

Walter Harland eBook

Walter Harland

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Contents

Walter Harland eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	9
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	16
Page 10.....	17
Page 11.....	18
Page 12.....	19
Page 13.....	20
Page 14.....	21
Page 15.....	22
Page 16.....	23
Page 17.....	24
Page 18.....	25
Page 19.....	26
Page 20.....	27
Page 21.....	28
Page 22.....	29



[Page 23..... 30](#)

[Page 24..... 31](#)

[Page 25..... 32](#)

[Page 26..... 33](#)

[Page 27..... 35](#)

[Page 28..... 36](#)

[Page 29..... 37](#)

[Page 30..... 39](#)

[Page 31..... 40](#)

[Page 32..... 41](#)

[Page 33..... 42](#)

[Page 34..... 43](#)

[Page 35..... 44](#)

[Page 36..... 45](#)

[Page 37..... 46](#)

[Page 38..... 47](#)

[Page 39..... 48](#)

[Page 40..... 49](#)

[Page 41..... 50](#)

[Page 42..... 51](#)

[Page 43..... 52](#)

[Page 44..... 53](#)

[Page 45..... 54](#)

[Page 46..... 55](#)

[Page 47..... 56](#)

[Page 48..... 57](#)



Page 49.....58
Page 50.....59
Page 51.....60
Page 52.....61
Page 53.....62
Page 54.....63
Page 55.....64
Page 56.....65
Page 57.....66
Page 58.....67
Page 59.....68
Page 60.....69
Page 61.....70
Page 62.....71
Page 63.....72
Page 64.....73
Page 65.....74
Page 66.....75
Page 67.....76
Page 68.....77
Page 69.....78
Page 70.....79
Page 71.....80
Page 72.....81
Page 73.....82
Page 74.....83



Page 75..... 84
Page 76..... 85
Page 77..... 86
Page 78..... 87
Page 79..... 88
Page 80..... 89
Page 81..... 90
Page 82..... 91
Page 83..... 92
Page 84..... 93
Page 85..... 94
Page 86..... 95
Page 87..... 96
Page 88..... 97



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
Author: Harriet S. Caswell		1
WALTER HARLAND		1
H. S. CASWELL		1
CHAPTER I.		1
CHAPTER II.		3
CHAPTER III.		5
CHAPTER IV.		9
CHAPTER V.		11
CHAPTER VI.		14
CHAPTER VII.		16
CHAPTER VIII.		19
CHAPTER IX.		23
CHAPTER X.		24
CHAPTER XI.		26
CHAPTER XII.		29
CHAPTER XIII.		32
CHAPTER XIV.		36
CHAPTER XV.		41
CHAPTER XVI.		43
CHAPTER XVII.		45
CHAPTER XVIII.		47
CHAPTER XIX.		49
CHAPTER XX.		52
CHAPTER XXI.		55
CHAPTER XXII.		58
CHAPTER XXIII.		61
CHAPTER XXIV.		66
CHAPTER XXV.		68
CHAPTER XXVI.		70
CHAPTER XXVII.		74
CHAPTER XXVIII.		76
CHAPTER XXIX.		80
CHAPTER XXX.		85
CHAPTER XXXI.		88



Page 1

Author: Harriet S. Caswell

Release Date: May 8, 2005 [eBook #15799]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-646-us (us-ASCII)

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WALTER HARLAND

Or, Memories of the Past

by

H. S. CASWELL

Author of Clara Boscom; Earnest Harwood, *etc.*

1874

CHAPTER I.

Left entirely alone on a quiet afternoon, the unbroken stillness which surrounded me, as well as the soft haze which floats upon the atmosphere, in that most delightful of all seasons, the glorious "Indian Summer" of Eastern Canada, caused my thoughts to wander far away into the dreamy regions of the past, and many scenes long past, and almost forgotten, passed in review before my mind's eye on that quiet afternoon. While thus musing the idea occurred to me that there are few individuals, however humble or obscure, whose life-history (if noted down) would prove wholly without interest to others, in the form of a book; and this thought caused me to form the idea of noting down some passages from my own life—as they were on that day recalled to my mind. Like the boy



who dreamed a most remarkable dream and, when asked to relate it, “didn’t know where to begin,” so was I puzzled as to how I should make a beginning for my story. But the incidents of one particular day when I was about thirteen years old were so vividly brought back to my mind, that I have decided upon that day as a starting-point; and now to my story.

“Where alive has that lazy, good-for-nothing boy taken, himself off to now, I wonder, and the weeds I left him to pull in the garden not half done yet; but it’s just like him, as soon’s my back’s turned to skulk off in this way. I’ll put a stop to this work one of these days, see if I don’t. Its likely he’s hiding in some out-of-the-way corner with a book in his hand as usual.” These and many other angry words came harshly to my ears, on that June afternoon now so long ago. I was seated in the small room over the kitchen which was appropriated to my use in the dwelling of Farmer Judson, where I was employed as “chore boy,” or, in other words, the boy of all work.

“Walter, Walter Harland, come down here this minute, I say.”

Page 2

I started up, trembling with fear, for the angry tones of the farmer made me aware that he had come home in one of his worst tempers, and his best were usually bad enough; and, more than this, I knew myself to be slightly in the fault. Before leaving home that morning Mr. Judson had ordered me to clear the weeds from a certain number of beds in the garden before his return. I worked steadily during the forenoon, and for a portion of the afternoon, when, feeling tired and heated, I stole up to my room, thinking to rest for a short time and then again resume my labors. I was very fond of study, and, as my Algebra lay before me upon the table, I could not resist the temptation to open it, and I soon became so deeply absorbed in the solution of a difficult problem that I heeded not the lapse of time till the harsh voice of my employer fell upon my ear. I had learned by past experience to fear the angry moods of Mr. Judson. In my hurry and confusion I forgot to lay aside my book, and went downstairs with it in my hand. I stood silent before the angry man, and listened to the storm of abuse which he continued to pour upon me, until sheer exhaustion compelled him to stop.

“And now,” said he (by way of conclusion) “be off to your work, and don’t be seen in the house again till the last weed is pulled from them air beds.” This was even better than I had dared to hope, for, on more than one former occasion, I had borne blows from Mr. Judson when his anger was excited. As I turned to leave the room the quick eye of the farmer fell upon the book which before had escaped his notice. Stepping hastily toward me he said:

“I see how it is, your head is so filled with the crankums you get out o’ them books, that you are good for nothing else, but I’ll stop this work once for all;” and, ere I was aware of his intention, he snatched the book from my hand, and threw it upon the wood-fire which burned in the kitchen fire-place. I sprang forward to rescue my book from the flames, but, before I could reach it, it was burned to ashes. As I have before stated I was then about thirteen years old, tall and strong for my age. I was usually quiet and respectful, but for all this I possessed a high spirit. I could easily be controlled by kindness and mild persuasion, but never by harsh and unkind treatment, and this act of Mr. Judson’s enraged me beyond all control, and in a moment all the smouldering anger occasioned by his past harshness shot up as it were in a sudden blaze. I have often heard it said, and I believe with truth, that there is something almost appalling in the roused anger of one of those usually quiet and submissive natures. I have often since thought that passion rendered me partially insane for the time being; trembling with anger, I confronted my employer fearlessly, as I said “How *dare* you burn my book? you bad, wicked man, you are just as mean as you can be.”



Page 3

This sudden outbreak from me, who hitherto had borne his abuse in silence, took Mr. Judson quite by surprise. For a moment he looked at me in silence, then, with a voice hoarse from passion, he addressed me, saying, “such talk to *me!* you surely have lost any little sense you ever may have had.” Then seizing me roughly by the shoulder he continued: “I’ll teach you better manners than all this comes to, my fine fellow, for I’ll give you such a flogging as you won’t forget in a hurry, I’ll be bound.”

Instantly my resolution was taken; he should never flog me again. Shaking off the rough grasp of his hand, I stepped backward, and drawing myself up to my full height (even then I was not very tall) I looked him unflinchingly in the face as I said,—“touch *me* if you *dare*, I have borne blows enough from you, and for little cause, but you shall *never* strike me again. If you lay a hand upon me it will be worse for you.” Wild with anger I knew not what I said. The strength of a lad of my age would, of course, have been as nothing against that of the sturdy farmer; but, had he attempted to flog me, I certainly should have resisted to the utmost of my ability. I know not how it was, but after regarding me for a few moments with angry astonishment, he turned away without any further attempt to fulfil his threat of flogging me. I turned and was leaving the house when he called after me, in a voice, which upon any previous occasion, would have frightened me into submission.

“Come back, I say, this instant.” I had now lost all fear and replied, in a voice which I hardly recognized as my own, “go back, *never*. Should I be compelled to beg my bread from door to door, I will never stay another day under your roof.” With these words I ran from the house, and soon reached the little brown cottage in the village three miles distant where lived my mother and sister Flora.

CHAPTER II.

I never knew a father’s protecting care and watchful love; for he died when I was but little more than three years old; and my sister Flora a babe in our mother’s arms. No prettier village could at that time have been found in Eastern Canada than Elmwood, and this village was our home. Its location was romantic and picturesque. Below the village on one side was a long stretch of level meadow-land through which flowed a clear and placid river—whose sparkling waters, when viewed from a distance, reminded one of a surface of polished silver. The margin of this river, on either side, was fringed with tall stately trees, called the Rock-Elm. According to the statement of the first settlers in the vicinity, the whole place was once covered with a forest of those noble trees and to this circumstance the village owed its name of Elmwood. The number of those trees which still shaded many of the streets added much to the beauty of the village. The village was



Page 4

small, but much regularity had been observed in laying out the streets. The buildings were mostly composed of wood; and nearly all were painted a pure white with green blinds, which gave a very tasteful appearance to the place. It had its two churches, and three stores, where all articles necessary to a country trade were sold, from a scythe down to cambric needles and pearl buttons. There was also an academy, a hotel, one and two public schools, and I believe I have now mentioned the most important of the public buildings of Elmwood, as it then was. The cool and inviting appearance of the village, as well as its facilities for fishing, boating and other healthful recreations, caused it, in course of time, to become a favorite summer resort for the dwellers in the large cities; and for a few weeks, once a year, Elmwood was crowded with visitors from many distant places, and, as may be readily supposed, these periodical visits of strangers was something which deeply interested the simple residents of our village. In looking back to-day through the long vista of years which separate the past from the present, the object on which memory is inclined to linger longer is a little brown house near one end of the village of Elmwood. Kind reader that was the home of my childhood. There was little in the external appearance of the house or its surroundings to win admiration from the passer-by, but it was my home, and to the young home is ever beautiful. Recalled by memory the old house looks very familiar to-day, with its sloping roof covered, here and there, with patches of green moss; and the large square chimney in the centre. Between the house and the street was a level green, in which were several fine shady trees, and one particular tree which stood near the centre was what I most loved of every thing connected with the surroundings of my early home—this tree was of the species known in Canada as the Silver Fir, and I am certain that every one familiar with this tree will testify, as to its beauty; they grow to a large size with very thick and wide-spreading branches, which extend downward upon the trunk in a circular form, each circle from the top growing larger, till the lower limbs overshadow a large space of ground beneath. This tree was my delight in the sunny days of childhood and early youth, and in summer most of my school-tasks were committed to memory beneath its friendly shade; and I loved it, in the dreary season of winter, for the deep green which it retained, amid the general desolation by which it was surrounded. When left a widow my mother was poor, so far as worldly riches is considered. My father had once been in moderately easy circumstances, but the illness which terminated in his death was long, and the means he had accumulated gradually slipped away, till, at the period of his death, all my mother could call her own was the little brown house which sheltered us, and very thankful was she to find, (when every debt was paid even to the last fraction) that



Page 5

she still possessed a home for herself and children. My mother possessed much energy of mind, as well as a cheerful, hopeful disposition, and, although she sorrowed deeply for her sad loss, she did not yield to despondency; but endeavored to discharge faithfully her duty to her children, and to this end she sought employment, and toiled early and late that she might provide for our wants, and so far did Providence smile upon her efforts that we were enabled to live in comfort and respectability. By close industry and economy she kept me at school from the age of six to thirteen, and would willingly have allowed me to remain longer, as she considered my education of the first importance, but during the last year I remained at school (although only a child of twelve years) I grew discontented and unhappy, by seeing my mother toiling daily that I might remain at school. And many a night did I lay awake for hours, revolving the question in my mind of how I could assist my mother, for I felt that, young as I was, it was time for me to do something for my own support. Had circumstances allowed, I would gladly have remained at school, for I was fond of study; but I believe I inherited a portion of my mother's energetic disposition, and I felt it my duty to leave school, and seek some employment whereby I might support myself, and possibly assist, in a small way, my mother and little sister. My mother was reluctant to yield her consent that I should leave school, but when she saw how much my mind was set on it, and knowing the motives which influenced me, she finally gave her consent, and leaving school I began looking about me for employment. My mother's wish, as well as my own was that I should, if possible, obtain some situation in the village where I could still board at home, but, as is usually the case, no one needed a boy at that time. After spending several days in search of work, without success, I became disheartened. My mother advised me to return to my books, and think no more about it; but I was unwilling that my first attempt toward taking care of myself should prove an entire failure.

CHAPTER III.

A few miles from the village of Elmwood lived Mr. Judson, a rich farmer, he might properly be termed rich in this world's goods, for, besides the broad acres which comprised the two farms in one where he resided, he was the owner of several houses in the village, which brought him a handsome annual income. The chief aim of his life appeared to be the acquisition of money, and, when once it came into his possession, it was guarded with miserly care. The very countenance and manner of the Farmer bespoke his nature. Aided by memory, I see him now as I saw him years ago:—he was of medium height, strong and muscular, but thin in flesh. His hair had once been black, but was then sprinkled thickly with gray; he had small piercing, restless black eyes that seemed to look several ways at once. His nose was of



Page 6

the form which I have often heard styled a hawk-bill; and, altogether, there was a sort of dry, hard look about the man which rendered his personal appearance repulsive and disagreeable. His constant care and anxiety was to get the largest possible amount of labor out of those in his employ; consequently, he was always in a hurry himself, and striving to hurry every one else. His farm-laborers used to say that he kept his eyes in such unceasing motion, to see that every thing went right on all sides, that a restless, roving expression of the eyes had become natural to him. Though living only a few miles distant, neither my mother nor myself knew any thing of the character of this man; and when he came to engage me to do "chores and light work" as he termed it, we gladly accepted his offer, as my mother had the idea that residing for a time upon a farm (if not overworked) would have a beneficial effect upon my health and constitution. Many wondered when it became known that I had gone to live with Farmer Judson; but each one kept their thoughts to themselves. When I took my place at the Farmer's I soon found that, if my work was light, there was likely to be plenty of it. I did not complain of this, for I expected to work; but what made my position almost unbearable was the constant habit of fault-finding in which my employer indulged. He was dreaded and feared by all under his roof. He was constantly on the watch for waste and expenditure within-doors, and without there could never be enough done to satisfy him; do your best, and he always thought you should have done more. As I have before said, I was very fond of books, and I had counted upon having my evenings at my own disposal that I might still do something in the way of self improvement; but I soon learned that books were quite out of the question in my new home. There was either corn to shell or errands to perform; in short, there was something to keep me busy till nearly bed-time every night. I used sometimes to think the farmer used to study up something to keep me busy on purpose to keep me from study. I believe my greatest fault in his eyes was my love of books. He was entirely without education himself, which, (in a great measure) accounted for his narrow and sordid mind; he looked upon any time devoted to books or mental culture as a dead loss.

"What's the use of botherin' over books," he would often say; and would often add in a boasting manner, "I don't know *a* from *b*, and if I do say it myself, where will you find a man who has got along better in the world than I have done." If getting along well with the world consists only in hoarding up dollars and cents till every feeling of tenderness and benevolence toward the rest of mankind becomes benumbed and deadened, then truly Mr. Judson *had* got along remarkably well. His door was but a sorry place to ask charity, as every one could testify who ever tried the experiment. It was reported



Page 7

that a poor woman once called at the house and asked for food. The farmer chanced to be from home, and his wife, thinking he might not return for a time, ventured to prepare a comfortable meal for the poor traveller; but, as fate would have it, he returned before the weary traveller had partaken of the meal prepared for her. As soon as he saw how matters stood he gave his wife a stern rebuke for “encouraging beggars”; and, with many harsh words, ordered the woman to leave the house. The poor woman rose wearily to obey the command, and, as she was passing from the room, she turned, and fixing her eyes upon Mr. Judson, said in a stern voice, “I am poor and needy—it was hunger alone which compelled me to ask charity—but with all your riches I would not exchange places with you who have the heart to turn from your door one in need of food; surely, out of your abundance you might have at the least given food to one in want; but go on hoarding up your dollars, and see how much softer they will make your dying pillow.” It was said that the farmer actually turned pale as the woman left the house. Perhaps his conscience was not quite dead, and it may be that a shadow from the events of future years, even then, fell across his mind. It would have been difficult to find two natures more unlike than were those of Mr. Judson and his wife. The former was stingy, even to miserly niggardliness, as well as ill-tempered, sullen and morose, while the latter was one of the most kind-hearted and motherly old ladies imaginable, that is, had her kindly nature been allowed to exhibit itself. As it was, not daring to act according to the dictates of her own kind heart, through fear of her stern companion, she had in the course of years, become a timid broken-spirited woman. In her youthful days she had been a regular attendant at church, she also was a valuable teacher in the sabbath-school; but, after marrying Lemuel Judson, she soon found that all religious privileges of a social nature were at an end. Poor man, money was the god he worshipped; and so entirely did the acquisition of wealth engross his mind that every other emotion was well-nigh extinguished. He seldom, if ever, entered a place of public worship, and did what he could to prevent his wife from doing so. She did at the first venture a feeble remonstrance when he refused on Sundays to drive to the village church, but, as this was her first attempt at any thing like opposition to his wishes, he determined it should be her last, for he assailed her with every term of abusive language at his command, and these were not a few, for his command of language of this sort was something marvelous too listen to, and, if his words and phrases were not always in strict accordance with the rules of grammar, they certainly were sharp and pointed enough to answer his purpose very well. From the sour expression of his countenance, as well as the biting words which often fell from his tongue, the village boys applied to him the name “vinegar



Page 8

face," sometimes varied by "old vinegar Judson." Like all village boys, they were inclined on holidays and Saturday afternoons to roam away to the neighbouring farms. Mr. Judson always drove them from his premises the moment they set foot hereon, and in a short time he learned that, as the saying is, there was no love lost between them. He one day gave one of these boys a smart blow with his horse-whip the boy had ventured into the hayfield among the laborers. The blow of course caused him to take to his heels, but from that time the whole band were in league against the farmer. If he left a horse tied in the village, he would sometimes find him shorn of his mane, and often a hopeless rent in his buffalo; and, as far as he could find out, the deed was done by "nobody at all." As he was driving leisurely homeward on a very dark night he suddenly came upon a number of boys near the end of the village street, and one of the boys called out loud enough for him to hear, "there goes old vinegar Judson;" another emboldened by his companion, next addressed him with the question; "What's the market price of vinegar, old man? you ought to know if any one does, for you must drink a lot of it or you wouldn't be so cross and ugly." It was a very dark night, and the farmer was unable to distinguish one from the other, and horse-whip in hand he made a rush among the whole crowd, who dispersed in all directions. He was not agile enough to overtake a fast retreating army in the dark, and was forced to abandon the pursuit. As he turned to pursue his journey homeward, a voice from out of the darkness, again addressed him, saying, "don't you only wish you could catch us, old vinegar man?" Knowing that further pursuit would be useless, he proceeded on his way, uttering threats of future vengeance. He did spend a portion of the following day in trying to find out the boys who had insulted him; but all his efforts to that end were without success. A gentleman to whom he complained ventured to remark: "I fear, Mr. Judson, that in a great measure you have yourself to blame for all this, for you ever treat the boys with unkindness; and, without reason and experience to guide them, can you wonder that they render evil for evil. If you exercised more of the spirit of kindness in your casual intercourse with the boys, I think it would be better for both you and them." This advice was very good, but it is to be feared that the farmer profited but little by it. Through fear of her stern husband Mrs. Judson finally ceased to mention attending church; but often on a Sunday afternoon, when he was either asleep or walking over his farm, she would seat herself in a quiet corner of the large kitchen and read her Bible, and perhaps sing a hymn to some of the old-fashioned plaintive airs, which formed a large portion of the Church Music in her youthful days. I remember when I lived at the Farmer's, I used often to think it no wonder that Mrs. Judson almost always sung her Sunday



Page 9

hymn to the air of "Complaint," and read more frequently in the book of Job and the Lamentations of Jeremiah than any other portion of the Bible. The poor lonely woman seemed to feel a mother's tenderness for me, which manifested itself in many little acts of kindness, when unobserved by her husband, who took good care that no undue indulgence should be shown to any one under his roof. I soon learned to regard the old lady with all the affection of which I was capable; and it was her kindness alone which rendered my position endurable. I sought in many ways to lighten her labors, for, even in the busiest seasons, no help was allowed her to perform all the household work; and I soon found many ways of making myself useful.

CHAPTER IV.

One rainy afternoon, while busied about the house, Mrs. Judson surprised me by saying suddenly: "I suppose you don't know what makes me take so to you, Walter; but I'll tell you, you remind me of my youngest boy, Reuben." I looked at the old lady with wonder, saying, "I did not know you had any children, Mrs. Judson." "True" said she, "I forgot you did not know; but no further than your mother lives from here she must remember that I once had two boys who were very dear to me, but perhaps she never told you about it. It ill becomes me to speak of *his* faults, but I must say my poor boys had a hard life of it with their father. He had no patience with them when mere children, and matters grew worse as they became older. Do what they would, they could never please him, and he often beat them cruelly. But one way and another they got along till Charley was sixteen and Reuben fourteen years of age. Their father one day left them ploughing in the field while he went to the village; the ground was rough and stoney, and by some accident the ploughshare was broken. When their father came home and found what had happened, he seized the horse-whip and gave both the boys a terrible flogging. Neither of the boys had ever before given their father a word; but, when he stopped beating them, Charley stood up and said: 'You have beaten us, father, a great many times and for very little cause; but this is the last time.' That was all he said. His father told him to shut up his mouth and go about his work. After dinner he went back to the village, and some business detained him till late in the evening. I remember as if it were but yesterday how my two boys looked that night when they came home to supper. After supper they rose from the table, and Charley said: 'Mother, we are very sorry to leave you, but we must go. I don't know what we have done that father should treat us so; he seems almost to hate the sight of us, and it is better that we should go before his harshness provokes us to some act of rebellion. I am older than Reuben, and will do my best to care for him, and we will never forget you, mother; but I believe it to be for the



Page 10

best that we should leave home.' I had long feared this; and I begged of them to stay and try and bear it, at any rate till they should be older; but talking was of no use, the boys had made up their minds, and go they would. They each took a change of clothing in a small bundle, and prepared to leave the home which had sheltered them from their infancy. When I saw they *would* go, I divided the little money I had of my own between them that they might not go forth into the world entirely destitute. I could not really blame the boys, for their father's harsh words, day by day, was like the continual dropping which wears the stone, and the poor boys were fairly tired and worn out with being continually censured and blamed. With a heart heavy with a sorrow which only a mother can know, I walked with the boys to the turn of the road where they were to wait for the stage. I felt sorrowful enough but I kept back my tears till the hour sounded which announced the arrival of the stage. They both shook hands with me and kissed me, and poor Reuben, the youngest, cried as if his heart would break.

"The sight of my youngest boy's tears affected me beyond the power of control, and the tears were very bitter which we all shed together, but the stage was fast approaching, and we must control our grief, 'Good bye, mother,' said the boys at last as they left me to take their places in the stage coach, 'Don't fret about us; we will try to do right and remember all you have said to us, and let us hope there are happier days to come, for us all.'

"These were their last words to me, and they were swiftly borne from my sight by the fleet horses of the stage-coach. This was five years ago last October." "But did they never come back," said I, looking in the old woman's face with a feeling of deep pity. "Bless you child, no," said she, "their father won't allow even their names to be spoken in his hearing. When the boys left home, they went to the State of Massachusetts, where they both learned a trade, and are doing well; they often write to me and send me money to buy any little thing I may want. About two years ago in one of their letters they asked me to talk to their father, and try to persuade him to forgive them; they also wished to gain his consent that they might return home for a visit, 'for,' said they, 'since we have grown up to manhood it has caused us much sorrow that we must live estranged from our father. Mother, we have long since cast aside the boyish resentment we may once have cherished, and would be glad to return and inform our father by word that we still feel for him the affection due from children to parents; we would gladly forget the past and be at peace for the future.' I feared to speak of this letter to my husband, but the strong desire to see my dear boys again gave me courage, and one day when he seemed in a better humour than usual I mustered up courage, and told him what the boys had written, but my sakes' alive, Walter,



Page 11

if you'd a seen the storm it raised in our house; it fairly took my breath away, and I didn't know for a while, Walter, if my head was off or on; you may think you have seen Mr. Judson angry, but you never saw him any thing like what he was that day. I must not repeat all he said, to you, but he concluded by saying: 'The boys went away without my consent; you connived to get them off, and if ever you mention their names to me again you'll wish you hadn't, that's all;' and from that day to this their names have never been mentioned between us. They still write often to me and some day I'll show you their letters. I suppose it was wrong for me to speak so freely to you (who are only a little boy) of my husband's failings, but somehow I couldn't help it, and it does me good to talk about my boys. I don't know as Mr. Judson can help his harsh, stern way, for it seems to come natural to him; but I can't help thinking he might govern his temper, if he would only try; as it is I try to do my duty by him, and make the best of what I cannot help; and every day for years I have prayed that a better mind may be given him by Him who governs all things, and that is all I can do."

After the above conversation, I more then ever regarded the old lady with pity, and sought by every means to lighten her cheerless lot. But the kindness which his wife evinced toward me only served to render Mr. Judson more harsh and unfeeling in his treatment. I remember one day hearing him say to his wife in a tone of much displeasure, "You spoiled your own boys, and set them agin me, and now you are beginning to fuss over this lazy chap in the same way; but I'll let you know who's master *here*." Hard as was my lot at this time, my anxiety to lighten the cares of my mother caused me to bear it with a degree of patience which I have often since wondered at. I was fearful if I left this place I could not readily obtain another, and I toiled on, never informing my mother of the trials to which I was daily subjected. For a whole year I endured the caprice and severity of Farmer Judson. I had long felt that I could not much longer endure a life, which (to me) had become almost intolerable; and on the day of the incident noticed in the opening chapter of my story, my naturally high temper rose above control, and I left Farmer Judson's and returned to my home.

CHAPTER V.

When I thus returned unexpectedly to my home my mother was at once aware, from my downcast appearance, that something was wrong, and when she questioned me I related the difficulty with Mr. Judson exactly as it took place. My mother listened attentively till I had finished, and then only said, "you are too much excited to talk of the matter at present; after a night's rest you will be better able to talk with more calmness, so we will defer any further conversation upon the subject until to-morrow morning."



Page 12

It was a mild evening in June, and slipping out of the house, I went to my favorite tree in the yard, and, as I lay at full length beneath its wide-spreading boughs, which were bright with the rays of the full round moon, my mind was busy with many anxious thoughts. My anger had by this time cooled down, and when left thus alone I began to question if I had acted right in returning to my home; hard as Mr. Judson was to please, he always paid me my wages punctually, and I feared I had done wrong in thus depriving my kind mother of the assistance which my earnings (small as they were) afforded her. But when I called to mind the Farmer's harsh and unkind treatment, I felt that to remain longer with him was out of the question; for during the whole year I remained with him, I could not remember one word of encouragement or kindness, and, to a boy of thirteen, a kind and encouraging word is worth much. Surely thought I, every one is not like Farmer Judson, and can I not find some place where, if I do my best to please, I shall not be continually scolded and blamed; and, after retiring to rest, I lay awake, revolving all these things in my boyish mind till I mentally decided that, come what would, I *could not* return to the Farmer. It was far into the hours of night before I slept, and then my sleep was harassed by frightful dreams, in all of which Farmer Judson acted a prominent part. From my earliest recollection, the counsels and pious example of my mother had exercised a powerful influence upon my mind and character. She was naturally cheerful and hopeful, and her heart had long been under the influence of a deep and devoted piety, which exhibited itself in her every-day life. She never allowed herself to be too much cast down by the petty annoyances of life. I am an old man now, and the silver threads are beginning to mingle in my hair, but I can yet see my mother as I saw her the next morning when I went down stairs, and in a pleasant cheerful voice she enquired if I had slept well. I gave an evasive reply, for I did not like to tell her what a restless, miserable night I had passed. When the breakfast things were cleared away, my mother seated herself by my side, and said: "Upon reflection, my son, I have decided that you had best not return to Mr. Judson." These were joyful words to me, for I had feared my mother would decide otherwise, and I had never disobeyed her, but it would have been hard, very hard for me to obey had she wished me to return to my employer. Little Flora was, if possible, more pleased than myself at the decision; with a low cry of joy, she threw her arms around my neck, saying "Oh! Walter, I am so glad that Mamma will not send you back to that old man." Poor child, she had never before been separated from her brother, and she had sadly missed her playmate during the past year. "Although," continued my mother "you may not have been free from blame, I think Mr. Judson acted very wrong. If, as I trust, is the case,

Page 13

you have told me the truth, I consider you blameable in two points only, first, in neglecting your work in the absence of your employer, and, secondly, in allowing yourself to use disrespectful language to him." While my mother was yet speaking, the door opened and Farmer Judson entered the room, without the ceremony of knocking, and began talking (as was his custom when angry) in a very loud and stormy voice, "Pray be seated, Mr. Judson," said my mother, "and when you become a little more composed I shall be pleased to listen to anything you may wish to say." He did not take the proffered seat, but muttered something about "people putting on airs," and turning sharply upon me, he said, "I hain't got no more time to waste talkin, so get your hat and come back to your work and no more about it." I did not move, but waited for my mother to speak,—with a voice of much composure, she replied to him, saying: "I have decided, Mr. Judson, that Walter had best not return to you. Till last evening I have never from him heard the first word of complaint;" in a straight forward manner she then repeated what I had said upon my return home. "My son informs me," added my mother, "that in more than one instance he has endured blows from you, and for very little cause; had I before been aware of this he should have left you at once; for my boy is not a slave to be driven with the lash. I have no doubt that his conduct may in many instances have been blameable. I am sorry that he allowed himself at the last to speak disrespectfully to you, but you must be aware that his provocation was great, and we must not look for perfection in a boy of thirteen. Considering all things, I think he had best remain no longer in your employ; for to subject him longer to a temper so capricious as yours, would be, I fear, to injure his disposition."

Mr. Judson was unable to gainsay one word my mother had said, and to conceal his mortification got into a towering passion, and used some very severe language which deeply wounded my mother's feelings. As he strode angrily from the room he said, "You need not expect anything else but to come to beggary if you keep a great fellow like that lazin' round in idleness, and I, for one, shall not pity you, depend on't." With these words he left the house, closing the door after him with a loud bang. It was indeed a welcome relief when he left us alone. My little sister had crept close to me the moment the angry Farmer entered the room, where she remained: trembling with fear till he was fairly out of hearing, when she exclaimed, "I hope that ugly old man will never come here again. Wasn't you afraid, Mamma?"

"No, dear," replied my mother, with a smile; "and let us hope if ever he does visit us again he will be in a better temper."

I wished at once to set about looking for another situation; but my mother advised me to remain at home and rest for a time. Little Flora was delighted when she found that I was to remain at home, for a time at least.



Page 14

CHAPTER VI.

Not far from our humble dwelling stood the residence of Dr. Gray, the village physician. His only child was a son of nearly the same age as myself, and we had been firm friends from the days of early childhood. When of sufficient age we were sent to the same school, where we occupied the same desk, and often conned our daily lessons from the same book. The uncommon friendship existing between us had often been remarked by the villagers. This intimacy was somewhat singular, as our natures were very dissimilar, it may be this very dissimilarity attracted us the more strongly to each other. From infancy the disposition of Charley Gray was marked by peculiarities which will appear in the course of my story. When at school he made but few friends among his companions; and the few friendships he did form were marred by his exclusive and jealous nature. He possessed very strong feelings, and for a chosen friend his affection was deep and abiding. My own nature was exactly the opposite. I was frank and joyous, and inclined to make friends with all. For all that Charley and I were so intimate, even as boys, his peculiar temperament was often a source of unhappiness to both. Charley was the child of wealthy parents, while I, being poor, was often obliged to attend school dressed in clothing which looked almost shabby beside my well-dressed companions, but with all this I was ever Charley Gray's chosen companion, in fact he seemed to care little for any other companionship, and his parents, who had known both my father and mother long and intimately, were much pleased with his preference for my society, and took much pains to encourage the friendship existing between us. Charley was as much delighted as my sister when I returned home; he had two or three times ventured to visit me at Mr. Judson's, but his visits always made the Farmer angry, and he chanced one day to come into the field when we were unusually busy, and, as a matter of course the Farmer was cross in proportion, and he finally ordered Charley to "clear out," "its bad enough," said he "to get along with one boy, but two is out of the question, and the sooner you make tracks for home the better." Charley was thoroughly frightened, and he followed the Farmer's advice at once by "making tracks" out of the field, and he never attempted to repeat his visit. I returned home in the month of June. Dr. Gray intended sending Charley to a distant school, the coming autumn; and we both keenly felt the coming separation. He was to be absent a year before visiting his home, and that time seemed an age to our boyish minds. The long midsummer vacation soon arrived, and now, memory often turns fondly to that happy period. My companion and I certainly made the most of the time allowed before the coming separation.



Page 15

Together we visited all our favorite haunts, we angled for fish, we roamed over the fields and through the woods in the vicinity of Elmwood, and no day seemed long enough for our varied amusements. I often wished to invite other of our companions to join our sports, but somehow or other, if this was the case, Charley's enjoyment at once fled. When (as was often the case) I would mention some of our schoolmates, with a view to inviting them to accompany us on some excursion of pleasure, a cloud would instantly come over Charley's countenance, and he would say in a petulant tone: "What do you want with them, we can surely enjoy ourselves without their company," and this reply would at once remind me of his exclusive and peculiar temperament, (which for the moment I had forgotten) and to please him I would say no more about it. But for this one fault of my companion's, and a fault it certainly was, I believe had I had a brother, I could have loved him no better than I loved Charley Gray. Previous to my mother's marriage her home had been in Western Canada; her father died while she was quite a young girl, but her mother, now far advanced in years, still lived in the old home, some fifty miles from the city of Hamilton. The affairs of the farm and household were managed by a son and daughter who had never married, and still resided in their paternal home. My mother was the youngest in the family, and had been the pet of the household during her childhood and early youth; she was many years younger than either her brother or sister, and they had exercised a watchful and loving care over their pet sister till the period of her marriage and removal to Eastern Canada. Her brother and sister seldom left their own home, owing to their care of their aged mother, and for some years past my mother's circumstances had not allowed her to visit her early home; and, amid the cares of life, letters passed less and less frequently between them, till they came to be like "Angels' visits," few and far between. My mother was equally pleased and surprised, a few weeks after I returned home, by receiving a kind letter from her brother Nathan. Like all his letters it contained but few words, but they were dictated by a kind heart. The most important words (to me) which the letter contained were these: "Your boy Walter needs more schooling before he goes out into the world, send him to me and he shall have it. If his disposition is anything like his mother's at his age I know we shall get along famously together. I will board and clothe him for two years; he shall attend the best schools in the place, I promise nothing further, only then, when the boy leaves me, he shall have all he deserves, if it should be only a cuff on the ear. In case you should find any difficulty in defraying his expenses, I enclose money sufficient for that purpose. I know not the reason, but I feel a strong desire to see your boy, and find out what he is made of."

Page 16

My mother was alone when she received this letter; she read it again and again, and with each perusal her heart warmed toward the brother whom she had not seen for so many years. "But," thought she, "whatever my own wishes may be in the matter, Walter must decide for himself. I should consult his feelings (as far as possible) upon a matter which concerns him so deeply." When I came home that evening my mother gave me Uncle Nathan's letter, and with silent amusement watched my face grow sober as I read it. She really knew this kind-hearted brother—I did not, and that made all the difference in the world. I suppose my grave countenance, as I perused the letter, informed my mother that a second Farmer Judson was rising before my mental vision. When I had finished, I looked up, and, with an anxious voice, said:

"Tell me, mother, is Uncle Nathan as gruff and crusty as his letter?"

"My son," replied she, "your uncle's manner may seem somewhat short and crusty to one not acquainted with him; but beneath this rough exterior, he has a very kind heart. I am well aware that he makes this offer with sincerity, and that he has your interest at heart. You certainly need more education to fit you for the duties of life, and now a way is open for you to obtain it. I can hardly bear the thought of your going so far from home, and yet I need not expect you always to remain under my own roof. It is my duty to submit to a temporary separation, if that separation is for your own interest. I will not advise you too strongly, for I consider you have a right to a voice in the matter as well as myself. Should you decide to go, where my advice and influence cannot reach you, I trust you will retain the good principles I have endeavoured to inculcate; you are my only son and should you allow yourself to be led into evil ways, it would be the heaviest trial I have ever known, and my sorrows have been neither few nor light." I had such full confidence in the opinions of my mother, that I allowed her to write to uncle Nathan accepting, for me, his generous offer. Charley Gray was entirely cast down when he learned that I was to go so far away. "It's too bad," said he, "that they must send you away to an old Uncle, who very likely is cross as a bear, and that before the holidays are over; and then in the fall I'm to be sent off to school, nobody knows where, so I suppose we may as well call our good times ended." As Charley said this his lip quivered and the un-shed tear glistened in his fine dark eyes. I was the only companion with whom he was intimate, and the swiftly coming separation grieved him deeply. I tried to cheer him up, but when any thing chanced to cross the wishes of Charley he was prone to look upon the dark side of every thing, and I fear there are many older and wiser than Charley Gray who yield to the same failing.

CHAPTER VII.



Page 17

After I had consented to go to Uncle Nathan, and a letter had been written informing him of my decision, I began to feel many misgivings. From the style of his letter I got the idea that I should find him like Farmer Judson; and the very thought caused me to shudder with a vague feeling of terror. My mother told me again and again how kind my relative would be to me, and I tried hard to believe her; but with all this my mind was haunted with many fears regarding the future. My mother strove to send me from home well supplied with clothing, that I might prove no immediate expense to my uncle, and the little money she had laid by, with which to replenish her own and little Flora's wardrobe, was applied cheerfully to meet my more immediate wants. Young as I was this circumstance fretted and annoyed me. I remember saying one day to my mother, in a vexed impatient tone, "it seems too bad that we should be so poor. Some of my companions who have rich parents, spend more money every year upon toys and candy than would buy me a whole new suit of clothes, and now to obtain a few new articles of clothing for me you and my little sister must do without what you really need; if the dispensing of money were left in my hands, I would make every one rich alike, and then no one should be ashamed of their poverty as I have often been, when among the rich boys of the village." "Be ashamed of nothing but doing wrong," replied my mother, "and you had best leave the dispensation of wealth or poverty to the One whose right it is, for, be assured, He knows best what is for our good; I had much rather see you grow up a good man than a rich one. If your life is spared, and you prove to be a useful and honorable man, people will never inquire whether your boyhood was passed amid wealth or poverty." I was then in too discontented a mood to profit by my mother's words, but many times in after years were they recalled forcibly to my mind. Time passed on till the last night arrived, which I was to spend at home for an indefinite period. Charley Gray obtained permission to spend this last night with me, and we lay awake for hours talking over our numerous plans for the future in true school-boy fashion. Many an air-castle did we rear that night which the lapse of years have laid in the dust. In our boyish plans of future greatness, I was not exactly sure what I was to be, only I was to be a wonderfully great man of some kind, while Charley was, of course, to become a very eminent physician, such as should not be found upon any past record; and we talked, too, of the wonder we should excite among our old friends when we might chance to revisit the scenes of our early home. We even spoke of driving past the farm of Mr. Judson in a fine carriage drawn by a pair of beautiful bay horses; but with all our lively talk poor Charley was sadly out of spirits. His old bosom foe was at work; he feared that among new companions I might meet with some one who would supplant him in my affections.

Page 18

To one of my nature, this jealous exclusive disposition was something incomprehensible; later in life I learned to pity him for a defect of character, which in his case was hereditary, and which he could no more help than the drawing of his life-breath. I was to leave Elmwood by the early morning train so we were up betimes; but, early as it was, we found my mother already up and breakfast awaiting us. The railway station was a little beyond the village, and more than a mile from our dwelling. Dr. Gray sent over the horse and carriage very early, and Charley, with my mother and Flora, was to accompany me to the depot. The morning air was fresh and invigorating, and under other circumstances we should highly have enjoyed the drive, as it was that morning, we were rather a sad and silent party. When we arrived at the station I moved rapidly about and looked after my luggage with far more care than was necessary, in order to conceal the sorrow I felt at leaving home; and I was heartily glad to hear the whistle which announced the approaching train, that the parting might be the sooner over. During the few moments we stood upon the platform awaiting the arrival of the train Charley stood by with the most solemn face imaginable. His countenance was always remarkably expressive of either joy or sorrow, and at this time his expression was certainly not one of joy. Many a time since, have I smiled as memory suddenly recalled the woe-begone face of Charley Gray, as I left him that morning. In order to make him laugh I enquired if he could not imagine the look of astonishment with which Farmer Judson would regard us when we should drive past his farm in our fine carriage, which (in imagination) we had possessed the night before. Any one acquainted with Mr. Judson could not have helped laughing at the idea; Charley did laugh but there were tears in his eyes. As the train rapidly neared the station he suddenly extended his hand to me for a last good-bye, and hurried swiftly from the spot, he could not bear to witness my parting with my mother and sister which was yet to come. My mother had borne up until now, but when the time came that I must indeed go, her tears could no longer be kept back. I kissed Flora good-bye, and last of all turned to my mother. She imprinted a parting kiss upon my brow, and as she held my hand with a long, lingering pressure, said in a choking voice, "Remember my counsels, respect yourself, and others will respect you, and may God bless and preserve you from evil!"

I was deeply moved, but to spare my mother's feelings I kept back my tears. The conductor's loud voice was heard calling "All aboard." I hastily entered the car, and taking my seat, the tears I had so long repressed now flowed freely, till some of my fellow-passengers began to question me, when I became ashamed of my weakness. To the many pitying enquiries I replied that I was going a long distance from home and was grieved at parting with my friends.



Page 19

“Chare up, me man,” said a good-natured Irishman who happened to be seated near me. “I was jist yer size (only that I was bigger) when I lift me father and mother in ould Ireland, an’ come over to Ameriky.”

This remark drew a burst of laughter from several of the passengers, and, though the tears were not yet dry upon my cheek, I could not help joining in the laugh. The man was not in the least disturbed by the merriment of the others, but again turning to me continued:

“As I was a tellin’ ye, an older brother an’ mesilf crossed the sea to Ameriky, an’ the first year we arned money enough to fetch over the ould folks, and we are now livin’ altogether agin, in the city uv Montreal, where we have a nate little home uv our own as your two eyes could light upon.” The friendly talk of the Irishman both amused and cheered me. How true it is that kind and sympathizing words never fail to cheer the desponding heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

We had written to Uncle Nathan, informing him of the day on which he might expect my arrival; and at the time appointed he drove over to Fulton, the small village two miles from his farm, where was the railway-station. As I stepped from the car I eagerly scanned each face among the crowd to see if I could find any one whose appearance answered to my ideas of Uncle Nathan, but for some time I could see no one whom I could suppose to be my unknown relative. I at length spied a middle-aged gentleman walking backward and forward in a leisurely manner, upon the platform, whom I thought might possibly be my uncle, and, as the crowd had mostly dispersed, I mustered up courage, and in a low voice accosted him with the question. “Please Sir are you my uncle Nathan?” “Your uncle who?” said the old man, as he elevated his eyebrows and regarded me with a broad stare of astonishment. “No I’m not your Uncle, nor nobody’s else that I know of,” said he, in a sharp crusty voice, then, giving a second look at my downcast face, he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and said in a much softer tone: “If its Nathan Adams you mean he’s just driven round to the other door. Be you a friend of his’n.” “Yes Sir,” answered I, as I hurried away to the “other door” pointed out by the stranger. From the ideas I had formed of my uncle I was unprepared to meet the kind, hearty looking man whose sunburned face beamed with a smile of welcome, when his eye rested upon me, as I walked with a timid, hesitating manner toward him. He at once held out his hand, saying, “I don’t need to ask if you are my nephew Walter, for if I’d a met you most anywhere I should have known you were Ellen Adams’ son; just the same dark eyes and happy smile which made your mother such a beauty at your age, for your mother was handsome if she was my sister; but I suppose, like all the rest of us she’s beginnin’ to grow old and careworn by this time, ’tis the way of the world, you know, boy, we



Page 20

can't always keep young, do our best. Its amazin' how time does fly, it only seems like yesterday since your mother trudged to school over this very road, with her books and dinner-basket on her arm; and now here's you, her son, a great stout boy that will soon be as tall as your old Uncle Nathan. It really does beat all; but I forget that, while I am moralizin' like on the flight of time, you must be famishin' with hunger, to say nothin' of your bein' tired most to death with your long ride in the cars; give me a seat in my wagon behind old Dobbin, with a good whip in my hand, and those who like the cars better may have them for all me. Come right along with me, my boy, and point out your luggage and we'll be off to my farm in no time." Before I reached my new home I had quite got rid of my fears of finding a second Farmer Judson in the person of my Uncle Nathan. As we drove through the village of Fulton, my Uncle directed my attention to a large and tasteful building standing in an open green, on a slightly elevated portion of ground. I said the building stood in an open space, but omitted to mention the thick shade trees which stood in regular rows between the building, and the long street which ran the entire length of the village.

"That," said my Uncle, with no little pride in his voice, "is Fulton Academy, where I mean to send you to school; and I hope when you leave it, you will be a wiser boy than you are now." The homeward drive after leaving the village lay past finely cultivated farms, with their waving fields of ripe grain and beautiful orchards loaded with ripe fruit, which delighted the eye of the passer-by; but the most important object (to me) was the Academy, where I hoped to acquire the knowledge necessary to fit me for the duties of life. During the year I lived with Mr. Judson I many a time thought how I should enjoy my books did my circumstances allow me to do so, and now all this was within my reach. As these thoughts passed rapidly through my mind, I looked up in the kind face of my relative and impelled by a sudden impulse, I seized his hand and, pressing it to my lips, said, "if I am a good boy and do my best to please, you will love me a little, won't you, Uncle Nathan?" "Bless your heart, child," replied my Uncle, "who on earth could help loving you? Yes, Walter, you may be sure I shall love the son of my favorite sister, Ellen; and, were it not so, I think I should soon love you for yourself alone, for, if I am any judge of faces, you are better than the general run of boys of your age."

Can this, thought I, be the man who wrote that short, crusty letter. I must confess, that (at first sight) I was not favorably impressed by the external appearance of the home I was approaching. I had expected to see a handsome tasty building, painted white perhaps; with green blinds, like those we had passed on the way from the village; and when Uncle Nathan said "here we are, Walter, most at home,"

Page 21

and I raised my eyes to gain a view of the homestead, the faded dingy appearance of the house and its surroundings struck me as unpleasant. It was a large old-fashioned square farm-house, which had once boasted a coat of red paint, but the winds and rains of many years had sadly marred its beauty, so much so that, but for the patches of dull red still visible beneath the eaves and round the windows, one would have been loth to believe the old house had all been of a deep red. The high road lay between the house and the long stretch of meadow-land which separated it from the river. The picket fence in front of the dwelling was in rather a dilapidated condition, and the gate, being minus a hinge, hung awry. Many tall sunflowers stood in the narrow strip of ground between the front fence and the house, and they were about all I could see in the way of ornament. But with this rather shabby look there was after all something inviting and attractive about the place, something that suggested the idea of quiet and repose and cozy comfort. Reader, have you never seen a home like Uncle Nathan's? I have seen many of them. Little did I then think how, in course of time, I should learn to love that old house and its inmates. A little before we reached home Uncle Nathan addressed me in a confidential voice, saying:

“Aunt Lucinder (as every body calls her) is my sister, who keeps house for me. She's kinder partickler and fussy, and you must not mind if she does snap you up kinder short sometimes, 'tis her way you know; but never you fear, for with all her sharp speeches she has a kind heart, and her bark is a deal worse than her bite; and if you once gain her over for a friend, you'll have a firm one, depend upon that. Then there's mother, she lives with us, too, she's an old, old woman Walter, and we have all try to please her in everything, and of course you'll always be quiet and respectful-like to her. I have often before spoke of hiring a boy to do chores about the house, but Lucinder always said, 'all boys were good for was to make a noise and litter up the house,' but I guess you'll get along famously with her; she's an old maid you know, that is she never was married, and folks say that old maids are always kinder cross and crusty.” Seeing my sober face as we drew nigh the house my uncle laughed, as he said in an encouraging tone, “Don't you be a grain scared, Walter, neither of them old wimmen will hurt you. I shouldn't a said a word, only I thought if I gave you a hint of Aunt Lucinder's queer ways you'd know better how to get along with her.” I had always thought all women like my own mild-speaking mother and kind old Mrs. Judson, but by this time I began to think Aunt Lucinda must differ very widely from them; and when I followed Uncle Nathan into the clean wide kitchen where a bountiful supper awaited our arrival, I felt somehow as though I was stepping upon dangerous ground, and I almost feared to set my foot down lest it might chance to



Page 22

be in the wrong place. Aunt Lucinda, however, gave me a much more kindly welcome than I had feared, which I regarded as a favourable omen. She also introduced me to the notice of my aged grandmother who was seated in her deep arm-chair in the corner. She has seen more than eighty years of life, but as she sits there, day by day, in her quiet decrepitude, she still pretends to a superintendence of the labors of Aunt Lucinda in a way that might sometimes provoke a smile. She seems not to realize that my uncle and aunt are themselves middle aged gray-haired people, and still calls them her boy and girl. When made aware who I was my grandmother seemed delighted to see me, and talked long and affectionately of my mother whom she had not seen for many years. Aunt Lucinda was busily employed at the ironing-board, but looked often to see that her mother's wants were all supplied; nothing could exceed the affection and care she seemed to bestow upon her aged parent, indulging every whim, so that the old lady hardly can realize that she is old and almost helpless. We were soon seated at the supper table, and they all must have had the idea that I had brought with me from Elmwood a most unheard-of appetite, if I could judge by the quantities of food they insisted upon piling on my plate. Aunt Lucinda treated me with a good degree of kindness, but evidently kept a sharp eye to all my movements, doubtless expecting that in a short time I would break out in some flagrant misdemeanor, when she would be called to open hostilities. Poor Aunt Lucinda, you had little to fear from the homesick boy who sat in the purple twilight, leaning his elbows upon the window-sill, thinking of his now far-distant mother and sister, and his loved companion, Charley Gray. As I sat there a line of light in the eastern sky gradually became brighter, till the full round moon rose to view, bathing the whole scene in a flood of silver light. Seated thus, gazing over the moonlit landscape I began (with a mind beyond my years) to look far away into the future, and I made many resolves for my course of action in time to come. I wished to assist my uncle in doing up the "chores" for the night, but he would not hear of it. "You'll get work enough here," said he, "but you shall rest after your journey and you shall not lift a hand to-night." When work was over and the house quiet, Aunt Lucinda placed the large family Bible upon the table, preparatory to their evening worship. "Now won't it be nice, Lucinda," said Uncle Nathan, "we've got some one in the house that has good eyes, to read the chapter for us every night, it bothers me to read by lamplight, and I have often heard you call a word wrong if the light was the least mite dim." "My sight isn't so bad as it might be," replied my aunt who evidently did not relish this hint that she was not as young as she had been, but she readily consented that for the future I should read the Chapter from the Bible each evening. After reading we



Page 23

all kneeled and Uncle Nathan offered a simple but heartfelt prayer, in which he failed not to remember the poor boy, who kneeled by his side, as well as his distant friends. After prayers I was shown at once to the room which was to be mine during my stay, and very different it was from the one I occupied at Farmer Judson's. It was an airy, cheerful, looking apartment, furnished plainly, but with everything necessary to my comfort. When left alone my first act was to remove from my trunk the small Bible which was my mother's parting gift, with the request that I would allow no day to pass without reading at least one Chapter, alone. And I have no doubt the obeying my mother's parting injunction, made the slumber all the sweeter, which weighed down my eyelids almost as soon as my head pressed my pillow.

CHAPTER IX.

Before a week had passed away I made up my mind that I might have found a worse home than the old farm-house at Uncle Nathan's. Aunt Lucinda was not positively unkind to me, but I could not help a feeling of fear when in her presence, for she evidently regarded my every movement with a watchful eye, and looked upon my presence in the family as an infliction that must be borne; but with all this she was very careful for my comfort, and treated me in every respect as one of the family. Few would, at first sight, receive a favourable impression of my aunt. During the first few days of my residence in the family I used often to wonder to myself how two sisters could be so dissimilar in every way as were my mother and Aunt Lucinda. My mother's manner was very gentle, and her speech was mild and pleasant, while my Aunt had a sharp, quick manner of speech, and took the liberty upon all occasions of speaking her mind plainly. She was however a very clever house-keeper, always busy, and a large amount of work went every day through her hands. From the first moment I saw her I felt strongly attached to my venerable grandmother, who treated me with the greatest kindness and seemed never so happy as when, seated by her side, I read aloud to her from the large Bible which lay constantly within her reach. The personal appearance of Uncle Nathan was very pleasing; there was a mild good-humoured expression upon his countenance which at once told you he was not one at all inclined to fret or borrow trouble. This disposition to take the world easy often irritated my aunt, and she sometimes went so far as to say, "if she didn't stir up Nathan now and then, every thing would go to wreck and ruin about the place." Mindful of Uncle Nathan's advice I did my best to please my aunt, and endeavoured to win her affection by many little offices of kindness, as often as I had opportunity, but for some time my attempts to gain her goodwill produced but little effect. When I had been a few days an inmate with the family, I became an unwilling listener to a conversation which troubled me much at



Page 24

the time, although I have often since smiled at the recollection of it. I happened one day to be employed in the back kitchen, or what they termed the sink-room, and I soon became aware that I was the subject of conversation by the family in the room adjoining. "Now if that boy ain't the most splendid reader I ever did hear," said my kind old grandmother, "and I think, takin' all things into consideration it's a good thing Nathan sent for him; what do you say Lucinda?" "What I say is this," replied my aunt, "it don't do to judge folks, specially boys, by first appearances, and I shouldn't wonder a mite, for all his smooth ways and fine readin' if the fellow turns out a regular limb for mischief before he's been here a fortnight. I think Nathan Adams must have been out of his senses (if he ever had any to get out of) when he went and fetched a boy here to tear about and make a complete bedlam of the house. I had to work hard enough before, but with a boy of that age round the house to cut up capers and raise Cain generally, I don't know how we're to live at all." "Well, Lucinda," replied Grandma, "Nathan's been a good dutiful boy to me," (Uncle Nathan was past forty) "and if he took a notion to bring Ellen's boy here, I don't see as you ought to say a word against it. What if you'd a married Joshua Blake as you expected to, and he'd a died and left you with a boy to bring up and school, I guess you'd a been glad if Nathan or somebody else had offered to take him off your hands for a while." This reply from her mother, at once silenced Aunt Lucinda, and there was no more said upon the subject.

CHAPTER X.

Weeks and days succeeded each other in rapid succession, till mellow autumn with its many glories was upon the earth. It had been a very busy season, and long since Uncle Nathan's capacious barns had been filled to overflowing with their treasures of fragrant hay and golden grain. The corn-house was filled with its yellow harvest, and the potatoes were heaped high in the cellar. Each different sort had its separate bin, and my memory is not sufficiently retentive to mention the numerous kinds of potatoes by their proper name which I that autumn assisted in stowing away in the old cellar; and potatoes were not the only good things to be found there when the harvest was completed. The apples were of almost as many different sorts as the potatoes, and their flavor was very tempting to the fruit-loving appetite, and their red cheeks were just discernible by the dim light, which came faintly through the narrow cellar-windows. Large quantities of almost every species of garden vegetable were stowed away, each in their respective place. The cattle and sheep had been driven from the far-off pastures to enjoy for a season the "fall-feed," of the meadows. The bright-hued autumn leaves were cast to the ground by every breeze which floated by; the migratory birds were beginning their flight



Page 25

southward, while on every hand were visible indications of the approach of winter. I had done my best during the busy season to render myself useful, and by this time had become quite an important member of the household, so much so that I one day heard uncle Nathan wonder "how he ever got along without me." He had often hired boys before, but a hired boy who merely works for wages is often very different from one whose services are prompted by affection and gratitude. Aunt Lucinda still seemed rather to distrust me and, although she said nothing, I was too sharp-sighted to be ignorant of the scrutinizing watch she maintained over my conduct. I did not, as many boys of my age would have done, allow myself to cherish any resentment toward my aunt, on the contrary I did every thing in my power to gain her goodwill; I never allowed the water-pails to become empty; I split the kindlings for the morning fire; and, by the time I had been a few weeks in the family, my busy aunt found herself freed from many household tasks to which she had been accustomed for years, and, more than this, I invariably treated her with the utmost kindness and respect. It happened one evening that my aunt was suffering from one of the severe headaches to which she was often subject. After supper she was almost incapable of any exertion whatever. When it was nearly dark she suddenly remembered that the large weekly wash had not been brought in from the clothes' yard, and there was every appearance of approaching rain. "I don't know," said she in a desponding voice; "what will become of the clothes, but if they are all spoiled I can't bring them in, for my head aches as though it would split." It was with fear and trembling that I came forward, and offered to get the clothes-basket and bring in the clothes. She looked at me with astonishment, saying, "a pretty sight the clothes will be by the time you bring them in, and then the lines will be broken into fifty pieces; no, no, let them hang and take their chance in the rain; I can't any more than have to wash them all over again." "Please let me go, aunty," said I, "I will handle the clothes very carefully, and I certainly will not break the lines." Touched in spite of herself by my desire to assist her she gave me the basket, saying, "now do pray be careful and not destroy every thing you put your hands on," and again seated herself with a troubled countenance to await my return. She was often inclined to think that nothing could be done properly about the house which was not performed by her own hands. Her face did brighten a little when I appeared after a short time at the kitchen door, bearing the well-filled basket with its snow-white contents in a most wonderful state of preservation. It was not her habit to praise any one to their face, but, when I had left the room, she turned to Uncle Nathan and said "I do believe after all there is some good in that boy. I am afraid I have been a little too hard with him, but I've made up my mind if he behaves as well as he's done so far, that he shall have a friend in his Aunt Lucinda; he's the first boy that's ever been about the house that I could endure at all, and I do believe he means well, and does his best to please us, and that's more than can be said of most boys."



Page 26

The busy season was over at last, and the harvest all gathered in; on the following Monday I was to enter as a pupil at Fulton Academy. I had long anxiously looked forward to this day, and now that it was so near, I grew restless with expectation. I spent the Saturday afternoon roaming among the old woods which skirted the farm on one side, and seated by turns at the roots of some of the fine old trees, whose covering of many-hued leaves had long since fallen to the ground, my thoughts wove themselves into many bright forms, and many a purpose for good was matured in my mind. I dreamed of a time when, by the unaided exertions of manhood I would purchase ease and relaxation for my patient mother and loving sister, and next to those of my own household I breathed a wish for the happiness of the loved companion of my childhood Charley Gray.

CHAPTER XI.

The important day arrived when I was to begin school-life at the Village Academy, the day I had so long looked forward to with pleasant anticipations. The teacher who had taught the Fulton Academy for several years was a gentleman of high culture, and of sound judgment. Teaching with him was a loved life-work. He had been left an orphan at an early age, and had, by his own exertions, obtained the education which enabled him to occupy a position of influence and respectability, consequently, he was all the better able to sympathize and assist studious pupils who laboured against many discouragements to obtain an education. Instead of regarding the pupils under his charge as only objects for correction and reproof, he treated them as reasonable beings, and laboured diligently to develop their better natures, as well as their intellectual powers. When I entered the school-room, and Mr. Oswald made some enquiries regarding my studies, and other matters, I looked in his clear honest, but withal searching eyes, and felt certain I had found a friend in my teacher. My ideas at the time, of my new home as well as my school, will I presume be best expressed by transcribing the copy of a letter, written to Charley Gray about this time. I lately found it among, some old papers. It reads thus:

Fulton, Oct. 25th, 18—

Dear Charley,

As I cannot possibly see you, I will do the next best by writing to you in answer to your kind and very welcome letter, which came to hand two days since. I have so much to tell you that I hardly know where to begin; but if I intend to finish I must make a beginning in some way. I will first endeavour to tell you something about my home. You know I feared Uncle Nathan might be like Farmer Judson; but never were two more unlike; he never scolds or frets, and, although he is not a great talker, somehow or other when he does talk I always like to listen to what he says. I am sure you would like Uncle Nathan, and if you could pay a visit to his farm he would not drive you off as Mr.



Judson did. My grandma and aunt live with my uncle. Grandma is a very old woman, but she looks happy and contented as she sits day after day in her large arm-chair, dividing her time between her knitting work and reading in the large-print Bible which always lies close to her hand; sometimes she says it tries her eyes to read, and then I wish you could see how pleased she seems when I offer to read to her.



Page 27

You remember the day Charley, when we were at school at dear old Elmwood, when we were out at recess and that poor old beggar-man who was nearly blind passed the playground, and dropped his cane into the ditch. Some of the thoughtless boys set up a laugh, but you left your play and ran and picked up the cane and placed it in his hand; and the old man patted your head and said "I know you will make a good man, my lad, if you live to grow up, for there is always good in the boy who pays respect to the aged and helpless." The master who saw it all from the open window did not forget to reprove the boys who laughed at the poor old man, while at the same time he warmly commended your kind act, "Take my word for it boys," said he "an act of kindness, or any mark of respect to the old and feeble, will always leave a feeling of happiness in your own hearts;" and I know now that our teacher told the truth. Sometimes grandmother calls me to read to her when I am busy with study or play, and at first I do not feel inclined to go, but I always do, and I feel more than paid when I finish reading and she says, "thank you, Walter, you are a good boy to remember poor old grandma and I hope if you live to be old, and your eyes grow dim like mine, some one will be as kind to you as you are to me." I don't know how it is, Charley, but some how I always feel happier after reading to grandma Adams. Aunt Lucinda is Uncle Nathan's sister, you know; she keeps house; she is a real go-a-head sort of woman, and a great worker; she is older than Uncle Nathan, but, between you and I, I don't think she cares to hear that spoken of, but it's no harm for me to tell you. She is so different in her ways from your mother and mine that at first I hardly knew what to make of her. She has a queer way of snapping people up short if she isn't just suited. For a long time I was afraid Aunt Lucinda would never like me, she seemed to have such a horror of boys—may be that's the reason she never got married. I have begun to think lately that I am gaining in her good opinion and I am very glad of it. After all she is kind-hearted, for all her queer ways; I could get along better if she wasn't so distressingly neat and particular about the house. I tell you if you lived with my Aunt, you'd have to remember always to wipe your feet on the door-mat before coming into the house; if you did happen to forget Aunt Lucinda would sharpen up your memory, depend upon it. When I first came here I really believe she thought I should burn either the house or barn, perhaps both, or commit some other enormity; but as no such occurrence has as yet taken place, she begins to think, I believe, that I am not so bad as I might be. In fact I heard her tell Uncle Nathan the other day, that she "would be real sorry if I was to go away, I was such a help about the house, and so careful to keep the chores all done up," that was a great deal for Aunt Lucinda to say in my favor; and I was so pleased when I heard her that I wished there was



Page 28

more chores to do than there are although I sometimes think there are quite enough already. But it is time I was telling you something about my school. I attend the Academy over at Fulton, the small village which is about two miles from Uncle Nathan's farm. The Academy is the only thing here which reminds me of Elmwood. It is a large building, two stories in height, painted white, and the grounds around it are thickly set with many different kinds of shade-trees. The upper story of the building is used as a Public Hall while the lower one is appropriated to the school. There is about an equal number of boys and girls attending this term. By-the-bye, Charley, when I first entered the school I was very much afraid that my own attainments would seem very little compared with those of my then unknown companions, but I have got rid of that fear now, I am in the class next the highest and am eagerly looking forward to the day, which I hope is not far distant, when I shall stand in the first ranks in Fulton Academy. There are two teachers. Mr. Oswald, the head master, and Mr. Lawrence, who is quite a young man, is the assistant teacher. This same assistant is very pompous in his manner, and when Mr. Oswald is not present, he is disposed to act something of the tyrant. He has red hair, which I believe is a matter of much annoyance to him, for he is uncommonly vain regarding his personal appearance. Knowing this, some of the boys delight in playing off jokes upon him. One day last week, Mr. Lawrence was leaning over a desk, working out a difficult example in Arithmetic, directly behind him was Ned Stanton, the most mirthful and fun-loving boy in the whole school. Ned took a match from his pocket and, first giving me a sly nudge to look, held it close to Mr. Lawrence's head, making believe to light it by his red curling locks. The act was so sudden and withal so comic that I burst out laughing before I thought where I was. Mr. Oswald raised his eyes just in time to see Ned holding the match, I expected the fellow was in for a punishment for sure; but will you believe me when I tell you that Mr. Oswald actually laughed himself. He tried hard to put on a stern look, and said "I think Edward you had best attend to your ciphering." The assistant was so busily occupied that he saw nor heard nothing of it all, till he raised his head, and seeing many of the scholars trying to conceal their laughter, and even observing an expression of quiet mirth on Mr. Oswald's face, he looked from one to another with such a ludicrous manner of enquiry and astonishment it made the matter still worse. But, whatever Mr. Lawrence may lack in any way, is more than made up to us in Mr. Oswald. He is past thirty years of age, he is married, and has a little boy and girl who attend school. The little boy is very nice, and if I wasn't afraid you would laugh at me I would say that I think Rose Oswald the handsomest girl I ever saw, and I have said it after all, laugh or no laugh. Mr.



Page 29

Oswald is very highly learned, but when we meet with him, somehow or other, the space between us and that tall, learned, and somewhat grave looking man, seems annihilated. I believe it is his kindness which does this. Like all schools there are both good and bad scholars here; some of them practice much deceit with the teachers, and will sometimes even conceal their books when in the class, and recite from them, to save study; I *never* do this, Charley, for I know it is wrong, and I know you wouldn't do it either. But the small space left warns me that I must bring my long letter to a close. Write soon, and tell me how you are getting along, and all about your school, and every thing else that you think may interest me. I have made some companions here but you needn't fear my forgetting you, for I have met with no one who, to me, can quite fill the place of Charley Gray. With much affection I remain,

Your sincere Friend,

WALTER HARLAND.

P.S. Write soon, and don't forget to write a long letter.

W.H.

CHAPTER XII.

In uncle Nathan's household a "bee" for the paring of apples had been the annual custom from time immemorial; and in rural districts, the merry-makings of any kind are a very different affair from the social gatherings in a large city; in the country a social gathering has about it a genuine heartiness of enjoyment, unknown in the city drawing-rooms of wealth and fashion. In the country you come nearer to nature, as it were, untrammelled by the customs and usages of fashionable society. Uncle Nathan was just the one to get up a social gathering of this kind, and enjoy it too; if his hair was growing white, the flowers of social feeling still bloomed in his heart; and the yearly apple-paring bee was never omitted in the household. He used to say "the apple pies would not taste half so good in winter if the apples were not pared by the hands of the merry company who assembled upon the occasion."

The sun rose bright and clear on the sixth of October; this was an important day at the old homestead, for on the next evening was to be held this annual social gathering. They did not often invite company, and, upon the rare occasions when they did so, Aunt Lucinda made extensive preparations for their entertainment. Some of her neighbours took the liberty of saying she did this partly to show off her unequalled cookery and housekeeping, but most likely these sayings were only maliciously called forth by her superior attainments in this way. Be this as it might, she was certainly very busy on this



particular day. The capacious brick oven was heated no less than four times during the day, and the savory odor from the numerous dishes taken therefrom bespoke a plentiful repast for the apple-parers. I was kept from school that day to take part in the grand preparations going forward. Aunt made me quite happy that morning by saying “I



Page 30

was a right smart handy boy, and could help along amazingly” if I would stay from school. I would have done much more than this for the few words of commendation bestowed upon me by my aunt, who was usually so hard to please. Neat as was her daily household arrangements, on this day every corner of the old house passed under a most searching review; and dust before unnoticed was brought to light in a most alarming manner, and as my aunt passed through the house on her tour of investigation, the very walls, with their closets and three-cornered cupboards, seemed to shrink back with apprehension, not knowing where she might make the next discovery of hidden dust or litter. I was so much elated by her encouraging words in the morning that I set to work with a right good will; but before the preparations were all completed I found that an apple-paring bee at Uncle Nathan’s was no trivial matter, and involved a large amount of labour. The brass knobs on all the doors, as well as the large brass andirons in the parlor, had to be polished till they shone like burnished gold and this with other countless tasks all fell on me; but the longest and most laborious day comes to a close, and so did this sixth of October, and tired enough were we all long before night came. Poor old grandma really entertained the idea that she was of much assistance, and remained up for an hour or so beyond her usual time of retiring, “to help things along,” as she said. With all my aunts sharp, crusty ways, one could not but respect her, when they noticed with what forbearance she treated every whim and fancy of her aged mother, and upon this occasion when she advised the old lady to retire to rest, and she replied, “that she must sit up to hurry things along,” she did not press the matter but allowed her to take her own way. The important evening arrived, and with it a merry company of both old and young who filled the large kitchen and dining-room to overflowing. All were in the best of spirits, and working and talking progressed about equally. Each one was furnished with a knife sharpened for the purpose, and a basket of apples allotted to every two or three. Without in the least interrupting the flow of laughter and lively conversation the baskets grew empty surprisingly fast, but were immediately replenished from the well-stored cellar, till some of the younger portion of the company with an eye to the supper, and fun in the prospective, began to wonder if the work would never be done. Aunt Lucinda, assisted by some of the company, was laying out the supper in the wide hall ready to be brought into the dining-room, directly work was over. Grandma had her arm-chair removed into the circle of the workers, and actually pared a dozen apples in the course of the evening.



Page 31

It pleased her to be there and enjoy the scene of innocent mirth, and that was enough. As for Uncle Nathan he was here and there and everywhere else, it seemed almost at one time, replenishing the baskets, sharpening the edge of a knife, and diffusing mirth and good humour through the whole company. Mr. Oswald, the teacher, was invited, bringing with him his wife and Rose. When I first mentioned giving the Oswalds an invitation Uncle Nathan advised me to give the Assistant one also; I was not too well pleased at this, for Mr. Lawrence was far from being a favorite with me, and, like most boys, I did not always pause to consider what was right; but Aunt Lucinda, who was anxious that every thing should be conducted after the most approved style, declared if the Oswalds were invited Mr. Lawrence should be favoured also with an invitation, saying, if any of the youths should make fun of his red hair, or cut up any capers with him she'd make them sorry for their fun. "I know," said Uncle Nathan, with a sly look, "what makes Lucinda kinda' stand up for Mr. Lawrence, and be so watchful over his red head; every one who knew Joshua Blake will remember that he had red hair. I thought Lucinda had forgotten the fellow by this time, but it seems I was mistaken after all." "Who was Joshua Blake?" I ventured to enquire. "If you don't be off to your work this minnit," said Aunt Lucinda, "I'll let you know who Joshua Blake was, in a way that you won't ask again, I'll be bound." I thought it unwise to push my inquiries further, in fact I was glad to beat a hasty retreat from the kitchen; years after I heard the story of Joshua Blake from Aunt Lucinda's own lips.

While we have been indulging in this digression, work has progressed steadily at Uncle Nathan's, till the last basket of apples was pared, and deposited in the back-kitchen. Then the rooms were hastily cleared up and the long supper-table set out. I will not attempt a description of that supper, and will only say that it met all my ideas of nicety, added to profusion and plenty. The girls lent a willing hand in assisting to clear away the tables after the supper was over; and then the fun begun in right good earnest. Soon there was a call among the younger part of the company for "Blind Mans' Buff." Grandma, who from her quiet corner watched the scene of mirth with as much enjoyment as the youngest present, was disposed to dispute the name, saying that in her young days the game was known by the name of "Blind Harry," and when the point was finally settled the game began, and was for some time continued with unabated enjoyment. Aunt Lucinda even allowed herself to be blinded and a very efficient blind woman did she prove, as many of the youngsters could testify who endeavoured to escape from her vigorous grasp. When the company became tired of this lively, but somewhat laborious amusement it was quickly succeeded by others of an equally lively character, which was continued for



Page 32

some two or three hours, and it was not till the tall clock in the corner of the kitchen tolled the hour of one that a move was made for the company to break up; and after a somewhat lengthy search in the hall for countless shawls, veils, gloves, and wrappers, each one was at last fortunate enough to find up their own, and the merry company took their respective ways home beneath the silver light of the full moon; and, half an hour later, sleep had settled over the inmates of the old farm-house. Afterwards in giving a description of the apple-paring bee to my mother, I allowed that it surpassed in enjoyment any thing in which I had ever before participated.

CHAPTER XIII.

The winter glided quietly, and withal pleasantly, away at Uncle Nathan's. To me it was a very busy season, being anxious to render myself helpful to my kind relatives, who were doing so much for me. It was some time before I could entirely overcome the feeling of distrust and suspicion with which Aunt Lucinda was inclined to regard me; her daily care for my comfort, and many real acts of kindness drew my naturally affectionate heart toward her, and it grieved me much to fear that she felt for me no affection; but Aunt Lucinda was not at all demonstrative, and seldom gave expression to her real feelings, besides this she had told Uncle Nathan at the first, she was sure I would turn out a bad boy, and, like all positive people, she disliked to acknowledge herself in the wrong. The reader is not to suppose that I consider myself as having been any thing like perfect at the time of which I am speaking; on the contrary, I had my full share of the failing and short-comings common to my age, and often my own temper would rise when Aunt Lucinda found fault with me, or in some other way manifested a feeling of dislike, and the bitter retort would rise to my lips; but I believe I can say with truth that I never gave utterance to a disrespectful word. My mother's counsel to me before leaving home, recurring to my mind, often prevented the impatient and irritable thought from finding expression in words; and before the winter was over, I found, what every one has found who tried the experiment, that there is scarcely a nature so cold and unfeeling as to withstand the charm of continued kindness. The last remaining feeling of animosity on the part of my aunt died out when my mother sent me a letter containing a small sum of pocket-money, and, without saying a word of my intention to any one, I expended this money in the purchase of a brooch, as a present to my aunt. The article was neither large nor showy, but was uncommonly neat and tasteful. It was an emerald in a setting of fine gold, and of considerable value; in fact, to buy it I was obliged to empty my purse of the last cent it contained. When, with a diffident manner, I presented the gift, asking my aunt to accept it for a keepsake, as well as a token of my gratitude for her kindness, a truly happy expression came over her usually rather stern countenance. "It was not," she said, "the value of the gift alone which pleased her, but it made her happy to know that I had sacrificed so much to make her a present; but" said she "I'll take good care that you will be no loser by remembering your Aunt Lucinda."

Page 33

I felt more than paid for the sacrifice I had made to give pleasure to another; I was trying to learn the useful lesson of setting aside self that I might add to the happiness of others, especially of the kind friend, beneath whose roof I dwelt. It was my invariable custom on my way to school to call each morning for Willie and Rose Oswald. We became great friends, and many evenings did I carry over my books, that we might together study the lesson for the morning's recitation; and when (as was often the case) Uncle Nathan rallied me upon the subject, I replied, with much dignity, (as I thought) that I preferred studying with Willie and Rose, on account of Mr. Oswald being at hand to assist us. "It's all right, Walter" he would reply, "you and little Rose will make a handsome couple ten years from now, and I only hope I may live to see the day, for it won't do to have too many old bachelors in the family", and, with a roguish look at Aunt Lucinda, "to say nothing of old maids." My Aunt would snappishly tell him to "let the boy alone, and not be always teasing him," adding that at his time of life it ill became him to talk such nonsense; and, if Uncle Nathan wished to make her particularly angry he would reply, "if I am old, you are certainly two years older," and my aunt, who made it a point always to have the last word would say, as a closing argument, she hoped her years had taught her a little wisdom at any rate, but as for him he seemed to grow more foolish and light-minded with each year that was added to his age. I presume if any one else had dared to make this remark of Uncle Nathan they would have learned that he had an able defender in the person of his sister.

The winter passed away, till March came in with its piercing winds; and to me, if it had been a busy winter, it had also been a very happy one. With my studies, and companions at my labours at home, time passed swiftly, and I received frequent letters from my mother and sister, and also from Charley Gray. But this pleasant state of things was destined to continue but a short time, a dark cloud was even then hovering over me, which was soon to burst in terror over my head. Before the winter was over many of the boys at school began among themselves to accuse our teacher of an unjust partiality toward me, whether with or without cause I am unable to say. Mr. Oswald was a very estimable man, but he had very strong feelings, and was inclined to form his opinion of one at first sight; if that opinion chanced to be favourable, you were all right; if the reverse, he sometimes failed to give one credit for whatever of good there might be in them. I charge it to no superior merit in myself, but I believe from the very first I was a favourite with our teacher. I studied hard, and endeavoured to give no trouble by misconduct, though I doubtless had my faults as well as others. It may be that Mr. Oswald sometimes allowed his feelings to exhibit themselves more than was exactly wise. I have often heard him say that strong likes and equally strong dislikes were natural defects in his own character, against which he was obliged to exercise a continual watchfulness.



Page 34

The idea once formed, that Mr. Oswald favoured me above others, gained ground amazingly fast. Each boy was on the watch, and the smallest action was noticed and repeated from one to another in an exaggerated form, till I became an object of bitter dislike to more than half the school. Many underhand attempts were made by some of my companions to hurt me in the good opinion of my teacher; but he possessed too much penetration and discernment to be easily misled, and for some time all attempts to injure me came back on themselves; but the feeling of enmity among the boys gained strength with each passing day. One day, about the middle of the forenoon, a gentleman who was owing Mr. Oswald money, called and gave him a ten-dollar bill. Mr. Oswald stepped to the door, where he received the money, and when he returned to the school-room, being busily engaged with a class, instead of placing the bill in his pocket-book lifted the cover of his desk and deposited it there; thinking to remove it before leaving the room, at noon. He forgot to do so, and went home to dinner leaving the money in his desk, without even locking it. The circumstance recurred to his mind soon after the school was called to order in the afternoon; and, going at once to his desk, could hardly credit his own eyesight when he perceived that the bill was gone; he examined all the papers in the desk, as well as every crevice and corner, but no bill could be found; and he became convinced that it was indeed gone, and he was equally certain that it had not been removed without hands. It was a most surprising circumstance, he had taught in that Academy five years, and this was the first instance of dishonesty among his pupils. Some boys, it was true, had given him trouble in various ways, but never any thing of this kind. He remained in deep thought for a few moments, but all this did not bring back the missing bill; and he decided that his duty was, if possible, to find out who had stolen the money, for stolen it had been beyond a doubt. He was sure if any boy had been tempted to purloin the money after returning to the school-room at the noon hour, he must have it about him still, having had no opportunity of disposing of it; he knew it must have been taken after the return of some of the boys for he was the last one himself who left the room at noon; and he therefore determined to take prompt measures to find out who was the guilty one. He had no suspicion of any one, for there was not a pupil in the school who for a moment he would have believed capable of such an act. He ordered perfect silence in the room and in as few words as possible explained what had happened; desiring if any one present possessed the least knowledge of the matter they would at once make it known to him; saying at the same time, if any boy had been tempted to take the money, if he would then come forward, and own the theft, and give up the bill, he would forgive him and the matter should go no further. Mr. Oswald granted us fifteen minutes,



Page 35

in which to reveal any thing we might know concerning the affair. A pin might have been heard to fall in the room during those fifteen minutes, and seeing that nothing was to be learned in that way Mr. Oswald rose and stepping from his desk said, "a duty is before me and it must be performed, no matter how unpleasant it may be, but this matter must not rest as it is. If you are all innocent you need not fear, but I shall certainly take the liberty of searching the pockets of every boy in this room, for, if any boy took that money, he has it now." Assisted by Mr. Lawrence he proceeded to search the pockets of each boy, keeping a sharp watch that no one had a chance to make way with the money if he had it in his possession. The boys were very willing their pockets should be searched, and none more so than I, who was anxious that even a shadow of suspicion should be removed from me.

It happened to be Mr. Oswald himself who examined my pockets, and, uttering an exclamation of surprise, almost of horror, he turned deadly pale, for with his own hand he drew from my vest pocket the missing bill. Had a bomb-shell burst in the school room the shock would not have been more unexpected than was occasioned by this discovery. My countenance must have expressed unbounded astonishment and dismay, but certainly not guilt. With a face of deep sorrow, and a voice tremulous with emotion, Mr. Oswald exclaimed: "Can it be possible! Walter Harland, that this is true? That you whom I would have trusted with uncounted gold have been led to commit this act. Would that the case admitted even of a doubt, but with my own hand I have taken from your pocket what I know is the money I placed in my desk this morning for, as is my custom, I noticed the number of the bill when I received it."

What could I do, what could I say, against such proof positive, and yet till my teacher drew the bill from my pocket, I had not the slightest knowledge of it's being there. I felt that to declare my ignorance of the matter would be almost useless, and yet, conscious of my own innocence, I could not keep silent. Looking Mr. Oswald boldly in the face I said, "whether you believe me or not I speak the truth when I tell you I never saw that bill till you took it from my pocket; how it came there I know not, but again I tell you I never took the money from your desk." I could say no more, and burst into tears. Mr. Oswald remained silent for a time, trying, I presume, to decide in his own mind as to his wisest course of action. Requesting the attention of all, he addressed us, saying. "You are all aware that I lost this money, and you all know where I found it. I am sensible that, with most persons, a doubt of Walter's guilt would not exist for a moment, but I say to you all, that, strong as appearances are against him, I am not entirely convinced that Walter Harland stole that money. He declares himself innocent; he has been a pupil in this school for some



Page 36

months past, and during this time I have never known him to deviate from the truth in the slightest degree. I shall wait for a time before proceeding further, and see what light may be thrown upon this most painful affair. If Walter did not place that bill in his pocket himself some one else did," and as Mr. Oswald spoke, he cast a searching glance from one desk to the other; but not a shadow of guilt could be detected upon the countenance of any present. "I would say in conclusion," said Mr. Oswald, "any scholar who taunts Walter with stealing, or ridicules him in any way, will be immediately expelled from school. For the present at least, let no allusion be made to the matter, unless it be in a way to throw light upon it, in that case let the communication be made to me alone. You all hear my commands, and I advise you to respect them." This was a dreadful afternoon to me; it seemed that a weight had suddenly fallen upon me which was crushing me to the earth. Although no one dared violate the commands of our teacher, I could not fail to notice the changed manner of nearly all my companions when school was dismissed. Some hurried away without taking any notice of me whatever; others seemed disposed to patronize me by their notice, which was more humbling still to one of my sensitive nature. The first ray of light which penetrated the darkness which had settled over my spirit was when Willie and Rose Oswald overtook me after a rapid walk, I having hurried away from every one. "What made you run away Walter," said Rose, panting for breath, "a nice race you have given us to overtake you. You needn't feel so bad," she continued, "I know you never took Papa's money, and I am certain he thinks just as I do, only he durst not speak too positively in the school-room; it is the work of some wicked bad boys, and you see if Papa don't find out the truth before he's done with it." I thought it unmanly to cry but it required a strong effort to keep back my tears, as I replied, "I am glad you believe me Rose, for I tell you again I *did not* take that money, never saw it till it was taken from my pocket. I cannot tell whether I shall ever be proved innocent or not, if not what will become of me; it would break my mother's heart to know I was even suspected of such a crime." "Never fear, Walter, trust Papa to find it out," said the hopeful Rose. They departed with a kind "good night" and I proceeded sorrowfully to my home.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was with a heavy-heart that I performed my usual tasks that evening; and, before I could summon courage to relate my trouble to uncle Nathan, Mr. Oswald called, and himself acquainted him with the matter. Free from the presence of the other scholars, he said he had not the slightest belief in my guilt, but looked upon it as a mischievous plot formed among some other members of the school. "I know not," said he, "whether or no the mystery will over



Page 37

be cleared up; but I shall spare no pains to that end, for I must in some way or other have Walter cleared from blame; but how it is to be brought about the future alone must tell." Uncle Nathan, and even Aunt Lucinda, did not for a moment believe me guilty, and felt for me a deep sympathy as I sat by, in a dejected attitude, with my arms resting on the table and my face buried in my hands. Aunt Lucinda defended me in her usual sharp positive manner, and was for proceeding at once to some severe measures; but Mr. Oswald reminded her that, if such were the case, the truth would in all probability never come to light.

Good old Grandma Adams rose from her seat and, walking with uncertain steps to the table where I sat, placed her hands upon my bowed head, and repeated the following words from the Psalmist: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass." "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday." "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." These verses from Scripture, repeated as they were by my aged grandmother had the effect to soothe my mind. It was so like what my own mother would have done under the same circumstances; and, raising my head I tried to be hopeful, and trust to time to prove my innocence. With all my resolves to be patient I found it very hard to bear up as day after day glided by and nothing took place to throw any light upon the matter. I could never have borne it, but for Mr. Oswald's assertion that he believed me innocent. He exercised the utmost vigilance to obtain some clue to the mystery, but two weeks (which to me seemed two years) glided by and nothing was gained.

There were two boys among the pupil, named Reuben Mayfield and Thomas Pierce, they were both older than I and for a long time had evinced toward me a strong feeling of dislike. From the first Mr. Oswald had suspected these two boys of having a hand in the affair, but said nothing to any one of his suspicions; but he never for a moment gave up the idea that, sooner or later, the truth would come to light. It was nearly three weeks from the time the affair happened that these two boys entered the school-room a full half-hour before the usual time for school to open. No other pupil was present, and they felt free to indulge in a confidential conversation, which I copy for the benefit of the reader. "I wonder," began Thomas Pierce, "what Mr. Oswald expects to gain by waiting. I know his eyes are pretty sharp, but hardly sharp enough to see to the bottom of this affair. It takes you to plan Reuben. I was as willing as you to do any thing to bring Harland down a peg or two, for he has carried his head rather high this winter, and walked into Mr. Oswald's



Page 38

good graces in a way that was wonderful to behold. You were always good at planning, and it was you who did the most difficult part of the business, which was getting the money into his pocket. It was very easy to get the money out of the desk. The way I hurried through my dinner that day wasn't slow I can tell you. I ran every step of the way that I might reach the school-room before the other boys; and it took but a moment for me to secure the bill, and I am sure no one saw me slip it into your hand, and you know when the other boys came we were busy skating, so of course no one could suspect that we knew any thing about it."

"Ha, ha," laughed Reuben, "Walter thought I was very kind, and even thanked me with that high-bred manner of his when I spent so much time helping him to fix on his skates, and when you directed his attention to a team passing on the street, he little thought that while you were both admiring the fine horses, I generously slipped a ten-dollar bill into his vest pocket, for his future wants. Wasn't it fun though. But we'll see now who'll be invited to tea at Mr. Oswald's so often, and spend the evenings, studying with Rose and Willie." "But I can tell you one thing," replied Thomas, "we've got to be on our guard, Mr. Oswald is very sharp-sighted, and a word, or even a look, would put him on our track, and then it makes me tremble to think of it. The afternoon he talked to us and sent those searching glances round the room I could hardly draw my breath for terror lest he should detect us in some way. You know I always feared those searching glances from Mr. Oswald." "I have no fears" replied Reuben. "We can surely keep our own secret, and, as no one else knows any thing about it, we are safe enough." Poor misguided youths, they did not pause to think that their guilt was already known to Him without whose notice not even a sparrow falls to the ground, much less did they think how near they were to detection and exposure. The plot by which they hoped so deeply to injure another was made instrumental in exposing the baseness of their own characters. The two boys had a listener to their conversation whom they little suspected. Mr. Oswald, having some exercises to correct, went to the school-room very early and shut himself in his private room, which opened out of the large class-room, that he might be free from interruption, and by this means lost not a word of the conversation which took place between the two guilty boys. The color receded from their faces, and as quickly came again, when Mr. Oswald at nine o'clock coolly walked out of his room and called the school to order. They at once knew by his grave and stern countenance that he had heard all that had passed between them; and they knew him too well to doubt that their guilt would be brought to light in a most humbling manner. Had they paused before committing the act to consider the possibility of detection it is probable they would never have



Page 39

done the deed; but it was too late now, and they must meet the consequences of their own wrong-doing. After offering the morning prayer, by which our school invariably opened, Mr. Oswald addressed us, saying: "I happened this morning to overhear a conversation between two of my pupils, which (as nearly as I can recollect it) I wish to repeat in presence of you all." Mr. Oswald then repeated, word for word the above-related conversation, without giving the names of the boys, till he said by way of conclusion, "If I have made a wrong statement, or varied in the slightest degree from the truth, Reuben Mayfield and Thomas Pierce will please come forward and point out my error, for it was between them the conversation took place." It would take a more able pen than mine to describe the countenances of those boys as Mr. Oswald ceased speaking. Reuben did attempt to stammer out a denial, but Mr. Oswald silenced him at once. "I will not allow you, in my presence, to add to your sin, by repeating a denial. So base an action never before came under my notice. You must surely have forgotten the overruling Providence which allows no sin to go unpunished. Had your plot succeeded according to your wishes you would have ruined as fine a boy as ever entered this school, both in my eyes, and his fellow pupils, as well as the community at large. But, from the first, something seemed to whisper to me that he was innocent of the crime of which, to all appearance, he was proved guilty. When I listened to your conversation this morning I fully decided in my own mind to expel you both from school in disgrace; but I have since reflected that even justice should be tempered with mercy; and, if you are willing both to come forward in presence of all the school and ask my pardon, as well as that of your deeply-injured school-mate, and promise good conduct for the future, we will allow the matter to rest, and you can remain my pupils. I would, if possible, spare your parents, as well as yourselves, the disgrace which would follow your being expelled from school under such circumstances, and I would also grant you the opportunity to prove the sincerity of your promises of good conduct for the future."

There was a severe struggle in the breast of the two boys; they were aware of the justice of their teacher's decision, but pride pled for them to brave the matter out in bold defiance. But their hearts were not entirely wicked and the good in them finally triumphed. Coming forward they craved Mr. Oswald's forgiveness in a truly humble and penitent manner. Then, turning to me, who felt truly happy that my innocence was thus proved beyond a doubt, Reuben addressed me, saying: "Can you forgive us, Walter. It was envy which first caused us to dislike you and we cherished the feeling till it led us to commit this wicked action; but that feeling has all passed away. You never injured us, and I know not what spirit of evil tempted us to injure you as we have done. We feel thankful to our teacher for the lenity he has shown us, and I hope our future conduct will bear witness that we appreciate his kindness, and, if you can forgive us and be friends again, I hope you will find that we are not altogether bad."



Page 40

I had no inclination to withhold the forgiveness so humbly sought. I shook hands warmly, with both the boys, saying, "I forgive you with all my heart, let us be friends. I am proved innocent, and am too happy to cherish anger towards any one." When order was again restored Mr. Oswald made some instructive and useful remarks upon the folly and sin of harboring a feeling of envy and ill-will toward others. "I advise you," said he, "when you detect a feeling of envy and malice rising in your heart, to remember the sin and wrong, to which the indulgence of this feeling led these two boys, and pray to your Heavenly Father to preserve you from a bitter and envious spirit. We will talk no more of the unhappy affair at present; it is my wish that each one of you treat Reuben and Thomas the same in every respect as though this circumstance had never taken place. I intend retaining them still as my pupils, and they must be treated as such by you all. I trust this lesson will not be lost upon any, for it speaks loudly of the necessity of guarding our own hearts from evil, and it also teaches us how to exercise a spirit of forbearance and forgiveness, and now we must proceed to the work of the day."

It is, somewhat singular that evil designs against one, either old or young, often, instead of working harm, prove the means of their advancement and promotion. It was so in this case. I did not forgive these two boys without a struggle with my own temper and pride, but I *did* do it, and it came from my heart, and this forgiveness accorded by me, as well as the thought of what I had suffered, caused me to stand higher than ever in the good opinion of my teachers, and the kindness extended to me on all sides more than repaid my past suffering, when moving under a cloud of suspicion and disgrace. Had I allowed a feeling of revenge to find a place in my heart it might have been gratified by the mortification of Reuben and Thomas, but I tried to rise superior to this feeling, and endeavoured, by repeated acts of kindness, to convince them that my forgiveness was genuine. When I returned home that day at noon Grandma Adams said she knew by the joyous bound with which I entered the house I was the bearer of good news; and when I had told my story, they were all happy to know that the dark shadow which had rested over me was lifted, and my sky was again bright. Grandma listened attentively while I told of the guilty ones being detected, and my own innocence made clear as the light of day. When I had finished she called me to her side and said, "I hope, my boy, you remember the verses I repeated to you the other evening from the thirty-seventh Psalm. That whole Psalm has been a favourite one with me all my life-long; when weighed down by trouble and anxiety during my long and eventful life, I have often derived consolation and encouragement from that beautiful portion of the Bible; and I have often thought if there is one portion of that Book more blessed and cheering than another



Page 41

it must be the thirty-seventh Psalm. If you live to my age, Walter, you have yet a long journey before you, and when the troubles of life disturb your mind—as doubtless they often will—when trials beset you and the way looks dark, remember that old Grandma Adams told you to turn to this Psalm; read it carefully, and you will be sure to find something which will cheer and support you.” I looked with a feeling of deep veneration upon my aged relative, indeed I could not have helped it, as she sat in her arm-chair, with her mild and pleasant countenance, her hair of silvery whiteness smoothly parted beneath the widow’s cap, and as I listened to the words of pious hope and trust which fell from her lips, I felt that I had never before sufficiently valued her counsels and advice, and I resolved that for the future I would endeavour to be doubly attentive and respectful to this aged and feeble relative, who was evidently drawing near the close of her life-journey.

CHAPTER XV.

Time, with his noiseless step, glided on, till but a few weeks remained before the school would break up for the midsummer vacation. Happy as I was at Uncle Nathan’s, I looked eagerly forward to the holidays, for I was then to pay a visit of several weeks to my home at Elmwood, having been absent nearly a year, and, as this time drew nigh, every day seemed like a week till I could set out on the journey. Added to the joy of again meeting my mother and sister, I would also meet Charley Gray, who was also to spend his vacation at home. We had kept up a regular correspondence during the past year. I could always judge of Charley’s mood by the tone of his letters. Sometimes he would write a long and interesting letter, in such a glowing, playful style, that I would read it over half-a-dozen times at the least, and perhaps his very next letter would be just the reverse, short, cold and desponding. Any one who knew Charley as I did could easily tell the state of mind he was in when he wrote, but so well did I know the unhappy moods to which he was subject, that a desponding letter now and then gave me no surprise. In fact, had the style of his letters been uniformly gay and lively, I should have been more surprised, so well did I understand his variable temper. But we both looked forward to our anticipated meeting with all the eagerness and impatience of youthful expectation. For, as I said near the opening of my story, I loved Charley as a brother, and so agreeable and pleasant was his disposition when he was pleased, you quite forgot for the time being the unhappy tempers to which he was subject.

Page 42

There is ever a feeling of sadness connected with the closing of school. Owing to the excellence of the institution, there were pupils attending Fulton Academy from many distant places. But with the coming of the holidays this youthful band, who had daily assembled at the pleasant old Academy would be scattered far and wide. Probably never all to meet again on earth. Many of the youths who had studied a sufficient time to obtain a business education were the coming autumn to go forth to make their own way in the world. The only intimate friend I had made among these was a youth whose home was two hundred miles distant from Fulton; his name was Robert Dalton, and he had studied at Fulton Academy for the past three years, and, having obtained an education which fitted him for the business he intended to follow, he expected to return to Fulton no more. His father was a merchant in one of the cities of the Upper Province, and in the fall Robert was to enter the store, in order to obtain a practical knowledge of business, as his tastes also led him to mercantile pursuits. When I entered the school, a stranger to all, Robert Dalton was the first youth who bestowed kind attentions upon me, and we soon became firm friends; together we studied and mutually assisted each other, and always shared in the same sports and recreations. I could not help sometimes thinking it was well that Charley Gray was attending another institution, for I felt certain (were he there) that the friendship existing between myself and Robert would irritate his fiery and jealous nature beyond measure. Poor Charley, it was a pity that he possessed that unhappy temper; for there was much suffering in store for himself and others arising from this source. Much had he yet to endure before that jealous, exclusive spirit would be brought under subjection. During the summer evenings a ramble to "Beechwood" had been a favourite recreation with Robert and I, and thither we took our way the last evening we expected to spend together at Fulton. We lingered long there that evening, and, seated upon a mossy rock beneath the shade of those old trees, we talked of our coming separation, as well as of our individual plans for the future, till the gathering darkness hastened our departure. The next morning we parted, each to meet the friends who were looking for us with the anxious eyes of love.

I knew not how much I had learned to love my kind relatives till the time drew nigh when I was to bid them adieu for a season. The day before I was to start for home, Aunt Lucinda made a most unexpected announcement, which was no less than she had made up her mind to accompany me to Elmwood. She had never before visited my mother since her marriage, and she thought she might not again have so good an opportunity of visiting the sister whom she had not seen for so many years. My aunt and I were by this time the best of friends, and I was pleased when she declared her intention to accompany me to my home.



Page 43

It did not matter to me that my aunt was odd and old-fashioned in her dress, and still more odd and eccentric in her manner and conversation, to me she was the kind aunt who had cared for my wants, and treated me as kindly as a mother could have done, and to one of my nature this was sufficient to claim my affection and respect. This journey was quite an event in the usually quiet and stay-at-home life of my aunt, but she allowed that having made up her mind she had but one life to live, she might as well enjoy herself sometimes as other folks. Grandma Adams fairly wept when I bade her good-bye, saying: "who will read to me while you are gone, Walter? and it may be when you come back you will find the old arm-chair empty. No one is certain of a day of life but remember the saying 'the young may die, but the old *must* die.' I hope to see you again, but should I not, strive to become a good and useful man, and remember my counsels." Uncle Nathan shook me warmly by the hand, and hoped to see me return soon, telling me also, with a comical look, to take good care of Aunt Lucinda on the journey, as she was *young* and inexperienced, and not accustomed to travelling. "Nathan Adams," replied my aunt, "if you must talk, do try sometimes and talk with a little sense."

I was fearful of missing the train, so long was my aunt in giving directions to the Widow Green, who had come to keep house during her absence. Grandma allowed that though the widow might not understand all the ways of the house, with *her* help they could get along tolerably well for a few weeks. "Never fear, mother," said Uncle Nathan. "There'll be no one to scold while Lucinda's away, and we'll get along famously. Only I suppose we will be called to a startling account when the rightful mistress of the house returns." We soon took our places in the carriage which awaited us, and, taking his place on the front seat, Uncle Nathan started the impatient horse into a swift trot toward Fulton, where we were to meet the train which was to bear us to Elmwood.

CHAPTER XVI.

It must be confessed that my aunt's quaint style of dress contrasted somewhat strongly with many of the fashionably attired lady passengers in the same car. I presume this gave her little uneasiness, for she cared little for the opinion of others in matters pertaining to dress; and she regarded the slightly quizzical glances of some of the passengers with cool indifference. Her apparel was of quite rich material, but the style dated backward for many years, and the bonnet she wore was quite too large to be considered fashionable. Directly in front of us were seated two young ladies, dressed in the extreme of fashion, who seemed to consider it their privilege to amuse themselves by observing and passing remarks to each other, in an undertone, upon the dress and appearance generally of the other passengers. When we took the vacant seat behind them, we were



Page 44

subject to a prolonged stare from the two young misses, and we distinctly heard one of them address the other, saying with a sneer, "I wonder how much that old lady's bonnet cost, when new, I would ask her only it must have been so long ago, I am sure she has forgotten by this time." Aunt Lucinda was not one to let this pass unnoticed. Touching the young lady lightly on the shoulder, to attract her attention, she said in a voice loud enough to be heard by several of the other passengers near us, "I believe, miss, you are anxious to learn the price of my bonnet when new, I have forgotten the exact sum, but you may be sure of one thing, I paid more for it than your good sense and good manner are worth both together." These two ladies had made themselves so disagreeable by their silly and vain manners that this "cut up" from my aunt was greeted by a burst of laughter from all near enough to hear it, and the laugh was evidently not against my aunt. The two girls blushed crimson, but made no reply, and as soon as possible changed their seat to a distant part of the car, possibly they might, for the remainder of their journey, be more mindful of the courtesy and respect due to a fellow traveller.

As the dear old village of Elmwood rose to my view in the distance, I could hardly contain my joy. I had written to my mother, informing her of the day she might look for my arrival, but at the time I knew not that Aunt Lucinda would accompany me, and her visit was certainly a joyful surprise. Quite a number of my young companions had accompanied my mother and sister to the depot. Charley Gray, of course, was there, having returned to Elmwood two days earlier than I. It is needless for me to say that, to all, the meeting was a happy one. My mother was almost overjoyed at thus unexpectedly meeting with the sister she had not seen for so long a time, and the sight of her elder sister recalled to her mind many almost forgotten incidents of her childhood's days. "You see Ellen," said Aunt Lucinda, addressing my mother, "I have brought your boy home to you safe and sound, and I believe half a head taller than when he left you. I don't know as I should have come only I couldn't trust him away from me so long." "I should say by Walter's appearance, that he has not missed a mother's care very much, and thanks from me would poorly express my gratitude." Charley Gray had remained with me the last night I spent at home, and he also gained permission to remain this first night of my return. It was a happy, and I might add a merry party which surrounded my mother's tea-table that evening, which, to please me, was spread under my favourite tree in the garden. So happy was I to be once more at home that I almost felt afraid to go to sleep that night lest I should awake in the morning and find it all a dream. "If you were as tired of the cars as I am," said Aunt Lucinda "you would think this journey no dream, but an awful reality, for my head is all in a whirl yet, and I shall feel no better till I got a good night's sleep."



Page 45

So swiftly had the time passed away, that, till Aunt Lucinda made this remark, my mother had failed to notice the lateness of the hour, and, obeying the hint, she at once offered to conduct her to her room with an apology for having failed to remember that she must be very much fatigued. My aunt was very willing to retire, saying she would be bright enough in the morning, but for to-night she did feel about done out. As for Charley and I, we had so much to say that sleep was out of the question, and, after retiring to our room, we sat for a long time at the open window, enjoying the beautiful moonlight which fell upon the familiar scenes of Elmwood, and talking of all that had befallen us during the past year, till Aunt Lucinda called at our door saying, in a tone which Charley thought decidedly cross, "Do you shut that window this minnit, boys, and go to bed; here it is nearly midnight, and not a wink of sleep has there been in this house. How do you expect we shall all feel to-morrow morning I should like to know? and besides you will take the awfulest cold that ever was heard of, if you sit there by the open window, in this night air." To please my aunt I closed the window, and Charley and I retired, and if we talked longer our conversation was carried on in a whisper, so fearful were we of again disturbing Aunt Lucinda. I doubt very much if there was that night a happier family in Elmwood than the one which rested beneath the roof of our little brown cottage.

CHAPTER XVII.

Happy days pass swiftly. The meeting of the friends at Elmwood was indeed a joyful reunion and each one seemed anxious to do their utmost to contribute to the enjoyment of the other. My mother suspended all regular employment (for the time being) and gave her undivided attention to the entertainment of Aunt Lucinda, and she fully appreciated the kind attentions of my mother and little sister Flora; for, notwithstanding her seemingly cold and crusty exterior, she had really a kindly heart, and real affection from others ever met with a hearty response: although one to whom she it was not well-known would have set her down as a hard, unfeeling disposition; and I am inclined to think my Aunt Lucinda not the only one who is regarded by the generality of people as cold and unfriendly, for the simple reason that they do not take the trouble of looking beyond their often rough exterior, and discover the kindly feelings which remain hidden till called forth by the voice of sympathy and friendship. Although in very moderate circumstances my mother often assisted those who were less favoured, especially when the sick and suffering required care and attention. Aunt Lucinda often accompanied her in these ministrations, and seemed to take pleasure in rendering her assistance in the chambers of sickness which my mother visited. My mother seldom visited in a social way but to add to the enjoyment of her sister she at this time accepted



Page 46

numerous invitations to visit friends, accompanied by my aunt. Scarcely a day passed that failed to bring something in the way of recreation and amusement. There were picnic excursions, drives and walks, in which both old and young participated—even Aunt Lucinda often making one of the company, and enjoying it too—although she was sometimes heard to wonder, what Deacon Martin's wife over at Fulton would say if she saw an old woman like her take such an active part in the pastimes of the young. It would seem that Deacon Martin's wife felt it her duty to be the first to point out any delinquency among those in her immediate sphere. Aunt Lucinda fearful the good Deacon himself would be inclined to think she was evincing a spirit of too much conformity to the world, by joining so frequently in the amusements of the young, and gay. "I think" said my mother, "your best way is to consult your own conscience, instead of the opinion of either Deacon Martin or his wife; and I am sure your conscience can accuse you of no wrong in joining the young people in their innocent amusements." Advised by my mother my aunt purchased a new bonnet of quite modern style and a shawl to match, both to be worn to a picnic which was to be held in a beautiful grove near our village. When she brought home her purchases I laughingly told her if any young lady we might meet on our homeward journey should enquire their price she could easily satisfy her curiosity, as the purchase was of such recent date. "I am sure of one thing," replied my aunt, "if we meet the same young lady we met on our way here, she won't ask me the price of my bonnet. I don't know after all but her remark did me good, for it set me thinking how long I have had this old bonnet, and I believe it was time for me to buy a new one."

The holidays were nearly over and we must soon return to our respective duties. Charley Gray and I had fully enjoyed the time we passed together. I fancied that contact with the world had blunted the keen edge of Charley's nature; for, during all the time we passed together, I saw nothing of the peculiar disposition which had so often been a source of trouble, even when we were mere children. I suppose it must have been that nothing called it forth, for his old enemy still remained in his heart, but so genial and pleasant was he that I really indulged the hope when we parted that his nature was undergoing a change.

During my visit at Elmwood I once met with Farmer Judson. Any resentment I might once have cherished toward him had long since died out, and, having lost all fear of the crusty farmer, I accosted him pleasantly, and offered him my hand. The man felt ashamed to refuse taking the hand so freely offered; but his grasp was certainly not very cordial; and, with a few words, which, if they had meaning, were uttered in too low a voice to be intelligible, he passed on his way. As I gazed after his retreating form I could not fail to mark the change which a year had

Page 47

wrought in his appearance. His step was far less brisk than formerly, his hair was fast turning gray, and I fancied that his countenance wore even a more unhappy and discontented look than usual. I was then too young to understand what I have since known that his dissatisfied expression was caused by his having failed to find happiness in the possession of worldly wealth, and as yet he had not learned to seek happiness from any other source.

The time soon came when we must bid a reluctant adieu to our friends at Elmwood. It was decided that I was to spend another year at Fulton. Charley Gray was to return to his studies for an indefinite time, and sad enough we all felt when the morning of our separation came. The steam-cars soon bore us from the pleasant village of Elmwood where we had spent six happy weeks. Aunt Lucinda allowed that she felt herself ten years younger than before she left home and declared her intention of accompanying me on my next visit to my mother.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Very welcome was the first view we gained of the old red farm-house upon our return, and still more welcome was the cheerful and mild countenance of Grandma Adams who, as soon as Uncle Nathan set out to meet the train, had taken her place at the front door to watch for our arrival. It was many years since she had been so long separated from her daughter, and the six weeks which had passed seemed to her more like six years. For so long had my aunt toiled on at the old homestead, "year in and year out" without scarcely bestowing a thought upon the world beyond, that the kindly spirit of sociality had nearly died out within her; but this visit with its many scenes of enjoyment, as well as the kind attentions of her friends, had again called into action that spirit of friendly intercourse with others without the exercise of which the warmest heart is prone to become cold and selfish. She seemed hardly like the same one who left home six weeks ago, as she presided at the supper table with such a cheerful, even lively, manner on this first evening of our return. The Widow Green insisted that my aunt should take no part in the household cares that evening, but advising her to sit idle when there was work to do, was throwing words away, and she was soon busy clearing away the supper table, and, as she said, "setting" things to rights generally. The lamps were soon lighted, and, though it was only the middle of September, a wood fire blazed in the fire place, and shed a ruddy glow upon the brown ceiling and whitewashed walls of the large clean kitchen which when there was no company, answered the purpose of sitting room as well. Uncle Nathan said he thought they should treat Aunt Lucinda as company for that one evening and occupy the parlor, to which kind offer she replied by begging of him "to try and be sensible for one evening at any rate." "Well" said Uncle Nathan, "remember when I go off and visit about



Page 48

for six weeks, as you have done, I shall expect you to have the parlor warmed and lighted on the first evening of my return, for I am sure I could not settle down to every day life all at once." "Well," said Aunt Lucinda, as she seated herself by the lamp, and took up the knitting-work which was ever at hand, to fill up the "odd spells" which she called a few minutes of leisure, "I have made up my mind that in the future I will sometimes enjoy myself a little, and visit my friends, instead of staying at home till I forget there is any other place in the world but this farm, with its dingy old red house and weather beaten barn." "I am very happy to find," replied my uncle, "that you have finally come to the conclusion that we have but one life to live, for by the way you have worked and drove ahead for the last fifteen or twenty years, one would think you had half a dozen ordinary life-times before you and if you have come to the conclusion that you have but one, and a good share of that gone already, perhaps there will be some peace in the house for the time to come." My aunt always complained that her brother had one very serious fault, he was prodigal of time, and took too little thought for the future, and on this ground she replied in rather a snappish voice: "Well, at any rate, if every one was as slack and careless as you, they would hardly survive for one life time; and I can tell you one thing Nathan Adams, this old house has got to be painted, and that right away, for it is a disgrace to be seen. I didn't think so much about it till since I saw how other folks live. You needn't begin, as I know you will, to talk about the expense. You may just as well spend a little money for this as for any thing else; and if as you say 'we have but one life to live,' we will try and spend the remainder of it in a respectable looking house." "What color would you prefer Lucinda," replied my uncle, "I suppose it will have to be of the most fashionable tint. Ah me, this is what comes of women folks going to visit, and seeing the world; I wonder," continued he, with a roguish look at me "if Aunt Lucinda isn't expecting some gentleman from Elmwood to visit her shortly, whom she would dislike should find her in this rusty-looking old house. There's no telling what may grow out of this visit yet." "There's no use in expecting you to talk sensibly," replied my aunt, "but the house will have to be painted, and that's all about it." "Any thing to keep peace," replied Uncle Nathan; "and if you are really in earnest we will see what can be done about it next week, if this fine weather continues, for the old house does need brushing up a little, no mistake." And this was the way matters usually ended. To confess the truth, Uncle Nathan was inclined to be rather careless in matters requiring extra exertion and confusion; but when my aunt once took a decided stand, the matter was soon accomplished, for much as my Uncle enjoyed teasing her, he entertained



Page 49

a high regard for her opinion, and was often willing to trust matters to her judgment as being superior to his own. As they were all busy in various ways, Grandma motioned me to take a seat by her side, and read to her, saying in an undertone, she had had no good reading while I was away, for Nathan reads too fast, and the Widow Green speaks through her nose, "and you don't know how much I have missed your clear voice and plain pronunciation." "What shall I read Grandma," said I, as I turned the leaves of the large Bible. "Oh, first read my favourite psalm which you know is the thirty-seventh, and then read from St. John's Gospel." For an hour she seemed filled with quiet enjoyment while I read, till, becoming tired, she said "that will do for this time, Walter, for you must be tired after your journey." The few days which remained of the week after our return were busy ones; school was to open on the following Monday and there were many matters requiring attention. The painting of the house was begun in due time, and Uncle Nathan thought "Lucinda was going a little too far" when she first proposed adorning the house which, instead of a dingy red, was now a pure white, with green blinds, but she soon (as she said) talked him over to her side, and the first time Deacon Martin's wife passed the homestead after the improvements were completed, she remarked to a friend, that she almost felt it her duty, to call and ask Uncle Nathan if he were not evincing too much love of display, by expending so much money on mere outward adornings. Somehow or other it came to Aunt Lucinda's ears that the good Deacon's wife thought they had better give their money to the cause of, "Foreign Missions" than spend it in so needless a manner. My uncle's family did give liberally when called upon, in this way, and, more than this, they were not inclined to make remarks upon the short-comings of others; but, upon this occasion my aunt replied with much warmth: "If the Deacon's wife has any thing to say to me upon the subject let her come and say it, the sooner the better, and I'll ask her if she remembers the year I was appointed as one of the collectors for the Foreign Missionary Society, and when I called upon her, after she had complained for some time of hard times and the numerous calls for money, put down her name for twenty-five cents, and did not even pay that down, and I had to go a second time for it; if she knows what's for the best she won't give herself any further trouble as to how we spend our money." On the whole I presume it was all the better that the Deacon's wife never called to censure Aunt Lucinda for extravagance in spending money.

CHAPTER XIX.



Page 50

The second year which I spent at Uncle Nathan's was one which I often since called to mind as the happiest of my life. The days glided by in the busy routine of school duties, and my evenings were spent in study varied by social enjoyment. I was never too busy to respond to grandma's request that I should leave my lessons or play for an hour and read to her. I had learned to regard this aged relative with much affection; even as a child I believe I was of a reflective cast of mind, and Grandma Adams was the first very old person with whom I had been intimately associated. And often as I sat by her side and watched the firelight as it shone upon her silvery hair, and lighted up her venerable and serene countenance, would I wonder mentally if I would ever grow as old and feeble and my hair become as white as her's. I remember one evening when I was indulging in these thoughts the old lady asked me what I was thinking about that caused me to look so serious? "I was wondering," replied I, "if I shall live to see as many years, and if my eyes will become as dim and my air grow white as yours." "My dear boy," she replied, "I suppose I seem to you like one who has travelled a long journey. At your age, ten or twenty years seemed to me almost an endless period of time, but now that I have seen more than eighty years of life the whole journey seems very short, when taking a backward view of the path over which I have travelled. It seems but as yesterday since I was a little mischief-loving school girl, when my only anxiety was how I could obtain the most play, and get along with the least study. I used then often to think how glad I would be when my school-days should be over; but how little did I then realize that I was then enjoying my happiest days; for, with many others, I now believe, our school days to be the happiest period of life. Time passed on, till I grew up, and married. I left my native place which was Salem, in the State of New Hampshire, and removed to Western Canada. When you look around, my boy, over this prosperous and growing country, with its well-cultivated farms, and numerous towns and villages, you can form no idea of what the place was like when I arrived here, fifty-six years ago last February. Your grandfather was born, and passed the days of his childhood and early youth, in Scotland, but when he was nearly grown to manhood his parents emigrated to the United States, where he resided for some years; but as he grew older he became prejudiced against the 'Yankee Rule,' as he styled the Republican Government of the United State, and, soon after our marriage, he resolved to remove to Canada. 'I desire,' said he, 'to seek a home where I hope to spend my life, be it long or short, and that home must be in a country subject to the British Government under which, I am proud to say, I was born, and under which I wish to die.' I was willing to make any sacrifice to please my husband, for whom I had a deep affection," and, as grandma said



Page 51

these words, youthful memories moistened her eyes and caused her voice to tremble, but she soon regained her composure, and continued: "I was then young and full of hope, and the trials which I knew would fall to my lot gave me no anxiety. The weather was bitter cold, during all that weary journey to our forest home in Canada. We had been married less than a year when we left our friends in New Hampshire to seek a home in this new country. The summer before my husband visited the place to purchase a lot of wild land, and build the log cabin which was to be our first shelter in the Canadian wilderness. Much as he had told me, I had formed but a very imperfect idea of the appearance of the place, till after a ten days' journey (by slow teams) through the deep snows which often impeded our way, we reached, near nightfall, the small log-hut which was to be our home. I had ever thought I possessed a good share of fortitude and resolution, but at that time it was put to a severe test. 'There Martha, is our home,' said my husband, pointing to the rude pile of logs, which stood in a cleared space, barely large enough to secure its safety from falling trees, and beyond all was a dense forest of tall trees and thick underbrush and a fast falling shower of snow (at the time) added to the gloominess of the scene. I gazed around me with sadness, almost with dismay and terror. At length I found voice to say '*can* we live *here*.' 'I have no doubt that we can live here, and be happy too,' replied your grandfather in a hopeful voice, 'if it pleases God to grant us health and strength to meet and, I trust, overcome, the difficulties and hardships which are the inevitable lot of the early settlers in a new country.' A man whom Mr. Adams had hired had gone before us that we might not find a fireless hearth upon our arrival; and the next day, after having become somewhat rested from the fatigues of our toilsome journey, and having arranged our small quantity of furniture with some attempt at order, I began to feel something akin to interest in our new home; but, to a person brought up as I had been, it was certainly a gloomy-looking spot; and I must own that I shed some tears for the home I had left. We were three miles from any neighbour, and in the absence of my husband I felt a childish fear of being left alone in that strange wild looking place. Time would fail me to tell you of all the hardships and privations we endured during the first years of our residence in this our new home. Lucinda there was our first child. I buried a little boy younger than Nathan. A few kind settlers gathered together and laid him in his grave without a minister to perform the rites of burial. I buried another son and daughter, and all that's left to me now are Lucinda and Nathan, and your mother, who was my youngest child; as my children grew older I learned the value of the tolerable education I had myself received. For many years such a thing as a school was out of the

Page 52

question, and all the leisure time I could command I spent in teaching my children. Nathan was slow at learning, but it did beat all, how smart Lucinda was at her book. I could never tell how she learned her letters; I may say she picked them up herself, and with a very little assistance was soon able to read. Other settlers came among us from time to time, and bye-and-bye we had both a school and a meeting-house. I tell you, Walter, when I now sit at the door, and look around me over the beautiful farms, with their orchards and smooth meadow-lands, and further away the gleaming spire of the village church, and hear the sharp shriek of the locomotive (I believe they call it) and call to mind the log-hut in the depth of the forest, which was, my first home on this farm, I am lost in wonder at the changes which have taken place, and I cannot help repeating the words, 'old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.' Your grandfather lived to a good old age, and, when infirmities obliged him to resign the care of the farm to our boy Nathan he enjoyed the fruits of his former industry in the comforts of a home of plenty, and the care and attention of our dutiful children. As for me I do not now look forward to a single day. I have already outlived the period of natural life and feel willing to depart whenever an all-wise Providence sees fit to remove me; but I would not be impatient and would say from my very heart: 'All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change comes.' And now, Walter, read to me, for it is past my usual time of retiring to rest." As I closed the book (after reading for half an hour) Grandma said, "I have read myself, and heard others read the Bible these many years, yet each time I listen to a chapter, I discover in it some new beauty which I had never noticed before. Truly the Bible is a wonderful book; it teaches us both how to live and how to die."

CHAPTER XX.

"I wish you would go over to the post office, Nathan," said my aunt one evening in the latter part of winter; "none of us have been over to Fulton this week, and who knows but there may be letters," "Who knows indeed!" replied Uncle Nathan, "I am as you say a careless mortal, and never inquired for letters the last time I was over, so I'll just harness up and drive over this clear moonlight evening." He returned in an hour's time and soon after entering the house, handed a letter to my aunt saying, "read that and see what you think of it." Seating herself and adjusting her glasses, she unfolded the letter, and perused it carefully; but any one acquainted with her would at once have been aware, by the expression of her countenance, as she read, that the communication, whatever it was, was not of an agreeable nature. The letter was from a cousin residing in the State of Massachusetts whom they had not seen for many years, but who used in his youthful days to be a frequent visitor.



Page 53

Indeed it would seem, by all accounts, that he was fonder of visiting than of any regular employment. This cousin, Silas Stinson, had grown up to manhood with no fixed purpose in life. As a boy he was quick at learning, and obtained a fair education, which, as he grew older, he was at much pains to display by using very high-flown language, which often bordered upon the flowery and sublime. I believe in their younger days Aunt Lucinda used to allow "it fairly turned her stomach to hear the fellow talk." He was a dashing, showy fellow when young, and was soon married to a delicate and lady-like girl, just the reverse of what his wife should have been. A woman like Aunt Lucinda would have given him an idea of the sober realities of life, but the disposition of the wife he chose was something like his own, dreamy and imaginative, with none of the energy necessary to face the trials and difficulties which lie in the life-path of all, in a greater or less degree. He had tried various kinds of business but grew weary of each in its turn. At the time of his marriage his father set him up in a dry-goods store, and, had he given proper attention to his business, would probably have become a rich man. For a time things went on swimmingly, but the novelty of the thing wore off, and he soon felt like the clerk who told his employer "he only liked one part of the business of store-keeping, and that was shutting the blinds at night." After trying various kinds of business, with about equal success, he got the idea, and a most absurd one it was, that farming "was his proper vocation." His indulgent father again assisted him, by purchasing for him a small farm, thinking he would now apply himself and make a living. His father maintained a kind of oversight of matters during his life-time, but in process of time he died, and Silas was left to his own resources. His father's property was divided among the surviving children, and it was found that Silas had already received nearly double his share of the patrimony, so, of course, nothing remained for him at the time of his father's death. Necessity at length drove him to mortgage his home, and he never paid even the interest on the claim, and when the above mentioned letter was written, the term of the mortgage was nearly expired, and he must soon seek another home for his family. Such was the idle whimsical being who now wrote to these relatives to know what they thought of his removal to Canada, and only waited, as he said, to see what encouragement they could give him adding that he was willing to work and only asked them to assist him in getting his family settled till he could look about him a little and see what was to be done, signing himself their attached but unfortunate cousin. But the professed attachment of her Cousin Silas failed to call up a very pleased expression of countenance as my aunt refolded the letter, saying, "Well if this isn't a stroke of business, then I'm mistaken. What are you going to do about it Nathan



Page 54

Adams?" "I can't answer that question just yet," said my uncle, reflectively. "I think we'd better all have a night's sleep before we say any more about it." They felt in duty bound to reply to the letter, but what reply to make was an unsettled question for several days. They were aware that, for all their cousin's professed willingness to work, the care of his family would in all probability devolve upon them, for some time at any rate. But Grandma Adams had tenderly loved her brother, Silas' father, and at length by her advice a favourable reply was written. "I can tell, you one thing," said Aunt Lucinda, after the letter was sent away, "I cannot, and will not have Silas Stinson's family move in here, for if he has no more method in governing his children than in other things we might as well have as many young Indians right out of the Penobscot Tribe brought into the house. I am willing to help them as far as I can, but bringing them into the house is out of the question." "I'll tell you what you can do, Nathan," said grandma, "you know there's an old house on that piece of land you bought of Squire Taylor last fall, and you just fix it up as well as you can, and let them live in it this summer, and by the time another winter comes you can see further about it; perhaps by keeping round with Silas you may get some work out of him on the farm this summer, and his family must have a home of some kind. Providence has been very kind to us, and we must lend them a helping hand." "I dare say," replied my aunt, in her usual sharp manner, "that Providence has done as much for Cousin Silas as for us, only while we have toiled early and late, he has been whiffling about from one thing to another, trying to find some way to live without work; but I guess he'll learn before he's done that he'll have to work for a living like other people. But I suppose, Nathan as they've got to come you'd better see about fixing up that old house right away. If there was only himself and wife, I'd try and put up with them here for a while, but with their five wild tearing children—it makes me shudder to think of it!"

When the matter of Cousin Silas' removal to Canada became a settled thing it appeared less terrible than upon first consideration. April arrived, bringing it's busy season of sugar-making, and it's mixture of sunshine and showers. Amid the hurry of work Uncle Nathan found time to give some attention to the matter of repairing the house, for the reception of the expected new-comers. Aunt Lucinda said she supposed her mother was right, and it was their duty to extend a helping hand to Cousin Silas, but at the same time it appeared to her that the path of duty really did have a great many difficult places, and she supposed as we could not go round about them we must keep straight forward and get over the hard places as well as we could. Preparations went on apace, and before the last of April the repairs on the house were completed. I was still studying hard, expecting this to be my



Page 55

last year at school. Of all the family I had become most attached to my aged grandma, whose life was evidently drawing near the close. She liked to have me near her, and, to her, no other reading was like mine; and the best which any one else could do, fell far below my services in waiting upon her; and my uncle and aunt often wondered what mother would do when the time came that I must leave them. Considerate ones, spare yourselves these forebodings, for, before I shall have left your family-circle, your aged mother will have been called to enjoy that rest which remaineth to all who live the life she has lived. It was thought by many to be somewhat singular that a youth of my age should have been so happy and contented in the quiet dwelling of my uncle, whose youngest occupants were middle-aged, and they could not be supposed to have much sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of youth. I had gone there in the first place merely to obey the wishes of my mother, which had ever been as a law unto me. I loved my uncle from the first, and, instead of feeling anger at the distrust with which my aunt was inclined to regard me, I felt a sort of pity for the lonely woman, and resolved, if possible, to teach her by my conduct that I was not altogether so bad as she supposed; and my kindness to her soon softened a heart which had become somewhat unfeeling, from having so few natural ties, as well as for want of intercourse with the world at large; and I learned that my attempts to please her, especially when they involved self-sacrifice, made me all the happier, so true it is that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

And in time I learned to love my home at the old farm house, with an affection so deep that the thought of leaving it was very unpleasant to me. I had also become much attached to my kind teacher and his family, and thought with pain of a separation from them. But the time was now drawing nigh when, like every youth who must depend upon his own exertions for success, I must go forth to make my own way in the world. By diligent study I had acquired an education which would enable me to fill a position of trust and responsibility, when I should have gained a practical knowledge of business. My mind turned toward mercantile pursuits, and it was my intention (after leaving school) to seek a situation where I could obtain experience in business.

CHAPTER XXI.

Winter had gradually melted away before the genial sun and warm rains of spring, till the snow had entirely disappeared, and the fields began to wear a tinge of green, with many other indications that summer was about to revisit the earth. There is something very cheering in the return of spring after enduring for a lengthened period the rigors of winter. The waters are loosed from their icy fetters, and sparkle with seemingly renewed brightness in the glad beams of the sun, and all nature seems to partake

Page 56

of the buoyant spirit called forth by this happy season. The song of birds fill the air, and they seem in their own way to offer their tributes of praise to the kind and benevolent Father, by whose direction the seasons succeed each other in their appointed order. All were busy at the farm. Uncle Nathan was beginning to look up his "help" for the labors of the summer, and my aunt was equally busy within doors. Grandma is still there, always contented and always happy, for the old-fashioned leather-covered Bible, which lies in its accustomed place by her side, has been her guide through the period of youth and middle-age, and now, in extreme old age, its promises prove, "as an anchor to her soul, both sure and steadfast." The Widow Green is at present an inmate of the dwelling, as she often is in busy seasons. A letter has lately been received from Cousin Silas, saying he hoped it would afford them no serious disappointment if he postponed the proposed journey to Canada for a time, and added, by way of explanation, that his wife was anxious to revisit the scenes of her childhood in the State of Maine, before removing to Canada, and, as he considered it the duty of every man to make the happiness of his wife his first consideration, he was for this reason obliged to defer the proposed removal for the present. Had he seen the look of relief which passed over my aunt's countenance as she read the letter, he certainly would have felt no fears of her suffering from disappointment by their failing to arrive at the time expected. "I only hope," said she, "that his wife may find the ties which bind her to the scenes of her childhood strong enough to keep her there, and I am certain I shall not seek to sever them." "I am afraid Lucinda," said her mother, "that your heart is not quite right." "Perhaps not mother," she replied, "I try to do right, but I can't help dreading the arrival of that lazy Silas Stinson and his family; he was always too idle to work and when they are once here we cannot see them suffer, so I see nothing for us but to support them." "Let us hope for the best" said the old lady, "he may do better than you think, and it's no use to meet troubles half way."

The preceding winter had been one of unusual severity, and, as is often the case in the climate of Canada where one extreme follows another, an early spring had given place to an intensely hot summer. The school had closed, but I was to remain with Uncle Nathan till autumn, when I was to return to my home at Elmwood for a short time before seeking a situation. It was the tenth of August, a day which will be long remembered by the dwellers in and around Fulton. For many weeks not a drop of rain had fallen upon the dry and parched ground, and the heat from the scorching rays of the sun was most oppressive. Day and night succeeded each other with the same constant enervating heat. Sometimes the sun was partially obscured by a sort of murky haze, which seemed to



Page 57

render the air still more oppressive and stifling, and all nature seemed to partake of the universal languor; not a breath of air stirred the foliage of the trees, and the waters of the river assumed a dull motionless look, in keeping with the other elements. "This day does beat all," said the Widow Green as she came in, flushed and heated from the dairy room. "I thought," replied my aunt, "I could bear either heat or cold as well as most people, but this day is too much for me. I cannot work, and I would advise you to give over too." "I remember a summer like this thirty years ago," said Grandma, "the same heat continued for nine weeks, and then we had a most terrible storm, and after that we had no more to say very warm weather the rest of the season; and I am pretty sure there is a tempest brooding in the air to-day, by the dull heavy feeling about my head, which I always experience before a thunder-storm."

The heat had become so intense by noon that Uncle Nathan and his hired men did not attempt to go back to the fields after dinner, but sat listlessly in the coolest part of the house; they made some attempt to interest each other in conversation, but even talking was an exertion, and they finally relapsed into silence, and, leaning back in his chair, Uncle Nathan's loud breathing soon indicated that in his case the heat as well as all other troubles were for the present forgotten in sleep. A change came over the heavens with the approach of evening, a breeze sprung up, scattering the misty haze which had filled the air during the day, and disclosing a pile of dark clouds in the western sky, which seemed to gather blackness as they rose. "It's my opinion," said Grandma, who had carefully observed the weather during the day, "that the storm will burst about sunset," and true enough it did burst with a violence before unknown in that vicinity. I had gone to the far-off pasture to drive home the cows at the usual time for milking. The huge pile of clouds, which for hours had lain motionless in the west, now rose rapidly toward the zenith, and hung like a funeral pall directly over our heads. The tempest burst in all its fury before I reached home, clouds of dust filled the air, which almost blinded me, and almost each moment was to be heard the crash of falling trees in the distant forest. The thunder, which at first murmured faintly, increased as the clouds advanced upward, till by the time I reached home it was indeed terrific. They were all truly glad when I burst suddenly into the house drenched with rain, and completely exhausted. The cows remained un milked for that night, a thing which Aunt Lucinda said had never happened before since her recollection. Flash after flash of vivid lightning filled the otherwise darkened air, succeeded by the deep heavy roll of the thunder. It was noticed by those who witnessed this storm, that the lightning had that peculiar bluish light which is sometimes, but not often, observed during a violent summer tempest.



Page 58

The inmates of our dwelling became terrified. The Widow Green crept to the darkest corner of the room and remained with her face bowed upon her hands. "I am no safer," said she, "in this corner than in any other place, but I do not like to sit near a window while the lightning is so bright and close at hand." Even my aunt, self-possessed as she usually was, showed visible signs of alarm, and truly the scene would have inspired almost any one with a feeling of terror, mixed with awe, at the sublime but awful war of the elements. The wind blew a perfect hurricane, and the rain fell in torrents, and, quickly succeeding the flashes of forked lightning, peal after peal of thunder shook the house to its foundation. Grandma Adams was the only one who seemed to feel no fear; but there was deep reverence in her voice as she said, "Be not afraid my children; for the same Voice which calmed the boisterous waves on the Sea of Galilee governs this tempest, and protected by Him we need not fear." The storm lasted for hours and increased in violence till Grandma said, "the storm of thirty years ago was far less severe than this." The rushing of the wind and rain, the deep darkness, except when lighted by the glare of the vivid lightning, with the awful roll of the thunder, altogether formed a scene which tended to inspire a feelings of deep awe mingled with terror. There had been a momentary lull in the tempest, when the air was filled with a sudden blaze of blinding light, succeeded by a crash of thunder which shook the very ground beneath our feet. "That lightning surely struck close at hand," said Uncle Nathan, as he opened the door and looked out into the darkness, and a few moments after the cry of "fire" added to the terrors of the storm. A barn belonging to a neighbor who lived a mile distant from us, had been struck by that flash, and was soon wrapped in flames. It was a large building, with timbers and boards like tinder, and was filled with hay, and it was well-nigh consumed before assistance could reach the spot, and it was with much difficulty that the flames could be kept from the other buildings on the premises, indeed several of the neighbours were obliged to remain on the spot most of the night. The storm continued with unabated fury till after midnight and then gradually died away, and from many a home a prayer of thanksgiving ascended to Heaven, for protection amid the perils of that long-to-be-remembered storm.

CHAPTER XXII.

I believe there is a power and solemnity in the near approach of death which often makes itself felt even before it invades a household; and something of this kind was experienced by the change which came over Grandma Adams about this time. It would have been difficult for her dearest friends to have explained in what the change consisted; but a change there certainly was which impressed all who saw her. She still sat in her arm-chair, she suffered no pain, and her



Page 59

countenance was cheerful and happy, and her intellect seemed unusually strong and clear; but to the eye of experience it was evident that this aged pilgrim, who for more than eighty years had trod the uneven and often toilsome journey of life, would soon be forever at rest. The Widow Green remarked to my aunt one day in a mysterious whisper, "that she was sure grandma was drawing near the brink of the dark river, and the bright expression of her countenance was but a reflection of the happiness in store for her on the other side." Strong and self-reliant as was my aunt, the death of her mother was something of which she could not bear to speak, and the widow was one who so often talked of dreams and mysterious warnings, that my aunt usually paid little heed to her remarks in this respect. But she could not reason away the change in her mother's appearance. Her mother had been so long spared to her that she had almost forgotten that it could not always be thus, and the All-wise Father, who sees the end from the beginning, willed it that the sudden death of her aged and pious mother should in a great measure be the means of preventing her from placing her affections too much on the perishable things of earth. One evening, when I closed the Bible after spending the usual time in reading to grandma, she said: "If you are not tired, Walter, read for me once more my favorite psalm." I read the psalm from the beginning in a clear distinct voice as I knew pleased her best, and when I had finished she said: "You have often, dear Walter, during the two past years forsaken your books or your play to read to me, and you have been to me a great blessing, and you will be rewarded for it, for respect and veneration from youth toward age and helplessness is a noble virtue, and the youth who pays respect to the aged will be prospered in his ways." There was something in the look and manner of my aged relative which affected me strangely. Her countenance looked unusually bright and happy, and her words had an earnestness of expression which I had never noticed before. At the time I knew but little of the different ways in which death approaches, and was not aware that with the very aged the lamp of life often burns with renewed brightness just before it goes out forever. After a short silence, grandma spoke again, saying, "Have you ever read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Walter?" I replied that I had, and she continued: "You may remember that when an order was sent for one of the pilgrims to make ready to cross the 'dark river', the messenger gave him this token that he brought a true message, 'I have broken thy golden bowl and loosed thy silver cord.' I think I have the same token, Walter. I feel that the golden bowl is well-nigh shattered, and the silver cord of my life is loosening, and soon the last strand will be severed, and to me it is rather a matter of joy than of sorrow. I know in whom I have believed, and all is peace. Continue, my child, as you have begun in life, and



Page 60

should you be spared to old age you will never regret following my advice. And now I must go to rest, for I am weary, and would sleep." Her words awed me deeply; but surely, thought I, grandma cannot die while she seems so well and so like herself. The words she had spoken so agitated my mind that it was long after I retired to rest, before I slept, and when at length slumber stole over my senses, I dreamed that a being beautiful and bright stood at my bedside, who was like Grandma Adams, only decrepitude and age had all disappeared, and a beauty and brightness, such as I am unable to describe, had taken their place. A smile rested upon her countenance, as she seemed in my dream, for a moment, to raise her hands above my head in blessing, when she disappeared from my view, and I awoke. But even while I dreamed, the angel of death came with noiseless step, and severed the last strand in the cord of grandma's life, and who shall say that her spirit was not permitted to hover for a moment, in blessing, over the youth so dear to her, before taking its final leave of earth.

Upon going to her mother's room the next morning, my aunt found that she had passed from the sleep of repose to the deeper sleep of death. Thinking that possibly life still lingered, they immediately summoned the physician, but after one glance at the still features, he addressed my aunt, saying, "Your mother has been a long time spared to you, but she has gone to her rest." Even death dealt gently with the aged one whom every one loved. There was no sign of suffering visible, for as she sank to sleep, even so she died without a struggle, and a smile still seemed to linger upon her aged but serene countenance. I believe there are few who have not at some period of their life been called to notice the change which a few short hours will bring over a household. A family may have lived on for years with no break in the home circle, and every thing connected with them have moved on with the regularity of clockwork, when some sudden and unlooked-for event will all at once change the very atmosphere of their home. Owing to her advanced age, Grandma Adams' death could hardly be supposed to have been unlooked for, yet so it was.

For so many years had she occupied her accustomed place in the family circle with health seemingly unimpaired, that her children had almost forgotten to realize that a day *must* come when she would be removed from their midst, and the place which then knew her would know her no more forever. Very silent and gloomy was the old farmhouse, during the days Grandma Adams lay shrouded for the grave. A hush seemed to have fallen over the darkened rooms, and the soft footsteps of friends and neighbors as they quietly passed in and out, all told the story of death and bereavement. Funeral preparations were something for which the Widow Green seemed peculiarly adapted, and her presence was ever sought in the house of mourning. She was a very worthy woman, and much respected by



Page 61

the people of Fulton, among whom she had resided for many years; but along with many estimable qualities she had also her failings and weak points; she had an undue zest for whatever partook of the marvellous or mysterious, her education was extremely limited, and her method of reasoning was not always most clear and logical. She was a firm believer in signs and omens, as warnings of death and other misfortunes, and very few events of this kind took place in the vicinity of which the Widow Green, according to her own statement, was not favored with a warning. But some of the neighbors were often heard to assert that many of her warnings were never spoken of till after the event happened. But setting aside this weakness, and the Widow Green was a kind and useful woman in the vicinity where she resided.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A conversation to which I listened between the Widow Green and Mrs. Waters, another neighbor who assisted in the preparations for the funeral, filled me with astonishment, it being the first time I had ever listened to any thing of the kind. It was the night before the burial and the two women were busily employed in making up mourning for the family; I was seated quietly in a corner of the room, and if they were aware of my presence they did not allow it to interfere with the conversation which they carried on in that low tone which people mostly use in the house of death. "Do you believe in warnings?" said the Widow Green, addressing Mrs. Waters. "Most sartinly I do, and with good reason," was the reply. "For many and many a time I have been warned of sickness and death in the neighborhood." The stillness and lateness of the hour, together with the employment of the women, surrounded as they were with crape and black cloths of different kinds, struck me with a feeling of superstitious awe; and I listened to their conversation as children listen to a story which fills them with terror, while yet they are unwilling to lose a word. "It was only last winter," continued Mrs. Waters, "just before old Mr. Harris died—you remember him, he lived, you know, over on the east road toward the pond—as I was saying, one night about nine o'clock, there came two quick raps at our front door, as loud almost as if you had struck with a hammer; Waters was just lighting his pipe at the kitchen fire, and he gave such a spring when the sudden thumps came on the door that he upset a pitcher of yeast I had left by the fire to rise, of course that was of no consequence, and I only mention it as a circumstance connected with the warning, and to let you know that he was frightened, for you know for a general thing he kind o' makes light o' these things and says 'all old women, who drink green tea, have dreams and wonderful warnings.' As I was sayin', he ran to unbolt the door, without stoppin' to pick up the broken jar, and of course no one was there. 'Now,' said I, 'perhaps you will believe in warnings, for if ever there was



Page 62

a warning that was one.' 'I believe', said he, 'that some of the boys that know how foolish you are, are trying to frighten you.' 'I wonder which was most frightened', said I, 'for I didn't upset the yeast jar at any rate,' and the next day when we got word that old Mr. Harris died at nine o'clock the night before, he looked kind o' sober, and said, 'well it *is* singular, that is certain,' and I could never get another word out of him about it, but you may know he thought it was a serious matter, for the very next time he went over to the village he brought me home a much nicer jar than the old one, without me as much as reminding him of it, and most always I have to tell him half a dozen times before I can get him to remember any little thing of that kind." They went on with their work for a few moments in silence, when the Widow Green, sinking her voice almost to a whisper, said: "I will tell you, Mrs. Waters, but you mustn't mention it for the world, we had two warnings over at our house of Grandma Adams' death. It's better than a month ago, I dreamed of bein' over here, helping to make up all kinds of finery for a weddin', and you know to dream of a weddin' is a sure sign of a funeral; and the next mornin' I said to my daughter Matilda Ann, there will certainly be a death over at Nathan Adams' before long. I didn't say nothin' to any one else, but kept kind o' ponderin' it in my mind, and then one night, about sunset, last week, our dog Rover went over on the hill and sat with his face toward here and give the mournfulest howls I ever did hear. I sent my boy Archibald to call him in, for I couldn't bear to hear it. The dog wouldn't stir, and the boy dragged him into the house by main strength, and I shut him up in the back-kitchen, but the first time the door was opened he sprung out, in less than a minnit he was over on the hill again, and set up them awful howls a second time, and if that wasn't a warnin' I don't know what would be one." The widow had a very appreciative listener in the person of Mrs. Waters, and I know not how many experiences of a similar kind might have been related, had not the entrance of my aunt put a sudden check upon their conversation; for they both knew her sufficiently well, to be aware that a conversation of this kind would not for a moment be tolerated in her hearing. It was something entirely new to me, and it kept me awake for a long time after I retired to rest. Can it be, thought I, that an All-wise Providence makes known by such means, events which are not revealed to the wisest and best of mankind: and young as I was, I banished the idea, as an absurdity, and to quiet my mind, I began repeating to myself what had been grandma's favorite psalm, and before I reached the close fell quietly asleep. In after years, the conversation between these two women often recurred to my mind, and more than once I have smiled at the recollection of the broken yeast-jar.

But they verily believed their own statements, having listened to stories of a similar kind since their own childhood; a belief in them almost formed a part of their education, and having never set reason at work upon the subject, they were sincere in their belief that events are often foreshadowed by those superstitious signs which formed the topic of their conversation.



Page 63

The funeral was over with its mourning weeds and solemn burial service, and all that was earthly of Grandma Adams rested in the grave; but what shall we say of those she has left in their now lonely home? My uncle and aunt were still as deeply attached to their mother as in the days of their childhood and youth, and her age and utter dependence upon them for years past had all the more endeared her to their hearts, and when she was thus suddenly removed a blank was left in their home which they felt could never again be filled. But the affairs of life do not stand still, and we are often obliged to take up again the realities of life, with the tears of bereavement and anguish still upon our cheeks, and even this may be wisely ordered to prevent us from indulging our grief, even to a morbid melancholy. But lonely enough seemed the house when the kind friends and neighbors had all again departed to their homes, and we were left alone. There was grandma's arm-chair with the little stand for her large Bible, her glasses lay upon its worn cover, even as she had laid them aside on the last night of her life. Many had offered to remove them, but my aunt would not allow them to be disturbed, and it was several days after the funeral that I quietly removed them to another room while my aunt was busied elsewhere, and she never questioned me as to why I had done so. From the day of her mother's death my aunt was a changed woman, her disposition seemed softened and subdued, and if, from long habit, she sometimes spoke in sharp quick tones, she was gentle and far more forbearing with the failings of others than formerly. Uncle Nathan said but little, but it was easy to see that the loss of his aged mother was much in his mind; and often was he seen to brush away a tear when his eye rested upon the vacant corner. It was not long after this that they received a letter from cousin Silas, informing them that he expected to arrive with his family in a few days. Aunt Lucinda never uttered an impatient word, but began quietly to make preparations for their reception. Very likely she remembered what her mother had said sometime before. It is very often the case that advice which we give little heed to while the giver is in life and health becomes a sacred obligation after their death. Almost every day she went over to the house which was to be their home, and spent several hours in putting it in order, and when they arrived, a comfortable home awaited them. Cousin Silas was, as may be supposed, a much talking, do-nothing kind of a man, his language was plentifully adorned with flowery words, to which he often added scripture quotations, although seemingly he took little pains to inculcate in his own family the principles taught in that sacred volume. When, soon after his arrival, he was informed of their late bereavement, he made a long, and I suppose very appropriate speech, but I am inclined to think, it failed to carry much consolation to his listeners. It would be difficult for one to imagine



Page 64

a more disorderly family than was that of Cousin Silas, and yet strange to say he seemed to regard his wild unmanageable children as models of perfection. His own imagination was very fertile, and he really indulged the illusion that they were all he would have liked them to be. His wife, her spirits broken down by poverty and care, had long since ceased to make the best of the little left in her hands, and her family government was also extremely nominal in its nature, so that their arrival at Uncle Nathan's, to say the least of it, was not a desirable affair. There were five children altogether. I believe it would have been hard to find a worse boy than their eldest son Ephraim, aged about fourteen. The next in age was George Washington, but I am certain, had he lived in the days of that illustrious man, he would have looked upon his namesake with any other feeling rather than pride. Ephraim had one way, and George Washington had another. The eldest was noisy and boisterous and delighted in malicious fun, and was continually, as the neighbors said, "up to some kind of mischief;" while the other was too indolent even to do mischief; he had one of those disagreeable sulky natures which we sometimes meet with always grumbling and out of humor with himself and every one else. Then there were three little girls, and all that caused them to be less troublesome than the boys, was, that they were younger; the youngest was little more than a babe and gave the least trouble of either of the five. They remained at Uncle Nathan's for two or three days before removing to the home prepared for them; and they certainly were not an agreeable addition to our quiet household. I could not have believed it possible that my aunt could have borne the annoyance with so much patience. She went about quietly and made the best of the matter, altogether unlike my Aunt Lucinda of two years ago, and I believe she had a feeling of pity for the weary-looking mother of this disorderly family; she did remark to the Widow Green, on the day of their removal, that "she believed if they had staid much longer, her head would have been turned with their noise and confusion." But they were gone at last, and assisted by the Widow Green my aunt went from room to room, and endeavored again to bring order out of the mass of litter and confusion; remarking that the house looked as though it had been turned upside down, and it did really seem pleasant when, after two days' labor, the rooms were again put to rights, and the dwelling brought back to its usual state of cleanliness and order. My aunt said, "it seemed a waste of labor to fit up a home for a family who didn't know how to take care of it; but then," added she, "if we do our duty, it wont be our fault if they fail to do theirs." In a few days she went over to see how they were getting along, and allowed upon her return that she had serious fears the children would pull her in pieces. In spite of their mother's feeble attempts at authority,



Page 65

the little girls pulled at the ribbons on her cap, picked at her cuff-buttons, and one of them made a sudden snatch at her brooch, my cherished gift; the mother ran to the rescue, but not till the pin attached to the brooch was first bent, then broken. "What shall I do with these children," said the mother. Provoked by the injury to her much valued brooch, my aunt replied, hastily: "I know what I would do, I would whip them till they'd learn to keep their hands off what they've no business with." But when she saw how grieved the woman seemed to be, she felt sorry she had spoken so hastily. My aunt said it seemed as though night would never come, when I was to drive over to take her home, for there was not, she said, a minute's peace in the house during the whole afternoon, and glad enough was she to return at night to her own quiet home. It was a severe trial to one of my aunt's orderly habits, to be daily subjected to the visits of the noisy mischievous children of her cousin, and although she bore it with more patience than might have been expected, it was a serious annoyance. More than all, she dreaded the eldest son Ephraim. From the first there had existed a kind of feud between them. The boy was quick to notice the love of order so observable in my aunt, and took a malicious pleasure in studying up ways and means to annoy her in this respect. Articles of daily use were misplaced, and many an accident occurred in the household which could be traced in an indirect way to Ephraim; but the fellow was shrewd as well as mischievous, and took good care that not a scrap of direct evidence could be brought against him.

His father was for a time to assist Uncle Nathan upon the farm; and under pretence of performing some of the lighter work Ephraim usually came to the farm with him, but it was very little work which his father or any one else got out of him; but it seemed an understood thing that Cousin Silas and his family were to be borne with, and they endeavored to bear the infliction with as good a grace as possible. My aunt was put out of all patience, by finding one day, upon going to the clothes' yard to hang out her weekly washing, the clothes-lines cut in pieces and scattered about the yard. She knew at once that this was some of Ephraim's handiwork, and when the men came home to dinner she taxed him with the crime in no very gentle tones. As usual he declared himself innocent, even saying that he did not know there was a line in the yard. Then, as if a sudden thought had struck his mind, he said with the most innocent manner imaginable, "I just now remember that when we went out from breakfast this morning, I saw Tom Green coming out of the yard with a jack-knife in his hand, and it must have been him who cut up the lines." This was rather too glaring a lie, and Ephraim must have forgotten for the moment that Tom Green had been absent from home for several days; and cunning as he was, for once he had, as the saying



Page 66

is, "overshot his mark." "Silas Stinson," said my aunt, "will you allow that boy to sit there and tell such lies in your hearing?" His father saw that there was no help for it, he must at any rate make a show of authority; and looking at his hopeful son with a very solemn countenance, he addressed him in the language of Scripture, saying "O! Ephraim what shall I do unto thee?" "It wouldn't take me long to find out what to do, if he was mine," said Aunt Lucinda. "I'd take a good birch rod, and give him such a tanning, that he wouldn't cut up another clothes-line in a hurry, I'll promise you." "Upon the whole I think your counsel is wise, Cousin Lucinda," replied his father, "for the wisest man of whom we have any account says, 'Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him,' and the same wise man adds in another place: 'He that spares the rod spoils the child.'" I know not whether he acted from a sense of duty, or to appease the anger of my aunt; but, for the first time in his life, I believe he did use the rod upon his son Ephraim. He provided himself with a switch, the size of which satisfied even Aunt Lucinda, and, taking him to the back-kitchen, if we could judge by the screams which issued from thence, the whipping he bestowed upon Ephraim was no trifling affair.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Autumn again came, with its many-hued glories, and I must bid adieu to the uncle and aunt who had been so kind to me for the two past years. Looking forward two years seem a long period; but, as memory recalled the evening of my first arrival at Uncle Nathan's, I could hardly believe that two years had since then glided away. I had bid my kind teacher and his family good-bye, and in the morning was to set out on my homeward journey. I accompanied my uncle and aunt to grandma's grave—a handsome head-stone of white marble had been erected, and I enjoyed a melancholy pleasure in reading over and over again the sculptured letters, stating her name and age, with the date of her death. Eighty-five years, thought I, as my eye rested upon the figures indicating her age, what a long, long life! and yet she often said that, in looking back over her long life, it only seemed like a short troubled dream; but it is all past now, and she rests in peace. We sat long at the grave and talked of the loved one, now sleeping beneath that grassy mound; till the deepening twilight hastened our departure. I could not check the tears which coursed freely down my cheeks when I turned away from the grave. Seated around the fireside that evening we talked of the coming morrow when I was to leave them for an indefinite time, and they both spoke of how doubly lonely the house would seem when I should be gone. It hardly seemed to me that the aunt I was leaving was the same I had found there, so softened and kind had she become. "It's not my way," said she, "to



Page 67

make many words; you have been a good, obedient boy Walter, and I am sorry, that you must leave us, but we could not expect to keep you always. Always do as you have done here, and you will get along, go where you will; always look upon this house as a home, and if you ever stand in need of a friend remember you have an Aunt Lucinda, who, if she does fret and scold sometimes, has learned to love you very dearly, and that is all I am going to say about it." It was well that she had no wish to say more, for her voice grew tremulous before she had finished; and these few words more than repaid me for the endeavours I had made to please her during my stay with them. "My boy," said Uncle Nathan, "you are now leaving us. I am not going to spoil you, by giving you money, for if you wish to ruin a boy there is no surer way than by giving him plenty of money; and I want to make a man of you, and have you learn to depend on yourself and save your money: so at present I only intend giving you enough money to bear the expenses of your journey home, and buy any clothing you may require before going to a situation; but I have deposited a sum of money, to remain on interest for six years; if your life is spared, you will then be twenty-one years of age, and if you make good use of your time, may save something yourself. I will not say how large a sum I have deposited, but at any rate it will help you along a little, if you should wish to go into business for yourself at that time; and now you had best go to bed and sleep soundly, for you must be up bright and early in the morning."

The good-byes were all said, and I was seated in the train which was to convey me from Fulton. As the train passed out of the village I rose from my seat to obtain a last look at the Academy whose white walls shone through the trees which surrounded it. I suppose if the Widow Green had been there she would at once have said I would never see the Academy again, it being a saying of hers, "that to watch a place out of sight was a sure sign we would never behold it again." I certainly tested her saying upon this occasion, for I gazed upon the dear old Academy till it faded in the distance from my sight, and since then I have both seen and entered it. When my mother met me at the depot at Elmwood, I could hardly believe the tall girl who accompanied her was my sister, Flora, so much had she grown during the past year. I did not expect to meet Charley Gray, as the holidays were all over long ago, but the good Doctor and his wife were kind and friendly, indeed they had ever been so to me. "Charley went away in the sulks because you failed to come home during the holidays," said the Doctor with a good-humoured laugh, "but a fit of the sulks is no very uncommon thing for him;" and then he added, while a grave expression rested for a moment upon his face, "poor Charley I hope he will get rid of that unhappy temper of his as he grows older, if not it will destroy his happiness



Page 68

for life." "I am sure," replied I, "that Charley could not have been more anxious about it than I was myself, but I could not leave Uncle Nathan till the fall." "So I told him," said the Doctor, "but would you believe it, the fellow for a while persisted in saying, you knew he was at home, and so stayed away purposely, till he finally became ashamed of himself and owned that he did not really think so, and only said it because he was provoked by your not coming home; you see he is the same unreasonable Charley that he ever was, but it is to be hoped he will in time, become wiser."

I was glad to find myself again at home; much as I might love another place, Elmwood was my home. My favorite tree in the garden looked doubly beautiful, clothed as it was with deep green, while the foliage had long since been stripped from those surrounding it by the frosts and winds of November.

CHAPTER XXV.

About two weeks after my return home, Dr. Gray called one evening, and informed my mother that he had that day received a letter from an old friend of his, who was a merchant doing an extensive business in the city of Montreal, requesting him, if possible, to find him a good trusty boy, whom he wished to give a situation in his store. "Mr. Baynard prefers a boy from the country," said the Doctor, "as he has had some rather unpleasant experiences with city boys; and it occurred to me that you might be willing your son should give the place a trial. I wish not to influence you too much: but I know Mr. Baynard well; and if I wished a situation for my own son I know of no place which would please me better." "Did my circumstances allow of it," said my mother, "I would gladly keep my boy at home, but, as it is necessary for him to seek employment, perhaps no better situation will offer, and as you, in whose opinion I have much confidence, speak so highly of Mr. Baynard, if Walter is willing we will at once accept of the offer, and you may write to your friend, accepting the situation for my son." Of course I had no objection to offer, and the Doctor wrote, informing Mr. Baynard that I would be there in two weeks time.

The time passed quickly away, and I again left home. The Doctor had written to my employer informing him on what day he might expect my arrival. The train reached the city about two o'clock in the afternoon, and, stepping from the car I became one among the crowd upon the platform. During the journey I had many times wondered to myself whether Mr. Baynard would meet me himself or send some one else. I supposed he would send one of his clerks. Dr. Gray had arranged that I was to board in Mr. Baynard's family, as my mother objected to my going to a public boarding-house, and in this, as in all cases the good Doctor was our friend; old as I am now I cannot recall Dr. Gray's many acts of kindness to me when a boy without a feeling of the deepest gratitude.



Page 69

To a boy of fifteen, whose life has mostly been passed in a quiet country village, the first sight of the city of Montreal is somewhat imposing. Presently I noticed a gentleman who appeared to be looking for some one, and I felt sure it was Mr. Baynard. He appeared to be about forty years of age and during the whole course of my life I have never seen a more agreeable countenance than he possessed. I felt attracted toward him at once. I stood still watching his movements, as with some difficulty he made his way through the crowd, and soon his quick eye rested upon me; approaching and laying his hand on my shoulder, he said "Is your name Walter Harland, my boy? My name is Mr. Baynard, and I drove round by the depot to meet a boy I was expecting to arrive on this train." "My name is Walter Harland," I replied, "and I am the boy of whom Dr. Gray wrote to you." He shook hands with me, speaking a few kind and encouraging words at the same time. After giving orders concerning my trunk, he told me to follow him, and we soon reached his carriage, and telling me to jump in he drove to a beautiful residence, sufficiently distant from the business centre of the city to render it pleasant and agreeable. Mr. Baynard's family consisted of his wife, two daughters and one little boy. They all treated me with much kindness, and seemed anxious that I should feel at home with them. I arrived at Montreal on Thursday, and Mr. Baynard said I had best not begin my regular duties in the store till the following Monday. I shall long remember the first Sabbath I spent in the city, for on that day I suffered severely from an attack of home-sickness. Mr. Baynard's eldest daughter, Carrie was twelve years old, her sister Maria was ten, and their little brother Augustus was only seven years old. In the morning I attended church with the family, and a very lonely feeling came over, as I looked around over the large congregation and among them all could not discover one familiar countenance. The most lonely portion of the day was the afternoon; we did not attend church, and feeling myself as a stranger in the family I spent most of the time in my own room, and naturally enough my thoughts turned to my far distant friends, and I must confess that, although a boy of fifteen, I shed some very bitter tears that lonely Sabbath afternoon. In the evening I again attended church, and after our return spent the remainder of the evening in reading, and so passed my first Sabbath in the city of Montreal. I rose the next morning determined to be hopeful and look upon the bright side.

Before I took my place in the store, Mr. Baynard requested me to accompany him to the library, where he passed much of his leisure time, and he talked to me kindly and earnestly, informing me what would be expected of me, and giving me instructions regarding the duties of my position. "Many years ago," said he, "I came to this city a poor boy like yourself, as assistant clerk in a large store, I was



Page 70

even younger than you, and less fortunate in one respect, for my employer did not give me a home in his family, and I was obliged to take my chance in a large boarding-house which was not the best place in the world for a young and inexperienced boy; but thanks to the good principles taught me by my parents, I was preserved pure and upright amid many temptations to evil. My friend informs me that you have been well taught by your mother and the knowledge that you are left fatherless interests me in your favour; and, more than this, I am much pleased with your appearance, and I trust you will never forfeit the good opinion I have formed of you at first sight. I wish not to multiply advices to a needless extent, and will only add, be diligent in your business, be honest and upright in all things, and, above all things, shun evil companions, and you will surely be prospered in all your undertakings." This advice was given in the kindest manner possible, and from my heart I thanked Mr. Baynard for the interest he manifested in me. When I entered upon my regular duties in the store, I found them light, but I was kept very busy. My first task in the morning was to sweep, dust and open the store; through the day I assisted the older clerks in waiting upon customers, carried parcels, in fact, made myself generally useful. When released from the store the remaining portion of my evenings were pleasantly passed in the family of my employer; he was very unwilling I should acquire the habit of spending my evenings abroad, and was at much pains that the evenings in his own family should be pleasant. The little boy seemed to regard me, when out of the store, as his own property. I was fond of the child, and devised many plans for his childish amusement; his lively prattle often drove away the lonely feelings which at times stole over me, when I remembered my distant friends. The little girls both played the piano, which was a source of much enjoyment to me; we had access to the library where there were books suited to all ages. Mrs. Baynard allowed us occasionally to indulge in a noisy game, when our numbers were increased by some of their schoolmates. I well remember the feeling of wounded pride and anger when I one evening chanced to hear a purse-proud gentleman say to Mr. Baynard, "I am much surprised that you should allow your children to associate with one of your clerks; I could not for a moment think of allowing mine to do such a thing." "I do not ask you to allow your children to associate with him," replied Mr. Baynard, with a heightened colour, "but as long as Walter remains the honest, upright youth he has so far proved himself, I consider him a very desirable companion for *my* children. I have learned his character and connections from my old and esteemed friend Dr. Gray, and his testimony is sufficient for me." This reply silenced, if it failed to convince the proud gentleman.

CHAPTER XXVI.



Page 71

As time passed on, I became accustomed to the duties of my position, and performed them much more easily than at the first. The feeling of diffidence with which I entered Mr. Baynard's family soon wore-away, by the kindness extended toward me by every member of the family. I spent no money needlessly, being anxious to lay by as much as possible. I wrote often to my friends at Elmwood as well as to Charley Gray, and received long letters in return which afforded me much pleasure. My mother's letters often enclosed one also from my sister, which gave me many choice scraps of news concerning my old school-companions, and many trifling matters which doubtless possessed more interest for me than they would have done for any one else. I presume Charley felt our separation more keenly than I, our natures were so unlike.

Hurrying along Great St. James Street one afternoon with a heavy package of goods under my arm, I struck against a youth, who was walking in the opposite direction, with such seeming rudeness that I paused to apologize, and when I raised my eyes found myself standing with my old friend and companion at Fulton Academy, Robert Dalton. Our meeting was not more unexpected than joyful: he had been in Montreal for the past six months, but had failed to inform me, indeed Robert was not a good correspondent, it was no lack of friendship but for some reason or other, writing letters was always a task to him. Meeting unexpectedly as we did our former intimacy was soon renewed. He was employed in a large druggist's shop in Notre Dame Street, and boarded with another clerk whose home was in the city, and we were much together when released from the business of the day. Learning from Robert's employer that he was a young man of good principles, Mr. Baynard did not object to our intimacy, indeed he looked upon him as a kind of safe-guard to me, owing to his being three years my senior and possessing more experience and knowledge of the world; and from what he had learned of the young man, he was aware if he exercised any influence over me it would be for good; and many pleasant evenings we passed together in Mr. Baynard's family; Robert was fond of music, and was considered a good singer and often his rich voice mingled with the notes of the piano in Mr. Baynard's parlor. Since then, in looking back to that time, I have often thought if business men, who often have young men in their employ whose homes are far distant, would be at a little pains to afford them social pleasures of an elevating nature, it might have a decided effect for good upon their characters, in after life.

Page 72

It is unnecessary and would prove tedious to the reader as well as to myself, were I to give a detailed account of the two first years of my residence in the city of Montreal. It had been understood that I was to remain two years, before visiting my friends at Elmwood, and although I became happy and contented, I looked forward with impatience to the time when I could visit my mother and sister. The two years was nearly past, and I began to count the weeks and days as the time drew nigh for the expected visit. I had become as one of the family in the house of my employer, and had enjoyed much pleasure in the society of my friend Robert Dalton; the more I saw of him the more I valued his companionship, indeed he had become to me as an elder brother. He often amused me by relating incidents of his childhood, and in my turn I talked freely to him of my distant home and friends.

If Charley Gray left home two years ago in a fit of the sulks, it did not interfere with our correspondence which had been sustained regularly on both sides. It was now nearly three years since we had met, and I looked forward eagerly to our expected meeting, for he was to spend the holidays at home. When I reached my native village, Charley was the first to welcome me, having begged the privilege of driving to the depot to meet me. He had changed much during the two past years. He had grown tall and manly looking, and a glance at his broad full brow at once told one that he possessed a powerful intellect; but he was pale and thin from close application to study, for from a mere boy Charley was a hard student. As we rode homeward we had much to tell of what had taken place since our last meeting. I received a joyous welcome from my mother and sister, and with a feeling of pride I placed in my mother's hand a considerable sum of money which I had saved carefully for her use, hoping it might enable her to live without the unceasing toil which had been her lot for several years. The month I was to spend at home sped swiftly away, and we all made the most of each passing day. Charley Gray seemed so cheerful and happy that I began to hope he had outgrown that jealous and unhappy temper which had formerly been so characteristic of him; but in this I was mistaken as I soon had abundant cause to realize. That serpent in his bosom was not dead, but only slumbered till aroused by some slight provocation. We were one evening engaged in a long and familiar conversation, he related many incidents connected with his school-life, and I also spoke of many things concerning my home in Montreal; among others I mentioned Robert Dalton, and spoke of the friendship between us which began at Fulton Academy and which was so pleasingly renewed in the city of Montreal. I had for the moment forgotten Charley's peculiar and exclusive nature, and dwelt at considerable length on the good qualities of my absent friend, till checked by the dark frown which suddenly gathered upon



Page 73

Charley's countenance, and the angry flash which shot from his eyes. Rising to his feet, he said in a voice of deep displeasure: "Since you are so fond of a new friend, I suppose you no longer consider an old one worth retaining, so I will trouble you no longer." I attempted to reason with him, saying I could not see why a new friendship should alienate us who had been friends from our childhood; but by this time he had worked himself into a fearful passion and made use of very violent language. I had learned long ago that when his anger was excited, he was not master of either his words or actions. I stepped forward, and laying my hand upon his shoulder tried to recall him to himself, but he threw off my hand as if my touch had been contamination, and without another word walked from the room. As I looked after his retreating form as he walked hastily down the street I could not help a feeling of pity for him, that he should suffer himself to be governed by such an unhappy temper, for I knew that when his anger became cooled he would bitterly repent of his conduct. To the reader who has never met with one possessing the unhappy disposition of Charley Gray, his character in these pages will seem absurd and overdrawn; but those who have come in close contact with a like nature will only see in this sketch a correct delineation of one of the most unhappy dispositions which affect mankind. Charley was endowed with rare gifts of mind and intellect, and was manly and sensible, and setting aside this one fault it was hard to find a more agreeable and pleasant companion. His absurd conduct was often a matter of after-wonder to himself, and he made frequent resolutions of amendment, which only held good till some cause roused his old enemy. I suppose no more proper name could be found for this unhappy disposition than exclusiveness, for what ever or whoever he liked, he wanted all to himself. He was respectful and courteous to all, but intimate only with a very few, and for those few his affection went beyond the bounds of reason, inasmuch as it was a source of unhappiness to himself and all connected with him.

I cherished no resentment toward Charley, knowing him as I did, but I knew the folly of trying to reason with him in the state of mind in which he left me. It must have been a hard struggle with his pride, for Charley was very proud, but his good sense prevailed, and he came to seek me. "You are freely and fully forgiven," said I, in reply to his humble acknowledgment of wrong-doing; "but *do* Charley for your own sake as well as that of others try and subdue a disposition which if not conquered, will render you unhappy for life. If I am your friend does it follow that I must have no other, and the making of other friends will never diminish my regard for you, the earliest and best friend I have ever known." "I am sensible," replied he, "of all and more than you can tell me of the unreasonableness and absurdity of my own



Page 74

conduct, and again and again have I resolved to gain the mastery, and often, when I begin to have confidence in my own powers of control, this exclusive jealous disposition will suddenly rise and put to naught all my resolutions of amendment. If you could know what I endure from it you would pity instead of blame me. But let us part friends, and I will try to exercise more reason for the future." We talked long together, for the morrow would again separate us, and it might be long before we would meet again. I had spent a happy month in the cool shady village of Elmwood, and returned to my labors with body and mind both strengthened and refreshed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

About the middle of October, Robert Dalton was taken ill. His disease seemed a kind of low fever, and in a short time he was completely prostrated. All the leisure I could possibly command I spent at his bedside, and many hours did I forego sleep that I might minister to his wants. The family with whom he boarded were very attentive, but I knew he was pleased with my attention, and exerted myself to spend as much time with him as possible. Several days passed away with little apparent change in his symptoms, but he grew extremely weak. His physician was of the opinion that he was tired out from long and close application to his business; but thought he would soon recover under the necessary treatment. One evening, when he had been about two weeks ill, I went as I had often done to sit by him for a portion of the night; after the family had all retired, I administered a quieting cordial left by the doctor, and shading the lamp that the light might not disturb him, I opened a book, thinking he would sleep. He lay very quiet, and I supposed him to be asleep, and was becoming interested in the volume before me when he softly called my name. I stepped quickly to his bedside, he took my hand saying, "sit down close to me Walter, I have something to say to you." I took a seat near him, and after a few moments' silence he said: "You may perhaps think I am nervous and fanciful, when I tell you I feel certain I shall never recover from this illness; the physician tells me I will soon be up again, but such will not be the case." Observing that I was much startled, he said, "Do not be alarmed Walter, but compose yourself and listen to me. My parents and one sister live at a distance of four hundred miles from here. I have deferred informing them of my illness, as my employer, who has much confidence in the skill of my physician, thought it unwise to alarm them needlessly, and I now fear that I have put it off too long, for I think I shall not live to see them. I intend in the morning requesting my employer to send a message for my father to hasten to me at once, but I fear it is too late." Much alarmed, I enquired if he felt himself growing worse, or if he wished me to summon his physician. He replied, "I feel no worse, but from the first



Page 75

I have had the impression that I should never recover; and should I not live to see any of my friends. I have one or two requests to make of you, knowing that you will attend to my wishes when I shall be no more." I became so much alarmed that I was on the point of calling some of the family; but he arrested me saying: "I am quite free from pain, and when I have finished my conversation with you shall probably sleep." He continued, "I know my father will hasten at once to me when apprised of my illness, but should I not live till he arrives, tell him I have endeavored to follow the counsels he gave me when I left home; for I know it will comfort him when I am gone to know that I respected his wishes. Tell him, also, he will find what money I have been able to save from my salary deposited in the Savings Bank. Tell him to remember me to my mother and sister Mary, and could I have been permitted to see them again it would have afforded me much happiness, but that I died trusting in the merits of my Redeemer, and hope to meet them all in Heaven, where parting will be no more." His writing-desk, which was a very beautiful and expensive article, he requested me to accept of as a token of affection from him. I promised faithfully to obey all his wishes should his sad forebodings prove true, yet I could not believe he was to die. At the close of our conversation he seemed fatigued, I arranged his pillows and gave him a cooling drink, and I was soon aware by his regular breathing that he slept soundly. As he lay there wrapped in repose my memory ran backward over all the happy time I had spent with him; he was the only one outside of Mr. Baynard's family with whom I was at all intimate, and the bitter tears which I could not repress, as I gazed upon his changed features, made me sensible how dear he had become to me. A hasty letter was written next morning to Mr. Dalton, informing him of his son's illness, and of his urgent request that he should hasten to him as soon as possible; but poor Robert lived not to see his father again. The next day after the letter was written a sudden change for the worse took place in his disease, and it soon became evident that he could live but a few hours. He expressed a wish that I should remain with him to the last, and before another morning dawned Robert Dalton had passed from among the living. A short time before his death, his eyes sought my face, and his lips moved as though he wished to speak to me; I bowed my ear to catch his words, as he said in a voice which was audible to me only: "When my father arrives remember all I said to you, and tell him I died happy, feeling that all will be well with me." After this he spoke no more, and an hour later he died with my hand clasped in his own. When, two days after, his father arrived, and found that he was indeed dead, his grief was heart-rending to witness. Never before did I see such an agony of grief as was depicted upon his countenance as he bowed himself over the lifeless body of his only son.



Page 76

As soon as circumstances permitted, I repeated to Mr. Dalton the conversation Robert had held with me a short time before his death. Among other things I gave him his watch which he had entrusted to my care. He pressed me to keep the watch, saying, "From the frequent mention my son made of you in his letters, I almost feel that I know you well, and knowing the strong friendship he entertained for you, I beg of you to accept of his watch for his sake as well as mine, and should we never meet again, bear in mind that I shall ever remember you with gratitude and affection." It was a small but elegant gold watch which to Robert had been a birthday gift from an uncle who was very fond of him, and to this day it is to me a valued keepsake.

When Mr. Dalton left the city, bearing with him the lifeless remains of his son, for interment in the family burial-place, a deep gloom settled over my mind, and for a long time, I could hardly rouse myself to give the necessary attention to my daily duties. Since that period I have made other friends and passed through many changing scenes, both of joy and sorrow; but I have never forgotten Robert Dalton, and his image often rises to my mental vision, as memory recalls the scenes and friends of my youthful days.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

With the reader's permission I now pass over a period of six years. I am still residing in the city of Montreal, as Mr. Baynard, when I reached the age of twenty-one, saw fit to offer me a partnership in his business, which the fruits of my former industry, added to a generous gift from my Uncle Nathan, enabled me to accept. Many changes have taken place in my early home in the village of Elmwood. Many old friends and neighbors have been laid to rest in the quiet churchyard, and many with whom I attended the village school have gone forth from their paternal home to seek their fortune in the wide world. The cottage home of my mother has undergone many improvements since we last looked upon it. It has been enlarged and modernized in various ways, and its walls are no longer a dingy brown, but of a pure white, and its windows are adorned with tasteful green blinds. From a boy it had been my earnest wish to see my mother placed in a home of ease and comfort, and that wish is now gratified. Time has not dealt severely with my mother, for she looks scarcely a day older than when we last saw her six years ago. My sister Flora is finishing her education at a distant boarding school, where I am happy to say my brotherly affection and generosity placed her. Good Doctor Gray and his kind wife are still alive; but they are really beginning to grow old. But what of Charley, for surely the reader has not forgotten Charley Gray; he graduated from College with the highest honors, and is now studying medicine in the city of New York, as, agreeable to the ideas of his boyhood, he has decided upon becoming a physician. I have met with him only twice during the past six years. Does his old unhappy disposition cling to him still? we shall learn that bye and bye.



Page 77

During all the years of my residence in Montreal, Mr. Baynard had enjoyed uninterrupted health, but he was now seized with a sudden and alarming illness; his disease was brain fever in its most violent form. His physician found it impossible to break up the fever, and with his afflicted family I anxiously awaited the result. A deep gloom overshadowed the dwelling, the family and servants moved with noiseless steps and hushed voices through the silent apartments. He was delirious most of the time. The doctor often tried to prevail upon Mrs. Baynard to leave him to the care of some other member of the family and seek rest, but she could not think of leaving his bedside even for a short time, and only did so when rest was an absolute necessity. The two daughters had been absent at school for two years, and just at this time they returned to their home, having finished their term of study, and they were almost heart-broken thus to find their father stretched upon a bed of sickness, and could not but entertain fears as to the result. All my attention during the day was required at the store, as the whole oversight of the extensive establishment devolved upon me.

The days that Mr. Baynard lay prostrated by suffering passed wearily by: the frequent visits of the physician, the perpetual silence, and the air of gloom which prevailed through the dwelling, told but too plainly that there was sorrow and suffering within its walls. His wife would often bend over the suffering form of her husband, and her tears would fall fast while he still lay unconscious of her presence or watchful care; and she feared he might in this state pass away and leave no token of recognition or remembrance. At length the time allotted for the disease to run its course arrived. This time had been anxiously waited for by the physician, and with much greater anxiety, by his sorrowing family. On the night of the crisis of the disorder, Mr. Baynard was so extremely weak that the question of life and death was evenly balanced, and it was hard to separate probabilities of the one from the other. Mrs. Baynard requested that I would not return to the place of business after tea, but remain with them. The physician never left the room during all that night; and O! what a long and dreary night it was: the house was silent as a tomb, even the ticking of the watch which lay upon the stand seemed too loud. Finally the breathing of the sick man seemed entirely to cease. The doctor stepped hastily forward, felt his pulse and placed his hand over his heart. "Is he dead?" said Mrs. Baynard, in a calm voice, but her face was pale as marble. The doctor made no reply but raised his hand as if to enjoin silence, and he quickly applied powerful draughts to the soles of his feet: if these took effect they might have hope. In a short time the patient made a slight movement as if from pain, and the physician hastily called for wine, saying, "Life is still there, and if it can for a short time be sustained by stimulants, he may rally." Ere the morning sun rose, the doctor expressed a hope that the crisis was past, and that he would recover. For several days, he lay weak and helpless as an infant; but the doctor assured us that he was slowly but surely recovering. Soon after he was so far recovered as to spend a portion of each day at our place of business.



Page 78

I received a letter from Charley Gray informing me that he intended spending several weeks of the summer at Elmwood, and urgently requesting me to meet him there. I had intended visiting Elmwood before receiving his letter; I had only been once there during the three past years, and I felt the need of a respite from the cares of business. My sister also expected this summer to return home, having spent four years at school, and I looked forward with much pleasure to the time when we should meet again in the dear old home at Elmwood. Time had worked a great change in me since I left that home eight years before. Providence had smiled upon my efforts to assist my widowed mother and sister. Through my means my mother was now placed in a home of comfort and affluence, and my sister had received a thoroughly good education. I was still prospered, and of late was fast accumulating money. Never before, since leaving the paternal roof, had I felt so strong a desire to rest for a time beneath its shelter, and as the time drew nigh I could hardly control my impatience. At home again! I realized this happiness in its truest meaning, when I found myself again beneath the roof that had sheltered my childhood. Flora too was there, but so much changed that I could hardly recognize the little sister who had ever looked up to me for protection and love. The very evening after my arrival Dr. Gray called. His call surprised us a little as the hour was late. He came in with his old good-humored laugh, saying: "Do not be alarmed, for this is not a professional visit, and for once I have left my medicine-case at home; but when I went home quite late in the evening and learned that Walter had arrived I thought I should sleep all the more soundly for coming over to welcome you to Elmwood again. By the bye," continued he, "I hear Walter that you are fast becoming rich; well I am glad to hear it, and I am pretty sure you will make a good use of your money." I assured him I was far enough from being rich. "Modest as ever," replied he, "but no matter, better that than forward and boastful, no fear but you'll get along. I am expecting Charley to arrive every day," said he, "and then won't we have the good old-fashioned times again." I was very happy to meet my old friend again in such good spirits. The next day while, conversing with my mother, I suddenly remembered Farmer Judson, and I enquired if his temper was improved any of late. My mother looked serious as she replied, "I had forgotten to tell you, Mr. Judson has been ill for a long time. He first had lung-fever from which he partially recovered, but he now seems like one in a slow consumption; I have not as yet called to see him, as I hear he is very irritable and does not care to see people, and I feared he would take my visit as an intrusion. I very much pity his poor wife, who is almost worn out with attending upon him, and would gladly aid her were it in my power." As a boy I had cherished anger toward the farmer; but that had all passed away and I felt sorry to hear of his illness.



Page 79

Two days after my arrival, Charley Gray came. Our meeting could not be otherwise than happy. He was, I believe, the most changed of the two; and I thought at the time I had never before seen so perfect a type of manly beauty. "What a pity," thought I, "that one so highly gifted, and noble looking, and whose manner was at times so attractive and winning, should allow himself at other times to be so morose and disagreeable from a foolish and unreasonable temper." He had now completed his studies, and had come home for a short time before entering upon the practice of his profession. When I left the city, Mr. Baynard advised me to spend at the least two or three months at home, for so long and industriously had I applied myself to business, that he thought a season of rest and recreation would be very beneficial to me; and all our old friends at Elmwood seemed anxious to add to the enjoyment of Charley Gray and myself during our stay. My mother was one who seldom left her home, and she surprised me one day by saying, "If Charley and I would take a journey to Uncle Nathan's, she and Flora would accompany us," and that very evening I wrote to my uncle and aunt informing them of our proposed visit, and asking them if they would be willing to entertain so large a party; and an answer soon arrived informing me that nothing would afford them more pleasure than our visit, and "they were very sure they could find room for us all." I had only paid one hasty visit to Fulton since I left it, and I anticipated much pleasure from again meeting my uncle and aunt with many old friends of my school-days at Fulton.

I did not intend writing a long story, and will not trouble my readers with the particulars of our journey, nor of the hearty welcome we received when we arrived at the old farm house of Uncle Nathan. Let it suffice that nothing was wanting to render our stay agreeable. My uncle and aunt looked scarcely a day older than when I left them eight years since. Upon my remarking how lightly time had set on them, my uncle replied with his old manner of fun and drollery, "Don't you know, Walter, that old bachelors and old maids never grow old, they get kind o' dried in just such a way and keep so for any length of time," and I could not help thinking there was some truth in his remark. I enquired with much curiosity for Cousin Silas and his family. "O!" replied Aunt Lucinda, "upon the whole they have done better than one could have expected when they first came here. Silas will never do much anyway, they still live on the Taylor place, and Nathan manages one way and another to get some work out of him. Nathan intends at some time to deed the place to the family in such a way that Silas can't squander it away; but he has never told them so yet. Somehow or other, after mother's death, I felt drawn toward the family, and did all I could to help them along. I kept the little girls with me by turns, and encouraged them to attend school, and took pains to learn them habits of order



Page 80

and industry, and I found after a time that my labor was not entirely thrown away, for as they grew older they carried the habits which I tried to teach them into their own home, and to say the least of it, they live much more like other people than they used to; and I begin to think that even an old maid can do a little good in the world, now and then, as well as any one else. Of course you remember the boys, and what an awful trial it used to be to have Ephraim about the place; well, he settled down after a while, he always said the whipping his father gave him for cutting up my clothes-lines and then lying about it was what made a man of him. He attended school for three years, and then not wishing to work on the farm, he struck out into the world for himself; he obtained a situation in a mercantile house in Toronto, and I hear bids fair to make a successful business man. George Washington has not entirely ceased to grumble and look sulky; but there has been a wonderful change in one respect, for there is now no harder working youth in the neighborhood; he likes farming, and early and late may be found at his work. I don't know but Nathan may have given him a hint that the old Taylor place may one day be his own. I don't know how it is, the neighbors say it was your Uncle Nathan and I who ever made any thing of those children. Nathan said: 'Silas would never do much any way, and we had better try and make something of the children,' and I certainly have done my best; but it was uphill work for a long time; and I am glad that they have profited by our efforts for their good."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Dr. Oswald was still the teacher of Fulton Academy, and many happy hours were passed in the interchange of visits during our stay at Uncle Nathan's; and I suppose I must inform my readers of a sentimental scene which took place in Mr. Oswald's garden on a delightful evening in midsummer, when, at my earnest entreaty, lovely Rose Oswald renewed the promise made to me on that very spot just eight years ago; for my boyish fancy had ripened into the strong man's love, and I felt that Rose Oswald, as my wife, was all that was wanting to render me as happy as one can reasonably expect to be in this world of change and vicissitude. "If you are willing to resign yourself to my keeping," said I, "there is no need of a long engagement, and when I leave Fulton I must take you with me as my wife." "So soon, Walter." "Yes, Rose, *just so soon*. I have long looked forward to this day, and now I almost count the minutes till I can claim you as all my own," and so the matter was settled. When Aunt Lucinda was informed of this arrangement she opened her eyes wide in astonishment, and when she learned that the marriage was to take place within a few days, she was highly delighted, "for", said she, "the sun never shone on one like Rose Oswald before; in fact, she was far too good for any one but you Walter, so if you had not chanced to fall in love with her, she must have died an old maid."



Page 81

It was a bright morning, early in September, that a small wedding party was assembled at Mr. Oswald's residence; the few guests invited were all old friends. I sent an urgent message for good old Dr. Gray and his wife, and although they seldom left Elmwood, they responded to my call, and made what, to them, was quite a long journey, that they might be present at my marriage. That same evening we set out on our wedding tour, while my mother and Flora, with Charley Gray, returned to Elmwood; and, after travelling for several weeks, we found ourselves at my mother's home, where we were to spend a few weeks longer before returning to the city, which was to be our permanent home. Soon after my return to Elmwood, I received an urgent message to visit Mr. Judson, who was said to be fast failing. I felt a degree of reluctance to go, having never once entered his dwelling since the memorable day on which I left it years ago, but I felt it my duty to comply with his request. I found him much weaker than I had expected. He seemed much overcome, when I softly entered the room, and extending my hand, enquired how he found himself. "I am very weak," he replied, "and feel that I have but a short time to live. I have felt very anxious to see you, and I feared you would not arrive in time to see me alive. I hope you will forgive my unkindness and harshness to you when a boy. I did not then know that I was so unkind, but it has come back to me since. At that time my whole desire and aim was to accumulate riches, and it was that which caused me to be harsh and unfeeling. I *have* become rich, but riches will avail me but little, as I stand upon the brink of eternity, and the way looks dark before me, but it will afford me some comfort to hear you say you forgive me, before I die." I took his hand within my own, as I said: "Any resentment I may once have cherished toward you, Mr. Judson, has long since passed away. I was but a boy when I resided with you, and very likely at times taxed your patience severely, and you have my entire forgiveness for any harshness I may ever have experienced at your hands. I am sorry to find you so ill, and hope you will soon be better." "No, Walter;" he replied, "that will never be, and I am now sensible that in my anxiety for the things of time, I have neglected the all-important matters of eternity. Since I have lain upon this sick-bed I have tried to repent, and I trust I do feel sorry for my sins; but, somehow, I do not find the comfort I seek. Would that you could tell me what to do Walter." Can this softened and subdued man, thought I, be the same of whom I once stood in so much fear. As well as I was able I directed him to the sinner's only hope, the merits of a merciful Saviour; while, at the same time, I referred him to many comforting Bible-promises; which, when I had read, he said: "Do you think, Walter, those promises can be meant for me, who have neglected my Bible and been careless and worldly all my life long?" For answer, I directed



Page 82

his attention to the promise which says: "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He requested me to pray with him. I have never before prayed save in the retirement of my own room, and I felt a degree of diffidence at the thought of praying in the presence of others, but I overcame the feeling, and, kneeling down, I forgot the physician as well as others who listened to me, and lifted up my voice in solemn earnest prayer. I forgot everything but the God before whom I pleaded. I prayed that were it the will of Providence, he might be restored to health; but, if not, that he might, in believing on the Saviour, find a comfort which would enable him to triumph even over the terrors of death. When I rose from my knees, he seemed more composed, and, after remaining silent for a short time, he addressed me with much earnestness, saying: "It seems to me, Walter, that I *must* see my two boys, before I die. Send for them at once. I drove them from me by my harshness, years ago. Send for them at once, and I hope my life maybe spared to see them once more." He held my hand long at parting, saying: "You have done me good, Walter, and I do begin to have a hope that my Heavenly Father will have mercy upon me and receive me, not for any merit of my own, but through the merits of that Saviour who died for the salvation of repentant and believing sinners." Learning the address from Mrs. Judson, I at once dispatched a telegraph message to the two sons, and four days later they arrived, to mingle their tears at the death-bed of their father, from whom they had so long been estranged. It was evident, from day to day, that Mr. Judson was failing fast; but, as his bodily strength wasted away, a most happy change came over his mind, during the last few days of his life.

I was summoned from my pillow at midnight to stand by his death-bed. His death was calm and full of hope; but, to the last, it was to him a matter of regret, that he had neglected, through life, those things which afforded him any hope in death. Among his last words to me, he warned me against setting my heart upon riches, in a way that would prove a snare to any soul. "Riches," said he, "are a great blessing when rightly used, but ought not to be the chief aim and object of life." Before the morning dawned, his spirit passed away, and it was my hand that closed his eyes in the dreamless sleep of death. The next day I called, in company with my mother, and entered the darkened room where lay his lifeless remains, now habited for the grave. I gazed long and silently upon those features now stamped with the seal of death. Reader, if there lives one against whom you cherish angry and bitter feelings, pause a moment and consider what your feelings would be if called to stand by their coffin; for, be assured, your anger will then give place to sorrow that you ever indulged anger toward the poor fellow-mortal now extended before you in the slumber of death. I attended the funeral of Mr. Judson, and saw his



Page 83

body consigned to the grave. He sleeps in the village churchyard at Elmwood, and a marble slab marks his resting-place. When, after the funeral, his will was read, the large amount of the property left was a matter of wonder to many. In his will he gave largely to several benevolent and religious institutions, and to me he left the sum of one thousand dollars. I could see no reason why he should have done this, but as his will was drawn up in legal form and properly attested I thought it right I should accept of the generous gift; and, indeed, it was but a small sum out of the large property left by Mr. Judson. Besides his liberal gift to me, he also gave largely to different benevolent and religious causes. Half the remainder of his large property was to go to his surviving widow, and the remainder was to be equally divided between the two sons. Before his death it was settled that Reuben, the youngest son, was to remain on the home place to care for his mother in her old age, while the eldest was to return to their former business; and thus Mrs. Judson's declining years were rendered happy and contented through the care and love of her favorite son. And so Rose and I at length bade adieu to our friends, after a protracted visit, and returned to the city, where, by my direction, a pleasant and tasteful house already awaited us. Rose liked not to reside in the noisy city, so our home is in one of the most pleasant suburbs in Montreal. Should any of my readers be curious enough to enquire if Rose and I are happy, I would cordially invite them to pay us a visit, and judge for themselves, the first time they pass our way. The evening before we were to leave Elmwood, I was seated beneath my favorite tree in my mother's garden, and leaning backward against its grey trunk, with its thick and wide-spreading canopy of green branches above my head, I indulged in a long and deep reverie. Memory ran backward over the careless happy days of my childhood, the struggles of my youth, and the exertions of mature manhood; and although bereft, at a very early age, of my earthly father, I could not fail to observe the guiding hand of a Heavenly Father who had smiled upon my youthful efforts to assist my widowed mother, and had prospered my undertakings, and crowned my mature years, by giving me, as a life-partner, the one who had been my first and only choice, and almost unconsciously to myself, I repeated aloud the following verse from what was Grandma Adams' favorite psalm: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

So busily was my mind occupied that I failed to notice the approach of my sister Flora, till she seated herself close to my side, and leaning her head upon my shoulder said in a constrained hesitating voice: "There is one thing I must tell you, Walter, before you go away: Charley Gray has told me he loves me, and asks me to be his wife." This did not surprise me much for I had noticed with secret anxiety the growing



Page 84

intimacy between Charley and my sister. "What shall I tell him, Walter," said my sister, "for I must not, dare not act without the counsel of my only brother?" I looked up in my sister's face with all the affection which welled up from my heart and said, "you love him then, Flora?" "How can I help loving him, who is so gifted, so noble," was her reply. "And," continued she, "on account of his reserved nature, I believe few give him credit for the real goodness of heart he possesses." As Flora had said, Charley possessed a kind heart, and was just and honorable in every respect, but I trembled for the woman who placed her happiness in his keeping; and how much more so, when that woman was my beloved and only sister. "You do not answer me," said Flora; "mamma would give me no reply till I had consulted you." "My dear sister," said I, "Charley is all that you say, just, honorable and good; but with all this he has qualities which, if not brought under subjection, will sadly mar his own happiness and that of all who love him. He is exclusive and jealous even of a friend, how will it be with a wife? Suspicion and jealousy is inherent in his very nature, for did not Doctor Gray tell me years ago that a suspicious, jealous nature was hereditary in the family of Charley's mother and he therefore begged me not to blame Charley too severely for a fault which he could not help saying 'he feared the cloud which hovered over Charley's cradle would follow him to his grave.' I doubt not Charley's affection for you, Flora; but the very depth of his affection will, I fear, prove a source of unhappiness to you both, for you are aware as well as I that Charley's affection, like his anger when roused, goes beyond the limits of sober reason. From your childhood, Flora, you have been petted and indulged, and a life of continual watchfulness and restraint will be something entirely new for you; for I never knew even a friend of Charley's who could act themselves when he was present, and unless there has been a wonderful change, as his wife, you will be forced to guard your every word and look lest you offend him; you must be pleased only with what pleases him, in short his will must be yours in all things." "You are my brother," said Flora, "and I need not blush to tell you I love Charley Gray better than I once thought it possible for one to love another, and I know from his own lips that he loves me equally in return, and as his wife the confidence between us will be so full and entire, there will be no room left for doubt and suspicion." "Well, little sister" said I, "knowing Charley as I do, I could not help uttering those warning words, but I shall not seek to hinder your marriage. I love and respect Charley more than any other friend I have, but I am very sensible of his faults. A heavy responsibility will devolve upon you as his wife, but love works wonders, and all may be well; but remember, Flora, you have a most peculiar nature to deal with, but it may be your privilege to exorcise the dark spirit



Page 85

from the breast of Charley Gray.” That same evening the engagement ring glittered upon Flora’s finger; and six months later, amid a small company of friends, they uttered their marriage vows in the old church at Elmwood; and by many they were called with truth a beautiful and noble looking couple; and immediately after their marriage they set out for their new home in one of the large cities of the Western Provinces, where Charley was to begin the practice of his profession. They left us under seeming summer sky, and I breathed a prayer, that no cloud might arise to mar its serenity.

CHAPTER XXX.

About a year after Flora’s marriage I received a letter from Aunt Lucinda with a pressing invitation that we should go at once to Fulton; she wished me also to write, requesting my mother to join us at Montreal and accompany us. This letter surprised me not a little, but I was well aware that Aunt Lucinda must have some particular reason for this sudden and unexpected invitation; and I at once wrote to my mother, informing her of her request, and two days later she arrived at my home in Montreal. We enjoyed a pleasant journey, and again my eyes rested with delight upon the familiar scenes of the village of Fulton. Uncle Nathan met us at the railway station, looking as hale and hearty as ever. On our way to the farm I ventured to inquire what had caused our invitation to visit them at this particular time; he answered me only by repeating the old saying, “Ask me no questions and I’ll tell you no lies,” and so we made no further inquiries. When Aunt Lucinda came forward to welcome us, I at once noticed the remarkable change in her appearance; one would have supposed that at least ten years had been taken from her age since I last saw her, and her whole manner was so cheerful and sprightly that I was at a loss to understand what could have happened; but I never dreamed of the truth till after tea, when Aunt Lucinda rose and said: “I want to see you, Walter, alone in the parlor.” I followed her, secretly wondering what wonderful revelation I was to listen to. When we were seated, she said with her old abrupt manner, “Well, Walter, you have heard Nathan talk about Joshua Blake, he has come back and we are going to be married to-morrow and I have sent for you to attend the wedding. You may well look astonished to hear an old woman like me talk about getting married; and the land knows what Deacon Martin’s folks will say; but as long as they have liberty to say whatever they please, they needn’t complain. You remember hearing Nathan laugh about Joshua Blake and his red hair years ago, perhaps you thought there was no such person in the world but there was. Joshua was an only child, his parents lived over at the village, and we went to school together. His hair was not a real blazin’ red but only a dark auburn, for all of Nathan’s nonsense about it. Well, we loved each other, when mere children.



Page 86

As we grew older I could see but one fault in Joshua, he was inclined to be unreasonably jealous, and that was the beginning of our trouble. I was young and giddy, and much as I loved him rather enjoyed teasing him, and doing trifling things which I knew would vex him, while at the same time I cared for no one else in the world; and I am now ashamed to say I often accepted of the attentions of others for the mischievous delight I took in making him angry and seeing him look cross, and it may be there was a lurking pride in knowing that I had the power to make him jealous. Truly, Walter, the human heart is a singular compound of good and evil. I shall ever remember the last evening we spent together, it was at a party. I know not what spirit of mischief possessed me, but I took particular pains to annoy Joshua by my giddy and frivolous conduct. When we were ready to return home he offered me his arm without speaking, this made me angry and I walked proudly by his side. We walked on in silence till we reached the gate at my own home. As he was turning away he said, 'I suppose, Miss Adams, it will cause you no sorrow if I tell you this is probably the last time we shall ever meet.' I know that even then, had I answered him differently the matter would not have ended as it did, but my spirit rose proud and defiant, and I said with a tone of mock levity, 'How long a journey do you purpose taking, Mr. Blake? is it to the grist-mill, or to the sawmill, which is a little farther away?' 'You may make light of my words, if you choose,' replied he; 'but I am in no mood for jesting. The truth is, Miss Adams, that I can no longer endure this life of suspense and torture, and it is evident you care more for a giddy throng of admirers than for the love of one who has loved you from childhood. I leave here to-morrow morning, trusting to time and distance to assist me in forgetting you.' He looked earnestly in my face, in the bright moonlight, as he said these words, but could read there nothing but self-will and defiance. It is even now a matter of wonder to me what caused me to act as I did, against my own feelings. He held out his hand, saying: 'Let us at least part as friends, Miss Adams.' I gave him my hand, saying lightly: 'I hope, Mr. Blake, you won't be like the boy who ran away from home and came back to stay the first night.' I turned and walked toward my own door, and he went away without speaking another word. I watched him in the clear moonlight till a turn in the road hid him from my view. Had I entertained the slightest idea that he would fulfil his threat of going away, I know I should have acted differently; and it was not till I learned, the next day, that he had left Fulton and gone no one knew whither, that I realized what I had done. I knew not whether his parents had a suspicion of the cause of his sudden departure, if they had they never named it to me. I told my sorrow to no one but my mother, but Nathan always said he knew well enough without being told by any



Page 87

one. I can tell you, Walter, my sin did not go unpunished; for, inconsistent as my conduct has been, I loved Joshua Blake with a deep affection, and when my tortured mind pictured him as a wandering exile from his home, through my absurd and foolish conduct, you may be sure he did not suffer alone. And if I hadn't turned kind of cross and crusty, I am afraid I should have gone crazy, and it was certainly better to be cross than crazy. That is twenty-five years ago. As I was employed in the garden one morning a few weeks ago, an acquaintance from the village passing by said to me: 'Have you heard the news, Miss Adams, that has almost turned every one's head over at Fulton: Joshua Blake, whom every one had given up for dead years ago, has come home.' I grew cold as ice, and I never could tell how I reached the house. I could hardly believe it, and yet something told me it was true, and that very evening he came over here; but, instead of the youth who went away, I saw, a middle-aged man with gray-hair, which Nathan said was an improvement, allowing that some gray looked better than all red. It sounds foolish enough for young people to talk love, but for old people like Joshua Blake and I, it is unpardonable. He told me he had resolved never to return to his native land again, till, by the merest chance, he met a man in Australia who informed him of the death of his father, and that his father had said upon his death-bed, that all that gave him the least anxiety was his aged partner, who, at his death, would be left quite alone in the world. 'Then,' continued he, 'I thought of the sin I had committed in so long neglecting my parents, and I resolved to atone for my past neglect, by hastening home to care for my mother, should I find her still alive; and the happiness is yet left me of watching over the declining years of my aged mother.' For awhile I refused to listen to him when he spoke about marriage, and told him it was better we should remain only as friends; but he talked and talked, and kept saying that, as we loved each other in youth, we could yet spend the evening of our lives together; and I at last said yes, only to stop his talking, and if we should happen not to agree, we shall have less time to quarrel than if we had got married twenty-five years ago; but, I rather think we have both got sobered down, so we can get along peaceably. And now, Walter, you go right off to bed, for you must get up bright and early to-morrow morning, to assist in the preparations for the wedding." Aunt Lucinda looked very becoming in her bridal dress of gray silk with its rich lace trimming, and she looked younger and handsomer than I had ever seen her before, when Joshua Blake placed the marriage ring upon her finger; he was a fine-looking man, but I could not help thinking that the mixture of gray in his auburn locks was more of an improvement than otherwise. He had returned to Fulton a rich man, and on the same spot where stood his father's old house, he erected and furnished



Page 88

a beautiful residence, which every one allowed was an ornament to the village; and removed thither with his wife and aged mother a short time after his marriage. My aunt's marriage made quite a change in the home arrangements at Uncle Nathan's, but he finally persuaded my mother to sell her old house and Elmwood, to come and reside with him. It was some time before my mother could make up her mind to leave her old home, hallowed by so many associations of the past; but, judging the lonely situation of the brother, who had done so much for me, she at length consented; and my uncle's home is now presided over by my mother, who was always his favorite sister. Cousin Silas's eldest daughter, now an intelligent girl of eighteen, stays with my mother, as an assistant companion; and the summer gathering of friends from the dusty city is now held at Uncle Nathan's farm-house instead of my mother's old home at Elmwood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Some of my readers may inquire what kind of a husband my old school-mate Charley Gray made; some will be ready to suppose that his young and light-hearted wife at once worked a great and wonderful change in his disposition; others, that failing in her endeavors to do so, she became disappointed, sorrowing and unhappy. Neither of these conclusions is entirely correct. Flora did not all at once change her husband into a genial and social being; but her affectionate devotion inspired a confidence in her which gradually extended to others, and has now strength to say to the tumultuous waves of jealous passion "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further," and I am happy to say that my sister's cheerful and happy countenance does not indicate a sorrowful and disappointed heart. Yes, Charley Gray is a changed man, and there are deep lines of thought in his face, and a serene expression on his brow, and a clear happy light in his eye, which all speak of the battle fought and the victory won over the dark passions of his own heart. This summer we are all together at Uncle Nathan's, and our time is about equally divided between the old farm-house and the more elegant home of Aunt Lucinda. All the usual accompaniments of such a season of joy and festivity are here but the tremblings of emotion, the out-gushings of the heart, the thanksgivings and gratitude, as we blend the sometimes dark past with the bright present, and the rosy hue of the future, I am quite unable to describe. Years have come and gone with their scenes of sunshine and shadow since that glad reunion, we have each grown older and I trust wiser. Sorrow has been experienced and tears shed, but gentle hands have wiped away our tears and loving voices soothed our sorrows, and now, dear reader, I leave the actors who have appeared in the simple scenes of my story to pass onward, and perform their allotted parts in the great drama of life.