

AUNT HANNAH AND MARTHA AND JOHN





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SHE SAT QUITE ALONE IN THE PRETTY STUDY.

AUNT HANNAH AND MARTHA
AND JOHN

BY

PANSY (MRS. G. R. ALDEN)

AND

MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON

Author of
Divers Women
Profiles
Modern Prophets
From Different Standpoints
and others

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AUNT HANNAH, AND MARTHA, AND JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

AUNT HANNAH'S LETTER TO HER SISTER.

MAPLEWOOD, Jan. 15, 1889.

MY DEAR JANE:

Do you know it is just thirty years to-day since you were married and started on your long journey? How dreadful it seemed to us older ones then to give up our little sister to foreign missionary work. It was harder than you knew, for we felt just as if we were giving you up to death.

Thirty years is a long time, but it doesn't seem such a stretch to me now as it did then. It is surprising how time goes along. I'm getting old, but I don't believe it. Although you've been home three times to see us, I always think of you

as looking just as you did the day you were a bride. We shall think of you as we do of our friends who go to heaven young. You will always be young to us. I remember I thought it was almost wicked to sacrifice you—such a pretty, fresh flower, to be buried in that wild land. The Lord has taught me better. Now, I am glad that our family gave up the brightest treasure they had to his service. I think he has blest us more ever since.

I have a piece of news for you. John is going to be married. You don't know all that means to me. It means a lonesome life. You know Johnnie was only five years old when Sister Margaret died and gave him to me. You can not think what a comfort he has been. It doesn't seem as if I could have lived, that summer after I was left alone in the world, if I had not had the dear boy to care for, and make living seem worth while again. I feel as though I had been a success in training one boy, at least. To be sure, he was an uncommon child, and had a fine start when I took him, because he had a remarkable mother. She had taught him to obey perfectly, and that is half the battle, to my thinking. He has always been a good, obedient boy—not one of your poky ones, either. He is just running over with fun to this day. He is smart, too. They tell me John stood high in college and seminary. It does

not seem possible that it is all past, and that he is gone out of this old house forever, and is about to set up a home of his own. I thought, when he was young, I was bringing up somebody that would be a stay to me in my old age, and take the farm off my hands; bring his wife, when he got one, right here, and we would all work together. That's the way of the world! Tug and work years and years to bring something about, and then see your plans all upset.

But what am I saying? Talking exactly like a heathen. Of course it is better, the way it has turned out. I wanted John to be a farmer and work for me, and the Lord wanted him to be a minister and work for him. Well, I'm glad he had his way and did not let me have mine. I might have seen long ago, if I hadn't been blind as a bat, what was coming, by the way things went. That boy never took to farming. He did his work well, to be sure, to please me, but I could see he hated it, all the same. He was fond of books and was never so happy as when he was in school. I'm sorry, since I begin to get my eyes open, that I opposed him so much when he wanted to go to college, and that I grumbled and fretted because things did not go my way. It looks like fighting against God, but I did not see it so then.

John has accepted a call to the church in Belle-

ville. I heard him preach his first sermon last Sunday, and I must say I had hard work to keep down my pride. John is a good-looking young man. He's what you might call handsome. He looks well in the pulpit, as if he belonged there. I hadn't an idea the boy could preach as he does. It did not sound much like some beginners' sermons — all froth and words. John must have had a deep experience to preach like that. I might almost have thought that some of it came from Baxter or Bunyan, if I didn't know that he would sooner cut off his fingers than to do such a thing. I don't want to take any of the credit to myself; but if there is anything in the world that I have tried to do, it is to teach him to be true and clean throughout. I know John has been that. When he would come home on vacations I used to look him over as soon as he got in the house. I'm pretty sharp-sighted, if I am an old woman. John couldn't have deceived me very well. I always saw the same honest, pure boy that went away. He never smelled of tobacco or beer, and his eyes looked clear as crystals.

When I think it all over, it seems as if the Lord had put great honor on a poor old woman like me to allow me such a privilege as bringing up a minister for him. You'll think there's nothing in my head but John, and it's about true that there isn't.

That boy wants me to break up house-keeping and come and live with them; but I can't do that. The old farm has been my home too many years to think of leaving it now. I shall go right on. Peter and Dorcas have been with me now ten years, so it won't be much of a chore, after all, to carry on the farm. They know every crook and turn as well as I do.

I've just had a letter from John, and nothing will do but I must go to Belleville and put things to rights a little in the parsonage, and be there to welcome him and "Mattie," as he calls her. I'm astonished that John should nick-name his own wife! What is the use of putting an "ie" to her name when it doesn't belong there? To think of a woman being willing to be called "Lizzie," or "Katie," or "Jennie," when she might have "Elizabeth," or "Katherine," or "Jane"—good substantial names. I shall call her "Martha."

I suppose I must humor the boy, and drag my old bones over there. To be sure, it is not much of a journey, but I'm not so young as I used to be, and the snow is deep. I have to take such an early start in the morning—the stage starts before daylight—that I can't finish your letter till I get back.

THURSDAY EVENING.

Well, your letter has lain by quite a spell. I've

been and done it up and got back. Of course you want to hear all about it. I took Dorcas with me to help.

The parsonage is a pretty little white house, with green blinds. John had been at work there himself for a week before he went away, putting down carpets and setting up furniture. His wife's folks bought all that. Then I gave John a horse and buggy, and cow—one of my best Alderneys; I gave the dishes besides. I don't know but I was a little extravagant, but I bought a China tea-set. Maybe it's a whim, but I always think tea tastes better out of the little thin, clear cups, with pink flowers on them, than it does out of the common ones. So Dorcas and I had work enough to do, unpacking and washing the dishes, and setting them up in the bit of a closet. Then we swept and made up the beds. John's wife's folks are well-to-do. They have supplied her with bedding—and that of the best, enough to last her always, I guess. The furniture is all nice, too—“plain,” John says, but it doesn't look very plain to me.

When we got all the rooms put in order the place looked as pretty as a bird's nest. John's study has a green carpet on it that looks like moss, and the parlor carpet looks as if somebody had taken handfuls of little fine flowers and vines, and sprinkled them all about on the white ground-

work. The sitting-room carpet, too, is lively-looking, the furniture is brown, and two large windows let the sunshine pour in—now that doesn't seem very nice to you in that hot country, does it? But you mustn't forget how you used to love the sunshine in your old home. I really enjoyed arranging it all, only I could not help thinking, what if she should be a little upstart, and poke fun at me and my way of regulating. Well, we got it done the day they were expected—the baking and all. I took over a jar of butter, and then I put into that cellar and pantry everything that could be needed for house-keeping—groceries, you know, and flour and vegetables, and—well, everything. Then we baked up a lot of nice things.

How pleasant it all looked to me when I sat down in the rocking-chair waiting for them. The whole house was warm; the kitchen door stood open a little, and the tea-kettle was singing on the stove. Everything was ready but making the cream biscuits. John is very fond of cream biscuits, and I always made them when I wanted to give him a special treat. By the time I had got my biscuits well in the oven, and the tea-table set, the sleigh drove to the door.

I was so glad to see John back safe and well that I almost forgot he had a wife. When he introduced her, I expected her to put out three

fingers; but instead, she came and put both arms around my neck, and gave me a real hug and warm kiss. She was dressed in some soft brown stuff; in fact, she was brown all over—brown eyes, brown hair and brown ribbons; everything matched. How she got ribbons to exactly match her hair and eyes I don't see. Her cheeks were just a little pink, like my hyacinths. Such a pretty, delicate little thing. I don't wonder John fell in love with her. She looks young. What can she know about housekeeping? She seems just about as fit to take upon herself the management of a house and the cares of a minister's wife as a butterfly. I know it is said ministers are poor hands to pick out wives, but I did hope John would have a little common sense, and not be taken by a pretty face. Well, I'm not going to croak. She's an affectionate little thing, anyhow, and treats me as if I were the greatest lady of the land. John thinks I didn't see the roguish face he put on when I called her "Martha," nor how her cheeks got pinker than usual, and she almost laughed, then turned it off. Young folks don't see into everything, though you couldn't make them believe it. I'm sure I don't care if she has a pretty face, if she only makes John a good, loving, prudent wife. But dear me, I have my fears. She looks too cityfied to make a good housekeeper. I'll miss my guess if I don't find

that house all sixes and sevens in three months' time.

I must own up, too, that I'm a little bit disappointed, for, to tell the honest truth, I had a wife picked out for John myself, though he didn't know a breath about it. Things are queer, anyhow! It seems to me as if anybody could see with half an eye that Samantha Brown was the sort of wife he needed. You remember her mother, don't you—Cynthia Hancock? She married Eli Brown, and they have lived thirty years next neighbors to us. Samantha is just like her mother—smart and economical. She is a master hand at all sorts of work. It is hard to find her equal in making bread and biscuits and doughnuts. And such butter as she can make—sweet and yellow and solid! Not many butter-makers like the Browns. Then Samantha can turn her hand to almost anything. She makes her own dresses, and she could have made John's shirts. She was a good scholar, too, when she was in school. To be sure, she has not what they call "style," neither does she look as if the north wind would blow her away. To my mind she is a wholesome-looking girl, and I like her. But what is the use of talking all this? I suppose if Providence had intended her for John, the boy would have taken a notion to her.

I wish I could get over the habit of meddling

and fretting about the way things go. As if the Lord needed any of my help to manage affairs! Only one can't help feeling sometimes that things are getting all wrong when you look at it one way. Now, why John should go and marry that little delicate creature, with her ribbons and ruffles and fine manners—who will most likely be sick half the time, and have to hire her housework done and her sewing in the bargain—when there stood Samantha Brown, strong and smart and sensible, and pious besides, ready to jump at the chance, of course—I know not. And what's more, I shall never be wiser by fretting over it. I should think I would have learned a lesson when you were married. You never knew how much opposed I felt to your marrying a missionary. I was sure your health would break down, sure you were too young, sure you were not suited to the work. But how grandly it all turned out! He does know best.

I want to speak of another matter now. You ask if I am satisfied that I am doing my share of the work our Master left us to do. You did well to ask that question, Jane. I have been a beetle-headed woman for years, I'll admit. When I had given some flannel to old Mrs. Betts for her rheumatism, and sent some potatoes and wood to the only other poor family we had, and put a dollar here and there among the different objects, I

seemed to feel that I had about done my part. But I've had what you might call an experience, and you are the only living soul I shall ever tell it to. I always had my own way of keeping my accounts; whenever I sold anything I felt that part of it belonged to the Lord—a wonderful small part, though—so one of the columns held what was set apart for him, the other column was for myself. But one day when I was having my yearly reckoning, it struck me all of a sudden what a difference there was in the columns when they were footed up. How much better I had treated myself than I had my Lord! I didn't like the looks of it at all. The five dollars that I had set down for Foreign Missions, that had seemed so large to me, dwindled away to nothing. It seemed as if the Master was sitting over against the treasury again, and seeing, not what all the people put in, but me only, of the whole world, as if he stood and went over that account-book with me, and then gave me such a look—something as he gave to Peter. Then my heart melted, and I saw everything clear as day for a few minutes—this life, and the next one, and how I had been robbing him.

That was the most wonderful night I ever spent. There was no sleeping done by me. I made an assignment of farm and everything to my dear Lord, and such peace and comfort as I had

in doing it! Does he send his angels down yet to speak to stupid souls, or even come himself, maybe? Blessed, gracious Master!

He made the way very plain to me, for here comes your letter telling how much you need money in your mission for another school building; how heathen children were turned away because you had no room for them. I had been praying for years a kind of half-hearted word about all the heathen being brought to Christ, and here they were trying to come and could not, because I would not stretch out my hand and give them a lift; the Lord's golden grain growing on every side of me, field on field, and I hoarding it away!

I said to myself—"Now, Hannah Adams! Suppose you just turn things around for this year, at least. Put yourself in that other column." So I did. After paying the hired help and putting by enough for necessaries, I doled out to myself, for clothes and anything else I wanted, just the sum I used to give away—and it was precious little, I can tell you—then I took the rest, except some to our Maplewood poor, and some for our own church, and carried it to the bank. And here is the check for you. Take it and build a school-house; perhaps it will hire a teacher for a year beside. I had to do it up in short order, for Satan came parleying round when

I woke up in the night, telling me I was foolish to give so much, and I would end my days in the poor-house, and all that. I was afraid if I waited, that I should begin to agree with him. But I shall be mistaken if it doesn't turn out the best investment I ever made. If I wasn't so old I would go myself and help you.

Now, don't you go to thinking that I tell all this in a boasting spirit. I can say with Paul—“Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” Nothing but shame and confusion of face belongs to me. Remember, there have been years and years of my life that I have been doling out little bits to him, and all that time came seed-time and harvest, the rains, the winds and the sunshine, everything my crops needed, and I gathered them in and stored them up and pulled down my barns and built greater, like that other “fool,” and all the while that command upon me, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel,” and I getting round it by handing out a dollar or two! Oh, I wonder he took any such gentle means as he did to bring me to my senses, and make me know it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Martha promised to write me a long letter every week or two—to make up for taking John away from me, she said. The child means to, I suppose, but I don't expect it. I know just what young folks' promises amount to. If she does I'll

send them to you sometimes, then you can get acquainted with her, too, for it is one of the best ways of knowing what people are made of; that is, if they write honest letters.

What would we have done all these years without yours? They are so bright and good I really think they ought to be published, for you tell all the little things that one wants to know about a strange people.

Good-by, dear Jane; may our heavenly Father bless you more and more.

Your loving sister,

HANNAH ADAMS.

CHAPTER II.

BY PANSY.

MIXED THINGS.

SHE sat quite alone in the pretty study, one trim foot patting somewhat restlessly on the mossy greenness of the carpet. A winsome little woman, still in brown, as Aunt Hannah had described her. Brown as to the soft silk of her hair, the depths of her eyes, and at this moment in a soft brown dress, without ribbons, with a bit of ruffle about the throat, the only thing that relieved the brownness. There was scarcely any pink on the cheeks this evening. Truth to tell, the young wife was very tired. In some of her conclusions Aunt Hannah was correct. The small lady in brown knew not much more about ordering her house than did the butterflies. Not that she had imagined this state of things herself when she took upon her the duties of a housewife.

In her secret heart she believed herself to be unusually wise, and felt that she was about to astonish not only John, but all the parish, with the amount of skill and tact that she should display in the ordering of her affairs.

For nearly two weeks she and John had been alone, and there had certainly been some astonishment, but it was almost entirely on the part of the young wife. She had made a discovery; to keep house with a mother whose room-door could be softly opened at any moment and the important question propounded, "How long ought that juice to boil?" or, "How much sugar does it take for such a pudding?" was one thing, and to keep house with a mother three hundred miles away, and the next-door neighbor a prim, wiry-looking woman, with thin lips that shut over each other in a very suggestive manner—lips that had already been overheard to say that "it seemed a pity for a minister to pick out a baby for a wife"—and eyes that seemed always to be looking through her pantry window into the parsonage kitchen—this was quite another thing.

These were some of the thoughts now passing through the restless brain of Mrs. John, and had to do with the restless tap of her foot on the mossy carpet. She was just tired enough to have the entire subject of housekeeping assume formidable proportions. How often had she with a

complacent air listened to the sweet, low voice of her mother, as she told some friendly caller that her "daughter Mattie" superintended the cooking and managed all the affairs of the house as nicely as she could herself. Both mother and daughter believed this to be true. But now, with an experience born in the last two weeks, the "daughter Mattie" knew that it was because her mother's room was on the same floor with the store-room and pantry that life in the old home moved on so smoothly, for the mother, who was unable to raise herself unaided from her pillow, could yet think and plan and suggest.

It was Tuesday evening, and the two trying days of the week through which Mrs. Remington had just lived, had followed a Sabbath which had also been in some respects a trial. To begin with, the trouble which just now loomed itself up darkly before her, like a mountain over which she was expected to climb, and felt that she could not, was connected with bread.

This small woman in brown had made and baked that day four loaves of bread which were unmistakably and hopelessly sour. Is there a young married woman in the land, having the ordering of her own house, who does not feel an instant throb of sympathy? I really think her astonishment and disappointment added to the bitterness. She had made bread before often in

her mother's home ; therefore she had gone about her task with no sinking of heart, but with such an air of superior confidence that she smiled over the thought of the peering eyes from the kitchen of her neighbor, and felt quite willing to let them peer. After that bread was fairly out of the oven, she had closed the blinds of her pantry very tight, and drawn down the shade, with a vague fear in her heart that the perfume from those acid loaves would steal into the kitchen across the yard, and tell their tale of failure.

What was the trouble? Oh, "its name was legion." In the first place, there had been in the old home a deft-handed maiden, carefully trained by the mother before the sorrowful accident that made her a prisoner in her bed ; a maiden whose duty it was to see that the fire was in just that state of clearness and steadiness which has so much to do with perfection from the oven. This same maiden had always her neat row of tins, shining with cleanliness, arranged on the baking-table, waiting for the young housekeeper's well-rounded loaves. In the parsonage kitchen there was just one pair of hands ; they went into the very depths of stickiness before the bread-tins were thought of at all. Even when their owner did think of them, she was for the moment only bewildered. It seemed so surprising not to be able to say —

“Jennie, the tins ; right away, please.”

However, she had gotten her hands out as best she could, and washed them, and given her tins an extra rubbing, and started afresh just in time to hear the door-bell ring.

There was no “Jennie” to answer ; she had neglected to tell John that her hands would be engaged, and he would be likely to hold to the arrangement she had herself proposed ; that nothing but an absolute necessity, of which she was to judge, should call him from his study in the morning hours. There was no help for it, the bread must be left once more.

It was the wiry woman next door, who wanted to borrow an egg, having discovered, in the midst of her baking, that she lacked just one. She saw a streak of flour on Mrs. John’s cheek and a dab of dough on her apron, and little lumps of hardening dough here and there on the hurriedly-washed hands, and asked if it was baking-day here, too ; then remarked that her bread was just out of the oven. The flurried minister’s wife, alarmed to find that she felt almost as though it would be a comfort to throw the egg at her caller, made all the haste she could back to her bread, her heart sinking the while. How late it must be ! She had forgotten that they sat so long over the letters this morning, and that she had taken time to read mother’s once more when quite alone.

There was much hurrying in the parsonage kitchen after that. Perhaps all would have gone well had not Dr. Crowther called to have a few minutes' talk with the minister on important business, and Mattie, ushering him into the little parlor, had been shocked to find that the floor was still strewn with papers, and the chairs with books, just as they had left it the night before. It was extraordinary that there was no Jennie to call upon.

She had summoned John, and he had carried the doctor to his study, and not before he gave a hurried glance about the disorderly room. After that Mattie felt that she should have waited to brush and dust and arrange that room, even though they had no dinner at all!

I need not follow her through her nervous and constantly interrupted morning; but if you had been there, you would not have been in the least surprised that she forgot the bread.

When at last, several hours later in the day, she ran to it in dismay, you are prepared to hear that it had silently, and with "malice aforethought," done its meanest and stickiest. Oh, the oven, the oven! The bread should have been not only in it, but out of it, by this time, and the fire had been forgotten entirely. Mrs. John was used to steady, well-behaved coals, and Jennie to "shake" them at just the right minute; how could she be

expected to remember this snapping, sputtering wood that flamed up so suddenly and died out so soon? She did her best with fire and soda and kneading-board, but the bread was undeniably sour.

She groaned in spirit over what her mother would have thought of it, or what Aunt Hannah would have said could she have seen her dear John bravely swallowing it for his supper. John, blessed man, made no comment whatever, until, in answer to his wife's earnest words, he was obliged to admit that it was a little tart.

"It wouldn't be good bread if it wasn't sour," said the poor, self-accusing spirit opposite him; "it isn't good yeast. I know it is too old, or the bread would not have been so long rising in the first place. We used to buy our yeast at the bakery. I don't know how I am going to manage; this is the only kind I can get, and I know I shall not succeed with it. It is not a bit like ours."

"We'll have to make some," said John, with a deliciously superior air, and a smiling emphasis on the pronoun "we." "I remember stirring a mess for Aunt Hannah that she called hop yeast, and it used to hop around in a lively manner. I don't think it can be very hard work. Aunt Hannah made it every week or two, I think."

But his city-bred wife knew nothing about

home-made yeast, and had a suspicion that neither did John, and the bread was sour, and the world looked dreary to her.

All the drearier, I am sorry to say, because of the fact that the later hours of the afternoon had been spent at what they were pleased to call in that region, a "female" prayer-meeting.

"Why do they use that term?" she had asked John, and laughed as she asked it. "Wouldn't it sound queerly to say a 'male' prayer-meeting?"

At the tea table she had tried to tell John about the meeting, and had not felt like laughing.

"It wasn't pleasant, John; it was, well, dreadfully stiff; I don't know any other word that will describe it. Almost every one was late, yet the meeting did not begin; they sat around solemnly and looked at one another. At last some one ventured to ask Mrs. Jones to lead. She said that she was not prepared, and that she didn't feel competent to lead a meeting, anyway. Of course that made all the others feel as though they ought not to be 'competent,' and one and another refused. Then our next neighbor said, she thought the minister's wife was the proper person to lead; but by that time I was so sort of frightened that it seemed to me I couldn't lead anything, and I said I did not feel competent, either." The sentence closed with a shy glance at John, whose amused face had grown slightly grave.

“I am sorry you did that,” he said, gently; “I would have been glad if you had taken the vacant place as a matter-of-course, and led the meeting as simply as you would have done the young people’s gathering in your old home.”

Mrs. John shook her head. “I’m sorry, too, now,” she said, humbly; “and I knew you would be, but it was a very different gathering from our young people’s, I assure you. Mrs. Green was finally persuaded to lead; she is the last person I should have chosen. She selected a long hymn and read the whole of it. Think of reading a hymn, John, in a little informal prayer-meeting that is to last only an hour, when each person present had a book! She isn’t what might be called a good reader, either. Then they had a time getting some one to start the tune. They didn’t ask me. Mrs. Jones said she was hoarse, and Mrs. Brown did not know any tune that would go with the words. At last I grew ashamed of myself, and started a tune that I thought everybody in the world knew, but hardly any one sang, and that frightened me. On the second verse it seems I changed the key. I don’t know why, I am sure, but I pitched it so high that even those cats which troubled us so last night couldn’t have squealed it. Of course I had to stop. ‘It is very strange,’ I said, ‘I have often sung that tune.’ But they all looked as solemn as though

they were at a funeral. The ludicrous side of it came to me next, and I laughed. You needn't think they did, though. Tombstones couldn't have been more solemn. In short, John, the new minister's wife disgraced herself, and she knows it and feels badly about it, though she doesn't understand it one bit; she meant to be as good as possible."

The sentence had closed with a queer little sound that was much like a sob. John, wise-hearted man, had laughed pleasantly, and said that she mustn't mind these little things; that the people meant all right, he was sure; that in regard to many things she had been brought up differently from them, and that they must take time to get accustomed to people's peculiarities. Then he had told her about the rose-bushes he was going to set out under her window as soon as the spring opened, and had been as cheery as a man could well be who was eating sour bread and stewed prunes which had been slightly scorched.

After supper he had agreed to dry the dishes, and they were being very merry, when a knock interrupted, and the minister returned from answering it with the grave look returned to his face. He must go at once. That woman about whom he had told her on Sabbath was worse, was going to die, and she had not planned for death. "Deacon True says she is in mortal terror," said

John, as he kissed the little dishwasher whose face was also now as grave as his own, and went away in haste.

This was why she was alone in the pretty study, waiting. Going over, as she waited, the events of the day, of the two days, and their pettiness and solemnities, sour bread, and prayer-meetings, and dish-washing, and death-beds, life looked strangely mixed to this young beginner at womanhood. It seemed to her just then that the spring would never come, and no more roses would ever bloom.

In her heart was a longing to write a long letter to "mother," to tell her everything, and claim from her the fullness of sympathetic love which had been her portion all her life. To this end, she turned presently to the study table, and drew toward her pen and paper, and began the familiar "Dear mamma." Then came a vision of the sweet, pale face and love-lighted eyes, bending eagerly over the sheet to read the precious words. Only sunshine should appear on those pages for her mother's eyes to read. No perplexities of the kitchen, however merrily told, should intrude. Her mother would be sure to "read between the lines," and grieve because she could not shield her darling from all roughnesses of the way.

"She shall hear about the roses that are to be,

and the sunshine that now is," resolved Mrs. John, bravely. "As for Mrs. Pryn and her pantry window, and Mrs. Green and all the others, mamma shall have none of them. But I do wish I knew how to make soft yeast. I have it! I'll write to Aunt Hannah. John will like that, and I'll tell her the whole story, because she is not my mother."

The first sheet was pushed aside, and another commenced — "Dear Aunt Hannah,"

CHAPTER III.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

GOOD BREAD AND GOOD MEETINGS.

MAPLEWOOD, Feb. 18, 18—.

MY DEAR MARTHA:

I was highly pleased to receive a letter from you. I must say it was more than I expected. Young folks nowadays are not fond of the society of their elders. That you can sit down and write a long letter to your old aunt shows, at least, that you had good training. Your mother must have brought you up to have a little respect for old people, and there is none too much of that, as far as my observation goes. I do not often speak of this; but I have had my feelings hurt more by young people since I begun to feel that I was an old woman than in any other way. I have been in families where young ladies would flirt in and out, not noticing me any more than if I had been a cat. If they had to sit down a few minutes,

they would act as though they supposed I was so old I had forgotten the English language, or hadn't any thoughts. I know it is foolish to be worried about it, but (I like young folks, and I want my heart to stay young just as long as I live.) When I get to be a mummy or an oyster, I shall be glad to leave this world.

That makes me think of the sick woman you wrote about. Poor soul, I have tried to pray for her, but I fear it wasn't with much faith. When a body has scorned the Lord's offer of mercy all her life, it seems almost too much to expect that he will receive just the dregs, as it were. We know he did receive one; and if it weren't for that dying thief, it would be hard to have a bit of faith about it. Yet when it comes to that, none of us gets a pass through the gate of the city because of our good lives.

Sometimes when I get to thinking about that thief, the love and pity of the Lord seem so wonderful that I feel as if I must go right out and tell every poor sinner about it.

You wish I would come and spend a year, do you? Now, child, you think you do, I dare say. But that would be like a good many things that we think would make us happy; when we come to try them we see our mistake. No, no; it is best for young ones after they once fly from the home nest to set up independent of the old birds.

I tried once to help two young robins. They were building a nest in the old apple-tree right under my bedroom window, and they weren't making it a bit comfortable according to my way of thinking. I watched them until I couldn't stand it any longer. Then I hung little bunches of ravelings on the limbs in plain sight. The stubborn little things wouldn't notice them, but kept on weaving in bits of straw and hay; as if, of course, they knew best.

One day they were both gone. I took a soft bit of wool and tucked it nicely into the nest. I thought when they once knew how warm it felt to the feet they would like it. But when that little housekeeper got back she was mad enough! She made angry sort of chirps that sounded for all the world like scolding, and he helped her along in it, like any foolish young husband. They flew around as if they were crazy, and tore that nest to pieces in no time. That taught me a lesson. I shall never meddle with any more nests.

I should like to help you about the bread and things. But, after all, experience is the best teacher. You won't let your bread run over many times after one such scrape. Of course, you may have the best flour and yeast in the world, and you may knead it for hours, as some do—there isn't a bit of use in it, either—and if you neglect it just a little too long before you

bake it, you will have sour, miserable stuff, full of big holes. It is in making bread as it is in everything else that goes to ruin; neglect generally makes the trouble. When I went down East last summer, visiting, I left the prettiest garden you ever saw, and when I got back there was nothing to be seen but Canada thistles and burdocks as high as the fence. (And I have many a time in my life got away down and away back; my heart as full of weeds as my garden. What was the matter? Why, I let alone the precious word he gave us to feed upon and neglected the spot where I used to meet the Lord and speak to him and he to me.) My experience is, that nothing thrives where the lazy jade, neglect, gets a foothold.

But to come back to bread; no good bread can be made without first-rate, lively, hop yeast. And I'm real glad you want to know how to make it, and don't depend on that abominable stuff they call "salt risings" and "milk emptins"! I think my receipt for hop yeast the best there is. I take a handful of hops and steep them in about a quart of water. Then I pare four middling-sized potatoes and grate them and strain the boiling hop water on them, stirring as I pour. Set it on the stove a few minutes and stir it until it thickens up. Put in a teaspoonful of salt and set it away to cool. When it is cool enough—milk

warm—stir in a small teacup full of yeast, that must be saved out each time for the purpose. Likely you can get a little of your neighbor for the first. Cover it and set it in a warm room to rise; every little while giving it a good stirring and leaving it standing in the pantry a couple of days. The oftener you stir it the whiter it will be. Then put it in a stone jar, cover it tight and put it in a cool place. It keeps a good deal longer than yeast that has flour and sugar in it. It will be quite thick when it is done, if it is right. That quantity is enough for a small family.

I am glad, too, that you know when bread is sour. Not half the people do. Some pride themselves on their handsome white bread; and very likely it will be so sour that it won't be fit to put in any human stomach. But they never know it. Even the bread that just escapes being sour has been made to rise so many times that it has lost all its goodness and tastes like sawdust. It is white, and that's all that can be said about it. Basswood chips are white, too, but who wants to eat basswood? You can count the folks on your fingers who know how to make a light, sweet loaf of hop-yeast bread—the kind that tastes like a good, sweet nut. I do hope John will have such to eat; for a man who works with his brains ought to be well nourished.

Your prayer-meetings must be a good deal as ours in Maplewood were. We used to get together, half a dozen of us, and pray over our old prayers every Thursday afternoon in a dismal kind of way as if we didn't half believe in what we were praying about, nor care whether we got it or not. If the truth were told, I suppose we were all glad when the meeting was out. I think those were the sort of prayers that wouldn't reach up, though they were long enough for the matter of that.

Some people might think, by the way you spoke, that you were opposed to praying for reforms and missions. But I am not going to think that. I know what you mean—better not pray for what you don't heartily want.

I went to a good meeting when I was East—a woman's meeting. (You're right about that; I never did like being called a "female," instead of a "woman.") That was the best one I ever attended. It was in a large, pleasant room, and an old lady led it. She sat up there, looking as dignified as Martha Washington, with a bright, happy look, as if she expected a real good time. When the ladies came in she would introduce those who were not acquainted, saying—

"I think we all ought to know each other—we that love the Lord."

The chairs were placed so that we were all

seated in a circle around the leader—about twenty of us in all.

“Let’s sing ‘Rock of Ages,’” she said. “We won’t wait to read it; an hour is so short.”

Now, it was new to me that an hour was a short time for a meeting, I know we always had hard enough work to fill it up in our meetings.

The singing was good and lively, because some one started it off in a firm, strong voice, as if she wasn’t afraid. That gave others courage. Then the leader prayed just for this—that the Holy Spirit would help every one who spoke or prayed; and that Jesus himself would be there.

Then each one repeated a verse or two that told something about the Lord’s mercies and loving-kindness. There wasn’t any waiting. After they had sung another verse, the leader said—

“Now, we won’t waste any time waiting for each other. Let us each one speak a word of some particular thing, if we can, wherein the Lord has been merciful to us this last week.”

The woman next to her seemed in a hurry to tell what she had to say. She was one of those handsome, tasty women, too—looked as if she likely had all she wanted of this world’s goods. But her words showed that her treasure wasn’t on the earth. She said her heart was so full of joy she did not know how to tell it. Her only son, who was in Philadelphia, studying medicine, had

been but a half and half Christian for years. "Yesterday," she said, "I got a letter from him. He says he has given all of himself to the Lord now, and he has peace like a river. Oh, I can not tell you how glad I am that the Lord has answered my prayer."

Then some one asked about consecration — if it was everybody's duty; another quoted a text, proving that it was. Then another pulled a little book out of her pocket, and read what that wonderful man, Mr. Finney, thought about it. Another said a word, and another; and, before they knew it, they were all talking away as sociably as if they'd been at a quilting or sewing society.

When there was a little pause, that woman, who could sing like a robin, struck up —

"Now I resolve, with all my heart,
With all my powers, to serve the Lord."

After the singing, a woman in a coarse blanket shawl and an old faded bonnet spoke, and these are the very words she said —

"Some of you have heard how I lost all my money. I've been years and years digging and scraping by the hardest work to earn it, for I made it all by washing. I put it in the bank, that I thought was as safe and strong as the hills. And now it is gone—all gone! But it's not

about that I'll be talking. I've been to Cedar Creek to stay a week with my daughter. She and her husband have been converted. Now, isn't that better than gold? The Lord has taken that, but he has given me what is better. I never spent such a happy week in my life. Besides, he took out of my heart the dreadful hate I felt at first for the man who cheated me out of my hard earnings. I can pray for him. I'm going to work again with my soul full of joy, and I shall sing as I work. He will keep me. I have his promise. Isn't that better than a bank-note?"

Then a young girl told how she had been a member of the church four years, but she hadn't been a happy Christian. She had tried to belong to Christ, and follow fashion and gaiety. "But I can't," she said; "the two won't go together." She said she was miserable; got so she didn't enjoy the world or religion, either. Sometimes she'd think she'd give it all up, but she was afraid to do that. Then she gave up her gay life, and determined to be very good. She read good books, and went to all the meetings, and gave to the poor, but that didn't help her. "One day," said she, "Jesus showed it all to me—that the doing or not doing wasn't going to be of any use till I rested with all my heart on him; and now I am happy since I learned to trust."

Then a woman said—"I want to thank him

before you all to-day for a great thing he has done for me. I told him I would. I don't suppose any of you know that I have a violent temper, for I usually control it before strangers. I fell into a grievous habit of scolding. I scolded the servants and my children, and even my husband. Everybody dreaded my tongue. I was sorry for it when I got over my vexation. Often I promised my Saviour I would not do it any more; but before I knew it something would go wrong, and I would scold again. One day, when I was in despair, I got to thinking if the Lord could do such a wonderful thing as change the heart in the first place, he could also break the chains of a sinful habit. (I went and told him that he knew I had tried, again and again, to conquer it, but I could not. Then the Lord put it into my heart to call quickly to him when I felt my anger rising. I have done it now for many weeks, and have been wonderfully kept from my besetting sin. Don't think I am boasting. I do not do it; I could not. I deserve no more credit for it than you do because the sunshine streams into these windows and makes the room bright and pleasant."

There was one woman who had not said a word. She had a pale face, and wore an old, thin shawl.

"I haven't anything joyful to tell," she said. "My husband is good and kind, if he would let

drink alone. He does try to, but he is terribly tempted. We have four children, and nothing to live on. If the Lord doesn't have mercy on us, I don't know what we'll do. I came to this meeting to ask you to pray for my husband."

"Let us pray," said the leader.

We all knelt, and those women one after another, poured out their hearts before the Lord. They rejoiced with the joyful ones, and cried with the sorrowful drunkard's wife. How they did pray for that tempted man! How earnest they seemed, pleading to be entirely consecrated. It was just beautiful when we arose from our knees, to see them all, rich and poor, gather around the drunkard's wife and speak kindly to her, and promise to help her. Such prayers mean something, to my mind.

I went out of that meeting feeling as if I had had a taste of heaven; rebuked, too, for I had thought, of course, that all the good people lived at Maplewood, and that city people were on the high road to destruction. I made up my mind that our prayer-meetings at home should be different if I could bring it about. Why shouldn't we bring our every-day joys and troubles to our meetings, and talk and pray over them? Why shouldn't we pray for Tom Jackson and Joe Miller, who were going to ruin with drink, instead of praying in a general, roundabout way, that "the flood of intem-

perance that is sweeping over the land may be arrested"? Our meetings are better.

Tell John Aunt Jane writes that the only trouble with their work in India now is the lack of money to carry it on. The way is open before them on all sides. There are even missionaries waiting to be sent, but the "Board" is cramped, and can't send them. I think just as you and John do about the word "sacrifice." I don't believe that even after we have done our best our Father likes to hear it from us, any more than parents would be pleased to hear their children ranking themselves among the martyrs because they had been obedient. I shouldn't a bit wonder it, when our eyes get a glimpse of the glory prepared for us, we shall be so ashamed of our "sacrifices" that we will beg to be allowed to go back to earth and lay down our lives for him.

Tell John, too, that I'm getting to be a sort of missionary myself in my old age, amongst the factory hands. It is queer, the way it came about. I'll tell him some time. But I begin to see why Sister Jane is so happy in her work; the wages are good.

You say John thinks there are very few women like me, and I should hope it was so. I am glad the boy loves me, but One who is best acquainted with me knows that I don't deserve any praise.

I am saving a little jar of October butter for you, as sweet as the day it was made, and some nice honey. You and John must come over and see me before long. That you may be a blessing, to each other is my daily prayer.

Your affectionate

AUNT HANNAH.

The way it came about that Aunt Hannah had a mission was this; during the last years a factory had established itself two miles from Maplewood. The usual community had sprung up about it, but as yet there was no church nearer than the village. In consequence, the children of the little hamlet were growing up to regard the Sabbath as a mere play-day.

Mr. Brewster went over occasionally to preach, but both he and Mrs. Adams had been in trouble of mind for some time about these heathen at their doors. The subject had been brought to the notice of the church, and an effort made to establish a Sabbath School. Nobody, however, was willing to undertake the work, so nothing more than talk had yet been accomplished.

One night Mrs. Adams was wakeful. Sleep was impossible; the children of Factoryville were on her heart. Something must be done for them at once. She went over all the puzzle. It was a shame to let things go on as they were. But

suppose she got up a school herself, where could a superintendent be found?

"I can't find anybody, and I can't chop one out of wood," she declared almost fretfully, as she turned her pillow over.

At last her decision must have been reached, for she fell asleep in a peaceful state of mind, and the next afternoon, immediately after dinner, prepared to act upon her resolutions. She had spent the morning in the pantry making a quantity of delicious little seed-cakes. By two o'clock Dolly and the old carriage were at the door, and Mrs. Adams and a bag of cakes set out to found a mission.

"I shall do my part," she had resolved, "even if I don't see the way clear to the end. After I've done what I can, the Lord will do what I can not."

She first called upon the trustees of the school-house, and secured the privilege of meeting there for an hour each week. Then she visited the mothers. Her common sense, her tact and her warm heart fitted her for such work, as no training in a Bible school could, if she had been lacking in these. Every woman in Factoryville, before that afternoon was over, felt that Mrs. Adams was her personal friend, and all promised that their children should be at the school-house at the appointed hour.

The next step this wise general took was to happen along just as school was dismissed. She drew up to the roadside and let Dolly nibble grass, while she got acquainted with the children. It was not difficult. Young people of all ages had an affinity for Aunt Hannah. She asked them to get her some of the scarlet maple leaves on a tree in the pasture, and forthwith every boy and girl scampered to do her bidding, bringing treasures of glowing leaves, whereupon they were liberally rewarded with seed-cakes. Then Mrs. Adams took into her buggy some of the younger ones and brought them on their way, and the triumph was complete. The next thing was to find some one who was willing to take charge of the school, but all pleaded inability of some sort. Saturday night came and nobody was provided.

“Go yourself,” said Mr. Brewster; “nobody is fitter.”

And Mrs. Adams went, after again spending a sleepless night, and protesting that she was getting old, and was “slow of speech.” The One who silenced that other objector, promising, “I will teach thee what thou shalt say,” overcame her reluctance also. She attempted nothing that first Sunday but teaching the children a passage of Scripture and telling them a Bible story; but in her graphic way of telling it accomplished much, gaining their undivided attention, and

awakening thought and conscience. After that Mrs. Adams always went without protest. Two other women, like-minded with herself, accompanied her, one of whom could sing.

And so the Factoryville mission was established on a firm basis. One of its chief charms was the Bible story at the close of the school. But it had no superintendent. Aunt Hannah would not allow herself to be called by that name.

CHAPTER IV.

BY PANSY.

"TOTAL DEPRAVITY."

AS Rev. John Remington arose from his breakfast-table one morning, he made the remark to his wife that they certainly must try to get out together that afternoon and begin an assault upon their calling-list; that the Pritchards, especially, should be called upon, as they were among the first at the parsonage, and were inclined to be sensitive.

Whereupon Mrs. John, with two pink spots glowing on her cheeks, partly from excitement and partly the effect of having broiled the steak under difficulties, declared that she did not care if the Pritchards were not called upon in a year. Then had John, with his gravest air and a note of something very like reproach in his voice, said—

“Don’t let us begin in that way, Mattie dear.

Let us resolve to make this people ours, with all their imperfections. I presume they have faults, even as we have, but as much as possible let us close our eyes to them, as we do, on occasion, to those of our best and dearest, and resolve to like them, in spite of their faults."

He had come around the little table to kiss her at the close of this sentence, and had stroked the brown head with a tender hand for a moment; and Mattie had returned the kiss, but said never a word, though he lingered a moment for it, and, she fancied, looked disappointed as he closed the door of the dining-room.

Mrs. Mattie could not help it. Just then she had no words to offer. She considered that she had been unselfish and Christian to an unusual degree, and John knew nothing about it. She felt that she did not like Mr. Pritchard, "in spite of his faults," and she was certainly not going to pretend that she did. The truth was, she had come into too recent contact with him. Certain words of his had spoiled for her one of the fairest Sundays of her life. She recalled the scene—a plain, large church, well filled with people, most of them plainly dressed, belonging to the class known as well-to-do farmers; the minister—her minister—preaching to them from the words—"Present your bodies a living sacrifice"—strong, terse sentences, thrilling from his very soul;

burning a way, the young wife thought, into the hearts of his hearers. She, his wife, who was certainly disposed to listen critically, if any mortal could, paid him the high compliment of forgetting for the space of five minutes that he was her husband, and gave herself up to the solemn and self-searching influences which the sermon set in motion. Following the "Amen" of the benediction so closely that it startled her, came the voice of Mr. Pritchard, whose family pew was behind her own.

"A very pretty sermon, young madam," he said, holding out his fat, pudgiky hand for her to clasp, "a very pretty sermon, indeed; went along as smooth as grease. But it shows plain enough that that husband of yours is young. By the time his hair is as gray as mine, he will know that a man must look out for No. 1, and be pretty sharp about it, too. Just tell him so, with my compliments, will you? He, he, he!"

No laugh that Mrs. Remington had ever heard had seemed so disagreeable as the one which accompanied this jarring sentence. She kept her voice low and quiet by a strong effort of will, but her answer seemed to bewilder Mr. Pritchard.

"Do you think, sir, that the Lord Jesus was mistaken when he gave us those directions through his servant?"

"How!" said Mr. Pritchard.

“Why, my husband did not make the text, you know. It is the Lord’s own message. I ask if, in your opinion, the Lord was mistaken in supposing it to be of practical value?”

“Ah!” he said. “Well”—another long pause—“I’ll tell you what I do think, madam; the kind of doctrine that that young husband of yours preached this morning will do first-rate for ministers, and for them who haven’t got to earn their own living. When folks are supported by the church, you know, it is a very different thing from having to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, and save a good slice for the minister besides. That takes hard digging, and lots of it. He, he, he!”

Mr. Pritchard’s momentary embarrassment had passed. He considered that he had made a sharp answer, and was entirely himself again. He shook himself like a great dog as he laughed, and waddled out of the seat in a tremor of satisfaction, while the red glow on Mrs. Remington’s face was rapidly changing into almost a pallor. What mockery it was to preach such solemn and uplifting truths to people like these!

It required her utmost effort at self-control not to tell John the whole story as soon as they were at home. She put the longing to do so sternly aside. His Sabbath should not be burdened with such things; she would wait until to-morrow,

when he would be rested. And by to-morrow, thinking much over that sermon, she had reached the heights of unselfishness, and resolved not to tell him at all; it could do no possible good; it might depress him. She would bear burdens of that sort for him; and it gave her a little glow of satisfaction to feel that she was doing so. But it was certainly hard, having silently shouldered so heavy an annoyance, to be spoken to in that almost reproachful tone, as though it was a special indication of depravity in her to shrink from calling on the Pritchards. For a minute and a half she wished she had told him the whole story.

Then she made another heroic resolve; she would put the whole thing aside and give her entire mind to the making of hop yeast. This subject reminded her of Aunt Hannah's letter, and a bright smile flitted over her face as she thought. What a delightful letter it had been! John's face had fairly shone with pride and pleasure as she read it to him.

"Blessed old Auntie!" he had said; "I use the word old as a kind of endearment; Aunt Hannah never seems, and I think never will seem, old to me. She is my mother, you know; the only one I remember, and I think mothers never grow old. How indignant it makes me to think of her being ignored in the way she has been. I should not suppose that the pertest young miss would be

likely to bestow such treatment on Aunt Hannah. She is a woman who ought to command respect wherever she goes."

Then they had gone off into one of their interesting little arguments, which almost any question started, and which was so pleasant to these two. Mattie had declared that she thought both John and Aunt Hannah were too hard on young people; that quite often they appeared indifferent to deaf persons, for instance, because they were timid, and the situation was embarrassing. There was her friend Fanny Mills, who would chatter like a magpie to mamma, but had never a word for old Aunt Patty, who used to spend part of each winter with them, and who was a very interesting old lady, but extremely deaf. One day she asked Fanny why it was that she did not talk to Aunt Patty Houston, and she admitted that it was because she could not think of anything to say that was worth shouting; that when she had squealed out for the third time that it was a pleasant day, or something equally original, and had not yet been heard, she was so mortified to think that she had troubled an old lady with such a triviality, that it kept her from venturing again for a long while. Then John had laughed, but insisted that Fanny's self-consciousness was at fault in that instance, and that she ought to rise above such mortifications, and Mat-

tie had answered him brightly, and, in the enjoyment of their own tongues, they had almost forgotten to finish the letter.

Over the theological portion of the letter the minister had looked grave.

“Aunt Hannah has some peculiar ideas,” he said; “they will not bear writing out. Her practice is all right, but when she comes to explanation, she gets into fog.”

“Why,” asked Mattie, with an air half timid, half mischievous, “do you think that woman ought to have kept on scolding, and scolded a little less each week, until by and by she overcame the habit entirely, when she had become old and gray and the children were too old to be scolded?”

He gave her a bright look in recognition of her sarcasm, but answered soberly—

“I would not limit the grace of God, and the things he will do for us are beyond the power of our comprehension, though we try our best; but it is a mischievous way some people have of talking as though they had nothing whatever to do on this spiritual journey. We are to put on Christ in order to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and the better we come to know him, the more entirely do we clothe ourselves in his garments; and we come to know him by daily study and fellowship with him; so that it

rests with you and me, Mattie, in a large degree, as to how nearly we shall conform to his image, and it is both our duty and privilege to be more like him to-day than we were yesterday."

Over this the wife had sighed a little, and had said that there were things about it that she did not understand; but didn't he think that was just a lovely meeting which Aunt Hannah described, and what did he think the effect would be if she should take that letter to their next "female" prayer-meeting and read extracts from it?

Then how they had laughed over those robins! Only Mattie, with a sort of undertone sigh, had said —

"Silly robins, not to take kindly to help in their housekeeping." And then — "Blessed robins, to be able to keep house without the aid of hop yeast, or any kindred trial; just a matter of strawberries, and cherries, with a worm now and then, by way of relish."

Whereupon John, in his wisdom, had remarked that he did not think she would have any trouble about the hop yeast; that however foggy Aunt Hannah's theology might sound when she undertook to write it, she was as clear as sunlight over hop yeast.

"I could make it myself with those directions," added this learned gentleman, with his most

superior air. And Martha had assured him that the directions were very clear, and that she did not anticipate any trouble; she thought it was all clear, so far as Aunt Hannah was concerned; that for her part she believed in her theology, as well as in her yeast.

Then the minister had smiled on her indulgently, and had remarked that he was late again; that they must make a resolution not to read the morning letters until afternoon; then had arisen just as he made that remark about the calling-list and the Pritchards.

You know how he was answered, and what reply had been called forth. Suffice it to say, he left his wife with a very uncomfortable assurance in her heart that whatever her theory in regard to Aunt Hannah's theology might be, she was certainly practicing on another line, and that some new element must be put into her life before she should be able to like Mr. Pritchard.

Her heroic resolve to attack hop yeast, and the result thereof, she will be able to describe better than I; as, for a purpose, she wrote the story to Aunt Hannah on the following evening. Before I copy it, let me remark that they did not call on the Pritchards that evening, as the minister planned. I omit, for want of space, Mattie's theological remarks, and begin with the yeast.

“By the way, whatever other doctrine I may be

in doubt about, I thoroughly believe in total depravity, and I also believe that it extends its influence to the inanimate world; for instance, to hop yeast. You know what minute instructions you gave me concerning that vile article, so in all boldness I essayed to make some. No soldier ever studied his orders with more careful eye than I bestowed on your letter. There were difficulties, however, in the way of following directions literally. I couldn't get a 'handful of hops.' I had to use pressed ones. How was I to tell how many it would take to make a handful? I asked John, and he said the entire package certainly didn't look like a generous handful, and Aunt Hannah was always generous about everything. So I determined to venture on that quantity. I grated the potatoes just as you said (and grated two of my fingers at the same time, but I kept the ingredients separate). Finally, I set the vile-smelling compound away to cool, and opened every door and window to get rid of the odor. The truth is, those creatures—the hops—had boiled over so many times that John called out from the study to know if I had started a brewery.

“Aunt Hannah, I have read your directions all over carefully, and you say nothing whatever about the size of the jar into which I was to put that awful mixture. How was I to know that it

would go and rise and rise, and pour slimily over the sides of the dish, and lie in a sticky, ill-smelling puddle on the closet shelf, and drip into the platters and saucers below, and deluge a pile of freshly-washed napkins, and be horrid generally?

“Does hop yeast always swell so dreadfully? I don’t remember that mother ever had any trouble. Perhaps those hops weren’t good. Perhaps they will continue to swell, and fill all the house with hops. If they should take a fancy to swell in the loaves, how will I ever get the creatures into my oven? I have just been to take a peep at the mess. I put it into the largest jar in the house, and stirred it down as you said, but the horrid stuff is creeping up again. I have set the jar in the dish-pan, and the pan in the middle of the pantry floor, but I almost know the pantry will be full of hop yeast by morning.

“Dear Aunt Hannah, John says to tell you he is so grateful to you for helping to carry his burdens to God. He says thank you especially for remembering that poor woman of whom I wrote. She died that night, and he does not know whether she understood his words or had any little gleam of hope before she sank into unconsciousness or not. He came home thoroughly exhausted; it was a very great nervous strain, you know. He was depressed, too, but the next morning he said, ‘We must leave it all with the

merciful Lord ; he is more anxious to save souls than we can possibly be.' He was just as tender and considerate as he could be at the funeral service. But do you know the relatives are offended because he did not speak more directly and definitely about her? Mrs. Green reports that a sister-in-law said, 'One would suppose your new minister did not believe in such a place as heaven.' When I told John, he gave one of his heaviest sighs, and said, 'Yes, he does; he believes in it with all his soul, but he doesn't know whether one who slights the Lord's mercy until past the eleventh hour, and then seems to feel only terror, reaches there.' Then I was sorry I had told him about it.

"Yours in love and haste,

"MARTHA."

CHAPTER V.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

PERTURBATIONS.

WHEN Mrs. Adams prayed that morning for special grace to bear special temptations, she may have had in mind the coming of her sister, Mrs. Hepsy Stone, who was at that moment trying to keep an upright position in the stage as it jolted over rough country roads.

Mrs. Adams went rapidly down the walk to welcome her, her round, ample form contrasting with her sister's, which was lean and angular. Their faces, too, were very unlike — Mrs. Adams', strong, smooth and placid, while the other face, though but a little older, was deeply wrinkled. Some of the lines, it is true, were caused by pain and sorrow, or rather by rebellion at pain and sorrow, and there were also traces of discontent and ill-humor. The other members of the family

often wondered why it was that Hannah was patient and sweet-spirited, while Hepsy was so "cross-grained." They said it was because they had different dispositions, but that could not altogether explain the difference in their lives and faces.

It must be confessed it was no small trial to Mrs. Adams, who had for so many years lived her even, methodical life, and had become accustomed to solitude, and enjoyed her quiet hours of reading, to admit one into close companionship so utterly different from herself, sister though she was. As girls they had never been congenial; one was sure to like what the other detested. Hepsy, too, was fond of interfering and setting up her opinion even in matters that did not pertain to her. Mrs. Adams had thought it all over before she asked her sister to come. She knew she was preparing for herself whole seas of difficulties and temptations, but that was the way of duty, and she would not shrink.

"We shall see," she told herself resolutely, "if the grace of God is not strong enough to enable two old women to live together in peace."

So she spoke only gentle words when Hepsy fretted at her hard lot, and she listened patiently to long eulogies on her deceased brother-in-law, and to sad complaints about the loss of the old home, knowing in her large-hearted pity that

poor human nature is always thus inconsistent, holding things cheaply until they are gone, then putting upon them sums of untold value. So Joab Stone, who had been, to outward appearance, a stupid, dull old man, was now, in his wife's eyes, a saint and a hero; while the forlorn little house in a straggling village had turned itself into a very model of convenience and comfort, with beautiful surroundings. Thus it is that old age paints the past with the same roseate hues with which youth gilds the future.

"Hepsy," Mrs. Adams said one fine morning, putting her head, arrayed in a deep cape bonnet, in at the door, "come out awhile; it's a beautiful spring morning. It'll do you all sorts of good."

Mrs. Stone sat by the sitting-room stove with a shawl about her shoulders, toasting her feet on the hearth.

"The idea of my going outdoors," she said, "when I'm taking medicine! It's as much as I can do to keep warm in the house, with the wind sifting into all the windows. You ought to have 'em listed, Hannah; I expect I shall catch my death. Do shut the door, won't you?"

"You'd catch your life if you'd come out," her sister said, stepping in and dropping into a chair by the door, while she fanned herself with her sunbonnet; "I've been digging around and got warmed up, and you would, too, if you'd come out.

You can't think how pretty it all is. The front yard got green last night. The lilacs are budded, and the daffodils and crocuses are almost out, and you ought to see the apple-trees and peach-trees all pink and white. The creek in the orchard is rushing and tumbling along, and the colts and lambs are frisking about. I'm not sure but I'd like to take a little trot myself, if my joints were not so stiff."

"You do beat all!" said Mrs. Stone.

"Come, Hepsy, do come out; it'll do you more good than medicine. Won't you?"

"Mebbe," Hepsy said, rocking back and shutting her eyes.

Mrs. Adams was soon hard at work again with the trowel, loosening the earth about her plants and thinking pleasant thoughts, as she was accustomed to do when alone.

"It is wonderful," she told herself, "to have the earth made over new every Spring. What can He do more when He makes the new heaven and the new earth? How condescending the Lord is to us! It looks as if He couldn't do enough to strengthen our weak faith. He must go and put in a picture here and there, so we won't fail to understand the great, grand story."

Just then she saw her sister, wrapped in shawls, and a capacious hood tied over her ears, coming slowly down the garden walk.

“It won’t do you any good to crawl along like an old caterpillar, Hepsy,” Mrs. Adams said, laughing; “you must step off briskly and stir your blood. Isn’t this air sweet?”

“It’s cold, I know,” her sister said, shivering and drawing her shawl tighter about her neck.

“But isn’t everything beautiful in the spring, and doesn’t it strengthen your faith in the resurrection?” Mrs. Adams said, going on with her thought.

“Resurrection!” Mrs. Stone gasped, almost in horror. “How in the world did you get to that?”

“Why, don’t you see? When the green grass springs out of the bare earth, and little tender leaves come out on the dead-looking vines, and above all, when the ugly-looking bulbs I planted stick up green heads through the ground, and then come out in white and yellow flowers, it makes me as sure again that the dear bodies I have laid in the old burying ground shall ‘be raised in power,’ as the Scripture says, and that my eyes shall ‘behold them’ some spring morning. Don’t you feel so, too, Hepsy?”

“No, I don’t,” said Hepsy; “it’s precious little I know about the resurrection, and you don’t, either. We haven’t any call to go into such mysteries.”

A look something like despair flitted over Mrs.

Adams' face for an instant, but it soon cleared, and she said —

“Hepsy, come here and I'll show you something!” pointing as she spoke, to a large, old pear tree. “There's a fat robin building her nest on that branch just under your chamber window, and you can watch her mornings and hear her sing. Isn't that nice?”

“Hannah Adams,” said Hepsy, “you're getting childish, I do believe. What in the world do I want a robin's nest under my window for? Watch her! As if I'd stand around and watch a robin! And you don't seem to know that she and her young ones'll make such a racket in the morning I can't sleep a wink after four o'clock. Don't be a sentimental old woman, above all things, Hannah; there ain't anything more sickish than that.”

Mrs. Adams shut her lips tightly and went on with her digging without speaking. She was disappointed and hurt. She had lived for so many years on intimate terms with Nature, knew all the ways and tricks of plants, insects and birds, that she had forgotten but that everybody shared her love for them. She would not keep silence, though, and appear to be offended with her blunt sister. She spoke, in a moment, of her plans for the summer garden, and asked Hepsy what vegetables she liked best.

That evening, as they sat by the fire knitting, the question, "How do you like John's wife?" was suddenly propounded. It was Mrs. Stone who asked it. On the way to her sister's she had made it convenient to spend a few days at the Belleville parsonage. John Remington had not told his young wife beforehand that Aunt Hannah was not by any means a sample of all his aunts. He would, if he could, have spared her the ordeal of the visit until she had become a more experienced housekeeper. Mrs. Adams had steered clear of the subject of John's wife thus far, because she shrank from hearing the criticism that would be sure to follow, but she answered now —

"Very much. Isn't she bright and pretty?"

Mrs. Stone picked up a stitch before she replied, then she said—"Pretty enough! But she ain't any housekeeper."

"No, I don't suppose she's perfect. You and I weren't at her age."

"Perfect! I should think not. If you could have seen her bread! It was heavy and sour. Poor John! He's got a hard row before him. You are great on conscience, Hannah, and everything of that sort. What kind of a conscience do you call that? Set up to take care of a house and look after the comfort of a man, make solemn promises and everything, and not know how to

make bread? I say it's cheating. A girl hasn't any business to do it. Why don't she learn how? She can play jigs on the piano and sing enough to take the roof off, and John sitting there looking as proud as a peacock. For my part, I should have thought he'd have been mortified to death."

"Well, she will learn after a while. She is probably a nice housekeeper in other respects."

"No, she isn't. There was a great cobweb on the dining-room wall and dust on the clock-shelf all the time I was there."

How vexatious it was that Hepsy, with her sharp, prying eyes, should have gone there just at first, Mrs. Adams thought, while her fingers flew rapidly. She would never get over her prejudice against Martha. It was sorely trying to have anything that belonged to John condemned.

"There is one thing to be thought of," she said, trying to be calm. "Martha has lived in the city all her life where people buy bread a great deal; when they do make it they are accustomed to a different kind of yeast; it raises the bread very quickly and with little trouble. Of course, though, she has not had very much experience."

"She ought to have had experience, and she wasn't brought up right if she don't know how

to make yeast. Why didn't John get a sensible, smart wife while he was about it? But that's the way it goes. As soon as a man gets to be a minister he seems to lose his wits, for anything but looks. There's no fool in the world like a minister. He can be cheated and taken in at every turn. Half of 'em get wives without a bit of gumption."

"Don't, Hepsy!" Mrs. Adams said, with such unwonted sharpness that her sister dropped her knitting needle. "Don't speak so of ministers; you hurt my feelings, and I think it is wrong. They are God's servants."

"They're nothing but men," persisted Mrs. Stone; "chock full of faults like all men, as far as I can see. As for John's wife, if ever she gets to be a good housekeeper, I'll wonder. I don't believe she's of that stripe. She's sort of airy and as full of book knowledge as John himself. I tell you what it is, Hannah, I hain't a grain of patience with a girl that's spent hours and hours every day practicing on the piano, and set up nights digging at French and German—for what, nobody knows—and then expect to set up housekeeping and have all the sort of learning that she needs to use, come to her just like the measles or whooping-cough. It's going to get worse, too, in my opinion. There's a deal of talk about wider spheres, an' there ain't a woman in a

thousand that's half filled the sphere she's in. Women want to vote and be ministers and lawyers, and nobody knows what. There won't be any women pretty soon to keep house. I say a woman hasn't any right to take nice, sweet wheat and make it into a sour, hard loaf fit for a cannon-ball."

Mrs. Stone was on her hobby now. She was talking loud, and, in her excitement, had grabbed off her steel-bowed spectacles and was gesticulating with them. Mrs. Adams would have laughed if she had not been so vexed and worried. Of course, young wives should be good housekeepers. It was mortifying that she seemed to be defending inefficiency and that Hepsy seemed to think she required a lecture on bread-making. She, indeed! A queen among housekeepers! So she answered her sister sharply, and contrived to grow more and more nettled until her frame of mind was such that she did not feel like family worship that night. Dorcas stared, and wondered what had happened when dismissed to bed without it, and Aunt Hannah tossed half the night and resolved not to allow her temper to run away with her again. She had thought it conquered forever, but here it was, alive and rampant. She could not sleep, so she got up and wrote a few lines to Martha.

"Poor child!" she said, "you had a bad time

with your yeast and your bread. You used too many hops and put the yeast in too small a dish to rise, are the secrets of your trouble, unless, maybe, the yeast that you got of that cross-grained woman had something to do with it. Milk has a wonderful power of absorbing flavors; who knows but yeast can absorb sharp words and bitter feelings? You won't be likely to put in too many hops again. Bread-making is something like religion; you may read all the books in the world on the subject, and you may have the best teaching, but you've got to have an experience; so don't be downhearted over it. When anybody tries as hard as you, they will be sure to succeed. Remember, next time you make yeast of pressed hops, to break off a bit as big as a good-sized hickory nut; that's plenty. Live and learn. Don't think it's a small thing to fuss over. It isn't. It's a great thing. Satan has a hand in some bread-making, I verily believe, and is well pleased with the result. He likes to have sour bread turned out. He knows it makes dyspepsia, and dyspepsia makes miserable, cross people that would rather die than live. It even puts the stomach in such a state that some get a horrible craving, and so take liquor and end up by being drunkards.

“John says he believes more in my yeast than my theology, does he?—he always was a saucy

boy, in a roguish way that you couldn't help liking—tell him he has good reason to. He has eaten good bread for years made of the yeast, but while the theology is all right, my practice of it has been so lame and full of flaws I don't wonder he hasn't much opinion of it. After all, my idea of it is about like this—I believe we are to take Jesus Christ as our Physician, give up our case to Him, and be perfectly sure that He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and then go about our work for Him without doubts or fears.

“I never imagined that John's wife would write me a long letter now and then. It is almost better than getting letters from him, because you tell me about him, which he wouldn't likely do. I count it one of my special mercies. (I hope you may have grace to bear patiently all the trials you will meet, whether they appear in the shape of hop yeast or cantankerous parishioners.) You'll find plenty of them, I've no doubt. (It's a wonder how the heavenly Father has patience with any of us.)”

Mrs. Adams arose the next morning with her ruffled feelings calmed. The air, as she stepped out on the side porch, was filled with perfume from the orchard, and the sun was just putting into the eastern sky that wondrous picture, brief and glorious, which half the world have never yet seen. This woman had not missed the sight for

years, but she watched it now as if it were a novelty. The distant blue hill was being touched and glorified. The mill-pond caught the glow, and little by little those ruddy beams crept over the world till they reached down and sent a shaft of golden light straight by her through the open door upon the wall of her sitting-room; seeming to her devout nature like the benediction of the Lord resting upon her house. She got from that sunrise hour what she was designed to have—an uplifting of spirit and refreshment and enlargement of mind for the work of the day. It is free to all alike, but the few fall heir to the riches.

“It’s a beautiful morning,” she said a little later to Mrs. Stone, as she, too, stopped by the same door and looked out.

“Yes; but it’ll rain to-morrow,” was the answer, in a lugubrious tone. “There was a circle ’round the moon last night, and there’s a dampness in the air now. We’ve had so much damp weather this spring it makes my rheumatism worse.”

Her Sister Hannah thought, while she poured the coffee, that if she knew of anything that would produce a spirit of cheerful thankfulness, and could be rubbed in like liniment, she would get Hepsy a bottle of it, cost what it might. She did not speak it out. She had resolved to abide in peace that day, and allow herself to speak no aggravat-

ing words to Hepsy. And, considering her provocations, the day wore away quite successfully; but alas! the evening brought its temptation. It was when they were making ready for bed. Perhaps Mrs. Adams was unusually tired, or, as the day was so nearly gone, had relaxed her vigilance. A new idea had struck Mrs. Stone.

“How lonesome it is—a great old house like this off in the country at night!” she said, while blinds were being shut and keys turned. She followed her sister about, trying doors and windows herself to make sure they were fast.

“I shouldn’t think you would depend on locks. Why don’t you have strong bolts on every door, Hannah?”

“Locks have served me very well forty years,” Hannah said, grimly.

“That ain’t to say they always will. They say that keys can be turned, and locks slipped just as easy as nothing. Think if somebody should get into the house, and nobody but two or three women here, way off from neighbors!”

“You forget that Peter sleeps in the kitchen chamber.”

“Your hired man? Well, you never can tell what notions hired men’ll take, or what rascals they’ll turn out to be. He might rob you himself.”

“Peter! Humph! Now, Hepsy, you don’t

know what you're talking about. You are saying the most ridiculous thing. I wouldn't have your notions for the world. Peter would as soon think of trying to knock the moon out of the sky as robbing me, or anybody else. I've tried him going on to fifteen years."

Hannah Adams discovered just then that she was talking in rather a high key herself, so she lowered her voice and said—

"Hepsy, to tell the real truth, I don't depend on the locks, or on Peter either, for keeping me safely at night, but on the Lord, who slumbers not nor sleeps. I used to feel nervous, years ago, till I got a text to help me, and that is—'What time I am afraid I will trust in thee.' I just trust him, and all the fears go away. Now, you'd better try it, too."

But Mrs. Stone had talked herself into a state of extreme nervousness. "That's all very well, as far as it goes," she said; "but you don't s'pose the Lord's going to take care of you if you leave your doors wide open, do you? Now, in my opinion, you've got something to do yourself," examining the lock of her room door as she talked. The chambers connected, so Mrs. Stone set herself to making both doors secure for the night. She slipped a pair of scissors and two nails through the top of each key in a way that should prevent their being turned. Then she

hunted about for something to brace the doors. She made several ineffectual attempts on one with her umbrella, opening and shutting the door, and rattling about, while her sister was snugly stowed away in the bed, saying occasionally —

“Do, Hepsy, go to bed.”

The umbrella was at last fancied a success, and a chair, after much clatter, was supposed to secure the other. Her next care was the windows. She tried every fastening in both rooms. One in her sister's room was open from both top and bottom. She shut it quietly, and fastened it, with a furtive glance at the bed as she did so; but Hannah had heard it.

“Don't shut that window, Hepsy,” she said; “we must have air.”

“Not night air,” said Mrs. Stone.

“Why not? That's all the air there is, and I never heard of anybody that could live without air.”

“You'll catch your death.”

“Yes; I shall if the window is shut. That window has been open, summer and winter, for years and years.”

“Well, it ain't safe,” Mrs. Stone said, in a sepulchral whisper. “There's a ladder I noticed leaning against the back kitchen. Somebody could climb up just as easy.”

“Let them climb, then. I guess they would

have hard work carrying you or me down a ladder in the night, and that's all there is here to steal. So open it wide. The air is rather close."

When Mrs. Adams spoke in that decisive tone Mrs. Stone always yielded to it, though it was sorely against her will to do so in this case. So up the window went with somewhat of a slam, while the irate woman muttered —

"When people think they're very wise there is no use trying to teach 'em. But you don't know all that's going on in the world. There was a family murdered last winter, in Dutchess County," speaking again in low, grewsome tones, and as though she had lived all her life in a great metropolis. "Hannah, I do wish, if I'm going to live with you, you'd sell this pokerish old place and move into the village. Why don't you?"

Now, Mrs. Adams had borne a good deal for one night. This was the last straw. Sell her dear old home! "A pokerish place, indeed!" She sat up in bed and spoke some plain truths, not mildly, ending with —

"Hepsy, if you don't like my home you are at liberty to leave it just as quickly as you please. I shall never sell it!"

Then she turned over her pillow, gave it several vigorous thumps, and lay down again, and there was silence, except something that might have been a long-drawn sigh from the next room.

Mrs. Adams' conscience, awake and alert on duty, administered the usual castigations, while she tossed and sighed, just as she had done the night before, telling herself at last —

“I'm making a dead failure of living nowadays, that's sure. Hepsy's been here three weeks, and I've lost my temper more times than I have in the last three years. She's made of different stuff from me, and that's all there is about it. I suppose she can't make herself over now, at her time of life. I might have been more pitiful and patient. Poor Hepsy!”

CHAPTER VI.

BY PANSY.

A SMOKY ATMOSPHERE.

BEAUTIFUL spring mornings," Aunt Hannah called the days that were now upon them. She had written of them in her last letter to "Martha," and put so much unconscious poetry into her description as to call forth from John the statement that "Aunt Hannah ought to have been educated, and had her chance in the world"; in which case he believed she would have been a second Mrs. Browning. And "Martha" had made the half-laughing, half-earnest reply —

"She has been better than that; she's brought up a minister, and is a perfect housekeeper."

The sad truth must be told that the cares of housekeeping sat very heavily indeed, on the shoulders of this young wife. The spring mornings did not seem "beautiful" to her. The little

kitchen of the parsonage had been built on the sunniest side of the house, and apparently sheltered from draughts, with as much care as though it had been an invalid. Neither was the stove which belonged to the parsonage conducive to cheerfulness; when the wind was in the wrong quarter, it smoked; and when Mrs. John was in charge, the wind seemed to be nearly always in the wrong quarter. As a usual thing, the oven chose to make everything very black as to upper crust, and very raw as to under. Once Mattie had hinted to their next-door neighbor that she thought the parsonage stove must be wearing out, and had been treated to such a history of its many perfections, as rehearsed by "dear Mrs. Perkins," who was the much-quoted wife of John's predecessor, as had amused Mattie at the time, despite the evident and unfavorable contrast that was drawn between her and Mrs. Perkins.

Certain exaggerated statements then made had amused her so much that she had been tempted to rehearse the conversation to John with inimitable reproduction of tone and manner. He had laughed immoderately, but he had also, when the laugh was over, said —

"By the way, Mattie dear, we will have to be very careful in mentioning any little defects about the parsonage or its furnishings. This parsonage has been the very apple of their eye; they did

have everything in unusual perfection here when the place was new, and it is hard for them to realize that things can wear out. We shall have to respect their feelings, and be as silent as we can."

Now, this was by no means the first time that "Mattie dear" had received just such pleasantly worded cautions, although she believed herself to be the soul of prudence and forbearance.

These were very wearing days to her in many respects, and once she had been startled and ashamed to find herself, after one of these cautions, muttering that she believed John respected everybody's feelings but her own—even the stove's!

It was very silly and unjust, she knew. Nothing would have tempted her to say it to him, at least, so she believed; nevertheless, it seemed a relief to her nervous weariness to say it to herself. And so, because of many things, the spring mornings were a weariness to Mrs. Remington.

She stood in her kitchen on one of the worst of these mornings, fanning herself to get a breath of air, and feeling almost as lifeless as the leaves of the maple, which did not even fan themselves, but lay perfectly still. How there could be any wind to be wrong this morning she did not understand. Yet the stove smoked, and though she had patiently shut and opened in turn every damper, it still refused to "draw."

It was late, and her miserable bread, which she had come to hate with a fierceness that appalled her, was slipping over the sides of the tins in a sly way that it had, which its mistress had come to know meant rekneading, and soda, and much weariful waiting for, unless the fire came up very soon.

She had been late with her breakfast, Saturday morning as it was, and John had said ever so gently —

“We must get around earlier on Saturdays, dear ; you know it is my busy day.”

Then she had ventured to say what she had often thought of saying to him, that Dr. Caruthers never used to study on Saturdays ; he took those for his rest-days in order to be fresh for the pulpit.

And John had replied, almost coldly, that of course he was not Dr. Caruthers, and must work in his own way, even as the Doctor had in his ; and his way was to give his best and hardest work to his sermon on Saturday, in order to be throbbing with it on Sabbath.

Now, Dr. Caruthers was her own dear old pastor ; his was an honored name in all the churches. He had had forty years of experience in sermon-making, and he was counted as the most eloquent preacher in the city of her birth.

Why need John speak as though his opinion

was to be set aside as a thing of no moment to a young minister? It sounded almost like egotism in him to speak of "his way," as though so young a man could be supposed to have any settled way of his own yet.

She had not put precisely these thoughts into words, but she had said words, and John had answered them in a way that made the stove seem inclined to "draw" less than it would otherwise have done. Not that these two had quarreled; oh, no. They were too genuinely in accord at heart, and withal too refined, to have done such a thing. But John had spoken in a different tone from usual, and had said at last, abruptly—

"Well, I certainly must go and work hard, if it is Saturday. Good-by, dear."

And he had not kissed her; nor had he remembered that it was baking-day, and she would need some longer wood on purpose for the oven; nor that the pump went hard, and she would need several pails of water. It was not because the pump went so hard that the young wife, thinking of these things, took the corner of her apron to wipe away a tear.

Her bit of a sink was piled full of dishes. John had brought home a brother minister to dinner with him the day before, and then had said that she must really attend the funeral of old Mr. Jacobs; that it was the custom here, and the peo-

ple would feel that she was lacking in respect if she did not go; that the dishes could wait until afterward, and he would then help her with them. But in the first minute of the "afterward," even while they were turning away from the cemetery, he had said —

"The Potters live on this road, about half a mile from here; I think we ought to take this time to call on them. Mr. Potter asked me yesterday if we had moved away.

Mattie thought of her dishes, but went to the Potters, being greeted with — "Why, you don't say! We had no notion that you ever meant to call on us — gave it up long ago."

Then, having been kept waiting, while Sarah and Jane Potter put on their best dresses and frizzed their hair, it dawned upon the minister's consciousness that "Brother Ferris lived within sight of the Potters, and that it would never do to pass his gate." And then, and then — who, that has made calls in a country parish, does not know the story? Who is surprised that it was dark when the minister's horse reached his own stable? Or that the minister ran in, after stabling him, to say, "Mattie, we'll have to take just a bite and run; the first bell is ringing. I had no idea it was so late!"

When she ventured to hint that perhaps she would better not go to the Friday evening meet-

ing this time, he had turned toward her with a face full of consternation to ask if she were sick, and she had hastened to reassure him by saying, "Oh, not at all; but then the dishes, you remember."

"Oh, the dishes!" said the reverend gentleman with a relieved smile. He was superior to dishes, good man. "Never mind them; we'll do them when we come home. Don't stay from the meeting, dear, unless you have a very big reason. Such an example, you know; this people are so given to making excuses."

So they had taken that "bite" which the initiated know soiled more dishes than the orthodox supper thinks of doing, and made all speed to the meeting. After meeting, the minister was told that Deacon Brewster was sick, and wanted to see him on particular business; and Mattie, who was not used to the country streets, and did not dare go home alone, must needs wait in Mrs. Brewster's kitchen, while that good woman nodded and yawned behind her knitting work and the deacon kept up a low growl of talk with the minister, behind the half-closed bed-room door.

Something in the talk must have disturbed him, for he was very quiet on the way home, and looked so pale and tired that, late as it was, Mattie had not the heart to say "dishes" again, knowing well that he would insist upon helping.

So she set her sponge and went to rest, remembering the crowded sink and the faint spring morning, and the feeling she was sure to have after a day spent in calling.

Do you wonder that the breakfast was late, and the eggs so rare that John could not eat his, and that a tear rolled down the flushed cheek, and dropped on her nice brown apron?

It was just at that moment—the woe-be-gone, embarrassing moment—that the gate clicked, and Mrs. John, with a start and a dismayed glance around the room, hastened to the side door to forestall any of their “people” from coming in through the kitchen, and encountered in the doorway the much-bundled figure of Aunt Hepsy Stone.

For one little minute the young wife’s heart had throbbed with a gleam of hope; that gray shawl in which the figure was wrapped was a counterpart of Aunt Hannah’s own; but the next moment she caught a glimpse of the face behind the thick, green veil, and the hope was gone.

“Well, don’t you mean to let me in, after all? I’m beat out enough, I can tell you, to be ready to come in and sit down in something decent. A long ride over such roads as you keep in this country doesn’t make a body feel much like standing.”

With the first clause in this sentence Mattie

had sprung blushing from the door-way in which she had framed herself and drawn forward a rocking-chair.

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Hepsy, I was so surprised to see you that I forgot what I was doing. Is Aunt Hannah sick?"

"Not unless selfishness is a disease," said Aunt Hepsy, grimly, as she unwound the long worsted shawl in which her head was bound.

"Hannah has lived alone so long that she hasn't the least idea there is another person in the world except her precious self. I have borne a great deal, even in the short time that I have been in her house, because I knew that, living alone as she had, it was natural she should have grown selfish; and I made up my mind to stand her if there was any such thing; but when it comes to turning the whole house out of doors, damp nights like these, and leaving us all at the mercy of tramps, and then being so cranky about it when one tries to reason a little common sense into her, why, it isn't to be expected that human nature can bear it.

1 "She as good as told me last night to get out of her house, and I did; I got up before day and was off. She may take off the whole left side of her house to-night for all I care. I've washed my hands of her. I meant to spend the rest of my life with her and help her through; but she is too

cranky for me. I made up my mind in the night that I'd come and live with folks that were too young to be so set in their way. And with me to resolve is to do; I never was one of your wishy-washy women who took all day to make up their minds which way to turn.

"Hannah hadn't thought of waking up this morning when I left. How she'll feel when she finds me gone I can't say. But it serves her right for talking to me as she did. (Folks can't bear everything, if they are patient.)"

Can you imagine Mattie's state of mind? This terrible aunt, who had been the trial of her life during the memorable days she had spent with them on her way East, had invaded the peaceful little home planned for those two, planted herself in John's easy chair, and announced her determination to live with them.

Could human nature bear this? Would John bear it? Would he allow her to be taken possession of and made a household drudge for the sake of this old woman whom he certainly could not love?

A dozen times that morning, as she made her hurried way about that kitchen did she assure herself that John would never permit it in the world. A visit was one thing, and to come all uninvited to live with them was certainly another.

Yet, as she flew about her warm little kitchen,

in frantic anxiety not to have the dinner very late, she knew she was also anxious to see how John would act.

She had tried to shield his morning from interruption, but had failed. In vain she had assured Aunt Hepsy that his Saturday mornings were very precious; that she did not allow herself to interrupt him unless the need was imperative; Aunt Hepsy had said—

“Nonsense; as though she should interrupt him by stepping in and saying, ‘How do you do?’ A young fellow like him mustn’t begin by being so notional; she was just going to walk into his study as a matter-of-course. If he were humored in all these silly notions he would be like Aunt Hannah herself before they knew it.”

The lecture closed with the following sentence—“You needn’t be afraid, young woman; I’m not, a mite. I knew John Remington before you did—before you were born, in fact—and I can manage him without any trouble.”

“Manage him!” The idea! Mattie’s eyes flashed over the thought. As if he needed management in any way, or would permit any human being to do it. She meant to steal up to their room for a moment after she had rung the little silver call-bell which was his summons to dinner, and, while he was brushing his hair, say to him that she had not meant to be “cross,” nor to

think of comparing him with Dr. Caruthers. She would rather hear one sermon of his than one hundred of the eminent doctor's. Then she would say how sorry she was that his precious morning had been interrupted, and tell him how hard she had tried to prevent it. She felt almost certain that he would in reply tell her how very sorry he was that his Aunt Hepsy had come to add to her cares, and assure her that, after a little, when she had made them a visit and had had time to get her ruffled feelings toward Aunt Hannah smoothed, he would tell her in the kindest, most Christian manner, of course, that his wife was not strong enough for a larger family than two, and that Aunt Hannah would be hurt if she remained.

This being the case, Mrs. John planned to say in her most cheerful tone —

“Never mind, John; don't worry about me. I shall manage nicely, I dare say, and I shall contrive some way not to have her hinder you again, either; see if I don't.”

Elated over this very soothing and encouraging conversation, she almost let the gravy scorch, snatching it away in the last perilous second at the expense of two fingers, that immediately puffed themselves up and smarted, and the clock in the dining-room tolled “one.” And John was already on his way down-stairs, chatting and

langhing with his aunt; and there were half a dozen "last" things to do whether the fingers burned or not. He had forgotten all about Dr. Caruthers, and he had not apparently been disturbed by his aunt's advent. On the contrary, his voice was full of cheer, and he seated her at the table as though she had been a queen, and did not come to help Mattie bring in the dishes, and nothing anywhere was as she thought it would be.

CHAPTER VII.

BY PANSY.

BONNETS, AND BURNS, AND BURDENS.

THERE was one element of discomfort about this Saturday that I have omitted to notice.

Truth to tell, Mrs. John Remington would have been glad not to have had it noticed. She felt ashamed to think the thing troubled her so much. She argued within herself that she must be of a very mean spirit indeed, if she could not consider the feeling which prompted the act, and ignore the bad taste of its outward appearance.

As of old, the occasion for disquietude was connected with something to wear. In brief, the minister's wife had received a present but the evening before—a remarkable present. It came in a bandbox, with the compliments of Mrs. Jonas Pryor—a name which Mattie had not fancied

would ever become a favorite of hers. When the bandbox was opened, she struggled with her inward conviction that she ought to feel grateful. Therein lay a bonnet—a very remarkable one. It was made of mixed green and black silk, shirred after the fashion of our grandmothers. Some of the shirrs had been laid in the old creases, and some had not. Between every third row came an obstinate crease, made in the times when the silk did duty as a dress sleeve—a crease that refused to be covered with stitches, or ironed out, but told its tale of “second-hand” as plainly as though it had a tongue. Nor was this all. The bonnet had what in that region they called “strings”—broad, green ribbon of a peculiarly trying shade—ribbon which had once been handsome. Mrs. Jonas Pryor probably paid a good price for it in its best days, but those days were past. It shone with recent pressing, and felt weak in spots where much former tying had worn it thin.

A second-hand silk bonnet, with second-hand green strings, for Mrs. Mattie Kirke Remington, Judge Kirke’s only daughter—a person for whom in her young ladyhood, father and mother had considered it hard to find what they held good enough. It was all very strange. The minister’s wife did not know whether to laugh or to cry, until she tried on the thing in the bandbox, and then

she laughed loud and merrily, being upheld by John, though his was a shout.

“It’s a mistake, Mattie; they mean it for Aunt Hannah; no, for Aunt Hepsy. I declare it looks like Aunt Hepsy! What in the name of common sense possessed them to choose such a shape for the thing, do you suppose?”

“It’s a second-hand shape, John,” said his wife, with an hysterical giggle; “everything about it is second-hand—ribbon, shape and all. Do you suppose they mean to convey the idea that I am a sort of second-rate woman?”

“Nonsense!” said John. His voice was somewhat sharp; “don’t, Mattie, take from it the only thing that makes it endurable. It is an expression of love; of that you may be sure; ill-judged, I admit, since a bonnet is certainly something that you do not need, and since there are a hundred things which might have been chosen to show their good feeling, that would have been really acceptable. But all people have not your exquisite taste, of course; and a great many who mean the very best, see only appropriateness in what to you is grotesqueness. I confess that I think it is a wretched-looking affair, but you can endure it a few times, can you not, dear, for the sake of the love that prompted it?”

“But, John, how do you account for its coming from Mrs. Jonas Pryor? She certainly does not

make second-hand bonnets for herself, and she has reasonably correct taste—at least, her milliner has—and she does not need to economize.”

A shade of doubt and anxiety crossed the good man's face, dispelled almost immediately by his sunny smile.

“I have it, Mattie; this gift is not from her. Depend upon it, some poor woman, who has more heart than money or taste, has sought to show her love for her pastor's wife, and chosen this curious way. She has doubtless confided her plans and hopes to Mrs. Pryor, and she has given what help she could, in order not to hurt the woman's feelings. You will hear a story about that bonnet which will touch your heart, or I am no prophet.”

“If I thought that,” Mattie had said, “I could wear the bonnet all summer with a happy heart. Poor thing, what a funny shape it is!”

Then this young couple had laughed again, immoderately, albeit Mattie's laughter was very near to tears. She had a tender regard for those who were loving her for their pastor's sake, and she went about all the evening with a gentle thought for that unknown poor woman.

With Saturday morning's burdens came the thought of the green and black bonnet. It was very well to say she could wear it all summer with a happy heart. She had felt so in the twilight,

with John's appreciative eyes on her face, his own lighting the while over the pleasure he felt in her words, but in prosaic daylight, with the stove smoking, and all those dishes to wash, and the thought that the next day would be Sunday, it was impossible not to think what a strange figure she would be moving down the aisle with John, inside that green and black bonnet.

Strangely enough it presented itself to her overwrought nerves just as they sat down to dinner; and either that, or the pain in her fingers, or the smoke of the morning, or all these things combined, brought the tears so close to the surface that John looked at her in dismay, and said abruptly —

“Why, my dear, what in the world is the matter? Are you sick?”

Then Mattie blessed those burned fingers in her heart, and made haste to parade them to her world.

“I burned myself, John, just as I was taking up the dinner, and my hands smart so badly I can hardly bear it.”

Then was John all sympathy and helpfulness. He wanted her to put cold cream on them, and flour, and raw cotton, and a dozen other things that he had heard Aunt Hannah say were good, and he left his gravy to cool on the plate, while he went himself to find a soft bit of linen in which to enwrap them.

“Pity’s sake!” said Aunt Hepsy; “what a fuss you make about a little burn on your finger. You are young, to be sure; and so is John. Why, I’ve burned my hand before now so that the flesh peeled right off in chunks, you may say, and made less fuss about it than this. Not that I ever burned myself getting a little simple dinner; I knew too much for that. It shows dreadful inexperience and ignorance of the right way of doing things to keep burning and cutting one’s self doing plain housework. Martha, how came your mother to bring you up to be such a kind of an ignoramus about all useful things? Didn’t she suppose you were ever going to get married?”

But John had returned, and was binding up the fingers with skillful touch, and cheerful word to Aunt Hepsy thrown in between. There was no need for Mattie to answer; which was well, for the tears were gone, and the words, had they been spoken, would perhaps have been such as were better left unsaid.

It was certainly very hard work to wash the dinner dishes with those burned fingers; especially as by this time the young housekeeper’s head ached, and her feet were so tired she had to order them sternly before they were willing to carry her at all. John had it in his heart to help her the minute he could coax Aunt Hepsy to her room for a nap. But a boy came for him to go

in haste to a sick-room. There was only one gleam of comfort belonging to the hour; Aunt Hepsy did go to her room and her bed, remarking that she was rather "tuckered out" with her long ride through the mud, and there she remained the greater part of the afternoon, to the great relief of her hostess.

A weary afternoon it was. John's call was four miles into the country. He had not asked his wife to go along, though the sweet spring air wooed her, now that the morning's lifelessness had gone out of it. It might have helped her head. But of course she could not go, with all that work to be done and company in the house; of course John knew she could not; yet she wished that he had asked her. It was not like him to rush away, even on such calls as these, without a word for her. This was another of the trials growing out of having a third person always present. Would she be "always" present? Was it possible that John could intend it? Yet he had looked almost pleased about it. The afternoon hurried away. There was much to be done and the wearied woman could not seem to get it done. There were constant interruptions. There was finally Mrs. Pryn, her next-door neighbor, who "just stepped in" to see if she could borrow a little milk for tea; theirs had not come yet, and Mr. Pryn must have his tea early

to-night, because there was a trustee meeting to talk about some things that needed righting in the church.

No, Mrs. Remington could not let her have a drop; she was very sorry, but her milk had soured that day, for some unaccountable reason, and they had none for themselves. This she explained, with an uneasy wonderment the while as to what needed "righting" in the church. Were they perhaps going to right the matter of the pastor's salary, so that they might receive it on time, instead of having to go through the humiliation of having goods "charged"?—a word, by the way, which Judge Kirke had brought up his family to regard with something akin to horror.

Meantime, Mrs. Pryn was expressing her mind.

"Soured? What an idea! Such a lovely day! Why, you get milk of Joe Perkins, don't you? We bought our milk there for years, and never had a drop sour on our hands. They are very particular indeed with their pails and pans—so neat, you know. That is what causes the trouble with milk—carelessness in caring for it. Mrs. Remington, are you sure you remember to scald the tin you keep it in? Young housekeepers cannot be expected to think of everything."

Then she chose a fresh subject.

"Oh, by the way, did you receive a box last evening?"

“Yes,” said Mattie, trying to smile; “quite a large box. Somebody has been very thoughtful; a Christmas present after Christmas time. I think I shall call it a birthday gift, as last Tuesday was my birthday. Do you know to whom I am indebted? Mrs. Pryor’s card was in the box, but I cannot suppose the gift was from her.”

Thus much the daring little woman resolved to venture; Mrs. Pryn would not be likely to understand why she could not suppose so.

“From her and me,” said Mrs. Pryn, with a complacent smile; “she has a right to claim the most of it; though the strings were mine. We talked it over, she and I, and decided to see what we could do. Mrs. Pryor used to work at millinery when she was a girl. She said she hadn’t made a bonnet in some time, but she believed she could make one which would become you better—well, I don’t know as I ought to say that, but it is just the words she said, and now that I’m started, I suppose I may as well finish—‘better than the one you were wearing.’ That was what she said.”

“Is there anything wrong about the bonnet I am wearing?”

Mrs. Remington tried to keep her voice natural and quiet; but she felt herself trembling in every nerve.

“Oh, nothing wrong, exactly,” with a slight

laugh; "but perhaps not just the thing for one who occupies your position. It looks so sort of bridey, you know. But, as I told Mrs. Pryor, said I, 'she's young, and it isn't to be expected that she should think of things; and her folks never had a great deal to do with ministers nor churches, I suppose.'"

"I ought to thank you, Mrs. Pryn, for taking my part, but since I am a bride, is there anything out of character in my looking like one? That is, if my little gray and white bonnet has that fault."

"Well, you know, Mrs. Remington, folks will talk; and now that you are a minister's wife, and the young people look up to you as a sort of example, Mrs. Pryor thought it would be just as well if your bonnet wasn't quite so jaunty and citified."

For some reason Mrs. Pryn seemed to be somewhat embarrassed. Perhaps it was the look in the great brown eyes which were fixed steadily on her face. Certain it was that she rose up suddenly and declared the necessity for hastening home that moment.

Once there, she sat down for a period of fifteen minutes and stared into space. What she said that evening to Mrs. Pryor was—

"I declare for it, I don't know what in the world it was that makes me feel as though she had taken that green bonnet and kicked it out of

the door after me. She didn't do any such thing; in fact, didn't do anything, and I've told you every word she said, and she spoke low and meek-like, but that's exactly the way I feel about it, and I can't tell why."

Perhaps it was all these things combined that made the breakfast late next morning—later by nearly half an hour than Mrs. Remington planned to have it on Sunday mornings.

John did not care. He was in those respects the most patient of men; but Aunt Hepsy asked, as she came with John from the parlor, in answer to the little silver bell—"Was that the breakfast or dinner bell, Martha? Seems to me I've been up long enough for it to be dinner-time." She declined the carefully boiled eggs, on the plea that they were bad for her dyspepsia—she always ate hers poached—so Mattie made haste to poach two for her. They were "underdone"—she never could endure half-raw eggs!

Breakfast over, John drew the Bible toward him, and began to read. Into the solemn music of the words, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain," Mattie broke in with a sudden exclamation—

"John, excuse me a moment, please; I smell something burning."

John waited in grave silence, making no reply to Aunt Hepsy's comment—

“What in the world can she have burning? She isn’t getting dinner, is she?”

Back again in her seat, the rich, musical voice went on — “Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent.”

On and on, through the long, solemn, wonderful chapter, stopping frequently to put in a word of comment — “Wonderful sentence that; isn’t it, Mattie?” or, “Aunt Hepsy, that is a great thing for people like us to look forward to, isn’t it?”

They were much in the habit of this kind of reading, and Mattie usually looked forward to the hour as one of great help and comfort. But on this particular morning she looked oftenest at the clock on the mantel. How late it was! And the work not done — not even the breakfast things put away; and there were a few little things she must do toward getting ready for dinner before she went to church. If only John had not selected so long a chapter! He, blessed man, was immaculate in fresh linen, beautifully laundered; his fine-fitting black clothes were spotless, and his serene face told that he had his sermon well in hand. Everything about him said — “This is Sabbath morning — a day for spiritual rest and refreshment.” And there was that dreadful odor of burning syrup! This time Mattie slipped away in silence, and set the dish

entirely off the stove; but John waited for her, and finished the chapter. His prayer, too, never long before in his wife's estimation, seemed to her almost endless. But at last it was over, and she was in her dreadful kitchen again, in no wise calmed by the devotional exercises, in no wise rested from the excitements and trials of yesterday. Had not John said, in the little minute they were alone that morning—it had been too late to talk when at last his sermon was finished the night before—"Poor Aunt Hepsy! She has never been a happy woman; we must try to make her later years feel a little sunshine." Did he mean, then, to give her a home with them, and without consulting her in any way? She had opened her mouth to tell him about the green bonnet, and had closed it again. Since he was so full of sympathy for every one but her perhaps he would sympathize with his dear congregation in having to bear the scandal of her wicked gray and white bonnet. She would tell him nothing about it.

This was the way a perturbed spirit within her put it to herself. As a matter of fact, she knew she did not tell him because of a resolute determination not to mar his Sabbath with bonnets, green or gray; but it seemed to fit her mood to "make believe" all to herself that she expected no sympathy from him. On the stove once more

was that tiresome dish of fruit which had been found working in its jar. Sabbath morning though it was, she was trying to save it by heat. The door opened suddenly, and Aunt Hepsy appeared.

"Aren't you done yet? When do you expect to get ready for meeting? The ten o'clock bell has rung. What smells so all over the house? Pity's sake! Do you can fruit on Sunday? Well," in answer to Mattie's explanation, "I wonder what Hannah would say to that! I didn't suppose ministers' folks cooked things over on Sundays, if they had been careless enough to let them work."

"Why, Aunt Hepsy, it isn't wicked for strawberries to boil on Sunday, is it? All I had to do was to pour them into the dish."

It might have been the tone more than the words that sent Aunt Hepsy out of the room with a flounce; that made her say to John, two minutes afterward — "That wife of yours has a temper of her own, I see. I don't know but I would rather be imposed upon by my sister than to be 'sassed' by a young thing like her."

"Mattie!" called John half an hour later, in a tone of voice not generally used to her. He was in the lower hall, and Mattie was just tying the strings of the green bonnet. "You really must come this minute, or I shall have to go without

you; the bell has been tolling for ten minutes. What can possibly detain you so?"

What had not detained her! The morning had been simply untiring in its efforts to delay and exasperate her. Not a pin but had pricked her; not a button but had trifled with her nervous fingers; and now her own mother would hardly have known her in that hideous green bonnet.

"Mattie!" said the voice again, "I shall have to go."

"Well, go!" It was the bonnet's fault. The mouth hidden under its shadow had never used such tones before—certainly not to John. "I'm not ready, and I can't help it. Do go."

The street door opened and closed. Steps were heard on the walk. She could see them from the window. John had given Aunt Hepsy his arm, and was bending his head to hear her words. He had actually gone without her! Off came the green bonnet, landing by accident, on the floor. She let it remain there, sank herself into a little wilted heap not far from it, buried her face in her hands, and sobbed as though she were the "child" that Aunt Hepsy had called her.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

—
IMPROMPTU VISITS.

OWING to the loss of sleep, due to the excited state of her feelings after the jar with her sister Hepsy, Mrs. Adams did not rise the next morning at her usual hour. The sun was actually streaming into her room when she opened her eyes. Such a thing had not happened for years as that she should get the start of her in rising.

She got up hastily and moved softly about, that she might not disturb Hepsy.

“Poor thing! I’ll let her sleep late this morning,” she said to herself; “her nerves are sort of used up, I s’pose, and I’m an old goose to notice what she says. I’ll try what extra kindness will do for Hepsy. I won’t ring the bell, and she shall have a nice breakfast got ready for her when she

comes down, with the very freshest eggs to tempt her appetite."

She smiled pityingly as she pulled the scissors out of the door, and she resolved again to be more patient this day. Unusual temptations required unusual effort and watchfulness, Mrs. Adams believed, so she lingered longer this morning in the little room to which she always retired for prayer. It was just at the head of the stairs, a small room with a sunny window, that had been her husband's. The furniture, beside the rag carpet, was a shelf of books, a round table with a large Bible and an arm-chair. Here in this room was the source of all that redeemed Farmer Adams' life from the commonplace. Scott's "Commentaries," Dick's "Philosophy," Bacon's "Essays," and Milton's "Poems" were all well thumbed. Could anyone wonder that he had seemed so superior to many of his brethren, whose treadmill life had three aims only—to eat, sleep and work?

The room was just as he had left it, and here his wife came daily as to a holy of holies, reading his books, studying his Bible and trying to practice his virtues; always humbly assuring herself, though, that she should never be as good as he had been, not in this world, at least. She knelt here this morning again, confessing defeat and failure, saying with one of the old saints—

“Lord, many times I am aweary quite,
Of mine own self, my sin, my vanity;
Yet be not thou — or I am lost outright —
Weary of me.”

Intent on household cares, Mrs. Adams was surprised to hear the clock striking ten.

“Why, what can make Hepsy sleep so late?” she thought, starting up-stairs at once to see if anything was amiss. She went softly to the door and looked in, but the bed was empty.

“Oh, I see,” she said; “Hepsy went down the front stairs while I was coming up the back ones.”

She hurried down to carry out her plans in regard to the breakfast, but Hepsy was not in the sitting-room, nor outdoors, nor anywhere, it would seem.

“Where can she be?” Mrs. Adams asked herself over and over, while visions of Hepsy plunging into the dark waters of the pond floated through her brain. She went up-stairs again to try to find some clue. Hepsy’s bonnet and shawl were gone. Had she become suddenly demented and strayed away? Such things did happen, and then the echo of that long-drawn sigh smote the sister’s heart and she wished she had been kinder.

She pondered awhile in deep distress as to what should be done, and, as a last hope, went

down to the kitchen. Perhaps Dorcas had seen her start.

As she had herself been at work out of doors all the morning, her handmaiden had found no opportunity for the bit of sociability which she prized. Mrs. Adams went into the pantry and busied herself at stirring up a gingerbread. If Dorcas had anything to talk about, it would be sure to come out, she knew.

“Your sister took an awful early start this mornin’, didn’t she?” began the girl.

“Yes, she did,” came from the pantry.

“I most always hear the stage go by,” went on Dorcas; “but this mornin’ I must a-been so sound asleep it took my wits away. I heerd a rumblin’, an’ thinks to me, ‘Is that thunder?’ An’ then it come nigher, an’ I knew it was the stage, an’ then behold, it stopped! I couldn’t think whoever was goin’ away to our house, an’ I hopped right up an’ looked out of the window, an’ there ’twas your sister jest gettin’ in the stage.”

“Yes, it’s pretty early,” said the crafty mistress; “it starts a little before five, now.”

Her inner remarks were —

“Hepsy’s gone to John’s as sure as the world! Of all things! It must be, because there’s no place between here and Belleville where she would stop. However did she get off without my hear-

ing her? It's just like Hepsy to fly off the handle like that."

"I didn't know your sister was a-goin' away so soon," said Dorcas; "is she gone fur?"

"To Belleville."

The gingerbread was receiving some vigorous stirring.

"Goin' to stay long, is she?"

"Long enough to make a little visit. Dorcas, run to the barn and get me another egg, quick."

While she was gone the quick-witted mistress came to several decisions. One was that no soul about the premises but herself, be she ever so inquisitive, should know as to the true state of things if she could help it. Another was, that Hepsy should not stay in Belleville and torment Martha. She could see how easily it might be the means of discord between the young couple. John would feel bound to be kind to his aunt, and manlike, would not be able at first to see why she couldn't live with them as well as anywhere.

"And that little wife of his has got just about as much as she can manage, I mistrust," she told herself while she poured gingerbread into the pans. To the girl she said, quite as if Belleville was a matter of two miles away—

"Dorcas, you may get me a cup of tea and a bite of something pretty soon. I'm going to drive over to Belleville myself and surprise them all. I

shall stay over Sunday and come back Monday, I guess. If not, then Tuesday. Of course, you and Peter can get along without me that long."

"Law, yes!" said Dorcas; "stay all the week if you want to."

Nevertheless, she fell to wondering why Mrs. Adams did not go in the stage with her sister. She would have liked to ask her, but there was a subtle, indefinable limit to the freedom of the friendly intercourse between mistress and maid, and Dorcas knew when she had reached it.

Mrs. Adams had decided to go by herself, partly because she did not want to be "bothered" with anybody, and partly because she wished Peter to go on with his ploughing, and then—she expected to bring her sister home with her. How that was to be brought about she had not yet planned. She only knew that when her wits and her will set to work on any hard job, it was usually accomplished.

It was not much past twelve o'clock when Mrs. Adams gathered up old Dolly's reins and told her to "get up." Under the buggy seat were stowed all manner of good things—a little jar of butter, a basket of fresh eggs and one of the new gingerbreads.

The day was perfect, and Mrs. Adams would have enjoyed the journey immensely if the perplexity of what she should do with Hepsy had not

absorbed her so that she could not give her undivided attention to fields and hills and woods, just decking themselves in all the bud and blossom and greenery of springtime. Hepsy was wonderfully "set," and when once she took a notion, she pursued it with that peculiar steadfastness common to stubborn, narrow people. However, Mrs. Adams was a woman of resources, and it must be taken for granted that she did not rack her brain for nothing as Dolly trotted contentedly over the pretty country road.

"We shall get there before dark," Dolly's mistress announced to her when they were within five miles of Belleville, which the wise old horse seemed to understand, for she pricked up her ears and hastened her gait.

It was but a minute after, when passing over some logs that covered a wet place in the road, that they came to grief. A jolt; snap, crack, went one of the axles, and down went the buggy.

"Whoa!" said Mrs. Adams sharply, and Dolly stopped short, turning her head far around, asking as well as dumb eyes could, "Whatever is the matter?"

"Now we've done it, sure enough," Mrs. Adams said, getting out and speaking aloud, as she always did when excited; "my buggy break! Of all things!"

She felt almost angry at the old vehicle standing there brazen and defiant, dragging itself in the mud in that shameless manner. It and Dolly had been standbys for years. It had gone up hill and down hill, and over all sorts of rough places, and had been rated as good as gold. Its owner regarded it for a few minutes as one might an exemplary person, who, all of a sudden, breaks out in some glaring fault. "What right have you to be disorderly?" is the first thought. Dolly, too, turned reproachful glances at the old gig, as if to say — "How could you? Just at this time, too, of all others!"

On the hillside, a few rods away, was a well-to-do-looking farm-house. Thither Mrs. Adams betook herself, after unhitching Dolly and tying her to the fence. It was a good half-hour before the farmer and his men came in from a distant field. They went at once to see what could be done for the broken wagon. After many ineffectual attempts, they announced that the break was such that it was impossible to mend it temporarily so as to make it perfectly safe for traveling.

Mrs. Adams tried to hire another conveyance, but they had nothing on the place light enough for one horse, as one of the family had gone away with the spring-wagon, and would not return until late in the evening. A glance at the tired-looking team that had been plowing all day, convinced



ON THE HILLSIDE WAS A WELL-TO-DO-LOOKING FARM-HOUSE.



Mrs. Adams it was useless to ask to be taken to town by them that night.

Curiously enough, while she stood there perplexed, her thought went back to long ago when her young husband had tried to persuade her to learn to ride on horseback, saying half jokingly —

“You will be sorry if you don't. You will be in a tight spot some day, and will wish you had learned.”

Forty years had passed away, and the tight spot had never appeared till now. How easily she could get to Belleville if she was in the habit of riding on Dolly's back!

“I'll tell you what I'll do for you,” the farmer said, seeing her disappointment; “I'll send your buggy to the wagon-maker Monday. You're welcome to stay with us to-night, and to-morrow we'll drive over to town.”

“So that I will be in time for church?” Mrs. Adams asked. “But I suppose you go to church there yourselves.”

“No, we don't go to church mostly; but we'll drive you over in time.”

There was nothing else to be done but submit thankfully.

While tea was getting ready Mr. Craig compared notes with Mrs. Adams, and was so much pleased with her knowledge of farming and her shrewd remarks, that the way was opened for her

kindly words of inquiry about the things that pertain to the other life, which this true servant of her Master found opportunity to speak later in the evening. When we see no longer "through a glass darkly," Mrs. Adams will doubtless find that what was called an accident that afternoon in front of Farmer Craig's, had to do with his eternal destiny. So it is that the earthly and the commonplace serve the divine and glorious.

"That is the house; the white one, with green blinds, set far back from the street," Mrs. Adams told Mr. Craig, as they drove down the village street the next morning, just as the last bell began to ring. "I'd better go right on to the church, for I s'pose John's folks have gone."

Just then she caught sight of the front door standing part way open. Somebody must be at home. She decided to stop. She walked in without knocking or ringing, after the manner of privileged relatives, through the parlor, on into the little dining-room and kitchen.

"Who knows but Martha is up-stairs sick?" she said to herself.

Half believing it to be true, by the time she reached the top, she tiptoed softly through the hall and to Martha's door, lest she might be asleep, and it would startle her to be awakened suddenly.

That young woman was still sitting on the

floor, a picture of despair, what there was to be seen of her. Her face was hidden in her hands, for it must be known that it was only about three minutes after John had turned the corner on his way to church that Aunt Hannah drove up from the other direction.

The wise aunt turned softly away and knocked at the door at the head of the stairs. There was a spring and a rustle, a splashing of water, and then Martha came to the door, her face half hidden in a towel, saying as she cautiously peeped out one side of the door—"Who can it be? Aunt Hannah!"

And then the minister's wife, who was nothing but a girl after all, threw her arms about this dear old aunt and hid her tear-stained face in her neck.

"Why, Martha child, what's the matter? Are you sick?" the kind voice asked.

"No, Aunt Hannah; I'm ashamed."

"What is it, dear?" and the old lady put back a stray brown curl, and looked down tenderly at the sweet face as if she thought its owner could not have gone far wrong.

"Why, you see," Mattie said, as she led Aunt Hannah into her room, and, placing her in an easy-chair, knelt by the side of it with her elbow resting on the arm, "everything has gone wrong this morning. In the first place, breakfast was

late, and I found a can of strawberries working, and I hindered myself a little heating them over, and Aunt Hepsy"—then she remembered to whom she was speaking, and came to an embarrassed standstill.

"Yes, I know. Go on," Aunt Hannah said, smiling.

"Well, never mind about Aunt Hepsy; I ought not to say it, anyway. The rest and the worst is, that I wasn't ready when it was time to go to church, and John went off without me."

The very worst, she knew, she hid in her heart even from Aunt Hannah, and that was that John had spoken just the least bit cross when he asked her if she was ready. And then, there was no such great hurry, after all; the last bell had only just stopped ringing, and it would toll several minutes. John liked to be there early and all settled before the people got in, and that was right; but she could not help feeling that, considering everything, he might have waited one minute longer.

"I understand all about it," said Aunt Hannah. "You didn't feel like going alone, did you? But put on your bonnet and go with me. I want to hear John preach."

"Oh, Aunt Hannah, I can't. Look at my red eyes. Everybody would know I had been crying."

"Put that little veil you wear over them, and come, child. You'll feel better if you do."

"We'll be late, Aunt Hannah, and John doesn't like to see people come in late."

"He'll be glad to see us, I reckon," said Aunt Hannah, while her eyes twinkled.

Mattie got up slowly and picked up the green bonnet. She had meant to make John feel sorry by staying at home, but she wanted to please Aunt Hannah, and then it was right to go. There was another reason, too. She could fairly hear Mrs. Pryor coming to borrow a pan or a clothes-pin on Monday morning, and saying, "why weren't you at church yesterday morning?" Yes, it was better to go.

"Why, what bonnet is that?" said Aunt Hannah, who had a very good eye to the becomingness of things. "That isn't yours, is it?"

"No—yes," said Mattie, with a hysterical little laugh. "It was given to me. I suppose I've got to wear it. I feel like a fright in it."

"You look like a fright. Nobody has any right to ask you to put on such a thing. Wear that pretty little bonnet you wore on the first Sunday. You'll make folks break the Sabbath laughing at you if you wear that. It looks as if it might have been made for your great-grandmother."

So the little gray and white bonnet went on, after all, though Mattie compromised matters for Mrs. Pryn and Mrs. Pryor by tucking most of the white feather under a soft gray veil.

“There! You’ll do,” Aunt Hannah said, with an admiring look. “Now I’ll walk as fast as I can. We’ll be there in time to hear the sermon; and if Mr. John doesn’t approve of us he can turn us out.”

It almost made “Mr. John” lose his balance when the door opened and Mattie walked in with Aunt Hannah. They dropped into a seat near the door, but many a head was twisted and several pairs of inquisitive eyes rested upon them, nevertheless. And there were two women who looked at each other in a meaning way when they discovered what bonnet the minister’s wife wore that day.

The sermon was on the text: “Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

Nobody listening to the fervid utterances of the preacher would have had a suspicion that during prayer-time his young wife was glad of the opportunity to hide her face for a little and wipe away a tear caused by the remembrance of the impatient tone of the same voice that now fell so agreeably upon the ears of the worshipers. Nevertheless, the voice did not belong to a dissembler nor to a churlish husband. In general, he did practice all he preached, but as he was not an experienced preacher, and had not learned to possess his soul in peace on Sabbath mornings before preaching, the strings of his nervous organization

were tense, and all considerations save one, that of delivering his message, seemed for the time unimportant. In fact, John Remington had not had time to make a study of a woman's nature. He was engaged in it now, day by day, and enjoyed the research. He was slowly learning that his Aunt Hannah, self-reliant, calm, sufficient unto herself, was scarcely to be considered as a type of all women, and he was becoming convinced that years would not suffice to reveal to him the many-sided nature of the wife he had chosen, who was, by turns, gay, piquant, willful, grave, dignified, tender, sensitive, a creature of moods, none of them positively unlovely, and all governed by conscience. A being too human to be worshiped and too dear to be long condemned. She had been reared in an atmosphere of love, where even chiding was accompanied by a caress and a soft tone. What wonder that she was inclined occasionally to consider a molehill a mountain, when a thoughtless or absorbed man gave her a hasty word, or no word at all?

Mattie didn't enjoy the sermon as was her wont. In the first place, she felt strange and ill at ease out of her own seat; she knew that curious eyes were upon her, and then the tears had not all had their way. When she was fairly seated in church and it all came over her again, one or two actually filled her eyes and dropped on her cheek. It so

happened that a pair of sharp eyes in the seat next her observed it. Their owner, with great secrecy, revealed this choice bit of gossip to a familiar spirit next day.

“Our minister and his wife don’t live happy, I guess. He went off without her in the morning, and I saw her crying in church.”

While the minister enlarged upon the sinfulness of Christians warring with each other, the congregation was as the average. Some slept, some fitted the coats to their neighbors, while others received the word with meekness and grew thereby, and a type of each of the latter class was found in the minister’s aunts, who listened intently to every syllable.

“Hannah Adams! Of all things!” Hopsy said in a loud whisper as they came out of the church door. “What brought you here?”

“Oh, I thought I’d surprise you all. You ran off and left me and it was sort o’ lonesome, so I thought we might as well have a visit together.”

“And you traveled Sunday!”

“No; I didn’t start Sunday.”

John came along just then with a joyful, “Why Aunt Hannah!” and listened to the story of the break-down, and then he and Aunt Hannah walked home together, leaving the other aunt to follow with Mattie.

CHAPTER IX.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

RECONCILIATIONS.

WHILE the sisters laid off bonnets and shawls in the guest chamber it came over Aunt Hannah that she had a duty to perform which is never a pleasant one. It was not an easy task to make confession of wrong to Hepsy; she always took on such an injured, self-righteous air which made one feel almost sorry at having humbled one's self. It was especially hard for Mrs. Adams, because it was so many years since she had had differences with anybody. She had almost forgotten the language of apology. She was one to do it, though, if she went through fire in the process.

"Hepsy," she began, while she folded her shawl with exactness, "I needn't have been so short with you the other night. I had no right

to get angry, and I'm sorry for it. But it upset me a little when you talked about my selling the farm. I s'pose I set too much by the old place."

"Humph! I should think so!" replied Hepsy, a look of unmistakable triumph on her face. "I'm glad the sermon took effect on you so quick; telling your own sister to get out of your house!"

"You're mistaken in that, Hepsy," Mrs. Adams went on, controlling voice and face lest the effort at reconciliation should be the occasion of a fresh quarrel; "I said you 'could go if you were not pleased,' but I needn't have said that, and wouldn't if I'd not been a little provoked, and I want you to know that my insisting on the window being left open was not because I was stubborn or selfish. I knew you could shut your door if you felt the wind, but I believe it necessary to health to have fresh air in a sleeping-room, and for my part I can't do without it."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Hepsy.

"We can have slats nailed across, if you are afraid," the even voice went on, determined to gain a victory over itself this time.

"Well, I'll see; maybe I'll go back since you felt so bad about it as to hitch right up an' go after me," Hepsy said, complacently; and Hannah had the grace to be silent.

Down-stairs another reconciliation was in progress, but the process was different.

John was kindling a fire in the kitchen. Mattie had just come down-stairs, her church dress changed for a gingham. She was on her dignity. John saw that at once. She did not come to him and tell him that that was the very best sermon he had ever preached.

He came over to where Mattie stood when he had got the fire to crackling and the tea-kettle on. She was cutting cold corned beef into thin pink slices.

“Shall I do that for you?” he asked; but his offer was coldly declined.

After standing in silence a minute, John said, roguishly —

“I’ll forgive you.”

This was a jocose way he had adopted of asking pardon after some slight tiff. Mattie usually met it with a laugh and a kiss, and that was the end of the trouble. But to-day’s grievance was too great to admit of being disposed of in any such trifling manner.

His wife did not answer. She only looked at him with eyes that he knew had shed tears.

“Did I break ’um heart?” John asked in a low, tender voice, such as might melt the heart of a stone. Her head just reached to his breast. He pulled it down, though it made a feeble resist-

ance, and smoothed the brown hair, while the same deep, tender voice murmured —

“Mattie, dear, I ought not to have spoken so. I acted like a bear. I’m very sorry, and I might have waited just a minute more for you to go to church with me. Poor little wife had so much work.”

Ah, that was royal reparation, and met with royal forgiveness as well. The storm was over, and these two loving hearts flowed on again as one. Fortunate beings, who had learned one of the secrets of happiness in married life — not to allow hours and days of gloom and alienation to pass because they were too proud to speak the word “forgive.” “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” It must have been written more especially for young husbands and wives.

“You didn’t let your bread get light enough, did you, Martha?” Aunt Hepsy said, as she helped herself to a slice.

Poor Martha flushed at having attention called to the one thing on the table that was not excellent. Aunt Hannah hastened to remark that the corned beef was delicious, cooked just right, and then she engaged John in a tide of talk about his old pastor and the church at home.

After dinner Aunt Hannah tied on a large apron she had brought with her, and helped Mattie do up the work. Her experienced eye took

in little details about kitchen and pantry, and rejoiced in them. Everything was orderly and neat. The elements of a good housekeeper were there without doubt. She was especially pleased to notice that the dishpans were clean and dry, the towels washed out and hung in the air to dry, and the dishcloth—humble instrument though it was, but an unerring test of neatness, nevertheless—was sweet and white and dry, though almost worn out. Then there were no cluttered corners where dust and disorder reigned. Aunt Hannah was pleased. She nodded her head to herself, and said—

“She’ll do.”

John went to his study, Aunt Hepsy to take a nap, while Aunt Hannah and Mattie had a long, quiet talk, helpful to the younger woman and refreshing to the spirits of both.

“John,” said Aunt Hannah the next morning, when they happened to be left alone, “I want you to let Martha go home with me for a couple of weeks, at least. She needs a change. I don’t know how long Hepsy intends to stay, but she is perfectly able to keep house for you two, and I don’t think Martha is strong enough in this spring weather to have company. She looks pale, and of course she has to do a good deal of work she isn’t used to; not hard work, but it tires her, just because she isn’t accustomed to it.”

John took the alarm at once. "Mattie pale!" "Doing work she was not accustomed to!" And he had meant to guard her so carefully. He had forgotten that she had been tenderly reared. What selfishness!

"I didn't know she was frail," he said. "She needs a servant; I must see about it."

"Servant!" said Aunt Hannah; "why, John, when did you go to calling help 'servants'? Well, she doesn't need a servant, then, and she isn't frail; she is healthier than most of them, thanks to her sensible mother, who wouldn't let her lace herself to death. Martha wouldn't want to be bothered with a girl, very likely, but she needs looking after, that she doesn't take extra burdens on herself and overdo. I suppose when you want to invite a brother minister you give Martha notice beforehand if you can, and insist on her having a woman that day to help her. It is these unexpected extras that break one's back. You ought to have a woman once a week, too, to clean up. People brought up in a city are not in the habit of doing such work. You've got a jewel in your wife, John; see to it that you take care of her. Don't let meddlesome women bother her and saddle her with all the work of the church. It's best to start out in the right way. Of course, she will help all she can, but they might as well understand that she doesn't belong

to the parish as if they had bought her and paid for her. She has spirit enough to take care of herself if you'll let her, and she won't be imprudent, either. Don't be so afraid of offending that you give up your self-respect. Some folks need to be rebuked. Now, the idea of those two women getting up that frightful bonnet, and giving it to her because they didn't think hers 'suitable'! It ought to have been sent straight back to them. I believe in doing the things that make for peace, but when women get to meddling like that, it's a little too much, and they need a lesson. Martha's own bonnet looks like a little dove, and she ought not to wear that old green calabash."

"Well, Aunt Hannah, I don't know," John said, as he walked up and down; "that green bonnet is as perplexing a problem as any that can be found in Euclid. What if Mrs. Pryor and Mrs. Pryn are so offended because of her refusing to wear it that they leave the church and raise a breeze. You know Paul says we are to be all things to all men."

"Yes, but not to all women," Aunt Hannah said, a twinkle in her eye; "a man could never think of half the things that a meddling woman can. I don't believe Paul himself would have thought it his duty to wear a bushel basket on his head when he went up to the synagogue,

even if a couple of foolish women had ordered him to. Humility is one thing, and getting down in the dust to be walked over is another, and not required even of a Christian, according to my way of thinking. But just yield once to meddling with your affairs, and you'll have them trying to rule you in everything—ordering about the cut of your coats, and what you shall have for dinner; there'll be no end to it."

"Why, Aunt Hannah," John said, surprised and amused; "I thought you were one of the meekest of saints, and here you are giving counsel the very opposite to what I supposed you would."

"You don't understand me, that's all," Aunt Hannah said; "I'd do anything or wear anything that would help anybody; but to encourage such a spirit as this is wrong. I don't mean that you are to say sharp things, or treat them unkindly, but just go calmly on your way, managing your own affairs like any self-respecting man and woman. You know Paul speaks very plainly about busybodies. Now, who is to check the meddlesome spirit of these two busybodies in your church if their minister doesn't? You won't always stay here. The next minister's wife will have a present of their cast-off mutton-leg sleeves, too, and have to endure their impertinent interference, if they are not taught better."

“And so they will go on to the end, pelting the heads of the long line of my successors with green bonnets,” laughed John.

“I want you to tell Martha she must go home with me,” Aunt Hannah said again. “She will not, unless you urge it, and you must ask your Aunt Hepsy if she will keep house for you awhile. She’ll like it if you ask her, and she will likely get tired of it, and be ready to come home by the time Martha’s visit is over.”

“John says I am to go home with you and stay a whole fortnight,” Mattie said, putting her arms about Aunt Hannah’s neck as she met her on the stairs. “Is that true? How good you are. I do love to get out in the country in the spring, of all times. If John could only go, too, but he can’t. I don’t like to leave him so long, although for one reason I’m glad he isn’t going, because I want you to teach me to make bread, Aunt Hannah; will you?” dropping her voice to a whisper.

Aunt Hannah and Mattie took an early start next morning, John carefully examining the axles, wheels and harness the last thing, to see that all was right, and giving various injunctions and warnings.

“Hear the boy!” said Aunt Hannah, gathering up the reins; “I’ve jogged about the country for years, and I never knew him to display the least anxiety before. What a difference it makes to

have this stranger along, that two years ago he hadn't laid eyes on."

Aunt Hannah did not get the full benefit of the look those two bestowed on each other then. She was leaning over to tuck Mattie's dress away from the wheel. It stayed with them, though, through the days of separation.

Aunt Hepsy put in a last sting as they drove away.

"You'll take good care of John, Aunt Hepsy, won't you?" said Mattie.

"Yes," was the answer; "I'll make him some nice bread, salt rising, and I'll put the house all to rights—sweep down the cobwebs, you know," she said, with a grim smile.

Aunt Hannah was a poetical old woman. She picked up a bit of beauty wherever it could be found, whether it was a bright-winged bird, a patch of moss on a stone or a fair young face. She turned purposely now and looked at Mattie, because she liked to see the peach-blossom color leap into the rounded cheek, and her brown eyes take on a troubled look like a child's.

Aunt Hannah laughed.

"My dear," she said, "don't let that trouble you any more than what that bird is saying," pointing with her whip to an ambitious little bird who was screaming at the top of his shrill voice. "Aunt Hepsy doesn't mean half as bad as she

says. She just lets out the first thing that comes into her head. Didn't you ever notice how she will say something that sounds real hateful, and the next minute she seems to be in good humor?"

"But the bread is horrible!" said poor Mattie; "and, Aunt Hannah, there is a big cobweb in the dining-room. I never think of it only Sundays and after I've gone to bed. I don't know why it is, but I can't remember cobwebs. I want you to know that my mother tried to train me to be neat."

"Of course she did," said Aunt Hannah. "And you are neat. Don't you worry. Young housekeepers can't think of everything at first. Just you drop your bread and your cobwebs and worries of all sorts now, and enjoy this wonderful spring morning."

"Such a dear old auntie!" Mattie thought, as she leaned back and breathed a sigh of relief; then, starting up eagerly, said—

"Look at those wild violets! Whole banks of them! How perfectly lovely! I didn't know they grew so near the village. We haven't been out in the country since the spring opened."

"I should think you'd take a walk out as far as this, you and John, and hunt up the wild flowers."

"Why, we have no time, Aunt Hannah, actually. It seems as if the housework and the study, the meetings and the calls, take every scrap."

“Poor child! She is so young for all these burdens,” mused Aunt Hannah. And then she fell to forecasting the years, if long years there should be, for this young life by her side, feeling weary herself as the probable trials and crosses and griefs mapped themselves out before her. None of them appeared in her next remark, though, as she said —

“If I were young again I should try to spend at least a few hours a week amongst plants and birds and trees, learning all that God has for me to know in this book. We shut ourselves in too much.”

“I should like it above all things,” said Mattie. “I’ve sometimes wished we had some robins and squirrels for parishioners. I would cultivate their acquaintance. See that beautiful yellow-bird! I never saw such a bright one. Oh, stop a minute here, Aunt Hannah, won’t you, and let us look?”

It was a bit of woods they were passing through. A log bridge spanned the little winding brook that tinkled and gurgled over the stones, and then lost itself between mossy tree-trunks and grassy banks. Gnarled limbs were decked in tender green, and delicate ferns were unfolding feathery patterns, while here and there a scarlet blossom swayed in the wind. The old woman and the young one gazed a moment in mute delight, taking in every small detail of the picture,



IT WAS A BIT OF WOODS THEY WERE PASSING THROUGH.

while each pointed out the varied tints, the white stones shining through the water, the shadows, the net-work of branches overhead, and the cool sweetness of the lovely spot.

Mattie began to repeat, half unconsciously, some lines from Whittier's Psalm —

“The West winds blow, and, singing low,
I hear the glad streams run;
The windows of my soul I throw
Wide open to the sun.

“No longer forward nor behind
I look in hope or fear;
But, grateful, take the good I find,
The best of now and here.”

“Amen!” said Aunt Hannah, smiling lovingly into the bright face; “that is good doctrine.”

“Don't you think it's strange that all this beauty is hidden away there?” Mattie said, as they drove on. “There are people who would pay a large sum of money to have that little nook transferred to canvas.”

“The strange part of it is that more people don't hunt up the first pictures God made, without waiting to get them on canvas, second-hand.”

“But many of them, Aunt Hannah, are inaccessible. Think of all the beauty at the bottom of the ocean — the gems and corals and plants; and the flowers and birds and trees in vast for-

ests, that seem wasted. No eye has ever seen them."

"None but the eye of God. Don't you suppose he takes pleasure in it all?"

"I never thought of that; but, of course, he must see it, and how can he help enjoying his own perfect work? I don't see how a lily could be fairer, or a rose sweeter, or the woods and mountains and sea grander, if man had never fallen. And that reminds me that I wanted you to meet Mrs. Van Cleve. I have such nice visits with her. She has some beautiful ideas about the world as it was before sin came into it. She thinks the curse did not extend to flowers, but that they are as beautiful as they ever were. She reads a great deal, and is so familiar with the older poets—Milton, Wordsworth and Gray—that she makes me blush for my ignorance, and I've gone to reading them myself."

"You couldn't do better," said Aunt Hannah; "but I'm glad you have some nice people. I was afraid they were all Pryors and Prynns and Pritchards."

"Oh, Aunt Hannah, that is because I grumbled so much. Don't you think, John says they are our three 'P's,' and we need three 'P's' to manage them—patience, perseverance and prayer. But, really, we have some lovely people. There's Mrs. Dean, that pale little lady dressed in gray,

who sat up in front. She's a dear saint, with her heart in heaven. She really does live her profession. Mrs. Kendrick, too, is so good. She's the large, fine-looking lady, with gray puffs. She's a perfect mother to us, always sending us things. Her character is lovely, too. She never speaks an unkind word of anybody. (I covet such a name as that.) The Hammonds live in the large brick house not far from the church. They are well-off, but you would never know it except by the amount they give away. They're both as plain and humble as possible. Mrs. Swift is another good woman, and one of my intimate friends. She is Scotch, and so devout and faithful. She tells me long, pleasant stories in the quaintest fashion. Then, there's an old couple by the name of Mills, who live out half a mile. They are both so nice, and they love us as if we were their own children. They are poor, and her fingers are all bent up with rheumatism, but at Christmas she made me a work-box, covered with chintz, with a pocket for thread and a place for needles. The sewing is in little, fine stitches. It's one of the most precious gifts I ever received. Oh, we have some perfectly royal people, and we love them dearly. I'm so thankful that I'm a minister's wife. I wouldn't change places with anybody else, not for anything. I tell John we'll just stay right there always, and work and grow

up with the people. Don't you think that is best?"

Aunt Hannah said, "I guess so," rather absently. Her thoughts turned to her own pastor. There were murmurings in the air which threatened to separate him from them. She almost said — "Poor child! Don't be too sure of anything. Your John may be asked to leave at the end of another year." But she kept it to herself. She would not repress the enthusiasm of this earnest young wife.

"Then you enjoy your work?" was all she did say.

"Oh, so much! I have a class of girls from the factory. I love them, and they love me. They meet with me one evening a week, beside Sabbath lesson, and all the young people seem interested. Oh, I love my work, and I should be perfectly happy in it if just a few people could be weeded out, and if I could make splendid bread. I ought to be happy, if anybody, with such a good husband. John's the very best man in the world."

"I s'pose so," said Aunt Hannah, smiling, while she unchecked Dolly, that she might take a long drink of the limpid water that flowed into a mossy drinking-trough by the roadside.

CHAPTER X.

BY PANSY.

MORAL EVOLUTION.

AUNT Hepsy sat opposite her nephew at the dinner-table, and bit generous pieces from her biscuit in grim satisfaction. The biscuits were not very good; Aunt Hepsy was not used to baking-powder, and there had been some difficulty about the flour which she did not understand. The result was heavy biscuits; but Aunt Hepsy had made them, and you may have noticed that it is much easier for some people to eat and enjoy that which they themselves evolved, even though it is not perfect, than it is for them to bear with composure the failures of others.

“They are not sour, at any rate,” their maker said to herself, with a nod of approval.

Truth to tell, Aunt Hepsy was very well satis-

fied with the present state of affairs. She had always rather fancied "John"—though as a boy he would have been surprised to have been told so—and she had been a housekeeper in her own home for nearly forty years. What wonder that she missed the privilege of doing exactly as she pleased, with none to gainsay or question? Not having lived with her sister Hannah since the two were girls in the old home, she had fancied that it would be a place where she could hold at least partial sway. It had not taken a month's residence to convince her that Aunt Hannah—low-voiced, quiet in movement, calm in manner—had ways of her own, and abided in them; and that Dorcas was simply solid rock when one came in contact with her methods. Aunt Hepsy had chafed a good deal over it; had declared to herself that she couldn't "stand" it; that she would go away and hire a little house of her own, and be independent. But some way, whenever she thought of that little house it came into unpleasant contrast with Hannah's roomy, breezy one; and the things which Dorcas and her brother did for even Aunt Hepsy's comfort were so numerous as to make her realize that she should miss them unpleasantly. On the whole, she preferred John's house, especially with Martha well out of it, and John to do whatever she wanted done.

“He, at least, would do as he was told,” Aunt Hepsy said, and believed it.

Elderly woman though she was, she had very little real acquaintance with human nature; and a man who kept his face without frowns and his voice low—even pleasant—under trying circumstances, was one, in her judgment, to be easily led. Had not poor, dear Joab been of that same temperament. The only thing the good man had done in forty years contrary to her expressed will had been to die. She did him the credit of believing that he could not help that.

I do not mean to be sarcastic; I do not want you to get a wrong impression of poor Aunt Hepsy. She had not made her husband’s life an unhappy one. She sincerely missed and mourned him. To have the ordering of a house again with no womankind to dispute her sway, was a positive joy to her poor old heart. She was a trifle vexed with Martha, it is true, but she meant only good to her, nevertheless. She would manage things with such skill that the ignorant child, when her visit was ended, would open her eyes in astonishment and delight over the changes which had been wrought.

“Even the dishcloth isn’t hung where it ought to be to be handy,” she said, with suppressed energy, as she dashed about the small kitchen after the travelers were gone.

The morning was a busy one, and Aunt Hepsy, when she met her nephew at the dinner-table, was triumphant. Not a thing in that kitchen or dining-room occupied the place it had held in the morning.

“Well, Aunt Hepsy,” said John, with cheery voice and manner, “this seems like old times.”

As he spoke he suppressed with resolute will a sigh over the newer times so suddenly vanished, and told himself sternly that it was absurd for a man to be such a simpleton as to have an absolute longing for the sight of a fair, flushed face, framed in brown hair, and some brown eyes that had looked brightly at him from across this little table only a few hours ago.

“It isn’t as though there were to be months of separation,” he continued, treating himself to a very severe rebuke. “She will be here again in a little while, and she will be here forever. You are a selfish idiot, to feel desolate over so short a separation. It is your duty to make Aunt Hepsy have as good a time as you can. Her ‘good times’ are scarce.”

The “old times” to which he had referred meant a never-to-be-forgotten summer which he spent in Aunt Hepsy’s home when a rollicking boy of seventeen; Aunt Hannah in the meantime being laid aside with a sprained ankle.

“It is many a year since we sat down alone

together," he added, bent on staying among those safe old times.

"Yes," said Aunt Hepsy, with a sigh. "There have been a great many changes since then; but I'm glad of a chance to make you comfortable once more, if I haven't any house of my own to do it in."

This was lugubrious. He must get away from it.

"I'm afraid you found a good deal to do this morning," he said, kindly. In his heart was the thought of how she must have missed the brisk young steps and the deft and skillful fingers of his wife, who seemed always to move with such grace and ease.

"Well," said Aunt Hepsy, "I expected that, of course, when I consented to stay. I had in mind putting things to rights, and I've begun it. They need it, I must say! You didn't think anything about housekeeping when you picked out a wife; now that's a fact."

"No," said the minister, with dignity, "I did not."

He wanted to add that he thought there were much more important qualifications for wives even than the ability to keep house. As to that, any woman with brains and good health could compass it in time, and his wife kept house quite well enough for him, and was really a marvel in some respects. Aunt Hannah said so, and who

should know if she didn't? All of this he kept to himself, finding it required a strong will to do so.

"What is the use?" he said, still to that trustworthy person — himself. "Aunt Hepsy is Aunt Hepsy, and will be until the end of the chapter. And my sensitive little Mattie is not here to be hurt; and she will be here in thirteen and a half more days. I can endure it, surely, until then."

Aunt Hepsy took another bite of biscuit; her satisfaction was increasing.

"I don't wonder her meals were always late," she said. "The wonder is she ever got 'em ready. Nothing in the house in place; that is, in the place where it ought to be. That's about half the battle in housekeeping. What kind of folks can she have had to start her out in life without any training?"

"Her mother has been an invalid since Mattie was sixteen," John said, gently. "A beautiful, patient sufferer; not able to take a step, but the light and comfort of the home."

Quite a little more he said, in the same line, resolved upon enlisting Aunt Hepsy's sympathy for the fair girl whom he had taken from such a home and such a mother, out into the world among strangers. He closed with the sentence—

"Mattie was her mother's housekeeper for two years before her marriage; though of course she

had her mother's judgment and advice to depend upon."

"Humph!" said Aunt Hepsy; "poor dependence, I should say; folks not able to take any steps don't amount to much in housekeeping. She might have been glad, though, that she could not look into her kitchen and closets; I dare say it would have made her sick. Give me anything but a young girl to tuck away things anywhere, and call places cleared up."

Then John felt his eyes flash a little, as the brown ones might have done. He held his lips resolutely closed. What next? He must get away from that subject.

"What new things are they doing in the church, Aunt Hepsy? Aunt Hannah made so short a visit I had no time to talk it over with her as I usually do."

"Trying to get rid of their minister," said Aunt Hepsy, promptly. "Though I dunno as that is a new thing; one of the members told me they had wanted a change for years. I guess they'll starve him out next; they are having dreadful times to raise his salary. The last thing they did was to have a supper; have everything under the sun to eat and drink, and charge a dollar a couple for supper, but it wasn't a success. That reminds me, I guess they are going to do some such way here to raise your salary. I heard that Mrs.

Pryn talking with Martha over the fence about it this morning, before she started."

"I sincerely hope and trust they will not," John said, his face glooming over instantly.

"Why not?" sharply; "they don't pay you any too regular, I should judge, by what I overheard her say. I should think you would want something done to help things out."

"I do not believe in any such method of doing it. If the Lord's ambassadors are not worthy of their hire, and of having it paid in a regular manner, as any other obligation would be met, they would better send them away and get others whom they are willing to treat with that degree of respect. It would be humiliating to think that the people were willing to pay their pastor's salary only by a road through their stomachs. I do not believe my people will ever do it; they have too much respect for the office, if not for the man."

Said Aunt Hepsy — "Oh, fudge! That seems to me like riding a high horse; you may get bounced off before you know it. Your people are just like other people, I dare say. They've got to raise the money for you, and they don't know how on earth to do it; if they can eat it out of folks, they'll do that, you may depend upon it."

"I trust not," with increasing firmness; "I can take less salary if it shall seem to be neces-

sary, though it is certainly not large now, and we live as Mattie has never been accustomed to live; still, we are willing, and more than willing, if that be necessary; but I am sure neither Mattie nor I could submit to such a method of raising what is our due."

Foolish John! So wise but a moment before in regard to his wife's kitchen, so idiotic now; presenting objections born of scruples which the woman opposite him no more understood than did the little brown tea-pot beside her. Somewhat chafed she was, too, by John's decided disapproval. Had she not heartily espoused the movement in her sister's church, and argued that Hannah, who had almost a son of her own for whom salaries had got to be raised, ought to be more active in it? Had she not stood in a hot little curtained-off closet and poured coffee and tea until her back ached, and felt that she was doing God service? It was certainly very disagreeable to have a minister, and her own nephew at that, speak in such a disparaging way of the work.

Mrs. Hannah Adams, blessed woman that she was, prided herself just a little bit on her skill in managing people; prided herself on this very bit of management which had resulted in carrying her new niece, Martha, off to the farm, to be petted and rested, and taught all manner of deft-

handedness which should tell for John's future comfort, while her slightly cross-grained sister remained behind to be soothed into good humor and propriety of behavior by John, who always got along so beautifully with everybody.

Bless her dear old benevolent heart! As she let Dolly jog quietly along, and poured out the treasures of her wise, sweet experience for the young wife's help, could she have imagined a tithe of the mischief which was brewing in the little parsonage so recently left behind, she would have turned Dolly's head around and trotted back before the afternoon's sun was low.

Not that Aunt Hepsy meant mischief; the worst mischief this world knows anything about is begun by the men and women who mean nothing but dullness or outspokenness; or, at the worst, a passing outburst of irritability.

Aunt Hepsy was vexed, and John, in the further attempts at conversation which were made, failed to soothe her. In fact, she had succeeded in depressing him. He told himself it was because he missed Mattie that he was so readily cast down by what Aunt Hepsy had said; that he wasn't used to doing without her; that she had the rare power of saying just the right things at the dinner-table and elsewhere, and that two weeks was a very long time, after all.

Very busy was Aunt Hepsy all the long, bright

afternoon; she omitted her usual afternoon nap for want of time, and was perhaps more careless of her words on that account than she might otherwise have been. It was nearly tea-time when Mrs. Pryn dropped in to see if she would like a little fresh gingerbread for the minister's supper.

"I knew you were alone, and I didn't know what condition Mrs. Remington might have left you in; going off on Monday morning so, and she a young housekeeper."

"Oh, I've been at work," said Aunt Hepsy, grimly. "I haven't baked gingerbread, it is true; but I have done most everything else under the sun. I haven't sat down before to-day, only at dinner." And she wiped a streak of flour from her chin with her apron.

"I thought you would have your hands full," said Mrs. Pryn. "I said to Maria that I had half a mind to come in and offer to help; I saw all the windows up, you know, and heard sweeping going on. It beats all what a sight of work there is to do even in a small house like this."

"Small houses are the worst," said Aunt Hepsy with energy. This was one of her old grievances. Let Mrs. Pryn but differ with her the least in the world on the sore subject, and she would have been angry with her in less than a twinkling, in which case the general interests of society might

have been conversed, for the time being, at least; but no, Mrs. Pryn agreed with her that it took a pattern housekeeper to keep a small house in order; or else things got the upper hand.

“The upper hand!” said Aunt Hepsy; “I should think they did! If you could have seen the number of things tucked into that closet out there under the sink! I’ve had them all out, and scrubbed the closet on my hands and knees. It wasn’t very dirty, to be sure—the things were clean; but then, I can’t get along without taking soap and water to places that I go over. She didn’t know what to do with them, I suppose; no more do I. I had to put the most of them back again, because there was no other place. The house is too full; a hundred and fifty nick-nacks that she brought with her from her city home, and they don’t fit in here, of course, only to clutter up.”

“She is very young to have all the responsibility that rests upon her,” said Mrs. Pryn, with a sigh.

“Too young altogether; that’s what I told John at the time. I said a man had no right to bring a woman a day younger than twenty-five to look after a house and take all the duties of a minister’s wife on her shoulders. But what was the use of talking? These young things think they know everything in the world. All he did

was to laugh at me and ask what was going to be done when the wife he had chosen refused to be a day over twenty."

"Is that her age? I've often wondered. Dear me! Twenty, and expected to lead the meetings, and cut out work at the society, and call on the sick, and I don't know what not! It is a pity, for your nephew's sake, that she hadn't had a little experience in some direction, isn't it? I suppose she didn't know what work was in her own home."

"Work! She doesn't know what work is now, and never will; takes things easy, you know. When I came the other day it was after ten o'clock, and the sink was piled full of dishes; actually left over from the dinner before! That will tell you how much the child knows. Not that she is to blame for it; she has never been taught. Her mother was one of the sickly kind, always in bed; and they had servants, of course, and Martha for housekeeper! I'd like to have seen the house she kept! I said to my nephew to-day—'You never thought about housekeeping when you picked out a wife, did you?' And he drew a long sigh and said—'No, he didn't.' Poor boy; he's nothing but a boy himself. Barely twenty-five when they were married. Two young things playing at living. It is enough to make one sick! John never was one to get along with

any too well, I guess, either. My sister Hannah brought him up, and she is peculiar herself, if I am her sister. Iron will, you know; everybody must bend to her; I didn't know John was of that stamp, but I guess he is. I haven't known him very well for the last eight or ten years; but I can see that he has grown a great deal like his Aunt Hannah. Well, he's had his own way in life so far, and he must abide by it. I'm glad he will have some gingerbread for his supper, and some decent bread. I made bread to-day with all the rest. Well, not exactly bread—there hasn't been time for that—but biscuit that isn't sour; and that's a comfort in this house."

CHAPTER XI.

BY PANSY.

"DON'T REPEAT IT."

I THOUGHT at first your niece was sick on Sunday," said Mrs. Pryn. "He came rushing into church without her, looking sort of pale and worried, I thought; I whispered to Maria that she must be sick; then, when Mrs. Peters' baby cried so, and I looked around and saw her sitting over by the door, I was beat. I suppose it was your sister's coming that hindered her."

"No, it wasn't. She didn't know anything about my sister's coming until after John and I were gone to church. She was late; she generally is. Of all habits for a minister's wife, I think that's the worst; so hard on him, because he's got to be on hand whether any of his congregation are dressed yet or not. Martha tries him a good deal that way, I guess. He

spoke up Sunday as sharp as a thorn about it, and went off with me, leaving her up-stairs prinking.

“Hannah wouldn't have hindered anybody. She's on time, Hannah is; she's worse than the sun. What beat me was her getting here on Sunday; she's a dreadful stickler for Sunday; but she broke down about three miles from here, and stayed all night at a farm-house; then they brought her in to church. She wasn't going to stop here at all, but she saw the front door open. John left it open for his wife, but it's my opinion she wouldn't have come a step if Hannah hadn't arrived. The plain truth is, she got put out on Sunday, and had a crying fit, I s'pose. Her eyes were as red as beets; she's nothing but a child, you see. The way she came to be late was because she took a notion to can some fruit.”

“Can fruit! Not on Sunday?”

“Well, cook 'em over, you know — she took a notion they were spoiling; but I guess they'd have waited till Monday. That's just like a young thing; they always know everything, to begin with. I offended her, I suppose; I spoke out before I thought, and wondered what Hannah would say to such goings-on. Hannah brought John up to be real notional about Sunday; worse than me, a good deal, and I'm strict enough. So when I spoke my mind without a thought of

doing any harm, she flared up and spoke as saucy as you please. I told John I thought he had looked out for a wife with a temper of her own, anyhow. I dare say he had a talk with her about the way she had treated me, and that is what upset her, likely. They had some kind of a tiff, I'm sure, because they were so dreadfully nice to each other the rest of the day. A couple of children!"

Aunt Hepsy laughed a not unpleasant laugh. (She thought she was simply repeating little interesting items.)

"I was disappointed on Sunday, I must say"—this from Mrs. Pryn, when she recovered from her surprise sufficiently to speak again. "Woman fashion, I was looking out for a new bonnet; I heard that our minister's wife had a present of one on Friday; and when that little gray and white thing came to church again I was greatly disappointed."

"A new bonnet?" echoed Aunt Hepsy, looking interested. "Why, I guess not; I didn't hear anything of it. Who could have sent her one? Hannah didn't, for now I think of it, I heard her tell her only this morning that the gray bonnet was exactly the thing for her face, shape and color and all."

"There was a new bonnet sent in, I'm positive," said Mrs. Pryn, nodding her head; "because I heard it from a source that couldn't have been

mistaken. I don't like the gray bonnet myself; I don't think it's appropriate to a minister's wife, and I hoped she would wear the new one; in fact, I thought, of course, she would, out of respect to the givers."

"She wouldn't," said Aunt Hepsy, decidedly; "not if she didn't take a notion. She has a mind of her own as well as the next one. Maybe it was a new bonnet they were talking about this morning; there was some nonsense about her wearing a coal-hod, and about green being suited to her complexion. I didn't understand it, and I don't now. It couldn't have been about a bonnet, either; for there was a good deal of giggling over 'mutton-leg sleeves' and 'smoothing-irons,' and I don't know what all. I know I thought they acted rather silly for grown people, let alone ministers' folks; and Hannah was as bad as they. But it couldn't have had to do with a bonnet."

Yes, it could; Mrs. Pryn understood perfectly — mutton-legs, smoothing-irons and all; two angry red spots glowed on her sallow cheeks.

"It wasn't a very Christian way of receiving a present, anyhow," she said, trying to laugh.

"Well, I don't know," said Aunt Hepsy, bridling; it was one thing for her to criticise her niece and nephew, and quite another to hear any one else do so.

“If it was about a bonnet, unless it was something very elegant, which she doesn't need back here in a country village, or unless it was from some ignorant body who didn't know what else to do to show her good will, I should say it was a piece of impertinence. Her bonnet is well enough, I'm sure; and folks like to use their own tastes, if they have any. Mercy knows there are things enough that people can send their minister without going into bonnets! Though for the matter of that, I don't know but they would rather it would be bonnets than marble-cake. You never saw such a sight of marble-cake as gets into this house! There are two jars in the pantry this minute full of it; and neither John nor Martha touch it. I overheard him telling her only this morning that she might find the walk out to the hen-house paved with marble when she came back; and she giggled right out and said—‘Marble-cake! That's a good idea, John; it's almost hard enough. I don't believe some families in this village can have anything else to live on, they make so much of it.’”

Silly Aunt Hepsy! Just simply silly, not malicious. She had lived for twenty-five years in the same neighborhood, and been used to speaking her mind freely on all occasions; and the people had grown used to her, and had learned to say—“Never mind, it is only Aunt Hepsy,” or,

“What’s the use of noticing it? Mrs. Joab Stone must talk, and Joab and we must endure it.” Aunt Hepsy had not the remotest idea of being a mischief-maker. Silly young husband and wife not to remember that walls, or at least indiscreet aunts, had ears! There were women in that large country church to whom it would have done no harm at all to repeat the foolish words about the marble-cake. Mrs. Pryn was not one of them; she did not send marble-cake to the parsonage herself, but she knew just exactly who did, and was indignant for them.

“Well,” she said, drawing her little black shoulder-shawl about her as though she might be preparing to go, “I’m sorry, I’m sure, if our gifts do not please them; we are only common country people and can not be expected to understand city folks, I s’pose. These are pretty hard times, though, and some people would be glad even of marble-cake as a help toward living. I don’t know how we are going to raise our pastor’s salary this year, I’m sure; we are having hard work and a good deal of it. Mr. Pryn is about discouraged. The Jenkins’ won’t give a cent, and they’ve always been liberal. It was their uncle who died so suddenly last week, and Mr. Remington didn’t say a word at the funeral about him; they didn’t like it, poor things. You can’t blame them; they have feelings, and they set great store by him, if

he was a hard old man; he was never hard to them. Then, there are the Ferrands, kind of stuffy because the minister doesn't call on them oftener. Mr. Pryn says if he doesn't go there pretty soon, and take her along too, he doesn't believe they'll pay their subscriptions. And there's quite a number of other influential folks who are sort of out with him for one thing and another. I tell Mr. Pryn that the great difficulty is, we are not social enough. A young minister is so bound up in himself and his wife and his home, somehow, that he forgets his social duties. I want to have a large gathering—a regular dinner—only have it in the evening, and get everybody out and give them a chance to get acquainted with the minister's wife; she will never get around to them in all the world. They only made twenty calls last week, I counted 'em myself; and what is that in a parish of this size? I tell Mr. Pryn that the way we've got to manage is to do their calling for them; get the people together and make them visit them. Then we could charge a good round price for the dinner and use the money to pay the minister's salary. He can afford to be sociable, then, for he will know that every word he speaks is helping his own pocket along."

"That's just where you are mistaken," said Mrs. Hepsy Stone. Now that the idea was put into bold language by another, she found that she

did not like it so well as she had supposed. "He won't hear to any such thing. I was talking to him about it this very day, and he was quite fierce. Said if people couldn't pay their minister through any road but their stomachs, they didn't deserve a minister. He said he could live on less salary, but as for having it raised in any such way, it wasn't to be thought of for a moment. Neither he nor Martha would consent to having their self-respect trampled upon like that."

"I guess they will have to consent to having their salary raised in any way that the trustees think best," said Mrs. Pryn, rising at last, the two spots on her cheeks having grown a deeper red. "It doesn't do for a minister to dictate too much to his people."

"Well, John Remington will have his own way, you will find, or you will lose him. That's all there is about that."

Mrs. Stone had risen, also, and was looking with fierce dignity at her caller. At that moment no one could have made her believe that she approved of a society supper for the purpose of raising a pastor's salary.

"Very well," said Mrs. Pryn, with awful dignity; "if people choose to get angry and leave because their people are economizing, and contriving and working like slaves to support them, that's their own lookout, of course. There are

other ministers in the world. Our church has never had to go a-begging for a pastor. I will bid you good-night, Mrs. Stone. I hope Mr. Remington will not disapprove too much of the gingerbread; I'm sure I would not have ventured to bring it if I had imagined for a moment that he disapproved of little tokens of good-will from his people. It is all new to me."

"I did not say any such thing!" said indignant Aunt Hepsy. But Mrs. Pryn had said good-night and was gone.

With the minister's gingerbread that evening, his aunt served up her opinion of the giver. To her mind she was a "cantankerous" woman, bent on making mischief; she had said things to her that very afternoon that made her feel like ordering her out of the house. Whereupon the startled John roused himself from his half-mournful wonderings as to what Martha was doing now; whether Dolly did certainly get through all right, as she was in the habit of doing; and whether the unusually long ride had tired Mattie, and whether she was lying on the dear wide old lounge at this minute, in Aunt Hannah's cheery sitting-room, resting and thinking of him; from all this he roused to say earnestly —

"Aunt Hepsy, I ought to have told you, perhaps, that our neighbor is just a little inclined to look after other people's affairs as well as her own,

and that we have to talk before her with utmost caution. The mildest expression of opinion is sometimes misunderstood by her, to such a degree that Mattie says she has learned to say only 'ah!' and 'indeed!' when she calls, and that she is sometimes afraid that even those words can be repeated with a wrong emphasis." The poor idiot of a lonesome husband could not resist a proud smile as he quoted this bright little speech of Mattie's. But Mrs. Stone did not smile.

"You needn't be afraid," she said, grimly; "I'm not one to make trouble. I lived twenty-five years in the same village, and belonged to the same church; and no one can say I ever made any trouble. It is not likely I would do it with my own nephew. I don't toady to people, either. I don't believe in it myself. Folks respect you more if you speak your mind once for all and have done with it, than they do if you simper, and say 'ah!' when you mean 'fiddlesticks!' I know people; I haven't lived in this world sixty years for nothing. Though, to be sure, there are folks who, if they live to be a hundred, will not be likely to have many grains of sense. I can tell you one thing for your comfort — your 'Mattie,' as you call her, has an enemy in that woman. Her 'ahs' and 'indeeds' that you think so much of, haven't done with her. She doesn't like her; she as good as said so this afternoon."

The minister went up-stairs feeling that the day had been sixty hours long, and believing that two weeks, under some circumstances, might represent an eternity.

As for Mrs. Stone, she washed the dishes with severity, setting the cups down hard, and breaking the handle from the delicate cream-pitcher; whereupon she regarded it with a contemptuous sneer, and said to it — “Frail, slippery, trimmed-up thing, like its mistress!” Mrs. Stone was in a miserable humor. She had overworked all day, she had taken no nap, she had had no careful petting from Aunt Hannah or Dorcas. Above all, she had been rudely dealt with that afternoon. “Mrs. Pryn had no business to say the things about John and Martha that she had. It was an insult! If she did not like her minister, why didn’t she go squarely to him, and tell him so? That is what she, Hepsy Stone, would have done, instead of slipping in at the back door and talking with a visitor.”

You think, perhaps, that Aunt Hepsy’s conscience pricked her, thereby adding to the soreness of her nerves. I declare to you that such was not the case. Not the slightest idea that she had said anything imprudent, anything calculated to make trouble for any one, had entered her mind. What had she said? Reported a few of the silly sayings and doings of a couple of

young people—her own nephew and niece. It was not likely that she would say things about her own folks to injure them! John needn't have treated her to a lecture on prudence and given her a dose of his baby Mattie's wisdom—she, a woman of sixty! Even if she had had anything to say, she would not have said it to a manifest gossip like Mrs. Pryn, a woman with whom Martha was evidently too thick, or she would never have come to the back door with a little shawl over her head, and bringing a gingerbread. She was sorry she accepted the gingerbread. The idea of her saying that there were "other ministers in the world!" Just as though there were many young men like John! He wasn't perfect, of course; who should know that better than his aunt? But he came as near to it as the most of 'em, she guessed—too good for women like Mrs. Pryn, anyhow. As for Martha, if she wanted to wear a gray bonnet, she didn't see what earthly right they had to interfere with her. For her part, she was glad the child had spunk enough not to wear the new one, if it was sent to her. But it was just like Martha to go and offend people about nothing more important than a little hat to stick on the back of her head!

I hope you understand what a whirl of contradictions the poor old mind was in. Neither is she alone in the world. There are many such—

people who keenly feel the stings in the words of others, but who seem unable to comprehend that there is ever the slightest approach to a sting in words of theirs. Beside, the biscuits were heavy, and Aunt Hepsy had a decided touch of dyspepsia.

Perhaps you think Mrs. Pryn sat down at home with her sewing, and held discreet communion with her conscience, and resolved to keep her lips securely closed. (There are such women—bless them—women who bottle up in their safe, warm hearts, material which would make a moral cyclone large enough to sweep the town, and who smile and pray and wait until the air is clearer, and the time has come for sunny and soothing words. Mrs. Pryn was not one of them. She did not wait even for supper—Mr. Pryn being late—but threw that much-enduring shawl over her head, and went the back-way to Mrs. Pryor's, where she told in detail all that she had heard, and much that she had imagined. Perhaps these ladies were not to blame that Mrs. Wakeman took it into her head to call on Mrs. Pryor that evening; nor can we consider it strange that they felt obliged to take her somewhat into confidence. They did try to be careful. When Mrs. Pryor made the unguarded remark that the Remingtons might not like the milk she was sending them any better than they did marble-cake, Mrs. Pryn, who knew that Mrs. Wakeman sent the last loaf

of that article, gave a warning "Hush! Don't say one word about that!" after which, of course, common propriety demanded an explanation, and the story about "the marble walk to the hen-house" came to the front. How could they help it?

Perhaps it was merely a coincidence that the committee on entertainments had to be called on that evening by both Mrs. Pryor and Mrs. Pryn, in order that they might determine as to the character of the next sociable. If it was, the opportunity was "improved" by enlightening them in regard to the pastor's views as to raising money through the stomach. Of course this was necessary, in order that the committee might be fore-armed, though Mrs. Pryor did remember to say that she hoped they would be careful about repeating it, because such talk as that would make it simply impossible to raise the salary.

Perhaps you are not so well acquainted with human nature but that you will be astonished to hear that three days afterward Mrs. Hoyt, who had been out of town, left her morning work undone, and went in haste and dismay to call on her most intimate friend, Mrs. Denton, saying almost as soon as the first greetings were over, "What is all this I hear, Mrs. Denton? What has been going on in the week that I have been away? Mr. Hoyt came home last night with

the wildest sort of a story, to the effect that Mr. Remington had said that if this church has another sociable he will leave town for good the next morning; and that he is not to be insulted by having gifts sent to his door, as though he were a beggar, and a great deal more of the same sort. Mr. Hoyt says the village is in a ferment, and he is afraid some steps will have to be taken—that quite a number of the leading men say they fear he is not the man for this church. Mrs. Denton, what in the world does it mean?”

“It means,” said Mrs. Denton, solemnly, “that Satan has been at his old business, going to and fro upon the earth, seeking whom he may devour; and he has almost devoured our poor young minister and his little wife. I am too indignant to live. You haven’t heard the worst, not by a great deal. What do you say to its being currently reported that he does not live happily with his wife—that they quarreled last Sunday, and kept it up all through Monday, and on Tuesday she went away, not to return? It is said that Mr. Remington declared he could not live with her, because she was so utterly ignorant of managing a house, and so ruinous in her expenditures for dress that he felt sure she would bring both him and the church to disgrace, and a great deal more of a like character.”

“What does it all mean?” repeated Mrs. Hoyt,

her face drawn with pain, her voice full of the deepest anxiety.

“It means exactly what I have told you—that Satan has been at work. I don’t know what other emissaries he found to help him roll up so large a ball of gossip in so short a time, but, of course, you know that Mrs. Pryn was one of them?”

Mrs. Hoyt groaned. “I’m afraid we shall lose him,” she said, pitifully.

“I’m afraid we shall,” said Mrs. Denton, winking hard to keep back the tears. “Flesh and blood can not stand everything. I know I would leave if I were he. It’s disgraceful! I’m too indignant to live!”

At which very moment, if history can be believed, little Mrs. Mattie was saying, with a sweet, moved face and tender voice—“Oh, Aunt Hannah, it is blessed to have a people whom you love, and who love you as ours do us. Even Mrs. Pryn is very fond of John; and so is Mr. Pritchard, I think, turnips and all”—with a little laugh. “I almost know that we shall live and die among them. John says it is a disgrace to the cause that a man must be always moving from church to church. He believes in long pastorates.”

Does he, indeed, Mrs. Mattie! What if you could see him now, alone in his study, his head

bowed low on his arms, which rest upon a large open Bible, where he has just been reading the words: “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.”

CHAPTER XII.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

LESSONS.

IT was a fair sight which met the eyes of John's wife, the next morning after breakfast, as she stepped out on the wide porch. Soft blue distant hills, patches of woods, green meadows, winding streams, and, nearer, the orchard, still white with blossoms. The long, old-fashioned front yard was now arrayed in its very best suit of green — syringas, lilacs, snowballs and maples. Each side of the stone walk gay daffodils and jonquils raised their bright heads, while the air was sweet as springing grass and orchard blossoms ever make it. Mattie looked, and breathed a long, delighted "Oh!" then, springing down the steps, ran with all the glee of a child across the lawn to a large lilac-bush covered with blossoms. She buried her

face in a white spray, calling to Aunt Hannah, who stood on the steps — “May I have one?”

“Pick all you want, child,” Aunt Hannah said, watching her with a curious, indefinable pang at her heart for an instant. The picture reminded her of her early plans — how John would stay on the farm and bring a wife to the old home, and there would be light footsteps and young voices and good cheer. Instead of that, she and the old place were growing old and gray together, and no young people or little children to soften the jagged edges of years. She brought herself back with a laugh, though, when she recalled another part of her plan that brought the square, solid figure of Samantha Brown.

“She couldn’t have run down to the lilac bush like that to save her life,” she said to herself.

Then this queer old aunt fell to picturing Samantha coming up the walk with a spray of lilac tucked in her belt, contrasting her heavy gait with this slim, straight girl, who stepped off like a robin, and looked up at her with winning smile and eyes clear as the spring in the meadow. No, no; this one — delicate, refined, and intellectual — fitted John. Samantha never could. Things were best as they were.

“I have not had such a run since I was a little girl and went out to grandpa’s,” Mattie said, as she came panting and laughing up the steps. “How

nice it is to get off here where there are no prying neighbors to watch you, and one may run or turn somersaults if she can."

"You are mistaken about that," Aunt Hannah said; "there are neighbors all about."

Mattie opened her eyes wide.

"There's a pewee's nest right over this door. The bluebirds have just moved into that soft maple, and there's a whole village full of robins scattered about this place, besides rabbits and squirrels and chipmunks without number."

The laugh that made response to this was, in Aunt Hannah's ears, sweeter than any music the robins ever made.

"How I wish I had been a girl when you were!" Mattie said, catching Aunt Hannah's hand and giving it a loving squeeze; "you must have been the very nicest sort of a girl."

"Then you would be an old woman now, when John is a young man. Think of that!"

"Think of it! That would never do. It is best as it is. But now I must go right to work, Aunt Hannah. I want to learn to make bread, and there isn't a moment to be lost."

"No, you are going to play for one whole day, Martha. We'll start some bread to-night. Put on your hat and stay out-doors. I'll come out, too, by and by, when I have set things to rights a little."

"I don't like to play alone; we'll both set things to rights," Mattie said, as she went into the house. And then she followed Aunt Hannah up-stairs, down cellar, from pantry to milk-room, chatting, watching and admiring the deft ways in which everything was done with so little bustle, with calmness and precision, and yet with rapidity.

"I ought to stay a whole year and watch you work," she said, at last, almost despairingly; "you do it so easily and make everything go smoothly. Now, I spill things, and I soil my apron, and get into a fluster, and look as worried as if the cares of the nation were upon me. John says I am getting a pucker between my eyes. How do you manage to keep so cool?"

"Why, anybody can do it who is not in a hurry. I am not hurried, because I give myself plenty of time. I always get up early. That is one secret of getting time by the forelock. If you don't do that, time gets you, and jerks you about all day without any mercy."

"Yes, I know," Mattie said, deprecatingly; "that is my besetting sin. I am so fearfully sleepy in the morning. John gets up and makes the fire, and I mean to get up, but before I know it I'm asleep again, and then I am late and have to fly."

"And that wears out your nerves and puts

puckers in your forehead. Why don't you go to bed earlier, child?"

"Oh, we think we will, but our evenings are almost the only time we have to read together, and it seems a pity to cut them short. Sometimes it is after eleven o'clock before we are asleep."

"Nevertheless, that is what ought to be done," Aunt Hannah declared. "Young folks must have sleep enough some way or other. You can't cheat Nature without getting the worst of it in the long run. She is an exacting old lady, and wants folks to toe the mark. Why, the freshness of the morning is the very time for work. You can do as much again in an hour then."

"Now, Martha," Aunt Hannah said that evening as she tied on a clean apron, "come out in the kitchen, and we will set the sponge for bread." And then there followed a lesson which would have done credit to a teacher in a modern cooking-school. Mattie reviewed it as they went back to the sitting-room, laughingly telling off on her fingers—"Good flour, how to tell it; sift it, yeast, water only tepid, stiff batter, no lumps, tuck it up warm; must not put it too near the fire, 'twill scald yeast."

Aunt Hannah was too wise a teacher to imagine that one lesson in bread-making would serve the young housekeeper. She arranged that two

loaves of bread should be made each day, and, after the first two bakings, left Mattie to herself, being always within hearing to advise, to drop hints and give bits of lectures on the quantity of flour to be used, the kneading, the rising, the baking.

“You may have everything right all the way through,” she said, “and spoil your bread by putting it in the oven before it is ready, or by not putting it in when it is ready. Shakespeare says, you know, that ‘there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.’ Now, it is something like that with bread. There comes a minute when your bread is just light enough. If your oven is ready, you pop it in, and in forty minutes it is out, light, sweet and brown. But just let it stand an hour after that favoring minute comes, and your bread will be sour and unfit to eat. The oven must be right, too—neither too hot nor too cold, if you would have perfect success.”

“How many ingredients beside yeast and flour it takes to make good bread!” Mattie said, as she tucked a blanket about the yellow bowl, and again she counted on her fingers—a habit which greatly amused Aunt Hannah. “There’s energy, strength, patience, early rising, attention, judgment, discernment—and what else?”

“Gumption?” said Aunt Hannah; “but that’s

all of them put together, and what is there in the world that is worth doing that does not take everything there is in you, if it's well done?"

The young woman stood with thoughtful eyes a moment, then she said — "It is so, isn't it? It ennobles work to realize it, too." And then she fell into a reverie about Aunt Hannah, who had spent her life in this one spot a farmer's wife. She had not had advantages of society or travel, and yet how truly refined and large-hearted she was. How self-reliant and really cultured! Seasoning her cooking lessons with quaint remarks and quotations from Shakespeare.

It was only the mornings which were devoted to the kitchen. The afternoons were given to resting or to wandering about the country behind old Dolly, indulging in long, delightful talks which reached higher and further than kitchen lore.

Their talk one day ran upon growth in grace. "I sometimes feel almost discouraged with myself," Mattie said, "because I'm not so good as I used to be. I thought I had perfect control of my temper for as much as two years, but now I begin to think it was because I had not much to try me. Mother is almost angelic. One could never lose patience with her, and there was nobody else who came in very close contact with me. I thought I was growing like mother — sweet-

spirited and unselfish, but I'm not. Why, I have even been out of patience with John sometimes, as much as I love him," and the young wife cast a deprecative glance at Aunt Hannah, thinking that surely she would be shocked at such candid avowals. But the gray eyes looked at her kindly as she said —

"I shouldn't wonder. (Satan is never more busy with young people than he is the first year or two of their married life. The trouble is, a young couple start out, in spite of anything that is told them, expecting to find each other perfect. Of course, they are not; and so they are both disappointed. Now, if they would be more reasonable, and believe that they will discover some faults in each other, and that they must bear and forbear, and seek the help of the Lord in it, loving each other, faults and all, Satan would not get the hold of them that he does. John is not perfect, by any means. I could have told you that long ago if you had asked me."

"He's better than I am," Mattie said, sadly; "he does not take offense so easily."

"No, a man as a general thing, doesn't; but there is this to be said about that. His blunders are often the cause of the offense. He is a heedless creature. But most women are too touchy. They don't make allowances for the different nature of a man. If a wife would speak out

frankly to her husband when something worries her, it would be far better — not in a fault-finding way — little misunderstandings could be cleared up at once, but instead of that she takes some little thing that has hurt her and broods over it and sheds oceans of tears over it, and it grows and grows, and then she puts on the face of a martyr, and her answers are all in one syllable, and her eyes have a red rim around them. Her husband doesn't know what is the matter, or he has forgotten if he ever did know. That is oftentimes the history, I dare say, of the beginning of trouble in unhappy marriages."

"But, Aunt Hannah, a man would soon grow tired of being called to account and of being obliged to explain things continually."

"No, the right sort of a wife, who has a good husband, will not allow herself to worry about mere trifles — that is, if she has good sense; if she hasn't, more's the pity for both of 'em. When she is tempted to go distracted over some little thing about as big as the point of a pin, she will say — 'Get thee behind me, Satan. You are not going to pick a quarrel this time. My husband means all right, and I shall trust him, even if he does forget some of the little attentions I'm used to.'"

"I read something the other day," Mattie said, "that vexed and troubled me. The author, who

has quite a reputation, said that all marriages had their pitiful side; that people expected much happiness and were always deceived; that all attachments were mere glamour which fell upon the senses, and, if truth were known, most marriages proved unhappy; after the spell was broken it was a mere co-operative housekeeping, with a state of harmonious mutual indifference, or else the yoke became intolerable, and each longed to be free; in short, that there was no such thing as lasting affection in the marriage relation. I know this is not the case with my father and mother. Are they exceptions? What do you think, Aunt Hannah? You were married a great many years, and you have had time to observe many couples."

"I think the man who wrote that was in the same fix I'd be in, if I undertook to explain a sentence of Latin or Greek. I shouldn't know 'B' from a bumble-bee, no more did he. It sounds like those infidels trying to talk down our religion. Their talk is perfectly foolish, because they don't know a thing about the other side of the question, and can't know it till they have had an experience. It is the same with the man who wrote that about marriage. How could he suppose that the Lord himself would plan it and speak of it as he did, if it was meant to be no more than that? You know marriage is used again and again in the Scriptures as a figure of

the union between Christ and the church. The marriage supper stands for the most glorious and joyful day that can ever come to us. And would he have said that a man was to leave everything and go with his wife, and that they should be one, if it was intended to be only a sort of partnership for convenience? It is altogether likely it was some young fellow wrote that who hadn't learned how to care for anybody yet but himself, and was just at the age when, of course, he knew it all. I don't much like to talk about myself, but being you have asked me a question I'm going to answer it. When I married Nathaniel Adams it was because I should have been a most unhappy creature if I hadn't. I don't pretend to understand it all, how one year I never had seen him and the next I cared more for him than anybody in the world. It's a great mystery. I always thought the Lord sent him to me. The Bible says that a good wife is from him, and so, of course, a good husband must be. I only know that I never got tired of him. To the last day of his life a room was always pleasanter to me if he was in it. When I was in Dutchess County I attended a woman's rights convention. When I heard them talk about men — such domineering, selfish, cross-grained creatures as they made them out to be — thinks I to me — 'Poor souls! It seems none of you has a good husband like Nathaniel, or she

would speak out on the other side.' I felt sorry that they hadn't heard there was such a being as a husband who was patient and kind and unselfish — the very best and dearest being on earth to his wife. Why, I've often thought I had a better idea of God from being so many years with Nathaniel. He was so strong and protecting-like, and so wise and pure-hearted."

Aunt Hannah's voice trembled, and there was silence, for Martha knew her thoughts were going back over the years rich in sacred memories.

"I'm ashamed to grieve," she said, as she wiped away a tear; "such a long, happy life as we had together. I'm more blessed in having even the memory of such a man than some women are in their living husbands."

"Oh, Aunt Hannah, I'm so glad to hear you talk so!" Mattie said, with a relieved sigh; "that article really troubled me. I have such a horror at the thought of John and me ever becoming the sort of married people I have seen, continually bickering, or else perfectly indifferent to each other. I should wish to die now if I thought it would ever be so with us. I couldn't endure it. I do not see how two people who have ever loved each other can get into such a state. I should never wish my husband to consider me a part of himself so thoroughly, that he would feel free to ignore me, and bestow his attentions on every-

body else. Why is it, Aunt Hannah, that before marriage some men treat women as if they were queens, but after marriage they are often positively rude to their wives?"

"Well, there are two sides to that. Sometimes it's the fault of the wife. She doesn't keep up her part as she did before she was married. He sees she's nothing but a common white dish, and he thought she was the finest china. He fixed her up with all manner of goodnesses and graces, that, if she has, she doesn't think it worth while to practice now they're married. She told him beforehand that he suited her exactly—that there wasn't a man like him in all the world—and then she goes to finding fault with him. He is surprised to find that her tongue has a little sting in it that she always kept out of sight before. Is it any wonder that he lets her down a peg from that high place where he put her?"

"After all," Martha said, meditatively, "if two people once love each other very much, they always do, in spite of occasional jars, unless something very dreadful happens. Don't you think so, Aunt Hannah?"

"No, I can't say as I do. Love isn't going to grow and flourish when everything is against it. Did you notice that rose-vine at the east end of the front porch putting out new branches all over it? It will be full of roses pretty soon. That

vine has been the wonder of the neighborhood for ten years. Now suppose I never watered it, or fed it with good rich earth from the woods, or dug about it, what a stunted, sickly thing it would have been! You have to take care of everything that's worth having in this world. Love will die from neglect and abuse as quick as a rose-bush. And there's another thing. We are apt to love what is lovely, and a man or woman who acts half the time like a northeast rain-storm, glum and sour, can't find fault if love doesn't hold out."

CHAPTER XIII.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

PERSECUTION OF THE SAINTS.

WHAT a luxury it must be to have a dress that is right in every way—of good material, in the fashion, fitting well, with lace in the neck and sleeves—hanging in the closet; nothing to do but go and slip it on when you have a sudden invitation to a wedding or a tea party!”

It was the minister's wife, Mrs. Brewster, who said it with a half-laugh and a half-sigh. She and Mattie had contrived to become very intimate during these ten days. They were not only drawn together by that free masonry belonging to ministers' wives, but each had a curiosity about the other. Mrs. Brewster was fond of John. Had he not been one of the boys in her Sunday School class? Naturally she wished to

know of what manner of spirit his wife was. And Mattie felt that it was a privilege to get a glimpse into the inner heart of one whose lot in life had been for twenty-five years similar to her own, just beginning. This woman had probably met and struggled with many Pryns and Pritchards, and yet no deep lines betokening a soured nature marred her peaceful face. There was more reason than this, though, for the intimacy. Each had taken a genuine liking to the other from the first, and it happened that the elder woman's heart was fresh enough to understand the younger. Mrs. Brewster was spending the day at Mrs. Adams's. She and Mattie had been wandering about the garden and orchard, talking about books and people, but just now Martha was telling Mrs. Brewster how to have her gingham dress made; to this end she had taken her up-stairs and shown her how the back drapery of her dove-colored cashmere was arranged. It was the appearance of the fresh, new gown that had called forth the half-envious remark from Mrs. Brewster.

"I have a fine, nice cashmere, a little darker than this," she went on, "made when they wore full, round skirts. I have been hiding it away from moth and rust these dozen years. It got so old-fashioned that I was ashamed to wear it, even in Mapleton."

“Why don't you have it made over?” Mattie asked, wonderingly.

“If you live to bring up five boys and get them ready for college on a very small salary, you will find one cannot always do as one would, my dear,” Mrs. Brewster said, with a smile. “I have no skill at making over, myself, even if I had the time. I could not have it bungled by a cheap dressmaker, and I never saw the time that I could afford the ten dollars to send it to the city to have it made. Haven't I a number of good reasons?”

Mattie thought, as she surveyed Mrs. Brewster, that even in her worn, ill-fitting dress, she had a noble dignity of face and form that one did not often see; well dressed, she would be elegant. She went over for herself in that few minutes—as young people do with old ideas, and then think they have originated them—the truth that a refined, intelligent woman cannot be made into anything less by the absence of fine clothes, and a coarse-grained, ignorant woman cannot be made into anything better by means of dress and jewels. Of how very little consequence outward adorning was, after all! She should never put so much value on it again, and yet she did wish Mrs. Brewster had one handsome dress.

“What are you studying about, child?” Aunt Hannah asked, when the company had gone;

“you have a pucker between your eyes just as John has when he’s in a puzzle.”

“I was thinking about Mrs. Brewster. Tell me about her, Aunt Hannah. I think she is so lovely. All the people like her, don’t they? Has she had a good many trials?”

“Trials? Plenty of ’em. There are some people in our church who would try the patience of an angel, and she’s almost one. Some of them went snooping round—now that’s the best word I can find, if it isn’t in the dictionary—when she first came here, to spy out her ways, see if she was a good housekeeper, and spending their money economically. They thought because she was young, they ought to oversee her. She is a born lady, come of good old Massachusetts family, and the blunt ways of some of our people seemed strange to her at first, but she has a way of managing them without getting their ill-will. If anyone said a rude thing to her, she always acted as though she was hard of hearing. If a meddling question was asked her, she would most likely answer it by asking another. Nobody could ever gossip with her. She would shut them up in no time in such a cunning way. She would turn the subject as quick as a wink, maybe say—‘How nice your flowers are this summer, Mrs. Jones. I love to pass your house, your garden looks so bright. Everything grows for you’; or, ‘Come

out and see the calla you gave me. It is in blossom'; or, 'Why didn't you bring your little girl with you? I must tell you some questions she asked me in the class. She's such a bright child.' And that's the way she headed them off. You get a woman started on her flowers or her child, and, as a general thing, she forgets her neighbors' business. Time and again I've looked to see her flush up, and maybe give a sharp word back; but no, she always seemed to have just the right thing ready to say to keep them in good humor, and yet not have them any wiser about her affairs than they were before. Sometimes a busybody told her things that were said about her—that she ought to do all her own sewing, and she ought not to keep a girl, she ought to call on the people more, and she ought not to be on the street so much; but she went right on just as if she never had heard it, and by and by they began to see that there was no use trying to do anything with her, and they just let her alone."

"Is she always so bright and cheerful?" asked Mattie, half-wistfully.

"Yes, indeed! Sick folks would rather see her coming than the doctor, and the poorer people are, the more kind and neighborly she is. The truth is, she is just the life and soul of everything—the prayer-meeting, the missionary society and the sewing society. The nearest I ever

came to seeing her angry was one time about seven years ago. Mr. Brewster had a call to another place, and they almost went. A woman said to her—‘What shall we do without you? We can fill your husband’s place quick enough, but we never can fill yours.’ The woman was a little huffy at Mr. Brewster just then at something he had said about the anthems. She was in the choir. Mrs. Brewster was still for a whole minute. She was always pale, but her cheeks got red then, and there was a sparkle in her eye that I never saw before, as she said, in a dignified way—‘I do not understand you.’ She could not bear to have any one hint at putting her above her husband, for he stands next to St. Paul in her estimation, I guess, and she doesn’t come far wide of her reckoning, either, if she does think so.”

“Oh!” Mattie said, drawing a long sigh, “I’m glad she could flare up. Perhaps I, too, can attain to meekness some day.”

“One day we had been talking—she and I—about Deacon Peters,” went on Aunt Hannah. He had been a member of our church thirty-five years, but he got out with Mr. Brewster; the deacon was in the wrong, of course, and away he went to the Methodist church. I was berating the deacon soundly, but she said with such a patient look on her face—‘Did you ever think

about it, Mrs Adams, that God honors ministers above most others? They do, indeed, drink of his cup, are baptized with his baptism in a peculiar manner. Here is Deacon Peters, now; was one of our firmest friends for years, received us to his house when we came first, and used to come over so often and bring us something rare from his garden. Fresh vegetables and the first strawberries always came to us; then the cherries and plums and pears were shared freely with us. Now he has turned right about and become our enemy. Don't you know that most people do not have that experience? If their friends cast them off in that way, it is because they have injured them, but it may come to a minister any day on account of something he said in a sermon, or did not say, or from his position on some question of the day. Men will tolerate differences of opinion among each other and still be friends, but their ministers must think and act at their dictation. There is a sweet thought in even this bitter cup. The Master drank from it first, for "his disciples forsook him". And then her eyes got glad again, and she began talking of something else without waiting for me to console her, and I'm afraid I couldn't have done it in the right way, for I felt so wrought up at Deacon Peters. Blessed woman! I can't see how the Lord can help loving some people more than others."

“Go on, Aunt Hannah,” Martha said, curling herself into the corner of the sofa; “I can hear about such a woman all night, even though it makes me feel perfectly mean and worthless.”

“Well, let me tell you about old Mrs. Hunt, so that you can have an idea how the poor people just worship Mrs. Brewster. Then we must go to bed. We have always had a queer fashion in our church of piecing out our minister’s salary with a donation. It is no kindness to him at all, for we agreed to give him just so much, anyway; every year we met at the parsonage and had a supper and a great fuss, bringing in our money and handing it to the clerk, and he taking account of it. (It had the appearance of being very generous, but all the time it was only paying our minister his just dues, and turning his house topsy-turvy and burning out his oil while we did it.) I always felt worked up over it myself, and have tried to have it changed, but some of our men are so set, they want to go on doing just as they have done for the last hundred years, and, for peace’ sake, the rest of us let them. So we had our donation, as usual, last week. In the course of the evening Mrs. Brewster and I sat in the corner by ourselves, having a little talk, and Mrs. Hunt came up. She is a poor widow, who makes her living by taking in sewing and selling eggs and garden stuff. She said—

“ ‘Mrs. Brewster, I’ve wanted to get a chance all the evening, when you were kind of by yourself, to speak to you; and I sha’n’t mind Mrs. Adams.’ And then she began untying a hard knot in the corner of her handkerchief. ‘I’ve got something in here for you’, she said. ‘You, mind, not for the church; they’re rich enough without my poor pennies. I’ve been saving this up for you all summer.’ And with that she brought out a five-dollar bill, and pushed it into Mrs. Brewster’s hand. ‘Now, don’t say it’s too much for me to give, and you can’t keep it, and all that. I guess I can treat myself to a little pleasure once in a while, if I am poor. I’ve had the worth of it twice over, enjoying myself getting it together. I’ve been prospered, too. I never had so many jobs of sewing come in before, and my hens—good creatures—acted as if they knew I was a-doin’ something special, for every one of them laid an egg every day. Don’t for pity’s sake, say anything about it to anybody else,’ she said, dropping her voice to a whisper, ‘or like as not, they’ll put it in the account with the rest if they hear of it. This is my own, and I want you to have it, not as a part of what belongs to you, anyway. I know now just how that woman must have felt that brought that box of sweet-smelling perfumery that cost so much, and used it for the blessed Lord, and I’m glad he let her do it!’

“Then Mrs. Hunt broke down in a big sob, and Mrs. Brewster said, with tears in her eyes — ‘I will keep it, and I will get something that shall speak to me of you, dear Mrs. Hunt, every time I look at it, and it will always be dear and precious to me.’

“Mrs. Hunt hadn’t been quite so private as she thought, for Melinda Brower kept edging nearer when she saw something was going on, so she stood behind Mrs. Brewster’s chair, and heard the whole of it. To make a long story short, when the ones that had charge of the accounts heard that Mrs. Hunt had given five dollars, what did they do after they had paid Mr. Brewster the two hundred dollars due him from the donation but go and tell him that a mistake had been made; that they had paid him five dollars too much, because Mrs. Hunt’s donation had not been reported to them. Mr. Brewster explained why it had not been reported, then handed over the five dollars, and they took it! When some of the other members got hold of it they had quite a stirring time over it. Mrs. Dr. Cressy — she’s equal to three common women any day — she put on her bonnet and went right out among Mr. Brewster’s friends. ‘Who wants to give a little present to the minister, sort o’ private and extra?’ she said. She got fifty dollars in no time. Then she invited everybody who gave it to come to her house

to tea the next night. Mr. and Mrs. Brewster were there, too. And such a happy time as we had will never be for us again on this side of heaven, I reckon. Some might think it was an odd tea party we had. It was a real experience meeting, with singing and praying. Mrs. Hunt was there, too. We managed to keep it still from her what these poor, tight-fisted elders had done. Sometimes I think we might better have a lot of elderberry bushes stuck around for elders. They couldn't do any harm, at least."

Whereupon Aunt Hannah wound the clock, and declared she ought to set a better example than to make such remarks. "It was a good thing to say," Mattie said, recovering from a fit of laughter. "I was getting very angry at those men."

Spring was fast growing into summer. The following day was exceedingly warm, and Aunt Hannah and Martha, after spending the morning in baking, were glad to rest themselves. Mattie had retired to the sofa in the cool parlor, and Aunt Hannah was shutting out the sun from the west windows, preparing to cast herself on the lounge and sleep her "forty winks," when she saw somebody coming up the path to the side door.

Mrs. Adams wondered why Simon Johnson, her neighbor's son — a frank, good-natured young man

—looked so sheepish to-day. She made him welcome, talked about his mother and the weather and crops, but still he was ill at ease. At last he pulled from his pocket a paper, and handing it over in confusion, asked Mrs. Adams if she would put her name to it.

She put on her glasses and read it, saying—

“But, Simon, here’s nothing but names! What are you after?”

Simon twisted uneasily in his chair and said—
“Why, it’s to see how many people would like to have a change.”

“A change?” Mrs. Adams was all at once very obtuse. “Yes, I would like a change in a good many things. I should like for one thing, to see the man ousted who has opened a saloon on the corner just as you go into town. If this paper’s for that I’ll sign it with all my heart.”

Simon blushed, and muttered something about the church and Mr. Brewster.

“Mr. Brewster! What do you mean, Simon? Speak out. Are you trying to get rid of Mr. Brewster, or to raise his salary?”

Whereupon the young fellow, while he closely examined his finger nails, delivered the speech he had prepared.

“You see, Mrs. Adams, the railroad is coming here. That’s a sure thing now, and people will begin to come in pretty fast. Property is going

up, and this town ought to wake up. Some of us have been thinking that a new minister in our church would be a good thing. The Methodists have got a young man, and first you know all the young folks'll be running there, and the Baptists are going to build a new church. We ought to stir round somehow and get up a sensation. Why, over to Burrville they've got a minister that plays base ball with the young men, and has a first-rate time with all the young folks. His church is just crammed. Everybody likes him, and they don't have to bother as we do about raising his salary; money comes right in. Now, Mr. Brewster is a good man, but he's getting a little out of date, you know. His sermons are too long, and sort o' dull, sometimes, to us young folks. We want to hear something besides the old doctrines over and over. We want somebody who would give us good lively sermons—short and not too solemn—and could draw the young folks. The church would fill up. Why, I know of three new families who are coming here to settle. They are well off, too, and if we try, we can get them into our church. Then we can paint the building, and get a new organ, and have a quartette choir, and we'll just be as big as anybody."

Simon had been gathering courage as he went on. His talk sounded well to himself, and he looked up reassured into Mrs. Adams' face as he

put the climax on it — “You are always so go-ahead, Mrs. Adams, and make things go as you want 'em, we know you can help us. Besides, you think so much of the church of course you want it to prosper.”

Mrs. Adams had felt herself growing warmer, and not with the heat of the weather. She wanted to take Simon Johnson by the collar and put him out of the house. She got up and set wide open the south door to let the breeze blow through and cool her anger. Then she took some long breaths for the same purpose, as she always did when excited, and came back and sat down by the young man. She looked him straight in the eye, and said —

“Simon, I feel ashamed of myself that you dare ask me to sign such a paper as that. I thought everybody knew where I stood. I've seen this thing a-brewing in the air for a good while. There's no telling what people will do. A few years ago nobody could have made me believe it would ever have come to this, though. It's astonishing how people can be so blind to their own interests!” And then Mrs. Adams' eyes looked far out through the open door over the green fields, and she seemed to be talking to herself rather than to Simon. “He has given his best years to us, and brought our church up from a little sickly thing to be self-supporting and prosper-

ous. And such sermons as he has preached—scriptural, strong and tender! What feasts he has spread for us! Just like his Master he is, catching a lesson from the birds and the lilies, or the sunset sky! And the young folks think it's dull, and he is to be asked to leave!" And Mrs. Adams fairly groaned as she said it. "It almost makes me wish I had left and gone to heaven before it happened. They want somebody to draw the young people, do they? My Bible tells me the drawing must be the work of the Holy Spirit. If young people slight and grieve that Spirit, is the minister to blame for it? What has Mr. Brewster ever done to you, Simon"—and the gray eyes came back with their penetrating look to his face—"that you should be slipping around like a snake in the grass trying to unsettle him? It does beat all! But then, Satan never lacks for laborers when he wants work done. Do you know, I think you have hired out to him to do something the same work that a man by the name of Judas did, more than eighteen hundred years ago—betraying your Lord in the person of his servant. Do you mind that it brought him naught but sorrow? You want a man to draw the young people! Who drew you into the fold, and watched over you like a father when you lost your own, followed you with his prayers and counsels; yes, and tended you when you were sick,

as if you had been his own son? And this is your return! Oh, Simon, Simon, I wouldn't have thought it of you!"

The young fellow's face had grown very red, and now great tears came into his eyes. He dashed them off, and thrust the paper into his pocket, and as he got up to go, he said — "It is mean, Mrs. Adams; I'll never be caught in such a scrape again."

After a few more admonitions from Mrs. Adams, he was allowed to depart.

"Oh, Aunt Hannah!" said Mattie, who had not been asleep at all, but heard the whole thing, "how glad I am! Didn't you lecture him well? I hope he will profit by it." And then, with a sober face — "Is that the way ministers are sometimes treated?"

CHAPTER XIV.

BY PANSY.

—
“CROSS-LOTS.”

SHE stood in the twilight at the open door of the parsonage looking at the familiar scene. A little more than two years before she had come to that home a bride. Now she was taking her farewell look. That terrible experience, the mere thought of which had made her breath come faster and her cheeks take a deeper hue when she listened to the story of good Mr. Brewster's wrongs, had come to her and hers!

“Is that the way some people treat their ministers?” she had said in dismay and burning indignation when she had talked it over with Aunt Hannah, and she remembered how she had shivered at the thought that such an experience might be possible for her John. Thought of it as we think of and shiver over possible trials which, after all, we have an assured feeling will never

touch us, and yet here she was looking back on a very recent past, enough like Mr. Brewster's to cause the blood to rush in waves to her face as she went over it in memory! It is true, John had not been actually invited to leave. He had been too alert and far-seeing for the disaffection to reach that point. But he had waited until he felt sure that the next movement of the church, or that miserable portion of the neighborhood which ruled the church, would be to disgrace its record in some such way; waited until he felt sure the Lord did not require further sacrifice of himself in this direction, before he sent in his resignation. What a year it had been! Poor Mattie, looking back over it now, with some of the apathy of extreme weariness heavy upon her, wondered in a vague sort of way how it had been possible to go through with it, and yet to stand there apparently unchanged—no traces of the trial left behind to tell their story. Not that it had been so different a story from that which is enacted every day in some Christian home. Not that there had been terrible things to bear, as outsiders look at events. There had simply been a hundred thousand pricks and stings, each one searching nearer the vitals, yet having to be borne in outward calm. A great deal of the story Mattie did not know. The minister had been thoughtful, and kept many things to himself.

For instance, when she had been suddenly recalled from that long, blessed rest which she was taking with Aunt Hannah, recalled by a letter from John, wherein he represented that he "really was too hopelessly lonely without her to endure it longer," she had smiled in fond complacency and murmured in a half-apologetic way that that was so like a man. He couldn't, with all his bravery, endure loneliness as a woman could, and had cut her visit short by two weeks, much to Aunt Hannah's discomfiture. John had welcomed her joyfully, and did not tell her then or afterward that he had called her home to close the mouths of certain gossips, who had actually dared to say that he and she had quarreled and separated! He was desolate and he needed her, and Aunt Hepsy was becoming intolerable to him. That was enough. Why, having told her thus much of undoubted, undisguised truth, need he soil the paper and wound the true young heart by a recital of the gossip which she was too pure-hearted ever to imagine? So the wife came home gleefully, glad to have been missed, frankly confessing that her own heart gave great springs of thankfulness over the recall, and greeted her people with happy smiles, and received warm grasps of the hand from some of them, with tears of thankfulness that "the lines had fallen to her in such pleasant places," and did not dream of

the choice dish of gossip which her sudden homecoming spoiled in the very act of getting ready to boil over. Some of the women watched her closely, and exchanged curious glances when she publicly told her story of John's loneliness and the woe-begone nature of some of his letters. John saw and understood the glances, and himself drew Mattie out at his own expense, the more entirely to enjoy the discomfiture of the gossips. But he had carefully shielded his wife from their breath. He felt, somehow, as though the very thought of their story disgraced her and himself.

But the trouble which a green bonnet set to brewing, and to which Aunt Hepsy had added many bitter herbs from time to time, though it had to take another form and was lulled for a little, bubbled up again on the slightest provocation. If the poor young wife had but known it—and it is a mercy that she did not—she was always standing on the edge of a precipice. Nothing that she said, or failed to say, but in some way added to the dissatisfaction.

Could you believe, for instance, that so simple a thing as a dish of mush and milk could be made to play an active, even a tragic, part in the programme? How well the minister's wife remembered the first outgrowths of the tempest which resulted! So small they were, so ludicrously trivial, that even now in the sadness of her heart she

smiled over the thought of them. One of those special snares of Satan—a church supper for the purpose of raising money—was being prepared for, and Mattie, who was on the musical committee, had been called into solemn conference with Mrs. Pryn and Mrs. Bacon, and asked to give her vote as to the respective merits of oysters and clams, or rather as to a choice between them. Previous experience and a wholesome remembrance of the mistakes of Mrs. Brewster in this very direction, warned her to be as wise as a serpent. She resolved to maintain a perfectly neutral ground; extremely indifferent which had it, the oysters or the clams. She agreed in general terms with first one lady, then the other; and finally, being under the necessity of saying something more definite, assured them laughingly that if they decided for clams, she should expect a dish of mush and milk prepared for her, as she was not fond of clams, after which she made her escape to the music-room.

Alas, for the silly little speech forgotten as soon as spoken! Both ladies had sense enough to understand the purely frolicsome nature of the response, and if, in the course of preparation for the supper they had not quarreled, no harm might have resulted. As it was—

Clams carried the day, and on the eventful evening certain skillful matrons took them in

charge, with an assured feeling that a perfect triumph in culinary art would be the result.

One of these was Mrs. Pryn. But Mrs. Bacon was at that moment engaged in preparing, for the place of honor intended for the minister's wife, a dish of golden mush and a generous bowl of creamy milk.

Then began open war. That which had been looked upon as a good joke, when both ladies were in good humor, suddenly assumed to one of them the form of an offensive personality.

"The idea," said Mrs. Pryn, "of disgracing a table like this with a dish of mush and milk! It will be a disgrace to our guests as well as a rudeness to our pastor."

"On the contrary," said Mrs. Bacon, "it will simply be a bit of fun which everybody who has brains enough to understand fun, can enjoy. As for being rude to the minister, it would be rude not to do it. I am sure his wife especially requested it."

"Humph!" sneered Mrs. Pryn, "it will not do to waste any sarcasm on people who cannot understand jokes. Since you take her silly remarks seriously, there is no use in our wasting time talking about it; I never in the world shall consent to having such a dish on this table."

Not the slightest word said Mrs. Bacon in

reply to the first part of the sentence. Only this with utmost dignity —

“I advise you as a friend to waste no more of your precious time, for I shall certainly place a bowl of milk and a dish of mush at Mrs. Remington’s plate to-night.”

Will it be credited that this is a faithful transcription of the conversation which actually took place between two Christian women in this nineteenth century? More than this, that words between them waxed so loud as to engage the attention of others unused to such scenes? That, in the course of the next few minutes, Mrs. Bacon triumphantly placed on the elegantly-spread table, not one, but two, of the offending bowls of milk for the pastor and his wife; that Mrs. Pryn came sweeping down the room with the majesty of a general, snatched the innocent-looking white bowls, and landed them in the closet; that Mrs. Bacon, as soon as she discovered it, brought them out and placed them on the table, and that this unseemly squabble — if I may use the word, certainly no other seems to apply — was carried on for some time, until Mrs. Pryn bethought herself to turn the key on the closet whither she had again borne the mush and milk, then hid it so successfully that it eluded the angry search after it for nearly an hour. By the time it was found, cunning came

to the searcher's aid, also. She quietly bore the dishes away to another closet, known only to herself—one not in use for the evening—and at the precise moment when the tables were being filled with guests, Mr. and Mrs. Remington having been escorted to the seats of honor at the head of the table, did Mrs. Bacon appear again in triumph to set the two bowls in their places.

I am aware that I am telling a story which may seem incredible, but nevertheless I declare to you that it is strictly true; such being the case, I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that Mrs. Pryn, having been at last foiled, snatched her shawl, wrapped her head in its folds, and went home "cross-lots." Meantime, Mrs. Remington, serenely unconscious of trouble in the air, accepted the bowl of milk and the generous dish of mush as a bit of merry-making at her expense, ate with great apparent heartiness a few spoonfuls of the same, her mystified husband following her example, and then the dishes which had caused, and were destined to cause, so much offense were borne away and the feast went on.

The explanation of such unparalleled folly is easily made. Two minds, both cast in narrow grooves, both accustomed to rule, having worked in a degree of harmony for some years, had, by some small matter, been set ajar, and, as the days

went by, drew wider and wider apart, jarred and jangled at every step, and reached finally the point when whatever Mrs. Bacon did was the thing which Mrs. Pryn would be certain to oppose; hence the open rupture over so trivial a cause. This, also, is the reason why those two women did not with the next morning's light — the excitements of the day before having slipped into the background — seek each other, honestly confess their folly, and exchange regrets.

Had the mush been the cause of the trouble, such must have been the conclusion; but because it was merely the pebble in the way, over which those two women determined to quarrel, instead of doing this sensible thing each sought her most sympathetic and most injudicious friend, and poured out her tale of insult, and wrought each her own feelings to the boiling-point again, and the trouble grew and grew.

The community was strangely interwoven. The young minister's wife had occasion to remember, with a heavy sigh, a remark she had made, in what seemed to her, two years afterward, the days of her youth and folly, that it would never be safe in Belleville to make a remark to a third person about anybody, because one would be sure to be talking with an aunt or a nephew, or at least a second cousin of the one concerned. This is one explanation of the fact that many supposed out-

siders took the matter up, and took sides, at first somewhat mildly, and, some of them at least, with the vague intention of perhaps being peacemakers. But as the days passed, they became interested in the turmoil, finding it spiced their lives, which it must be confessed were often tame and flavorless. They went from aunt to cousin and repeated and repeated every little detail of the story; enlarging upon it unconsciously, as reporters nearly always do, translating the gestures and exclamations and frowns of those who last reported, until, a week afterward, the first teller did not recognize her own story, and accepted it, told again, as added evidence in the case.

Is it worth while to try to unravel the mysteries of a church quarrel or to try to explain the many curious meanderings which it made, until no one, least of all the two women with whom it began, understood how it had attained such proportions, and at times, stood appalled before the work of their own tongues?

Certainly the minister did not understand it; he was by turns indignant or almost crushed with a sense of personal humiliation over the outcome of those two years of toil. A church almost literally torn in sunder by a fierce quarrel which began nobody quite knew how or when; a quarrel in which he was somehow mysteriously involved; for, although if ever man and woman tried with all

their powers to be as wise as serpents, these two had; the few cautious words which circumstances and self-respect had forced them at times to utter had been repeated and translated into so many strange tongues, that though their owners lost all knowledge of them, their power for evil was intensified each day.

Part of the trouble, I am obliged to confess, grew out of Mattie's honest eyes. Careful of her words she was learning to be; it was a more difficult task to keep those great, brown, truth-loving eyes from speaking a language which sometimes touched home. Such an occasion was found during that memorable church supper, which certainly was as fruitful for evil as those institutions have succeeded in being, ever since the world began, in the church.

The fashion of Belleville was to spread a sumptuous feast, summon the world by special invitation to partake thereof, and when the inner man had been generously supplied, before any of the guests arose from the table, to pass around the collection plate for "offerings." This was judged a more delicate way of managing the matter than to have a set price for the feast. It gave occasion for Dr. Archer and Mrs. Eames, the generous ones of the church, to drop in a five-dollar bill if they would, while poor Uncle Tommy, who had no five dollars to bestow, could eat his supper

with the rest, and feel as welcome as the richest, though he only dropped a ten-cent piece into the plate; at least so the committee said, and looked benevolent and pious while they spoke the words.

But the fact remains that Uncle Tommy never came to the table with the guests; and that his sixteen-year-old daughter, who tried it once, and dropped a bright new silver quarter on the plate, the hoarded treasure of weeks for this purpose, heard in less than ten minutes, in a not subdued whisper — “The idea of eating such a supper as this, and giving only twenty-five cents for it!”

The daughter went home soon afterward, with eyes already red with weeping, and had come neither to church suppers nor Sunday School since. But that was only an incident by the way.

The plate on this occasion was being passed, and Mrs. Bacon, smiling and happy, her discomfited enemy having long before this departed, wrapped in her shawl, “cross-lots” to her solitary home, occupied a seat directly opposite Mattie, and with a slightly ostentatious clang against the metal of the plate, landed therein a shining five-dollar gold piece, remarking as she did so that one could afford to be generous once in awhile, though it was none too much for such a supper as that!

Certain glances were exchanged between the wise ones not in line with her eyes; for Mrs.

Bacon was not free with her gold pieces, albeit she had more of them than most of those at the table with her.

It was fifteen minutes afterward that the brown eyes did the mischief. Mrs. Remington was passing the side room, where a treasurer for the evening was carefully counting and systematizing his hoards with a view to the report which must come later, when Mrs. Bacon's voice was heard just in front —

“Mr. Perkins, give me my change, please.”

“Change? What change? I do not seem to remember.”

“Why, my change for the money I put in at the table. It was a five-dollar gold piece. I want four dollars and fifty cents.”

Young Perkins' face was a study. Slowly and reluctantly he removed the shining gold piece from the very few fives which bore it company, as he said —

“I did not understand, Mrs. Bacon. I saw you drop in the money, and I thought you said it was not too much for such a supper. I did not know it was to be changed. How much did you say you wanted?”

“Four dollars and fifty cents. Did you think I could afford to pay five dollars for one supper? I put it in for effect, of course.”

Silently the change was passed into her hands.

Turning, she came in contact, for a single instant, with the aforesaid brown eyes, and had a chance to note the present effect of her act.

Not a word would Mrs. Remington have uttered for the world. There was really nothing that could be said. Yet the eyes spoke as plainly as words could have done. "Is it possible," they said, "that this is your idea of honesty? Is it possible that you want the guests at the table to think that you gave five dollars to-night, when all you intended to give from the first was fifty cents? Can you be so mean a woman as that?"

How could the minister's wife help the language of those tell-tale eyes?

She moved on quietly, her face flushing over this revelation from the heart of her sister.

Mrs. Bacon's face flushed also, a deep crimson. She was not quick in some directions, but there was no mistaking the look in Mrs. Remington's eyes.

She had been annoyed before by her minister's wife. She remembered the green bonnet. She remembered certain unguarded expressions of Aunt Hepsy's. She was not good at forgetting little things that rankled. But, after all, it was not until this evening that she made up her mind, swiftly, surely, with no hope of changing it, that "the good of the church" demanded a change in their pastorate.

CHAPTER XV.

BY PANSY.

CHARACTER STUDIES.

SUCH, in brief, are some of the forces which resulted in bringing Mrs. Remington to the door of the Belleville parsonage on that evening of which I told you, to take a farewell view of what had for two years been her home. She was not so sad at heart as she might have been; not by any means so sad as some of her sisters have had occasion to be, before and since. Some of her experiences had been bitter, it is true, but many had been pleasant. She knew she was leaving a few whose friendship for her husband and herself would outlast time, and be a strong bond drawing heavenward. She knew, also, that there were some whom she was glad to leave, in the hope that she need never again meet them, socially at least, until time or grace

had so changed them that they would not be to her the same that they were this day.

They were not going out into desolation. A new home had promptly opened to receive them. Perhaps the young wife may be forgiven for cherishing a secret feeling of gratified pride over the thought that no sooner was her husband's name before the public as a possible candidate for vacant pulpits than two churches, both standing high on the lists, simultaneously and unani- mously called him. Churches very far superior to this which they were leaving; so far, indeed, as to cause some of the members of this church to open their eyes wide when they heard of the calls, and wonder whether they had not, after all, made a mistake.

It is not my purpose to tell you the story of those last days, or to describe the parting from those few faithful ones. Such hours are hard to describe, and hard to endure.

It was all over at last, and Mrs. Remington, as she dropped into an easy-chair, in the guest-chamber of Mr. Chilton's elegant home, and waited for her husband to finish his toilet, preparatory to going down to the six o'clock dinner, felt that one chapter of her life was finished, and the page turned over to an entirely new experience.

There was a little sense of satisfaction as she

glanced about her on the luxurious appointments, and met everywhere the evidence of cultured taste, with unlimited means to gratify the same. She had not yet seen the house which was to be their home, but John had told her, with a significant smile, that that, too, was "very different."

There were people, it seemed, who could appreciate John. That, after all, was the uppermost thought in the young wife's heart.

"Isn't it a pretty room?" she said aloud; then, before her husband could answer—

"Oh, John, while you are dressing, I might finish reading Aunt Hannah's letter to you. Did you know she was acquainted with the Chiltons? Let me see; I was just at this sentence, wasn't I—

"It seems queer that you should be going to Robert Chilton's house. Perhaps he doesn't remember me, but in the old days we used to be very good friends. That was before he became famous as a politician, or had so much money. He may have changed for the worse; money and politics have that effect, sometimes. He used to be good-hearted enough, and was a member of the church from his boyhood, though I never thought him remarkable for his piety. But his wife—well, I'm an old woman, and the daisies I planted on Elsie Chilton's grave must have died out long

ago. But she was certainly the prettiest and dearest little creature I ever saw.'

"Just here, John, is an erasure, and the page looks blotted, as though tears might have dropped on it."

"Poor Aunt Hannah," said John; "she loves her friends. I remember she used to visit people by the name of Chilton; but I never connected them with this family."

"There's a daughter," said Mattie, who was still glancing ahead; "did you see the daughter when you were here, John? See what Aunt Hannah says—

"I am glad you are going to stop there, child, for Elsie Chilton's sake. I don't mean the mother, who has been in heaven so long, but the little flower of a daughter she left behind. Just two years old little Elsie was when her mother died, and as beautiful a child as ever I laid eyes on. I asked Robert to let me have her, and bring her up as my own, but he was almost angry at me for daring to hint it. All the same, I think the mother would have liked it. She looked at the baby wistfully, and then at me—in a meaning way which went to my heart. She was younger than I by a good many years, and looked up to me, something as she might have done to a mother. I think she would have liked me to grandmother her child. But, of course, I could not blame

Robert, though if some of the reports I have heard are true, it might have been better for little Elsie's eternal future if he had let me take her. I think Robert Chilton has, without much doubt, grown worldly as he grew older, and there was no occasion for that; he had worldliness enough about him always. I shouldn't wonder if "the world and the flesh," and all the rest of it, were making a hard fight for little Elsie, whose mother is waiting for her in heaven. Maybe you and John are sent there to help the child to find the road home—who knows? Anyhow, I'm sure you'll do your best for her for my sake and for the sake of the mother in heaven, and above all, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Oh, I don't know much about her; there's a step-mother, but for all that there's no tragic tale to relate; they are fond of each other, I hear, which may be better for the little Elsie, or it may be worse, according as one studies the character of the step-mother. She is worldly and fashionable, so report says, though both husband and wife are leading members in John's church. Maybe, child, some of the old farmers you have left are as near heaven as some of those who have more culture, and live in palaces. But there, I'm not going to croak; it is neither farms nor palaces which make the difference.'"

"Robert Chilton's treasure may be laid up in

heaven, for all I know, but I am afraid he has a good deal of it laid up on earth," John said, gravely; then, after a thoughtful pause—"Ought we not to go down, Mattie? They may be waiting for us."

In the brightly-lighted back parlor their host was waiting to receive them, and his welcome was cordial and hearty in the extreme. He had with him a gentleman of about his own age, who was presented as "My friend, Mr. Hartwell, an interested outsider who ought to be inside our church, Mr. Remington." This last with a genial laugh.

Then came forward a fair-faced, bright-eyed, beautiful girl, faultlessly dressed in quiet evening costume, who was introduced as "My daughter, Elsie." She in turn presented her friend, Mr. Palmer, a young man with hair combed too low on his forehead, and with an eye-glass, which had to Mattie, some way, the air of one being accustomed to being used often offensively. The gentleman bowed low, and was most happy to make their acquaintance.

The company at once dropped into cosiness in that indescribable way which well-bred people know how to manage. The three gentlemen plunged into animated talk, as though they had been only waiting for the minister to come to bear his part.

Miss Elsie gave attention to Mrs. Remington

after this fashion — “Mamma begged to be excused for a very few minutes ; she has a tiresome committee-meeting in the library, so important that it could not be postponed without great detriment to the cause. Mamma is a dreadfully busy woman, Mrs. Remington. Moreover, she gave Mr. Palmer and myself our orders, to the effect that we were not to bore you with talk, but to let you rest until she came, for she knew you must be very tired.”

“That means that Miss Elsie was to talk, and you and I were to listen and be amused,” the gentleman explained, with a genial smile.

“Nonsense!” laughed Miss Elsie. “Mamma left no such word as that, you may be sure. She knows your capacity for talk too well to have the least hope of your being quiet. By the way, Aleck, I have a compliment for you from no less a source than Mrs. Howell Eustis ; you must be prepared to be made even vainer than is natural to you.”

From which, and sundry other remarks in the same strain, Mrs. Remington inferred that, “Aleck” was on terms of exceeding intimacy in this house. Almost instinctively she began to imagine a romance, and to try to fit the facts before her to it, led into exceeding interest by Aunt Hannah’s letter and appeal. Who and what was this young man, who said “Miss Elsie” as

though his tongue were hardly used to it, and dropped several times during the next half hour, into the more familiar "Elsie"? Perhaps the present afforded as good an opportunity as she would have for studying him.

The three gentlemen grew more and more engrossed in conversation, while the young people chattered together, with an occasional appeal to her, to remind her that she was recognized, and that her comfort was being considered.

With a table near at hand, covered with choice books and choice pictures, she had but to appear sufficiently interested in them; to turn the leaves, stopping occasionally to study an engraving, and listen, meanwhile, to the conversation about her. It was very desultory, as became the occasion; gliding from one subject to another with the indifference of those who only talk on such themes for the sake of passing the time until they can take up some occupation of more interest, and yet with the air of those who found it a pleasure to talk together, no matter what the theme.

"So you smuggled in an hour for Mrs. Belmont's reception last week, after all," Miss Elsie said. "I heard that Fern was there; did you have any visit with her?"

"More than I cared to have," the gentleman answered, quickly. "Miss Fern made herself ridiculous, I'm sorry to say; if you have any spe-

cial influence in that direction, as no doubt you have, for her sake I hope you will exercise it."

"Fern Redpath make herself ridiculous!" said Elsie, with a little incredulous laugh. "That is hard to believe! How, pray?"

"Why, it was a dancing party, you know; no other arrangements made for the entertainment of guests; yet Miss Fern refused to dance—made a wall-flower of herself during the short time she stayed, and committed the further discourtesy of leaving conspicuously early—before refreshments were served, indeed."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Elsie. "What could have been the reason? Fern is a perfect lady, you know, on all occasions."

"Except this one," Mr. Palmer said, with emphasis. "The trouble lies in the fact that she has imbibed some puritanical ideas in a camp-meeting she has been attending during the summer, and proposes to eschew dancing, along with several other pomps and vanities; that, at least, is as I heard it reported."

"Fern Redpath at a camp-meeting! Aleck, what in the world do you mean? Why, she went—let me see—she went to Chautauqua for the summer."

"Well, what is that, and where is it, but in the woods; and don't they have meetings all the while? What is that but a camp-meeting?"

“Aleck, your education is being neglected! Positively mamma must know of this; she will be shocked; she is an ardent admirer of Chautauqua. Don’t you know she has been there herself for two weeks this summer? And is it possible that you do not know that there is a university there, with professors for everything under the sun; and a grand musical college, and specialists from Europe to teach, and to play, and to lecture? I’m astonished at your ignorance!”

Mr. Palmer shrugged his handsome shoulders. “Fern Redpath is the only exponent of the enterprise I have met,” he said; “and she has had the effect on me which you discover. I hope your mother may be able to manage her, Miss Elsie.”

“Miss Elsie” glanced to another topic.

“I haven’t seen you since your tramp with Mr. Mason. How did you both enjoy that?”

“Indifferently well; on my part, at least. I can’t speak for Mason, though I rather think he enjoys being miserable occasionally. The truth is, Miss Elsie, I’ve been unfortunate for the last few days — fallen among fanatics, which is worse than falling among thieves in some respects. Mason is developing into a first-class fanatic, in certain lines; dragged me off to a second, or rather a fourth-class hotel, in New York, because it had no wine-room or wine-list; prated of ‘principle before convenience,’ and all that sort of rubbish!”

Elsie laughed lightly. "I'm not greatly surprised," she said; "there is material in Mr. Mason for that sort of thing; but I did not know he carried it to such an extent. That is rather stretching a point, I must confess. Poor creature! With your fastidious tastes, how did you survive? He is worse than a lady, Mrs. Remington; last summer he was positively bearish because, at one little country mountain house, they gave us steel forks to eat with."

This seemed a difficult place for Mrs. Remington to join the conversation. Truth to tell, she hated steel forks herself, but felt a peculiar aversion to admitting it in this presence. Mr. Palmer saved her the trouble—

"I protest against my weaknesses being served up to entertain a stranger. It is only fair to wait until Mrs. Remington knows my great worth; beside, it was on account of the ladies that I was indignant. By the way, Elsie, I brought Howells' last book over to-night."

"Oh, did you? I'm so glad! I'm especially anxious to read that book because you do not like it. Do you not like Howells, Mrs. Remington?"

"Very much," assented Mattie, heartily. "Does not Mr. Palmer?"

"Well, as a rule I do; but he is sometimes too true to human nature to be heartily enjoyed. What's the use in having a fellow's sins and fol-

lies served up for other people to laugh at, however natural they may be? I hope you see, Miss Elsie, by what association of ideas I reached Howells' book so suddenly."

"I agree with you," said Mrs. Remington, gravely, "that while I enjoy Howells occasionally, as I would any good study in human nature, I am sorry that he doesn't put his manifest genius to a higher use, and try to help the world more than I think his books do."

Mr. Palmer looked amused.

"As to helping, I don't think he can be accused of prosing in that direction; and to be entirely frank, I admit that I admire him for it. I'm sometimes tired of having studies in human nature thrust at me, but it is not so bad as to have morals dished up for consideration, as they used to be in the Sunday School books of our childhood."

"Why, it seems to me that Howells writes with a better purpose than most writers of fiction to-day, does he not?"

The appeal was made by Elsie in sweet earnestness to Mrs. Remington, and she, after a moment's hesitation, replied —

"What do you think of his stories compared with Miss Warner's, for instance?"

"I'm not familiar with her books," Elsie said, simply, while Mr. Palmer shrugged his shoulders again.

“She is the one who writes the goody-goody books, isn't she? With an impossible little girl, and a three times impossible young man in each volume, *ad infinitum*.”

“Are they impossible young men?”

The young man before her felt a pair of brown eyes keener than Elsie's leveled at him for a moment. He hesitated, he hardly knew why, with his answer.

“As the world goes, yes,” he said at last.

“But that is just the point. These young men are not ‘as the world goes’; they have risen above the world.”

“Too far to belong to it, madam; that is what I say.”

“I know who you mean now,” interposed Elsie; “I read one of her books once—the ‘Wide, Wide World.’ You know everybody has read that, and really, Mrs. Remington, do you think there are any such young men as that John?”

“If there are not, should there not be?” Mrs. Remington asked, gently, resting those earnest eyes of hers on the young girl, with a kind of wistful tenderness, thinking the while of the mother waiting for her in heaven.

“Is the character any higher than the religion of Jesus Christ calls for? Do you think there is much justification for the reading of fiction at all, from the Christian standpoint, unless it can hold

up for our admiration and our study Christ-like characters, such as there would be in the world if the world followed closely in the footsteps of its Master?"

There was an interruption to their talk, a murmur of voices in the hall, the quick entrance of the lady of the house, cordial greetings and profuse apologies to the new pastor and his wife for her detention with "that tiresome committee," followed by an immediate summons to the dining-room.

As Mrs. Remington thoughtfully unfastened from her breast that night a lovely bouquet of Marechal Niel roses, which had been gallantly presented to her by Mr. Palmer, and placed them very tenderly in water, she said within herself —

"He is of the earth — earthy, I am afraid; living on a low plane of life, from whatever side one views him. And he very much admires that fair, sweet Elsie; he will win her if he can, I think; perhaps has already done so. Also, I think 'Papa' and 'Mamma' Chilton admire him very much indeed. I wonder if John and I have come here to help divide a house against itself? May that possibly be necessary in order to help a child home to her mother? What if we could win them both — win them all? But I'm afraid" —

Just here Mrs. Mattie seemed to hear the brave

voice of Aunt Hannah saying, "Child, don't croak!" and she smiled. But the smile hid a sigh which found vent as soon as the lights were out, and she was once more confronted with the chapter of life to be lived next.

CHAPTER XVI.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

THIS WORLD, AND THE OTHER ONE.

IT WAS with a very satisfied air that Mrs. Remington surveyed her new home—the handsome house in Kensett Square. All was in perfect order now, after six weeks' hard work, from the daintily-appointed chambers and elegant parlor to the kitchen; a very model of a kitchen, Mattie thought, with its bright oil-cloth, convenient closets and shining new range set in red brick. How different it all was from the place at Belleville—this house, one of many in a block of brown-stone fronts, its white steps, with iron railing and front door precisely like those on either side of it. It was a dignified, elegant home, and yet the advantages were not all in favor of the city house, Mattie recollected with a sigh, as she stood looking out a window that

opened into an alley, while another had for its prospect a blank brick wall. She could not at the moment but recall the sunny windows of the Belleville parsonage, overlooking the wide lawn, and beyond, as far as the eye could reach, meadow, river and hill; and she sighed again, as we all do, when we suddenly wake to find that what we have held cheaply has become infinitely precious when once it had vanished.

“One cannot have everything at once,” philosophically said the minister’s wife to herself, and then eased that first real pang of regret by taking another look at her handsome rooms.

They were much more handsome than the young couple had planned, but it all came about by degrees. The Belleville parlor was a square room, so its carpet did not fit the long double parlors of the city house. Mrs. Chilton advised them to purchase a velvet carpet, as there were fine bargains in that line just then, and they had followed her advice. Once bought, this soft, rich carpet proved a tyrant, demanding portières and lace curtains and easy-chairs that would not be out of harmony with its elegance. And then Mrs. Chilton, who sometimes accompanied them on their shopping excursions, was always whispering like an evil spirit in Mattie’s ear—“This set is much more desirable. There is a style about this that the other has not, and

really the cost is but a trifle more." As the bills increased, these two young people began to look serious over the amount they had laid out. A salary of three thousand dollars had seemed such an enormous sum, compared with that paltry thousand at Belleville, that they had laid plans to give liberally, and lay up a nice sum each year; but here it was melting like snow, before they had received it!

"There is this to be said," Mattie remarked, as they sat looking over their bills; "the thing is done for some time. We shall not find it necessary to make such an outlay very soon again; if, indeed, this was necessary," she added, her face clouding.

"I suppose," John said, perplexedly, "we must live somewhat within the style of our people, or they would not be pleased."

"And yet does it not seem absurd," said Mattie, "for our parlors to bear even a slight resemblance to Mrs. Chilton's, when you compare our incomes? I like nice things, but sometimes it troubles me. Where are we to draw the line? This is not at all the simplicity we had meant to maintain in our style of living, John."

"Regrets are vain," said John, gathering up the bills and thrusting them into the secretary. "One thing is certain, I have not time to indulge them. We did what we thought was for the best.

It is not good to be continually recasting one's decisions. The only way is to act in harmony with conscience at the time, and then not go back over the past too much. There is not time in this busy world." With that he hurried off to a committee meeting, but Mattie still sat and thought, weighing motives and actions, conscious that many times during the last few weeks, when she had stood irresolute before a curtain or a table-scarf, conscience had protested while she had persisted, and paid—it had ended by her paying—far more for an article than she purposed, because the lace was finer, the pattern more graceful, or the particular shade of color exactly suited her taste. She had decided against conscience in a way that John, with no feminine love of fine lace and exquisite tints, would find it hard to comprehend.

"Men do not know about our temptations," she told herself; "they wholesale matters with conscience, and march along comfortably, while women deal in petty retail business. We are obliged to stop and parley about a flower or a feather or a bit of lace till we are quite worn out and perplexed." What a strange, exacting tyrant was this conscience; how sensitive, how quick to take affront and leave one to adjust alone the delicate balance between right and wrong. Perhaps sitting there alone, searching herself, convicting

and condemning, Mrs. Remington did quite as profitable work for herself and those she was to influence as John did at his meeting.

If life at Belleville had been busy, what should be said of this new life, when neither found scarcely a minute to call his own. Such a broad field as it was!—this corner of the vineyard, with many of its members business men in hot pursuit of wealth, others struggling to keep one hand in Christ's and the other in that of the world, and its young people chasing pleasure as children do butterflies. An eager, bustling, hurrying throng it was, with ears stopped, and eyes intent on their different goals; only the faithful few to be found in every church to help stem the tide of worldliness. Well might the young minister choose for his text: "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Mattie found her work among the young people. The former minister's wife had been elderly and reserved, performing her round of duties in a solemn punctilious manner, utterly devoid of sympathy with all who had not attained to years and wisdom. To those who had been accustomed to her for years, she served as the type for all ministers' wives. Mrs. Remington was a surprise, with her youth and brightness and winning manner, which charmed the hearts of young and old alike. It seemed a pity, some of them thought,

that one no older than themselves and so fitted to shine in society should be, by her position, debarred from any of its pleasures. But what was marvelous, to them she seemed just as much absorbed in her world as they in theirs. In fact, she spoke with more enthusiasm of prayer-meetings and church work than many of them — pleasure-surfeited creatures — could possibly feel for their gayeties.

“She might as well be a nun,” remarked a society man, as a group of young people were discussing the new minister and his wife one evening; “it is too bad to condemn her to such a life. She is so beautiful and charming. Any fossil of a woman could fill her place — lead missionary meetings and visit the sick. She ought not to be wasted in that way.”

“She doesn’t seem to need your pity in the least,” a sharp-tongued young lady replied; “she is the happiest person among us all. And you must remember she chose her position. She probably had the opportunity to look higher, and marry a man who would take her to hops and theatres and operas, every night in the week. She preferred missionary meetings, it seems.” “Perhaps she preferred á husband who had brains for something else beside theatres and operas,” remarked another girl. “Mr. Remington is a noble man, and brilliant besides. It would go far toward rec-

onciling one to an uncongenial lot if it were shared with such a person."

"Yes, indeed. It makes quite a difference whether a handsome young minister who can get loud calls to rich churches is thrown into your lot," giggled an empty-headed young fellow.

"She might as well do her duties with a good grace. A minister's wife has to give herself up to all these things, or she won't be popular," came from another.

"Anybody would think, to hear you talk," said a plain-faced girl, with a positive ring in her voice, "that you were all heathen, instead of church-members. I have heard of people, young and beautiful, and rich beside, who gave themselves up to Christian work for this one reason, that they loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him. They believed this world was simply a school in which to prepare for another. I think Mrs. Remington is such a person."

"Sure enough!" a young man said in a tone half ironical and half earnest; "there is another world! That is why things seem queer sometimes. It would be really funny, if there wasn't a solemn side to it, to see how some Christians act. They profess to believe that their chief business is to serve God, and that when we go out of this world we open our eyes in the next one—which is the beginning of eternity—and yet many of

them make religion a little side issue. I tell you I believe there will be a terrible awakening when some people awake in the next world. They insult the Lord as they would not dare insult a fellow-creature. In my opinion there isn't any half-way business about this matter. Do you suppose men and women, who are mad for money, or who spend their whole time in dressing, eating and drinking, dancing and card-playing and dawdling, are going, as soon as they close their eyes in death, to wake to a long eternity of praising God? I don't believe it."

The last speaker, familiarly known as "Bob Trent," was a gay young fellow, given to jokes and witticisms to such a degree that everybody expected to laugh every time he opened his mouth. His listeners, who were most of them professed Christians, stared in amazement at such talk from him. Evidently this was no joke. His face was positively troubled. One of the most shallow of the girls tried to break the spell that had fallen upon the group, by breaking into a merry laugh, and asking — "What has come over Bob?" But the attempt was a failure. There was a constrained silence until somebody proposed a song, and they started for the music-room. On the way, Aleck Palmer confided to Elsie Chilton that if poor Bob ever did become a Christian, he would surely be a fanatic, for it was out of

just such ill-balanced fellows that they made them.

Elsie made no reply. She was thinking of Bob's words. Truly, it was strange that people went on as they did if they believed that at any moment they might step into the next world. She would not like to go, she thought, that very minute. She did not feel ready enough. And then, in those few seconds, this half-hearted Christian pressed nearer to the Master — even touched the hem of his garment, so, changing her whole life. But they were calling upon her to sing. Mr. Palmer made the selection, and she sang a wild ditty about an elfin knight, which was much applauded. They pleaded for another, and yielding to an impulse that she could scarcely resist, Elsie sang, to a sweet, low accompaniment, the verses she often sang for her grandmother —

“ It lies about us like a cloud,
That world we cannot see;
But the swift closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.”

Then that strange hush fell again upon the listeners; even the most persistent talkers ceased, and the company gathered from every room into that one, eager to catch every note of sweetness.

“ I wish they would give us such music oftener, instead of so much fol-de-rol,” a tired-looking

business man remarked. But the musical critics sneered a little, privately, and cast meaning glances at one another. Aleck Palmer frowned, and wondered within himself what possessed everybody to-night. He hinted afterward to Elsie that there were more cheerful themes for songs than dying, and she replied —

“It is strange, as Bob Trent said. When we are only going to stay a few years in this world, and ages on ages in the other, one would think we would like to know about it. Everybody doesn’t dislike to hear about the other world, Aleck; my grandmother loves those songs.”

And then the young man murmured something about it being very well for old people who were just through with life.

“How do you know but you are just through with it?” she asked. “You may be going to another world to-night, for anything you certainly know. And it is not old people only who feel so. Mrs. Remington feels about dying just as my grandmother does. She never speaks of it in a gloomy way.”

“Mrs. Remington!” the young man said, with an impatient drawing down of his eyebrows. “It is strange that one like you will allow two narrow, countrybred young people to get such an influence over you.”

“You are mistaken entirely, Aleck; Mrs. Rem-

ington has never lived out of a large city, except a few months, and Mr. Remington spent seven years of his life in New York City. I don't know what you mean by narrow. They are both of them extremely well educated, and father says Mr. Remington is one of the finest scholars for his age that he has ever met."

Others joined them then, and the talk was interrupted; but Elsie, while she kept up a gay conversation, was conscious that Aleck Palmer's words had jarred her. She did not like to think that they two were not in harmony. Was he changed, or was she?

The truth was that Elsie Chilton was strongly influenced by Mrs. Remington, more so than she was aware. They had been mutually attracted from the first. During the arranging of the house, Elsie was often called in to consult in matters of taste, which ended in her being quite at home there, scarcely a day passing that she did not run in upon them.

It was a novel experience to Elsie to find a friend nearly her own age who sympathized with many of her tastes, and yet whose pure character and sweet dignity compelled her highest respect. The girl was unconsciously raising her standards, (not so much from anything that was said to her as from observing two people who lived on an unusually high plane.) She began to be more critical

of her music. It must be more elevated in tone. The novels she had read a short time ago she now cast aside without questioning, as trashy, and gradually a taste was awakened for the best thoughts of great minds, so that she really enjoyed reading and talking over what she had once thought dry and devoid of interest. By degrees, too, as she watched these busy workers, her own life began to seem aimless.

"Mrs. Remington," she said one day, "I am growing ashamed of myself. I live just for my own pleasures. I don't know that I ever did anything to help anybody."

"Help me, then, this very day," said that lady; "go to missionary meeting with me."

"I never go to such meetings. I could not open my lips in one, if it would save my life. How could I possibly help you if I went?"

"I have to lead the meeting, and the singing is not good. Most of the ladies sing in a timid way. I have to do it nearly all myself sometimes. It would help immensely to have you there. Your voice would carry them right along. Do go, please."

"Yes, I can sing, if that is all; but that's not working."

"To be sure, it is working in a most effective way. If we can make a missionary meeting so attractive that people will come out, they will be

sure to be interested finally. I am delighted that you will go. Now, you are to preside at the organ, lead the singing, and sing a solo beside," Mrs. Remington said, eagerly, turning over her music in search of a certain piece.

"Oh, I can't sing 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains'," said Elsie.

"No, you shall not. We can sing that ourselves. Here is one for you, though — one of my favorites. Listen." And Mrs. Remington sang the first verse —

"There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall;
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all."

"That is lovely; but it is not a missionary piece," said Elsie, as her eyes glanced over the next verse.

"It is all missionary, dear. Don't you know part of the work has to be done for our own poor faithless selves who stay at home? One never feels so much like helping to save others as when his own heart has been made soft by a look at the dying loving Lord. These words are very tender and sweet, I think."

After that it came about that Elsie Chilton's solos were an attractive feature of the missionary meetings. As she sang, her own heart was

often stirred with a longing for something she had not.

“It is so easy and pleasant for you to do good with that wonderful voice of yours,” the minister’s wife said to Elsie, one day. “Do you know the next thing that needs you very much? It is our Children’s Temperance Band. They sing in a nasal tone, and they drag, and my voice is not powerful enough to control so many. You will not say ‘no,’ will you?”

And so the clear young voice rang out in the temperance band, infusing into it new life and spirit. Without her knowing how it had come about, Elsie Chilton found herself being changed from a frivolous idler into a busy, interested worker. Her friends thought the change was due to a sort of magnetic influence which Mrs. Remington exercised over her, but she herself recognized something deeper and stronger—even the Spirit of God transforming her being. When her face had become a familiar object in the different benevolent societies, people looked on and wondered, remarking—“There is a good deal in that butterfly girl, after all.”

There were two persons who, looking on, were not pleased. One was Mr. Aleck Palmer. The other was Elsie’s step-mother. As long as Mrs. Remington’s influence had been exerted in an intellectual way only, Mrs. Chilton was not dis-

turbed. Anything that assisted to "culture" had her entire approval. It was in its shallow sense that she used the word. She had no idea of the broader and deeper meaning. Whatever would enable one to show off well, and make a display in some line, was to be cultivated. She was herself a member of a high literary club, and she talked learnedly of "heredity," "natural selection," etc. She was, most of all, a thorough woman of the world, filled with ambitious schemes for herself and others. She had long ago laid her plans that Elsie should marry Aleck Palmer. It was an alliance to be desired. He was wealthy and cultured, and belonged to one of the best families. Elsie, once settled in life, would be well out of the way when her own young daughters should come into society. If Elsie married into much wealth, she would have need of less from her father. Mrs. Chilton did not tell these things out. She did not even urge Mr. Palmer on Elsie's attention. She had too much tact to spoil affairs in that way; but she had managed that they should be much together; and without seeming to do so, had been an important factor in hastening the glad day when she could announce the engagement to her friends.

And Elsie Chilton, as she was a few months ago, viewing life as one long summer in which

to laugh and sing and dance, gave her promise that June day with no more serious thoughts concerning it than had the butterflies circling about her head. "Of course, she would accept so brilliant an offer; there could be but one answer to that," and when her heart, asserting its rights, propounded perplexing questions, she declared — "Certainly I am fond of him; why should I not be?" Having once decided the question, her loyal, affectionate nature would take matters into its own hands and at once enthrone him in her heart as wisest and best of mankind.

Elsie was out one evening when Mr. Palmer called, but Mrs. Chilton received him warmly. They were excellent friends, and the young man was disposed to be quite confidential with her. He admired her exceedingly — the graceful, gracious woman, never jarring one by eccentricities or extremes. He liked to talk with her, because she did not differ from him. She administered flattery in such a subtle, delightful way that he always came away from a visit with her feeling exceedingly well pleased with Aleck Palmer.

"Elsie used to be like her," he told himself, with a sigh; "but a strange change is coming over her."

"I suppose your daughter is worshipping at the shrine of her patron saints this evening," he said, as he seated himself with a disappointed air.

"Why, what do you mean, Aleck?" Mrs. Chilton asked, in surprise.

"Pardon me," he said; "but I suppose you know of her great admiration for Mr. and Mrs. Remington. They seem to be drawing her into all sorts of vagaries. I should not know her for the same person."

"Yes," Mrs. Chilton said, with a troubled air; "I do regret her intimacy with Mrs. Remington. A minister's wife, of course, must live differently from others, but the idea of her trying to induce a society young lady to go into such extremes is preposterous. I have not said much to Elsie lest opposition should strengthen her in her course. I think she will tire of it all."

"I am rather doubtful of that," Mr. Palmer said; "she is pretty far gone. The other night at the Merediths she sang a hymn, when she was encored."

"Is that possible?" Mrs. Chilton looked shocked.

"Oh, yes; and her talk to me was extremely visionary. Of late she seems to have no time for her friends. She has to attend a temperance class, or an industrial school, or something of that sort. And actually she told me the other night she feared it was wrong to dance. Of course, I knew where she got it. The egotism of people who lay down laws of conduct which condemn all

who do not agree with them is astonishing! Those Remingtons hold most obnoxious views on every subject. I am sorry such a narrow, bigoted man is our pastor. Elsie is becoming spoiled, Mrs. Chilton. I fear she will be on a public platform yet, speaking for temperance like Miss Redpath. If there is a person I abhor, it is a so-called strong-minded woman, especially those who are clamoring for the ballot. They seem so unrefined, so destitute of all that makes womanhood charming."

"I agree with you thoroughly; but Elsie would never go to such lengths; her father would not allow it."

"Did it ever occur to you, Mrs. Chilton, that your daughter has quite a strong will of her own?"

"It has crossed my mind occasionally," she said, laughing; "all the Chiltons have strong wills, but Elsie's is as yet in subjection to her father."

Mrs. Chilton began to feel that her step-daughter's prospects were in jeopardy. She had never seen Aleck Palmer in such a state of excitement. He considered excitement extremely vulgar when manifested by others, so she hastened to soothe him. She diverted his mind from the subject by showing him some rare pieces of pottery, and gradually drew him on to talk of himself—his

temperament, his gifts, his poems, which he sometimes wrote. Mingling with all the talk was that delicate flattery pervading it like a fragrance. And when Aleck Palmer's attention could once be concentrated on himself, he forgot everything else, even fair Elsie Chilton.

CHAPTER XVII.

BY PANSY.

—
READY TO MAKE SACRIFICES.

IF Elsie Chilton, sitting so cosily in a low rocker in the pretty back parlor of the Remingtons, could have heard the conversation which was taking place that evening between Aleck Palmer and her mother, and could have realized its portent, her fair face might well have clouded with anxiety. As it was, the face was grave, thoughtful, giving the impression that topics of importance were under discussion, but there was no shade of anxiety. This young woman believed that the lines of life had fallen to her in pleasant places, and not the least among the blessings for which she daily thanked God, was the coming of the new pastor and his wife. If Aunt Hannah was praying, as John and Mattie Remington knew she was, certainly her prayers seemed to be hav-

ing rapid answer. The beautiful world, which had begun insensibly to get such a hold on this fair young Christian, was already losing its grasp—thus far in a pleasant enough manner. Perhaps the girl had inherited from her praying mother a tendency to higher things than had for years surrounded her, and therefore it was that she glided so gracefully into her native element so soon as she recognized its presence.

Whatever was the reason, Aleck Palmer was right in his belief that these “narrow-minded” people were certainly weaving a spell of influence about her stronger than she realized, and more in harmony with her own heart longings than she herself understood.

Heretofore Mrs. Chilton had been but vaguely disturbed by it all; there had been the impression, rather than the knowledge, that some strong foreign element was slipping itself in between herself and the girl whom she had, through all these years, so readily influenced.

She exerted herself to place Aleck Palmer at his ease and in harmony with himself, and succeeded; but all the time she was carrying on a troubled undertone of thought; so troubled that she was glad when the gentleman took an early departure, leaving her free to think and plan without the embarrassment of keeping it all beneath the surface.

There had been a little added ripple of discomfort just before he went. He had taken advantage of the long years of friendship between them to look boldly at his watch, more than once, before he said —

“May I ask at what time you expect Elsie? Or is it to be my pleasure to go for her? I suppose, however, no message was left for me, or I should have received it before this.”

With a little flush of anxiety on her face, the matron admitted that Elsie had left no word with her.

“She was, of course, not expecting you this evening, or she would have been at home.”

Despite the “of course,” there was an element of anxious inquiry in the tone. Mrs. Chilton was already beginning to wonder to what lengths of thoughtlessness Elsie’s present infatuation might have led her.

“Oh, no,” Mr. Palmer said. He had made no engagement, other than the tacit one that he would drop in when he could. He had half expected to be engaged at the club-room this evening, but had been happily disappointed.

“Then you might go for her,” said Mrs. Chilton, brightening; “it is a lovely evening for a walk.”

A long, slow walk homeward under the quiet stars might be the best possible opportunity for

soothing the evidently disturbed feelings of this young man. It was momentarily growing more apparent that he needed soothing. Especially when he said quite stiffly that he would not like to intrude; perhaps she had made other arrangements.

"Oh, Aleck!" Mrs. Chilton had said, affecting to laugh, "don't be absurd. As if your presence could ever be an intrusion to Elsie! You don't deserve her, you foolish fellow."

Then she rung the bell and made inquiries of Jean, Elsie's special attendant and protégé, only to learn that "Miss Elsie" had directed her to say that Mr. Remington would be detained late to-night at a ministers' meeting away down town, and that she would therefore remain all night with Mrs. Remington.

"Then, why did you not tell me as soon as I came home?" Mrs. Chilton asked sharply, venting her irritability on poor Jean, who, however, was able to explain that she had spoken of it to Mr. Chilton, he having come in first, and that he had said "very well," after which, she considered her duty done.

"Then I may as well relieve you of my presence at once," Mr. Palmer had said, as soon as the door closed after Jean. "I ought not to have remained so long, hindering a busy woman; but you see I was feeding my heart on false hopes."

And despite her gentle appeal to him not to be too much disturbed about the whims of a young girl, who had been fascinated for a time by a phase of character with which she was unfamiliar, he went away gloomily, leaving Mrs. Chilton extremely anxious. Something must certainly be done, or the next one knew these two young people would quarrel, and some of the most important schemes of her life would miscarry. You are not to misunderstand Mrs. Chilton; she was no vulgar schemer, trying to get rid of her beautiful young step-daughter. The threadbare, and it may as well be confessed, generally too true, story of miserably unhappy relations between step-mother and step-children, is not to be repeated here. Mrs. Chilton was very fond of her step-daughter; she took a pardonable pride in the fact that Elsie was undeniably fond of her; she was also very much attached to Aleck Palmer; she believed the two to be exactly suited to each other, and had congratulated herself even on her knees, when she thought herself praying, over the happy issue of her plans concerning the two.

Now, here was an ominous cloud portending a storm. What could she do to avert it? Easy enough to trace the producing cause of the trouble. It might be ridiculous—she was half inclined to think it was—but nevertheless it was

undeniable that Aleck Palmer was jealous of the Remingtons.

“She really is with them too much,” Mrs. Chilton told herself perplexedly. But how was it to be avoided or changed? It would be absurd to warn a young lady like Elsie against having too much to do with her pastor and his wife! Should she venture to tell Mr. Chilton just how Aleck was impressed, and advise with him as to what they could do to change the tone of things?

No; after mature deliberation, she resolved against such a course. Mr. Chilton could be hauteur itself on occasion. He would be sure to resent the idea of Mr. Palmer finding fault with his daughter in any way; she could almost hear his voice saying coldly, that Elsie was certainly free to choose her friendships as yet, at least without dictation from Aleck Palmer; and as long as they were so entirely unexceptionable as at present, he should certainly brook no interference. Pressed in that direction, he would be entirely capable of saying that if Mr. Palmer was dissatisfied with his choice, a way of release was open to him; he need not fear being held to his pledged word.

No; Mrs. Chilton would not be guilty of such an unwise movement as that. Long she sat alone, thinking; Mr. Chilton was also detained late in the evening, giving her much time.

When he came her plans were, in a degree, matured. She set some of them brewing that very night.

"Elsie is spending the night with the Remingtons again, Jean says. I'm almost sorry, Robert, that they are getting such a hold upon the child."

"Why? Most people would rejoice that the pastor's family had a hold on the young people. They are unexceptionable, certainly, and very interesting. Remington has a keen brain. He's the best preacher in the city, by all odds."

"Oh, his preaching is well enough, I suppose. Perhaps it might be called 'narrow' in some lines, but I'm not troubled. What I think of is their social notions. Mrs. Remington is decidedly old-fashioned in her views."

"Well, old fashions are better than new—some of them. I know scores of young people who would be greatly benefited, in my judgment, if they could get old-fashioned."

"Oh, of course. You and I are in sympathy, Robert. But, you know, one can go to extremes with old fashions, as well as new. Perhaps I mean that she is narrow and peculiar; and our little Elsie has the material in her out of which they make martyrs. She could take up false views and carry them to martyrdom, on occasion."

Mr. Chilton left off the effort to unfasten a

refractory button, and faced around upon his wife.

“What do you mean, Augusta?”

“Oh, nothing very formidable. I’m merely thinking aloud. Elsie is young and impressionable. Let her once get the idea, for instance, that she is to sing nothing but psalms, and what will her glorious voice amount to, as well as her influence in society, which is more important? Of course, when one adopts extreme views in regard to any question, one loses influence in circles where it ought to be used.”

“What leads you to think that Elsie is in danger of any such nonsense?”

“Well, not to that extreme, perhaps; but she sang a hymn at the Merediths’ entertainment last week—a very solemn one, indeed—and threw a gloom over the entire gathering, as you may imagine. Moreover, she declined to dance with young McMartin the other evening—not a round dance; a mere promenade through private parlors. Of course it made Mr. McMartin very conspicuous, as he is young and easily embarrassed. I am afraid it annoyed his father, as well. I am wondering if it would not be wise for you to give Elsie a hint that you would like her to be considerate of young McMartin, at least, for his father’s sake; but I do not know that it would do any good.”

“It is somewhat difficult to understand you to-night, Augusta. Why shouldn't it do good for me to express an opinion to my daughter? It always has, I am sure.”

“Yes; but—as I told you, Robert, I am almost afraid these new people are inclining her to be fanatical. They do not approve even of the plainest kind of parlor promenades. I have heard Mr. Remington say as much; and I have noticed that Elsie has declined to dance several times of late. I am really afraid they are giving her false ideas of life. She is certainly much impressed by them; and they are young and unaccustomed to thinking, except in grooves. They are just the sort of people who would find it difficult to see why what was not the proper thing for them, should be entirely suitable, and even desirable, in a young girl in society. Of course, it does not matter to us whether Elsie dances or declines to dance, save as she makes herself conspicuous in an unpleasant way, and offends people, as she certainly will, for she has been very fond of dancing, you know—a leader, indeed. Oh, there is nothing serious, Robert—you need not worry; only I have thought for Elsie's sake so long, I cannot help looking ahead and thinking now. It would seem a pity for even a pastor to have a stronger influence in the family than the father of that family, you know. Of course, I cannot conceive

of such a thing with Elsie; and yet, as I tell you, they are peculiar in the extreme, and one never knows to what lengths such people will go. Perhaps if we could interest Elsie in other lines for a while, it might be wise."

And then this wise and good woman, after some more solitary thinking, went to sleep. I have not used the adjectives in sarcasm. She was a wise woman in her way; she was also, in her way, a good woman. She knew, it is true, that her husband, despite her advice, would worry a little, but she also knew that some worrying was necessary. Robert Chilton was a rich man—a very rich man. His position in society and in business was assured, yet, like business men generally, his interests were more or less involved with those of other rich men. There were days together when it might involve him in great discomfort, not to say embarrassment, to have the senior Mr. McMartin, for instance, feel coldly toward him. There were also other considerations than those of wealth. Mr. Chilton had ambitions; so had his wife. He was a leading man politically; he had fair hopes of being even a more pronounced leader in the future. He had of late been planning his business with a view to leaving it in other hands for a time, should he be called upon by the people to fulfill an important trust. He had let this feeling come to the sur-

face even in his prayers, at least in the family circle, in the form of some such phrase as—
“Grant that none of us may shrink from taking our turns as servants of the public, whenever the best interests of the people shall seem to demand that we so sacrifice ourselves.”

The senior McMartin knew, as did certain other leading business men, that Robert Chilton would be willing, on occasion, to “so sacrifice himself,” and it was perhaps desirable, for the sake of the people, that they should be willing to aid and abet this sacrifice on his part. Therefore—well, I am sure you see the point. I am sure, at least, that Mrs. Chilton saw and sympathized with it, and with all the other and finer points involved.

But remember, I am also sure that she had, or honestly thought she had, Elsie’s best interests at heart. Could she not plainly see that such a course as Elsie was pursuing would, sooner or later, alienate Aleck Palmer’s affection? Then what a life of misery for poor Elsie!

The curious fact is, that, before she slept that night, Mrs. Chilton distinctly felt this thought thrilling through her heart. “There will be no way to break up the intimacy between them save by separation. There is no reasonable place for Elsie to go at present, for a long stay; and even if there were, it is not desirable in her present state

of mind, to separate her from Aleck. Then the other alternative is to get rid of them!"

I have put it in bald English, but Mrs. Chilton did not. That is what she meant, but this is the way she told it to herself.

"A daughter's place is in her father's house, but I really am afraid of their influence. Aleck is far-seeing, and he evidently dreads it. Why, he even hinted that the child might go on the platform! I wonder what her father would have said if I had told him that! He would have forbidden Aleck the house! That is what would have happened to the poor foolish fellow, who ought to be glad that he has so sensible a friend as I at the helm. But I, who can control my temper, ought to be able to heed the warning. The point is, if their influence is to be feared in our family, why not for other young people? All will not be influenced in the line that Elsie is taking; very few of them will, I presume. Elsie is peculiar in some things; her mother must have been a strange woman.

"What the others will feel is a repulsion toward such strait-laced notions; just what Aleck feels to-day. It is an unfortunate thing for a church when its leading young men discover that they can not hope for sympathy and encouragement from their pastor, because he has lived in a band-box of Puritanism; thought in circles so long that

he has forgotten what young life means. Really, when I think of it in that light I cannot but feel that we have made a serious mistake in calling him to our church.

“What is brilliant preaching, after all, if the young and emotional are to be alienated? We might better listen to the monotonous droning of poor, dear Dr. Borne all our lives than to sacrifice real sympathetic influence to brilliancy of diction and the charm of eloquence. Still it is so short a time since they came; and they have been at such heavy expense in settling among us.

“I’m sure I don’t know what to do. We cannot sacrifice our children for such paltry considerations, it is true. But—oh, dear! We meant it for the best; but I’m afraid we made a sad mistake. And I suppose a mistake, when once acknowledged, should be righted as soon as possible, no matter at what sacrifice of feeling.”

So, you see, here was still another soul who desired not to shrink from “sacrifice” when the good of the people demanded it!

Will you hastily call her a hypocrite? Nothing could be more entirely unjust.

When Mrs. Chilton, with the next morning’s light, went about her partially-perfected plans for “correcting a mistake,” she thought as emphatically as ever St. Paul did, that she was “doing God service.”

Had she prayed about it? Yes, she thought she had ; she had gone on her knees, and said that she wished to be so directed that what they had to do might be done in no spirit of bitterness, with no thought of malice ; and might be accomplished with as little pain to the feelings of others as possible.

You will observe that as to "what they had to do," she seemed to have made up her mind without the help of prayer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

“WITHOUT ARE DOGS.”

AUNT Hannah was sitting by the fire one November evening, her mending-basket by her side, her book open on the table before her. She would read a paragraph or a page, and then, while she neatly fitted a patch on a tablecloth or darned a stocking, she would think over what she had read. It took a long time to go through a book at this rate. But she did not always go through them. She read after her own peculiar fashion whatever suited her mood. Sometimes for days at a time it was history, then biography. She would even on occasion take a dip into a novel, although she declared she could sit and think over ever so many real stories, that had as much romance and tragedy in them as could be found in any novel. She was fond of poetry,

and read her husband's old time-stained Milton, Young, Wordsworth and Shakespeare, relishing them as she had not in her younger years, when her mind was more filled with household cares. There was another secret reason why she would have read those books. Nathaniel had feared she did not appreciate them, because in their early married life she had seemed to enjoy money-making far more than literature. So there always mingled with the reading a slightly remorseful feeling, as if she could hear his voice saying, protestingly —

“Oh, Hannah, don't work all the time! We have minds and souls as well as bodies, and it is our duty to care for them, too.”

What a clod she had been in those days, to think that time and money spent on books were wasted, and had not known that Nathaniel was so rare a man until he was gone. If only she had improved those long winter evenings spent with him; he was so wise. But she must make it up, and she would, too. He should know, when they met some morning in that other country, that she knew his books and had not lived the life of a drudge.

John had told her about a certain literary society, and had sent her a set of the books. Ah, this was the very thing. She could be more systematic. Nathaniel was very systematic, and she

feared it had grieved him somewhat that she was not. Consequently, since the day her husband had gone out of this life into that mysterious other one, Mrs. Adams had been the very soul of system, except in her reading; she had not known exactly how to bring that under rules, and had gone on in the same old desultory way. Now, here was a regular course of reading—certain books laid out for her that she must read with forty minutes a day to it. She could just about put in forty minutes in an evening. She winced somewhat at the idea of making out examination papers, but finally reminded herself that she had always been able to tell what she had read. Why could she not just as well write it down? So Aunt Hannah was fairly launched on a prescribed course of reading, and felt exceedingly happy over it.

One book looked especially appetizing, both from its title and appearance. She was glad that she was to begin on it this very evening. She would read the introduction. Nathaniel always used to. The very first few minutes spent on it sent a perplexed frown into her face as she read. "There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. . . . More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn

to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science will be incomplete, and most of that which now passes for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. . . . Our religion parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind now relies! The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted in them, and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize the breath and finer spirit offered to us by poetry."

"I want to know," Aunt Hannah exclaimed, as she laid down the book and searched her basket for a patch of the proper size; "now, that is queer sort of talk. Speak for yourself, Mr. Arnold; I know of a creed that isn't shaken, and doesn't threaten to dissolve, though it's as old as the world. What stuff and nonsense! I should like to see some poetry that would console one when all he had in the world was swept away, or that would sustain one when she laid a baby or a husband in the grave. I've been in all those spots myself, and I know what sustains. It's what 'passes for religion.' The matter with this man is, that he is talking what he doesn't know a mite about, same as if I should undertake to write a letter in Greek. It's a great pity they allowed him to get into this reading circle. It won't hurt such as me, but some young things will like as

not read those words and say—‘Oh, that’s the thing to believe, is it?’ And it will have an effect upon such. If I knew the man who got up this course of reading, I would write to him and ask him why in the name of all that’s wonderful, when he had got up such a nice thing, he allowed Satan to put his word in through a foolish man who didn’t know any better. I don’t care how wise he is, he’s a fool about the greatest thing in the world, and the poor soul will find it out in a terrible way some day. He is the one that will find ‘hollowness.’ instead of us. May the Lord open his eyes.”

Aunt Hannah had so much food for thought while she sewed around her spacious patch that the book itself got no further notice from her that evening. Mingled with sorrow, that one should be so blinded, was indignation that such words could be printed and circulated—words of insult to her dearest Friend. But then came that strange, exultant feeling, understood only by the devout disciple, and she could smile up into the face of her Lord with deeper content, with tenderer love, as if to say—“Thou knowest and I know that the blessed truth lives, and will live.”

Toward nine o’clock Peter returned from the post-office and brought a letter. It was from John and his wife beseeching her to come and visit them.

“We cannot see,” wrote Martha, “what is in the way. Farms, it seems to me, do not do much in the winter but sleep, and you can surely trust Peter and Dorcas to care for everything, when there is so little to be done. John says he wants to see you enjoy city life awhile, as he is sure you will.”

And really, there did seem to be no reason why she should not go. Aunt Hepsy had found the loneliness of the farm intolerable, and had gone to spend the winter with a niece, who thought she was willing to put up with the aunt's peculiar infirmities for the sake of having some assistance in the care of her babies. Things in the parish, too, were now on a very good footing. Mrs. Adams and Simon Johnson had another interview not long after the one on that afternoon in May. She asked him to sign a paper that time. It was to raise a certain sum of money to send Mr. and Mrs. Brewster away on a vacation of six weeks. She also offered to pay Simon a nice sum if he would circulate the paper among the church people. This he did and raised more money than was asked for. Then Mattie had come over for a few days from Belleville, and brought her patterns and fashion papers and her taste, by means of which, and the aid of the country dress-maker, Mrs. Brewster's dove-colored cashmere was remodeled into a styl-

ish suit. And then, to everybody's astonishment, Aunt Hannah produced the desired number of yards of very excellent black silk, and a handsome gown of that material was forthcoming. The two, with "lace in the neck and sleeves," which last was a gift from Mrs. Remington, were hung in Mrs. Brewster's closet. While all this went on, there were sewing-bees in Aunt Hannah's large old parlor, with good cheer that drew the hearts of the people together. They made shirts for the boys, and did all the odd jobs of sewing that had accumulated for months on Mrs. Brewster's tired hands. To put the climax upon her kind deeds, Mrs. Adams took possession of the four boys and gave them a good time on the farm while the father and mother were away. Since that time no tongue had ever moved against Mr. Brewster. His people declared, when he returned, that he was ten years younger, and that his sermons were better than ever.

So, considering all things, Aunt Hannah had decided to go. No preparation was needed. Her clothes were always in order. She had never considered it one of the virtues to go shabbily dressed, and was not without her best and her second best gowns made of good material and with taste. When they needed making over, they were bestowed upon some one who was

thankful for them; thereby Mrs. Adams had no garments treasured up for moth to corrupt. And so, although the fashion of her bonnet and the cut of her gown were slightly quaint, there was, nevertheless, an unmistakable air of respectability and dignity about her. Martha, when she met her at the station, noticed this, as well as that she carried herself in an erect way for one of her years, and had not at all the look of the typical country relative.

Aunt Hannah had not visited a large city many times in her life, and it seemed to her like a never-ending panorama or a continuous world's fair. Her keen observation took it all in, and she was by turns admiring, pitiful, amused and indignant.

"How would you like it, Aunt Hannah," John asked, after she had been with them a few days, "to spend your life in a city?"

"I wouldn't choose it," Aunt Hannah replied, emphatically; "I should like more elbow room. I shouldn't like to be in danger of making the mistake of going into Mrs. Smith's when I got home from down town, and sitting down to her supper table and thinking it was mine. I don't see how you know your own house here, or know yourself from anybody else. It is well enough in winter, but how I pity the poor creatures who have to stay here all summer! I stood on the

steps this morning, and looked up and down the long street, and tried to think how it would be in July, with nothing but brick and stone as far as you can see; not a spear of grass, not a breath of air. I should think they would suffocate. And there are the very poor, who maybe were brought up in green fields. It makes me shudder to think of it. I'll remember to pray for them after this."

"And for that," said John, "nobody can tell what blessings may come to some weary soul in one of these streets."

Some types of character, new to her, Aunt Hannah met for the first time in the church receptions, which were held fortnightly. She knew for a certainty, after a little, that all the queer people did not live in Mapleton. The sort of person she understood least was one who had no interest in people, unless they were rich or distinguished. The minister's wife noticed one evening, with vexation, that dear Aunt Hannah was seated between two ladies of this stamp. They looked her over in a supercilious way after they had been introduced by the pastor, and then ignored her, conversing with each other across her. Their airs, however, were lost on that unsuspecting woman. She was so accustomed to being honored that she was not on the lookout for slights. She leaned back in her chair quite content, listening to the conversation.

"I feel quite weary this evening," Mrs. Delancy remarked to Mrs. St. Clair, as she suppressed a yawn; "I was up with Floy the greater part of the night."

"Ah, indeed; what was the matter?"

"Why, Floy almost had the croup. She breathed terribly. I was very much frightened, but I placed her in a hot bath and put mustard on her throat. Then I wrapped her up warm in blankets, and gave her mustard every hour. Floy has not been a bit well lately. I think she has eaten too much cake and ice-cream, and put her system out of order, but she is so fond of it I can't bear to deny her. And then I think she took a little cold yesterday. We went for a drive. I did not intend to take Floy, but she teased to go in such a sweet way when she saw me put my hat on that I could not resist."

"Is your child better to-day, ma'am?" Aunt Hannah asked.

Mrs. Delancy elevated her eyebrows in surprise, and said in freezing tones—"You must have been misinformed, madame; my child has not been ill," then turned again to Mrs. St. Clair—

"You have no idea what a lovely present Floy received yesterday. Alexandrina Wetherington sent her a lovely blanket, sky-blue plush, embroidered with gold braid, with her monogram in scarlet in one corner. It's a perfectly elegant thing.

I'm in haste to take her out for an airing, so she can display it."

"How lovely!" Mrs. St. Clair murmured. "That reminds me to tell you that Claude bought a beautiful collar for Bernard. It is hammered silver, and his name, 'Bernard,' is in German text letters. It has a silver chain, and is really quite a unique thing. It was made to order, and so there is not another like it in the city."

Mrs. Delancy was mentally resolving to see that collar at the earliest opportunity, and have one manufactured that would far outshine it.

"Bernard is getting to be a sad rogue. Let me tell you what he did yesterday. My hat had just come home from Madame Oliver's, and I had left it on my bed while I went down to dinner. I thought Bernard was in the nursery. When I went back up-stairs, what a sight did I behold! My elegant hat—it was brown, trimmed with lovely little brown birds—was torn into shreds and strewn over the floor, the birds were utterly ruined and the feathers flying in every direction! And there was Bernard frolicking about in great glee. He ran under the bed as soon as he saw me. I was so overcome I just dropped down and cried. I was very angry at Bernard at first. I thought I should give him a good whipping, but the dear little fellow was so cunning I hadn't the heart to do it. He came and got up in my lap

and kissed me so prettily that my heart just melted."

"I know just how you felt," the other lady said, sympathetically. "Floy jumped up on a light stand the other day and knocked down a lovely vase. It was shivered to fragments. The poor creature just trembled with fright, and looked up at me with her great soft eyes. I couldn't find it in my heart to punish her. And don't you think, she has the queerest fancies. She will not take her afternoon nap unless she can lie on my bed. I put her in her own little bed and tuck the blanket and spread about her, and the next thing I know she lies right in the middle of mine, looking quite happy, and then I think: 'Poor creature, she hasn't many pleasures; if she likes that best, do let her have it.'"

"It's the same way with Bernard, only he fancies for his dormitory my handsomest large plush rocker in the parlor. He never misses an opportunity to secure it, if possible. Another queer freak of his is to sit on the piano, and he has the most ingenious way of getting there. He climbs upon a chair, then to a table, and from that to the piano, and there he sits and surveys himself in the mirror opposite. He takes such a magnificent pose and is so immovable, really he looks, with his peculiar tawny skin, like one of those bronze pieces. Oh, he is so entertaining! I don't know

what we would do without him; and, as we have no children, he rather takes the place of a child. A house is so dull, don't you know, without something to amuse one, and really a pet of that sort is in some ways more satisfying than a child."

And now Aunt Hannah was mystified. If these creatures of extraordinary behavior, who wore blankets and collars and chains, and sat on pianos, were not children, what were they? Actually, they were dogs! The next few words settled it.

"Yes, indeed, that is so," Mrs. Delancy replied; "they are great comforts, but there is a good deal of anxiety connected with them, after all, I suppose," with a deep sigh; "there is in everything this side of heaven. I am so anxious about Floy this minute I can scarcely wait for refreshment, so that I can go home. I am always thankful when I see poor, forlorn little dogs on the street, half-starved and wretched-looking, that dear little Floy has such a good home. She has never wanted for anything."

"Last summer," said Mrs. St. Clair, "when we were in the country, there was a poor dog that nobody would own. It had lost its master. Everybody stoned it, and nobody said a kind word to it, and the other dogs fought it. A man who lived near us suggested shooting him. Think what a brute! One day, when it was being persecuted,

I just picked it up in my arms and carried it home. I had to walk a half a mile, and it gave me a terrible pain in my back. I was ill for a week from overdoing, but I felt that it was in a good cause. I kept him for two weeks and nursed him up. I don't suppose that poor dog had ever tasted beefsteak before. He seemed so glad to get it, and he was so grateful for everything that was done for him. I succeeded in finding him a good home with a farmer."

"You are a heroine," said Mrs. Delancy; "it was a noble act, and you will be rewarded for it. Do you know, I tell my husband if I die first I want a large portion of what belongs to me appropriated to building a home for poor homeless dogs and cats that wander about and are abused."

"Precisely," Mrs. St. Clair declared; "I feel the same way myself. I have always had the deepest sympathy for the poor creatures."

Aunt Hannah had felt the rebuff administered to her and had kept silence, but as the talk went on she forgot it again, in her amazement that there could be two such foolish women in the world, and so, to their surprise, the next remark came from her, spoken because she could not longer hold her peace.

"I shall not leave my money to found a home for dogs and cats until all the homeless, hungry little children are provided for. I think our heav-

only Father intends that we shall be kind to his dumb creatures, but when we go to putting them in the place of beings made in his own image, it is another matter, and not pleasing to him. I have seen a good many half-starved little children wandering about the streets just the little time that I have been here. Did you ever try nursing up any of them? I should think it would pay better. It is enough to make a body's heart ache to walk about this city and see saloons in every other building, and watch the streams of men going in and out, and remember that most of them have wives and children. Oh, how many little ones have gone to bed without their suppers to-night, and are shivering this very minute because the covers are too thin. Can you tell me whether there is anything being done for them?"

The two ladies stared in silence, with that hateful manner which some people know how to affect when they wish to be superlatively rude and disagreeable.

Then Mrs. Delancy arose and shook out her skirts, saying, "My good woman, you will have to apply to other quarters if you wish to know about these matters. Probably our pastor can tell you; he seems to know a good deal about that sort of people. As for myself, I have always kept as far from such low, vile creatures as possible."

Then the two sailed away and left Aunt Hannah in as high a state of perturbation as she ever allowed herself to reach.

"A coarse, impertinent old woman," Mrs. St. Clair murmured; "I always thought Mr. Remington came of a low-lived family. Money, indeed! She looks as though she hadn't money enough to build a home for a mouse!" And then they both laughed, and the minister had two more enemies.

A young lady standing near heard the closing words of this conversation, and her eyes flashed the anger and contempt which Aunt Hannah would not allow hers to indulge in. These were but young eyes, though, and had not learned as yet to observe the rule of a "love that suffereth long and is kind." It was an intense face which turned itself to Aunt Hannah, a bright spot flaming in each cheek, and her form, slight and tall, drawn up in a queenly way.

"Mrs. Adams, please let me introduce myself to you," she said. "I am Fern Redpath, and I know you are the dear aunt whom Mrs. Remington told me she expected. I have been away for a few weeks, or I should have known you before. I unintentionally heard a part of the conversation just now, and am indignant that one like you should have been so insulted. How can you bear it so calmly?"

"Never mind," Aunt Hannah said, smiling;

“it takes all sorts of people to make a world, and I suppose I seem as queer to them as they do to me. I dare say you can tell me something of what I asked them. What is being done here to stop this horrible rum business?”

Aunt Hannah knew she had found the right person to answer such a question, for Miss Redpath, a girl of fine mind, of brilliant attainments and vigorous health, had thrown all these gifts at the feet of her Master, and chosen her career to fight wrong in the shape of rum as truly as any reformer of old. Because she moved in a high circle, of unquestioned influence, her work was all the more effective. Perhaps more effective, too, with some, because she also brought to it youth, ardor and unusual attractiveness. She sat down by Aunt Hannah and told her with enthusiasm about the Woman's Christian Temperance Union—what they were doing and what they hoped to do. She told of the gospel temperance meetings, the new coffee-rooms for men, the home just opened for young girls, and the free kindergarten for little children.

“You talk as if you had been at the work for years,” Aunt Hannah said; “but you are not very old.”

“Not very. I have only been in it since I left school—a couple of years.”

“I should like to know how you happened to

give yourself up to it so. You don't appear like one who grew up in it. It must be quite a story. Do you mind telling me?" Aunt Hannah said, after they had talked long enough to feel well acquainted.

"It is a short story, Mrs. Adams. I went into the work for very shame, when I saw the enormity of the drink curse and how some who should teach better things are helping it along. I have two brothers, and I awakened to find them in danger. The habit of drinking had become firmly fixed before I dreamed of such a thing. Father died when they were young, but they were doing well until they came under the influence of a certain minister in the city where they lived. He is a fine preacher. They admired him very much, but he holds peculiar views on the temperance question and does not scruple to advocate them openly. He teaches that one may drink beer or wine just as he drinks tea or coffee, and must control the appetite for all of them. My brothers did not find that an easy thing to do. They were on the verge of ruin, but they were saved, by means of the W. C. T. U. in that city, and they are now total abstinence men. After that I gave myself up more entirely to this work, out of gratitude to God. I still feel anxious about my brothers. It is a life of temptation, and I have

temptation, too. It is so hard not to hate that minister who led them astray."

"I should think so!" Aunt Hannah said, with vehemence. "I'm not sure but that is righteous indignation. Is he partly idiotic, or is he a bad man?"

"Neither. He is a good man in every other way, very much beloved and is quite scholarly. That is the strange part of it, he ought to know better."

"He isn't an evangelical minister?"

"Oh, yes; he is Dr. Carter. I presume you have often seen his name in the papers."

"Humph!" said Aunt Hannah. Then, after a pause—"It must be a case of the devil taking possession of a good man to accomplish his purpose—and he couldn't find a cunninger way to do it in this case; now, could he? There were such instances in Bible times, and there is more of it now than we think for, I guess."

But now Elsie Chilton was singing, and that was usually a signal for conversation to cease.

"Let us go nearer," Miss Redpath said; "she will no doubt sing something that you like. There is the most remarkable change in her; even her songs are different. Doesn't she look more like a beautiful lily than ever with her white gown, her golden hair and her yellow sash? The likeness is quite striking."

CHAPTER XIX.

BY PANSY.

—
INTRICACIES.

A CURIOUS and interesting study, as well as a very profitable one, could we be persuaded to take time to consider it, would be what large results are often produced from small causes. As trivial things in their way, at least from their starting-points, as the dish of mush and milk, and the green silk bonnet made out of an old-fashioned mutton-leg sleeve, were contributing to make life a perplexity to Mr. Remington and his wife.

Industriously they toiled at the problem how to make a wealthy, fashionable church, which felt itself in need of nothing, take vigorous hold of the Lord's work in the world, with eyes single to his glory, and with ears attent for the sound of his coming.

They expected difficulties — these two. They were no visionary workers. They remembered that the Lord himself walked the earth very much alone — misunderstood, spoken against, sneered at by his enemies, held under restraint by his friends. They remembered that “the servant is not above his lord.” They were prepared to move slowly, cautiously; to be as “wise as serpents,” and they meant certainly to try to be as “harmless as doves.” Yet as the weeks passed, and the months, there was in the air a nameless something which perplexed and disheartened them. It was not criticism so much as espionage which they felt; a vague feeling of being watched and commented upon, and distrusted almost, in localities where they had hoped for and looked for hearty co-operation; so far, at least, as the visible prosperity of the church was concerned. They were perplexed, and they were in a degree anxious, yet they tried bravely to keep their burdens to themselves. Very early in their city experience it became apparent to Mrs. Remington that her husband was to be overtaxed; that he took life too hard to be a physical success in a city; that he shouldered the whole heart-wearing round of burdens which belonged to the poor, and the suffering, and the sinful; that he let himself be weighted down by a thousand bitternesses which he could neither lift nor control. The young wife,

wise beyond her years in some respects, looked on anxiously; felt certain that "John" would have to drop this, and let up on that, before many months; yet resolved that she would not distress him with spoken forebodings about anything, nor dish up for him any of the pettinesses which fell to her share. So she treasured as bits of jewels all kind and appreciative words, and even grew skillful in translating kindly glances and warm hand-pressures with which to rest the minister's heart when they met at the breakfast table, which was now almost their only uninterrupted bit of leisure time together. Their home life was constantly broken in upon by engagements elsewhere, not often by guests at home, save the informal ones — the brother minister from an outlying parish who dropped in just at dinner-time because there was a lecture or a debate, or something of interest in town that evening; or the agent who represented some church or library or association in financial distress. Interruptions of this kind were so numerous as at times to almost bewilder Mrs. Remington, and lead her to wonder whether city pastors were really expected to keep a hotel for the benefit of their brethren in the suburbs, and the innumerable company who represented some "cause."

Nothing of this sort troubled John. He was social by nature, and accustomed to the hearty

hospitality of the country. His invitations to "come in and take dinner with us, and be ready for the evening in town," were as free and genial as the most timid could desire, and led many a perplexed brother in the work to say — "What a warm-hearted, cordial way Brother Remington has! It does me good to go to his house." As for Mattie, she held the family purse and paid the bills, and the extra expense which these informal guests entailed upon them sometimes filled her prudent heart with dismay. For this reason, among others, there were not often formally invited guests at her table. It appalled her to think that she actually seemed not to be able to afford to have company. What would her mother or Aunt Hannah think of that? The other reason, which she also kept in the back-ground as much as possible, was connected with the troublesome thought that she had neither the appointments nor the trained servants to enable her to furnish for guests such entertainment as was constantly offered to them in the elegant homes connected with their church. When would they ever have? Were they not spending money in an alarming manner every day? Were they not also constantly running behind? What would be the end of it all and how could they help it? All these puzzles she kept resolutely to herself. She could foresee that the time would come when they

must be shared, but until such time as she should have something to offer in the way of relief, she would be silent.

“It must be that I shall learn, after a little, how to manage so as to have the expenditures less,” said this poor over-burdened woman; “or it may be that I can, by and by, get along without a second girl. If cook would only answer the bell and do a few other little things beside the ones for which she seems to think she was exclusively engaged! It does seem as though two people ought to be able to get along with one servant. If there were not so many calls to make and receive, or if John had time for the marketing—which he hasn’t.”

Day after day the problem came and stood before her, and waited with a sort of sullen triumph along with other problems, to be solved; and day after day she did her best and gained upon it not one cent, and pushed it resolutely aside for one night more and held her peace.

Aunt Hannah, wise-eyed though she was, had not discovered that financial burdens were helping to pale the cheek of her favorite. She had lived on a farm all her life; she did not know that the morsel of butter and eggs and milk and cream which so small a family as John’s could consume, needed to be counted at all. His salary seemed large to her—very large. It did

not once occur to her that they could be in other than really affluent circumstances. It was she who had installed this second girl.

“Of course, you must have some one to answer the bell, and run of errands, and do a dozen little things for Martha,” she had said to John, with the familiarity of one accustomed to advising him; “the idea that that child can trot up and down these long flights of stairs twenty times in a morning to answer a book-agent, or a tax collector, or a gas-man, or a water-man, or the land only knows what kind of a man—there seem to be all sorts—is not to be thought of a minute. She will let herself be killed and say nothing, under the notion that she is helping you, and you just mustn’t permit it. It isn’t as though you were a poor country minister; now that you have got to Rome, there is a certain sense in which you must do as the Romans do.”

John had smiled somewhat constrainedly over the hint that he was now a wealthy minister; he was by no means blind to the fact that they were spending a great deal of money, though just how much he did not realize as his wife did; but he took the alarm at once as to Mattie’s overtaxed strength, and said—“Of course, she must have more help; that she had calls enough to make to take all her time and strength.”

So the second girl had been immediately sought after, and her weekly earnings were drawn from Mrs. Remington's already overtaxed purse.

To the minister the revelation of affairs came suddenly, as such things generally do. He had been closeted for more than an hour with a brother minister, whose church was twelve miles away. Mattie had chafed over the length of the call, knowing that her husband could ill afford the time. Sunday, with its two sermons and its Bible class and young people's meeting, was near at hand.

He had accompanied his caller to the door at last, and then, instead of returning to the study, had sought his wife in her little sitting-room and dropped into the chair opposite her with a sigh.

"Poor Hammond!" he said; "he is overburdened; he has bills to pay to the amount of a hundred dollars, and extremely little to meet them with. I suppose, dear, we couldn't help him a little just now?"

There was a wistfulness about the words that fairly stabbed his wife's heart. What a shame it was that a minister of the gospel must be so cramped that he could not respond to a brother's call in his time of need!

However, she controlled as much as possible

the sense of dismay, and answered quietly that she did not see how it was possible just then. "We have given more than our tenth this month already, you know, for those special cases."

"I know," he said, quickly; "I did not mean for a benevolence, exactly—a loan, perhaps; though I don't see how, with his present salary, he is ever to pay it, but he thinks he can. Still I made no promises; I only thought my thoughts. Mattie, dear, I saw you start just now as though you were almost frightened. Does the fear of a possible future when we shall be bankrupt oppress you occasionally?"

His wife looked up at him wonderingly; then he was quite as ignorant as she had half feared. She would not have chosen this time to talk the matter over with him, but how was she to be sincere and evade it longer?

"I don't think a possible future worries me," she said, trying to speak lightly, "so much as an immediate present. Don't you know, John, dear, that it will be three weeks yet before our next quarter's salary will be due, and we have a bill at Delancy's and one at Wharton's which we cannot meet?"

There was a look on Mr. Remington's face just then that his wife long remembered; a new look, as one who had met at last face to face an enemy for which he had no courage. The "world, the

flesh and the devil," in their most aggressive forms, John Remington felt himself ready to meet, unless, indeed, they came in the form of debt; from that he shrank with a feeling almost akin to terror.

"Is it possible?" he said at last, and then his wife knew that the whole matter must be gone over in minutest detail; there would be no sermonizing and no sleeping that night until the minister knew to the fraction of a penny what they had done, and where they stood.

But these and kindred perplexities, though they pressed close, were not, as I began to tell you, the chief anxieties. It was that nameless something, that want of sympathy and co-operation, that being met with silence where response was expected, that indifference (or worse) to subjects which should have thrilled them, which weighed heavily on the hearts of the minister and his wife. And these pressures were on the increase; they could feel them much oftener than they could put them into sufficiently tangible form to talk over together. Some of the things they did talk over, or wonder over. Why, for instance, had Mrs. Delancy withdrawn from the Ladies' Aid Society, in which she had been so interested and for which she had asked Mattie's special assistance? Could it be because Mr. Remington had been obliged to ask in much embarrassment that the bill against

them be allowed to stand until the next quarter's salary was due? But that would be absurd; of course, they would settle it! And their faces glowed over this new experience.

Then why did Mrs. St. Clair make a little party on Wednesday evening—their prayer-meeting evening—and invite them, though she knew, of course, that they could not come? What a strange thing for a member of the church to do, and one who had at first been so cordial; who had even assured them that she always made her social gatherings an opportunity for her pastor and his wife to meet and become better acquainted with their people. How astonished would this pastor and wife have been could they have realized that the starting-point in this phase of the disaffection was two dogs! It is too sadly true that neither Mrs. Delancy nor her particular friend, Mrs. St. Clair, could forget the conversation over Bernard and Floy, and Aunt Hannah's share in it. They could not forgive Aunt Hannah; do people ever succeed in forgiving those whom they have insulted, unless, indeed, the grace of God takes hold upon their hearts? Neither could they forgive Mr. Remington for being her nephew. Of course, she had told him all about their talk together, and tried to make them appear ridiculous. Judging of other characters by their own, no suspicion of the fact that Aunt Hannah had

kept her own counsel about the dogs and their mistresses, ever entered the minds of these two embarrassed ladies; so they nursed their petty chagrin and vented it in a dozen small, ill-natured ways bewildering to the chief sufferers, and were excellent material for Mrs. Chilton to work upon, and Mrs. Chilton was the woman to discover it, and work them wisely and graciously in a manner soothing to their self-importance and helpful to the cause she had at heart. Oh, it is a long, intricate story, with a hundred interesting avenues and bewildering by-paths. I long to tell it out to you in detail, but must not. Does any one who has even simply looked on at life, with wide-open eyes, need plainer speaking?

Nor were these quiet days for Elsie Chilton. She did not understand her step-mother's plans; she did not know that they included her; but she felt, rather than realized, that an element of unrest had entered her home. She began to be vaguely conscious that for some reason the new pastor was not in as high favor as he had been; that her father, even, resented his influence. It was a matter of great surprise to Elsie. She had been accustomed to having the pastor's views, or perhaps even what were called his whims, graciously deferred to. Now she learned that she must move carefully. Here, too, the influence of apparently trivial things, passing

circumstances, words not carefully premeditated came in to help or hinder according as one looks at these things. For instance, Elsie, sitting in her favorite spot, a low rocker, just in front of and quite close to Mrs. Remington, detains her pastor one afternoon, just as with a smile for his wife and a bow for her he is passing through the room, with the question —

“Mr. Remington, I wish you had time to give me a long lecture ; or, failing in that, I wish you would tell me in just a sentence whether you think it always wrong for a Christian to dance ; in quiet parlor dances I mean — merely promenades.”

“I wish you would tell me whether Miss Elsie Chilton thinks it is wrong ; that would be much more to the point than what I think on such a subject.”

“But she doesn't know,” half laughing, yet with a vivid color on her cheeks. “She has been upset in her moral status. Two people who think differently about almost every question under the sun from what she has supposed she thought, have come into line with her mental vision, and she is half lost in a fog.”

“She has an infallible guide ; One who has promised her wisdom on all points where she feels her need ; and she will take no step in any direction until she knows it is the step which she ought to take. Where she is in honest doubt she

will give her Master the benefit of that doubt until he has cleared it away."

"That would mean that I certainly should not join in the dance this evening at Mrs. St. Clair's, whatever I may do hereafter. I wish you would make me promise so much, Mr. Remington; that would relieve me for to-day, at least."

"You have already promised so much," Mr. Remington said, gravely; "I consider you pledged to do just that thing which I said. It is the pledge of every honest doubter. I have no objection whatever to your quoting me as believing that such is the necessary position of the sincere Christian, if you have any desire to do so."

Then he had passed out, wondering much whether it would help the girl to argue with Aleck Palmer, to be able to say to him that her pastor approved of her settling these questions with her conscience before being called upon to take decided ground on either side.

Two hours later Elsie Chilton was at her father's dinner table, by no means aware of the fact that her mother, while that gentleman was making a hasty dinner' toilet, had said to him —

"Robert, if you care to have Elsie accept any courtesies from young McMartin, perhaps it would be as well to mention it. The St. Clairs have company this evening, you know, and he will

be there, of course. He is a cousin of Mrs. St. Clair."

"Why shouldn't she be courteous to him? She has been brought up to comply with the ordinary regulations of social life, I believe."

"I know, Robert, but you do not realize what a strain there is upon the child; it is hard for her to be natural just now. She has just come from the parsonage, and I have not a doubt but that the evening's programme has been gone over and she has received her directions from a couple who have the narrowest and most unreasonable views in regard to social life of any persons I ever met. They are trying to make your daughter over again, Mr. Chilton; and I am afraid they are succeeding to a degree that will be annoying to you in the future."

Mr. Chilton's head was buried in the marble basin by this time, and the reply which he growled was unintelligible; but his wife was satisfied, and not at all surprised to hear him address Elsie abruptly at the dinner table—

"By the way, Elsie, I want you to dance with young McMartin to-night, provided you are invited, of course. I have special reasons for trying to help him to enjoy life just now; and a little kindness from you, occasionally, will go a great way toward it."

"Papa, I'll help him have as pleasant a time as

I can, of course ; but I'm not going to dance this evening."

"Why not? Are you ill? If so, stay away altogether."

"No, sir ; I am quite well, and have accepted the invitation ; but I" —

He interrupted her.

"Then remember I desire you to dance ; not only with McMartin, but with others who ask. I object to any such conspicuousness as having my daughter attend a dancing party, and refusing to join in the amusement ; I wonder that your good taste doesn't object to such a course."

"Papa, it is not entirely a dancing party ; there are others who do not dance."

"Never mind if there are ; you are not one of them. You have always danced, and been a leader, and to do otherwise now marks you for criticism. I don't often interfere with your whims, but you are to understand that I have interfered. You are to be among the dancers to-night."

Mrs. Chilton was distressed ; this was not at all as she would have managed matters ; it was not in keeping with her husband's usual good judgment. As for Elsie, the glow on her cheeks was painful ; yet she controlled her voice and manner and spoke gently —

"Papa, I beg your pardon. I did not know that you cared in the least as to how I amused

myself, and I have promised not to dance this evening."

"Whom have you promised, pray?"

There was an instant's hesitation. Mr. Chilton's voice was loud, most unnecessarily loud; the servant who had been dismissed from attendance by the wise forethought of Mrs. Chilton, and who was waiting in the next room the call of the bell, must certainly be able to hear. Elsie did not know how to reply; her first thought had been to say firmly, steadily — "The Lord Jesus Christ." It was He, of course, whom her pastor meant; but Elsie Chilton had not been brought up to speak thus freely of her Guide. The whole subject of religion had been relegated to the privacy of one's own room; it would be judged indecorous, perhaps even sacrilegious, for her to make such reply; there was certainly a secondary sense in which she had promised her pastor; he had said that he expected so much of her. Had Elsie been aware of that talk in her father's dressing-room, she would have understood him better than to make the reply she did; as it was, she said, still very gently —

"I promised Mr. Remington."

"Did you, indeed! And you presume to put his commands before mine, do you? You may tell him for me that he is a contemptible meddling puppy, and if ever I hear of his interfering in

my family again I will kick him out of the house."

Elsie had never heard her father use such language before. It is safe to say that his elegant wife was also exceedingly annoyed, and feared, from the look in Elsie's eyes, that he was doing irreparable mischief to her plans. She even ventured a low-toned "Robert, remember the servants."

But Mr. Chilton had gotten himself started, and was not to be stopped by servants.

"And do you understand, my young lady," he said again, his voice in no wise lowered, "that you are under orders to dance at the party this evening as frequently as you have been in the habit of doing. I will see whether I am not the head of my own family."

"Papa, I have made a more important promise than the one I mentioned. Do you not think that a promise carefully made should be kept?"

"It makes no sort of difference to me whom you have promised. No, a promise which ought never to have been made is better broken than kept, always. I want you to distinctly understand, once for all, that any promises which interfere with my orders for to-night are to be broken."

And then Mrs. Chilton took matters into her own hands, wishing she had done so ten minutes before, and boldly rang the bell for the waiter.

CHAPTER XX.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

AN EVENTFUL AFTERNOON.

IT was not a common occurrence for the Chiltons to have family jars at the dinner-table. It is true, Mr. Chilton was inclined at times to be somewhat irascible, but his wife was an adroit manager. She was skilled in turning the conversation at just the right instant, whenever unpleasant subjects were broached, so that peace instead of discord was the rule. And this, not because she was naturally more amiable than her husband; she might say sharp things in private, but it was vulgar to wrangle before others, especially servants. At the same time Mrs. Chilton was not a quarrelsome woman. She preferred always that life should be without frictions when it was possible to live so, and yet accomplish her purposes.

Elsie struggled hard during the remainder of

the meal to maintain her composure. She could not trust herself to speak again, but her step-mother began to tell a piece of news on another subject, which relieved her from the necessity of speaking. She managed to keep back the tears till she had escaped to her own room, and there they poured forth in floods. She had been a petted child, accustomed to take her own way about things. This sudden and violent interference with her plans by her father was bewildering. He had not spoken to her in that authoritative manner since she was quite young, when on rare occasions he had thought it necessary to employ loud, harsh tones in checking a wayward fit. Perhaps the one being in the world whom she loved almost to idolatry, was her father. He was usually so fond and indulgent that the rough words he had spoken cut her like a knife. What did it all mean? How had she displeased him? In her distress she entirely forgot her engagement for the evening, until a servant came to say that Mr. Palmer was waiting for her. She hastily penciled a note begging him to excuse her, saying that circumstances had suddenly arisen which would detain her at home. He seemed so vexed and disappointed that Mrs. Chilton went up to try to persuade Elsie to come down.

“What is all this?” she said. “Aleck thinks your conduct very strange, no doubt. If you

have decided not to go out, why do you not come down and see him? If you do not feel like dancing this evening, it is just as well to remain at home, perhaps, since you have been so foolish as to get into a fracas with your father. And yet I'm afraid that will not do, either. Aleck will be offended. Come down at once and explain to him."

Elsie almost said — "He would not understand or sympathize with me if I should." But she was preserved from making that remark, and only murmured, as she lifted a tear-stained face — "Oh, I cannot see him to-night."

"Sure enough, you are not fit to see him. What a fright you have made of yourself. Such an ado as you make about a little thing! Just a perfect child you are, to go and cry your eyes out because your father spoke cross-wise to you. But what are you going to do? Here is Aleck insisting on seeing you a moment. If you had only told him you were not well."

"But I am well, mamma; that would not be true."

"There is some more of your fanaticism. You did not use to be so over-scrupulous. I do not much wonder that your father loses his temper. I would not know you for the same girl you were a year ago."

Mrs. Chilton was dressed to go out, and Elsie

could not but notice what a very beautiful woman her step-mother was, especially when her graceful form and brilliant face were set off by black velvet and diamonds, as to-night. Then, with a sigh, it came to her for the first time in her life that beauty and elegant clothes were of so very little worth compared with beauty of spirit. How she would love to have a dear mother to flee to with her perplexities! What would it matter how plain her dress or face might be, if only the wise, loving mother-heart were there?

It was certainly true that this girl was not the same person she had been a few months ago. Then she would have resented such words, and replied with haughtiness. None of these thoughts came to the surface, though, as she said in gentle tones —

“I am sorry to make you so much trouble, but will you excuse me to Aleck, and tell him that I cannot see him to-night? Perhaps I am foolish, but I cannot seem to help it. When my father speaks so to me, it almost breaks my heart.”

The words ended in a sob, to which the step-mother made answer in her very coldest tones —

“Elsie, you would better go to bed and stay there.”

Then she swept down-stairs, where she said to Aleck Palmer —

“The dear child is suffering with a nervous

headache, and really cannot see anybody to-night. I have persuaded her to retire at once, and probably she will be quite well in the morning."

Aleck Palmer was an imperious young man, and thought much of his dignity. Mrs. Chilton did not like the ominous way in which he drew his brows together, nor the utter silence with which he received her words, although she made them as sweet and gracious as possible. She looked after him as he went down the steps, thinking within herself—

"What a fool the girl is! She deserves to lose him, trifling with him in this fashion."

She had felt vexed enough with Elsie to tell Mr. Palmer the whole story, but restrained herself, resolving that nothing should be done by herself to imperil their relations. The Chiltons were an old and honorable family, but the Palmers were older and wealthier. An alliance with that family was not to be put in jeopardy, and there was need of great care during these days. There was no telling what queer whim Elsie would take next, and all because of those Remingtons—narrow-minded people—who had more zeal than knowledge. It was too vexatious.

It was the next evening, after a day of unrest and troubled thought, that Elsie went down to Mrs. Remington's. A talk with her pastor or his wife would help her, she was sure. Aunt

Hannah was alone in the back parlor, enjoying her knitting and her book. Mrs. Remington had retired with a severe headache, the outcome of twenty-seven calls, and Mr. Remington was out.

"But sit down and stay awhile with me, do," Aunt Hannah said, pushing a willow rocker toward her.

"You always seem so happy," Elsie said, with a little sigh, as she sank into the chair.

"And why not? Did you think it was only young people who were happy, my dear?" the old lady said, with a brisk air.

"Oh, no; they are not always happy. But people who are growing old have not life before them; things with them are nearly done for—this world at least."

"I could preach a long sermon on that subject," said Aunt Hannah, pushing back her glasses and bestowing a kindly look on the fair, sweet face upon which her sharp eyes detected a slight cloud. "I could tell you how old people have more leisure and ease; they have passed through the sorrows and trials of life and left them behind. (It is all very well to be young, and to be starting out in life, but it is nice to be getting near home, too.) Don't you know when a ship starts out on a long voyage the passengers are very chirk and full of life when

they start, but they never are quite so happy in all their lives again as when that ship is homeward bound. (Now, I take it that is the way it ought to be with a Christian who is coming alongside the other shore.)”

“What a pretty thought, Aunt Hannah; I shall never see a ship leave the harbor again without remembering it. That is a consideration to be thought of—that you have gone through the trials of life. I just begin to see, too, why you should have had troubles; so that you will know how to help others when theirs begin. I have had such a merry, happy life; a good deal like a bird or a butterfly, until I began to try to be a more earnest Christian. Now troubles seem to be springing up all about me. I have so many temptations, and I am full of perplexities and doubts. Don’t you think that is strange?”

“Not a bit. As long as people live careless lives, Satan is not going to trouble his head with them. It is those who are striving to follow closely he is most concerned about.”

“What shall one do, Aunt Hannah, in a case of this kind? Suppose a girl has come to feel that certain amusements interfere with her spiritual life, and her friends do not approve of her giving them up—really insist that she shall take part in them. If she persist in

her determination, what becomes of the Fifth Commandment?"

"If the daughter is, say twenty years old," said Aunt Hannah, "and able to judge of what injures her spiritual life, I should say she must follow her conscience. Christ must not be dishonored, whatever comes. At the same time she can so honor her parents in all things else, and be such a good, loving daughter, that they shall be convinced it was not mere obstinacy that governed her."

Elsie made a brief introspection just then, and pronounced upon herself that she should have been more cheerful through that day before her father, and not have sat in gloomy silence at meal-times.

"But, Aunt Hannah," she said, "such a course would bring so much trouble into families, and how unhappy the one who caused it would be!"

"The Lord Jesus never promised his followers that they should have no trouble in this world. He told them plainly—'In the world ye shall have tribulation'."

"Oh, why cannot people see things alike?" said Elsie, with a sigh; "it would seem strange to suddenly start up and condemn amusements which we have been brought up to think of as innocent, and which all one's friends hold to

be so. It would make one appear singular and self-conceited, as if all but one's self were under condemnation. Why, Aunt Hannah, if I were to take such a stand, I should be fairly persecuted by my friends."

"'Blessed' are they that are persecuted for righteousness, sake'," said Aunt Hannah, smiling down at her; "'he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it'."

"If you knew positively that your heavenly Father was not pleased with certain of your practices, what would it be right for you to do—hold on to them or give them up?"

"Give them up, of course," said Elsie.

"Well, child, isn't it a sure thing that he is not pleased to have you do what you feel comes between you and him? Why, I suppose the uneasiness you have felt about these things is God speaking to you through his Spirit to teach you his will. There can be no more doubt about what you are to do after you know his will. You have nothing to do with what comes of it. 'He will take care of that.'"

"That is a short way of settling it, Aunt Hannah, and for me it is settled—the question of dancing and card-playing. I shall give them up. I knew it would come to that; but it will be hard, on account of what I shall have to meet."

"Yes, my dear, martyrs are not gone out of

fashion ; only it is tongues instead of flames they must meet and overcome."

"My troubles do not stop there," said Elsie, with a wistful face and broken voice; "I am in great perplexity about something else. Do you know, Aunt Hannah, that the one to whom I am engaged will pour all sorts of ridicule upon what he calls my fanaticism when I take the stand I must? We have talked it over somewhat, and he is not in the least in sympathy with me in my desire to place my religious life on a higher plane. Is it wrong, do you think, for people to marry who do not agree on important things like this?"

"{How shall two walk together except they be agreed?}"

This text said itself almost. Aunt Hannah looked startled when she heard it coming from her lips; but she must be true, and she added—

"Certainly; if there are any two in the world who should be one in principles and aims, it is those who are to spend their lives together. God meant it so. There is no happiness where a husband pulls one way and the wife another. Why should they wish to be together unless they are in harmony on what you might call the keynotes of life? It will only be one long discord. If a man and woman jar each other before marriage, a few words spoken by a minister is not going to change them."

Aunt Hannah glanced pityingly, as she spoke, at the troubled young face, and was moved to add —

“But God can change people. Mr. Palmer may come to think just as you do.”

“Oh, if he would! But no; if you knew him, you would see how hopeless it is.”

“Dear child, you must pray about it all, and the Lord will guide you,” Aunt Hannah said, as she gave her a good-night kiss, and while she folded the girl in her arms for an instant she silently prayed that “the dear young thing might be shielded from an unwise marriage.”

The next day Elsie started early in the afternoon to call upon one of the little scholars in her mission class who had been absent for a long time. Doing something for others, she hoped, might lighten for a time the unwonted depression which weighed down her spirits. The day was fine, and she was glad of the opportunity for thought which the long walk afforded. She remembered, as she knocked at the door of the dingy tenement-house, that she had meant to bring a few flowers with her, but had forgotten them. Somebody else had been thoughtful, though, for on the pillow of the bed, where lay a white-faced little girl of seven or eight, was a lovely bunch of roses, and Earle Mason was talking with the mother. There were some fine



LITTLE NELLIE.

oranges on the table, also, which had arrived when he did.

Mr. Mason was superintendent of the large mission school which little Nellie Forbes attended. This young man, from his busy life, abstracted two hours each day which he consecrated to philanthropic work. Sometimes it was done at his desk, sometimes it was in the shape of a lecture on reform, and again it was a call upon the sick or desolate, as on this afternoon. A wide business career had opened, but the two hours were as faithfully given as though he had abundance of leisure.

The child had been hurt, the mother told Elsie. Her spine was injured, and the doctor said it might be a long time before she could walk again; in the meantime she would suffer much pain.

"You will use this for her comfort, won't you?" said Elsie, dropping a generous bank note into the mother's hand; "I shall send Nellie a couple of pretty wrappers soon."

She thought, as she looked about the bare, forlorn room and noticed the hollow eyes of the sad-faced mother, that a good many more things beside this should find their way there.

Mr. Mason and Elsie walked home together, talking of the family and their destitution.

"Has Nellie no father?" Elsie asked.

"Oh, yes. Did you not know about the acci-

dent? I suppose the poor woman dislikes to speak of it. George Forbes is an excellent mechanic, and makes a good living when sober, but he has been under special temptations latterly, his wife tells me. Since the large saloon near the foundry has been opened, he is constantly asked to drink, by fellow-workmen, so that for the last six months he has been doing badly. He has spent his wages and nearly stripped the house of furniture. It has all gone into that awful maw which swallows up everything within its reach. A few nights ago he came home intoxicated. His wife had gone out on an errand, and he seized Nellie and flung her against the side of the house with such force that it is a wonder he had not killed her. The little creature was crying out, 'Please, papa, don't!' when a policeman heard her screams, and rushed in to her rescue. She may feel the effects of it all her life. That is just a little page from the long story of rum's doings, Miss Chilton."

"Oh, it is dreadful! Poor little Nellie!" said Elsie, under her breath. "Can nothing be done to stop this awful business?"

"It may be," Mr. Mason said, "that this ward will not obtain a license next year. We are working hard to save it. That will benefit this family not only, but scores of others. There are many men in this locality who would be sober and

industrious, if the accursed stuff were not placed in a tempting form before them every time they pass. The sight and smell are too much for them."

"And if license to sell is secured, then there will be no help?" Elsie asked, anxiously.

"Not unless we can break up the establishment. If we could get property owners in the ward to refuse to rent their buildings for this purpose, it would be a great kindness to the men who work in the foundry."

"Where is the saloon?" Elsie asked, lifting her eyes to the tall buildings.

"There, on the corner, in the brick block."

"Why, why!" she exclaimed in astonishment, her face paling and flushing by turns; "that is my father's block. He would not rent it for any such low purposes. Of course, he does not know it is being so used; I will speak to him about it at once. I am sure he would have been obliged to you if you had informed him, Mr. Mason."

Pity for the guileless girl kept the young man silent.

"It is horrible," Elsie went on, "that in this country, so boasted of for its grandeur and power, the law cannot prevent vile places being opened on every corner to entrap men who will go crazy with drink, and then half kill their little children. It makes me positively angry. I feel as if I could

not endure it! Poor Nellie; she was such a bright, happy little creature, and now her life is spoiled!"

Mr. Mason could hardly believe his senses, that this was Miss Chilton, whom he had believed to be a mere society girl, haughty and selfish! Even her appearance as a teacher in the mission school he had supposed to be a whim of the hour—a spasmodic playing at benevolence, which was one of the modern phases of society. Yet her eyes were actually filled with tears and her whole being was deeply moved.

"You do well to be angry," he said; "it is righteous indignation. Would that every man and woman who call themselves Christians shared it. Then we might hope to wipe the curse from the land."

"I am ashamed to say that I know very little about the subject; but it cannot be possible that Christians are not doing all in their power to put it away with the greatest despatch. You talked just now about their obtaining licenses. Surely good men do not deliberately give permission to anybody to sell an article that turns men into maniacs! That would be too absurd and inconsistent. Is not all selling of it against the law? I am very ignorant," she added, deprecatingly, as she saw a smile hover about Mr. Mason's eyes.

“I was amused at the unconscious irony of your remark. One would naturally think as you do, but such is not the case. License to sell is given—to ‘men of good moral character’ is the wording of it—by the payment of a certain sum.”

“But,” said Elsie, excitedly, “a man of good moral character would be ashamed to sell anything to Nellie’s father that would make him knock the breath out of her. He is a murderer, and the man who sells it is a murderer, and the man who gives the license!”

Again Mr. Mason was silent for a moment. This artless girl had evidently no thought that she was pronouncing condemnation upon her own father. Then he said—“In other words, it is sin from the beginning to the end of it.”

“This visit has had one effect upon me,” said Elsie. “Henceforth, as far as I can, I shall give my life to help to take away this evil out of the land.”

Her face was glowing, and the look which Mr. Mason bestowed upon her was admiration, blended with reverence. Earle Mason forgot that he was on the crowded street, and possibly the object of curious eyes. He extended his hand, his own face lighted up with surprise and pleasure, as he said, in low tones—“God be thanked.” They clasped hands an instant. Then Elsie

raised her head and met the pair of eyes which had witnessed the little scene. They belonged to Aleck Palmer! They were very haughty eyes just then, and his bow was extremely cold. He passed on, and Elsie stepped into the car.

CHAPTER XXI.

BY PANSY.

EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS.

WHY did the fellow look at me in that fashion, I wonder? I'm not aware that I have said or done anything to injure him."

Such was Earle Mason's mental comment as, having seen Miss Chilton to her car, he walked on alone, recalling the look on Aleck Palmer's face as he passed them.

Elsie, on her part, indulged in some mental comments.

"Now, Aleck will be offended. He looked unutterable things; I hope Mr. Mason did not notice. Something is always occurring nowadays to disturb him. Why should he take offense, though, at so simple and commonplace an act? Have I really not the right to walk a few blocks with a gentleman, and engage in conversation with him, even shake hands if I will?"

A little frown was overspreading her face with the thought. The sort of jealous espionage which her intended husband seemed to consider necessary, was wearing upon her naturally sweet nature.

"If he cannot trust me now," she murmured; but she left the sentence unfinished, and went to a scarcely less disturbing thought.

"What an idea that my father should own the building where they have a saloon! I suppose it is leased, and he knows nothing about it. I wonder if leases cannot be annulled or revoked, or whatever is the term, whenever there is just cause for complaint. Father must be able to do something about it, of course. The idea of an officer in the church having such a reproach upon his name! How strange that Mr. Mason did not go to him. I suppose he is not acquainted with my father. There is evidently some work for me to do at once in the cause. I am glad it is within my own family, and is therefore such an easy thing to manage."

Saying which, this young simpleton, who was so sure of "easy" work, stopped the car in front of her own door, and was presently in the library, which was the family gathering-room, to find her mother in as much of a flutter as that elegant lady often allowed herself over trifles.

"Elsie, where have you been? I have wanted

you exceedingly; nor am I the only one. Aleck has been waiting for you for the last hour. It seems to me that you are rather indifferent to his interests, in view of the relations between you. I would advise you to be careful. Young men will not endure everything, even when they are very much in earnest."

It was an unwise way to speak to a girl of Elsie's stamp. Her step-mother knew it almost before the ready blood glowed in the girl's cheeks, and she made the cold answer that "she still had an individual existence, as Aleck must be aware, and was not conscious of having done anything that ought to disturb a reasonable person."

"Oh, he will endure it, I presume," Mrs. Chilton said, trying to laugh; "but you need not frown, because he is extremely fond of your society. Love is not so cheap an article in these days that even a pretty girl can afford to toss it about as worthless. But I was not waiting for you in order to give an address on the courtesies due to fiancés; I am overwhelmed with engagements, and perplexed to the degree that I do not know which way to turn. I thought you might suggest something to help me. Here are cards for the Emerson dinner on Thursday, and an evening promised to Mrs. Potts without fail during the week. Friday is the only one left for that, and the circumstances are such that I really cannot

refuse, and every other day and evening for the next ten is crowded. What am I to do?"

"About what, mamma? I do not see any unusual pressure in all that."

The young girl's lip had curled ever so slightly. For some reason, whose depth she did not herself fathom, all these engagements looked so utterly trivial to her now; so little worth getting into a pressure and an excitement over. The prayer-meeting was on Thursday evening also, but her mother had not mentioned it as in the way of her engagements.

"I forget that you had not heard the latest perplexity," said Mrs. Chilton. "It seems that Dr. Benham is in town for a few days, and your father is resolved that we must entertain him; in fact, it is necessary. He is one of the greatest dignitaries of the church, you know. Your father met him last summer at the seaside, and wishes all due honor paid to him. Now, there is really no day in which to entertain him but Thursday, and do you see how we can possibly send regrets to Mrs. Emerson? One meets the very best at her dinners."

"Dr. Benham!" Elsie said, with a lighting up of her face; "oh, I want to see him! Why, he is Mr. Remington's dear friend. They went abroad together before Mr. Remington was married. He must be their guest."

“It is not probable,” said Mrs. Chilton, coldly. “Your father wanted to invite him here; but he said he had a very pressing engagement with some friends who were almost like brother and sister. Your father thought he meant the Lorrimers, probably; he was out riding in their carriage. He is very wealthy, and has most distinguished relatives; it is not an ordinary case of a mere doctor of divinity.”

“Mamma, he is at the Remingtons, you may depend. They are very intimate. They exchange letters every week or two. Mrs. Remington calls him ‘Dr. Joseph,’ and Mr. Remington speaks of him as ‘Joe’.”

“Then we should have to entertain the Remingtons,” Mrs. Chilton said, the perplexity deepening on her face; “that complicates matters still more.”

The light kindled by Dr. Benham’s name faded from Elsie’s face, and she said coldly—

“Why, mamma, of course you would invite our pastor and his wife to meet a ministerial guest, even though he were not an acquaintance of theirs.”

“I am not sure that I should do any such thing,” the lady said, irritably. “I am not bound, I suppose, to have Mr. Remington always at my house just because he happens to be my pastor. I never carry religious observances into fanati-

cism ; beside, if the truth must be spoken, he has made himself so offensive to your father by his unwarrantable interference in family matters that I doubt if he will be willing to receive him socially very soon."

But Mrs. Chilton was mistaken. Although her husband had been guilty, in a moment of ill-temper, of calling his pastor a "contemptible puppy," he by no means proposed to make himself conspicuous in the church by being openly rude to him. It was discovered, a little to Mr. Chilton's annoyance, that the great Dr. Benham was, as Elsie had surmised, the guest of the Remingtons, and, of course, they must be invited with him.

"For the matter of that," said Mr. Chilton, in his loftiest tone, "of course we would invite them when we had guests which it is proper for them to meet. I trust I am above exhibiting personal likes or dislikes in these common matters of courtesy. Because Mr. Remington is not entirely to my taste, does not relieve me from the proprieties which should be observed between pastor and people."

All this sounded exceedingly well to Elsie. She told herself admiringly that "father was so high-minded and unprejudiced." And then she sighed and blamed herself for having misrepresented her pastor ; unwittingly, it is true, but so evidently that her father actually thought he had

been interfering in family affairs! It was well for her, and for Mr. Remington, that her father was the grand man he was.

And Mrs. Chilton, who understood her husband thoroughly, listened and smiled, and knew that the lofty sentence meant that he did not choose at present to have any open rupture with the pastor of Kensett Square Church, and that he intended to maintain his present position as a large-minded, clear-brained, judicious leader of said church. Also, she knew that some opportunity must be found for inviting the Remingtons and their distinguished guest, with certain other distinguished people, to enjoy their hospitality.

It was no sort of use to plead previous engagements; when Mr. Robert Chilton made up his mind, previous engagements had simply to move out of the way. Mrs. Chilton was a wise woman; she immediately "moved" the engagement which she liked the least, and made her preparations on her usual elegant scale, for guests. Among those bidden to the feast were the Delancys. Not that they were remarkable church people; indeed, their attendance at church even, was exceedingly irregular, depending upon the weather, the demands of society on the day before, and a dozen other trivialities. But Mr. Chilton, as I have before hinted, had extensive business relations, and needed to plan his hospitalities carefully. In

fact, they often had to be made up along with his ledger; and this time he decreed that the Delancys were on no account to be omitted.

"I do not like her," said Mrs. Chilton, in an annoyed tone; "she is a coarse woman—does not know how to conduct herself in society. She speaks her mind on all occasions, whether it is agreeable to others present or not; and she has no taste in selecting proper subjects for conversation. I am always in distress when she is my guest, lest she effect an explosion of some sort."

"Then, mamma, why do you invite her?" questioned Elsie, who was studying the forms of society life in these days in all directions, and finding them painfully hollow.

"Because your father insists upon it," Mrs. Chilton said, coldly; "there are business reasons, I believe. I consider it very unfortunate to be obliged always to bring the warehouse into social life."

But Elsie's brow had lightened. Her grand father, she thought, would not have his business acquaintances slighted, even though they were not quite to mamma's mind. She herself did not like the Delancys very well, and had never given them much attention, but she resolved to bestow extra courtesies upon them, and so "help father."

Verily, when I think of Elsie Chilton and her father, I can hardly help quoting the old, almost

worn-out statement, that "where ignorance is bliss, 'twere folly to be wise." It is so beautiful a thing to see a daughter honor a father.

In due time the feast was spread, and those who were bidden made ready, most of them with very satisfied hearts, for the Chiltons entertained elegantly. It is true that Mrs. Mattie said, in the privacy of their own room, to John —

"I almost wish Dr. Joseph had not honored us until after the Chiltons went to Washington. I am beginning to have almost a terror of visiting there. Mrs. Chilton is so much like our lovely white cat at home, whose claws were hidden in the softest and whitest velvet, and were the sharpest of any cat I ever saw."

"What an idea!" laughed John, as he struggled with his collar-button. Then, from out of his masculine mind came this thought, which would doubtless have gratified the persons in question, could they have heard — "I do not think you quite do justice to the Chiltons. Mrs. Chilton is worldly, it is true; but I have sometimes thought she was growing dissatisfied, which is the first step toward a change, you know; she often looks grave nowadays, perplexed or disturbed in some way. I cannot but hope that she has at times a longing for something better than her life offers. As for Mr. Chilton, Aunt Hannah, without intending it, has prejudiced us both a little, I fear. He

is immersed in business, and has very heavy responsibilities which weigh him down, and at times make him irritable. I often overlook sharp things that he says, because I think he is so absorbed that he does not realize how they sound. He is a good friend to us, I think, in his way; his tastes and ours are very different. And I think, too, that he means to be an earnest Christian, but the world, almost of necessity, has a tremendous hold upon him."

Mrs. Mattie listened to all this in determined silence, shutting her lips firmly lest they should insist on a reply, bending low over her shoes with her button-hook, so that John might not detect the little upward curve that there was to her lips. But after a moment's silence he came toward her, took the button-hook out of her hand, and himself finished the task it was doing, as he said with that tone of sweet gravity which never failed to impress her —

"Mattie, dear, I am making that man a special subject of prayer. I long for his awakening almost more, I believe, than I do for that of an unconverted soul. It seems to me at times that he is in peril. I want to keep my heart open and sweet toward him as much as possible. And, darling, I want your help."

Then did Mrs. Remington's face grow bright; all the curve went out of her lip; she looked up

with a frank, glad smile and kissed her husband, and thanked God in her heart that "John" was just the high-toned, unworldly man he was; and humbly wished that she could see through some things not a bit plainer than he could himself.

They went to the feast which Dr. Benham had spread for them, and while they were doing honor to it that gentleman said, in his clear, genial tones —

"Well, Brother Chilton, what are you doing in your city to fight the giant who is stalking all over the land? I suppose you meet him in an aggressive form here as elsewhere. It becomes us who are in earnest to keep careful watch of the 'Davids,' and see what stones are most successful in fighting him."

"Which giant?" his hostess asked, in her smooth, gracious tones, as her husband hesitated a moment; "you clergymen believe that their 'name is Legion' in these days, do you not?"

"That is true, Mrs. Chilton; but the Goliath who, to my mind, towers more than head and shoulders above all other evils, is the liquor traffic. You are especially interested in putting it down, of course, as all Christians are. Is there anything new in your line of work?"

The question was still addressed to Mr. Chilton, and there was nothing about it to embarrass him. Of course, he was a temperance man. Did he

not often pray that the "tide of evil flowing through our land might be stemmed"; that all good men might unite in "wise and well-directed efforts" to overthrow the power of the saloon? He was beginning his reply, couched in language as judiciously worded as his prayers were wont to be, when that unreasoning fanatic, John Remington, suddenly broke forth —

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Benham; did I interrupt? Brother Chilton, I am reminded of something I have been intending to ask you for the last thirty-six hours, as soon as opportunity offered. Has the petition reached you yet for suppressing that infamous saloon near the foundry? Of all the snares which Satan has spread in this city, that one, I believe, makes me the most indignant. Nothing could be more cunningly planned than its location. It is impossible for those poor, tempted men to go to the cashier's desk without passing the door of the trap. And the man who is running it is the worst character in the city, I am told. His license will soon expire, and he is making every effort to secure another, and we are making every possible effort to circumvent him. What decent men he can find to sign his petition, I'm sure I do not know; but the Excise Board does not look closely into the decency of the signers, I presume. Earle Mason is working day and night to outwit the

man. He is a 'David' who would be after your own heart, Benham. A splendid fellow. Has he been to you yet, Brother Chilton?"

"No, sir."

Elsie looked up with a flush on her face. How harsh her father's voice sounded!

"Who owns the building in which the saloon is kept? He's the man to go for first." This from Dr. Benham.

Then Mr. Remington — "I don't know. There seems to be some difficulty in discovering. It is owned by an association, some of them think; but Mason said not, and he is generally well posted. But he didn't state who the owner was. Oh, there is no hope from that quarter. Mason said he had been to the person, or persons, and been assured that their hands were tied. They had leased the building out of their control. Purposely tied, Mason said; and he added that he knew it had been purposely done, and could prove it, if occasion demanded."

Again that startled — this time almost frightened — look in Elsie's eyes. There was surely some mistake. The saloon could never be in her father's building!

"Where is the obnoxious saloon?" Mrs. Chilton's voice again — clear, cultured, undisturbed. Evidently she was in utter ignorance of this being possibly a personal question.

“Why, it is in that large brick block on the corner of Foundry and Washington Streets—the worst possible place for a saloon in the entire city. But what enrages me, is the thought of the man who manages it. The idea that any citizen would perjure himself by saying that the man was of good moral character! Even judged by the rules which obtain in the civil courts, he has an infamous character in almost every direction.”

“Perhaps he will fail of his object,” said Dr. Benham; “and if he does, how much better off will you be? Somebody will succeed. The person with ‘spotless moral character,’ it seems, can be readily found to sell liquid fire to his fellow-men. Perhaps you can get a very high-licensed, gilded saloon there, Brother Remington, and a first-class statesman to run it. Then the foundry men will be safe, of course!”

“Oh, there is room for sarcasm over this way of fighting the enemy, I admit,” Mr. Remington said; “and we are only fighting in this way on the road to better methods. The end will come. Meantime, this saloon—pardon my return to the subject, but I am extremely anxious. There are gentlemen present who, if I mistake not, own property in that ward. If Mrs. Chilton will forgive me for bringing business into a social gathering, I would be glad to receive your promise to give a little attention to this matter just now. I

know how pressed for time business men are, and how liable they are to overlook some things, but the enemy is alert and pressing us very closely just now."

Mrs. Chilton's general interest in the subject had been dispelled within the moment after she had heard where the building was located. Her interest just now was centered in jelly.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Remington; you have not been served to some of my choice jelly. What an oversight! I am sure you will be fond of it."

"No, madame, thank you; it was not an oversight. I declined the jelly."

He did not say that it was because it blushed to its very heart with the flavoring of wine, but returned to, or, rather, continued on, the topic from which his hostess had skillfully tried to draw him.

"Mr. Delancy, am I not right in thinking that you own property in the Fifth Ward?"

"I do, sir; and I am one of those 'infamous citizens' who signed the petition for license, which seems to have aroused your special indignation. Allow me to remind you that we business men have as good opportunity to judge of character as have most of the clergymen, who do not come in contact with the persons in question, and judge only from generally exaggerated hearsay. If we must have a saloon I know no reason

why Hodge should not keep it, as well as any other person. And I call on my friend here, Mr. Palmer, to uphold me. You signed the same obnoxious paper, if I mistake not, Palmer?"

"I believe I did," Aleck Palmer said, affecting an exceedingly careless tone, his eyes avoiding the end of the table where Elsie sat.

CHAPTER XXII.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

FANATICISM.

“GOOD for you, Mr. Palmer!” Mrs. Delancy said, in tones which made her fastidious hostess wince, so high-keyed were they. “I’m glad you haven’t joined the fanatics yet. There’s Fern Redpath, half way beside herself on the temperance question. I should not wonder if she were to end in an insane asylum—I shouldn’t, really! She came to me to sign some sort of a petition the other day—something about some law upon the hobby she is riding. The perfect absurdity of the thing! I told her I was thankful it wasn’t my business—that I had a husband to attend to those matters for me, and I could trust him to do it. Poor Fern! I’m sorry for her. She used to be such a lovely girl.”

Mrs. Delancy supposed herself to be talking

confidentially to Mr. Palmer, but her loud tones had arrested the attention of the whole company, and there was an awkward pause for a moment when she ceased to speak.

Mr. Chilton, in the outset, had intended to reply in a general way to Dr. Benham, and pass to some other subject. But as he became each moment more annoyed at the turn the conversation had taken, resolved to be silent, partly because he did not purpose to confess to the ownership of the building in question and because he was a proud man, and did not relish being obliged to define his position, or commit himself to any line of action—especially did not relish being exhorted to duty by Mr. Remington. He was, moreover, a courteous man. (The laws of God might be broken with impunity, but not so the code of social etiquette.) He was growing more exasperated each minute, and, if he spoke at all, would probably be guilty of extreme rudeness to a guest at his own table; so, making an immense effort at self-control, he preserved silence upon the obnoxious topic, and set his next neighbor going on Gladstone. He made irrelevant replies, but lost not a syllable of Mr. Remington's remarks. Pale from suppressed excitement, and incensed beyond all power of restraint, he was beginning to speak, when there came an interruption. A servant brought word

that a messenger boy waited in the hall with an important dispatch. Excusing himself, Mr. Chilton withdrew, and in another moment sent for his wife. When he returned to the dining-room, it was to state in hurried words that the message was to summon his wife to the bedside of her dying mother — that a train left the station in a half hour, and they would barely have time to reach it.

The guests dispersed soon after. Even Aleck Palmer did not linger, having a pressing engagement elsewhere. Mr. Chilton did not accompany his wife. An important meeting of bank directors, to be held the next morning, prevented the busy rich man from pausing in his career, even when so unfamiliar a presence as death was drawing near to one of his family.

Elsie was alone with her father for an hour or two. Here was an unusual opportunity, she reflected, to speak of what had been to her a heavy burden for the last day or two, and which the conversation at dinner had not lightened. Her father's mood was not propitious. She knew he had been greatly agitated, so she thought to take him by guile. She drew the easiest chair near the grate in the library, brought his slippers carefully warmed, then played and sang low, soft airs. When she had finished, she came and stood behind her father's chair, and fell into her

old childish habit of passing her fingers lightly through his hair.

"Papa, will you let me ask you a question," she said, at length, "about what we were speaking of at dinner? You did not rent your building knowing that a saloon was to be kept in it, did you?"

"Suppose I did; what then?" he said, his brow darkening.

"Oh, it cannot be that you would do anything so wrong! Say you did not. Oh, do!"

The tones were pleading and distressed. Mr. Chilton was amazed.

"How came you to know anything about it?" he asked, angrily. "Elsie, do you know you are meddling with matters that do not belong to you? What does all this mean?"

"It means, papa, that I am a woman, and not a child any more. I have got my eyes opened to some of the wicked things that are going on. Oh, papa, such a dreadful thing happened to one of my little scholars in the mission school! She has been made a cripple by her own father, when he was intoxicated. I went to see her. Her home is so very poor and bare, and they are half starved, because her father spends all his earnings for liquor. He has tried to reform, but the saloon is right there, and he is strongly tempted. I felt so much ashamed when I saw that the place where a

stream of men and boys are going in from morning till night, was in your building!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Chilton, wheeling his chair about and glaring at his daughter; "if Miss Elsie Chilton had been in the home that her father provided for her instead of wandering about in the slums, she would not be quite so wise. It has come to a pretty pass that I am to be called to account by my own daughter, who is ashamed!" Mr. Chilton had risen by this time and was striding up and down the room. "This is what comes of putting a consummate idiot in the pulpit. You are, parrot-like, repeating some of his stuff."

"Please, papa, don't be angry with me; but it seems to me dreadful for a Christian to have anything to do with the sale of such a horrible thing!"

"You would better learn another part of Christian duty, then, and discover that it does not belong to a daughter to arraign her father."

"Oh, papa, I am not arraigning. I only speak of it because I love you so much. I feel so sure that God will judge one who helps in any way to cause such misery. Please promise me that the man who keeps the saloon shall be turned out at once. You used to give me whatever I asked for. Won't you please grant me this? Am I not your dear little daughter yet? Don't look at me so. Do say you will do what I ask."

But the father was too angry to be moved by endearments.

“Elsie,” he said, bringing his hand down on the table, “stop! Let me hear no more of this. You have listened to the fanatical ravings of those ignorant fools, and have taken up their rantings; have taken for granted that of course they are right, and your father is wrong. You seem to have joined yourself to a company of old women who prowl about the city and poke their noses into everything that doesn’t concern them. You will stop that, too. That part of the city where you went is not a fit place for you, and I command you not to go there again. The idea of your getting up a maudlin sympathy for brutes who cannot control their appetites. They are not fit for you to think of; nor their miserable families, either. Don’t ever step your foot there again.”

“But, papa, my little girl is sick, and I promised to go and see her. And you are mistaken about one thing. I have not taken up with any ‘talk’ to repeat it as a parrot might. They are my own conclusions, after thinking and reading and seeing, and I must speak and act according to my conscience.”

“Heavens! Your ‘conscience’ and your ‘conclusions’!” thundered Mr. Chilton; “you’ve no business with either. You would better cut off your hair and put on some strong-minded clothes

and take the platform. If there is a woman in the world that I hate, it is one of that sort. Leave the room, do. To think that a daughter of mine should come to this!"

If he had not been so very angry, the look his daughter gave him — sorrowful, pleading, the eyes filled with unshed tears as she slowly rose to obey — would have melted him. But Mr. Chilton was more than angry. He was bitterly disappointed. He had spared no pains or expense to fit his lovely daughter for a high place in society. She had for a brief time fulfilled his highest hopes concerning her. Especially gratifying was her engagement to Aleck Palmer. There was nothing in the way of a brilliant reign for her as queen in the social world, for years. But of late she had declined invitations repeatedly, and she was losing fairy-like ways and puzzling herself over things that should never have come near her. She was endangering her prospects, beside, in many ways. Aleck Palmer would probably not find such a wife to his taste; and again the man inwardly pronounced maledictions on those who had worked so much mischief, and resolved to do his part toward making the pulpit of Kensett Square vacant very soon. There were reasons, too, why such talk from his daughter pierced him like a knife. Conscience had revived, and was persecuting him. The torment was insup-

portable, for conscience had long been silent on this point. Gold was heaped upon it so heavily that it was nearly suffocated; gold which flowed in from other sources than the mere renting of one building for the purpose of dealing out liquor. A prosperous distillery had his name as a silent partner, although himself, his partners, and we, were the only ones let into the secret. Yet Mr. Chilton did not intend to be a hypocrite. He was punctilious in regard to many religious duties. He gave liberally to all good objects, and was just in his dealings with his fellowmen.

When Elsie came down-stairs the next morning she found that her father had ordered an early breakfast for himself, and had gone to his office, leaving word that he would not be at home that night, as he should go to join his wife, and return with her. It was a relief to find herself alone, sorrowful though she was. Her father was displeased with her, and there was nothing, it seemed to her, that she could do to be reconciled to him, for there was no confession of wrong on her part to be made.

Elsie was growing into the consciousness that there are other methods of relief, when the heart is burdened, than floods of tears. Prayer was daily becoming something more to her than a repetition of familiar phrases, in a general way. There was a continuous lifting up of her heart for

guidance in a life which had suddenly been turned from straight, flowery ways, into bewildering cross-roads. What was to come of it all! How was she to be true to her new convictions with all the pressure that would be brought to bear upon her?

She sat alone toward evening, thinking it all over, when Aleck Palmer was announced. She had dreaded to meet him. They had not seen each other alone since the day they met so inopportunately in the street. His admission, too, at the dinner-table the day before, that he had signed the paper petitioning for license, had fallen upon her heart like a heavy weight. She did not come with a spring to meet him to-night, as she used to do when she was a careless, happy girl.

"I am delighted to find you at home," he said, as he entered; "not attending a mission school, or festival, or singing bad rhymes at a temperance meeting, nor closeted with two or three old women at a committee meeting. How does it happen?"

It was scarcely a lover-like greeting, and Elsie detected more sharpness in the tones than in the words, even though Mr. Palmer smiled as he spoke. He was not in a decidedly bad humor, for he had just concluded a bargain which pleased him exceedingly—a purchase which he had long coveted, but owing to difficulties in settling the

estate, could not gain possession of until now. It was an elegant house on a spacious street in the most delightful part of the city, and was to be his home and Elsie's.

He would not tell her of it at once. There were some matters to be settled between them first at which he had been slightly nettled, as his first remark proved. If he had known how his words jarred, and how they gave evidence to Elsie of utter lack of sympathy with her, he might have hesitated to speak them. Still, Aleck Palmer was accustomed to having circumstances and people yield to his imperious will, and he considered any inharmony of views between them of little importance, as he could easily mold Elsie into what he wished when once she had become his wife. To this end he had in mind to propose an earlier date for their marriage than had at first been named.

"Then I shall soon put an end to these new whims she has taken," this wise young man declared to himself.

It was a grave face that was lifted to his, though the eyes were sweet. Somehow, he shrank from those pure, steady eyes to-night, and would have preferred that his bantering mood should have been met by a bright repartee rather than by her low-spoken, gentle—

"Oh, I have been at home a great deal this

week." Then, in haste to speak at once of what lay heavy on her heart, added—"I am glad you are come, Aleck; I want to ask you to do something for me."

"Command me," he said, lightly.

"You said at dinner last night that you had signed the petition for license in the Fifth Ward. You surely did not mean it."

"I surely did. Are you going about getting up a counter-petition that you wish me to sign?"

"No, I am not getting it up, but there is such a petition; and oh, Aleck! I wish you would take your name from that one and sign the petition for no license."

"It has come to just what I had feared," Mr. Palmer said, contracting his brows; "you have become thoroughly infatuated with the rantings of those fanatics. It is highly complimentary to me to conclude that I am wrong, and they, of course, are right. I have reasons for my principles as well as they, and I act as I believe to be for the best good of the greatest number."

"How can it be possible that it is for the best good of any human being to have liquor sold as a beverage? I have been reading for myself on the subject, Aleck, and I find that a great part of the misery in the world comes from that source. The Bible, too, is against it. I was searching to see if there was anything about it, and, to my sur-

prise, I found this verse: 'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink.' Is it not the same thing when you petition for some one else to be allowed to give it? How can there be a question about the right and wrong of it? Why should not every good man vote always and everywhere against it, and try to legislate it out of the land forever?"

Aleck Palmer looked down at the fair girl, with her soft draperies and her grace of form and manner. How had she suddenly become transformed from a dancing, laughing, winsome, young maiden into this positive, argumentative creature. He could not deny that she had never looked more beautiful than now, with her glowing face and earnest eyes. If it had been a disquisition on art that she was absorbed in, he would have thought her almost divine. But this hateful subject! What had his fairy-like Elsie to do with such hard, disagreeable topics? She was becoming utterly spoiled.

"Women know nothing of these political matters," he said, coldly; "and it is best not to try to meddle with them. They cannot comprehend all the reasons for certain lines of action. Men are perfectly capable of adjusting these questions, and women would much better trust them, and attend to matters in their own sphere, where they are far more attractive than when

they assume to be strong-minded. Let me tell you that even liquor-sellers are not doing the harm that these addle-headed fanatics are, who are the means of dividing the country up into factions, and diverting votes from important questions. An impertinent, conceited, bigoted, common horde, who cannot see more than an inch ahead of them! Of course, they will secure a following among the ignorant, but it is mortifying that Elsie Chilton has been made a tool of, to spread the foolish notions of a few unbalanced persons who egotistically imagine that they can make the world over."

Elsie's color had grown brighter, and she was beginning eagerly to make her defense when Mr. Palmer added—

"By the way, let us change the subject. What impressive scene was going on between you and Mason just as I passed you in the street? I have scarcely seen you since."

"We simply shook hands. Did we look very impressive?"

"Is he such a dear friend that you must take leave of him with so much demonstration?"

For the second time that week there came to Elsie a slight, indefinable sense of annoyance, that she must be accountable for her smallest action, as if she were a child. Her transparent nature would not allow her to evade or prevari-

cate, so she answered by telling the story of her visit to little Nellie, her meeting Mr. Mason, and their talk afterward.

“Indeed! So you and Mr. Mason go together on errands of mercy in the byways of the city! It is a pity he had not business enough to keep him employed, without his being obliged to fill up his time dawdling about in this way. He is contemptible!”

“He is very noble!” Elsie said, with a show of spirit, “and we did not go together. I told you we happened to meet there.”

“And so you announced to him that your purpose was henceforth to number yourself among ‘the martyrs to a sacred cause’? That is the way the cant phrases go, I believe. Did it occur to you that your life was to be joined with another’s, and that that one might have something to say about your future?”

Aleck Palmer was extremely angry. His face was white, and his tones were unsteady, for, added to other grievances, there had shot into his heart for the first time a swift pang of jealousy. The face of the girl who listened, flamed up into vivid color. How could he speak of dear and tender relations in such a way? Her life joined to another’s, joined in the sense of shackles! Was that what it was to be? All her womanhood rose in protest, that any one,

be he ever so dear, was to command her conscience and restrict her freedom of thought. The young man might well feel a jealous twinge, for at that moment, involuntarily and swiftly, Elsie contrasted the two men; not their eyes, or complexions, or height, but their manhood. And Earle Mason towered above the man who had pronounced him "contemptible." In this, she had no thought of being disloyal to Aleck. Indeed, she recognized with sorrow the fact that such had been her verdict. Character, not those who interpret it, is alone responsible for the impressions it produces.

"No," she answered, lifting her head somewhat proudly; "it had not occurred to me that I was not to obey my conscience, and to have the utmost freedom of thought and action in all my future life. I will repeat what I said to Mr. Mason, that it is my solemn purpose to give, so far as I can, my strength, my voice and my means, to help wage a war against rum, as long as I live, God helping me!"

It was evident to both, at that moment, that a great gulf had arisen between them. The man could not appreciate the heroism of the woman's words. To him they were mere absurdity, and she knew and felt it. Aleck Palmer was astonished. This was not the timid, clinging girl he had come to put down by a few masterful words.

She had been changed into a thoughtful, self-assertive woman.

There was a moment of silence, when they looked into each other's faces. One was fierce, the other resolute. Mr. Palmer resolved to resort to a desperate remedy, and frighten this young reformer into a recantation. He forgot, in his rage, that he had resolved not to argue the question with her, but wait until he could speak with the authority he conceived a husband should have.

"You certainly," he said, "will not persist in such a course, when I tell you that it is in direct opposition to my wishes; and that, after you have become my wife, it will be impossible for me to permit you to be prominent in any work of the kind. In fact, it would damage my interests politically."

"We might as well be plain with each other, Aleck," Elsie said, speaking with effort, mingled emotions striving for the mastery. "I cannot permit any one, whether I be married or otherwise, to rule my conscience. What I promise to God I must perform."

"Such absurd folly! Such infatuation!" he muttered, and then —

"Are you sure you will be able to meet the consequences of such a decision, if the result of all this be to separate us forever?"

He spoke in that low, hoarse tone into which some men fall when they are angry. He was utterly unprepared for the sentence that followed.

“I have sometimes thought it would have come to that. We are so utterly unlike. We have somehow got upon different planes. We should make each other miserable, I fear.”

Her face, as she looked up at him, while she spoke those words, had a look in it that was not so much of sorrow for herself, as of pity for him.

Aleck Palmer bowed low with mock reverence as he said —

“I quite agree with you, Miss Chilton. Let this little farce end here, now and forever.” And then, without further speech, he turned and was gone.

As he went out into the frosty air, he himself did not know which was hurt more — his heart or his pride.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BY PANSY.

PRECIPITATION.

THE Rev. John Remington was in his study, in his favorite chair, and evidently studying, though neither book nor paper was at hand; his elbows rested on the hospitable arms of the study chair, and his head was bowed on his hands, whose fingers, interlocking, formed a rest for it.

Some philosopher in human nature says, that for certain natures, this is the attitude of deep and painful thought. If you could have seen the heavy lines on this young minister's forehead, and the quiver of his sensitive mouth hidden by the friendly hands, you would have felt that the philosophy held good in this place.

He was not alone. Seated in the easy chair near the study table, the chair Mattie was supposed to occupy, and rarely had time for in these

days, with eyes dropped to the carpet, his entire attitude betokening respectful waiting, was Earle Mason. There was no quiver on his lips; instead, they were firmly set, and there was about him an indescribable air of holding himself in check.

The silence between them lasted until Mr. Remington seemed suddenly to become aware that it was growing painful, and lifted his head with a faint smile. "I beg your pardon," he said; "I had almost forgotten that I was not alone. You see how entirely at home I must be with you; there are some whose presence I could not forget, however much I might wish to."

"No apology is necessary, of course, Mr. Remington; but may I be allowed to ask what you mean to do; or is that premature?"

"Not at all; there is but one thing to do; I will go, of course. When a pastor is respectfully invited by eight of his leading members to do so, I take it there is nothing left for him but to resign."

Now the eyes flashed, and the impetuous tongue burst forth. "I do not see why, sir, when the eight members are 'leading ones' merely because they happen to control more money than the others. This is not a new experience in our church. Your immediate predecessor, as well as several who preceded him, passed through a like ordeal. Did you never hear how Dr. Bourne was treated?"

Despite his excellent powers of self-control, John Remington winced. Yes, he had heard of Dr. Bourne, and a vivid flush overspread his heretofore pale face. He had heard that Dr. Bourne was "a good man, a well-meaning man, but not in any sense of the word a preacher. Good old-fashioned, prosy sermons, you know," Mr. Chilton had told him with a benevolent smile; and had added —

"I respect Dr. Bourne as much as any man could, and regret the necessity which was laid upon us for making a change; but one's personal feelings must not interfere with one's duty, where the good of the church is concerned. You know, of course, that that sort of preaching will not do for the present generation?" And Mr. Remington had acquiesced, by silence at least.

Perhaps, in this hour of painful awakening he saw more plainly than ever before, the train of thought which he had pursued while Mr. Chilton was explaining the "sacrifice of personal feeling," made for the good of the church!

Of course a preacher of the gospel ought to keep abreast of the times; he cannot be expected to win the respect of thinking men, who are alive to all questions of the day, unless he can meet them on their own ground, with as thorough a grasp of the subject as they, and with ability to present his views in a logical and interesting man-

ner. He did not think they would have occasion to find fault with him on that score, at least.

This humiliated pastor recognized thoughts like these as the ones which had presented themselves during that talk with Mr. Chilton. Was he, then, an egotist? That despicable thing, a vain man; trusting in his own powers of logic and elocution to move the multitude toward Christ? No, he was not; he held up his head and told himself boldly that there was no need for making himself worse than he was; that his supreme hope and trust had been centered in the thought of the Holy Spirit speaking through him, but he had believed that the Lord called men of talent to the gospel ministry, and expected them to use their talents to the utmost; and he had believed that the reason Dr. Bourne failed, was not because of the hardness of men's hearts, but because of the weakness of his powers. He himself had not expected to fail, at least, not in this line; yet here beside him lay that curiously-written letter, every word of which struck at him like a knife. A letter which said that they regretted the necessity which seemed to be upon them to seek a change for their pulpit. They did not doubt his integrity of purpose, nor his earnestness of soul; but they felt that he must have seen that he was not succeeding in holding the young and vigorous elements of the church. That his style of preaching, though

excellent in its way, and all that many churches might desire, did not seem suited to the demands of Kensett Square. And much more, in the same strain.

There are ministers, and ministers' sons and daughters, who will smile over this story, they know so well the very phraseology of communications of like character. It is true in this, as in other lines, that "history repeats itself."

But it was all new to John Remington, and his heart was as heavy as lead. Earle Mason did not await this retrospect in silence; he was pouring out a torrent of words.

"I am an advocate of peace, Mr. Remington; I have always taken the ground that it should be maintained at the expense of everything but principle; but I declare to you that I think the time has come when the Kensett Square church should listen to the voice of its large majority of people, with brains and souls, whose pockets are not so heavily lined as those of the present controllers of affairs. Do you not know that fully three-fourths of your large congregation would to-day sign a petition begging you to remain at any cost, and that a respectable portion of the other fourth would sign the same paper if they were not held in bondage to the aforesaid few? Is it right for the few, whose aims and plans are utterly out of accord with the spirit of the gospel, to rule the church of God?"

Mr. Remington was regarding him thoughtfully, and now asked — “What do you take to be the real animus of this letter, then? Do you mean that even those men who have signed it do not honestly feel what they say? Do they not really think that my sermons are such as cannot benefit the Kensett Square congregation?”

Earle Mason threw back his head in evident scorn. “Benefit! Dear sir, they are perfectly honest. How do they want the Kensett Square congregation benefitted? They want to retain the favor of the fashionable, worldly crowd. They want its members to be able to make their nightly feasts, where wine, and cards, and fashionable dancing rule the hour. They want them to think nothing about the wages of the poor, or the temptations of the poor, except to plan asylums for the daily increasing number of paupers. My dear pastor, the fraction which rules Kensett Square, and has ruled it for a score of years, believes itself to be rich, and in need of nothing; and wishes to be left in peaceable possession of such belief. It has come to realize that such sermons as yours must either bear fruit, or be silenced. To sit quietly under them from Sabbath to Sabbath, and make no change, is impossible.”

“But, Brother Mason, consider what you are saying; all but two of the names on this paper are members of the church!”

“Church members, it is true, but—well, Mr. Remington, I’ll be as charitable as I can under the circumstances; but I know these men well, and my father knew them before me.”

“‘Judge not that ye be not judged,’” said his pastor, with a wan smile.

“Yes, sir; and ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ Look here, Mr. Remington”—and drawing to him the letter which lay on the table, he pointed with his pencil to a name—“this man furnishes work to dozens of women, at what he knows to be starvation prices; and when called upon to aid one of them, who is dying of hunger and impure air, he replied that when the woman brought home her last bundle of work and was paid for it, his responsibility toward her ceased. That to be expected to enquire into the aches and pains and whims of each woman who happened to work for him, was preposterous. This man owns, and receives rent for tenement houses, the sleeping apartments of which are green with mold, and refuses to spend a dollar in repairs. And to my certain knowledge he turned a family into the streets last week, because the mother—a widow—was twenty-four hours behind time with her rent.

“How dwelleth the love of God in him, Mr. Remington? And this man is the largest owner in one of the largest distilleries in the country;

unless his prospective father-in-law is as large—which I surmise, but do not know. The other items I can vouch for.”

“His prospective father-in-law!” the minister interrupted, hastily; “you surely do not mean Mr. Chilton? Brother Mason, that cannot be possible!”

“I do, indeed, mean him; though as I say, that part is surmise. At least, he is the owner of the building next to the foundry where we have been trying so hard to suppress that saloon—and have failed, by the way—and Mr. Chilton was petitioned when he gave the lease, to make the selling of intoxicants in the building impossible, and refused.”

“Is it possible?” said Mr. Remington; and the pained, shocked look on his face was one that lingered afterward in the young man’s memory. There was silence between them for several minutes, then Mr. Remington spoke again in a low, moved tone—“Brother Mason, I have felt a peculiar anxiety for, and interest in, that man from the very first of my coming here. I have made him a special subject of prayer, and asked that the Lord would let me help him.”

“Then it may be that the Lord’s effort to reach him in answer to your prayer is what has stirred up all the evil within him, and made him so bitter against you. A man must either turn squarely

around or plunge ahead, when God's spirit strives with him. Is it not so?"

"Is he bitter against me?"

Mr. Mason bowed gravely. "More bitter, I think, than the others, though less honest; he does his work in an underhanded way, and is at the bottom of this precious document, if I mistake not. Mr. Remington, would it not be possible for you, and has not the time come when the church should rally around you and stand her ground? It would cause a division, it may be; but would we not be in better shape for the Master's handling if we were to come out from such positions, and be separate?"

Mr. Remington shook his head. "It may have to come, in time," he said, gravely. "It should come, perhaps, if you are right; but not yet, and not through me; I am too young a man. The spirit of the effort would be misunderstood and do harm. No, you must try again—with a new man who will try more wisely, perhaps, than I have done."

Silence again; broken this time by Mr. Mason.

"Mr. Remington, where will you go? And when will you go? Not, surely, until the close of the church year?"

"As to the first," Mr. Remington said, with a grave smile, "I am not sure. I have no present knowledge; that is, I do not see very far ahead.

But as to the second question, nothing is plainer than that I should vacate this pulpit as soon as it can be done, in accordance with our church rules. Nothing is gained, in my judgment, by delay, when matters have reached such a focus as this. How they could have reached it without my having at least a premonition, is almost beyond my comprehension. It would seem as though I must have been culpably blind." And he passed his hand wearily over his forehead, in a way he had when perplexed and weary at heart.

"They were precipitated," the young man said, with stern gravity, "and by causes utterly outside of either your duty or control. May I ask if Mrs. Remington knows?"

A sudden flush overspread the minister's face, which had paled again. "She does not," he said, quickly; "I have known of it myself, you remember, less than twenty-four hours; and I have been weak, perhaps," hesitating for a word, and smiling faintly. "I have shrunk from telling her; these things strike to the very life of ministers' wives, Brother Mason."

"It is dastardly!" said Mr. Mason, rising hastily. "It will not do for me to talk about it, yet; I have not your wonderful self-control, nor your Christ-like spirit. I will go; only—there is this to say, and yet I don't know how to say it. There is a little church—a very poor church in a

poor country village—which is just now in sad straits ; no preaching in the town of any sort, and no present prospect. If you could at any time give them help for a few weeks, until you knew what you wanted to do, it would be work for Christ. They are hungry for the gospel.”

“I will go to them with all my heart, if I can,” said Mr. Remington, promptly. “If there is anything which it seems to me would do my soul good, it would be to get where there are some poor, disheartened, struggling people who are hungry for the gospel. It was the ‘common people,’ you remember, who ‘heard Him gladly’.” And this time John Remington’s smile was full and sweet.

Now, in order to understand the motive powers which had precipitated this event, it will be necessary to go back a little, to the days immediately following the evening on which Aleck Palmer so abruptly left his intended wife to her own troubled thoughts, and went out, slamming the door ever so slightly after him.

To say that Aleck Palmer, on that occasion, was in a passion, would be to put it very mildly. He had been angry before, in his life—as certain who were so unfortunate as to be in a degree in his power, could have testified to their sorrow—but at this time the blood fairly boiled in his veins. He tramped a half mile in the wrong direction

before he was even composed enough to note the way he was taking. He told himself that he would have nothing more to do with the Chilton family; that he was well rid of a dangerous and exceedingly uncomfortable young woman who was getting views on all questions under heaven; and if there was one form of womankind more unutterably disagreeable than any other, it was females with "views!" That he, Aleck Palmer, a millionaire in his own name and with almost unlimited prospective wealth not only, but with the most dazzling political prospects opening before him, should actually be trammelled and thwarted by this soft-voiced, fair-browed young girl, who had had mind of her own enough where other people were concerned, but had always been ready to defer to his slightest wish, was unbearable. All this, he told himself for the dozenth time, was because they had put a whining, meddling fanatic into the pulpit. "Confound the puppy!" he said, shutting his teeth together hard. And he did not know that in his rage he had chosen the same descriptive noun which the courtly, middle-aged officer of the church had used in reference to his pastor!

CHAPTER XXIV.

BY PANSY.

COMPLICATIONS.

BUT this mood passed. Aleck Palmer was not thirty-six hours older before he was made aware that it was all very well for him to say that he would have nothing more to do with Elsie Chilton; the fact remained that this fair-faced girl, with her sweet voice and thoughtful eyes, held a place in his heart from which not even her unaccountable lack of sympathy with his views could remove her. He was even conscious of the fact that there had been of late, an added something about her, which, while it annoyed, at the same time held him. It was of no use to think of giving her up.

Moreover—and here the caliber of the man showed itself—they had gone too far to consider such a question!

In the circle in which both moved, it was the recognized thing to make no secrets of marriage engagements.

Perhaps the most sensible position which the fashionable world took at that time, was the eminently proper one of behaving in a rational manner in this respect; instead of acting as though an engagement involving marriage was a thing to be concealed, to be blushed over, to be giggled over, to be covered with language which, if not utterly false, approached to the very verge of falsehood, fashion decreed that marriage engagements should be duly announced, at a convenient time, and congratulations were received with the dignity which the subject demanded.

Among their intimate friends the Chilton-Palmer engagement had been formally announced and the usual courtesies exchanged. Therefore, for Aleck Palmer to have the petty gossips of their world set on the *qui vive* over their affairs, whispering that the engagement had been broken off, and conjecturing all sorts of wild reasons, was a humiliation not to be thought of.

Almost stronger than his ambitious schemes and his love for his own way, was this gentleman's pride. Not that he had the remotest idea of giving up his own way. So little did he understand the young woman whom he expected to marry, that it did not seriously occur to him

there could be two settled opinions about the way to take; his judgment would rule, of course, in all outward affairs; only, it was so disagreeable—so like second-rate novels, he told himself in a vexed consciousness—to have discussions over such matters! But for the unwarrantable interference of the Remingtons with their affairs, and their unaccountable influence over Elsie, nothing of this sort would have occurred to mar his peace.

Is it any wonder that he grew more out of tolerance every moment with people whom he had never liked? Yet he anticipated no serious trouble. Why should there be trouble? Was he not Alexander Roosevelt Palmer? The blood of more than a dozen “first families” flowed in his veins.

“Of course,” he said to himself, “Elsie’s words to-night were worth no more than mine. She was, like myself, excited. She is as true as steel everywhere and always; and as for pride, the Chilton blood does not flow in very lowly channels. Beside” —

The idea involved in that last “beside” he did not formulate even in thought. It really meant — “The idea of any sane girl voluntarily releasing Aleck Palmer from an engagement of marriage!”

His decision, after mature deliberation, and

having given his first anger time to cool, was that he would be extremely judicious. It would certainly be well to let Elsie understand that it was not wise to trifle with him in the way she had been doing; a little dignified holding aloof, he resolved, would be excellent for her. To this end he absented himself for more than a week; merely taking the precaution to send a note to Mr. Chilton, asking if he could serve him in any way in Boston, whither he had determined to go, on business. Also, after the lapse of a week or so, he let Mr. Chilton know, incidentally, that he had returned. Yet it was several days before he made any demonstration to Elsie. However, nearly two weeks from the time when he had taken his abrupt leave of her she received by a special messenger, the following note—

MY DEAR ELSIE:

You have of course heard, through your father, that I have been absent on business. It detained me longer than I had expected, and since my return I have been too closely confined to important duties even to write to you. This evening will be my first leisure hour, and I shall hasten to be with you at as early a moment as possible.

I hardly know whether it is wise to refer at all to our last somewhat trying interview. Of course I give you credit for too much good sense to have taken to heart the somewhat strong language which I believe I used at that time. Indeed, if I remember correctly, you were also somewhat unfortunate as to your choice of words; the truth is, we were both excited, unduly

so, I now think, and perhaps were not responsible for our words; at least, I am willing to forget those of yours which grieved me. I have now to propose that we drop all discordant themes — sink them into oblivion, I hope.

Perhaps the wise way for both of us will be to ignore the recent past and commence anew. I have something of importance to bring to your consideration; something which is exceedingly pleasant to me, and which I trust will be not unpleasant to you. But enough of this on paper; I am pressed for time, and yet can scarcely wait for evening.

I am, yours as ever,

ALECK.

Over this letter Elsie had grown pale, to the degree that her step-mother, who entered her room at the moment of its reading, paused in dismay, and said, hastily — “Elsie, what can be the matter? Is there a ghost hidden in that note? Is anything wrong with Aleck?” Mrs. Chilton was unaware of any coldness between the young people. Mind and heart had been busy with her own affairs of late, to the extent that she had almost forgotten her anxieties concerning them. You will remember that she was summoned hastily to her mother’s dying bed. She had been much separated from her early home, and had never been a daughter who was in all respects congenial to her mother. Yet, the summons home for such a cause had been a shock; she had not realized that one belonging to her could die! Despite the uncongeniality and the long years of separation, mother is mother, still; and Mrs. Chilton’s

tears fell fast over her coffin; and the people looked on pitifully, and told one another how inconsolable she was, and how beautiful she looked in her mourning. And Mrs. Chilton came home again as soon as custom had decreed that it would do. At times she thought that there had come a gloom into her life, and sighed; at times she felt that mourning was becoming to her, and it was well it was, for Robert would not like her to look dismal.

There were many "duties to society" that even in her mourning it seemed proper for her to remember; still the episode gave a sort of relief to the whirl of engagements, enabling her to excuse herself where she desired to be excused, and to accept with becoming gravity certain invitations which she wanted to. Always prefacing such acceptances with a little sigh, and the grave statement that one must not be selfish in one's grief. These and kindred duties her mind had been busy with during the early days of her return. Elsie and her prospects had slipped into the background. But that pallid face put her on the alert again. She questioned Mr. Chilton when he came by appointment for her to ride.

"I don't know what they are about," he grumbled. "Elsie is being an idiot, probably; she seems to have taken up that *rôle* lately, and plays it extremely well. Palmer has been away on busi-

ness ; he wrote, asking me to let Elsie know ; I thought it would have been more in keeping if he had written her, and I suppose some quarrel between them is the reason of his not doing so ; but I asked no questions — if they cannot manage their affairs without my help I'm sorry for them. Yes, Palmer has been at home for two days at least — I don't know but three ; hasn't he called ? They both need masters ; a couple of silly children playing at life." Silence for a few minutes, then this —

"Try to find out, Augusta, how matters stand. I'm so vexed with Elsie that I don't want to talk with her about that or anything else. Oh, there is nothing particularly new ; some of that fanatical preacher's ideas coming to the front. But there must be no break with Palmer ; that she must understand. I'll have no daughter of mine posing in such a character before the gossips ; beside" —

And his wife knew that that "beside" covered a multitude of reasons why there must be no "break with Palmer." Business reasons, more important than those which affected merely human hearts.

As for Elsie, she still sat in her room where her step-mother had left her. She had been glad when she saw her father and mother drive away ; she wanted to be alone in the house ; she felt

overwhelmed with the burden of her troubles. The ten days just past had been days to remember. There had been a fierce battle fought with the tempter, and she almost did not yet know which had conquered.

Sincere to the heart's core herself, she had believed that the words with which Aleck Palmer had left her on that last evening they had spent together, were meant to be final, so far as he was concerned. But she also believed that if she would write to him, or send for him to come to her, and should tell him that the ideas which had so disturbed him should be put aside; that she would be the sort of woman he expected her to be, the sort of woman he believed he had won, that he loved her enough to take back those words of separation, and declare peace between them.

Now can you understand the fierceness of the battle? Elsie Chilton, even in her unthinking girlhood, which now seemed to her so long ago, was not one to pledge herself lightly. With her word to Aleck Palmer she believed she had given her whole heart. Since then she had changed, it is true; and she recognized sadly that there were important subjects upon which she and her promised husband did not agree. There had been times, especially after that talk with Aunt Hannah, when she had felt, with great throbs of pain, that perhaps Aunt Hannah was right, and she

ought not to consummate her engagement with one not in sympathy with her new views of life. But Elsie Chilton's higher experience had been very recent, and there came always to her assistance the memory of that solemn pledge between them.

"If we were not engaged," said the poor girl, sorrowfully; "if I had not in the most solemn and unreserved manner given myself to him for life, and if he should ask me now, for the first time, to be his wife, I should know that I must not; but are such earnest vows as I made, asking God to help me, to count for nothing?"

Under this heavy conflict of "ought I" and "ought I not" her life had been spent, for weeks. There being all the time, however, an undertone belief that in the sight of God she was pledged; an engagement entered into deliberately, as hers had been, without compulsion of any sort, ought perhaps to be as sacred as marriage. Aunt Hannah did not seem to think so; but then, Aunt Hannah was old, and thought strongly in certain lines, perhaps, without giving due regard to arguments on the other side. If only she could know without asking, what her pastor thought! But she shrank from going over the subject with him, as being a humiliation too deep for her, and perhaps dishonorable to Aleck. "If I only had a mother!" was the out-cry of this poor heart many

a time during these wearing days ; and yet, foolish lamb, One who had promised to be more than father and mother to his own was leading her through the darkness all the time. Into the perplexities of the hour had come those parting words of Aleck's. Now, at least, according to her logic of a little while before, Elsie knew her duty. He had hurriedly and utterly thrown off the pledges she had thought to be so binding ; freed her without a moment's hesitation as to his right to do so ; and yet she was not at rest. She shrank utterly from the ordeal through which mere passiveness on her side, would now lead her. She thought of the gossip which would result, and imagined the questions levelled at her, to say nothing of the eyes from those who would not dare to question, until her throat burned as though it had been scalded with the words which she knew she would have to bear. Above all, she thought of her father ; how entirely his heart was set upon this union of two old and honorable names she hardly understood ; yet enough of his strong feeling had come to the surface to make her realize the importance of the step she was now considering. Also, there was her step-mother. Elsie's heart cried out for a mother, yet she was by no means insensible to the fact that Mrs. Chilton had been to her an exceptionally good step-mother. She had petted her in her

childhood, and lavished untold thought and care upon her wardrobe, her home appointments, her interests in general during all these years; she, too, had set her heart upon this marriage; had spared no pains to secure to Elsie all the pleasures connected with this period of her life which it was possible to secure from abundant leisure and unlimited indulgence. Elsie had been all her life fond of her step-mother; had been grateful to her, in a sense, and while recognizing, of late, as she had not before, the great void which was unfilled, she still liked her step-mother so well that the thought of disappointing her in this darling wish of her life was a deep, added pain.

What of her own heart, meantime? Why, perhaps you will be able to understand me when I say that Elsie gave it extremely little attention. She believed that of course it would ache. Of course she loved Aleck Palmer, and of course it would be like giving up part of her life to give him up; that was to be accepted as part of the ordeal which needed no looking at; the only question for her, after all, was that supreme one — “What is Right?”

She settled it at last, on her knees. She would write no letter, speak no word of recall. Since the one whom she had given the right to hold her pledged, had of his own accord given back her pledges, she would not in any way place upon her-

self again, vows not in accord with the supreme motive which must from henceforth rule her life.

She had barely reached, during these ten days, the quiet stage which follows an important decision that one believes to be final. She had not yet decided how or when to reveal the state of affairs to her father and mother. Circumstances favored her silence. Her father held himself aloof and immersed in business to an unusual degree, even for him; and her mother was engaged in making the wheels of her world run smoothly in the grooves which her mourning made necessary. Very soon she must tell them, but for the present she would hold herself quiet.

Into this comparative quiet came the calm, assured letter, a copy of which I have given you. A letter in which the writer claimed her as composedly as though he had not of his own accord thrown her off—and bade her let the subject upon which they differed, drop forever into oblivion!

An hour after its reception, she still sat with the letter in her hand and a feeling almost of terror in her heart. How utterly this complicated her life, hedged her way! What was the next step to take? But before she had time to commence an answer to this question, there came an interruption—another note. The gentleman was waiting for an answer, the servant said. Elsie

did not recognize the writing, but made haste to read —

MISS CHILTON:

Dear Friend—Your little Nellie is dying. I do not think that she can live through the evening. Her mother tells me that since yesterday morning she has begged for you almost constantly. So distressed was the poor mother, that this morning she sent a messenger to your father's office praying you to come to the child. I assured her that you could not have received the word or you would have been there. I shall take the liberty to wait at your door for answer to this, in the hope that you will permit me to take you at once to Foundry Street. I pray God that we may not be too late to grant the poor little sufferer's last pitiful wish.

Sincerely,

EARLE MASON.

Before this note was fairly read, Elsie was on her way down-stairs.

“Mr. Mason,” she said, hurriedly, “what am I to do? My father has forbidden my going to Nellie's home again; it is the only thing which has kept me from her. My father is not at home, and I fear I cannot reach him in time. What ought I to do?”

“My dear friend, you promised to come again, and the child is dying! There can be no possible harm in your keeping your word. Your father must be misinformed as to the locality. It is a perfectly decent street, though the people living on it are so wretchedly poor. The drunken men who find their homes there, are not on the street

in the daytime. As for the poor father, he is in no state to do you harm, now; he is utterly crushed with grief and remorse. Miss Chilton, I will pledge my word that you shall not be annoyed in any way."

Elsie had turned toward the stairs again before his sentence was concluded. "Thank you," she said, quietly; "I will be ready in a moment. Jean," to the servant in waiting, "say to mamma when she returns that I have gone to Foundry Street with Mr. Mason to see my little Nellie; she is dying. They sent for me this morning and I did not receive the word. Tell mamma I will return as soon as I can, but she need not be anxious about me; Mr. Mason will see that I am taken care of."

Very soon thereafter, Mrs. Chilton, having dropped her husband at the office, and picked up Aleck Palmer, alighted with that gentleman from her carriage, and led the way to her own door.

"Take a seat in the library, Aleck; you will be less liable to interruption there; Jean, say to Miss Elsie that Mr. Palmer is here."

"Miss Elsie is out, ma'am," said Jean, awaiting further orders.

"Out!" repeated the lady, in dismay. "Are you sure? I understood her that she was not going out at all this afternoon."

"Yes, ma'am, I am quite sure; she went a

little while ago. She was called away, ma'am; it is a little girl — one of her Sunday children — and she is dying; she wanted Miss Elsie bad; I heard him say so myself."

"Heard whom say so? Why do you not speak so that I can understand you?"

"Mr. Mason, ma'am — he came for her; and she said to tell you she would come back as quick as she could; and you were not to worry, because Mr. Mason would take care of her."

"I believe in my soul she is infatuated with that fellow!"

It was Mr. Palmer who muttered this sentence; he had not gone to the library, but lingered in the hall and heard Jean's story. Even Mrs. Chilton was displeased. She waited only for the retreating form of Jean to be lost to sight, then said — "Softly, Aleck, softly. You forget that you are speaking of our daughter. That is not a sentence which Elsie's father would like to hear you utter."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Chilton; I hardly know what I am saying. I have been through a fearful ordeal since I last saw you. I do not know — come into the library, please, and let me talk to you."

An hour later the dinner-bell sounded in the hall, and Mr. Palmer and his hostess came out from the library.

“No, I will not stay to dinner,” he said; “I am not in the mood. I will come again, perhaps; or, suppose you say to Elsie that at any time when she is at leisure to see me, she might send me word.”

“Do not be foolishly hard on the child, Aleck; she is very much attached to her little scholars, and is easily wrought upon in any way. You must make all due allowance for the peculiar influence under which she has been drawn. I confess I shall be glad when it is removed.”

“It shall be removed,” the gentleman said, bitterly, with an ominous drawing down of his eyebrows.

“But you must not be rash, or unduly in haste, Aleck,” said Mrs. Chilton, a little anxiously. “Such matters will not bear precipitancy.”

“Good evening,” said the young man, still gloomily, and with drawn eyebrows. He looked as though he did not care how rash he was; nor how soon Kensett Square church had a vacant pulpit.

CHAPTER XXV.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

—
A MODERN MARTYR.

THE Elsie Chilton of a year ago would have shuddered at the bare suggestion of herself being summoned to a forlorn tenement house in a back street of the city to stand by a dying bed.

She had especially shrunk from the thought and presence of death, and had seen a face where he had set his seal but once or twice in her life. During these last months she had come to look upon the going out of this life into another with different feelings. Christ was to her no longer far off and impalpable, but a real friend and Redeemer who had delivered her from the bondage of the fear of death, so far as herself was concerned. And yet she reflected as she drew near the house that it was a great and solemn mystery,

this departure of a soul from a body, and if there should be suffering connected with it, how could she bear to see a little child in agony? Despite a great effort at self-control she was pale and trembling when she entered the room. But there was no need for fear here. Like a drooping white lily the child lay back among her pillows sweetly breathing her life out, as quietly as a flower passes away. The time for suffering was past, and the little face had taken on that look of sweet content which the parting soul sometimes leaves behind when the veil has been lifted, and a glimpse of the glory to come has dawned upon it.

If pity were needed it was for the father; the strong man who knelt by the foot of the bed, his whole form shaking with repressed sobs and groans. Can any agony be greater than that of remorse?

"Teacher has come," said Nellie's mother.

The brown eyes opened then and rested with a glad look on the one she had so longed for.

"Jesus has come for me," the faint little voice whispered as Elsie bent over her; "I love you, teacher." And the eyes closed again.

There came a long, quivering breath, and they thought she was gone; but she opened wide her eyes once more, searching for her father, and her voice rang out clear and strong as if new strength had been given for the last sweet mission.

“Papa, take me!” she said. Sitting down on the bed he lifted her head in his arms. She smiled up into his face, murmuring “Dear papa!” Then lying back as if satisfied, whispered, “Sing, ‘Jesus, lover’” —

Then was stillness for a moment, broken only by sounds of weeping; then Elsie’s voice, at first choked by sobs, but gaining the mastery of itself, went out in the sweet, clear notes of the old love-song which has so comforted God’s saints during the last hundred years —

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.”

Elsie paused after the first verse, but the eyes unclosed again and cast a pleading look, and the low sweet music went on through the whole hymn. With the last notes little Nellie looked about on them all, smiled a good-by, and was gone, her spirit risen to that eternity so far away, we are apt to think, and yet quite near to each one of us.

The hymn was not one the singer would have chosen, and she thought the choice a strange one for a child, but she did not know that it was the lullaby song which had fallen first on Nellie’s baby ears, and that from hearing it all through the years she loved it better even than her favorite Sabbath School hymns. And then the Spirit who put it into Nellie’s heart to ask for it is wise. It

was not a mere happening. This was the hymn her father and mother had sung together before she could remember. It was when George Forbes was a sober, industrious man, who feared God and kept the commandments; when he loved his home and sat and sang by the fireside with his wife.

The wife had sung it when her heart was breaking. How her soul had gone up to God again and again in low, sad song in the words —

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
Leave, ah leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me.”

The singing was rarely sweet, the consummation of true art; each word being articulated perfectly; and it accomplished that whereunto it was sent; comforted the sad mother and brought deep conviction to the sinning father. It did more for George Forbes; with that precious head in his arms, and the hymn sacred to such dear memories sounding in his ears, he sent up a swift prayer of contrition and faith which sprang into his heart in the very words of the hymn —

“Vile and full of sin I am.”

It was heard, and he was saved because the prayer was a real one, and because it is written —

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The few words of prayer that Mr. Mason spoke, seemed to recognize what had gone on in the heart of the man and to bear him in strong faith to God. While he pleaded for comfort and strength and guidance to be bestowed upon those who needed God's loving thought in their sorrow, Elsie, joining her heart in the petitions, could rise for the moment above her own griefs, and rejoice that into the midst of this sorrow and trouble it was possible for the peace of heaven to descend.

Mr. Mason and Elsie were silent as they went on their way, each busy with thoughts stirred by the scene they had just witnessed. Elsie, brought face to face with the sad tragedy again, experienced the same rush of indignant feeling, when she remembered the cause of it all, and a deep blush of shame dyed her cheek at the thought that her own father was not free from guilt in the matter; and that the man whom she had promised to marry had signed a petition asking that the poison which crazed the brain of this wretched father might continue to tempt him. Aleck Palmer was again brought into unfavorable contrast with this other one, who went about battling the wrong and comforting the sorrowing. If Aleck had been in the

habit of prayer, could he have got so far wrong? But her father prayed in the family and social meeting, and yet he, too, seemed to be on the wrong side of this question.

"Life is very different from what I used to suppose," she said, speaking suddenly out of her thoughts; "the world is filled with sorrow and wrong-doing."

Mr. Mason cast a pitying glance at the troubled face. Perhaps he ought not to have brought to her any added burden; he had noticed during the last weeks that the care-free expression was gone from her, and an anxious look seemed to have taken its place. He believed that women should be brave and helpful in the conflicts of life, and yet somehow, he felt an instinctive desire to shield this one from its rough places. They were so new to her, and she seemed so guileless, so grieved and surprised at sin and inconsistency.

"You are forgetting, Miss Chilton," he said, smiling, "that with most of us the bright days far outnumber the dark ones; and you do not remember the multitude who are engaged in right-doing."

"Yes, it sounds like an ungrateful speech, I know, but it has all come to me so suddenly. I think I must have been asleep, these years. Mr. Mason, I am so perplexed. How do you account

for it that good men see things so differently? How can they pray 'Thy kingdom come,' and then not do every possible thing to put sin out of the land? How can they vote for license, and rent buildings for liquor selling? Are they to be called hypocrites?"

"You have asked me some hard questions. At least, they would be, if there were not an explanation. I do not think we would be justified in denouncing as hypocrites all men who hold what we consider erroneous views on certain questions; some are blinded. We must not ignore the fact that Satan is very busy in this world. I have not a doubt but that he planned the liquor traffic from beginning to end; that it is one of the chief means on which he depends to deceive and destroy souls. What could be more Satanic than to deliberately, for money, set up to sell an article which always harms the one who takes it? What more cunning device could be invented, than to put it into the hearts of Christians to tamper and dally with this sin instead of laying the axe to the root of the tree? I grow impatient at the manner in which we deal with it; at the slow progress we make. If all Christians were of one heart and one voice on this question, we could put away the evil. It is indeed humiliating that it is they who block the wheels. When some good men bestir themselves on this subject,

that arch deceiver is at hand; and he works largely through politicians. How he must laugh for very glee to see God's people helping to regulate sin, licensing it, using its revenues to build almshouses, inebriate asylums and prisons. How he mocks when they rejoice that the saloons in their town are cut down from fifty to ten, counting it a long step in progress! Satan can send souls to eternal ruin through one saloon. And when even Christian ministers, who see other things so clearly, have the veil over their eyes, too, when some of them in high places drink wine, themselves, and declare to young men—'Beer is no more injurious than tea,' is he not satisfied, exultant? Especially when the thing goes on and on through the generations. But the end will come. It does not require much of a prophet to foresee that a crisis is not ages off. There will be a fierce conflict; perhaps it will come in our day, Miss Chilton. We may be martyrs for the truth's sake."

"It has come. I am one," she said, with a tremble in her voice. "I"—and then she closed her lips. Her father's name should never be mentioned in connection with blame—and that other trouble—she could not speak of that.

"Can I serve you in any way?" Mr. Mason asked, with a touch of reverence in tone and manner which Elsie noticed.

Aleck Palmer was authority in all matters pertaining to "good form," yet his manner lacked that indefinable something which people of fine perceptions recognize and appreciate, and there was about him a trace of condescension, even to his superiors. He had grown up believing that people and things were created to minister to his enjoyment and his convenience. He revered nobody so much as himself.

"Yes," she said, after a moment's silence, trying to steady her voice; "you can. I will say in confidence to you that I am in great perplexity and sorrow, partly on account of this subject; and I wish you would pray for me and for two of my friends who are 'blinded' in the way you speak of."

"I will," he said, heartily; "and will, beside, do your bidding in any way in which you will trust me. But do not be cast down, my friend. Remember He said — 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven, there shall no evil touch thee.' Seven in the Scriptures, you know, stands for completeness. That covers all troubles. And He is able."

"I never knew what the verse meant before; thank you, I will try to remember," Elsie said, as she bade him good-night at her own door.

She went in with the thought in her mind that Mr. Mason always lifted her up out of self, and made her stronger.

She needed all comforting suggestions, for a storm awaited her. Her father was more angry than she had ever seen him, and her stepmother did not as usual try to mollify him, and shield Elsie, in order to make the evening pass pleasantly; she was herself too much displeased. When Mr. Chilton was angry he was always sternly quiet for a time. His daughter knew as soon as she saw his white, set face, that there was fresh cause for trouble. It was a pleasant, home-like room to which she came; the grate glowed brightly, the lamp was softly shaded, and easy-chairs stood invitingly about the fire.

“Such a pleasant room!” a passing beggar-girl sighed to herself as she caught a glimpse of the warmth and brightness through the parted curtains; “and such a pretty girl! Oh, if I was her!”

Then she took up her basket and trudged on, never dreaming that in that room, dark passions dimmed the brightness, and the one she had envied carried a heavy heart.

“Is it possible that you have returned?” Mrs. Chilton said, in icy tones; “what you mean by such conduct passes my comprehension. Here Aleck has been waiting for you a long time, and has gone away deeply offended. It seems he sent you a note that he had returned and that you might expect him this afternoon or evening.

Behold, when he comes he finds you gone out with Mr. Mason! Explanations are in order, I should say."

Elsie was not naturally meek, but she was striving to grow in that grace, and in the second before she answered, remembered — "He is able," and sent a swift prayer for help to control her speech.

"I had not time to write a note," she said; "there was need for great haste. The little girl was dying; but I left word with Jean where I had gone. Did she not tell you?"

"Since when did you deem it your duty to hold yourself in readiness to go at a minute's warning to any beggar's house who should happen to demand your presence? This must not go on, Mr. Chilton. We shall have all sorts of vermin introduced into the house, as well as malignant diseases. I was never in favor of her taking a class in that mission school. You see what it has come to."

"Mamma, pardon me, you are mistaken. The house where I went was very clean, though they are poor, and there was no contagious disease. The little girl died from the effects of an injury. I was obliged to go; she wanted me. She was that dear little Nellie whom I loved so much."

"It seems to me that in the new *rôle* you have adopted you have consulted everybody's wishes but your father's."

It was Mr. Chilton's voice now, cold and hard. "If I remember aright, I commanded you not to go to that place again."

"Commanded! I am twenty years old, papa."

There was all the pride and haughtiness of the father visible in the daughter's face now. It was but for an instant, though. She remembered her "high calling" and the fifth commandment; the proud curves went out of her mouth and her head drooped.

"Papa, forgive me. I should not have said that. But did you not know it was not necessary to command me? I understood you I was not to make a practice of going there, and I have not been since. I thought you would not object if I had an escort, and in such a case. I have loved to carry out your wishes and I always shall—unless—unless they are contrary to my convictions of right."

"Hear that!" said Mr. Chilton. "What impertinence! As if I would counsel you to do wrong. It is true I had no occasion to complain of you until you became overmuch righteous. As it is, you are growing perfectly insufferable; now we will have an end of such nonsense once for all. As long as you are in my house you will obey me whether you are twenty or forty years old. Here are some commands: You are to separate yourself from that society of ranting women who,

under cover of temperance work, are clamoring for the ballot and other unwomanly follies. You will give up your class in that mission school. There are plenty of proper persons to engage in teaching ragamuffins. Let them hire poor women to do it; there is money enough. And you are to stop trifling with Mr. Palmer. A flirt is a most despicable character. You have amused yourself with Mason long enough. No more nonsense of that sort. He is another fanatic. I presume he is responsible for some of your newly-fledged opinions. I warn you that Aleck Palmer is in no mood to be trifled with. When a girl succeeds in making a man like him, jealous, it will not be well for her. If by your folly you lose him utterly and bring upon yourself and us the disgrace of a broken engagement after it has been made public, I will not answer for the consequences. I wish you to write him a humble apology and smooth matters out between you. See to it that it goes to him to-night. If you are too young and foolish to manage your love affairs, they must be managed for you."

Elsie tried to speak, to vindicate herself from such charges, but she could not. She felt as if she were turned to stone. She arose with a white face, and went slowly out of the room.

"She will come to her senses and accept the situation," her father said, when she was out of

hearing ; "she always did when she was cornered, but I had to be straight up and down with her. I must own, however, that this is an entirely new development. It does not run in the Chilton blood to be fickle."

And so this father went on misjudging his child, not understanding her motives or actions in the least.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

“THREE OF US.”

DESPITE all she had been through, and the trouble she must yet face, the sorrow which fell with crushing force upon Elsie as she sat alone in her room that night, was connected with her father. To be so misunderstood, to be so shut out from him by a wall of coldness, that it was impossible to make explanations, was terrible. Her tender spirit quivered under the memory of his sharp words, as her flesh might have done under the cruel cut of a lash. (There are not many bitterer pangs than this same experience) Why do earthly fathers, who were meant to typify the heavenly, continually misrepresent the divine love in its infinite tenderness?

Her sense of desolation would have been intolerable, if she had not thus early learned the

blessed secret, which usually takes a lifetime, that we may have Jesus Christ as our confidential friend, to whom we may whisper thoughts that the dearest earthly friend may not know. It was even a closer relation in this young disciple's case. Prayer, with her, when she was in trouble, was a real casting herself into the arms of divine love, and with tears and broken fragments of sentences, complaining and beseeching, like a little child in the arms of its mother. So she pleaded now for her father, that his heart might be softened toward her, and that he might see every question in the light of eternity, and give up all wrong at whatever sacrifice. It was strange, too, to be asking that—she, who had through all these years believed her father to be everything that was true and noble!

And now, grown somewhat calmer, she attempted to look in the face this other problem over which she had been puzzling when called away, and from which the afternoon's experience had diverted her for a time. Feeling that the bond between her and Aleck Palmer had been forever broken, not only by his words but by her own conviction that it was right and best that it should be so, she had been earnestly striving to school her heart into submission to the altered state of affairs. It was not an easy thing to do, even after she began to suspect that the virtues with which

she had vested him, existed in her imagination only, and that his wealth and social position had cast a sort of glamour upon her. There was bitterness in the thought that she had possessed something bright and beautiful which was gone, and there was a dull pain and a dreary sense of loss; it could not be otherwise. Her sensitive nature shrank, too, you will remember, from the ordeal which must follow as soon as it was known that the engagement was broken. The anger of her father and mother, the criticism or pity of her friends — how could she face it all?

Now this letter of Aleck's gave her an opportunity to escape these mortifying experiences and put the joy back into her life. He had said that they would drop all inharmonious subjects. Did that mean that she should be free to obey her conscience? Perhaps so. Was there so pleasant and easy a way out of her troubles? But then came the recollection of her decision made a short time ago, when she had promised before God to be true to her convictions of right. What was right? There were solemn promises between herself and Aleck, and now that he acknowledged that he had spoken in anger the words which released her, and seemed to claim her as his own still, was she justified in breaking her pledge to him? But a new complication arose. This time it was in her own heart. The revelation confronted her that

the possibility of being able to put things back on the same footing as they were, gave her no throb of joy. That delicate something which cannot be compelled or analyzed, and which put him in her thought above all others, had fled. Like a flower chilled by the frost, the beauty had gone out of it. She was surprised and shocked. Was she of a cold, fickle temperament, she asked herself, that she could so soon harden her heart against one who had been dear? She could not understand herself.

If she had been wiser, she would have known that a fine nature like hers, renewed and illumined by the spirit of God, would find it difficult to continue to have a high regard for one whose moral perceptions were dull, and who was so conceited, blind and perverse that there was little hope for him.

While she searched her heart, blaming herself that the thought of giving up Aleck Palmer did not fairly take her life away, she reflected that this change of feeling was not of her own bringing about. She had been passive in the apathy of sorrow, and had not tried to steel herself against him; even though at times some manifestation on his part of a domineering spirit, or of selfishness and jealousy had awakened within her a feeling very like contempt, although she did not recognize it as such. Yet she had left it all with

God; had even prayed that He would take the obstacles out of the way of her becoming the wife of Aleck Palmer, or that He would give her grace to bear the separation. Was this His answer? For she was startled at the discovery that even though the effort should be made, she could not put this man back into the place he had once filled. And then again there swept over her that feeling of pity for him to whom she had for months been in dear relations. There came, too, a suggestion that perhaps it was her duty to do as he wished, drop all discussion of clashing views for the present, and try once more to persuade and allure him into the right path; in other words, try to shape into a different mold the character which seemed so warped and dwarfed. But would it be possible for her to marry him? It was against nature and against Scripture not to reverence the one who was to bear the sacred name of husband. If this reverence were lacking, could there be true affection? Without it, would not marriage be a profanation? If Aleck should change, perhaps her love for him would come back. Oh, to know which way to turn! There was the letter her father had told her to write. He little knew the difficult task he had imposed. She could not write it! Not yet. She must seem even to be disobedient. Oh, the perplexity and the tumult! Would she ever be at peace

again? There flashed into her recollection just then, the promise Mr. Mason had quoted and explained to her. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee," and that meant "complete deliverance!" She would ask once more to be led. She would "trust and not be afraid." So she laid herself down, although a clock in a near steeple chimed one of the morning hours before she closed her eyes in sleep.

Meanwhile there had come into the midst of the storm which had burst over the head of John Remington, a brightness; for in the dawn of one gray morning there appeared in his home a small stranger.

It was the old mystery of life once more repeated—a taper lighted never more to go out! A new soul to begin an earthly pilgrimage! To-day it is here, a lit le time ago it w .s—where? How beautifully the God of love has arranged it all, that these strange souls find loving welcome and everything in readiness—the cradle-bed, soft and white, the drawers filled with daintily-fashioned garments of creamy tint and finest texture, downy flannels, fleecy sacks, and wee, warm socks—all be-sprinkled with ribbons, blue, and pink, and white.

Aunt Hannah opened such a drawer on this eventful morning, which, by the way, was a cold

one, and searched for a good, sensible blanket, with which to cover the baby, who was sweetly sleeping in his crib. She found one and tucked it about the precious little bundle, then sat down in the rocking chair by its side and drew a long, grateful, satisfied breath — John's baby!

Having attended to all the physical needs of the atom of humanity, sitting there in the quiet room, watching, listening to the delicate breathing of the new treasure, she began a work for him which would end only when one of them should leave this world. It was as natural for Aunt Hannah to pray, as to breathe. At first her heart went out only in thanksgivings. Then the petitions encircled the little one and laid him by faith in the arms of Infinite Love. Happy child! To have the fragrance of prayer breathed about his cradle in those first hours. Will not the life voyage be safer and pleasanter because the little bark set sail amid such "favoring gales"? For Aunt Hannah was not the only one who prayed. The young father's glad heart went out, too, at the dawn of day alone in his study, in thanksgivings, in fervent faith laying all his treasures at the feet of his Lord. For the time he dropped his burdens, rising above the sense of defeat and humiliation which had almost overpowered him during the last few weeks, and rejoiced in this new dignity and honor which had been placed upon him.

It is strange, though, how very soon people can become accustomed even to the presence in the house of a little new being! Before three weeks had passed, this family had quite adjusted itself to the order of things. The baby proved to be the usual tyrant, but they cheerfully submitted. John and Aunt Hannah arose early or stayed up late, just as his highness ordered; and Aunt Hannah said to John — “Hush, you will wake the baby,” quite as if he were an old institution.

Aunt Hannah looked so natural with baby's head over her shoulder, or patting his back while he lay face downward across her lap, that one wondered what she could have been about before he came, while John and Mattie seemed to have lost all identity except as “Baby's” father and mother.

“What are you thinking about, child?” Aunt Hannah asked of Mattie, one afternoon as she sat by the crib, looking long into baby's face. She had not spoken for some time, and Aunt Hannah fancied she saw a shadow on her face.

“Why, just at that moment I was really taking in the idea for the first that now there are three of us, Aunt Hannah — we are a family!”

Then the loving old aunt saw a new look on the face of John's wife, even the joy and sweet content of mother-love.

“I was thinking, too, what a very good woman

I must be now. (Little children should make people better.) My baby must never see me out of temper. I thought John never should, but he has. Here comes a must, though—a little copyist who will imitate us, for the first years at least, and he must have good copies; the after life will probably hinge on the first years. I wonder that parents do not fairly stand in awe of innocent eyes looking up into theirs, wondering and judging. There is one thing, at least, that I am sure I shall never do to this precious baby; and that is, punish him in anger. That is perfectly fiendish. I suppose he will need punishing”—drawing a long sigh as she spoke; then catching a glimpse of the wise old face, she said:

“Aunt Hannah, there is a pucker in each corner of your mouth as if you wanted to laugh at me. You may; I know I ought not to be lecturing on the best methods of training children, when I know almost nothing about it.”

“You have got a long step on the right road if you don’t,” Aunt Hannah said, looking up from her knitting to cast a tender glance on the young mother, so fair and so wise. How blest John was in such a wife! If the world should be searched, her equal could not be found, Aunt Hannah firmly believed.

“I wasn’t laughing at you exactly, child, but I was thinking in how many ways this little fellow

would try you, for he has an uncommon will, even now. If he decides that he would rather not be dressed just then it's as much as your life is worth to get through the performance. You thought he had a pain this morning; it was nothing under the sun but temper. He wanted to be cuddled some more instead of being dressed."

"Aunt Hannah! And he isn't a month old yet!"

"Fact! The first thing to wake up and go at it is that old will; and it is the last to leave. So I say, when the day comes that he puts his will straight across yours, it will be a big trial. If you succeed in keeping calm and sweet through it all you will have attained to saintship. Mind, I don't say it can't be done, but most fathers and mothers are like Peter. They say 'I never will,' and then, sometime, when they have been in a rage with their own children, they have to go and weep bitterly when the Lord casts a look at them to bring to mind their promises. I think the resolves are all right, and I like to hear you make them. May the Lord give one woman grace to keep them, and I believe He will. Some one said—I don't know but it was Henry Ward Beecher—that every child was intended to see a type of God in its father and mother. Some poor children won't stand much chance if that is so."

“I shall have to have ever so many talks with you about it if I do succeed,” Mattie said; “but just now I want to ask you concerning something else. I did not tell you all I was thinking. Do you know of any trouble in the church?”

This was a sudden question for which Aunt Hannah was unprepared. She and John had agreed to keep his dismissal a secret until his wife should have recovered entire strength.

“Why? What made you ask that?” she said, while she gave unnecessary attention to her knitting.

“I can scarcely tell why; but I fancy there is an atmosphere of constraint about the few who have come in to see me. Even Elsie Chilton does not act naturally. I miss little kindnesses from certain ones, and John’s eyes look as if they were guarding a secret. Aunt Hannah, what is it? I believe there is something, and that you know it. Tell me, please do!”

There was silence for a minute, while Aunt Hannah took counsel of herself—“It is certainly time the child knew. If I tell her, John will be spared so much.”

“There isn’t much use in trying to keep anything from such a sharp-eyed body as you are, that’s sure!” she said, at last. “What should you say if John were not to stay in this church much longer?”

“Has John resigned, Aunt Hannah?”

There was no help for it then, but to begin and tell the whole story, while the color came and went in the sensitive face of the young wife, and her eyes were by turns, wistful, indignant, and astonished.

“If only they had not asked him to resign!” she said, after a little. “If he had but done it of his own accord.”

“Dear child, search down in your heart and see why you wish that,” said Aunt Hannah.

“I know; I need not wait to search. It is pride at work; but I suppose it is good for us. Oh, it is hard for John to bear. He has worked so faithfully and he hoped so much that the truth was taking effect.” And she wiped away some tears.

“Truth hits people differently, my dear. Some folks repent and believe, and some fly up and turn away the minister when their consciences are pricked. You know, of course, that this is not the work of the whole church. Some of the best ones are on John’s side, and they insisted on his staying.”

“What reason do they give for wishing a change, Aunt Hannah?”

“Why, they say they have decided that the needs of the church demand a man of more age and experience. That means they want some one who is experienced enough to know that he can’t

stay in this church long, unless he minds his p's and q's. He must not preach total abstinence, because some of the members have money in a distillery. He must be dumb about the snares and temptations of the world, because half of them dance, and play cards, and go to the theatre. He must not speak of everlasting punishment, because Satan has persuaded some of the members that such language is all figurative. They don't want to hear about sin, either; or any unpleasantness. The shepherd of this flock may have a good time if he will preach about evolution, and poetry, and philosophy, and turn his head the other way when he sees some silly sheep breaking through the fence, dancing and capering off into forbidden paths; and go to sleep when others are stumbling, and tumbling into pits. If I were a minister I would sooner preach to wild Hottentots than to such a church. But there! I'm getting stirred up myself. The Lord has a people among them; it's a thousand pities, though, that the other sort ever got inside the fold. If they were counted as enemies of Christ there might be some chance of reaching them. But we must not be worrying about John, Martha; he has got to go through these things. 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.' Let us rather be glad that he has been used to strike some blows against sin in this place. Good will come of it, you may depend."

"I think it would be refreshing," the young wife said, trying to smile amid her tears, "to work among Hottentots for a time. Some of these people are actually hardened by preaching."

Baby started just then, and his mother knelt beside him, laying her cheek to the tiny soft one. Nobody could be thoroughly miserable with a new little heart fluttering in her ear, and a soft, sweet breath, sweeter than roses or hyacinths or new-mown hay, coming and going in her face. Precious comforters are the babies!

CHAPTER XXVII.

BY PANSY.

INTUITIONS.

MATTERS made rapid progress after Aunt Hannah's revelation. That good woman was much troubled for a time lest she had spoken "unadvisedly with her lips"; but it proved in the end to have been the best thing that could have been done. The truth is, that plain, straightforward statements are often less wearing upon heart and nerves, than poor attempts at concealment, among people unused to concealments from each other. John Remington was not by nature a dissembler, and the utmost sympathy and confidence had always existed between his wife and himself. It was new and harassing work for him to conceal from her eyes anything of importance which she naturally would know as well as he. She had been quick to discover

that there was something concealed, and not knowing what it could be, had brooded over it in silence. When she knew the whole truth she wasted not much time in tears.

"I've put my foot into it now," Aunt Hannah said, her anxiety making her voice sound grim. "I had to tell her."

"Had to tell her what?" asked the minister, wheeling around on her, and speaking more sharply than he ever had before.

"All there is to tell; I had to, I tell you. There was no getting out of it without downright lying; and I'm not used to lying. She asked me a point-blank question, and looked straight at me with eyes that refused to be hoodwinked."

"Well," said the minister, after a moment's silence, while he struggled for complete self-control, "of course you did what you thought was right; she would have to know about it soon. I could wish that we might have waited until she had a little more strength, but it cannot be helped."

Nevertheless he shrank from going to his wife's room, and allowed various trifles to detain him later than usual, until at last Aunt Hannah said — "Seems to me I wouldn't keep her waiting longer than is necessary, seeing she has not much strength to waste."

Then, much ashamed of himself, he went up-

stairs with haste. His wife was bending over the sleeping baby, folding the soft blankets more closely about its small form, surreptitiously tucking a bit of flannel about the little doubled-up fist, which already asserted its determination not to be muffled or restricted. She glanced around as her husband entered. "John," she said softly, "see how resolved he is not to have his hand anywhere but just where he chooses to put it."

A moment the two stood, looking at their treasure; then the young mother placed both hands on her husband's arm in a pretty, clinging way she had, and said, "John, I am proud of you."

"Proud of me, dear; what can you mean?" Despite his determination at self-control there was a suspicious quiver in the minister's voice. There was none in his wife's; and no hint of tears in the eyes, which looked steadily into his own.

"Yes, proud of you; you have been honored above many. I always thought that if I had a husband who spoke squarely for the truth of God, so as to move people to a better life if they would, but in any case oblige them to listen and think, and do something, I should be proud of him; now I know I am."

He had not expected it; he had nerved himself for a few tears, for some tremulous questions as

to what they were to do, and as to why he thought the people had so soon changed in their feelings; these clear-cut, almost triumphant, sentences nearly unnerved him.

Aunt Hannah fidgeted much that morning and sniffed suspiciously more than once, as she aired and folded the baby's flannels and pretty white robes, fresh from the laundry, and felt such a sense of relief, as she would not like to have owned to, when the minister and his wife came down to dinner together in a very comfortable state of mind.

"You are a wise woman, Aunt Hannah," said her nephew, going around the table for the purpose of placing a deliberate kiss on her faded cheek; "a very wise woman. It would probably have been for our peace of mind, if you had spoken the truth two weeks ago. I was a nervous coward to mislead you; now that your good sense has broken through, and helped us out, no one can thank you more heartily than I, and next to you, in wisdom, is my wife 'Martha'; do you know that?"

"Don't be foolish, John," Aunt Hannah said, briskly; "and you a father, too!" But the anxious lines which her face had worn smoothed suddenly, and her smile was pleasant to see.

As they took their seats at the table, Aunt Hannah assured herself for perhaps the twentieth

time in the course of the last few months, that "Martha was certainly a remarkable woman!"

After this, as I said, plans and preparations for removal from the Kensett Square locality went on steadily. The minister had already interested himself greatly in the struggling church whose people were "hungering for the gospel." Certain letters had passed between them. Those from the little church breathing such a spirit of eagerness and hope, that John, as he read them aloud to his wife, paused to say, "Does it not seem as though such people ought to have help, even though there is but a handful of them, and they so poor as to be almost discouraged?"

"To the poor the gospel is preached," said Mattie, musingly. And after a moment, in the same tone — "The common people heard Him gladly. I am not sure, John, but it would be a great comfort to be among such a people."

But Aunt Hannah was silent and somewhat grim whenever the little church was mentioned.

"Time enough for plans of that sort after you have had a long rest," she said, decidedly, one day when, being directly appealed to, it was necessary to say something. "I don't want to hear about that church or any other until your play-time is over. John has overworked in this church, to say nothing of you, Martha, who will always overwork everywhere, I'm afraid; and it

won't do. Remember you have another one to think about now, you have got to save up a good deal of strength and energy for him; he'll need it all. He is going to be a masterful boy, mark my word! I can see it in the way he sucks his thumb and gazes about him as though he owned all creation. You are going to the farm for the summer, remember that. And then it stands to reason that Martha will need to go home for a while, and show her baby, and you will go with her, of course. I won't be unreasonable if I can help it, but don't talk about churches."

"Nevertheless," said John to his wife, with much decision in his voice, "I do not mean to waste this summer; I must be about my Father's business. We will go home with Aunt Hannah, and you shall see that blessed father and mother, my darling; yes, we will both plan for that, if possible, but I must make my vacation short; I am not to be an idler because I chose the wrong field for work. For a few weeks it seemed to me as though I might have mistaken my vocation entirely, but since you have grasped the situation and received the news in the way you have, it seems to have put new life into me; I long to be at work." And he smiled at her in a way calculated to put fresh courage into a wife's heart.

There came, also, a letter which helped. Mrs. Remington opened it with fingers that trembled;

she held her father in very high esteem, and this was the first letter since the news went to him. He was a busy man, with little time for writing; his epistles were always short, and to the point. If he should not understand John, or should think it strange that he had so soon broken his relations with the important city church, why, that would be very hard to bear! This letter was short, shorter even than usual; she could not determine whether that augured well or ill, the only way was to read it. But her father was capable of being very sarcastic. She looked over at her sleeping baby to steady her heart, then read the letter:

DEAR DAUGHTER:

I do not know how you look at the matter, but it seems to me that congratulations are in order. When I heard the news of your call to Kensett Square church I said to your mother, "One of three things will happen — either there will be a radical change in the position which that church takes on most questions now before us for discussion, or there will be a new pastor soon, or we shall know that we have been mistaken in our daughter's husband." I have looked in vain for the "radical change"; indeed, the church, if I may judge by what I know of a few brilliant examples, never stood on a lower plane than at this moment; and I confess I have been awaiting somewhat anxiously the next step. Because it is as it is, I draw a long breath of relief. Do not wax indignant, because I did not know what the next step would be; we thought we were sure of John, but people are sometimes deceived. Tell him for me, that the world, and what is more important, the Lord, has need of men like him."

There followed a few sentences more; messages to the "royal new comer," a word of comfort

over the thought that they would soon welcome father, mother and son to the homestead; but Mattie made haste over these—they were matters-of-course. There was a pretty glow on her cheek as she took her way to the study with the letter. Such words from “father,” John would prize.

So there were bright spots, even among the discomforts and embarrassments of the breaking-up.

Meantime, Elsie Chilton had been bearing her own burdens as best she could. Certain unexpected allies had come to her aid. In the first place, Aleck Palmer made another sudden departure; this time being honestly called away by business so imperative that it would brook no delay, though it came to him at a time when absence chafed him almost more than he could endure. In the second place, Elsie fell ill; not dangerously so, but ill enough to require care and judicious management, and to materially soften her father’s feelings toward her; at least, to the extent that he asked no questions and permitted none to be asked her with regard to the letter which he had ordered written; assuring himself that, after all, the young people were probably capable of taking care of their own affairs, and resolving to judiciously forget all commands which he had given, unless circumstances should make it necessary for him to remember them again.

As soon as Elsie was able to leave her room, while the much-tried Aleck was still chafing over his absence from the city, she took a sudden departure to the country; ostensibly to make a long-promised visit to an aunt of her father's, really because she found herself not strong enough to visit at the parsonage and keep face and voice under the control necessary to deceive Mrs. Remington into the belief that all was as it should be in Kensett Square. While with her aunt she did write the letter; not, indeed, such an one as her father had ordered, but a kind, grave, womanly letter, to Aleck Palmer, in which she gently but distinctly, and with solemn reasons for her conduct given, severed forever her relations with him. Much tried would she have been, had she known that through some freak of the mails, aided by the gentleman's hurried transit from one business point to another, he failed to receive her carefully-worded letter.

It was on the afternoon of her return home that Aunt Hannah arrested her steps in the hall, just after the little maid had given her permission to go to the up-stairs sitting-room, where the family, baby and all, were gathered.

"Wait a minute, child. I want to see you before you go up-stairs. You will be as wise as a serpent, won't you, dear, when you get up there? She isn't as strong as she might be, even yet, you

know, and going over things will just excite you both, and do no good."

"I will try," said Elsie, humbly. "But oh, Aunt Hannah, does she know the whole story now?"

"Oh, yes; she does—all her husband can tell her, I guess. There are no secrets between them any more, if that is what you mean. I told her myself—had to, a week before he was willing. She was worrying herself over something wrong, and working upon her nerves more than a week of knowing all about it would. All the same I blundered into it—didn't mean to do it, only she sees through things so, you have to tell her."

Elsie turned and descended the two or three steps she had taken up the stairs, and came close to Aunt Hannah, her face pale, save for a little spot of red which seemed to burn on either cheek. "Aunt Hannah, will you tell me something?" she said; "I have not been able to learn. There was no one whom I was willing to ask. That paper, you know, or letter—it was a letter, was it not?"

"The resignation which they sent him in, you mean, I suppose?" said Aunt Hannah, calmly; "call things by their right names, child. To be sure, ministers are generally supposed to send in their own resignations, but they reversed the usual order."

“Yes, I know all about it; I want to know just two things. Is my father’s name on that paper?”

“It certainly is,” said Aunt Hannah, gravely; “it pretty nearly heads the list.”

The pink on Elsie’s face spread and deepened. “Aunt Hannah, one question more — is Mr. Palmer’s name on it?”

“Oh, indeed it is. That does actually head the precious list.”

The face which had been crimson but a moment before, had grown so pale that Aunt Hannah’s heart smote her with pity. She tried to think of something comforting to say, but Elsie did not give her time.

“Aunt Hannah,” she said, struggling to speak quietly, “there are things which daughters cannot help; over which they have no control. I suspected some things, but I did not know — I mean I did not believe” —

She stopped abruptly, and Aunt Hannah made haste to speak.

“Don’t you worry, child; of course you could not help any of it; and there is nobody who understands that better than those two up-stairs. Don’t worry about them, either; they aren’t cast down — not a mite. When a man goes into the Lord’s work, he counts the cost generally, and he doesn’t go to breaking his heart, or giving up the world for lost, because a few men in it cannot

stand his Master's message. What does the whole of it amount to, compared with what the Lord had to bear? Don't go to shouldering more burdens than is necessary, child; go up and see the baby and be comforted. He has his father's eyes; I always knew he would have."

But Elsie moved, instead, toward the door. "No, Aunt Hannah, I am not going up now; I am going home. I want to think. I have not known, to a certainty, anything. I knew my father was annoyed and vexed, and had been led unwisely; but I did not know how far he had gone. I will come again, to-morrow, perhaps, or very soon. I want you to tell Mrs. Remington for me that I love her dearly—dearly, and that I will not in any way disappoint her if I can help it."

"Of course you won't, dear child," and Aunt Hannah's chin quivered. "She doesn't expect disappointment where you are concerned; I can tell you that. There's another one whom you won't disappoint, I know; and that's your mother. I can hardly understand how she could be happy, even in heaven, if she could look down and see her baby walking in the road she didn't want her to take. I held you in my arms when she kissed you good-by; I saw the look in her eyes, and I know all about it."

Aunt Hannah had gained her point; the drawn

lines on the young face were relaxing, and the eyes were dimming with tears. "Thank you," she said, gently; "I will not forget. I am not going to disappoint my mother, nor my mother's Saviour. I have been walking a road that was full of temptation; I am going to get out of it. Kiss me for my mother, Aunt Hannah." Where-upon the strong old arms closed about the fair form, and some very tender kisses were left by the withered lips on those fresh young ones.

"It was Elsie," Aunt Hannah said, half an hour afterward, in answer to Mattie's inquiring look. They were in the little reception-room at the head of the stairs—father, mother and Earle Mason—holding court around the new baby.

"Elsie!" repeated the mother in surprise and dismay; "has she returned? And she didn't come up to see the baby!"

"She couldn't, Martha, not this time; she was all upset. She has just discovered some names on that paper which was sent to John that surprise her more than they do any one else. It is amazing to me how girls can be so blind! She left her love, and is coming again soon."

Mrs. Remington's face looked troubled, and she drew a heavy sigh as she said—"Poor Elsie! there are hard lines coming into her life. I tremble for her. It seems almost too hard that we should have to leave her just now. Still, if she is

to become that man's wife there is very little that we could do for her."

"Don't you worry about her," said Aunt Hannah, in her most assured tone; "the Lord can take care of His own, especially His lambs, and she's one of them. I don't believe she will ever marry that man in this world; and she certainly won't in the next."

If she had not almost immediately occupied herself with the baby, to the exclusion of everything else, she might have been bewildered over the sudden flash of feeling on Earle Mason's face, and the quick look he gave her. Did it express gratitude? If so, for what?

"The Lord can certainly bring good out of evil, as Mrs. Adams says," he remarked, in an almost cheerful tone; "He has shown us that phase of His love often enough to lead us to trust Him. She is a very wise woman," he added, as Aunt Hannah gathered the baby, blankets pillows, and all, and unceremoniously left the room, by way of the nursery. "A very wise woman. I would trust her knowledge of human nature, and her intuitions, where I would not my own." He was still speaking quite cheerfully; apparently, for some reason, he was very glad to trust to Aunt Hannah's intuitions.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BY PANSY.

—
“J. S. R.”

IT was surprising how little time it took, after all, to dismantle the pretty home in Kensett Square, and make it look utterly unhomelike!

Oh, there was no indecorous haste. Indeed, everything was done with the utmost order, and with a view to all the proprieties. There was a farewell gathering in the church parlors, where many wept honest tears of regret, and some made dishonest speeches of regret.

There was presented a very elegant silver dinner service, the largest donors on the list of names presented with it being those from whom it was very hard to receive gifts; and but for the grace of Jesus Christ bestowed in unusual measure for the needs of this very hour, the offerings would certainly have been declined.

As it was, the minister's voice was kind and calm as he expressed their united thanks to all who intended kindness. The minister's wife's eyes flashed suspiciously during this ceremony; but when, ten minutes afterward, the widow Porter brought, done up in a bit of newspaper, a pair of rather coarse and rather ill-shaped baby's socks which her own hands had fashioned after the hard day's work was done, those same eyes filled with tears, and the widow Porter's thanks were such as she will remember.

Of course this episode was not allowed to close without a carefully prepared paper commencing with—

“Whereas, it has pleased Providence to so order that it is expedient for our beloved pastor, the Reverend John Remington, to remove to another field of labor, be it resolved that” —

And then followed the long list of carefully-planned, gracefully-worded resolutions. Aleck Palmer had returned just in time to give his skillful mind to the work of formulating them, and had spent much thought and care upon them, writing and re-writing until he was more than weary of them all.

He was making what was, for him, an unusual effort to please—not his pastor, nor yet the Kensett Square congregation, but Elsie Chilton. He had pushed the matter with relentless hand

to a successful issue, and had now time to feel a degree of sorrow for Elsie's evident suffering. There had actually been times when he told himself that had he realized how entirely she was bound up in the Remington household, he would not have been so precipitate. Of course he knew this to be false, because it was what he called her "infatuation" over them which had hurried him on.

He was altogether complacent over the result of his skill, and could afford to indulge himself in an imaginary regret that such effort had been necessary; or at least, that it had been necessary for him to play so prominent a part.

Truth to tell, this phase of the situation troubled him not a little. For instance, he had been exceedingly annoyed that his name had had to appear on that obnoxious paper, even obliged to head the list. Given the possibility of Elsie's ever knowing it, and he did not like to think of what might result. But he reflected that it was not in the least probable she would ever know it. The actual signers were pledged to stand by one another and keep their own council; and the Remingtons would certainly not be likely to show the paper, or talk about it! He left out of consideration the fact that Aunt Hannah, having had long experience in truth-telling, knew how to answer only the truth to directly put questions.

In fact, he left Aunt Hannah out of the question entirely, as an old woman who was quite beneath his consideration. But he had his anxious hours, nevertheless. Twice, during that enforced absence he had written Elsie hurried little notes, expressive of his extreme regret that he must be away at such a time, and assuring her that certain rumors which he heard relative to the state of things in the Kensett Square church, while they did not surprise him, were matters for sincere regret; especially on her account. He trusted that nothing unkind had been done; and that nobody with a zeal not according to knowledge had said or done anything to bring the pastor to so sudden a departure. For himself, while he could wish that he was present to comfort her, he could not but, at the same time, be glad that his continued absence would furnish her proof, if indeed she needed proof, that certainly he had nothing to do with the peculiar state of things. The only answer which Elsie had returned to these notes had been that long, carefully-worded one of which I told you, and which, you will remember, he did not receive. Her silence troubled him somewhat, until Mrs. Chilton wrote of her illness and then of her sudden departure to the country. "The poor child," wrote Mrs. Chilton, "is utterly worn out in body and mind, worrying over the prospective departure of her friends; it is really extraordinary

what a hold they have gotten upon her affections. I know somebody who will have to be very patient and very cautious for a little time; her nervous system is so overwrought by all these matters that if you go to being exacting, and, well—almost jealous, you know, I shall not answer for the consequences.”

And Mr. Palmer, who had been absent from Elsie long enough to begin to realize something of what she really was to him, had resolved to be very patient indeed, and very magnanimous. He would say nothing to Elsie when they met, about this recent and trying past. He would not even refer to that last vexation when she actually went away to attend a dying child, though he had been absent for two weeks and had engaged to be with her early in the evening; neither would he say anything about her having gone with Mr. Mason on this errand. Truth to tell, when he thought of Elsie and of the look which certain things had the power to bring into her eyes, he decided that to be silent on that subject was simply common prudence.

He returned, as I said, but the day before the public meeting in which the series of resolutions were presented. He devoted all his time to the preparation of them, and was conspicuous on that public occasion, as Mr. Remington's friend and earnest well-wisher. It was a trial to him that

Elsie did not appear. He resolved not to see her until after the train had departed which would bear away her friends, and then to go to her in all tenderness, and be the one to soothe her first hours of loneliness and grief. He would make himself as necessary to her hours of sorrow as he had been heretofore to her hours of pleasure. Then, when the time came to speak of that, he would hasten their marriage with all speed. Business should call him abroad in a few months; in fact, he would make it imperatively demand his presence; and that should be his plea for hastening their plans. Elsie had always wanted to travel in Italy; she should now have the opportunity. It was, under the circumstances, the best possible thing to do; he would hasten her away from all present interests foreign to his taste, all hateful sights and sounds which were stirring her blood to unhealthful throbbings. She should go where she would not hear of saloons, nor tenement houses, nor drunken, cruel fathers, nor managing, aspiring women, nor fanatical young men.

She should go where there would be only graceful lakes, and fairylike boats in which to float down them, and lovely valleys in which to dream, and gorgeous sunsets on which to gaze, and flowers, and grace, and sweet leisure, and perfumed air.

It was such a life for which she was fitted.

He had rescued her from a fanaticism which would become terrible to her, when once she was fairly rid of the fevered air of reform, which she had been breathing for the past few months. So he rounded his periods carefully, and omitted no word or act calculated to show outward respect to the departing pastor; even keeping his carriage waiting, with many others, on that last morning at the depot. And Elsie, when she heard of it all, had said only this, under her breath — “False to the last; in little and unnecessary things, as well as in those necessary to carry out his schemes!”

The note which she received that evening was as carefully worded as the resolutions had been.

He knew she must be worn and sad, but might he not come? He would not detain her late, for he was sure she needed rest; but it had been so long since he had seen her! He ignored utterly the possibility that there might be such a thing as a coldness between them; in fact, he did not honestly believe that there was any coldness which a half-hour of his inimitable petting would not remove. For he could be very tender and gracious, this man, when he chose; none knew this better than Elsie. Yet her face had paled in indignation over his note. Ever since that first day of her return, when Aunt Hannah had sud-

denly and unwittingly revealed to her something of the true character of the man to whom she had been engaged, she had felt herself humiliated in having ever been in such relations to him. Up to that hour, having settled her own part with her conscience, once for all, she had had time to be sorry for him. As she walked swiftly away from Aunt Hannah's keen eyes, she said, almost aloud — "He is actually a liar! I am disgraced in my own eyes by having my name coupled with such as he!"

She replied to his note with such promptness that he smiled, well pleased, when the messenger came; then held the sheet up before his astonished eyes and read and re-read, seemingly unable to believe his senses.

Yet the note was not long; it was only this:

MR. PALMER:

Sir:—Your note received just now amazes me. You must surely have received the long letter in which I explained in detail why we must be only friends hereafter. I am sorry that you did not understand it. I am sorry that you force me to be entirely frank. I wish now to say that I decline from this time forth to acknowledge you as among my list of acquaintances. I have ceased to respect you. I have found that you can be untrue, on occasion, to even your written word. I need not particularize, for you at least, know the facts; yet to relieve your mind from any doubt in the matter I will simply say, that I have seen the letter which was sent to my pastor, I have read carefully the list of names, and noted what one headed that list. With this fact in mind, recall the lines which you wrote me in regard to this

very letter. Why was there need to soil the page written to me with deliberate falsehood? What did you hope to accomplish by it? After this, I need only sign myself,

ELSIE CHILTON.

You will doubtless agree with me that this was a somewhat startling letter for a man to receive from a lady whom he confidently expected to take to Europe as his bride, in less than two months from that date!

I am tempted to let you hear a few sentences of a conversation which took place in the Chilton household a few hours thereafter.

“No child of mine shall play hide and seek with a gentleman in this ridiculous way, I can assure you. I command you to write, as your mother has suggested, and invite Aleck Palmer to dine with us to-night, and then to receive him as you know you ought, in view of the relations between you; we will have no more of these disgraceful scenes. Do you fully understand me?”

This from Robert Chilton, in a great rage.

Then Elsie, quiet, pale, grave —

“Father” — she used the name but rarely; it was generally the more familiar, more childish “papa” — “Father, had you given me the opportunity when I asked, the other day, you would have better understood the relations between Mr. Palmer and myself. I will write a note for mamma, inviting any person to dine with her

whom she wishes to entertain, signing her name to the note; but Mr. Palmer is, and can be no guest of mine. I will certainly meet him if you desire, in a way befitting the relation between us, which is that of strangers. I neither like, nor admire, nor respect Mr. Palmer. He can never be reckoned among my friends again. He perfectly understands this; I have been entirely frank with him, and if he chooses to ignore my words as he has so frequently done before, when occasion offered, he must be prepared to endure the embarrassment which will certainly follow. Father, I am not a child. I am your daughter, it is true, and in all things right I will obey you. But the days have surely gone by when a father forces his daughter to marry a man who has deceived her, and whom she despises. I do not suppose it is necessary to say this to you, but perhaps I should tell you frankly that if I knew I should be sent out from my father's house to-night never to return, unless I obeyed your wishes in this respect, I should have to go; because to do otherwise would be to go contrary to the plain directions of my Father in heaven, whom you, sir, have taught me from a child to obey."

And then Elsie Chilton went away to her own room.

"She is a born idiot!" said her step-mother, with paling lips. "This accounts for Aleck's

wild letter which he sent me; but even yet I may be able to patch it up, if you will help me. Those Remingtons are gone; that is a great step in advance; and there is no other fanatic here to influence her."

Was there not? Even at that moment there waited for her in the parlor a very great "fanatic" indeed; no other than Fern Redpath, to whom Elsie presently came, holding her excitement in check to hear from this friend the truth about something else which had also excited her.

"Oh, Fern, is what I have heard true? Are you really going to speak in the opera house?"

"I am, indeed. I am going to do what I said I never would—go on the platform in my own city, and speak to the people. I have within the last few weeks been so roused, so fairly burned through and through with the enormity of this thing, this evil in our midst, that it seems to me as though the very stones would cry out if women held their peace much longer. I am not going to make a speech; I am going to tell them a story; a story of facts; things which are occurring under their very eyes, in which their own sons and daughters are engaged. It is a terrible story, Elsie; you do not know the half nor the quarter of it. You do not know, for instance, that my poor boy Jack, for whom I have been working and praying, was drugged last night, and lies in a state of

beastly intoxication to-day; and his mother dying, and calling for him. Will not that be a story for the opera house listeners to hear?"

"Fern, tell me, why did you go to the opera house? Would not a church, the lecture-room of a church, have served your purpose better?"

"We thought of that at first, and tried for it; but no lecture-room large enough could be secured. The Kensett Square church will not open its lecture-room to a temperance story told by a woman; even though the story be vouched for as true. Nothing less than a cantata, or an operetta can be admitted there. Think of it, Elsie, the folly of it all! Last week an operetta, with ladies dressed like fairies, and goblins, and I don't know what — certainly not like human beings, and a delighted crowd to listen to their songs and recitations, and see their dancing; but because I want to appear in a plain black dress made close to the throat, and close to the wrists, and tell that same company about the things which are taking place around the corner from their own homes, things which have to do with the future of immortal souls, it becomes unwomanly! Oh, Elsie, will you do something for me? I do so long to have you stand by me now."

"What can I do? You know I *would* do if I could. But, Fern, I am not like you; I cannot speak before a dozen people, ever, about anything."

“No, you cannot speak; at least, you think you cannot, and it may be you have not been called to do so; but I think I have been. I am going to tell my story to-night as simply as I can. And I want a woman with me—a woman to pray. Earle Mason would, but he says it ought to be a woman. Elsie, you can pray?”

A moment of solemn silence, and then Elsie, almost as white as the marble bust near which she stood, spoke again—

“Yes, I can pray; and I will. Fern, you may depend upon me, to-night.”

It was just at that moment that they, coming from different ways, paused to take a good-night look at the sleeping king. “They,” being Aunt Hannah, and Martha, and John. Perhaps I ought to say there were four of them, for Aunt Hepsy hovered in the near distance intent on some work for the young king. Talk about slaves and tyrants! If ever there was a tyrant in the flesh his name was John Remington, junior; and the most devoted and utterly self forgetful of his many slaves was Aunt Hepsy Stone. The intensity of her devotion had its rise in what we are pleased to call an accidental circumstance. Much discussion had been had between this new father and mother as to the newcomer’s middle name. Of course he was to be John Remington; thus much had been decreed from the very first: the young

mother having an air of firmness and decision about her whenever the subject was hinted at, which discouraged any other suggestion. But a middle name she was willing to talk over, and held herself open to conviction. At least, she received proposals graciously enough, but none of them suited her. "A name is such an important thing," she said. "You cannot cast it aside after childhood is over, and try another; it is a life-long companion, and stays behind, even after you are done with this part of life; sometimes is immortal." This last with a fond look at the young immortal among the blankets; a look which said as plainly as words could have done—"He will glorify his name; mark my words!"

"Then I should think you would want something less commonplace and prosaic than 'John' for him," would the amused father say, partly in earnest, and partly to see the new dignity on the mother's face and hear it in her voice, as she said—"I like John; I always have; I like it better than any other name. Beside, it was the name of the beloved disciple, you know. I want my John to be another of whom it shall be said—'That disciple whom Jesus loved'." Then, after a little—"Middle names are important because of the initials. 'J. R.'—that is too short; we need something which will slip in between those two letters and harmonize. I should like your

initials, John, 'J. S. R.,' only your middle name is simply horrid. I always disliked the sound of Sylvester; my baby shall never bear it." So every name in the college catalogues, and church records, was by turns discussed and abandoned, until it began to seem that there was no name as yet coined good enough for the new baby.

They were looking, one evening, at an ancient engraving; a massive shield with its Latin motto and its curious carvings, and as they looked, the minister said, slowly, meditatively, as though thinking aloud instead of talking—"He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him." And the mother, looking at the shield and then at the sleeping baby, thinking of the weary, dangerous way the small feet must travel, longing, oh, so earnestly, that he might be shielded even by that Almighty One, said, suddenly—"Oh, John, let us give him 'Shield' for his middle name. John Shield Remington; that will give him the same initials as yours, and it is not a commonplace name; it is dignified, and at the same time simple and unpretentious; and it cannot be twisted into some silly diminutive; beside, when he is old enough, we can tell him how we came to choose it."

"The Lord God is a sun and shield," quoted the father, smiling. "It is an original name, certainly, but I like it." Thus was the moment-

ous question settled. - A few days later, when Aunt Hepsy took the morsel in her arms which was henceforth to rule her life, and tried to look grim and sensible, and do her best at convincing this silly father and mother that whatever Hannah might do she was by all means determined that she would not go into her dotage and make a fool of herself over that baby; looking down on its sweet helplessness, at the blueness of its eyes, and the utter trustfulness with which it lay in her arms, something very like a tremor sounded in her voice as she asked — “What is his name?”

“John Shield Remington,” said the mother, promptly; it was the first time she had been able to speak it in full, as a matter of information. She was quite unprepared for the effect produced. Aunt Hepsy gave so sudden a start as to nearly upset the baby, and said, “What!” almost as sharply as though she had been a gun, and had exploded.

“John Shield Remington,” repeated the wondering mother, lingering over the syllables; “don’t you like the name? I do, very much.”

Aunt Hepsy’s face was working strangely. The wrinkles about her mouth twitched and quivered; she struggled with her throat, with her eyes, with her voice, and at last said in tones which shook with feeling, the while two tears rolled slowly down, dropping one on her nose. the

other plump on the baby's cheek. "I didn't expect it nor dream it; but I'll never forget it, never! And the boy will not have reason to regret it; neither will his father and mother; mind you that!" Whereupon she laid the bundle of flannel very unceremoniously in his Aunt Hannah's arms and left the room.

"Poor dear heart," said that woman, very gently, as she skillfully manipulated the flannel, and arranged the long, white robes; "to think that we should never once have thought of it, and I knew it so well; but it went out of my mind more than a quarter of a century ago; and to think that she cares so much!"

"What is it?" asked John and Mattie in the same breath.

"Why, his name was Shield—Joab Shield Stone; it was his mother's family name, you know; she belonged to the Shields of New England. He liked the name, Joab did; I've heard him speak it with a kind of lingering tenderness many a time; he was uncommonly fond of his mother, Joab was. And to think that I should have forgotten! But I didn't know that Hepsy cared about such things. (We don't know one another very well in this world, after all.)"

The young mother and father looked at each other, half amused, half embarrassed; they had not thought of Joab Stone; Mattie had never

thought of him twice in her life; to John he was a dream of an early childhood, that had faded long ago. They had neither of them so much as known that he laid any claim to the name of Shield; and here they were supposed to have named their baby for him! And then to think that Aunt Hepsy cared! She of all women indulging in such tender sentiment over a name!

The baby's cheek was still wet with that one tear she had dropped! As the mother leaned over to brush it away, the father spoke in a low, moved tone—"He was a good man, Mattie; a pure-hearted, God-fearing, faithful man; shall we keep the accidental part a sacred secret between us, and consider our baby named for him?"

"I like to have it so," said Mattie, gently; "I am so glad that Aunt Hepsy cares."

Well they might have been. Even she did not know how utterly unselfish, and tender, and patient, and absorbed she could become over that small morsel of humanity who had come into her heart. But God knew; and I like to think that he planned this sweet surprise in her old age for Aunt Hepsy Stone.

So they stood that evening, beside his crib, taking a good-night look at John Shield Remington—Aunt Hannah, and Martha and John. Aunt Hepsy had been there and gone, intent on some bit of flannel which she believed should be aired

for the morrow's use, only by her own careful hands.

"Young mothers don't understand; how should they?" she had said, as she bustled away. But the look which she had bestowed on Martha as she said the words, had been full of a lingering tenderness which often shone in her eyes during these days. "Martha is maturing very well indeed," she had confessed to Aunt Hannah but a few days before; she did not know but she was as good a choice on the whole as they could have had for the baby's mother!

"I should think as much?" the minister had said; but he had laughed as he said it, and they had all laughed; and somehow, it was very easy to be patient with Aunt Hepsy nowadays.

To-night, though, Mattie's face had a tender sadness upon it. "I thought I should hear from Elsie this evening," she said. "My heart aches for her; it seems so strange that we should have had to leave her just now in her hour of peril; I cannot like to think of her as that man's wife; and yet, I am afraid she will marry him. The world, the flesh, and her step-mother will be too much for her, I am afraid. John, dear, I really believe he is going to have dark hair like yours. I shall be so glad of that."

"Whom do you mean, Mattie, Aleck Palmer? I had an impression that he was the last mascu-

line you mentioned." This was the minister's merry reply, and then they laughed a little, as people will, sometimes, even when grave thoughts are pressing up behind the gaiety. John Remington's face sobered almost immediately. "I hope he will be a better man than I have been, Mattie, and be able to do some of his father's work; accomplish where I have failed. I hope he will preach the gospel, and succeed in what I have only attempted."

"If he grows up to be as good and true and brave a man as his father, I shall be quite, quite satisfied." This from Mattie, with a firm clasp of the hand that was resting on her shoulder. "I do not like to hear you say you have failed; if you have, the Lord Jesus did. They would not endure his preaching, you know."

"And beside," said Aunt Hannah, in the grim tone which with her always covered strong feeling, "you are rather young yet to be a patriarch; I've no objections to the child being as good a man as you please, and doing plenty of his own work, or rather the Lord's; but you two, John and Martha, have just begun life; it is all before you, as it were; don't go to talking as though you had left it behind, and had finished your course, and kept the faith, and were already watching out for the crown. You haven't got there yet; and its more than likely you will have plenty of hard rubs and

tugs before you do. And if I were you, I wouldn't try to shoulder too much of that child Elsie's burdens, either—not the Lord's end, I mean. I tell you He'll take care of his own, even though you and I are not there to help. If he had wanted you by her side any longer he would have had you stay. He manages things; just let us remember that."

John Remington reached forth his unoccupied arm and drew Aunt Hannah into his embrace as he said with a cheerful laugh—"Aunt Hannah, what do you suppose 'Martha' and I would do without your strong common sense to ballast us?"

Aunt Hepsy bustled in at the moment. "I do wish you wouldn't talk and laugh right over his head," she said; "it isn't good for a baby's nerves."

THE END.

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