argument that he was not a hypocrite. No impostor could ever have composed the sermon on the Mount. Such grand, sublime teachings could have issued only from a pure and honest heart.

The last argument which I shall use is the rapid spread of the Christian religion immediately after the death of Jesus of Nazareth. I shall not refer to the prophecies, or the miracles ascribed to him; because infidels will not accept these as proof; and besides, I have proposed to myself to discuss the question in the light of reason, and to employ arguments based on historical facts.

Now it cannot be disputed by any one that directly after the crucifixion of Jesus the Christian religion did spread throughout the world with the most astonishing rapidity. The question comes up, why did not the religion of Jesus spread with greater rapidity in his life time. He himself preached and sent out his disciples to preach the gospel; and yet it seems they made no great impression on the world. How will you account for the fact that about a dozen uneducated men succeeded in converting whole nations in a very short time, when hundreds of the disciples could achieve scarcely anything, at least comparatively, during the life time of their leader? What was there in the religion of Jesus to make it more attractive after he was put to death, than it was while he was alive? How can the question be answered? If Christ was a fanatic or an impositor, it is very evident, his resurrection from the dead was a fable. If he was not the son of God, then, when he was laid in the grave he was just like any other dead man; and he could be of no assistance to his followers. This being so, why should they perpetrate



such a monstrous and palpable falsehood, and attempt to hold up to the world a crazy fanatic, or a wicked impostor, as the Son of God? If Jesus did not rise from the dead his disciples knew that he did not. Now why should they all at once be inflamed with so much zeal in supporting the cause of a man who had disappointed and deceived them. If I were an infidel I would be bound to suspect that some remarkable event transpired directly after the death of Jesus to bring about such a wonderful change in the opinions and conduct of his disciples. Something must have occurred to produce such a change. What was it? It is an undeniable fact that Jesus was crucified, and that his disciples had all fled, and his enemies had possession of the dead body. Yet in a few hours after the death of the master, his disciples came forth from their hiding places, and with the most astonishing boldness, and in the most public manner affirmed that their Lord had risen from the tomb. Why did not the Pharisees and Sadducees produce the dead body, and thus place it beyond all dispute that Jesus was an impostor? It was a duty which they owed to themselves, and to the Jews and to the Gentiles, to you and to me. I charge it upon the Jewish officers, that for the good of all future generations, they ought to have brought forward the dead body of Jesus, and thus have put his disciples to open shame and have silenced them forever. If Jesus was an impostor those men had it in their power to prove it without any difficulty whatever. But the infidel may suppose, if he please, that the body was produced. Then it is still more difficult to account for the rapid dissemination of the Christian religion among the nations of the world. For if Jesus rose not from the dead, the whole Christian system of theology is the most silly superstition that ever enfeathered the human mind. It is the most stupendous fraud that has ever been palmed off on the world. Because if Christ was not the Son of God, it is evident that he was an impostor. Then how does the case stand? Why, directly after the



death of Jesus thousands and thousands of people who had been wedded to their own religious belief gave it up and became followers of an impostor, who had been publicly executed as a malefactor. And what did they gain by renouncing their own religion and embracing that of Jesus? Suffering, persecution, death. Do you believe that thousands of intelligent persons would have thus acted—thus given up their lives without the clearest proof that the Christian religion was of divine origin. They had no excuse for being deceived; because, if the disciples had told a falsehood in regard to the resurrection of their Master, it could at that time, have been easily proved. Is it not evident that the disciples of Jesus did have some way to prove the truth of what they asserted? They could prove it only by the performance of miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they did this, then we are driven to the conclusion that he was what he claimed to be—the Son of God.

In the arguments which I have advanced, I have employed plain facts of history. They are stubborn facts, which you cannot brush out of your way as mere cob-webs. They prove clearly that Jesus is the Son of God, and as such I call on you to accept him. He is the only Saviour. If you reject him, then your doom is hell. But I pray you, my hearers, look to him as the only hope of salvation. I hold him up to you to-day as the Son of the living God—the world's Redeemer, and I entreat you lay claim to an interest in the precious blood which was shed for you. Come to Jesus as your Saviour, and then you will be happy in time, and at last will enter into an inheritance which is undefiled, incorruptible and that fadeth not away."



## CHAPTER VII.

Miss Junie listened to the preceding sermon with the very closest attention. It was the first she had ever heard in her life ; and as she had never received any religious instruction it left her in a confused, bewildered state of mind. These were new and startling truths to her, however common place they might be to others. It is rather a strange circumstance to relate—so strange that our reader may feel somewhat disposed to doubt the truth of the statement—that here was a young lady well educated who had been living almost in sight of churches all her life ; and yet had never heard the story of the cross. Still this circumstance ought not to be regarded as beyond the bounds of probability, when it was the boast of a prominent member of the Congress of these United States, between the years 1870 and 1880, that his grown daughters had never been inside of a church in their lives. Our reader, therefore, has no need to wonder that Junie Paine had never before heard a sermon. It would seem that she might have learned something in regard to this subject from her Christian



mother; but that poor woman through fear of her unbelieving husband had not dared to mention the all-important matter to her children.

Junie being of a reflective turn of mind, thought and thought, while she was on the way home, over the strange truths which she had heard that day. Milson was not in a talking mood. So little was said about the sermon. The most of the half-hour's ride was made in silence.

When the parties were getting out of their buggies at the front grate of Col. Paine's residence, a poor woman came up leading a little boy. Both were clad in rags, and the general appearance of both indicated that they had had a hard struggle with the ills of life. The old woman in feeble voice asked for alms. Miss Gerie cast upon her a look of scorn, which both of the young men observed.

"I've worked till I am sick," continued the poor creature, "but I can't make enough to support myself and little boy. We are forced to beg."

The little fellow was gnawing away on a piece of corn bread which he held in his much soiled hands. Gerie manifested very plainly by her manner that she had no sympathy for these objects of charity.

"Wait a moment, poor woman," cried Junie before any of the party had time to reply, "I will give you something." At once she ran into the house.



“Just look,” exclaimed Gerie, “how easily sister is gulled. She would give half she had to any impostor that might chose to ask her.”

Junie soon returned and placed in the old lady's hands a dollar. An expression of gratitude lit up her wrinkled face as she exclaimed :

“May Heaven bless you, good child ; you look like an angel.”

“No doubt,” said Gerie with a laugh, “all of us would look like ‘angels’ if we should treat you in the same way.”

Milson looked at the idol of his heart in utter amazement. Here was one phase of her character which had, for lack of opportunity of development, escaped his observation. He was astonished and pained at such an exhibition of heartlessness. From the bottom of his heart he did wish that Gerie had the noble disposition of her sister Junie. True, if the old woman were an impostor, he thought Gerie had no right to insult her. In spite of all the excuses which his affection prompted him to make for her, her manner made a disagreeable impression upon him. He was somewhat surprised that Gerie had so little policy as to act as she had in the presence of himself and Bertram. She might at least have pretended to be sympathetic. But she did not seem to be aware that she had done or said anything which could elicit the slightest criticism.

After dinner, the details of which can be of no interest, the young people were seated in the



parlor. They had scarcely taken their positions before Bertram said :

“What did you all think of the sermon to-day?”

“What is your opinion of it, Mr. Bertram?” asked Junie who was really curious to know what he did think.

“I think of it just as I do of all others. They are mere tricks designed to frighten people.”

“But why should people be frightened? What is to be gained by it?” asked Junie.

“Umph!” said Bertram. “I am surprised that anyone should ask such a question. Don’t you know that the preachers gain their livelihood from those who can be duped into believing such nonsense as you heard to-day? Didn’t you see them hand round the hat?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well the preacher will take that money and have a gay time till next Sunday.”

“But, Mr. Bertram,” said Milson, “you seem to forget that Dr. Archer stated that the collection was for the benefit of Foreign Missions.”

“Oh! I know he said so. But how do we know that he will not apply it to his own use? Well, I shall not allow them to work on my fears. I flatter myself that I am proof against such superstitions.”

“So do I, Mr. Bertram,” quickly exclaimed Miss Gerie. “I really paid little attention to what the preacher was saying. I could now and then catch the words ‘impostor, fanatic, and Son



of God.' I was more interested in looking at the people than listening to the preacher. Some of them tried to put on such solemn airs. I thought it was really funny."

Milson gazed at Gerie in surprise. He wondered if it were possible for anyone with ordinary intelligence and even a moderate appreciation of oratory, to feel no interest in such a fine speaker as Dr. Archer, leaving out entirely the subject of his discourse. He was sorry that Gerie had so plainly disclosed her want of taste. He had never heard her talk in this way before. But he did not seem to consider that the young lady herself thought that her hearty endorsement of Bertram's opinions would elevate her in his estimation. She was under the impression that the worst thing she could say about the Christian religion would be agreeable to him. She cared nothing for the opinion which Milson might form of her.

So John just looked at her in surprised, and at the same time he thought of the scene at the gate when the poor beggar had made her appeal for alms.

"John," said Miss Gerie, "what did you think of the sermon?"

Milson did not reply for a moment. All three turned their eyes toward him as if awaiting his answer.

"I must say," at length he replied, "that I



thought it excellent as an argumentative composition."

"Why, Milson," exclaimed Bertram with a manifestation of surprise; "how can you say that?—a man of your taste and judgement."

"I do not hesitate to affirm," slowly answered Milson, "that the argument appeared to me to be good."

"Well," said Bertram, "I saw no argument in it from beginning to end, and I paid close attention."

"What do you say to his propositions?" asked Milson. "Were they not true?"

"Yes, in one sense. Such propositions with some modifications may be made in regard to almost any public character. I can prove that Julius Cæsar was the Son of God, if you will allow me to assume just what I please. The preacher's arguments to-day were good, I admit, if you grant his premises. But he assumed the very thing in dispute. I deny his third proposition that Jesus Christ was the Son of God."

"Because," interrupted Gerie with a laugh, "there can't be a son of anything which has no existence."

"Very true," responded Bertram joining in the laugh.

Milson looked at both of them as if he did not at all relish such irreverence. At this point Miss Junie said:

"Well, Mr. Bertram, in spite of your ridicule



I confess that the sermon has made an impression on me. I think, though I do not profess to be a critic, that the preacher's arguments were good. I do not see how it is possible to dispute the propositions which he laid down in the outset. It did not occur to me that he assumed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. If you admit that only three opinions can be formed of Christ; and it can be shown that two of them are false, then the third is bound to be true, and I do not see on what logical principle you can dispute it."

"I can easily dispute all his propositions on the principle that the entire history of Jesus Christ is a fable. In fact no such person ever really existed."

It will be perceived that Bertram took the extreme position of infidelity. Some of the more daring and desperate kind of unbelievers have, in different ages of the world persisted in denying, with the most reckless audacity, the very existence of Jesus.

"Why, Mr. Bertram," exclaimed Junie, "I am surprised to hear a man of your intelligence make such an assertion as that. As little as I know in regard to the subject, it seems to me that it can easily be proved that there was such a person. I have never read the Bible; but I have seen the name of Jesus Christ mentioned in other books which are regarded as good authority by everybody."

"What books!" exclaimed Bertram, "I will



be bound it was some book, or books written by Christians."

"I think" said Junie "that the Latin historian Tacitus says something about him, though I don't remember just what it was. Do you Mr. Milson?"

"Why certainly" replied Milson "Tacitus does mention him, as a real person too. If I had the book I could easily find the passage."

"Produce your proof," said Bertram.

"I have the book" said Junie. "If you will excuse me a moment I will get it, and we will soon see."

Junie then went into the Library and soon returned with a book which she handed to Milson, who turned over a few leaves and then said, "here it is Miss Junie. You can translate it for us."

"I think I can."

Then she took the book and read as follows:

"Nero, in order to stifle the rumor of his having set Rome on fire, ascribed it to those persons who were hated for their wicked practices and called by the vulgar, Christians. The author of this name was one Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was brought to punishment by the procurator Pontius Pilate."

"Now, Mr. Bertram," said Junie, "what do you say. Will you affirm that Tacitus wrote a falsehood?"

"No," answered Bertram, "I am bound to accept Tacitus as reliable authority. But he seems



to have a contemptible opinion of Christ and his followers. He says they were hated for their wicked practices."

"That is neither here nor there" said Junie. "We are not discussing that point. You say that no such person ever lived, and Tacitus says he did. Which is right, you or the historian who lived very near the time of Jesus Christ?"

"Well," said Bertram who was not at all familiar with the most common evidences of Christianity, "perhaps I was a little too fast. It is a matter of no importance, even if Christ had a real existence. Tacitus says so, and I will have to give up that point. But you notice that he does not by any means say that Christ was the Son of God. So your preacher can get no comfort from that quarter."

"If I understood him," answered Junie, "he did not seek 'comfort' as you call it from that, or any similar source. But I do not know enough about it, Mr. Bertram, to discuss the subject. But I intend to investigate as the preacher told us it was our duty to do."

"So do I," said Milson; "Because, as Dr. Archer said, if there is any truth at all in the Bible, it is the most important of all things."

"Well, I declare, John," said Gerie laughing, "I believe you and Junie will both turn Christian yet."

"I am willing," said Milson, "to accept the truth, no matter what it may be. If I am con-



vinced that Christians have the truth I will embrace it."

"So will I," said Junie. "The preacher's words are yet ringing in my ears. I wish I knew what to do."

"Junie," said Gerie, "are you going crazy? You'd better not go to church any more, if that's the way it serves you."

"Why don't you read the Bible?" asked Bertram. "That will tell you what to do, if you want to join the Christians."

"There is not a Bible about this house," said Junie, "that ever I saw."

"And I hope there never will be," interrupted Gerie, "as long as I am in it. Father says it is a nonsensical book, and I am willing to take his word for it. I have no use for Bibles and Christians; have you, Mr. Bertram?"

"Not I," answered Bertram. "I shall not surrender my liberties to any institution, especially to that called the church."

"I do not see" said Junie, "that Christians are such bad people."

"I did not say they are bad people. In fact most of them are very good people. But my opinion is they are slaves to a superstition. I can never regard the Christian religion as anything else."

Then Bertram changed the topic of conversation. It was a subject about which he knew very little, and about which he did not care to know



anything. So there was not another allusion to the sermon during the evening. Toward night the young men took their leave. Junie at once sought her mother, who she remembered was called a Christian. Dr. Archer's sermon had made a profound impression on her mind, and having no one else to consult she determined to ask her mother in regard to her mental troubles. So that evening, soon after the young men had gone she found her parent alone.

"Mother," she said, "I have been to church to-day."

Mrs. Paine looked at her daughter in some surprise, but in a tone of inquiry she merely said, "Well?"

"Well, I heard something which perplexes me no little. You have never told me that you are a Christian; but I have heard others say so."

At this Mrs. Paine burst into tears.

"Mother, what are you crying about? I have come to talk with you, and I do wish you would not cry so. I am in trouble, and if you can I want you to relieve me."

"My child," said the poor woman making an effort to restore her tranquility, "for years I have lived in torment. Oh, Junie you cannot imagine what I have suffered. I now plainly see my error, yes my sin, and I hope God will forgive me for having so neglected the religious instruction of my children. But don't you know that your father would never permit me to talk to



you about God?"

"I know that father says there is no God. I have frequently heard him say that, and he spoke very positively as if he knew. I have never thought much about it and have never cared much about it. But Mr. Milson has convinced me that there is a God. On that subject I have not a single doubt. Mr. Milson is the first one that I ever heard affirm that there is a personal God who created all things."

"May the Lord bless that noble boy," cried Mrs. Paine while the tears again welled up to her eyes. "He will do to trust; but go on, my child; what is it you want to talk with me about?"

"Well, to-day we went to church—the first time, mother, I ever did such a thing. The sermon was in reference to Jesus Christ whom the preacher tried to prove to be the Son of God. His arguments were very clear; but I am not satisfied—I am bewildered—I don't just exactly know what to think. The preacher in the most awful manner said if we did not believe on Christ, we would go to hell. This I do not clearly comprehend. What is hell, mother?"

"Oh, my God!" forgive me!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Paine clasping and wringing her hands in indescribable agony.

"Why, mother," said Junie in amazement, "what is the matter? Why can't you talk to me quietly?"



“My child, I fear that God will never pardon my neglect of duty. I ought to have told you all about this before. Just to think that my dear children are so ignorant of the most important subject on earth. Oh, God of Grace! look down in pity on me a poor wretched mortal that has so grievously erred. Forgive, oh, blessed Lord, forgive!”

Junie looked at her mother in astonishment.

“Well, mother if you can’t talk quietly on the subject I will say no more about it.”

“Bear with me, Junie, my dear child. You can’t imagine what a mountain load is pressing on my heart. But, go on; I will try to be calm.”

“Well, then,” said Junie, “in my reading I have frequently met with observations in regard to Tartarus, and Hell and Heaven. But I have never thought of myself in connection with the matter. Now tell me what hell is and how does it concern me; what have I to do with it?”

“Hell,” said Mrs. Paine with a very perceptible shudder, “is a place where the wicked are punished; it is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone—where not a single ray of hope ever comes—where there is nothing but sorrow, gloom, suffering, death; where the conscience burns with more than the heat of a furnace; where there is no love, no joy, no peace; where God-hating fiends chase the lost soul through the illimitable regions of dark despair; where no voice of friendship is ever heard; where every



sound jars like a thunder-crash ; where wild wails and mad shrieks go up with the smoke of torment that ascendeth forever. Oh, Junie, I can't describe hell. Avoid it, child, avoid it. Into that awful place shall all the ungodly be cast ; and they can never come out. Alas ! there is no escape."

"When, mother, are they cast into hell ?"

"After death."

"I have often heard father say when we die, that is the last of us."

Your father, my dear, is an intelligent man ; but he is certainly mistaken about this matter. We have souls which leave the body at death, and go either to Heaven or Hell. At the judgement day the Lord Jesus Christ will come to earth again ; and then our bodies will come forth from the grave, and we will all live again in a state of happiness or misery. We will go to Heaven with the holy angels, or to Hell to dwell with fiends forever. This short life of ours is merely a probationary state. We are placed here by the Allwise God to prepare for the eternal life."

"Where will I go, mother, when I die?"

Mrs. Paine made an effort to restrain her tears, at this question. She was partially successful. She answered in a voice trembling with deep emotion.

"I hope and pray, my child, that you will go to Heaven ; you certainly will, if you will do



what Jesus so plainly and lovingly tells you to do."

"And what is it he tells me? What must I do?"

Poor, ignorant Junie, ignorant almost as a heathen, asked a question which is natural to the human heart. All men living, under the highest and lowest forms of civilization feel that there is something wrong about them; and realize the necessity of doing something in order to be saved. All along the track of time, from the fall of Adam to the present day, the question has been anxiously and earnestly asked by millions of trembling human souls, "What must I do?" There is a feeling of sinfulness in man, which no human philosophy can explain. Men may try to deny it; but their own conscience rises up as a witness against them. True they may not have clear conceptions of what constitutes sin; yet there is in the heart a consciousness of wrongness of some sort. No science can explain this except the science of that one book in which God has made a revelation of himself to men.

"What must I do?" asked Junie.

"You must be a true Christian," replied her mother.

"And how must I be a Christian?"

"You must repent of your sins; you must be sorry on account of your sins."

"My sins," interrupted Junie. "What sort of sins? What are my sins?"



“Oh, Junie, Junie,” cried the unhappy woman. “Is it possible you do not know?”

“Why, mother, no one ever told me about my sins. How should I know?”

“Oh, God of Truth! have mercy on me!” cried Mrs. Paine, giving way to another paroxysm of grief. “Oh, blessed Saviour! forgive a miserable wretch who has so grievously and sinfully neglected her children!”

“Mother,” said the young lady in a state of bewilderment, “it seems that you cannot talk quietly on this subject. But tell me, how did you learn so much about it?”

“The Bible, my daughter, gives us all the information that is necessary.”

“Then, mother, show me the Bible. I have never examined one. Let me read it for myself.”

“Your father years ago burned up every Bible he could find about the place. However I managed to save a small Testament which I keep concealed, and which I have to read by stealth.”

Mrs. Paine then went to a trunk from the very bottom of which under a pile of clothing she drew forth a very small New Testament which she handed to Junie.

“Do not, my child, let your father see it. If you do, it will make trouble for us both. Read it through, and you will be able to form clearer views of your duty than I can tell you. But if you still have any doubts, I think it would be advisable for you to call on the preacher whom



you heard to-day, and he will tell you what to do."

"How can he tell me any better than you can, mother?"

"Because this is his business. He studies more on the subject than other people do. There are some difficulties connected with the Christian religion which he can explain much better than I can."

"I should like very much to ask him some questions," said Junie.

"Well, he would be delighted to see you," said Mrs. Paine, "and would take the greatest pleasure in answering your questions. Nothing affords a true minister more pleasure than to tell people what to do to be saved. You need have no fear in calling on him. I would be glad if you would form his acquaintance, as he is no doubt capable of giving you good advice and removing the difficulties with which you will most certainly meet. But read this book through first; and while you read pray God to enlighten your mind by his Holy Spirit that you may understand his truth."

Miss Junie, without saying more took the little volume, and hastened to her own room, and locked the door. Then she sat down to read. She pored over it till supper; and after supper she continued to read. It was nothing at all surprising to Miss Gerie to see her sister thus engaged. So she asked no questions.

Junie read the New Testament till late in the



night. Then she closed the book and sat in deep meditation. Having a most excellent memory she could easily recall the wonderful incidents of the life of Jesus. We, who have a Bible in every apartment of our dwellings can scarcely imagine with what avidity and eagerness she read the startling life of Christ as given by the inspired writers. We have heard the story of the cross so often that it makes but a slight impression upon us. We have been accustomed to hearing it ever since we could lisp our mothers' names. But not so with Junie. The miracles of Jesus to her were astounding. But when she came to his trial and crucifixion, her feelings were far different from those of curiosity. Her imagination transported her back to the fearful and sickening scene. She could see the silent prisoner standing before Pilate meek and humble—the soldiers smiting his unprotected form, as the blood trickled from his thorn-crowned head down to the dust—the God-man marching along the streets, faint, bleeding, reeling under the cross on which he was soon to die; she could hear the stroke of the hammer as it sent the nail through his quivering flesh—the jeers and maledictions of the mocking multitude—the loud, last cry, “it is finished,” as it sounded out through the supernatural darkness. She felt in her very soul, like the Centurion, “surely this was the Son of God.” Junie found herself in tears. Her thoughts were similar to those of the great Napoleon when he



said : “Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit over-awes me, and his will confounds me. His ideas and his sentiments, the truths which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human observation, or the nature of things. His birth, and the history of his life; the profundity of his doctrine, which grapples the mightiest difficulties, and which is of those difficulties the most admirable solution; his gospel; his apparition; his empire; his march across the ages and the realms,—every thing is for me a prodigy, a mystery insoluble, which plunges me into a revery from which I cannot escape—a mystery which is there before my eyes, a mystery which I can neither deny nor explain. Here I see nothing human. The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine. Every thing is above me. Every thing remains grand,—of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an Intelligence which is certainly not that of man.”

Junie felt all this; yet she knew not how to pray aright. If she could, she would have said in the language of the poet:—

“ My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary;  
Saviour Divine,  
Now hear me while I pray;  
Take all my guilt away;  
O let me from this day,  
Be wholly Thine.



## CHAPTER VIII.

“Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,  
Were he on earth, would hear, approve and own —  
Paul should himself desire me. I would trace  
His master-strokes and draw from his design,  
I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;  
In doctrine, uncorrupt, in language plain ;  
And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,  
And natural in gesture ; much impres’d  
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds  
May feel it too. Affectionate in look,  
And tender in address, as well becomes  
A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

Thus wrote the poet. It is quite an easy matter to portray the essential qualifications of a good preacher. Anybody can do that. But where can the man be found who combines, within the limits of his personal identity, all these qualities that can be so elegantly arrayed in solemn verse. The Lord Jesus was a grand preacher ; and yet, even he was far from pleasing all men. There never was a preacher who was more abused ; and still he possessed in an eminent degree the very qualifications which Cowper so graphically describes. Even with the aid of the most stupendous and awful miracles that men ever beheld,



he did not succeed in persuading all his hearers to espouse his cause. No one is acquainted with the trials of the preacher, but the preacher himself. The world no doubt thinks that he has an easy and nice time--nothing to do but to preach sermons on Sunday, and then visit among his friends during the remainder of the week. But the world sees only the outside. The world knows nothing of the prayers and tears which it costs to prepare a sermon--nothing of the heart-aches which are felt in the study and the closet. If the preacher's work and cares ended with his sermons and visits the world might charge him with leading an indolent life. But the feeling of solemn and awful responsibility which pervades his soul and mingles with his thoughts, is not and cannot be appreciated by the world. Often there is a distressing anxiety on account of the effects of his sermons. If the minister's only aim were to secure popularity or fame as a scholar and an orator he might be content to let his sermons as literary productions pass for what they are worth. But preaching the gospel is designed for the achievement of higher and nobler ends than the gratification of public curiosity and captivating people's fancy by eloquence. The minister is a mouth-piece for God ; and he must give account to God for his work on earth. Every sermon which he delivers must be accounted for at the Tribunal of Eternal Justice. Is it any wonder then that at times he is almost over-whelmed by



a feeling of deep and awful anxiety? He has many discouragements of which the world dreams not. Often he feels that he is struggling against a wild, terrible tide which will overpower him in spite of all his efforts. It is like swimming up a swift stream that hurries onward and downward heavy drift-wood in its current. The minister then does not wonder at the fact that Moses entreated to be excused from acting in the capacity of leader of the Children of Israel. When he contemplates the difficulties and the responsibilities involved in his position of "messenger of grace to guilty men," often he cries out in bitterness of heart "who is sufficient for these things?" Who is able to depict sin in such horrible colors as to make men turn from it with loathing? Who is able to overcome their indifference to Eternal Things, and cause them to reflect on the dangers of their situation. No wonder that often he feels like exclaiming with Moses "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." No wonder that he often goes to the sacred desk in a state of dread at which the wicked would be surprised if they knew it. No wonder that he often feels in the pulpit like closing the Bible and rushing out in despair!

Dr. Archer was sitting in his study Thursday evening following the Sabbath on which Bertram and party attended his church. A train of reflections somewhat similar to that in which we



have taken the liberty to indulge was passing through his mind. He was endeavoring to arrange subjects for the next Sabbath. He was wondering if his last sermon had had any effect in convincing the skeptical and in confirming Christians in their hopes ; and whether he would better preach any more such sermons, or just simply the plain gospel truth, on the assumption that all his hearers believed in its divine authenticity. Silently he was praying the Lord to direct him in the choice of topics.

Just at this juncture he was informed that a young lady was in the parlor who desired to see him. At once he rose from his seat and proceeded to the parlor. He beheld a visitor whom he knew not. Promptly the lady rose upon his entrance, and, with some confusion which did not escape the Doctor's notice, said :

"I presume, Dr. Archer, that you do not know me. My name is Junie Paine."

"Are you the daughter of Col. Paine who resides two or three miles in the country ?"

"I am," she said ; "and no doubt you are surprised at this visit from his daughter. For, if you have any acquaintance with my father, you cannot be ignorant of the fact that his views in regard to religious subjects, are very different from your own."

"I know it to my sorrow," was the Doctor's only reply. But after a moment, seeing that Junie was embarrassed he continued, "your



father's views and mine are diametrically opposite on theological subjects. But pardon me if I ask, do you hold to your father's notions on such subjects?"

"I do not," she promptly replied, "and I have come to talk with you in regard to the matter. I hope you will pardon the liberty I have taken in trespassing on your valuable time."

"No apology is necessary at all, my child. I am really glad to meet you, if such is the object of your visit. If I can be of the least service to you. I am even anxious to converse with you; for this is a part of my work. So I beg you to talk freely, and tell me your trouble, and with the help of God I will do all I can to render your visit not without profit. I beg you not to feel the least embarrassment in telling me your difficulties."

The Doctor spoke so kindly that Junie began to feel perfectly at ease. She felt that this man of God was in earnest, and could be trusted; and still she realized the solemnity of the occasion.

"I heard your sermon last Sunday," she said, "and I will not conceal from you that I was deeply impressed with what you said. You appeared to believe every word you uttered."

"I did, and do, from the bottom of my heart."

"Well, if what you said is true, and I begin to believe that it is true, I find that the subject concerns me. I feel that I have a personal interest in it."



“So you have, my child.”

“Doctor,” I am ashamed to tell you, a thing which is almost incredible, that I never read any portion of the Bible till last Sunday night.”

If the Doctor felt any surprise at this information, he had too much consideration to manifest it.

“I procured a New Testament, and I have read it through two or three time this week ; and now I am in trouble. I want to be a Christian like my mother is, and I do not know how.”

Saying this, a flood of tears rushed to her eyes. Dr. Archer, who at once comprehended all her difficulties, was himself deeply moved, and he could have mingled his tears with hers. But he thought it prudent to betray no emotion.

“Now, I perceive,” he said as if talking to himself, “that God is no respecter of persons. Now, my dear child, try to be calm ; and I will talk to you as I would to one of my own children. I am truly glad that you have come to me. It is one of the greatest pleasures I have on earth to talk with those who desire to find the Saviour. Now, religion is a sensible thing, as you will find after a while. It is not a kind of spurious sentimentality. It involves thought as well as emotion. It demands the highest exercise of reason. That you may not be mistaken you must start right.”

“That is what I wish to do, Doctor.”

“Well, you appear now to be in the dark. But can you tell me what it is that prevents



your becoming a Christian? What particular point gives you trouble?"

"I can hardly tell. I am so ignorant in regard to the whole matter, that I am not certain as to the first step it is necessary to take. It seems to me that I am shut in by dark mountains, and know not where to look for light."

"I understand something of the difficulties by which you are beset," replied Dr. Archer; "but it is sometimes the case that there are only one or two obstacles in the way; and when these are removed, all is clear."

"The whole subject," answered Junie, "appears to me to be wrapped in mystery. I have read the New Testament, as I told you; and while it seems to be plain; yet there is something about it which I do not understand. Clouds seem to envelop me, through which I vaguely see. I am somehow unable to lay hold of anything tangible."

"You read in your Testament that the Lord Jesus says, 'him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.'"

"Yes, sir; I read that or something similar to it."

"Then, the first and only step is to come to Christ just as you are."

"But I do not know how to come to Christ. I know not what is meant by it."

"Well" said the Doctor while the suspicion crossed his mind that probably in this case the whole foundation might be wrong, from the young



lady's unfortunate associations, "you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you not?"

"I suppose I do, sir."

"You believe that he is the Son of God?"

"Yes sir. Your argument last Sunday appeared to me to settle that point."

"Well then, if you are convinced that he is the Son of God, you will easily believe that He is God himself. There are three persons in the Holy Trinity, you know,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You learned that doubtless from your Testament. The three are equal in power and glory."

"Yes, sir: I believe that."

"Well, do you believe that what you read in your Testament actually occurred; that Jesus performed miracles such as healing the sick and raising the dead to life? and that he was crucified, and that on the third day after his burial he rose from the grave and ascended into heaven?"

"I may say I believe all this; I have no reason to dispute it. The writers of the Testament appear to be honest men. I accept their statements as simple matter of history, though it is wonderful."

"Certainly it is wonderful," replied Dr. Archer. "The advent of a God into this world could not but be wonderful. The facts narrated by the sacred writers are really startling. But the plan of salvation is not difficult of comprehension. What you have to do is to realize that



you are a sinner, and then put yourself in the hands of Christ, implicitly trusting in the merits of His atoning blood.”

“But how am I such a sinner, Doctor?”

“My child, the Holy Scripture well says that the ‘heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’ We cannot appreciate the depth of our depravity. Now to prove that you are a sinner, if you require proof, I ask you has it been the one purpose of your life to serve God? ‘Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul and mind and strength,’ and with no wavering and no cessation—not even for a moment. Have you done this? During the past few years of your life, have you thought of God at all? He requires that he shall be the supreme object of your love. You say that you never read the Bible till last Sunday. Then it would seem that you have known really little about God and what he requires. It would appear that he has hardly been in your thoughts as an object of worship. I should judge, if you will pardon me for talking so plainly, that the only object of pursuit with you has been worldly pleasure.”

“I will not deny it.”

“I suppose,” continued Dr. Archer, “that you have paid little or no attention to the Sabbath day; you have not attended divine service; you have not associated with Christian people. Indeed, what have you done that God requires? Our blessed Lord says ‘if any man will come after



me, let him take up his cross and follow me.' In the days of our Lord and of his Apostles, many of his disciples had to give up their professions and vocations when he could make them no promises of earthly good. In bearing the cross they had to wade through fire and blood; they had to give up home, country, friends, and often life itself for Christ. Such heavy crosses they had to bear. Now how many crosses have you borne? Where is your self-denial? According to your own account you have done nothing all your life but consult your own will and pleasure; you have been continually violating God's holy law; and yet you cannot realize that you are a sinner!"

"Well," said Junie, "I cannot defend myself; but I did not know all this was wrong. But then, I have not committed any of those crimes of which the Bible speaks and which it forbids."

"No. That is no doubt true. Your hands are not stained with the blood of murder; you are not an out-breaking sinner; you are not a drunkard, nor a gambler, nor any of those flagrantly immoral characters that are under the ban of respectable society; but the question is, have you obeyed God's holy law? Have you done every thing that he requires? If you have not, my child, it is my solemn duty to tell you that you are sinner enough to exclude you forever from Heaven—sinner enough to be condemned to the world of woe. While your position as a



female has saved you from the commission of outrageous and shocking crimes; yet you will not dare to say that you have not violated God's high and holy law. You have not broken the civil law, and have never been arraigned before the courts of your country; but the civil law is not so exacting as the divine law. To keep God's law as He requires, you must be absolutely perfect in thought, word, and deed. Now you have never tried to serve God at all; you have been all your life seeking your own pleasure; and yet you cannot feel that you are a sinner."

"Oh, Doctor, I begin to see my error. I see that I have not led the kind of life that God requires. I have not obeyed God's law which I had never thought of in the light you have presented it. I see now plainly that I must render strict obedience to the divine law. If I live up to its requirements, then I shall be a Christian."

"My child," said the Doctor speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "you are greatly mistaken in your conclusion. I am sorry that anything I have said may have led you to draw any such inference. You certainly misunderstand me. I must then explain myself more clearly. Now, to show you your error, suppose we grant that you succeed in keeping the law perfectly the remainder of your days how can you atone for your past offenses? The law in itself offers no remedy when it is violated. You are already a guilty sinner before God. No doubt you feel



sorry that you have not been a Christian long ago, and that you have wasted so much time."

"Yes, Doctor, I am sorry enough," replied Miss Junie, "I wish I had known some years since what I do now; I would have led a different life. I would have kept God's law."

"But suppose I tell you that you are utterly incapable of obeying the law as God requires. Suppose I tell you that no one ever did keep it but the Lord Jesus."

"Why Dr. Archer, do you not obey the law?"

"No, my child, not perfectly."

"Then," said Junie in surprise, "how can any one be save?"

"No one will ever be saved on account of his own merits. Do all he can; live as uprightly as his depraved nature will permit, he can never deserve salvation for anything he may have done."

The young lady looked a little confused. Having no religious experience, and no very definite views of the plan of salvation, it appeared to her that the preacher's propositions and explanations were just a little marred with some incongruity. She could not somehow grasp his meaning.

"Did you not say, Dr. Archer, that I am a sinner because I had failed to obey the divine law?"

"You are sinful by nature, child. Your failure to keep God's law shows to you that you are a sinner. You have never kept the law and I candidly tell you that you never will."



“How then may I be a Christian? I inferred from what you said that if I keep the law I will be a Christian.”

“If you keep it perfectly you will be saved, if you can get forgiveness for your past sins. But how will you do that? The law in itself makes no provision for any infraction of it.”

“My past sins, Dr. Archer, were committed in ignorance. I did not know that I was breaking God’s law. I ought not, it seems to me, to be held responsible under such circumstances. It certainly was no fault of mine. I do not see on what principle a just and merciful God can condemn me for a failure to discharge duties that were unknown to me.”

“You do not seem to comprehend the design of the law” said Dr. Archer. “You are trying to put yourself under the covenant of works. After the fall of Adam man was placed under a different covenant—the covenant of grace; and in accordance with the terms of that covenant we must be saved, if we are saved at all. I can hold out to you, my child, only one plan of salvation; and that is through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. This plan seems to be disagreeable and even repulsive to the human heart. Somehow men want to earn salvation by their own works. They fondly imagine they can be saved by a strict compliance with the demands of the divine law—demands which even some angels did not obey. I tell you plainly that you can never be saved in that way.



Miss Junie's attention was so distracted by her own thoughts that she did not catch the preacher's meaning.

"But, Doctor, if I do not violate God's law why can I not be saved? Upon what principle can I be condemned? It seems to me that I ought not to be punished any more than the citizen is, who is obedient to the civil law."

"I have already told you" replied the Doctor in the most kindly tone, and not manifesting the least impatience toward the young lady whose ignorance he pitied, "that the demands of God's law are much higher than those of the civil law. You must not break the divine law in the least particular. Human law gives you much wider latitude. Some of the civil laws you might violate with impunity; because it could not be legally proved that you were guilty. But it is far otherwise in the case of the divine law. The great God takes notice of all our thoughts. In the language of the Scriptures 'There is not a word upon our tongue, but lo, O Lord thou knowest it altogether.' If you undertake to be saved according to the terms of the divine law you must not infringe it in the slightest particular. Every deed which you perform must be in accordance with the law. Every word you utter must be such as the Lord will approve; you cannot indulge in any idle conversation; you will have to measure your words with more care than if they were gold. Possibly in these respects you might



succeed; you certainly could do so by avoiding all company, provided your very seclusion from society should not be an infraction of the law. At any rate by this course you could avoid the use of all idle words. But, my child, God's law does not terminate with these demands. You must not have a single thought, nor a single desire which is contrary to its letter and spirit. Even a wish to be freed from its demands would be an infraction of it. And now with this view I ask you if you believe that you are capable of keeping it?"

"With my understanding of it," she said, "I think I am."

Poor Junie did not know her own heart and her own weakness. Dr. Archer was fearful that she was too self-willed and self-confident. Despite of his explanations, which he had tried to make free from the least abstruseness, she seemed disposed to cling to an error which was very palpable to him. He began to fear that she would have to be convinced of her weakness by actual experiment. He would not recommend such a course; but he thought the young lady would never be satisfied till she had tried it. So he said after a moment:

"I hold up Jesus Christ to you, my dear child, as the only hope of salvation. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. If you cannot trust him, I can point to no other foundation upon which you may ground your hopes."



“Do I understand you to mean that a Christian is free from the law ? ”

“I hope you have not understood me to say that. I tell you that you are obliged to obey it. It is our rule of duty. But you must not trust to it as a means of justification ; you must not rely on your obedience for salvation. Let your whole trust be in our blessed Redeemer. If not, you will be bitterly disappointed.”

Dr. Archer perceived from the puzzled expression of Miss Junie’s face that she did not clearly comprehend his meaning. It occurred to him that she would have to be gradually led into the light. Any more instruction at this time might only add to her confusion. He concluded that he had said enough.

“I will,” he said presently, “lend you a Commentary with some passages which I will mark. I beg you to read them carefully and study over them. You must also read the Old Testament ; for it seems you have not read that.”

“No sir ; I have had no opportunity.”

“Here then,” said Dr. Archer rising and approaching a table and taking from it a book, “is a Bible which you may call your own, if you will accept it.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” said Junie. “I assure you I shall prize it very highly, coming from such a source.”

“And now, my child,” suddenly said the preacher, “have you ever prayed ? ”



"I do not know, Doctor, that I ever have in the right manner. I am ashamed of my ignorance."

"Well then before we part I must pray with you. You can never free yourself from the meshes of doubt without prayer. I do not believe any man ever reasoned himself out of skepticism and unbelief. Prayer is the medium through which God conveys his blessings to men. We must have the Holy Spirit to show us the path of truth. Let us kneel down right here and ask God's blessing, and pray Him to give you a greater measure of His spirit."

Accordingly the two knelt down in Dr. Archer's parlor on that Thursday evening; and the preacher offered up a most feeling petition for this young lady who was wandering under clouds of doubt and temptation. He prayed the Lord to guide her feet into the path of all truth, and to enlighten her mind by a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that she might be enable to form more clear and definite views of the plan of salvation, and that at least she might be gathered with the redeemed in the blessed land of eternal joy, and peace and love.

Miss Junie listened with the closest attention to the Doctor's prayer, and treasured up his words in her memory. So she learned something of the nature of private prayer.

After this the Doctor went into his study and returned with a book.

"Now I beg you," he said, "read these pas-



sages which I have marked out and the author's comments on them. But above all things go to the Lord in prayer, cast your burdens on Him, and trust all to Christ. You must call again soon, if you are not relieved of your troubles and doubts. I will be delighted to talk with you whenever you feel that you need advice."

Miss Junie then cordially thanked the Doctor, and took her leave, saying that she would avail herself of his permission to call again. Doctor Archer was satisfied in his own mind that it would not be long before she would return. He believed that the Holy Spirit was gradually leading her along, and he felt confident that she would soon rejoice in the possession of that peace which "passeth all understanding." Then he also felt that his last sermon had not been in vain. Here he believed was one soul that would be a star in his crown of glory. He then went into his study and fell on his knees and thanked God for blessing his labor, even to the extent of saving one soul. Again he prayed for the young lady; that she might not long wander in darkness, but would soon rejoice in a Saviour's love.

Miss Junie, as she rolled along homeward in her carriage, knew not that she was still in the Doctor's thoughts, and formed one of the subjects of his prayers. If she had, she would probably have felt like thanking God for casting her lot in the vicinity of such a preacher. When she arrived at home, she began at once to study the books that Dr. Archer had lent her.



Poor child ! she dreamed not of the awful trials which awaited her. She knew not that God often leads his children in the most thorny paths that they may be purified by affliction. It would not be long before she would have to drink the very dregs of a cup of bitterness, which would bring into requisition all the resources of Christian faith.

## CHAPTER IX.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,” says the Apostle. The great God himself thus informs us that death is an enemy. It is in vain to attempt to persuade ourselves that that thing is a friend which our Heavenly Father tells us in the most emphatic manner is a foe. Death is one of the most unpleasant circumstances that pertains to human existence. Some of our extravagant poets attempt to depict the charms of the tomb in flowing verse ; but with all their elegant versification they have never succeeded in persuading sensible people, and perhaps no other kind of people, to commit suicide for the purpose of enjoying the ghastly and sickly attraction of the grave. The truth



is, Death is the most dreadful of all foes that come in antagonism with physical life. There are some enemies with which proud man delights to contend ; but the “grim monster” is a foe that he always most scrupulously avoids. Man turns pale at the very idea of a contest with this awful antagonist that is sure to gain the victory. Only let this invisible and silent enemy manifest his presence in some epidemic disease, and men tremble with alarm. It matters not how busily employed they may be, they at once leave off their pursuits and fly for life. They will sacrifice all their worldly stores ; they will retreat from pole to pole ; they will cross over seas and oceans ; they will climb mountains ; they will hide in the trackless wilderness ; they will do anything to avoid a conflict with the King of Terrors, and it may well be added the terror of kings. The bare thought of submitting to the monster’s chilling embrace is fearful. There is that moldering into loathsome dust in the dark and dank bottom of the grave—to be shut out from the genial sunshine—to dwell with worms and creeping things—to hear no sound of music and no voice of friend—that long, long silence, never to be broken till the last trump shall arouse the countless dead—all this is shocking, revolting, horrible. None but those who have been bitterly disappointed with life—whose affections have been crushed—whose hearts have been broken—whose bodies are racked with pains—whose hopes have



been blighted—who groan under the pressure of intolerable burdens—can relish the idea of resting in the grave. It is a house of refuge that no healthy person can desire. It seems that the demands of the monster can never be satisfied. His constant cry is, “give, give.” When he bears off his victims in the midst of tears, anguish and moans he cries out in unmerciful mockery, “There is room yet.” Armies are swept off; and it might seem the City of the Dead would be crowded to overflowing; and still his harsh unceasing cry is, “there is room for more.” As we follow the remains of a fellow-being to the final resting place of decaying humanity, Death whispers in the ears of each one of us, “There is a place for you.” It matters not with what rapidity the motionless dead are rushed into his dominions, he ever exclaims in derisive tones, “There is room yet.” Amid mourning, lamentation, wretchedness, his horrid cry jars upon the ears of the living, driving out every joy from the heart, “there is room for more.”

Death is an unmerciful enemy. No sentiment of compassion is ever aroused in the monster’s heart. He pays not the slightest regard to the circumstances of his helpless victims. We are placed here in a state of probation; but death soon puts an end to it. We may be so situated that we are not at all ready to depart, but it makes no difference. We may most ardently desire to linger for a while longer amid terrestrial



scenes, but he cares not. He lays his icy hand upon us, and prostrates us in the midst of our pursuits and pleasures. No pleadings can induce him to pause for a single moment. We may cry out as did dying Queen Elizabeth, "millions for an inch of time," but death pays no heed to our prayer. His heart is steeled against all sympathy and pity. He hears the wild screams of the despairing mother as she imprints the last kiss on the icy brow of her darling child; and the deep groan of anguish wrung from the bleeding heart of the husband as he bends over the rigid form of a beloved wife; and the pitiful, touching cries of poor little orphans, as they take the last look at the palid features of the dear mother, and are then led away from the coffin by weeping friends—Death hears all this, and yet betrays no emotion of pity.

Death is a common enemy. No place, where there is life escapes his visits. From every country grave-yard and every city cemetery a mysterious voice comes to the passer-by, saying,

"Ye living men, come view the ground,  
Where you must shortly lie."

Since the "grim monster" is thus empowered with such distressing ubiquity, and since he passes by no house-hold, our reader needs not be surprised at the information that the King of Terrors paid a visit to the residence of Col. Paine. The victim was Mrs. Paine. Early on Friday morning she was attacked by a most severe and



malignant disease, into the discussion of whose nature it is not necessary to enter. Her husband saw at once that she was in a dangerous condition; and immediately he called in his family physician. The appropriate medicines were administered; and on Saturday there was a slight improvement in her condition. But the physician candidly informed Col. Paine that there was very little hope of his wife's recovery. Then taking his leave he promised to return in a few hours.

When the Doctor had gone Col. Paine went into the sick room. The wife called him to the bed-side, and then she said in a feeble voice,

"My dear husband, I feel that my days are numbered."

"I hope not," replied the Colonel. "You must not give way to despondency; but you must cheer up, and help nature to overcome the disease."

"The Colonel said this in a choking voice. For with all his faults he loved his wife; and the thought of her dying filled him with the deepest grief.

"I am satisfied," replied Mrs. Paine, "that I shall not be long with you. It grieves me to leave you and the children; but it cannot be prevented. No earthly power can save me. The premonitions of death are too plain to be mistaken. I must soon leave. And now before I go I have only one request to make. Will you grant it? My dear husband, do not refuse the last request I shall ever make in this world."



“What is it?” asked Col. Paine. “If it is in the bounds of reason it shall be complied with.”

The Colonel made this remark because he perceived from his wife’s manner that the request was something unusual.

“It is something which you can easily grant. It is very simple.”

“Let me hear it then.”

“You may be surprised at my boldness in asking such a favor; but I want to see Dr. Archer, the preacher.”

She had learned his name from Junie; and from the young lady’s description of the minister she had the utmost confidence in him.

Col. Paine did not at once reply; neither did he appear to be angry. He seemed to be in deep thought.

“Husband, husband, let me see him before I die,” said Mrs. Paine in such imploring and earnest tones that Junie who with Gerie, was in the room, said while trying to conceal her emotions:

“Oh, father, do not refuse. I cannot bear the thought that mother should not be gratified in this. What she asks is perfectly reasonable, and there is no impropriety in her request. Please send at once for Dr. Archer who is a refined gentleman, and who I know will come with pleasure. His visit will do mother no harm, if it does no good.”

“Wife,” he said in no unkind tone, “you know



very well that I have no confidence in what you call religion ; you know that I believe it to be nothing but a delusion. Still I am not disposed to be harsh. I am willing to gratify you, but I fear to do so without the Doctor's consent. The excitement which such an interview will no doubt produce, may be unfavorable to your recovery."

"Never mind that, husband. It may be better for me to see him. If my request is refused, I shall certainly grow rapidly worse. O," she exclaimed clasping her hands with energy, "I must see the man of God before I die. Dear husband, send for him at once."

"If the Doctor will give his consent," said Col. Paine, "I shall interpose no objection."

"Bless you, my dear," she said taking his hand. "Where is the Doctor?"

"He has just gone ; but will return in a few hours."

"Oh, it may be too late. Send for the Doctor. Let me see him."

Fortunately, just at this moment the physician returned. He had thought of a direction in regard to the treatment of his patient which he had failed to give. Col. Paine at once acquainted him with his wife's request, at the same time remarking that he "did not want any religious scenes in the sick-room." The physician studied for a moment and then said :

"I would like for her to be kept as quiet as possible. And still it may be best that she should



see Dr. Archer, who is a prudent and judicious man. She has some trouble on her mind which an interview with him might relieve. I am intimately acquainted with Dr. Archer, and you have no reason to fear 'scenes' so far as he is concerned. So I think you would better gratify her in this particular."

Col. Paine at once dispatched a servant for Dr. Archer, and so informed his wife. The poor woman appeared to be inspired with new strength at the thought of conversing once more with a minister of God. Patiently she awaited his arrival. In the course of two hours Dr. Archer made his appearance. Col. Paine spoke to him with civility, but manifested no particular warmth. They had frequently met; but Col. Paine had avoided all intercourse with the minister; and Dr. Archer did not care to impose his company on a man who showed so plainly that it was not desired. The Colonel remarked :

"My wife is quite sick, sir, and has sent for you, for what purpose, I know not. I hope you will avoid as much as possible every thing that may tend to produce mental excitement. I suppose however that I need hardly make a suggestion of this sort to a man of your experience and intelligence."

"I understand," said Dr. Archer. "I frequently have such cases to deal with. I shall do nothing I assure you to cause any excitement. I hope by the Lord's help I may succeed in re-



lieving the lady's mind of troubles, and this will be better for her physical condition."

Col. Paine made no further remark; but both forthwith entered the sick-room where the preacher was introduced to the suffering, dying woman.

"Madam," he said at once, "I regret to find you in this condition; but I hope that ere long you will be restored to health. It is a pleasure however to me to visit you, and to be of any service of which I am capable."

At this point Col. Paine had the good sense to retire from the room that his wife might speak her mind with untrammelled freedom. She evidently did not wish him to be present as he could see from her manner. The two daughters were also on the point of leaving; but Mrs. Paine said,

"Stay, my children, stay; I have no objection to your hearing what I have to say; in fact I want you to listen to my dying words."

"I hope it may not be so bad as that, madam," said Dr. Archer. "You must not yield to despondent feelings. I pray God you may be spared to your family for many years yet."

"It is in vain, Dr. Archer to try to comfort me in that way. I feel that I have not long to live; and it is a waste of words to offer me consolation of an earthly character. This is not what I want. I have sent for you for a purpose which is of far more importance."

"Very well, madam; I shall not distract your attention from the subject which is of greater



importance. I am willing to serve you in any way I can. So feel no hesitation in expressing your mind freely."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Paine, "you are acquainted with my husband?"

"Not intimately, madam. I may say that I have only a passing acquaintance with him."

"Well, then you know what his religious sentiments are?"

"I have heard what they are; but I would be glad to know that I have been misinformed."

"I am sorry to say, Doctor, that he is an infidel. He has been very good and kind to me during all our wedded life except in one particular; and that is I have been deprived of all church privileges. O, you know not what it costs me to say this; but the truth must be told. I have not been to church for many years, Doctor. But I have been guilty of a greater offense than this. I have neglected the religious instruction of my children. For this I will take the blame myself. I ought to have done my duty at all hazards. But the truth is, Doctor, I grew cold in the service of God. I was raised up by pious parents; and I professed religion when I was a small girl, and I thank God that I enjoyed the comforting influences of His Holy Spirit. But some years after my marriage I had to face difficulties which you can easily imagine, and I yielded to the force of circumstances which it seemed I could not control, and for which I did not regard myself as



responsible. So I became careless. I lost my zeal, and wandered far off from God. Being in such a state I suffered my children to have their own way. I never did talk to them about God, Doctor; I never told them of Christ; I never explained to them the nature of the Christian religion; I never told them of the danger of living in sin; I never tried to snatch them from the broad road to destruction; I made no effort to lead them in the path of truth. This I might have done by example, if not by precept. But I failed; and now I see the sad consequences. I ought to have discharged my duties; but now it is too late. My children have grown up scarcely believing there is any God."

"Oh mother!" cried Junie while the tears were trickling down her cheeks, "do not talk so, I believe with all my heart there is a God, and I am trying to obey him and love him. I am sorry that I did not begin sooner; but in the future I am going to be a Christian like you."

"Not like me," said Mrs. Paine, "I want you to be a Christian; but I pray God that you may lead a life far different from mine. I hope you may never be as lukewarm as I have been."

"I do not think," said Dr. Archer, "that you have need to give yourself any uneasiness on Miss Junie's account. I have not the least doubt that she will soon be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, if such is not already the fact."

"I am glad," said Mrs. Paine, "to hear you



say so, Doctor. It is a consoling thought to me, that I will meet at least one of my dear children in heaven. Oh, may the Lord bless them, and open their eyes, and take them under the shadow of his wings." Then she looked earnestly at Gerie, as if expecting some promise from her. The Doctor understood her.

"Young lady," he said, "can you not promise your mother that in the future you will endeavor to lead a Christian life?"

Gerie looked sad; but she was firm. Perhaps obstinate would be a more appropriate term. She did not care to talk on the subject; but Dr. Archer's question was so direct that she felt she would have to make a reply of some kind.

"To tell you the plain truth, and you want me to speak the truth?"

"Certainly," answered Dr. Archer. "This is no time for trifling."

"Then," said Gerie, "to tell you the plain truth, I have studied very little about the matter. Whether it is right or wrong, I have followed my father's example; I hold to his belief, and I have the very utmost confidence in his judgment."

Mrs. Paine looked at her erring, stubborn daughter with a sad expression,—so sad that it betokened an aching heart.

Dr. Archer did not think it a proper time and place to try to convince her of her awful error. So he said only,

"I am sorry that such is your belief."



Then he turned to Mrs. Paine.

“God’s mercy, my dear madam, is very great. Though we may have neglected our duties, yet the Lord is ready to forgive when there is sincere repentance.”

“Doctor, you see the sad consequences of my neglect of duty,” said Mrs. Paine. “If I had done what the Lord requires of every parent, I don’t think I would ever have heard one of my children avow a belief in Atheism. If I had my life to go over I should pursue a different course. But it is useless to talk of that now. The past cannot be changed. The years gone by can never be recalled. I have prayed God to forgive me; and I believe, I feel in my soul that my prayers have been heard and answered. So far as I am concerned, I die in peace.”

“God be praised!” said Dr. Archer in a low tone. “I am glad that your faith is so strong in the hour of trial. You feel in your heart that you can say, ‘my Redeemer liveth?’ You feel that you can trust him under any circumstances?”

“That is my feeling, Doctor. I had waked up to a sense of my true situation before I was prostrated by this disease, and I had formed plans of reformation. I felt that God had forgiven me before I was stricken down. I am not the least afraid to trust my salvation to him. My fear, Doctor, is not for myself, but for my children. If I could believed that they would be rescued



from the mael-strom of Infidelity, I could die better satisfied."

"With God," said Dr. Archer, "all things are possible."

"That is true" replied the suffering woman ; but the means which God has prescribed must be used. And now I want to do the only thing that occurs to me as a means for making at least some amends for my neglect. I have sent for you, Doctor, to beg you to look after my children when I am taken from them. I have no right to impose this task upon you. But then, it is your duty to save all that you can."

"I need no persuasion," quickly replied Dr. Archer, "as to that matter. I am glad you have sent for me. You may rest assured that I will do everything in my power to lead your children to the Saviour, if I can by any possibility induce them to be led."

"I knew you would promise, Doctor; and may the Lord bless you in your efforts to save my poor, neglected children from eternal destruction. And I hope, my children will obey your instruction and follow your advice," she said in an appealing manner to them.

"Oh, mother," said Junie who was crying as if her heart would break, "I will."

"And you Gerie?" said Mrs. Paine.

The truth was, Miss Gerie had not been enjoying this conversation at all. To her it seemed to be foolishness. She would have left the room



if she could have done so without giving offense to her mother and her visitor. Scarcely knowing what answer to make, she said,

“I will think about it mother.” And this was all the promise she would make.

Mrs. Paine gazed into the beautiful face of her daughter while an expression of intense anxiety rested for a moment upon her own countenance, and then she turned her head sorrowfully away.

“Now Dr. Archer” said the poor woman, “if you will pray with us I will detain you no longer.”

Accordingly Dr. Archer and Junie knelt down by the bed-side; but Gerie merely leaned her head upon her hand. After the prayer, and after some further conversation, Dr. Archer took his leave proffering to call again, if desired. Col. Paine met him in the hall, and as the Doctor was preparing to depart, he took out his pocketbook and said :

“How much am I indebted to you, Doctor, for this visit?”

The preacher gazed searchingly into his face as if to discover the motive underlying this question. But he could see no indication of derision or ridicule. The Colonel appeared to regard it as a mere business transaction.

“I am sorry,” said Dr. Archer, “that you have such a poor opinion of ministers. Do you suppose that money is the only object we have in view?”



“I am sure,” said the Colonel with politeness, “that I have expressed to you no such opinion as that. I take the view, sir, that you are discharging the duties of your profession. I sent for you, and I have no right to your time without paying for it. I meant no offense in asking your charge for your services.”

“There are ministerial duties for which money cannot pay,” said Dr. Archer. “I came to offer to your suffering wife the consolations which religion affords, and to sympathize with you and your family in your distress. If I have encouraged the dying, or made any impression for good upon the living I am richly compensated for my time. As for your money I would not receive a cent of it. And if your wife again needs my poor services, you can command me night or day.”

The Doctor said this with so much dignity and earnestness that Col. Paine could not but in his heart pay a tribute to his sincerity. At that moment, at least, he felt that Dr. Archer was an honest man. So when they parted he gave the Doctor a warmer grasp than was customary with him. But there was no further occasion for the ministerial services of Dr. Archer in that direction. That interview was the first and the last he ever had with poor Mrs. Paine. That night she grew rapidly worse. It was apparent that the hour of her eternal departure had arrived; and now husband and children were gathered around her bed-side. What Col. Paine's thoughts



were as he beheld the work of death we know not. Suddenly the dying woman exclaimed:

“Do you hear that music? Where is it?”

“You are mistaken, dear wife” said Col. Paine; “there is no music. I hear nothing.”

“O, but I do hear music. Listen. It is the sweetest music I ever heard—now it is coming nearer. Do you not hear it?”

“I can hear nothing,” said the husband.

“Listen—it is coming nearer—nearer. Look” she suddenly exclaimed, “do you not see them?”

“I see nothing,” answered Col. Paine “but the children.”

“Why look at those beautiful beings—all clothed in white---harps in their hands---crowns on their heads.”

Junie gazed at the pale features of her dying mother while a feeling of awe crept over her. She imagined that she could almost hear the music, and almost see the heavenly visitors as they swept their fingers over the golden harps. Her imagination was so wrought upon that she almost expected to see them suddenly burst into the room.

“Oh! how lovely they are—here they come—now they are looking at me—they beckon to me to come. Where are you, husband—children? I cannot see you! Are you gone?”

“Here we are, my dear,” answered Col Paine. “Try to compose yourself. I hope you feel better now.”



“Oh, yes, so much better. Here they are—the room is full of them—welcome sweet angels—you have come for me?—I am ready.”

Then she sprang up into a sitting posture in the bed, but immediately fell back—a corpse. A holy smile was settled upon her pale features which even the cold, iron fingers of Death could not efface.

Junie gazed at the silent, motionless body, feeling in her heart that the released soul was now winging its flight with the angels to the God-built City of Light and Love and Liberty. Then realizing her own loss she threw herself on the bed in a paroxysm of grief. Presently the flood burst over, and her agony found vent in utterance:

“Farewell, dear mother,” she cried as she imprinted a kiss on the icy brow. “By God’s grace I will meet thee in heaven where we will part no more. Thou hast gone with the angels; I doubt it not. I wish I could go with thee. I wish I too could hear the melody of the heavenly harps, and join the white-clad throng, and mingle my voice with theirs. Oh! God of my angel mother” she cried wringing her hands in agony, “have mercy on me. Oh! mother—gone! gone! gone!”

Col. Paine and Gerie were both weeping bitterly. They listened at what they regarded as the wild ravings of Junie; but they could not speak. At length Junie suddenly rose to her feet.



“Father, father,” she cried, “let us all here by the corpse of my angel mother resolve that we will be Christians, and meet together after death in happier climes and amid fairer scenes.”

“Junie,” said Col. Paine, now partly recovering himself,” you know not what you are saying. I have often told you there is no God. When death comes and carries us off to the grave, that is the ultimate destiny of humanity. This is but the stubborn truth, however disagreeable it may be.”

“Father,” said Junie, “do you believe that poor mother in her dying moments just now was deceived? Do you believe she saw nothing and heard nothing?”

“Daughter,” said Col. Paine with sadness in his voice, “that was only a beautiful dream which frequently occurs amid the convulsions of death.”

“Oh, father, say not so. I believe it was a blessed reality. I could almost hear the music of the angels, and the rustle of their wings. Father, this room is hallowed by heavenly influences. I cannot believe dear mother was deceived. She was evidently in full possession of her faculties. O, I believe it was a solemn reality. If not, God grant that when death comes to me, I may be favored with such a dream.”

To this Col. Paine made no reply. He did not think it the proper time and place for the discussion of such questions. He had heard it said that Christians sometimes die in this way; but



this was the first instance that ever came under his observation. Were we to affirm that it made a deep impression upon his mind, we would state that which was not true. He thought his wife was laboring under a delusion, and that Junie would come to her senses in a few days. So he said nothing more on the subject, but allowed the young lady to think and talk as she pleased.

Often have God's people departed from the world just as Mrs. Paine did. How shall we account for it? Is it simply the wild raving of a feverish imagination? If so, why is it that the ungodly never die in this manner? Why is it that the wicked when leaving the shores of time cry out in such anguish as it is impossible to describe, that they are sinking into darkness? Why is it that they complain of such horrid visions? Why do they cry out, it "is a fearful leap in the dark?" If it is nothing but a mere fancy, why should the ungodly not fill their room with imaginary, beautiful beings? It ought to be as easy to do this as to imagine that they are pursued by frightful hobgoblins. It is a matter of history that some infidels have died in this awful manner. It is said that Voltaire's death-bed scene was such that his nurse could never again be induced to enter a sick-room, where there was a prospect of death, through fear of witnessing such another sight. Many other such instances could be referred to. Now, why is it that Christians never witness these horrid visions



when they are wading through the chilling waters of death ? Let the infidel, with his proud reason, explain the cause of the difference.

Sunday evening the burial of Mrs. Paine was to take place. Dr. Archer had some reason to believe that he would be called on to conduct the obsequies. But he was much mistaken. Col. Paine had determined that he would be true to his principles under all circumstances. He had fully made up his mind that no minister of God should officiate. Following the custom of some of the ancients he resolved to attend to it himself. So he prepared himself for it.

The hour arrived ; and the corpse was placed in the hearse, and then the procession moved slowly on to Holly Springs. As it passed along the streets no bell was tolled. In silence the procession moved on till the cemetery was reached. Then after some preliminary arrangements when the coffin was about to be let down into its last resting place, Col. Paine advanced to the head of the grave and motioned with his hand. There was a pause. Then nerving himself up to the exigencies of the occasion, he said :

“My friends : you may think this a strange procedure on my part ; and some may wonder at my departure from the custom of the day on such occasions. I shall not now attempt to give my reasons. As to the subjects which the present occasion naturally suggests we hold different views. The truth is none of us know what is the



actual state of the dead. We know nothing of the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler has ever returned. But one thing is certain, Death cannot be any worse than Life ; and it may be better. We therefore have no reason to weep over the remains of our friends and loved ones, whose hearts have been touched by the monster death. They are at all events no worse off than we are. They are freed from all troubles and cares and sorrows. They are done with the wild storms that on all sides loom up above the horizon of the Living. Soon all of us must be brought to this state of Eternal Silence, which no enemy can ever disturb. We have little time for grief and still less reason for it. Standing here under the broad, blue canopy of the skies I bid farewell to a beloved companion with whose dust my own shall soon mingle.”

Col. Paine spoke these few words with a quivering voice, and then stepped aside. Poor Junie listened with sorrow and mortification to this jingle of words in which there was not a ray of hope or comfort.

The corpse was lowered down into its narrow prison house; and soon a little hillock of earth arose, the procession broke up, and the senseless remains of Mrs. Paine were left to rest in quiet till the resurrection morn.



## CHAPTER X.

One evening, a few days after the events narrated in the previous chapter, Miss Junie ordered the carriage. Since her mother's death she had been rather depressed in spirits. She seemed to feel keenly that she was now left in a Godless household. The only Christian had been removed to a higher sphere of action. Between herself and the surviving members of the family there was no congeniality of religious sentiment; and she realized the fact with the most poignant sorrow. Her thoughts often wandered to that dear mother's grave,—that mother, whom she was beginning to love with a deeper affection, as the Christian excellencies of her character were unveiled. She felt a sense of peculiar loneliness. Junie was in distress on account of her own condition; and there was none in that house, which had bidden God depart, that she could consult. So she was compelled to seek relief and comfort away from home. As she was leaving, Gerie said:

“Where are you going, sister?”

“I am going to call on Dr. Archer,” she replied; “and I wish I could induce you to accompany me.”



"I shall do no such thing," replied Gerie, rather sharply. "I wish you could be persuaded to keep away from that preacher. If you follow his advice you will be perfectly miserable."

"I would rather be miserable in this world than in the next."

"In the next!" cried Gerie. "What do you know about the next? O, I wish you would quit bothering yourself about the next world; you know nothing at all about it; and I don't believe there is any next world."

"Whether there is or not I believe it, and I have deliberately made up my mind to lead a Christian life. I am going to follow in the footsteps of our dear mother, who I firmly believe is now with those beautiful angels she heard singing around her death-bed."

"Father told you that was all a delusion," said Miss Gerie.

"I cannot help it. I want to live so that when I die I may depart from this world under just such a delusion. I too want to see the angels and hear their sweet music as I am quitting the shores of time. Whether it is a delusion or not, it will strip death of his terrors."

"Sister," said Gerie with seriousness, "you are pursuing a fleeting phantom. You are going to make your life one long scene of gloom and wretchedness. If you become a Christian you will have to give up all the pleasures of life. And for what? Nothing in the world but a



foolish chimera. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' As for me I know nothing about the 'next world' as you call it, and I care nothing. This world is before me; it is all I know anything about, and I am going to enjoy its pleasures and avoid its miseries. A regard for my own happiness demands this course. What is the sense of just deliberately trying to make ourselves miserable. Why not try to be cheerful and happy?"

Then there was a momentary pause.

"I will tell you what it is," continued Gerie, "John Milson has put all this silly stuff into your head. You used to be gay and happy till you went to church with him that Sunday."

At this accusation Junie's face assumed the color of scarlet.

"Your charge, sister," said Junie with an innocence which was not feigned, "is without foundation. I confess what Mr. Milson said in regard to the existence of a personal God did put me to thinking. But it was Dr. Archer's sermon which aroused my desire to find out the truth in reference to the matter."

"Well," said Gerie, "my opinion is that you would better let Dr. Archer and his sermons alone, and try to enjoy life. I would just as soon," she added with a shake of her beautiful head, "risk the judgment of father and Mr. Bertram as Dr. Archer. I think they are about as intelligent as he is."



“Mr. Bertram,” said Junie mildly, “is no match for Mr. Milson in argument, much less Dr. Archer.”

“I do believe you are in love with John Milson. Well, you are welcome to him so far as I am concerned.”

“I am not thinking of such things now,” answered Junie in a sad tone, “and I would be obliged if you would not mention such subjects.” After a moment she continued. “Sister, you remember our dear mother’s last request?”

“What about?”

“She asked Dr. Archer to watch over her children. Will you not go with me then, and talk to him about your spiritual state?”

“My spiritual state!” cried Gerie with a laugh; “what has Dr. Archer to do with my spiritual state? I am very well satisfied with my spiritual state. Therefore I shall not go to Dr. Archer to consult him about it. I am not sick.”

“Oh, sister,” said Junie with the tears coming to her eyes, “how lightly you talk about the most important subject that ever occupied the attention of human beings. It pains me to think that you are in the high road to eternal ruin; and yet you are so indifferent, and have so little appreciation of your peril. Why will you bestow no thought on your destiny beyond the grave? Why live for the vain, fleeting pleasures of sense and lose your own soul? You cannot long enjoy these carnal gratifications, which never do satisfy.



You know by your own experience that they are followed by a feeling of weariness and often, pain. Does it become us to waste our noblest energies in the pursuit of these things that so soon perish?"

"Stop, Miss Preacher!" interrupted Gerie with a laugh. "Wait, if you please, till you have a better congregation. Now let us be dismissed."

Junie was so overcome by this heartless mockery that she sank into a chair, buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud. Then she fell upon her knees.

"O, God of Salvation!" she cried, "give to my sister the enlightening influence of Thy Holy Spirit. Arouse her—"

"Junie, Junie," exclaimed Gerie in some anger, seizing her by the arm, "get up from here, and quit this ridiculous stage-acting. I believe you are stark mad. What a simpleton you are making of yourself. Get up, I say."

Junie, seeing that it was in vain to talk to her sister on this subject, arose and left the room without uttering another word. She went out to the carriage, and was soon on the way to Holly Springs. In half an hour the vehicle stopped at the residence of Dr. Archer. The minister was at home, and met the young lady at the gate and conducted her to the parlor. When the Doctor looked at her sad face, on which yet lingered the traces of recent weeping, and recalled the scenes at her home and the cemetery, he had to make



some little effort to conceal his emotions. Junie sat for a moment without speaking; and then in spite of all she could do the tears rolled down her cheeks.

“My dear child,” said the Doctor in a voice that slightly trembled, “I know how to sympathize with you. I know what you feel. For your comfort I can point you to no earthly source. In all our hours of affliction and trial, earthly philosophy and wisdom are in vain. And now, before you even mention the object of your visit, let us kneel down and pray for that consolation which God alone can give.” Then they knelt down, and Dr. Archer offered up a prayer characterized by true Christian unction. He asked the Father of Mercies to pour balm into the bleeding heart of this orphan kneeling as a suppliant before the throne of Grace. He prayed God to sustain her in this her hour of affliction, and to guide and keep her in the path of all Truth.

When they arose Junie felt happier. The thought crept into her mind that the angels must certainly dwell in the house of this earnest man of God. Oh! how different he was from her unbelieving father. If her own parent were such a man, she felt that she would be willing to face all the inconveniences and hardships of abject poverty.

“My dear child,” said Dr. Archer, “I have thought of you frequently since your first visit; and I have made you one of the special subjects



of my prayers. I hope my prayers have been answered, and that you can now realize that the Lord Jesus is your personal Saviour."

"Doctor, I am in perplexity ; I seem to be shut in by mountains."

"It is nothing more than I expected."

"Why so?" asked Junie in surprise. "I have been trying to follow your advice. I have been trying hard to be a Christian, and am endeavoring to obey God's commandments ; and yet I do not feel satisfied. Why should I feel thus ?"

"Are you sure" asked Dr. Archer, "that you have obeyed the divine commandments as the Lord requires ?"

"Well, I have done nothing wrong that I can see."

"Very well" replied the preacher, "we will admit that you have done not one thing wrong. But I told you plainly that you must keep the law in every particular if you intend to rely upon your obedience for salvation. Now how about your words ? Have you uttered an idle word ?"

"I may not exactly understand what is meant by idle words ; but I have spoken very few words of any sort since my visit to you ; and I do not think I have uttered a word which could be construed into a violation of any of God's commandments."

"Very well" said Dr. Archer, "we will grant you have kept the law in word, which is saying a great deal for a poor, frail mortal. But how



about your thoughts? Have they been such as God requires?"

"I do not think I have had any evil thoughts," replied the young lady.

"But the law demands that every thought shall be in strict accordance with the Divine Will. If you have had a single thought which is in opposition to that Will, then you have violated God's law and you occupy the attitude of a condemned sinner. If, as in our former conversation on this subject, I tried to impress the idea, you have even wished that you were not under the restraint of the law, and that there were some other plan of salvation, you are guilty of rebellion. If you have had a single desire to do a thing which is forbidden by the Divine Word, however slight and brief may have been the desire, you have certainly broken the law, and you are subject to its penalties."

"Then, Doctor, without saying more I confess I have failed. How then am I to be saved? What must I do?"

"The difficulty, child, is that you are trying to do too much. You will recollect that I told you no human being can perfectly obey God's high and holy law. I tell you again you must not look to that, and try to conform to it as a means of justification, that is, as a means of procuring pardon. Did you not read the Commentary I lent you—I refer to the passages which I marked?"



“Yes sir, I read them.”

“Did you not read that the law is our school-master to bring us to Christ?”

“Yes sir.”

“Well, that is the design of the law—not to furnish the means of salvation—but merely to bring us to Christ. While it is a rule of duty it does not provide in itself any way of escape from condemnation. It shows man his sinfulness and teaches him his duty, but it imparts no strength to discharge that duty.”

“You do not mean that I am not to try to keep the law?” asked Junie.

“So far from meaning that, I say that you are to endeavor to keep it as if your salvation depended on it; but you are not to expect to be justified by it. The law ends with Christ. What you have to do is to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus. He has fulfilled the law and complied with its demands in your place; and he offers to save you on the simple condition that you will trust your salvation to him. Now that is what you have to do, if ‘do’ is the proper word to use. It is natural for us,” continued Dr. Archer, “to think that we can deserve God’s favor by something which we can do. It seems that we have to try experiments before we can be convinced of our inability to secure salvation by our own merits. Some try to keep the law as you have done. They must exhaust their own resources before they will accept God’s simple



terms. Now the whole object of the Bible is to reveal Christ as the only way whereby we must be saved. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. All I can tell you is to accept him as your Saviour."

"But how am I to accept Him, Dr. Archer? What particular thing must I do? You tell me to trust Christ; but how am I to do that? I am willing to do so if I knew how. If I could see Him as did the people of his day, I could go to Him and propose to be one of His disciples, and I could accept Him in that way."

"My child, we walk by faith, and not by sight. Do you not believe the facts recorded in the New Testament in regard to our Lord Jesus?"

"To what particular facts do you allude?"

"That he died on the cross, and then on the third day rose from the dead."

"Yes, sir, I believe that."

"Well, then, Christ is just as much present now as he was then. You can gain His ear now just as readily as any one could then. Though absent he is present however contradictory the assertion may appear. He is in this room at this very moment. Do you believe it?"

"While I am bound to accept it as truth Dr. Archer; yet I find a difficulty in making a clear and distinct reality of the fact."

"And that is a difficulty, my child. You have come to the point now where reason can go no further; faith must come to your relief. You ask



me how you must trust Christ—how you must have faith in Him? I cannot tell you how. I can only point out the way; but you must walk in it. This is something which no one can do for you. It must be your own act. But I will try to illustrate by a very simple circumstance—something like this: Suppose this house should take fire during my absence. I am returning home, and I see the flames shooting upward. When I arrive I find that all my family have escaped except my little five-year old boy. I see him at the window of the second story. All below is on fire, and I cannot get to him. There is only one way of escape. I call to him, and tell him to spring out of the window, and I will catch him. It is to him a fearful leap, and he hesitates. But I hold up my hands; and at last he makes the venture, and jumps safe into my arms. Do you not see that he has faith in me, and in my ability to save him? Well now, your condition, from a spiritual standpoint is somewhat similar. You are in the utmost danger. The Lord Jesus tells you He is ready to save you, and He tells you to come to Him, and trust to Him.”

“But,” said Junie, “I cannot see Christ; I cannot hear Him. I can find nothing for my faith to lay hold of.”

“You have come to the difficulty with which probably nearly everyone has to contend; and I am glad you have got to that point. I will not tell you that it is an easy thing to exercise faith



in the Saviour; and especially for one of your reflective turn of mind. I am glad that you do find a difficulty; and I am glad to see you feeling your way with so much care and caution; for I do not want you to be deceived in this matter of such vital importance. I do not want you to make a step in the wrong direction. Let the foundation be firm, and then you will know how to build the superstructure. I cannot tell you the precise mental effort to make—in other words I cannot tell the particular act of the soul in trusting to Christ. I met with the very difficulty which you experience. But have you ever prayed over this matter—prayed for the Holy Spirit?”

“Well, Doctor, only in a sort of loose and general way. I may say I have not prayed in reference to the particular subject we are now talking about.”

“Then, my child, I will tell you that you can never reason yourself into religion. The regeneration of the heart is God’s work, and not man’s. You cannot give yourself a new nature by a mere volition. The only way out of your difficulties is by prayer. I cannot scatter the clouds that hover over your pathway. I can do no more for you except to help you pray to God to give you light. It is said in the Holy Scriptures ‘God is my Refuge and my Strength, a very present Help in trouble.’ You need strength and help. Suppose then we now go to Him in prayer, and implore His gracious aid.”



Again the two knelt down, and Dr. Archer prayed with reference to the difficulties that clogged the faith of his young friend. After the prayer he said:

“You must read and study the Sacred Scriptures; and whenever you meet with difficulties just go to the Lord with the simplicity of a little child approaching an earthly parent. True faith is never disappointed. You will no doubt meet with discouragements, and will be subjected to trials as all God’s people are; but in the darkest hours go to our blessed Redeemer in prayer. Cast all your troubles and cares on Him, and you will find a ‘friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’ But whenever you feel the need of counsel from a human being, remember that I am always ready to give you such advice as I am capable of. Do not hesitate to call on me as your friend. But one thing more,” continued Dr. Archer, “which you must take into consideration. When you feel that you have passed from death unto life; when you feel that you are reconciled to God, then the next step is to confess Christ before men.”

“How is that to be done?”

“That is to be done by joining the church.”

“Joining the church!” exclaimed Junie.

“Certainly,” replied Dr. Archer. “You cannot be a secret Christian. You must take a public and bold stand before the world. You must let your light shine. But we will not talk more of



this now. We need not anticipate difficulties, which you may never encounter. Wait till you feel that Jesus is your personal Saviour; and then let me know. The Holy Spirit is, I believe, gradually leading you into the light and the path of duty. I have no doubt that in a short time you will want to talk to me again. But for the present let your whole aim be to trust Christ. Have faith in his precious promises; pray to Him constantly, and you will, if I am not greatly mistaken in my estimate of your character, soon rejoice in His love. You will feel that the sense of condemnation is gone; and your soul will be filled with that peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

Then Miss Junie took her leave, thanking the Doctor for his invitation to call whenever she might desire, and remarking that she had need of just such a friend and counsellor.

As the carriage rolled along homeward the young lady felt happier. She now had clearer conceptions of her duty, and she determined to put in practice what she had learned. She might have asked herself the question why she did not at that very moment take refuge in Christ as the only Saviour? Why postpone to some future time? She was just like thousands of others in this respect. Procrastination in this regard seems to be natural. To be saved we must rely solely on the Lord Jesus at some time. Why should not the penitent sinner do at once that which he



expects to do in the future? How will he be in any better condition by waiting? It is evident that nothing is gained by procrastination; and yet, men will defer. So Junie intended to accept Jesus as her Saviour; but somehow she did not feel quite ready. It seemed to her that she must go through some process of preparation. Her interview with Dr. Archer had not entirely banished the idea from her mind that there is some sort of merit in human works. So she began at once to study the Scriptures day and night; and she prayed with regularity; and yet she did not feel that she was a Christian. Days passed away; and she thought she would better call on Dr. Archer again. But then he had informed her that he could tell her nothing more. All she had to do was to accept the Lord Jesus.

One night Junie could not sleep for thinking of her condition. She felt like giving up in despair. Then she began to pray. At last after working up all her material in the way of human merit, she by that act of soul, which no one can explain, cast herself on Jesus, crying in her heart, "Lord save, or I perish."

The next morning when the sunbeams struggled through the window of Junie's room, she was a "new creature in Christ Jesus." She felt that her trust rested on a sure foundation. The sense of condemnation was all gone; the dark clouds had rolled away; and her heart was full of inexpressible joy. She felt as if she ought



to tell Miss Gerie. But no : it would be like “casting pearls before swine ;” and she had to enjoy this new happiness in secret and silence. And now the sky was clear ; and Junie was cheerful and happy. She went on her way rejoicing under the life-giving rays of the blessed Son of Righteousness.

## CHAPTER XI.

It would be well for every young Christian to have an experienced counsellor with whom he can consult in regard to those “fightings without and fears within” which distinguish the religious pilgrimage. Incalculable benefit may be derived from conference with one who is acquainted with the perils of the journey. Frequently the young pilgrim falls into the Slough of Despond, and has a hard struggle with difficulties that could be removed by a few judicious words of explanation. It was fortunate for Miss Junie Paine that she had such a wise and pious adviser in Dr. Archer. Again she felt the necessity of making another visit to him. She recalled the remark which he had made in reference to joining the church,



though she hardly understood what this step involved. She was moving slowly, but with firm resolution. She had determined to follow the path of duty wherever it might lead. So, one evening, a few days after the occurrences related in the preceding chapter, she drove to the residence of Dr. Archer who had been expecting her. He had experience enough in such matters, to anticipate her actions. It was fortunate that Providence had directed her to this faithful minister. Any church may consider itself peculiarly blessed that enjoys the ministrations of such a preacher and pastor as he was. For he was not only an accomplished scholar; but he had a deep insight into human nature; and he understood how to direct the inquirer. Sometimes it is the case that ministers in their great anxiety, give too much advice. Too much counsel has a tendency to lead the inquirer away from Christ, and induce him to depend to too great an extent upon human agencies. The penitent should be let alone to do that which no one can do for him. The preacher then should have considerable prudence as well as zeal. Dr. Archer not only possessed knowledge, but wisdom. Besides he was distinguished for a suavity of address that was magnetic. He was so destitute of all false pride, and was so kind-hearted and sympathetic that he readily won confidence. It could soon be discovered by even the careless observer that he was a man who could be trusted.



"If I am not greatly mistaken" said Dr. Archer to Miss Junie when they were both seated in the parlor, "you have found the light. You have put your trust in our blessed Redeemer."

"How can you tell, Doctor?" asked the young lady in some surprise.

"Sometimes" he replied, "our thoughts and feelings manifest themselves in our faces; especially our religious emotions. In some persons the inward peace which they enjoy betrays itself in their features. I have often observed that the sincere inquirer loses the expression of painful anxiety when he finds the Saviour. Your very looks, my child, show that you are better satisfied than when you were here some days ago. Am I mistaken or not?"

"You are correct, Doctor. I was in great distress for some time; but I followed your advice and made a full surrender of myself to the Lord Jesus; and so soon as I did this I at once felt relieved; The grievous burden was gone. I was astonished that I did not sooner pursue this course."

"Your experience in this respect is just like that of other people. We are surprised at ourselves for not having perceived the glorious light which was really shining all around us. But, my young friend, remember that you have just entered upon the race. You cannot stop at this point. You have a work to perform, and other battles to fight with the powers of darkness.



Our Master will not tolerate idlers in His vineyard. He demands constant activity. You are now only upon the threshold. I must also warn you that new and severe trials await you. But I will not now describe them particularly. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Whatever may be the character of your trials, do not forget the source of all help; cling to the Saviour whom you have found, and He will never fail you."

"Doctor," said Junie, when the minister had paused, "at my last visit you said I think that it would be my next duty to join the church."

"Yes; I think every Christian ought to be willing to confess Christ before men. You will not need any persuasion in regard to this matter. John says 'we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.' You will, if you are a true child of God, naturally desire to identify yourself with God's people. I cannot conceive how a true believer can be content to live without the pale of the church."

"It is my desire and intention to try to discharge every duty which the profession of religion involves. So if you will tell me what steps to take I will at once join your church, if you will receive me."

"I suppose you have never been baptized?"

"No, sir. I never was inside of a church in my life till I attended yours some time since."

"Very well then. But before we say anything



more, allow me to ask if you have obtained your farther's consent?"

"I have said nothing to him about it" replied Junie, "but I suppose he will not offer any objection. When can I join?"

"Next Sabbath, if you desire to do so. But my child, my opinion is that you would better prepare for opposition on the part of your father. I hope you may be correct in your supposition that he will allow you to have your way in this matter. But if he does oppose you, you will encounter a great trial in the very beginning of your religious career. What will you do, if he should oppose your desire to join the church?"

"I do not know, Doctor. I had not calculated upon any opposition; and I hope I may be spared such a trial. But Doctor, there is no need to make provision for exigencies that may never arise. Somehow I cannot believe that my father will interpose any objection. He has always been very kind to me, and allowed me to act just as I pleased."

"Perhaps you do not know how bitterly your father is opposed to the Christian religion?"

"I know that he does not believe in it," said Junie. "He does not believe there is any God. But I cannot think that he will oppose my wish in this."

"Very well," said the Doctor shaking his head dubiously; "I do hope and pray that you may be correct. But when you have consulted with him



be sure to let me know the result. Let everything be done openly; and let me hear from you before Sunday if you can." Then after a moment he said, "when could I have an interview with your sister?"

"Doctor, I do not know. She holds to my father's views. I tried to induce her to come with me this evening, but she indignantly refused."

"Could I pay her a visit at home?"

"I would be delighted to see you at our house; but I cannot speak for sister. I will talk with her about it, and will acquaint you with her decision."

Here we may say that Dr. Archer never did have an interview with Miss Gerie or her brother. She would not consent to see him. He tried to comply with the request of her dying mother, but it was in vain.

"Miss Junie took leave of the Doctor; and as she went homeward she was thinking of the new duties she would have to perform in the capacity of a member of the church. Her conscience approved the important step she was about to take and she felt happy. At the same time she was wondering what were the new trials to which the preacher had alluded. Poor child! she was not long to be kept in ignorance on this subject.

That night Col. Paine and Gerie with Junie were seated in the library. After a while Junie said:

"Father, I wish to consult you in regard to a step which I am about to take."



"What is it, daughter?" he asked in a kind tone.

"I do not want to act without your consent. If you have no objection I would like to join Dr. Archer's church."

Col. Paine, on hearing this, almost sprang from his seat. It would have been difficult to an observer at the moment to tell what feeling was predominant. There were surprise, vexation, anger, all depicted in his countenance. The newspaper which he had been reading was quickly thrown aside. Gerie looked at her sister in mute amazement. Junie was thrown into a state of confusion and embarrassment by her father's manner; then she could not help recalling what Dr. Archer had said.

For a moment not another word was spoken. Col. Paine seemed to be making a desperate effort to acquire full control of himself; and appeared also to be studying how to shape his course. Gerie was the first to break the silence.

"All this," she said, "comes of your visit to that old hypocrite. I warned you and tried to dissuade you from going."

"Hypocrite!" cried Junie turning red in the face. "How is it possible you can call that holy man a hypocrite?"

"Holy man, indeed!" answered Gerie with a sneer. "He is about as holy as a rattle snake. Holy man, truly!"

Oh, sister," said Junie with an air of depreca-



tion, "how can you talk so? You do not—you cannot believe that Dr. Archer is a hypocrite."

"He is a hypocrite, and nothing but a hypocrite," exclaimed Gerie in anger, "making his living by working on people's fears."

"Junie," said Col. Paine in a milder tone than she expected, "I did not know that you had been visiting the preacher. I thought you had more self-respect than that."

"Why, yes, father," interrupted Miss Gerie, "I ought to have told you all about it; but I had no idea that Junie would turn Christian so soon. I will tell you how it was. John Milson and Junie and Mr. Bertram and I went to church not long since, without saying anything to you about it. We went to have a little fun, as I supposed. Dr. Archer preached a sermon about Christ, which I thought was a piece of foolishness mixed up with rant and cant. I never expected to hear of the performance anymore; but I see it has turned Junie's head. I am surprised that she was so easily taken in. Since then she has been to see the preacher two or three times; and now we have the results of her visits: she wants to join the church. But, father, if I were you I never would give my consent to it."

"Oh, sister," said Junie with moistening eyes, "how can you be so cruel? What harm can it do me to join the church? What harm can it do you or father?"

"Junie," said Col. Paine calmly and deliberately—



ly, "now listen to reason. You know not what you are doing. Do you know what is required of church people?"

"No, sir, not precisely."

"Do you know that you will have to give up your dancing?"

"Father, I am willing to do it. I always thought it was a frivolous amusement anyhow."

"What a ninny-hammer you are!" cried Gerie stamping her foot.

"Father" continued Junie not seeming to notice her sister's interruption, "you know mother was a Christian, though she never spoke of it, because, because—

"Because what?" asked Col. Paine.

"Because," answered the young lady timidly, "you did not approve of it. But mother was a good woman. I believe she has gone to heaven; and I wish all of us could meet her there." And the tears began to chase down her cheeks.

"What stuff!" exclaimed Gerie.

"Well now, Junie," said Col. Paine, "if I did not approve of your mother's being a Christian, why do you think I would approve of your being one?"

"Father, you have always been kind to me, and indulged me in all my wishes. I could see no reason why you should oppose my joining the church. It will certainly do you no harm. If it injures anybody, it will be only myself; and I cannot see what possible injury it will be to me."



“You do not consider the consequences.”

“Yes I do, father.”

“But, hold,” interrupted Col. Paine, “hear what I have to say. You know that I do not believe there is any God, and I am firm in that belief. You talk about heaven. I do not believe there is any such place; I do not believe there is any hell. I have never been afraid to express my opinion on this subject. I have argued the question in town and country. There are many people in Holly Springs who hold to my principles. And now I ask you, what will they think if they see my own children sustaining an institution which I heartily despise. You ought to know that the church is a thing which I immeasurably detest. I regard it as a curse to the human race. It is a thing which the preachers have originated for their own private ends. It is an easy way to make a living, and it appears to be a respectable profession. But it is a decent way of begging; and when I say that, it is the very highest compliment which I can pay the preachers. Most of these men, as Gerie said just now, are hypocrites. Some of them I will admit are honestly deluded, just as their followers are: but the large majority are, notwithstanding their pious cant and solemn airs, nothing but polished phycrites. It is to their interest to get people into the church, as they call it. They get handsomely paid for that delightful blarney which they get off on Sundays under the name of preaching. They are merely



speculating on the fears of the people. They try to frighten people into obedience to their will by that terrible story of a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The world never believed a more foolish and ridiculous superstition."

"Father, do you believe" asked Junie "that my dear mother was deceived?"

"I am sorry to say, Junie, that your mother suffered herself to be carried away with that foolish superstition; and that was the only fault I ever found in her. I can call it nothing else than a superstition; and I am utterly astonished that you or any one else with ordinary intelligence can believe it. Why the preachers themselves do not believe it. They tell a falsehood when they say they do. Their only object is to gain a subsistence. It is a more respectable way of making a living than begging on the streets."

"Father," said Junie, "I can never believe that Dr. Archer is a phycrite. He is certainly sincere in what he does and says. A man of his talents and education could make a better living by following some other profession. I cannot conceive why he should make the sacrifices he does, if he is not honest."

"Sacrifices!" exclaimed Gerie with a derisive laugh, "I should like to know what sort of sacrifices he makes. He does nothing but stay at home all the week, and then deal out a little cant on Sunday. If you call that making sacrifices I should like to make some sacrifices myself—I would."



Col. Paine laughed at this remark.

"Junie," he said, "I wish you would take a sensible view of things like your sister does. She has too much sense to be carried away with such a delusion."

"Yes," replied Gerie with a wise shake of the head. "I do not allow Dr. Archer, nor Dr. Anybody-else to fool me with hypocritical talk. I have no use for such decent beggars."

"Sister," said Junie in subdued tone, "you know not what you are saying. I have learned Dr. Archer's history."

"Oh, pshaw! I care nothing about his history," said Gerie.

"But do let me have a word," entreated Junie. "I have listened patiently to the ridicule of you and father. I have learned Dr. Archer's history. Years ago he was a distinguished lawyer; he stood in the front rank of his profession. He was accumulating a fortune. Now, if he is such a hypocrite, why should he give up his profession in which he was successful and come to the little town of Holly Springs and take charge of a comparatively small church which pays him hardly a respectable salary? Where is the hypocrisy in that?"

"Who told you that?" flippantly asked Gerie. "Who told you that?"

"It does not matter who told me. I have it from good authority. It seems to me," continued Junie, "that some sacrifice was involved in that.



Besides—”

“Besides,” quickly interrupted Col. Paine, “you know not what you are saying. You speak of making sacrifices. It depends entirely upon circumstances whether any sacrifice is made. You must have a concrete case before you settle that question. Cold and heat to a certain point are mere relative terms. If one of the Esquimaux should be suddenly transported from his ice-bound home to our country on some pleasant day in April, he would pronounce the weather intolerably hot. Your opinion would be quite different from his. Let the mercury in the thermometer suddenly rise on a cold day to sixty degrees, and we would complain of the heat; but let it fall to the same number of degrees on a hot day in July, and we would pronounce the day cold. And so it is in the affairs of life. What one man would call a large amount of money, another would pronounce a very insignificant sum. So in any particular case we have to know what estimate the individual places upon money before we can determine whether he makes any sacrifice or not. As a case in point I knew a young man some years ago who was engaged in farming. He worked hard at his calling, but could accumulate nothing. As he manifested some intellectual brilliancy a certain church took him from the plow and authorized him to preach. To my certain knowledge he laid up while preaching a hundred dollars annually for several years. One day I heard a Christian who lived in grand style say in



regard to the preacher, 'what a great sacrifice our preacher is making, getting only five hundred dollars a year.' But to the young preacher there was no sacrifice in the case. He found preaching more remunerative than the agricultural business. So, you will have to know in what manner Dr. Archer was raised before you can say that he is making sacrifices."

"And I suppose," said Miss Gerie with a slight sneer, "you have not put yourself to the trouble of ransacking Dr. Archer's history from his very childhood in order to ascertain what great sacrifices he is making in dealing out his Sunday cant."

To this sarcastic remark Junie made no reply. Col. Paine thinking that she was reduced to silence by his argument, said:

"So you see, my daughter, you have no proof that this pious Dr. Archer is making any sacrifices."

"Father," said Junie, "I admit that there is truth in what you have said. But I do not think your reasoning will apply to Dr. Archer. I was endeavoring to show what sacrifices he is making when you interrupted me. You know, father, that he is finely educated. He could not then have been raised in abject poverty. Well, as I said just now, he was a lawyer who occupied an enviable position in his profession. That position he resigned in order to fill an humble office in the church. It occurs to me that this for him was a sacrifice.



Then again, in his profession of law he could have achieved fame; but he certainly can never do this in a country village. I can conceive of no motive in this case at least, of acting the hypocrite. What could he possibly gain by such a course? If it could be shown that he could acquire either wealth or honor by such a course—by giving up the law for the ministry, there might be some ground for the charge of hypocrisy.”

Miss Gerie, in whom there was not much intellectual depth, could make no reply to this sort of reasoning. So she glanced significantly at her father, who promptly came to the rescue.

“My daughter,” he said, “you are young and inexperienced in the ways of the world. You are very liable to be deceived and misled by outward appearances. You know not what may be Dr. Archer’s motives, granting that you have his history correct. I admit that he has the manners of a polished gentleman; but then his religious pretensions are based on hypocrisy.”

“O, father, say not so,” cried Junie, “when you have no proof of it.”

“I have as much proof as I want,” said Col. Paine manifesting some symptoms of vexation. “No sensible man would believe what he says he does; therefore, he is a hypocrite. The premises are correct, and so is the conclusion.”

“Father,” said Junie deeply grieved, “do you believe that I am a hypocrite?”



“No, child ; I do not think so. But you are laboring under a delusion for the want of reflection and investigation. I have looked at both sides of the question. You have never done this. But you have just jumped at conclusions, you have assumed, without thought, that Dr. Archer spoke the truth. If you had read Thomas Paine’s Age of Reason, you would never have had these notions which I must call silly.”

“But suppose, father, I tell you that I have read the Age of Reason. ”

“When did you ever read it? ”

“Why, in the last few days. I read it carefully too. I have heard you say so much about it that I had some curiosity to see what was in the book. I had no wish to be deceived. If there was no truth in the Bible I wanted to find it out. All I want is the truth, and will accept it no matter what it is. I would be foolish indeed to attempt to deceive myself.”

“Well,” said the Colonel, “did not Mr. Paine convince you that there is not a particle of truth in the Bible? If you weighed his arguments you must have been convinced.”

“I studied the book,” said Junie, “as well as I could, but I was not convinced. The ridicule to which he resorts, proves to me the weakness of his cause. His reasoning, if such it can be called, had no effect on me except to confirm my belief of the Bible.”

“Girl,” cried Col. Paine, showing indications



of real anger, "do you not know that his cause, as you call it, is my cause? Any insult offered to his memory is an insult to me. I take it as a personal matter."

"Oh, father," quickly exclaimed Junie, I beg your pardon. I did not intend to wound your feelings. I meant no reflection whatever on you. I meant only that the Age of Reason is a very weak book in my opinion."

"Well, upon my word," said Gerie, "I think you must have a great fund of presumption, to express your opinion so freely about a great man."

"And a great patriot too," added Col. Paine, "and defender of Liberty."

"I do not dispute that" answered Junie mildly. "I had no reference to his private character. I was speaking only in regard to his book."

"Well, his book," said Col. Paine. "I say his book is unanswerable. He exposes in a masterly manner the absurd pretensions of the Bible. He shows clearly that it is an imposition and a forgery. And I cannot see how any one can read it and not concur in his opinions. His reasoning is as fine a piece of logic as I ever met with. To a thinking mind it is irresistible."

"Father," said Junie who was now afraid of arousing her parent's violent temper, "I am incapable of arguing the question with you. With your superior scholarship and learning you can suggest difficulties which I cannot solve. But



my faith is strong in the Bible. I cannot help believing it. You may not believe in it; but you cannot say that it is a bad book."

"Well, if you think I cannot say so, I do affirm that its teachings are in some instances really pernicious; they are detrimental to the best and highest interests of human society. Besides, it requires people to do things that are repulsive and galling to the noblest feelings of manhood."

"What is it, father, that is so repulsive? I have not met with a single precept or commandment whose observance I thought would injure any one. What is it that is so galling to the feelings of manhood?"

"O, that godly sorrow for sin, as the Christians are pleased to call it—that humbling one's self down in the dust, and begging like a whipped cur for mercy—and that 'fasting' as they call it—starving one's self to get up a proper feeling of humility—that doing penance when one happens to laugh a little too loud on Sunday or some other heinous offence of that sort;—and," he added with considerable emphasis, "giving up the pleasures of life for the sake of Paradise which has no existence save in the imaginations of Christians. I will never give up my liberties, and put myself under the control of priests. Ugh!" he continued with a show of disgust, "I hate the whole system of Christianity from beginning to end. (Col. Paine uttered the truth when he made that assertion.) I do not see how people with any



sense can suffer themselves to be gulled with such trumpery. Junie, give up this silly notion of joining the church."

"Oh, father," she said with the tears streaming down her cheeks, "it may be a silly notion, as you say; I confess my weakness. But it is a harmless notion. My joining the church will certainly make me no worse."

"Make you no worse?" said Col. Paine. "It has already made you worse. It makes you go moping around like a criminal. Why, you have not been yourself for the past few days. I could not account for the absence of your usual vivacity. The experience of a few days in religious matters has made you look five years older. Already you begin to have the solemn appearance of a Sister of Charity."

"I have been in trouble, father, for a few days, I confess. But in the future I will be cheerful. There is nothing in religion to make one unhappy. On the contrary, it has an elevating influence. It enables one to bear up under the sorrows and trials of life."

"So," interrupted Gerie with a sneer, "you have begun to acquire that miserable cant for which the preachers are distinguished. You are rather a precocious disciple I think."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Col. Paine in vexation, "give up this foolish notion, and be yourself again."

Poor Junie, under this torrent of ridicule and



abuse, could no longer control her emotions. She was not prepared for this kind of opposition; and now she knew not what to do. So she broke down, and sobbed aloud.

“Junie,” said Gerie, “if I were you I would be ashamed of myself. What are you crying about? Is this one of the fruits of you religion? If it is, deliver me from it.”

Junie made no reply to the unkind cut of her cruel sister. But after a little she recovered herself sufficiently to speak; and she concluded that she would make a direct appeal to her parent who she was loath to believe would resist all her entreaties.

“Father,” she said uncovering her tear-stained face, and speaking in a pleading tone, “it is but a small favor that I ask. I cannot be satisfied unless I join the church. Please gratify me in this, and I shall not trouble you again.”

Then she paused for the reply. It occurred to Col. Paine that he ought to crush this thing in its very incipency. Neither ridicule nor reason would avail anything. Here was a plain issue between father and child. He was determined that he would not be outdone. So he said firmly and sternly,

“Junie, it is no small thing that you ask. You do not appreciate what is implied in my consent to your joining the church. It would be like surrendering all my principles.”

“I do not ask you to surrender any principle, father.”



“Silence!” exclaimed Col. Paine, still more sternly. “You know not the meaning of your own words. You want to make me the laughing-stock of all my neighbors. Now I have got enough of this foolishness; and I tell you once for all that if you join the church you will incur my everlasting displeasure. I tell you further that if you take this step against my will, that moment you sever all connection with me, and I shall disinherit you. Now that is my answer; and it shall be like the laws of the Medes and Persians.”

Poor Junie! All her hopes were now blighted. She knew her father too well to say anything more at least then. So without speaking she went to her own room, fell on her knees, and lifted her heart to God in humble prayer.

## CHAPTER XII.

The next morning Miss Junie arose in a state of mind which can be better imagined than described. There are many phases of human experience which words have no power to portray. We feel much more than we can express. Such is the poverty of human language, that often the



mute look conveys a more correct idea of the heart's emotions than any arrangement of words could possibly do.

The morning was bright and lovely, and its balmy air was sufficient to make bare existence desirable and enjoyable. But all this beautiful appearance of nature was not in harmony with Junie's feelings. She recalled the conversation of the previous evening; and she was filled with anxious forebodings. She dreaded an open rupture with her father; and yet she thought she ought to perform her duty at all hazards. Then it occurred to her that probably it might not be her duty to join the church when the step involved such fearful consequences to herself. It seemed that it would be ruinous to her earthly prospects. Then again the thought came to her mind that probably her father might retract what he had said, and allow her to have her own way in regard to the matter. But no; she believed that she knew him too well to indulge the hope that he would relent. Then she prayed with all the faith she could command; and still the way seemed dark. At last she came to the conclusion that she would consult Dr. Archer about it. She had promised to call anyhow before the next Sabbath.

So immediately after breakfast Junie ordered the carriage. Her father's suspicions being aroused he said:

“Junie, where are you going?”



Some weeks before that time the young lady would not have hesitated to practice some little prevarication; but now that she was governed by higher principles she recognized the obligation to speak the truth under all circumstances. She was sorry that her father had asked the question; but she must answer.

"Father," she said in a pleading tone, "if you will allow me, I want to see Dr. Archer. I signified my wish to join his church. But perhaps" she added with some hesitation, "if I inform him that the step does not meet your approbation, he may not think it necessary."

The Colonel was in hopes that his daughter had changed her mind after the last night's conversation. So he did not offer any objection to the proposed visit. Indeed he thought it would be best that she should see the minister and nip the matter in the very bud. But he deemed it advisable to reiterate the threat which he had made the previous evening in order that the menace might operate against any of Dr. Archer's persuasions.

"Junie," he said with great deliberation and with an air of firmness intended to make a deep impression, "I want no trifling in this matter. I have fully and deliberately made up my mind; and I tell you again that I will never give my consent to your joining the church. If you do so, I repeat that I will disinherit you. If you see proper to join the church never let your shadow



darken the doors of this house which has so long afforded you shelter. Now take your choice ; I am in earnest."

"May I not call on Dr. Archer this morning ?" she asked.

"Go if you wish ; but you know my decision, which is unalterable. When you join the church, never come back home ; it shall no longer be a home to you."

The Colonel looked terribly in earnest ; and his harsh words uttered with distressing deliberation made Junie turn a shade paler, and almost tremble. The idea of leaving her beautiful home and her father who had been so kind to her all her life, and had humored even her whims ; and of parting with Gerie who really loved her notwithstanding her sharp and sarcastic remarks,—this was an alternative presented to her mind, that sent a shivering, sickening sensation through her frame. The Colonel intended his menace to intimidate his daughter ; and still what he had said was half in earnest. He did not believe that Junie would ever put him to the test. It would be as great a trial to him as to her. He might execute the threat if he had reason to believe there was any attempt to force him into measures. He took pride in not being driven.

The young lady with a heart full of sorrow left her father without saying more. Her course now must depend somewhat on the advice of Dr. Archer ; though she had almost determined in



her own mind what she would do. In a little while she was again seated in the minister's parlor.

"I perceive, child, that you are in trouble," he said, a few moments after they had entered the house.

"Doctor," said the young lady with an expression which was nearer akin to a mournful smile than anything else, "you are an expert at reading thoughts."

"No, not thoughts, my child. I have no power to do that. It is only God that can perceive the thoughts and intents of the heart. I would not have you think for a moment that I can discover the operations of your mind. But you wear a troubled look without perhaps being aware of it."

"Well, Doctor, whatever my looks may indicate, I am in trouble. You know not what an awful alternative now squarely faces me.

"I might imagine," replied the minister, "but I will not try to anticipate. I might be mistaken. So go on, to state your trouble. I am ready to help you out of it, if I can possibly do so."

"Well, in regard to joining the church my father manifests an opposition which I did not expect, and for which I may say I was not prepared."

"I felt satisfied that he would oppose you. But is his opposition very decided?"

"So decided," replied Junie, "that he threatens to disinherit me, and drive me from home," she said as a flood of tears rushed to her eyes.



“Well,” said Dr. Archer quietly, “compose yourself, my child, and let us talk over the matter with calmness. We must not act hastily in the matter. Perhaps the opposition of your father may be overcome.”

“I have not the slightest hope of that,” answered Junie making a great effort to restrain her tears,

“Then, child, let us, before we say more, kneel here and pray to God for direction. I cannot think of giving advice in reference to such an important matter without first invoking the help of the Lord.”

Accordingly they knelt down, and Dr. Archer offered up a prayer appropriate to the occasion. When they arose the minister felt painfully perplexed. For a moment he did not utter a word. But presently he said :

“Well, child, what are you going to do? Perhaps, you have already determined upon some course of action which will supersede the necessity of giving advice; and besides you have not said that you need any advice.”

“I certainly need instruction. I know not what to do. Will it, do you you think, be necessary under the circumstances for me to join the church? Can I not be just as good a Christian at home?”

“But,” said the Doctor slowly and thoughtfully, “is this confessing Christ before men? Would your own conscience be satisfied with such a



course? Then see here," said the minister taking up a Bible and turning a few leaves, "what does this mean? 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' What means that?"

"Does religion really require, Doctor, that I should give up my home in order to be a Christian? Does it require me to come down to absolute beggary?"

"My child, heaven forbid that I should deceive you in this matter, or conceal anything from you that might place your eternal interests in jeopardy. Oh, if we miss heaven, nothing of an earthly character can compensate for that loss. Heaven is worth every sacrifice that a mortal can make. We would better by far live on bread and water in this world, if our religion makes it necessary, than to dwell forever in the flames of torment. The Lord requires us to do our duty, let the consequences be what they may. He will excuse no one. Often times our path seems dark and dreary; the clouds lower; and storms rage; but we must go forward. God promises protection and assistance only when we tread the path of duty. Outside of that path there is no safety. Thousands have given up not only their homes, but even their lives for Christ. You read in the New Testament of the trials and perils of Paul. The early Christians had to go through the fires of persecution. We read in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews an awful account of the trials of God's people."



And Dr. Archer turned to the book and read :  
“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again ; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that they might obtain a better resurrection : And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments : They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword ; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy ; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

“Such,” said Dr. Archer “were the sufferings that many have endured for the sake of their faith. Some it is true faltered, and renounced their faith ; but thousands did sacrifice their lives. Many were delicate females like yourself ; but they cheerfully gave up their lives for the Master. Now religion has always been the same. Whatever is required of one generation is required of another. We are to obey God rather than men. Whenever it comes to such a question as that we should not hesitate as to our course. All we have to do is to follow the path of duty. If it leads through fire we must nevertheless follow it. If we do so we have God’s promise of a glorious reward. ‘He that loseth his life for my sake



shall find it.' That blessed assurance is enough to encourage any Christian to tread the path of duty under any and all circumstances."

"But Dr. Archer," said Junie, "I do not propose to renounce Christ or my religion."

"I understand that," replied the preacher. "The martyrs had to choose between the renunciation of Christ or death at the fiery stake, or some other form. We are not now subjected to such a fearful ordeal. But granting that the consequences which you suppose would follow your joining the church—that is, you should be disinherited and should have to leave your home, still it would not be as much of a sacrifice as they made. They not only gave up their homes, but their very lives. What you would suffer would be nothing compared with what they endured."

"Do I understand you then, Dr. Archer, to advise me to join the church in opposition to the wish of my father, and become an outcast from home?"

"I do not take upon myself to tell you, my child, that you ought to disobey your parent in this matter. I am only in general terms pointing out the path of duty. My opinion is that we should obey God rather than men. But as to the particular course you ought to pursue, when we make a concrete case of it, that must be decided by yourself. Your conscience must be satisfied, not mine. I really wish you to decide the question for yourself. I would advise you to



pray over the matter ; take your Bible for your guide. Examine closely what is said in regard to confessing Christ before men ; and then determine upon your course of action. "If you can reconcile it to your conscience to live out of the church, and you think you can serve God in secret, I have nothing more to say. May the Lord help you to decide right. I fully appreciate the difficulties of your position ; and I think it will cost you a hard struggle to come to a decision. But put yourself in the hands of Christ, and he will make the way plain. When that is done, there is only one course left you ; and that is to walk in the way which He points out, let the consequences be what they may."

When Miss Junie left the residence of Dr. Archer, it was with a rather clouded face and a heavy heart. She could not see clearly that she was called upon to make the sacrifice which joining the church would render necessary ; and yet she felt that if she were only a member of the church, she would certainly be in the path of duty and of safety. In this state of hesitation she could not but feel depressed. When she reached home she met her father who said :

"Well, what was the result of your visit?"

"I have decided," said Junie in a tone of tinged with sorrow, "that I will not join the church—at least, not yet."

"That is a sensible decision, my daughter. I thought you would have too much good sense to



take such a foolish step after you had weighed the subject in your logical mind."

Junie was not in a condition to appreciate such a compliment. It was so far from the truth that it sounded more like mockery than anything else. Had the person speaking been anybody but her father she would have regarded such words as mere derision. But, Col. Paine looking more closely at her pensive face said :

"I hope you have not made any further engagement with Dr. Archer. My advice to you is to strike his name off the list of your acquaintances. While he appears to be a gentleman, he is an oily tongued hypocrite who will use all his influence to get you into his church."

This unjust accusation was almost too much for the pent-up feeling of Junie. She felt like repelling it as a falsehood, but she durst not open her mouth in defense of the slandered minister. While her heart ached she said :

"I did not tell him that I would call again."

"Did he ask you to call ? "

"He gave me a general permission to call whenever I should feel like it."

"Permission, indeed ! " exclaimed the Colonel with a frown. "I suppose he acts the autocrat over his congregation. He might consider himself honored by a visit from my daughter, without permission."

"He did not say permission, father," said Junie quickly. "I unfortunately used the word which



occurred to me as proper, from the fact that I have no right to trespass upon his time without permission. I should have said that he gave me a general invitation to call whenever I desired to do so. That was all."

"Well, never mind, child," said Col. Paine kindly. "Have nothing more to do with him, whether he permits or invites. Dismiss this disagreeable subject from your mind and try to be happy. I hope I shall never again hear you mention such a thing as joining the church."

Junie made no reply but went immediately to her room, and sat down to think. Her thoughts culminated in the determination to be a Christian at home. She tried to satisfy her conscience with the reflection that it was not Christ and her faith that she had renounced, but had only abandoned the idea of joining the church. That was all. She could and would enjoy her religion in secret. Accordingly she read and studied the Bible, which Dr. Archer had presented, but which she was under the necessity of hiding from both her father and her sister Gerie. She prayed much; and yet with all her secret devotions, there lurked in her heart a feeling of dissatisfaction with herself. Somehow the "secret monitor within" did not appear to approve of her decision to live out of the church. So it is with every believer who avoids a known duty. The conscience cannot be bribed or flattered into silence. Reason as he may, like Ban-



quo's ghost, it "will not down at his bidding."

So days rolled away ; and Junie felt that she was making no progress ; but there was a painful sense of retrograding. She had no Christian friend to whom she could go for comfort and counsel except Dr. Archer ; and somehow she dreaded another interview with him. He had spoken his mind in regard to joining the church. The young lady was hardly capable of making a correct analysis of her own feelings. The Christian race was something new to her, and she was not acquainted with the difficulties that lie in the way. She often propounded the question to herself whether her refusing to attach herself to the church had anything to do with her feeling of general unhappiness. Why was it so important to join the church ? Dr. Archer seemed to think it necessary ; but then, the thought came creeping into her mind that possibly he might be a little over zealous on the subject, as he appeared to be a rather impulsive character. But why could she not be a good and true Christian without ever going to church at all ? Then, some passage of Scripture would flash into her mind like, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." How was she denying herself ? Then she would recall what Dr. Archer had said about the martyrs. Then she would try to make excuses for herself. In the midst of this multitude of clashing notions and feelings Miss Junie was



decidedly unhappy. She became melancholy, and avoided company as much as she possibly could. Miss Gerie grew vexed with her sister, and frequently rebuked her with considerable sharpness. One day she said :

“Junie, do for goodness’ sake, quit moping around, as if you expected to die. What is the matter with you anyhow? You don’t talk any scarcely ; and you just stay in your room from morning till night. I wish you had never met with that preacher, and had never heard that sermon about Jesus Christ. Just such people as you are enough to disgust anybody with religion. If you expect to go to heaven why can’t you be cheerful and happy? What is the use of going about with your head hanging down as if you were some criminal soon to be executed? If that is the way religion serves people, I don’t want any of it.”

What could poor Junie reply. Miss Gerie was worldly-minded not even believing in the existence of a God ; or at least she was so thoughtless that she never examined her own mind to ascertain if she believed anything in reference to eternal things. Junie could find no sympathy at home ; and she had to endure her trials in silence. She durst not make known her feelings.

One day a ticket to attend another ball in Holly Springs was sent out addressed to the Misses Paine. Gerie on receiving it, at once sought her sister. With a face glowing with delight she exclaimed :



"See here, Junie,—another ball. How shall we dress?"

"I am not going, sister."

"Not going!" exclaimed Gerie looking at her in amazement.

"No; I am not," was the firm reply.

"Why not?"

"Because I do not wish to go."

"Yes," said Gerie with a bitter smile, "there is that abominable religion again. Have I not always said that religion only makes people unhappy? Well," she continued in a sneering tone, "I would not be one of those moody, mopish Christians for anything in the world. I never saw the like in my life. A few months ago you were gay and lively, and fond of balls; and now you are just like some old grandma seventy years of age. What has got into you? Do you expect to go moping the balance of your days?"

"Sister," said Junie with tears coming to her eyes, "what makes you talk so unkindly to me? You can go to the ball, if you wish. My staying at home needs not give you any trouble."

"Yes, but people will be making remarks about it, and asking me where you are, and why you did not come, and all that. I hate to tell them you have turned Christian, and have given up dancing and gone into private life, and changed your room into a cell. I don't like to make such explanations."

"You need not make any explanation. If any



one should ask about me, you can say that I did not wish to attend; and you need not assign any reason for my absence."

No persuasion could induce Junie to recede from her determination not to go. Col. Paine himself talked with his daughter on the subject, and even tried to bribe her into going to the ball. He told her that there was no harm in it, according to the highest standard of religion, if the standard could be ascertained from the conduct of Christians themselves. He had often seen them dancing in the ball-room, and they were consistent people too.

Some months previous to this, before Junie had become a Christian, if she had refused to attend a ball, he would not have asked her a question about it. But now it was different. He thought that if she could be persuaded to attend this ball, it would be a little victory—at least one retrogressive step toward her former position. But Miss Junie was firm, and the Colonel, though considerably chagrined, wisely concluded that the matter was of such a nature that it would not admit of the application of force. So Miss Gerie was compelled to go to the ball without her sister—a thing she had not done for several years.

Bertram and Milson were both in attendance. In the course of the evening Bertram said to Miss Gerie:

"Why did not Miss Junie come to the ball to-night?"



“O, I hate to tell you, Mr. Bertram. But sister has turned Christian—thorough Christian. I can do nothing with her. Father’s persuasions and mine were all in vain. You never saw any one changed as she has in the last few days. She looks as solemn as a preacher. I really feel sorry for her. If that is the way religion does people I never do want it.”

“Religion effectually puts an end to all pleasures.” (Oh, Bertram, what a falsehood that is!) “Why Christians condemn all amusements, I never could see.” (Another falsehood, Mr. Bertram.)

“Neither can I,” answered Gerie. “Why they should oppose dancing, for instance, passes my comprehension.”

“Mine too. I do not know of any recreation which is more refining and more healthful; and it certainly does have that effect.” (But what other effect does it have, Mr. Bertram?)

“Of course it does,” answered Gerie, who would endorse almost any affirmation that Bertram might make. “I do not see on what principle God could condemn it.”

“That is,” interrupted Bertram, “if there is any God to whom we are responsible. You forget.”

“Yes; that is what I meant. I did not forget, but I had in my mind the kind of God that Christians worship. If there is any such God I do think he would be very cruel to forbid so innocent a pleasure as dancing.”



“By the way,” said Bertram, “speaking of religion reminds me that a celebrated Bishop of the Methodist church is announced to preach here next Sunday. He is quite an orator, even if he is a Christian; and if you and Miss Junie would like to attend, I think Milson can be pressed into service as an escort.”

“For me?”

“No, not for you. Because, with your consent, I reserve that pleasure and honor for my humble self. No doubt you will be highly entertained with the performance of the preacher. What do you say?”

“I am perfectly willing, Mr. Bertram. But I do not believe that father will give his consent for Junie to go.”

“O, never mind that,” said Bertram. “We need not let him know where we are going. We can tell him a little fib.”

“Very well,” said Gerie with a laugh. Just so she could be with Bertram she could endure a divine service. Then it would be such a treat for Junie!

“I will see Milson now, if you will excuse me a moment?”

He then at once approached Milson and stated his proposition. To his surprise Milson consented with an expression of pleasure on his face.

The ball at last broke up, and the parties separated. Next morning when Gerie informed her sister in regard to the arrangement for the follow-



ing Sabbath there was a perceptible brightening of Junie's face. As to all the causes Gerie was ignorant. At any rate Junie was glad to learn that she could attend church once more. So she was in better spirits the remainder of the week.

### CHAPTER XIII.

According to previous agreement, when the next Sabbath dawned Milson and Bertram made their appearance at Col. Paine's residence in order to see the young ladies to church.

Judging from Milson's conduct it would seem that he had resisted the "yellow fiend" to such an extent that he now had full control of himself. He could look Miss Gerie squarely in the face without that palpitatio of the heart, which, under some circumstances that require no description, is rather "painfully pleasing." There are some phases of human nature that can be learned only by experience, and this is one of them.

Milson said very little to the fair Egeria, and paid not much attention to her in any way. What change, if any, had "come over the spirit of his dream" was known only to himself. But he manifested not the least vexation or pertur-



bation when Miss Gerie was assisted into the buggy by the devoted Bertram. Her evident partiality for Bertram could not escape his notice; and yet he seemed not to care. We are speaking merely of the external appearance. We do not pretend to say that he had lost his fondness for Miss Gerie—a fondness that had been fostered and encouraged for some years. Were we to say this the inference might be drawn that he was of a rather fickle mind, unless our judicious reader should conclude that the recent exhibitions of some phases of her character, to which attention has been called, constituted just cause for an alteration of sentiment toward the fair one. We merely inform our reader in what manner the young man acted. When he helped Junie into his own buggy he betrayed not the slightest emotion, if there was room to suspect any unusual emotion in the case. If a stranger had been looking on, and had desired to ascertain the state of Milson's heart, he would doubtless have pronounced the young man indifferent to the charms of either one of the young ladies. But dismissing such matters, for the present, at least, the parties were soon on the way to Holly Springs. Col. Paine did not ask any question as to where they were going. He could trust Bertram, who had in his mind a very plausible "fib" if the Colonel had manifested any curiosity to know their destination.

In due time the parties were seated in the



house dedicated to the service of the living God. Soon the preacher entered the pulpit. It was the Rev. Joshua Soule, D. D., one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church. As our story does not concern him, we will not consume time by attempting to give a description of the man. It is sufficient to say that he was a grand man, and a powerful preacher—a man who had so little ambition to gain ecclesiastical honors that when he was elected Bishop in 1820 he declined to serve the church in that capacity. But in 1824 he was re-elected, and submitting to the earnest and urgent solicitations of his friends, was consecrated to the office.

When the Bishop had gone through the preliminary exercises he announced as his text, Hebrews 11:8. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

As he proceeded with his subject he warmed up, and his very soul seemed to be on fire. A great interest was awakened; and many in the audience wept. When he spoke of Abraham’s leaving his home and friends, sacrificing personal ease and comfort, going out, with his life in his hands not knowing what would become of him, it seemed to Junie that the Bishop was preaching directly to her. Then, when he came to the personal application of his subject, and exhorted his hearers in eloquent, burning words, to profit



by this sublime exhibition of faith, and to obey the call of God, even if they had to forsake home and country, Miss Junie began to suspect that Dr. Archer had acquainted him with her history. If the supposition had not been too presumptuous she would have concluded that the sermon had been preached for her special benefit. Of course the Bishop knew not that there was such a person in the congregation as Miss Junie Paine. It was just one of those general and abstract discussions which frequently find concrete cases when the minister is in perfect ignorance of the fact. Almost any minister can refer to such instances that have come under his own observation. The Bishop's application of his subject appeared to Junie so personal that she could not restrain her tears. Even Milson showed by the expression of his eyes that he was deeply affected. As for Bertram and Gerie, they looked on as if they were greatly amused. What there was in the sermon to melt people to tears was beyond their comprehension.

At the close of the sermon the preacher called for any in the congregation who desired to be prayed for, to come forward. Numbers at once availed themselves of the invitation. It was evident that a great interest was aroused in the church. After a prayer or two and a hymn the congregation was dismissed.

On the way back home Milson and Junie were silent till they had passed out of town. Then



the young lady was seized with an inclination to cry. Suddenly the unmistakable sound of weeping was heard in Milson's buggy.

"Miss Junie," said Milson, "what is the matter? Why do you weep?"

The young lady could make no reply for several moments. Milson, who knew nothing of the spiritual change that had come over Junie, was becoming embarrassed by the situation. He knew not what the passer-by might think to see him riding with a young lady who was making demonstrations of such deep grief. At length Junie recovered herself sufficiently to say :

"O, Mr. Milson, I am miserable. Please excuse my emotion. I am incapable of controlling my feelings. If you knew all you would not blame me."

"If your trouble," said Milson, "is of such a character that you can reveal it to me, I am ready to serve you in any way that I can."

"Thank you, Mr. Milson; but I do not think you could give me any assistance in my present trouble. Since, however, I have shown so much weakness in your presence, you are entitled to an explanation. Well, you remember the Sunday we went to hear Dr. Archer preach?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well that sermon made a deep and lasting impression on my mind. It seems that nothing could efface it. At last I called on Dr. Archer, who succeeded in relieving a portion of my



troubles ; and that means that I have become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"So," said Milson, "you are satisfied as to the truth of the Bible?"

"Perfectly satisfied, Mr. Milson. I have not a doubt of its divine origin."

"How did you satisfy yourself?"

"By reading the book itself. The four gospels appeared to me to be written by honest men. I accepted their statements as a simple matter of history. I could see no good reason to doubt."

"But how do you know they tell the truth?" asked Milson.

"What object could they possibly have in view to utter falsehoods?" said Junie. "They were persecuted even to death ; and yet they could not be made to retract a single assertion they had made. But it was the purity and excellency of their teachings that satisfied me. If they knew that what they wrote was false, they must have been bad men and hypocrites. Now why should hypocrites undergo suffering and death merely to perpetrate a known falsehood—and such a falsehood as could have been easily detected? If they were bad men, from what source did they learn their morality? Why should hypocrites travel up and down the world preaching a pure religion which condemned themselves and brought them into danger? These writers were illiterate men, and were utterly incapable of concocting such a story as that of Jesus Christ."



"I confess, Miss Junie, that your reasoning appears plausible. But somehow this sort of logic does not satisfy me."

"Well, what kind of evidence would satisfy you?"

"I hardly know myself," said Milson. "But it seems to me that the appearance of God on earth in visible form ought to have made such an impression on mankind that the facts of the life of Christ could not be denied. It seems to me that it ought to have so interwoven itself with all history that the truth of the Bible could not be disputed by anyone."

"I venture to say," said Junie timidly, "that some men would dispute it in spite of all history. Many of the Jews would not believe in Christ, who saw him do the very things that are recorded in history. If men would not believe, who had ocular proof, how would men now, who have the same disposition, believe on the mere testimony of history? But why do you not go to Dr. Archer and talk with him on the subject? I am sure that he could throw light on it. I think you said you intended to investigate."

"I did intend; but I have not done so."

"I think you would better, Mr. Milson, if I may be so bold as to say it. It is a matter of too great importance to be postponed. You remember that Dr. Archer said that any one could be satisfied who would take the trouble to investigate."



"I would investigate" said Milson, "but I do not know where to begin. The subject is so much out of my line of business that I do not really know how to commence."

"I would like to suggest again" said Junie, "that you go to Dr. Archer and have a consultation with him. I feel certain that you will not be disappointed."

"I think I will," answered Milson, "just so soon as I have time."

"If you would not consider me presumptuous, Mr. Milson, I think you would better take time. Religion is too important a concern to admit of delay."

"That is true, Miss Junie; and I intend to give the subject my earnest attention. I assure you that I am not indifferent. I fully realize the necessity of having some fixed principles; and I will follow your advice. I will get Dr. Archer to put me on the track of systematic investigation."

As it was with Milson, so it is with thousands. They are somewhat skeptical; and really wish in their hearts not to be so; and yet from some cause they will not take any steps to have their doubts removed. They could soon be satisfied if they felt sufficient interest to investigate. But procrastination, the cunning thief, steals away the golden moments; and soon they come to the end of their mortal career; and then the shrinking soul soon to be forced into the realms of eternity hears the sad whisper, too late.



“But” said Milson suddenly changing the topic, “you have not told me your trouble.”

“No. Well, after becoming a Christian I conceived it to be my duty to join the church. I asked my father’s consent. As you may suppose, he promptly refused. I thought then I would try to lead a Christian life in secret; but I have succeeded very poorly. To-day the sermon has made me feel wretched. I am, I feel, neglecting a known duty. I believe I ought to join the church at all hazards.”

“Why not join anyhow in spite of your father’s opposition?”

“If I do, Mr. Milson, I will have to follow the example of Abraham, and leave home, and go out, not knowing whither I go. Father has threatened to disinherit me, and drive me from home.”

“He has?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you believe he will execute his threat?”

“I have every reason to fear that he will. But, Mr. Milson, I will tell you that I have now determined to leave home in the morning. I cannot stand to live another day in the neglect of my duty. Abraham had to make a great sacrifice; and it occurs to me that I would be a poor sort of Christian if I cannot sacrifice the comforts of home for the sake of confessing Christ before men. I must try to have some of the faith of Abraham. I shall leave home—I must do it—I will do it.”



Milson looked at her with deep interest. He thought how different she was from Gerie—the mere painted butterfly who never appeared to have a serious thought, but whose mind dwelt only on frivolous things. It was strange that he had never noticed the difference between them until recently. But he had not been thrown much in Miss Junie's company. And now that she was about to take a step, at the call of duty, which would leave her without a home and a protector, the strong points of her character were brought out in vivid contrast with the weak traits of Miss Gerie; and is it to be wondered at that she suddenly rose several degrees in Milson's estimation? Why had he never before noticed particularly her decidedly classical features? While she sat in the buggy with such a solid look of determination, every feature expressive of the intensity of her purpose, the conviction seized upon Milson's mind that Miss Junie was a jewel whose true beauties had not been developed. Presently he said:

"I do admire your devotion to principle, Miss Junie; and if your worst anticipations are realized—that is, you have to leave home—if you would—" And Milson paused as if painfully embarrassed. (Take care, impetuous young man!)

"If I would what, Mr. Milson?" asked Junie, who had no idea what was passing through the young man's mind.

"Well—nothing," he replied, as a deep blush



receded from his face. "There is no use of saying anything till it becomes necessary to act. But perhaps, Miss Junie, your father will relent. I do not see how he could have the heart to turn you out of doors."

"I have no hope that he will retract his threat. He has said very positively what he will do."

"Well, where are you going?"

"I shall go to Dr. Archer's to-morrow, and ask his advice. Beyond that I have determined upon nothing. Like Abraham, I am going out not knowing whither. There is another passage of Scripture which says, 'when my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' I have full confidence in the promises of the Heavenly father. Abraham trusted God, and I feel that I can, too."

Miss Junie rose another degree in Mr. Milson's estimation. Well.

"Well, Miss Junie, if you are determined on this course, with your permission, I will be a friend to you whatever may be your trials."

"Thank you, Mr. Milson," she said, as the tears welled up to her eyes.

"I hope, though, your father may not be so harsh as you are disposed to believe. But if he carries out his threat, if you could only—" Milson paused again.

"Could only what, Mr. Milson?" asked Junie, a little surprised at his apparent inability to finish sentences which seemed to foreshadow something of importance.



“Well, never mind,” he said slowly and as if hesitating about the completion of the sentence, some of whose members crept back into his heart. Junie could form no idea of what he intended to say. “Well, never mind ; we will wait till the worst happens.”

By this time they had reached home. Miss Junie appeared to be more cheerful than she had been for some days.

That evening when Milson took his leave he said to Junie in a tone and manner that caused her to bestow upon him a very searching look :

“When can I see you again ?”

“I do not know. I shall be in town I suppose, this week. I intend to go to Dr. Archer’s in the morning ; and my future course will depend upon his advice.”

“Well,” said Milson, “whenever I can be of any service, please let me know.”

Junie said nothing to this beyond thanking Mr. Milson for his kind offer. Then they parted.

That night Junie was engaged in writing. After awhile she folded up the letter which she had penned and laid it away.

Monday morning Junie felt quite sad ; but she tried to be cheerful.

That evening when she ordered the carriage Col. Paine, to her relief, did not inquire where she was going. She had said nothing about the church since their last interview ; and he was beginning to indulge the hope that she had given



up what he considered to be a foolish notion. He would say nothing that would cause her to think that he even suspected the purpose which now had assumed in her mind the form of a fixed determination. He acted and talked just as if she had entirely dismissed the matter from her thoughts.

So Junie got into the carriage; and it was not long before she was at the residence of Dr. Archer. She gave the driver a letter which she ordered him to deliver to her father, at the same time telling him that she would not go back home that evening, and that he needed not return for her unless he was sent by Col. Paine. When they were seated in the parlor Dr. Archer said:

"I have been looking for you for some time. I was persuaded that you could not be satisfied."

"No, Doctor, I have not been satisfied. So, to make a long story short, I have come to the determination to join the church, let the consequences be what they may."

"Your father, I infer from your language has not given his consent to this step."

"I have said nothing more to him about it. I left home this evening without telling him where I was going."

"I am afraid," said Dr. Archer, thoughtfully, "that you have been a little rash. My opinion is that you ought to have informed your parent in regard to the step you are about to take."

"I was afraid to do so," said Miss Junie "after



he had twice said that he would never give his consent. I determined to put myself completely in the hands of the Lord and do what I conceived to be my duty, and which you told me is my duty."

"The Lord," said Dr. Archer, "will not disappoint your trust; but while that is true, we must exercise prudence. But now I suppose it is useless to talk about it; you have already taken the step. What do you propose to do? or have you settled upon any definite course?"

"I suppose I will hear from my father to-morrow. If he says I shall not return home, then I will go out like Abraham not knowing whither I go."

"God grant that you may have the faith of Abraham. But you must not forget that he had his trials, notwithstanding his faith. You too must prepare for trials. But let us wait till we hear your father's decision. Till then you must remain with my family. We are glad to have you with us."

Junie expressed her obligation to the Doctor for this generous offer of hospitality, which she said she would be forced to accept. So here for the present we have her pleasantly located at Dr. Archer's.

The carriage driver returned; and Col. Paine and Gerie were both surprised to see that the expected occupant did not get out. The man delivered the letter with which he had been en-



trusted, after having informed his master that he had left Miss Junie at the house of the preacher. The Colonel quickly opened the letter and read as follows :

MY DEAR FATHER:—It is painful to my feelings to be under the necessity of communicating with you in this way. But I have determined to follow my convictions of duty. I cannot rest satisfied to live out of the church. I have resolved to join whatever may be the consequences. You threatened to disinherit me, if I took this step. But, dear father, I assure you I do so in no spirit of defiance. I tried to comply with your wishes, and thus to render that obedience which is due from the child to the parent. But my obedience did not assuage the stings of conscience; and at least such obedience appeared to me to be sinful, because it involved disobedience to God. We must obey God rather than man. I know, dear father, you will say that these are foolish notions; but I beg you to consider that these notions are with me firm convictions, which it is impossible to eradicate.

I regret that I had to leave home as I did. But I had no reason to believe that you would recede from your declaration that I should not return if I did join the church. Therefore I left without saying anything to you about my intention. I pray for your forgiveness. But I am bound, dear father, to heed the dictates of my conscience. I dreaded another interview with you on this subject because you expressed yourself so emphatically that it left me no room to hope for your consent to my joining the church. O, will you forgive me? You know not what an effort it cost me to leave home as I did. I will gladly return if you will give me permission to attach myself to the church. This I must do, even if the loss of my life is the consequence. If, my dear father, you will not forgive me, and bid me return home, on the condition named, then God's will be done. I know not what is to become of me; but I must do my duty, if I perish. I make this emphatic affirmation not in defiance, but merely to show to you the strength of convictions which I cannot stifle. Please let me know your decision. Whatever it may be, you shall still have the love of

Your affectionate

JUNIE.

When Col. Paine had finished this letter he handed it to Gerie without the utterance of a word. That young lady rapidly glanced over the contents, and then said :

“Well, what will you do, father?”

“What can I do,” said Col. Paine knitting his brow, “but carry out my threat? That wretched preacher has put this silly notion into her. But



I am not going to be trifled with; they cannot force me into measures. If Junie joins that miserable institution called a church she cannot live under my roof—that's all."

"But, father, people will talk about us if you don't allow Junie to come back."

"Would you have me to forfeit my word?" exclaimed Col. Paine angrily. "I gave her fair warning. She has deliberately disobeyed me; and now she may take the consequences. I care not what people may say. I have said it, and I will be as good as my word. I will certainly have my way in my own house."

"But, father, what is to become of her? How will she make her living? What can a helpless thing, like she is, do?"

"I do not know. I disclaim all responsibility. Miss Junie must look out for herself. I am certain I can do without her as well as she can do without me. If Dr. Archer thinks it his duty to entice her away from home, he may have the pleasure of providing for her."

"May be Junie will come back home after she has tried to make her living."

"She may try it" said Col. Paine. "I shall not give her a cent. She had no business to leave home."

Gerie knew it was useless to try to dissuade her father from his purpose. So she said nothing more. She felt sorry that her sister had acted in this way; and she could not imagine



what Junie intended to do. Then she dreaded the disgrace which her sister's foolish conduct would bring upon the family. Yet she hoped that Junie would soon be brought to her senses by the necessity of gaining a subsistence, and would repent of her folly and return home.

That evening Milson called at Dr. Archer's. He said very little to Junie about her prospects, as he could not conceive that Col. Paine could be guilty of the meanness of turning his amiable daughter out of home, penniless into the world. When at a late hour he was bidding the young lady adieu, he informed her that the next morning he had to leave home, and would be gone for several weeks. Business of importance called him to Louisville, Ky. He then asked permission to see her when he should return.

"Certainly, Mr. Milson, I shall be delighted to see you at any time, though I know not where another week may find me."

"Let us hope for the best," replied Milson. "When I return I hope that I may find you and your father perfectly reconciled. I shall rejoice to find you at home."

"If you knew my father, Mr. Milson, as well as I do, you could hardly use the word hope in connection with your good wishes. There is no foundation for such a hope as you have expressed. But I thank you."

Milson then left her. Miss Junie could not account for his manner toward her. But still she



felt glad that she could trust Milson as a friend which he had proposed to be. It was simply the relation of a friend which he sought to occupy—that was all. Anyhow the thought was pleasant that he would be a true friend. So, here was one gleam of sunshine.

The next morning one of Col. Paine's servants brought Junie a letter which she eagerly opened. Then she read the following words :

You have without my consent left your home. If you see proper to disobey me in this matter the consequences must rest with yourself. Whenever you desire to return home, you can do so by renouncing the institution which I detest. This is the only condition on which you can return. If you decide still to carry out your intention of attaching yourself to that institution, let me know, and I will send you your clothing, but nothing more, and then you may regard yourself no longer as my daughter.

Thus ended the letter. Not even was her father's signature attached to it. She had not dared to hope that her father would revoke his decision; but the short letter was so cruel, cold, and destitute of all sympathy and affection, that poor Junie let it drop on the floor, and then buried her face in her hands. She wept bitterly at the thought that she was now indeed an outcast from home. Presently she sought Dr. Archer and showed him the heartless missive. When he had read and returned it, she said :

“I have not the most remote hope that father will ever relent.”

“Well, what is your decision ?”

“I have determined to join the church, as I told you, and take the consequences. Nothing else will satisfy my conscience.”



“My child, I approve your decision ; and I know that God will bless you. But you must prepare for severe trials. You do not yet realize the position you occupy. But God’s people are always tried—some more heavily than others. But let us not give way to despondency. It may please the good Lord not to expose you to any very great trials. We will only have to wait and see. If I can, I will see your father soon and try to persuade him to relent. So just remain here till Sunday ; and you can join the church. And so the matter was settle for the present.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

That very day as Dr. Archer was walking along the street he met Col. Paine. The preacher thought it to be his duty to intercede for Junie who did not seem, according to his view, to fully realize the exigencies of the situation. With unbounded faith she had obeyed the Scripture in its most literal sense, “take no thought for the morrow.” She had abandoned her home, it appeared without any plans for her support. To



tell the truth the Doctor was just a little perplexed by the situation.

He had no intimate acquaintance with the infidel, and did not know how his advances might be received ; but still, he did not feel that he ought to avoid, on that account, what he conceived to be his duty. Accordingly he stopped on the street, when they had met, and asked Col. Paine to grant him the favor of a private interview. The Colonel with frigid politeness signified by a mere monosyllable his willingness to comply with the minister's request, of course having a well-grounded suspicion of what would be the subject of their conversation.

When they had found a private place in the counting-room of a store-house Dr. Archer broke the silence.

"Col. Paine," he said, "I desire to talk with you in regard to your daughter, Miss Junie."

"So I suppose," was the dry answer.

"You know what step she has taken."

"I know she has stepped away from her home."

"She has," continued Dr. Archer, "signified her intention of joining my church ; and I cannot—I dare not reject her application."

"You can do just as you please" answered Col. Paine with an air of as much indifference as he could assume.

"You do not propose then to interfere ?"

"I do not, sir. My daughter has seen proper to abandon her home without any provocation. I



have nothing, sir, to conceal in regard to the matter. I told her very plainly and distinctly what would be the consequence of her joining the church. You may know by this time that I have no use for the church. I am aware, sir, of the difference of your sentiments and mine on this subject. You are entitled to your opinions, and I am entitled to mine. I claim nothing for myself in this respect which I do not accord to others."

"It seems," said Dr. Archer who had very little hope of effecting a reconciliation between the infidel and his daughter, "that you make some exceptions."

"I understand your insinuation, sir," said Col. Paine with coolness, "and I was perfectly aware that I had left the way open for the exercise of your logical acumen. But, sir, if there is any crime in the exceptions at which you hint, you too are guilty. If you had not interrupted me I was going on to say that I claim the right to govern my own household."

"I have not sought," said Dr. Archer, "to interfere with your family government."

"I do not bring up any such accusation against you. I do not accuse any one of interfering. But what I meant to say is this: I have the right to make rules for the government of my family, and such rules as I see fit to make. I recognize your right to do the same for your family. Whenever my children violate these



rules I have the right to inflict such punishment as I deem proper. My daughter has deliberately violated my rules, and she must suffer the penalty. I shall not allow my children to rule me."

"I have no desire," replied Dr. Archer, "to deprive you of any of your rights. But why should you be so opposed to your daughter's joining the church? What harm can it possibly do her? However much you may be opposed to the church you cannot say that it is an evil institution. We do not propose to make people worse; on the contrary, our aim is to elevate their moral character, and to make them better citizens. Your daughter cannot possibly be injured by her connection with an association whose only object is the accomplishment of good. Besides, by taking this step she will secure the good will and sympathy of a host of friends against whose moral and social standing you cannot find an objection."

"That may be true" said Col. Paine; "but suppose one of your children should renounce your opinions, and leave home, and come to my house in order to espouse my principles, what would you say? Would you think any more of your child for pursuing such a course?"

"I certainly should not," answered Dr. Archer. "But there is a vast difference between our creeds."

"O yes," said the Colonel with a hardly perceptible sneer, "I see the drift of what you are going to say."



"If my child," said the preacher, not seeming to notice the last remark, "were to act in the way you have supposed, I should feel deeply grieved; because I would be bound to consider that he was bringing ruin upon himself."

"Yet," replied Col. Paine beginning to manifest some warmth, "reverse the circumstances, and I suppose I must remain silent. Why may I not feel grieved too when my children trample my authority under foot? and may I not think they are injuring themselves by giving up my principles for yours?"

"But you forget," said the preacher, "that the church does not injure anyone."

"That is your view of the matter."

"Col. Paine," asked Dr. Archer with great solemnity of manner, "do you really believe that the church injures anyone?"

"I think it does, sir, if you insist on a plain and honest answer."

"Will you be so kind as to tell me in what the injury consists?"

"My experience with my own family is enough for me. My wife was a Christian, and her so-called religion made her a gloomy woman. My daughter who was once lively and cheerful, for several weeks has been moping around, and now has deserted her home. I think this ought to be sufficient to dissatisfy me with the church, and all connected with it. These are two beings whom, to my certain knowledge, that the church has seri-



ously injured. (O, Col. Paine, you have not made a true statement of the case.) Why, sir," continued the Colonel with considerable energy, "religion seems to be a synonym for gloom itself."

"I will insure," replied Dr. Archer, who did not think he had the right to tell the infidel of the tyranny which he had practiced in his family government, "that if you will allow your daughter to join the church and enjoy its privileges, and remain at home, she would be anything else than unhappy. It was the thought of incurring your displeasure that has caused her to be gloomy. There is nothing in religion, as I understand it, to make a person unhappy. On the contrary it is a source of the purest joy, and has a tendency to make us rejoice even in the midst of trials and misfortunes. It presents the most delightful and cheering prospects of which it is possible to conceive. There is nothing in religion itself that has made your daughter unhappy; but her surroundings have produced her gloom, if such you please to call it."

"I do not care to be preached to," said Col. Paine bitterly. "I have made up my mind. If my daughter is at your house, you can inform her that I will send her clothing; and with that my obligation to maintain her comes to an end. I told her emphatically that I would disinherit her, and I will not falsify my word. (Col. Paine reminds one of Herod who had such a tender conscience that he would not falsify his oath to a



dancing girl, but did not scruple to murder John the Baptist.) When she chooses to give up this foolish notion, she can return home, and I will be the kind father that I have ever been."

"What foolish notion?" asked the preacher.

"Joining the church, sir," answered Col. Paine with a show of firmness in his manner, as if prepared for any resentment which his remark might provoke. He had resolved not to yield an inch to Dr. Archer, and not to spare his feelings, if the preacher said anything which would admit of a harsh reply.

"You owe to the church," replied Dr. Archer, seeing it was useless to say more in regard to Junie, "all the blessings which you enjoy, of a civil character."

"That assertion requires proof," interrupted Col. Paine, who was beginning to feel that he was a match for Dr. Archer.

"Our republican institutions" continued the preacher, "are founded on the Bible. Had it not been for that book which you so bitterly denounce, we would be nothing but a nation of savages, and probably cannibals. The Bible makes our civilization what it is. As a proof of what I assert, you have only to compare our condition with that of other nations, and what an immeasurable difference there is. Our educational and charitable institutions are to be traced to the Bible."

"And that same book," interrupted Col. Paine, "which you regard as divine, has caused nations



to roll in blood. Men have taken that book in one hand, and the sword in the other, and have slain their fellow-beings as if they were wild beasts; and both parties professed to be serving the same God that gave them the Bible, or rather as they thought, gave it to them."

"Granting," replied the preacher, "that your charge is not without foundation: Admitting that men have been persecuted, on account of difference of religious opinions, I ask you can you find anything in the Bible which authorizes persecution? Does it not condemn bloodshed? Does not the sentiment run all through it in letters of gold, 'peace on earth; good will to men?' Have you never read in the Bible that heaven-born sentiment, 'love your enemies?' Does it not command us even to do good to them that hate us?"

"It would seem," said Col. Paine with a slight sneer, "that the Children of Israel were ignorant of these fine, heaven-born sentiments when they went into the land of Canaan, and in accordance with the command of their imaginary God butchered nation after nation in cold blood. That was loving their enemies with a vengeance!"

"I see no difficulty in that at all," replied Dr. Archer. "You are not the first one who has brought forward that objection—an objection which has been exploded a hundred times. Infidelity is no new thing, Col. Paine. All the objections which it is possible for you or anyone



else to adduce have been often answered. Now in reply to what you have asserted in regard to the Children of Israel slaying the Canaanites, I say that this was done at the command of God. These nations had filled up the measure of their iniquity. The time had come for their punishment. God selected the Children of Israel as the instrument of their punishment. The Lord could just as easily have destroyed them by disease or some other means in the way of what we call natural causes. He had good reasons for employing the Israelites as an agency in the destruction of these nations. The Lord's ways are past finding out; and he does not often reveal to us the reasons of His conduct. In this particular case my opinion is that one of His reasons was that he desired the Children of Israel to see for themselves how exceedingly sinful these nations were that they were ordered to destroy. The nations of Canaan were an illustration of wickedness in its most God-provoking forms. But it does not matter. All living beings are God's creatures; and he has the right to remove them from the world as he deems best. I believe that to this day God frequently, if he does not so in every war which is waged, uses one nation for the chastisement of another. The only difference is that now no one nation has any direct, revealed command to execute the divine sentence on another. But I suppose unbelievers, if they could have their own way, would not allow any



wars, and would banish death from the world. They profess to be more merciful than God himself. The Lord, even if he does not send diseases by a direct exercise of his power, permits them to come, and to sweep off women and children by millions. The only difference in the two cases is that one is a conscious instrument, and the other is not. If God for some wise purpose unknown to us choose to remove His creatures by death, why should He not take them off by the sword as well as by disease?"

"Yes, but," interrupted Col. Paine, "it just made the Jews a set of murderers."

"Do you consider," asked Dr. Archer, "all nations that go to war as murderers?"

"Of course not. Some wars are justifiable and necessary."

"So was that waged against the Canaanites. They were God's enemies devoted to destruction just as many nations have been since that time."

"I do not take that view of the matter," said Col. Paine evidently at a loss for an answer.

"I am aware that you do not, but it is the proper view to take."

"But," said Col. Paine, "changing the subject a little just to show how inconsistent your Bible is, did not God permit polygamy? Did he not allow the Jews to have just as many wives and concubines as they wanted?"

"That is another old slander through which



human depravity has sought to blacken the character of God."

"Slander or not," said Col. Paine, "the fact cannot be denied."

"Of course it cannot be denied that the Lord permitted it—that is, permitted it in the same way that he permits any other crime. But do you believe, Col. Paine, that God approves of everything which men do?"

"O, as far as I am concerned I do not believe there is any such God as Christians worship. I have granted the existence of the God of the Jews and your God just to avoid argument on that head, and just to show how absurd is the book which you affirm he has given to men."

"Very well, then; to prevent digression, just grant that the God of the Jews does exist. Now I ask you, can it be shown anywhere in the Bible that God approves of all the sinful deeds that men perform? Can it be shown anywhere that He approves of murder? Does He not emphatically say, 'Thou shalt not kill?'"

"Yes, I will grant that the Bible says that."

"Very well. We read in the second chapter of Genesis: 'Wherefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' Mark you, Col. Paine," it does not say 'cleave unto his wives'—but his wife. That is as plain as can be. And they—that is, this one man and one woman shall be one flesh. It seems to me, sir, that any man not dis-



posed to cavil, would naturally construe that passage into a prohibition of polygamy. But remember, sir, that the Lord was acting in the capacity of civil ruler of the Jews. He made civil laws in regard to murder, because he knew that men would commit this crime. He caused the Jews to provide cities of Refuge for the manslayer. You certainly will not contend that God sanctioned and authorized murder, because He made these regulations in regard to it. Another commandment is 'thou shalt not steal;' but God made laws and regulations in reference to theft. Now will you take the position that because He did this as a civil ruler, that he authorized the Jews to violate His own positive commandment. Now then the Lord spoke of polygamy as existing, or even granting that He made laws and regulations in regard to it, you cannot say that God approved of it, any more than He approved of murder or theft. The whole difficulty arises out of the fact that men confound the moral law with the civil law of the Jews. The Lord dealt with them as weak and erring beings. He gave laws to them just as any other law-giver would, knowing that his laws would be violated."

"But then," said Col. Paine, "God ought not to have made any regulations in regard to polygamy. He ought to have said in plain terms 'thou shalt not have but one wife,' if it was wrong."

"On the very same principle," said the preacher,



“He ought not to have made any laws in regard to murder and theft. Why, according to your reasoning, Col. Paine, God ought not to have given the Jews any civil laws at all; but ought merely to have told them what was right, and left them without any farther directions.”

“My reasoning does not lead to such conclusion, Dr. Archer,” replied Col. Paine exhibiting some vexation. “I assert upon the authority of your Bible that your God did tolerate polygamy without any rebuke or reproof. Why, sir, did not Solomon have about a thousand wives?”

“If he had ten thousand,” replied Dr. Archer, “you cannot show that God approved of Solomon’s conduct. It seems, Col. Paine, that you want to make God responsible for men’s sinful actions.”

“You are determined, Dr. Archer, so it appears, that you cannot or will not apprehend my meaning.”

“Your accusation is unjust, Col. Paine. I have certainly answered you as I understood you. I have not purposely avoided a single objection or argument that you have adduced. Now just show me wherein I have failed to catch your meaning.”

“Well, I said that your God did not rebuke—that is he did not directly disapprove of polygamy—he did not attach any penalty to its practice. Now you understand me.”

“O, yes, that proposition is easily comprehended; and I will answer. I can find in the



book of Exodus, I know not how many laws and directions to which no penalty is attached in words. The penalty follows as a necessary consequence in the reflex action of the violation of the law. There are some sins about which God says nothing directly. If they are committed, they naturally work out their own penalty. In regard to some sins the Lord merely gives warning; and if we commit them, what you call nature inflicts the penalty. Let me ask, Col. Paine, if you approve of polygamy?"

"Of course I do not, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because, sir, it is contrary to nature—it leads to disastrous social consequences."

"Then," said Dr. Archer, "you have solved your own problem. Because, if it is contrary to nature, then nature will punish the crime."

"O, well," said Col. Paine, who felt that he was defeated on this point, "it is really useless to argue upon such a subject or any other of which the Bible treats, because the book itself is nothing but a human production. No God ever wrote it or ordered it to be written. So it does not matter even if you clear up its many inconsistencies."

"Well," said Dr. Archer smiling, (Any man can afford to smile when he feels that he has gained the victory over his opponent.) "it seems you admit that what you call an inconsistency can be



explained. And now I will take occasion to say that every inconsistency to which you can point can be explained, and has been explained, of course excepting some things which God intended should be involved in mystery. But any material fact can be explained; and I am persuaded that men would find little difficulty, if they would honestly investigate. But now you have made a wide digression. You change the subject, and you make the broad, sweeping assertion that God had nothing to do with the Bible. You say that it is a human production; can you tell me when it was written?"

"That would be hard to do," said Col. Paine with a sort of smile which he intended to be full of deep significance, "quite hard to do, sir. I should think you ought to be the man to tell that. But I have no idea that it was written at the time you will claim for it. I have no idea that Moses wrote his part of it fifteen hundred years before Christ."

"I do not see how you can affirm that with such confidence," said Dr. Archer. "But let us see if we cannot determine something as to the time it was written; for this is a very important factor in the argument. You are bound to admit that the Old Testament was in existence in the time of Jesus Christ."

"O yes," said Col. Paine, "I admit that as a matter of history."

"Well, if you grant that much, you are bound



to admit that it was in existence nearly three hundred years before that time."

"I am not bound to admit any such thing," quickly exclaimed Col. Paine, who was determined that he would not admit too much in the very out-set.

"But I insist that you are."

"Why am I?"

"Because Christ and the sacred writers quote from the Septuagint, which was the Greek version of the Old Testament. It was translated at least two hundred and eighty years before Christ. You well know, Col. Paine that this is a matter of history."

"O, well, you can have the benefit of that. It is a matter of no great importance either way."

"But, begging your pardon, I think it is a matter of great importance. Because if we can trace the Bible back that far, we stand on firm ground. So, it could not have been written since then."

"Of course not."

"If then it was translated nearly three hundred years before Christ it must have been in existence a long time before then. You say with an air of the utmost confidence that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. You ought to be able to state then who did write it."

"I have not thought of the subject for some time," said Col. Paine, "but I am trying to recall the name of the man who I think forged it merely to gratify the vanity of the Jews. I believe Ezra is the name."



"Yes ; that is the position of your party. They assert this in the face of the very plainest evidence to the contrary. Your idea is then that Ezra imposed it on the Jews, and that they never heard of it before."

"That is just my notion."

"Suppose it can be proved that the Pentateuch was in existence before that time, can you imagine any period previous to that time that it could have been imposed on the Jews?"

"I am satisfied," answered the infidel, "that Ezra was the man who wrote it."

"Well, Col. Paine," said Dr. Archer, surprised at the ignorance of his opponent on the subject, "you will soon bring our discussion to a close by your very admissions. You certainly, sir, remember that the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. Well, the Samaritans had a version of the Mosaic Law ; and they were in existence between seven hundred and eight hundred years before the time of Christ, and nearly two hundred years before Ezra went back to Jerusalem. The Jewish and Samaritan versions are so nearly alike that both must have been obtained from the same source. So it is just as clear as daylight that Ezra could not have forged it."

Col. Paine was vexed. He saw that he could not sustain his position. So he resolved to change his tactics.

"O well," he said, "it does not matter who wrote it. You may have it that Moses wrote it,



and at any time or place you please. It remains to be proved that Moses was directed by his God or any other God. You have got to prove that the Bible contains the truth,—which I imagine will be a rather difficult matter to do. You have simply got the word of Moses for it. Why do not early profane historians say something about Moses and his exploits ? ”

“I am really surprised,” said Dr. Archer in some astonishment, “that a man of your intelligence should ask such a question. Profane historians do speak of Moses.”

“Who are they ? ”

“Well, Manetho, Cheremon, Apollonius, and Lysimachus, besides some other ancient Egyptians, whose histories have been lost, are quoted by Josephus as extant in his days; and passages are collected from them, in which they agree that Moses was the leader of the Children of Israel when they went out of Egypt, and that he gave them their laws. Strabo also speaks of Moses. Justin, a Roman historian, gives an account of the origin of the Jews; and he speaks of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. Pliny speaks of Moses. A sentence of Tacitus I distinctly remember: ‘Moses gave a new form of worship to the Jews, and a system of religious ceremonies, the reverse of every thing known to any other age or country.’ Then I refer to Juvenal, and Longinus, and Diodorus Siculus, and Justin Martyr. Now from all these testimonies, and



many more can be adduced, if you are not satisfied, it is clear that it was generally believed among ancient nations as among the Jews themselves, that Moses was the founder and lawgiver of the Jewish state. So, sir, we do have some other testimony besides that of Moses. But, with your admissions, it is hardly necessary to refer to these authorities. Because when you grant that Moses wrote the portions of the Scriptures which are ascribed to him, you virtually give up the question."

"Why do I?"

"Because if Moses told falsehoods he certainly would have been detected. He informed the children of Israel that he had led them through the Red sea which was opened for their benefit. If it had not been true they would have contradicted him at once."

"But they had no reason to contradict him," said Col. Paine. "It was gratifying to their vanity that nations should believe that they had been preserved by miraculous means."

"But, on the contrary," said the preacher, "they had every reason to contradict him. For they often rebelled against his authority. At such times, why did they not tell Moses it was not true that they had crossed the sea in the way he had stated, and that they had not been fed with manna that fell from the heavens. If these things, and others of a miraculous character had not been true they would certainly have accused



Moses of imposture. You say their miraculous history was gratifying to their vanity. But do you believe that to gratify their vanity they would have submitted to the burdensome ritual of the Mosaic dispensation. How could they gratify their vanity or gain credit to their miraculous history by sacrificing their sheep every day. The observance of the requirements of their system of worship would have exposed them to the greatest danger if they had not been under divine protection. For instance, all the males had to repair to Jerusalem three times in the year, thus leaving their women and children exposed to the attacks of their enemies. In a word, the whole Levitical system imposed such burdens as had no tendency to gratify the vanity of the Jews. If they were trying to impose on mankind by making it appear that they were special objects of divine care, they would never have suffered Moses to relate some circumstances concerning themselves which tended to disparage them in the estimation of the world. The Jews were the greatest simpletons that ever lived in the world, if they had permitted some portions of their history to go down to future generations as true, which they knew to be false. I can explain their conduct on no other principle or hypothesis than that Moses gives us a true history. If it is false, we have the strange spectacle of a whole nation combining to publish a long string of falsehoods which could only bring upon themselves



disgrace, and which could be easily detected."

Seeing that Col. Paine was becoming restive, Dr. Archer thought it best not to press the matter. So he said :

"Of course, Col. Paine, in a common conversation it is impossible to enter into any extensive discussion of this subject. If you had any disposition to investigate the matter I would gladly lend you some books which you would find worthy of a careful perusal, and would convince any man, free from prejudice, of the truth of the Bible."

"Thank you, sir," said Col. Paine very coolly, "but I think I am capable of selecting my own books. And now," he said rising, "I call you to witness that this controversy is not of my seeking. I am not given to discussions of this sort, and I never seek to convert other people to my belief. They can believe what they please ; and I claim the same privilege for myself. Now, sir, if you have no further business with me I will bid you good day."

"Before we part," said Dr. Archer, "suffer me to make one more appeal to you in behalf of your daughter. I plead with you, sir, and I beg you for your self-respect not to cast off your helpless daughter, who, at her age is incapable of fighting the battle of life unaided. She has no experience with the world. Will you see her struggling with the ills of poverty and—"

"I do not conceive," quickly interrupted Col.



Paine in a peevish manner, "that I am to blame at all in the matter. My daughter did not consult me in regard to the step which she has taken, or is about to take."

"The reason she did not was because you had expressed yourself so positively on the subject."

"Very well. All I have to say is that she can return home only on the condition which I have named. I hope you understand me perfectly. And now, sir, as I have business to attend to, if you will excuse me I bid you adieu."

It was useless to try to detain the cruel father in order to persuade him to relent. What Dr. Archer had said to him only made him the more determined to execute his threat. He had been fairly defeated in their short discussion; and the consciousness that he was no match for Dr. Archer was provoking. Nothing now could induce him to swerve from his purpose. He resolved that no matter what unfavorable criticism his conduct might provoke the disobedient Junie should suffer the consequences of her opposition to his wishes.

Dr. Archer went back home with a sorrowful heart. He informed Junie of the interview with her father, so that she might prepare for the worst.

"She waited quietly till the Sabbath, and was then received into the church. Of course such an accession under such circumstances created a little sensation. When the circumstances were



learned a number of the members went to Junie and offered her a home till she could determine upon her future course. But she went back to Dr. Archer's, as she desired next morning to consult him in regard to a plan whose execution would relieve all friends of the burden of her support.

## CHAPTER XV.

It is now time to direct our attention to another party to whom very little prominence has thus far been given in the progress of our story. It is also our design to notice in the present chapter events which throw further light upon Bertram's intention, and which give us an insight into his real character. The mask must now be removed.

The reader has already been informed that Col. Paine was the parent of three children—two daughters and a son. It is the son with whom we are at present concerned. Romulus Paine had now reached an age at which boys generally receive that bias of character which determines their position in society. A boy, up to a certain age may be very wild or he may be very moral; and still we cannot predict with any certainty his so-



cial or religious destiny. He may astonish us by a sudden turn in his course either gladdening or saddening the hearts of his parents and friends. But when he reaches the point in his career at which he manifests restiveness under the reins of parental authority, and comes to the conclusion that he no longer stands in need of any sort of guardianship, but is perfectly capable of self-government, he has come to the crisis of his history. His whole future life, as a general rule, depends on the direction he starts from this critical point.

Rommie, as he was familiarly called, like the daughter's of Col. Paine, had been allowed generally to have his own way. Owing however to the difference of their relations on account of sex Rommie had been most grievously neglected. We will have to throw the mantle of charity over the faults and failings of his poor mother. She could not give her boy such training and instruction as she desired he should receive. A strong current was against her, and she yielded to its force. The boy was soon beyond her influence. Col. Paine himself seemed to care very little for the boy anyway. There was nothing in Rommie which was calculated to arouse the father's pride or to call forth his admiration. So the boy grew up in ignorance of the existence of a God. It is true he had heard the negroes on the plantation say something about God; but he had frequently heard his father assert that no such being existed. So that this matter as a subject of thought



rarely ever occupied Rommie's attention for a moment. Such being the state of things there was no restraint upon his evil propensities. The boy resembled his father in disposition. His temper was violent; and he made no effort to govern it. He had gone to school but little, as this sort of discipline was not in accordance with his tastes; and his father cared so little about his unpromising son that he would not take the trouble to force him to go. So Rommie left the school-room in disgust, and spent his time in the woods with his gun and dogs, and in the fields with the slaves who were his principal associates.

But Rommie had now reached the age at which he began to lose somewhat his relish for the sports of childhood. He began to have a little higher ambition than to go with the negroes fishing and robbing bird's nests on Sundays. He must now begin to play the man. This ambition was encouraged by Bertram, who seemed to take a fancy to the boy; and Rommie was equally delighted with his sister's suitor. Bertram was the first white person who appeared to manifest the slightest interest in him; and it is therefore no wonder that Rommie should reciprocate this apparent affection at a compound rate. Bertram had this field to himself. There was no one to divide this boy's affections with him. Whenever he went to Holly Springs, which he now very frequently did, he was sure to call at Bertram's office, where he always met with a warm welcome.



Rommie was infatuated with this elegant gentleman who paid so much attention to him. Bertram saw that he was a reckless boy; and for a purpose which will soon be revealed, he endeavored to acquire unbounded influence over his new-found protege. By degrees he got the boy to smoking, and then to drinking a little, and then to playing cards. Then he began to put bad books into his hands—chiefly the lives and exploits of celebrated highwaymen. These characters Bertram slyly and cautiously praised, insinuating in guarded terms that they were great heroes, till it was plain that Rommie felt an absorbing interest in such literature. At last he was so delighted with these heroes that he said to Bertram he wished he were a highwayman himself. He thought it would be an exhibition of his manhood to command people to “stand and deliver,” and on their refusal to yield prompt obedience, to silence them with his pistol or bowie-knife. At the expression of this wish Bertram smiled approvingly. But when he had learned enough of the boy’s proclivities to satisfy himself that his young friend could be trusted, he asked him one day how he would like to join a clan of brave men who rode splendid horses and carried fine guns and pistols and glittering knives, and who had plenty of money. Though Col. Paine was wealthy, yet he had never been very liberal with it toward Rommie. The consequence was he did not have as much pocket-change as



he desired; and he was now beginning to feel the necessity of having more money. So his eyes fairly glittered when Bertram proposed the question of joining the robbers. The substance of his reply was that he would be glad to do so, if he had the opportunity. Bertram then very cautiously gave him to understand that there was such an organization not very far off, composed of dashing gentlemen. When Rommie asked Bertram if he belonged to the organization, he replied that he did not; but that he intended to join if they would receive him. He further told Rommie that he would see the chief in a few days, and that Rommie might accompany him, and then they would see about becoming members of the organization.

“I am,” said Bertram, “tired of the life I am leading. I want some exciting adventures.”

Then he went on to describe in glowing terms what a jolly life he had heard that these men led. The boy was wild with excitement. He wanted to see the chief as soon as possible. Bertram told him to keep quiet for a few day's, and his wishes should be gratified.

“Now,” said Bertram, “you must not even hint that you have any knowledge of the existence of such a clan. If you do, you will spoil our prospects.”

Rommie promised to observe the utmost secrecy, and he faithfully kept his word. He thought in his young and foolish heart that it was a great



thing to be entrusted with such a secret. He rose several degrees in his own estimation, and felt that he had suddenly stepped up to the elevation of manhood, and was a fit companion for Bertram.

It might occur to the reader that Bertram ran some risk in talking in this way to a boy, and almost revealing his connection with a clan of robbers. But he was a good judge of human nature; and he had studied Rommie very thoroughly before imparting this information. He felt sure that he would not be betrayed. He had found in this boy one who would not scruple to do a deed of shame.

On Monday morning following the Sabbath on which Miss Junie joined the church, Bertram and Rommie on horseback left the town of Holly Springs. Col. Paine offered no objection to his son's accompanying one, who he believed would soon occupy a closer relation to him than that of friend. Indeed he cared little where Rommie went.

The two traveled on Monday till they reached Oxford, which then was nothing but a small village. Now it is the site of the University of Mississippi—one of the finest educational institutions of the South. The next day the two proceeded in a southerly direction toward the town of Coffeeville. About noon they came to a halt on the bank of the beautiful little creek that now meanders through the streets of Water Val-



ley. The traveler who now passes through these localities can hardly realize the fact that this portion of the country not a great while ago was a wild wilderness. No one then dreamed that the railroad whistle would send echoes among the hills and vales that intervened between Oxford and Grenada. No one then suspected that a thriving city, noisy with the incessant rattle and clink and clang of mills and machine shops and foundries, would spring up all along and over that little creek which wandered idly through the tangled forest till it was lost in the Yockana river. Then, all through that portion of our country the silence was broken scarcely by any sound save the voice of wild animals; and not a great while before this the yell of the Indian could have been heard.

Our reader needs not therefore be surprised at the information that when Bertram and Rommie left the main road and turned into the forest they were completely hidden from view. Bertram told Rommie to alight, and he would soon be introduced to the bravest man he ever beheld. They remained probably about an hour, and then they heard a noise as of some one approaching. In a moment a shrill whistle was heard, which was responded to by Bertram; then a solitary horseman rode out and alighted. He shook hands heartily with Bertram, and said:

“I am glad to find you here on time; but who’s this with you?”



“O,” said Bertram, “this is a young friend of mine—Mr. Rommie Faine, Col. Murrell.” It was the famous and infamous John A. Murrell.

The history of this man would be a wide departure from our story. We deem it sufficient to say, for our purpose, that he was the leader of a large gang of robbers. The strange part of the history is that they were not all cut-throats and desperadoes. It was discovered, or at least believed, that men who stood high in society had some connection with this gang. Some of those suspected occupied even high official position. The reader who has no acquaintance with Murrell’s history needs not be surprised that such a one as Bertram belonged to this clan. He was a lawyer; and whenever any of the gang happened to be arrested he always took their case. By means of witnesses, who also belonged to the organization, and jurors who were in the same condition, Bertram managed to gain nearly all his cases. The culprits, many of whom richly deserved hanging, somehow got off scot-free. If any were caught with stolen horses Bertram managed to prove that the rogues had not been guilty of theft. By his false witnesses and packed juries, and other similar trickeries, he established the fact legally that the horses had been honestly bought from some other parties who had disappeared. So Bertram was the lawyer for the clan in this portion of the country; and it needs hardly be added that he was of invaluable service to them.



In a few moments after the meeting of the above-mentioned trio, Bertram requested Rommie to remain with the horses while he and Murrell went off a short distance to have an interview on business of importance. The two men then seated themselves on a log, and conversed upon subjects that can be of no particular interest to our reader. Murrell informed Bertram that one of the clan had been recently arrested, and that his trial would soon come off at Coffeetown, and that his legal services would be necessary.

"We have got everything arranged so that there will not be much difficulty in the case. Now then," continued Murrell, after a momentary pause, "coming to business, I'm in need of money. I've been lending you money from time to time; can't you return some of it?"

"Not till a project which I have in view, is executed," replied Bertram. "When that succeeds I will pay you back every cent and good interest too."

"What sort of project?" asked Murrell.

"That boy with the horses——"

"Yes," interrupted Murrell, "that boy; before we go any further tell me something about him. What use do you expect to put him to?"

"I found him near Holly Springs, replied Bertram; "and I have been associated with him for some time. You know not what a spirit of daring is in that boy. He is destitute of all sense of fear, as you may see from his looks."



"O yes," said Murrell, "I see that he has the look of a little fiend."

"Well, I want him sworn into our organization. He has not yet performed any deed that would make him amendable to the law; but I will find an opportunity for him to commit an offense which will make him faithful to us forever."

"Very well," said Murrell, "I understand that; but what has that boy to do with your project?"

"That ugly boy has a sister."

"Yes," said Murrell with a smile, "I see. You're always getting into scrapes with some boy's sister."

"But hold," said Bertram, "till you hear me through. That boy, notwithstanding the fact that he is not a Narcissus, to fall in love with the reflection of his own face in a fountain, has a sister who is the living incarnation of beauty itself. I tell you that if there are any such beings as angels, she belongs to that class."

"O, nonsense," interrupted Murrell, "what care we for angels. Come to business."

"But, you won't give me time to explain," said Bertram. "I am gradually preparing you for the denouement, as the novelists call it. I don't want to shock your nerves by any sudden out-burst of light."

"Well, go on then."

"As I said that boy's sister is the very personification of grace and loveliness."

"I understand that," said Murrell, with some impatience. "Come to business."



"Well then," said Bertram, "to make a long story short, my notion is to marry her, pretty soon."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Murrell.

"Yes, marry her."

"Why, man," said Murrell, "how many more wives do you want? To my certain knowledge you have now three living wives. You will get yourself into an ugly scrape after a while. I do wish you would quit that sort of business. You will get trapped sooner or later."

"Hear me through," said Bertram quietly. "The other three wives I married for money; and I did not get any worth talking about. But that ugly boy's sister I really love."

"Well," said Murrell manifesting a considerable degree of vexation, "now you're going to play the fool sure enough. I thought you had too much grit for that."

"You will approve, I think, the step I am about to take when you know all. For the girl's father is very rich."

"So you thought about the others."

"Yes; but I have learned something by experience. I am not mistaken this time. Well," continued Bertram, "the old man is very fond of gaming, and is given to drink. If I become his son-in-law I can just wind him around my finger. He already has unbounded confidence in me; and when a more intimate relationship is established between us his confidence will be greatly in-



creased, and then I can leisurely carry out my project."

"What is your project?"

"It is just this: I will get him to go to Memphis, sometime when his cotton crop is ready for market. I want you and another of the clan to meet us there; and then we will get him to playing cards you understand?"

"Yes, I see."

"We will break him up root and branch, and then I will put out for parts unknown."

"And desert your wife again," said Murrell with a grim smile.

"I don't know about that," said Bertram very coolly. "That depends on circumstances. If my present sentiments do not undergo any change, I will not abandon her. But if they do, it will be an easy matter to put a long distance between us. I would rather wait for the old fellow to die," continued Bertram after a short pause, "but there is not much probability of such an event soon. If I conclude not to leave my intended wife, the execution of my project may require us to hasten that dreadful event which will come to the old man in the course of time. You understand?"

"Yes, I get your meaning."

"Some things," said Bertram, "must be left for future consideration. We will get the old fellow to Memphis, and then determine how he shall be disposed of. Now that is my scheme; what think you?"



"It is deep laid," answered Murrell. "But what is the girl's father worth?"

"Not less than two hundred thousand dollars."

"That will do; that will pay us very handsomely."

"I think so."

"But I wish," said Murrell, "you could carry out the plan without marrying the girl. Women sometimes cause a great deal of trouble in business of this kind."

"I can succeed much better by marrying her. Besides, you seem to forget that I am enamored of her."

"That is the very thing I'm afraid of. Love often makes men fools. You may be so desperately smitten with your new wife that you may conclude to give up the project altogether, and leave me in the lurch. You may acquire too much respect for your father-in-law to deal with him as you have said."

Murrell would not have made such a remark as this if he had known all the hidden depths of depravity and cold-blooded villainy of Bertram's heart. Under that polished exterior he concealed as much brutish selfishness and tergitude as could well belong to one human being. We may exhaust the means which language affords to portray the most unprincipled features of human character; and yet there is in the nature of some men a species of scoundrelism, of which no words can convey the true idea. We know what it is



only by viewing the fruits in their actions. Bertram was one of this class of men. So to Murrell's last remark he replied :

“There is no danger of that. I will think less of him after I become his son-in-law than I do now. He is the worst old Atheist you ever saw. The old fellow though has considerable influence about Holly Springs, and I pretend to be one of his disciples—not much pretence about it either, because I really do not believe there is any God. But when I am with Col. Paine, for that is the name of the girl's father, I hold to all his opinions, whether I believe them or not ; and so I am regarded as one of his followers. But really there is nothing about the man to call forth esteem that I can discover. His wife died not long since of a broken heart, from all I could learn. The woman was a Christian ; but he would never suffer her to go to church, nor even to read the Bible. I never met with a more prejudiced man in all my short life. He therefore deserves the fate which I am trying to work up for him.”

“Well, you may be right,” said Murrell thoughtfully, “and I hope you may be successful. But you must do something to raise me some money.”

“That is what I am going to do. Then I will more than pay you.”

“What use” said Murrell, “do you intend to make of this boy in the execution of your scheme ?”

“None at all. I liked his looks, and I thought



that at some time he might be useful in the way of a scape-goat, if in no other. But I believe that as soon as he is a little older he can be made as serviceable as any member of our association. I do not think he will hesitate to perform whatever he may be ordered."

"Of course," said Murrell, "you propose to keep him in ignorance of your intentions in regard to his father?"

"Certainly; I would not dare to let him into the secret. And still I believe the boy would help to ruin his own father if I ordered him. There is no love lost between them any way."

But I do not know that it would be prudent ever to let him know by what means the Paine property passed into our hands. It might make trouble for us some years hence."

"You are right," said Murrell. Have you made arrangements for your marriage with the girl?"

"Not yet," replied Bertram. "I have moved slowly and cautiously. I desired to see you before I went too far. I have not proposed to her yet; but I am just as certain as I can be of anything which I do not positively know, that she will not reject my suit. Now that it meets with your approbation I will propose as soon as I return, and will consummate the marriage as soon as possible, and then I will notify you when to meet me in Memphis with Col. Paine."

"Well Brock——"



"You forget," interrupted Bertram, that I do not go by that name now.

"I had not forgotten," said Murrell, "but when we are alone it is more natural to call you by your true name."

"Another thing of some importance," said Bertram. "There is to be an election soon, you know. I am going to become a candidate for the office of District Attorney. You and the boys must muster your forces, and use all your influence to secure my election. If I succeed in getting that office I can be of more service to the clan than in my present position. I will prosecute in such a way that our men will be certain to escape. You understand?"

"Now you're talking sense," replied Murrell. "I was going to make that very proposition; but I'm glad you see the importance of that thing. With you in that position we can manage matters as we please. You can often put in a Nol-Pros, and thus put an end to what might be an ugly scrape. I think we can manage to have you elected. I tell you, Brock, you would make a first-class diplomatist."

"Don't call me Brock in the presence of that boy," quickly said Bertram, not paying any attention to the compliment.

"No, I will not," answered Murrell; "you need not have any fear. I would not be so forgetful as that."

The two men then talked for a short time about



some general matters pertaining to the clan, and returned to Rommie whom they had left with the horses. Murrell engaged him in conversation for a while in order to satisfy himself that Bertram was not mistaken in his estimate of the lad's character. But it did not require any great length of time to convince him that Rommie would do to trust. His villainous look was almost enough of itself. He then gave Rommie to understand that before anything more could be revealed he must take the oath that was administered to all the clan.

"Do you consent?" asked Murrell.

"O, yes; I'm willin," said the boy.

"Kneel down," said Murrell.

The command was instantly obeyed. The robber then drew forth a formidable bowie-knife. Bertram noticed that the boy suddenly thrust his hand in his pocket, and with his cold-looking eyes gazed searchingly into Murrell's face. The robber then put one hand on the top of Rommie's head, and placed the edge of the ugly knife against his throat. He stood in this position for a moment while Bertram was looking earnestly into the lad's face. But Rommie did not flinch nor betray any emotion. The two men, however, thought they heard the click of a pistol. Murrell broke the silence by administering a most horrible oath, explaining it as he went, so that the lad could understand it clearly. Among other things he bound him to obey every order of Ber-



tram without the least hesitation. Rommie never faltered at any stage of the ceremony. When it was completed Bertram said with a smile :

“I declare, Rommie, you are a brick. I have seen men tremble while taking that oath.”

“He’ll do,” said Murrell ; “but how did you know, Rommie, but that I would cut your throat?”

“I did’nt know,” said Rommie, “what you wanted to cut my throat for. But if you had a tried it, I had my hand on my pistol, and I would a shot you.”

At this Murrell laughed.

“Why, my boy,” he said, “I could have cut your head from your shoulders before you could have crooked your finger. Let me see your pistol.”

Rommie drew from his pocket a little rusty pistol, the sight of which made the two men laugh.

“Why, Rommie,” said Murrell, “at twenty steps off you might shoot at me all day with such a pop-gun as that.”

Rommie seemed to be a little indignant at this ridicule of his cherished weapon ; and before the men were aware of his intentions he quickly leveled his arm and fired at a sapling about twenty paces distant, on which the ball made a white spot.

“Spouse,” said Rommie with an air of triumph, “you’d bin standing whar that tree is.”

“I give it up,” said Murrell. “But Mr. Ber-



tram, he must have a better pistol than that."

"Yes, he shall have a new one."

"You're a brave boy," said Murrell. "You will never be in any danger from any of the clan as long as you're faithful."

Rommie was then put in possession of the signs and pass-words by which he could make himself known to any of the gang, and would also know them. After this the parties shook hands and separated. Murrell took the road leading toward Coffeeville; and Bertram and Rommie turned their faces homeward. Late on Wednesday evening they reached Holly Springs. The boy went out home feeling that he was now a man. His foolish head was full of the exploits he intended to perform. O, how a lad left to his own control can be misled! Poor, foolish Rommie had taken the road to ruin!

## CHAPTER XVI.

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform,  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm."

This is true; and no visible trace of the Divine footstep is left. It is beyond the powers of the



human mind to explain the ways of providence. Faith is put to the severest test that it can bear. Often it staggers before the mountains of difficulties and mysteries that rise up and shut out the light of Eternity which alone can make them clear in all their bearings and relations. Sometimes it would seem that the most precious promises of the Lord to his people are about to fail of fulfillment, or even have already failed; and then we stand still in doubt and deep perplexity. Then we have to fall back upon the general assurance, that no matter how obscure may be our spiritual vision, the Judge of all the earth will do right. It is no uncommon spectacle to behold the Lord's worst enemies revelling in the midst of affluence, and glutting themselves with the luxuries which the world affords; and to behold at the same time His most faithful servants suffering for the very necessities of life. The subject of Divine Providence has perplexed the good and the righteous in every age of the world. The question arises if a just and merciful God rules in human affairs, why should the virtuous writhe and groan under a great burden of misfortunes? Why does not the Lord interfere, and ward off heavy calamities from those who love Him and whom He loves? All the way we can account for these things is the fact that this life is but a state of probation. The road to the better land generally leads through tribulation. To some that road is more thorny



than to others. Why, we know not. Indeed we now "see through a glass darkly."

Junie Paine, for some good reason, had to be put to the test. Here she was a young lady, not yet twenty years of age, suddenly thrown upon her own resources, having scarcely a penny to begin the battle of life. Add to this the fact that she had no experience. Up to this time she had never known the value of money. She was now an outcast from a home under whose roof she had hardly a conception of want. She knew not what it was to have an ungratified desire. But now all was different. The thought of her father's anger was chilling to her heart. It is not to be wondered at then that the young lady sometimes went off to a secret place, and gave vent to her troubles in tears. But yet, Junie was determined not to make a retrograde movement. She had set her face Zion-ward, and having once put her hand to the plow, she had no thought of looking back. Dr. Archer felt a deep sympathy for her in this time of trial and did all he could to encourage and comfort her. He fully realized the difficulties of her situation. He thought he could see at least a remote end to her troubles in a marriage with John Milson with whom he was well acquainted, and whose noble traits of character he fully appreciated. The Doctor honestly believed that these two would be happy as husband and wife. Though he had seen the young people together; yet he knew



not that any relation existed between them, but that of friendship. The Doctor was too dignified to be a match-maker, and had no idea of becoming one. But the thought just occurred to him that night when Milson called at his house for the sole purpose of seeing Miss Junie, that if a marriage could take place between them it would be a "consummation to be devoutly wished"—it would be quite a happy solution of a perplexing problem. But the Doctor did not dare to hint at such a solution to Miss Junie. So he must leave events to their own development, unless the young lady herself should take him into her confidence, and enlighten him as to the true state of affairs. But the young lady soon blasted his hopes of any immediate solution of her difficulties in the way the good Doctor thought would gladden two hearts.

On Monday many of the kind Christians of Holly Springs offered Junie a home when they were informed of the sacrifice she had made to join the church. But she had too much pride to eat the bread of dependence. She resolved to gain her own support. So that very day she told Dr. Archer that she intended to take a school if she could secure one. She could think of nothing else that she could do. The preacher informed her of a vacant school a few miles in the country which he had no doubt could be obtained for her, as he himself had been requested by some of the citizens to recommend a teacher.



He would see some of them on Thursday, if she could make up her mind to take a school in the country.

“Certainly,” said Junie. “I will be glad of the opportunity to do anything by which I can make an honest living.”

“But, my child, I fear you will be disappointed. You have never kept school and you know nothing of the difficulties you will have to encounter. The people in that neighborhood are very kind, but they are poor. You will not find the kind of society to which you have been accustomed, and you will have to change your mode of life and adapt yourself to the people. I am afraid you will be discouraged. But then you must keep up a brave heart till there is something better offered. You will have to commence at the bottom of the ladder and work your way up. If you show your ability to manage a school it will not be a great while before you can find a more desirable situation.”

“All I ask,” said Miss Junie, “is an opportunity. I am willing to take a very humble position to begin with.”

“I have no fear that one of your determination and energy will not succeed. But I do not want you to undertake this business without a due consideration of the difficulties which will present themselves.”

“I think I am prepared for them,” modestly replied Junie.



"Very well then. We will have only to wait till Thursday, and then I hope the matter can be definitely settled, and to your satisfaction."

So nothing more was said on the subject at that time.

Thursday soon came. On that day while Dr. Archer was in town making arrangements in regard to the school, Col. Paine's carriage drove up to the preacher's residence. Miss Gerie emerged from it, and went into the house and called for Miss Junie Paine. That young lady at once responded to the summons, and the two sisters met in the parlor. Junie could not keep back her tears; but Gerie was calm and self-possessed.

"What are you doing here, Junie?" asked Gerie as soon as she had taken a seat. "Have you made this your home?"

"Only for the present."

"Well, I've come for you; and I want you to go right straight home. I'm getting tired of this nonsense."

"On what condition may I go?"

"You know the condition, Junie. Father told you explicitly. You will have to quit that horrid old church, and go back home and behave yourself. Now you understand."

"I can never quit the church," said Junie with sadness. "I will suffer anything before I will do that. My mind is fully made up."

"Junie, have you lost all your senses? Are you really going to desert home for that misera-



ble church? How and where will you live? Are you going to take up quarters with this poor preacher who has inveigled you into his church?"

"He did no such thing," said Junie in a mild, but firm tone. "Every step has been taken of my own free will, and after mature reflection. You cannot throw the responsibility of my acts upon Dr. Archer. If any one is to blame in the matter it is myself."

"Well, that is neither here nor there. What are you going to do?"

"I expect," said Junie with deliberation in anticipation of the astonishment which the announcement would cause, "to go into the country in a few days and take a school, if I can get the situation."

On hearing this Miss Gerie sprang from her seat, and held up her hands in horror.

"O, Junie, Junie, has it come to this? You keep a little country school! Did ever I hear the like! You shall do no such thing. You will bring disgrace upon our family. Why the very idea of my sister going out into the hills and hollows to keep an insignificant school!—it is shocking—it is an outrage. I won't stand it."

"But what am I to do?" asked Junie. "I will not be a burden upon any of my friends. Numbers of them have offered me a home; but I prefer to make my own living. I am not going to put myself in the attitude of a beggar."

"Junie, you shall not do it. I will make father



send for you and carry you back by force, before you shall thus disgrace yourself and us."

"Father will not do it," replied Junie. "He gave me my choice between leaving home and joining the church. I have chosen calmly and deliberately, and I have determined, come what may to go forward. I will do my duty or what I conceive to be my duty if it cost my life. So, sister, the matter is settled. You need not try to persuade me to return unless I can have permission to serve God as I desire."

"Serve God!" cried Gerie, her eyes flashing with anger. "Serve God! I declare, Junie, you are the biggest simpleton I ever met with! You have just gone stark mad. Going out to keep school and serve God."

And Miss Gerie paused for the want of suitable words to express her astonishment, indignation, and disgust.

"You may ridicule as much as you please, sister," said Junie meekly, "but I shall try to lead a Christian life."

"Well," replied Gerie, "it is no use to talk to you. Once more I ask you will you go home or not?"

"I will not," said Junie, "except on the conditions which I have named."

"Well, it is no use to bandy words with you. Your trunk is at the gate. I will have it sent in, and then you can go where you please. But I do believe that you ought to be sent to the



Lunatic Asylum. I've a notion to go home and tell father you're stark mad."

And Miss Gerie rose to go.

"O, sister," exclaimed Junie with tears in her eyes, "do not leave me in anger. Father has cast me off in anger; I have no home, and now the thought that my only sister leaves me with such bitter feelings fills my heart with inexpressible grief."

"Junie, you have brought all this on yourself," said Gerie softening her tone. "Father has not cast you off; but you have deserted your home. I can't help being vexed at you for acting as you have done. I still love you, and I want you to go back; but you've said positively that you won't go. So I'll just have to tell you good-by and leave."

"Give me a sister's kiss then," said Junie, "and let us part good friends."

Accordingly they kissed and separated. The trunk was sent in, and Gerie went back home. Not long after her departure Dr. Archer returned to the house, and informed Junie that the arrangement was effected for her to take the school which was to be opened the following Monday.

"I will go with you myself to-morrow," said Dr. Archer, "that you may form the acquaintance of at least some of your patrons before the school begins. Some of them are members of my church, and they will be warm friends."

Accordingly the next morning Dr. Archer and



Junie got into a buggy and started to the scene of her labors. After a while they halted at a very plain farm-house which the Doctor informed her was to be her boarding place.

“The people,” he said, “are not wealthy, but they are pious, which is better; and they know your history, and are prepared to sympathize with you. Besides they come to town nearly every Sabbath to church, and I have arranged for you to come with them, supposing that you would like to attend divine service.”

Junie with tears starting to her eyes thanked the Doctor for his kindness in taking so much interest in her welfare. The preacher after introducing her to the family, spoke some encouraging words, prayed with her that God would sustain her in the midst of the trials which she must soon encounter took his leave.

And now here was Miss Junie Paine among strangers. Everything appeared so odd to her, accustomed as she was to all the conveniences and comforts that wealth could procure. The house was constructed of hewed and huge logs. There was no carpets on the floors except in one chamber which was called the “company room,” and this carpet was home-made. All the furniture was of the very plainest style.

When Junie cast her eye upon the plain looking-glass in which there was an unsightly rent that made it necessary to view one's self by piece-meal, and which hung on a nail over the



washstand, a mournful smile played over her features as she contrasted it with the magnificent mirror before which she had stood at home, while she adjusted the ornaments of dress. In one corner of the room a small pole reached from the two adjacent sides of the building, from which pole a calico curtain was suspended; and this little triangular department was the wardrobe. All these internal arrangements, so different from what Junie had been accustomed to, at home, were sadly amusing. But she was determined not to yield to discouragements. She must now adapt herself to her changed position.

On Saturday a number of the patrons of the school called to see the "new teacher." Junie went through this ordeal bravely. Some few went off shaking their heads wisely, and predicting a failure for the school under the management of this "young thing;" but most were pleased with the new teacher's "manners," which she was expected to communicate to the children by precept as well as example.

So Saturday passed off rather pleasantly for the new teacher; and the thought occasioned a small degree of complacency that in this first day's experience she had succeeded very well in adapting herself to the situation.

Monday morning dawned, and Junie went early to the school-house which was situated not more than two hundred yards from where she boarded. It was also a plain log building such as was com-



mon to the country at that time. The floor was made of puncheons; and so were the seats—elevated by means of rude legs scarcely any two of which were in the same geometrical plane. But Junie, occupying the position of teacher, had a chair, and in front of it an humble table. And here in this rude structure, and in the midst of these inelegant surroundings she was to “teach the young idea how to shoot.” She felt awkward in this strange position; but then she went to work with a will. When the new teacher had gotten everything arranged as well as she could, the little fellows began to come in from all directions with buckets and baskets and sachels till some twenty-five or thirty of both sexes had arrived and taken their seats. Then Junie took down their names and arranged them into classes as well as the variety of books would allow. It was fortunate for her that Webster’s Spelling Book was then in universal use. Each one of Junie’s pupils possessed one of these blue-backed books beginning at the very foundation of literature, and gradually leading the little learner along through the mysteries of orthography till he could read in a whining tone about the milkmaid whose head was so full of vain imaginings that down fell the pail, and with it all her high hopes.

We will not tax our reader’s patience with any long account of the new teacher’s trouble, which may be easily imagined. She toiled on day after day endeavoring to discharge the duties which



the situation imposed upon her. She soon won the confidence of her little pupils ; and in a little time they were most ardently attached to the new teacher. For the first few days Junie felt embarrassed in her novel situation. Sometimes, in spite of all she could do the tears would roll down her cheeks in the school-room ; and then the little ones would look at her in sorrowful surprise. The innocent things had no idea what this crying meant. But in a short time she overcame this amiable weakness, which can be excused under the circumstances, and things went on smoothly enough. She became interested in the progress of her little students that did their best to accomplish the tasks which she assigned them. So she soon mastered the difficulties that are common to the tyro in any vocation. But it was not long before the young lady encountered another source of trouble from an unexpected quarter ; and this difficulty grew out of her religious experience.

God tries his people in various ways. For some wise purpose he permits sorrow to come upon them. Frequently He suffers doubts of a most distressing character to arise in their minds. Junie was now to fall into the hands of Giant Despair and become a prisoner in Doubting Castle. One night as she was reading the Bible the thought suddenly flashed into her mind that probably the whole thing might be a mere fable. She closed the book, and laid it aside. "Is it



possible," she thought to herself, "that I am mistaken? What if religion is all a delusion? What if this Bible is only the production of uninspired men—disigning hypocrites? My father is an intelligent man, and he has studied this subject, and he has arrived at the conclusion that there is no God. Suppose he is right. Then what a simpleton I am. I have deserted my home where I had everything that money could afford—where I was loved by a kind father and sister; and here I am an outcast from the home of my childhood, hated by my dearest relatives—here I am employing my energies in teaching little country fellows how to spell and read. What an awful sacrifice I have made. Why did I act so hastily? But I thought I was thoroughly satisfied, and I know I did feel in my very soul that I was reconciled to God. I did not have a doubt. Suppose father is correct in his opinions. But then Dr. Archer is also an intelligent man—just as learned as father; and he seems to believe the Bible with all his heart. Is it possible that he and all other ministers are hypocrites? Dr. Archer cannot be a hypocrite. He has nothing to gain by playing such a disgraceful part, and he has everything to lose. He has given up a lucrative profession, in which he could have risen to the highest eminence. No hypocrite would do such a thing. Now is it possible that he too is mistaken? He does not appear to have a single doubt. No, he is not deceived. This



book is the true Word of God. The fault is in me. I have been mistaken in my own feelings. I have no religion—that is what is the matter. If I were a true child of God I could never have these doubts that are so dishonoring to the Saviour. I am acting the hypocrite myself. I have joined the church; and yet I am nothing but a vile sinner. I have been deceiving myself, and I am deceiving other people by pretending to be what I am not.”

As such thoughts as these rushed through Miss Junie’s mind, she clasped and wrung her hands in agony of soul. The suffering which she underwent is indescribable. A burden was upon her whose weight seemed to be crushing her soul. Hope seemed to have winged its flight forever away, leaving her under clouds of doubt and darkness. Those alone can understand her condition who have themselves wallowed in the Slough of Despond, and writhed under the seeming frowns of an offended God—who can say in the language of a poet :

“I run the gauntlet of a file of doubts,  
Each one of which down hurls me to the ground.”

Miss Junie’s face was clouded; she became gloomy. For several days and nights she seemed to be in the deepest distress. She had little to say to any one. The family with whom she was staying supposed she was thinking of the elegant home which she had left; and some of them alluded to it in a delicate way in order, if possible



to draw her out on the subject. But from the manner in which she answered, they soon came to the conclusion that her trouble sprang from some other source.

Junie could endure it no longer. She must find some one to whom she could unbosom herself. She was now in such a state of mind that she had almost given up her private devotions. She appeared to think that God had cast her off, and it was no use to pray. At last a gleam of light came from an unexpected source.

There was an old lady, a member of the household, who had reached her three score and ten—a deeply pious woman—a venerable mother in Israel, whose white locks and wrinkled face, and trembling limbs made it evident that she was on the borders of the Promised Land.

While the new teacher was in her state of darkness, the old lady requested her to read a chapter in the Bible every night to her. To this Junie cheerfully consented. The first night she read, she did it so correctly and with such proper emphasis, that the words of Holy Writ seemed to be invested with a new charm and new force. The girl's sweet, melodious voice, in connection with her subdued manner, as the promises of the Lord came forth from her pretty lips, almost instinct with life itself, sounded in the old lady's ears like the soft tones of an angel's harp. She had never heard such reading; and she could not prevent the "crystal drop" from making



a moistened track adown her cheek on which time had impressed his unmistakable seal.

The second night that Junie began to read, her eye accidentally as it were fell upon the chapter which commences, "Him that is weak in faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." These words she read aloud, and then paused as if reflecting.

"Yes, weak in faith," said the old lady. "The faith of Christians sometimes gets to be mighty weak—so weak that it's real distressin."

At once the thought flashed into Junie's mind that this very old woman, notwithstanding her want of education, might throw light on the subject which was such a source of perplexity. Why should not this pious mother know as much about Christian experience as Dr. Archer with all his learning. God intended the Bible for the ignorant as well as the wise. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise." Why not then talk with good "Grandma Jones" in regard to her trouble?

"Grandma," asked Junie, "how long have you been a Christian?"

"Why child," she slowly said, "more'n fifty years. I professed religion before I was as old as you."

"Did you ever have any doubts about your religion—that is did you ever doubt whether you had any or not?"

"Yes, many and many a time. I sometimes



has doubts now, but not as often as I did when I was younger. As my sight fails I somehow can see more clearer them 'delectable mountains' that we read about in Pilgrims Progress. But many a time I've come to the conclusion that the good Lord could not save sich a sinner as I was."

"What caused you to think so?"

"Well, somehow my faith got weak. It's my opinion that old Satan tempts people and puts bad thoughts into their heads; and you're mighty fortunate, child, if you've not got to doubtin' yourself."

"Well, grandma, to tell you the truth, for the last few days I have been in an awful condition. It seems to me sometimes that the Bible itself is nothing but an idle story; and then you have no idea what anguish of soul I do suffer."

"O, yes I do, child. Your experience is jest like mine and all other Christians. These is nothin' but the temptations of old Satan which all Christians have to contend with. I've talked with many a Christian about this very thing for my own satisfaction, and I've never yet met one but what had doubts in one way or 'nother. Even Dr. Archer, and a truer Christian never breathed the breath ov life, don't escape the fiery darts ov the Evil One; he told me so his self."

"And does Dr. Archer say," asked Junie, "that he has doubts about his salvation?"

"Yes. To be shore he does; at least he did; I've not talked with him in a good while on the



subject; but he has told me that sometimes he has felt as if he'd be lost. He feared that he was a deceivin' his self. And why shouldn't he? He's nothin' but a frail mortal like me an' you. Even Paul had his ups and downs; and so does every Christian. Don't you read in the good book how the Lord chastises his children? So, child, you mustn't give up, and sink into despair because you sometimes fall into temptation."

"But, grandma, how do you get rid of these awful feelings and doubts?"

"There's but one way that I knows of," slowly replied the old lady, "and that is by earnest prayer. But pra'ps you may never git rid of 'em entirely. You'll have your bright days and dark days. This is the way God tries his people. Some has doubts of one kind, and some of a'nother. But no matter what kind they is, you must go to the blessed Saviour in prayer; and if you don't always come into the light you'll receive sufficient grace to sustain you, and you can bear your temptation. Our Lord casts off none that come to 'im. The verse that you've jest read says 'him that is weak in faith, receive ye.' Your faith child, may often become mighty weak, yes mighty weak; but don't give up: jest keep on prayin', and you'll finally come off more'n conqueror."

Junie soon discovered that this sensible old woman who had never studied the abstruse sciences and knew nothing of the mysteries of



Latin and Greek, nevertheless understood the science of religion, and could give her instruction in regard to the most difficult phases of Christian experience. There was no necessity therefore of going to Dr. Archer with her trouble.

After this time Junie's path ran along under brighter skies. When she fell into religious perplexities she would go straight to "Grandma Jones," and she was always sure to receive comfort. The old lady soon got to be Junie's dearest friend. At night the young teacher would read the Bible, and they would talk for hours upon religious topics.

So Junie's life was not unpleasant. She got to feeling that her spiritual enjoyments fully compensated for all the sacrifices she had made. She was happier in the true sense of the word, than when she was at home, doing nothing but seeking her own pleasure. The change in her condition had produced broader views of life and human destiny. She was busy all day, so that she enjoyed rest at night; and thus the hours flew quickly by. Junie could say with one of her own sex :

" Oh ! never chide the wing of time,  
Or say 'tis tardy in its flight ;  
You'll find the days speed quick enough,  
If you but husband them aright."



## CHAPTER XVII.

Several weeks had now passed away. Junie had succeeded in rendering herself very popular in the neighborhood where she was teaching. The little students dearly loved their new teacher; and every morning they tried to gladden her heart by offering her such fruits and flowers as the season would afford. So she found no difficulty in managing her school. It was a great source of pleasure to her to notice the rapid development of her students. It made the young lady feel that her life, even in this humble sphere was not in vain. She sometimes consoled herself with the reflection that her influence might be felt after she had gone to the grave—and like Abel being dead, yet she would speak. She might now be molding the character of some future President of the United States. Or may be, as the poet has it, when she looked over the school, she saw

“A little bench of heedless bishops here,  
And there a chancellor in embryo,  
Or bard sublime, if bard may e’er be so,  
As Milton, Shakspeare, names that ne’er shall die.”

Miss Junie experienced pleasure in such secret



reflections as these. But we must now hasten on to events of perhaps a more interesting character.

One bright morning about ten o'clock a solitary horseman was seen advancing along the main road, that led from Holly Springs to the Tallahatchie river.

The little log school-house in which Junie taught the "young idea how to shoot," was situated not far from this road. Our horseman turned aside, and had nearly reached the door of the unpretending structure, when the teacher announced "recess,"—a musical word to school children. No sooner had the welcome word escaped the teacher's lips than the little ones began to rush out pell-mell, almost tumbling over each other, and screaming in the gladness of their hearts at the thought of enjoying a few moments' respite from their intellectual labors. Who cannot remember these happy days of innocent childhood? It is true, as a poet hath said that "heaven lies about us in our infancy." When we reflect upon the guilelessness of youthful days, we need not wonder at our Saviour's declaration in regard to children that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But the little ones of Junie's school had no idea what mischief their sudden rush and gleeful boisterousness would occasion. They did not know of the approach of the horseman, who had dropped the reins of his bridle on the animal's



neck ; and was in the act of dismounting. The horse, frightened at this violent outbreak, made a sudden spring, and the rider was forcibly precipitated against a tree, and lay stretched at full length upon the ground. Some of the children at once ran back into the house, with staring eyes and with pale faces exclaiming :

“O, Miss Junie, man killed, horse throwed him—he’s killed !”

Junie on hearing this startling announcement, rose from her seat and hastened to the scene of the disaster. A deathly palor spread over her face. No doubt she would have been thrown into a state of great perturbation if the fallen man had been an entire stranger. But the sight which she beheld made the world appear to reel for a moment. It was no stranger. Before her was the prostrate, and bloody form of John Milson. The young lady grew sick. In this awful moment the situation revealed to Miss Junie herself the depth of her affection for the young man, apparently dead. She had frequently thought of him, it is true ; but only, as she persuaded herself, as of a dear friend. But now she could not blind herself to the fact that her sentiment toward him was much deeper and warmer than friendship. Her first impulse was to give way to a violent paroxysm of the grief which had produced a suffocating sensation. But this was no time for the exhibition of weakness. Perhaps he might not be dead. So nerving her-



self she bent over the prostrate form and felt the pulse. To her great joy it indicated signs of life. At once she said to some of the children :

“Run to the house, and tell Mr. Jones to come quick.”

They obeyed. Then she brought out the bucket of water, and bathed the fallen man's face. She now hoped that it was only a temporary unconsciousness, and the hope caused a flood of strange emotions to roll through her heart which was throbbing fast and wildly. The innocent young lady did not know herself.

Soon Mr. Jones, with whose family she was boarding, made his appearance ; and the teacher cried out with an energy of which she was not aware :

“O, Mr. Jones, will he die ?”

“Let me see, Miss Junie.”

He then examined Milson as well as he could to the full extent of his surgical knowledge.

“I don't know whether he will die or not. He's mighty badly hurt. But he must be moved from here.”

“O, Mr. Jones, do all you can for him—spare no expense.”

“Is it somebody you know ?”

“Yes, sir ; it is Mr. John Milson ; I have known him for years. He lives in Holly Springs.”

“Why, yes, I remember him now myself. But we've no time to lose. I'll send for the Doctor at once.”



Mr. Jones then went back to the house and procured some assistance ; and a rude litter was hastily constructed, and on this Milson was borne to the house. His breathing was now perceptible. In the course of an hour the family physician of Mr. Jones arrived, and at once he began to discharge the duties of his profession. He examined his patient carefully, and then said :

“There are no bones broken ; but his internal injuries are severe.” Then he began to apply the proper remedies.

Junie went back to the school-room, and hastened through the lessons as rapidly as she could. It was twelve o'clock when she returned to the house. She went up to the bed-side, and stood for a moment gazing into his pale face, and then let fall the tears she could not repress. Suddenly Milson opened his eyes. For a moment he appeared to be bewildered. Then in a feeble voice he said :

“Junie.”

The teacher could not but notice the tenderness with which he pronounced her name. He had even dropped the prefix of “Miss.” Notwithstanding the distressing situation Junie observed these little things which to her had considerable significance. There is no telling what would have been the result of this incipient *tete-a-tete*, if the Doctor had not deemed it his duty to interfere. It was fortunate for the young lady that he did so ; for she was becoming some-



what embarrassed. The physician quickly said :

“You are wounded ; you must not talk ; you must be perfectly quiet.”

Junie left the room while the physician administered a dose of medicine. In a little time the patient fell into a deep sleep.

That evening the school was dismissed earlier than usual ; and when the teacher returned to the house the physician informed her that the patient was doing very well, though he could not tell what would yet be the result.

“Doctor,” she said, “you must not leave him to-night if he is in any danger.” Then she continued as if by way of explanation, “it is a friend of our family ; and I must see to it that he has proper attention.”

“Yes, I understand,” replied the Doctor, looking at her so searchingly that Junie turned her head, “but there is no immediate danger. You may rest assured that I will not neglect the young man. I must leave now ; but I will return about midnight. If he wakes up before then, I have left instructions with Mr. Jones what to do.” Accordingly the physician took his leave.

From the searching look the Doctor gave her, Junie saw that he had put a construction upon her words which she by no means intended. She felt vexed. Then the young lady tried to recover from her former status, that is in her own mind, by attempting to persuade herself that the interest she took in the present case grew out of



friendship. Mr. Milson was her friend, and that was all. The Doctor had no right to give her such a searching look, when she was acting only as a friend. But she thought any attempt to remove his suspicions in regard to the relation, which he evidently supposed to subsist between herself and the wounded man, would only confirm him in his opinion. So Junie turned her head, and secretly bit her cherry lip, wishing that she had not spoken so hastily; and yet allowing the Doctor to go off thinking just as he pleased about the matter.

But Miss Junie determined to do her duty toward her friend in spite of people's thoughts. So, after supper she told Mr. Jones that she would watch the patient at least till the Doctor returned; and that he could retire to rest if he wished.

"I am afraid, Miss Junie," said Mr. Jones, "it will be too much for you to sit up so late, and then have to teach school to-morrow."

"Never mind that," replied the young lady, "I will not become sleepy till midnight, and even for some time after. I can stand it better than you can, Mr. Jones. Besides—"

There was a pause. Mr. Jones had no idea what the teacher intended to say. But Junie suddenly came to the conclusion that it was useless to make any more remarks on the subject of friendship. The young man was quite sick and required nursing. Why then make any apology?



It was this process of ratiocination, that required only an instant for its full development in the young teacher's mind, which resulted in such an abrupt pause.

If Mr. Jones had any suspicions he kept them to himself. He offered no objection to the proposed arrangement, and left Junie and grandma Jones who said that she "didn't mind settin' up at all," as nurses. Milson was still in a heavy sleep. After they had been in the room for an hour or so grandma Jones began to ask Miss Junie some questions in regard to the sufferer who seemed to be an object of such deep interest to her.

"You seem to be acquainted with this young man?" she asked in a low tone.

"Yes, grandma, I have known him for a long time."

"Well," said the good old lady slowly and thoughtfully, "it's jest struck me that he was a comin' here to see you."

"You have no right to make any such supposition, grandma."

"Now come, Junie," she said bluntly, but pleasantly, "aint that young man a sweetheart o' yourn?"

"Hush, grandma," she said looking toward the sleeper, "he might hear you."

"No danger o' that, child; he's dead asleep."

"Well, then, grandma, you are very much mistaken if you suppose he is anything more to



me than a friend. I do not mind telling you, but you must not say anything about it,—he thinks a great deal of my sister, and of course I regard him as a friend.”

But grandma Jones had no small amount of innocent curiosity in connection with her deep and solid piety. There could be no harm in gratifying her curiosity, and she resolved to probe the matter to the bottom. She felt a considerable degree of interest in Junie’s welfare anyhow. So the good old lady replied:

“Yes, certainly, if that’s the case. Are they engaged to be married?”

“I cannot say, grandma, for I really do not know.”

“If you don’t know for certain, I tell you I don’t believe it. That young man was a huntin’ you up, now shore. I was once young myself, and I know somethin’ about the ways of young people. What was he a doin’ at the school-house if he didn’t come to see you?”

“I suppose he did call by to see me,” said Junie. “My opinion is that he was merely passing by, and knowing that I was teaching he stopped to speak to me—that was all.”

It was far from Miss Junie’s intention to tell anything but the truth even in regard to so delicate a matter. She knew that Milson had addressed her sister; though his conduct since had been a little strange. Under the circumstances she made a supposition which was in harmony



with at least the upper current of past events. This supposition seemed reasonable to herself, and in making it she did not think she had done violence to the truth. Her innate modesty would not permit her to think that calling to see her was the sole object of Milson's visit.

But this plausible supposition was not altogether satisfactory to grandma Jones.

"Well, meb be so," she said, "but I have my notion about it."

And "grandma's" notion was that any sensible young man would prefer Junie to her sister. She had never seen Miss Gerie; but Junie had informed her that Gerie was an infidel; and the sensible old lady could hardly conceive it to be possible that any one with good common sense, would prefer an infidel to such a lovely Christian as Junie. If she had ever beheld Gerie's dazzling beauty, probably her notion might have been slightly modified. But grandma was looking only to the qualities of mind and heart which she thought a wife ought to have. So she could not bring herself to believe that it was possible for the young man who lay before them, to prefer infidel Gerie to Christian Junie.

The physician arrived about midnight according to promise, and on examining his patient discovered that the symptoms were rather unfavorable. So he and Mr. Jones sat up the remainder of the night. Next day Milson had a high fever, and he was incapable of conversing.



But we will not fatigue our reader with all the details of his sickness. It was several days before he was pronounced out of danger. During all this time Junie was at his bed-side all the hours she could spare from the school-room. For several nights she and grandma Jones took their turn as nurses. The neighbors kindly offered to take Junie's place, but she insisted that it was her duty to watch, especially since the misfortune had been incurred on her account.

But Milson began to improve; yet he was confined to the house for some time.

One morning as Junie was leaving for her school, grandma Jones said to Milson:

"There goes one of the best girls I ever seen in my life; but you're well acquainted with her, I 'spose?"

"Yes, madam, I have that honor."

"Well may you call it an honor. You owe her a mighty big debt, young man. She's watched at your bed-side a part of every night you've bin sick, and then taught school next day. I was really afeard she would make herself sick a doin' so much."

"I am extremely sorry," replied Milson, "that I have been the innocent cause of so much trouble to this kind family and to her. I shall certainly try to discharge my obligations, though I can never hope to succeed; for pecuniary returns cannot repay those kind attentions bestowed by true friends."



“It makes not so much difference about the family; but dear Junie was the one that had the hardest task. I’m told that you are a friend of the family?”

“Yes, madam.”

“Junie tells me,” continued the kind-hearted old lady, “that her sister is an infidel as well as her father.”

“Yes, madam, I believe she is.”

“Believe!” said grandma. “Why, don’t you know?”

“Well, madam,” said Milson, who did not relish this inquisition, “she did profess to be an infidel, even an Atheist; but I really cannot say now what she is. It has been some time since I conversed with her on that subject—indeed, on any subject.”

“You’ve not seen her lately then?”

“No, madam.”

“Well,” said grandma, partly satisfied with the information which had thus been elicited, “Junie is one of the most pious young Christians I’ve ever saw in my life. I dun know what sort of a man her father could be to turn the dear child out o’house an’ home and force her to make her own livin’. It must be mighty hard on her to give up sich a fine home as she had an’ come out to this poor neighborhood to teach school. But she never complains. I feel sorry for her an’ I hope the good Lord will open up some other way for her.” Then after a short pause the old lady



continued, looking straight in Milson's face, "one thing's certain she'll make some man a mighty good wife."

At this Milson slightly winced, but he said nothing. The little wince, which might have been accidental, was all that she could draw from him in regard to the actual current of his sentiments.

At length Milson had sufficiently recovered to return home. It was on Saturday he was to take his leave. That morning he requested Junie to take a short stroll to the school house. She consented; and when they had proceeded a little distance from the house Milson said, "I can never repay you, Miss Junie, for your kindness to me during my illness."

"I do not ask any compensation, Mr. Milson, I have done nothing more than my duty. One of the requirements of pure religion is to visit the sick."

"Yes; but I know I have put you to a great deal of inconvenience."

"Do not allude to it, Mr. Milson," interrupted the young lady, "and do not, I beg you, consider yourself under any obligation to me."

"Well," said Milson, speaking slowly, "I want to tell you why I happened to be here. I have been absent from home for several weeks. When I returned I inquired after you, and soon learned your history. At once I started to this place, and if the misfortune had not occurred which has confined me to the house so many days, I would



have informed you before now that the sole object of my visit was to tell you that I have a warmer sentiment toward you than mere friendship. I love you with all the ardor of my soul."

On hearing this emphatic declaration Junie stopped suddenly and looked at Milson with some show of indignation.

"Mr. Milson! how can you say that when I have had sufficient evidence to convince me that your love has been bestowed elsewhere? You will not deny it."

"Your sister has told you all then?"

"I do not know that she has told me all; but some time since I learned that you made a proposal to her—with what success I know not. How then can you address such language to me as you have just employed?"

"Miss Junie, listen to me. It certainly devolves upon me to make an explanation. I am glad that your sister has given you the information of which you are in possession; for I have nothing to conceal or deny. You have used the word 'deny'——

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Milson," interrupted Miss Junie, "I did not mean that you really would deny the truth. I have a better opinion of you than that."

"I am glad you have, Miss Junie. Well, what your sister told you is true."

"And if that is true, Mr. Milson, and my sister has discarded you, do you suppose that I feel



highly complimented by such a rapid transfer of your affections? Do you suppose" she continued straightening herself proudly up, "I would be any man's second choice?"

The young lady had the advantage of the young man, for he had at first revealed the existence of the tender sentiment in his breast; and she could therefore afford to talk in this proud manner.

"But hear me, Miss Junie. Please let me explain. I repeat that what your sister told you is true. I did blindly love her—at least I thought I did. But if you will excuse me for saying it, my eyes were not opened till Mr. Bertram began to pay his addresses to Miss Gerie. I was filled with jealousy and madness. I made a proposal to your sister which she did not decline; but asked time to consider it. But the first Sabbath we went to church the light dawned into my mind. I began to see Miss Gerie in her true character. I do not say that she was playing a part; but I failed to notice in my madness what I now regard as faults. I was looking only at the outside. It was her external beauty that had thrown such a spell over me. It was not long before I saw that Miss Gerie would not suit me. You may be disposed to think that I am in the condition of the fox that could not secure the grapes, and in vexation and disappointment pronounced them sour; but this is not my case. It is true that I plainly perceived that Miss Gerie



had concentrated her affections upon Mr. Bertram. But the knowledge of this fact was not the cause of the change of my sentiments toward her; but it was the discovery of the fact that her traits of character were not what I desired in a wife. It was not long before the foolish dream of my boyhood was entirely broken and dissipated. I was, I confess, overwhelmed by her great physical beauty. If Bertram had never formed her acquaintance, I believe my feelings would have changed, even if I had discovered that my feelings were reciprocated. I am glad that I was set free from the delusion so soon. If some months ago your sister had accepted my proposal and a marriage had been consummated I believe that to-day I would be a miserable man. Now, Miss Junie, I have told you the truth. I love only you."

The young lady was silent for a moment. But she must make some reply.

"Mr. Milson," she said half laughfully, "your sentiments toward sister underwent such a sudden change, how do I know that the attachment which you now profess, is not a mere fancy, which will prove to be another idle dream?"

"I acknowledge, said the young man, "that you have some ground to suspect me of weakness. But I have studied your disposition and traits of character, and I love you for your noble qualities of mind and heart and not merely for your beauty."



“I am satisfied,” replied Miss Junie, “that it is not for my beauty. If it is I can inform you and warn you that you are laboring under a greater delusion than you were before.”

“And yet, notwithstanding the poor opinion you seem to have of yourself, you appear more lovely and more beautiful in my eyes than your sister ever did. My affection for her was simply a boyish fancy which was soon dispelled by sober realities, and I am glad to say in time to save me from a life of wretchedness. I mean no disrespect to her; but we are not suited. And, now I have told you all. Will you send me away in despair? If you refuse my suit I will be miserable.”

Miss Junie had no experience in such affairs. Milson's words accelerated the motions of her heart; but she was confused and embarrassed. She really did not know what reply it would be proper to make. She was satisfied that she had formed a true estimate of Milson's character. She could not for a moment believe, especially under present circumstances, that he was merely trifling with her. He was too noble, she thought, to do this under any circumstances. There she was in thoughtful silence.

“Speak, Miss Junie; tell me that you will be mine; and I will take you from this place just as soon as you will go. It fills me with grief to see you in this position, which I know does not suit you.”



"I am not unhappy in my present situation, Mr. Milson. Besides, I have entered into a contract with these good people to teach their school for at least five months. I do not think I am at liberty to leave till my time expires."

"It will be easy enough to get some one else to fulfill your contract."

"But I do not think it right to put these kind people to that trouble. They are poor, but I like them, and I do not wish to disappoint them."

"I will not persuade you," said Milson, "to do anything which is revolting to your sense of right. But I dislike to see you engaged in an employment which must be distasteful to one reared as you have been."

"My labors are not at all disagreeable," interrupted Junie. "I feel that I am engaged in a useful work. This employment is much better than wasting my energies with the frivolities of fashionable society. My sphere of action is I own very restricted, but perhaps it is as wide as I am capable of filling at present. I am not discontented. The consciousness that I am not living in vain compensates somewhat for the trials and difficulties I have to encounter."

"I see," said Milson smiling, "that you are determined to have your way in this matter. May I dare to hope then at the expiration of your engagement with this people I can call you mine?"

"Mr. Milson," she said modestly, "I will not conceal from you the fact that I have a very



great respect and esteem for you. I think you are too noble and honorable to trifle with one in my present situation. I believe that you are sincere in the declaration you have made, and I feel highly flattered by the preference which you have expressed for me. But to tell you the truth," she continued with a blushing smile, "you appear to be rather susceptible. I therefore think that you would better not be entangled with an engagement till the expiration of my contract, which will not be very long."

"I deserve to be punished for my folly," said Milson. "I suppose I will have to prove my devotion and fidelity to you. Well, I shall not complain. I suppose you would like to attend church every Sabbath. Will you grant me the privilege of seeing you to town and back to your field of labor? It will be a great pleasure to be with you every Sunday."

"Then, Mr. Milson, you shall have that privilege, if such you think it."

So Milson could not get Miss Junie to be any more explicit in regard to the state of her affections. While the interview did not result in what he had desired; yet he could not but admire her good sense. He left her therefore with a higher appreciation of her worth than he had before.

Miss Junie's pathway seemed to be growing brighter. In her heart she really loved Milson with a far deeper regard and ardor than Gerie felt for Bertram. It was on a better foundation.



It was purer, broader, deeper. Junie believed that Milson had told the exact truth in regard to her sister. She believed that his love for her was far more solid; and the thought made her happy.

Milson, according to promise, came out for her every Sunday. And so the weeks passed away, and not a shadow fell across Junie's pathway. She became satisfied of Milson's stability, and at last consented to be his wife as soon as her contract expired.

There was only one thing that gave her the least uneasiness. Milson was not yet a Christian. He had promised to investigate the evidences of Christianity; but had put it off under the pressure of other affairs. The change which was so apparent in Junie had impressed him more with a sense of the excellency of religion. It had somehow invested her with more loveliness, and had brought to light qualities that otherwise would have been obscured. Milson fully intended to carry out his promise; but he was guilty of procrastination. Persons are sometimes awakened by awful dispensations of Providence. But we will not anticipate.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

After Bertram had made all the necessary arrangements with Murrell for the accomplishment of his diabolical scheme, there was nothing to prevent his making a proposal of marriage to Miss Gerie Paine. This he did in a few days after his interview with the robber. Our reader no doubt anticipates the result of the suit. The young lady was so infatuated with the villainous, polygamous Bertram that he found no difficulty in inducing her to accept his proposal. The reluctance which she exhibited was assumed for the purpose of concealing the infatuation, which the sense of ordinary modesty forbade her to manifest. In her heart she gave a glad consent. So as soon as could be all things were made ready for the marriage. It is needless to say that no invitation was sent to poor Junie, whose existence was now ignored at home.

One evening in the presence of a large party Bertram and Miss Gerie were made "one flesh" by a civil officer. Col. Paine was too bitterly opposed to the church and all its institutions to allow a minister of the Gospel to enter his doors for the purpose of performing a marriage ceremony. When Bertram consulted with Gerie in regard to the matter she said :



"I would prefer to have Dr. Archer."

"I thought," said Bertram in surprise, "you did not like the preacher."

"I have no use for him," she said, "in that capacity, but we have to yield to fashion you know. All respectable people have Dr. Archer."

"Of course," said Bertram, "you can have your way about it. It makes no difference with me; but I think we would better consult with the Colonel."

This was accordingly done; but no sooner did Col. Paine understand the proposition than he almost flew into a rage.

"Dr. Archer," he said, "shall never darken my doors, if I can help it."

"But, father," pleaded Gerie, "you know that all people who make the least pretensions to fashion have him to perform the ceremony."

This was one time in her life that Miss Gerie felt the need of a minister.

"I do not care," said Col. Paine, "you shall not have him."

"But I hate to be married," said Gerie, almost crying, "by a common Magistrate."

"I am sure," said Col. Paine, "that 'Squire Keems is a nice gentleman."

On hearing this Gerie was so provoked that she cried in the presence of her father and prospective husband. Bertram himself felt vexed at the Colonel's obstinacy. He really wanted Gerie gratified in this particular. But he did not dare



to argue the question with the young lady's stubborn father. Presently he said :

"If you will give your consent, Miss Gerie, I can procure the services of Judge Huling who is an elegant gentleman."

"Yes," said Col. Paine, "that will do. I don't see what objection any one can have to him."

And to this suggestion Miss Gerie had to consent, or not be married at all. So the matter was settled.

Miss Junie, notwithstanding her surroundings, was happy. Every Sabbath Milson went out in his buggy for her and carried her to church. Her affection for him increased as the weeks went by. Soon she would be his "help-meet" for life.

And now in the progress of our story we come to one of those events which gives to human history such a melancholy aspect, and which causes us to stand appalled at the workings and ways of Divine Providence.

John Milson had some law business at a little village in Pontotoc county, Mississippi, which required his attention. Accordingly one day he left Holly Springs, and late the following night he reached his destination. His business was transacted the next day; and the day after he started back home. But he was not alone. He left the village in company with a peddler who desired to make his way across the country to Hernando, Miss. It was an apparent accident that threw the two together. The peddler had



somehow found out that Milson was going at least a part of the way in the direction which he himself was traveling; and as he was a stranger in the country, it would be pleasant to have the company of one who was acquainted with the best route. The peddler drove a vehicle which in times gone by was very similar to what was called a "carry-all." To this two very fine horses were attached. The man was a clock and watch peddler. The railroads, by almost annihilating distance between rural districts and cities have now abolished this species of trade from the country; but it was quite common in the times when our story occurred.

So Milson and the peddler journey on together till they reached the Tallahatchie river, which they easily forded. When they had reached the shore Milson caught a glimpse of a man not far from the opposite bank, whom he took to be a hunter; and consequently did not give the matter another thought. Milson said to the peddler as soon as they had crossed the stream:

"There is an old road which is not very often traveled; but it is in a very good condition at this season of the year. By taking that road you will shorten your journey five or six miles."

The peddler seemed to hesitate for a moment; but to save traveling five or six miles was something of a consideration in those days. So he decided to act upon Milson's suggestion. He made some inquiry in regard to the route, and



then the two parted. When they had started Milson heard the clattering of a horse's feet on the opposite side of the stream; but he supposed it was the hunter whom he had seen a few moments before. So he pursued his journey. When he had gotten a few hundred yards from the river he heard the report of a pistol not more than a quarter of a mile distant, which report he judged to be close to the road which the peddler was traveling. But it was no very uncommon thing to hear the report of fire-arms anywhere in the country. A moment afterward Milson noticed a deer standing in the road broad-side to him. The wild animal was running from the hounds; and as a deer will generally do, had stopped for an instant when it reached the highway. It was the custom in those days for all travelers, and also for a great many that were not travelers, to go armed. So our reader needs not be surprised to hear that Milson on this trip had carried a pistol, which he quickly drew and fired at the deer standing only a few yards from him in the road. He soon perceived that he had struck his game, and that the animal was badly wounded. So he started in pursuit of the deer, which he would soon have overtaken had it not been for the roughness and thickness of the undergrowth. He slowly followed his game till he came to the old road which the peddler had taken. There he came to a sudden halt. A sight met his vision that caused his blood to run cold. In the road



stood the peddler's vehicle ; but the horses were gone. In the carry-all he perceived the peddler's motionless body. A horrible murder had been committed. Impelled by sympathy and motives of duty Milson dismounted and tied his bridle to a limb close to the road-side, and then went to the vehicle. From the head of the prostrate form a portion of the brain had oozed out. The trunks had been broken open and rifled, and the horses stolen. The robber or robbers in their haste had left several silver watches. Milson put these in his pockets intending to keep them till he could report to the authorities. Suddenly the thought entered his head, "suppose some one should come upon me in this situation, how easy it would be to prove that I committed the murder ! I have read of such cases ; and this would be one in which the circumstances would certainly be conclusive against me. I do not know how I could get out of the difficulty. There is no legal way by which I could prove I did not do it."

The thought frightened him to such an extent that he resolved to leave in haste and carry the news to the first house, with whose owner he had some acquaintance. If he could do this he would be safe. So he got out of the peddler's vehicle as quickly as possible. But scarcely had he made three or four rapid steps towards his horse before the thought that had flashed through his mind, to his horror and amazement was trans-



formed into an awful reality. For two hunters emerged from the thicket into the road not more than twenty paces from the scene of the murder. They saw the dead man and Milson's hasty movements and rather frightened looks, and their suspicions were at once aroused. They promptly leveled their guns at him, and commanded him to halt. Milson was dumbfounded. He was seized with violent trembling, and he turned as pale as a corpse.

"What does this mean, sir?" sternly demanded one of the hunters.

"You know as much as I do, gentlemen," replied Milson in a quivering voice. "It was a mere accident you found me here."

"Accident!" cried the hunter. "Yes, I guess it was an accident, for in a few minutes we wouldn't hev found you here at all."

"I meant it was a mere accident that brought me here."

"It looks mighty suspicious. Aint that man dead in the carry-all?"

"He is—shot through the head," replied Milson.

"Who done it?" asked the hunter.

"I have not the slightest idea."

"Hold! young man! this thing has got to be investigated. It appears to me that you must a killed that man yourself. "Jim," he continued "set on your horse till I git down; keep your gun on him, an' if he attempts to run, shoot him. I'll soon see into this business."



Saying this the hunter dismounted, and tied his horse. Milson saw that resistance would only make matters worse. So he stood still. However unfavorable appearances might be ; yet knowing that he was innocent, he hoped that he could convince the hunters of the fact. The hunters then approached him and said :

“Now if you please I’ll search you.”

Milson began to explain.

“None o’ yer blarney,” said the man, “hold up yer hands till I search you.”

Milson, perceiving that it was useless to attempt any explanation, did as he was ordered. Once he was on the point of drawing his pistol and defending himself. But this would only make against him. The best policy he soon concluded was submission.

The hunter in his search found first Milson’s pistol, which was a revolver.

“Look at this,” said the hunter. “It begins to look suspicious—one barrel empty—and jest bin fired off.”

Next he came to the silver watches.

“Worse and worse—not much in this. It all looks nat’ral.”

The hunter then found in Milson’s pocket book over five hundred dollars.

“Still worse,” he said. “I don’t think thar’s much doubt that you’ve jest murdered that man in the carry-all. Every circumstance is agin you.”



The hunter then got into the carry-all, and examined the wound on the peddler's head. Then he said :

“Every thing is agin you, young man. Thar's no use to deny that you killed this man.”

Milson once more endeavored to speak.

“Now, gentlemen,” he said, “you have had your own way ; I have offered no resistance, because I am conscious of my own innocence. If you have one particle of humanity in your hearts let me explain my connection with this affair.”

“Let's hear, Tom,” said the other hunter, what he's got to say.”

“Wal, go on then,” said the person addressed, “we'll give you a fair chance ; but I don't see what good it'll do to try explain, when every single circumstance is agin you.”

“Listen to me,” replied Milson in an earnest tone. He then went on to give a full account of all the circumstances, some of which he felt were against him. He explained how he happened to be in possession of the watches, and the money, which had been collected the day before at a little village in Pontotoc county—a fact which could be established to the satisfaction of everybody. The two hunters listened patiently to the explanation ; and then one of them remarked :

“Young feller, that's a mighty purty tale ; but it won't do. Facts is facts ; and it's as plain to me as day-light that you killed that peddler. You don't look and talk like a man that ought to



do sich a awful thing as rob an' kill a poor peddler; but facts is facts. What was you a tryin' to git away so fast for? and what was you a doin' with them watches. We can't turn you loose on sich a lame story as you has told."

"Gentlemen," said Milson, "there is one thing that ought to convince you that I am innocent of this crime; for it is evident that the peddler had horses; and now where are they? If I had done this thing, you would certainly have found the horses in my possession."

"I've bin lookin at the tracks," said one of the hunters, "and my opinion is you had pardners in this business. They've gone with the horses. Jest as like as any other way you're one of the Murrell gang, and I think you is. We'll be bound to take you to the sheriff. If you ken prove that you didn't kill the peddler I'll be glad; but if you can't, it looks to me as if thar might be some hangin' in the case. Jim," he said addressing his companion, "we'll have to take this feller to Holly Springs. We'll stop at Bill Bonds' an' git him and some of his neighbors to come here and attend to the corpse."

Then they made Milson mount his horse, and ride ahead, one of them remarking that if he "tried to run his hide wouldn't hold shucks." But there was no necessity for the threat. Milson had not the most remote idea of attempting to escape. He would not have done so, if he could; because he knew that flight would only



strengthen the circumstances against him. He firmly believed that he would be able to establish his innocence; yet the thought caused rather a painful apprehension that it would be difficult to explain some of the circumstances in the case. In a legal point of view he felt that they were unfavorable. As he was thinking over the situation they were moving on toward Holly Springs as rapidly as the circumstances would allow. Milson said nothing to his captors, seeing that it would be a mere waste of words; besides he had already made every explanation which was possible, and it had no effect upon them.

When they reached the house of Wm. Bonds the two hunters reported the awful occurrence, and pointed to their captive as the perpetrator.

“Good heavens!” cried Mr. Bonds, when he had heard the story, “you didn’t do that! I can’t believe it.”

“No, Mr. Bonds,” replied Milson calmly, “I am as innocent of that horrible crime as the very angels, though I confess that from a legal point of view some circumstances appear to be against me. So I really cannot blame these honest and law-abiding citizens for arresting me. It is merely an accidental train of circumstances that has singled me out as the murderer. I am not without hope that the true perpetrator will be apprehended in time to acquit me; or at least some clue will be obtained that will establish my innocence.”



"Look here, men," said Mr. Bonds, "I've known John Milson ever since he was a boy. I never can believe he murdered that man. There's some mistake as sure as you live; you've got the wrong man certain. I tell you, you've made a mistake."

"I say mistake," replied one of the hunters. "If you'd a bin thar you wouldn't a' thought thar was any mistake. We come on 'im almost in the very act."

"But you didn't see him shoot?" said Bonds.

"No; but we found nobody else thar except him; we heerd the pistol fire, and when we got thar he was a makin' off with three or four watches in his pocket, besides five hundred dollars and up'erds in cash. Here's his pistol; and you can see for yourself that it's loaded exceptin' the one barrel."

Here Milson spoke up and explained the matter to Mr. Bonds, who after having heard this version of the affair, said:

"I believe you John. Men," he continued, addressing the hunters, "you may depend upon it that this young man is telling the truth. I jest know he wouldn't tell a lie about it."

"O, pshaw! Bill Bonds," exclaimed one of the hunters, "you don't know what you're a talkin' about. Facts is facts, an' it's no use to deny 'em. It 'pears to me like this young feller is one o' Murrell's gang. Thar's no doubt that he had 'complices, for the horses was gone."



"You can never make me b'lieve," said Bonds, shaking his head to give emphasis to the assertion, "that John Milson had anything to do with that crime. I know him too well for that. I b'lieve it's jest exactly as he says it is, and you'll find it so too. You've got the wrong man shure."

"I tell you, Bill Bonds," said one of the hunters with energy, "if you'd a' bin 'long with us, an' seen the feller's motions as we did, you'd hev a differ'nt 'pinion. We'll be bound to take 'im to the sheriff; an' if he ken prove he's not guilty I'll be mighty glad on it; but jest as matters is now it 'ud be wrong to turn 'im loose."

"It is useless, Mr. Bonds," said Milson, "to argue the question with these gentlemen. I do not blame them for discharging their duty; in fact, I am glad we have such honest, law-abiding citizens. You can see, at least from a legal standpoint that they have some grounds for suspicion against me. But if you are a friend to me, watch the peddler's corpse till a jury of inquest can reach the spot; which will be some time to-morrow. Let nothing be disturbed. To corroborate my story, please take your dogs and track up the deer which I shot. I am satisfied you can find it; for it was badly wounded. You see the discovery of that deer will be a very important circumstance in my defense."

"I'll do anything for you, John, that I can," said Mr. Bonds. "I'll have that deer if it's pos-



sible for dogs to track 'im ; and if they can't track 'im I'll scour the Tallahatchie bottom till I do find 'im."

The party then pushed on for Holly Springs. But everything now seemed to be against Milson. For in half an hour after leaving Mr. Bonds' residence there came up a very hard shower of rain. Bonds went out in the rain with his hounds to track the deer, but the tracks were destroyed or so filled with water, that no dog could follow the trail. The next day Mr. Bonds and his neighbors hunted over the bottom for miles ; but no trace of the animal could be found. Thus one important link in the chain of Milson's defense was hopelessly broken.

When the hunters reached Holly Springs that night, poor Milson was lodged in jail. The next morning when it became known that he had been arrested on a charge of most foul murder there was intense excitement. Numbers of his friends called to see him, and among others Dr. Archer. Few could believe that Milson was guilty ; but they could not deny that the circumstances as related by the hunters were decidedly against him. The legal evidence of the crime, they could not but see, was almost conclusive, even according to Milson's own version of the matter.

"John," said Dr. Archer, "I firmly believe your statement in regard to this unfortunate affair. But you are a lawyer, and I have been one ; and you and I cannot but see that your



case is extremely critical. However, you may rely on me as your friend. I will serve you in any way that I can."

"I am under obligation to you Dr. Archer, for your kind offer. Will you be one of my legal counsel?"

"Certainly, if you desire it."

"I will thank you," said Milson, "if you will secure also the services of Mr. Barton. I think with you two acting for the defense I will be safe."

"I hope, John, you have not forgotten your best friend. If you secure Him, then indeed will you be safe."

"Who is that?" asked Milson.

"It is," answered the preacher, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—a friend who has done more for you than any else—the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Doctor," said Milson thoughtfully and sorrowfully, "I have recently been reflecting a great deal on that subject, and I have promised myself that I would give to it the necessary attention. But I will confess to you that I am not satisfied as to the divine origin of the Bible. Just so soon as I am extricated from this difficulty I am going to investigate till I am satisfied."

"But, John," replied Dr. Archer with deep and impressive solemnity, "I am afraid for you to postpone this matter of such awful importance. I do not blame you for having your doubts; but



I would blame you very much if you do not try to get rid of them."

"In my present condition, Doctor, I cannot concentrate my mind on any subject except my own defense. But I promise you that just so soon as my trial in the Magistrate's Court is ended, no matter how it may terminate, I will put it off no longer. It will be but a few days till the trial comes off."

"Very well, if you will so have it. But there is one thing which you can do, and do at once. You can pray God to give you His Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind."

"I will try to do so, Doctor. But I am so awfully perplexed and troubled that I can now think of nothing but my present situation."

"Yes, but we are told that the Lord is our Refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Now why not go to our merciful Heavenly Father with your trouble.?"

"Doctor, you know a man cannot pray with proper faith who has serious doubts in regard to the divine authenticity of the Bible. In a short time I promise you again that with your assistance and your direction I will commence the work of investigation. But, if you will excuse me for saying it, my case in a legal point of view must be attended to first. You appreciate the necessity of prompt action."

"Yes," said Dr. Archer, who did not think it



prudent to press the other matter, "we must begin to take steps at once."

"Please see Mr. Barton immediately."

"I will go to his office now," said Dr. Archer.

"Try to be cheerful, John."

Accordingly the preacher took his leave and soon secured the services of Mr. Barton, who was at the time one of the most celebrated lawyers in the Criminal Court in the State of Mississippi. He had achieved a wide-spread reputation, which was deserved too; for he had worked his way up by native energy and talents. Mr. Barton willingly undertook the case of Milson, to whom he was a warm friend. At once he set about the business of procuring testimony. He went to the jail, and obtained all the facts of which Milson was in possession. Then he saw the Magistrate, and came to an understanding as to when the trial should take place. Having done this he forthwith set out for Pontotoc county to the village where Milson had collected the money found on his person. On the way he stopped at the house of Mr. Bonds, and got him to promise that he and his neighbors would search the bottom again for that deer.

"You shall be well paid for your trouble and time," said Mr. Barton. "If we can only secure the body of that deer, it will corroborate Milson's statement, and will account for the empty barrel of his pistol."

"I don't want any pay, Mr. Barton, for such



service as that. I will do anything I can for John Milson, who no more killed that man than I did. But I'm afraid it's too late. I've already searched."

"Go to the river," said Mr. Barton, "and look up and down the stream. It may be that the deer attempted to cross the river and was drowned. From Milson's statement the animal could not have gone far before it died."

Mr. Bonds promised that he would make every possible effort to discover the animal's body.

Accordingly Mr. Bonds secured the services of as many of his neighbors as he could; and for two days a diligent search was made. They went up and down the river for several miles, but no trace of the deer could ever be found. At last the general conclusion was that Milson was mistaken in regard to the severity of the wound, and that the animal had left that part of the country; so the search was sorrowfully abandoned—sorrowfully, because there was general sympathy for Milson.

Mr. Barton went with the jury of inquest to the scene of the murder. In walking around the spot examining everything which could throw any light on the subject without any particular object in view, he stepped behind a large tree that stood only a few feet from the road-side. The tree was hollow, and would easily admit of the entrance of a human being. His eye fell upon a pocket handkerchief in this tree, which he



eagerly seized. It was a very common article. In one corner he easily perceived some rude letters worked in red cotton thread. It did not require much study to spell out the name W. Z. Boland. He put the handkerchief in his pocket, and then without saying anything in regard to his discovery, he inquired of the persons present if they knew such a man as W. Z. Boland. But no one had ever heard of the name before. Not being able to discover anything more of importance Mr. Barton pushed on to Pontotoc county where he obtained the facts with which our reader is acquainted. He returned to Holly Springs with only one man as a witness.

In a day or two afterwards a preliminary trial was held in the Magistrate's Court. The two hunters that had arrested Milson appeared as witnesses against him. The defense had only one witness, and that was the man from whom Milson had collected the five hundred dollars that had been found on his person. The establishment of this fact was the only circumstance that seemed to corroborate Milson's account of the matter; and that in itself weighed little against the overwhelming evidence on the other side. Mr. Barton and Dr. Archer had no hope of the acquittal of their client. All that they could reasonably expect to accomplish was to have Milson bound over to the Circuit Court to await his trial under bond. They apprehended no difficulty in making the bond no matter how



heavy it might be. But they were defeated in their efforts ; for the Magistrate decided that it was not aailable case. So the trial ended. There was no help for it ; and Milson was forced to go to jail.

As might be expected the news of the shocking murder soon spread rapidly over the country, together with the arrest of John Milson. People were astounded. The young man's friends would not and could not believe that he was guilty ; and yet the circumstantial evidence was so strong against him that they had little hope of his final acquittal.

The awful news soon reached the ears of one upon whom Milson dreaded its effects. It is just impossible to describe the amazement and horror of Junie Paine. The news came over her like a mountain billow. When good Mr. Jones announced to her the fearful news, she sat still as if petrified. Not a word escaped her lips. But every trace of color faded from her cheeks. If Mr. Jones had ever had any doubt as to her feeling toward Milson, Junie had now betrayed herself. The poor girl, stricken with grief too deep for utterance, went off to her room and fell upon her bed. It seemed that her very heart must burst under the terrible weight of this new trouble. Then she began to weep, and wept on till it appeared that the fountain of her tears was exhausted.

The next day after she had received this



startling news, a letter in the handwriting of John Milson was delivered to her. Eagerly she tore open the seal and read as follows :

MY DEAR JUNIE:—Will you still allow me to call you “dear ?” I have nothing in the world to live for but you. If you cast me off in this dark hour of trial I care not what may become of me so far as this world is concerned. You will no doubt have learned before this reaches you, of the fearful crime of which I am accused. I am entangled by a chain of circumstances which have mysteriously fastened upon me as a wretch guilty of murder and robbery. I am in great perplexity and distress. I cannot see my way out of this terrible affair. But, dearest, God knows that I am innocent of this crime. I am incapable of such a horrible deed. Will you believe my solemn protest? My hand is as free from the blood of that poor peddler as yours is. But I will not attempt to enter into any explanation. The whole affair is wrapped in profound mystery. Dr. Archer promised me that he would see you, and give you the only explanation which I have it in my power to make in regard to this sad and unfortunate affair. From the present aspect of the case I do not know that he can convince you of my innocence. Circumstances are certainly against me from a legal point of view. You therefore have nothing but my emphatic denial of the horrible charge against me. My dearest, I cannot ask you still to be faithful to one who is now confined in a felon’s cell. I cannot ask you to share in my disgrace. If you think best you can terminate our engagement, and thus put an end to the bright dream which, for weeks past, like a brilliant rainbow, has spanned the skies across my pathway. Believe me, my love, when that beautiful dream vanishes the last gleam of light will be shut out by the threatening clouds and I shall sink down into darkness that nothing can dispel. If under present circumstances you decide to discard me I cannot censure you, and I will love you none the less. But I beg you to remember one thing: whatever may be the result—if my worst fears are realized I shall assert my innocence to the last. I shall close till I hear from you either by letter or through our mutual and dear friend Dr. Archer.

Yours in trouble,

JOHN MILSON.

When Junie had finished reading the above letter, a flood of tears rushed to her eyes. She fell upon her knees by the bed-side, and prayed God to give her strength to bear this awful trial. She prayed for poor John Milson, who was then lying in a loathsome jail. The thought could find no lodgement in her heart for even a moment, that her lover was guilty of murder and robbery.



She could no more believe that, than she could believe herself to be guilty. So she prayed God to clear up the mystery which hung over this awful affair, and to discover the true murderer. Then she whispered to herself: "I will never desert one around whom cluster my hopes of earthly happiness. I know he is as innocent of this crime as are the angels of Heaven. His noble nature would not permit him to do such a shocking thing. Others may forsake him as a guilty wretch, but I will be true to the last. I have promised to be his, and I will be, if I go down to my grave in dishonor." Then she clasped her hands and cried, "Oh, God of Goodness and Mercy! thou art too wise to err and too compassionate to be cruel. Why then should he suffer, and probably be made to expiate a crime of which he is not guilty? Can thy providential care not bring the real murderer to light? Oh, my God! protect the innocent. But thou wilt do right. Help me to be resigned to thy will, whatever it may be. But noble John Milson did not do this thing—he could not—it is impossible. Oh, Lord wilt thou, canst thou permit justice to be trampled under foot? Wilt thou not interfere and save virtue from outrage. Oh, is it possible that the Great and Wise God will permit an innocent man to die in shame and disgrace, and allow the guilty one to escape? It cannot be—it must not be—it would be a reflection upon the divine government of the world."



Thus, in this rambling way, half-talked and half-prayed poor Junie Paine. It required all her physical nerve and all her faith to bear up under this fiery trial. She knew not with what intensity she loved Milson till he was overtaken by this fearful calamity. How she wanted to go to him even in the jail ! But this was forbidden by ordinary prudence. That night she wrote a letter to Milson, so long that we have not space to give its contents. Neither is it necessary. When the young man received it the sweet words of comfort and love fell like balm upon his heart, and let into his prison through the rifted clouds a bright beam of sunshine.

The next day after the trial in the Magistrate's Court Mr. Barton and Dr. Archer had a long consultation in regard to the case. Neither one had the most remote idea that Milson was guilty. They firmly believed his version of the affair ; but they had no way to prove its correctness. The impression was somehow made upon the mind of Dr. Archer that the key to the whole mystery was contained in that pocket handkerchief which Mr. Barton had found in the hollow tree. Why, he could not tell. It was one of those strange thoughts which sometimes come into the mind from some hidden and unaccountable source. He stated his conviction to Mr. Barton ; and both at last came to the conclusion that they would make an effort to discover the owner. Said Dr. Archer to Mr. Barton :



“Things more insignificant than a pocket handkerchief have sometimes changed the current of human history. It would not be at all strange then, if Milson’s life should be saved by that common, cotton handkerchief.”

Accordingly they inserted an advertisement in the papers making inquiry after one W. Z. Boland, with whom they had business of vital importance. They would be glad to receive a communication from him or from anyone acquainted with his place of residence.

They waited with much anxiety for a response; but though the advertisement was inserted in many papers, no answer ever came. And now we must turn our attention to some other matters of great importance.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The next day after the preliminary examination in the Magistrate’s Court, Dr. Archer called at the jail where Milson was held in “duress vile.” The sight was enough to elicit the sympathy of anyone like the Doctor, who believed in his heart that the young man was innocent.

Milson, as a matter of course, was in such dis-



tress as no words can depict. To be restrained of his person liberty was bad enough ; yet if the misfortune had terminated at that he could have endured his confinement with some degree of resignation. The jailer, who was a friend, had made his quarters as comfortable as a prison would allow. But the thought that there should be grounds, as there undoubtedly were, for the suspicion that his hands had been imbrued in the blood of a fellow-being, and for such a vile purpose as robbery, made his soul recoil with horror. To a refined, upright man, with a sensitive nature like his the sense of disgrace was so keen and overpowering, that, at times, his reason would seem to totter on its throne . Sometimes it appeared to him that his situation was only a horrible dream. It is simply impossible to describe his emotions.

“John,” said Dr. Archer, giving him a warm friendly grasp while his eyes were moistened with tears, “language cannot convey my sympathy for you in this dark day of trial. I confess that I am shocked and astounded. I stand appalled at the mysterious circumstances that inclose an innocent man in a net-work through which at present I see no way of breaking. You understand the difficulties as well as I do. And yet the Holy Bible tells us that all is for the best. We, poor finite mortals cannot comprehend the ways of Divine Providence.”

“The trouble with me, Doctor, is to believe



that Divine Providence is concerned in this affair at all. Do you believe that a just God would permit an innocent man to be brought into disgrace and ignominy, as I am? If I were guilty I could easily perceive, or at least would be disposed to acknowledge the hand of God all through the horrible affair. But to have all my earthly prospects blighted in an hour, and all my fond hopes and bright anticipations scattered like dust—and to be accused of a crime at the commission of which my soul revolts, to say nothing of events to come—all this, Doctor, appears to me more like a series of unfortunate coincidences, or accidents, or chances, or by whatever name you may call them, than the deliberate plans of a wise and merciful God.”

“John, my dear boy,” said the preacher in a tone full of sympathy and kindness, “speak not harshly of our Heavenly Father who doeth all things well, and whose purposes you cannot fathom. God sees not things as men do. He allows a great many events to transpire that are very perplexing to us poor worms of the dust. I have no doubt that this awful calamity as you regard it, and as I too regard it in one sense, is intended for your good either in this world or the world to come—it may be both. You may rest assured that God will in some way bring good out of it. If it result in your becoming a Christian, your suffering will not have been in vain. Heaven is worth any sacrifice that it is in the power of man



to make. Any temporal calamity that will cause us to take Refuge in Christ will one day be regarded by us as a blessing."

"I candidly confess to you, Doctor, as I have intimated before, that I am not satisfied as to the existence of such a heaven as I have heard you describe in your sermons. I have told you that I have no objections to Christianity as a system of religion. I can admit that it is the only system that furnishes any reasonable basis for the hope of immortality. If I could only be thoroughly satisfied that the Bible is a Divine Revelation I would even gladly become a Christian."

"Well, why can you not believe it? What is in your way?"

"I want the proof," said Milson slowly, "that it is not a forgery—that it is not an uninspired production."

"Your demand is perfectly reasonable," said the preacher. "You have the right to require such. God does not demand that we shall believe without evidence. Now why can you not receive the Bible as true just as you do any other history?"

"How do I know, Dr. Archer, that there ever existed such persons as Moses and Joshua and Matthew, and all the other writers of the Bible?"

"I will ask you, John, how do you know that such a person as Julius Cæsar ever lived?"

"I know that, because we have his history;



and because his works are referred to by other historians."

"Would you accept the same kind of proof in regard to the divine authenticity of the Bible?"

"I would accept it," replied Milson, after a thoughtful pause, "as establishing the genuineness of the Bible."

"You are right. I am glad that you see the importance of making a distinction between the genuineness and the authenticity of a book. You must be satisfied first that the work is written by the person or persons that are its reputed authors; and then you must next consider whether they tell the truth."

"Yes, sir," answered Milson, "it seems to me that would be the proper way to proceed."

"Have you never," asked the preacher, "investigated the evidences of Christianity at all?"

"No sir; I intended to do so, but for some reason—I hardly know why—I have put it off. Besides I have not had access to the necessary sources of information. But I suppose you can answer such questions as I desire to ask. If so the work of investigation needs not occupy much time."

"I will with pleasure," replied Dr. Archer, "answer any question that I can. I have devoted a great deal of time to this subject, and probably I may be able to give you satisfactory answers, and thus save you the trouble of reading a large number of books. I see that you want Chris-



tianity to be true, and that is half the battle. I have noticed that whenever a man goes into the investigation with the wish or hope that the Bible is false, he will persuade himself that such is the case in spite of all argument. Besides, you cannot get him to give the subject a fair and full investigation. Instead of giving assent to a truth or an argument, he is all the time trying to confirm his preconceived notions. I have little hope of the conversion of such an infidel as that; and I am glad to know that you do not belong to that class. But before you propose a question let me make a suggestion, which, if you act upon it, will enable us to reach a conclusion much sooner."

"What is that?"

"We need not investigate the question of the divine authenticity of the Old Testament scriptures at all. Because if the New Testament is genuine and authentic so is the Old."

"Why so, sir?"

"From the simple fact that Christ and the apostles refer to it as an inspired book and thereby endorse it. You are bound to admit that if Jesus Christ was the Son of God, His endorsement alone of the Old Testament establishes its divine origin."

"I am glad, Doctor, you have made that suggestion. I had not thought of that. Of course if the New Testament is true, so is the Old. So if you will satisfy me that the New Testament is



genuine and authentic, that will be proof enough."

"Very well. Now ask me such questions as you wish."

Milson studied for a moment and then said :

"What proof have you that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote the Gospels to which their names are attached ?

"We know it from the testimony of both the enemies and the friends of the Christian religion. We have more and stronger evidence to establish the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament than any other book in the world."

"Strange as you may think of it Doctor, I do not recollect of ever having seen any allusion to the Christian religion by any heathen author, except Tacitus."

"There are many persons, John, who are in your condition, leaving out Tacitus. They do not know that there is any allusion at all to the Bible by profane historians. But I suppose the passage in Tacitus satisfies you in regard to the actual existence of Christ and his followers ?"

"Yes, sir. I have no doubt of that."

"Well now, if you can take my word for it, I will refer you first to the testimony of some of the enemies of Christianity, which is invaluable because they would make no admission which was the least favorable to the Christian religion unless they were forced to it by the pressure of facts too plain to be denied. I will first name



Trypho. He was a most bitter foe to the Christian religion."

"When did he live, Doctor?"

"His birth occurred before the death of the apostle John. Of course then he could and did obtain the facts in regard to Christ. This man had a public debate with Justyn Martyr about A. D., 140. In that discussion Justyn related many of the facts recorded in the Gospels, and Trypho admits the facts—a thing which he would not have done, if he could have denied them. Trypho says that Christ was crucified, and then he refers to the Christian belief that Jesus was born of a virgin, and rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven."

"But, Doctor, does Trypho admit that these things were true?"

"No,—not all of them. I am not trying to prove that they were true by his testimony, but only that they were believed by Christians at that early day. I prove by him that the facts of the life of Jesus which we now believe, were believed at that early day. Here is one enemy of Christianity who tells us what the followers of Christ then believed. If you doubt my statement I can show it to you in a book which I have."

"Certainly, Dr. Archer, I do not doubt the correctness of your statement. I will take your word for it that you have this evidence."

"Very well then," said the preacher, "I refer next to Celsus. He was born sometime during



the reign of Adrian, which began A. D., 117, and ended A. D., 138. He was an Epicurean philosopher, and wrote a book against the Christians entitled 'The True Word.' Now, Origen, in his reply to this work, states all the objections of Celsus in his own words, and minutely examines them all. This philosopher confines himself to the narratives contained in the New Testament, and does not refer to any spurious gospels. He admits that Christians then believed that Jesus was born of a virgin, that Herod destroyed the infants of Bethlehem, that Jesus went into Egypt, that he had twelve apostles, and that he was crucified. He refers to the fact that the disciples forsook Jesus when He was arrested, and also to the gall and vinegar, and he even quotes the expression which Jesus used, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' So, here we have the testimony of Celsus to the facts to which the Christians held. Next," continued the Doctor, "I refer to Porphyry. He was born about the year A. D., 233. He wrote a large treatise in fifteen books against the Christian religion."

"Are those books extant?" asked Milson.

"Only some fragments remain," replied the preacher. "But we have enough left to show what he admitted. He was one of the most learned opponents that Christianity ever had. But he did not deny the genuineness of the New Testament writings, but his aim was to overthrow



their authority by attempting to point out contradictions and absurdities. He never pretended to deny the miracles of the New Testament, but he ascribed them to cunning demons. If Porphyry had not been thoroughly convinced that these miracles had been actually performed, he would never have admitted that they were. But they had entered into history, and he could not possibly deny them. Then he comments on a large number of passages from the New Testament. We gather then from Porphyry that in his time not the slightest suspicion was entertained that the Holy Writings were forgeries. Their genuineness could not be questioned. Again, I refer to Hierocles, the philosopher, who was prefect in Alexandria in A. D., 303. He was well acquainted with our Scriptures, and brought up many objections against them, thus bearing testimony to their antiquity. He refers to both parts of the New Testament,—the gospels and the epistles. He mentions Peter and Paul by name; and does not attempt to deny the facts recorded in the New Testament. He contrasts the miracles of one Apollonius with those of Jesus, and says that the Christians reckoned Jesus a God because he performed a few miracles. I could refer to others," continued Dr. Archer, "all bearing testimony to the same facts. But I want to call your attention to just one more witness,—just such a witness as the infidel himself would desire to hear—an apostate from the Chris-



tian faith. It is Julian, the Roman Emperor. He succeeded to the throne of the Cæsars, A. D. 361. This man once professed to be a Christian, but afterwards renounced his faith. In his youth he was trained up for an office in the church; and he publicly read the Scriptures in the churches of Nicomedia. I make this statement on the authority of Gibbon. Julian was a man of great abilities, and wrote a great deal. Having been initiated into the church, and trained for the ministerial office, he must have possessed every means of investigating the genuineness of the Scriptures. He also held in his hands the archives of the empire, to which the apologist of Christianity repeatedly appealed. If therefore there ever was a man who could successfully controvert the claims of Christianity, if they were false, he was the man. Well now, he does not attempt to invalidate the genuineness of the New Testament, but he plainly acknowledges the leading facts of the Gospel history. He admits that Jesus did heal lame and blind people and exorcised demoniacs: he speaks of the enrollment in the time of Cyrenius: he says that Jesus 'rebuked the winds and walked on the sea, and cast out demons.' Then he refers by name to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and Peter; and he quotes from the Scriptures. It would seem that his testimony alone ought to be sufficient to establish the genuineness of the writings of the New Testament. One other circumstance in regard to him ought



not to be omitted. In order to falsify a prophecy of the Scriptures, he made preparations to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem with the intention of restoring the Jewish mode of worship. When the workmen were digging up the ancient foundations and removing the rubbish, we are informed that great balls of fire issued out of the ground and frightened the workmen so that they could not be induced to go back anymore."

"But," said Milson, "could not that phenomenon be explained on natural principles?"

"Suppose it could?" replied Dr. Archer. "The explanation does not destroy the fact. The attempt was made to do a thing which God said should not be done. The Lord could use natural means, and generally does, to frustrate designs which he does not desire to be executed."

"But if the workmen," said Milson, "had persisted might they not have succeeded?"

"That supposition still does not invalidate the fact. Julian determined to falsify prophecy; he made the attempt, and for some reason failed; that is the plain fact; and it makes no difference whether fire balls issued from the ground or not. But this is merely an incidental circumstance. Now I want to mention only a few of the early Christian writers. Why should not their testimony be entitled to as much weight as that of a heathen?"

"I think it is," replied Milson.

"Well then; there is the epistle of Clement,



which was written about A. D., 96. He makes so many quotations from the New Testament that we are forced to the conclusion that it was in existence in his day. There is no way to get rid of his testimony unless we deny the very existence of Clement himself.

Then there was Hermas who was contemporary with Paul. He wrote his work toward the close of the first century; and it is as clear as any thing can be that he was conversant with the New Testament Scriptures.

Then there was Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch A. D., 70. It is certain that he was contemporary with the apostles. Chrysostom says that he had the hands of the apostles laid upon him. His writings make it manifest that he was familiar with the New Testament.

Then there was Polycarp, who was an immediate disciple of the apostle, and was appointed Bishop of Smyrna by John. He conversed with many who had seen Jesus. Now his epistle abounds with quotations from, and allusions to, the New Testament, so that it cannot be disputed that the sacred writings were in existence in his day.

Next we come to Justyn Martyr, who was born in Palestine about A. D., 89; and was at one period of his life a heathen philosopher. He wrote several pieces, three of which, and whose genuineness is undisputed, are still extant. From his works might be extracted almost a complete



life of Christ as written in the gospels. To these gospels he appeals in the most public manner. He says they were generally read in all the churches. If this had not been true, the falsehood could have been easily detected.

Next I refer to Irenæus, who succeeded the martyr Polthynus in the bishoprick of Lyon about the year 170. In his youth he was the disciple of Polycarp; therefore his testimony is of great value. Of all his works we have only five books against heresies remaining. The books of the New Testament he quotes as Divine Oracles; and his works show that he had an intimate knowledge of the Gospels, Acts and Epistles.

Next we come to Tertullian, a Presbyter of the church of Carthage, who was born in the year A. D., 160. He uniformly recognizes the four gospels, as written by the evangelists, distinguishing Matthew and John as apostles, and Mark and Luke as apostolic men. His works are filled with quotations by name, and with long extracts from all the writings of the New Testament, except the epistle of James, the second epistle of Peter, and the second and third epistles of John. But as he did not profess to give a catalogue of the books of the New Testament—the fact that he neither quoted nor mentioned these books, is no evidence that they did not then form a part of the sacred canon.

I believe it was Dr. Lardner who observed that the quotations from the small volume of the



New Testament by Tertullian, are both longer and more numerous than the quotations are from all the works of Cicero, in writers of all characters for several ages.

I will omit the testimony of Clemens who was cotemporary with Tertullian. But descending to the third century and passing over a number of Christian writers, we come to the celebrated Origen, who was born in Egypt in A. D., 184 or 185. In his works there are so many quotations from the Scriptures, that if we had all his writings, we should have before us almost the whole text of the Bible.

When we descend to the fourth century, we find a multitude of witnesses to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. They are too numerous to mention; and I will name only one—Eusebius,—who flourished in A. D., 315. His Ecclesiastical History is still extant, in which he records the history of Christianity from its commencement to his own time. Since the fourth century there have been so many writers, that I could not now refer to them. But I think I have shown you that both the enemies and friends of the Christian religion, during the first four centuries, give a united testimony to the genuineness of the New Testament Scriptures. If this evidence is not satisfactory, I know not how to make it stronger. Many more witnesses can be referred to; but if a man will not accept those I have named what would be the use of mentioning others?"



"I see no use in it Doctor," said Milson, who had been paying the closest attention to the preacher's statements. "You have referred to authorities enough. I candidly confess to you, I was not aware that so much has been written about the Bible, especially at so early a time."

"Why," said Dr. Archer, "we have one unbroken chain of writers from the apostles themselves down to our day. With all this array of evidence I do not see how any thinking man can have a doubt as to the genuineness of the New Testament."

"It seems impossible," said Milson, "that the New Testament could have been forged. But has the charge ever been made that these writings were forged?"

"O yes," replied Dr. Archer. "There is no objection, which can be imagined, that has not been urged against the Bible. Men have exhausted human ingenuity to overthrow the authority of God's word."

"But, Doctor, in view of the unbroken chain of writers from the apostles down to the present, when was there a time at which the Bible could have been imposed on the world?"

"There never has been a time," said Dr. Archer, "that it could have been done. But to show you how unreasonable men are, it has been suggested that several persons about the fourth or fifth century agreed to write the Bible, or at least the New Testament, in order to give the world a better form of religion."



“But,” said Milson, “how could they dispose of the testimony of the writers on the subject of Christianity before that time?”

“There is the difficulty,” replied Dr. Archer. “For the impostors could not stop simply with writing the New Testament. They must also have forged the writings of Porphyry, Julian, Origen and all others both of friends and foes. It would have been necessary to change history itself. Suppose the New Testament had never been heard of till the fourth or fifth century, what becomes of the history of Nero, for instance? How would we account for the persecutions which profane history states that the followers of Christ endured previously to the fourth century?”

“I do not think, Doctor, that such an objection deserves refutation or notice. It is too trivial.”

“And yet, it is no more trivial than hundreds of other objections which men have urged against the Bible. If the advocates of the Christian religion were to resort to the use of such means as its opponents do, they would soon make the Scriptures an object of contempt, and bring merited disgrace upon themselves. My opinion is that Christian writers have treated all these silly objections of their opponents with too much respect, and thereby have exalted them into an importance of which they are utterly unworthy. By their mild and patient replies they have furnished grounds for the supposition that these trivial objections have some force in them. If



you had read much on the subject, you would have been astonished at the apparent seriousness with which sensible men have adduced foolish objections — objections which carry their own refutation on their face, and at their sophistry.”

“Do you think, Doctor, that honest men would resort to such processes?”

“I think many of them are downright dishonest men. Of course no honest man would attempt to do violence to Truth. Any honest man will accept truth no matter how it may conflict with his desires. But there are others who in my opinion are honestly skeptical at first. But their prejudices are against the Bible. They do not want it to be true. They endeavor to strengthen their prejudices, and after a while they succeed in making themselves disbelieve the truth. This is the way to account for their conduct on natural principles. But the Bible teaches us another way to account for it. We find this passage in the second epistle to the Thessalonians: ‘And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ Let a man begin to tamper with his conscience, let him oppose the Bible and try to disbelieve it, and my opinion is that God himself will send delusion upon him, and then to his mind a positive lie will assume the aspect of truth. And then any objection against the Bible,



no matter how trivial it may be, will appear to him worthy of consideration, and he will urge it, and contend for it with an air of sincerity, and with a solemnity truly amazing."

"Doctor," said Milson thoughtfully, "I was in a fair way to become one of these. I have had some doubts which I might have strengthened by false processes of reasoning. I feel thankful that you have put me on the right track of investigation."

"John, God brings good out of what we call evil. And as I said a while ago, if your present misfortune results in making you a true believer, the time will come when you will thank our Heavenly Father that he led you forth from the perils of infidelity, even if it was along a thorny pathway. It may be that nothing but a heavy calamity would have brought you to your senses. The old hymn says:

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace,  
Behind a frowning Providence  
He hides a smiling face."

I believe this is your case. So I beg you to try to have faith in the Lord."

After a pause the pastor continued :

"John, I must leave you for the present. I will call early in the morning, and will bring some books which I want you to read."

The Doctor then prayed with the prisoner, and took his leave. Again Milson was left to his own thoughts.



## CHAPTER XX.

According to his promise, Dr. Archer called at the jail next morning, and found the prisoner in better spirits than he had expected. The reason, no doubt, was that Milson had some other subject to occupy his thoughts besides his misfortune. Without some employment to call his attention away from himself, the shock resulting from the first few days' imprisonment would have been much harder to withstand. We are told by those who have been incarcerated in dark dungeons, and who had sensitive natures, that from a lack of occupation, reason can scarcely maintain its balance. So it was fortunate for Milson that he had something to think about—something, too, which was worthy of thought—something which is of more importance than any temporal thing—his own eternal destiny. He was now laying the foundation on which to base his hope of everlasting happiness.

After Dr. Archer had taken his seat, Milson at once introduced the subject of his thoughts.

“Doctor,” he said, “I am perfectly satisfied as to the genuineness of the New Testament Scrip-



tures. It seems to me clear enough that they were written by the persons to whom they were ascribed."

"Well, then," replied the Doctor, "if you admit their genuineness, it is not difficult to admit their divine origin. Because if the sacred writers made statements that were not true, there were numbers of persons who could and would have pointed out their falsehoods, and thus they would have crushed the imposition in its very incipency."

"Yes, that appears reasonable," said Milson. "But, Doctor, is there not some short, direct way of proving that the sacred writers must have told the truth? While I admit that the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures are closely connected, perhaps inseparable, yet, the process of reasoning by which that conclusion is reached, is somehow so abstract, that I cannot lay hold of the truth. Somehow I cannot grasp it as a living reality--somehow it makes no deep impression on my mind. I do not know, Doctor, that I have expressed myself in such a way as to make you see clearly what my difficulty is."

"I think, John, that I understand your state of mind. And now in answer to your question as to some short, direct mode of proving the authenticity of the New Testament, it seems to me that there is a way. Judging other people by myself, there is one thing which would satisfy



my mind, if I had any doubts on the subject.”

“What is that, Doctor?”

“In my opinion, John, the truth of the whole Bible depends upon the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. If he did not rise from the dead there is no truth in the New Testament. If the sacred writers had made a mistake in regard to some other events, it would not affect the general truth of the Christian religion. For instance we might say they were mistaken when they stated that he changed water into wine, or walked on the waves of the sea—and such mistakes would not destroy the plan of salvation. But if they were mistaken about our Lord’s rising from the grave—then all is lost. We are left without one ray of hope, and ‘we are of all men most miserable.’ But if he did rise then he must have been what he claimed to be. So I think the whole discussion in regard to Christianity can be narrowed down to just this one event. This was the ‘sign’ which he himself gave. So if the resurrection occurred, it at once settles the question of his Divinity beyond all controversy. Do you not see clearly that if the Infidel were to admit that Christ rose from the grave, he would at once give up the whole question.”

“Yes, sir. That is plain-enough. So, Doctor, if you will have the kindness to show me how that fact can be established, I do not see what more proof of the divine origin of the Christian religion I could demand.”



“Well,” said the Doctor, “if you will accept logical proof, I think I can satisfy you in a few moments.”

Then after a short pause the kind-hearted preacher began.

“You remember that on yesterday we proved that even Infidels down to the fourth century did not deny that Christ performed miracles. They did not dispute the leading facts of his life. All parties, both friends and foes, agree that he suffered death on the Cross. Now, Christians affirm that Jesus rose from the tomb on the third day after his death ; Infidels and Jews deny it. The question at issue is whether Christ actually came to life, or whether the body merely disappeared in some mysterious manner which no one could explain. It is evident that on the third day the corpse was missing. The Roman soldiers that guarded the sepulcher were persuaded to say, or at least they did say, that while they slept the disciples came and stole away the corpse.”

“If they were asleep,” asked Milson, “how could they affirm that the disciples did it?”

“That is the question,” replied Dr. Archer. “For according to their own statement they were competent to testify to the fact that they all went to sleep, and when they awoke the body was gone. If they were not all asleep then the question arises why they did not discharge their duty and arrest the disciples. No court that ever met on this earth would allow a witness to



state upon his personal knowledge what transpired while he was asleep. But the next question is how came these Roman guards to be sleeping on their post? It was a serious thing for a Roman soldier to be guilty of such an offense; and here according to their own account was the whole guard, after being charged with the utmost strictness to watch the sepulcher, asleep on their post. Why were they not punished for their offence as their military rules required? It would not do to tell before any respectable court, that an entire Roman guard was so careless and indifferent as to go to sleep, and that a few, timid disciples deliberately walked among them, broke the seal of the mighty Roman empire, leisurely replaced the grave clothes, and then bore the body away. The disciples had all fled, and were hiding in shame and confusion. When Christ breathed out his life on the Cross, his followers never expected to see him again. All their hopes of a great temporal kingdom were suddenly dashed to the ground. After the resurrection of the Saviour, the great caution which they manifested to prevent imposition—the astonishment which they exhibited at the appearance of the crucified Redeemer, prove clearly that they did not expect any resurrection. It is not at all probable that, under such circumstances, they would all at once become so bold as to bid defiance to a Roman guard. Besides all sensible men are prompted to action by motives. Now what could pos-



sibly have induced the disciples to steal the body and hide it in such a way that it could never be found? They must have had some object in view to act thus. What could it have been? If the Lord did not come to life as he had predicted, then he was an impostor; and if he was, what could His followers gain by giving countenance to such a wicked imposture? They could make no fortune by it; but on the contrary, they would encounter poverty, violent opposition, and fiery persecution everywhere. Christ's religion was opposed to covetousness, and required men not to place their affections upon worldly wealth and honors. It demanded self-denial, and making war upon the natural passions of the heart. If then its founder was an impostor, why should the disciples wish to shield His memory from infamy, when they would have nothing to gain, and everything to lose by it? It is not natural for men to honor one whom they believe to be an impostor; but on the other hand it is natural for them to execrate his memory for having attempted to dupe them. The strongest proof that the disciples were not endeavoring to practice a deception is that they faced death in every conceivable shape and form in attestation of what they had affirmed. Some of them were crucified; some were torn into bloody fragments by wild beasts, and others were burnt to ashes at the stake."

"But all that, Doctor," said Milson, "does not



prove that Christ rose from the tomb. His disciples might have submitted to death, if he had not risen."

"Of course, John, their willingness to die and their actually dying, does not prove the resurrection of Jesus; but it does prove that they themselves believed that he rose; therefore, they did not regard Him as an impostor; and it proves that they were no impostors themselves. It is true that men will die in support of an erroneous principle, which they regard as true; but no man will become a martyr to sustain a falsehood, which he knows to be such. History has never furnished such an instance as that yet. Infidels, therefore, though they may charge the disciples with laboring under mental hallucination, cannot, with any shadow of reason, charge them with being impostors. It is evident that they believed that Jesus rose from the dead, whether he did or not."

"I see the force of your argument, and I beg your pardon for having interrupted you," remarked Milson.

"I will take it as a favor, John, if you will interrupt me whenever you think my arguments are not clear. You are the whole of my audience now, and I want you to understand me. My dear boy, I feel as much interest in my present little audience, as I would, if there were five hundred people before me. I am talking now for your exclusive benefit. So interrupt me, just when you think necessary."



Milson thanked him, and then the Doctor continued.

“I think it is clear then that the disciples were not impostors. But even supposing that some of them were deceivers, can we believe that among the thousands of our Lord’s followers there was not one honest man? If thousands of them knew that the body had been hidden is it not reasonable to suppose that some of them had honesty enough to expose the vile falsehood? And yet it does not appear that a single one of them ever intimated that the body was stolen and hidden away.”

“But suppose, Doctor that only a few of the disciples were privy to the imposture?”

“Well,” said the Doctor, “how could this few prove to the rest the truth of what they asserted? Of course if any number of them had affirmed that they had seen Christ after his death, the rest would have to be convinced that it was true. Would they have taken the mere word of a few men without any further proof? Such a supposition is entirely unreasonable. But even allowing that all the disciples connived at the imposture, how could they convince the Gentiles that Jesus actually rose from the dead, if it was really a falsehood? Here is one of the strangest spectacles, and at the same time, one of the strongest proofs of our Lord’s Resurrection that history presents. The disciples began to travel through the world preaching the Gospel to all



nations, in accordance with their instructions from the Master. They were men of no influence—despised at home and treated as outcasts and traitors. They were illiterate and poor—having emerged from the humblest walks of life. They knew none of the arts of rhetoric, logic, and eloquence. Now how were they to prove to the Gentiles that Christ had risen from the tomb? The Gentiles were devotedly attached to their own system of religion which had been handed from generation to generation, for ages. Of course they would not abandon their time-honored system of idolatry for another system that demanded so much self-denial, without the most satisfactory evidence of the truth of what the disciples preached. There was only one way by which they could establish what they published; and that was the performance of miracles. But how could they heal the sick and cause the lame to walk, and achieve other wonderful things, if Christ was still in the grave—Christ by whose power and in whose name they professed to work these miracles. It is evident that if our Lord was nothing more than a mere man, the great God of the universe would not have conferred upon his followers the power to control the laws of nature to even a limited extent, by which they could deceive mankind with a wicked imposture. It is plain then that God approved the work of the disciples. Indeed it was God's own work; for the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of the super-



stitious Gentiles, enlightened their minds, and thus enabled them to lay hold of the truth ; and without this influence I do not think the Gentiles could have been converted into Christians by the performance of miracles. But at any rate they were satisfied ; and it seems the disciples had no great difficulty in persuading nations to abandon their own religion and to espouse the cause of the despised Nazarene. The truth did spread like wild-fire, notwithstanding the assertions of Infidels. Philosophers gladly embraced the sublime truths which they heard fall from the lips of humble fishermen. Before the bright blaze of the Gospel, heathen Mythology began to fade away like a morning mist. The temples of Jupiter, Diana and others were abandoned, and everywhere the incense of true righteousness smoked to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Doctor," interrupted Milson, "is there any profane history to corroborate the statements which you have just made? It seems to me that there ought to be some mention of these wonderful events by other persons besides the sacred writers."

"So there is," replied Dr. Archer, "and in proof of what I have stated I will read a short extract from a letter written by Pliny to the Emperor Trajan. Here is the book containing it," the preacher said, taking up a book which he had brought. "Pliny, you know, was born only about twenty-eight years after the crucifixion of our



Saviour, and was Pro-pretor of Bithinia in the year 100, A. D., when the Christians were most dreadfully persecuted. Now in this letter he says ; ‘Nor has the contagion of this superstition (speaking of the Christian religion which he calls a superstition) seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country. Nevertheless it seems to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples which were almost forsaken, begin to be more frequented ; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims are likewise everywhere bought up, whereas for some time there were few purchasers.’ Now,” continued Dr. Archer, “such is the testimony of Pliny—that cannot be disputed. We are told by him that the religion of the Romans which had been in high repute for centuries, was, in a few years after the death of Christ, almost rooted out by the story of the cross, and which could be revived only by a violent and bitter persecution of the Christians. Now, how can we account for the rapid spread of Christianity in the first century, unless we assume that the New Testament relates the whole truth in regard to Christ ? The disciples proclaimed everywhere with boldness that Jesus had been crucified, and on the third day rose from the tomb ; and to prove what they affirmed they must have wrought miracles, and the Holy Spirit then moved upon the hearts and consciences of men, and the consequence was



that multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles were convinced of the truth of the Saviour's resurrection."

"But," said Milson, "do not infidels deny the facts which you have stated?"

"Yes; a few persons in every age of the world have been found, who have just contradicted all history on this subject, giving no other reason for their disbelief than that the events related by the disciples are contrary to experience and observation. Mr. Hume took the bold position that no amount of human testimony was sufficient to establish the fact that a miracle had ever been performed. But he is utterly unreasonable. Most Infidels have too much sense to endorse any such preposterous theory as that. They admit, with some modifications, the general facts contained in the New Testament; but they assume that the followers of Christ were deceived as to his resurrection from the dead. From the fact that people even now-a-days sometimes imagine they have seen a 'ghost,' these Infidels argue that the friends of Jesus saw a phantom, or thought they did, and honestly reported that they had really seen the Saviour after his death. But fortunately we are secured against the possibility of Christ's resurrection having been a mere fancy, by, it seems to me, an amount of evidence too great to be disputed or doubted. It is admitted that if Jesus had made his appearance under cover of darkness, it is possible



that his friends might have been deluded. At night some people might mistake a shadow, or some other object for an apparition. But the history shows that Christ went forth in broad open daylight, and did not simply flash before the eyes of his disciples, leaving them in doubt as to whether they had seen anything or not; but he deliberately moved about among them, and talked with them, and ate with them. He appeared not simply to one or two, but even to five hundred at once. Some of them were slow to believe that he had come forth from the grave. The language of Thomas was 'except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' But when Thomas saw Him, he was so thoroughly convinced that he cried out 'my Lord and my God.' When Mary Magdalene went back and told some of the disciples that she had seen the risen Saviour, Luke tells us, 'and they, when they had heard that He was alive and had been seen of her, believed not.' We read again that, 'after that He appeared unto two of them in another form, as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the residue; neither believed they them.' Why, it seems that the disciples could not believe the reports of one another till each had been favored with a sight of the Saviour's risen body. From the history, it would appear that the disciples were men who could not be easily



imposed upon. They were not at all credulous ; they would not believe on mere hearsay. They were not convinced till they had met the Lord face to face, put their hands on him, and talked with him. He stayed with them in the daytime for hours at once. Now then under such circumstances how could so many persons be deceived?"

"But, Doctor," said Milson, "why did not Christ appear to his enemies?"

"Infidels have asked that question too," said Dr. Archer. "They say that the Saviour ought to have boldly exhibited himself to those who condemned him, and put him to death. They affirm that if he had had all the inhabitants of Jerusalem as witnesses to the truth of his resurrection, there would be little room for doubt. This is simply demanding more evidence than has been given—not stronger, but more. But even granting that our Lord had appeared to the whole nation of the Jews, Infidels would have the very same objections that they now urge. Because the Jews would either have admitted the claims of Christ as the Messiah, or they would have rejected him. If then all had acknowledged him as their Spiritual king, and as God, Infidels would prefer the very charge against the entire nation, which they now urge against the disciples. They would say that the Jews were a nation of fanatics—wild dreamers—or consummate hypocrites. If these unbelievers would not admit the testimony of five hundred persons, they would not



receive that of five thousand. As a proof of what I have asserted, why do they not admit the divine authenticity of the Old Testament. The Jews of all ages have received this book as a revelation from God. There have been millions of witnesses from the time of Moses clear down to the present day, all testifying to the divine origin of the Old Testament; and yet, so far from believing, some Infidels assert that Moses was an impostor, and some affirm that the whole history is a fable, and others go so far as to say that there never was any such nation as the ancient Hebrews. Now here is the very evidence they require to sustain facts: and still they do not hesitate to deny the facts. If they would admit that the Old Testament is of divine origin because the whole Jewish nation recognized it as of divine origin, then we might concede their right to demand the same kind of testimony to establish the truth of the Saviour's resurrection."

"Well," said Milson, "would you admit the right of the Jews to require this sort of evidence?"

"No," replied Dr. Archer. "Because with a Jew I should pursue a different line of argument. I should plant myself on the Scriptures which he professes to believe. But I am speaking of Infidels that are not Jews. What would be the use to furnish the evidence which they demand when they show by their rejection of the Old Testament that they would not receive our testi-



mony. If they would throw it aside in the one case they would do so in the other. But suppose Christ had shown himself after his death to all his enemies, the probability is they would still have rejected him. They were so blinded, and so determined to have none but a temporal king ; and they seem to have been so thoroughly convinced that the prophecies referred to the kind of Messiah they expected, and Jesus was so different from the character for whom they were looking, it is almost certain that they would not have recognized him as the Son of God, if they had seen him with their own eyes. Our Saviour manifested great wisdom in not appearing to them. Because, If he had done so they would have rejected him, in spite of the evidence of their own senses ; and then the opposers of the Christian religion might throw us into perplexity and confusion, by adducing the fact that only a few of the immense multitudes that saw Christ after his reported resurrection, believed there was any reality in it. As the case now is the evidence is sufficient. Profane authors indirectly confirm the statements of the sacred writers. Christ, before his ascension, said : ‘And these signs shall follow them that believe : in my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them : they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ And then it is



added 'They went forth everywhere and preached, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.' The heathen writer Pliny in the letter to Trajan, a part of which I read a few moments since, confirms this statement, not, of course, by mentioning the wonderful things that were done—not by telling that devils were cast out, and that the sick were restored to health; but he confirms it by mentioning the effects which could have resulted only from the performance of miracles. He tells us that the temples erected in honor of the gods of Mythology were at one time almost entirely abandoned. Mighty multitudes of heathens were convinced that Jesus rose from the dead, not by the simple affirmation of the disciples, but were convinced by the miracles that were wrought in the name of Jesus Christ. Now common sense ought to teach anyone that if the Saviour did not rise from the dead, it was impossible to perform miracles in his name; for he was nothing more than a mere man, and had no more power than any other dead Jew. If the apostles had recognized Moses as God, and tried to heal the sick in his name, there can be no sort of doubt that Jehovah would have frowned upon the attempt, and they would have been powerless. The conclusion, therefore, appears to me irresistible, unavoidable, that the Lord Jesus Christ on the third day after his crucifixion rose in triumph from the sepulcher of Joseph, and if so the



Divine Authenticity of both the Old and New Testaments is established beyond all reasonable doubt. Of course in this brief talk between us two, I could give only the general outlines of the argument; but if you can point out any error or fallacy in it I would be glad if you would do so; or if any objection occurs to you that I have not named, please mention it."

"There is no flaw in your argument, Doctor, that I can perceive."

"What is to hinder you then from becoming a Christian at once?"

"I shall make the effort," said Milson.

"All the effort you have to make," replied the preacher, "is to cast yourself upon Christ. That, John, is done by faith and prayer. Do not think you can get rid of your skepticism by reasoning yourself out of it. Reason only lays the foundation for your faith. But, John, I know how it is with a skeptical man. My opinion is that you will have to study the evidences of Christianity. What I have said may not be sufficient to stir you up to action. The impression upon your mind must be intensified. So I have brought you some books to read, which are exhaustive discussions of the subject."

"I will be glad to read them, Doctor."

"If you are not satisfied with the brief proof which I have adduced, you will find in these books an elaborate discussion of every objection that Infidels have ever brought forward. I want



to relate a circumstance in regard to two of these writers—Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West. They agreed each to write a treatise against the Christian religion. Lyttleton chose for his subject the conversion of Paul; and West chose the resurrection of Christ. When they met to compare their work, to their mutual astonishment and joy, both had become Christians. So, West wrote one of the best treatise we have on the Resurrection of Jesus. You must read it by all means. Then I have brought you the first volume of Horne's Introduction, and Watson's Apology, Jews' Letters to Voltaire, Paley's Evidences, Leslie's Short Method of Deists, and Soame Jenyri's Evidences. I have other works on the subject, but you will find these sufficient. Study them, John; weigh well their arguments, and I think you will come forth from the investigation without a doubt."

"Really, Doctor," said Milson, "I have very little, if any doubt. But these works will deepen the impression on my mind; and as I have nothing else to do, I will take great pleasure in reading them. I shall also try to cast myself on Christ."

"This is the one thing you have to do—trust Jesus—give him your heart. We read in the Scriptures that 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit; for it is the spirit that renews the heart.'"



After some further consideration Dr. Archer prayed with the prisoner and then took his leave.

## CHAPTER XXI.

There were no startling developments in the history of any of the parties with whom our story is concerned, for several weeks before the trial of Milson by the Circuit Court. The prisoner himself was busily employed in reading and studying the works on the Evidences of Christianity, which Dr. Archer had lent him. By pursuing this course every lingering doubt vanished, and his belief was firm and fixed. With his logical mind he comprehended clearly what was to be done. The Holy Spirit deals with people according to their mental peculiarities. Miss Junie Paine had, it seems, very little trouble in regard to the External Evidences of the Christian religion. The Internal Evidence was sufficient for her. She appeared to perceive the truth at once; and required no long process of investigation. But Milson was differently constituted. His profession probably made it necessary that he should have full historical proof before he could grasp the truth. And yet his



faith was no better and no firmer than that of Junie Paine ; but it had been reached by different processes. Infidels make much sport of what they are pleased to denominate "blind faith ;" and they assert that most Christians become such from the force of the example of their fathers and mothers. But this faith, since it leads one to Heaven is just as good as any. That person is to be almost envied who can with unquestioning faith follow in the footsteps of godly parents. Infidels may call this "blind faith," if they will. Who cares ? They themselves will admit that the religion of Jesus is the only one that is at all rational ; it is the only one that holds out even the shadow of hope. Blessed then is the person who can lay hold of Christian truth, simply from a perception of its internal excellence. It leads to the very same results as that faith which grows out of the most laborious investigation of historical proofs. It is far from indicating weakness of mind or "blind credulity," as has been charged. On the contrary, it is an indication of quickness of mind. These persons, who appear to Infidels to be so credulous, perceive at once in the Bible the marks of truth. Thousands of men of gigantic intellects have just this sort of faith ; and happy are they !

We need not recount Milson's spiritual trials and struggles in the jail. It is sufficient to say that he emerged from the crucible a true child of God.



Miss Junie Paine toiled on almost broken-hearted. The consolations of religion could scarcely sustain her under such a fiery trial as that to which she was now subjected. The thought was soul-harrowing that the one around whom all her affections clung lay bleaching in a felon's cell. She could not take the interest which she desired, and which was necessary in the performance of her school duties. Several times she had thought of resigning her position, and probably would have done so but for the absolute necessity of supporting herself. She however kept up a correspondence with Milson—which was a source of mutual pleasure and comfort.

But at last the day for Milson's trial by the Circuit Court arrived, and his destiny would soon be decided. The prisoner was brought forth from the jail, looking pale, but calm and resigned. The court-room was crowded. Those who were acquainted with Milson, did not, and could not believe that he was guilty. They were confirmed in their opinions of his innocence when they gazed upon his pale features. There were no marks of a murderer in that honest, open face. Hence, there was wide-spread sympathy for him.

At length all the preliminary arrangements having been made, the jury was impanelled, and the trial began. Bertram had been defeated by a small majority in the election for District Attorney. But it so happened that the gentleman



who had been elected, was unable, owing to sickness, to attend this term of court, and Bertram was appointed to fill his place. The indictment was read by Bertram, and then began the examination of witnesses. The defence had only one witness—the man from whom Milson had collected the five hundred dollars. The prosecution introduced two witnesses—the two hunters that had arrested the prisoner. They testified to the facts with which our reader is acquainted; and their testimony seemed to be conclusive. Mr. Barton cross-examined the two witnesses with the most rigid scrutiny, but the testimony could not be shaken. He could elicit nothing from the hunters except the stubborn facts which they had related. The examination of the witnesses was soon finished, and then the pleading commenced. For one time in his legal practice Mr. Barton appeared to be embarrassed. It seemed that he had no grounds upon which to make a speech. The testimony of his own witness amounted to almost nothing, while that of the hunters in a legal point of view was overwhelming. But he felt that he must do everything in his power for the unfortunate prisoner.

In his speech Mr. Barton dilated on the nature of circumstantial evidence. He admitted that often it was to be relied on; but in many cases it is doubtful, and should be received with extreme caution.

“Circumstances,” said he, “sometimes by



strange and unfortunate coincidences do point to the wrong man. There is often a broken link; it may appear to be a link of very little importance; and yet of sufficient magnitude to turn the direction of circumstances away from the real criminal, and to fasten the hook to some innocent man. I have not the slightest doubt that the case now before us is an illustration of the manner in which the chain of circumstances has somehow missed the guilty party, and seized upon a man who is incapable of such a crime as that with which he is charged. These two witnesses, who seem to be honest men, did not see Milson fire any pistol. The bloody deed could have been committed by some other person, the trunks could have been broken open and searched, and the actual murderer could have taken the horses from the vehicle, and made his escape before Milson arrived on the spot, as he was following that deer."

At this Bertram interposed an objection.

"Mr. Barton," he said, "is commenting on evidence which is not before the court. It has not been proved, and no attempt has been made to prove that the prisoner was following a deer. This is a mere street rumor, which has grown out of the prisoner's own statements. Let Mr. Barton establish the fact that there was a deer in the case, and then he can comment as much as he may please on the circumstance. But I must insist that he confine himself to the testimony that is before the court."



“I admit,” replied Mr. Barton, “that unfortunately we have not been able to establish that fact. But this is a case of circumstantial evidence, and I therefore have the right to make a supposition.”

“You have no right,” interrupted Bertram, “to make a supposition and then comment on it as if it actually constituted a part of the testimony before the court. That is certainly contrary to all the rules of pleading.”

“I am perfectly aware of that,” replied Mr. Barton. “Gentlemen of the jury, I suppose, if it is lawful to make any sort of supposition, that Mr. Bertram has never before acted in the capacity of prosecuting Attorney; hence he is disposed to be overzealous. But he must not forget that the honorable and important position which he now occupies does not require at his hand works of supererrogation. If he will only give me time I will make clear the point that I have in my mind. I am not manufacturing evidence as he intimates, nor taking street rumors as evidence, though popular belief is there was a deer in the case. Now, I contend that I have the right to take even popular belief, and frame a theory upon it which will establish the innocence of the prisoner at the bar. The law in regard to circumstantial evidence is this: If you can make any other reasonable hypothesis than that Milson murdered the poor peddler, there is good ground to doubt his guilt. I can make this



hypothesis: Milson was riding along the highway, and a deer ran across the road, he fired at it, and wounded it, and then followed it. Any of us would do that very thing. Milson then came to the spot where the awful tragedy had been enacted already. Now what would be more natural to any man with a particle of humanity in his breast than to dismount and go to the assistance of a man in distress? That hypothesis can be made, and it is reasonable. Mr. Bertram will say the hypothesis is without any foundation, because we have not shown that Milson was following a wounded deer, and because no trace of a deer has ever yet been discovered. I do not contend of course that that is in evidence before the court; but you may eliminate the deer entirely from the supposition. Milson was not seen by the witnesses before the murder was committed. They know not when he came. They only saw him as he was leaving the spot. You can therefore reasonably suppose that some one else committed the deed before his arrival on the spot—some one whom I am bound to believe will yet be apprehended and brought to justice. There is a just and righteous God who rules in the affairs of men, and who will not suffer the guilty to escape punishment in this world. There is no proof, gentlemen of the jury, that Milson committed this foul deed. If you find him guilty, it will be only upon an inference. You suppose him to be the murderer because he



was seen leaving the spot. There is a broken link in the chain, which invalidates the hypothesis that Milson committed the deed. Now, gentlemen, I desire to show you, on the very best authority, how dangerous circumstantial evidence sometimes is. It has led in some instances to disastrous consequences, which were deeply regretted, when it was too late to repair the injury done to innocent parties."

Mr. Barton then for about an hour read extracts on this point. After which he continued:

"Gentlemen of the jury, there is another consideration, which must not be overlooked. What motive could have prompted Milson to murder that poor peddler? Sane men are always actuated by motives. Milson could not have been driven to it by the pressure of poverty. He has a sufficiency of this world's goods to enable him to live in comfort. Did he stain his hands with human blood for the sake of the peddler's horses? He never got them. Those horses have not been heard of from that day to this. What became of them? Evidently they were gone before Milson arrived on the spot. Had it not been for the shower of rain that fell in a little time after the murder was committed, those horses as well as the deer could have been tracked, and then there is no doubt that we would have gotten some clue to the real murderers. It is in proof that Milson asked Mr. Bonds to search for the deer. These witnesses—the



two hunters—ought to have done that themselves. But no matter now. It was not, then, for the horses that Milson would have murdered the peddler. Was it for the sake of two or three common silver watches? These were all that were found on the prisoner's person. Now, do you suppose that the peddler had only two or three common silver watches? What became of his money? Not a cent of it was found on the prisoner. It is clear to my mind that the peddler was murdered and robbed before Milson reached the spot. When he got there the horses were gone, the watches were gone, the money was gone. If Milson had been seen by the two hunters making off with the horses, watches and money, the testimony against him would have been too strong to admit of denial. But such was not the case. The prospect of gain was certainly not sufficient to induce a man in Milson's circumstances to commit such a foul and dastardly murder.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” continued Mr. Barton, “John Milson has been raised in this community. He was born here; and he has ever borne an irreproachable character. All the citizens of this place will bear testimony to the fact that he has ever conducted himself as an upright gentleman. Even in his boyhood he was remarkable for his morality. It is not possible, then, that a man of his character and in his circumstances would have committed this awful crime.



If he had ever been a bad boy ; if he had ever before been arraigned before the courts charged with any offence, or violation of the laws, there might be stronger grounds for the suspicion of guilt. Men, as is proved by observation, do not plunge suddenly into crime. They are led along gradually in the path of vice, committing little offences, each becoming more aggravated and more daring, till after awhile they shrink not from the most heinous crimes known to the law. All history proves this to be a fact. It requires training to make robbers and murderers. This training must begin in early life. For instance, a boy commences his career by robbing birds' nests, and practicing cruelty upon animals ; he goes fishing and hunting on the Sabbath-day ; he is disobedient to his parents. These seem to be very small offences to him ; but they are the foundation on which he builds the superstructure of his character. He advances a step or two in his career of vice and shame, by telling little falsehoods, and committing small thefts, it may be at home. As soon as he is old enough he begins to cheat those with whom he has dealings ; and thus step by step, inch by inch, he moves along in the path of degradation, infamy and crime till almost every vestige of a conscience is eradicated from his breast. Then he is ripe and ready for any deed of shame ; and when an opportunity presents itself that appeals to his covetousness, he imbrues his hand in the blood of a



fellow-being for the sake of a little gold. I challenge the world to find a single instance on record in which a man in Milson's circumstances, and free from any pecuniary pressure—a man of Milson's moral character, committed such a crime as that with which he is now charged. I would sooner suspect that boy," continued Mr. Barton, pointing at Rommie Paine who was sitting near Bertram watching the proceedings with the most intense interest, and who was struck with Mr. Barton's description of the progress of a bad boy, from the fact that it was somewhat similar to his own history. "I would sooner suspect that boy under the guidance of some older head, of committing that murder than this prisoner."

Rommie suddenly started in such a way as to attract the attention of Dr. Archer who looked at him with such a searching gaze that Rommie almost cowered under it. Mr. Barton paused in his speech and was also looking at the boy with his keen, black eyes. His manner soon drew the attention of all present, to Rommie, who began to turn a little pale under this ordeal to which he was suddenly subjected. There was breathless suspense. What did this mean? Suddenly Bertram sprang to his feet:

"If the court please," he said, "I should like to inquire what sort of farce this is. Has Mr. Barton just quit the case and gone to playing with children?"

"I merely referred to the boy," said Mr. Bar-



ton deliberately and calmly, "by way of illustration ; but his conduct was so remarkable that it attracted my attention."

"This boy is not on trial before the court," exclaimed Bertram, with some show of anger. "It seems that you have suddenly turned detective and are hunting after the criminal in the courtroom. I insist that you either proceed with your argument or resign the floor."

Mr. Barton without seeming to notice Bertram's last remark then went on with his speech. We regret that we have not space to give it in full. But from the preceding extracts the reader can easily perceive what was the line of his argument. He occupied the time of the court about two hours, discussing every circumstance which was the least favorable to Milson's case. No one could have done better.

When he had concluded Bertram then rose to address the jury ; and this was to close the case. We can only give some brief extracts from his speech. Among other things he said :

"I have no personal interest in this case, gentlemen of the jury. Mr. Barton has accused me of displaying unwarrantable zeal. But the only object I have in view is to secure justice. If I would allow myself to be controlled by my sympathies, these, gentlemen, would lean toward the prisoner, with whom I have been on terms of intimate friendship. No one was more surprised and shocked than I was. When I first heard the



news of his arrest for this crime, I could not believe that John Milson was guilty; and I indulged the hope that there was some mistake, and that he would be able to show clearly that his hands were not stained with that peddler's blood. But, gentlemen, you must not suffer your sympathies to override your reason and judgment. You cannot trample the law under foot and ignore the clearest kind of testimony, because the prisoner, up to the time of the commission of the crime, has stood high in the community. When the evidence is clear and conclusive, we cannot afford to let guilty persons escape the punishment that stern justice demands, because they have borne the character of honest citizens and gentlemen."

"Mr. Barton, by the aid of his brilliant, fertile imagination has advanced for your consideration a beautiful theory, based altogether upon suppositions, that amount to nothing in the face of stubborn facts. You remember that he spoke of the prisoner pursuing a wounded deer. Has any witness testified to such a fact. Why, there is not a particle of evidence to sustain such an assertion; and yet several times in his long speech he referred to that groundless hypothesis as an actual occurrence."

"Yes," suddenly cried Dr. Archer, "it was an actual occurrence. I have not the slightest doubt of it."

"Gentlemen of the jury," said Bertram, with a



sneer, "you can easily discover that Dr. Archer, although employed in this case, is a better preacher than lawyer. In the pulpit he has it all his own way. He can assert what he pleases and no one has the right or the privilege of contradicting him. But he cannot throw himself back on his ministerial dignity in this court. He cannot act the clerical autocrat here. He cannot expect his naked assertions, backed up by not a particle of legal proof, to settle disputed questions as they do in his pulpit. The church and the civil court are very different institutions."

It was unfortunate for Dr. Archer that he had interrupted Bertram with such a positive assertion. It certainly gave his opponent the advantage. Bertram continued :

"But the reverend lawyer, gentleman of the jury, has lorded it so long over people in the pulpit, that he seems to think that the court is bound to accept his bare dictum as testimony which cannot be disputed. He seems to be acting in a double capacity—he is both witness and counsel. The reverend gentleman has affirmed emphatically that the prisoner was in pursuit of a wounded deer. Now let him come on the witness' stand, and prove up his assertion. I call on him to do it. He can come about as near establishing his uncalled for testimony as he can prove the existence of a God."

But, Bertram soon saw that nobody was enjoying this ridicule except himself. So, thinking it best to desist, he said :



“But I spare the reverend gentleman. It seems to be the fashion with the counsel for the defense to make suppositions. They will therefore allow me the same privilege. I can make a reasonable hypothesis too. Let us see. Mr. Barton has asked what became of the peddler’s horses? Is it not very reasonable to suppose that the prisoner had accomplices, and that they made off with the horses and watches, and money, if the peddler had any? It is believed that there is a clan of robbers in the country. Can we not suppose that the prisoner is a member of the gang?”

“I would sooner believe that you are one of the gang,” cried a voice somewhere in the crowd.

“Mr. Sheriff,” exclaimed the Judge, “arrest that man.”

But the man could not be found.

“I remember,” continued Bertram, not appearing to have noticed the interruption, “that sometime since an advertisement appeared in the newspapers making inquiry in regard to one W. Z. Boland. It was reported that Mr. Barton had found a pocket-handkerchief in a hollow tree by the roadside close to the scene of the murder. I do not vouch for the truth of the report. I expected some use would be made of that article in this trial; but I have never seen the handkerchief; and I do not know that the counsel for the defense have possession of it.”

“Oh, here it is,” cried Dr. Archer, “you can



see it if you wish. If you think the owner was an accomplice of Milson's we would be happy to see him."

"Well, gentlemen of the jury, here is the handkerchief, sure enough. And here in the corner is the name of W. Z. Boland. Mr. Barton advertised extensively for the owner. I thought that Mr. Boland would appear as a witness in this case. Why was not Mr. Boland brought into court?"

"Just from the simple fact," said Dr. Archer, that he never has been heard from."

"He never has been heard from," replied Bertram; "and why not? Somebody in the world must know the man. He must have seen this advertisement, which was published in so many papers. Yet he has never been heard from. Why, gentlemen, it is just as reasonable a hypothesis as can be made, that this man Boland was an accomplice. It is easy enough to suppose that he and probably others made off with the horses and other property before Milson was arrested. Of course if that hypothesis be correct, Boland would have been a great simpleton to reply to an advertisement in the newspapers. You can perceive that my supposition is much more in accordance with reason, and with the facts in the case, than that of Mr. Barton in regard to the wounded deer. Mr. Barton calls this a case of circumstantial evidence. I cannot see why he should do so; for we have the plainest sort



of facts. Just look at them. The prisoner was seen to leave Pontotoc county in company with the peddler. They journeyed on together till they came to the Tallahatchie river. The peddler took an old road which is seldom traveled. I leave it for you, gentlemen of the jury, to conjecture why he did this. Somebody must have given directions. It would be reasonable to suppose that the prisoner did it. A few hundred yards from the river, the report of a pistol is heard. Some little time afterwards these two hunters come into the old road; and they see Milson making off in great trepidation, and thus acting as a guilty man. These hunters as law-abiding citizens promptly arrest him. They take from him his pistol, which they find loaded with the exception of one barrel that had been recently emptied of its charge. The ball was extracted from the peddler's head, which ball has been exhibited to you; and it is the very size that the prisoner's pistol carries. The hunters search him, and find the peddler's property on his person, which, if he is an innocent man, he ought not to have touched. His knowledge of the law, to say nothing of common prudence, ought to have prevented his doing such a thing as that—concealing on his person the property of a murdered man.

“Now, gentlemen of the jury, these are the stubborn facts in the case; and I ask you how much stronger could testimony be? I see no



possible grounds for any other hypothesis, at all reasonable, than that the prisoner is guilty. You have the law and the evidence. If according to these your consciences obligated also by your oath will suffer you to acquit the accused I shall utter no word of complaint. I only ask you to look at the facts in the case. You are not to consider the hypothesis which Mr. Barton has made, and which is so utterly inconsistent with the real facts. You might suppose, if you are going to be governed in your action by suppositions, that the peddler's own pistol accidentally discharged itself and shot him through the head, and that the horses broke loose and plunged into the Tallahatchie river and were drowned. That would be as reasonable as Mr. Barton's hypothesis in regard to the wounded deer."

"Mr. Barton argued that the prisoner could not have committed this shocking deed, because there was no motive prompting him to it. But what have you to do with motives? You cannot see into men's hearts, and you know not what their motives are. They amount to nothing—they are entitled to no consideration in the face of undeniable facts. You cannot acquit a guilty party simply on the ground that the prospect of reward was not a sufficient inducement to commit the crime. There is no way to measure the strength of incentives. Men often perpetrate the most awful crimes for what would appear to some as a trifling, insignificant amount, while to themselves it ap-



pears to be ample compensation. So the question of motives and inducements can cut no figure in this case."

"I wish from the bottom of my heart, gentlemen of the jury, you could acquit the prisoner; I wish the law and the evidence would permit his acquittal. I have no prejudices against the prisoner, and I ask you as honest men to lay aside all prejudices, either one way or the other, and do justice though the heavens fall."

It could not be denied that Bertram had made a strong case. He seemed to be, as he said, entirely free from prejudice; and his only object appeared to be to have nothing but simple justice done. Even Milson and his friends could not accuse Bertram of manifesting excessive zeal to secure the prisoner's condemnation. All had to acknowledge that he had done nothing more than the functions of the office required.

When the jury retired the crowd in the court-room was left in a state of the most painful suspense. They seemed to anticipate and to dread the verdict. But their suspense was of brief duration. In about twenty minutes a signal was given at the door of the jury-room. The door was opened, and the jurors filed slowly through the crowd, up to the Judge's stand. The dropping of a pin could almost have been heard in that court-room. There was a momentary pause, and then the verdict was announced—"Guilty as charged!" A shudder ran through the crowd.



They knew that the penalty was death. Mr. Barton dropped his head upon his hands, leaning upon the table. Dr. Archer was so overpowered that he fell upon his knees in the court-room and seemed to pray for several minutes. Judge Huling, who was presiding, waited respectfully till he was through. When the Doctor arose from his knees the tears were streaming down his face. Audible sobs were heard all over the room. Few dry eyes could be seen. Milson betrayed no emotion; but what he really felt no one could tell. It was very evident that few in the house, if any, believed Milson to be guilty.

Presently Judge Huling in a husky voice ordered the sheriff to take the prisoner back to jail. When poor Milson rose to leave, if any one had only given the word to release him, there is not much doubt that the crowd would have gathered round him and restored him to liberty in spite of law and evidence. But no one dared to do this.

The jury was discharged. But no sooner had they gotten out of doors than a crowd gathered around them, and bitterly reproached them for the verdict they had returned.

"You have condemned an innocent man," cried one.

"His blood will be upon your heads," said another.

And then another who was perfectly furious, exclaimed :



"You ought to be hanged, every one of you. John Milson no more murdered that peddler than you did. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"Why, gentlemen," said one of the jurors, "we had to be governed by the law and evidence. There was no dodging it."

"You didn't have any evidence," cried one, "to prove that Milson committed the murder. All the world can't make me believe that he is guilty. You have just deliberately condemned an innocent man to death. You'd better sneak off to your homes and never show your faces again."

However unjust and unreasonable these reproaches were, it was with some difficulty that the court could prevent the mob from inflicting personal injury upon the jury. They left town as soon as they possibly could.

A disagreeable duty remained for Dr. Archer to perform, and that was to break the awful news to Junie Paine. He knew of the relation between the two young people. They made no effort to conceal it from him.

At once he mounted his horse and rode out to where the young lady was keeping school. It was late in the evening when he arrived at her boarding house. Miss Junie came out to the gate to meet him. One glance at the Doctor's face convinced her that he had no good news to communicate.



"Tell me," she said in a trembling voice, "is the trial ended?"

"It is," was the reply.

"Well?"

"My dear young friend, prepare yourself for bad news."

Junie made a desperate effort to brace up.

The Doctor was silent. At last he said :

"There is hope yet; we by no means give up in despair. We shall spare no pains and no expense to save him."

"Tell me the worst, Doctor."

"He is condemned to death."

Junie did not shrink nor speak. She became dizzy—staggered, and would have fallen to the earth, had not Dr. Archer prevented it. He called for help; and Junie was borne to her room in a state of unconsciousness. Restoratives were quickly applied, and in a short time the young lady recovered from her swoon. Then she requested to be left alone with Dr. Archer for a few moments. When the members of Mr. Jones' family had retired, she said in a quivering voice :

"Oh Doctor, how can God, who is so merciful and kind, suffer him to meet such a horrible and unjust fate?"

"Do not speak rashly, my child. God has not yet suffered it. As I told you, we have not given up all hope. There is no telling what may happen before the dreadful day arrives. We are going to appeal to the Supreme Court. May be



the decision of the Circuit Court will be reversed. At any rate we will gain time. We must in the meantime pray God to clear up the mystery. 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' So do not despair. Be cheerful till there is reason to abandon all hope."

"Doctor, do you think anybody believes that he is guilty?"

"If you could have witnessed the scenes which transpired to-day you would not ask such a question. All seem to believe that he is innocent."

"Then why do they not go to that horrid jail, and give him liberty?"

"That would not be right, my dear. It will not do to trample the law under foot. If Milson should be set free by a mob, of course he would be regarded as nothing but an escaped convict. I want him to be acquitted in an honorable way."

"Doctor," she cried, rising to her feet, "that law is a curse which condemns an innocent man to death. I have no respect for any such law—I do not—I cannot believe that God requires it to be observed. Men would be cowards to stand by and see an innocent man put to death. It would be sinful in them. Why can they not go boldly to the jail, and take him before the court, and tell the Judge to his face that the innocent man shall not suffer? There would be no injustice in that. God himself would not condemn such an act. Oh!" she cried as these wild thoughts were rushing through her mind, "if I could only be his——"



She paused.

"His what?" asked Dr. Archer.

She sank her voice to almost a whisper as she said :

"You know Doctor, that we are engaged to be married?"

"Yes."

"The time has nearly arrived for the consummation of that engagement. Doctor, I will be true. God forbid that I should desert him in this dreadful hour of trial. I trust you will not think me indelicate if I say that if I were only his wife, I think I could be of service."

"In what way?"

"If you please," she said suddenly as some new thought appeared to rush to her mind, "I will retract the word 'service.' Doctor, I want to see him. If I were his wife, I could be with him whenever I please. Will you have the kindness to deliver a note to him?"

"Certainly, I will."

The young lady then got her writing material, and in a few moments she had the note ready. From the sudden change in Junie's manner, Dr. Archer began to fear that there might be some danger of mental derangement.

"My child," he said as Junie handed him the note, "you would better not act too hastily. From what you have said I can easily guess at the contents of this note. You might take a step which will subject you to severe criticism."



"Doctor," she said with an exhibition of energy and firmness, "I have reached a point that places me beyond the fear of criticism. I shall not do anything which my conscience disapproves. I shall not desert the dearest friend I have on earth in his trials. Nothing could convince me that he is guilty of murder and robbery, but his own confession; and if he should make such a confession I should believe him to be insane. In his right mind he is incapable of the crime for which an unjust tribunal has condemned him. Who was the lawyer against him?"

"Mr. Bertram."

"Bertram?"

"Yes."

"Doctor, I never could endure the looks of that man. Though he is my sister's husband, I have no confidence in him. It will require all of my religion to forgive him."

"My child, you do not understand these legal matters. Bertram did no more than his duty."

"Well, let us not talk about him. I do not like to give him any place in my thoughts. Please deliver that note."

Dr. Archer saw that it was useless to give the young lady any more advice. He could not account for the sudden change in her manner. After praying with Mr. Jones' family, he remounted his horse, and returned to Holly Springs that night.



## CHAPTER XXII.

Early the next morning Dr. Archer proceeded to the law office of Mr. Barton. When he had taken his seat, as might be expected he at once adverted to the occurrences of the preceding day.

"Were you surprised," he asked, "at the result of the trial yesterday?"

"No," answered Mr. Barton, "not after we had reached a certain stage of the proceedings. The circumstantial evidence was so strong against Milson, that I was considerably perplexed. Yet I did not think he would be condemned to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. But while I was speaking my suspicions were aroused; and the more I study about the matter the more I am confirmed in these suspicions."

"What kind of suspicions?"

"You noticed the conduct of that boy whom I happened to single out as a mere illustration?"

"Certainly I did."

"It seemed to be the merest accident. But it suddenly flashed into my mind that what I had supposed as a simple illustration was a real fact. I was so strongly convinced that I was almost



upon the point of accusing that boy of the murder in open court."

"I think, Mr. Barton," said Dr. Archer, "that you and I have the very same suspicions in regard to the matter."

"To be plain," replied Mr. Barton, "I suspect Bertram himself."

"So do I."

"I have studied over the thing all night," said Mr. Barton, "but I see no thread which we can take hold of to untangle the mystery."

"What makes you suspect Bertram? I ask the question to see if our suspicions rest on the same basis."

"Well," replied Mr. Barton, "I have had to manage a great many cases of circumstantial evidence, and whenever I get a case of this sort I watch in every direction for some clue; I closely watch men whom I have the slightest reason to suspect. As soon as I heard Milson's version of the affair, I was satisfied that he told the strict truth. But my suspicions fastened upon no one till yesterday. I was watching Bertram closely the whole time he was speaking. You remember that he alluded to the existence of a gang of horse-thieves. I noticed a slight change in his manner while he was on this point. He did not dwell upon it as he might have done. I thought I detected a little anxiety on his part to get away from it. Then I recalled how frequently I have seen him and that boy leave town together,



and come back together. So I began to suspect that both of them belong to the gang. But this is a very slight clue—nothing but suspicion. I also suspect some of the jurors of complicity; and the thought occurred to me that among them they would make a scape-goat of poor Milson—especially since the law and the evidence appeared to demand the verdict which they brought in. Bertram is a shrewd, sharp man; but I intend to keep my eye on him. So, all we can do now is to wait patiently for the development of events. I believe that something will yet turn up to establish Milson's complete innocence."

"Your suspicions are like mine, Mr. Barton. Though, on yesterday, he appeared to be fair, and even to sympathize with Milson. He did nothing and said nothing more than duty required."

"No. There was no necessity for saying more. He felt sure of his case."

"Of course," said Dr. Archer, "we will appeal to the Supreme Court."

"Certainly. By the time the Supreme Court reaches the case and decides upon it I hope something may transpire to put us on the track of the murderer."

"Well, that being settled, there is another matter, about which I should like to ask your advice."

"What is that?"

"To be brief then, Milson is engaged to be



married to Junie Paine, and the young lady is willing to fulfil the engagement even under present circumstances."

Dr. Archer then went on to give all the particulars, and then again asked Mr. Barton what he thought of the marriage—whether it would be advisable under existing circumstances.

Mr. Barton then thought for a moment, and replied :

"I can see no objection if the young lady is willing to risk it. It may be in spite of all we can do, that she would be a widow in a few months. But if she sees proper to take the risk, we have no right to interpose an objection."

After some further conversation Dr. Archer proceeded to the jail. He almost dreaded to meet the prisoner. But he found Milson calm, his face wearing an expression that indicated happiness.

"I trust, John," he said, "that in the hour of trial you feel that Jesus is your Saviour and friend?"

"I have no doubt and no fear on that subject, Doctor. I have put myself in the Lord's hands, and I feel perfectly resigned to His will. If it is not right that I should die on the scaffold I am confident that the Lord will in some way prevent it. But if it is His will that I should die in this way, I have no right to murmur. God will do what is best."

"You take the proper view of the subject, my dear boy. The Judge of all the earth will do



right. I am truly glad that your confidence in our dear Saviour is so strong. You may rest assured that he will do what is best for you. If he sees proper to take you hence in a short time, it will only be to remove you to a happier world."

"I have not the least fear of death, Doctor. There is only one thing that troubles me."

"What is that?"

"You know the relation between Miss Junie Paine and myself."

"Yes."

"Well, she is willing to marry me in the midst of all my dismal surroundings. The time we had appointed for the marriage is nearly here. Would you advise me under present circumstances to take such a step?"

"On such a subject, John, I would prefer not to give advice. I think you and the young lady are the proper persons to settle that matter."

"Doctor, of course, I desire to see her; but it would be—or to say the least, it would subject her to criticism if she were to come here as a young lady. But if she were my wife, there would be no grounds for scandal. And if I am taken from her, she will be in no worse condition than she now is; for I will leave her all my property which is sufficient to support her in comfort."

"Under such circumstances, John, I see no good reason for opposing your wishes."



"Then Doctor, I will thank you if you will see that she gets this note to-day."

"I will send it immediately," replied Dr. Archer, "or if you think best I will take it myself, and make any explanation that may be necessary."

"None is needed, Doctor. I will get an answer by the bearer. Please come back this evening."

"I will come, John, whenever you desire to see me, be it day or night."

Milson thanked the Doctor for his kindness. The preacher left the jail; and soon the letter which he had written was on its way to its destination.

In the evening the prisoner was sent for to receive his sentence. Again a large crowd of people assembled in the court-room when they saw Milson led along the street. The prisoner walked into the room without the slightest indications of trepidation.

Whatever might be the facts, his bearing was that of an innocent man. His look made that impression upon all who saw him.

When he stood up the Judge said :

"Have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon you according to law?" Milson replied in a clear, calm voice which was heard distinctly by all present:

"I suppose it is now too late to say anything. I know I can say nothing which could change the sentence that your Honor is bound to pronounce.



I have gone through the form of a trial which was conducted with fairness. I have no accusations to make against any one on that account. The District Attorney has done nothing more than his duty required. I do not deny that the witnesses have told the strict truth. I was in precisely the situation which they have described. But, if they had arrived on the spot a few moments earlier or a few moments later, I would not be standing before this court to-day in the attitude of a criminal to receive sentence of death. I am merely the victim of unfortunate coincidences. But I have been declared guilty of the awful crime of murder—murder for such a purpose as makes my soul recoil in horror. These twelve men were supposed to be impartial. I have no accusation to bring up against them. But notwithstanding the weight of circumstantial evidence against me, I boldly assert that the real murderer has thus far escaped. It may never be known till the last day of time who the murderer is, and I may have to repose in a felon's grave. But when the last awful day arrives, and all of us stand before the great White Throne, to hear that sentence which will settle our eternal destiny, the unerring Judge will not point to him who is now speaking, as the guilty party in this case. Standing here before men, and before God who knows all secrets, I place my hand on my heart, and I affirm and declare to all the world, in opposition and contradiction to the



verdict of the twelve jurors, that I am not guilty. No human blood stains these hands, and no accusing conscience disturbs this heart. I can sleep as quietly and peacefully as a babe on its mother's breast. And now I am ready to hear your Honor pronounce sentence of death upon an innocent man."

Milson's voice ceased. All present felt the solemnity of the moment. The prisoner's emphatic denial of guilt, the expression of sincerity upon his face, his striking attitude as he stood with his hands upon his breast, his steady gaze at the Judge who was to speak the words that doomed him to death—all this seemed to rivet the impression upon the minds of the hearers that Milson was a deeply injured man. It is no wonder then that a slight tremor could be detected even in the voice of Judge Huling as he said :

"John Milson, it is my painful duty to pronounce sentence of death upon you as the law demands. You have been declared guilty of murder by twelve of your countrymen. I shall make no comments and no remarks of any sort upon the case. In accordance with the verdict of the jury I sentence you to be hanged on Friday---, by the neck till you are dead."

Milson listened with respectful attention to these awful words. Not a muscle quivered, and no unusual paleness spread over his face. As he left the court-room with his firm step, and his calm and resigned look, many eyes suffused with tears



gazed after him. Again he was locked up in his lonely cell.

No sooner had he left the room than Mr. Barton took the necessary steps to appeal to the Supreme Court.

About two hours after Milson had been remanded to prison Dr. Archer again went to the jail. He carried with him a letter from Junie Paine. Milson read it, and then said :

“Doctor, she will be here day after to-morrow. Will you take the necessary steps to consummate our marriage ?”

“Certainly, if you are determined upon it.”

“The matter,” replied Milson, “is definitely and positively settled. Doctor, it is a strange letter that she has written. Some of the expressions she uses are enough to excite suspicion as to her sanity. I do not understand it.”

He handed it to Dr. Archer, who read it and then said :

“It is a strange letter, John. But when I carried the news of your condemnation, and while I was talking to her there was a sudden change in her manner, for which I could not account. I began to fear that she was losing her reason. But I hope that our suspicions are groundless. She is certainly a brave and noble woman, John, to marry you under such circumstances. But I pray God that you may get out of this awful difficulty and live to reward the devotion of such a wife. I confess the prospect looks rather gloomy just



now. It seems we can get no clue to the mystery. But you may rest assured that we will leave no stone unturned to bring the real murderer to justice. Possibly you might suggest something that would be of service to us."

"Doctor, I cannot suggest a single thing. I leave the matter in the hands of the Lord in whom I have an abiding faith. I cannot feel the uneasiness which probably I ought to feel. But no matter; I am ready for the result whatever it may be."

"I am glad to hear you say so," replied Dr. Archer. In a few minutes afterwards he took his leave.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

We need not tell how Milson spent that night, and the next day, and the following night. It would be in vain to attempt to portray his feelings. Here he was condemned to death, with but little hope of reprieve or mitigation of the sentence. All human means to save him, it appeared, had failed; and now there was only one source to which he could appeal. If God did not in some way interfere, it seemed that he must suffer an



ignominious death. The prospect was dark. Then he was about to be united in marriage to one around whom gathered all his earthly affections. What could she promise herself in connecting her destiny with that of a reputed robber and murderer? He seriously suspected that her reason was beginning to gradually withdraw from its temple. Her letter he read over and over till he could repeat every word from memory. It certainly afforded grounds for the suspicion that she was at least partially insane. She wrote not as to a man condemned to die; but she spoke of their future life; and how glad she would be to help him in his career of usefulness.

The young man was in torture. The question came up should he marry this poor insane girl? So he was in a dreadful state of suspense till the hour arrived for the marriage. Then Junie and Dr. Archer and Mrs. Archer made their appearance at the jail. We shall not attempt to describe the meeting of Junie and Milson. Some things can be better imagined than described. The young man gazed earnestly and searchingly into the face of his intended bride, expecting to detect palpable signs of insanity. But he was gladly surprised. Junie looked not at all like a lunatic. He then talked with her, but her conversation was perfectly sensible and rational. Yet the young man was not satisfied with his investigations. So he presently requested to be left alone with Dr. Archer for a few moments. When the ladies had retired he said:



“Doctor, what do you think about Junie’s sanity?”

“She came to my house yesterday evening; and I have been watching her closely. I have talked with her, and I can discover not the slightest trace of insanity. But somehow she does not seem to realize your situation. It seems to give her very little uneasiness. I confess this puzzles me.”

“Perhaps, Doctor, it is some sort of monomania.”

“But then,” said the Doctor, “she exhibits no wildness of manner. She talks as rationally about you, as about anybody else. The only thing that makes me the least suspicious is that she does not apprehend your danger. But she does not talk nor act like a monomaniac, as you can see yourself.”

“Well, would you advise the marriage?”

“As I have said before, John, I do not like to give advice to anyone on such a subject. But, your refusal to marry her might make matters worse. Besides, who knows but the Lord has put some thought in Junie’s mind that may lead to your acquittal if she becomes your wife. If I were in your place, I do not think I would hesitate on the ground of insanity. If I am any judge at all there are no indications of mental derangement about her. My wife, too, is of my opinion.”

“Very well then, Doctor; we will say no more about it. Please perform the ceremony.”



In a few minutes, in the presence of the jailor and Mrs. Archer as witnesses, the two young people were declared husband and wife. In a little time, the Doctor and his wife went back home and the bride and groom were left alone. It was a rather gloomy kind of marriage; and yet the young people appeared to be happy. In the course of their conversation Milson remarked:

“You will not go back to the school?”

“No, my school is out.”

“I want you to board with Dr. Archer. It is not necessary that you should teach any more. I hope you will spend as much time with me as you can. I know this is not a very inviting place for a bride; but you have no idea how your presence lights up my lonely cell.”

“I will remain with you all the time,” said Junie quietly, “till you leave this place.”

Milson looked at his young wife in amazement. His suspicions were again aroused. She must be deranged.

“Junie, my dear, what do you mean?”

“I see you do not understand me,” she answered in the same quiet manner. “I mean then I will remain with you in this cell till you walk out free to go where you please.”

Milson in great astonishment said:

“Junie, you certainly know that I am sentenced to death.”

“Of course I do; but that gives me no uneasiness.”

“Why does it not?”



"Because the sentence will never be executed."

"My dear Junie," said Milson in a sorrowful tone, "have you married me with such an expectation as that?"

"There is not much expectation about it. I have no fear as to the final result. I know the Lord will not disappoint me."

"Do you rely exclusively on God? How do you know but that it is the Lord's will that I suffer death on the scaffold?"

"But it is not the Lord's will."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? Well, I do not claim that the Lord has revealed it to me in an audible voice. But when I go to pray on this subject, my faith is so strong, that it seems useless to pray for your deliverance. I feel that my prayer has already been answered."

"And is this your only hope? Your faith may be the blindest presumption."

"Well, probably my faith might be weaker if I relied on that alone. But God helps those who help themselves. Faith without works is dead."

"I cannot imagine," said Milson in perplexity, "what in the world gives you so much confidence."

"It does not matter. I want you to be cheerful till the time comes, and then you shall see what a weak woman can do."

Milson in silence looked searchingly into her face to see if he could not detect symptoms of insanity. Miss Junie seemed to understand his thoughts for with a smile she said :



“You need not look at me, as if I were a lunatic. I know very well what I am about.”

“I will be driven to the conclusion that you are slightly demented if you continue to talk in this style. My dear, you do not appear to understand my situation. You do not seem to understand that I am in danger of disgraceful death.”

“You are in very little more danger than I am,” she said quietly. “And now, I want to make an explanation. You may have thought that I have manifested more anxiety than a modest woman ought to, to fulfil our engagement. But I had an object in view. I could not have saved you easily without being your wife. But now, thank God you are safe.”

“I safe! O, Junie, Junie! poor thing, you know not what you say. What made you marry me under such impressions? The probability is that in a few weeks we will be forever separated. Poor child” said Milson with much emotion, “why have you taken a step that may terminate in your being left the widow of a reputed murderer?”

“Do not,” cried Junie, “apply that horrid word ‘murderer’ to yourself even with a qualifying term preceding it. Do not I know that you are innocent of crime—innocent as the angels in heaven. When Dr. Archer brought the news to me of your condemnation, I asked the question if God would permit an innocent man as you are to die such an infamous death. I was almost



startled by what appeared to be a still small voice close to my ear whispering 'no.' Several times since I have asked the same question, but the voice seemed to answer in anger, 'no,' because I doubted. And now I am afraid to ask the question any more. I dare not doubt. I married you to save you, and I will save you."

Milson listened in agony at this wild and strange language. Then he took both her hands in his and said :

"O, Junie, my poor deluded wife, how I pity you."

"Your pity is all wasted," she said. "Have you no faith in God?"

"Certainly I have. But I will not suffer myself to exercise a presumptuous faith."

"Mine is no presumptuous faith. For while I look to God for help, I expect to carry out my own plans."

"Your plans? What sort of plans?"

"If I tell you," said Junie, "you will accuse me of insanity. So, if you please, let us say no more on this subject, at least till you are convinced that I am perfectly sane. I rather think anyhow that I will keep them to myself. No good general divulges his plans till they are executed. So I will take it as a favor, if you will ask me no more questions in regard to this subject. You will see at the proper time that I knew what I was doing."

Junie insisted on changing the subject of their



conversation. Milson assented, as her strange words only gave him pain.

The next day, through the efforts of Mr. Barton and Dr. Archer, permission was obtained for Junie to remain in the jail with her husband.

The marriage had occasioned a sensation in the town of Holly Springs. But whether the reader may think strange of it or not, Junie elevated herself in public opinion by the course which she had pursued. It gathered many true friends around her. But there was one thing which was a great and general puzzle ; and that was how she could be so cheerful under the circumstances. If she felt any uneasiness in regard to the final result, she never manifested it. When any of her friends questioned her on the subject, she replied that she had no fear ; but she could not be induced to assign any reason.

The most of her time was spent in the jail with Milson. The young wife was so cheerful that Milson at last began to hope that in spite of the present prospect he would be honorably acquitted ; and yet, so far as he could see, there was no legal ground of hope. He was looking forward to the decision of the Supreme Court as his last chance. But, in spite of his gloomy surroundings, he was happy in the company of Junie. When he became the least despondent, she would encourage him and reassure him. So the days flew by.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Time rolled on. Milson was as happy as any man condemned to die on the scaffold could be. He had a faithful young wife ever at his side, who kept him out of the depths of despair. Still his prospect of an honorable discharge from prison was as dark as ever. Mr. Barton had been busy watching in all directions ; and he had put a spy upon Bertram's tracks ; but not the slightest clue could he obtain.

At length the news came that the Supreme Court had passed upon Milson's case. The judgment of the Circuit Court was affirmed ; and another day was appointed for the young man's execution. This dreadful news cast a gloom over the entire community. Milson could not but feel despondent. When the awful information was brought to the prison, Milson looked at Junie to see what effect it would produce. But she did not appear to be the least concerned.

"Junie, you understand this?"

"To be sure, I do."

"Do you see, the day is named for my execution?"



"Yes, I see," she quietly remarked. "But what does that amount to?"

"Amount to?" cried Milson, with some little inward vexation at her apparent unconcern. "Junie, have you lost your mind?"

"No, I think not. But do not lose your patience, my dear husband. I tell you, not a hair of your head shall be touched."

This was the first time since their marriage that this subject had been mentioned. It was so unpleasant to Milson. And now again his suspicions were aroused as to his wife's sanity.

"Junie," he said, in a sorrowful tone, "I know not what to make of you. Here is the day appointed by the Supreme Court for my execution. My only hope after the trial was in that Court; and now that hope is gone; and yet you tell me that I shall not be harmed. What, in the name of reason, can you do to prevent the execution of the sentence?"

"Cheer up, my dear," she said, kindly. "Why can you not have faith in my assurance?"

"How can I, when your assurances seem to me to rest on simply an insane hope. Why do you tantalize me in this way?"

"You know," said Junie, "that I would not tantalize you for the world."

"Well," said Milson, a little peevishly, "why will you not explain yourself?"

"My dear husband, if I were to explain myself, I fear that all would be spoiled. If you



will only be patient and trust to me, you shall be saved. Do not be in the least troubled by the decision of that Supreme Court. Be cheerful and ask me no more questions about my plans, for I think it best to keep you in ignorance for a while longer. But take my word for it, you shall never die on the scaffold. You need never to have the least fear of that."

Milson, seeing that it was useless to attempt to elicit any further information in regard to this matter, dropped the subject. But in spite of the dark prospect his wife's manner inspired him with hope.

When the news came in reference to the decision of the Supreme Court, Dr. Archer and Mr. Barton drew up a petition to the Governor, asking a pardon for the prisoner. It was signed by hundreds of the citizens of Marshall County. This petition Mr. Barton presented in person. He plead with all the earnestness of a man who was convinced of the righteousness of his cause. But the Governor was inexorable. Mr. Barton then made an effort to procure a commutation of the sentence ; but all in vain.

"I see no reason why I should interfere with the course of the law," replied the Governor. "If evidence can be relied on, this man Milson is guilty of the murder. It is as plain a case as ever I saw."

"If you were acquainted with the man, Governor, you would not say that," replied Mr.



Barton. "His moral nature renders him utterly incapable of committing such a crime."

"I can pardon no man simply on the ground of his social standing, when there is overwhelming testimony to show that he is guilty of cold-blooded murder. Why, sir, you have not a particle of evidence to show that this man is innocent, except his own statement, which, in law, is no evidence at all; and yet you ask me to assume that he is not guilty, in the face of the decisions of two Courts."

"Governor," said Mr. Barton, with emotion, "I will not ask you to assume that Milson is innocent. I base my plea for the exercise of Executive Clemency on one of the prerogatives of your office. You can pardon, notwithstanding the weight of the evidence against the prisoner. You can assume that he is guilty, if you will; but here, in this petition, are the names of hundreds of the best citizens of Marshall County. I ask you, sir, are not the wishes of a large body of your fellow-citizens entitled to some respect? I think their judgment in this case, for the reason that I have mentioned a while ago, is more reliable than that of the Jury. But I will say nothing about that. In the name of all the citizens, I plead for mercy, Governor. You know what Shakspeare says about mercy—beautiful lines :

"It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath; it is twice bless'd ;  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes ;  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ;  
It becomes the throned monarch better than his crown."



The great God is merciful. Christ extended mercy to the thief on the cross, when His blood was streaming to the earth. Of all the attributes of the divine character, mercy is the most lovely. Governor, I ask you in the name of humanity itself to exhibit this noble quality in your own nature; I ask you in the name of this State; for if it were necessary, I believe I could get nearly all of the citizens of Mississippi to sign this petition."

"I have not the least doubt of that," interrupted the Governor, with a smile, "if you would talk to them in the style you are talking to me. It is a wonder to me that your client was ever condemned with such an advocate. But, Mr. Barton, I tell you plainly, that my mind is fully made up. It will not do to trample Law and Justice under foot. I see no reason in the world that demands executive clemency in this case. So, I say, once for all, that the man must be executed according to law,"

"Then, sir," said Mr. Barton, as he was turning to leave, "as sure as a merciful God exists, an innocent man will suffer."

He returned to Holly Springs and reported the result. Dr. Archer seemed to be upon the borders of despair. The last hope was destroyed. It appeared that it would take something akin to a miracle to save poor John Milson. But, notwithstanding all these unfavorable circumstances, Junie Milson did not seem to be the least disturbed.



Time went on, and the day appointed for the execution was rapidly approaching.

One Sabbath Dr. Archer requested his congregation to observe the following Thursday as a day of fasting and prayer for the benefit of John Milson. He stated that it was now universally believed that Milson was innocent. "But," he said, "the only hope we now have is in God. We have, it seems, exhausted all human means. But the Lord knows who the murderer is, and we can now look only to Him for help. I have to leave on Friday to attend a church court in the city of Memphis. Let us meet then in this church next Thursday at 11 o'clock and humbly invoke God's aid in this time of trouble. If poor John Milson is executed I believe that in the course of time the mystery will be cleared up, and then this country will have to repent of having committed a legal murder. But I have not lost faith in God."

Thursday came. When the church bell rang all the people of Holly Springs went out to church. The store doors were closed, and things had the appearance of a Sabbath day. Dr. Archer conducted the services. Many fervent prayers were sent up to the throne of Divine Grace in behalf of the poor prisoner under sentence of death. There were many "strong cryings." Had the murderer been present at that meeting he must have felt like confessing his crime, to prevent an innocent man from suffering undeserved punish-



ment. But he was not there. Yet there was one present, who next to the prisoner himself, was the most deeply interested; and that was Junie Milson. Some of her friends who had begun to suspect her of insanity, watched her to see what effect these solemn proceedings would have upon her. But Junie shed not a tear. She had the appearance of one who was attending an ordinary service. Her friends were amazed. On what she could base a single hope no one of them could imagine. After the service was ended some of her lady friends went to her, and begged her to explain, that they might share her hope. But Junie had been questioned so much on this point by curious friends that she had become somewhat sensitive. She did not like to talk about it. For, their close questioning, she was aware, made her appear a little insane. So now when they approached her in church, she answered as if slightly vexed :

“I have nothing to explain.”

“But you seem to have hope,” said one.

“Yes, I do.”

“What is it then ?”

“I will say this,” answered Junie, “that to-morrow one week you will see John Milson a free man, or you will see me a corpse.”

Her friends shook their heads incredulously.

“Poor Junie,” said an old lady with tears in her eyes, “you don’t apprehend your husband’s awful danger.”



"Some of us," said another, "have asked Mr. Barton about it, and he says that there is no legal ground of hope. He says that everything has been done that can be."

Junie became a little more vexed and excited; and she replied:

"Mr. Barton from his standpoint is justifiable in his assertion. But he does not know everything. No rope," she exclaimed with an energetic gesture, "shall ever throttle the throat of John Milson."

At this point Mr. Barton himself came up. He was in the church, and had overheard Junie's last remark. He took in the situation and put an end to the conversation by offering to conduct Junie back to the jail. As they were walking along he said:

"I see that the ladies are annoying you with their questions. Now I want to give you a little advice."

"Mr. Barton," she interrupted, "I have half a mind to tell you—"

"Do not tell me anything," he quickly exclaimed. "I do not want to know. I only want to say to you that it is imprudent to use such bold expressions as you did just now in the church. I would advise you not to talk to your friends on this subject."

"I understand you Mr. Barton; and I believe you are the most sensible man I ever saw; and I believe you understand me too without any explanation."



"Say no more; but be prudent."

Then he left her at the jail. Junie went in, and gave Milson an account of the proceedings at the church. She talked about it in such a cool sort of way that the young man exclaimed:

"Junie, you are stark mad."

"I believe," she said seeming not to be at all surprised at the accusation "that everybody in town thinks so with one exception."

"And who is that?"

"Mr. Barton. He doesn't stare at me, and open his eyes in amazement, as if he took me to be insane. He talks to me as he would to a rational being."

"When did you see him?"

"Just a moment ago. He came with me to the jail."

"Junie," said Milson after a pause, "I want to see Mr. Barton this evening. Will you get him to come here?"

"Why, yes," she replied. "I expected you to make that request. I am anxious that you should see him; for I believe he will remove your groundless suspicions."

"I hope he may; for, my dear Junie, you have given me reason for weeks to think that on one point you are insane."

"Very well, then. I will have Mr. Barton here; and after your interview I don't think you will ever accuse me of insanity again."

"I want to see him alone."



"Yes, I understand that too."

Then the subject was dropped. But after dinner Junie went herself to the office of Mr. Barton, and requested him to visit her husband. He cheerfully complied with her request, and in a few minutes he was in the jail with the prisoner. After they had talked a short time Milson said :

"I have sent for you for a special purpose. I begin to believe that my wife's reason is affected."

"That seems to be the general impression," remarked Mr. Barton quietly. "I have heard numbers of persons say so."

"But she says you do not think so."

"How does she know ?" asked Mr. Barton.

"I cannot tell. But, she says you do not look as if you thought her insane."

"Well," replied Mr. Barton, "she has talked in such a way as to lead people to think that she is not exactly sane."

"But, Mr. Barton, tell me," cried Milson eagerly, "do you think she is perfectly sane?"

"To be sure I do," replied Mr. Barton.

"Well do you know anything about the plans she speaks of?"

"I have never heard her speak of any plans."

"Mr. Barton, if you please, do not tantalize a man in my situation."

"I would not do so for the world, John. But this is a delicate business. Your wife was on the point of telling me something which I did not



wish to hear. But to be candid with you, I think I have divined her purpose. I am so certain of it that I would not permit her to divulge it to me."

"What is her purpose?"

"On that point I prefer to be silent."

"My wife, Mr. Barton, at times appears to me to act very strangely. She says emphatically that I shall not be executed, and expresses the utmost confidence in her ability to save me. I cannot imagine how she is to do such a thing; hence I have thought her partially insane."

"She is certainly not insane. But the truth is she is in an unusual position for a lady, and especially a young woman. She has talked too much; and expressed her intention to save you, too publicly. Her bold expressions have made the impression on people that she is in the first stage of insanity. I might have thought so myself, but for two or three circumstances which any lawyer could link together so as to divine her intentions. She has nerved herself up to such a point that she does not talk and act like a wife would be expected to do with such an apparently dreadful prospect before her; and that is all there is in her insanity."

"You seem to know her intentions."

"Now see here, Milson," said Mr. Barton with a smile, "you have already forced me to say more than I thought I would say. But you looked so despondent, and seemed to be in such distress, that I thought I would try to cheer you up."



“Anybody in my situation,” said Milson, “needs encouragement if there are any grounds upon which it can be based.”

“Yes, I know that; I can enter into your feelings.”

“Let me ask you one more question, and then I will trouble you no further.”

“Very well. If it is a proper question I will answer it.”

“I want you to answer candidly, Mr. Barton, and end my suspense. I do not want to solace myself with delusive hopes.”

“No, I would not suffer you to do that.”

“Well then,” said Milson as if he almost dreaded to hear the answer, “do you think my wife can save me?”

“My opinion is,” said Mr. Barton emphasizing the word opinion so as to make it something more than an opinion, “that she can.”

“Mr. Barton,” said Milson, “do not let her do anything that will bring disgrace upon herself, even to save me.”

“I cannot say a word to her on the subject,” replied Mr. Barton, “and my opinion is that you would better not say anything. Just let her alone. She is a woman of decided firmness, and your opposition would amount to nothing. I do not believe anything short of death or imprisonment could prevent her attempt to carry out her determination. Her mind is in a great strain; and next week she may exhibit such oddities as



to again impress you with the belief that she is insane."

"Mr. Barton, you have used the word 'attempt.' Is it to be only an attempt?"

"John," said Mr. Barton good-humoredly, "you are a man of great obtuseness of mind for a lawyer. Now I will tell you to keep you from sinking into despondency, that whenever I have any reason to think that you are in real danger, I will let you know. Certainly that is plain enough; and so to prevent your asking any more improper questions, I will bid you good-day."

And Mr. Barton left. Milson was in considerable perplexity; but with Mr. Barton's assurances he was elevated into a condition of hopefulness and cheerfulness.

## CHAPTER XXV.

It is now time to direct attention to other parties with whom our story is concerned. The allusion is to Col. Paine and Bertram. The Colonel had the utmost confidence in his son-in-law; and Bertram eagerly endorsed the infidel sentiments of his father-in-law. He really desired



earnestly to believe, as the fool hath said in his heart, "there is no God." In his situation the thought would have been comforting that death would sink him into a state of eternal annihilation. He was guilty of dark crimes that would never come to light. It is a great mistake to suppose that God exposes every villain. In many instances he does so. But there is no doubt that innumerable crimes of horrible atrocity will be wrapped in impenetrable mystery till the awful day of Final Accounts. Many aggravated murders have been committed, whose perpetrators will never be known till their names are called before the assembled universe by the Eternal Judge. This fact itself is the strongest kind of presumptive evidence in favor of Christian belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. It is clear that in this probationary condition of man Vice does not receive that punishment which justice demands; and it is plain, also, that Virtue often does not secure that reward which, the sense of right and wrong tells us, is deserved. Hence to the thinking mind the conclusion would appear to be unavoidable, that there is another state in which the apparent evils of the divine government of this world will be corrected.

But to return. Bertram was a very shrewd villain. He laid his schemes with the prudence of an educated scoundrel. He was Murrell's most valued coadjutor. But whether our reader may think strange of it or not, Bertram in the execu-



tion of his plans had never with his own hand committed murder. That horrible work he left for others of the gang to perform—not that he was too conscientious; but he was too politic. In all the operations of the clan in which he was concerned, he always had the wisdom to provide for his own legal safety, so far as it could possibly be done.

The time had now come for the execution of his scheme for the destruction of his father-in-law. It was now December; and the great bulk of Col. Paine's cotton crop had been conveyed to Memphis. The Colonel proposed to Bertram to accompany him, to which proposition the wily robber consented with secret joy, though he made a show of hesitation and reluctance to avoid arousing suspicion. Murrell and another one of the clan were already in the city. Bertram had notified them to be on hand as he intended to induce his father-in-law to go to Memphis about this time. But he was saved the trouble of offering any inducement, as the Colonel walked into the trap set for him without any solicitation or persuasion.

So, on Tuesday following the Thursday on which public prayer was offered up for Milson's benefit, the Colonel and his son-in-law were in the city of Memphis.

Tuesday night, while they were at the hotel, Bertram introduced to Col. Paine a couple of friends by the names of Blake and Slogue. Both



these men presented the outward appearance of elegant gentlemen. Bertram whispered to Col. Paine as soon as he had an opportunity that they were large cotton planters and had entrusted to his management a great deal of their law business. They soon entered into conversation with the Colonel who was delighted with them. He thought he had never met with nicer gentlemen and more congenial companions.

After a little Blake proposed that they should "take a drink;" and the Colonel very readily and cheerfully signified his acceptance of the proposition. When the parties perceived that the dram was beginning to have some effect on their victim Slogue proposed that they should have a game of cards.

"We'll not go to any gambling establishment," said Bertram. "Vile tricks are too often played upon gentlemen; and I do not care to be entrapped by swindlers."

"Neither do I," said Slogue. "I was not thinking of going to any such dens. Besides I never play cards with any but known friends."

"Suppose then we go to my room," said Bertram, "and have a social game just for amusement. What do you say, Colonel?"

"I have no objection," replied Col. Paine. "It is a very pleasant way to pass off the time."

Accordingly the four adjourned to the room occupied by Col. Paine and his cunning son-in-law. Bertram ordered several bottles of wine;



and all took another "drink" before they began to play. Bertram and Col. Paine were partners. Their two opponents suffered themselves to be badly beaten in the first several games. It occurred to the Colonel that he might derive some profit from the game as well as amusement. So he said pleasantly :

"I think it would make you two gentlemen play more carefully if we were to stake a small amount on the game. You would become more interested in what we are doing."

This was precisely the proposition that the villains wanted their victim to make.

"Well, Colonel," said Blake, "perhaps it might have that effect. I will try not to play so recklessly. But you and Mr. Bertram I fear will beat us badly. What do you say, Mr. Slogue?"

"O, I am willing," replied Slogue carelessly. "If I have any money to lose I would as soon Bertram should win it as anybody. I can afford to lose something anyhow on account of that law suit which you brought to such a successful issue for me. I tell you, Colonel, Bertram will do to trust in litigation."

"O, yes," said Col. Paine, who was warmed up with the wine he had drunk. "I feel proud of my son-in-law."

"You have reason to be," put in Mr. Blake, "for I do not think Mr. Bertram has a superior in legal abilities."

"O, come, gentlemen," cried Bertram trying



to look bashful, "we have had enough of this flattery. Let us get to playing."

"I must have another drink first," said Mr. Slogue.

"Yes," replied Bertram, "let us all take a drink. It will sharpen our wits."

The glasses were filled again. But Col. Paine's glass was the only one that contained wine. The others drank only colored water. This part of the process of swindling was conducted by his own son-in-law.

At first Bertram and Col. Paine won all the stakes. This soon made the game assume dimensions of importance in the estimation of the Colonel. The trio observed his excitement and glee. They suffered him to win a hundred dollars.

"Let us quit," said Mr. Blake. "I have lost enough."

"O, no," cried Col. Paine. "Make the stakes larger and you will play better."

"Well, if I do not have better luck the next game, I will quit," said Blake.

The Colonel winked at Bertram, who nodded as if he understood. The two men appeared to be considerably under the influence of wine.

The next game Blake and Slogue won.

"Now you see," said Col. Paine, "luck has changed."

"Well, let us double the bet," said Blake.

"I have no objection," replied Col. Paine, who



seemed to be pleased with his skill. "I will go further and bet five hundred dollars."

"All right," said Slogue.

They played again, and Col. Paine lost. Then they suffered him to win again; and then he lost. For some time they played in this manner, allowing the victim to win just enough to keep up his interest. But in two hours Col. Paine could count his losses by thousands.

Then in desperation he proposed that they should double the bet at each successive game. He thought he had sufficient funds to keep up this desperate and hazardous method till he should win, and then by one stroke he would recover all he had lost and much more.

The trio allowed him to win the next game or two. The Colonel was greatly elated. They proceeded in this way till at last an amount was the stake which was as large as the proceeds of the Colonel's entire crop. The victim played with a trembling hand. His interest was too intense to be described. In a moment more he lost.

"Bertram," he exclaimed in agony, "I am ruined. I have lost every cent I have in the world."

Bertram appeared to be in despair.

"Look here, gentlemen," cried Bertram suddenly, "you must give me a chance to win back at least some of what I have lost. That is fair you know. When we commenced the game, I



had no idea of losing to this fearful extent. It has been a fair game, and you have played like gentlemen. We will have no quarrel about it like cut-throat gamblers. But if you are disposed to do the right thing, I ask you to meet me here to-morrow night, and give me a chance."

"Why certainly, Bertram," said Blake. "That is the way gentlemen do."

"Well then," said Bertram, "as a pledge that you will do this I ask you to lend me ten thousand dollars."

"Double the amount, Bertram, if you wish. I am willing to do you any favor in my power. I will make you a present of the amount if you want it."

"No, no," cried Bertram, "I am no beggar. My self respect would not suffer me to accept it as a present. I only ask the favor of a loan. You won the money fairly, and it is yours. But I want you to give me a chance to-morrow night. Probably, luck will change. I know you do not want to break a friend up, root and branch."

"Of course not," replied Blake as if Bertram were the best friend he had in the world. "You shall have a chance, and I hope you may win; and I have no doubt you will; for it was nothing but luck with me and Slogue. We will also give Col. Paine a chance to make up his losses if he desires it."

"I don't know," said Col. Paine with a forced smile. "I have lost the proceeds of my whole cotton crop."



"But you no doubt have friends in the city," said Blake, "who would come to your relief."

"O, yes," replied Col. Paine, "I can borrow to any extent that I desire. So we will meet here to-morrow night and see about it. I want to think over the matter. I do not know, though, that I will take any further risks."

"Very well," replied Blake politely. "But it is growing late. So we will bid you good-night, and wish that you may have pleasant dreams and refreshing sleep."

Then the two retired to their own room. When they had gone Col. Paine did not speak for several moments. He and Bertram both appeared to be occupied with gloomy reflections. But presently he said :

"Bertram, are you sure those two fellows are not professional gamblers?"

"O, no, Colonel," was the quick reply, they are not professional gamblers. I am well acquainted with both of them. They are perfect gentlemen, and it was a fair game. Those men would not be guilty of trickery."

"If you were not well acquainted with them, I would be sure to take them for gamblers who are up to all kinds of tricks."

"I do not see how you can say that, Colonel. You remember that the proposition to bet came from you."

"I know that," replied Col. Paine. "but they pretended to be unskilled players merely to get



me to make the proposition. My opinion is you will not see them. They will leave to-night."

"You are very much mistaken," answered Bertram. "I would be willing to wager my life that we will meet them in the morning. I know where their plantations are, and I know all about the men. They are both friends of mine, and would lend me fifty thousand dollars any day without security. I am going to try to win back my losses. I have borrowed ten thousand dollars from Blake, and this I think will enable me to get even with them, if nothing more. Our luck was bad to-night—that is all. I think we would better try them to-morrow night. We will play more cautiously. We certainly can beat those two men. They just happened to draw good hands."

"Whose cards are they?" asked the Colonel.

"It is my deck," said Bertram, "and a right new one too. The cards are all right." Saying this Bertram put them in his pocket.

"Shall we try them to-morrow night," asked Bertram.

"How can I, Bertram? I am broke."

"But can you not borrow?"

"Of course. I can borrow any amount I want, within reasonable bounds; but I will have to give some security."

"I think you can do that very easily," replied Bertram. "If no other way you can give a mortgage on your farm and other property."



“I could,” said Col. Paine. “But let us sleep on it awhile. To-morrow my brain will be clearer ; and I can think better what to do.”

Accordingly both retired to bed and slept soundly till next morning. The Colonel waked up not feeling very well from the last night’s dissipation. Bertram offered his father-in-law a glass of wine to cheer him up, and the Colonel drank it.

After breakfast they walked down Main street without any particular object in view. They had not gone far before they met Blake and Slogue who spoke pleasantly and expressed the hope that the Colonel was feeling well after the last night’s amusement.

“It was not much amusement to me, gentlemen,” said Col. Paine moodily. “If I were in your condition I could afford to call it amusement.”

“O, Colonel,” said Blake, “you must not give way to trifles.”

“Trifles indeed !” exclaimed Col. Paine. “I do not see how it is a trifle when I have lost the results of a whole year’s labor.”

“Well, suppose you have,” replied Blake. “I have been in that condition more than once. Three years ago I lost in one night two hundred thousand dollars. But I was determined that I would not show a faint heart. So the next day I went to the bank and mortgaged my plantation, and got as much money as I wanted ; and the



night following I took in my two hundred thousand dollars and fifty thousand dollars over. Luck you see is not always against us, and we must not give up because we lose occasionally. The next time you may be the successful party. Pluck is bound to win after awhile."

With this kind of talk and with the aid of a glass or two of strong drink Col. Paine was persuaded to follow Bertram's advice. It was unfortunate for the Colonel that he had such unqualified confidence in his son-in-law. He could not have been duped by the two men alone. But notwithstanding his suspicions as to their true character, he at least believed implicitly what Bertram had said about them.

So they went to Col. Paine's commission merchant.

"I want," said the Colonel, "one hundred thousand dollars."

Bertram had persuaded him to borrow this large amount. "The more money you have," he said, "the easier it is to influence luck. That in fact is the secret of luck."

When the Colonel asked for a hundred thousand dollars, the merchant looked at him closely and perceived that he was at least slightly under the influence of ardent spirits. From, probably motives of friendship joined to policy, he thought it his duty to remonstrate.

"Why, Colonel," he said, "you have already received the amount due from your cotton."



"I know that," replied Col. Paine, "but I want more."

"May I ask what you want with such a large amount?"

"Never mind," said Col. Paine a little tartly, "I want it, and that is sufficient."

"The Colonel is capable of attending to his own business," said Bertram.

"I think I am," said the Colonel.

The merchant was of a different opinion; but he said:

"Very well, you can get it, but I must have some security."

"That I propose to give," replied Col. Paine. "You can have a mortgage on all my property. No doubt that will be sufficient."

"Yes; but Colonel, if your speculation does not succeed, I should think you will be in a somewhat crippled condition."

"I have the ability to manage my own affairs," said Col. Paine.

"All remonstrance on the part of the merchant was to no purpose. So with considerable reluctance he drew up the necessary legal document and gave an order on the bank for the required amount.

The remainder of the day Bertram and his two accomplices endeavored to make the time pass off as pleasantly as possible for their victim. Bertram was secretly overjoyed at the success of his villainous scheme. He felt that he would



soon be fully repaid for his months of patient waiting and watching. The prospect of making good his losses kept the Colonel in a comfortable frame of mind till night.

After supper the four men were seated around the card table in the same room. Col. Paine was a great lover of wine ; but he thought he would not drink any, but that he would keep perfectly cool, so that his opponents could take no advantage of him. Bertram offered him a glass, but he declined, and remarked :

“I would advise you not to take any till the game is ended.”

“Wine,” replied Bertram, “always brightens my intellectual faculties.”

The Colonel noticed that Blake and Slogue both drank freely ; but he was not aware of the fact that it was only colored water.

The game commenced. They allowed the Colonel to win ten thousand dollars. Then he began to play more boldly.

“You see,” said Blake, “luck has changed.”

“Come, Slogue, we’ll have to wake up.”

The next game the Colonel was on the losing side to the sum of twenty thousand dollars. At this juncture he manifested a disposition to withdraw. But Bertram said :

“It will never do to give it up now. Let us try another game.”

“I am perfectly willing,” said Blake blandly, “that you should recover all your losses ; and



then we will quit good friends. But of course in a fair game like this, I will win all I can.

“Yes,” said Bertram, “that is right. All we want is a fair game.”

The next game Col. Paine was on the winning side. And after two or three more games he had won thirty thousand dollars. Then his hopes were so much revived, he concluded that he would take just a little wine. They played on, and Col. Paine was still “in luck.” So he took a little more wine, and then he became bolder. He began to think that Bertram was right, and that wine had a tendency to sharpen one’s wits; so he took more. After awhile when he became warmed up with strong drink he became a little reckless.

We need not enter into all the particulars. Col. Paine’s success was varied; but, as the reader has no doubt anticipated, the whole hundred thousand dollars in the course of three or four hours, passed into the possession of Blake and Slogue.

When the last card was thrown, that settled Col. Paine’s financial destiny, he looked bewildered. Then, as he realized his penniless condition he dropped his head upon the table. Not a word was spoken. But in a moment he raised up, and looked straight into the faces of his opponents, and spoke with the energy of a man bent upon the accomplishment of a stern purpose:



"You two have swindled me," he said with deliberation. "You have not played a fair and honest game."

"Now, come, Colonel," said Blake, "that is a very heavy charge to bring up against gentlemen."

"I don't believe you are gentlemen," replied Col. Paine grinding his teeth. "You are regular swindlers."

"Mr. Bertram is acquainted with us," mildly answered Slogue. "We will leave it to him to say if the game has not been fairly played. You are excited, Colonel, and are under the influence of wine. But if you, or Mr. Bertram can show where we have swindled you out of one cent, we will return the whole amount we have won."

"Say, Bertram," exclaimed Col. Paine, rising and locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket, "are these fellows gentlemen?"

Then he drew a pistol and cocked it.

"Just say, Bertram," he continued, "have they not swindled us? If you think so, I will make them refund or I will take their lives on the spot."

"Colonel," said Bertram who had been narrowly watching his father-in-law's motions, "put up your weapon. It is robbery you know to take money at the muzzle of a pistol. I wish I could tell you that there has been unfairness in the game. But Mr. Blake and Mr. Slogue, as I have already told you, are both gentlemen; and have won our money fairly. You feel no worse about



it than I do. So put your pistol up and be quiet."

"I tell you, Bertram," exclaimed Col. Paine, "you are mistaken in these fellows. As sure as you are born they have swindled us."

"Well now, Colonel," spoke up Blake in a mild tone, "if you will show where we have practiced the least swindling, we will refund every cent."

"You villains!" cried Col. Paine angrily, "you know I can't show it; but I am so certain that there has been swindling that if Bertram will say the word, I will make you return what you've gotten from us."

"Suppose you did," meekly replied Mr. Slogue, "it would be mere robbery. You have the advantage of us. We are unarmed and in your power. If that is your way of doing business, of course I would rather 'stand and deliver' than to have a bullet hole through my head."

"You are guilty of swindling which is as bad as highway robbery."

"Sit down, Colonel," said Bertram. "If we have lost all, it is our own fault. I cannot accuse my friends of unfair dealing. But gentlemen," said Bertram addressing the two men, "you have ruined us."

"Well," said Blake, "I don't want to injure my friends, and if I can be of any service to you, command me."

"If you wish to do me a favor," said Bertram, "you have it in your power to place me under lasting obligations."



"Name the favor," said Blake.

"Well," replied Bertram, "I have told you that Col. Paine is my father-in-law, and I think just as much of him as I do of my own father. I cannot bear to see him ruined. Now, I want you to lend me one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, which you can well afford to do. It will put you to no inconvenience at all, and will enable him to get straight with the world again. His property must not be encumbered by a mortgage."

"You have been a friend to me, Bertram," replied Blake, "and now I will comply with your request; or rather I will lend you the money, and you can do with it just as you please. That is fair."

"Yes, thank you, that will do."

"And now Colonel," said Blake, "if you will let us out, we will leave you to rest."

"Let Bertram have the the money first."

"You are indeed very suspicious," said Mr. Blake with a smile. "But to show you that your suspicions are groundless, here Bertram count out the money."

Bertram did so, and the two men retired.

"Now Colonel," said Bertram, "we have got the money, and will take our own time to pay it back. Let us have a glass of wine, and go to bed."

Then Bertram very adroitly dropped some kind of powder into Col. Paine's glass. The victim



drank it ; and in a little while was in a deep sleep. Bertram arose, and dressing himself, went to the room of his accomplices.

“Boys,” said Bertram, “I have drugged him well ; and it is now time to go to the boat.”

Accordingly they went to the river, and soon were gliding down the stream. Thirty miles below Memphis, they got off the boat and disappeared.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

We now return to Dr. Archer. He set out for Memphis on Friday morning just one week before Milson's execution was to take place. He traveled with a heavy heart. Unlike Mr. Barton who had kept his thoughts and suspicions to himself on one subject, with the exception of the hints he had thrown out to the prisoner, Dr. Archer could discover not the shadow of a hope for Milson. He could think of scarcely anything but the rapidly approaching execution. It was a subject that almost sickened him ; but he could not banish it from his mind. He asked himself frequently, as he rode along, if God, who was so compassionate and just, would not interfere in



some unexpected way, and bring the murderer to light before the innocent should be put to death. And all along the road the good man was praying for poor Milson. The Doctor was a man who had the utmost confidence in God; but sometimes the dark prospect caused even his faith to stagger.

Friday night he stopped within a few miles of Memphis, and spent the night with an old friend. The next morning he rode into the city.

The ecclesiastical court opened at ten o'clock, and commenced business; but Dr. Archer could take but little interest in the proceedings. He was appointed by the court to preach the next morning, but flatly refused, giving as an excuse that he was in such a frame of mind, that it was impossible. It seemed as if Dr. Archer himself was approaching the borders of insanity. His depression and uneasiness are not to be wondered at, when it is remembered that he was an impulsive man, whose whole heart was in the cause of a young man whom he dearly loved, and whom he believed with all his soul to be innocent of murder.

Monday came and went: then Tuesday. Wednesday morning dawned. The next morning the Doctor would start home. As the hours went by bringing nearer and nearer the fatal Friday on which Milson was to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, he became more and more uneasy. Hope was dying out. Faith was reel-



ing like a drunken man. Was it possible, he asked himself, that the great and merciful God would permit such an awful calamity to occur, after so many petitions had been sent up to the Throne of Grace? In his heart he felt that this ought not to be. The thought that the young man whom he and others had tried to rescue from the clutches of the law, would die an ignominious death, was sickening, agonizing, maddening. The Doctor became so restless on Wednesday that he could not keep still. He would leave the church and walk up and down Main street, praying at nearly every step he took. Were all these sincere prayers to be in vain?

The Doctor was staying with a friend in the city to whom he had related the circumstances of the murder—in fact, it seemed that he could talk of nothing else. After supper the subject was brought up again. But his friend, to divert his mind, if possible, from a subject which had already been discussed till it was threadbare, took down a watch that was hanging in the room where they were sitting, and made the remark that it was a fine chronometer which he had recently bought, and quite cheap too.

“Just examine the works, will you, with this magnifying glass.”

The Doctor took the glass and began to look at the watch. His eye caught a name on the inside of the case. The letters were quite small, but the glass brought them out in very legible



distinctness. In a moment he started from his seat, and looking earnestly at his friend, asked :

“How long have you owned this watch ?”

“Only a few days,” was the reply.

“Where did you get it ?” asked the Doctor in visible agitation.

“I bought it from F. H. Clarke & Co., here in the city,” said the friend.

“Come along,” cried Dr. Archer, seizing him by the arm, “come along quick ! I must immediately see the man from whom you got this.”

“What for ?” asked the friend, looking as if he thought the Doctor crazy.

“What for ? Why look here,” said the Doctor, sinking his voice to almost a whisper, “why look here—don’t you see that name ?”

“Yes, very distinctly.”

“That,” said Dr. Archer, “is the name of the murdered peddler. Come,” he cried, “let us go at once.”

“We will have to go to Mr. Clarke’s residence. Can’t you wait till morning ?”

“I cannot wait a minute,” cried Dr. Archer. “This may be the key to the mystery. We must go right now. There is not a moment to lose.”

The friend seeing that the Doctor was determined, and also being willing to aid all he could in the solution of the mystery, went out and procured a hack ; and soon they were on the way to Mr. Clarke’s residence.



It was not long before they alighted and rang the door-bell. The summons was answered, and in a few minutes Mr. Clarke made his appearance.

"Mr. Clarke," said the friend after Dr. Archer had been introduced, "you remember this watch which I bought from you a few days since?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Clarke.

"Do you remember when you got it?"

"Yes, one of my clerks bought it in my absence from a boy, not more than two weeks ago."

"Who was this boy?" eagerly inquired Dr. Archer, who could scarcely keep still, so certain did he feel that he was on the track of the murderer.

"I did not ascertain his name," replied Mr. Clarke, "indeed I made no particular inquiry about him; but possibly my clerk can inform you, if it is a matter of any great importance."

"It is a matter of the gravest importance," replied Dr. Archer, "for the life of a human being probably depends upon it."

Here Dr. Archer briefly gave Mr. Clarke an account of the murder, and of Milson's critical situation. As soon as he had finished Mr. Clarke said :

"We will hunt up Scaliger at once. I see the necessity of prompt action. I will render you all the assistance in my power. Let us go immediately; for there is no time to be lost."

Then the three got into the hack and were rapidly driven to the house where the clerk was



boarding. When they arrived Scaliger had not retired. He was soon found, and then Mr. Clarke questioned him in regard to the matter.

"Mr. Scaliger," he said, "do you remember the name of the boy who sold you this watch?"

Mr. Scaliger put his hands up to his eyes and tried to make his memory act. Dr. Archer held his breath expecting to hear a name pronounced which he had on the end of his tongue. But Scaliger said :

"I don't remember that he told his name. If he did I've forgotten it."

"Would you know it if you were to hear it?" asked Dr. Archer.

"No, sir, I don't think I would. I didn't pay much attention to him. The watch was cheap, and I bought it. But the boy was in the house this evening, and he asked if I wanted to buy another watch."

"Did you buy another?" asked Dr. Archer.

"No, sir. It was a common silver watch, and he asked more for it than it was worth."

"Do you think you could recognize him again?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, sir, easily; for he is one of the ugliest boys I ever saw."

"What time was it," inquired Dr. Archer, "when you saw him this evening?"

"It was not long before sun-set—probably half an hour before."

"He must be in the city then," said Mr. Clarke.



“Scaliger, don’t you think you could find that boy?”

“I think I could to-morrow, if he is in the city.”

“But we want him to-night,” said Dr. Archer. “He must not have the opportunity to leave.”

“I’ll tell you what, Doctor,” said Clarke, “the boy will not be apt to leave before morning. There is no necessity for it. I am satisfied he will remain to-night. My opinion is that it is useless to examine the hotel registers, because if he has come by the watches dishonestly he will not give his true name. We’ll get Scaliger to go round to the hotels early in the morning and find him, and persuade him to come to my store.”

“I can do that easily,” said Scaliger, “by proposing to buy his watch.”

“And it may be,” said Mr. Clarke, “that he has other watches. But I think it is now too late to do anything more to-night. We will have to be quiet till morning.”

After some further consultation it was thought best to follow Mr. Clarke’s advice. That gentleman agreed to notify the police, and then they separated for the night.

Dr. Archer returned with his friend, and they retired to rest; but there was no rest for the preacher. He spent most of the night in prayer. He could not sleep. He believed that he was on the track of the murderer at last, and he felt almost afraid to close his eyes in slumber lest he



should lose the trace. So the hours dragged heavily by. But at last the day dawned. The first thing which Dr. Archer did was to hire a messenger to go to Holly Springs with a letter to Mr. Barton. It was short, as follows :

“I am on the murderer’s track. I hope I will have him in custody before many hours. By no means allow the execution of Milson to-morrow. There is no legal way to prevent it, because you cannot possibly get a communication to the Governor in time. But there is an illegal way to do it. At all hazards stay the execution.

Yours truly,

A. ARCHER.

The Doctor then instructed his messenger to deliver the letter without fail early Friday morning, or if possible that very night. Here we may as well inform the reader that this messenger was taken sick Thursday evening so that he could not travel. Before day on Friday morning he started again ; but he had to stop on the way on account of the return of his sickness. Notwithstanding his intermittent illness he pushed forward as fast as he was able. But it was after four o’clock when he reached Holly Springs.

Dr. Archer, after he had despatched his messenger, would scarcely take time to eat his breakfast. He swallowed his food in haste, and then in company with his friend went to the establishment of F. H. Clarke & Co. Nothing had been heard from Scaliger. While they were waiting for him, it was agreed that Dr. Archer should conceal himself behind the counter so that he could hear what the boy said in case he should be found. Mr. Clarke and Dr. Archer’s friend then went out to see what had become of



Scaliger. They soon found him at the principal hotel in the city.

"I've got him," said Scaliger in a low tone. "He is now at breakfast, and he will go with me as soon as he is through."

"Very well then," said Mr. Clarke, "by no means suffer him to escape."

"You may depend upon it, he will go with me. I've made the impression on him that I would buy his watch if he would bring it to the store and allow me to examine it carefully. I will come with him presently."

Mr. Clarke and Dr. Archer's friend then returned to the Doctor. They had a policeman near by to make the arrest, should it be necessary. And now all was ready.

In about fifteen minutes Scaliger came in in company with a boy. As soon as Dr. Archer heard the lad's voice, he at once recognized Rommie Paine. His heart beat till he could almost hear it. He felt that the mystery was solved.

It was assigned to Mr. Clarke to interrogate the boy, and elicit such information as he could.

"Show your watch," said Scaliger, pointing to Mr. Clarke, "to that gentleman."

Mr. Clarke pretending to examine the watch said :

"Are you in the jewelry business, my little man?"

"Yes, sir," was the prompt response.



"Where do you live?"

"Little Rock, Arkansas."

"Have you any more watches to sell?"

"No, not here. I've got more at home."

"What is your name?"

"My name is John Smith?"

Dr. Archer, on hearing this, could scarcely restrain an ejaculatory prayer of gratitude. He believed that his earnest petitions had not been in vain. But Mr. Clarke then drew from his pocket the watch which Dr. Archer's friend had bought.

"You sold this watch," said Mr. Clarke, pointing to Scaliger, "to that gentleman."

"Yes."

"Where did you get it?"

"I traded for it," was the reply.

"With whom did you trade?"

Evidently Rommie did not like this question. It had a tendency to excite his ire. So he tartly replied :

"I don't see that is any o' your business."

"But, young man," said Mr. Clarke, looking quite serious, "it is my business ; and I will tell you it will be a bad business for you if you don't answer correctly. This watch has been stolen, and you must explain how you got possession of it. If you do not, I will have you arrested as a thief. Now I ask you again, with whom did you trade?"



Rommie studied for a moment, and then in some little confusion said :

“I’ve forgot the man’s name.”

“Forgot it?”

Yes, I have,” he answered emphatically.

“Look here, boy,” said Mr. Clarke sternly, “that story will not do. You must give a better account than that.”

But Rommie now became stubborn.

“I’ve done told you all I know. If the man stole it I can’t help it.”

Dr. Archer was satisfied that the murderer, or at least an accomplice, was found. It was enough. So he suddenly came from his place of concealment, and pointing his finger at the boy’s face sternly exclaimed :

“I charge you with the murder of that peddler.”

Rommie was so startled by the sudden appearance of this old acquaintance that for a moment he was speechless. The eyes of all present were turned upon him. The suddenness of the whole thing threw him for an instant off his guard, and he turned slightly pale. But Rommie, in some respects, was no ordinary boy, as his interrogators soon found out.

“Rommie, said Dr. Archer, “I have heard your falsehoods. You gave your name as John Smith; and you know that is false. You said that you live in Little Rock; and you know that



is false. If you are honest why do you tell such falsehoods?"

"Just because," said Rommie bristling up, "it's none o' thar business whar I live, nor what's my name."

"Rommie," said Dr. Archer solemnly, "you know that poor John Milson, your own sister's husband is condemned to be executed to-morrow for the murder of that peddler."

"Well," interrupted the boy, "it was proved that he done the murder."

"You know, sir," said Dr. Archer with sternness, "that he did not do it; and you know who did it."

"How could I know?" asked the boy.

"Where," said Dr. Archer, holding up the chronometer, which his friend had bought, "did you get this?"

"I bought it."

"So I heard you say; and you say you don't know the name of the man from whom you bought it?"

"No, I don't."

"Where were you when you bought it?"

"I was at Coffeerville."

"Does the man live there—the man from whom you purchased it?"

"I don't know whar he lives."

"Could you find him again?"

"I don't know that I could; but what do you want to know fur?"



"I will tell you," said Dr. Archer, thinking that he might frighten the boy into a confession. "This watch belonged to that murdered peddler."

"How do you know it did?"

"That does not matter; I know it. And now it is found in your possession. If you do not tell the truth about it, I will have you arrested as a murderer."

"I've told you the truth," said Rommie.

"Rommie," said Dr. Archer, "you have not told the truth. It is evident that you know more than you will tell. Now I ask you will you suffer poor John Milson to be hanged when you can prevent it?"

"I can't help it," said the boy.

"Dr. Archer," exclaimed Mr. Clarke with bluntness, "that boy is lying like a dog. He can tell something about the murder if he would."

"I know he can," replied Dr. Archer, "and I will have him arrested and tried for the murder."

"I'll show you whether you will," exclaimed Rommie with a most determined air, and with eyes glaring like those of a wild animal. He suddenly jerked a pistol from his pocket, and started for the door. But the policeman who had been watching saw this maneuver, and as soon as the boy reached the door, both his arms were in the strong grasp of the officer. The pistol was in an instant out of his possession.

"Search him," said Mr. Clarke. "Perhaps something may be found that will be of use."



Rommie struggled with the policeman, but it was to no purpose. He was taken back into Mr. Clarke's office, and rigidly searched; but nothing was found that gave any further clue to the murder.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon before Dr. Archer started to Holly Springs with his prisoner. He was accompanied by Scaliger, who was to be a witness in the case. Rommie was in the charge of an officer whom Dr. Archer hired for the purpose. For the present we leave them pushing on toward the town of Holly Springs.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Friday morning dawned with the sun shining clear in the eastern horizon. A flood of golden light was poured upon the earth; and the day promised to be beautiful.

It is strange what a propensity the masses have to witness the struggles and agonies of a criminal who dies by the throttle of the gallows. We cannot accuse them of cruelty; for they look on the horrid spectacle with shuddering, sickening sensations. It is frequently the case that females, who are drawn to the spot by some strange



fascination, find themselves in a fainting condition when they cast their eyes upon the writhing, suffocating victim of the choking noose. Often, when the fatal "drop falls," stout-hearted, strong-minded men turn their eyes away from the awful sight. But people go to such places of solemn entertainment, impelled by a morbid curiosity. Whether this be true or not, it is an undeniable fact that nothing can excel a public "hanging," in drawing crowds.

So on that Friday morning, when it was the general expectation that poor Milson would have to mount the scaffold, it is not at all surprising that wagons, buggies, and other vehicles, loaded with as much human flesh as could be crammed into them, were driven into the town of Holly Springs. Some rode on horses and mules; and others came on foot. It was a general holiday for miles around; and nearly the entire country turned out en masse. Every street was crowded.

The gallows had been erected the day before about a mile from town. This awful, but plain and rude structure, with its noose dangling in the breeze, was the center of attraction; and here the people assembled by thousands. Some had come the day before, and had camped out in the woods, as if determined that they would not be behind time.

But there was one feature of this mighty gathering that did not escape the notice of those who were anything like close observers. Occasionally



a man would be seen armed with a rifle, or a double-barrelled shot-gun; then there would be three or four together. Thus they came in on all the roads leading to town. By nine o'clock there were as many as a hundred assembled at the court-house. They were quiet and orderly; but it soon became evident that they were organizing into companies. They made their arrangements openly and boldly. Mr. Barton, who was on the alert, saw these proceedings, and he was at no loss to know the meaning. At once he proceeded to the residence of Dr. Archer where he expected to find Junie Milson.

The day before she had left her husband telling him that she would not see him again till the next evening at four o'clock.

"Where are you going?" asked Milson.

"It does not matter," she said. "But I want to tell you not to be alarmed at anything that occurs to-morrow. They are making their preparations," she continued, while tears came into her eyes, "for your execution."

"And if I am executed—"

"Never! never!" interrupted Junie, throwing her arms around his neck and giving way to a flood of tears. Then she released him and stood in the middle of the floor.

"They shall not touch you," she exclaimed with intense emotion. "I will not permit it. I trample the sentence of the court under my feet—I bid defiance to that law which condemns my



innocent husband to death. I will rise above the weaknesses of my sex, and show to the world what one weak woman can do. I part with you, John Milson, not as a wife who expects to see her husband a corpse to-morrow. Rest easy, dear. A few hours more, and my work will be completed. You will see me to-morrow evening."

Milson said nothing. It was useless. Had it not been for Mr. Barton's assurances, his suspicions in regard to her soundness of mind would have returned. Yet it was but natural that he should have feelings of uneasiness.

When Mr. Barton reached the residence of Dr. Archer, he found Junie as he had expected. But she seemed to be considerably excited.

"Mr. Barton," she said, "have you been to the court-house this morning?"

"I am from there now" he answered.

"You saw some armed men?"

"Yes, a large number of them."

"Well, you now know my intentions. The hour has come for action. I am no Beadicea, nor Joan of Arc. I am not an Amazon, Mr. Barton; but with my little army I will save my husband or die. Do you think I can succeed?"

"I think you can," replied Mr. Barton, "unless the sheriff gets up another 'little army' and defeats you."

"I do not believe he can do it, Mr. Barton," quickly answered Junie. "I am posted in regard



to his movements. The little handful of men that he has under his command, to assist in the execution, will be no more than a row of pins before my soldiers. But if the sheriff can possibly raise enough men to offer resistance, there will be blood shed, Mr. Barton. I will lead my army myself—I will be seen in the thickest of the fight. You have read about women warriors in battle—disheveled hair flying in the winds—sword in hand—walking over corpses—cheering brave men on—an awful picture, Mr. Barton—but if the sheriff dares to offer resistance, he will never reach my husband till he walks over the dead body of Junie Milson and a hundred other corpses. Those men will bring John Milson out of that jail or die. You may give the sheriff to understand that, Mr. Barton.”

“I cannot say anything to him about it,” replied Mr. Barton. “Neither can I have anything to do with mobs.”

“I care nothing for names, Mr. Barton. Call it a mob if you will.”

“It is a serious matter,” said Mr. Barton, “to resist the officers of the law.”

“Mr. Barton,” cried Junie with wild energy, and standing up before him, “do you want John Milson hanged?”

“Certainly not,” he answered.

“Then, talk not to me about resisting the officers of the law. I will resist,” she cried, “to the last. I want to know if you would advise me not to resist?”



"It would be useless to give any such advice now ; for I perceive plainly that you are desperately bent on executing your purpose. All I now have to say to you is, be prudent ; do not become excited, and stimulate your men to the performance of deeds which may get you and them into very serious trouble. There must be no blood shed."

"There will be none," said Junie, "unless they attempt to execute my husband."

"You are not going with the mob, are you ?" asked Mr. Barton.

"Not unless it is necessary."

"I would advise you not to."

"I understand you, Mr. Barton, and I thank you. I would have gone to you for advice in regard to this matter ; but I knew it would not do for a man in your position to take any part in this sort of an affair. I found out all I desired to know from another source. No one can accuse you of participating in this thing. I shoulder the entire responsibility."

"Well," said Mr. Barton rising to go, "I am glad you understand me. Again I say to you, be prudent."

Mr. Barton then walked back toward the court-house to watch the proceedings of the mob.

It was not till twelve o'clock that the mob began to move. Then like regular soldiers they shouldered arms and went marching along toward the jail, which they soon reached. This 'littl



army," as Junie called it, was under the command of a great gigantic looking man, who had the physical strength of two or three ordinary men. He was, in fact, a desperate looking man—just the right sort to take the leadership of a mob. His name was Joab Grimes.

When they arrived at the prison Grimes quietly asked the jailor to lead the way to Milson's cell. The jailor saw that it would be folly to resist this armed force, and he obeyed. He was commanded to open the door—which he did without hesitation.

"Why, Mr. Grimes," exclaimed Milson, "what does this mean?"

"O, it means," said Grimes carelessly, "that we have come to set you free."

"But, Mr. Grimes, you have no authority to do that."

"Here's splendid authority," said Grimes holding up a long, heavy rifle. "I tell you there ain't no resisting sich authority as that. There is some more like it out there in the yard."

"But, Mr. Grimes," said Milson, who did not much like the idea of regaining his liberty in this way, "this is mob law."

"Well, 'spose 'tis?" said Grimes bluntly, "mob law is better than bein' hung up by the neck like a dog. But, I'll tell you what if you don't like mob law, you jest resist if you want to. We're goin' to take you prisner. Now you understand that. So, Mr. Jailor, if you please jest take off them chains."



"Shall I do it, Mr. Milson?" asked the jailor, who thought he ought to make some show of resistance.

"Do as I tell you," exclaimed Grimes with sternness. "I'm in command now. Milson has nothing to do with it. We're a gonin' to give him all the advantage of the law. So off with them chains."

"You see how it is," said Milson to the jailor. "I am as powerless as you are."

The jailor could but obey; and in a moment the fetters were off.

"Now," said Grimes to Milson, "you're my prisner; not another word, but do jest as I tell you."

Taking Milson by the arm Grimes led him out into the yard. When the crowd of armed men saw him, they gave three hearty cheers. Then they deliberately marched back to the court-house. Milson's friends were overjoyed.

Mr. Grimes sent word to Junie that her husband was at the court-house. By way of answer she requested the messenger to tell Mr. Grimes to keep him till four o'clock and then bring him to Dr. Archer's.

The sheriff in the meantime was endeavoring to raise a posse to enforce the law. In his heart he was really glad that Milson was out of prison, and in the hands of a mob that would not permit his execution. But he thought he ought to make a show of resistance, in order to sustain his



official character. So he went about over town trying to raise a posse ; but every one flatly refuse to obey the summons. No one cared to get into a battle with that determined mob.

At last four o'clock came, and then Mr. Grimes said to Milson :

“We'll now go to the preacher's house.”

So they went. Mr. Barton had preceded them. Grimes led Milson to the gallery where Junie was standing.

Of course the young wife had been in a state of suspense which she had endured in silence for weeks. The reaction was too great for Junie's delicate nerves. The tension was relaxed. When Milson reached her she cried out :

“Thank God ! saved ! saved ! ”

He caught her in his arms as she fell fainting. But there was a physician standing near by, who did what was necessary in such cases, and Junie soon recovered.

The sheriff had followed on and was now also in the gallery with Mr. Barton, Grimes and a few others.

“Mr. Sheriff,” said Junie, “you are fairly defeated. The hour is past.”

“Mr. Barton,” said the sheriff, “what is my duty in such a case ? ”

“Mrs. Milson is right,” replied Mr. Barton. “The hour is past. You were ordered to perform the execution within certain hours, but you have failed.”



"What must I do then?"

"I can tell you," exclaimed Junie. "I have found that out long since. You can do nothing till the next court."

"She is correct," said Mr. Barton to the sheriff. "If you had possession of the prisoner now, and were to execute him, you would be guilty of murder."

"I am glad," said the sheriff, "that such is the law. Mrs. Milson, I dare not express my feelings to you."

"I understand you," interrupted Junie. "No apology is necessary. You have done nothing more than your duty. I assure you that I have not the slightest feeling of ill-will toward you. But this is one time that justice has triumphed over law."

"But, Mrs. Milson," asked the sheriff, "what do you propose next?"

"I have accomplished what I proposed," she replied. "My object was to gain time. I believe that before the next court God will answer my prayers. Day and night I have besought my Heavenly Father to bring the murderer to light. I have not lost faith in Him. So, my programme is ended, and my work is finished."

"At this moment Dr. Archer's messenger arrived. Sick as he was he had pushed on. In answer to his inquiry, Mr. Barton was pointed out, to whom he delivered the letter, which was hastily read.



“Good news!” cried Mr. Barton. He then read the letter aloud.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul!” exclaimed Junie, winding her arms around Milson’s neck. “I could not believe that a just God would permit you to suffer.”

Junie suddenly became sick and had to be put to bed. The excitement of the day coupled with this last news was more than she could endure.

The mob perceiving that something strange had occurred, went into the yard and gathered around the gallery. Mr. Barton then entered into an explanation.

“My fellow-citizens,” he said, “ordinarily mob law should be discountenanced. It is something to be dreaded. It demoralizes public sentiment—it subverts social order when men rise up in arms and acting on the authority of powder and shot, bid defiance to the courts of our country. The law must be respected and obeyed.”

Some one cried out :

“Do you want John Milson hung?”

“I was going to say,” replied Mr. Barton, “that while ordinarily we must have reverence for our judicial bodies and respect for their decisions, yet in this one instance, fellow-citizens, you have justice and right on your side. You have this day performed a righteous deed in the sight of Heaven. This is one instance that justified ‘doing evil that good might come.’ You have



rescued an innocent man from death. For this letter which I hold in my hand informs me that at least the trail of the murderer has been discovered."

"Who is it?" cried a dozen voices.

"I do not know," replied Mr. Barton. "I will read you the letter, which contains all the information I have on the subject."

At the conclusion of Dr. Archer's letter, the mob gave three cheers for John Milson. Then Mr. Grimes said :

"Mr. Barton, tell these gentlemen whether John Milson is safe or not. They'll never leave here till they know he's out of danger."

"He is certainly safe," replied Mr. Barton, "till the next court meets; and before that I hope we will have the real murderer."

By this time the people who had been waiting at the gallows all day for the arrival of the victim, began to swarm into town, to see what was the matter—why they had been so awfully cheated.

"Who knows," said Grimes, "but some fools in them crowds might take a notion to hang the prisner. We'll not leave till they're all gone."

Grimes then sent half of his men out to inform the crowds that "there'd be no hangin' that day." When the people understood it they began to leave; and before sunset Holly Springs wore its usual air.

Before Mr. Grimes disbanded his mob, Mil-



son stood on the gallery steps, and in a voice trembling with emotion thanked them for saving his life. His feelings overpowered him. He stopped short, and then Grimes said :

“He’s to full to talk. We’ll excuse him. So three cheers, and then go home.”

This was done, and the men dispersed. But Mr. Grimes said he must tell “Miss Junie” good-by. So Milson conducted him to his wife’s room.

“God bless you, my dear friend,” said Junie, taking his rough hands in hers and kissing them, “I owe you a debt that I can never pay.”

“O shucks, gal,” said the rude, blunt man, “you’ll make me ashamed o’ myself.” And he hastily brushed an unbidden, rebellious tear from his eye. “I aint use to this kind o’ thing. You ken ask God to bless me if you want to, but as to bein’ in debt, you don’t owe me a thing—nary red cent. An’ if this here boy o’ yourn ever gits into sich another scrape, jest let Joab Grimes know an’ he’ll be in for it again. Now let me go afore I cry like a baby. Good-by.” And Grimes gave them both a hearty shake of the hand, and then like a giant strode out of the room.

Mr. Barton and the sheriff were in the gallery talking; and as soon as Grimes had gone they called Milson out.

“Milson,” said Mr. Barton, “you know of course that you are not properly and legally at liberty. The sheriff has the right to hold you in custody.”



"I understand that, Mr. Barton. I surrender myself, and cheerfully submit to legal authority."

"Well, then, I advise you as a friend to go quietly back to jail, and patiently await further developments. I hope in a few days, or rather in a few hours, this mystery will be solved, and then you can come forth from prison without a stain on your character."

"Junie is sick," said Milson. "Could I not have permission to remain with her at least till morning?"

"What do you say, Mr. Barton?" asked the sheriff.

"You can do this," said Mr. Barton to the sheriff: "I do not see that it is absolutely necessary for Milson to go back to-night. But to go through the form of law, you can leave a guard, say of one man, at the house. In this particular case, that would be sufficient. You run no risk at all, as Milson would have made his escape several hours ago if he intended to do such a thing."

Accordingly this course was agreed upon, and the parties separated.

When Milson returned to his room his wife gave him a full account in regard to the mob. She was not too sick to talk. She said:

"As soon as Dr. Archer informed me of your condemnation, and even while he was talking the thought flashed into my mind that you could be saved in spite of law. Sometimes I think the good Lord must have inspired me with the idea.



And looking back over the circumstances which have occurred, I am more convinced of it than ever. For it has so happened that the mob, if you will call it such, was the only thing that could have saved you. Well, anyhow the thought occurred to me, and I firmly believed there were enough honest men, men who did not think you guilty, who could be induced to save you. But I had to fulfill my engagement before I could act with the necessary freedom. After our marriage I approached our mutual friend Mr. Grimes on the subject. It seems to me that I can see the workings of divine providence all along through our trials. If you had not been thrown from your horse at the school-house, you would not have gotten acquainted with Mr. Grimes. But you remember how frequently he came to see you while you were sick. He took a fancy to you; and the truth is you have not a better friend in the country than that 'diamond in the rough'—Joab Grimes. He sent several of his children to school to me, and was delighted at the advancement they made in their studies. When I made the proposition to him to try to save you by means of a mob, you ought to have seen the great giant rise up with his eyes fairly flashing--looking like, I imagine, Richard the Lion-Hearted; and he raised his hand and said, 'Miss Junie, I'll do it or die. I shan't allow an innocent friend to be hung like a dog. I know I ken find enough men in Marshall county to stop



sich a shameful thing. I'll tell ye if thar is a jest God in the heavens I'll save John Milson. He shall never be hung as long as thar is a spark o' life in Joab Grimes' body.' When Mr. Grimes said this I felt safe. He and I went to work then to enlist others. I had friends, and you had friends, who readily engaged to undertake the rescue. It was not long before we had about a hundred who I knew could be relied on. Mr. Grimes said these were enough. To use his own language, 'I ken take them men, Miss Junie, an' whip out the balance o' Marshall county. Now, gal, jest go back and rest easy till the day comes an' Milson 'll come out o' that jail a free man, or you'll see many a bloody feller lyin' around the door.' It was only occasionally I felt the least uneasy. I went out yesterday to see Mr. Grimes, who told me that the mob would be certain to be on hand in time. And you know the rest. I would not tell you of my intentions, because I was afraid you would oppose me. Besides I wanted to shield your character. No one can say that you had anything to do with raising the mob. If there is any disgrace in it I shall bear it all."

"But what," asked Milson, "did you expect would happen after you had rescued me? You certainly knew I would not be legally free?"

Yes, I knew that. I have a kinsman in Jackson, who is a lawyer, and I corresponded with him as to legal points, as I did not wish in any



way to compromise Mr. Barton and Dr. Archer. I did not think much about the future. My object was to prevent your execution to-day. But it is all right. I have no doubt that your innocence will soon be established, to the satisfaction of all."

While Milson and Junie were thus talking, Dr. Archer was coming on toward Holly Springs with his prisoner. A man of his temperament could not but be in a state of excitement. He was fearful that his messenger would not be in time, and if he should not, it made him shudder to think of the consequences. The very thought caused the Doctor unconsciously to apply vigorously the spur to his horse. His uneasiness was not removed till late in the evening when in a few miles of Holly Springs he began to meet the people coming from town. He knew what it meant; and he almost dreaded to ask a question. But he soon learned that no execution had taken place, and then a great burden was lifted from his heart. At last he met an acquaintance who gave him all the particulars of the rescue. After this he rode leisurely along, thinking of the strange circumstance which had occurred.

"Now," he thought, "Junie's madness is all clear. Who could dare to say that she has not been an instrument in the hands of the living God. True it was an illegal measure; but God's ways are not as our ways. In his sight a thing may be just and right which is contrary to



human laws. There is no doubt of it in this case. Anyhow, praise be to the Lord, for the fact that Milson was not put to death."

The Doctor had several times tried to induce Rommie Paine to make a confession. But the boy had fallen into a state of sullenness similar to that of the animal called by the masses a "possum." He said to the Doctor that he had told all he knew, and he would not talk about it any more. So the Doctor was forced to let him alone. They rode on in silence Friday evening till they reached town. The boy was confined in jail and Dr. Archer went home. He would tell nothing he said to his family and Milson till the next day.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the next morning which was Saturday Junie had recovered her customary health. She looked cheerful and happy. Dr. Archer dreaded to inform her of the arrest of her brother as a murderer. It would be another great shock, and he was fearful of the effects of so many disasters. But it would be impossible to keep her long in ignorance of what had occurred. So he thought he would better break this awful news himself.



Accordingly after breakfast he requested her and Milson to accompany him to the parlor. When they were seated the Doctor said :

“Miss Junie, you must prepare yourself for more bad news.”

She looked at Milson with an expression of anguish, and turned pale.

“Is he not safe yet?” she asked. “I thought you were on the track of the murderer.”

“So I was.”

“And has he escaped,” interrupted Junie.

“No, not escaped,” replied Dr. Archer. “He has been arrested, and is now confined in jail. He was brought in last night about dark.”

“How is that bad news?” asked Junie. “I think that is good news.”

“But poor child, I may as well tell you, that this person, who, if he did not commit the deed himself, is an accomplice, is related to you.”

Again Junie became pale. But presently she said :

“Go on, Doctor, tell who it is. I can stand to hear it.”

“It is your brother.”

“Oh, my God !” exclaimed Junie wringing her hands in agony, “will my misfortunes never cease ?”

But as soon as the first paroxysm of grief was over, and Junie’s tranquility was comparatively restored, Dr. Archer explained the particulars with which the reader is acquainted. Milson



and his wife listened with painful attention. As soon as the Doctor had concluded, Junie said :

“As sure as you live, Dr. Archer, if Rommie did that thing, Bertram was the instigator.”

“We have no legal proof,” said the Doctor, “that Rommie actually committed the murder, but I feel certain that he knows something about it.”

“Where is Bertram ? ” asked Junie.

“I have no idea.”

“Does Rommie know ? ”

“He says not.”

“What will be done with Rommie ? ”

“I cannot tell. He will be examined either to-day or Monday. I think though you had better prepare yourself to hear that he is an accomplice, if nothing worse.”

“God’s will be done ! ” said Junie with tears streaming down her face. But in a few moments she complained of sickness, and was forced to retire to bed. She could no longer bear up under such calamities. Before many hours her sickness had developed into fever ; and a physician was called in. The sheriff concluded that humanity demanded that Milson should not be taken from the bed-side of his suffering wife ; and feeling that he was assuming no risk, even removed the guard, thus leaving his late prisoner to do as he pleased. Here for the present we leave Milson and Junie.

Dr. Archer at once went to the office of Mr.



Barton, in order to hold a consultation as to the course to be pursued. After he had related the particulars of the arrest, Mr. Barton said :

“From my point of view, Dr. Archer, the evidence is not sufficient to secure the boy’s conviction.”

“I have been fearful of that myself,” replied Dr. Archer. “But there is no doubt in my mind that he is privy to the murder.”

“The circumstances are very suspicious, that is true. But, Doctor, the boy’s conduct in Mr. Clarke’s store has made an impression upon you to which, I think, you give too much legal weight. If I had seen the boy’s actions, I would doubtless have the very same impression. But I am free from anything of that sort, and I am looking only at the naked facts in the case. We can prove only this : that the peddler’s watch was found in the boy’s possession. He says he bought it. That may be so, or not. If we could find the man from whom he got it, we would be on the right track. But he refuses to tell, or rather says, he does not know. So I see no way to find the man ; and right there the matter comes to an end.”

“But he had another watch, and says that he has others at home.”

“Yes ; but you have not found them. We must at once get out a search-warrant, and search the boy’s room.”

“I attended to that a few moments ago. I



suppose the constable is on the way now to Col. Paine's."

"Very well," replied Mr. Barton, "some other evidence may be obtained from that quarter. But here is another difficulty, Doctor: it will have to be proved that the silver watch belonged to the peddler. There is no way to do that. The boy had a gold watch with the peddler's name on it, and sold it for much less than its real value. He told falsehoods in regard to his name and place of residence. All this leaves room for strong suspicion, that is true. In a moral point of view I am satisfied that the boy knows something about the murder. But I fear our legal evidence is insufficient. My opinion is more confirmed that young Paine is merely a tool in the hands of Bertram; but how to establish the fact—that is the question. If the boy had not been arrested so hastily, probably something more could have been elicited."

"But there was no time to be lost, Mr. Barton. If I had known anything about Mrs. Milson's intentions, I would not have acted so hastily. I confess I was so eager to obtain some clew to the mystery which would be favorable to Milson, that I did not take time to reflect as I ought to have done."

"I suppose," replied Mr. Barton, "that if I had been in your place, I would have acted just as you did. But it cannot be helped now. We will have to do the best we can with the testimony in



our possession. Let us wait till the constable returns from Col. Paine's, and hear his report."

In about three hours after this interview occurred, the officer returned, and reported the results of his search. No one was at home except Mrs. Bertram, who inquired eagerly about her father and husband. They had been gone for about a week, she said, and she felt considerable uneasiness. The officer then exhibited his search-warrant, and requested her to lead the way to Rommie's room. This she at first refused to do; but he told her it would be folly to resist, and that he would have to search the whole house. Finally she yielded and pointed out the boy's room. But the result was, that nothing could be discovered that would throw any light on the mystery. The officer said that he had evaded the lady's interrogatories as to the object of the search, and had not acquainted her with the fact that her brother was in jail."

On hearing this information, the Doctor and Mr. Barton sat in thoughtful silence for several minutes. Then the Doctor said:

"I think we would better go to trial on the testimony which we have."

"We can but try it," replied Mr. Barton. "It is like striking in the dark though. But I do not see anything else we can do. The trial itself may develop something."

Accordingly they arranged with the magistrate to have the trial on Monday, and then they separated.



Col. Paine returned home Saturday afternoon. Gerie met him at the door, and without making any inquiry in regard to the prolonged absence of himself and her husband began to tell him about searching Rommie's room.

"Where is Rommie?" asked the Colonel.

"The officer would not tell me."

Then Gerie noticed her father's troubled expression.

"Where is Mr. Bertram?" she asked.

"I know not," replied her father in a manner that made her turn pale.

"Father, what is the matter? Where did you leave Mr. Bertram?"

"He left me at Memphis."

"Left you! O father, what do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. Gerie, my daughter, I dislike to tell you; but the plain truth is Bertram is a consummate scoundrel."

"O, father! father!" she exclaimed in wild excitement, "what is it?"

"My child," said the Colonel, "I fear that Bertram is a member of a gang of robbers and horse thieves."

"You don't know that?" she said.

"I could not just now prove it; but I strongly suspect it."

"Father," said Gerie, biting her lip in desperation, "I don't believe it. He is too noble and high-minded to be accused of any such thing as that."



“Noble, indeed !” almost hissed the Colonel through his clenched teeth. “He has ruined me.”

“O, father,” she cried, while she looked as white as a corpse, “you are killing me—how has he?—tell me.”

The Colonel then gave her an account of Bertram’s conduct in Memphis. Then he said :

“The villain has no doubt left the country ; and you need never expect to see him again. If you do, it will be when he is hand-cuffed in jail. He has,” continued the Colonel, “reduced us to beggary. And now from what you tell me, I am satisfied that he has got Rommie into some serious difficulty. I must now go at once to town and find out something about it.”

Accordingly he left.

Poor Gerie ! It is hard for any woman to believe that she has married a villain. She can find excuses for him when no one else can. When, at last, the awful fact is too palpable to be denied, it does not eradicate love from her heart. If the villainous husband loves the wife, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, she will cling to the unworthy object of her affections, under the most disgraceful circumstances. When all others desert him and treat him with derision and contempt—yea, when angry justice stands over him with drawn sword to execute the righteous sentence of law, that weeping wife would throw her trembling arms around him, and receive the stroke upon her own fragile frame. There is



no doubt that woman's love is far broader, deeper, purer, truer, than that of man. Let a woman be guilty of any sort of crime, and the husband would be the first to cast her off in scorn. No tears of hers could ever reinstate herself in his heart. But how different it is with woman! The husband may be a degraded, worthless wretch—outlawed on account of his crime; and yet, if he only loves his wife, the consciousness of that fact would cause her to stand by him to the last. When the Great Books are opened in the day of Final Accounts, it is not hazardous to affirm that in the Book of Life, there will be found written the names of more women than of men.

It could not be expected then that Gerie would suddenly turn against her unworthy husband. He had not, she thought, proved false to her. She loved the polished villain with all the ardor of her nature; and she could hardly believe her father's statement. She fondly hoped that Bertram would return, and prove that he was no villain.

When Col. Paine returned from town, Gerie anxiously inquired in reference to Rommie. The Colonel told her that he went to the jail and questioned his son about the crime with which he was charged, but the boy would tell him no more than he had told Dr. Archer. Rommie said he knew nothing about Bertram. All three had gone to Memphis together, and Rommie being in



the habit of taking care of himself, had left them.

And now," said the Colonel, "he is to be tried for the murder of that peddler; and my notion is that, if he is guilty, Bertram was the leader."

"Is there any proof, father, that Rommie did it?"

"No. But from all I could learn, there are some circumstances of a suspicious character against him. I can find out nothing more till Monday."

\* \* \* \* \*

Saturday night came. About eight o'clock Mr. Barton received a message to go to the hotel immediately. Dr. Archer also was summoned. The two arrived at the hotel about the same time. They were met by the proprietor who led them to the register, and pointed to the last name written. There it was—W. Z. BOLAND.

"That man arrived about an hour ago," said the landlord in a low tone. "When he registered I was somehow struck with the name. I began to study about it; and after a little it occurred to me that this was the very man for whom you advertised."

"This is certainly the man," replied Mr. Barton. "Dr. Archer, where is that handkerchief? We must have it at once."

"It is at my house," replied the Doctor, "carefully locked up. I will have it here in a few minutes."

And the impulsive Doctor started off at a



rapid gait. It was not long before he returned. Then Mr. Barton said to the landlord :

“Where is the man ?”

“He is in his room.”

“Please ask him,” said Mr. Barton, “to have the kindness to receive two gentlemen, who want to see him on business of importance.”

The landlord complied with the request, and in a moment Dr. Archer and Mr. Barton were introduced to Mr. Boland. He was a very plainly dressed man, having the air of one who had been raised in the backwoods. If the science of physiognomy could be relied on, he was an honest man. He had the appearance of a stout, hale man of about sixty years of age. His general appearance made a favorable impression upon both Mr. Barton and Dr. Archer. Presently Mr. Barton said :

“I trust, Mr. Boland, you will not think me impudent if I ask you a few questions. If you only knew the object I have in view, I think you would have no objection to answering.”

“Lem me light my pipe, gentlemen,” was the reply, “and then you may ask as many questions as you please ; but mind ye, I’ll be the judge whether I’ll answer or no. Now go ahead,” he said as the smoke began to curl up from his pipe.

“Where are you from ?” asked Mr. Barton, “that is, where do you live ?”

“I’ve no perticler objection to that question, stranger—I’m from Texas.”



“What is now your destination?”

“You mean whar I’m agoin’ to?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’ve no objection to that question either—I’m on my way to old North Caroliner, whar I was born.”

“Well, were you ever in this part of the country before?”

“I’ve bin near this town before, but never in it.”

“When were you near here?”

“Wal, sir,” he said, “Lem me see. Yes it was——just exactly.”

He had mentioned the very day of the murder. Mr. Barton now felt sure that this man could tell something about the tragedy. So he drew out the pocket-handkerchief.

“Mr. Boland,” he said, “do you recognize that?”

The man gazed at it for a moment, and looked at his name in the corner, while his two visitors were watching him with the most intense interest.

“This is mine,” replied Boland. “Them letters was worked in thar by my darter Sal; but see here, stranger, whar did you get it?”

“Where did you lose it?”

“Wal, I can’t exacly think now.”

“I wish you would try to think, Mr. Boland,” said Mr. Barton. “This is a matter of more importance than you imagine it is. But I will try to refresh your memory a little. Do you not re-



member crossing the Tallahatchie river some fifteen or twenty miles below here at the time you have said?"

"Look here, men," said Mr. Boland, "I don't like this sort o'questionin'. I'm an honest man a'travelin' peaceably through the country; and I don't know what you're a drivin' at, onless you're a tryin' to trap me some how."

"Mr. Boland, you look like an honest man, and I am laying no trap for you. I will tell you plainly, that handkerchief was found by myself in a hollow tree near the spot where a most shocking murder was committed. Yesterday a man whom everybody believes to be innocent, would have been executed but for the interference of a mob. But Mr. Boland, will you have the kindness to explain how your handkerchief happened to be in that tree? You must have been there."

"Stranger," said the Texan, "lem me ask you a question or two—time about is the far thing you know."

"Very well; proceed," said Mr. Barton.

"You say a man was to a bin hung yistiddy fur the murder?"

"Yes."

"Only one?"

"That was all."

"An' he was innocent, you say?"

"That is the general belief."



"Do you suspicion anybody else?"

"Yes."

"Wal, do you suspicion me?"

"I have said," replied Mr. Barton, "that you look like an honest man. You have thus far given no good reason to suspect you. But that handkerchief proves that you were very near to the spot where the murder was committed."

"Wal, stranger, didn't you never suspicion a boy?"

"Yes. A boy was confined in jail last night, who is strongly suspected."

"Wal, you're on the right track then."

"How do you know?" asked Mr. Barton. If you can throw any light on the subject we would be more than thankful. You will save an innocent man."

In course, stranger," said the Texan coolly, "honesty's the best policy as the sayin' is. If I weren't to tell you somethin' you'd begin to suspicion me, wouldn't ye?"

"To be sure I would," said Mr. Barton.

"An' jest as carcumstances now is, stranger, you'd have the right to. But one more question, stranger, is it a mighty ugly boy you've got in jail?"

"Yes, sir, ugly enough."

"You know his name, stranger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is his name Rommie?"

"Thank God!" cried Dr. Archer, "Milson is saved."



"That is his name," said Mr. Barton.

"Then, you've got the right one, an' that clears me."

"You can tell us all about it then?" said Mr. Barton.

"I ken tell some things about it, if I was in court."

Mr. Barton then briefly explained the matter, so that the Texan could understand that they were looking up testimony against the boy.

"Wal, I understand," said Boland, "an' you is entitled to all the information that I ken give. If I ken be of any service to you in this thing I'm willin'. Jestice ought ter be done. So I'll tell you all I ken in a mighty few minits."

"Wal," said the Texan, after re-lighting his pipe, "you see I was on the way back home from Caroliner, whar I'd bin after some money that was left to my ole 'oman by her brother that died some time ago. It was eight hundred dollars or nine hundred dollars--along thar somewhars; but I only got four hundred dollars, an' I'm a goin' back to Caroliner now fur the balance. Thar was some law pints in the business, an' I have to be a witness. But never mind that. I got back to this State, an' traveled along till I got in some eight or nine miles of that river you spoke of a while ago, an' thar my horse gin out. He was a good-sized Mustang pony, purty tough too; but that long ride was jest a leetle too much fur his bottom."



“Well, never mind about the pony,” said Mr. Barton. “You left him I suppose.”

“Yes. I sold ’im fur ten dollars, which was a heap less than he was worth. But I sold ’im to a man that lived near the road. If you don’t ble’ve that, stranger, I ken find the house agin’, an’ if the man’s alive yet, an’ I guess he is, he’ll tell you that I’m a tellin’ the truth.”

“I have no doubt of it,” said Mr. Barton, who saw that he would have to let the rough Texan tell his story in his way, “so proceed.”

“Wal, I started off afoot thinkin’ I mout pick up a chunk of a horse from somebody else, as the man I sold my pony to didn’t have any horse that suited me; fur he had nothin’ raly but three or four ole mules that I wouldn’t ride—they war too poke-easy fur my use. So I started off afoot, an’ traveled along till I got in two or three mile of that river, an’ thar I inquired the way. I was told to take a left-hand road jest as I got over the river, that, I was told, was the nearest route to whar I wanted to go. So I got to the river, an’ jest waded over—fur it was mighty shaller—not knee-deep. Then I tuck the left-hand road which was an’ ole lookin’ road. I hadn’t got more’n half a mile before I begun to feel kinder uneasy. You know, stranger, when a man’s got four or five hundred dollars in his pocket, an’ is a travelin’ a lonesome road, ’specially in a swamp, he somehow thinks about robbers. Wal, that was my experience. You’ve



bin along that ole rode, stranger, whar you found my kerchief? ”

“Yes, I know all about it,” replied Mr. Barton.

“Wal, you know thar is powerful thickets in some places on both sides o’ the road. I got to thinking how easy it ’ud be to rob a feller in sich places. Stranger, you mout think it foolish-like; but I jest concluded that I’d travel that lonesome road no further. I thought it ’ud be best to go back an’ tak the reg’lar road that I was told led to this town o’ yourn. So I turned back. When I’d got three hundred yards or sich a matter, I heard the clatter of horses’ feet behind me. Stranger, I tell you, I didn’t care to meet nobody in sich a place that I didn’t know. So I thought I’d step behind that tree whar you found the kerchief. It was holler, as you know, stranger. Wal, thar was a knot-hole in that tree, next the road, big enough to look out an’ see what was a goin’ on. I’d not bin thar more’n a minit before I hearn a wagon comin’ along from towards the river; an’ right opsite that tree the wagon was halted by two fellers—one a man, an’ to’ther a boy. I was not more’n ten feet off, an’ I tell you, stranger, I felt mighty ticklish. The man said: ‘Git out, an’ give up your watches, money an’ horses.’ The man in the wagon said nothin’ that I could hear; but it appeared that he was a drawin’ a pistol. In a few seconds I hearn the man on horse-back holler out, ‘shoot ’im Rommie.’ That was what he said, shore as you’re born.



You know under some circumstances the memry is mighty powerful. I never will forget that name, to my dyin' day."

"Did you hear no other name called?" inquired Mr. Barton.

"No, that was all; an' I'm shore that was it."

"You are correct, Mr. Boland," said Mr. Barton. "Proceed."

"Wal, the feller said 'shoot 'im Rommie,' an' immediately I hearn the report of a pistol, which I saw that boy aim; an' the man in the wagon seemed to a bin killed right away; he never groaned; he must a bin shot in the head or heart."

"You did not examine to see, I suppose," said Mr. Barton.

"No, sir. You see, stranger, this was a ugly piece of business, an' I didn't keer to be mixed up with it. I was in a mighty ticklish place, you see."

"Proceed," said Mr. Barton.

"Wal, that boy an' man went to work in a hurry. They busted open the trunks and took out watches, an' then they onhitched the horses, an' mounted an' went off in a hurry back the way they'd come."

"Why did you not try to prevent the murder?" asked Mr. Barton.

"Wal now you see, I was a stranger in these parts, an' as I told you, I didn't want to be mixed up with this ugly scrape. Besides, it was done



so quick I didn't have time to interfere. I had only one pistol, an' I could have killed only one of the rascals; an' if I'd a done this, my karkass would a bin lying thar too in the road. So you see I couldn't do nothin'."

"Well," said Mr. Barton, "what happened when the robbers left?"

"Wal, stranger, I tell ye I felt mighty peculiar like in that hollow tree. I at first thought I'd better go an' see what damage had bin done. But I thought to myself—kinder whispered to myself—'spose somebody was to ride up an' see you Bill Boland a foolin' aroun' that murdered man. You'd be arrested shore, an' put in jail, an' have to lie thar a long time, an' then at last have to stand on nothin' an' pull hemp. The thought made me feel all-over-ish, kinder sick-like, stranger, so I arrove at the conclusion mighty quick, that I'd better make Bill Boland skeerce about thar. I lit out an' went on in the drection the robbers tuck. I knowed they'd make tracks fast. I was afeared to go back the reglar road. Stranger, I tell ye, a man don't hardly know what he'd do under sich carcumstances till he tries. If you'd a bin away out in Texas under them same carcumstances I reckon you'd a done about as I did. A man has a mighty anxiety to save his own karkass, an' it makes him kinder act foolish-like, an' do the very thing that everybody says he oughtn't to a done. Taint no use a talkin' stranger; you don't know what you'd



do. It kinder looks like I ought to have tuck the reglar road, an' a come to some house, an' reported the thing. But don't you see, I was afeard I'd be suspicioned? So I tuck the ole road, becaze I thought it was the nearest route away from that place. I walked as fast as I could. I traveled all night; I wanted to put as big a distance as possible between Bill Boland an' that holler tree. I 'spose I must a dropt this kerchief in that tree in my hurry to git away. Next day I bought me another horse; but it was two or three days before I felt safe. I was a thinkin' about somebody a ridin' up behind me an' arestin' me on suspicion. But I went on 'thout any accident. An' now, stranger, God bein' my witness, that's the truth, the whole truth, an' nothin' but the truth. I ken tell you no more."

Dr. Archer had been listening to this recital of facts with almost breathless attention. There could be no doubt that the rough old Texan had told the truth. So when he had finished Dr. Archer said:

"God be praised! the mystery is solved at last."

"Would you be able," said Mr. Barton to the Texan, "to recognize those two robbers and murderers again if you were to see them?"

"I'm pretty certain I would," replied the Texan. "I seen thar faces good; an' you know under sich carcumstances a man's not apt to forgit faces. I'd know that boy in the middle of



anywhars; for he is jest one of the ugliest varmint, in the shape of a human bein', that ever I seen."

"Suppose, Mr. Boland, that boy were in company with ten or fifteen other boys of his age, do you believe you could recognize him?" asked Mr. Barton.

"I'm certain I could."

"Well then," said Mr. Barton, "we are going to have the trial on Monday, and I would like for you to recognize him in open court among some other boys that I will have present."

"All right," said the Texan. "If I ken be of any sarvice in this thing I don't mind staying a day or two."

"I do not see," said Mr. Barton. "how you could have the heart to leave, when you alone can remove the stain from an innocent man's character."

"I understand that, stranger. Bill Boland is not a wile varmint. I'd stay here a whole year before a innocent man should be hung, when I could prevent its bein' done."

"I am satisfied of that," said Mr. Barton.

At this point Dr. Archer said :

"I had thought that it would be prudent to bring Milson and Mr. Boland face to face, to-night, to see if Mr. Boland can identify him; but I suppose it is useless. It is clear now that Milson is not the guilty party."

"We will have Milson in court on Monday,"



said Mr. Barton, "if it should be necessary."

Then the parties separated till Monday, after Mr. Barton had asked the Texan to say nothing about the matter.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

The rescue of John Milson by a mob raised through the efforts of a young woman—a young bride too, created a great sensation in Holly Springs. It was a startling event. On Saturday there was another sensation when it became known that Rommie Paine had been arrested and confined in jail. It was the general topic of conversation; and there were many and conflicting conjectures as to what would be the final result. People at last began to suspect Bertram, from the fact that he and Rommie were seen together so frequently. So the inquiry was, where could Bertram be. No one knew. He had not been seen in town for the past eight or ten days. There were therefore good grounds for suspicion. Many people now remembered that they never did like Bertram's looks. Even those who were on intimate terms with him, said that there al-



ways appeared to be something wrong about him. So, people talked, and guessed, and made predictions, on Saturday and Sunday. The congregations that Sabbath were not very large in Holly Springs. Men gathered in groups on the streets to discuss the events of the last few hours, and to wonder what the near future would bring forth. They were impatient for Monday to come. The hours dragged by.

At last the Sabbath was gone, and the much-wished-for Monday was ushered in by an unclouded sun; and now expectation was on tip-toe.

It was ten o'clock before the examination by the Magistrate's court began. Rommie Paine was brought forth from the jail and conducted into the court-room. All eyes were turned upon him as he entered; but the boy stood the ordeal. In the presence of the vast crowd that occupied every available seat, and filled up the aisles, he seemed to be unconcerned.

The man Scaliger from the establishment of F. H. Clarke & Co., was the first to occupy the witness-stand. He made his statement and was then cross-examined by the lawyer whom Col. Paine had employed. Dr. Archer was next examined. When the testimony of these two had been taken there was a pause. Rommie's lawyer then said :

"If this is all the evidence that can be produced, I am justified in demanding the acquittal of my client. There is not the slightest proof



that this boy knows anything about the murder."

At this point Mr. Barton begged leave to interrupt the gentleman in order to say that he had another witness to put upon the stand.

"I thought this was all the testimony you had," said the lawyer.

"No," replied Mr. Barton, "we have one more witness."

"Bring him in then."

"The constable," said Mr. Barton, "will please go to the hotel, and bring Mr. W. Z. Boland."

"Why, that is the man," said the lawyer in surprise, "for whom you advertised so extensively."

"The same," quickly answered Dr. Archer, "and Providence has at last sent him to us."

"Now," said Mr. Barton, "I expect the accused to be identified by Mr. Boland. That everything may be done fairly, and to remove all grounds to suspect collusion, I have here in the court-room twelve or fifteen boys of Rommie Paine's age and size. We will put these boys all together in front of the judge's stand, and see if my witness can select Rommie. I do not know that he can do it; but we will make the trial. I want nothing but justice."

"If you are going to try experiments of that sort," said Rommie's lawyer, who was a little confused by this sudden and unexpected turn in affairs, "I will take the precautionary measures to prevent any one pointing out my client, or making him known in any way."



"Bring in Mr. Boland, blindfolded and with his ears stopped, if you will," said Mr. Barton. "I will be under obligations if you will take every possible precaution that you can think of, to prevent imposition."

"We will blindfold him at the door, if you please," said Rommie's lawyer.

"Very well," replied Mr. Barton.

Presently the old Texan made his appearance at the door, and was blindfolded. When he was led in a few feet of the boys and halted, Rommie's lawyer said :

"Before the bandage is removed from the eyes of this witness I want my client to exchange coats with some of the boys."

"Certainly," said Mr. Barton, "and we will place Mr. Boland in such a position that he cannot possibly see them while they are exchanging."

Rommie's lawyer thought he was doing his client a great service in taking these precautionary measures, but he was only making the testimony stronger, and thus damaging his own case.

When things were ready, Mr. Barton said :

"Will you have the witness sworn before the attempted identification, or after?"

"It does not matter I suppose," said Rommie's lawyer. "Proceed, and put him on his oath before he testifies."

"Very well," said Mr. Barton. "Now, Mr. Boland," he continued, "I want you as soon as the bandage is removed from your eyes to iden-



tify, if you can, the boy whom you spoke to me about."

The bandage was then removed and Mr. Barton said :

"There are twelve or fifteen boys—which is the one ? "

The old Texan looked at them ; and without the least hesitation he stepped up to Rommie and said :

"This is the boy. I'd know him in the middle of anywhars."

"Are you satisfied ? " asked Mr. Barton.

"I am satisfied that Mr. Boland is acquainted with my client. But I do not see that that amounts to anything."

"You will see presently," said Mr. Barton. "Now let Mr. Boland be sworn."

When this was done Mr. Barton said :

"Now, Mr. Boland, just tell what you know about this case."

There was the most intense interest manifested as the honest old Texan gave the details of the bloody deed. No one listened with more painful curiosity than the accused boy. He evidently was trying to assume an air of indifference. But when the Texan came to the expression "shoot him Rommie," the boy was observed to slightly wince ; and throughout Boland's story this was the nearest approach to self-betrayal.

When Mr. Boland had finished, Mr. Barton



requested that Milson should be brought forward. He came and stood before the Texan.

“Mr. Boland, you stated that a man cried out ‘shoot him Rommie.’”

“Yes sir, I did.”

“Would you know the man again if you were to see him?”

“Ondoubtedly I would.”

“Well,” said Mr. Barton, pointing at Milson, “is that the man?”

“No sir, that’s not the man.”

At this the great crowd in the court-room raised a yell that almost shook the building. The court had not power enough to prevent this testimonial of joy at the complete vindication of John Milson. When order was restored Mr. Barton said :

“One more question Mr. Boland. Can you remember what sort of a horse the man was riding?”

“O, yes, I tuck in the whole thing. The horses hitched to the wagon was two iron-grays. That boy rode a dark-bay, an’ the man was on a large coal-black horse.”

This explanation left no doubt on the public mind that the guilty wretch was Bertram; for it was generally known that he rode a horse of that description.

Mr. Barton now said to Rommie’s lawyer :

“You can take the witness.”

The lawyer accordingly began his cross-examination ; and he tried in every possible way to



confuse the witness. But the attempt was in vain. The old Texan's testimony could not be jostled. Even Col. Paine, who had witnessed the entire proceedings, felt that Boland had told the truth.

The result was that misguided Rommie Paine was sent to jail to await his trial by the Circuit Court.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Our story will soon come to a close.

Junie was confined to her bed for some days with the fever which had been brought on by great mental excitement. But with excellent medical attention and nursing she was restored to her usual health.

It was not long before John Milson was legally released.

One evening as they were all sitting around the fire at Dr. Archer's, they were talking of the remarkable events of the bygone months. Then the Doctor said to Milson and Junie:

"The good Lord has certainly brought you both through FIERY TRIALS. The reasons for his actions may never be known till the day of judgment



when all of us must stand before the Everlasting Throne and give an account of our earthly life. But I think both of you can discover the hand of the wise and merciful God in all the severe and strange trials through which you have passed. Some things are miraculous in your history, or at least appear so to those who look at the circumstances from the Scriptural standpoint."

Then the Doctor mentioned circumstances which it seemed must have been directed by the Supreme Being; such, for instance, as finding the handkerchief of Mr. Boland in the hollow tree. To the world this appeared simply as a "lucky accident," but that was not his view of the case.

When he paused Milson said:

"I think I also can recognize the hand of the Lord in my affairs. It required some calamity to arouse me to a just sense of my danger and duty. I was in a kind of stupor, which I can now easily perceive. If I had gone on in that state of lethargy I never would have investigated the Evidences of Christianity, and I would have lived and died in sin. I was thrown from my horse at the door of Junie's school-house, and nearly killed; and I ought to have taken warning from that misfortune, but I did not. I still kept on in the road to ruin. So God in wisdom and mercy brought me face to face with ignominious death, and then I came to myself like the prodigal son. It has been an awful, but no doubt a necessary



experience. The merciful God has been very kind to me in the midst of all my fiery trials, and I am thankful that I can sincerely say 'blessed be the name of the Lord.' But, Doctor, I feel that I ought to do something for my kind Heavenly Father; and I have made up my mind, if my dear Junie who has been so faithful and true and brave in all our trials, will give her consent I have made up my mind to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ—I feel it my duty."

"Then God forbid," said the young wife rising to her feet and taking both his hands in her own, "that I should offer any opposition. Indeed I have wished and prayed that you might be a minister. I will labor with you, my dear husband, in this glorious work, as long as it may please God to spare my life. I crave no higher honor in this world than to be the humble wife of a faithful minister."

"That is another good result," said Dr. Archer, "which God has brought out of circumstances that once were so perplexing and distressing. Even in this life the ways of the Lord become manifest. Your determination, my dear boy, is not at all surprising to me, and I heartily approve of it. You could not employ your energies in a more exalted work. I have no doubt that God has called you to it; and the sooner you go at it the better."

"I am willing to begin, Doctor, just so soon as I am authorized by the proper ecclesiastical authority."



In due course of time Milson was ordained a minister of Jesus Christ. He thought it best to move away from Marshall county, and Dr. Archer agreed with him. So he and his devoted wife moved to Alabama. Milson became a useful and a powerful preacher. Junie was indeed a "help-meet" in their field of labor. None was more faithful in visiting the sick and comforting the dying. She became more dear to Milson as the years rolled by, and he firmly believed that he could discover the hand of the Lord in his marriage.

We return to Col. Paine. Some weeks elapsed, and then the merchant to whom his property was pledged, thought it best to foreclose the mortgage. The Colonel was left almost penniless in the world. He took to hard drinking. He drank as long as he could procure the means of gratifying his consuming appetite. One day, late in the evening as he was going to his wretched home in a state of intoxication, he fell from his horse, as the animal stopped to drink, into a little stream, which had however been considerably swollen by a rain an hour before. He was so much intoxicated that he could not help himself, and he was drowned.

Poor Gerie ! she waited for some weeks hoping to hear something from her base and villainous husband. She was disposed to believe that he might be faithful to her, even if he had ruined her father. It was a forlorn hope. The dreary days passed away ; and the consciousness that



she was a wife deserted by an unprincipled husband drove her into despair. At last, when the corpse of her drunken father was brought home, the cumulative weight of terrible misfortunes could no longer be borne. She became hopelessly insane, and was sent to a lunatic asylum. Here she did not long survive the awful calamities that had overtaken her. She was attacked by a most malignant fever, and she died a raving maniac.

When the Circuit Court met Rommie Paine was brought to trial. It is not necessary to enter into the details. The boy was sentenced to the penitentiary for life. The jury agreed upon this penalty in consideration of the fact that Rommie was an instrument in the hands of others, although he was guilty of cold-blooded murder. He never did make any confession, nor could he be induced to implicate others.

In a few days after the trial the sheriff started with him to Jackson in the stage-coach. When they reached the Tallahatchie river they were met by a dozen men armed to the teeth, and wearing masks. They took Rommie out of the coach and forced the sheriff to unlock the handcuffs. The boy thus set free mounted up behind one of the men, and the party rode off. When they had gotten a mile from the river, one of the men took off his mask and asked Rommie if he knew him. It was John A. Murrell.

“Boy,” said Murrell, “you’re true grit. You were faithful to the last; and now you are free.



But you must get out of this country, and never return to it again."

Rommie was once more at liberty. He went with two or three of Murrell's gang into Texas. In a few months, however, he was caught in the act of stealing a horse. The stern Texans in those days dealt very summarily with horse-thieves. Poor boy! he was promptly hanged to a limb; and again was verified a passage of Scripture in which there is a volume of fearful meaning—"the way of transgressors is hard."

About ten years after Milson had left Holly Springs and settled in the State of Alabama, where he began the work of the ministry, a note was brought to him by a messenger, in the latter part of a beautiful forenoon. On opening it he read the following :

DEAR SIR:—A man has just been shot here; and at his request I write to you. He desires earnestly to see you. He says, tell you it is Eugene Bertram. His wound is fatal, and in my opinion he cannot survive many hours. He asks me to beg you not to deny the request of a dying man. He seems to have something of importance to reveal to you. If you can come, you would better not lose a moment. Yours truly, J. H. N. JONES, M. D.

Milson showed this missive to Junie, who after reading it, said :

"Of course you will go?"

"O, yes. I must start at once. He has deeply wronged me; but the Lord knows I have forgiven him."

"He has brought ruin on my family," said Junie. "But heaven forbid that I should harbor malice and revenge in my heart. I have long



since banished all such feelings. We are commanded to love our enemies, and I try to do so."

"You are right, my dear Junie. We have both forgiven one who has been to us an enemy. But I have no time to lose. I must at once attend to the summons of poor Bertram. Who knows that he may not repent of his sins? He may need advice, and perhaps I may be of service to him."

Accordingly Milson at once set out to the little town where it appeared Bertram lay wounded and dying, and which was distant about eight or ten miles. In about two hours he arrived at his destination, and stopped at an office pointed out to him by the messenger. On knocking at the door Milson was met by Dr. Jones, with whom he was slightly acquainted. Bertram was in the back room of the physician's office. Just after the two had exchanged the usual civilities in the front room, Milson asked :

"How is your patient, Doctor?"

"There has been no perceptible change in him since he was wounded."

"Is there no hope of his recovery?"

"There is not the slightest ground on which to base a hope," replied the Doctor.

"How did the difficulty occur?"

"We can find out very little about it. This stranger, who yesterday registered himself at the tavern as W. B. Parkhurst, was standing on the street alone, when a man rode up and accosted



him. They talked perhaps five minutes, so says a person who was looking at them some distance off, and the report of a pistol was heard. No one was very near the spot; but several persons at a distance saw Parkhurst, or Bertram, or whatever may be his name, reel and fall to the ground; and then his assailant wheeled his horse and rode at full speed out of town. I was called at once, and had the man brought here to my office. He was asked who shot him, but he refused to tell. When I examined his wound, I informed him that his case was hopeless. Then he requested me to despatch a messenger in great haste for you. And this is all I can tell you. I am glad you are here, as the man appears exceedingly anxious to see you. You would better see him at once; for there is no telling at what moment a change for the worse may occur."

The Doctor then opened the door of the back room, when Bertram asked in a feeble but eager voice :

"Say, Doctor, has he come?"

"Yes sir. Here he is."

Then Milson approached the bed-side. Bertram held out his hand which Milson grasped with the pressure of friendship. The very pressure conveyed so much meaning that Bertram inquired :

"Is it possible you can forgive me?"

"As the Lord knows my heart, Bertram, I have long since forgiven you."

"Doctor," said Bertram, "please leave us alone for a few minutes."



As soon as the physician had retired Bertram said :

“It is very kind of you to come to see such a one as I. You know I have grievously wronged and irreparably injured you. How is it possible you can forgive such a villain? ”

“Do not call yourself hard names on my account,” said Milson. “I freely forgive, by God’s grace. Without that I might not have been able to do so. But I assure you, Bertram, that I have no more feeling of bitterness toward you than if we had never met before.

“I remember the conversation which we had more than ten years ago at Col. Paine’s dinner-table, in regard to the existence of a personal God. May the God you believe in reward you for your charity toward one who deserves your eternal hatred. I did you a great wrong in that shameful trial—a secret wrong, Milson, which it will do no good to explain now. My conscience, or whatever it is, has rebuked me a thousand times for it. I regard it as one of the meanest tricks I ever did. But, I will say no more about it. The Doctor tells me I am bound to die, and that death may come at any moment. For fear that I may be snatched off suddenly, I want to make some amends for the injury I have done you. I have upwards of fifteen thousand dollars which I now bequeath to you.”

“But, Bertram,” said Milson, “I do not ask you to make any amends. Give it to your relatives, if you have any.”



"I have no relatives," replied Bertram, "that need it. Besides I do not want them ever to hear how or where I died. You do not know my real name and you never will. It is not Bertram. I would rather that you should have the money than any of my relatives. I cannot die satisfied unless you accept it. I owe much more than that to your wife, anyhow. It was I that ruined her father. So you must accept it. It is all I have in the world ; and I will tell you, Milson, every penny of it has been acquired honestly and honorably. It is not the profits of gambling nor of robbery. I have made it fairly in my law practice. All that I want you to do, is to have me decently buried, and to pay this good Doctor for his trouble. Will you not accept the gift, and thus gratify the last wishes of a dying man?"

"If you insist on my taking it," replied Milson, seeing that he could not well refuse, "I will give it to Junie, since you acknowledge you owe her more than that."

"Thank you, my friend. Now to make all right, call in the Doctor for just a moment."

Milson did so ; and when the physician came in Bertram said :

"Doctor, here is a belt around my waist next to my person. Please help me to take it off."

The Doctor obeyed, and in a moment drew forth a leathern belt which he placed in Bertram's hand.



"Now, Doctor," said Bertram, "I call you to witness that I give and bequeath this belt and all it contains to John Milson. No legal process will be necessary. I owe no debts. Mr. Milson will pay you for your attention to me. Please leave us alone again for a few moments."

When the physician had gone, and Bertram had given the belt to Milson, he said :

"Tell Miss Junie to forgive me, if she possibly can."

"She has already done that," replied Milson. "She said so just as I was starting to see you."

"Well," said Bertram thoughtfully, "there must be something noble in religion to produce such effects. But never mind," he broke off suddenly, "I can now die much better satisfied."

"Why not die entirely satisfied?" asked Milson. "Why not implore Divine mercy and forgiveness even in your last hours? The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

"I have been a fool Milson," interrupted Bertram. "I have tried to believe there is no God, because I knew that if there is any such being, he is bound to punish a guilty wretch like me."

"But he is a merciful God," answered Milson, "and he will forgive your sins, if you will only sincerely repent of them."

"It is too late, Milson, too late, even if I believed in the existence of a God. I cannot now concentrate my mind on any such subject. Let us not talk about it if you please. It is useless."



"If you will not talk about it," said Milson sorrowfully, "will you not tell me who it was that assailed you, so that steps may be taken to arrest the man and bring him to justice?"

"Justice," said Bertram, "he has done nothing but an act of justice in shooting me. If I had been in his place I would have done just as he did. No, Milson, I will not give his name. You know not what crimes I have committed; and you will never know from me. Some of my secrets I will carry down into the grave. To reveal them would only make people execrate my memory. Say to the civil authorities here to let the man alone who shot me. I have no idea that there is anyone here who knows his name. So he will escape. I am the one who is brought to justice. I have no dying confession to make."

Just at this moment Bertram was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and blood flowed freely from his mouth. Milson called the Doctor, who came in and did what he could for the dying man's relief. In a few moments the patient became quiet.

"Do you wish me to retire again," asked the Doctor.

"No, Doctor, I have said all that I wish to say. How much longer do you think I can live?"

"Not many hours more, sir. The symptoms which you now present are decidedly worse."

"Well, so be it. I am ready."

And Bertram lay still for perhaps ten minutes.



But it was evident that the "grim monster" had now commenced his awful work in earnest.

"Milson !" suddenly cried Bertram with an expression of terror depicted on his face, "who is that horrid black man standing near you? Take him out! Good heavens! what awful eyes! Milson, my friend, if you have any respect for me, drive him from the room."

"You are mistaken," said Milson, "there is no one in the room but Dr. Jones and myself."

"There, it is gone. I suppose it was an optical illusion. Yes, that was all. But, my friend, shut and lock the door, if you please. Now let down the window, and do not allow anyone to come in."

"In a few moments Bertram cried :

"Milson, you did not lock the door. That horrid thing has come back again! There it is at the foot of the bed. Come here, Milson, take your seat by me. Now call on the name of your God."

"Can you not pray for yourself?" asked Milson as he moved to the bed-side.

"I don't know how to pray. It would be throwing words to the winds. Doctor, Doctor, put that cursed black thing out of the room."

"I assure you," said the physician, "there is nothing in the room."

"Strange, you can't see it," muttered Bertram. "That is no optical illusion. Oh, God! what an unearthly expression."



Bertram closed his eyes. After a moment he asked :

“Is he gone ?”

Then he opened his eyes.

“No, there he is at the door. Doctor,” he said, sinking his voice to a whisper, “give me my pistol. I will shoot the black rascal. Quick, quick, Doctor, my pistol.”

“You do not need a pistol,” replied the physician. “Close your eyes.”

Bertram obeyed, and for some time lay still with his eyes tightly closed.

“Do you see anything now ?” inquired the physician.

“No. But it is so dark—Oh ! it is thick darkness. Give me your hand, Milson. I feel that I am about to fall. I must open my eyes. I can’t stand this terrible darkness.”

Again he opened his eyes and stared wildly.

“Look !” he cried, “there is that same horrid thing—and there is another—Yes, two. Milson, they are fiends come to take me to hell. I never believed there is such a place—but those two black things stare at me with their horrid stony eyes. Doctor ! for heaven’s sake, give me my pistol—they are moving toward me !”

“Shut your eyes,” said the Doctor.

“Oh ! it is so dark---dark---dark————I can’t stand it. I am not afraid of anything---I will open my eyes. Oh, you hateful dogs ! how dare you stand at my bed-side in that impudent way ?



I will endure it no longer. I can whip both of you--and I will do it."

Saying this, Bertram, before Milson and the physician were aware of his intentions, made a sudden spring with all his strength, which placed him out of their reach. He made for the door which he struck with a tremendous blow of his fist, then fell flat on his back. The blood gushed through his mouth, and in a moment he was strangled.

"He is dead," said the Doctor feeling for the pulse, "and may God save me from ever witnessing such another death. Mr. Milson, this is no common man. Who is he, and what has he done? You seem to have known him."

"Yes. I became acquainted with him some years ago. He has a history, Doctor, which I do not feel at liberty to reveal. He is now in the hands of God, and there let us leave him. If you will not think me rude I will answer no questions in regard to his history---a part of which only is known to me. I will ask you to make the necessary preparations for his funeral. He must be buried decently; and I will pay all the charges. I must now return home. I will be back to-morrow, and will perform the funeral service myself."

The physician promised to attend to all the arrangements for the interment, and then Milson left. But the next morning he came back in his buggy accompanied by Junie. About three



o'clock the remains of Bertram were taken to the grave. Milson made some remarks appropriate to the occasion; but he gave not a word of Bertram's history, to the great disappointment of those present. That evening he and his wife went back home, leaving the inhabitants of the little town wondering who was the stranger that had so suddenly and mysteriously found a resting place in their midst.

Some months afterwards a marble slab was seen over the stranger's grave, and the passer-by saw only this inscription:

HERE LIES ONE  
WHOSE NAME WILL NEVER  
BE KNOWN TILL THE  
LAST DAY.

Milson and Junie lived and loved and labored for many years in the State of Alabama, and then it so happened that neither mourned at the other's funeral. For they died within an hour of each other, and their remains were deposited in the same grave. Let their ashes rest in peace till on the resurrection morn they are reunited with the principle of Life. Then, gentle reader, you and I will be there. After our long, long sleep in the silent city of the dead we will come forth at the call of the last trump as its loud, terrible blasts echo over land and sea, and we will stand before the great White Throne, and we will hear sentence pronounced on every individual of the human race. In your case what shall the sentence be?



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And now reader, our story is ended. A few words before we part. Are you skeptical? If so, we have endeavored in these pages to point out as we conceive, the proper method of investigating the evidences of the Christian Religion. Read the books to which your attention has been directed. It is in vain to attempt to make the Holy Scriptures and Geology and other sciences antagonize. There are certain great and stubborn facts attested by credible witnesses; such being the case, no science can destroy them, and no reasoning of men can shake them. We may as well try to prove by Geology that Julius Cæsar never lived on earth as to attempt to subvert the facts of Christianity by the same or a similar process. A proper investigation will terminate in a well-grounded belief that the Bible is the revealed Word of God. Wo, to the man that rejects it! He is in a world without hope. He is drifting about in an ocean, with no polar star to guide him. He is groping in darkness and gloom; he will live in doubt and die in despair. Then skeptical reader be not satisfied in your awful condition. Go to work! Investigate! Investigate! The golden moments of your life are rapidly passing away. Soon your mortal career will come to an end. There is no time to be lost. If you have doubts in regard to the Divine origin of the Bible, I entreat you in the name of the Everlasting God, INVESTIGATE! INVESTIGATE!!