

RAGWEED

JULIA
MACNAIR
WRIGHT



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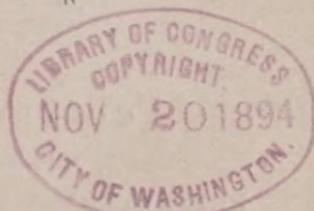
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

RAGWEED

A WEST-WORLD STORY

BY ✓

JULIA MACNAIR WRIGHT



43422-21

“And judge none lost, but wait and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain.
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory, that may raise
The soul to God in after days.”

PHILADELPHIA

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
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RAGWEED.

CHAPTER I.

BORROWED CAPITAL.

“The vintage is ripe,
The harvest is heaping,
But some that have sowed
Have no riches for reaping.

THE fertile lands along the Missouri River, low-swelling hills and broad intervals, lay under the glory of an October sun. Along the fences and roadsides ran a riotous splendor of golden-rod, helius, crimson blackberry vines, and low sumac, with leaves glowing in the light to a translucent red. The season had been early from the first heat in April, and now the corn stood in shocks, the pickers and the cider-presses were busy in the orchards, and the splendid tassels of the sorghum in their rich and ever-varied shades of brown were nodding to their fall as the cutters with sharp sickles passed along the dark-green rows, and the cleft stalks loaded all the air with a honey-sweet perfume calling multitudinous

bees. Here the bluebirds flashed and fled along the fence-rails; there the jays clattered jubilant; yonder the pigeons preened in the sun; and, sweeping down to meet their own dark shadows on the newly-harvested fields, the pirate crows called each other to their feast of first-fruits. Along the broad, smooth road traversing the prairie sped a lively, well-groomed young bay drawing a handsome new buggy. As they neared a rise of land around which a creek, seeking the distant river, made a horseshoe bend between well-wooded banks, Dr. Garth drew rein.

“There ought to be a very fine place, but—”

The “but” covered ruin, carelessness, and desolation expressed in a double block house going to decay, loyally accompanied in its progress ruinward by a little village of outbuildings. On the highest part of the ground between the house and the road a small crowd of people, a smoke, a slowly-moving mare, and the creak of a machine suggested the occupations of the hour. “They are boiling sorghum,” said Mrs. Garth; “let us drive in.”

Turning up the lane beside a small dilapidated barn, they found scant room to pass some sections of black-oak log, wedges, and an axe, where some one had been riving shingles, which, fresh and ruddy, lay scattered about, yielding their aromatic odor to the sun.

Where the lane ended in the house-yard there stood a primitive mill for grinding sorghum. The motive power was a discouraged-looking roan mare, attached to the grinder by means of a long green sapling to which she was harnessed at the collar. The creature unwillingly plodded in a great circle, urged thereto by an eleven-year-old girl armed with a switch and following close at her heels. Standing beside the grinder, a shock-headed lad supplied the stalks of sorghum, which were thrown to him from an adjacent pile by a younger boy. The greenish juice of the canes trickled from the mill into a barrel through a particularly dismal-looking piece of gunny-cloth. Just beyond the path trod by the dreary mare, a big muscular fellow of sixteen with a hatchet in his brawny hand was converting a dry dead apple tree into fuel for the brick oven under the long iron boiling-pan. A raw-boned, disheveled woman squatted on the ground watching, witch-like, the seething, bubbling, sticky mass in the pan; her second self in miniature carried the apple-tree fagots, and as needed thrust them into the oven. A dark, handsome, unkempt child of five stood aloof and looked on, superior, at the group of listless workers.

As the buggy stopped no surprise or attention was manifested; there was a slow bucolic lifting of the eyes and then calm indifference; if Doctor

and Mrs. Garth had alighted in a yard full of cattle, as much notice would have been bestowed upon them. Mrs. Garth went to the back of the box-buggy and took out a bag of red and green striped paper.

"Oh, you're going to distribute candy, are you?" said the doctor.

"I'll stir them up some way," retorted his wife, and, placing herself near the path of the girl with the switch, she held out a stick of "store candy."

It was accepted in friendly silence. The mill-feeder, the boy who supplied him with sorghum stalks, the wood-carrier, and the lofty little Olympian who surveyed like a baby Jove the labors of the rest, all received their saccharine doles without a word. Mrs. Garth paused by the wood-cutter, half smiled, and tentatively held out the paper bag. The young fellow, already grown to man's estate, shook his shock of black hair and, laughing, turned away.

As Mrs. Garth passed around the group to the woman, a girl carrying the inevitable baby came from the house to be in the range of this unexpected windfall of sweets. The baby rested fretting against its sister's arm.

"He's sick," said the woman; "he's had fever for three nights."

Mrs. Garth eyed with compassion the miserable, dirty little object.

“Why don't you give him a nice hot bath and put a clean night-gown on him and let him lie quiet?” she asked.

“Oh, my young uns ain't used to pamperin' up, and, 'sides, I've got the sorghum to see to.”

Mrs. Garth turned toward two other children who had kept at a distance—a boy of fourteen, a girl of nine. The boy sat on a box with his back to the others, and had neither turned nor given any sign; he was splitting and trimming slender saplings into hoop-poles, several bundles of which lay piled on the ground beside him. The girl handed him a split sapling, which he fastened in a notch in the lowest branch of the tree by which he sat, and with slow, machine-like persistence and lack of interest shaved with a draw-knife, while the girl, with her hand on his shoulder, stood looking toward the strangers. As soon as Mrs. Garth turned toward her she picked up her dress-skirt and covered her face to her eyes. The woman coolly rose, took the bag of candy from the lady, and, going to the two, dealt out a mint stick to each. Coming back, she threw the empty bag under the boiler, remarking, “Pope and Turk don't never want nobody 'bout *them*.”

“Won't your mare go around without being driven?” asked Dr. Garth.

“No, she won't. And 'taint our mare; we borried her of Mis' Jonsing down by the brook.”

“What is that empty brick place over there?” asked Mrs. Garth, intent upon getting information.

“That’s what we built for our sorghum-pan last year.”

“Do you have to get a new pan every year? Does it burn out?”

“No, ’taint that, but las’ year we used Mis’ Morgan’s pan, an’ now she’s moved away, so we borried Mr. Gage’s, an’ we have to bile early, ’long of them wantin’ it. It’s a smaller pan than Mis’ Morgan’s, an’ so we had to brick up a new oven for it.”

“Do you own the house and farm? It seems a good place.”

“Well, no, we don’t ’zactly own it; we sort of borried it. I reckon it’s good enough if it was worked, but, land o’ gracious me! he’s so lazy he won’t work enough at nothin’ to get any good out of it. He’s cuttin’ sorghum now, down in the field, an’ lettin’ us get plumb out while he stands gassin’ with whatever passes by.—Nance, you cut over to the field an’ tell your dad to hurry up some stalks if he means us ever to get done.”

Nance, baby on arm, strolled off toward the field behind the hill.

“The children are all yours, I suppose?” said Mrs. Garth.

“Well, no, they ain’t; seven of ’em is, but that tall fellow choppin’, an’ that gal that’s drivin’, an’

that little chap a-lookin' on—he allays is lookin' on, kind of scornful like, 'pears to me—them three is sort of borried."

"Dandy is getting restless," suggested Dr. Garth to his wife.

With a merry nod all around, and a sudden smile that illuminated beyond sunshine the girl that was driving the dreary mare, Mrs. Garth sprung into her place in the buggy. As they turned down the lane, a lean little boy, speeding across a field, leaped, cat-like, on the fence and shouted, "Da-a-a-vid! Da-a-a-vid! Sis sent me for our axe!"

David, the big dark youth, waved his arm; the boy tugged the axe out of the black oak and hurried off with it over his shoulder. The buggy turned into the road.

"Stop a minute—turn the wheel; I have missed the opportunity of my life!" cried Mrs. Garth. The doctor, accustomed to her whims, obeyed. She sprung out, ran back to the woman crouching by the pan, and said,

"Would you please tell me where you got the mill?"

"We borried it from Uncle Mose Barr."

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" said Mrs. Garth, and the next minute was in her place by the doctor's side.—"I knew it could not be theirs," she said; "house, children, horse, pan, mill,—every-

thing borrowed;" and a silver peal of laughter, fresh as a child's, rang to the accompaniment of Dandy's swiftly-beating hoofs and the whirr of the wheels on the level prairie road.

"There he is, cutting sorghum, a stalk in five minutes or thereabouts;" said the doctor, pointing with his whip; "and there is Nance going to try the impossible task of hurrying him; and that gray-headed darkey on the fence is no doubt Uncle Mose Barr, who owns the sorghum-mill. What unutterable shiftlessness curses much of this magnificent land! Look yonder at that expensive reaper standing out exposed to the weather the year round; look at that barn, with a roof like a sieve; see those cattle and horses that will winter out unsheltered; there is a buggy and a spring wagon, never housed. Yet, in spite of all this unthrift, some of them get rich—but not that class of 'borrowers.' That family looked to me like 'movers' or 'wagon-tramps' settled for a time. See there, what corn! Such harvests as this land is capable of producing! Just after the war I came through here, and these farms might have been had for a song. I thought all was sterile, worth nothing, because it was entirely covered with a crop of ragweed growing as high as one's head. I thought it would produce nothing but ragweed. If I had understood the hidden possibilities, I might now be a millionaire."

“Some men’s sins go beforehand to judgment, and some men their sins follow after,” said Mrs. Garth. “For my part, I have no very inordinate desire to have my steps dogged by a million as I move on to account. As for the ragweed, I am sure there must be something useful in what is so abundant. I don’t believe God creates so much for waste. Something could be done with it if we were wise enough to find it out. There is plenty of it still. See that pasture.”

“Yes, it looks like a poor use of land. Do you know that woman and the ten up there struck me as ragweed too—human ragweed?”

“Value, eternal value, in them, if we could find it out,” said Mrs. Garth, and then she sank into silence, and then she sighed. Words are sometimes spoken which we do not on the moment catch, but the mind gathers up their vibrations and translates them to us presently in their full force. So the eye catches sights, scarcely aware of their meaning, and after a time the brain correlates them and expounds them to us in their true significance. It was so now with Mrs. Garth. That vivid picture set in sunlight on the hill had attracted and amused her as a whole in its bald realism; now fragments of it were evolved upon her mental sight, and she discerned in them pathos, tragedy, responsibility. The echo of her own voice came back upon her: “Are we ready

to answer to God for our use of a million? Rather, can we answer with assurance for our use of an hour?"

"What now?" said the doctor. He was used to these changeful moods.

"I am of those who see and do not understand—until afterward. I told you a few minutes ago, jestingly, that I had missed the opportunity of my lifetime. I missed up there more than I knew, and now I am gathering up what I overlooked. Those two under the trees apart—she called them by odd names, 'Pope' and 'Turk.' The boy never turned around. I understand it: he did not hear our voices—he is a mute. And the girl—the instant I turned toward her, she gathered up her skirt across her face. I realize now what I saw of her face in a flash and what the action meant. The child has a hare-lip, and she is sensitive about it."

"Eh? Is that so?" said the doctor, his professional interest waking up. "Why, it ought to be cured. Every year will make an operation more difficult. How old did she seem to be?—about nine?"

"I should think so. And those three children who she said did not belong to her—they are of a very different strain. That big, suddenly-grown-up boy, with his dark, thin, heavy brown hair, and great black eyes, in which thought

is only now slowly waking, because his mind has been nearly dormant while his body outgrew it—he looked like a young buffalo, half-curious, half-belligerent. The little girl with the brown eyes and swarthy skin had a dreamy, wistful, poetic face, full of possibilities. The little fellow, said to be always looking on, was a splendid child. No ragweed about them but in the way in which they grow.”

“You will make a romance about them, and have them all princes in disguise,” laughed the doctor; “but you are right: those three were of a very different breed. I wonder how they come to be there?”

“She said she ‘borried them,’ with the rest of her surroundings. I mean that they shall cross my path of life again, and that some day my wasted opportunity shall be under my hand once more.”

Meanwhile work had stopped about the sorghum-pan. The last stalk had been fed to the mill, and “he” did not appear with further supply. David had provided more than enough of dead apple tree; “Sis” had sent for the axe, and he could not rive shingles, so he seated himself on the top rail of the fence; the mare was allowed to stand and doze; Janet dropped her switch and approached David. For the first time in her life Janet had beheld a lady and a toilette.

That slender figure in a black silk grenadine, black gloves, black boots, a crimson crepe tie at the throat, and a black lace hat with a bunch of barberries at the side had been ineffaceably painted on Janet's brain.

"Oh, David," she said, "wasn't she beautiful?"

"No, she wasn't. I hate her," retorted David, cordially.

"Why, David! Did you *see* her?"

"Yes, I did—I saw she was laughing at us. We all looked very queer and funny to her, it seems. She came back and asked who owned the mill. She heard Sikey say that Sis had sent him for the axe. I reckon she has her own things. Oh, I saw her. There wasn't as much dust on the sole of her shoe as those young ones had on their faces. I never knew how ragged and dirty you looked till she held out that bag to you. I suppose she considered Bruce a curiosity, along of bare feet and rags. Oh, she is of one world, and we are of another, it seems. Yes, I hate her."

"I don't. I wish she'd come back. David, that is the way, just exactly the way, my cousin Ida looks, I am sure."

"Your cousin Ida—bosh!"

"It is, I tell you. Oh, did you see her hat and her boots? And gloves every day! And what was her dress made of?"

"I don't know and I don't care. I wish I could

build a wall about us a mile high, so such folks could not get in and stare."

"But, David, I'd rather—rather—be just like her."

"Well, you can't, and there's an end of it. Look at us—look at them—and talk of being like such a high-flyer!"

"Oh, David," wailed Janet in dismay, "have I got to be like her?" and she pointed to the woman still sitting on her heels watching the boiling sorghum.

"No, you haven't. Just wait, and I'll kick out the whole lot."

"Do you suppose she lives over in the town, David? I wish I knew her name."

"What good would it do? Would you go and see her and be laughed at? Want to be made fun of?"

"She looked kind at me," said Janet.

"You don't know her name, and I'm glad of it. You'd be going to see her next, barefooted and in your ragged frock."

Janet cast down her eyes, and her dark pretty face hardened into lines of fixed determination, of a kind that always discerns a way to its end and relentlessly pursues it.

"David, did you notice the buggy? Bright yellow wheels and gear. Did you ever see one like that?"

“No, I never did. Looked like a great whirling snake-doctor”—by which he meant a dragon-fly, and in his remark he had unconsciously ranged himself beside Hugh Miller, who had seen and commented on this resemblance long ago.

Here “he” arrived with a white horse and a small cart-load of stalks. Once more a boy handed over stalks, a boy fed the mill, Janet switched the sleepy mare, David chopped apple tree; “she” crouched by the boiling-pan, dipped out molasses, and added fresh juice; the little girl fed the fire; the baby cried; Nance shrilly sung “by! by! by!” Bruce looked on; Turk handed Pope saplings which he shaved into hoop-poles,

“And all the pent-up stream of life
Rushed downward in a cataract.”

CHAPTER II.

SEEKING A FAMILY.

“One after one they flew away
Far up to the heavenly blue,
To the better country, the upper day,
And—I wish I were going too.”

A WEEK later, nine o'clock in the morning, the day glorious with sun and fragrance and all the wealth October garners from the subservient months. Dr. Garth was off on his rounds, the house had fallen into that careful order demanded by Mrs. Garth's critical eye, and she was in her garden, deciding which of the plants should winter in her little conservatory. The gate opened, and a slim, dusty, barefooted girl with a weary step came toward the house-mistress.

“Good-morning!” said Mrs. Garth; “do you want the doctor?”

“No; I came to see you.”

Mrs. Garth looked more observantly across the rose bush which she was despoiling. “And who are you, my dear?”

“I'm Janet Hume. You saw me—don't you

know?—out yonder by the river, biling sorghum that day.”

“Oh yes, I remember; and you have come to town to-day?”

“David said not to. He says he hates you, and you were only makin’ fun of us ’cause we were all so dirty and ‘she’ borried all the things.”

“I was not making fun of you at all,” said the lady, with some compunction of conscience, remembering her mirth. “I did think the woman rather queer, but not you.”

“I said you looked nice and kind. David says he hates the sight of you, but I think you are just beautiful.”

The least vain of women might not be indifferent to such praise as this, so spontaneous and hearty. Mrs. Garth regarded her guest with increasing favor. “I am very glad that you had a chance to come to see me.”

“Didn’t have it. I took it. Got up this mornin’ when the stars was shinin’, an’ afore there was a streak of red in the sky, an’ jes’ walked off.”

“You walked! Why, it is ten miles! you must be tired.”

“You b’lieve I’m tired, orful.”

“And did you have any breakfast?”

“I brung along a piece of corn-pone. I et it.”

“Why, you poor dear little soul! And how did you find me?”

“I asked in a store where the folks lived with the buggy that had yellow runnin'-gear, an' they said it was this house, an' when I got to the gate I knew you, though you didn't have the same things on. I most wisht you had. Them red and black things was what made you so perfec'ly lovely. You look tol'able in that blue frock, but I don't like blue; 'f ever I get rich I'm goin' to stick to red.”

Any little rising of vanity evoked by her visitor's first praises was now thoroughly rebuked; it was the black and red that was “*perfec'ly lovely.*” Mrs. Garth laughed.

“And so you have come to visit me! The first thing will be to get you thoroughly rested, and a hot bath will do that; and then a nice little breakfast, and then we'll talk, and in the afternoon I'll take you home, or nearly home, in the buggy. You cannot walk back, that is sure. Come, let us go in.”

She led the way into the house and up stairs to a little square room with lace curtains, and a carpet on whose gay flowers and scrolls Janet feared to tread. Sitting upon the side of a great white-china something, the lady turned two bright handles, and, as if by magic, a stream of hot and a stream of cold water poured into the china tub.

“What's that for?” demanded Janet.

“It is a bath-tub, and when I get the water

ready, here are soap, sponge, towels, comb, and brush. You can undress and jump into the tub, and wash and bathe as long as you like, and all the tired will go out of you, and you will feel fresh and comfortable. I have some clothes here that a little friend of mine left this summer, and you can put them on, for yours are dirty from your walk."

"Is this a bath-room and a bath-tub? Oh, jolly! ain't I some now? My cousin Ida has a *luxuriant bath-tub.*"

"Oh, has she? Well, when your toilet is made I'll have a nice little breakfast ready for you, so when you are dressed come down stairs. You can let the water out of the tub by pulling the chain—see?"

The clock was striking ten when a metamorphosed little maid in a pink gingham gown, black stockings, and buttoned boots came slowly down the stairs; her dark hair had been washed, combed, brushed, and woven into a shining braid the ends of which fell in three soft round curls. Mrs. Garth, seated near a little tray holding sandwiches, a roll, a pear, and a glass of milk, realized that her self-invited guest was very pretty.

"I emptied the tub and wiped it with the towel, and I rolled my clothes all up in a bundle," said Janet with satisfaction. "I guess David will stare when I tell him how nice you treated me. David

says you're proud, and he never wants to see you again. I guess he'll sing another tune when I get back. What an elegant house you have! just like my cousin Ida's."

"Does your cousin Ida live near here?"

"No, she don't."

"Have you ever been to see her?"

"No; she lives too far off. But I think about her, and I want to be just like her, if I could only begin. But we can't be anything with those Bealses around. David says he means to kick them all out some day. I hope he will."

"Where are your father and mother? Who owns that place?"

"Our folks is dead. We used to live in Texas, but two years ago our uncle Hume died, and he left our father that place you were at the other day, and we started up here in a wagon, and mother died on the road. Then father never held up his head, and when we moved into the place he was sick and lay on the bed all the time. One day, along the edge of winter, those Bealses—all but the baby—that baby hadn't come then—come along in a wagon an' saw David, an' we knew them, 'cause we had camped near them on the road, an' they came in to see father, an' Mis' Beals said she'd stay an' keep house an' nuss father, and they stayed ever since. Father died that Christmas. David says the Bealses haven't

any right there at all, an' he'll show them a thing or two next spring. David's showed old Beals a thing or two already. One day old Beals told Bruce to fetch in some wood, and Bruce said, 'No,' an' Beals hit him on the side of his head and upset him, and David just gave Beals a good one—he got him down and thrashed him! You ought to seen him! his fists flew!" Janet's eyes glowed at the memory of her brother's prowess.

"And what did Mrs. Beals say to that?" asked Mrs. Garth.

"Why, she just said if David was able to lam him, she reckoned he'd have to, an' it would pay Beals up for some of the skites he'd give other folks."

"Do you go to school?"

"Yes, me and Turk go to school. I love school and books, and I've got a book—a book of my own"—this with great pride. "The last leaf is gone. I wisht it wasn't, so I could tell how it turned out. But I guess it turned out pretty well, for it reads like it up to that. I found it on the road-side."

"Did you? and what is the name of your book?"

"'The Ranger's Bride.' Oh, its elegant! You made me think of some of it, your gloves and your hat, but you're not so grand, of course—she wore diamonds and gold and velvet. Dear

me! I've et up all your breakfast! I didn't know I was so hungry. Not one of those Bealses can read but Turk. David can, of course, and write, but David don't care for school. He likes work when there's any sense in it, but there's no sense, he says, in working for the Bealses, and they owe us work, David says, for the place, so Bruce don't do a thing, and I don't do a thing, and David don't do much, only mend up the house and fences a little. David says its all going to rack and ruin. Are all these things yours? Who is that a picture of on the wall?"

"That was a picture of me when I was a girl."

"Land o' gracious! Weren't you nice-looking! lots nicer than now!" with the unnecessary frankness of one accustomed to savage life. "Now, that picture is just exactly like my cousin Ida! Could I ever be like that, do you think?" She stood before the picture lost in admiration.

Mrs. Garth leaned back and meditated on the chapter of life laid open before her. Three orphans, real owners of a good but entirely neglected farm which had been taken possession of by a family of idle and dirty "movers," those vagabonds of the mid-Western States, who, in slow-going, canvas-covered wagons, drift to and fro between Illinois, Colorado, and the Mexican frontier. Could any companionship be more disastrous? Was any obsession more unwarranted and

injurious? The matter must be looked into; this boy of sixteen, however ready with his fists, was likely to be an inefficient protector of his own rights or of his younger brother and sister. Certainly something must be done about it. Meanwhile, Janet cruised about the room, examining everything, generally refraining from meddling, her tongue in perpetual motion, either in answering questions or volunteering information. Had her father liked the Bealses? Oh no; he said just as soon as he got well they'd have to go. But then he didn't get well. Her own mother—what was she like? Oh, she was nice—real nice, and she had had a trunkful of things, but Mis' Beals had cut them all up for herself and her own children. Had she ever seen the uncle who left them the farm? Oh no, indeed, never, nor had her father either; but it was all writ in a letter by a lawyer-man, and when they got to the house, why, it had stood empty eight months, and most of the things had been carried off by movers, Mis' Jon-sing down by the brook said, and the windows was all knocked out. Hume? Yes, that was their name. Their grandfather was from Scotland, father said. The Bealses didn't have any name of their own, only "she" was called Deb and "he" was named Saul, and they borried the name of Beals from a man they got the white horse of, tradin' for a mule and a calf; the mule was lame.

Doctor Garth was not at home to dinner. The maid served what seemed to Janet a very magnificent meal, in a state that awed her into silence, so oppressed was she by napkins, silver rings and forks, brass crumb-tray and scraper, and dessert served in china with whipped cream. After dinner Mrs. Garth offered Janet some toys for little Bruce. She looked at them hesitatingly: "You'd better not, till David gets the Bealses kicked out. There'd be fight, fight, all the time." Mrs. Garth then gave her several books likely to be more wholesome reading than "The Ranger's Bride," provided her with two or three garments to match the suit she had put on, and then took her in the buggy to within a mile of her home.

"Good-bye," she said; "I am glad you came, and I shall be out to see you and David before long."

"I guess I'll make David open his eyes!" cried Janet.

Mrs. Garth drove home, letting Dandy go his own gait while she wondered what she ought to do about the Bealses.

Two days; three; it was Friday. The morning train had come in, and to the platform stepped a woman of sixty with the dazed, lost look of a stranger in a strange land. The kindly, keen blue eyes, the fine, regular features, the oval face, cheek-bones a little prominent, upper lip rather long, the

bloom late-lying on the fair skin, the white cap, the trim, quaint, old-world array, proclaimed the Scot woman fresh from her native land. She sighed: at last her goal was reached, but it was late—late to tear up the fibres of the heart from the old soil and its ways, and plant them anew in this strange world of the West. She was a woman accustomed to self-dependence. She asked a question or two and sturdily set off down the street. The house where she paused had a closed-up air, and three vigorous peals of the bell were required to bring to the door an old-time-looking negro woman in a plaid turban, a black neckerchief, and a white apron against which proudly jingled a bunch of keys.

“Is Judge Garth at home, mem?” said the traveler, quite overwhelmed by the stately appearance of the portly, coal-black doorkeeper.

“No, missus, he is not,” said the flattered black woman.

“Will he be at home the day?”

“No, missus, co’se not. Judge Garth am gone abroad; he done take a trip to Paris.”

The blue-eyed stranger seemed so overwhelmed by this news that Miranda felt stirred to pity. Her position as care-taker of the judge’s house required from her some attention to his clients; she had, happily, some one to refer to.

“Yo’ can’t see de judge, honey, ’cause he am

gone, but ef yo'll go 'cross de street, to de oder big house, yo'll see Mis' Doctor Garth, an' she knows all that's wu'th knowin', fo' suah."

Over the street went the pilgrim, more tired now: the end of the journey seemed receding before her just when she thought that it was reached. This time it was a comely, strong-faced white girl who answered the bell and led her to a library. Again the wanderer's heart sunk. This Mrs. Garth who turned from her writing-table was so young-looking, so sunny, time and tide seemed to have gone so easily for her, how could she know the empty heart of an exile or show a plain path in intricate places?

"I kem to see Judge Garth, but he is awa'; I am juist fra Scotlan', an' I dinna ken what to do wi'oot him."

"You are from far," said Mrs. Garth, taking her hand and placing her in a rocking-chair. "How sweetly sounds to me that Scottice which was my father's native tongue!"

"Aye. I'm glad gif my auld farrant talk does-na offend you, but I'll try an' speak the plain English, only I aye drop back intil the ither."

"Speak as you are accustomed. I like it; I understand. You need to see my brother-in-law? Tell me about it."

"My name is Ailsa Crathie, an' I am juist fro' Blantyre. Better than a year syne I had word fro'

Judge Garth that David Hume had left me in his wull a braw big farm o' a hunner acres lying anigh here. I could'nt attend til it nor luik to it then, for my niece Ailsa, a braw lassie, a' I had i' the wide worl', had juist sickened wi' the consumption o' which she died. I had no a heart for anything but her. Weel, when the end cam' an' the dear Lord took his ain, she said to me, as a' my kin were deid, an' I had no hame i' a' the auld world, I suld gaiter oop my few hunner poun's an' come awa' here to the lan' that was lef' me, an' mak' a home anear my cousin David's kin; for bluid is bluid, ye ken, mistress, an' in the veins of such o' the Humes as is lef' rins a' the bluid i' the worl' akin to me. Weel, I cam' oot like Abraham, not knowin' whaur I went, an' it aye seemed that the good Lord led me along, till, standin' yon on the door-stone, I heard that Judge Garth was over the water, an' then a' at once it seemed as if the Lord's han' slipped oot o' mine, an' I didna ken whaur to turn. Sic is the weakness o' my faith; but, oh, ye dinna ken what it is to be a stranger in a strange lan' an' to have none to ca' ye kin!"

Mrs. Garth took the trembling hand in hers. "There is a Name," she said, "which makes strangers kin—the name of our elder brother Christ. God's children are never out of their fatherland, for all the world is their father's house: the lovers of the Lord find home and family where-

ever Christ is loved. I do not think the Lord's hand slipped out of yours just now: it only led you across the way. Judge Garth is abroad, but his chief clerk does his office business, and I will write him a note to come here at once with information about the Hume farms. You will stay here with me to-day, until you find out all that you need to know. Perhaps God has brought you here to find a new home and a new family and to give you work here for him. A week or two ago I met three children, David, Janet, and Bruce Hume, who said their farm had been left to their father by his uncle David Hume."

"Aye, aye! That will be Robert Hume's childer. Judge Garth wrote that David wulled one farm to me an' one to his nephly Robert. Aye; Cousin David writ me long syne that Robert had married an American. D' ye think they will tak' kindly to a lonely auld countrywoman like me?"

"Robert and his wife are dead, and the three children are in great need of some one to look after them. A low, bad family took possession of their farm and house, and they are all simply sinking into ruin. I only found out about it a few days ago, and I have been thinking in what way to rescue them. Now God opens the way by sending you here."

"I'm ower auld for sic a burden," suggested Ailsa.

“If you were too old to do the errand, you would not have been sent.”

“Aye; that is a guid word. The Lord kens what he is about.”

“‘To them that have no might he increaseth strength.’ You will stay with me until to-morrow, until you learn the facts in the case and decide what should be done. My husband and I are interested in this family of Hume children, and we will be glad to help you in every way that we can. I believe you will find them a great blessing and comfort to you some day, but now they are something like young savages; they have lived among this strolling family of Beals for two years.”

“It will be hard,” said Ailsa Crathie, tears welling to her eyes. “My ain Ailsa was so donce an’ fair, an’ we were a’ the world to ilk ither, Ailsa an’ I.”

“Take now these other three for God, and he will give you your wages.”

CHAPTER III.

HARD LINES.

“Take courage: the King hath one measure
For the service of feet that run
And of feet that wait his pleasure
Till all his deep will be done.”

“HERE, Mistress Ailsa Crathie, is the house that was left you, and this land about it—eighty acres, the half of David Hume’s original quarter-section.”

It was Saturday morning, and a s Surrey, wherein were Mrs. Garth, Ailsa Crathie, and Judge Garth’s junior partner, stopped before one of those curious ruins of the Western world—a house falling into utter decay without being old. It was a two-story “block” house built of squared logs mortar-chinked. An open hall above and below, one-third the width of the house, with a large square room on each side of these two halls, had been the original plan of the house, the staircase, little more than a ladder, ascending from the lower hall. Early in its history, however, the house had become the first stage-station from the river, and the halls had been enclosed with clapboards. The

front portion of the lower hall had an enormous door, which, as too large for convenient use, had been closed, and a tall narrow door opened, panel-like, on each side. These doors had fallen from their decaying frames; all the windows of the house had been carried off bodily; what of the shutters remained hung disconsolately, each by one hinge; the doorstep was gone; the front walk was obliterated; what had once been a large fruit-garden in front of the house was now a desolation of prairie-grass in which struggled for life a few peach and cherry trees, and certain currant and gooseberry bushes which had ceased to bear fruit.

"You'll have to climb the fence," said Mr. Porter; "there is no gate."

Crowding through one of the narrow, broken-down doors, Ailsa surveyed her inheritance. The lower rooms had been used for sheep-shelters, the upper ones for grain-garners. In each was a wide fireplace. These were built in the great stone chimneys which stood in their integrity on the outside of either end of the house. In the north room a very tall and beautiful mantel of carved cherry was falling from its place, dragging with it a portion of the window-frame; in all the other rooms the mantels had been torn away for fuel.

"This house," said Mr. Porter, "has not been inhabited for ten years, and since Mr. David

Hume died, over two years ago, folks seem to have made pretty free with it. I suppose the whole thing would have been carried off if it had not been so solidly built. The walls, roof, chimneys, and part of the floors are yet good; but I suppose you will live in the other house with the Hume children?—that is still habitable.”

“I’m o’er auld,” said the canny Scot, “to sit by a stranger’s hearth-stane. If there is ony leevin’ together, I wad rather the childer suld leeve wi’ me. I aye liked to have my ain roof-tree above my head.”

“There’s one small barn in pretty good order,” said Mr. Porter. “Mr. Johnson has had the grazing here to pay the taxes. Shall we go on to the other house?”

They had gone but a few rods when Mrs. Garth said, “Stop; there are the Humes.” They were near a small house close by the road-side, where David Hume was making short work of a wood-pile. Evidently, as his sister had said, he liked to work when he could see any sense in it, and now he must have seen the sense. With one foot on the stick laid across the saw-horse, he bent to his task with the grace that always inheres in strength, and back and forth through the oak and hickory tore his saw, while under his ragged blue cotton shirt the great pectoralis major swelled and rose, lifting the strong ribs, and the

splendid play of the deltoid and infraspinatus showed Celtic stock not degenerated in the years that lapsed between the gladiators of the arena and the young rustic of the West. What did he know of deltoid and infraspinatus? he knew that he seized the saw with a will, and it moved. He had never in his life heard of the name or relation of a noble biceps like that of a blacksmith, but he kept that and the triceps and the supinator longus steadily at work, and thus incidentally supplied occupation to a boy of twelve who split wood with more zeal than discretion, and to that lean and freckled eight-year-old laddie who was impressed on Mrs. Garth's memory as the recoverer of a borrowed axe, and was now occupied in piling wood, aided by two little girls of six and four. All these manœuvres were watched by a thin, anxious girl, prematurely bent under the weight of a fat baby, and Janet Hume, still in the glory, a trifle tarnished, of the pink gingham frock. Beside Janet, looked on the Olympian Bruce, surveying with supreme indifference the toils of men.

"The house," said Ailsa, "is verra sma', but it is bonny,"

"This is not the Hume place; this is the Gower lot. What a swarm it is!—Hello there, David Hume! Go up to your house, will you? I'm taking some one up to see you," cried Mr. Porter.

The Hume delegation at once set off swiftly

across the fields, headed by Janet, who guessed that the company might be Mrs. Garth, while David, not at all enchanted by a similar idea, followed more slowly. When the surrey reached the long, dirty porch of the Hume house, the entire Beals family were drawn up there, idling in the autumn sunlight, the parents both smoking.

"Mrs. Beals," said Mrs. Garth, with ceremony, "this lady is a relative of the Hume children, and has come to visit them. She intends to live with them."

"She does, does she? Well, there ain't no room for her here; we're all full. She'd better go back where she came from; the Hume children take up a whole room above stairs for themselves, and we're that crowded there ain't place for no more."

Here arrived David, with his half-curious, half-startled stare, like a young buffalo, from under shaggy locks.

"David," said Mr. Porter, "have you rented your farm to these Beals?"

"No, I haven't," said David.

"Yes, he has," said Mrs. Beals.

"Have they paid you any rent, David?"

"No, they haven't."

"Yes, we have: we've boarded and done for them three for two years."

"The board of three children who work as much as the rest of you is small rent for a house and farm of eighty broad acres of good land. If you have rented the place, where is your contract or your witnesses?" demanded the lawyer.

"There's no writing about it," said David. "They moved in on us while father was sick, and he said they were not to stay; but he died, and they stayed. I don't want them here."

"Why haven't you put them out? You're a man. How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"You look twenty. So they came in on you, a boy of fourteen, and the others nine and three! Humph! they had it all their own way! The court should have looked after you and appointed a guardian; but what is everybody's business is nobody's. Hume, this is a relation of yours, from Scotland; she owns the other half of this farm, and the stage-house."

"Let her go there, then!" cried Mrs. Beals, advancing with arms akimbo, red eyes flaming wrath, long, jagged, yellow teeth displayed, and rough locks flying, terrible as a Tisiphone; "I won't have any stuck-up ladies here."

But under the soft, elderly exterior of Ailsa Crathie was the good metal of the true Scot, and it rang out at this charge. She turned to the tall brown lad;

“If this is my cousin David Hume’s property, it is for him, an’ no for any stranger, to say whether I shall go or stay. Speak ye, David, my mon; I hae coom fro’ far to touch a han’ that has bluid kin to mine. Sal I go or tarry?”

She had evoked out of this great boy a man. In the heart of this burly, unmothered lad was the natural longing for woman’s care and tenderness. Mrs. Garth with her “air fin” and laughter-loving eyes abashed him, but this blue-eyed, elderly, motherly face turned to him, finding in him the arbiter of destiny, awoke the man. His broad back straightened, his great shaggy head erected itself. “You’ll stay,” he said, placing himself by Ailsa; “and if Deb Beals don’t like it, yonder’s the road she come on.”

“The road!” cried Deb, roused to fury; “and winter comin’ on, an’ we bin here workin’ for you two year! You don’t get rid of us like that. What right has she here?—a cousin! a far cousin! We don’t count cousins in this country!”

“The law, Mrs. Beals,” said Mr. Porter, “counts cousins, and recognizes blood as far as it can be traced. She has rights, and you have none. As for getting rid of you all, a writ and the sheriff will settle the affair as soon as Hume speaks the word.”

“I speak the word,” said David, a flash of flame adding itself to the curiosity in his big eyes. Mrs.

Beals had seen that flash once or twice before, and she quailed before it. When this "young buffalo," as Mrs. Garth called him, roused himself and snorted with wrath, little could stand before him.

Mrs. Beals broke into loud wails. Turn them out! So late in the year, and only one horse, and nothin' ready, and a baby, and a poor dummy, and that deformed little Turk, and she had been like a mother to those Humes, and nursed their father, and buried him—and turned out! She dropped on the floor in a heap, and, rocking to and fro, continued her lamentations, interspersed with profanity that made Ailsa Crathie's blood run cold.

Beals now interposed with an injunction to his wife to "shut up." As for the lady, she was welcome. Let her take all the room she wanted. David needn't get on his ear: they'd make fair terms, and get out papers if he liked, though, as for himself, he could neither read nor write, and didn't care for papers and such ruck. He didn't want to quarrel with Hume nor Hume's folks.

The hostile camps now separated: Mr. Porter, Ailsa, Mrs. Garth, and the Humes drew toward the road; the Bealses grouped on the veranda.

"David," said Mr. Porter, "don't enter into any contract or bargains with that lot. I don't know as you can clear them out now, but by spring you'd better get rid of them, and with Mistress

Crathie's help try to make something of yourselves.—Mistress Crathie, I don't see how you can live with such a noisy, dirty, foul-mouthed lot!"

"An' the poor childer ha' leaved wi' them two years! David, my braw laddie, ye dinna tak' to sic ungodly neer-do-weels?"

David shook his head emphatically.

"I will hae my ain hoose set in order, an' we'll a' live yon."

"This house is in better order and is easier to repair," said Mr. Porter.

"Na, na," said Ailsa; "I couldna bide to live in this hoose. In auld days the leprosy clave in hooses as weel as in people. I suld aye think the leprosy o' sin, an' a' the cursin' an' drinkin' an' swearin', stuck to the verra wa's o' this hoose. I couldna sing my psalms an' say my prayers here richtly.—Mrs. Garth, hoo long will it tak' to make yon hoose fit to live in? An' hoo much money would it require to set up a hame there wi' these childer? I tell't ye yestere'en what I hae."

"You can easily afford to make the place comfortable. A man who is finishing some work for us to-day can be had to come out here early Monday morning with two loads of lumber and go to work at it. If David will help him, no doubt the place can be ready for you in a month."

"What! go and live in another house, away

from the Bealses?" cried David. "You believe I'll help him!"

"That will be leaving the Beals family in full possession here," said Mr. Porter. "If you do that, you must have them clearly warned that they are to go in the spring. They cannot stay here any longer. Set the time, and stick to it. They have been here too long now; the next thing, it will be hard to oust them."

"I don't see how you can stay here for a month," said Mrs. Garth to Ailsa. "I don't believe there is a clean room or bed or dish in the house, or a towel or wash-basin."

"Janet's been scrubbing at our room since she came back from your house," said David, "and she's washed the bed-things. There's a bedstead where she and Bruce sleep, and I have a place in the corner, on the floor; but Bruce can lie there, and I'll go to the barn."

"I maun stay," said Ailsa with a great sigh. "Yon Bealses maun ken that the Hume childer hae someain to tak' tent for them. David, ye're a braw laddie, ain o' the dark Humes. When I was a sma' lassie yer gran'sir an' his brither David Hume aye look't to me the brawest men that ever trod heather. They carried me to dame-school on their sho'thers, an' when I was a lass grown David Hume an' I were sweethearts. But trouble cam' between, an' we partied. There's a glint o' David

in your eye, laddie. God send you like him in your heart, for he was a gude mon."

She spoke to the lad, her hand on his arm, forgetful that there was any one there but themselves. Mrs. Garth and Mr. Porter drew a little apart.

Presently, as Ailsa was resolute to remain, they gave her her portmanteau and a basket of provisions that Mrs. Garth's forethought had made ready. Then they prepared to drive away. The prudent Ailsa handed Mrs. Garth her purse. "I'll no keep ony money in this hoose," she said, "and ye'll keep my chests in town till I have my ain roof. Send oot the carpenter-mon on Monday, an' dinna fret about me. I'll win through: the Lord will be wi' me as he was wi' the three childer in the fiery furnace"—which Biblical reminiscence was sufficiently uncomplimentary to Ailsa's present surroundings.

"You needn't be afraid," said David to his guest as the surrey rolled away. "I'll look out for you."

"I wadna be afraid wi' sic a braw young birkie to stan' oop for me," said Ailsa, regarding him proudly. Already her lonely heart had received this mettlesome fellow, or "birkie," as a son, and stirring in David's soul was a something new—a man's right of protection and attention to women.

"Will you come in the house?" said Janet. "When I visited the lady, we went in and sat down and talked."

The house, however, looked to Ailsa like a cage of unclean birds. She could say, with Adam in "As You Like It," "Though I look old, yet am I strong." The vigorous Scotchwoman had often walked twenty miles over the dales of her native land. "Let us luik at a' the lan'," she said—"at your farm an' mine. It is a grán' thing to own the lan' ye tred: it's as guid as bein' a laird; may God keep me fro' bein' o'er vauntie aboot it! But, David, I maun speak English; ye canna unnerstan' me."

"I can understand well enough," said David; "my grandsir lived with us till I was eleven, and he spoke as you do, and we were used to it. He died the night Bruce was born."

"Is it sae? A soul went to God an' a soul cam' fro' God at the same hour! I mind it was aye said when that happened in a hoose that the new babe was born for greatness. But that is a' cummer's chatter, I tak' it. The Lord lifteth up ane an' pulleth down anither!" Still, in spite of this protest, Ailsa began to look more attentively at Bruce.

"Grandsir used to tell me about when he was a boy, and about his home, and about a little cousin he had, with yellow hair—Ally, he called her. He wished Janet had yellow hair."

"Aye—Ally—it was me. There were aye two kinds o' Humes—black Humes an' fair Humes,

Your grandsir an' David were black, an' I was fair an' bonny once; but beauty is vain, a' except the beauty o' holiness, the Buik says."

David could understand Scottice, but this was Greek to him. They wandered about the two farms until mid-afternoon. Returning to the house, David proposed to demand dinner, but Ailsa suggested that they should sit under a tree and share the contents of Mrs. Garth's basket. This served for dinner and supper, so it was the next morning before the factions of Beals and Hume fairly met.

Ailsa, coming down from her upper room, addressed Deb:

"Guid-morn, mistress; can ye tell me whaur I will fin' somethin' to wash me in?"

"No," retorted Deb, drawing her frowzy head from the smoky chimney-place; "we're not such dirty people as has to wash ourselves every day. I give the children a rub generally when I'm washin' clothes."

"But you aye wash before you eat?" said the horrified Ailsa.

"No; we're not so stuck-up as that."

Ailsa privately considered that they might be more "stuck up" if they didn't wash, but she took a towel from her valise and proceeded through the frost-rimed grass to the brook.

It was Sabbath morning, fresh and clear; the

woods were glowing in scarlet, orange, brown, bronze, crimson; jays and red-cap woodpeckers and scarlet tanagers darted and clattered about her, but neither Sabbath peace nor nature's glory filled poor Ailsa's soul. She was hungry. She had seen the breakfast preparations: bacon and corn-pone frying in two cracked pans, and a decoction of beans and chicory, respectfully called coffee, boiling and sputtering in a lidless kettle. Could she eat such a meal?

When she returned to the house she found breakfast laid, without grace of a cloth, on the black, greasy table. David put a chair for her by the cleanest place, but, though the clans of Hume and Beals fairly devoured, Ailsa could not eat. David looked at her.

"Don't you like that coffee? Do you want some of that other stuff you made yesterday—tea, out of your bag? Have it, then." He looked about, and seized a dipper in which to make tea.

"You let things alone," bawled Deb. "If she's too fine to eat what we do, let her go without."

"The things are mine, and so's the house," said David, "and my—aunt—can have what she likes." He went up stairs for the tea, and when it had been brewed in the dipper he filled Ailsa's cup. "Let me have some too," he said; and he manfully swallowed it, although, to his unaccustomed palate, it was more atrocious than Deb's coffee,

but with a rising chivalry he wished to aid and comfort his guest.

During breakfast Pope and Turk ate apart.

"Mistress," said Ailsa to Deb, "have you no sent your dumb chiel to school?"

"What good would school do him—a dummy?"

"There are schools where the dumb are taught to read and write and given a trade, that they may fend for their ainsels like ither people."

At these words Turk drew her apron over her face and turned to listen.

"Pope ain't goin' to no school," said Deb. "Who'd pay us for his time while he was gone? He's the only one that works."

"But, woman, you owe your unfortunate bairns the best ye can do for them. Ye suld school the lad an' ha' the lassie's lip mended."

"Yes; there was a doctor 'long here one day, who wanted me to let him take Turk to Kansas City and make her mouth right. Said he'd do it for nothin', but he wouldn't pay me ten dollars for a-lettin' of her go. I don't want her mouth mended. When she grows up nobody will marry her, and she'll stay an' work for us, but if her mouth gets right she'll go off married."

After this enunciation of maternal principles the room seemed to Ailsa too small to hold her and Deb. She said to Janet, "Come, you and Bruce, out wi' me unner the trees in yon auld wagon-

box, an' I'll read the Buik til ye.—Come you too, my dear," she added, looking kindly at Turk. David had already disappeared.

"Whaur is David?" she asked as she and Janet, Bruce, Pope, and Turk took their places in the broken-down wagon-box in the warming sunshine.

"He's gone over to cut wood for Sis," replied Janet.

"Does he no keep the Sabbath day according to the commandment?"

"What is commandment?" suddenly demanded Bruce.

"Eh, my little lad, I have scarce heard you speak before," said Ailsa.

"She' says he's a fool because he looks on and don't talk," said Janet; "but Bruce has got lots of think in him. We don't keep Sunday now, Aunt Ailsa. I think we did when mother lived, before we got in with the Bealses, and we had a book mother read out of, but 'she' burnt it up. We didn't see her burn it up, but we found part of the book in the ash-heap. The book I have don't say anything about Sunday."

"The commandment, my bonny man," said Ailsa, laying her hand on Bruce's nobly-fashioned head, "is the law of our God."

"Who is our God?" demanded the child, calmly.

“Oh, puir wee heathen! God is the one who made you.”

“Did he make Pope and Turk?”

“Aye, everybody.”

“Then,” clattered poor Turk from behind the ragged apron wrapped over her face, “if he made us so bad, when he knew how to make good work like Janet and Bruce, it was awful cruel, and I hate him!”

Ailsa looked for a thunderbolt after this blasphemy. The sky was serene. Had not God heard? Or did he not condemn? Or had she herself charged God foolishly with the making of these two?

CHAPTER IV.

AILSA CRATHIE'S INHERITANCE.

“The tempest, with its spoils, had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.”

“IS there no a kirk near here, Janet?—a church?”
added Ailsa, as Janet looked puzzled.

“Yes, there's a church toward the river two miles, but I guess it's shut. I never was there.”

“You don't go to church?” asked Ailsa, grieved.

“I've only had this dress since las' Monday—others was all rags.”

“If the church is open I could easily win there,” said Ailsa, her heart thirsting for the courts of her God.

“Ask Uncle Mose Barr—he knows,” said Turk, thickly.

Ailsa regarded with awe the big, black, gray-wooled negro who came slouching up the lane. She had only seen negroes as component parts of penny shows.

“Uncle Mose, is there preachin'?” called Janet.

“Preachin'? What anybody roun' hyar car’

'bout preachin'? No, dare ain't. Had preachin' las' Sunday; won't have no mo' for a month. Guess I knows. I'm sexton down dar.—Yo' Turk, yo' go tell yo' mar I want my soap-kettle; my ole woman's gwine bile soap. That's all yo' gits for lendin' things to po' white trash: nebber brings nuffin back."

Here Mr. Beals and the partner of his erratic life appeared, and took exception to being referred to as "poor white trash."

"Well, I doan know what else yo' is," asseverated Uncle Moses; "you doan own nuffin but a wagon with three wheels an' a hoss with one eye; all de res' dare is b'longs to me or to de Humes or to Mis' Jonsing down by de brook"

This initiated a wordy battle, carried on with equal vigor on both sides until Uncle Mose, out of breath, retreated literally under cover of the soap-kettle, for he carried it reversed on his head; and the Bealses, left also *hors-de-combat*, took up their cob pipes.

The next diversion was a quarrel between the Beals children in which the parents were finally enlisted, with the result that the juniors withdrew and left their seniors on opposite sides of an argument conducted with sticks.

"I canna thole it," cried Ailsa. "It is a' like a den o' wild beasts. Daniel foun' the crooning hour an' glory o' his life sittin' in a den o' lions

wi' a' the beasts glowerin' at him, but I hanna Daniel's faith, an' I canna thole sic weary ways."

"Did they eat him?" slowly demanded Bruce, turning his lofty gaze upon Ailsa.

"Wha? The lions eat Daniel? No, bairnie; God sent an angel."

"What's an angel?"

"Oh, lassie! Yon two will kill ilk ither."

"No, they won't; they're used to it," said Janet. Then, seeing that Ailsa, whom she called her aunt, was pale and really terrified, she said, "Come, let's us and Bruce go down to Sis Gower's house; it's always nice there since her father ran off."

Ailsa Crathie, Bible in hand, departed under the leadership of Janet, Turk and Pope following at a respectful distance.

"Are these new-world manners?" Ailsa asked herself. Truly, these people seemed to be apt pupils of the aborigines. Ailsa supposed that Indians whooped and fought and indulged in squalid savagery, but her lines of life had been hitherto in quiet rural places where to fear God and keep his commandments had been recognized as the whole duty of a Christian.

"Did you say the faither had rin awa'?" she asked Janet.

"Sis Gower's father? Yes. You see, he wouldn't work at all, and Mis' Gower always worked for Mis' Jonsing down by the brook, and

she fed him and gave him money for his whiskey and tobacco, so he could just lie 'round. Then she died, and I expect he thought he might have to work and help take care of the children, and the next day after the fun'al he ran away, and never came back. That's a year. Sis takes care of them all. There's six."

"Sikey works," struck in Bruce, showing that he paid some attention to mundane affairs.

"Yes, Sikey works for Mis' Jonsing down by the brook, and gets his clothes and board and a dollar a month. And Sis works hard, and Pam works what he can, droppin' corn an' huskin' an' pickin' up apples an' 'taters, but he's only eight. I hate all these mean, poor ways, Aunt Ailsa. I'd like to live where there are silken cushings, and feet sink in velvet, and lace curtings float into the moonlight, and walls flash with gold, as it is in 'The Ranger's Bride;' and if I couldn't have like that, I'd rather be like Mrs. Garth than like—nothing."

Here Janet was discoursing Greek to Ailsa, who had not had the good fortune to form thought and language upon the descriptions in "The Ranger's Bride;" and while she tried to divine what Janet did mean, they reached the little home of the Gowers, and found the work at the wood-pile proceeding actively, and Sis, baby in lap, looking on.

Sis and her five brothers and sisters were clean, and their poor garments were well patched. The three rooms and a "lean-to" were clean and quiet, though something bare, for the errant "dad" had swallowed in the form of whiskey all superfluities.

"They're goin' it over there," explained Janet, "and Aunt Ailsa was frightened, and we came over here. She was readin' to us, and she's brought along the book. It's the book the teacher reads out of mornings at school, and that Miss Beals burnt up for us."

"Aye," said Ailsa, "an' it is a verra guid buik. I'll wale a portion for ye, gif ye'll sit to listen. It's no richt to cut wood upo' the Sabbath day."

Sis brought a rocking-chair to the grass-plot before the door. The day was balmy; the children dropped quietly into various attitudes of rest, David cast his brawny strength at Ailsa's feet, and Turk and Pope hid their informities behind her chair.

Ailsa turned over the leaves of her book. But she was unused to ministering to the minds of children, and she was accustomed to reading her Bible in course. The portion yet unread for the day was in the seventh chapter of Daniel. The children, with staring eyes of surprised young animals who lift their heads from grazing to watch the passer-by, heard of strange beasts and thrones and kings; the clouds in the heavens became

chariots, and the sunset glories were for them, for ever after, fiery streams.

As the reader's voice fell away into silence Sikey started up: "I've got to go to dinner. We're goin' to have roasted chine over to our house." He leaped the fence and set off toward the invisible abode of plenty—the home of Mis' Jonsing down by the brook.

Sis sighed: how good meat would taste! Sis was generally hungry. She looked at Mistress Crathie and the Humes. Dinner-time, and her supply was—a pan of skimmed milk and two johnny-cakes!

David guessed as much. "Hello! dinner-time," he said. "I'll run over to the house and bring your basket, Aunt Ailsa, and we'll all eat what is in it: there's plenty."

What! saved from going back to that den? Ailsa agreed heartily. David set off at a round pace. He was gone long. He returned, not with the basket, but bearing on his shoulder Ailsa's valise.

"What are ye glowerin' at, laddie?" asked Ailsa as she noted his red and frowning face, black clouds of wrath lowering under his heavy brows.

Then his rage broke forth. He had gone up to their own room for the basket, but found it entirely empty except for the little tin box of tea. Several Beals children were licking their lips after having

devoured all the eatables. Deb herself was on her knees, not praying to be delivered from temptation, but trying to pry open Ailsa's valise, while Saul looked on.

"I didn't whack her," said David, roaring out his wrongs like a young bull of Bashan, "'cause she's a woman, and I ain't so low down as Saul Beals yet; but I licked him, handsome." The memory of his recent active interview with Saul seemed to afford him great aid and comfort for a season; but all his mighty muscles and the hot currents of his young blood could not be nourished merely on fond fancies and recollections; he needed some solid sustentation, and where to satisfy his robust appetite he knew not.

But He who feeds the sparrows and fills the gaping mouths of young ravens and the whelps of the lions, was not unmindful of the hunger of the curiously assorted group at Sis Gower's door. He sent help from an unexpected quarter.

Sikey was to be seen coming up the road, carrying on his head a large splint basket decorated with a white cloth.

"Ho there, Sis! Lay out a cloth! Here's your grub!" cried Sikey.

Sikey, having found Mis' Jonsing down by the brook engaged in the womanly art of dishing dinner, had made himself acceptable to her by a large instalment of gossip: David Hume's aunt had come

from Scotland; she was a mighty grand lady, and awful rich. She was the one old Hume's t'other farm an' the "stage-house" had been left to, and she was goin' to build over the 'stage-house' an' live there with the Humeses. Carpenters an' things was comin' to-morrow to begin buildin'. An' David Hume's aunt couldn't abear them Bealses, an' she an' the Humeses was sittin' in Sis's yard now, an' he'd jes' like to know what they'd get for dinner, for he'd be blamed if Sis had as much pone an' milk as would go oncet 'round.

This narration roused Mis' Jonsing down by the brook to a magnificent exhibit of Missouri hospitality. The foreign woman was not to think that all Missouri was as low down as them Bealses nor as poverty-struck as Sis. Whereupon, the dame placed a splint basket on the table, and bestowed therein a pan of crisp and fragrant chine, a mound of steaming potatoes leaping out of their brown jackets, huge green cucumber pickles, biscuits galore, and, roofing the whole with two well-browned apple pies, she drew over the basket a clean towel and charged Sikey to carry it safely if he had any desire for prosperity in this world or the next.

By the time the basket was lowered from Sikey's head, Sis, whose table was very small and her dishes very scarce, had spread her largest cloth upon the

grass, and at this improvised picnic they all sat down, while Sikey and the basket speedily reverted to their distant place.

“This kind of a dinner,” said Sis, beaming, after all were at their second helping, “is the kind we’ll have every day when our father comes back. I am pretty sure he will come back soon now. Of course he loves us, and he’ll want to see how the baby has grown. When he comes back he will work for Mr. Gage or cut ties, and earn a dollar or a dollar and a quarter a day; Sikey will keep on working, and so will I, and we’ll send the rest to school. We’ll have clothes then, and go to church, and after a while we’ll have a store carpet and muslin curtains in the front room, and a new room built for the boys, and everything just as mother and I planned it before mother died.”

“I don’t believe he’ll ever come. Mis’ Jonsing down by the brook says he won’t never; he’ll stay away and drink whiskey.” Thus the ruthless little brother Pam shattered with his voice her fancies. But Sis recovered herself:

“Hush, Pam; you don’t know. He’ll come. I have dreamed of it plenty of times. I shall hear a sound, and I shall open the door, and there will be father; and he’ll never go away, and never drink any more.” O prophetic soul!

“Oh, bother it, Sis!” said David.

But Janet came to the rescue of Sis: “It will

be as she says, David—of course it will; her father will come back, and I will be rich and a great lady like my cousin Ida. I shall have rings and a pearl necklace, and play on a music-thing, and have snow-white hands like Cousin Ida.”

“Bosh!” said David. Evidently, David, the big, brown, brawny one, was not dowered with the grace of sympathy.

The meal was over. Sis laid the sleeping baby in a corner, and proceeded, with Janet's help, to put away the remnants of the goodly feast. David sat by Ailsa.

“Much he'll come back!” growled David. “A lazy, drinking creature! Sis believes in him for all, and so did her mother. I was here the night she died, and she talked to them mighty nice—made me think of my mother. And, the day after she was buried, off he skipped! Sis takes care of the whole of 'em. She sells ties enough for taxes, from her wood-lot. Six acres, and this house they own. Us't to be her mother's. She earned it school-teaching. She school-teached in this district ten year, Mis' Gage says, an' finally took up with Gower, a lazy, drinkin' boy that married her to be took care of. If a woman can't do better than that, she'd better never marry whatever.”

“Aye,” said Ailsa; “women often marry to their trouble an' confusion.”

“Sis isn't like the other folks,” said David, un-

easily. "See how clean her house is! I don't want you to think I am going to knuckle to them Bealses or turn my back on you, Aunt Ailsa, but it's no use tryin' to have you stay over yon. They'll break open your bag an' steal all you have, an' you can't eat or sleep in such noise an' dirt, an' them Bealses ain't none too good to put poison in your tea—if they could get any."

"Preserve us a'!" cried Ailsa. "But whaur will I bide?"

"You can stay here with Sis till your house is done. Sis will give you her best room. Look in at it; there's a risin' sun quilt on the bed! Sis made that."

"Aye," said Ailsa, "it's bonny, an' I fin' it haird to stan' sic contramptious tapsalteerie ways as yon Bealses. They are a feckless lot, sure enough, but I could thole it a' but the fichtin' an' cursin': I canna bide that. The God o' peace canna come intil sic a hoose as yon, an' the name o' my Faither is o'er dear to me to hear it used in vain. But I canna thole leavin' you a' there."

"We have been there two years," said David, "and I didn't know how bad it was till you came. I saw a white flower lyin' in the mud one day, and it made the mud look pretty black; and you're so clean and quiet and so—so like a mother, you make the Beals lot look pretty wild. If you're going to let us live with you, why, we can stand

it till the house is done. And I'll work like a nigger to get it done too, you bet!"

"Aye," said Ailsa; "do they black bodies work so fast? I ne'er saw but twa o' them, an' they didna look verra stirrin'. But we'll a' work wi' a wull, an' get a hame ready for us a', an' then I shall ha' a family o' my ain once mair! You will ken then, David, what a hame can be whaur the peace o' God rests like a benediction, an' the wull o' God is dune, an' the guid Buik is aye the rule o' livin'. Aye, wi' sic a hame makin' ready for us we can wait. Hope is aye a gran' stay to the soul. Doesna the psalm say, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land o' the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, an' he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord'? Oh, mon, the Buik is a well o' sweet waters!"

David shook his shaggy head and gazed at her with round, wondering eyes. Her voice was sweet and tender, her words flowed warm from her heart, but to him they meant nothing. He lived in the present; he almost never looked back, almost never, forward; he dwelt in a perpetual now, and his eyes, unless he was roused to anger or curiosity, had the calm, contented stare of those of a young bullock.

There was much more thought in the eyes of Bruce. Since dinner he had remained quiet, de-

voting himself placidly to digestion and speculation. Now he came near.

"Ailsa," he said, without the ceremony of "aunt," which the other two had adopted, "who is God?"

"Oh, my poor lambie, dinna ye ken that it is God who spreadeth the heavens like a curtain, and bendeth the rainbow in his hands, and speaketh in the thunder?"

Poor Bruce, unable to comprehend, stared in her face, but David caught a little glimpse of this King of Glory—and he had often taken his name in vain!

That evening, when the Humes were gone, Aunt Ailsa and Sis became very good friends. Sis told of her hopes of the errant father's return, and of her ambitions and intentions for her little family. Her imagination forestalled the years, and she saw them honorable, happy, rich. Sis was a thorough altruist; all her life was absorbed in these brothers and sisters. What was her name? Why, Sis—only Sis, so far as she knew. But the others had names which she had picked out for them from a history book, when they had a little shelf of books which father had—sold by mistake. It seemed whatever father had done had been done by mistake. Yes, Sikey was Cyrus, after a very great king. Pam was Epaminondas; not to forget it, Sis had written it all down on the under side of the closet shelf—not on the top side: it

might be scrubbed off. Epaminondas, the book said, was a great soldier, very wise, who played the flute beautifully. Of course Pam could not expect quite to come up to that, but he might be something pretty nice if she could give him a chance. One thing was sure—they all had to learn to work, and daren't tell any lies nor drink a drop of whiskey. Lola, she was named after a lady that danced; not that Sis cared to have Lola dance, but it was a pretty name. "Miss" was short for Artemisia, a queen. The baby had had several names to try on, and they were not quite sure which one to keep.

On Mondays Sis worked for Mis' Jonsing down by the brook, and on Fridays for Miss Gage, and at other times all she could. When Mistress Crathie offered two dollars a week for her board, and promised to teach Sis various kinds of needle-work, Sis felt that her fortune was assured, but she made haste to promise that bacon, wheat-flour, and potatoes should at once be provided.

The next morning about nine, Ailsa Crathie, standing by Sis Gower's gate, saw two wagon-loads of lumber stop at the fence before her house. The fence was promptly torn down and the wagons drove in.

On the top of a pile of shingles, ship-lap, scantling, three-by-fours, planks, and planed boards sat a lean little German surrounded by tool-box, mitre-

box, oil-stove, cans of paint, some tinware, and a bundle of bedding. This was "the carpenter-man," come prepared to live in Ailsa's house until he had completed his work. He leaped from the wagon, darted at the house, and flew hither and thither, now at a door, now at a window, now at a wall; he looked to Ailsa for all the world like a wasp seeking a suitable place for building its paper cells.

Now a ladder was planted, and up to the house-top skipped the little man, and danced over the roof; now he peered into the chimney; now he was on his knees on the ground, prying into the state of the underpinning; now he leaped like a dervish along the floors; now he kicked a bare board, now pounded at a partition. Ailsa had just concluded that here was "a daft body" when he sat on the door-step and, with his mouth twisted sideways and one eye screwed shut, elaborated on a strip of paper a further order for lumber, casings, bricks, lime, and hair. This was to be sent by the returning wagons. Then he danced at David:

"Is there any sand about here? Draw a couple of loads at once, sifted. No sifter? Well, make one;" and before the wagons were out of sight broken window- and door-frames were coming down and a great dust rose about Ailsa's Inheritance.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE FLOCKS ON THE HILLS.

“He guides, and near him they
Follow delighted, for he makes them go
Where dwells eternal May,
And heavenly roses blow
Deathless, and gathered but again to grow.”

ALL day long boards fell and rotten shingles flew, and the wasp-like little man seemed only bent on demolition. The odd, ill-conditioned door-frames of the hall fell away, and the old staircase, “worn by the feet that now were silent,” lay bare to the sun. Finally the demon of destruction stayed his work and turned to Ailsa, who was looking gravely on :

“Now, missis, what is left is good and solid ; we can work on that. Tell me what you want done, and I’ll do it. You’d better let me partition off a hall-room above stairs, and divide this north room into a little sitting-room and a bed-room for you that will have the sun by a west window.”

As he hurried on with his list of changes a buggy with yellow wheels stopped at the door, and Ailsa turned to see Doctor and Mrs. Garth,

A little ripple of laughter, a smile all around which would have lit the cloudiest day, a hand extended friendly-wise, a merry voice: "Ah, Bilman, have you stopped to take breath yet?" and carpenter Bilman tucked his chin into the neckband of his shirt, looked flattered, and sidled toward Dr. Garth, saying, "I reckon you'd better tell her what she wants."

"Her" was Ailsa, who, as a shipwrecked wanderer desires and seizes the dear land, had placed herself close to Mrs. Garth and was at peace.

"He's a verra stirrin' body," she said, looking askance at the "carpenter-man."

But now Mrs. Garth went about the house with Ailsa, and, chalk in hand, marked out on the floor the changes. Here, from the large south kitchen, a nice pantry must be taken off, and here a closet with shelves for bedding. Here, as Bilman suggested, a west bed-room for Ailsa, and a room from the upper hall for Janet, while the room over the kitchen, heated by a drum from the kitchen stove, would be a fine place for the boys. Ailsa heard about closets, an extra room for emergencies, a new staircase, and a covered porch at back and front, and her troubled face grew serene. Her coming house rose commodious before her, a fixed fact. No more an alien or a wanderer, seated at her own hearthstone, a family of her kin about her, she could constitute her home in the

fashion of that of her fathers. Mrs. Garth was so assured, so self-reliant, and so undoubting that she conveyed these qualities to those about her. Ailsa received their full benefit.

“You need not watch your carpenter nor give him orders after you have once told him what you want. He will do the work in the quickest and most reasonable way, and you will see that, though he is working by the day, he scarcely gives himself time to eat. He is one of the people made to do better for others than for themselves. He was born in an outlandish country called Altruria.”

“Eh?” said Ailsa. “I ne’er heard o’ that country.”

“It lies so far off that no one has ever visited there. The climate is not favorable to us nineteenth-century people,” laughed Mrs. Garth. And then along the path to meet them came a tall, lean, freckled girl, stooping under the weight of a fat baby named for the time Olive. And, though Mrs. Garth did not know it, this girl had lived all her life in Altruria, and found there congenial air.

“Friday,” said Mrs. Garth to Ailsa, “I will come for you in the surrey to stay over night at my house, and we will talk about what you will need to buy for your house, and how you will arrange your life.”

The next morning, when Ailsa awoke, she found that she was restored to her natural calm, energetic

self. She had become physically rested after her long journey, and she was able now to adjust herself to her surroundings. The strange accents, the foreign landscape, the ways so different from her life-long environment, had at first discomfited her. She had been prepared to see Indians in full suits of feathers, scouring up and down, possibly even out after scalp-locks, but she had not expected to live in their wigwams or to see Humes gone down to the level of Bealses. She had been dazed at finding herself in a country so rich in land that the ownership of one hundred and sixty good acres had been an affair of little interest; where a gypsy family could settle down in a homestead unhindered; where a decent bequeathed house could be turned into a byre for cows and sheep; and where a girl of fourteen could, unmolested and unassisted, administer a house, five acres of land, and five children, pay her own taxes, plan her own future, and no one consider the matter worthy of comment.

But God "giveth songs in the night," and bestows blessings on his beloved in their sleep; as in ancient days he gave visions and made his goodness to pass before them in their dreams, so still, "when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." So on this night, in the language of those among whom she had been

reared, Ailsa had been "visited." God had met her in the wilderness, and allured her, and spoken comfortably unto her, and strengthened her heart, and renewed her will, and increased to her wisdom and charity, that her last days might be her best days, that life's late autumn might bear life's richest fruits, and that, while yet living, Ailsa might not sink down in apathy and ignorance into a spiritual death.

She awoke: the sun had risen; along the still air came to her the ring of the hammer of the indefatigable Bilman; the busy Sis was in the "lean-to," getting ready the breakfast, and out in the yard Pam and Lola were neither fluting nor dancing, but were gathering chips and refuse wood to make a fire under the big iron kettle mounted on stones—for, to-day Sis was to do her family washing.

Ailsa's heart went out to these children; beyond them she realized a redoubled responsibility toward the Humes, and this love and responsibility renewed her strength; once more she felt *at home*. Our skies may change, but love and duty are the same for evermore.

David was coming across the field at a swinging pace; the work at the "stage-house" had opened to him a new existence. Ailsa went out to meet him:

"David, laddie, I want ye to go back an' fetch me the chiel Bruce. He mustna stay wi' yon

evil-tongued anes ony mair. I can pay Sis here for his keep wi' me. It will help the lassie, an' what is a bit o' siller to set over against the guid o' the wee lad? I waud better gie him up-bringin' the noo than siller after I am deid. So go bring me the bairn, an' tell Janet an' the puir chiel Turk to come here an' I will gie them a lesson in sewin'. Janet can spen' her time here learnin' what is guid for her, not havverin' wi' they Bealses."

Janet and Bruce speedily arrived under convoy of David, but Mrs. Beals had asserted herself and refused to allow Turk and Pope to go near "that proud foreign piece." If, Mrs. Beals thought, she owned anything in the world, it was her children, and she'd have no one interferin' an' settin' up that the dummy Pope had ought to be schooled, and Turk had ought to be made like other people. She'd show 'em.

"When I told Turk to come on an' learn to sew," said David, "Mis' Beals nearly took the place. She went to ravin' an' pitchin' an' chargin' about like mad."

However, on Thursday Turk arrived, eager to "learn somethin'." Pope had been hired by a "tie-man" to give a day to cutting railroad ties in Sis Gower's woods. As Pope's only means of communication with the outer world, Turk had been sent with him; but Pope was quick at catching signs when he chose to be, and, having

settled himself at his work and given poor little Turk half the lunch of biscuit and bacon, he had offered her the day to go to Sis Gower's.

Turk was now so far accustomed to Ailsa that she dropped her apron from before her deformed face, but she kept behind Ailsa's chair, reaching her needlework around for inspection. Ailsa was learning to catch the girl's thick speech, and their talk was about schools where "dummies like Pope" could learn things, and about doctors who could cut and change a face such as Turk's to look like other people's.

"But don't you think," said Turk, returning to her grievance, "that, when God knew how to make me an' Pope right, he ought to done it? Wasn't it bad enough to make us Bealses, 'stid of like Mis' Jonsing down by the brook? What did he do it for? I wouldn't treat poor children so!"

"Lassie," said Ailsa, "ye are askin' me hard questions. I canna answer them a'; but I know it is sin, not God, that is chargeable in human dools, an' somehoo your parents are the anes answerable for the meeserable condition o' yoursel' an' the dumb laddie. Maybe for that hardness o' hairt that doesna pity you, and willna take pains to get you help, their forebears before them are answerable that they suld be harder than brute beasts to their childer! It seems to me some power ought to be able to stan' between you two

an' sic unnatural parents. But let me tell you, lassie, there is ane named the Lord Christ, who sees a', an' kens a', an' takes tent for us a'. He can help you wi' a strong han' an' a stretched-oot arm. The hearts o' a' are in his han', an' like rivers o' water he turns them whaur he will. Gif ye kneel down every day and pray to him, 'O Lord Christ, help me an' Pope,' he'll surely dae it, tho' hoo or when I canna tell ye. He lo'es you baith, though ye mayna know it."

The little girls steadily and silently drew their needles in and out the seams of sewing—work for Sis; "Miss" and the baby played with cobs; Bruce sat seriously surveying a busy ant-hill on the door-path. Ailsa knit, and her mind wandered in a weary maze. Once it had been so easy to refer all to God, to go to the Book and get direction thence, and follow it. But, set face to face with the Beals problem, what was God's doing, what was man's? Had these tyrants any real rights derived from an accident of birth? If only to be obeyed "in the Lord," could they expect any obedience at all? What honor could possibly be given to them? Rather than like parents, they were like two horrible, irresponsible jagged wheels that caught and held and tore under their grip these wretched human things.

Turk's thick voice clacked out a question: "How will he help folks when they pray to him?"

"I don't know," said Ailsa, desperately. "I only know he does it—sometimes by giving them verra guid sense to help themsels."

On Friday Mrs. Garth came with the surrey and took Ailsa and Bruce to town with her; Janet was left with Sis in Ailsa's place. Mr. Gage had hired David to go early to town next day, to help drive in mules for shipping. That suited Ailsa.

"You'll come to me airly as ye can, David, an' we'll go to the tailor-man an' buy ye claes. I'll outfit ye a' wi' my ain siller the noo, an' when we get they Bealses ousted an' your farm weel in han', ye can aye provide for yer ainsels."

There was much to tell Mrs. Garth. Ailsa's heart was very full of Sis Gower and her brood: what a conscientious, hopeful, loving little house-mother it was, with faith in her children's future, faith even in the recreant father; how those long, lean arms washed, ironed, scoured, lifted, and then fondled and cradled the baby; what active feet, going here and there all day; and what self-denial, that scarcely allowed herself enough to eat, lest the rest go hungry! Then there were the Bealses to discuss. "David was a' for drivin' them oot the noo, but upo' the edge o' winter, an' wi'out any providin', it didna seem to me the Lord would be pleased wi' it. I tell't David the Lord had been wi' them an' wi' us a lang time, an' we

ought to bear wi' them the while. They are a dreadfu' lot, but they twa puir unfortunates Pope an' Turk, wi' their outlandish names, seem to ha' guid in 'em. Ye ken there was foun' some guid thing toward the Lord God o' Israel in one from the house o' Jeroboam. I wouldna lichtlie the grace o' God, but I ha' no verra great hopes o' the rest o' the Bealses."

"'Ragweed,' my husband calls them—'Ragweed,'" said Mrs. Garth.

"Aye," said the cautious Scot, "they may be ragweed, sure eno', but I ha' heard gardeners say that some o' the fairest flowers that blaw i' kings' gardens were once common weeds, made flowers by care an' cultivation. We canna tell but some o' the same ragweed may bloom brawlie some day i' the gardens o' our God. When I went yon, a week ago, I felt my speerit overwhelmed within me, an' my heart within me was desolate; but the Lord has laid his right han' on me an' strengthened me, an' set me upo' my feet; he has given me an errand out yon to do for him, an' to do God's errands is aye better than hoardin' siller or livin' or dyin' to our ainsels."

Janet was another theme of discussion. "I canna mak the lassie oot," said Ailsa; "she talks so strange, wi' gran' words o' lace an' velvet an' pearls, when she hasna a fresh sack to her back or a second gown! She aye wanners aff intil a

gowden future wi'out turnin' her hand to the present needcessity."

"She doesn't know what to do nor where to begin," said Mrs. Garth. "She has a keen mind and a strong will. She is ambitious. Her ambition, her native pride, have wandered into the only path opened before them, and that was found in some romance that she has read. I would lay hold of her pride and ambition as means to make her womanly; I would give her just as nice and pretty a room as I could, and dress her neatly and keep her in school. Let us supply her with books, since she likes them, and let books be her friends."

Finally, on Saturday afternoon, Ailsa returned in the surrey, taking with her neat garments for Janet and a large bundle of clothing sent by Mrs. Garth to Sis for herself and family. She was accompanied by Bruce, majestic in a new suit and a Scotch cap, and clasping in his arms a small framed picture of the Child Christ. Of all the things he had seen in Mrs. Garth's home, this picture of an earnest-faced, serene little Hebrew boy most attracted Bruce. He had placed it before him in a corner of the sofa and held communion with it for hours; he took it with him to the table and to bed; and when about to leave the house, disdaining a jumping-jack and a ball, he had clasped this picture in his arm, remarking,

"The Holy Boy is coming too." He had found a comrade suited to his need, silent but appreciative.

If Bruce was content with his picture, David, riding beside the surrey, was proud as any young heir newly entered into a fortune. For the first time in his life he had two suits of new clothes and a supply of shirts and shoes! Further explanation of his joyful pride would be superfluous.

Uncle Moses Barr had called to say that there would be preaching at the church next day. Therefore on Sabbath morning Aunt Ailsa in her Sunday best, her Bible folded in a clean kerchief, David in his glorious new store-clothes, which he had kept prudently at the "stage-house," Janet and Bruce in great splendor, Sis and Pam and Miss in clothes sent by Mrs. Garth, formed a procession toward the church. To see them pass by, the Beals family had drawn up along the fence. Saul sat perched like a crow on a post; Deb, her snake-locks streaming, leaned her elbows on the topmost rail; the children, according to their ages, thrust their faces between the rails.

"Ho!" said Saul. "Ha!" cried Deb. "Hi, yi, yi, yi!" squeaked the children, and there was a sudden rolling and screwing up of eyes and a thrusting out of tongues. If it had not been for the sanctity of his new suit, David would have refreshed himself with a fight then and there.

“Gif ye wadna spier at them, ye wadna ken what they puir feckless bodies were daeing,” said Ailsa. “Come awa’, my lad. Does not the Buik say that the weeked laugh God’s people to scorn, shoot out the lip, an’ shake the heid? It is sae the warl’ ower, an’ people maun aye act in accordance wi’ their lichts. The warl’ is fu’ o’ licht an’ learnin’ an’ Christianity, an’ yon puir vagrums ken naething about it a’. They canna read, they hanna the Buik, they are wi’out God or hope in the warl’; an’ yet, David, my mon, they are immortal souls. Somebody—the Church, the State, or some person—is to blame for it, for we are a’ our brithers’ keepers, an’ somebody has no kept them.”

Pope and Turk had not been drawn up in the dress parade at the fence. They had quietly deployed across the fields, and when out of the family sight had humbly marched in as the rear-guard of their friends. Arrived at the church, as they felt unfit to enter, these two passed around to the side of the building, where, under an open window, Turk could gather something of what passed within, and translate it in her own fashion to Pope. For this child was the only being in the world who had cared enough for the dumb boy to establish a method of communication with him, throwing the succor of human sympathy within the wall of silence that beleaguered him around.

Great was the surprise in the little church when the delegation headed by David and Ailsa entered.

The Humes, then, after all, were somebody, and did not belong to those Bealses. Here was the Scotch aunt, who was tearing down and building up at "the stage-house," and great friends with the Garths, magnates of the county-town. Well, those Humes were handsome children, and she had taken up with Sis Gower too, poor little trick! with her brood of brothers and sisters.

After service Mr. and Mrs. Gage came up and shook hands, and, with Missouri hospitality, invited the whole seven to dinner, so that they could return to service in the afternoon. Mr. Gage was eager to know what was to be done. He said the Bealses had been as pricks in his eyes and thorns in his side. They kept dogs that worried his sheep, and a miserable little fice that ran his chickens. They robbed his garden and his watermelon-patch and his hen-roost. Mrs. Gage, with tears in her eyes, explained how they had carried off a watermelon she had expected to take the prize at the county fair, and had despoiled the chicken-yard of a big yellow-legged Brahma rooster.

David heard and blushed. He had not taken part in these predatory expeditions, but he knew right well that a great round of that melon, glowing in crimson, black, green, and white, had dis-

appeared under his own spoon, and that down his throat had traveled one of the ever-to-be-regretted yellow legs of the Brahma rooster.

“But I’m glad to see,” said Mr. Gage, “that you’re not of that stripe. If I’d understood that those Bealses were vagrums that had come in on you, I’d have helped you to oust them long ago. But you struck here about the same time, and what is everybody’s business is nobody’s. My sheep take my time.”

“Do you keep sheep?” said Ailsa. “I was brought up on a sheep-farm, an’ I ken mair about sheep than ony ither thing. I lo’e upo’ the hills the white flocks. There is naething brings the guid Lord so near i’ wark as the wark o’ the shepherd; it is a’ sown an’ glitterin’ wi’ promises. Aye, why canna I keep sheep, an’ David Hume also, i’ the united Hume lan’s, ance they Bealses are awa’?”

Mr. Gage was delighted. The thieving Bealses and their dogs gone, and peaceful, honest sheep feeding on the Hume uplands, while in the low bottom fields between, growing green and nodding, the corn for their winter food, and in the meadows waving the heavy grass, and, after haying, the ricks rising like great brown dunes,—this would be comfort indeed! He had a hundred and fifty ewes which he could not winter. Why should not Ailsa buy them to begin her flocks? Fortune

was benignant—so benignant that he dreamed of these schemes through all the afternoon service.

The weeks went by: “the stage-house” was finished and set in order; sheds had been built for sheep, and a yard with troughs, and a hundred and fifty ewes had been driven up the road from Mr. Gage’s farm to Ailsa’s.

The fire was lit on the hearth—a sacred fire, kin to that which burned in the tabernacle of the Lord. Ailsa Crathie, “after much tossing both by land and the high sea,” had found a safe habitation and gathered about her a family of her own blood—a condition dear to the soul of every true Scot. David, placed at the head of the well-set table, given a seat of honor by the fire, felt his heart swell with pride.

The day was done—the first day in the new home. Ailsa took the Book from the stand in the corner:

“Sit ye a’ down, childer; we will noo gie ourselves an’ our hoose to God in worship.”

“The Holy Boy is coming too,” said Bruce, taking his stool, holding his picture under his arm.

“Aye, he is here,” said Ailsa, and her face shone bright as in the day “when a holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart.”

CHAPTER VI.

“AN’ YO’S GWINE CHA’GE ME!”

“Belubbed fellow-trablers, in holdin’ forth to-day
I haven’t got no special tex’ for what I’s goin’ ter say.
My sermon will be berry short, an’ dis yere am de tex’ :
Dat half-way doin’s ain’t no ’count in dis worl’ nor de nex’.”

THE buggy with yellow wheels turned up the lane to the house seized and held by “the Bealses.” The late-lingering Indian summer made all the land beautiful. That morning “the Bealses” had killed a pig which had all summer foraged for itself in the woods along the brook. Just as it was reverting to its ancestral state as a wild boar, Pope and Turk gave chase to it, Saul slaughtered it, and, having borrowed Mose Barr’s great iron kettle and some other neighbor’s saw and big knife, the Beals family, gathered about the fire under the kettle, were trying out a modicum of lard, chopping sausage, cutting up meat, and generally enjoying themselves.

“Where hast thou been, sister?—‘Killing swine.’
Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble,”

hummed Mrs. Garth. "I think Shakespeare's prophetic soul must have foreseen this picture before he wrote the witch parts of Macbeth."

"Hello!" said Dr. Garth; "you all seem to be busy."

"Hevin' a reg'lar picnic," said Saul, tossing fat into the pot.

"Are you going to be here all winter?" asked Mrs. Garth.

"Whar else would we be, whatever?" demanded Mistress Beals.

"As that is so, we may be able to do you a good turn," said Mrs. Garth, amiably. "Over in the town is a very fine school, a State school for the deaf and dumb. If you will send your son Pope over there, he can be taught to read and write, to do shoemaking, printing, or carpentry, so that he can earn a good living. It will be no expense to you—even his clothes will be provided. He can go at once if you like."

"Wal, I don't like. What business is it of yours, or anybody's, if Pope is a dummy? Ef he can't talk, he can't talk back sass like the rest of 'em, nor cuss like his dad."

"He cannot be taught to talk, you know, but he can learn to read and to work and to be a good man."

"Wal, our young 'uns, I'll let you know, ain't gwine to be no better nor we be. We can't read,

an' they ain't gwine to, an' nobody needn't come 'round here meddlin' with what b'longs to us, I can tell you. Pope ain't gwine to larn nothin'."

"See, here, man," said Dr. Garth to Saul; "it is your right and duty as a father to have that boy educated so far as he can be. Won't you send him over to the school, if only for your own good?"

"Deb kin have her own way 'bout the boy," said Saul, lazily, "an' I ain't goin' to vote to have him go off 'les' we'uns is paid for his work. He ain't free till he's twenty-one, an' he has to work for us till then, 'les' somebody gives us a dollar a day for his freedom."

"I won't let him go for no dollar a day," said Deb, angrily.

"But think how much more useful he would be to you if he only knew something!" urged the doctor.

"Yer needn't say no more; I won't, 'cause I won't," said Deb.

"At least, I am sure you must want your little girl's face cured," said Mrs. Garth, glancing at Turk, who, with her apron held over the bridge of her nose, stood behind her mother. "There is a surgeon in St. Louis who will make her face right for nothing, and I will pay her board in the hospital, and some young ladies over in the town will fit her out for the trip and pay her fare, if

you will let her go. The schoolteacher tells us she is very bright indeed. If you have her defect cured, some day she may be a teacher too."

"Set that gal up fer a teacher!" shrieked Deb. "Get her a lot of new clo'es, an' take her off trips on the cyars, an' pay her keep in Saint Louis! What's good enough fer me is good enough fer her, an' nobody dressed me up an' sent me off trips." Then, with a sudden change of tone, she added: "Turk can't go nowhar whatever 'thout me. Ef you'll dress me up and send me 'long to St. Louis, an' pay my keep, why, I'll let her go."

"No, you don't, old woman," put in Saul; "you don't go off a-gallivantin' an' me lef' home, ye don't."

"What you ask is impossible," said Doctor Garth; "but, as you are so opposed to the poor child's having a trip and good clothes, why, I will take her over to the town for three or four weeks, and perform the operation myself, rather than have her left as she is."

"No, you won't," said Deb; "she'll stay jes' as she was made. It's none of your business. S'pose she does look bad?—it don't hurt."

"Hurt! she suffers more from it every day," cried Mrs. Garth, "than you are capable of suffering in a lifetime! It is all your fault some way, no doubt, and if your heart were not as hard as

a stone, you would give your life to remedy her misfortune, if it were necessary."

"Well, neither of you needn't come here meddlin' an' tellin' us what to do," said Deb, turning her back, stirring the kettle, and ordering Turk to go for more wood.

"Once for all," said Doctor Garth, clearly, "over at the town is a good school where your dumb boy can be taught; and at my house is a cure for Turk's face."

"We don't know nor care nothin' 'bout it," said Saul; but behind these brutal parents Dr. Garth saw fixed upon him the earnest glance of a pair of big dark-blue eyes full of longing and misery. He answered that look by a long, firm gaze; then, saying to his wife, "We can do nothing; come away," he turned Dandy's head toward the road.

"Confounded fiends!" said the doctor furiously, between his teeth.

"Can nothing be done?" cried Mrs. Garth. "Cannot we apply to the courts?"

"There is no law under which we could plead a case," said the doctor. "Pope and Turk are neither maimed, frozen, slashed, nor imprisoned; against such cruelties there would be redress in law; but the Bealses confine themselves to the sharper cruelty of keeping the boy in brutal ignorance, and the girl in an agony of shame over a deformity; and against such there is no law.

What we need is a law for compulsory education, and under that we could get the boy. There should also be a law that all deformities should be reported at birth, and promptly remedied, as far as possible, at the expense of the parents or the State. How many club-feet, hare-lips, deformed hands and shoulders, I have seen, where ignorant parents did not know that remedy was possible, or, knowing it, were too poor or too stingy or too indifferent to apply for it! It is the duty of every county clerk to report the case of every deaf mute; but the duty is often neglected, so that, incredible as it may seem, parents in the very State or county with an institution know nothing of its advantages. Again, as in this case, the proffered good is recognized and rejected. The State, as the greater parent of the child, should protect it from the curse of ignorance and from neglected deformity. That would be for the benefit of the State. There would be less criminals, and fewer helpless paupers for the State to support—and the glory of a State is a moral, educated population, devoid of physical defect.”

Mrs. Garth had asked David Hume to defer any warning of ejection to the Beals faction until she had made her effort to remove Pope to the protection of the institution for deaf mutes, and to secure attention for Turk. Possibly these two, removed for a time, would not be desired back.

The undertaking having ignominiously failed, she stopped at Ailsa's to notify them.

"It's verra cruel," said Ailsa; "yon puir bairnie Turk gangs aboot wi' her apron ower her mou' an' tears in her eyes for verra shame. An' at the schule there are aye some ill-faured callents to mak' jibes at her an' flyte her for her bad mou'. Her mither winna let her coom here to get a bit teachin' fro' me, but I gie her a gown an' a wrap, an' she slips aff to the kirk when there's preachin', an' some days she gets here for a little teachin' in needlework an' housework an' keepin' hersel' tidy. What can a body do, mem?—the Buik is clear against deceivin' an' disobeyin', an' yet ane canna thole let a bairn grow up like a brute!"

"Certainly not. These laws are for the normal relation, not for such exceptional cases as this. The human parents being worse than brutes, you must bring the poor children into as close relations as possible with the heavenly Parent. Let them know they have a friend somewhere. How do you come on with your Hume children?"

"Verra weel, considerin'. Janet goes to school an' tak's hold richt weel o' needlework an' a' housewifely ways. David is a braw lad for work, but he doesna tak' to his buik as he suld if he is to prosper. Ye ken, mem, that ane canna touch pitch an' no be defiled, an' for sure my bairns have brocht fro' they Bealses when ill-faured

ways an' lang'age that is no richt. But I expectit no less, for they see the evil an' are gey ready to correct it, an' as there is bluid an' dear love between us a', we shall win through. The bairn Bruce seems no to have ta'en in ony o' their evil. He bein' sae young, I suld ha' expectit he wad ha' the maist evil fro' foregatherin' wi' sic gypsies; but he is aye quiet an' biddable, an' clean-mou'ed when he sees fit to speak at a', an' he seldom speaks save to spier at ye some auld-farrant questions about sternies an' flowers an' snow-flakes, or his frien' the Holy Boy, as he ca's him; an' somewhiles it seems to me maist like papistry an' worship o' images to see him sit luikin' at yon picture, or talkin' wi' it, tellin' it a' his queerly thochts. When he gets an apple or a cake or a sweetie, he gies his picture some, layin' it down before it wi' a smile, sayin', 'Tak' some.' Is it wrong?"

"No," said Mrs. Garth; "what safer companion can he have than his picture? There is kindred between souls, Ailsa, as between blood relations, and somewhere there has been an artist soul whose ideal of a noble, sinless, divine child is just the ideal hidden in Bruce's heart of all that he can love most. Make his picture a means of bringing him close to the child Christ in daily thought. I have sometimes wondered what a young life would be, nurtured on and measured by the Christ

Child, and so daily from child to boy, from boy to youth, from youth to man, keeping that one measure and friendship close alongside of one's life; and at last, in the prime of manhood, when life is sweetest and strongest, realizing that self-nunciation which for us trod the way of the cross, of death and burial; and then for ever after living in the light and worship of the ascended Christ who went up on high, leading captivity captive and securing good gifts for men."

"Aye," said Ailsa, "they are thochts to feed upon. Yon is the chiel Bruce wi' a pet sheep; he seems to unnerstan' sheep. When I look at his calm broo an' deep, thoctfu' eyes I hear the wards o' the psalm, 'Though ye hae lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings o' a dove covered wi' siller, an' her feathers wi' yellow goold.' He got no ill fro' they Bealses, either because o' his innocence or his silent, thoctfu' ways. I hope it is no supersteection to fancy the Lord has had an angel aye by the chiel to screen him. As for the ithers, they will coom a' richt some day. But what could I expec'? They that board wi' cats maun look for scarts, sure eno'."

The Bealses had not within two or three days finished their self-gratulations and scornful pride in the ignominious rout of "them yellow-buggy people" when their security was invaded by David Hume and Lawyer Porter. David in new clothes,

David the head of the family, David with his heavy brown locks well combed, David with a hundred and fifty sheep under his hand, was no longer the lazy, slouching, wide-eyed boy of a few weeks before. David asserted himself, he fairly towered, and he surveyed the wide rolling acres with the eye of a landlord.

"Beals," said Mr. Porter, "we have come to notify you that you must vacate this place the first of April. Until then, as the weather is coming cold, and you are a large, ill-provided family, Hume will allow you to stay here."

"He will!" said Deb. "We'll stay here as long as we like, for him."

"See here," said Mr. Porter; "the court has made me guardian of these Hume children."

"Do you call that great gawking lummoX a child?" shrilled Deb.

"In the eyes of the law he is an infant, though of stately height."

Hearing himself commended, David straightened his back bravely.

"An' you an' he are comin' hyar warnin' us out," shrieked Mrs. Beals, "when I've plumb wore myself to a frazzle workin' for that grand rascal, feedin' an' doin' for him for two year, an' he eatin' for ten! If he wants we'uns to go, let him pay his board."

"You have had in the rent all you'll get,

Beals, so prepare to go in April," said Mr. Porter, calmly.

But Mrs. Beals eyed her partner :

"If you back down to them, Beals, you'll have me to settle with. I'll wear you out, sure."

"If we're warned out," said Beals, who was already weary of a settled life, and longing for the road, "he'll be welcome to what's left of it."

"Mark you," said Mr. Porter, "I shall look after this place closely, and if you burn up the fences, or tear down the porch and out-buildings, or destroy the doors and windows, you'll be arrested for wanton destruction of property. You've nothing to pay damages with, but you two can go to jail, and the county will farm out your children. That would be better for them—and, on the whole, I sha'n't be very sorry if you destroy things."

The vision of four prison walls was terrible to these born wanderers; the slow moving along the roads, the camps on the outskirts of woodlands, the idleness and freedom, the wide air, the poaching on gardens, hen-roosts, pig-sties, and clothes-yards, were dear delights, and they would rather stay revengeful hands than risk the loss of the joys of roaming.

Mr. Porter saw that they quailed. "I'll not forget what I say," he added; "and do you fix your plans to go in April."

As he walked back with David to Ailsa's house he said: "David, it was your childishness and ignorance that caused you to be saddled with that degraded crew. The childishness will pass with years, but not the ignorance, unless you take measures. If you are not to be cheated, overreached, scorned, and always at the lowest level of your neighborhood, you must learn what will put you on a level with the best. You must study and read and learn to cast accounts well. You must take the county paper and an agricultural paper; and, David, if you are going to be a man at all, you might as well aim to be the best kind of a man. Take a religious paper, and know what is going on in the world of work and religion and charity. Don't be a clod; don't be merely a big fine animal: be a man."

They were standing on the door-step, and Ailsa heard them. She came out. "David is 'shamed to go to school," she said, "bein' heid an' shouthers aboon the lave; an', moreover, he's wanted wi' the sheep. But if David will stick to his learnin' i' the e'enings, I'll board the schulemaister to teach him."

"Mistress Crathie is willing to make sacrifices for you, David."

"An' what for no should I mak' sacrifices an' spen' a bit o' siller on my ain cousins three times removed?" said Ailsa.

"Take the offer, David," said Mr. Porter, "and I'll send you some books and papers and magazines about sheep."

"I'll do it," said David. "It will come tough, but I won't be like the Bealses."

"Hoot!" said Ailsa; "the warl' wad be turnin' withershins indeed gif a Hume could level wi' the Bealses."

David manfully tackled his studies under the direction of the schoolmaster, and for two hours every evening toiled with book, pencil, and pen. After that he heard the master read "sheep books," but in his heart believed Uncle Moses Barr a better instructor than the printed pages. Mr. Gage had recommended as shepherd and factotum Uncle Moses, who had established himself for a year past in a cabin on Ailsa's land. Uncle Mose, like most of the negroes of his generation, had allowed his children to grow up idle and drunken, and had now on his hands a troop of grandchildren to support. It was very difficult for him to get any work out of these juveniles, but one day he had brought to the barn Ike, his ten-year-old grandson, to cut fodder in a corn-cutter for the sheep. Ike, sitting melancholy under the shadow of the barn, was found by Si Beals, who invited him to come along and ask "Mis' Jonsing" for some corn to pop.

"I's got to stay 'n' wuk fer gran'dad," said Ike;

"wisht you'd stay an' he'p me. Nen I'd be done, an' go to Mis' Jonsing's wid yo'."

"Ketch me workin' fer enybody!" said the youthful Beals.

"Oh, yo' stay!" said the crafty little Ike; "de ole man can't git me to wuk very long. I'll cut. Mis' Jonsing down by de brook likes me more'n she does you; she'll gib more co'n ef I'm 'long."

"I'll wait fer you," said Si, "down in the fiel' ridin' yo' grandad's mule."

"No, Si; yo' stay an' he'p me cut fodder, an' I'll gib yo' some ob de pay, an' we'll go git a team an' take a ride. I's gwine to cha'ge him fo' my wuk; I won't wuk fo' noffin."

By this time Uncle Mose, who, within the barn, had heard all, was filled with mighty wrath; he leaned half-way out of the nearest window, and his baleful eyes fixed the scion of his house.

"So yo's gwine cha'ge me, is yo'?" he shouted. "Who done took cyar ob yo' ebber since yo' was bawn, and of yo' daddy befo' yo'? Who sent yo' to school, whar yo' doan learn noffin'? Who buyed dem shoes yo' hab on? Who git yo' dat coat on yo' back? Who buys all yo' vittles, yo' little nigga? An' yo's gwine cha'ge me! Who tole yo' yo' mout be sittin' dar wid dat Bealses? Yo' come ob decent fambly. De Barrs was plumb gentlemen, an' no low-down white trash like

Bealses. De Barrs raised me to be somebody, an' tink well ob myse'f; nebber 'spected a boy ob mine 'd be coaxin' a mis'ble wagon-tramper to 'sociate wid him; dar you sit demeanin' ob yer-se'f; an' yo's gwine cha'ge me! What yo' tink de worl' comin' to when little niggas like yo' lie roun' an' do noffin? 'Spec' it's gwine rain bacon an' griddle-cakes on yo'? Yo' 'lows yo'll hire a team an' go dribin' roun' like young white gemmen, does yo'? He's gwine down in pascher lot to ride my mule, am he? An' yo's gwine share pay wid him, an' yo' doan wuk fer noffin, an' you's gwine cha'ge me!"

Here the buggy with yellow wheels came near, and Doctor Garth, seeing that the gray-haired negro waxed eloquent, stopped to get the benefit of his discourse.

Uncle Mose rolled his lurid eyes toward the yellow wheels: "Doan yo' listen to me, boss. Jes dribe on whar you's goin'. Dis yere am a fambly matter I'm spatiatin' upon, an' I kin settle it 'thout you."

Dr. Garth drove on laughing, and the irate Uncle Mose continued his discourse: "Yo' Ike, yo's jes de mos' ornary boy roun' 'cept Bealses. Teacher says yo' doan learn noffin; yo' don't earn yo' keep. 'Spec' me to be wukin' an' worryin' fo' yo' from mawnin' till night, does yo'? Who's got a right to gib yo' orders, ef I haben't? Who's got

a right to yo' wuk? Who's got his min' made up to gib yo' a lickin'? I'll wear yo' out, see ef I doan. An' when I comes cha'gin' on yo' wid a good hick'ry stick, yo'll change yo' min' 'bout gwine cha'ge me!"

Here Uncle Mose, closing his oration, went with such determination for a piece of hickory that Si Beals fled incontinent, and Ike, grasping the handle of the corn-cutter and whirling it with all his might, cried in a lamentable voice, "Doan yo' see how hard I's wukin', gran'dad?"

"Wukin' hard, is yo'? You'll wuk all day, or dat hick'ry stick'll fin' out de reason why, fo' suah."

This announcement fell on Ike's head like a brick. He bent himself like a bow over the handle of the corn-cutter, and as it went round and round no prisoner in a treadmill, no horse tramping on a wheel at a wood-sawing, ever looked so dejected as Uncle Mose Barr's Ike.

CHAPTER VII.

AILSA'S ERRAND FOR HER LORD.

“And following her beloved Lord
In decent poverty,
She makes her life one sweet accord
And deed of charity.

“**I** CANNA unnerstan' why winter doesna come,”
said Ailsa often.

The last days of the year drew nigh. Ailsa had been accustomed to seeing snow falling thickly in November, filling the dales, lying deep on the hills, whirling in blinding swirls, and endangering all exposed flocks. She had known winter days when the lamps were kept burning until nine o'clock in the morning, and were lit again between three and four in the afternoon. But here the shortest days of the year had come, and there was a fine golden light glowing across the land at seven in the morning; at five in the afternoon the sunset pink was changing to gray; and there had been no snow but a few flurries which left little white wreaths curled under the shelter of the fences. The sheep were out all day nibbling in the fields, and coming

trooping in at four to be fed with ground corn and salt at the troughs.

This mild winter of the West was a strange experience to Ailsa. She did not feel sure that she enjoyed it; she whispered to herself that there was something uncanny in having no swirling storms; and when there was a week when icicles hung from the eaves, and glittering mail bound the well-ropes, and the water-barrel was frozen over, Ailsa felt more at home. It was like what she had always known of winter.

She was busy enough. She was an indefatigable knitter, and her notions of the proper number of pairs of socks for a family of four kept her needles clicking; she boarded the schoolmaster; and she found plenty of sewing to do in furnishing bedding and clothing for this family who had come to her unprovided with anything but needs. Besides all this, Ailsa often took care of the baby for Sis Gower, and gave Sis lessons in sewing, knitting, or various kinds of work; while sometimes on Saturday poor Turk found opportunity to escape to "the stage-house" for varied instruction and for talks about the school which could teach "dummies" and about the surgery which could adjust "such dreadful faces."

Turk went to school. Satisfied as "the Bealses" were with their ignorance, they had realized that it might be convenient to have one member of the

family able to read and write; and, as Turk had insisted upon going to school, she went.

The schoolmaster was a great comfort to Ailsa. He was a young man working his own way through college, with a view to the ministry, and Mistress Crathie regarded him as already crowned with the nimbus of the sacred desk; his foot was "a'ready on they poopit stairs," she said, and so to her in a lofty and most honorable path.

As soon as the five o'clock supper was cleared away, the books came out. The schoolmaster pursued the studies that he had already begun in college, and meanwhile gave Janet help about "sums" and geography questions, and drilled David in writing and arithmetic, and had him read the newspapers or a magazine aloud. It is true that oftentimes the master suspected that David's skull was about as thick as his crop of shaggy brown hair, but then there was one comfort: if ever an idea got into his head, it went in to stay; and David had such a Scotch tenacity of purpose that, having once undertaken to learn something, he would never give over until his end was gained.

At half-past eight the books were put away, the lamp was turned low, and the household gathered about the fire to talk. Bruce, wide-eyed, sat on the schoolmaster's knee. While study was going on, Bruce had filched his share from the tree of knowledge: "What's this?" "What's that?"

“Show me how to write *o* or *x* or *a*.” “Make me my name.” And Bruce made more progress than the other two put together, and before any one was aware of it he could read.

The gala time of the day for Bruce—and, indeed, for the others—was this hour after lessons. Ailsa had been greatly disturbed by the dense ignorance of her Hume relatives in regard to the Scriptures. The Bible was to her especially “the Book;” its imagery filled her mind, and its expressions her speech. Entered into the domain of Scripture, she lost her broadest Scottice, which, moreover, was daily somewhat softening, hearing only what she called “fair English” spoken. In those evening hours, while Ailsa talked, the listening Humes had before their eyes that garden which the Lord planted eastward in Eden, wherein was all that was pleasant to the eye and good for food; they heard the serpent talk with Eve; they shuddered at the doom and the exile; they trembled when fell the fatal blow of Cain; and they fled with him into the land where cities rose and brass was forged and iron rung. With Noah they gathered strange four-footed, creeping, and winged things into the ark; they saw the world drowned, the floods ebb away; they went out with Abraham with God for a leader, followed Eleazar on his mission, and took different sides in the strife between Esau and Jacob. David

shook his thick locks and guessed that Esau was not so much to blame as Jacob; and demanded, "What right had Jacob to wear his brother's Sunday clothes?" With Joseph they were sold into captivity, and climbed with swift steps the golden rounds of the ladder of glory, and sat down beside the Pharaoh on his throne. With Moses they performed wonders, saw the plagues, and in that night of doom led out a rescued people. With Samuel they heard the voice of God, and with David slew Goliath; and David Hume envied his ancient namesake, and sighed in utter amazement when he heard how Israel's young king, Solomon, chose wisdom as better than long life or rubies or dominion. That was quite beyond David's comprehension, and was even more astonishing than going with Daniel into a den of lions, or with the three Hebrews into the seven-fold heated furnace.

At other times Ailsa dwelt on the history of her Lord—his wonderful birth, his holy life, his deeds of mercy, his friendships, his parables, his ungrateful people, the night when all forsook him, the day when the heavens were dark and the earth trembled and the graves were opened. She told of the glory of the Resurrection morning, the splendors of the Ascension day. Then the book of Revelation fired her tongue, and she spoke of a new heavens and a new earth, a "happy, blood-

bought people "wandering in fadeless day, Satan bound, and right triumphant.

Lighting up all this discourse with the apocalyptic imagery of beasts and cherubim, angels and resplendent hosts of saints, seraphs, thrones, altars, horses panoplied for war, bending rainbows, and voices like the sound of many waters, she entranced her listeners; they were spell-bound, their eyes glowed, their breath came short and panting; they were a part of what they heard.

The schoolmaster contributed his share to these evening talks. He told stories of heroes, of pilgrim, Puritan, and cavalier; he told of the wondrous ways of birds, bees, ants, beetles; he talked about the stars, the planets, the birth of worlds. These stories caused the eyes of Bruce to glow, large and luminous like moons; he felt as if he were living in a perennial raree show. Even David's slow thoughts were stirred and quickened; now he could not look at the skies hung with flaming lamps, the clouds chasing each other, the waters doing their work,—he could not drive the share through the sod, nor cut the fallen trees, without thought about the marvels he had heard.

The schoolmaster comforted Ailsa in her anxieties about her Hume children.

"I'm fashin' mysel' about Janet," she said; "she thinks o'er weel o' hersen. She taks oop a hantle o' time decoratin' her room an' trimmin' up her

ainsel; d'ye notice hoo she stan's before yon glass, curlin' the ends o' her braids an' strokin' her eye-brows an' turnin' her head hither an' yon, like a pigeon i' the sun?"

The schoolmaster laughed: "She is only making up for lost time, when she had no glass and no clean clothes. Do not worry about Janet. She does not think too much of herself. I wish some of the other girls in my school thought more of themselves. Janet studies hard; she tries to improve; she aims high in good manners; she is quiet, and not pert and bold. When the trustees or visitors come in, she is my show girl for her lessons and behavior. When she has seen more of the world, she will discover that she is by no means the prettiest and best-dressed person in existence, and she will lose her little vanities."

"Aye, I hope sae," said Ailsa; but she was still anxious.

"Janet, Janet," she would say, "favor is deceitfu' and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth God, she shall be praised."

"But, Aunt Ailsa," said Janet, "can't I fear God just as much if my hair is curled and my apron is real stiff starched?"

"Aye, na doot; but ye maunna care sae much for appearances. The Buik says, 'The Lord looketh upo' the heart,' an' ye ought sae."

Poor Janet was greatly puzzled. Exactly what

was meant by her heart, or how she should look at it, she did not know, but she knew it was a joyful thing to go to school neatly dressed, to have help in her lessons, and to have a pretty bed-room and as nice a home as there was in the neighborhood. She thought with disgust of her sojourning with the Bealses, and she never spoke to one of them now but poor Turk. Janet looked so crestfallen over Ailsa's remarks that the good dame made haste to reassure her:

“Dinna greet, lassie; ye dae as weel as ye ken hoo, an' I ne'er saw a lass tak better to knittin' an' sewin' and housewifely ways.”

Certainly, Janet was industrious and obliging. At the Christmas vacation she went and kept house for Sis Gower for a week, so that Sis could go to Mrs. Garth's and learn to run a sewing-machine and to knot quilts. A circle of King's Daughters had heard of Sis, and were ready to give her a machine, so that she might earn her living in an easier way than by washing and scrubbing.

That week was the gala time of Sis Gower's life. To have three fine meals a day, a warm house, and nothing to do but to learn how to sew on a machine! To have those lovely young ladies come to see her, take her out driving, make things pleasant for her, and buy her aprons and handkerchiefs and shoes! Sis found it as hard to believe that I was I as the dame whose petticoats were cut all

round about when she was on her way to market. Was she really Sis Gower? and yet a lady was telling her to hold her shoulders back and her chin in, and taking an interest in how she looked!

"Why do you worry yourself with that long, freckle-faced girl?" cried one of Mrs. Garth's acquaintances when that lady made the instruction of Sis an excuse for not going out to spend the day.

"These," said Mrs. Garth, "are of the little errands one does for God. Wherever, in the long distances of an endless life, my paths may lie, I know at least that I shall never come this way again; along this road that I travel but once, why not make some flowers spring up by the largess of a word or a smile?"

When Sis Gower came home, bringing a sewing-machine and various other presents, all the neighborhood shared her joy, and David and the schoolmaster achieved a sign: "Machine sewing done; quilts made; comforts knotted; knitting," which thenceforth ornamented Sis Gower's front yard.

David was Sis Gower's good genius: he cut her wood; he mended her roof, chimney, and fence; he threatened Sikey and Pam with thrashings if they were not strictly obedient; he brought her birch-bark, sassafras, and slippery elm from the woods. When work was going on in the long-

neglected front yard of Aunt Ailsa's house, and walks were made, and flower-beds were set out, and trees were planted, and small fruits were put in sheltered rows, David turned his attention to the needs of Sis, and she too had a flower-bed spaded up ready for spring, and evergreens and maples for future shade, while some of the peonies, iris, lilacs, currants, gooseberries, and plums, donated by Mr. Johnson, Mr. Gage, and others, went to Sis.

"That is a kind thocht o' you, David," said Aunt Ailsa. "The widow an' the orphan sit close to the heart o' our God, an' the Buik says, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor.'"

"That night Sis Gower's mother died," said David, "she said, 'Oh, who will help my poor children!' I was standin' over by the stove, and I looked at her and nodded my head. I don't know if she saw me. Maybe she did. Anyway, I know what I meant by it, only, until you came, I didn't know what ought to be done over and above wood-cuttin' or diggin' the garden."

"Weel, David, the Buik says that 'pure religion an' undefiled before God an' the Faither is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, an' keep himself unspotted fro' the warl.'"

The Book! It was Ailsa's court of appeal. When questions arose as to right or wrong, when Janet and David disputed, or when David's

easily-kindled anger arose, "Wrax me the Buik," said Ailsa, "an' I'll deal ye oot the Lord's opin-eens." And when she had found her text and read it clearly, she laid by her Book, for to her mind the affair was settled; nor did her family dispute it.

"Mr. Perry's mules have been tearing around our pasture lot among the sheep!" cried David. "If he's going to keep mules, he ought to build mule fences; an' that's his line of fence to keep up, not ours. If I see his mules there again, I'll fire rocks at them: that will show him what to look for."

"The Buik says, 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath;' also, David, it says that if one offends us, we are to go an' tell him his fault, between oursel's and him alone. You're to go an' speak peaceably to Mr. Perry about they mules, for 'a sof' answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir oop anger.'"

Sometimes when Sabbath came, now that the novelty of going to church in new clothes was over, David preferred to stay at home. "Listen, David, till the words o' the Buik," said Ailsa, turning to her volume of laws and ordinances: "'Forsake not the assembling of yoursels together;' 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the hoose o' the Lord;' 'Lord, I have loved the habitation o' thy hoose, an' the place

where thine honor dwelleth;’ ‘I had rather be a doorkeeper i’ the hoose o’ my God, than to dwell i’ the tents o’ wickedness.’ David, ye’ll no bide hame.”

For now they had service at the little church every Sabbath. That was partly Ailsa’s work. She had been so homesick for the house of her God, those long Sabbaths when the church was shut! . “I hanna eneuch spiritual strength to gae so lang wi’out the preachin’ o’ the Word,” she said to Mr. Gage. “I’m like a bridge that is too weak to stan’ the strain o’ sae lang a span. An’ it’s no guid for the childer to hae sae mony idle Sabbath-days. The Buik says, ‘Those that be planted i’ the hoose o’ the Lord sal flourish i’ the coorts o’ our God.’ We maun hae preachin’ aftener.”

“We haven’t been able to afford it,” said Mr. Gage, “and I don’t see how we can.”

“Why, mon, we can by gi’en mair! What for no? Yester morn i’ the kirk we waur a-singin’,

‘Waur the whole realm o’ nature mine,
That waur a present far too sma’.’

We are aye willin’ to sing that. The whole realm isna ours, an’ we canna gie it, an’ sae we talk large wi’out considerin’ hoo we can be liberal wi’ the wee part o’ the realm o’ nature the Lord has put unner our hans. Hech, mon! I’m thinkin’

if the Lord were sae strict to mark iniquity as in the days o' Ananias an' Sapphira, we suld hear a voice speakin' til us, full o' dread, 'Ye hanna lied unto man, but unto God;' an' there's mony a Sabbath-day, when, after a' our preachin' an' prayin' an' singin', there wad no be eneuch o' us left alive to cast shadow on the kirk porch."

Brother Gage heard, and his face slowly grew purple: he was adding field to field; and brother Jonsing down by the brook was lending yearly more and more out at interest; and Mr. Perry was boasting of great profits on mules; and Widow Munson, because she was a widow, got her religion free, and did not give even two mites!

Happily, brother Gage had grace enough to amend his ways. He headed a subscription list with the best donation he had ever made, and Ailsa gladly added her portion; and when Mr. Gage had made the tour of the neighborhood, there was money for heating the church every Sabbath, and for securing preaching for the Sabbaths hitherto vacant.

On one of these Sabbaths, so blissful to Ailsa because she could hear "soun' preachin'," David, walking to the house of God in her company, beheld Saul Beals chopping up for fuel his lane gate. David did not call his aunt's attention to this direful spectacle; he did not wish to hear

what the Book said about patience exercised toward folks that cut up gates. He had heard Ailsa speak of a "strong inward conviction," and he felt a strong conviction now that he should thrash his old enemy, and he did not wish to discover that said conviction was not in the line of Ailsa's spiritual monitions.

When, after the few minutes' intermission after morning service, the Sabbath-school gathered, David was not in his place. Ailsa could hardly fix her attention on the lesson of the day. "Whaur is David?" she kept asking herself.

David had adjourned to his former home. Not only was the gate demolished, but Saul Beals with great energy was reducing to kindling-wood the door of the smoke-house! David felt a conviction, even an overpowering conviction, that the time to settle with Saul had come. He hung his coat, vest, cravat, and hat on the lane fence, and with a roar, "You've got me to settle with for that there gate and door," he rushed upon Saul as the Huns, with Attila at their head, rushed upon Europe. He put in fine work about Saul's nose and ears; he shook him as a cat shakes a mouse; he counted out Saul's ribs with lusty blows; he prostrated Saul, and, sitting upon him, whooped a pæan of victory. Saul defended himself: he clawed David's face and tore his white "store shirt" in two; he pulled David's bushy hair until it stood up like

a thicket around his purple face. But in the end he admitted that "he didn't want to cut up no more gates and doors." The battle was ended.

David felt as if the fight had done him more good than all the preaching that he had ever heard. He rose up like a giant refreshed with new wine. Not to disgrace Aunt Ailsa, he secured his coat and vest and went home across the fields for repairs. "Sis Gower would see to the shirt, and the least said the soonest mended." But David was reckoning without a scratched face and a black eye.

"Whaur got ye they ill marks, David?" asked Ailsa, when, returned home, she found her "braw laddie" seated "by the ingle-side readin' his buik."

"Well, aunt," said David, "Sunday or no Sunday, I just had to settle Saul Beals's hash for him. He chopped up my gate and my smoke-house door."

"Gif ye ha' bin wi' Saul Beals, I'm no surprised at ye're luiks, laddie; them that boards wi' cats maun expec' scarts."

David looked rather humiliated. The hour of reaction struck. That fight appeared less glorious retrospectively than when it was going hotly on, with whirling arms, set teeth, hot breath, tense sinews, heart thumping like a trip-hammer.

Ailsa looked askance at this latest idol of her heart:

"Weel, laddie, syne ye did fecht Saul, I hope

ye waur helped to thrash him weel?" There spoke the Celt!

"You believe I did!" said David, reviving. "I pounded him into a cocked hat."

Ailsa and Bruce sat down to meditate what this flower of speech might mean. Presently Ailsa spoke:

"David, my sonsie lad, ye are o'er fond o' fecht-in'. I wadna for onything hae ye a quarrelsome man."

David looked rather "birkie" than "sonsie;" he shook his head.

The schoolmaster laughed and quoted:

"And, being young, he changed himself, and grew
To hate the sin that seemed so like his own."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW A PRAIRIE SCHOONER SAILED.

“Here and there a wild flower blushed;
Now and then a bird-song gushed;
Now and then, through rifts of shade,
Stars shone out and sunbeams played.”

LIKE Sir Anthony Absolute, David Hume could say, “Hark ye, I am complaisance itself when I am not thwarted. No one is more easily led—when I have my own way.”

This is such a very crooked and aggravating world that complaisance held on this tenure is exceedingly uncertain. Many were the days when Ailsa, lifting her calm blue eyes to the cloudy face of her “braw callant,” would ask, “What’s wrong wi’ ye the day, my fine laddie?” or, “What are ye glowerin’ at the noo, David, my mon?”

One late February afternoon, having heard loud words in the barn-yard, she questioned David in this way.

“I was clearin’ out Si Beals,” said David; “he came over here after corn-meal and after corn for his chickens. I asked him if having house and wood wasn’t enough, besides all the things in the

house, and said I'd see myself funder before I'd give him an ounce of anything."

"Hoot, laddie! the Buik says, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirst, give him drink.'"

"He has the whole of my well up there—that's drink plenty; and if he's hungry, it's his own fault—he has a hundred acres of my land to raise his victuals on."

"Ay; but it's an ill time o' year to raise victuals the noo. Gif he has no laid by in store, he'll be hungry. The Buik says, 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.'"

"I've lent him house and land—isn't that enough?"

"The Buik says, 'If ony man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.'"

"Come, now, Aunt Ailsa, talk sense. If you go on like that, you might as well say I should leave the Bealses on the land as long as they want to stay, and not fire them out this April."

"Weel, laddie," said the canny Scot, "lan' is different. The Buik sets store by the lan', an' is aye particular that the son should have the lan' his faither left till him. It says that we mustna remove our faither's landmarks, an' it also says that if ony will no work, neither shall he eat. It is true that ane may go too far in helpin' neer-do-

weels, an' ye hae no richt to house in a decent neighborhood idle bodies like they Bealses, wha keepit dogs to rin thé sheep. They maun go in April, the lawyer-body says, an' no doot he is richt; but the day, David, we wad no wish that the puir childer should be toom. Why, mon, the Buik says, 'Gif ony see his brither ha' need, and hath no compassion upo' him, hoo dwelleth the love o' God in him?' David, we maun do a good turn for the credit o' our religion, sae I'll hap up a poun' o' bacon an' a sma' sack o' corn-meal, an' bid Janet take it over to Mistress Beals. We're no verra likely to meet i' the nex' warl', laddie: let us dae them a' the guid we may i' this."

"Oh, well, take your way, Aunt Ailsa," said David, uneasily; "but I'm glad those Bealses are going, for, between you and the Book and Mr. Porter and Mr. Gage and the rest, I'm blest if I know how to treat them. But I can just tell you the neighbors mean to freeze 'em out."

Yes, that was what the neighbors meant to do. The neighbors had talked it over about firesides and after church and on the way home from town meeting, and they had concluded that the borrowing of "the Bealses" must come to an end, and that, if they were not willing to earn bread, they might lack bread. So, when the Beals juniors went on quests, they were not cordially received.

"Wants a bucket of milk, does yer mar, 'cause your cow's dry?" said Widow Munson, her hands on her hips and surveying Peggy Beals. "Your cow's always dry. What else can you expect when she's not half milked? And, first and last, she's not your cow at all, but David Hume's, and he ought to take her to his own place, where she'd be given proper care. No, I hain't got no milk an' no nothin', and you needn't mind coming 'round here again."

Whereupon Peggy Beals withdrew to the road, ran her tongue out at the widow Munson, and threw a clod of mud at the window which Della Munson had elaborately cleaned.

"Potatoes?" said Mr. Gage to Si Beals. "Your par wants potatoes? Why didn't he plant 'em? He had field enough. I told him if he wanted anything he could have it for work, and he could come here and help put up wire fence; but I haven't seen him 'round when there was work to be done."

"A loaf of light bread and a pound of butter, eh?" said Mrs. Gage to Deb. "Well, no, I can't. We've come to the conclusion that you folks have lived off this neighborhood jist about as long as is healthy. We'll pay for work, but we've shut down on giving or lending."—"I declare," she said later to "Mis' Jonsing down by the brook," "it made me feel powerful mean to refuse the mat-

ter of a loaf and some butter ; but Gage and the rest say it is the only way to get rid of 'em, and they are a ruin to the neighborhood ; and when I think of my melon-patch and my chicken-roost, then I do get strength to be firm. But I never thought I'd come to refusing food, whatever."

Still, when that human ferret Si, who was known to be the spoiler of melon-patches and hen-roosts, was seized with pneumonia, Mrs. Gage, armed with flannel and flaxseed, liniment and lotions, mustard and medicine, spent the night at the Bealses, and while Saul Beals snored in his bed and Deb smoked her pipe by the fire, Mrs. Gage nursed and tended the young rascal as if he had been her own boy. Mrs. Munson made Si chicken-soup and toast ; " Mis' Jonsing down by the brook " sent for the doctor for him and paid for his medicine ; and Aunt Ailsa sat up all night with him, and gave him two pairs of woolen stockings of her own knitting. However, it was evident that these tokens of good will in time of sickness were not to be continued in health, and the hegira of " the Bealses " drew near.

The schoolmaster made a last effort in behalf of Pope and Turk. He spent an hour in exhorting and entreating that Pope might be sent to the institution for mutes, and Turk put in the care of Dr. Garth. He endeavored to enlist the selfishness of the parents in this behalf.

"You're losin' of your time, mister, talkin' to we'uns," said Deb. "Nobody can't meddle with our children. We'uns has a right to them, if we hain't got nothin' else. There ain't no sense whatever in tryin' to do for Pope. When he was born, a campin' fambly nigh us said as the pope was the biggest man in all creation, so we named the young un' Pope, an' he went an' turned out a dummy! Ketch me ever takin' any pains to do things for a young un' agin!"

Beneath and beyond all this talk, the facts were that Pope was the only hard worker in the family, and his earnings represented the cash income of the house of Beals. Deb had found out that when poor Turk went to people to ask for things—food, clothing, or money—pity for her deformity and a desire to get her out of sight caused them to give to her what they would deny to any other Beals. In fact, Pope and Turk were useful, and therefore she kept them. The schoolmaster understood this; probably it was clear also to Turk, who, from behind a door, listened to the interview.

When, after his bootless errand, the master was half-way back to Mistress Crathie's, Turk overtook him. Keeping just behind his elbow—for Turk always preferred not to be seen—she clacked, "She won't let us stop, sir? Have we got to go on this way all our lives? I can't! I can't!"

"This vagrant life is a disgrace," said the mas-

ter. "Your parents should not be permitted to bring up children as trampers; they should not be permitted to be trampers themselves. The State ought to interfere, but it does not. You and Pope should grow up to be decent citizens. You should not be dragged into a life of idleness and crime. Your parents are going far beyond their rights. I do not know what to tell you to do, but I know what I would do in your case."

"We'll have to go," said Turk. "If we tried to stay behind, they'd take the place. You never saw 'em on a tear, did you? I have. Chains couldn't hold 'em."

"I can't help you any about it, Turk—I've tried my best. You must look out for yourself and Pope as well as you can, and don't forget that over in the town is the place for you both."

It was Friday evening. The schoolmaster said "Good-bye," and passed on. Turk, on the edge of the brown newly-plowed field, stood looking after him. To her he represented respectability, knowledge, the decencies of life. But she should see him no more. The note of departure had sounded. This day was the first of April, and Turk knew that on the Sabbath their move would begin.

Pope, during the winter, had dressed hoop-poles, helped to put up wire fencing, woven husk mats, and cut ties, and all the money he earned went

into the hands of his parents. The dumb boy was in rags and barefooted; Turk would have been in a like predicament had not Mrs. Garth sent her shoes, dress, and a sunbonnet. The Bealses owned a one-eyed white mare, bony and old; with Pope's wages they bought a vicious little black mule, sold cheap by Widow Munson. Saul took the cow and her calf to the river on Saturday night, and exchanged them for an old brown mule. As for the three-wheeled wagon, he made that all right after dark by exchanging his one front wheel for a pair of front wheels of a wagon left by Mr. Gage in his wheat-field. They fitted the Beals wagon to a nicety. Deb had patched the old canvas cover, and inside the wagon they stowed whatever they could carry; beneath it they hung pots, pails, and pans. They were ready for departure, and they were not sorry.

Whenever spring returned, wreathing the runnels by the wayside with new frills of white-clover leaves and tiny white chickweed stars; when dandelions opened in sunny nooks, and the branches of the trees were covered as with gray, bronze, green, or purple mist of young leaf-buds; when the maples and the lindens were in flower, and the jays with joyful chatter chased the bluebirds along the fence-rails; when the robins walked stately in their flame-red gorgets across the grass, and blackbirds twirred and whistled, and turned

their violet, amethyst, and blue necks to the sun; when, as says Virgil, "The happy earth wooed to her bosom the warm south winds,"—then a terrible nostalgia for the roads seized upon these wandering Bealses. Not that they were in harmony with nature, or loved her, or noticed her glories more than the clods or boulders by the way; but in their savage souls that instinct of migration which lies dormant in us all awoke more readily; it was less chained by possessions, less rebuked by pride, less atrophied by the pressure of circumstances.

While they lived on the Hume farm the *vis inertia* so largely present in them had combated in its way the migrative impulse. Life had been easy when all its expenses were contributed by the neighborhood; and the trouble about wheels and mules had been great. But now the genius of Saul Beals had secured a wagon and a team; Si made a last visit to Mr. Gage's hen-roost; and Deb, in the gloaming of the morning, milked Widow Munson's cow; and as they creaked down the road "Mis' Jonsing down by the brook" was less one little black porker that never squealed again.

Away! away! away! The east is pink and saffron with the coming dawn; the dew hangs in beads on the grass; a long, winding, twisted fold of soft mist shows where the brook takes its course to the river. The roads are good, for the spring

came early, the rains ceased in the first week of March, and sun and wind have drunk up the moisture from the traveled ways.

Saul behind the wagon rode the extra mule; Pope trudged along the roadside; Si drove, and his mother sat beside him, looking out from under the hood of the wagon with vacuous eyes. Here and there the frowzy heads of children appeared among the lading of the wagon, and Turk sat in the back end, looking pitifully at Pope, and with a rag of apron pulled over the bridge of her nose.

Slowly on, on, the prairie schooner wound its way. Saul did not think that Mr. Gage would consider his wagon-wheels, or "Mis' Jonsing down by the brook" her porker, worth coming after; besides, they would not know which way to come, and it would be Monday before the matter of the wheels would be manifest. When Saul thought of that transaction about the cow and the calf, and the mule which he rode, he tipped back his head, screwed his eyes shut, opened wide his mouth, and slapped his knee. His attitude was that of a dog baying the moon, but he made no sound.

The abandoned Hume house stood open to the elements. Saul, departing, had kicked the front door from its last hinge, and Deb had driven her elbow through the only whole pane of glass. Straw, chips, dirt, broken crockery, rusted tins,

wrecked chairs and tables, wads of greasy paper,—these were touched by the early sunlight and stirred by the soft south-west wind. Overthrown fences, broken gates, dying trees, neglected fields, rubbish, dismantled out-building, marked the tarrying and passing of these locusts of the West.

In a log shelter propped by two fence-rails from falling, high up in a corner, blinked and querulously complained a gaunt and ruffled rooster. No kin he to that famous yellow-legged Brahma; he was a common barn-yard fowl of hapless destinies; much chasing and little corn had been his portion; he had foraged for himself with small results, and the previous night Deb had caught him and two hens. The rooster had escaped. Deb had raced after him, aided by Peggy and the lean Si. Five several times hands had been laid upon him, and each time he had left a tail-feather in the grasp of his pursuer. Now, shorn of his natural glories, only two long curved feathers shedding metallic lustre left, he moped in the gloomiest corner, too depressed to salute the sun or to send a challenge to neighboring cocks, none of which would stoop to his acquaintance. In a ground corner of this same shed lay a heap of rags. The rooster eyed the rags, as if considering whether to stir and peck them for a breakfast.

“It looks,” said David Hume, as, with Aunt Ailsa on his arm, and followed by a tail, like a

proper chief of a clan, he went to church—"it looks as if the Bealses had gone. So to-morrow Mose Barr and I will get at that place, and plow for corn and buckwheat and turnips."

"Whist, laddie!" said Aunt Ailsa; "'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' The Buik says we are no to talk our ain wards, no to think our ain thochts, but to aye withdraw our feet fro' the Sabbath, as Moses, ye ken, took the shoon fro' off his feet, syne the place where he standit was holy groun'. Dinna forget, laddie, that the Buik says, 'Them that honor me I will honor.' Besides, laddie, dinna ye ken what the apostle James writes: 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.'"

"Why, does God care for—for ploughing and planting, aunt?"

"What should we do if he didna care?" said Ailsa; then she added, "Oh, my mon, it maks me verra happy to ken that God does care for a' that I am an' a' that I dae!"

The service and the Sabbath-school were over. The congregation went home to dinner, and, when

all was in order in the afternoon, Sis Gower and her brood came across the way, and Aunt Ailsa read to them from "the Buik" and told of Sabbaths in Scotland. Miss and the baby played after a while by the front door. Bruce finally wandered out of the back door.

The idea of that other house, empty of the Bealses, drew Bruce with some fascination. How did an empty house look? Suppose he should go there and peep in! How odd to walk about there and not hear the loud voices of the Bealses! Surely the house would not look the same! Bruce set off across the fields to explore.

Meantime, the cock, drawn into a ball, sat on his high perch, despondent, and the heap of rags lay in the corner. At last the cock fell asleep, and by and by he dreamed. He dreamed of a fine barn-yard full of clean yellow straw, such as Mr. Gage kept, and he dreamed that no one chased him, but daily he headed a long train of fowls marching about in the sun. He dreamed that there was a pan of clean water with pebbles in the bottom; he dreamed that there was a heap of clean sand, and that a girl threw out plentiful corn, oats, and crumbs every day. So great was the joy of the forsaken cock in his dreams that he erected his head and tail, spread out his wings, threw forward his parti-colored breast, and

gave a mighty crow. At this crow the heap of rags sat up, rose to its feet, showed a very pale and dirty face, and broke into a dreadful wail. The Bealses had left the baby!

The wild wailing reached the ears of Bruce as his short legs climbed the nearest fence. Bruce had never heard of goblins, but he had heard babies cry, and he went straight toward the sound. Baby as he was himself, Bruce could recognize the forlornness of this attenuated, starving, neglected, deserted infant. He took it by the hand, led it out into the sun, and said, "Come to Ailsa and get a biscuit." Then, realizing that he could not get this baby over the fences, he led it to the road. That way was much longer, and this jetsam of the prairie schooner was only fifteen months old. Bruce dragged it, coaxed it, took it up and carried it, and encouraged it by remarks about "bread and tea." The baby itself seemed to realize the needs-be, and staggered along valiantly, while the humiliated and lonesome rooster followed them afar off. Finally "the stage-house" was reached. Bruce marched his protégé in.

"Ailsa," he said gravely, regarding with unfavorable gaze the snub nose, dirty face, and sore eyes of the derelict, "he isn't the Holy Boy—but *he's a boy.*"

"Mercy!" said Janet; "the Bealses have left the baby!"

Ailsa spoke with emphasis: "You poor wee bairn! ever syne I first set een on ye, I've wanted to gie ye a guid washin', an' I'll dae it the noo! It is dirt maks ye so peaked an' sore-eyed; an', providentially, there is a pot fu' o' hot water on the stove."

"Have they left him on our hands?" said David, indignantly.

"Hoot, mon!" said Ailsa; "does no the Buik say, 'Whoso receiveth one such little child, receiveth me'? 'To do good and communicate forget not;' 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.'"

Thus quoting, Ailsa was making ready a tub of warm suds. Then she whisked off the two dirty garments which draped the deserted baby, and, taking off the stove-lid, dropped them into the fire. Into the tub went the baby, and Ailsa's sharp scissors sheared its hair close to its head. Having now a fair field for soap and water, she went vigorously to work.

"I smell an awfu' smell o' gin," she remarked.

"Of course," said David; "Deb Beals wanted the baby to sleep until they were well out of the way, and she dosed it with gin. The baby's been drunk, and it's not the first time."

"Preserve us a'!" groaned Ailsa.—"Janet, my lass, get a cup o' milk, and warm it and sweeten it. When the bit bairn is clean it shall be fed."

Sis Gower had disappeared. She returned with

her hands full. "Here are some clothes for the baby," she said.

"You can't afford to give things, Sis," cried David.

"Whist, mon! She canna afford to live wi'out gieing," said Ailsa.

"Aunt," cried David, suddenly, "what has become of my cow? That was my cow up there, and they've taken her off."

"Well, David, bide patient; it is guid they hanna you an' your soul, as well as the coo," said Ailsa, quietly.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW BLEST A THING IS WORK!

“So work the honey-bees :
Creatures that, by a rule in nature, teach
The art of order to a peopled kingdom—
The singing masons building roof of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up honey.”

“**W**EEL, weel!” said Mistress Crathie, standing amid the desolation of the abandoned house; “it luiks, sure enough, as if a’ the plagues o’ Egypt had been poured out here. The weeked are the children o’ the destroying one, an’ they are a’ in their way destroyers. God is the gran’ Maker, an’ his children are up-builders. It is a guid providence they washel oons are oot o’ the neighborhood! An’ yet, Mr. Porter, I am wae for them that human souls an’ bodies must thole sic a rede. Puir waefu’ beings!”

“It is their own fault,” said Mr. Porter; “they have had opportunities and examples and instruction. They had their chance here, and what did they care for it?”

“Weel, wha wull to Cupar maun to Cupar,” said Ailsa. “I am lost in admiration o’ the guid-

ness o' God, who kept my childer sae free fro' taint when they foregathered wi' sic bodies for nigh twa years!"

"The Humes are silent and reserved, and keep to themselves. They are clannish, like the rest of you Scots, and that has saved them."

Mr. Porter stood on the porch, looking at the desolation that was left them. In the autumn and winter the Hume property had been well looked after—trees planted, fences re-made, the fields plowed, grass sowed, the orchards trimmed, and new trees set out. The improvements had come down to the last ten acres, upon which the house stood. That had been left to the Beals family—and destruction. The family had resented the advance of civilization and industry upon them, and had avenged themselves by making the dwelling and its surroundings a singular picture of ruin. Mr. Porter spoke briskly:

"David and Mistress Crathie! We'll lay a mortgage on this place for two years, and so get enough to complete our repairs and buy more sheep. That old well must be pulled down and replaced by a chain-pump. All those tumble-down out-buildings must come down, and we'll use what we can of them on the new barn, sheep-sheds, and wood-house. We'll put a picket fence about this doorway, sow the yard with grass-seed, and set out some bushes and some maples. That lane must

have a good gravel road, and the house must be done up so that your farmer can live in it. David and Uncle Mose Barr cannot take care of one hundred and sixty acres and what sheep you will be able to keep, and I have my eye on a nice young farmer, just married, who will suit you exactly. As for the mortgage, those two corn-fields have to pay it in two years. I'll have Bilman and his lumber out here day after to-morrow."

Ailsa stood on the porch listening, and as Mr. Porter spoke she looked across the lovely land, and in imagination saw it "as the garden of the Lord, as the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar." Her children, as she called them, would have a goodly heritage.

"David," said Mr. Porter, "will have to work manfully if he is to be master here, for, unless there is a master's eye and hand, work lags."

"David will buckle to," said Ailsa; "he likes work, an' he likes to tak the lead."

Winters always seem long, and the longest summers short. That summer fled by as if it had worn the talaria of Mercury. David found, as Virgil says, that the "ceaseless labor of the farmer moves in a mighty round," while "the year follows in its own footsteps." But David liked these duties of the husbandman and the shepherd. All that the son of Mantua had sung of the cares of the vine, David could have rehearsed as the

labors of the corn, the best gold of the Western world.

It was a summer without a history, except what was written in the ripening harvests, the increasing flocks, the growth of trees and vines, and the general air of well-being that began to hover about the two long-neglected farms of the late David Hume. These farms seemed to Ailsa in some way as the monument of the lover of her youth, and when she saw "the pastures clothed with flocks, the valleys also covered over with corn,"—then she felt as if, in some way, David Hume must know this, and be more glad amid the gladness of paradise.

Ailsa was no neglectful farm-mistress; not a week passed but her active figure might be seen going over all the fields, noticing every break in a fence, every neglected implement. Daily she went down to see the sheep as they came up from the meadows; her eye, trained to sheep-tendance in the old home, marked every missing lamb or thin or stumbling ewe.

"We'll hae a new graft set here come spring;" "a new tree planted yonder;" "you'll put in a ditch wi' drain-pipe yonder, David, my mon;" "we can as weel raise a hunner hens as fifty;" "Janet, ye sall be our hen-wife, an' gif ye do weel by the feathered things, it will be a penny in yer ain pocket."

Meanwhile, Janet and Bruce were sent to school, and Pam, Lola, and "Miss" Gower went with them, while the Gower baby and the Beals baby played and quarreled together on the road-side or in the door-yards.

The abandoned Beals baby had been named Nathan. His skin was now clean, his legs straight; he was fat, and his eyes were cured, but he had the small eyes and ferret-like face of Saul Beals and Si. Ailsa would look at him and say with complacency, "Ye can see plain he is no a Hume—he is sae ill-faured. But, please God, he shall no ken that he was e'er a Beals. Nathan Barber I hae named him, an' his onnatural parents canna get him back gif they come after him, for I went to the county coort about it, an' had the bairn bound over to me, an' David Hume after me, till he's ane-an'-twenty. I wasna meanin' to throw away a' my cares o' him. I will juist bring him oop on porridge an' milk, an' on the Buik an' the Shorter Catechism, an' if that winna mak a mon o' him, there's naething will. There's na fence better than the Shorter Catechism to keep oot mischief. It has—wi' the Buik—made Scotchmen strong. I canna expec' yon puir bit bairn, o' Beals flesh, to grow like a Scot. That wad be askin' o'er much o' the Lord. Ye ken Abraham did not pray that Sodom suld be saved gif less than ten righteous were in it; he was morally

conditioned. An' I'm that morally conditioned I canna demand that even the Buik an' the catechism may mak a true, strong Scotch character oot o' a Beals; bluid will tell. But I can expect him to grow into a decent mon, an' no vagabond. I ne'er could bide a vagabond, an' the Lord canna!"

Pursuant to these ideas, Ailsa washed and rubbed her Beals baby, put him early to bed, fed him wholesomely, set him in the corner if he fell into a passion, and, so soon as he could toddle from the door to the wood-pile, gave him a little basket and had him bring in chips for the fire three times a day. For Ailsa was a thrifty housewife, never idle, and tolerating no idleness.

Ailsa was also the model of the neighborhood in economy. The prodigality of her Western neighbors in food-stuffs horrified her. All but Sis Gower threw away more than they used.

"Sic wastry must be verra unpleasin' to the guid Lord," said Ailsa. "Dinna ye ken how our Master himsel' had a' the fragments picked oop, though he could create plenty wi' only one word?" Nothing was wasted in Ailsa's plain, abundant housekeeping; there was enough, but none to throw away. For Sabbaths and guests and festal occasions she had store of her Scotch dainties—shortbread and scones and currant bun. She made her bannocks and her "ait cakes," and

called her little cheeses kebbucks, and her table, her dress, and her speech kept in the hurrying new world the fashion of the old-world ways.

Again a winter passed and a summer came. The money to pay off the mortgage was ready, and Ailsa was glad of it. She did not take kindly to usury. "The Buik," she said, "did no favor it, an' a' borrowin' at interest seemed usury-like."

"Tuts!" said Mr. Porter; "it is nothing of the kind. That's the way we run all our business in these days."

"Weel, weel!" said Ailsa; "I'm glad to pay oop, and to hae money to put in the bank, to lie by in store for our ainsels. The guid mon in the psalm 'is he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh a reward against the innocent.'"

Mr. Porter laughed. Ailsa was at once a shrewd business woman and thoroughly child-like and unworldly.

Just at present Ailsa was busy making a neat outfit for Janet. In September Janet was going away. Mrs. Garth had invited her to live at her house and attend the high school; when she had graduated there, she was to go to the normal school and fit herself to be a teacher. Janet had been faithful with her fowl-yard, and many dozens of eggs, many young chickens, many turkies, had gone to market, and she had a grand holiday in

June, when David took her and Sis Gower over to the town, and Janet bought muslin and gingham and flannel and winter dress-goods.

"It is so nice," said Sis, cheerfully, as they rode home in the moonlight, "to be able to buy things!"

Sis had bought a few yards of gingham and some denim for her brood, but she had enjoyed looking on at Janet's bargains.

David turned to her; "Never you mind, Sis; the time will come when you too can go to town and buy what you like for yourself."

"After the children are grown up and father gets home," said Sis, sedately.

David had visited a five-cent counter and bought for the Gower baby and for Master Nathan Barber each a tin horn. For Bruce he had gone to the book-store and bought a story-book. Bruce adored a book, and always wanted to do whatever was in it. This especial book told of an industrious and helpful boy.

Bruce knew that he himself had always been very incompetent to help. Nathan Barber, at two and a half, picked up more chips than did Bruce at seven. Bruce meant to turn over a new leaf.

It was vacation, and Bruce wandered out dreamily to look for employment. He went into the barn, and there was a brown hen in great excitement: in her long-brooded nest the eggs were

stirring, and from some a little beak, from others a yellow head and a pair of round black eyes looked out upon the world, so different from those translucent walls of silk and pearl. This was a joyful occasion. Bruce went down on his knees, compassionating the tender things that must peck their way into life so hardly. In gentle hands he took egg after egg, unmindful of the protesting hen-mother, and safely and neatly he broke the shells open and let each struggling little chick out into the wide world.

“You lazy hen!” said Bruce; “you ought to have done that yourself, and not just stand looking on and scolding folks!”

Then he went slowly to the house, and said to Janet, in his deep, deliberate way, “I helped, Janet. I helped you and the hen. The hen didn’t thank me any, but I s’pose you will. I helped you get money for books and dresses. I helped hatch a whole nestful of poor, tired little chickens.”

Janet rushed to the barn, and came back crying: every little yellow fluffy chick lay dead; the bereaved hen-mother was raising a terrible din.

“Why?” demanded Bruce. “Why? Why wasn’t it right to help? Why do they have to do it for themselves?”

“It’s so always, you little goose,” said David, who had just come in for dinner. “I remember

two or three times I have found a moth or a butterfly wrestling to come out of its little woolly roll, and I have helped it just as easily as I could, and all I got for my trouble was that the poor things had twisted wings and could not fly. They have to be left to themselves."

"Why? why?" insisted Bruce.

"Bairn," said Ailsa, "we canna tell, but it is a parable o' the soul strugglin' into life. The guid Lord aye leaves us some'at for our ainsels to do. The Buik says, 'Work out your ain salvation wi' fear an' tremblin', for it is God that worketh in you;' an' it says also, 'The kingdom o' heaven suffereth violence, an' the violent take it by force.' The soul has to bestir itsel' to cast off the clogs o' this sinfu' warl' an' enter into glory."

"Don't touch my chickens again, Bruce," said the inconsolable Janet; "don't go near them."

"But I want to help," said Bruce.

"It's well you do," said David, "for you've always been a looker-on." So he found various little tasks for his small brother.

After a hard day's work David was lying on his back on the porch floor to rest himself when Bruce lamented, "I did want to do something to help, but I haven't to-day. David, what can I do?"

"I'll tell you," said David; "you can weed the bed.—Janet, show him the bed where I have the seed-onions, and show him which are weeds,"

Bruce went away, and after a little he was back, saying joyfully, "I've done it, David! I've done it all! It's so clean!"

"You've got through mighty quick," said David. "I don't believe it is half done."

"Yes it is. It is as clean as this porch floor."

David leaped up and went to the garden. Not a green spire was left in the long, narrow onion-bed. It was clean indeed. He returned to the expectant Bruce:

"Don't you ever dare to go near that garden again, nor touch a thing in it! There is not an onion left!" and he lay down as before.

Bruce, thus in disgrace, felt that the circle of his usefulness was rapidly closing in about him. His ambition and his Scotch tenacity were roused. Ailsa no doubt would be more grateful for help. He would look about for some way of aiding her.

In a few days' time Bruce thought that he had found his opportunity. Ailsa and David had gone to an executor's sale of stock and farm-implements. Bruce noticed the weeds in the lot next the house, and the prairie-grass, dry from a long drought. He had heard Aunt Ailsa complaining of these weeds, and saying that they must be cut down, as the seeds were infesting her front yard. Bruce could not mow, but he had read that if the weeds were well burned they would not return. Oh,

happy thought! He ran for a match, threw open the gate, and, happily, left it open. The dry grass caught like tinder, a dull cloud of smoke rolled upward, and before the gentle breeze a crimson billow of fire swept toward the barns and sheep-folds. Janet, sewing on the door-step, gave a shriek and came dashing up with two buckets of water; Sis Gower echoed the shriek and ran from her home with water, followed by Pam, also carrying a pail of water. Bruce, speechless, fled to the pump and began to turn the handle with all his might. Two men were passing in a wagon; they sprang to the service: one, carrying two empty canvas wheat-sacks, beat the fire with them; the other seized David's scythe and began to mow a broad swath between the barn and the fire. The men cutting ties in the bit of woodland near by hurried up with branches of pine and cedar to beat back the flames, while Sis Gower sent Pam for her own scythe. There was a hard half-hour's fight; then there was to be seen a scorched fence, some exceedingly red, hot, tired, smoke-blackened people, a broad band of burnt stubble, and a little boy lying on his face with his head and shoulders thrust under the porch, that none might see how terribly he was crying.

"He pretty nearly burnt the whole place up," protested the wrathful Janet to David and Ailsa. "We had every tie-man in the township here fight-

ing fire; if we hadn't, you'd have found nothing but cinders here when you got home."

"'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain,'" said Ailsa. "'Under his wings shalt thou trust.' 'When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall flame kindle upon thee.'"

"I wanted to help!" burst forth Bruce.

"You—wanted—to—help," said David, slowly, eying him sternly. "You do more harm helping than any boy I ever saw! What were you made for, Bruce, anyway? Over at the town, yonder, there are a lunatic asylum and a college; which of 'em would fit you best I don't know, but it seems if you belong in one of them."

"Try the college soon's I'm big enough!" cried Bruce, eagerly.

"I reckon; you'll never have sense enough to farm," said David.

Bruce might have been made for philosophy, but, decidedly, not for affairs.

Meanwhile, Sis Gower had sprained her hand fighting the fire, and Sis Gower's baby had been running about in the hot sun, and had then tumbled into a tub that Bruce had filled with water; and, Bruce having pulled her out and left her to dry in the wind, the youngster took a chill and proceeded to have a fever. This was the first sickness that had come among Sis Gower's

brood, and the child was near to death. There was great anxiety.

“Miss’ Jonsing down by the brook” came over to see the baby, and then concluded to stay all day, and then all night; by that time the little suffering child had so wound itself about her heart that she avowed her intention of “seeing the thing through.” That meant two weeks of constant nursing and kindest care, when “Mis’ Jonsing down by the brook” scarcely saw her domicile by the brook, and when Sis Gower’s faithful heart, though full of gratitude to the neighbor, ached a little at seeing her baby prefer that neighbor to herself, and find more commodious resting on “Mis’ Jonsing’s” broad bosom than in her own thin, tired arms. But the baby was getting well. The fever had spent its fury, and the little one could give a wan smile into loving faces.

Never had the prosperous life of “Mis’ Jonsing” looked to her so bereft, never had her plump arms felt so empty, never had her generous heart been so lonely, as when she looked at the little pitiful baby and reflected that it belonged to Sis Gower, and not to herself. Oh, how she wanted that baby! She and Mr. Johnson had long ago ceased, by common consent, to express their disappointment in their childless home. Not one child over there in the commodious dwelling, and here, in Sis Gower’s, were six, including poor Sis! Mrs. Johnson

wondered why, when Mrs. Gower was dying, she had not asked her for the baby. Surely she had never realized what a darling it was! Would Sis give it away? Would she give it now, just when the little one was doubly dear from its close brush with death? How should she ask her for it?

"Mis' Jonsing," said Sis, "I'm going to stop calling the baby different names to try on. I've tried Olive and Laura and Amanda, and ever so many more. I'm going to name her 'Jane Jonsing,' after you. I'd have named her after mother, only mother said she never wanted a child named for her—she had been so unfortunate and so unhappy—but you have been always happy and fortunate, and I'll name her for you, sure."

"I've had a great trouble and sorrow, Sis," said Mrs. Johnson.

"Dear me! I'm sorry to hear it," said the sympathetic Sis.

"It's a trouble you might help me out of, partly, Sis."

"Could I? How? I'd do anything for you, Mis' Jonsing!"

"My trouble is, I'm lonesome for a child. I've wanted a child of my own so much, and one never came. My home is so empty! If you'd not only name the baby after me, Sis, but give her to me, I'd be such a good mother to her!"

"I know you'd be good," said Sis, white and red by turns, "but how could I give her away?"

"Think how much better off she'd be! I could do so much more for her, Sis! You have three besides to take care of, and Sikey can't help you much. Think of the schooling I could give her! Why, when she gets big I'd have her taught music, and I'd get her a piano, or at least an organ."

Sis had a vision of her baby, in a pink muslin dress, playing "Rock of Ages" on an organ, that had always been Sis Gower's maddest dream of ambition. But—no baby—ah!

"What would mother think?" said Sis, weeping.

"I feel sure she would think it just exactly right."

"But what will father think when he comes home?"

"Oh, I'll settle with him easy enough," said Mrs. Johnson.

CHAPTER X.

IN NATURE'S LAP.

“Rich in love of fields and brooks—
The ancient teachers, never dumb,
Of nature's unhoused lyceum.”

THERE was a long silence between Mrs. Johnson and Sis. Sis sewed, and dropped tears on her work. Mrs. Johnson rocked the baby and sang to it “Jesus, lover of my soul.” At last Sis put her apron over her head and went out. Mrs. Johnson nodded, well content. Sis was going to take counsel with Ailsa, and “Ailsa had good sense,” Mrs. Johnson told herself.

In fact, Sis found the Humes sitting down to supper.

“What you crying for, Sis?” demanded David; “baby worse?”

“No, but—but—Mis' Jonsing down by the brook wants to adopt her. Wants me to give her the baby!”

“That's all right,” said David, coolly, cutting a slice of ham; “she ought to 've asked for her long ago. She's rich, and got none, and you have five to do for, and it's too much for you.”

"Oh, David!" cried Sis, in dismay. "I've got on so well with them!"

"So you have, considerin', but you're killing yourself. What is to become of the whole lot if you're dead? Why, it is the greatest thing for that baby! Mis' Jonsing is rich. She'll make a lady of her. 'Taint so far; you'll see her every day, and Sikey lives there, anyway. Sis, if you don't give her the baby you'll be a bigger dummy than Pope Beals."

"Come sit by me, lassie, an' tak' a cup o' tea to quiet your min'," said Ailsa, soothingly. "Dinna be sae excited over this. At the worst, it is only fro' ane hoose to the next. Is no Mistress Johnson a guid Christian woman, wha will bring oop the child in the nurture an' admonition o' the Lord? It is no like lettin' the babe gae oot o' the family, for the Buik says we are a' brethren. I hae known o' cases whaur even parents refused to gie a bairn to ane wha could do weel by it, an' the child cast it up against them later."

"That would be dreadful," sighed Sis.

"Sometimes, to luik mair at oor ain loss than the bairn's gain is but selfish," added Mistress Crathie.

"Sis couldn't be selfish if she tried," spoke up David.

"And Mrs. Johnson is nice, and would not make the baby proud, so that by and by she would look

down on you because she had better things," said Janet, concisely.

Sis flushed.

"If she undertook to look down on Sis, I'd shake the breath out of her," said David, sharply.

"Hoot, mon!" said Ailsa. "I wuss ye wadna talk sae steep. Ye ken the Buik says that for every idle word men speak they shall be called into judgment; an' it is idle indeed to say what ye ne'er wad do."

"If the baby, or any of them whatever, now or hereafter, give Sis impudence, I'll settle 'em, and I mean it," said David.

"But suppose I give away the baby, and father comes home and does not like it, and feels hurt about it?" cried Sis.

"He went off from the baby, and from the whole lot of you, without a word," said David; "he wouldn't take it much to heart, I guess."

"Yes, but when he comes home he will be different—very sober and loving and good," said Sis simply.

"Well, Sis," said Janet the practical, "tell Mrs. Johnson that if, when your father comes home, he is not pleased, and wants the baby back, and is able and willing to take care of it, she must give it back."

"Your head's level, Janet," quoth David, eating ham diligently.

"You all think I ought to do it," said Sis, who had drunk the cup of tea Ailsa pressed upon her, but could not eat, as David had several times requested. She wiped her eyes on the corner of her apron, arose, and went out.

"She'll do it," said David, looking after her.

"Mis' Jonsing," said Sis, entering the little room where her neighbor still rocked the baby, "you—can—have her; but—you go home—and let me keep her to-night just."

"See here, Sis," said Mis' Johnson, "I know what you'll do: you'll lie all night hugging and kissing her and crying over her, disturbing her sleep and wearing yourself out. There's no sense in that. If it's well to do it, let's not make a long job of it;" and, having thus unconsciously paraphrased Macbeth, Mis' Johnson waited.

Sis sobbed.

"I'll take her along now, Sis, and to-morrow afternoon you come over and take tea with me, and you shall put her to bed. Why, girl, don't cry; you'll see her every day."

"Take her quick, then," said poor Sis, running into the little back kitchen and shutting the door. She loved this baby that her dying mother had committed to her childish arms.

Mis' Johnson wrapped up her prize and set off over the fields. Ailsa saw that the little tragedy was over. She waited for a time, and then went

to Sis Gower's. Sis, her eyes and nose very red, had just given her three children their supper. Her family seemed so small, her house so desolate! This was the first vacancy made in her little household. Tears ran over when Ailsa entered.

"Sis, lassie," said Mistress Crathie, "I mak' noo doubt this is the Lord's way o' providin' for the little bairn and widening out the life o' Mistress Johnson. It's hard the noo, but it will look a' richt by an' by. I hae had, in my ain life, Sis, to thole mony hard hours. The way I hae been led was aften no the way I suld hae chosen my ainsel', but it was the Lord's ain han' led me ilka step o' the way, an' it has been a guid way, a richt way—a better way than I could ha' foun' for mysel'. It will be so wi' you, my lass."

Some of the neighbors thought Sis "very lucky to be rid of one of those children." Sis had her own opinion about that, but as the weeks went by and she saw little Jane every day, and found that she was happy and thrived like a flower in fortunate places, she became reconciled. Besides, Sis was very busy. She was trying to lay up money to buy a cow and a pig. Since her father went away Sis had secured a fine flock of poultry; she had had fuel enough and food enough; in fact, the going of her father and the improvement of family circumstances seemed to have been simul-

taneous. In the one day-dream in which Sis indulged the return of her father was to bring in the age of gold, when the fair halcyons should fold their wings and brood over the untroubled waves of her life. Work is a fine medicament for sick hearts. Sis worked, and content came back.

"I must get the pig and the cow," said Sis to Ailsa. "On my wood-lot the trees are nearly all cut. Sikey and I went there and looked the other day. After this year there will be no more, and so I must raise a pig each year to pay my taxes. I want a cow too. Do you notice how scrawny Miss looks? I think she ought to have new milk."

"She can have a drink o' fresh warm milk at my house night an' mornin', gif ye'll send her o'er, an' welcome," said Ailsa; "but she's no so thin as you are, Sis, by mickle."

"Oh, well, I don't matter so much, but I want my children to look well. I don't want folks to think I can't provide for them, and I don't want father to be disappointed when he comes home."

"When he comes home!" said David, derisively, to Ailsa when she told him of this; "he won't come home, except to loaf and to live on them and to make life harder for Sis. If he tries that on, I'll bust his head."

"David, David! ye mauna say what ye willna do. 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay,

for whatsoever is mair than these, cometh o' evil,' the Buik says."

David laughed: "Anyhow, I mean to stand by Sis."

"That is a' richt, an' I wish ye could gie her some o' your ain joyfu', hearty, healthy life an' way o' feelin' an' doin', my brave laddie," said Ailsa, stroking her David's strong arm.

David had found the "sweet life" of Sirach's son, "to labor and be content." He had just enough of the animal about him to be bravely unconcerned about to-morrow and fearless for to-day. The stern kindness of the Adamic doom of labor had made him a man, self-reliant, alert, absolute, hearty, happy. He went whistling off to his work, and he came singing home. Going and coming, he usually passed, sitting on a fence-rail or a stone, that high-browed, thought-grave little philosopher Bruce, already dwelling in the shadow of the perpetual "how" and "why."

Ailsa went to town one day to make some purchases and to visit Mrs. Garth. Janet dryly advised her to "take Bruce along, to keep him from helping."

Ailsa loved to talk to Mrs. Garth of the past—of the old life in Scotland, and the scenery and the people of the land she loved best. Mrs. Garth understood: she had breathed Scotland's air and trodden heather. Such an hour of converse quiet-

ed for a time the homesick longings of the Scotch-woman's heart. As Mrs. Garth and Ailsa talked, Bruce, kneeling by the book-shelves, with gentle hands lifted down and turned over the leaves of the books in the library; he looked at the plates, read a little, eyed the long rows, sighed, but was happy.

"I canna tell what is to become o' the little lad," said Ailsa. "He is no like the ithers. I can unnerstan' them, but I canna unnerstan' him. He is sae auld-farrant like! Whiles I think in tryin' t^o train him I am like a hen raisin' ducks. He is weel, he is happy, he doesna care for plays, but he thinks, thinks, thinks, a' the time. An' noo we hae a new school-teacher who is no like the ither; he just hears lessons oot o' the books, but he canna feed the min' o' the bairn an' fin' oot what is in it, like the ither."

Mrs. Garth watched Bruce and said nothing.

A week later Mrs. Garth appeared early one morning at Ailsa's "to spend the day." The event was not unprecedented: her fashion of spending the day was to roam about out of doors, eating under a tree the picnic which she had brought with her, having an hour or so of converse with Ailsa, Janet and Sis on the porch in the late afternoon, and then going home as fast as the yellow wheels could carry her, alone, or with the doctor if he had chanced to be passing.

There was nothing that Mrs. Garth loved better than such a day at Ailsa's, devoted to botanizing, geologizing, and insect-hunting over the beautiful rolling acres, along the wooded banks of the creek, in the wood-lot, where newly-felled trees were a wonderful hiding-place for insects, in the green depths of the few acres of ancient forest, or in the sunny hollows of the lush intervalles.

On this day she asked for Bruce as a companion. They went out together. Woman and child: these are meet and natural comrades the world around. That day Mrs. Garth opened to Bruce the gates of a new life. She had divined the mystery of his being—a mystery to him, to her a solved problem learned in the volume of experience. She had with her a microscope and a simple book or two. She showed Bruce how to sit down by a lichen-covered boulder and find there a world—forests peopled with living creatures, over which the shadow of a hand is as a cloud in the sky. She showed him how to find tropical forests in every bit of turf; she showed him where beetles hide; she took him to the margin of the pond and opened to him new worlds under a lily-pad; the stones in his path told him stories; she sat with him by an ant-hill, and helped him to find the ants and told him how to watch them. She told him the secrets of the leaves, and of the great colonies and nations that live and war and thrive

and die on the branch of a tree or in a clump of meadow-grass. Then, when the eyes of the child blazed with excitement and his cheeks flushed, and he seemed lifted up and carried out of and beyond himself with the glory that had been revealed, she knew that she had not misread him. Much to his delight, she gave him the microscope and the little books. They went back to the house finally, and Mrs. Garth sat down to talk with Ailsa, who brought to her oat-cakes and a glass of milk.

“Ailsa,” she said, “the child has a large mind. At present he has also a large, strong body. He must not let the growing mind dwarf and weaken the body. Do not worry the child about learning set things. Let him read. I don’t know that I should send him to school: let him read; and, if the teacher boards here, get such words as are new pronounced and explained; always let him read. I will send him some books, but books suited to his age and taste are scarce. Let him study nature: turn him out to observe and reason upon and remember what wonders are upon every hand. He will gather store of facts that will lay the foundation of his life-work. The fact is, Ailsa, that once his feet are fairly set in the path of learning, he will press on and on that steep, alluring way, never arriving, never satisfied, his goal for ever retiring as he advances. He is

born to be a great man, and therefore unhappy; the greater he is, the less happy."

"Oh," said Ailsa, "I canna bear that! I wadna hae him unhappy, he is so guid and bonny! I wad rather he were no great."

"You would make him still more unhappy if you should try to ward off unhappiness by driving him into some line of life where he would not be great. You cannot help it. It is his rede."

"But *maun* the bairn be unhappy?"

"Kismet!" said Mrs. Garth, who was looking far away.

Ailsa waited a little, then said, "But, mem, this grieves me."

"Do not grieve," said Mrs. Garth; "perhaps he will never know quite how unhappy he is, and he will have his compensations."

Their Alruna Wife had spoken. The family regarded her words as the leaves of fate. She had said that Janet must be a teacher, and, lo! Janet had passed her examinations for the high school. That evening, as they sat on the porch, Aunt Ailsa told David the doom of Bruce: he was to be a very learned man—a great man.

David meditated, and finally gave a deep sigh: "I'm glad she did not put it on me! Perhaps Bruce can stand it; I never could. What I want is to plough my own acres and cut my own corn and send my own lambs and wool to market."

“It is a gran’ life,” said Ailsa; “the first father o’ our race, Adam, kept the garden, an’ when driven out he taught Cain to be a tiller o’ the groun’ an’ Abel to keep sheep. Ah, mon, I canna see a cornfield but I think o’ that canny Samson wi’ his foxes, an’ Ruth gleanin’ in the ripe fields, an’ our Lord wi’ the twel’ walkin’ thro’ the cornfields upo’ the Sabbath day. It is wonnerfu’ to drop the seed in sure hope that it shall rise. Think ye hoo it preaches o’ the resurrection an’ the life? An’ mind ye the parable o’ the sower? It is gran’, just gran’, to think o’ walkin’ han’ in han’ wi’ God, who gies the increase an’ makes us his helpers i’ feedin’ the warl’! Ay, ’tis a guid life, regular, quiet, useful—the life o’ your forebears.”

Ailsa had found, as Hammerton, that “everything, almost, that the peasant does is lifted above vulgarity by ancient and often sacred associations,” and, with Lubbock, she had learned that “any useful occupation in life, however humble, is honorable in itself, and may be pursued with dignity and peace.”

“Well, then,” said David, “it seems we are all satisfied. Janet is going to have what she wants; I have got what I want; you are suited with it, Aunt Ailsa; and as for Bruce, if he is bound to be a great man and cannot help it, I hope he will be suited with it. And there’s one thing certain:

I never mean to be ashamed of him, and I don't intend to allow him to be ashamed of me." With which assertion David went up to the bed where the future great man of the house of Hume was already soundly sleeping.

"It seems," said David, who frequently found time to sit for a while in the evening on Sis Gower's door-step or gate-post, "that all of us Humes have got our plans laid out for us. What are you all going to be up to, Sis? You ought to be planning for your family."

"I can't, very well," said Sis, "for, you see, I have father to consider. He may want everything different when he comes home."

"Then I wouldn't let him have it different, unless it was a blessed sight better."

"Of course it will be better," said Sis; "father will be all right when he comes home. I expect he is only waiting to make lots of money to bring us. As to plans, Sikey is to stay on with Mis' Jonsing, and next winter is the last he's to go to school. After that he's going to get real big wages. The rest have to go to school. Lola is right quick at her book and at everything, and she sings like a bird. Besides, she's going to be pretty. I'd like Lola to be a lady."

"And what about you, Sis?"

"Oh, nothing about me until all the rest are done well for," said Sis.

“Hoh! You might be old by then! I say something about you. You ought to have a nice house, a nice room to sit in, a nice rocking-chair, a canary bird in a cage, good things to eat, nice clothes to wear, and a chance to get real rested—out and out rested. You might like some flowers in the window, like Mis’ Gage; and if you want books, you could have a shelf of ’em like your mother did.”

“How I wish,” cried Sis, eagerly, “that I only could have mother’s very own books back! She liked them so! No other books will ever be like those!” She stopped suddenly; this was impliedly reflecting on that absent father, now reforming himself.

“I wish you might,” said David.

The next time that David went to town to see about selling his wool he found an auction in progress on the public square. Among the things piled up ready for sale were a few books on a table. David concluded to wait until they were put up, and perhaps buy one or two for Sis. At least he would better go near and examine what they were.

But it happened that this was a sale of the effects of a saloon-keeper who had dropped dead in his bar the week before. Moreover, it was the very saloon-keeper who had received all the money that Sis Gower’s father could handle; and some-

times, when money was scarce, had accepted, as an accommodation, goods.

When David opened the books, he saw written on the fly-leaf of each, "Sara Gower."

"What'll you take for the lot?" he demanded.

Seeing a young countryman, whip in hand and in haste, the auctioneer said, "Oh, if you want them, two dollars will buy the lot."

David handed over the money, and put the books in a white bag that he took from his pocket. He had brought the bag to town full of feathers to sell. Having the books, he went into a second-hand store and paid fifty cents for a little set of shelves, which he carried home before him on the saddle.

How happy was Sis Gower that night when David hung up the little shelves, all polished with kerosene, and put upon them her mother's very own books! What books were they? Oh, just the books a poor country teacher would be most likely to have twenty-five years ago: "Scottish Chiefs," a hymn-book, "Pilgrim's Progress," "Waverley," "Æsop's Fables," "Willard's United States History," "Young's Night Thoughts," an odd volume of "The Lady's Book," one volume of Cowper's poems, a Life of Henry Martyn, "The Children of the Abbey," a Fifth Reader, an Ancient History, and a Life of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Sis Gower gazed on them with rapture—the lost

treasures of the house returned! "Oh, David, how respectable it makes the room look to have books in it! If I can get some ferns down by the brook, and make them grow here all winter by the window, won't the place look nice, and won't father be pleased with it when he gets home?"

No vision of the future was written on the air between them, but David felt, as he called it, "creepy" to hear her father thus spoken of, and he went home with a shadowed soul. There was no shadow over Sis Gower's soul. She had back her mother's books, and she took them as an earnest of her father's penitence and return.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CELTIC SOUL.

“Long may the hardy, rustic sons of toil
Be blessed with health and peace and sweet content!
And, oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury’s contagion, weak and vile!”

A MELLOW October haze subdued the sunshine and softened all the outlines of the landscape. In the fields pale-tinted shocks of Indian corn stood in rows, each shock with a golden heap of husked ears beside it. Along the roads big wagons filled with brown-plumed, dark-green sorghum-stalks went creaking toward the mills; other wagons loaded with brown heaps of potatoes rolled toward the town; the clatter of the threshing-machines was heard; the bees swung in dizzy circles over the white acres of buckwheat. The land was stamped with progress and prosperity.

On her door-step sat Ailsa Crathie. She was alone and lonely. Janet had begun her school in town a month ago. She could come home, now and then, on Friday night to stay until Monday,

but Mrs. Garth had impressed it upon her that the months of study were months of golden opportunity, and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with school-work.

David had gone to Chicago with two hundred sheep and lambs. This was David's first little venture into the great world. He had not gone alone, but with Mr. Gage, who was also taking sheep to market.

Bruce was, as usual, wandering over the fields, prying under stones and into holes, watching woodpeckers and kinglets running around the tree-trunks, squirrels speeding along fence-rails, or rabbits, brown as the fields over which they went leaping, but betrayed by their little white tails.

Sikey Gower had invented for himself a clumsy corn-sheller, and Ailsa heard its click and clash as Pam and Lola shelled corn for their chickens.

That stray child Nathan Barber, born a Beals, was in the road, playing with a yellow dog which David had given him to console him for the loss of the companionship of baby Gower, now Jane Johnson.

Ailsa looked across the wide landscape with its rich coloring, and deeper and deadlier grew upon her a fit of homesickness. She had had several such. She had been old to expatriate herself: she could not always adjust herself to such

changed surroundings, the different speech, and household ways and habits of thinking. How she longed for those dull gray-blue skies which seemed to stoop so close over down and moorland, instead of this vast flashing, scintillating dome of turquoise blue! Oh for a sight of the low bleak hills purpled with heather, the hazel clumps, the rowan and the lady birch, the fir and the oak, low-growing, gnarled and twisted by so many winter storms! These towering walnuts and butternuts, the stately elms, and the broad domes of the maple were no doubt fair to see, flaming parti-colored now in the autumnal frosts, but they could never be half so dear as the weather-worn woodlands of her northern land. Her love was there; it had struck its roots deep in graves—the graves of her kindred—and could not be torn away.

She took up the lament that at first wailed above the hills of Judea: "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." No more, no more. O gray stone kirk where she had worshiped! O lichen-covered stones that marked the resting-places of her dead! blest braesides where the white flocks were feeding; and O little noisy burnies tumbling toward the sea! O sheilings and byres and long stone farm-houses with their roofs of thatch!

She bowed her face upon her knees; her knitting had fallen to the door-stone, and a little cat was making sad work with the stitches. She moaned forth the same low, passion-full cry with which the women of her people had moaned the flower of the clans fallen while the Norman Wall was building: "O-hon-a-ree! O-hon-a-ree!"

But now out of the distance, as if swept up with the breeze from the river, came familiar sounds, shrill, high, piercing, prolonged, soul-stirring—such sounds as brought reprieve to Lucknow, the clear, predominating call of the Highland pipers! Ailsa held her breath and hushed her moans to listen. Was she deceiving herself? was she under a spell? No; clearer and clearer it came, wild chords of the wildest music known. Ailsa sprang to her feet; her heart beat as if she had gone back over thirty springs. Yes, there he came, down the road, marching straight along the middle of the way, making long steps, his head held high, his chest thrown out—a "Highland mon" in the McDonald plaid, kilt, sporran, philibeg, cairngorm, long stockings and tied shoes, his chanter under his arm, and his cheeks blown out round and purple. How many, many times had she as a child followed such music up and down the country town!

Ailsa knew that this wandering piper was no doubt too lazy to work, making his money by

showing off his gala dress and playing his pipes along the roads, and spending that spare money in grogshops at night—a “ne’er-do-weel” surely, but as welcome just then as a saint! She opened the gate for him; she listened to his playing, while Nathan Barber and all the Gowers ran to stare and hear; she brought him new milk and oat-cakes and short-cake and scones. She had, fortunately, but one silver dollar in her purse; if she had had five just then, he would have been given them all. Her heart was in a tumult of love and longing for her native land; she was sick for a sight of the dim haze of blue-bells across the sod, for the spicy scent of the heather. The wandering piper played his tunes, understanding this warmth of welcome. He was not inclined to tarry over long: the hospitality might soon be tempered by chill gusts of suspicion; the town was far away and the sun was westering.

But the Celtic soul is never without its residuum of poetry, and this idler divined that here was an exile doomed to lay her dust under alien skies; as he passed down the road the dashing measures of Lady Flora MacDonald, which had taken the children’s breath away, were succeeded by the Coronach of Rob Roy, “*Ha til mi tulidh!*”—“We return no more, we return no more!” Ailsa, leaning on the gate, caught the wailing notes; she bowed her head and wept. Again she took the

lament of the Hebrews: "He shall not return thither any more: but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more."

She lingered until the last notes perished in the distance, then she went into the house and took her "Book." Here were words for her need: "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. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

The children reported that Mistress Crathie had been crying. When Sis had given them their supper of corn-bread and milk, she went over to Ailsa's and said that she had come to take tea with her. When tea was over Ailsa asked her to go and "walk a wee" with her. They went across the hills to the country burial-ground set off by the neighborhood when it was first settled. There Ailsa had bought the plot of

earth where David Hume was buried, fenced it in neatly, and set up "a braw white stone." She stood looking at it in the last rays of sunset.

"When I am deid, Sis," she said, "you will see to it that I am laid here, near David. I maun rest by dust that is kin to me. I couldna thole to be laid alone. I hope the Humes wull bide here an' lay their bones wi' mine. But that is a' as God wills, an' when I win the lan' that lies verra far off, I ken I shall be satisfied."

That was a wakeful night for Ailsa; her mental experiences, the sound of the pipes, had stirred her beyond the soothing of sleep. She knew that time, which brings balm for all human woes, would subdue and bear away this present fit of home-sickness; that others would follow it at longer and longer intervals, and be less acutely felt, but that only when she reached "the land o' the leal" would this pain be gone to come no more. O nostalgia of the Scot, which seizes upon even the third and fourth generation of a transplanted line, making them feel at times as pilgrims and strangers even in a land where they were born!

David came home from his trip to Chicago feeling tenfold more of a man than ever. He was of larger frame and statelier height than most men; he had been treated as a man, he had sold his sheep and lambs well, he had signed his name

with an easy flourish to a receipt, and he had been called "Mister Hume." For the present life held nothing more to be desired—unless it was his supper when, the journey finished, he arrived at his own home. He came in with a swing and with his head held high. As he passed Nathan Barber and the yellow mongrel he pulled Nathan's ear and bestowed upon him three sticks of mint candy; then he went into the house, and as Ailsa turned with a smile of welcome to greet him, she looked so "sonsie," so motherly, all the home-life seemed so concentrated in her, that a quick reminiscence of his life with the Bealses rose up before him, and love and gratitude overflowed toward her who had made all so different. He bent down, putting a hand on each of Ailsa's shoulders, and kissed her smooth fair cheek. She turned away with tears in her eyes and a little catch in her breath. So had David Hume, who now lay yonder under his white stone, kissed her when he left Scotland, "to return no more, nor see his native country."

Sis Gower was there with Ailsa: she had come to help her clean house. Sis had her cotton frock-sleeves rolled up from her long, thin arms, a big wheat-sack was pinned about her for an apron, and she was washing a window. David looked at her sheepishly.

"Howdy, Sis?" said David.

"I'm well," said Sis, primly, stooping for a piece of newspaper to polish the window.

"Always at it?" said David, looking at Sis.

"Dear me! I have to be!" cried Sis, cheerfully, "with all my children to look after."

"I saw Jane as I came by Mis' Jonsing's," said David. "She was playing in the yard, in a sky-blue calico dress and a white sunbonnet. My! but she's fat! and she looked real tony. I say it was a good stroke to give her away. I wish that somebody'd ask for some of the rest of them."

"I don't," said Sis, indignantly, pulling down her sleeves and wiping the suds from her red hands. "I wouldn't give away any more of them. Father shall not find his family all scattered when he comes home. I'm not sorry about Jane: that was all right. I see her every day; she came up with Sikey this morning."

"Come," said David, "let us have some let-up of your work now. Here's supper on the table.—Hello, Bruce! how are you? Here's a book I brought you. Hurry up, you and Nathan, to supper. I'm starved.—Aunt Ailsa, I didn't bring you anything, but I did well with the sheep.—I didn't bring you anything either, Sis. I—"

"I should hope not," said Sis. "What should you bring me anything for? You gave me those books and the shelves a while ago, and I reckon

that ought to last a long time for presents. I don't care to get presents myself."

"You don't care for anything for yourself, do you?" said David. "You got lost and mixed up with other folks as soon as you were born, and you haven't found yourself yet. I'm glad to see you eating a hearty supper for once, like a Christian. Aunt Ailsa's porridge is mighty good."

"In Scotlan' ye wad no get onything but porridge an' milk for supper," said Ailsa; "but in this extravagant lan' ye maun hae meat an' eggs as weel."

"Why not?" said the lord of the Hume lands; "meat and eggs are plenty."

The next Friday evening Janet came home. The days were short now, and Sis was putting her children to bed when Janet came in with a big bundle in her arms:

"See here, Sis; here is a plaid dress Mrs. Garth sent out; she says you can make Lola and 'Miss' each a Sunday frock out of it. And this dark blue one is to make over for you. And here are some patterns, and here is a magazine that tells about sewing and cooking and flowers and fixing your house up; it has patterns in it, and Mrs. Garth is going to send it to you every month. It will come in care of Mr. Johnson, and be put in the mail-box that is nailed to his gate-post."

What! have a magazine of her own? That was

great splendor. Sis, ignoring what she had formerly said about presents, unrolled her bundle eagerly and spread out the dresses, while from the bed the close-cropped brown head of "Miss" and the ruddy curls of Lola popped up to see what was going on.

"Lie down, children," said Sis; "to-morrow you can help me rip these frocks, and I'll have yours done for you in a week's time."

She sat down with the plaid dress on her lap, but looked at Janet. Janet's hair was curled in a neat brown bang over her forehead; the thick wavy locks were drawn loosely back and tied with a red ribbon, while their soft curled ends fell gracefully about her neck. She had a white ruffle at her throat, and wore a brown-and-white check dress and buttoned boots.

"Janet, how nice you do look!" cried Sis, heartily.

"Do I?" said Janet. "But you just ought to see some of the girls!"

"And are you having a nice time?"

"REAL! I have to study ever so much, but that is what I went for, and if I'm going to be a teacher before I'm as old as the hills, I have to work for dear life. I start for school at half-past eight. Before then I have to put my room in order, and Mrs. Garth is very particular. At noon there's only time for the lunch, and after school

I sometimes take a walk with one of the girls or I walk or ride with Mrs. Garth. Mrs. Garth doesn't let me go around the streets with the girls much, nor even to the post-office or *dépôt*. She says girls have no business to be seen at such places, and she detests seeing them for ever on the street. I have to be in at five, and study until six. Mrs. Garth lets me sit in the library for three hours and read over my lessons, so that if I have to ask her about anything, I can do so. After tea I stay in the library with the rest until seven, and then I go to my room and study until nine; then I go to bed. Mrs. Garth doesn't let me go out to tea or to visit. She says it interrupts my lessons, and that I see company enough at her house to learn how to behave myself. I go to prayer-meeting with her on Wednesday evenings, and to church Sunday evenings, and whenever there is an elocution entertainment she takes me; she says that is part of a liberal education."

"Dear me!" said Sis, admiringly, as Janet drew her breath. "Oh, if only, by and by, Lola could have a chance like that! I wonder if I ever could lay up money enough to send her to a boarding-school for a year or so? Are you going to take music?"

"No; Mrs. Garth says I have no time, and could not get anything to play on, and haven't much taste. I did want to play; my cousin Ida plays—

mar-marvellously! Her fairy fingers just fly over the keys!"

"Dear me!" said Sis, in profound admiration of Cousin Ida. "If ever you go to see her, she'll play for you. Now, Lola ought to play."

Again a little curly head bobbed up from a pillow:

"Oh, Sis! won't you earn money, and send me to boarding-school to play a'norgan an' wear a bow an' a ruffle like Janet?"

"Why, Lola! are you awake? Go straight to sleep. There is time enough yet, and no knowing what I can do by and by—when father comes home."

"Do you know," said Janet to Sis, "I heard Mrs. Garth talking to the doctor about Bruce. She says Bruce is a wonderful genius. She expects great things of him, and she says he must go to school and to college, and go to study in foreign countries; and maybe he will turn out a great man, and perhaps write books or be a professor. Only think of that for our big-eyed Bruce that never says anything!"

"My! Your cousin Ida will be proud of him, won't she?"

"Humph!" said Janet.

"I wonder," said Sis, meditatively, "if Pam is a genius? I wonder if Pam oughtn't to go to college and write books? I might begin by

making him read all the books on the shelves. There's a good many of them—and then—”

Here a heap on the floor, supposably Pam in a sound sleep, but too proud of his ten years to go to bed as early as girls and chickens, suddenly sat up and demanded,

“Make me read all them books? No, yer don't!”

“Oh, Pam! not if it would make you a great man and teach you how to write books?” said Sis, persuasively.

“Write books?” said Pam, angrily; “there's 'nuff in the world! *There's* a whole shelf full; and teacher's got a lot more, besides all the hymn-books at church; and I just hate books!”

“But, Pam, think of college, and being a great man, and how proud father will be of you when he comes home!” cried Sis.

“Shucks!” said Pam, curling himself up and lying down, dog-like, again.

Poor Sis sighed.

Janet looked superior. Why not? Her small brother was the incipient genius. “Folks are made that way, Sis,” said Janet. “Some are made for books, some not. Bruce likes books; Pam likes work; Si Beals didn't like anything. Our David doesn't care for books—only the Bible and farming books and the ‘Complete Business Guide.’”

"Well," said Sis, taking heart of grace, "it's no matter; what is good enough for David is good enough for Pam, I guess."

"Only," said the long-headed Janet, who occasionally did her Scotch blood justice, "David has plenty of land; Pam hasn't."

"Well," said Sis, looking troubled, "when Pam grows up he can have—this place."

"But there's only ten acres! we've got two hundred and sixty! Besides, Sis, what would you do then?"

"Why-y-y—maybe I'd go out to service, or— or—"

"And 'Miss' and Lola—what would they do?" urged Janet.

Once more the heap on the floor bestirred itself:

"Shucks! what be you gals planning for *me* for? I lay out to earn a farm for myself if I want one. Don't you s'pose I can do nothing for myself? I ain't a girl! Girls can't look out for themselves. Boys can, I'll let yer know!"

Whereupon Janet abandoned that rigid propriety and good-society air which had characterized her since she entered. She bounced at Pam, took him by the collar, and shook him vigorously. "I'll let you know girls can give you a good dressing out," she said wrathfully. "A pretty time of day it is when you, Pam Gower, set up to say girls can't do anything! Who but a girl

has taken care of you this three years? You'd a' been bound out or sent to the county-house if it hadn't been for a girl! Who has taken in work, and gone out working, and sold ties, and rented pasture-lots, and raised garden-stuff and chickens, and washed and mended and made, to keep you children fed and sheltered and all together? As far as I can see, it's a girl that looked out for herself and for the rest of you. Take that for your impudence, so!"

"I, I, I—didn't m-m-mean Sis," blubbered Pam.

"You'd better not mean Sis," said Janet, with mischief in her big dark eyes, "or you'll have me to settle with."

CHAPTER XII.

THE POTENCY OF COUSIN IDA.

“A brow of pearl
Tressed with redolent ebony
In many a dark delicious curl,
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;
The sweetest lady of the time,
Well worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.”

THE high school closed for the winter vacation, and the next morning Dr. Garth, *en route* to see a patient near the river, deposited Janet at her aunt's door.

“Coom here, lassie! coom here,” cheerfully cried Ailsa, who had seen from the kitchen window the yellow wheels; “ye're kindly welcome home!”

Janet stood in the doorway of the summer kitchen. There was a busy scene, perhaps, just now, not very attractive to her. At a long table Mistress Crathie, in a large canvas apron, was rubbing and preparing, with salt and an odoriferous decoction of spices and muscovado sugar, hams, shoulders and long, narrow cuts of bacon,

getting them ready, in true Scotch style, for smoking. By another table stood Sis Gower, dextrously cutting up sausage-meat, judiciously providing fat and lean, while near her was Sikey, in his shirt-sleeves, vigorously grinding up the meat in Mrs. Johnson's patent grinder. The back door was open, and through it Janet saw a fire in the midst of which a circle of stones upheld a great iron pot filled with fat pork, which was boiling and bubbling at a great rate under the superintendence of Uncle Mose Barr. David, seated on a tub turned bottom-side up, was scraping and cleaning pigs' heads and feet, and putting the pieces into another tub standing beside him.

"Ye are juist in the nick o' time, lassie," cried Mistress Crathie, cheerfully. "We are bye ordinar busy the morn. Mistress Johnson has a sprained han'; an' she has sent her pigs oop here to be attended to wi' oor ain; also she sent us Sikey an' the sausage-cutter, an' the great kettle, sae we are all busy enow."

"Lola," said Sis, in her usual brisk, hopeful tones, "has gone to stay for vacation with Mis' Jonsing, to wash dishes and to look after little Jane, an' she is to get a dollar for it. That will buy her a pair of school-shoes."

"Coom, coom, lassie," said Aunt Ailsa; "rin awa' to your room an' and get on your warkin'-gown, an' lend us a han' down here."

Sis Gower detected the reluctance expressed in Janet's face.

"Oh, Mistress Crathie," she cried, "maybe Janet is tired, from school and her long ride; perhaps we don't need her. I'll work twice as fast—if I can."

"No, bairn, ye shanna," said Ailsa. "Gif Janet is tired, change o' wark will rest her fine. Dinna hev a cloudy brow, Janet, lass! When ye are at school, ye mun wark at the books wi' a wull; but when ye are no at school, then ye mun lay han's to the hame-wark wi' a wull also. The wark that lies nex' han' is aye that wark to which the Lord calls us, an' we maun no shirk it. Be brisk, noo."

Janet's good sense told her that Ailsa was right, and the calmly insistent air of Mistress Crathie left nothing to be said. Janet went up to her room and took down her brown calico working-dress from the closet. As she took off the neat check gown and untied her new hair-ribbon she reflected that the girls with whom she had lately associated would not spend the vacation doing housework or helping in the multitudinous affairs of "killing-time." They would make fancy-work for Christmas presents, help decorate the infant-school tree, visit each other and enjoy little parties and candy-pulls. Then, as she sought out a pair of coarse shoes and took off her buttoned boots, common sense told Janet that she ought to be thankful for

the privilege of going to school at all. Sis Gower and Della Munson had no such opportunities; and how cheery Sis always was, working for others and getting small thanks for it!

"I would look well," said Janet to herself as she buttoned her frock, "to set up for a lady, and loll back in the rocking-chair while all the rest of them are working! I can't expect to be like my cousin Ida, for she was born in a magnificent mansion and her mother wore a velvet robe. I can't expect to be like Mrs. Garth even, for she reads French and Italian and Spanish and I don't know what all, and gets letters and visits from learned and great people. I'd better go down and help cut up pig!" So down ran Janet with a bright face and a gay "Here I am!" which caused Ailsa to say to herself, "Weel, the bairn is no spoiled *yet*."

"What shall I do?" asked Janet.

"Scald out yon lard-crocks an' sausage-bags, lass, an' then get yon great bowl and get they bits ready for the head-cheese. I dinna min' gif ye mak' the cheese all yer nainsel'; it will be a braw thing to ken hoo to do. Ye'll na doot be a hoosekeeper yoursel' some day. Set the iron kettle on the back o' the stove, an' hae it half fu' o' boilin' water; then put the meat in it, an' keep it skimmed whiles ye scald the things yon and do ither wark."

Janet was soon as busy as the rest, but she was one to keep her tongue flying in unison with the motions of her nimble fingers. She told about the "closing exercises"—the singing, reading of the compositions, the room ornamented with vines and cedar. She told of the church fair, and of the tree that the infant school was to have. She had been invited to a party, but Mrs. Garth would not let her go; however, she had asked three girls to tea with her, and they had made nut candy and popcorn balls. She had a basket of candy and a ball for each of the children. She told of her studies, of her chief friends, and of the girls—not a few—whom she "just couldn't bear!" "And, Sis, I see you're getting crooked. That will never do! It will make you look old while you are young. I've been taking gymnastics; if you can take them, you'll be straight as a dart;" and Janet held up her head and kept her shoulders back as she stepped about the kitchen. "Mrs. Garth says that if you ever mean to be anybody, or to do anything that's worth while, or to have good health and live-out half your days, you must keep your shoulders back. Then you will have strong lungs and plenty of fresh air in them, and you will digest your food and be strong. It is all in keeping your chin in. If you hold your chin in, you can't have crooked shoulders. I'll show you how, Sis, and I'll teach you my gym-

nastics, and you can do them every night before go to bed."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Sis; "if there's anything that you have learned that you think I can learn, I'd be so glad to have you teach me! I don't want my family to be ashamed of me when they grow up."

"Ye had no better let David hear ye talk like that, Sis," said Ailsa, with a queer little smile; "gif ye do, he'll begin to speak great swelling words about breakin' heids. Gif David kep' a' his promises, there wad no be a whole bane i' the neighborhood, I'm thinkin'."

Janet washed the big lard-jars, and carried them out to be ready for Uncle Mose Barr to strain lard into. She made ready the sausage-bags, and rubbed sage and summer savory and pepper together for Aunt Ailsa to season the sausage-meat. Sis looked at her with great admiration. Sis thought it wonderfully good and beautiful for Janet to be willing to take hold and work in this way. She did not consider that there was any virtue in her own ceaseless toils: they were for her family; her family needed her work.

"I'm sure," said Sis to Janet as the latter stirred the boiling head-cheese, "your cousin Ida does not have to do such work. I guess she would not know how."

"Of course not," said Janet, looking a little em-

barrassed; "she never goes near a kitchen: she is always dressed in silk and lace, and she would ruin her clothes. She embroiders in gold and rainbow-hued silks, and plays on a lute, and sings, and sometimes she reads—letters."

"Come, come, lass; dinna be havoring like this," said Ailsa.

"Yes, she does!" cried Janet, flushing crimson, but she said no more about Cousin Ida.

But if Janet had a cousin Ida, Sis had a father about whom to dream, and he was never long absent from her thoughts. She presently took up her tale:

"Now I have to sell my pig, of course, as soon as it is big enough. I earn what meat and lard and sausage we use—earn it helping; but when father comes home we shall kill our own pig—a fine large one—and then I shall have rows of jars full of lard and sausage, and I shall have head-cheese, and that scrapple Mis' Jonsing makes, and a whole half bushel of doughnuts, like the Widow Munson has. Just Widow Munson and Della and the hired man—I don't know how they use so many doughnuts! But they have them on the table three times a day, and that is what I shall do when father comes home."

Uncle Mose Barr, who had just carried a big jar of lard into the pantry out of harm's way, heard this remark. When he went out he said to David,

in a scoffing tone, "That there Sis Gower is a-talkin' 'bout her par agin."

"See here," said David, his face black as a thunder-cloud with wrath, "if you can't twist your tongue to say 'Miss Sis,' I'll knock your head off. Do you hear?"

David had not had the privilege of really fighting with any one since Saul Beals left. He was suffering from the over-peacefulness of his neighbors. He would have been glad if Uncle Mose had given cause of war then and there.

But Uncle Mose had been too well brought up by his "family," the Barrs, to fight with white people; he concealed a wide grin by bending in close inspection over the lard-kettle, and rejoined,

"Wal, o' co'se, boss, dat ar's what I meant, suah. But don' yo' tink it's jes' like reck'nin' on ketchin' a hare by jes' runnin' after hit, or reck'nin' on de hones' intentions ob a possum, reck'nin' on *Mas'* Jeems Gower comin' back?"

"Who wants him back?" said David, gruffly.

"Wel, I don'," said Uncle Mose, cautiously lowering his voice; "he was jes' a plumb disgrace to dis yere 'spectable neighborhood. He was allus a-drinkin,' an' he'd play craps with ary a nigger he could fin' low-down 'nuff to play wid him. I don' hol' to niggers playin' craps, but w'en hit comes to white folks tryin' it, boss, I makes suah d'ey ain't libbin' up to dere obligations. Yes, boss,

Mas' Jeems Gower was allus drunk; he wasn't allus miraculous drunk, tho' I hav' sot eyes on him in that condition."

"Well, you'll never set eyes on him again, drunk or sober."

"I hope not, boss—I hope not, though I do hear dat *Miss Sis* 'lows he's suah to come home 'spectable an' prosperatin'. I hope I may live long 'nuff to see dat day; ef I do, I'll live long as dat Methusalem de Bible done tell 'bout. Boss, I lef' Ike up dar by de barn to scrape dat oder hog w'en it was done scalded, an' de little black rascal's gone lef' de fire burn plumb out, an' is firin' stones at dat Shanghai rooster. Ef you'll jes' look after dis laad a minute, I'll go give him as han'some a thrashin' as he wants to see."

In three minutes Ike was racing around the barn at a lively rate, Uncle Mose after him, rod in hand; but Ike, without half running, was always a yard in front of the rod. After two or three turns Ike shouted,

"Wha' yo' chasin' me fo'? Ain't I gwine buil' up dat fire fas' as I kin?"

"See dat yo' do, den," said Uncle Mose solemnly, laying down his weapon. "See dat yo' do, or I'll war you to a frezzle soon's I lay han's on yo', fo' suah."

"Sis," said Aunt Ailsa, "you ha' cut sausage-meat until your arms are a-weary; let it be, noo,

for David to tak' oop, an' do you get yon bowl o' cracklins, an' mak a drippin'-pan fu' o' cracklin bread, an' half o' it you sall tak home to-night wi' you."

The vacation thus briskly begun proceeded in much the same fashion. It was nearly half gone before the work with the pigs was finished. Janet took her share in all the business of the day, and then, in the latter part of the afternoon, put on her check gown and her new red hood and made calls on Mis' Jonsing or Mrs. Gage or Widow Munson and Della.

Della brought her crazy-work and came to spend the afternoon with Janet. Della had a new gown of Dutch blue calico, a sun-bonnet of the same lined with red, and a gay plaid shawl, chiefly yellow. She felt a deal of pride in her new outfit, and she wanted to learn from Janet whether the girls in town wore gloves or mittens, and whether they wore long bangs or short bangs, curled bangs or straight bangs.

Janet, with her little air of superiority, gave the desired information, and, her taste being naturally good, and now for some time strictly formed on that of Mrs. Garth, she secretly condemned Della's array as "simply horrid."

"You ought to go to school in town yourself, Della," said Janet. "It would do you lots of good, and you'd know—about things. You

could as well as not—your mother has plenty of money.”

“Ho!” said Della; “I wouldn’t go to town and live among those stuck-up girls for anything! I’ve seen them turn up their noses at folks ridin’ in a road-wagon. If mother lays out money for me, I want her to buy six stuffed chairs and a looking-glass for the front room as soon as I’m old enough to have young men company. I’m past thirteen now, and if ever I can get through what they teach up here to the district school, I’ll thank my stars. I hate learnin’ lessons, I do, but I like fancy-work, and I learned this piece out of a book that Sis Gower got from Mrs. Garth. Sis keeps talking about her father coming home. Mother says she’d think it was the last blessed thing any one of them would want. Mother says he never would do a hand’s turn of work. I think just like mother does. It’s all right to take hold and work for them as will lay to an’ help theirselves, but if they jest lie back an’ drink an’ smoke, they needn’t count on me; they may jest pile on.”

Janet had now been so long with Mrs. Garth, having her conversation strictly corrected, that she found Della’s language very faulty, and wondered how she had ever endured her company.

“It’s gettin’ darkish,” said Della, “and mother will be scart if I stay out long. There’s Sikey Gower goin’ over to Mr. Gage’s to take over the

black Holstein calf—Mr. Gage bought it—so I'll go home 'long with him; he passes right by my house.—Ho there, Sikey! wait till I git my bonnit; I'm coming with you!"

Janet went to the gate with Della and inquired of Sikey as to the health and price of the black Holstein calf. Sikey remarked that, as far as he was concerned, "it wasn't worth a rap; it was allus a-bawlin'; never heard tell of a calf as had so much bawl in it."

"I think," said Janet to herself as she went back to the house, "I'd rather get a school in town when I am ready to teach. Always, after I knew about my cousin Ida, I liked her way of living and speaking and dressing, and all that, better than what is around here."

When she had closed the door and was shut in to the society of her own family, Janet was well content. There was nothing there with which she was out of harmony. There was a fine manliness about David—a certain self-possession, dignity and quiet assumption of authority which had come to him as the head of the household and a man of affairs—which Janet both admired and respected.

Bruce, serene and silent, was already wrapt in a thought-world almost out of Janet's reach. He came to her with his books to find out what this word meant and how that word was said, and told

her facts that he had discovered, and made surmises and uttered wonderments that made Janet set him in a niche apart as a marvel. He had hung on the wall his picture of the Holy Boy. It was still his favorite picture, but no longer his comrade: he had found comrades that lived and breathed—the creatures of the wood and field. He was “going for eight” now, he said, and he knew the Holy Boy could not hear his confidence nor see his gifts. But this Holy Boy was a picture of One who had once trodden this earth, a living boy. What had he been like? Had he loved the brooks, the fields, the flowers—all living and growing things? He asked Ailsa, for she knew.

“Ay, bairn, I ken he did, fine. The boy is as the man is, an’ when he was a man he aye foun’ pictures o’ the Father’s grace an’ bounty in the springin’ o’ the mustard-seed, the puttin’ forth o’ the leaves o’ the fig tree. He said, ‘Consider the lilies, hoo’ they grow; Solomon in a’ his glory was no arrayed like ane o’ these.’ He spoke o’ the sparrows, pur birdies! for whom God taks tent; the cry o’ the young ravens, the little foxes rinnin’ to their holes, an’ the hen gatherin’ her chicks unner her wings. Ay, lad, he loved them a’ an’ cared for a’.”

“I wonder,” said Bruce, “if he remembered that he had made them and kept them all alive?”

“ Ah, laddie, ye are askin’ questions aboon me ; ye hae thoughts too gran’ for your heid. Ye sal’ ken a’ i’ the nex’ world.”

In the evenings the family went to Romance Land under convoy of Janet. One of the high-school teachers had had a Saturday afternoon reading-club for some of the new pupils, and among these was Janet. They had read “The Age of Chivalry” and some of the “Idylls of the King.” Janet was so interested that she took these legends for fact. To her they were as soundly historic as anything in the chronicles of ancient or modern times. While her reasoning powers were but little developed, her imagination was actively awake and her memory was exceedingly retentive. The dress, the manners, the adventures of the days of chivalry were as real and clear to her as the hourly work of home or school. King Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Enid, Vivien, Merlin, Guinevere, Astolat, Sir Geraint, Caerleon, Edyrn, Modred—all the places and people—passed before her auditors like a gorgeous lord mayor’s procession.

When David heard of these plumed, corsletted, helmed and gallant knights, who rode forth, sword in hand and lance in rest, and with scant courtesy toppled over whosoever came in their way ; when he learned how they “would not take one bit of cheek,” but clapped spurs to steed and rushed like

a whirlwind upon their adversaries, always leaving said adversaries gasping on the plain; when he was told how the chivalric men of the Round Table slew giants, dragons, lions, bears, tigers, and boars,—then was his heart lifted up within him, and he felt that he himself was built of the granite out of which are hewn heroes.

Aunt Ailsa found the story of the search for the Holy Grail “rank popery,” and hoped Janet would “beware o’ sic misleadin’ nonsense.” The giants and dragons she accepted as “possible a long time ago, syne the Buik spoke o’ them.”

David, while he greatly admired the knights, held a very poor opinion of the mediæval dames: They were always crying. S’pose they were pretty—what of that, when they were such ’fraid cats? ’Seemed as if they were always shrieking and screaming about something. Why, Sis Gower had stayed alone in her house with the children ever since she was thirteen; Sis wasn’t ’fraid, though. He had often told her that she ought to keep a dog, but Sis said it cost a good bit to keep a dog, and Pam and Lola might tease it, and get bit if it was real outrageous severe.

Mistress Crathie shared David’s views about the general inefficiency of the dames of chivalry. She had never learned that beauty is its own excuse for being, and she said they “seemed to be puir, do-less bodies, wha’ thocht o’er much o’ their

luiks, an' it was verra ill-considerate o' them, trapesing about i' silk gowns, an' goold an' siller an' precious stones on them, to tempt ne'er-do-weels to thieve an' plunder. Ladies had no business abroad wi' diamonds i' their ears an' goold bracelets an' chains on. They had better bide at hame."

Ailsa herself contributed Scotch ballads to the evening's entertainment. The children all laughed at "Come under my pladdie." Janet preferred "Hunting Tower." She said it made her think of Cousin Ida.

"I'd quit talking of her, if I were you," said David, shrugging his shoulders.

"I won't," said Janet, contumaciously.

"Girls are queer creatures. What a stupid you must be!" said David, with the refreshing frankness brothers are prone to use toward their sisters.

CHAPTER XIII.

REALISM AND IDEALISM.

“Ye have seen—what ye have seen.”

YOUTH is the time of hope, not of memory. The young seldom trouble themselves to look backward; their golden palaces, their ideal personages, are before them. It is because they do not burden themselves with memories that the young are slow to learn by experience and continue to expect the impossible. Doubtless this explains why Sis Gower was looking with bright anticipations toward her father's return.

If the mother had been alive, she would have been pretty sure that her truant husband would come home to lead his drone existence at her expense. She would have known better than to expect him back strong, honorable, diligent, loving, prosperous. He was not made of such paste, as the Italians say. Can the leopard change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin? It was open to Sis to remember her father idle, selfish, cross, absent for days, then coming home nervous, shaken, irritable, excited. She might have looked back to

times when he had taken the very bread out of his children's mouths, and added by sharp complaints to the burden of her mother's toils. But Sis did not look back. She saw here and there cheerful, happy, busy, generous, affectionate fathers. That kind of father would suit her exactly; it was the fashion of parent she meant to have. The absent father would return made over into that good likeness. In ancient days men made pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre for their sins, and came back clean of taint to live honorable lives: some such miracle was to be wrought in her father.

When Sis uttered these hopes before David, he made no contradiction. He had known James Gower for a year, and the last thing that he desired was to see him return. But it was pathetic to hear Sis planning for the future with the regenerated Gower as its largest factor. "If she choose to hope, let her hope," said David to himself.

"By and by," said Sis, "my children will all be grown up and married, and gone away and settled themselves. Then father will be old, and he and I will live here together, and I will not let him feel lonely for mother. I will read the Bible to him, and talk to him, and wait on him, and we will be happy."

This was the large maternal heart of Sis, planning for a father needing motherly tendance, who should fill her heart and her hands when her children were grown up and gone.

Why did not David undertake to give Sis what he called "a good settin' down" about her father, such as he gave Janet, one February day, about Cousin Ida?

"You silly, to be always talking about your cousin Ida! What did she ever do for you?" said David, shaking his big head.

"She did a great deal for me," said Janet, rising up in defence of the absent.

"I don't see," said David, arranging himself for an argument, "how a person that you never saw could do you any good."

"She did," insisted Janet. "Would you have wanted me to be like Mrs. Beals, to be lazy and dirty, to use bad language, and to sneer and dip snuff? Would you want me to be noisy and bold, and to act like some of the girls that go to our district school? I might, if it had not been for Cousin Ida. Thinking how nice and quiet and proud and lady-like she was, I wanted to be that way too, and I couldn't bear folks that were far away from like her—and—well, I kind of measured folks by her, and when they were not like her, I didn't care for being much with them or learning their ways. I can't really explain it to you, David, but she helped me ever so much."

"For my part," said David, "I don't swear by folks that hasn't more solid flesh and blood to 'em, more real 'git up an' git,' than Cousin Ida."

“But, David, you don't know everything. Let me tell you what I heard a gentleman saying one evening to Dr. and Mrs. Garth. It was Saturday evening, and I was allowed to stay down stairs, as all my lessons were learned for Monday. He was a college professor, David, so of course he knew what he was talking about. He said nothing really was except as we made it in our own mind—that we had an idea of a thing, and that *was* the thing. We think things, and they are. So, of course, whatever we think is as much real as—as—as anything.”

“'Cordin' to that, we couldn't tell nor believe no lies, for just thinkin' 'em so would make 'em so, sartain! Don't believe it!”

“He said there wouldn't be sound unless for the drums in our ears—”

“There's no drums in my ears, you bet!” said David.

“There is light because we see it—in our minds. Things *are*, because we think them; and what we think is what is.”

“That's the plumbest nonsense ever I heard in my life, an' that man ought to go to the asylum. S'pose I don't believe there is any fire?—that wouldn't hinder my bein' burnt by the fire, would it?”

“You'd believe in the fire quick enough as soon as it burnt you. You'd think fire then. Seeing,

hearing, feeling, and I don't know what else, are the ways things get into our mind, and they are—well, they *are* because we think they are.”

“Shucks, Janet! Such foolin’! I wasn’t here to see the fire that day Bruce set it a-goin’, but there was a blaze all the same, ’pears to me.”

“You weren’t here to see, but the rest of us were.”

“If there hadn’t been a livin’ soul here, the fire would ’a’ been here all the same, an’ burnt down the barn an’ the sheep-sheds. ’Cause I never saw any lions, that doesn’t make it that there ain’t lions. ’Cause Joe Leeds doesn’t believe there is any God, that doesn’t make it that there isn’t any. I can crack you a verse on that, as Aunt Ailsa says: ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.’ I s’pose the fool said that, so long as he didn’t see or hear or feel God anywhere, there wasn’t any. He was a fool, all the same, and when he got dead I reckon he found it so.”

“But, David, if you’d heard this professor talk, you’d have understood about it.”

“I’m glad I didn’t. I don’t want to waste my time hearing such trash. Set you up with the notion that your cousin Ida was just as good as other folks, didn’t it? That’s enough for me.”

A few evenings after this, when David and Ailsa were alone, David told his aunt that “maybe it wasn’t doing Janet any good to be at Mrs. Garth’s.

She was getting set up with a lot of cranky notions, just reg'lar infidel, like Joe Leeds. Don't believe in nothin' they don't see, and think they make everything by thinking of it; and, at that rate, they make their God, if they have any. He didn't believe in it, for his part." And he tried to repeat what Janet had said to him.

Mrs. Crathie meditated for a while :

"David, the lassie is improvin' brawly. Na doot she hears mickle she canna comprehend, but by an' by she will sort oot a' that she learns, an' coom to a fair realizin' sense of what is true. Ye maun expec' Mistress Garth to say things aboon Janet's graspin', her frien's the same, and Janet canna gie a clear report o' it a'. I ken Mistress Garth weel, an' I am sure she has the love o' God shed abroad in her hairt, an' his grace in her life."

"Maybe so, and maybe not so," said David, shaking his head. "If what they want to make of Bruce is a man to talk such trash, I'd rather he ploughed all his life."

In truth, David had never accepted Mrs. Garth as cordially as the others had. The laughter that had rained from her eyes into his on that day, now two and a half years gone, when he had been cutting apple tree to cook the sorghum, still rankled in his soul. The Celt and the Indian have long memories.

Aunt Ailsa, failing to alarm herself as to the

orthodoxy of Mrs. Garth, and Janet not being where her new vagaries could be combated, David might frequently be found leaning on Sis Gower's door-post. He did not lean on the gate, because Sis never came out there. Sis had no time for idling: she made sheets, pillow-cases, towels, aprons, check shirts and children's frocks for the entire neighborhood. No doubt David found the idiosyncrasies of Sis Gower more tolerable than those of Janet. Other girls' fads are more enduring than your sister's.

"Lola," said Sis, "you and 'Miss' go and bring in the washing. Lay a sheet on the grass, and put all the clothes on it; then climb up and take down the line. Pick up all the pins, and then put the clothes on the kitchen-table and fold them down as I showed you. Put all the small pieces on top, Lola, so that you can iron them before you go to school to-morrow."

"I'm glad you make them work," observed David.

"Of course I do! It is my duty. They ought to work. Then I have more time to earn money. I worked when I was their age. If I hadn't, what would I have known when mother died and left me alone with them? If I die, Lola and 'Miss' ought to know enough to take my place."

"Now, what are you talking about dying for?" growled David.

“Oh, I don’t mean to die if I can help it,” said Sis—“not until I have my children provided for. Of course, Lola and ‘Miss’ will need to know how to keep house and do work if they’re going to get married. I have it all planned out: they will all four of them get married some time, and I shall go to their weddings and help them settle in housekeeping.”

“And what will you do?”

“Oh, stay here and take care of father. Perhaps Pam and his wife will want to live here too.”

“And when will you be married?”

“Oh, never, I expect. You see, I’m not pretty at all, and I am too busy to have time for courting. Then, from what I’ve read in books, somebody has always to be asked if a girl can marry—a father or a mother. There it is, you see: my mother is dead, and my father hasn’t come home. I could never marry until my father came home to give his consent. It would not be proper, and he might not like it.”

“How about the others, then?”

“Oh, I can give consent for them, I suppose. The young men will come and ask if they can have Lola and Miss, and I will say, ‘Certainly,’ if they are the good sort. I think I would have that much right—don’t you? I’ve been rather a mother and father both to them.”

"I should say you had," said David.

As Sis preferred only to talk about her family, and not herself, David sometimes found it pleasanter to stand by his own gate and admire the fine spring evenings, and all those signs about him which indicated that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." He was standing thus one afternoon in April, having come up early for his tea, when a mean-looking man, a stranger, came along, inquiring, "Jim Gower live around here?"

"Used to," said David, curtly; "he's gone."

"He'd a house an' farm, hadn't he? Will you p'int 'em out? S'pose he didn't take 'em when he went, eh?"

David "sized up" his man with a long, slow look. "Mebby I might point out the place if you'd come round behind the barn," he suggested.

They went behind the barn, and David, leaning commodiously against the fence, offered his guest a seat on a barrel lying upon its side.

"Stranger in these parts?" said David.

"From St. Louis," said the stranger. "I'm a capitalist. I lend out money on farms and so on."

"You don't look so very flush," said David with aplomb.

"I don't go in for no show, but I've got the shekels."

"How did you hear about Jim Gower's place?"

"Met him in St. Louis. Jim wanted to borrow

some money of me, and he offered to sell me his place for it, cheap. But I don't take bargains I haven't looked into, so ez I was coming down this way, I thought I'd look it up and see ef it was worth the two hundred dollars Jim wanted."

David's blood boiled. However, he made noble efforts at self-control—for the time being. So! Jim Gower was in St. Louis. And, not content with abandoning a brood of children, he was trying to sell roof and hearth! He spoke grimly:

"Jim's fooled ye. He doesn't own ary rod of land nor stick of timber. His wife us't to teach school, an' she bought her a house an' ten acres before she was married, and put three hundred in the bank. Jim used up all that was in the bank, but he never had nothin' to say to the land, and it was left to his fambly. Garth and Porter holds the care of it, and if you want to know it's so, and Jim can't touch it, you call in on them in town."

"Well, brother, while I'm out here I might as well look at the place; mebbly Jim's fambly will want to do somethin' for him."

"I ain't no brother of yours," quoth David; "I'm white folks. I am rather particular who brother's me." Then, reflecting that it was idle to conceal the whereabouts of the Gower property, he added: "Yon's the house and land over there, and—you're not going near it. If you stop foot before that gate, you'll have me to an-

swer to. Do you see the make of that arm?"—and David drew up his right arm and struck out with it like lightning—"I can fell an ox if I lay myself out to."

"An' if yer knows where to hit, brother."

"Don't 'brother' me; and I *do* know where to hit. I'm in charge of that Gower fambly. The night the mother died she put me in charge of the whole lot, and I look after them."

"Women are always doing some mean thing like that to stir up a fuss," complained the capitalist.

"That's because there are so many grasping, mean, low-down scamps of men in the world," said David, with evident intention.

The capitalist was fidgeting about on his barrel like a wasp buzzing after an opportunity to put in some of his fine work; but David looked so alert, so self-possessed in his massive strength, that it might be safer to treat him with humility.

"You hear what I say," iterated David: "if you go near that house or open your head to one of the Gowers, I'll horsewhip you till my arm drops, if I have to chase you to St. Louis to do it."

"Nice farm, this," said the capitalist, coolly turning the theme. "Yours?"

"Yes, it is."

"What's it in?"

"Sheep and corn and some wheat."

"Oh! How many sheep do you winter?"

"I mean to try fifteen hundred next winter; but I'll have to hire pasture."

"Oh! The wool and the lambs and mutton must bring you in a proper pile of money."

"That's so," said David.

"And all yours?"

"In the family. Mine and my aunt's, and I run it."

"Oh! The world goes easy with you, brother. You ought to be pretty well suited with yourself."

"Yes," said David, nonchalantly. "Some people are always fretting and fuming because they're not suited with themselves. I'm suited. I suit myself, looks and all, clear down to the ground!"

Here a loud noise of altercation arose on the other side of the barn, and Uncle Mose Barr and Joe Leeds came in sight.

"What's the row?" demanded David, greatly interested.

"W'y, boss, Joe Leeds, he jes' cheatin' me out o' my eye-teef!"

"I sold him half a beef las' month," said Joe Leeds, defiantly, "and I've come after my money. Mose said you'd pay me when he took up his wages. It ain't cheatin', is it, to come after my money? You pay me, David—it's thirteen dollars."

"Don' you pay him a cent," cried Uncle Mose;

“don't, boss! W'y, dat half a beef wasn't wuth nothin'. He tole me hit was bes' yearlin' beef, fat as butter, an' he took it down dare to my ole woman w'en I was up here wukkin', an' dey cut it all up an' put it in salt 'fo' I got home, 'cept some of it. An' my my ole woman, she biled it an' biled it all day long an' mos' all night; she baked it an' she chopped it, an' she did everyting to it, an' not one of dem little niggers had a toof sharp 'nuff to get troo it! Yearlin' beef! W'y, boss, hit was dat ole cow from Mas' Jones' sale, twenty years ole ef she was a day, an' he got her for six dollars, boss.”

“What did you lie to Mose that way for?” demanded David fiercely, turning to Joe Leeds.

“I didn't,” said Joe, “not a word. I told him it was yearlin' beef, an' it was. When I bought that cow she was bare skin an' bone. I kep' her a year, fattenin' her, an' I laid on her every bit of flesh an' fat she had on her, and it was yearlin' beef, ef I know anything 'bout beef.”

At this dialogue the capitalist shrieked with joy, and in a paroxysm of laughter fell off his barrel.

“You and Joe Leeds would make a pretty pair of partners,” said David, gruffly.—“Joe, I sha'n't pay Mose Barr's wages to you. I'll pay him when his month's up, and you and he can fight it out between you.—Mose, go to see to those sheep.—You capitalist, if that's what you call yourself,

you've made a mistake if you think you've got any business around here. I've told you all there is to be told, and you'd better move on toward town." Then, seeing that the man looked reflectively toward Joe, he added: "Joe, I don't care to have you around here. My aunt doesn't like you about, because you're always swearing.—I'm going five miles toward the town, mister, and I'll give you a lift if you're going that way."

He had decided to put five miles between Sis Gower and the man who had seen her father.

The stranger helped him to harness the sulky, and David, calling to his aunt that he didn't want any supper, drove rapidly off with Jim Gower's friend.

"There's a man round here named Beals, ain't there?" said the capitalist, looking askance at David.

"Jim told you about him, I reckon," said David—"told you that he had pockets full of cash, wore a cloth coat and plug hat every day, and ate turkey reg'lar, didn't he?"

"Well, no; he hadn't much to say about Beals—reckoned him a sort of low-down critter; but he said there was a boy living with Beals—a smart sort—might come to somethin' if he was looked after proper."

“Oh! did he? Jim wanted to look after him an’ be a father to him, did he? If Jim’s got any ’tentions to spare, he’d better put them on the raft of children he left behind when he skipped.”

“Jim Gower didn’t care about the boy, but I’m wantin’ a smart chap to train up in my business, an’, seein’ he was a tidy orphan, I thought I’d give him a chance.”

“Well, he don’t want none of your chances. Jim told you the boy owned the farm, and you laid out if you got him with you, and give him whisky and tobacco an’ gamblin’ enough, he’d turn the farm over to you as soon’s he come of age. Much obliged, stranger; I can look after myself. I’m that boy.”

They drove on in silence until they saw two men sitting on the roadside before them doing something with cards. The capitalist became much excited.

“See there! Do you know what they’re up to? It’s just the neatest little game when you know it! I can tip you the wink about it, and you can clean them out as easy, and serve ’em right too! The rascals are sittin’ there lookin’ for some one to come along to them. They’d suspect me, mebby—I look sharp—but you look innocent, and they’ll never know what you’re up to till you’ve got their pile. You just follow my

lead, and make the motions as I wink at you, and we'll send them flyin' !”

David drew up at the roadside: “ You may get out, Mr. Capitalist. I've carried you far enough.”

“ Ain't you goin' to stop to the game or take me farther ?”

“ Not if I know myself. Do you s'pose I don't read the papers, and never heard tell of confidence-men? My eye's peeled. You come up in this neighborhood again, and I'll lam you to flinders and turn over the pieces to the constable. I lay he can find some sheriff that's wanting you.”

Then David wheeled about in fine style and rattled up the road. His countenance expanded, his spirit felt mightily refreshed; he was more satisfied with himself than ever; he had routed a capitalist, horse, foot and dragoons. Fate had forbidden that he should live in the “ good old days” when robbers and lions lurked at every turn in the road; he was doomed to wear flannel and denim instead of gleaming armor, flashing helmet, waving plume, and chiseled shield; it was not his to ride about on a warlike steed that walked generally on its hind legs and pawed the air with its fore feet. All the same, he had defended Sis Gower and her family and scared off a sharper, and, though he had not thrashed him, he had threatened him terribly.

The grass was soft and fresh along the roadsides; the trees and shrubs were putting on the first faint hazy green of their bursting buds; the sunset was blazing in crimson and gold turquoise, glorious as the "blue and purple from the isles of Elishah." For the moment David had nothing left to desire.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DOLL STUFFED WITH SAWDUST.

“I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,—past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream.”—*Shakespeare.*

“NOT all men are endowed with tender sympathy; some have hearts hardened like Pharaoh’s. This arises, no doubt, from that natural depravity which has come upon men in consequence of the fall of Adam, or because at their baptism the devil is not brought sufficiently under subjection.” This was no doubt the case with David Hume, and the reason why he felt angered at Sis Gower after the visit of the capitalist. How absurd, how wrong, was Sis, to be building faith, hope and affection into a shining altar whereon she meant to sacrifice herself and her all to that contemptible renegade her father! David was in a superior “I-told-you-so” state of mind, and part of the time he arraigned Sis at the bar of his judgment, as if she knew all that the capitalist had divulged; again, he resolved to go to Sis and forever rout her fancies by telling her the sharp truth.

Intent on this somewhat brutal frankness, David would go over to the house of Sis Gower, and, leaning his broad shoulders against the door-post, would prepare to divulge. Then Sis, lifting her gentle blue eyes from the work on the machine, would tell him how nicely Pam was getting on in school, or that Lola was learning to make button-holes, or that Miss had nearly learned to read, and "father will be so glad when he comes home!" and David, who would have dared in fight any man in the neighborhood, would feel all his courage oozing away, and would depart with that news from St. Louis still locked in his heart. But he always went home angry at Sis, who had defeated him.

"I b'lieve Sis Gower is plumb crazy about her father," he said angrily to Mrs. Crathie after one of these discomfitures, "Sis is so good she's good for nothing."

"Why, lad, what ails ye?" Ailsa would cry, amazed. "Sis Gower good for naught! Wha then is the best girl about here?"

"Well, it just makes me sick to hear her palavering about when that blasted rascal of a father comes home!" shouted David. "Doesn't the Bible say it's wicked to believe a lie?"

"Na; it says it's wrong to love or to make a lie," said Ailsa.

"Sis does both," said the rabid David; and

finally he relieved his mind by telling Ailsa all about the capitalist.

David and Ailsa were sitting on the front porch in the moonlight of a warm April night; looking up the road, they could see that the lights were out in Sis Gower's home. Sis did not like the expense of lamps, and she and her children went early to bed.

"David," said Ailsa, "this is no waur than I ha' thought. Ye ha' done weel to turn yon rascal awa', an I'm thinkin' his report will no move the faither to come hame. But ye maun no tell the puir lassie. Gif it were no for hope the heart wad break. Sis has a heavy burden, an' a' these dreams o' a guid faither an' guid future help her to bear it. Some people nourish hope on ane thing, some on anither. Some lassies wad be thinkin' that by an' by they wad marry, an' ha' a gran' hame an' hantle o' siller in pocket. But Sis is no that strain; she lives in the guid an' well-doin' o' ithers. Whiles I think she maun ha' early been taught the spirit o' the tex', 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not, saith the Lord.' Let Sis dream her dreams, David."

"It will be just that much harder for her when she wakes," grumbled David. "Suppose Jim Gower comes stumbling along here drunk some day, and I have to thrash him?"

"That will be trouble enough when it comes,

lad. It will no be better for expectin' it. An' it may no come."

"Girls are always chatterin' about some nonsense," said David, gloomily—"Janet about her cousin Ida, and Sis about her father. It makes me sick."

"Ye luik unco weel, lad, for ane wha is made sick by sae mony things," suggested Ailsa. "Aince I read o' a little lass wha loved her doll weel, an' took muckle comfort in it, until ane day she foun' oot that the puir doll was stuffed wi' sawdust, which spoiled a' her content. Noo, gif she had no discovered the sawdust until, in the order o' nature, she had outgrown the doll an' foun' what took its place, it wad ha' been better, nae doot. It is aye pitifu' to lose ane comfort wi'oot havin' anither ready to fill the vacancy. But i' this warl there are many wha make it their business to rin aboot tellin' their neighbors that a' their dolls are stuffed wi' sawdust. It's no weel, an' it is unscriptural, to tak awa' the first before we can establish the second."

"I never shall understand girls," said David.

"Few men do," said Mistress Crathie, with conviction.

It was on such an early warm April afternoon that Mrs. Garth and Janet set out on one of their accustomed walks. When Janet saw which way their steps tended, she silently disapproved. She

preferred to walk on the granite pavements that led by the handsome houses of the town, where she could bow to acquaintances walking on the lawns or looking from the windows. Mrs. Garth usually preferred noting the glory of returning spring, rambling along the country roadside toward the little river. She had a small parcel in her hand, and Janet knew what it meant. A prairie schooner or tramp-wagon had entered the town, and Mrs. Garth meant to give a New Testament in good print and some illustrated temperance papers to any one in it who knew how to read. She made this her errand to each "tramp-wagon" that stopped in the place.

They found the wagon drawn up on the broad stretch of pebble and sand beside the stream, where the red bridge leaped the little river with a double span extending beyond this rocky bottom that was often overflowed in spring tempests. A tongue of green grass ran down among the stones; three great cottonwoods spread their branches and lifted their mottled, parched, black and white trunks, and a thicket of buckberry bushes, just growing green, offered a little wall of shelter for the fire. The mules were already tethered to feed on the grass; the men were lying smoking on the piled-up harness and wagon-seat; the woman of the party was cooking supper; and the children were at play in the water.

Mrs. Garth opened conversation with the woman, asking how long they meant to stay.

"Over stock-sale day; we want to trade off our mules."

"That will not be until Tuesday. Have you been here before?"

"Oh yes, we've been knocking up and down this road for ten year."

"I should think you'd rather settle."

"I did crave to when I was first married, but now I don't care. We were settled all winter in St. Louis. I longed for the road agin!"

"Can any of you read?"

"Wall, yes; my brother-in-law, the red-headed boy over yon, reads right smart."

Mrs. Garth turned to interview the literary member of the family, and, her book and papers being well received, she increased her knowledge of the ways of trampers by conversing with the men, who sat up straight and laid by their pipes.

"We us't to stop here a week in that pascher," said the senior man. "It was a mighty pretty campin' spot; but they've wire-fenced it an' warned us off."

Mrs. Garth looked, and lo! on the fence was a sign: "MOOVERS, KEPE OUT!" She laughed.

"You see, many of the town cows are kept there, and I suppose you wagon-people used to milk them,"

"Well, what's a little milk?" grinned the man.

"I suppose the owners prefer to have it themselves. As you have tramped so long, perhaps you have met a family named Beals?" The men shook their tangled heads.

"The eldest boy was a deaf-mute, and one of the girls, Turk, had a badly deformed mouth."

"Land-a-mercy-me!" said the literary youth. "Yes, I remember 'em."

"Ain't seen 'em for four or five years," said the older man.

"I have reason to think they are down somewhere along the Arkansas border. I want to write to that girl Turk, the one with the deformed mouth, and I don't want any of the others of the family to see it or know of it. You may meet them in the course of a year or two, and I want you to deliver the letter whenever you do. I'll go home and write the letter, and if you"—turning to the red-headed lad—"will come to my house this evening, I will give you the letter, and a bundle of clothes for yourselves. If you choose to bring a pail and a basket, I will give you some milk and provisions to help you over Sunday. I am very anxious to get that letter to Turk Beals. You won't forget it, will you?"

"No, missus, I won't," said the man, rising. "You're a plumb lady, and know how to treat movin' folks. He'll come for the things; and as

for the letter, the gal shel hev it if the Bealses are anywhar 'round these parts yit."

Mrs. Garth gave the boy her card. "Any one in the town will direct you to the house," she said as she and Janet went away.

"I hate those movers!" cried Janet, fervently, as she and Mrs. Garth returned to the main road. "I wish I might never see one again!"

"I find them very interesting."

"They make me remember the Bealses. It may be interesting to you, Mrs. Garth, because you never had to live among such folks. You have always been a lady: you never had to associate with Bealses. It seems to me, if those Bealses should come back and speak to me, or any of the girls should ever know that I used to live with them, I should die!"

"You did not belong to them, child; it was merely an accident of your life."

"It was the kind of accident that goes against one and makes one mortified," said Janet. "I shall never get over it." Tears were in her eyes.

"On the other hand, as an offset to the Bealses, you have your cousin Ida, the farthest possible from the Beals type, I should fancy;" and Mrs. Garth gave a cautious glance at her pretty protégé.

"No, she can't make up for Bealses," said Janet, flushing.

“My dear child, you are the one to make up for the Bealses, as you call it, by living them down. What you are, in yourself, in good manners, in refined purity of thought, speech, and behavior, in education, intelligence, and usefulness—that is important; by that you will be judged. We can be our own greatest enemies, our own best helpers. Each one of us for ourselves is to

“Ring in the nobler modes of life
With sweeter manners, purer laws;

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good;

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.”

Mrs. Garth felt after that as if she understood Janet better. She saw what was at the root of her excessive craving after niceness, daintiness, and what she called “style” in all that she did; her fear of doing anything that should seem vulgar or coarse; her intense desire after what she termed “gentility.” In her lack of experience Janet was apt to seize upon affectation for refinement, and her idea of a nice girl was usually the best-dressed girl, whose father had the most money. “But the child has good sense; she will reach a

proper mean some day," said Mrs. Garth, laughingly, to the doctor, "and her passionate zeal to be what she calls a 'real lady' makes it much easier to teach and manage her. To say that a thing is vulgar or not in good taste is quite enough to make her avoid it."

When Janet went home for the long vacation, this growing passion for fine-ladyhood caused her to feel less happy and comfortable in her surroundings, and David bluffly asserted that "she was getting to be too finicky for anything." Secretly he was proud of Janet's pretty face, sweet voice, soft, refined ways, and simple, tasteful dress. He compared her with the other girls in the neighborhood, and found her superior—to all but Sis—but he did not wish Janet herself to see and assert any such superiority.

"You act lonesome, lassie," said Ailsa, one evening when they were all sitting on the porch together. "After our wark is a' done, why do ye no go about amang the neighbor lassies a bit?"

"Somehow I don't care to," said Janet. "I have my books and my sewing, and Mrs. Garth and my teacher advised me to read my geography and grammar and history right through, all I've had for the last two years, to keep them clear in my mind."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not kept at books!" cried David; "they'd kill me!"

"But you might visit about amang the girls, after a'," said Ailsa.

"Oh, I don't want to," said Janet, with a dissatisfied air; "they all seem so tacky about here."

"'Tacky! tacky!'" said Ailsa; "whatever does that word mean, lass? I've asked when times, and nane can tell me."

"'Tacky'? Oh, it means just—tacky," said Janet, luminously.

"A fine schoolma'am you'll make, if you cannot explain a thing better than that!" cried David. 'Tacky' means to be trying after something you haven't got. It means to be aiming at being a high-flier when you're a low-flier. It means to put on brass rings, and put flowers and furbelows on cotton gowns and try to make believe they are silk, and to be nobody and make out you're somebody; it's—it's— 'Tacky' is a doll *all* sawdust!" David was semi-occasionally subject to sudden illuminations, whereby he evidenced his Hume blood.

"Ay," said Ailsa; "'tacky,' then, is cheap lace an' cotton ribbons an' brass jewelry—not bein' our own honest selves."

"For instance," said David, "Sis Gower is never tacky. Sis always is her plain, honest self."

"That is true," said Janet; "there's no pretend

about Sis, and it is because she is not thinking about herself, but about other people."

"Yes," said Ailsa; "I min' our minister i' Scotlan' said one day that 'unselfishness aye saved a body fro' bein' vulgar.' An' there is naething as refining as Christianity, because it is the religion o' unselfishness."

At this moment a dark shadow that had been moving down the road turned in at the Hume gate. It was Sis. Her family were in bed and asleep, and, as the night was warm, Sis had come to refresh herself with a chat with the Humes instead of going to bed with the rest.

Sis, as usual, was occupied about her family: "Janet, have you noticed how pretty Lola is?"

"Yes; Lola is very pretty."

"And she has such taste! She is always decorating the house with bouquets, and she likes to keep everything neat, and is always teasing me to buy pretty things for the house or clothes for her."

"I don't think that's very smart of her," snapped David.

"She's so little, you know—only nine; she doesn't understand. I think Lola was made for a lady; she may marry some one that's well off. I'd like her to be educated.—Janet, how much would it cost to board her in town and have her go to school after she is through this school?"

"A good deal," said Janet; "and as for boarding-school, the cheapest is two hundred and fifty dollars a year."

Sis sighed deeply.

David said tartly, "Why don't you think about giving yourself a chance in town or somewhere?"

"Oh, hush!" said Sis. "I'd think I was flyin' if I could get Lola even a chance of six months. And yesterday she was teasing me to let her learn to play on Mis' Jones's parlor organ."

"Janet," said Ailsa, "I have some business to talk wi' you all, an' the noo will do as well as ony time. I do not want these Hume lands ever to be divided, an' a' my lan' I maun leave to David. But you ken, Janet, you an' Bruce baith belong to me as weel as David, an' I mean do what is fair by you. Noo, I mean to gie you as guid an education as you wull hae, instead o' gi'en you siller or lan'. You sall go to the high school till you graduate, an' then you maun go to the normal gif ye wull. An', Janet, gif ye want music, ye sall hae it; an' gif ye need ane o' those kists o' whistles ca'ed organs, I'll buy you ane. I can stan' it. I maun do weel by your education, for David maun hae the lan'. An' as much as I lay oot for education for you, I wull for Bruce."

"You are very kind, aunt," said Janet. "I'd like the high school, and a year or so at the normal; and if you would let me take elocution, I'd

like it; and I've heard Mrs. Garth say every girl should have French—there are so many French books to read, and so much French is quoted in books.”

“Ye sall hae it an ye wuss, lass; but French, to my min', is a gay silly tongue, wi' na sense intil it, an' nane can unnerstan' it.”

Janet smiled a little superior to this opinion: “But I don't want any music nor any organ. If there's a thing I hate, it is a piano or an organ! I wish whoever invented them had never been born. Mrs. Garth says that over in town something to play on and the knowledge of a few notes constitute a patent of gentility. You hear the pianos banged from morning until night. If you go to a house, the first thing the girl must do is to sit down and play something for you, whether or not she knows how to play, and whether or not you like it; and you have to listen and say it's lovely. The girls spend lots of time and money on music, and then, as soon as they leave school or are done taking lessons, they drop it all, and it is all thrown away. If they are asked to play, they make a hundred excuses, and say they can't play without their notes. But they expect to be begged, all the same. Not a quarter of the girls who take lessons have any taste for it; they do it because other folks do it; and if one girl in the family gets music, all the rest must, to be fair to them.”

“Janet,” said Mistress Crathie, “ye ha’ a glib tongue i’ your heid, an’ in the year’s time ye ha’ been yon in town ye ha’ picked up much.”

“Dear me!” said Sis; “to hear you coolly refuse music, and music is so genteel!”

“Knowing how to talk well is much better,” said Janet, astutely, “and fewer can do it.”

“Janet, ye sall ha’ the elocution an’ the French. I will educate ye brawly for a teacher,” said her aunt; “an’ ye will unnerstan’, an’ David will, I gie ye that instead o’ lan’.”

“I don’t see that you are bound to give me anything, Aunt Ailsa.”

“But I am, lass. Bluid an’ love bind me. Now, for Bruce it sall be the same. I’ll gie as much to educate Bruce as you. Then, as to yer ain pairt o’ the lan’, a third pairt o’ that other half, Janet, when ye are of age, I want ye to let David buy yer share from ye, an’ the bit money will plenish your hoose when ye marry, an’ the lan’ will lie still wi’ David.”

“Yes, aunt. Only don’t talk that way: it sounds as if you were going to die,” cried Janet.

“Na, na; bein’ ready will no mak one die, lass. By the time I ha’ laid out on Bruce his fair share o’ siller in education, he will be old enough to decide whether or no he will tak his third o’ the ither farm in mair education. Mistress Garth says it will take a hantle o’ money to educate Bruce,

for he suld gae to foreign lan's as well as study here. And when he has had a' I can gie him, then he will know whether he will be pleased to make a compaction wi' his brither, to get his share o' lan' paid out in schoolin' for him."

"He'll do it," said Sis; "all Bruce will want is learnin'."

"When he is eleven, Mrs. Garth means to take him to town to school," said Janet. "She'll be done with me by that time."

"And by that time," said Sis, hopefully, "father will be home, and we'll send Lola to boarding-school and buy her a piano!"

Mistress Crathie leaned over and laid her hand on Sis Gower's head: "Bless you, lass, for the unselfish heart and the ready han'. Let me tell ye that in years noo far away, but daily drawin' nearer, ye will sit on this poorch i' the moonlight and will remember this night, when it seemed that a' was for ithers, an' naething for ye; an' ye will then reflec' that the Lord was no slack to gie ye your portion, an' ye will say, "My lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage!"

They were silent. The moonlight fell whitely about them. David and Janet and Sis strained their eyes toward the future; their hearts pressed on to take possession of it, sure that it could bring them only good. They were all so young,

and the day of youth is the glorious to-morrow.

Ailsa looked back. Her heart was with other years and scenes and friends. She strained her eyes to catch faces that were vanished from earth and her ears to hear voices that were silent for ever. She was old, and the day of age is the glorious yesterday. But yesterday and to-morrow in experience are alike unsatisfactory, and only "when I awake, with thy likeness I shall be satisfied."

CHAPTER XV.

A FORLORN HOPE.

“At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of future thought and deed.”

MID-JUNE, and the air sweet with the perfume of the new-mown hay. The blue-birds are bringing out their second brood; the mother sits on the nest; the little father, gaily dressed in blue and pink, but grown more silent from the weight of his family cares, leads the first brood up and down the hedges, and instructs them in singing, hunting, and a sense of danger. This is a liberal education for a blue-bird. Colonel-birds are flashing above the deep-green thickets in swampy lands; blackbirds, their necks clad in rainbows, are scolding at jays and woodpeckers among the trees; gorgeous swallow-tailed butterflies in black and orange with rows of dusky blue spots sail about the thistle-tops and the milfoil; where there is a moist spot on the road-way, or a tiny pool between stones, the yellow colias settle in a little golden cloud; stray white pieridæ flit in

shadowy places; and velvet-clad tortoise-shell vanessas that have just escaped from their gold-burnished pupa cases drift leisurely up and down seeking for honey in nettle-blooms.

Man completes such harmony of nature or smites it into discord. Creation's crown, creation's blot—that is man. Saul Beals, for instance, dirty and ragged, lying on his back, smoking a cob pipe and swearing at a brown mule; and Deb Beals, lazily washing the family tatters and hanging them on the buckberry bushes and bramble tangles—these are shamelessly incongruous with nature's loveliness. The place is near Panther Valley, at the head-waters of the White River, where the level lands are yet broken by the retreating spurs of the Ozarks. The new-born river ripples along its boulder bed; elm, maple, walnut, and cottonwood shadow it; squirrels leap around the tree-trunks; rabbits dart off in the thickets; the woodpecker hammers all day long.

Saul has done nothing since sunrise. It is now sunset. The canvas-topped wagon, torn, dirty, patched, stands apart; a rude tent has been stretched over a straw bed; a few pails, chairs, cooking utensils, are scattered about the grass by the side of the stream; stones have been piled to form a fire-place; three mules and a broken-down horse feed at will, too discouraged and decrepit to wander far.

The Beals family feel at home in this sequestered reach of bottom-land: they have been here for over a week. When they came here, affairs had reached a crisis: the wagon was broken, and two of the mules had entirely given out; there was not a dime to buy whiskey or tobacco. People will give away meal, meat, milk, and cast-off clothing, but whiskey and tobacco must be paid for; therefore the Beals household tarried, in order that their two working members, Pope and Turk, might earn some money.

The Bealses had been in this place before. There was a farmer up here on the rolling prairie who would welcome the strong and diligent Pope among his haymakers; the farmer's wife was accustomed to Turk's face and voice, and would be glad of her help in the house during haying. Meanwhile, Saul, Deb, and the four younger children lay at ease along the brook, like a colony of water-rats taking a holiday.

That year the farmer's wife was in a moralizing mood. Possibly, also, her conscience had received some quickening of late, and she looked upon Turk as more than a pair of hands, tolerated during a few days for low wages.

"Turk," she said several times, "you ought not to live as you do, roaming about in a wagon. Tramps have no friends and no character. You can't make your folks decent, but you and Pope

ought to get off and be decent for yourselves. You have the makings of respectable people in you. I never knew either of you to be dishonest or sassy, and that's a heap more than I can say for any of the rest of your tribe."

"Folks wouldn't take me in on account of my mouth," clacked Turk from behind the rag which sheer shame caused her to bind on the lower part of her face.

"I've heard tell doctors could cure such, and make you look pretty much like other folks. There's schools where Pope could be taught, and it's a plumb shame you two are left to grow up dumb and frightful when there's help to be had."

Such talk stirred more actively Turk's reminiscences of Dr. and Mrs. Garth and what they had said to her. These memories she had never let die: they had been the staple of the interviews she had had with Pope in the language they had created for themselves. Turk had also held fast to her reading and writing. Every newspaper or old pamphlet or advertisement found on the way—and they were not few—she seized as a treasure, read, re-read, expounded to Pope, and then wrote with a bit of coal, chalk, or pencil on the margins or on bits of smooth chips. She had even taught Pope something—as the words for tree, dog, house, girl, man, and so on, and had showed him how to write them. In the quarrelsome, miserable family,

these two, fortunate in their greater misfortunes, lived apart from the rest. Turk was beginning to think that she must assert herself; but then her father, mother, and the other four would be banded against her. She and Pope were valuable hostages to fortune: they were the only workers!

On this evening, when Saul was lying on his back with his ragged legs crossed in the air, and Deb was washing, while two of the younger children brought fuel for the fire for supper, the seclusion of this their peculiar and especial retreat was broken by the crack of a whip, the grind of wheels, and the clumsy steps of wearied horses, and another prairie schooner lunged heavily into sight and was brought up at a cottonwood.

The Beals faction drew together and eyed the intruders—two heavy, low-browed men, a tall woman, shrill-voiced as Deb herself, a flock of youngsters who escaped out of the wagon and took to the little pools of water like a covey of ducklings, and a tall, very red-headed boy.

The horses were unharnessed; a sheet-iron cooking-stove was lifted down, then some chairs, then a couple of boards which were placed on crossed sticks to serve for a table; an old hammock was slung between two trees, cooking-utensils were displayed, and the newcomers evidently expected the old settlers to be greatly impressed by their magnificence.

"Drat 'em!" said Deb.

"Ain't this our campin'-groun'?" growled Saul.

The seniors of the newcomers now advanced a few steps, and the Bealses did the same: there was to be a grand parley. At this minute a loud inarticulate noise called attention to two figures coming over the bank of the stream—Pope and Turk arriving from their day's work with a pail of buttermilk and a splint basket of provisions. The red-headed boy examined the pair closely and spoke to the red-headed man. The man went forward more briskly:

"Ain't you the Bealses?"

"Yes," said Saul, sulkily; "an' here's our camp."

"Well, we ain't goin' to hurt your camp. We've bin here afore, so it's part ours. We're goin' to move on day after to-morrow. We see you 'bout five year back. D'ye mind, we camped near some Humeses, that were not movers, but goin' up from Texas to come into a fortin'?"

"Drat them Humeses!" said Deb with additional venom.

"Our name's Pitcher. D'ye remember?"

"Yes," said Saul; "how are ye, Pitcher?"

"We're well, thanky; an', seein' as we've met, an' we has a fine side o' bacon 'long with us, we invites you an' Mis' Beals to eat a bite with us."

"Thanky," said Deb; "I'll bring a loaf."

"Have ye any whiskey?" asked Saul, anxiously.

“No, we ain’t: we’re out. We’ve got some tea.”

“Well, I’ve got what will put us a drop round in the tea, just to stiffen it,” said Saul.

Upon this great cordiality developed. A fire was built; Mrs. Pitcher cut liberal bacon and put it in the pan on the coals, and then brewed tea in a tin pail. Deb brought her two largest cups, her loaf, and a knife. Then the party sat down by the dying fire.

The juniors knew that they were to wait. Deb and Saul sat on one side of the fire, Mistress Pitcher, her husband, and her brother on the other. Deb cut slices from her loaf and skillfully tossed them through the smoke to the Pitchers, who caught them as they came. Mrs. Pitcher speared slices of bacon on her long fork and held them out across the fire to her guests, who took them off the tines and laid them on their rounds of bread in lieu of plates. Mr. Pitcher poured the black liquid called tea into cups, scooping with his fingers some moist brown sugar from a tin box for each cup; then Saul reached across the fire and added the proper “stiffening,” and the meal went on.

The younger children of both factions played in the stream. Pope and Turk remained on the high bank, and the red-headed boy joined himself to them.

“Is your name Turk?”

"Yes," clacked Turk from behind her apron.

"Las' spring a lady give me a letter for you to hand over whenever I see you—April it was. I've got it here in my shirt-pocket. She give me this striped shirt and these trousers and a whole raft of things, and said I wasn't to let none of the rest see the letter or know 'bout it. Reckon that's why Job asked your folks to tea, so's I could give you the letter, for the lady spoke to us pleasant and paid us liberal. Anybody lookin'?"

"No," said Turk, eagerly; "give it to me."

"Yere it is. You'd better slide off behind the bank an' read it while they're eatin'."

Turk and her letter disappeared.

Mrs. Garth had written very plainly:

"MY POOR TURK:

"You are now past twelve, and Pope is seventeen. It is wrong for you to rove about idle and ignorant. Your parents have no right to keep you as they do. Pope ought to be in the school for the dumb. You ought to have your lip cured and then learn to make an honest living. If you can get here, we will help you. If you go to the court in any town, I think the judge would say that you are old enough to choose for yourselves. Do try to leave your people, and do better than they have done.

MRS. GARTH."

Turk read the short plain words several times. Then she rose up with a strong light in her dark-blue eyes. She had always, since she left Ailsa, said that prayer asking God to help her and Pope. She had not forgotten that Ailsa had said that sometimes God helps by giving-us good sense to help ourselves.

Presently one of the Beals children, playing in the brook, shouted, "Mam! Turk's gone to the farm to get some 'taters!" and Turk was running back along the fields to the farm-house.

The good wife had just put by the evening's milk, and was standing on the porch wiping her round red arms on her check apron.

"There's another tramp-wagon down on the creek," said Turk.

"Land save us!" said the woman angrily; "wish there was a law agin the hull lot of 'em."

"So do I," said Turk. "One of the boys brought me a letter from a lady. I want you to read it. See, it's directed to me—'Turk Beals, on a prairie schooner.' She's the lady I told you of, who wanted to cure me an' put Pope to school."

The dame read the letter: "That's got sense in it. Ain't it what I told you?"

"Yes, it is; and do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to run away—me and Pope."

"Sakes! Do you mean it? When?"

"I means it, and I'm goin' to-morrow mornin' early. You see, we always start for here while the rest of 'em is asleep, and they don't look for us back till night, so we'll get more'n a day's start if we go at three; and when they miss us, it will be night, and they won't know where to follow us, any way."

"Well, you are right level-headed, Turk; and let me tell you, if you get your face cured, and learn to work, and leave Pope in school, and want to come back to me, I won't mind givin' you a dollar a week the year round."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Turk to this munificent offer. "We can't go without money, and Pope and I have a right to what we've earned, haven't we? Would you pay us?"

"I'll tell you," said the good woman, entering into the plan with spirit, seeing a way of helping Turk, whom she liked, and also of saving some of those dollars which seemed so small to her when she took them in, and so very large when she paid them out. "See here, Turk. Don't tell me just which way you're goin', and start in the mornin' before I see you, so when your folks come to ask for you I can say I haven't seen you since to-day, and paid you to-night, and don't know where you are. Now, you can't start off on such a long trip with no clothes and no food, and food and clothes will be as good to you as

money. I'll make up a sack of bread an' meat an' boiled eggs and snaps for you, and some coffee and a tin pail; and I'll put up in another sack some shirts for Pope, and a dress of Mirandy's and a new sunbonnet and some aprons for you. If you look decent on the road, you'll be less likely to be meddled with. And what money is due you two, over and above the things, I'll put in a purse for you. And, if I were you, tomorrow afternoon I'd strike the railroad, and ride a matter of twenty mile or so, to be sure your folks can't ketch up with you. Get a good sleep and set off early. Do you know which way is north?"

"Oh yes," said Turk; "I know the roads. We must go north a little, and the rest east."

"Then good-bye, child; and if ever you do get your face cured, and Pope gets to school, and you are doing well, try to write me a letter, for I'd love to hear from you—I would, truly."

Turk asked for a few potatoes to cover her visit, and returned to camp, where the juniors were already eating supper. She and Pope ate heartily, and Turk put two large corn-pones in her pocket, to eat when they made their early start. Turk and Pope had built two little booths on the bank, and had piled up in each a bed of leaves. It was their habit to keep as much apart as possible from the rest of their family, and no

one cared. When a family constantly denominates two of its members as "Dummy" and "Ugly Mouth" there is apt to be a schism.

Withdrawn to their bowers, Turk and Pope sat on the grass before them. This was the time when Turk said her prayer, Pope, with eyes intent, following the motions with which she tried to explain her meaning. On this night, before the prayer, she showed Pope the letter and explained her plan.

The great eyes of the dumb boy flamed and hope rose up in his heart. He and Turk had in their way talked about that school and its possibilities—how he could be well clad, clean, taught, learn a trade, and become a decent citizen. And what! Now should they strike out for fortune? The thought was rapture. And Turk?—her face made like other faces, so that she would no more crouch in shadows or bind her apron over her pitiable deformity? All that in a letter?

Turk made him understand about the flight in the early dawn, and the clothes and food and money to be found on the farm-house porch.

When, finally, Turk, flung on her heap of leaves, was sound asleep, Pope could not sleep for the hope and joy that surged through his soul. Finally he dozed, woke again, dozed, and so by snatches, until he went outside his bower and knew that the time had come. The moon

was setting; the stars were growing pale; around the horizon there was a rim of grayish pink; along the course of the creek a faint white mist slowly arose; the fire had smouldered out; the tramp-wagons looked white and clean in the dim light; the mules were lying about, dark hulks on the plots of grass; the trampers were all asleep.

Pope reached into his sister's hut and pulled her bare foot. Turk rose and came out: there was no matutinal ceremony of dressing, as there had been no evening task of undressing. Pope and Turk looked at each other, stretched their arms and yawned, ran their fingers through their hair, took a good shake to rid themselves of clinging leaves, and their toilet was made. They took hold of hands and ran across the pasture-lot. Their pilgrimage was begun.

On the farm-house porch they found two small flour-sacks, each well filled. Pope slung them over his shoulders; they then took a big drink at the pump and set off due north. Turk had in her hand the corn-pone left over from supper. She gave Pope his share, and they went on, eating.

They walked slowly, steadily. They had been tramps all their life, and they knew how to economize exertion. They made no spurts, they uttered no sounds; on they went, Pope bent a little under his load of bags, Turk faithfully following in his steps.

After six hours' tramp they were tired and hungry. It was nearly ten o'clock, and they were entering a piece of woodland where was a little brook. Pope proposed to rest. They must open their bundles, breakfast, sleep, then go on. He built a fire, and Turk put on the pail of water to boil for coffee. In the bag of provisions she found a knife, two little tin cups, and a flat tin lid to serve as plate or frying-pan. There was a piece of boiled salt pork, a pound or two of raw bacon, a little bag of coffee and one of sugar, some biscuits, a dozen hard ginger-snaps, and three pounds of corn-meal. They considered the provision munificent.

Then they opened the other bag: a pair of blue-jeans trowsers and two check shirts for Pope; a piece of soap, a comb, and a brown towel; three aprons, a dress, and a new sunbonnet for Turk, and a suit of under-clothes. What splendor!

Finally, in the purse were two dollars. The good woman had been as liberal as she could. Pope and Turk had each worked eight days, but she thought those clothes were worth a deal. So did they.

Turk explained to Pope that if they could strike the railroad, they would better invest fifty cents in a ride, to get on the faster. The other dollar and fifty cents must serve to buy food on their trip when what they had was gone.

The coffee being made, they feasted lavishly on

cold pork, biscuits, and ginger-snaps, and then found a shady place for a sleep.

Turk awoke first. It was high noon. She filled her pail with water, and, adjourning to the thicket, took a good washing with soap—an unusual luxury—combed and washed and braided her hair, and put on her clean clothes. At the end of an hour she was a very tidy-looking girl, and she went and punched Pope vigorously, that he might awake and behold her glory.

As toilets were in order, Pope found a deep place in the stream, wasted a deal of soap, made himself very clean, put on his new clothes, and combed his hair artistically in a flat mat all around his head. Then, each munching a biscuit, they walked on until five o'clock, when they boarded a railroad train, and Turk, presenting a half dollar to the conductor, asked thickly for "twenty-five cents worth of ride apiece." The conductor laughed and obligingly carried them twenty miles. From seven until nine the pair marched stolidly along the road-side, and then, finding an abandoned barn, they took it for night-quarters. Here Turk suggested that, in order to keep their new garments nice and be like folks, they should sleep in their old clothes, and wash their faces and comb their hair when they first arose. As soon as this was arranged they felt as if they had begun their life as respectable citizens.

CHAPTER XVI.

A THANKSGIVING.

“Our common mother rests and sings
Like Ruth amid her garnered sheaves;
Her lap is full of goodly things,
Her brow is bright with autumn leaves.”

IN those bright summer days, when the wheat was ripe for harvesting, and along immense smooth fields the corn waved its green sabres in the sun, two dusty, slow-plodding, often very warm and weary figures, a brawny lad and a lithe little girl, passed steadily on. One of the white bags had been emptied long ago; it served Turk now for a towel. Pope carried the other bag over his shoulder or under his arm. Both went barefooted; usually Pope marched first and Turk followed him, but when they were very tired and discouraged Turk came beside her brother, and they moved on holding hands.

For this was a weary, long journey, and the late June suns beat down fiercely, and very often the travelers lost their way.

When Turk in her imperfect speech asked the

direction of the town to which they were bound, people often failed to understand her, or they did not know of the town at all, or, as over half the breadth of the State lay between, they did not know which road she should take, so passed on, not replying, or answering but vaguely.

In the early morning, two figures refreshed by sleep in barns or empty log houses or under hay-ricks, faces washed, clothes shaken out, hair combed, something of cheer and courage restored, moving on hopefully. At noon the two figures, warm and dusty and grown laggard with the heat, sitting to rest under a tree or stack or in a bit of woodland, eating the stale loaf and the morsel of cheese bought at the store they have passed, counting their dimes and wondering how they dwindle, and looking at each other and marveling that the way is so hard and so long. At sunset, two slow, dark figures, their backs toward the glowing west, keeping pace with their shadows falling sidelong curiously foreshortened; always moving resolutely the way they have chosen, but doubting, in spite of the letter which Turk carries in her pocket, whether they will be well received. At twilight the swallows are slipping into their nests, the owls are beginning to cry out of the wood, the bats wheel, the crickets sing shrilly, the night-hawks sweep upward, then settle with a scream, the buzzards are huge dark shadows on the

tree-tops, while these two dark figures are looking for some empty corn-rack or barn or tobacco drying-house or sheep-shed wherein to sleep. At night sometimes, when the moon is up and when the day has been so very hot that they had to pass hours hidden under the shade of the trees by some failing stream, these two dark figures travel on in the cool silver half-light, slipping across the bright spaces like lost shadows, drifting into circles of darkness and anon coming forth again, and still laboring on.

These night journeys, however, soon came to an end. The two were once attacked by a big, persistent bull-dog whom Pope had much ado to defeat with a fence-rail ; on another night walk they were met by a man in the quarrelsome drunken stage, who took great exception to Pope's refusal to speak to him.

"He's dumb!" shrieked Turk.

"I'll teach him to be dumb to me!" quoth the belligerent. But Pope understood this language of fists ; he had been brought up in wars and rumors of wars, and, as the stranger wanted a fight, Pope was nothing loath ; he was given to thoroughness in work, and he polished off his antagonist vigorously. But, like all deaf mutes, Pope was capable of violence : he could not hear the cries of his victim, and sympathy and contrition are oftenest reached by "ear-gate." Turk had

much ado to tear him away from his enemy, whom they left bemoaning himself under the shadow of a fence.

“We’ll get into trouble and be ’rested,” said Turk to herself, and concluded that by night they would better sleep, and travel only by day.

Finally one morning when Turk was discouraged and wondering how much farther they had to go, and whether they were wholly out of their course, they came to a district school-house empty for vacation, but the door stood open. Turk bethought herself that if she could find an atlas in one of the desks, she might by means of a large map of Missouri trace out her path with some definiteness; at least she could make a list of the larger towns and villages, and by asking her way from one to the other could the better pursue her journey.

They entered. Pope lay down in the vestibule like a big dog. Turk, after searching several desks, found an atlas, a leaf of a copy-book, a pen, and a bottle with ink. She seated herself at a desk and then fell into a meditation. “How lovely this is! A quiet school-room, books, lessons! How nice it would be, if my face was straight like folks’, to be going to school and learning reg’lar!” She fancied the seats full of busy boys and girls, the teacher in his place, and herself—always with a proper face—the best of all the pupils in the

school. O dream of glory! Turk had made no poor use of her opportunities during the time, perhaps three years in all, that she had attended school. She had not found it pleasant to play with other children, and she had studied right through recess and noon-time. Promotions had fallen thick and fast upon poor Turk.

But come, she must look up her route. She had grown rusty in the ways of geography, and she was long in finding Missouri, and longer still in finding where she had started from. However, she knew that Springfield was their nearest city in their camp on the White River, and finally she found two towns through which they had passed, and she stuck a pin in one, so that it might not escape her while she looked for that blessed town which held help for them.

This school-house was used also as a church by the farmers of the district, and a theological student on a visit to his aunt near by was holding a series of evening meetings there. As there was no one else to assume the duty, he was in the habit of coming during the morning to the school-room to see that all was in decent order for the evening. Coming this morning, he found a burly lad lying with closed eyes in the vestibule. The lad made no reply when addressed, but as soon as the young preacher stepped upon the porch the youth shook himself, sat up, and silently gazed

from under heavy brows with the half-alarmed, half-defiant look of some disturbed wild animal.

Passing within, he saw a girl very busy at a desk.

"Little woman," said the student pleasantly, "you are either very early for service or very late at school."

As he spoke, the girl turned a sadly marred face which she promptly covered with her apron, while tears filled her eyes.

"I'm looking for places on the map," clattered Turk. "I've kind of lost my way, me an' Pope."

"Yes? Let me see if I can help you. Where did you come from?"

"Near Springfield."

"That is a long distance. Do you want to get back there?"

"No, I want to go to—oh, here it is! I've found it!" and she joyfully stuck another pin, lest the desired town should disappear.

"You have far to go," said the young man, taking a seat by her side. "What is this? You are making an itinerary? That is good. Let me help you. See, now, SPRINGFIELD, and here's your journey's end; and you are about here, and these are the towns you must pass through. See?"—and he marked down village after village with plainly printed names—"and this is your

course. You are a little too far north. You go so and so and so and so. Are you alone?"

"No; Pope is my brother. He's a dummy, and I'm going to put him in the school where they teach them, and I'm going to have my face made right. See, here's her letter." She gave him Mrs. Garth's worn, soiled letter.

"Why, this is a very good plan, and you have true courage and real grit. You'll get on, I am sure. You have sixty-eight miles, more or less, to go yet. Have you any money?"

"Twenty-five cents now, in Pope's pocket."

"Well, there's a quarter to put in your pocket. And when Pope is in school and your face has been mended, what then?"

"I'm going to go to work for somebody, and I'll do my best, and work awful hard, and save up my money till there's 'nuff to furnish a home, three rooms. How long do they keep the dummies in that there school to teach 'em all they can, and a trade?"

"Eight years."

"Then Pope will be twenty-five and I'll be twenty. I can earn a lot in eight years. I don't know which trade Pope will take, but when he's learned it and is out he'll work at his trade, and we'll live together, and I'll take in some work, and we'll do real well, and be respectable people, me an' Pope—don't you think so?"

“I am sure of it. See, here are two or three little books for you. Can you carry them?”

“Oh, yes. We’ve got a Testament. Mrs. Garth gave it to me; it is in Pope’s pocket.”

“It is nearly noon. If you’ll come over to my aunt’s with me, you two shall have a good dinner.”

“I don’t like to, please,” said Turk, tears rolling over. “I look too ugly. People don’t like to see me, and I can’t keep my apron over my face while I eat.”

“Then come along down by the spring to a shady place, and I will bring you a nice dinner and something to carry along with you for supper and breakfast.”

Pope, being made aware of this arrangement, became friendly. Desiring to show what he could do, he went to the blackboard and wrote: “Hen,” and “Boy.”

“I taught him,” said Turk, proudly. “Pope is very smart.”

Their new friend brought them a lavish dinner—meat, vegetables, pie, milk. Then he packed a little splint basket with buttered bread, sausages, ginger-cake, and cold biscuit. “I am going to see a sick man,” he said, “and I might as well go to-day as to-morrow, and I can take you five miles along your road.”

So they departed in great state, riding in a sur-

rey. That was the gala day of the whole trip. The undertaking had been pronounced feasible and reasonable; they had been helped and comforted, and had partaken of what Turk called "a right square meal."

Even with that map they missed their way twice, and there were several rainy days when they had to tarry in an empty house. That delay exhausted Turk's twenty-five-cent piece. She spent it for milk, meal, and potatoes. A Missouri farmer's wife seldom takes pay for a little food, but Turk fell in with an exception to this rule, who said to herself that "if any money was going from trampers, she might as well have it as anybody, an' they'd be less likely to come agin."

Finally, almost at the end of July, the journey ended. It ended late at night, after a very hot day, when the clouds hung low at sunset, and lightning played along the piled-up masses and thunder pealed far off.

Pope and Turk hurried on. They could not wait, now that the end was so near. It was dark, very dark, and on they went. When they reached the town the court-house clock pealed out twelve. Those last four miles had taken so long!

They opened Dr. Garth's gate, but all the house was dark. Of course it would not do to wake up respectable people at midnight for little vagrants, but now the storm was breaking with fury. There

was the deep front portico. They would be safe there, and dry in the embrasure of the big door. To sit down anywhere would be such a luxury! They were fainting with fatigue and excitement, and now a terrible storm was raging—wind, thunder, lightning, and a deluge of rain. Happily it came from the north, and the house faced south-east.

Pope seated himself on the doorstep, and Turk crouched on the big mat between his knees and leaned her head back against him; his arms held the faithful, valiant child fast.

And so they fell asleep. They did not know when the storm ceased and the stars came out in a blue sky; they did not know when morning broke in pink and primrose along the east, and the stars—great, trembling, luminous jewels—melted back into the blue, and the chorus of the birds awoke, and the sleepy flowers held up their heads and shook off the rain-drops. The sunshine smote the pale, worn, weary faces of the children, and they did not know it.

Dr. Garth rose early, anxious to know if his grounds had suffered damage. He opened his front door. There slept, sitting nearly erect, a dark, travel-stained lad, and against his knees a little girl, her sunbonnet fallen from her head, long lashes lying beneath a straight clear brow; even in sleep, by the long habit of her humiliation, her

arm laid jealously across her mouth. He knew them, Pope and Turk, and he went to call his wife while they still slept on.

A week after that, a circle of King's Daughters accompanied to the railway station a very clean and cheerful little girl in a blue gingham dress, a straw hat with a blue ribbon on it, a veil tied about the lower part of her face, and a linen traveling-roll on her arm. This was Turk, *en route* for St. Louis, "to be mended."

Pope, greatly excited by Turk's solitary departure, took some comfort in seeing her seated in style in a car, her bag by her side and a picture paper in her hand. Until the car swept around the curve and into the cutting Turk looked from the window, and Pope's big anxious eyes followed her. Then Dr. Garth motioned him into the buggy with yellow wheels, and they drove to the outskirts of the town, where, surrounded by a lawn shaded by trees, six huge buildings offered aid and comfort to deaf mutes. Pope was handed over to the superintendent, and the next day might have been seen marching proudly about in a gray uniform braided with black, his hair closely cut, his life as a pupil begun.

The summer had passed, the harvest was ended, and Pope and Turk had been socially saved—caught out of that deadly stream of trampers, and lifted into the possibilities of civilized life. The

labors of the autumn had rounded up the year, and Thanksgiving day was at hand.

“It has been a by ordinar good year,” said Aunt Ailsa. “We a’ o’ us hae much to gie thanks for. There’s nane o’ they new-warld ways I like better than havin’ a Thanksgivin’ day.”

“Don’t you have one in Scotland?” demanded Bruce.

“Na, laddie, unless ane is proclaimed for some extraordinary occasion. We hae days o’ humiliation an’ days o’ prayer an’ fastin’, an’ I’ll no say they’re not needed an’ serviceable, for we ha’ mickle need to lament our sins. But we’re a’ too apt to forget praisin’ whiles we are instant in prayin’. The apostle yokes thanksgivin’ wi’ supplication, but we’re a’ too ready to gie thanksgivin’ the go-by, an’ be lamentin’ our lack o’ this, that, an’ the ither. It is a true observe that we are aye readier at fault-fandin’ than thankin’.”

“Well, Aunt Ailsa,” said David, “let us praise up to the top notch this year, with a big turkey and all the trimmings. Sikey Gower will be at Mis’ Jonsing’s, and Mis’ Gage has asked Lola to eat with her; let’s us ask Sis and Pam and Miss; and Janet is coming, and we’ll have Turk and Pope too. I reckon they’ve about forgotten that baby that Deb left us as her parting blessing. He’s their own brother, and they’d better see him.”

“Aye,” said Ailsa, “we’ll have a party; and the

day before Thanksgivin', David, you take the light wagon to town, and bring Pope an' Janet an' Turk, and carry a dressed turkey and a pair o' ducks to Mrs. Garth, and buy spices and raisins for a plum pudding, and get the cranberries, an' take Bruce in for his new winter suit, and let Janet hae the money to get her a new hat. Ye'll hae the bank-buik made oop, an' see the carpenter aboot mair shed-room for the sheep."

All the day that David was in town on these errands, Ailsa and Sis with joyful faces and happy continuous speech occupied the kitchen at the "stage-house," now generally known as "Cra-thie Farm." They stuffed a turkey and a pair of chickens, made pumpkin pie and light bread, boiled a noble piece of beef, and sorted out onions, turnips, and sweet potatoes for the feast next day.

Finally the shelves in the pantry were well filled. Ailsa put on her best black gown, her best cap, and a white apron and neckerchief. Sis caught Master Nathan Barber for a final washing and brushing, and put on him his first breeches, which she had made over from a pair outgrown by Bruce. The yellow dog lay somnolent by the fire, and Nathan Barber sat beside him winking at the blaze.

Sis rebraided her hair, put on her Sunday gown, brought over for the occasion, and for the

first time a collar of some old country lace, a gift from Ailsa. Then there came a roll of wheels, a loud "Whoa!" and an irruption into the kitchen as of Huns, Goths, and Vandals—but, after all, it was only Janet, Bruce, Turk, Pope, and David, cold, jolly, all with their arms full, all laughing and talking at once—all but Pope: he laughed the loud, unmodulated laugh of the mute, and waved his arms on high, talking with his fingers, so proud of his uniform and of what he knew!

Ailsa held Turk at arm's length: "Let me ha' a guid glint at ye, lassie, an' see what a' has been done for ye. Weel, praise the Lord, wha has gi'en sic power unto men! They ha' made a guid job o' your mou', for sure. Thae twa scars are nane so bad, an' will grow less an' less; an' the teeth are brought in place, an' twa new anes put in, an' ye can speak conformably, an' ye ha' na need the noo to cover your face! Praise the guidness o' the Lord, wha said, 'When thy faither an' thy mither forsake thee, then the Lord will tak' thee oop.' Aye, he has said, 'Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.' Hoo happy an' weel ye luik, lassie! An' hoo lang were ye in Saint Louis?"

"Nearly two months. I had waited so long, you know, and my face was so bad. But everybody was very kind to me. I came back the twentieth of September, and Mrs. Garth has found

me a place where I work for my board and go to school. Mrs. Garth clothes me, and after I go to school for two years, then I'm going to live with Mrs. Garth as chambermaid and seamstress, and get nine dollars a month."

"Aye, ye are weel done for! An' do ye see the lad bairn yon?"

"Yes. Is that our baby?" Turk was down on her knees by him. She looked up at Ailsa through tears: "He don't look like a Beals. Oh, how good you have been to him!"

"His name is Nathan Barber," said Aunt Ailsa.

Turk sprang to her feet: "Not Beals! Suppose we all change our name to Barber? Beals was only a borrowed name, anyway! I will tell Pope. I think we'll all be Barbers." She lifted up Nathan, proudly smiling in the glory of his new breeches, and explained him to Pope. She also explained that hereafter they would all be Barbers, "not Bealses."

Janet danced with joy, this was so amusing. She placed the three "Barbers" in chairs, she led up the various members of the family and introduced them, and she said that the Barbers were very nice people from Texas, and she hoped they would always live in that neighborhood.

"Lassie, ha' done wi' your daffin', an' coom to supper," cried Ailsa. "Here is a gran' plate o'

pork-steak wi' potatoes an' apple sauce a' coolin' whiles ye are playin' aff your pranks!"

"All the same, the Bealses are dead and buried!" cried Janet.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW FATHER CAME HOME.

“Upon the midnight battle-ground
The spectral camp is seen,
And with a sorrowful deep sound
Flows the river of life between.”

WHEN Janet Hume was graduated at the high school she was a tall, pretty, pleasing girl of seventeen. She stood at the head of her class, and the school principal stated with pride that Janet had made the best record and taken the highest grades that had ever been given in the school. This was not at all because Janet was a genius—merely because Mrs. Garth had held her to the apostolic rule, “This one thing I do.” Nothing had been allowed to tax her strength, divert her thoughts, or occupy her time to the detriment of her work.

“What you want,” Mrs. Garth had said, “is not merely to get through the course—to escape being turned back for a year; you are to be thorough in it all. Read in the line of your studies, and gather a large amount of information entirely beyond school-work in each branch pursued.”

Held to these lines, Janet had the satisfaction of being a great credit to herself and to her friends.

Sis Gower, sitting among the audience which admired the graduates, felt that nothing could surpass the honor, beauty, and happiness of Janet, and turned over in her mind plan after plan for securing equal benefits for the pretty Lola who was seated at her side.

Lola, on her part, would have been glad enough of the white gown, flowers, and fan; she would have enjoyed being the girl who played the piano and wore a pair of lovely white-kid slippers. She secretly thought that "Janet must have had a horrid time" studying so hard, and that Mrs. Garth had been very strict in refusing to allow her to go to parties or receive evening callers; but then, Lola said to herself, "anything was better than living 'way out in the country, and being 'tacky,' and never wearing real handsome clothes."

"Sis," said Lola, fretfully, that evening, "won't you fix it so I can go to school in town and learn music and wear nice clothes? I hate it out here! Can't you earn enough money for it?"

"I'll try just as hard as ever I can, Lola," said Sis, patiently. "I am laying up a little bit of money now, and I'll work hard every day of my life. I'm sure you'd be welcome to all I had. You are not old enough to go yet. You have

not learned all they teach here. Janet was thirteen when she went."

"I just hate this mean little school out here! I hate this little common house! I want to be a lady. I don't see why Mrs. Garth couldn't have promised to take me to town, now Janet is done. Instead, she goes and takes Bruce Hume, and he is a year younger than I am. He'll only be going on for eleven when he begins. I'm eleven past."

"But Bruce is a great genius, they say, and his aunt and David are going to lay out ever so much money on him for college. You know, we haven't money like that, Lola dear; but if you'll be patient, father is sure to come home with plenty, and I'll see that you have everything that you want."

"I don't believe father'll ever come. No one expects him but you. I wish you'd ask Mrs. Garth to take me—she's rich."

"That is a thing I will never do," said Sis, firmly. "I will work as hard as ever I can for you all, but I will not beg. Mrs. Garth would not have taken Janet, only that Janet wanted to really make use of what she learned, and be a teacher. You couldn't be a teacher, Lola: you hate your lessons and are not at the head of your class."

"I don't care if I'm not, Sis. I'd play music if I had a chance."

"Mrs. Garth certainly wouldn't stand any one practicing in her house: she can't bear it."

"Anyway," said Lola, contumaciously, "you needn't think I mean to stay here and work at sewing and house-cleaning and killing, and wear myself all out, and never be young and have a good time, for I won't. I'll run away first!"

Then Lola went out of doors and sulked, and Sis cried silently by her sewing-machine, so that for a little time she could not see what she was doing. She did not blame Lola. In her humble, good, patient heart she said, "Of course this life looks very dull and hopeless to a bright, pretty child. Oh! if father would only come home and make all right!"

While Lola was thus making Sis uncomfortable Janet was having a very nice time in town. Mrs. Garth had presented her with a pretty gray summer silk gown, and had thrown open her house for the calls of all the young graduate's friends. Turk had just finished up what schooling she was to have, and had come to Mrs. Garth's to be chamber-maid and seamstress, and she, aided by two other maids, carried around trays of cake and ices and sherbet. The scars were not now very visible on Turk's honest, healthy, cheerful face, and Deb Beals would never have recognized her despised daughter in this brisk, pleasant-mannered girl in a "gown of sprinkled pink," with a white apron trimmed with wide lace wrought by her own ingenious fingers,

Among the callers was the principal of the town schools. "I shall miss you, Janet," he said; "you have been very exemplary, and we are all proud of you. I know much of your method is due to Mrs. Garth's firmness and judgment, but not all girls would have realized the worth of such care, and so cheerfully have followed rules. Who knows how to obey well will rule well. You are going to the normal in September. After a year there you can have one of our schools in the grammar grade."

"I shall like that!" cried Janet. "David and Aunt Ailsa have been very liberal to me, and now it is the turn of Bruce. How delighted I shall be to be making my own way! I must cultivate dignity this year, it seems, so that I shall be sufficiently impressive in a school-room."

When the callers were all gone and the servants were closing the house, Janet in the library told Mrs. Garth of the principal's promise. "You have been very good to me," said Janet, "and have held me up and helped me along, and soon I shall be able to go alone. Do you remember that morning I walked ten miles to come and see you? and that other day, when we were all making sorghum-syrup, and you stopped and laughed?"

"David has never quite forgiven that laugh," said Mrs. Garth, who was cutting the leaves of a magazine; "but some day he will. I see that

day coming. I have gone through the world with a heart like those ancient masks that were made one side laughing, the other side crying. The pathos of life would have killed me or driven me insane if I had not been able to see the comedy running alongside it. I am going to sit up a while; the doctor is not likely to be at home before two o'clock, and it is only eleven."

Janet went up stairs. She took off the pretty silk dress with the lace ruffles, and the little cairngorm pin given that day from Ailsa's treasures; then she put on a cambric wrapper and let down her hair. Her fingers moved very slowly; she was thinking. Presently she knelt down by her trunk, opened it, and, searching under the contents at the very depth, pulled out an old book—a soiled, ragged, paper-covered book, with the back and the last two leaves missing. She smoothed out the rumpled corners, and smiled whimsically as she looked at the large black letters on the yellow cover: "THE RANGER'S BRIDE." Then, book in hand, she went slowly down stairs, saying, "Now that I am no longer a child, I must put away childish things."

Mrs. Garth was still reading by the library table, but, as the June night was cool, she had kindled the wood fire always kept laid in the hearth-place. She looked up with a smile as Janet came back:

“Too excited to sleep?”

Janet sat down on a stool at her friend's feet :

“I have brought you—my cousin Ida!”

“Ah! is the mystery of Cousin Ida to be revealed at last? I have heard less and less of her for two or three years.”

“Yes; I suppose David thinks she is dead and buried long ago; but she has existed until this present time. Now she is to be cremated.”

“I suppose you have outgrown her, as children outgrow their dolls.”

“I imagine so. She did me good when I had few things that were really good. You see, it was this way: my mother had been a very kind, quiet, neat, gentle woman, and I think my natural taste was for all that was refined and beautiful. Those Beals people made me wretched; their noise, dirt, vice, and quarrels filled me with loathing, and shame that I lived with them. Our squalor and degradation hurt me terribly. At school the girls sometimes showed great contempt for me and my home, and often, when they could not boast much in their own behalf, they would tell of aunts, sisters, or cousins who lived in town or in the city, and had very elegant homes and fine clothes, and showed their refinement by never doing anything useful. One day I found this book on the road. I loved to read, and had no books. I often stayed at the school-house and read the readers and geog-

raphies and histories through. I thought this book was a great treasure, and I used to go to the woods or up into the barn—anywhere to get away from the Beals family—and read it. I read it dozens of times. The heroine is a rich girl named Ida who finally marries the ranger—at least, I suppose she does, for the concluding leaves are torn off just where she ‘lifts her heavenly eyes to the ranger’s face and drops into his arms, exclaiming, “Yes!”’ I never could quite understand why, at that critical moment, my cousin Ida did not maintain her perpendicular. I should have respected her more if she had not toppled over. That was the only flaw in my cousin Ida’s conduct. From intensely admiring Ida, and wishing that I were she or were like her, or that she were my relation, I proceeded to arrange a relationship, and adopted her for my cousin. Then I not only had some one very splendid to boast of, but she was really company and consolation for me, as a doll is to younger children, while I measured all about me by her daintiness, elegance, and ultra refinement, and so I disliked the Beals manners more and more, and was saved from being injured by them. I think this imaginary Cousin Ida did me much good: she kept up my ambition and self-respect, gave me a pattern which at least had the virtue of being something finer than I was myself, and harmlessly occupied much of my

thinking. David never took any stock in Cousin Ida; David is intensely realistic."

"And now what is to become of her?" asked Mrs. Garth.

"I am going to perform her funeral here and now. That fire in the hearth shall be her funeral-pyre. Cousin Ida has served her day."

Janet went smiling to the fire-place, and, kneeling on the rug, laid her book on the red coals. In a few moments nothing remained of Cousin Ida but "smoke, ash, and a tale—perhaps not even a tale," as saith Marcus Aurelius in his "Meditations."

Janet's ideal had drifted gently back into that land of shadows whence it had emerged to form for a season part of her life.

What of Sis Gower's dream? What of her ideal father?

It was mid-winter, and bitterly cold. Janet was away at the normal; Bruce was in town; "Miss" was living with Ailsa for the time. Only Sis, Lola, and Pam were at their little home. Sis was as busy as ever, trying to put by a little money. That was hard work with three to feed and clothe, with only the help of Pam's chance wages and three dollars a month contributed by Sikey.

One raw, sleety afternoon, a miserable, slouching man crept into the caboose of a freight-train, helping himself to a ride. "We can't take pas-

sengers," said the conductor; but the man replied that he was just out of the hospital, had no money, and must get to his folks. His appearance bore out his tale, and, this being a branch road, where generally every man did that which was right in his own eyes, he was not only permitted to remain in the caboose, but the brakeman shared his supper with him, and the engineer, when they reached the town, handed him a half dollar, saying, "It will get you a night's lodging. It's turning very cold. You cannot lie out."

The man, with his hands thrust into his pockets and his head bent, tramped through the streets under the electric lights, for it was now dark. He came at last to the court-house square. Across it lay the wide road that led out of the town, over the hill beyond the gully, and then across the level prairie to his home. On the corner of the square was a well-lighted building which had for its sign a barrel made of cubes of colored glass from between which shot flames. The man knew that sign: it had often allured him in other days. He had spent his own earnings there, but that had been little. He had spent his wife's earnings and savings there: that had been more. He had sold there whatever he could carry out of his house. Straight as the animalculæ drift into the vortex caused by the whirling, whipping ciliæ of the barnacle, so this wreck of a human creature drifted

into the doorway under the flaming barrel, and sat down behind the stove.

Some of the hangers-on eyed him; some said, "Howdy, stranger?" some turned their backs.

"Ain't there nobody here that knows me? I'm Jim Gower."

"Great governor! You Jim Gower! Us't to live up near the river! Thought you was dead long ago. Most of the fellows you us't to run with is gone. Had bad luck 'bout livin', some-way."

"Where's Dake, who us't to keep this saloon?"

"Fell dead sev'ral year back—sold all his things out."

"Give us something stiff; I'm cold," said Jim to the bartender.

As he drank his liquor he asked, "Know anything 'bout my folks, any of you?"

"Saw one of your boys in las' stock-sale day, lookin' pretty peart."

"His gal keeps the house, I've hear tell," said another, "an' does for the young ones. They're a-flyin'."

"Give us another glass. Ef I've got to walk out there, I need suffin to put heart in me," said Gower.

"You'd better wait till daylight; maybe then you can ketch a ride."

But with increasing drinks Gower became stub-

born. Go he would, that very night. Yet he lingered until it was about time for the place to close, and still the night grew colder and darker.

“Since you will go,” said a big farmer who tarried also till the last, “you may mount up behind me, and I’ll give you a lift for three miles; my horse can carry double till my road turns off.”

When, at the cross-roads, the farmer bade Jim dismount, he advised him to go rapidly on his way, and not sit down. If he found the journey too hard, he’d better knock up some house and get lodged for the night.

Jim went on—briskly for the first mile, slower the second, dragging heavily the third, cold, cold, fairly crawling the fourth. He was in a little belt of woodland. He scraped some leaves and twigs together, and, striking a match, made a little fire. He sat by it for an hour. Then, somewhat warmed and rested, he drank the remains of a bottle of brandy he had in his pocket, ate a crust that had remained from the brakeman’s supper, and then heavily pursued his way.

His little flash of warmth and strength failed: he stumbled along, gasping, his breath coming in choking sobs; he fell; he picked himself up and stumbled on. He clung to a fence, leaning over it for support, then, with a last flicker of resolution, tore himself away and went on. He fell and could not rise, and then he crawled, catching by

roots and grass tufts and brush to pull himself along.

Up again and on; and now the night is wearing away, and the intense cold that precedes the dawn has come. He must give it up. But, just as he is about to drop down, he notices, dark against the dull gray of the sky, three sharp black silhouettes, and recognizes them as the poplars that mark the home of "Mis' Jonsing down by the brook." He is then only a third of a mile from his own home, which means bed, fire, food. The sight revives him. He goes on. Each step is an agony, and each next step seems an impossibility.

Before the gate of Ailsa Crathie, which he believes to be the empty "stage-house," he finally falls, and cannot rise, his legs are so numb and weak. But he crawls and rolls and creeps and drags himself on. In this horrible night his wife's martyrdom is avenged. If Gower had ever shown such persistency in combating his sin as now in getting home, he would have been a saved man.

His children sleep safe and warm in their beds, and now he has arrived, and finds the gate open or he could not have entered it; he crawls in and tries to call, but his voice is gone and his tongue is paralyzed in his mouth. His extended arms are on the threshold, his face is on the door-stone, his body lies prone along the path; the

sleet-storm renews itself, and cases the man—or what was a man—in ice. This is his shroud.

In the morning Sis Gower rises and dresses, and then opens her front door to look out. Father has come home. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?”

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIS ESTABLISHES HER FAMILY.

“Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act
And make her generous thought a fact;
Keeping, with many a light disguise,
The secret of self-sacrifice.”

HALF of that hard-won reserve of fifty dollars over which Sis had pondered with secret joy went for father's shroud, coffin, and grave. The ragged, sleet-stiffened clothes of that poor corpse had not a penny in them. Sis had a hearse come out from town with the coffin, and then the neighbors came with their carriages, buggies, or spring wagons, and father had a funeral. That was a comfort to Sis.

“You could see,” said the weeping Sis to Ailsa and “Mis’ Jonsing down by the brook,” “that he had been awful sick, and of course that had used up his money; and I know that he had repented and loved us all, and wanted to say so and make all right before he died, or he would not have tried so terribly hard to reach us. Oh, I am sure he had come to be a good man, and would have been a blessing to us all if he had lived longer.”

“Weel, lassie, ye can leave him wi’ God: there’s nane wiser an’ kinder,” said Ailsa; “an’ beyond the bounds o’ this warl’ we canna go—not even wi’ our best an’ dearest.”

Sikey and David knew the other side of the story: they had heard about that evening in the town. However, they made it clear to everybody that Sis was not to be told of it, and so a merciful veil of silence was drawn over those closing hours, and Jim Gower passed out of the thoughts of his former neighbors.

Sometimes David mentioned him to Ailsa. He did so one Sunday evening in the spring. “Poor Sis!” he said; “she took a lot of comfort to-day out of that sermon, ‘There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.’ She is sure her father was a great penitent. He wasn’t, if I know anything about it, but he had need to be, you just bet!”

“We all hae,” said Ailsa.

“But he was meaner than other folks. I never told you a trick of his that ‘Mis’ Jonsing down by the brook’ told me of. Before he came, I thought he might get back halfway better, and I wouldn’t let you know what a mean scamp he really was. Mis’ Gower had a sewing-machine that she earned herself, and she needed it bad enough, with that raft of children to sew for; and sometimes she took in sewing. Well, one day

when she was off working for Mis' Gage, Jim traded off that machine to some movers for an old gun. He wanted a gun to shoot quails. Mis' Jonsing said Mis' Gower was near heart-broken over that; and the gun was a just judgment on Jim—and served him right, too!—for it wouldn't go off half the time, and when it did, it was likely as not to kick Jim over; and if it didn't, it never shot anyways near the mark. Mis' Jonsing says that it wouldn't hit the side of the barn if 'twas aimed at it, an' she 'lowed she wouldn't have been 'fraid to stan' in front of it when it went off, 'less Jim was aimin' at the top of one of them popple trees—then mebbly it might hit her."

David seldom discoursed to anyone but Ailsa or Sis; for the most part he was a silent fellow. His speech, however, was intermittent, like the ebullition of the geysers in the Yellowstone Park, and sometimes to one of these intimates it broke forth freely.

Here Nathan Barber came in: "David, there was a weeny lamb lame in the leg, an' I packed it home on my shoulders. It wrestled awful to git away from me, but I fotch it in, an' Ike's tyin' the leg up."

"Yes, that's all right, Nathan; you're a good boy," said David.

"Aye, laddie; an' you min' that's the way the Guid Shepherd does: he 'lays it on his

shoulder,' 'he carries the lambs in his bosom,'" said Ailsa.

"Eh?" said Nathan Barber, stupidly. "Well, old Mose Barr ain't a very good shepherd: he shied a rock at a sheep."

"So? I'll shy something at him if he does that again," said David, rousing himself.

"I told him you'd be after him if he didn't round up them sheep easier," quoth Nathan, bustling out to the folds.

"He ain't half bad, ain't Nathan," said David; "if he's well looked after he'll make a fair chap. He knows he has to work, and he don't lie very often. He's awful dumb at his books, teacher says, an' I had to promise him a thrashin' if he didn't learn his lessons. After all, promisin' the thrashin' didn't take hold of him half as hard as promisin' that as soon as he could read the Bible and newspaper clearly, and write a letter and add up accounts a little, he might quit. That much he has to know."

"Aye, he'll do. He's no so canny as Bruce; he steps heavy, and his claes an' his skin tak to dirt uncommon easy; he speaks away high oop in his heid, and he stumbles about clumsy, an' is aye too fond o' clishmaclaverin'. Bruce steppit light, an' was aye spotless clean, an' his voice was sweet, soundin' way down in his throat."

"You can't expect this one to be like Bruce,"

said David with pride. "Bruce is a Hume, and this one is a Beals. But Nathan works hard, and so gets dirty, while Bruce had no more call to get dirty than if he was always sitting up on a gilt-edged cloud looking on. Nathan don't pull up seedlings when he weeds, and he has a real knack with sheep and horses. I reckon that's the way folks are made, Aunt Ailsa—some for one thing and some for another."

"Aye, lad; there's a path made to fit the measure of ilka foot the Lord sends intil the world. The prophet Hosea says, 'The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but transgressors shall fall therein.' It is only a just man, David, that can walk in a right way: the way an' the man maun fit, an' God's way an' God's child are made for ilk ither. But, laddie, what is peace an' life to the just is apt to be a savor o' death to the unjust, an' transgressors fall even in the way whaur ither men would walk safely. It is the old story, David: 'Can two walk together unless they be agreed?'"

David rose up to go to the yards to see to the feeding of the sheep. He heard the cries of the woolly mothers and their children as they came over the hill, hurrying toward the long troughs where the nightly rations of meal were served out. As he passed Aunt Ailsa his big brown hand rested lovingly on her shoulders. There was the

love of a mother and son between these two, and Ailsa, lifting her eyes from the big Bible lying on her knees, blessed God who had given her this staff for her old age.

But as yet the hardy Scotswoman did not feel old. She measured the flight of time by its marks on others rather than by its marks on herself. The children were no longer children, the Hume farms were now the finest in the country, and the yearly increase of their surplus in bank caused David and Ailsa to be looked on in the town with great respect.

"Everybody calls me Mister Hume now-a-days," laughed David to Aunt Ailsa, one day when he had come back from shipping wool. "My title is due to our good circumstances, I reckon."

"Aye, lad, there's Scripture for that; it is written, 'For men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself.'"

David pulled off his best hat and his riding-gloves, and gave a glance toward the horse that Nathan Barber was leading round to the barn.

"Hi! you Nathan," he cried; "see that you don't forget yourself and give that horse anything to eat while he's warm."

"I won't," cried Nathan; "guess I know 'bout horses."

"Guess you know 'bout everything since you got to be ten years old," said David.—"Aunt

Ailsa, Mrs. Garth says that Bruce is ready for college, and he is only fourteen! She says she never saw anything like the way he goes ahead at his books! Dr. Garth says to let him enter; he is stout and strong as a boy can possibly be."

"You called on Mistress Garth?"

"Yes, indeed I did! and Turk came to the door with a 'Please walk into the parlor, Mr. Hume;' and then down came Mrs. Garth: 'I'm ever so glad to see you; I want to talk to you about Bruce, David. You don't want me to call you * "Mr. Hume," do you? You folks have come to be like my own family. It is nine years now since our lives have run along together,' and she gave me her hand and laughed; and I didn't mind the laugh as I used to, and I said, 'Yes, it is nine years since you found us making sorghum molasses with borrowed capital;' and then we both laughed."

"Aye; she comes in wi' a laugh an' goes out wi' a laugh, an' brings summer weather where'er she goes. Did ye spier after Janet?"

"Yes; I didn't see her, for it was school-hours, but Mrs. Garth says Janet is doing fine. She likes her boarding-place, and she makes a first-class teacher, and she is busy in the church, and Mrs. Garth says she's a credit to us all. And Saturday week will be Janet's twenty-first birthday, and Mrs. Garth invites us all to dinner. She and the doctor mean to give Janet a watch."

Somebody else was also twenty-one that September—namely, Sikey Gower. Mr. Johnson gave Sikey a two-year-old colt for a birthday gift.

“You’ve been with me ten years, Sikey, and I’d be glad if you’d stay another ten. I hardly know how I’d get on without you,” he said.

“We’ll think about that,” said Sikey, who was to dine at home with Sis and the younger three.

After dinner, Sikey, who had on a brand-new “store suit,” remarked that “he’d go over and call on Widow Munson.”

“You mean Della, don’t you,” said Lola, pertly.

Sikey found Widow Munson and Della in their front room. Widow Munson had crutches by her chair, having suffered from a paralytic stroke and being no longer able to oversee her farm. Della sat by the window sewing.

“Land-a-mercy, Sikey! how dandy you look!” said the widow.

“It’s my birthday, and I’m celebrating,” said Sikey. “Sis gave me a dinner, and Mr. Johnson gave me the bay colt.”

“Well, I’ll ask you to tea. What are you going to do now—go on just as you have?”

“I don’t know. Tom Gage says if he was me he’d go West and strike out for a fortune.”

“Bah!” said Widow Munson; “you’re much more likely to find a fortune by sticking to work where you are.”

“Sis would hate to have me go—though Sis never puts what she wants first—and I’d hate to leave the folks, dreadful bad”—and Sikey looked askance at Della, and Della looked out of the corner of her eye at Sikey.

“How much have you laid up, Sikey?” asked Mrs. Munson.

“Two hundred dollars. You see, I’ve helped Sis some—three dollars a month. Didn’t seem right to leave Sis to take care of the family all alone.”

“And I s’pose you’ve a right to your share of the place—the house and ten acres? There’s six of you.”

“The house isn’t worth fifty dollars. I plumb wonder it don’t fall down; and I’ll never claim any of that bit of land. Let the girls have that, or Sis, for if Sis hadn’t held it together I reckon it had been lost long ago.”

“That’s so,” said Widow Munson, slowly; “Sis has been a mighty good girl to you all, and I don’t account she’s laid up much.

“With what I’ve helped, and Pam’s been earning right smart for a year, Sis has put by a hundred dollars. But, land! there’s Lola teasing for Sis to lay out that, and twice as much more, on her.”

“Lola’s getting clear ahead of herself,” said Mrs. Munson, sternly; “she thinks nothing’s good

enough for her because she happens to have red curls and black eyes and dimples and red cheeks. I have seen other folks that looked as well, to my thinking."

"So hev I," said Sikey, with great cordiality, fixing his gaze on Della. "But, if Lola isn't worth much for work, Miss will make up for her: she's Sis all over agin! There ain't nothin' hardly that little trick can't do! Mis' Jonsing down by the brook allows, at a pinch, she'd as leave have Miss to help her as any grown woman 'round. Miss can bake light bread an' pies, an' run the sewin'-machine, an' iron, equal to anything ever you saw!"

"Della," said Mrs. Munson, "seein' it's Sikey's birthday, an' he's goin' to stop to tea, s'pose you go an' make some soft gingerbread, an' have tea early, an' then you an' him can take a walk 'round the place."

Della laid by her sewing and retreated silently to the kitchen.

"What makes Del so mumchance?" demanded the visitor. "What's gone wrong? 'Taint often she sits without a thing to say for herself; usually she's pretty tonguey."

"Sikey," said Widow Munson, with gravity, "you an' Della has been a-courtin' a right smart while."

"Three year," said Sikey, briskly.

"Three year is long enough. Me an' Munson

courted jes' three weeks. If you're goin' to be married, why don't you be married?"

"Why, Mis' Munson," gasped Sikey, red as a poppy, "'taint as if I was rich. Della's been used to better than I could give her, for you're right forehanded, an' twenty dollars a month ain't much to keep up a home on; though nobody thinks more of Del than I do."

"Well, Sikey," said the widow, in a motherly tone, "you see how I'm situated. Here's my hundred and fifty acres, good land, all clear an' in order, and day in an' day out since Munson died I've looked after the men an' kep' all up to the mark. An' here for two months I'm laid by, an' the doctor says there ain't no hope as I can travel 'round spry never no more. Things is goin' by the board. That Job Brown shirks awful now. I can't watch him, and I'd like nothin' better than to bounce him! I've talked with the men 'round here, and they say you are a right smart farmer, and not a bad habit to bless yourself with; moreover, I've knowed you from a baby, an' your mother before you, an' you an' Sis take after her. A man will lay out his best strokes for his own, an' all I have will go to Della when I'm dead and gone—not till then. My idea is, that you'd better give warnin' to Mr. Jonsing down by the brook, an' I'll bounce Job, an' you an' Della can be married, and you can can put your shoulder to the wheel here."

Sikey listened with open eyes and mouth to this astounding proposal. He could hardly believe his own good fortune! Married to Della Munson, he would have the wife he wanted, and, moreover, be one of the best-situated farmers in the neighborhood!

"Do you mean it, ma'am?" he gasped. "Do you think Del will agree to it?"

"Del's all right," said Widow Munson, calmly; "I talked with her before I talked with you, an' there's nothin' to say agin your bein' married the tenth of October."

"I'm sure I'd be ready enough," cried Sikey; "and if your farm here don't look up, it won't be for want of my puttin' in my best strokes."

Then he thought of Sis. He hesitated. "You see, Mis' Munson, there's only one thing to think of. While I worked for Mr. Jonsing I've been my own man, an' took my wages an' helped Sis. Don't seem quite fair to drop helpin' and leave her to pull along alone with the three of them."

"Why don't it?" said the widow, testily. "She took hold with five of you to do for, an' you only eleven. Now Mis' Jonsing by the brook has Jane, an' Pam is equal to do for himself an' give Sis a little help, an' you leave them the house an' lot. I don't see what more they could expect of you."

"That's so," said Sikey; "and, of course, I couldn't throw myself away for them. Sis

wouldn't ask me to. She'll be pleased at my chance."

"You can get Mr. Jonsing to take Pam, and after this winter Pam needn't go to school, and can get fifteen dollars a month, maybe."

"That's so," said Sikey. "I'll speak to Mr. Jonsing to-morrow."

"But see here," said Mrs. Munson, who had her plan all laid, but preferred to seem to be conferring benefits rather than receiving them. "I don't want you to feel any drawings-back, or as if you owed more to Sis than you had done for her. I will tell you what I'll do. I'm pretty helpless, and I can't do much except sew an' dress vegetables, an' I need a bit of waiting on. You think Sis has too many on her hands? We will take Miss. You can bring Miss here when you come, and she can go to school for a couple of years if she wants to, and you can do for her as well as not. And after she grows up, why, she'll get married, likely. 'Twon't cost much to keep her: she can make over Della's things, an' get a new gown once in a while. I wouldn't be stingy to her. I'm close, but I like to see everybody and everything around me well kept up. I can't give in to keepin' hired help in the house—idle, dirty, wasteful critters! Miss an' Della could do the work between them, for Della's a mighty good sry worker, just as Miss is."

“Land of liberty!” cried the joyful Sikey; “folks always said you had the best head to plan that ever was set on shoulders! With Pam in my place at Jonsing’s, and Sis with no one but Lola to do for, Sis needn’t complain, sure; she’ll be well done by. Do you s’pose Del would mind if I went out to see how that soft gingerbread is coming on?”

“I don’t reckon she would. If she does, she can say so.”

Sikey joyfully intruded his new suit and his smiling countenance into the kitchen. Della’s gingerbread was in the oven. She was now making biscuit. The dough lay on the paste-board; she had the rolling-pin in her hand and a patch of flour on her nose. The widow heard for a moment or so a murmur of voices and much giggling, then shrill defiance in Della’s tone, ordering Sikey out of the kitchen “so she could get supper in peace.”

Sikey, hilarious, retreated to the protection of his future mother-in-law. The astute widow noticed that now Sikey had a patch of flour on his nose.

CHAPTER XIX.

DAVID ASSERTS HIMSELF.

THE next day, being Saturday, Miss was working for Mistress Ailsa Crathie, and Lola, somewhat pouting and reluctant, was doing the family baking and scrubbing, when Sikey, who had hurried through with pressing work, came to report to Sis his new prospects. Sis, with clasped hands and tears of joy in her eyes, arrested the whirr of her sewing-machine and listened in rapture:

“Why, Sikey! Whoever heard of such good fortune! Such a nice farm and good buildings, and stock and machines, and money in the bank, and a buggy and a light wagon, and all the same as yours! You ought to be mighty good to Della an’ Widow Munson after all that, and I know you will, for you’ve always been good to us, Sikey.”

Self-satisfied as Sikey always was, a little prick in his conscience here suggested that he might have done more to help Sis.

“I think it’s horrid mean, his taking Miss off!” cried Lola. “All they want her for is to do the

work; and it will leave me with everything here to do, while you sew, Sis; and I hate work!"

"All the same, you ought to do it, like the rest," said Sikey, virtuously; "and I couldn't go off and leave both of you for Sis to take care of. People would have talked."

"I shall feel lost without Miss," said the elder sister, sighing; "and, Sikey, you know Widow Munson has a pretty sharp tongue and is a great driver."

"I won't let Miss be put upon," said Sikey, "and hard words break no bones. Besides, Miss is so good-natured and industrious that she'll never give anyone a chance to fault-find. It will be a heap better for her, Sis; she'll be right near the school-house, and at Widow Munson's all is handy, and full and plenty of everything. She'll have a nice bedroom all to herself—Del's going to give her hers—and Del says she'll teach her to play on the melojun; and when Miss is grown up an' has company, she'll have a nice sittin'-room to see 'em in, like a lady; and she'll be dressed nice, for Del will see to it, and Del has good taste."

This explication of the prospects of Miss aggravated Lola. "Much she will teach Miss to play the melojun," she cried. "She don't know only to drum herself; and if you call Del's dressing taste, you don't know what taste is: it's real tacky, and not one bit like town folks!"

"Del don't lay out to play at bein' town folks," retorted Sikey in wrath; "and as for her clothes, she isn't one of those asking to dress above her station, and wear things she's no right to. All Del's things she can pay for with her own money."

Sis, finding her family falling out, as often happened, hastened to intervene: "Della is a sweet, good girl; she's industrious and lively and pretty, and everyone likes her. She and you, Sikey, will have the nicest home, and as much money as anyone about here. Widow Munson is always respected; she is a good Christian, she is a great business woman, and there never was a better neighbor. She has brought up Della well, and she'll do the same by Miss. Miss is in good luck to go with you, Sikey, and I know she will like it. I know what my duty is as the mother of the family," added Sis, with her funny little assumption of dignity. "This afternoon I shall take my work and go to visit Della an' Mis' Munson, and I'll tell them how proud and glad I am, and that I hope we'll all be good friends, and that I'm sure Miss is in great luck."

"That's all right, Sis," said Sikey; "I knew you'd do the fair thing."

"Lola," remonstrated Sis as Sikey left the house, "I'm ashamed of you, saying unkind things to fret Sikey just when this ought to be the happiest time of his life. Don't do it again."

“Sikey is real selfish, and always was!” cried Lola; “he takes off Miss, who will fully pay her way, and then he washes his hands of the rest of us, and don’t lay out to help me at all!”

Sis, not recognizing the fact that selfish people always see clearly the selfishness of others, mildly combated Lola: “I’ll do for you all I can, dear, and you couldn’t expect to burden Sikey. Every young man should be let alone to do as well as he can for himself, and if Pam can look out for himself as well as Sikey has done, I’m ready to take care of you.”

“Out here in the country, where houses are only in hollerin’ distance!” cried Lola, scornfully, “never seeing anything or going anywhere, wearing shabby clothes and working all the time! And if Miss is gone, am I to stay here alone when you go out for a week or two to nurse folks?”

“No; I’ll ask Mistress Crathie to let you stay with her then.”

“I won’t do it; she’s too strict,” said Lola, crossly.

None of the other children had been contumacious, and Lola gave Sis no end of heartache and anxiety.

Meanwhile, Sikey went to talk with Pam and David about his new plans. Pam was working with David for a week, getting in the potatoes,

and Sikey found David and Pam digging, Nathan Barber and one of Uncle Mose Barr's descendants picking out the potatoes and piling them in heaps to dry, while Uncle Mose, now too old for regular work, was sitting on the nearest fence holding discourse.

As soon as he saw Sikey he shouted, "Whar yo' bin at yisterday, Mas' Sikey, all dress fit to kill?"

"Out making calls," said Sikey with dignity.

"I laid as mebbly yo' was gwine make 'rangements for leavin' Mas' Jonsing down by de brook. Yo' jist stay whar you're at, Sikey. No good nebber come changin'; min', I'm old an' I tole yo' so."

Having thus admonished Sikey, the old negro renewed his discourse with David, whom he was trying to persuade to take his grandson Ike for a regular hand.

"Drop it, Uncle Mose," said David, resting for a moment on his spade-handle; "I lay out to get the worth of my money when I hire hands, and you know I'd never get it out of that shiftless Ike."

"That's so, boss," assented Uncle Mose, nodding his gray head. "I nebber kin quite make up my 'pinion whether that nigger is powerful weak or powerful lazy."

"He's lazy," volunteered Nathan Barber, lift-

ing himself up from his potato-picking; "there's nothin' weak 'bout him when there's a possum-hunt or a break-down."

"Dat's so," said Uncle Mose, laughing joyfully at this view of the prowess of his descendant; "but Ike allus hes bin powerful unwillin' to do any work."

When David heard the story of Sikey's good fortune, and that he and Miss were soon to betake themselves to the Munson farm, his big eyes shone with joy.

"Mr. Jonsing says he'll take you in my place, Pam," said Sikey; "and if you'll do as well as I've done for him, who knows but you'll have as good a stroke of luck by and by."

"Widders ain't so plenty," quoth Pam; "but I'll tell you what I mean to do as soon as I'm a man grown: I'll work for Mr. Jonsing, and I'll farm our ten acres for myself, and I'll take care of Sis and keep her like a lady. Sis is twenty-three years old, and she looks older, and she's never had a holiday or a real rest-day in all her life! Mis' Gage says that Sis was two year old when you were born, Sikey, and she began to take care of you and watch over you right off, and she did the same for all the rest of us, and she got crooked luggin' us about when we was babies; and Mis' Gage says if it hadn't been for Janet Hume teaching Sis gymnastics, and how

to keep straight and take care of herself, she'd have died with consumption by this time. There's going to be an end before long, of Sis killing herself with work, you bet!" and Pam returned to his potato-digging with exceeding vigor.

That evening, David went over to see Sis. She had returned from her visit to the widow Munson, and felt very much elated over her kind reception and the promises Mrs. Munson had made about Miss.

"So there's going to be a wedding at your home, Sis," said David. "Seems to me you are doing quite a stroke of business, getting three of your family settled at once."

"Isn't it good!" cried Sis, so happy that she forgot to get out any work, but for once sat with her hands in her lap.

"Where's Lola?" asked David.

"She and Pam went to singing-school. I get Pam to go to all such places with her, because Lola is so discontented and uneasy. That worries me a good deal, David. I never had that trouble with the others. They always took what came to them, and were thankful, and didn't fret for what they couldn't have. Not that I complain of Lola. She is a lovely girl, and real good, but she's set her heart on having things she can't get. You see, she keeps thinking about the good chances Janet and Bruce have had, and it makes her dis-

satisfied. I tell her she must take what the Lord sends, and Mistress Crathie to-day told her to take to heart that verse, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him;' but Lola is at an uneasy age. I suppose she'll outgrow it, and settle down by and by."

"See here, Sis," suggested David; "I didn't come over here to talk about Lola. Two years ago I asked you to marry me, and you wouldn't hear to it; you said you had your family on your hands, and you must see to them. A year ago I asked you the same, and you made the same answer; and when I told you I would help you to look after your family, you wouldn't hear to it. You said the Lord had laid the care on you, and not on me, and you wouldn't shirk your duty. It made me sick, Sis, to see you wearing yourself out caring for so many, and a great hulking fellow like me without any burdens at all. Now, look here. Sikey, Miss, and Pam are all provided for at a stroke. I ask you to marry me. There's only you and Lola, and I'm equal to taking care of you both. Perhaps at my home Lola would be better suited than here. She could have Janet's room, which is pretty nice, and we'll get a good sitting-room or parlor, or whatever you call it, that might suit her ideas. If it's school in town for a term or so that she's crazy for, perhaps we can manage that—anything to get her suited;

and you've worked yourself to death long enough. Pam was talking about that to-day."

"Pam's such a good boy!" cried Sis; "he is so fond of me, and so kind! He never lets me cut or bring in an armful of wood, and he draws all the water, and—"

"He's known for a long while that he'd have me to reckon with if he didn't do all that," said David, shaking his big head. "But, all the same, Pam has a good heart, and does his duty. But I didn't come here to talk about Pam, Sis. Will you and Lola come over to my house as soon as Sikey is married? Aunt Ailsa would be mighty glad to have you there, Sis."

"No, David; I can't come. My work here is not all done. I have Lola to look after, and Lola is not easy to manage. I know she is not the kind of girl that would make it real pleasant for Mistress Crathie, and Mistress Crathie is getting old. I've got too much pride, maybe, David, but I can't go to your house and take my sister with me."

"It's what Sikey is doing," said David.

"Miss is a different girl: she'll more than pay her way. If I am to have trouble with Lola, I'll have it to myself. My mother left the children to me, and I must do my duty by them all, to the very last one."

"She left you all to me: I saw it in her eye," quoth David; "and I tell you, Sis, I'm not going

to stand this nonsense very much longer. If you won't take care of yourself, I'll do it for you;" and David went home to get sympathy from his aunt Ailsa.

A year went on quietly after that—a year of prosperity in which even Sis Gower shared, and wherein, by Pam's help, she laid up fifty dollars. Lola had submitted to the inevitable, and behaved pretty well under protest until in June Mr. Gage's son Hiram, who had been away for two years, living with his uncle and attending school, returned home.

In about three days after Hiram's return the childish friendship between Lola and himself was renewed in a vigorous manner. Lola found a daily errand to do at Mrs. Gage's, and was very diligent in her visits to Della and Miss, and from all these calls Hiram indefatigably escorted her home. In the evening Hiram brought his accordion and played tunes, and he and Lola sang, and he taught Lola to play the accordion. Lola and Hiram also sat on a bench in the front yard, or even commodiously on the wood-pile, and Hiram read poetry and novels to Lola. Sis became exceedingly uneasy, and with tears in her eyes asked Ailsa what she would better do about it.

"Lola is not sixteen, and Hiram is nineteen, and he'll go off and forget her and break her heart!" she mourned.

“Hiram isn't the forgetting kind,” said David, “and Lola isn't the heart-breaking kind. Let them alone; they are enjoying themselves and doing no harm to anyone.”

One day at the close of August, Lola made known to Sis very clearly what was to be done about it. Lola was as tall as Sis, much stouter, rosy, bright-eyed, and curly headed—a very pretty girl, withal willful. She sat down by Sis, and, taking her hand, began:

“Now, Sis Gower, pay attention to me. I am going to tell you something fine. Hiram Gage doesn't mean to stay here and be a farmer; he's got a place in the bank in town, and he's going to it next week, and he's going to be a banker, and live in town all his life!”

Sis privately felt relieved and thankful.

“And, Sis—we're engaged!”

“Oh, Lola!”

“Why not? And we're going to be married in two years from now, when I'm eighteen and Hiram is twenty-one.”

“Unless you change your minds.”

“We won't change. This is a positive, solemn engagement, and it was made yesterday at Mr. Gage's, and Mr. and Mrs. Gage know it, and they both kissed me and said it was all right.”

“Oh, Lola!” cried Sis; “and you never told *me* till now!”

“Why should I tell you till it was all settled and I knew what I wanted you to do? You can see for yourself, Sis, how well Hiram has been educated, and if he goes to live in town two years, and I stay out here, getting awkward and not learning anything, I will be gawky, and he’ll be ashamed of me. Mrs. Gage herself said I ought to have two years in school if I’m going to town to live among folks, and I told her I would, sure.”

“Oh, Lola dear! how can it be done!”

“It can, because it has to be; and I’m going to show you how. School, with music—for I must learn some music to be like folks, Sis—will cost two hundred a year. Now, you have one hundred and fifty laid up, and you can sell the cow and our three pigs for the other fifty, and that will pay for one year. I have twenty dollars in my box that I have saved up for two or three years, and I can get Sikey to give me twenty more, and that will be enough for clothes and books. Maybe in vacation I can earn a little something for myself.”

“But, Lola, all that would only be for one year.”

“Yes, but in that year you and Pam could save up something more for me. Besides, Sis, Mr. Gage says our house and land are worth eight hundred dollars. Sikey and Jane are out of it, and that leaves the other four of us two

hundred each, and I will sell my part out to Pam if he'll earn or borrow two hundred for me for that second year."

"But, Lola, Lola! There will be clothes and books, and then when you're married you'll want some good clothes if you are going to town, and you won't be satisfied with less."

"It will come some way. I'll borrow it of some one, or get Miss to let me sell out her share to David Hume, or something. You make up your mind, Sis, I'm going to school to learn how to look and act and dress like town folks; and if you refuse me that hundred and fifty, and won't sell the cow and pigs, you are just as mean as can be!"

"You can have all I have, an' welcome," said Sis, who, like the eider duck, had become accustomed to stripping herself for her family; "but, Lola, I'm going to see to two things: in the first place, I'm going to talk with Mr. and Mis' Gage, because, if you should spend all that we have in going to school where you do not mean to learn really useful things that would be a support for you, and then Hiram should look on the promise as all child's play, that would be very terrible; and I've heard of such things."

Lola tossed her curls disdainfully.

"And then, Lola, if you are going to school, it shall be to a boarding-school—not board in town

and be a day-pupil, and not in this town, where Hiram will be, either. You would be wanting to have calls from him, and sending him notes, and neglecting your studies, and breaking rules; and, finally, you'd see so much of each other that you'd get tired of your engagement and break it off. I've heard of just such things."

"Seems to me you've heard of a heap of things," cried Lola, angrily.

"I've had a family to raise, and have had to keep my eyes open, and my ears too," observed Sis, primly. "However, Lola, I've just finished this work for Mis' Gage, and I'll take it over and talk with her, so I can know what I'm doing."

"It's all right," said Mrs. Gage, frankly. "Hiram thinks there is no one to equal Lola, and we like her very well ourselves. I don't think, Sis, that Lola has had a fair chance in this neighborhood. She naturally doesn't like the country, or country ways, or rough work. She isn't very industrious, as things go about here, and so folks find fault with her and call her 'stuck up' and idle. I can sympathize with her. When I was her age I couldn't abear farms and farm-work. Hiram is the same. I know Lola will make a real nice, neat, tidy housekeeper in town, where she's given something to do with. She likes stories and music and flowers and pictures, and Widow Munson throws that up at her as a sin,

I don't. She has been hampered and kept at what she hates, and has been discouraged, and it has made her envious and pettish; but Lola is naturally sweet-tempered, and all that fretfulness will pass away when she gets into pleasant surroundings. I suppose she is somewhat selfish, but I've said time and again, Sis Gower, that it would make anyone selfish to live with you—you spoil folks so! Most girls of Lola's age are selfish; the selfishness works out of 'em by the time they have a family to do for. You needn't feel afraid that Hiram will change his mind: he won't. Me an' his pa said they was too young to marry now, but they're to wait two years, and then me an' his pa will buy them a little house in town and furnish it. We can afford that. It's true, as Lola told you, she needs a couple of years in school, so she won't be gawky and shamefaced when she comes to live in town. I want her to hold up her head with the rest. She's as good as anybody, and me an' Gage is forehanded, and Hiram will have it all, an' he an' his wife can stand with the best. Gage said maybe we'd ought to offer to help send her to school, but I said, 'No; I've heard tell of men educatin' their wives, but I don't hold to givin' a man any such claim over a woman, nor lettin' him have that to throw up to her some day. She wouldn't be independent enough,' says I to Gage."

“I should not want you to do it,” said Sis. “I can manage it somehow, and Lola shall start in this very September. I am afraid we haven’t treated her right.”

“Why, yes you have, Sis! You’ve just laid down and let the whole lot walk over you ever since your ma died! You’ve got ’em all settled but Lola, and in two years she’ll be settled, and then it seems to me that you’d better settle yourself.”

“You shall go to school next term,” said Sis to Lola when she went home. “The first chance you get to go to town with anybody, you’d better ask Janet to go with you to buy some clothes, and I’ll make them for you right off; and you shall have my lace collar and cairngorm pin that Mistress Crathie gave me. Mis’ Gage thinks just as I do—that you shouldn’t go to town to school, and you ought to board in the school, to get all the good of it you can; and I’m going to write a letter all about it to Mrs. Garth to-morrow, asking her to choose the school that will be the best for what money we have. One year I can be sure of, and when the next year comes, perhaps I can manage that.”

And so, finally, from Sis Gower’s once overfull nest the last bird had flown. Lola had gone to her school, and Sis sat in solitude; the sun was setting, and Sis felt very lonely.

Then David came in. "Sis," said David, calmly, "three times I've asked you to marry me, and three times you've said 'No' on account of your family. I've come to ask you again, and it won't do a bit of good for you to say 'No,' for I'm going to say 'Yes' for you. If you think I'm going to leave you here alone for two years to work for Lola, you're mistaken. Pam and Sikey and I have talked plans over, and we see how we can manage for her, and I've made up my mind how I'm going to manage for you. You're not going to stay here one hour longer. I'll just lock this house and take the key, and you're coming over to Aunt Ailsa, and you're going to just rest all the time and amuse yourself until Thanksgiving, and then we're going to be married. So come on; Aunt Ailsa is waiting for us on the doorstep."

CHAPTER XX.

ARISE, FOR THIS IS NOT YOUR REST.

“Ah, then my soul should know,
Beloved! where thou dwellest in noon of day;
And from this place of woe
Released, should take its way
To mingle with thy flock and never stray.”

IT was the morning after David in such a masterful manner had removed Sis from under her own roof-tree. David was superintending the threshing of his wheat with a hired steam-thresher in a field next the road, when up drove a buggy with yellow wheels. It was not the buggy which had stopped ten years before by the sorghum-boiling, but one of its successors, and from it beamed Mrs. Garth, in a new fall hat that would have done Janet's eyes good. She beckoned to David. He leaped the fence, and, hat in hand, stood beside the buggy.

“David, what have you done with Sis Gower?”

“I've taken what there is left of her to my house.”

“What! Is anything the matter with Sis?”

“Only what's always been the matter. She's

clear worn to a frazzle working for her family. She's plumb tired out, and last evening I just put my foot down about it and took her home."

"And what next?"

"The next was," said David, grimly, "that I told her she was to sit by the window and not do a blessed thing; and as we've kept Mose Barr's Ida for the last two years to help Aunt Ailsa, I didn't see what Sis would find to do. All the same, when I came away, there she was making light bread!"

"And when are you going to be married?" demanded Mrs. Garth, going straight to the point, her eyes raining happy laughter into those of the prepotent David.

"Thanksgiving day," said David, stoutly.

"That's right," said Mrs. Garth. "And now, David, I have a good plan for Sis. You know, entire change is the best of rest, and Sis has never had any change, and has never seen anything but her own little hard round of work. I know you cannot keep her quite idle at your house—she would not know how to sit by the window and watch the road—and treating her like an invalid may make her an invalid. I think, too, that to stay at your house now, and be married at your house, is not exactly what Sis would like. I've come to take her to my house, and I want you to be married there, and I mean to fit out the bride.

It will be one of the pleasantest episodes in my life to do something for one who has lived only to spend and be spent for others. All the little pleasures of town life will brighten up Sis, and then, when you are married, I want her to have a little journey. She should see at least one big city. Haven't you any business to call you to St. Louis or Chicago?"

"If going would be a pleasure to Sis, that is business enough," said David.

"Now, that's what I call proper talk," said Mrs. Garth, "and I want you to come to the house and advise Sis to accept my invitation. It will not be a great deal of trouble for you to ride over to the town every Sunday morning and go to church with Sis."

When Mrs. Garth told Sis that she had come to take her to her house for a visit of two months and a half, Sis at first looked surprised and delighted, then flushed, and presently said,

"Why, I can't go; I haven't anything fit to wear at your house"—for whatever little decorative article of dress Sis had had—collar, apron, or handkerchief—had been given to the exacting Lola, who had taken it calmly with an "Of course, here you don't need things, but I shall need to be like other girls."

"What!" said Mrs. Garth, "everything used up? That's so much the better! You and I are

going to have the nicest time shopping that ever was known. I hear that there is to be a wedding Thanksgiving. I propose to have that at my house. Come, Sis, surely you're not one to keep people waiting."

"Go, lassie," said Mistress Crathie; "this is the Lord's way for you. Take the pleasure and rest from his han' just as simply as you have taken the care and work; in a' he is our Faither."

That ride in the September sunshine began pleasant things for Sis Gower. Mrs. Garth chatted merrily, cheered Sis about Lola, and planned wonders for the future. "And, Sis, I have arranged just what it will give me so much pleasure to do for you; and you'll please take it freely, as from one Christian sister to another. I'm going to provide your trousseau, and we'll get it at once, so that you can use some of the things at my house. I have a dressmaker there now, and she has made a tea-gown for you, and I want you to put it on to-day, for Janet is coming to tea with you. People say the country is ever so much more healthful than the town, but I want you to get so fat and rosy in town that everyone will revise that opinion. You shall rest, walk, ride, do physical exercises with Janet, go to bed early, rise at what you would call a late hour, and we'll surprise David and the rest of the family with the result."

When Sis went up to the pretty room that had

once been Janet's, she found laid on the bed not only the charming tea-gown, but a store of other array—silk ties, slippers, kerchiefs, white goods, gloves—such treasures that at first tears of astonishment and gratitude came, and then she felt very guilty at having things so much prettier than dear Lola; then she wished she dared give them to Lola, and then she knew that she must not. Finally her good sense prevailed, and she considered that all this good fortune came to her from her heavenly Father, and that, just as she had taken comfort and pleasure in providing for her “family,” he found pleasure in sending blessings to her, and that he wished to see her taking her allotment with a happy face. If God sent rest and abundance, surely she must get out of them all the good that was to be found in them. Who knew for what future he was now fitting and strengthening her? Toil, self-denial—these had been her work for God hitherto; now ease and pleasure cheerfully accepted and well used,—these were her work also for God.

Sis proceeded to dress herself in her unaccustomed splendor, and was just arrayed when Janet ran up stairs and tapped at the door.

“Do you know me, really, when I am so fine?” laughed Sis.

“I'd have to know you by the way you do your hair,” said Janet; “it is not becoming and is not

in the fashion. Sit right down here before the glass, and let me pin a towel about your shoulders and dress your head properly; and see that you do it in this way yourself hereafter."

So Janet was hair-dresser, arranging Sis Gower's head in a simple, pretty style, and meanwhile rattling away about what they should do and see and hear while Sis was in town.

"Really, Sis!" cried Janet when her task was done, "I didn't know you were so nice-looking! Dear me! how all this becomes you! Let me see. Stand up. Have you been keeping your head up and your shoulders back? Yes, fairly well. Now fold your arms behind you, and go and stand by that open window and draw six deep breaths. Do that three times a day. Now put that book on your head and walk up and down the room six times. There! now you may come down stairs."

What weeks those were for Sis! What charming drives daily with Mrs. Garth, what evening walks with Janet! Sis found herself wearing pretty dresses and new hats and jackets; she went shopping, she discussed patterns, she sat for pleasant hours reading pleasant books. She visited Janet's school, and went with Turk to see Pope, and then to look at the little four-roomed house where Pope and Turk were to live when Pope's course at the institution should be ended.

“Pope is a real good shoemaker,” said Turk, “and he’s promised work by a man here in town. This house, you see, is not far from Mrs. Garth’s back gate, and I am going to rise real early, and get part of my work done, and our breakfast, and then go over to Mrs. Garth’s and do her upstairs work, and take the sewing and mending home with me. I shall have saved money enough to furnish our house, and Doctor Garth is going to give me a sewing-machine.”

Sis Gower felt that in town she had a very lively life. She went to a church fair, a picnic, a nutting party, a Christian Endeavor social, a King’s Daughters’ entertainment, the missionary society and the sewing society, and was three times invited out to tea! In all her life she had not known such excess of merrymaking!

Each Sunday, when David came to spend the day, he found Sis stronger, brighter, her cheeks gaining roundness and color, her eyes bright, her whole nature expanding as does a flower which, having long pined in the shade, is at last transplanted into a sunny place. This mission to Sis of Mrs. Garth’s genial, laughter-loving spirit for ever wiped out of David’s remembrance the hour when she had enraged him by finding “the Bealses,” the sorghum-boiling, and the borrowing so very entertaining. After that morning when the Gowers and the Humes and “Mis’ Jonsing down by

the brook" gathered in the Garth parlor, and David saw coming down the stairs to meet him a happy-faced young woman in a gray Irish poplin trimmed with velvet, and a gray bonnet with a gray plume, he was ready to be Mrs. Garth's devoted servant to the end of his days.

Sis in all her glory, and Janet, who, to David's mind, was simply sumptuous, did not overpower David that day one-half so much as did the Olympian Bruce, who, emulating his elder brother's size, appeared in a stunning suit of dark-blue cloth, dignified, silent, absolutely *au fait* in all the ceremonies of the occasion. David felt as if it were altogether too presumptuous even privately to reflect that that serene, scholarly youth was his own brother!

Lola was disposed to be a little envious of her sister's fine new trunk, so handsomely filled. "I do not see," she said to Janet when they were alone, after the rest of the company had dispersed, and David and his wife were *en route* for St. Louis, "why Sis could not have given me some of those nice things. Surely I need them most. Sis is going to be buried out there in the country."

"She would have had no right to give them," said Janet. "Sis did not buy them: all were a present from Mrs. Garth, and it would have been quite wrong to give them away. You must put up

with what you have, Lola. I am sure you look very well."

"But you don't know how much better the other girls are dressed than I am; and they all have spending-money, and I never have a cent, and it makes me feel dreadfully mean."

"It will teach you economy, self-denial, sympathy, and many other good things if you use the experience well," said Janet, serenely; for, as La Rochefoucauld well observed, "We all of us have sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others," and Janet was not particularly galled by those stings and arrows of outrageous fortune which were torturing poor Lola.

However, before the time for Lola's train to take her the twenty miles to her school, Janet took her down town, bought her a blue-serge dress and six handkerchiefs, and gave her five dollars to pay for having the dress made.

"Lola is certainly a very pretty girl with very pretty ways," said Mrs. Garth to Janet the next day, "and I have no doubt she will be a useful and agreeable woman. I really pity her, for it is terribly hard for a girl in school to be deprived of so much that the other girls have, and her poverty will make all her two years in school less pleasant than might be desired. But that is part of the appointed discipline of life for her, and in some way she needs it and it will work good. Yet, as we are not called upon

to assign discipline to our fellow-mortals or to make it heavier, I propose to send her a box at Christmas that will probably make her quite joyful."

While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease. The serial of the seasons flows on endlessly, and the years reproduce themselves, the one like the other, unless disasters befall.

The next ten years were years of peace and blessing as they went by, and heaped the snows on Ailsa Crathie's hair, and made her steps totter, and bowed her vigorous frame, and dimmed her eyes so that even the big print in her Bible was uncertain reading. But what then? That hoary head was a crown of glory being found in the way of righteousness. She forgot that her steps faltered, for David's ever-ready arm was strong. Sis was always at hand to read to her; the hours flew past right merrily watching the robust and dimpled children of David and Sis at their play.

The "stage-house" was changed, having a handsome front, a wide piazza, and a garden full of pleasant things. The old Gower house over the way had been enlarged and repaired, and Pam Gower and his family lived there, Pam superintending a mule-raising enterprise for a St. Louis firm. Miss Gower was in her own home by the river, and Jane Johnson was a tall, pleasing girl, the joy of her foster-parents.

In the town Janet and Lola, each in her own home, were neighbors, and Lola frequently confided to Janet the comfort she took in the thought that her own children would not have such a strife of mortifications and denials to live through as had fallen to her lot.

"Sis never seems to care," said Lola; "she is prosperous and happy now, and yet she talks as freely of her hard early days as if they were pleasant times. To me their memory is full of a thousand pricks and stings."

"Sis always accepted her privations, as she does her blessings, as from the hand of God," said Janet; "and I suppose all were sweetened to her by the joy of fulfilled duty."

"I am one of those that believe best when they are most prosperous," laughed Lola. "There are many fruits that ripen well only in plenty of sun and fine weather; storms do not agree with them. The sugar-beet, for instance, will not store up sugar in the cold or damp: it needs fine warm sunshine to make it fit for anything. I'm a sugar-beet."

"You look more like a rose or a peach," said Janet, smiling at her pretty neighbor.

"Now, really, a sugar-beet is a very pretty vegetable," said Lola. "Did you ever see a field of them? It is smooth and pink, and has lovely broad, crimped, light-green leaves, crisp and dainty as flowers."

"You always see the beauty in things, Lola," said Janet.

Bruce, a part of the busy world of books and learning, had never ceased to be in his heart a part of that brave household from which he sprung. College and university halls had nourished him and honored him; foreign lands had shown him their treasures. As Ailsa had planned, his share of the homestead had been his education; and David, a prosperous farmer, proud of his scholarly younger brother, had gone beyond the legal demand in providing for Bruce. Bruce had taught and written, and had finally reached the point where he reaped his own harvest with no niggard hand.

Whenever Bruce went home for part of a vacation there was great joy; and finally, each year, Ailsa took his coming as a blessing she had not expected to share again, for she was now very old and the end drew near. Bruce, silent as of old, sat by her, holding the tremulous hand that had been strong to nourish and comfort his childhood.

"It has dune me gran' guid to hae ye here the while, lad," said Ailsa. "I hae pined for ane mair luik at your bonny face."

"And it has done me good to see you, aunt. The end crowns the work. This peaceful, quiet closing of life gives me strong courage for the crosses and toils that come before."

“I am auld, auld,” said Ailsa; “I hae coom to they days when the guid Lord maun tak me oop an’ carry me. When we are wee bairnies, an’ when our heids are hoar wi’ age, then the Lord kens we canna go our lane, an’ he juist folds us oop in his arms an’ carries us in his bosom along the way. Mony is the time, Bruce, in Scotlan’, when I hae gone oot to the fiel’s to luik to the flocks, an’ I hae foun’ the wee weak lambie lyin’ its lane, an’ I hae happed it oop i’ the neuk o’ my pladdie an’ carried it down to the ingle-side to tak tent for it; an’ sae my Shepherd does for me the noo. I sit here, lad, an’ I think o’ the far-away days, my faither an’ my mither, an’ a’ the auld-time folks, an’ my cousin, braw David Hume. I canna feel as if I am sae far frae my native lan’, an’ I’m thinkin’ that heaven is my ain countrie, an’ I am now near to win in there, an’ so I do no feel like a far-awa’ exile ony mair.”

It was in such spirit, one golden autumn day, when all the corn-land stood thick with sheaves, and the fruit was ripe across the orchard rows, that Ailsa, sitting in her big chair by the window, “fell on sleep.” Her head rested easily against the pillow, her hands lay clasped in her lap, a smile was on her lips, and the glory of the heavenly light shone on her white face and her snowy hair. Sweet and serene satisfaction rayed from each placid feature. A voice had whispered in

her ears, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you. Fear not." The next sounds she should hear would be the challenge of the great resurrection angel's trumpet awakening the sleepers in the earth.

David drew near her with gentle steps, not to break her slumber—love's last idle care! She was keeping that tryst with Death which had been made for her the moment she came into life.

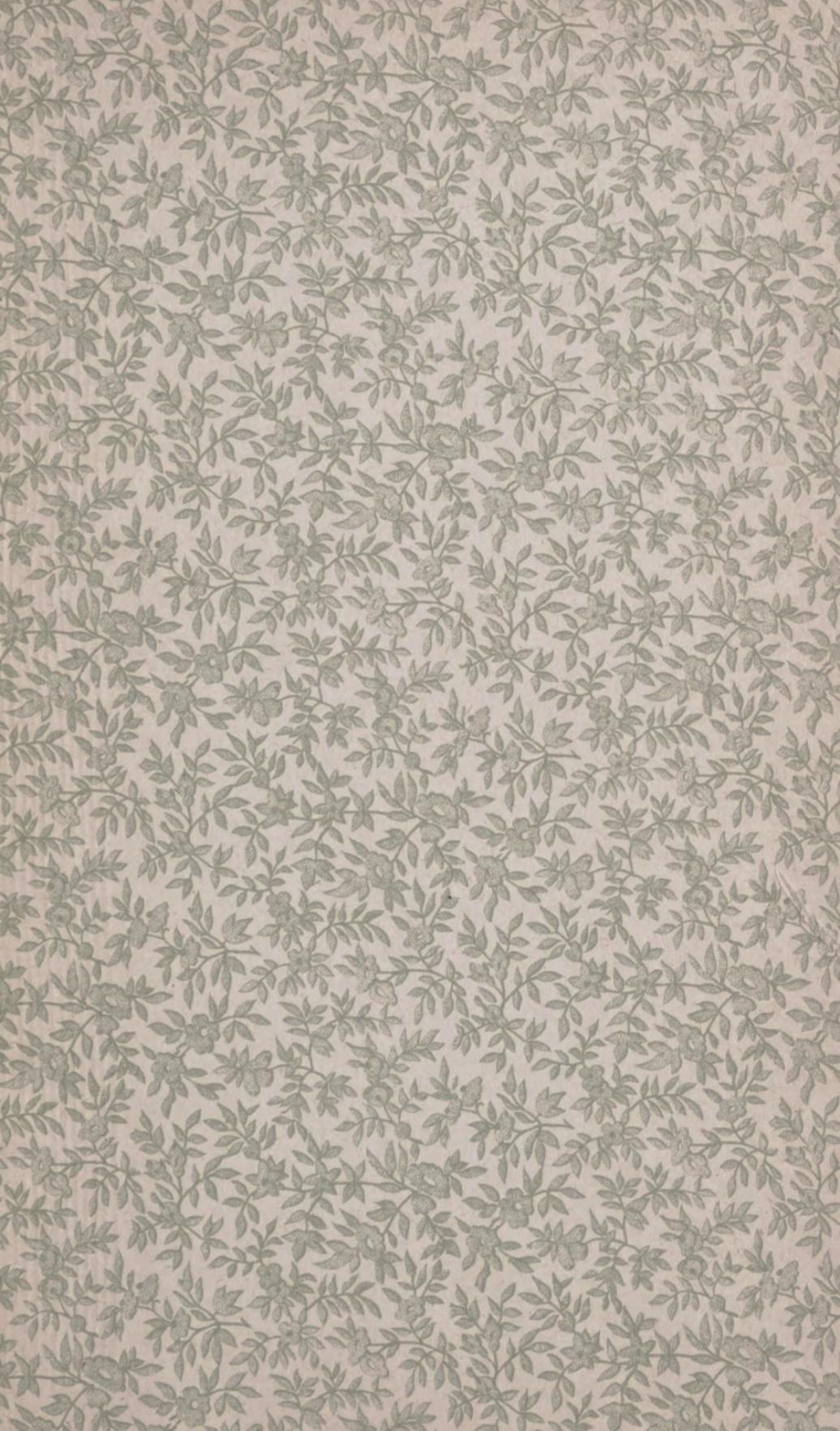
This story has been of plain and simple people, of common ways and of common things; but these are the people, the ways, and the works that are in the vast majority and that survive and perpetuate the commonwealth. The aristocrat, whether of brain or blood or purse, perishes; the people continue themselves, and create out of their own ranks the aristocrats of the future.

It is "idle to lock the gates of life against inferiority" in book-people as in real life, for the inferiority gains uplift with the passing years, and becomes superiority.

Pam Gower, like Dr. Wheeler, could tell us that, even in herds, stalls, and stables, "The best, in a few generations, are wont to become sterile;" and the "classes" are renewed from the "masses," as

on the farms racers arise and thoroughbreds are improved out of the common stock. Across the fertile acres the ragweed grows ; along the newly-opened ways of progress the horny hands, the inaccurate tongues, the bluff, free-and-easy manners, thrive and suffer subtle change, and the life of the world is for ever renewed.

THE END.



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