



The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is decorated with a marbled paper pattern. The background is a mix of light and dark greenish-blue tones. Overlaid on this are intricate, branching patterns in shades of brown and black, resembling veins or perhaps a stylized map. A prominent vertical crease runs down the center of the cover, indicating the spine's location. The text is printed in a clean, sans-serif font in the lower-left quadrant.

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Darkness in the Shannons' Home.

The Shannons.

FRONTISPIECE.

See Page 9.

THE SHANNONS,

OR,

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

BY

MARTHA FARQUHARSON,

AUTHOR OF

"ALLAN'S FAULT," "MARION HARVIE," "ANNANDALE,"
"ELSIE DINSMORE," ETC., ETC.

"For thou art my lamp, O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness."—2 SAMUEL xxii. 29.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."—DANIEL xii. 3.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN "THE SHANNONS" the Author has traced the story of a family in the country, rescued and raised from the degradation entailed by intemperance, united to ignorance, poverty, and irreligion, through the influences of Christian love, and prayer and labor. The earnest disciple will here find incitements to hopeful and persevering effort for the least promising; and the humble laborer in the Sabbath-school will be encouraged to sow the seeds of divine truth in the least propitious soil with a more hearty and expectant faith. May "The Shannons" lead many to enter upon the blessed work of leading the degraded and sinful FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

THE SHANNONS.

CHAPTER I.

“He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acrs xvii. 31.

THE home of the Shannons was in a little, unpainted frame house, whose weatherboarding had grown old and brown by exposure to sun and storm for many years. It stood in a lonely spot—no neighbors in sight—on the bank of a river, which flowed silently along scarce a hundred yards from the back door. The highroad passed in front, but at a considerable distance, and in those days the travel upon it was not very great; there were some cultivated fields in sight, but most of the land was wild and wooded, and at a little distance beyond the river it rose into hills, covered with forests, where squirrels and deer and other wild game abounded.

A small spot of ground had been cleared just about the house, and there had been some attempt at a garden, but it looked sadly neglected; a few vegetables had been planted, and a few flowers had come up of themselves, but the weeds were far more numerous and thriving than either. Indeed, there was an air of poverty and neglect about the whole place which made it very uninviting, so that it was no wonder the Shannons had few visitors, and those generally of the least desirable class.

Philip, the eldest child, a boy of about thirteen, was expected to take care of the garden, but as he was never commended for industry when he deserved to be, nor taught to do right that he might please God, he neglected that, and other duties also, and in consequence received many a hard beating from Mr. Shannon, who was a very ill-tempered man when sober, and when drunk—which was more than half the time—so fierce, quarrelsome and cruel that his wife and children dreaded his approach as they would that of some ferocious wild beast.

There were four children besides Philip: Euphemia—or Phemie, as she was usually called—a

girl of eleven; Christopher, eight years old; Melissa, five; and a baby named Oliver, just able to sit alone.

If Ira Shannon made his children wretched by his intemperate habits and fierce temper, so did Eunice, his wife, by her indolence, bad management and slatternly ways. The house was never made to look neat and tidy, the food never cooked in a way to make it wholesome and palatable; she was always behindhand with her work; her washing was never done until the last of the week; she seldom mended a garment as soon as it was torn, or washed it until it became quite filthy; and the consequence was that she and her children were always ragged and dirty, and her husband, finding his home so comfortless and his wages wasted, spent more and more of them at the dram-shop, instead of in the purchase of food and clothing for his family.

It was near the close of a bright, warm day in the early summer-time. In the fields and woods without all was peace and loveliness, but within Eunice Shannon's cottage dirt and disorder, wrangling and discontent, prevailed as usual. She herself was bending over the washtub, doing

at this late hour of the day, and almost at the end of the week, what a thrifty, managing house-keeper would have accomplished in the early hours of Monday morning.

"Phemie, can't you stop that child's crying? You know how mad it always makes your father to hear him, and yonder he comes down the road," she said in fretful, peevish tones as she glanced from the window, and then, shaking the suds from her hands, hastily gathered up some soiled garments that lay on the floor beside her, and huddled them into the tub.

"I do wish," she went on, muttering to herself, "that he'd just stayed away till I got these clothes out; for there's nothing makes him madder than to see the washing around."

"You stop that quarreling in a minute, Chris and Lissa; here's your father coming, and he'll give it to you both," she added in a louder key, addressing the two little ones, who, seated on the step of the back door, were pinching, slapping and pulling each other by the hair, the girl screaming at the top of her voice, so as almost to drown the cries of the baby, which had filled the room a moment before, and the boy swearing at

her in a towering passion, as he had often heard his father swear to his mother.

“Father’s just at the gate, and you’d better be quiet,” said Phemie in a flurried tone, drawing near with the sickly, puny infant in her arms. “Oh dear! you squalling young one, if you don’t hush we’ll all catch it.”

“Father’s not coming, any such thing; you’re just lying—you and mother—as you always do when you want us to be still; and I shan’t mind a word you say,” replied Christopher, with an oath, as he dealt his little sister another blow, which sent her backwards to the floor, striking her head against it with considerable force.

“You don’t believe I’m at home, eh, my fine fellow? I’ll soon let you know if I’m not,” cried a rough voice, and the boy felt himself seized from behind, dragged off the step, and shaken until there was scarcely any breath left in his body; then followed several blows accompanied with oaths and curses, and a kick which sent him to some distance and left him sprawling upon the ground.

“There! that’ll teach you to knock your sister down another time,” added his father, and catch-

ing up Melissa, he shook and beat her also, though somewhat less severely, telling her he would have no more fighting, nor screaming and crying.

While her father was thus engaged the terrified Phemie had escaped through the other door, with the still crying babe in her arms, and was flying down a narrow path towards the river.

“Oh Phil,” she cried, as panting and breathless with haste and affright she caught sight of her elder brother seated on a stone, and busied with some fishing tackle, “father’s come home, and in such a rage! He’s most killed Chris, and now he’s at Lissa.

“He sha’n’t!” exclaimed Philip, springing up; “he may beat the rest of us; but Lissa and the baby, they are too little to stand it yet, and he’s got to let them alone.”

“Don’t, Phil, don’t; it’s no use: you’ll just get a beating yourself, and not save Lissa one bit,” said Phemie, seeing him start towards the house. “Oh come back, do!” she called after him, but he sprang away without heeding her words, and, sinking down on the large flat stone where he had been sitting, she cried bitterly.

"I wish father was dead," she sobbed; "he does nothing but beat us. I don't know what fathers ever were made for."

Philip found Chris sobbing on the grass, Melissa cowering and weeping in a corner, and his father belaboring his mother with a broomstick.

"You're always in the suds," he said. "A pretty house this is for a decent man to come home to! but I'll teach you to attend to your business another day;" and blows and curses followed each other in quick succession.

Philip sprang at him like a young tiger.

"You just let mother alone!" he exclaimed, seizing the stick with both hands; "she's as good as you, any day, if she doesn't keep everything just so snug, for you waste all that you earn at the dramshop."

"You impudent young rascal!" cried his father, "I'll give you *your* deserts," and seizing him by the hair, he dragged him about the room, beating him most unmercifully.

"Why haven't you weeded that garden, you lazy dog?" he asked. "I ordered you to do it three days ago, and it hasn't been touched yet."

"I'll work when you give me decent treatment,

and not before," said the boy, wrenching himself away from the grasp of the infuriated man. "What's the use? You beat me all the same whether I do well or ill."

He darted through the open door as he spoke, and ran away, following the same path that Phemie had taken a few moments before.

"Well, I'm too tired to care to follow you now, my man," said Ira, standing in the doorway and shaking his fist at the retreating form of the boy, "but I'll pay you off for this another time."

"Oh, what an awful beating he's given you, Phil!" exclaimed Phemie, seeing her brother coming towards her with a bruised and bleeding face—"the wicked old wretch! I just wish somebody would pitch him into the river and drown him, so I do."

"Yes, 'twould serve him right," said Phil, adding some fearful oaths and curses.

"Phemie! Phemie!" called their mother's shrill voice from the house door, "bring that child in this minute. It's too late to have him out any longer; he'll be catching his death of cold."

"Now I s'pose my turn 'll come," said Phemie,

rising to obey, and hugging the child closer to her with a heavy sigh, while Phil moved on to the water's edge, and stooping down bathed his wounded and swollen face.

"You seem to have been badly hurt, my poor boy," said a kindly voice at his side, and Philip turned with a start of surprise to look at the speaker, merely answering "Yes," with a muttered oath.

The person who had addressed him was a gentleman of very pleasing appearance, though his countenance wore a somewhat pale and sickly hue.

"Does it bring any relief to your pain to take God's holy name in vain, my child?" he asked in a grave though very gentle tone.

"I didn't mean any harm," muttered Philip, hanging his head, for, gentle as was the stranger's tone, it evidently conveyed reproof.

"Perhaps no one has ever told you what a wicked thing it is to swear," said the gentleman. "Do you know the third commandment?"

"Never heard of it before," said the boy. "What is it?"

"It is God's command to us, the creatures he has made: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the

Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.’”

The words were repeated slowly and with distinct and solemn emphasis, and the boy asked in an awestruck tone—scarcely raising his voice above a whisper—“Who is he? I don’t know anything about him. I never heard his name before, except in oaths and curses.”

“Poor child! poor child!” exclaimed the gentleman, sighing deeply; “is it possible that such ignorance can exist in this Christian land? Did you never go to church or Sabbath-school, my boy?”

Philip shook his head. “I’ve seen the meeting houses in Cedarville, when I’ve been there selling fish, or berries, or such like, but I never went into ’em. Father doesn’t like such places: he says they’re all a set of canting hypocrites that go there; and he believes he has just as good a chance to get to heaven as the best of ’em; and mother says she’d like well enough to have us go to church now and then like decent folks, but we haven’t any clothes fit to wear.”

“That is a pity,” said the gentleman; “but would it not be better to go in such clothes as

you have than to stay away? It is a duty to worship God, both at home and in the sanctuary, and it is only in the path of duty that we can expect his blessing."

Philip stared, evidently scarcely comprehending the stranger's words; and wiping the water from his face with the sleeve of his dirty, ragged jacket, he seated himself upon the grass.

"Where do you live, my boy?" asked the gentleman, sitting down by his side.

"Yonder," replied Philip, pointing with his finger.

"What is your name?"

"Philip Shannon."

"Are your parents living?"

"Yes," said Philip, grinding his teeth; and again a muttered oath escaped him.

The stranger looked grieved.

"My boy," he said, "I wish I could persuade you to give up that terrible habit. You tell me you know nothing of the great God whose holy name you are continually blaspheming: let me tell you of him. 'Twas he who made you and gave you health and strength, sight, hearing, and all that you enjoy. 'Twas he that made this beau-

tiful river flowing at our feet, and yonder glorious sun, just sinking behind those western hills and touching the treetops with gold: the lovely blue sky, the gorgeous clouds that linger around that setting sun, the fruits, the flowers, and everything that is beautiful and good are all the work of his Almighty hand. 'He giveth us richly all things to enjoy;' he loves us, and is ever doing us good; and in return he claims our love and our obedience; and shall we, instead of yielding him these, spend the breath which he has given us in taking his holy name in vain? Is it not a wonder that he does not take away his good gifts from those who repay him with such base ingratitude?"

"Yes, if he's knowing to it," said Philip; "but 't isn't likely he hears it half the time."

"Yes, Philip, he does," replied the stranger. "He is everywhere present, watching all that we do, listening to all that we say; and in the Bible—his own book, which he has given us to teach us how to do his will—it is said, 'There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.'"

"I don't see how that can be," said the boy, shrugging his shoulders and glancing round un-

easily; "how can he be all the time seeing and hearing us, and we never so much as catch a sight of him? I never saw him in my life."

"No," replied the stranger; "he says, 'There shall no man see me and live.' God is a Spirit, and we cannot see him, but his eye is ever upon us. He is everywhere present, but invisible to our eyes."

For a moment Philip seemed lost in wonder; then he said, "Father does nothing, most days, but curse and swear from morning till night, and if God hears it all, I wonder he doesn't strike him down dead."

"It is wonderful forbearance, Philip, but our God is very long suffering and patient, slow to anger, and of great mercy: but he is just also, and sooner or later must punish sin. The Bible tells us that there is a day coming when God will call all men to an account for all the deeds done in the body, 'for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil! And all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that

have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'”

“When?” asked the boy, fearfully.

“God only knows,” replied the gentleman, lifting his eyes to the glowing west, while a grave, solemn, but peaceful expression stole over his face; “the Bible says it shall come as a thief in the night, when men are not looking for it. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead be raised up, and all, small and great, shall stand before God, and the books shall be opened—the book of life, in which are written the names of all who have loved and obeyed him here, and the book of remembrance, where every sinful thought, and word, and deed is recorded, and out of them shall all be judged; and then the righteous shall be taken to heaven, where God dwells and all is peace and joy and love, and the wicked shall be turned into hell, the place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.”

“I’ll hide away somewhere,” said the boy, shuddering. “I’ll not mind the call of the trumpet, nor go up there to be judged; for I’ve said so many bad words, and done so many bad things, that I know well enough I’ll never get to

heaven, if all's true that you've said about God watching and listening, and writing down everything in his book; and I don't want to go to that bad place; so I'll hide till it is all over, and just stay here."

The gentleman shook his head. "No, Philip, you cannot do that," he said. "Nothing can hide you from the eye of God. Many in that day will wish, like you, to hide, and will call on the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and cover them; but it will be useless: none can escape: we *must all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. The only way, my boy, is to make the Judge your friend now, before that dreadful day comes, and then you will be able to meet him with joy and rejoicing, instead of with trembling and fear."

"But how can I do that?" he asked. "I've got so used to cursing and swearing that I don't believe I could stop if I wanted to; and then I've done it so often already that I don't s'pose he'd let me into heaven even if I did stop."

"It is very true," replied Mr. Seldon—for that was the gentleman's name—"that you cannot go to that holy place with the sinful nature which

you now have; nor would you be happy there if you could; nor would it be just in God to allow your past sins to go unpunished. Yet there is a way provided. Jesus, who is God's own dear Son—himself, both God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever—Jesus, who will be the Judge in that last great day, has willingly laid down his life a ransom for us; has borne the punishment which we deserve, has kept the law in our stead, and now invites us to come and be saved on account of what he has done and suffered. He is able to save us from our sins and to make us good and holy; and God says to each one of us, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

"But I must leave you now," he added, rising, "for it is growing late, and I have a long walk before me. God bless you, my boy!" and he held out his hand with a kindly smile. "The Lord bless you, and grant unto you that you may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

"Thank you, sir; and oh I hope I shall see you again," said Philip, with a tear trembling on his eyelash; for the exceeding kindness of the stranger's tone and manner went straight to the

heart of the poor boy, unaccustomed as he was to anything but the harshest treatment and the roughest tones.

"God willing, I will see you again to-morrow," Mr. Seldon replied as he turned away; and Philip stood and watched his retreating form until it was lost to view amid the trees that bordered the highroad.

Then he looked towards home, but shook his head, muttering between his teeth, "He won't be gone yet, I reckon," and turning in the opposite direction he wandered slowly along the river bank.

It was after nightfall when he returned, but the moon gave sufficient light for him to discern a childish figure crouching down in one corner of the neglected garden.

He drew near with a noiseless step.

"Oh, is it you, Phemie?" he exclaimed, almost under his breath.

The child started and turned towards him.

"Yes," she whispered; "I just came out to see if I couldn't find a radish, for I'm awful hungry. Father, he ate up every bit of bread there was in the house, except just a little piece that mother divided between Chris and Lissa."

"And isn't there any flour left?" asked Philip.

"No; there's a handful or two of cornmeal, that mother's saving up to make a little mush for breakfast; but that's all."

Philip clenched his fist, and half muttered something that sounded very like an oath, but suddenly checked himself as the remembrance of the stranger's words flashed upon him.

"Oh, here's a real big one!" exclaimed Phemie, who was still groping in the sand, with a half-smothered cry of joy. "Take half, Phil, won't you?"

"No," he answered, almost fiercely, "I don't want it;" and Phemie, too hungry to wait till she could carry her prize to the house and wash off the dirt, brushed away the sand with one corner of her greasy apron and began devouring it greedily.

"It's good, I tell you!" she said, smacking her lips, "but I wish I had a piece of bread to eat with it. Aren't you hungry, Phil?"

"What's the difference if I am," he answered roughly, "if there's nothing better to eat than dirty radishes? Is he gone, Phemie?"

"Yes; a good little bit ago. I was afraid he

might be lurking round somewhere, but I don't see him, and I guess he's clear gone."

"Then I'm going in," said Philip; "and you'd better come along too, for it's getting late and mother'll scold."

Phemie rose and followed him. They drew near the house with cautious tread, peeped in at the window, but could see nothing, listened at the door, and, finding all quiet, gently lifted the latch and stole noiselessly in.

"Who's that?" asked Mrs. Shannon's sharp, querulous tones from an inner room, as the slight sound caused by the closing of the door reached her ear.

"Only Phil and me, mother," replied Phemie, with a slight tremor in her voice.

"Fasten the door and go straight to bed, both of you," commanded Eunice, and the children obeyed, securing the door, and then hastily mounting the narrow, crooked stairway to the half story above.

The loft was divided into two rooms, each furnished with a hard straw bed covered with ragged and filthy sheets and quilt. Lissa lay sleeping on the one in the inner room, and Christopher

on the other; and in another moment Phemie and Philip had taken their places beside them.

The gnawings of but half-appeased hunger kept Phemie awake for some time, yet she slept long and soundly ere Philip had closed an eye. The stranger's description of the scenes and transactions of the coming judgment had taken fast hold of the boy's imagination and conscience, and he trembled and shuddered with fear as again and again they passed in review before his mental vision.

"Oh," he muttered, as he tossed and turned upon his hard couch; "I wish, I wish I'd never said bad words nor done anything wicked! But I don't care. I'm not so bad as father, for I don't get drunk and go on like mad, beating everybody that comes near me; and I reckon I'll get off as well as he will, any how. And then I remember the man said that maybe I could somehow make the Judge my friend beforehand, and I believe I'll try. I hope I'll see him to-morrow, to ask him how I'm to do it."

And with this thought in his mind, Philip at last fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

“The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”—PROV. vi. 23.

THE sun had quite set when Mr. Seldon parted from Philip, and fearful of the effect of the night air upon his feeble frame—for he was an invalid who had come to pass a few months in the country in the hope of recruiting his shattered health—he hurried on as fast as his small stock of strength would permit.

For some distance the road, which lay through the woods, seemed dark and lonely, the trees shutting out nearly all the remaining light; but at length they grew more scattered, and he began to come in sight of cultivated fields and farm-houses.

Then he reached a small log school-house, now lonely and deserted, standing at a spot where the road branched off in different directions, and a little stream came rushing down from the hills,

singing and dancing over the stones. A few grand old forest trees sheltered the little building from the sun, and the grass grew green and fresh about it.

While hurrying on his way, Mr. Seldon's mind had been busied with plans for doing good to Philip and several other neglected children whom he had met in the neighborhood, and pausing for a moment in front of the place we have described, he gazed upon it with a pleased expression.

"A country school-house pleasantly situated, and the very thing for my purpose, if I can but get possession of it," he murmured, half aloud. Then turning round and sending a sweeping glance over the landscape: "There are a number of houses within easy walking distance, I see," he continued, "and no doubt children in them, too; and I daresay that with a little effort I shall be able to collect quite a school. But I must hasten or Bella will be alarmed, thinking some accident has happened to detain me."

A few moments more and he had reached the gate of Woodlawn, Squire Langley's country seat, and one of the finest residences in the vicinity. The gate opened upon a graveled walk

winding about through a green velvety lawn, dotted here and there with magnificent shade trees and flowering shrubs, up to the front of the house, which stood back several hundred yards from the road—a large, many-gabled building of dark gray stone, round the pillars of whose porches and porticoes twined roses, honeysuckle, and other flowering vines, adding grace and beauty to the structure, and filling the air with fragrance.

On one of these porticoes several ladies and gentlemen were seated, one of whom sprang up at the sound of the closing of the gate, exclaiming, "Here he comes at last!" and running down the steps, she flew to meet Mr. Seldon.

"My dear Arthur, my dear husband," she said, "what can have kept you so long? I feared you must have met with some accident."

"No," he said, "I have had a very pleasant ramble, and was not aware how far I had wandered until I turned to retrace my steps. I am sorry you have been anxious about me."

"We have been *very*, anxious Uncle Arthur," said little Effie Langley, catching his last words, as he and her aunt drew near. "Aunt Bella seemed-

so uneasy that Walter was on the point of setting out in search of you. But please give me your hat and cane to put away, and you sit down in this large easy chair and rest yourself; for I'm sure you must be weary enough."

"Yes, brother, sit down and give an account of yourself, as it is but fair you should after frightening us all half out of our wits," said Mrs. Langley, laughingly.

"Willingly, sister mine," he replied with a smile as he took the offered seat. Then turning to his brother-in-law: "Edward," he asked, "do you know anything of a family named Shannon, living on the bank of the river some two miles from here?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Shannon is a well-digger by trade, but works at almost anything when he has an industrious fit; which, however, is not often. He is a drunken brute, and very abusive to his family, I have been told."

"I am not surprised to hear it," remarked Mr. Seldon, with a sigh; "it is what one would naturally suppose from the forlorn appearance of his children; nor does it seem probable that the mother can be much better."

“She is an exceedingly bad manager, and a lazy, whining, complaining creature—enough to drive even a well-disposed man to the dramshop,” said Mrs. Langley. “I have tried again and again to help them, but it is of no use whatever; everything that is given them seems to be quite thrown away, and I am completely discouraged about trying to do them any good.”

“Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not,” said her brother; and then he unfolded his plan, which was to open a Sabbath-school in the little school-house, if he could obtain the use of it from the trustees for an hour or two every Sabbath day, and to try to gather into it all the children in the neighborhood, and to do them good, soul and body.

“I believe the gospel is a sovereign cure for evils of every sort,” he said; “and if we can lead these little ones to Christ, we shall be doing the very best thing to promote their well-being and happiness both in this world and the next; and who knows but through them we may be able in time to reach the parents also?”

“I am very glad to hear your proposal,” said

the squire, "for I am a friend to Sunday-schools; and think if one was ever needed anywhere, it is here; and even if the carrying out of your plan should do no good, it will at least do no harm."

"Except to himself," said Mrs. Seldon, looking anxiously at her husband. "Arthur, I don't think you are fit for it, for you know you are far from strong."

"Yes, my dear; but strong enough yet, I hope, to do a little for the Master, and try to get some stars for my crown; at least I must make the attempt, and you, I trust, will be ready to assist me."

"Yes," she said, "to the utmost of my ability, if you really think you ought to undertake it."

"I fear your wife is right, and that you are hardly fit for such an undertaking," said the squire; "but if you are quite resolved to attempt it, the school-house will be at your service. I am one of the trustees."

"Thank you," said Mr. Seldon. "And now, who, besides my wife, will volunteer to be my assistants in the good work?"

For a moment no one spoke, and then Walter, and Alicia, the grown-up son and daughter of

the family, offered their services if their uncle would instruct them how to proceed; for they had never, they said, had any experience in teaching. This he promised to do. Then the family were called together for evening worship, after which all retired to rest.

The sun was already high in the heavens when Eunice Shannon, at length fully aroused from sleep by the cries of her infant, crawled lazily from her bed, and, going to the foot of the stairs, called in her shrillest, sharpest tones to Phemie and Philip to come down.

Philip grumbled and turned over, but finding it impossible to sleep with those shrill tones and the screams of little Oliver continually sounding in his ears, rose up with a muttered oath, and came growling and grumbling down the stairs, followed by Phemie, looking pale and jaded.

"There's never the least bit of peace or comfort about this house," growled the boy; "you can't even let a body sleep."

"You've slept long enough, I'm sure," said his mother. "Now take the axe and go off to the woods, and get something to make a fire with,

for there's not a stick in the house, nor the yard either."

"Phemie must go along, then," said Philip, looking about for his hat, which had fallen off in the scuffle with his father the day before, and been kicked into a corner.

"No, she sha'n't," replied his mother. "You can carry enough yourself, and she's got to take this baby. How do you suppose I can do anything with the child in my arms?"

"It's too hot to tend babies and do everything else," muttered Phemie, dropping into a chair, and reluctantly permitting her mother to place the still screaming little one in her lap; while Philip, saying, "Chris shall go with me, then," bounded up stairs, and wakened his little brother with a rough shake.

"Don't, now! you just let me alone!" fretted the little fellow, returning a kick for the shake.

"No, I won't. Come now, you've got to go with me to get some wood," said Philip, dragging him from the bed by main force.

Christopher cried and fought with all his might, but he was no match for Philip, who kept his

hold, and pulled and pushed until he had brought him down stairs.

"You just let me alone! I sha'n't go, I tell you!" screamed Chris.

"Yes, you will," said his mother, who was lazily wringing out the clothes which she had left soaking all night in the dirty suds in her tub; "just go right along this minute, or I'll take a stick to you."

"I won't!" said the child, adding a fearful oath; then, as she caught up the broom-handle to execute her threat, he ran off screaming with passion.

The baby echoed his cries.

"Phemie, that child's hungry," said her mother, "and I've nothing for him, and there isn't a drop of milk in the house. You'll have to run up to Mrs. Nott's, and see if you can't beg a little for him."

"You've got to take him, then, while I go," replied Phemie, sullenly.

"No, you must take him along; he's not heavy, and I've enough to do without tending babies," said her mother.

"I sha'n't stir one step, if I've got to carry

him along," returned Phemie, with saucy determination; "it's bad enough to have to walk all that long way through the hot sun, with only the bucket to carry. You'll have to take him or go for the milk yourself—I don't care which."

"Take that for your impertinence, you saucy, good-for-nothing brat!" exclaimed her mother, flying at her and administering a tremendous box on the ear. "Here! give me the child; and now do you take the bucket and start right off this instant, or I'll give you such a trouncing as you'll be apt to remember for one while."

Phemie obeyed, but turned round at the door to make a face at her mother; then darted away just in time to escape the poker, which Eunice seized and flung after her.

She flew down the road, passing Philip, who was swearing roundly at Chris for his slow movements.

Philip's fears had almost vanished with the return of daylight; what had seemed very near and dreadful in the darkness and stillness of night, had lost more than half its terror and reality, now that the sun shone brightly and all was life and motion around him; and he was ready to say

with other careless sinners, "Where is the promise of his coming, for all things continue as they were since the foundation of the world?"

"Nobody ever did have such children as mine, I do believe!" exclaimed Eunice, giving the screaming babe an angry shake, and setting it down hard upon her knee. "Hush your squalling this instant or I'll spank you! You too! I'd like to know what *you're* crying about?" she added, turning to Lissa, who came fretting into the room.

"I want my breakfast," said the child. "I'm just as hungry as I can be. I can't wait. Give me a bit of bread right off."

"There's none to give you," replied her mother; "you and Chris had the last bit there was last night."

"I don't believe a word you say. You're just telling stories. Give me a piece this minute, or I'll hit you," cried the child, stamping her foot and shaking her fist at her mother.

"If you do you'll get the worst of it, my lady," was all Mrs. Shannon said in reply. Then setting the babe down on the floor, "There!" she said, "you may just cry it out. There's no use

in holding you if you won't be quiet. Lissa, mind your little brother while I wring out these clothes. You can amuse him if you try."

"I can't, and I won't, either!" replied the child, marching out of the room.

"Such children, as lazy and saucy as they can live!" sighed the mother, going lazily about her work.

It was long past eight o'clock when the boys returned with the wood. Phemie had come in a few minutes before with a supply of good, sweet country milk, the gift of the kind neighbor to whom she had been sent, and the baby, relieved from the gnawing pains of hunger, had fallen asleep in its dirty, uncomfortable-looking cradle, where its sister had laid it.

"It'll be somewhere about noon, I believe, before a body gets a mouthful of breakfast," said Philip sullenly, as he threw down the wood.

"It's your own fault, then," returned his mother, "for I told you to get the wood yesterday, and you wouldn't do it."

"'Tain't my fault, either," he answered with an oath: "you've no business to burn up the wood so fast, dawdling all day over your washing,

instead of doing it up in a hurry like Mr. Nott's folks. Their clothes are always out on the line before we get our breakfast on Monday morning, and looking ten times nicer then ever ours do, besides."

"Just you make that fire as quick as you can, and hold your tongue," said his mother. "And, Phemie, do you bring some water from the spring and fill the kettle; and then put the bowls and spoons on the table."

"I will, mother, and I'll just put a dipperful into the little black pot, so that it'll boil quick to make the mush, sha'n't I?" asked Phemie, who, young as she was, seemed to have more talent for managing such matters than her mother, who, as the neighbors said, "generally took hold of her work at the wrong end," and on this occasion had thought of no better plan than waiting until the whole kettleful should boil.

"Yes," she said, "I s'pose that will do about as well as any way."

Phil's fire was slow, and to the half-famished children it seemed as if the water in the pot never would boil. But at last breakfast was announced as ready, and, unwashed and uncombed, they

gathered about the table. No blessing was asked upon their food—no thanks were returned to their heavenly Father for thus providing for their wants. The mother dealt out the mush, and the hungry little crew devoured it greedily, their keen appetites taking little heed that it was smoked and scarcely more than half cooked.

“Mother! mother! see, there’s a gentleman coming in at the gate!” whispered Lissa, pulling at her mother’s sleeve.

“Sure enough! so there is! What on earth can he be coming here for?” exclaimed Eunice, glancing out of the door, and then passing her hands hastily over her hair and dress, in the vain effort to bring them into something like order.

Phil looked out too as Lissa spoke, and recognizing the stranger who had talked with him the night before, blushed and hung his head, thinking to himself, “I hope he’ll not ask me if I’ve been swearing again.”

“Good morning, sir; will you walk in, and take a seat?” said Eunice, going to the door.

“Thank you, I will, if you will permit me to do so,” he replied, “for I have walked some distance, and would like to rest a little.”

“Perhaps you have a well to be dug, and wished to see my husband?” said Eunice, inquiringly, setting him the only whole chair in the room. “He’s not in just now, but if you’ll be so good as to tell me where you live, I will send him to you as soon as he comes home.”

“No,” said Mr. Seldon; “I am only a visitor in the neighborhood, and my business is perhaps rather more with you than with your husband. I am about opening a Sabbath-school in the little log school-house that stands at the fork of the road, a mile or so from here, and would like you to send all your children who are old enough to walk that distance.”

“What do you ask a quarter?” inquired Eunice, blushing as she glanced at her little group, with a new and strange consciousness how very ragged and dirty they were, and how perfectly in keeping with those rags and dirt were all their surroundings.

“I am not going to work for money,” replied the stranger, patting little Lissa’s head, and smiling kindly upon her, “but for love. My Master, the blessed Lord Jesus, loves little children, and he has said to me, ‘Feed my lambs,’ and I desire

to obey his command from love to both him and them."

Eunice stared, evidently but half comprehending his words, and he went on:

"I wish to teach the little ones to know and love that dear Saviour who when on earth took young children in his arms and blessed them, saying, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Eunice, "but I don't think I can send 'em; for you see, sir, in the first place, I know *he'd* never allow it, for he hates the folks that he thinks set up to be saints (I don't mean any offence, sir) worse than poison. And then they haven't one of 'em a stitch of decent clothes to wear."

"Now, mother, you needn't say that," said Philip, speaking up boldly, "for I shall just go right straight along."

"And I too," said Chris, while Phemie looked as if she felt very much inclined to echo their words, though respect for the stranger kept her silent.

"If you do, you know what you'll catch when

your father finds it out; and if you go against my wishes, I'll be sure to tell him, and I sha'n't care if he does half kill you," said their mother.

"I don't care," muttered Chris; "father beats us anyhow, and so we may as well do what we like."

"I've got just the worst children in the world," said Eunice, addressing Mr. Seldon in a whining, complaining tone; "they won't mind one word I say, and don't think anything of swearing at me and spitting in my face."

"Those are sad words to hear from the lips of a mother," replied Mr. Seldon, gravely. "I fear you have not taught them to love God and keep his commandments. Do you not know, my children, that God says, 'Swear not at all?' 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?' and that he commands us to honor our parents, to obey them and treat them with respect and kindness? That is the fifth commandment, and he has added to it a promise of long life and prosperity to those who are careful to obey it. Have you a Bible?" he asked, again addressing Eunice.

"No, sir," she said; "we used to have one a

good many years ago, but he sold it; he said it was all a pack of lies, and he wouldn't have it about the house."

"And have you prospered while thus casting dishonor upon God's holy word, refusing to study it, and to conform your lives to its teachings?" asked her visitor, gravely.

"That you may see for yourself," she replied in a bitter tone, as she sent a scornful glance around the miserable apartment, with its bare, blackened walls, from which the plaster was falling here and there, its broken windows and scanty furniture.

"Yes," he said, following the direction of her glance, "I see. God tells us, in that same Bible, 'the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just.' 'Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' 'Him that honoreth me I will honor.' You have not found prosperity nor happiness in forsaking God; now will you not be persuaded to turn and seek him?"

He paused a moment, but, receiving no answer, went on :

“I do not like to hear of any one being without a Bible, and if you will accept one as a gift from me, and promise to keep and read it, I will bring it in a few days.”

“Thank you,” she said, coldly; “but it wouldn’t be at all worth while, for the very first time Ira got his hands on it he’d sell or burn it. Besides, I’ve no time to spend in reading, and the children don’t know how, except Phil, and he’s no great scholar.”

“Then there is the more reason why you should let them go where they will be taught to read and understand God’s word,” he said. “If you cannot find time to read it for yourself, let them learn both for themselves and for you, for then they can often read aloud to you while you work. Yet surely you could sometimes find a few moments to give to its study—on the Sabbath at least, if not on a week-day. The Bible, my good woman, is God’s letter to us to teach us how to do his will, that we may be happy here and hereafter; and if we lose our souls by neglecting its study, we alone will be to blame.”

She was silent a moment, seemingly lost in thought; then said, “Well, I’ve no great objec-

tion myself to letting them go, but their father would be ready to half kill them if he caught them going to such a place; and don't you mind telling them, a bit ago, that the Bible said they should obey their parents?"

"Yes," he said, "I have not forgotten it; but the command is, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right;' and when a parent orders a child to do what God plainly forbids, or to abstain from doing what he commands, his duty is to respectfully refuse obedience to his parent, remembering that the Bible also says, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'"

"Yes, I see," she said, slowly. "Well, if I can get 'em fixed up any way decent, and they can manage to slip off without his knowing it, I'll let 'em go."

Mr. Seldon expressed his pleasure and approbation, and after a few more moments spent in conversing kindly with her and the children, he rose and took leave, saying he hoped to see some of them, at least, at nine o'clock the next morning in the little school-house.

"I'll bet I'll be there," said Philip, looking after him.

"And I too," said Phemie. "Mother, this is the best frock I have, but it's as dirty as it can be. I'm going to take it off and wash it, and sew up the holes: and I'll wash up that old sun-bonnet too, and wash myself and comb my hair; and I guess I'll do pretty well."

"You haven't any shoes to wear, Phemie," said her mother.

"No, so I haven't," replied the little girl, sorrowfully. "I wish I had; but I'm bound to go anyhow; and my frock's long, you know, and I'll try to slip in softly when nobody's looking, and sit down on a bench, and tuck my feet up under my frock, and maybe nobody'll see that they're bare."

Eunice went about her work with an unusually thoughtful air that morning. "Yes," she muttered to herself, as she bent over her washtub, "it's just as he said: folks that mind the Bible, and go to meeting, and all that, do seem to get along a sight better than we do; and those that mind their parents and do as they want to have them, when the parents are the right sort and want 'em to do right, live longer and are better off than those that don't. There's Ira's father's

family, now; what a set they were! like our children for all the world—wouldn't mind a word their parents said. There was Sally, would dress up in thin clothes and go to a ball, in spite of all her mother could say, when she was just getting over a spell o' sickness too, and took her death o' cold, and went off in less than six weeks in a galloping consumption; and John went a-boating on Sunday and got drowned; and Sam was killed in a drunken spree; and Jake died pretty soon after with the delirium tremens; and Emma married a rascal that broke her heart, and she died before she was twentyfive; and she wouldn't have had him if she'd minded what the old folks said; and so there's none left but Becky and Ira; and I know what Ira is, and I reckon Becky's husband knows what she is, for one drinks just about as hard as t'other; and tisn't likely that either of 'em will live to see old age, nor that anybody'd want 'em to, since the old folks have gone down heartbroken to their graves. And *I'd* never have been Ira Shannon's wife if *I'd* minded *my* father and mother," she concluded, with a heavy sigh.

CHAPTER III.

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—2 Cor. ix. 15.

IT was about the middle of the afternoon, and Phemie was seated on the big flat stone by the river side, making earnest efforts to mend the numerous rents in the old faded calico dress which was her best, and which she had dabbled out of some dirty suds that morning, then rinsed and afterwards dried, and smoothed a little with a warm iron; while Philip knelt at a little distance on the grass, busily engaged in scaling some fish which he had drawn from the river shortly before.

“I’ll tell you how we’ll manage it, Phemie, if father should happen to be at home to-morrow morning,” he said.

“How?” she asked, pulling out her needle with a jerk that broke the thread. “Dear me! I shall never learn to sew.”

“Why, I’ll just say I’m going a-fishing, and

want you and Chris along for company, and to take the fish off the hook. Won't that be a good plan?"

"Yes, first-rate," replied Phemie; for these poor children were sadly ignorant of right and wrong, and had never been taught the sinfulness of lying and deceit. "But then, Phil," added the little girl, after a moment's thought, "you won't have any fish when we get back, and so we'll get found out."

"Not a bit of it," he replied. "I'll say the fish wouldn't bite; sometimes they won't, you know. And besides, I can hide my pole in the woods, and maybe catch some after the school's out and before we come home."

Eunice had made some faint efforts to clean up her house and set it to rights, and was sitting in the doorway with her babe in her arms when the children came in.

"You've caught quite a lot, Phil," she said, glancing into the old tin bucket he was carrying. "Now Phemie shall fry them, and we'll have a right good supper."

"The lard's all gone, and I'm too tired to go to cooking," said Phemie, in a fretful tone.

"Eat 'em raw, then, if you like it better," replied her mother, with a provoking laugh.

"I sha'n't do any such thing," said Phemie, angrily; "but you know well enough that I can't fry 'em without lard."

"Get out the old gridiron, then, and do them over the coals," said Eunice, too much accustomed to disrespectful and disobedient behavior in her children to take any notice of the impertinence of Phemie's reply.

"I'm so tired," again fretted the little girl, who was a feeble child naturally, and very much overworked in consequence of her mother's indolence and inefficiency.

Mrs. Shannon, however, treated her complaints with the utmost indifference, and slowly and wearily she went through the task of preparing the evening meal.

"I wish I was Mrs. Nott's girl instead of mother's," she said to Philip, as she bent over the gridiron turning the fish. "They keep that big, strong Polly Miller to do the work, and Maggie Nott has nothing to do but dress up in nice new clothes and go to school."

"Yes," said Phil, "and everything's so nice and

pretty about the place, and they always have plenty of good things to eat, and fine clothes to wear. I do believe that gentleman is right about folks that mind the Bible getting along better than folks that don't; for I know the Notts are that kind, for I've seen 'em going to church in all weathers. And, Phemie, I'm *bound* to go to-morrow to see what that Sunday-school's like."

"So am I," she said; "and I mean to go to bed just as soon as ever supper's over, because I'm so tired, and so's to have Sunday come soon."

"You'd better wash the dishes first," said Philip, "or mother'll keep you at home to do it in the morning."

"No, she won't," replied Phemie, with a wise shake of her head, "for we'll be off long before she's up."

"Oh Phemie, aren't the fish most done?" asked Lissa, looking at them with hungry eyes. "I'm afraid father'll come and eat them all up from us if you don't hurry."

"I am hurrying all I can," said Phemie, "for I know that's just what he'd do; and I want to

get to bed, too, before he comes home, so's not to get a beating."

Poor Phemie lived in constant terror of her brutal father: he was cruel and abusive to all the family, but most especially so to her and Philip, who were seldom without cuts or bruises, inflicted by his hand, upon some part of their bodies. No amount of care and attention to his wishes could secure them from the ebullitions of his fury: their only safety lay in keeping out of his way, and Phemie felt more secure in bed than anywhere else about the house, as he was ordinarily too drunk to ascend the stairs; but unfortunately this was not *always* the case, and there had been times when he had dragged the poor children from their beds to beat them cruelly, and then turn them out of doors to pass the remainder of the night shivering with cold and crying with pain and fear.

To the great relief of all, however, from the mother down to little Lissa, he did not come home this afternoon, and they were able to eat their suppers and go to bed in peace.

But in the middle of the night poor Phemie was roused from her slumbers by the sound of

his unsteady step and his tones of fierce anger as one fearful oath after another rolled from his stammering tongue.

The child started up and listened intently, trembling in every limb, while the cold drops of fear stood on her brow. Then she thought she heard his foot on the lowest stair, and springing from her bed, she crouched down in a corner, trembling more violently than before. But either she had been mistaken, or he changed his mind, for the next moment she heard him stumble over a chair and fall heavily to the floor: a few muttered curses reached her ear and all was still, and she ventured to creep back to bed again, where she lay hour after hour trembling and starting at every sound, real or imaginary, and only towards morning fell into an uneasy slumber.

“Phemie! Phemie! wake up, or we’ll not get off in time. The sun’s two good hours high, I’m sure,” said Philip’s voice at her elbow, the words being accompanied by a not very gentle shake.

“Oh, dear, I’m so tired!” groaned the little girl, turning over; “do let me alone!”

“But you want to go to the gentleman’s Sunday-school, don’t you?” asked Philip.

"Oh, yes; is it time, Phil?" she cried, starting up.

"Yes," he said; "I should think it was somewhere about seven o'clock, and you want to wash your face and comb your hair, and put on your clean frock; and we've a pretty long walk to get there. There's no breakfast to wait for, but you know there's some corn-bread and cold potatoes, and mother said we might take a bit in our hands and eat as we go."

"Yes, I know," replied Phemie; "but oh, where's father?" And she began to tremble again.

"I don't know nor care where he is," said Philip. "I don't think he has come home yet."

"Yes," replied Phemie, in a whisper, and glancing fearfully around, "I heard him last night, and he went on awfully. I thought one time he was coming up here; but presently after I heard him tumble over a chair on to the floor, and then I guess he went to sleep."

"I'll just slip down softly and see where he is," said Philip.

He did so, and presently came back, reporting that all was quiet below, his mother and the babe

apparently asleep on the bed in the inner room and his father upon the floor of the kitchen.

“He hasn’t slept off the liquor yet, and we’ll be safe enough if we move quietly,” concluded the boy.

Phemie had risen and put on her dress while he was gone, and was now engaged in combing out her hair.

Phil waked Chris and helped him to dress; and then, in their bare feet and walking on tip-toe, they stole softly down the stairs and out at the back door; then on to the spring, where each took a drink of the clear, cold water, and washed hands, face and feet in the little stream that wound its way down to the river.

Then Phemie returned to the house and presently came out again, bringing a pretty large piece of corn-bread and three potatoes, which she divided equally between her brothers and herself.

Many children would have turned away in disgust from such a breakfast; but the Shannons had felt the gnawings of hunger too often to be dainty, and considered themselves very fortunate in having anything at all wherewith to satisfy their appetites; and in their hearts were sincerely



The Sunday School in the School House.

The Shannons.

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grateful to good Mrs. Nott, who, having learned from Phemie, though not without close questioning, how entirely empty their larder was, had sent them a supply of cornmeal and potatoes sufficient to last for several days.

It was a bright, sweet morning; a Sabbath stillness seemed resting on river, field and forest, and the children walked slowly along the shaded road, talking in subdued tones and eating their frugal breakfast as they went.

Once they sat down on a fallen tree to rest for a few moments, then pressed on more rapidly than before, fearing they might be too late.

They found the school-house door open, and a little group of boys and girls gathered about it under the trees, and as they came up Mr. Seldon invited them all to walk in.

Mrs. Seldon and Miss Alicia and Mr. Walter Langley were there, sitting on one of the seats near to the teacher's desk, on which lay an open Bible and hymn-book.

The Shannons, and some others of the more poorly-dressed children, sat down near the door, but Mr. Seldon, taking his place at the desk, asked them to come forward to the seats nearer

him, that he might address them the more easily.

They did as requested, and after talking to them a little in words so well chosen and simple that the youngest and most ignorant child there could quite understand him, telling them that they had come together to study God's holy word, that thus they might learn to do his will, and how to reach heaven at last, he gave out a hymn, which was sung by the ladies and gentlemen, some of the children joining in; then he read a portion of Scripture and prayed, and after that the children were divided into classes.

Philip became a member of Mr. Seldon's own class, much to the boy's satisfaction, while Phemie was assigned to Miss Langley, and Christopher, with two or three others, of about the same age, to her brother.

There were but few girls present that first Sabbath, and all but Phemie, being able to read, were formed into a class which was given to Mrs. Seldon, and Phemie was the only one left for Miss Langley. Alicia, however, was quite content to begin with but one, feeling that even that was a great responsibility. She was a sincere,

earnest Christian, and had come to her work that morning with a heart full of love to the Saviour, and a longing desire to lead some little one to him.

The children were all strangers to her, for she had but lately returned from boarding-school, where the most of her time had been spent for the last few years, and while Mr. Seldon was speaking she had been watching them and trying to read their countenances. Several of them she thought very nice-looking children, and one or two even decidedly pretty; but there was something in Phemie's little pale, thin, careworn face that made it more attractive to her than any of the others, and led her to request her uncle to give her that child to teach.

He readily complied, and leading the little girl away into a distant corner of the room, where they could be quite to themselves, she sat down beside her and asked in a kindly tone, "Can you read, my dear?"

"No, ma'am," replied Phemie, with a blush; "I never had much chance to go to school. I can spell a little, but that's all."

"That is a great pity," said Alicia, "for there

is a great deal of pleasure to be found in reading, and in that way we may gain much knowledge that we never should in any other. But I will teach you if you like, and if you are willing to take pains to learn, I hope you may soon be able to read nicely."

"I'll try my very best, ma'am, if you'll be so good as to teach me," said Phemie, gratefully, making a vain effort to hide her bare feet under her worn and faded dress, which looked worse than ever in contact with the lady's neat, though simple attire.

"That is right, and if you do so I am sure you will learn," said Alicia; and then she asked the little girl her name, and where she lived, and several other questions about her home and the family, which she answered very readily; for the young lady's look and tone were so gentle and kind that she felt that she had found a friend.

"I must hunt up a book to give you a reading lesson in," said Alicia, looking about among the desks near which they were sitting. "Ah, here is one that will do nicely, for it has some very easy reading in it."

The reading lesson over, Alicia proposed teach-

ing her little pupil a Bible verse. "I have chosen one which I think very sweet," she said: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' I will say a few words of it at a time, and you may repeat them after me until you know it all perfectly."

Phemie had a retentive memory, and as she was anxious to learn, and kept her attention fixed upon the business in hand, she was soon able to repeat the whole verse quite correctly. But Alicia did not think that sufficient. She was anxious that the child should understand what she had learned, and that the precious truth taught in those words of our Saviour should be brought home with power to her heart.

"Do you know what it means, Phemie?" she asked.

The child shook her head.

"Do you know who God is?"

"No, ma'am," with another shake of the head. "Father and mother, and other folks that come to our house sometimes, say that name pretty often when they're talking, especially when they

get mad; but I never knew there was much meaning to it."

"Poor child!" said Alicia, looking both shocked and sorrowful. "I will try to teach you something of that great God whose holy name you have heard so wickedly profaned. It was he who made you, Phemie, and gave you everything good that you have."

"I haven't got much that's good," murmured the child, more as if thinking aloud than addressing her teacher; "no good clothes to wear, and often nothing but mush to eat, without either milk or molasses, and sometimes not even that. I've gone hungry many a time."

"That is sad, Phemie," said her friend, "but I hope it may never happen again; and in spite of all your poverty you still have a great many blessings. How pleasant it is to be able to see, and hear, and speak, and run about—to be neither blind, deaf, dumb, nor maimed, nor laid upon a bed of sickness and pain, as very many are in this world of sin and sorrow!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Phemie, "but I never thought about it before; and was it God that made me so I could see and hear, and all that?"

“Yes, Phemie, and it was he who made the lovely green fields, the flowers, the woods, the singing birds and running brooks, and everything that it is pleasant for us to listen to or look upon; he made all things, and when he made them at first they were all very good: he made man holy, but he sinned.”

Then she told the little girl the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, their creation and fall, and how sin had brought death into the world, because God is holy and just, as well as kind and merciful, and must punish sin; “and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” and lastly she told her how Jesus had come into the world and died to save sinners.

“And now, Phemie, you can understand your verse,” she said: “‘God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

“But why couldn’t he forgive us without?” asked the child, down whose cheeks the tears were streaming. “Oh, why did he let them kill Jesus?—the wicked, wicked wretches!”

“Because, Phemie, that was the only way in

which we poor, guilty sinners could be saved," replied her teacher, with emotion. "We had sinned, and God is just and holy, and *must* punish sin. It was necessary that some one should die, for God had said, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' and would it have been right for him not to keep his word?"

Again Phemie shook her head.

"No," said Alicia, "and God hates sin: he is holy, of purer eyes than to behold sin, and cannot look upon iniquity: he hates sin because it makes us wretched. When you have done wrong, Phemie, been very angry or told a lie, or done something else that is very wicked, tell me, do you feel happy?"

"No, ma'am; I don't feel a bit good when I'm cross and spiteful," said the child; "sometimes I just wish I'd never been born."

"Yes, sin always brings misery sooner or later," said her teacher, "and God would have his creatures happy, for 'God is love;' and he so loved us that rather than leave us to perish he sent his own beloved Son to bear the punishment of our sins instead of us."

"But why did he send *him*?—why, if he had

only one Son, and loved him so, didn't he send somebody else to die?—somebody that he didn't love so well?"

"Because, Phemie, the Lord Jesus was the only one whose blood was worth enough to save us all. He alone was both God and man—man that he might suffer, and God that he might redeem."

"Did the Lord Jesus want to come?" she asked. "Oh, how *could* he be willing to die that dreadful death?"

"He was willing, Phemie. He says, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.'"

"Did he take it again?" asked Phemie, eagerly.

"Yes; he rose from the dead on the third day, and afterwards ascended up into heaven, whence he had come when he was born a little babe, and the wise men came to worship him, as Mr. Seldon read to you this morning."

Mr. Seldon had read the second chapter of Matthew, and Alicia had noticed that Phemie seemed a very attentive and interested listener.

“Was that the same Lord Jesus you’ve been telling me about?” she asked.

“The very same,” replied Alicia. “Think what love he showed to us in leaving that beautiful heaven where all the bright angels worshiped him, and coming down here to our wicked world, being born in a stable, then living here in poverty and toil for so many years, doing all the good that we ought to have done, and at last suffering and dying in our stead, bearing the punishment that should have been inflicted upon us. It was for you and me, Phemie, if we will believe on him. Ought we not to love him?”

“Yes, indeed,” she said, clasping her hands and heaving a deep sigh, “and oh, I wish I could see him! I’m ever so glad he didn’t stay in the grave, but rose and went up into heaven; but I wish I’d seen him before he went, and spoken to him too; but now I never can.”

“Yes, Phemie, you can speak to him, and thank him for all his kindness, and tell him all your wants and wishes, all your sins and sorrows, and ask him to forgive and love you, and make you holy.”

“But what would be the use, ma’am?” asked

the child, with a wondering look. "If he's away off in heaven he couldn't hear me."

"He is in heaven," replied Alicia, "but he is here too: here and everywhere; for he is God as well as man; and God is everywhere present, and he sees and knows all things, Phemie—your thoughts and feelings, and all your troubles and sorrows: he looks right down into your heart and sees all that is there, and he loves you and wants you to love him."

"And will he let me talk to him, and tell him everything that vexes me?" she asked, with an eager, longing look.

"Yes, he will; and he will be your friend always, if you will give him your heart."

"I don't know what that means," she said, doubtfully.

"To love him, to trust him and believe whatever he tells you. By your heart I mean your affections. He says, 'My son, give me thy heart,' and he means thy love. Will you do it? will you love him?"

"Yes," she whispered, almost under her breath, while the tears fell fast on her clasped hands as she pressed them close against her heart; "how

can I help it when he's so good to me? Oh, I've always wanted somebody to love me!"

"Alicia," said Mr. Seldon, coming up to the corner where the young teacher and her pupil were seated, "here are some little picture tracts. I brought a few packages with me from the city, and have been distributing them among the children. Will you select one for your little scholar?"

"Thank you," she said. "I suppose she would like to have one, although she cannot read; but she can enjoy the pictures, and perhaps she may soon be able to read it."

"Yes, ma'am," said Phemie, "and I think Phil will read it to me when we get home."

Alicia found one in the package which gave a brief sketch of the life of Christ, with several illustrations: the wise men offering their gifts—Christ in the temple talking with the doctors of the law—Christ blessing little children—Christ healing the sick—the raising of Lazarus, and of the widow's son—Christ dying upon the cross—and, last of all, Christ ascending into heaven. She chose this, and had barely time to give a brief explanation of each of these pictures to her

eager, interested little listener ere the closing exercises commenced.

The children were taught to repeat and sing a verse or two of a little hymn, and were then dismissed, with an invitation to come again at the same hour the next Sabbath.

Alicia held out her hand to her little scholar, saying kindly, "Good-bye, my dear child. I shall hope to see you here again next Sabbath."

"Oh, ma'am," said Phemie, seizing the offered hand and clasping it tight in both of hers, "won't you please, *please* tell me how to speak to the Lord Jesus, and *when* I may do it, and where I shall go when I want to talk to him?"

Her tone was low, but very earnest, and she looked up eagerly into her teacher's face as she spoke.

"You may speak to him when and where you will, dear child," replied Alicia, drawing the little girl aside into the shade of a tree, where they could converse without being overheard. "He is so kind and loving to us, wicked and undeserving as we are, that he permits us to approach him at all times of the day or night; nor is it necessary for us to go to any particular spot,

for he is everywhere present, and his ear is ever open to our cries, and you may ask him for whatever you want; but speak to him humbly, as one who feels that she deserves nothing good at his hands; for the Bible tells us, 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.'"

"But won't you tell me some *words* to say, please, ma'am?" pleaded the little girl; "for I never had any one to teach me how to pray."

Alicia thought a moment, and her heart went up in silent prayer for the teachings of the Spirit. Then she said: "This will do, I think, Phemie: 'Dear Saviour, teach me to know and do thy holy will: forgive all my sins, and make me thine own dear child.' Kneel down by your bed night and morning and repeat those words; and you may add to them a prayer in words of your own for whatever else you want; and as you go about your work or your play, you may lift up your heart to Jesus for help in every trouble and trial, and for strength to do right whenever you feel the need of it; and, though you do not even move your lips, he will hear and help you. Can you remember the words?"

“Yes, ma’am,” she said, repeating them slowly and carefully.

“That is right. You have an excellent memory,” said Alicia. “And now good-bye again; my friends are waiting for me, and I see your brothers, as I suppose they are, are looking impatient at your delay.”

She stooped and pressed a kiss on Phemie’s lips, then turned quickly away, while a bright flush rose to the little girl’s cheek and a glad tear shone in her eye.



CHAPTER IV.

“Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”—ECCLES. xii. 13.

WHAT on earth were you and that lady talking about so long there, Phemie?” asked Philip, as they left the school-house and walked slowly along the road towards home.

“Never mind; ’twas nothing you’d care about,” replied Phemie, evasively, and pressing her hand tightly over the bosom of her frock, where she had deposited her tract. “Didn’t you like the school, Phil?”

“Yes,” he answered, doubtfully; “but I say, Phemie, I wish we had some better clothes. I heard one boy whisper to another, ‘Just look at that fellow’s ragged coat. I’d stay at home if I couldn’t dress better than that.’ ‘So would I,’ the other one said, and then they laughed and looked at me and made faces, and moved farther off, as if I wasn’t fit to sit by them.

But I say, they shan't keep me away, for I know that's just what they were after; and I'll come next Sunday as sure as my name's Phil Shannon, if 'twas only to spite them, the mean fellows!"

"I'll go too," said Chris, "for I like it first-rate; my teacher told me a pretty story; and I want to learn to read."

"So do I," said Phemie; "and I've got the nicest teacher in the world, and I'll go every Sunday, rain or shine, even if I get a beating for it afterwards. Boys, did either of you get a little book given to you?"

"Yes," they said, drawing them from their pockets and comparing them with Phemie's, which she displayed in her turn.

They were all different, as Philip observed with delight.

"You'll let me read your's some time, won't you, Phemie?" he asked.

"Yes indeed, if you'll read it to me," she said. "I want to hear your's, and Chris's too. Couldn't we sit down now under one of these trees and read them?"

"No, not now," said Philip, quickening his

pace. "I must catch some fish and carry them home, or you know what *we'll* catch; and we'd better make haste, too, for I'm afraid it's growing late."

Hurrying on, they presently reached the place where Philip had hidden his pole and line, and drawing them out he hastened down to the river to seek a favorable spot for fishing, Chris following close at his heels, while Phemie, feeling sure that her assistance was not needed, sought out a retired place in the woods and sat down to look again at the pictures in her book, and think over all that Miss Langley had said. She spent some little time on each, and coming at length to the one next to the last, gazed upon it long and earnestly.

"Oh, how good—how good he was!" she murmured, the tears dropping silently down upon the print; "how I love him for it! how I wish he would love me, and be my friend! I'll ask him this minute;" and rising quickly, she fell upon her knees, clasped her hands, and prayed; beginning with the words Alicia had taught her, and then adding, "O Lord Jesus, I thank thee for being so kind as to die for me. Oh, please

love me, and be my Friend, and teach me to be good."

Her heart felt lighter and happier, as she rose from her knees, than it ever had before since her earliest recollection.

"Now I must go home, for mother will be wanting me to take the baby," she said half aloud, as she stooped to pick up her bonnet, which had fallen on the grass. She put it on, and once more concealing her treasured tract in her bosom, followed her brothers, and called to them that she was going home.

"Very well," said Philip; "we'll be along directly, tell mother. I've caught one pretty big fellow already, and I hope I'll soon catch some more."

"I hope so, too," said Phemie, thinking aloud as she walked away; "for if he doesn't carry home a good lot, and father's there, he'll be sure to catch a beating; and maybe he will, anyhow."

As Phemie drew near the house she saw her mother walking slowly back and forth along the river bank with the babe in her arms. The little girl's heart beat quickly at the sight, for her mother's indolent habits kept her almost always

within doors, and she feared something unusual must have happened.

"Mother, mother, is anything the matter?" she asked breathlessly, as she came running up.

"Matter enough, I should think," replied Eunice, turning towards her a fretful, wearied face; "your father's as cross as a bear with a sore head, and crosser too; and the child can't whimper but he's ready to fly at it and beat it. What kept you so long? Here it is almost noon, and I'm tired to death keeping Olly the whole morning."

"I didn't know it was so late, mother, but I will take him now," said Phemie, holding out her arms to the little one; and Mrs. Shannon wondered at the unaccustomed meekness of the tone in which the words were spoken.

"You look tired yourself, Phemie," she said, with a feeling of something akin to self-reproach as she gave the infant into her arms; "but sit down on the stone there: I think he'll let you sit now; and I'll go on into the house, and see if I can coax your father into a good humor."

She was turning away, but stopped to ask, "Where are the boys?"

"I left them fishing about a quarter of a mile up the river," replied Phemie, "and they said they'd be along directly."

"That's right. I hope they'll have good luck, and come home with enough for dinner anyhow," said her mother, moving away towards the house.

The boys were very successful after Phemie left them, and nearly two hours had slipped away before they thought of returning home.

In the mean time, Ira either had, or imagined he had, become very hungry; yet he refused to eat the corn-bread and potatoes his wife set before him, because, as he said, he had made up his mind to dine on fresh fish; for he had insisted upon knowing where the boys were and what they were doing.

"Those lazy young scoundrels!" he exclaimed at length, rising and putting on his hat. "I've a great mind to go after them and give them a sound thrashing."

Eunice said nothing, knowing that remonstrance would only make him more determined, but she looked out uneasily, hoping in her heart that he would somehow happen to miss the boys.

Ira stepped from the door with the apparent

intention of carrying out his threat, but, changing his mind, made the circuit of the garden, taking careful note of its neglected condition.

“That lazy young rascal!” he muttered, wrathfully. “If I don’t give it to him well the next time I get hold of him, my name’s not Ira Shannon. He’s actually never stuck hoe nor spade into the ground, nor pulled up so much as a single weed since I ordered him, two days ago, to set the whole thing to rights. Hollo! here they come at last. You’re in for it now, my young gentlemen, I can tell you;” and with a few hasty strides he reached the house, and taking down a cowhide from a nail where it hung, stepped out of the back door and advanced to meet the boys.

But he had triumphed too soon, for they, seeing him coming towards them whip in hand, and well knowing what they might expect if caught, threw down their fish and ran.

Ira gave chase, screaming out threats and curses, telling them “they’d better come and take their licking now, or they’d only catch it ten times harder when he did get hold of them.”

They, however, preferred present safety, and

exerted themselves to the utmost to keep out of his reach. He pursued them for some time, but at length, losing sight of them in the woods, gave up the attempt, and, panting with his exertions and foaming with rage, sat down on a log to rest.

"I'm too tired to go one step farther, Phil," said Christopher, dropping down behind some bushes, panting for breath, and wiping away great drops of perspiration from his forehead with the back of his little brown hand. "I don't believe I could run another yard to save my life. I'll just hide here till he's gone."

"You can do as you like," replied his brother, "but for my part I'll not feel safe till I've put another mile between him and me. I'd get the worst thrashing if we were caught, for he's mad about that garden, I know. So good-bye;" and he hurried onward in the direction of the school-house.

The Sabbath evening was closing in calm and beautiful: the sun was nearing the horizon amid great masses of purple, rose-colored and golden clouds, and a gentle breeze rustled the leaves in the trees and shrubs, and wafted the sweet scent of flowers and new-made hay into the open

windows of the drawing-room at Woodlawn, as Mr. Seldon stepped from one of them out upon the portico, and, descending from there into the grounds, sought his favorite walk, a broad graveled path, bordered on one side by a row of beautiful evergreens, and on the other by a hedge which separated it from the road.

Here he loved to pace back and forth at eventide, enjoying the beauties of nature, and meditating upon the goodness and love of God, especially as shown in the gift of his only-begotten Son, and to hold sweet communion with his Saviour.

On this occasion he had been engaged thus for but a few moments when he was somewhat startled by a sound of distress, something between a sigh and a sob, which seemed to come from the other side of the hedge. He paused a moment to listen; then as the sound was repeated, though in a lower and more subdued key, he walked quickly down the path to a little gate opening upon the road, and passing out through it, perceived a ragged boy seated at some little distance on the grass under the hedge. He sat in an attitude of deep dejection, his elbows resting on his

knees, and his head in his hands, and was so absorbed in his grief, whatever it might be, that he seemed quite unconscious of Mr. Seldon's approach until he stood close beside him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said, in a kind, sympathizing tone, "Why, Philip, is this you? What is the matter, my boy?"

"I'm tired and hungry, and afraid to go home, because father'll beat me half to death if I do," was the answer, accompanied by a heavy sigh.

"Ah, that is a sad story; but one of your troubles, at least, I can relieve," said Mr. Seldon. "Wait here until I return: I will be back very soon;" and before Philip could reply he was gone; and ere many minutes had elapsed he again stood beside him with a supply of bread and butter and cold meat, which he had begged from Mrs. Langley, sufficient to satisfy a very ravenous appetite.

The boy ate as if half starved, while Mr. Seldon looked on with feelings of pity for his hard lot, mingled with unselfish pleasure and satisfaction in being able thus to relieve his most pressing want.

"And now, my child," he said, sitting down

by Philip as he saw the last mouthful disappear, "I see your hunger is appeased, and I should be very glad if I could help to relieve your other troubles also. Would you mind telling me the whole story?"

"Well you see, Mr. Seldon," said Philip, hanging his head, for he somehow felt that the gentleman would not altogether approve of his conduct, "I knew well enough father'd never let us go to Sunday-school if he could help it, and that he'd beat us half to death if he found out that we'd been; so I took my fishing pole and line along and hid 'em in the woods as we went, and when we were going home again I stopped at the river and caught some fish, so's he'd think that was where we'd been all the time; and we had very good luck, Chris and I, and carried home a great string of bass and sun fish; but when we got pretty near the house I saw father walking round the yard, and then, as we were most at the door, out he comes with the cowhide in his hand, and I knew in a minute that he'd been looking at the garden, and meant to lick me like blazes for not weeding it and fixing it all up, as he ordered me to the other day. So we threw down our fish

and were off like a streak, for Chris was scared too, because when father begins he never knows where to stop, and when he beats one generally beats us all round. He couldn't catch us, this time, though, but Chris gave out after a while, and hid in the woods while I came on here."

"But why did you disobey in the matter of the garden, Philip?" asked his friend. "That was certainly very wrong and quite deserving of punishment, for the Bible teaches us that children should obey their parents in everything that does not interfere with God's commands. It would not be right for you to go to work in your garden to-day, but you should have done it when your father bade you. And, Philip, did you not know that it was wrong to fish on the Sabbath-day?"

Philip shook his head.

"Yes," said Mr. Seldon, "'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy' is God's command; in it thou shalt not do any work."

"But what if we've nothing else to eat?" said the boy inquiringly. "Sometimes we haven't."

"Then you should try to catch enough on Saturday to last over the Sabbath," said his friend. "Could you not have done that?"

“I s’pose so, if I’d tried,” said Philip; “but I didn’t feel like fishing all day. I did fish a while in the afternoon, but I only got enough for supper; and you see I knew I had to tell father I’d only been a-fishing this morning, or he’d beat me like fury.”

“But that would have been a falsehood, Philip; and as God hates lying, and has said, ‘All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,’ would it not be better even to take a most cruel beating than to have a lie recorded against you in his book of remembrance?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the boy, shuddering, and sighing deeply; “but it’s very hard always to do right.”

“Yes, Philip, it is,” said his friend; “but God will help us if we look to him for strength; and the Bible says, ‘It is better, if the will of God be so, that we suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.’”

“I’ll tell you why I didn’t weed the garden, Mr. Seldon,” said Philip. “You see, father’s got an awful temper, especially when he’s drunk, and he hardly ever comes into the house that he

doesn't give us a beating all round, whether we've minded him or not; so I think what's the use of doing what he bids me when he'll just beat me all the same? Besides he never asks me decently; but always speaks to me as if I was no better than a dog."

"That is hard, Philip," said Mr. Seldon, "but it does not alter your duty to obey him, because he is your father; and we should do right, not because we hope to be praised or rewarded, or to escape ill-treatment in consequence, but because it is right and pleasing to God; and if we strive to do our duty because we love him and desire to do his will, whether it be obeying our parents or keeping any other of his commands, he will always see and notice both the act and the motive which prompts it; and oh, how much more is his approbation worth than that of any earthly creature! Jesus says, 'He that hath my
• commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'"

CHAPTER V.

‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.’—1 JOHN iii. 16.

“It is good for me to draw near to God.”—Ps. lxxiii. 28.

LITTLE Oliver was a very fretful child, and no wonder; for an utter want of proper care and attention, which his mother was too indolent and Phemie too young to give, had made him feeble and sickly. He was Phemie’s constant charge during the day, and seldom out of her arms except when she was busied with housework; and her patience was often sorely tried by his crossness, and sometimes she would shake or slap him, when out of her mother’s sight, telling him to “Hush, for he was just a naughty, cross boy.” But when this only made him cry the harder and more piteously, she would repent of her harshness, and kiss and coax and pet him; for she was a warm-hearted child, and really loved the little fellow.

When left alone with him that Sabbath noon,

though much wearied and heated with her long walk in the sun, for the day was a very warm one, she sat patiently down on the stone, and did her very best to soothe and please him, thinking all the time of the truth she had learned that day, that God's eye was ever upon her, taking note of all her words and ways. It was the desire to serve and please him, which had sprung up in her heart, that led her thus to strive to be patient and kind to her little brother; but the constraining principle was not fear, as with Philip, but love.

"Oh, he was *so* good, *so* kind to die for me!" she murmured to herself. "I'm sure I should like to please him better than anything else. How strange to think that he sees me all the time, and even knows all I'm thinking, though I cannot see him at all! and how nice it is that I may speak to him just whenever I will, and that he will hear me, and help me out of all my troubles! I'll ask him now to help me to keep me from being cross to the baby, for it's real hard when he frets so all the time and I'm so tired. Oh, dear Lord Jesus, help me to be good to Olly, and to get him to sleep soon," she added, raising her eyes to the beautiful blue sky above her; "and

please don't let father beat me and the boys to-day."

Then she began swaying herself gently backward and forward with the child in her arms, while softly humming one of the tunes she had heard in Sunday-school that day, and presently the little head drooped upon her shoulder, and all Olly's troubles were forgotten for the time. He slept long and quietly on Phemie's lap, where she at length ventured to lay him gently down, while she employed herself in taking another look at the pictures and going over in her mind the story connected with each.

The boys passed near her with their fish, and she motioned to them to be quiet, as Olly still slept. She was at some distance from the house, but could get a view of the back door by merely turning her head; and looking after her brothers, she saw all that passed between them and her father. Her heart beat quickly as the chase began, and as her father passed near her she trembled with fear at the rage in his countenance and the dreadful oaths and curses that fell from his lips.

Disturbed by the noise, Olly woke with a wail-

ing cry, and raising him in her arms, she fled to the shelter of some bushes a little higher up the stream, and falling on her knees, asked God to help her brothers to escape from their father, and to keep him from injuring her and Olly.

She felt less terrified after that, and applied herself to soothing and amusing the baby, though still listening for any sound that would tell her how the pursuit had ended.

The noise of their running and shouting had died away, and all had been quiet for some time, and she was beginning to consider whether she might venture to go in to get some food for Olly, who seemed very hungry, when again a heavy tread and a muttered curse came to her ear, and she crouched low and tried to keep the child quiet as their father passed within a few rods of them on his way back to the house.

Several motives had combined to induce Eunice to lay aside her usual habits of indolence, and clean the fish and prepare them for the table—a desire to gratify her own appetite, and appease her husband's wrath lest it should fall upon herself, mingled with some feelings of compassion for Phemie, to whose lot the cooking usually fell, for

the child's pale, weary face haunted her. And thus it happened that on Ira's return to the house he found the supper smoking hot upon the table.

He would have beaten his wife if she had not had the food prepared, for he was just in the mood for such work; as it was, he scowled at her, kicked Lissa out of his way, hung up his cow-hide, tossed his hat on to the floor, and, sitting down to the table, helped himself to the lion's share, and fell to eating, leaving the others to take care of themselves as best they might.

"Lissa, go and tell Phemie to bring the child and come to her supper now," said Eunice, when she thought that Ira was sufficiently engaged in satisfying his appetite to prevent him from laying violent hands upon them.

Phemie obeyed the summons at once, though with much fear and trembling; but she was very hungry and very tired of her burden, from which she hoped her mother would relieve her for a time; and besides, she really wished to do right and please God, who, she remembered she had been told, had said, "Children, obey your parents."

"Come, Phemie, here's a good supper for you, child; and I dare say you're tired and hungry

enough to be glad to get it," said her mother, as she entered.

"She don't deserve a mouthful of it," growled Ira, giving the child a look that almost made her turn and run away again.

"Why, what has she done?" asked Eunice.

"Done! that's just it. What has she done to earn her salt? She deserves to be turned out o' the house this minute, and made to earn her own bread. What are you standing shaking there for?" he thundered, bringing his fist down upon the table with such force as to make all the dishes rattle. "Come along directly and sit down as you're bid, or I'll take that cowhide to you."

Little Oliver, alarmed by the loud, angry tones, set up a frightened cry, at which Eunice started up and snatched him from Phemie's arms, and the little girl, pale and silent, seated herself at the table beside Lissa, who had chosen her place as far from her father as possible.

Eunice quieted her babe, and helped the children to fish and corn-bread, and the meal proceeded in silence, until at length Ira laid down his knife and fork, pushed away his plate, picked

up his hat from the floor, and stalked off through the garden and up the road towards Cedarville.

All seemed to breathe more freely when he was gone, and Phemie asked if she might go and call Phil and Chris to come and eat their suppers.

"Yes, if you're done your own," said her mother; "but I don't know where you'll find 'em."

"I don't know either," said Phemie, "but I'll go up to the woods and call: maybe they'll be hid somewhere there."

"Like enough," said her mother, finishing her meal by wiping her mouth on her greasy apron. "I'm right glad they were too quick for that old brute. Wouldn't I horsewhip *him* a few times if I only had the strength!"

"I wish you had, then," said Lissa, "for he's just the meanest man that ever was made. I wish he'd fall down and break his neck the next time he gets drunk, so he'd never get a chance to kick me again."

Phemie was already on her way to the woods, following the path she had seen the boys take when pursued by their father, and calling loudly, "Phil! Chris! Chris! where are you? Come and get your suppers."

But there was no reply, and nothing by which she could trace them, and at length, weary and disheartened, she returned to the house.

“Mother,” she said, “I can’t find them. Do you think it’s possible that father did catch them after all, and beat them so that they can’t stir to come home?”

“Maybe so, but I think it’s hardly likely,” returned Eunice, carelessly. “I thought he looked as if he’d missed what he went after; and if the boys had been lying in the woods, you’d most likely have heard them making some sort of noise.”

“Maybe he killed ’em and threw ’em into the river,” said Lissa.

Phemie shuddered, and began slowly clearing the table in obedience to her mother’s orders. She was uneasy about her brothers, but said to herself, “What’s the use of worrying? Most likely they’ll be in after a bit, when they think father’s gone. I wish there was somebody to go and hunt ’em up, though—some big, strong person—for I’m so tired I feel as if I couldn’t stir another step.”

Then she thought of her unseen Friend, and

Miss Langley's assurance that He would hear and help her if she only prayed in her heart; and silently, but very earnestly, she asked him to take care of Philip and Chris and bring them safely home.

That relieved her mind very much; for she believed her prayer would be answered, or at least she had strong hope that it would; so that her anxiety almost passed away, and having filled a plate with food for them and set it in the cupboard, and then washed the dishes, she went out and sat down on the back-door step.

Her mother and the baby were asleep, and Lissa was amusing herself with the cat at the other door, and Phemie ventured to take her tract again from its hiding-place in her bosom to look over the pictures and think of what her teacher had told her about them.

She was so absorbed in her occupation that she did not hear the sound of Lissa's bare feet moving across the floor, and was quite startled by the childish voice asking, "What's that, Phemie?" as the little one peered over her shoulder at the picture.

"Never mind," replied Phemie, hastily thrust-

ing her treasure under her apron; "you'll tell father if I let you see, and he'll take it from me and burn it up, and beat me too."

"No, I won't," said Lissa. "What should I tell him for? I don't like him a bit, and I never told him one word about the gentleman coming yesterday, nor where you'd gone this morning. Now do let me see; that's a good girl."

"Well, I will," said Phemie, drawing it out; "but if you ever tell father one word about it, mind I'll never show you anything again."

She then turned to the first picture, and showed them all, one after the other, repeating to her eager, wondering listener all she could remember of Miss Langley's explanation of each, and of the story she had told her previously of the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her bosom heaved with sobs and the tears fell fast down her cheeks when she came to tell how he was beaten and spit upon and crowned with thorns, and how the soldiers pounded nails through his hands and feet; and throwing her apron over her head, she wept as though her heart would break, while Lissa cried too from sympathy.

"Couldn't he get away, Phemie?" she asked.

“Yes,” replied her sister, “the lady told me he could have made every one of these cruel men drop down dead in one minute if he’d wanted to, but he didn’t choose to do it, because he knew that if he didn’t die on the cross we couldn’t any of us go to heaven; and he loved us so, he did, Lissa, that he took the punishment in our place for all the bad things we’ve done, and said, and thought.”

“What’s heaven? And who was going to punish us?” asked Lissa.

“Heaven is a very beautiful place, the lady told me,” replied her sister, “where everybody’s good and kind and happy, and nobody ever gets sick, or cross, or tired, or hungry; and it’s never dark night, for nobody ever wants to go to sleep; and they’re all dressed in beautiful white robes, with bright golden crowns on their heads; and the streets are like gold too; and oh, it’s *lovely!* And God’s there too, and Jesus that died to take us there. It was God that was going to punish us for all the wicked things we’ve done, because he’d said he would, and he must keep his word, and because we couldn’t ever be happy unless he made us be good first; but Jesus said he’d take

the punishment instead of us, so that God can forgive us now, if we'll only love him and believe on him; and then he'll wash us in his blood, and make us clean and good, so that we won't want to do bad things any more; and then when we die God will take us to heaven, and we'll be very happy there. But if we don't love Jesus, and ask him to make us good, we can never go to heaven; but when we die we'll have to go to live in a dreadful place called hell, with the wicked devil, who likes to torment people. The lady said that's where everybody'd have had to go if Jesus hadn't died."

Lissa looked very thoughtful, and said she wished she could go to Sunday-school too; but just then they heard their mother calling Phemie to take the baby, and thrusting her book into her bosom, and repeating her injunction to her little sister never to say a word about it, she rose to obey the summons.

She brought the child out and sat down on the step again, and Lissa asked if she couldn't remember some more to tell her.

"I don't know," said Phemie. "I'll see if I can think of the little verse we were learning to

sing. But, O Lissa, look! yonder's Chris peeping out from behind those bushes. Run and tell him that father's gone, and he can come in and get something to eat."

Lissa went very willingly, and presently returned accompanied by Christopher.

"Where's Phil?" asked Phemie.

"I don't know," replied the boy; "he said he was going a mile farther when he left me."

"Come in and get your supper. You must be as hungry as a wolf by this time, I should think," said Phemie, rising and going to the cupboard. "Which way did Phil go?"

"Up the road towards the school-house, I guess," said Chris, seating himself and attacking the corn-bread and fish, which Phemie set before him, as if he were indeed half famished.

"Father went that way too," said Phemie, anxiously. "Dear! dear! I'm afraid he's caught him before this."

"I guess not," said Chris. "I think Phil knows enough to keep out of his way."

"Phil ought to have come home before this time," remarked Eunice; "and if he doesn't come pretty soon he'll get locked out, for I shall pack

you all off to bed, and go myself too, just as soon as Chris is done eating."

"The sun's not down yet, mother," said Phemie.

"It will be by that time," replied her mother; "and anyhow you've got to go to bed."

Phemie was tired enough to feel no objection on her own account, but she was not willing that Philip should be locked out to spend the night in the woods or the door-yard—hungry too, as she supposed he must be—and she determined to try to keep awake for a while, in order to come down and let him in if he should return. She went upstairs with the others, but, instead of getting into bed, seated herself by the window. The sun was just sinking behind the trees, and the beauty of the clouds attracted her attention.

"I wonder if God made them too?" she thought. "Yes, he must, because the lady told me he made everything. How splendid they are! and how they change every minute! I'm so glad I've heard about God; and now Lissa's asleep," she added, glancing towards the bed, "I'll just kneel down and say my prayer. I'm glad the lady told me about praying, and that I might ask

God in my heart any time, and any where, to help me out of trouble, and to give me whatever I want; and I've done it a good many times to-day. Let me see; yes, I asked him to help me to be kind to Olly and get him to sleep, and he did; and I asked him not to let father come after baby and me with that cowhide, and father didn't come; and I asked him not to let father catch the boys, and he didn't catch 'em—at least not Chris, and I hope he hasn't got Phil either; and I asked him not to let father beat me when I came in to supper, and father didn't. Oh, it *is* a good thing to pray, and I'll keep on. It's a grand good thing to have such a friend; and now I'll ask him again to be my friend, and to bring Phil home safe to-night, or give him something to eat and a place to sleep; and I'm right *sure* he will;" and kneeling down she repeated the prayer Alicia had taught her, adding the other requests in her own words.

She then sat down by the window again, resting her head on the sill, and soon fell asleep. She was wakened by a low whistle. It had grown quite dark, except for the moon, which was obscured by clouds; all was quiet within

doors and without, and she knew that she must have slept some hours.

"That was Phil!" she said, starting up; and leaning out of the window, she strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of him in the yard below.

The whistle was repeated, and then she thought she saw something moving behind a clump of bushes on the other side of the fence.

"Yes, I believe it's Phil out there behind those bushes, and I must go down and let him in," she said; and tremblingly, for she was very timid by nature, she groped her way through the two rooms, down the stairs, which creaked and startled her anew at every step, and on through the kitchen to the front door; then cautiously drawing back the bolt, and stepping out into the yard, she called softly, "Phil! Phil!"

"Here, Phemie," he answered in the same subdued key; and springing over the fence, "Is all safe?" he asked.

"Yes, father's gone," she said; "but come in quick: I'm so afraid out here in the dark."

They entered quietly, and while Philip secured the door, Phemie asked if he had had anything to eat.

“Yes, plenty,” he said. “I say, Phemie, you were a real good girl to come down and let me in; and I’ll do as much for you some day. I wouldn’t have liked to stay out all night, it’s so awful lonesome in the woods.”

They stole softly up the stairs, and Phemie went on into her own room, thinking, “Now God answered my prayer for Phil too, and I must tell him about it to-morrow; but it’s too late to talk to-night, and mother might wake up and scold.”



CHAPTER VI.

“ Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap,
yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God.”

—JER. ii. 22.

“ But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be
feared.”—Ps. cxxx. 4.

IT was growing quite dark when Philip left Squire Langley's, and his lonely walk through the woods was anything but agreeable to him. He was not, like Phemie, naturally timid, but to-night his conscience was ill at ease: thoughts of the coming judgment troubled him, and he started and trembled at every sound, and heartily wished himself safe at home: yet when he reached there he feared to enter lest he should meet his father.

Everything was so quiet that he felt convinced they must all be in bed, and he had not much hope of waking Phemie with his whistle, or that she would venture to come down to the door if he did; but he tried it, and was most agreeably surprised at the result.

Mr. Seldon had spoken to his class that morning on the subject of daily prayer to God. He told them it was a duty to pray, and a very great and precious privilege to be permitted to come to our Father in heaven for the pardon of our many sins, for cleansing from their guilt and pollution, for strength to do his will, and for the supply of all our wants, temporal and spiritual; and he urged them ever to begin and end each day by thus calling upon God, always remembering that all their requests must be made in the name and for the sake of his dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All this Philip thought of as he lay down upon his bed, but he could not bring himself to obey. He was afraid of God, for his many sins were staring him in the face, and he felt guilty and condemned. So he put off praying, saying to himself that he would break off from swearing and lying, and all his other sins, and make himself more fit to draw near to God, and then he would begin to pray, and keep it up ever after.

Alas, poor boy! he had yet to learn how utterly unable he was to make himself any better, and that if he tarried for that he would never come

at all. The Bible says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin; or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

The work is too hard for us or for any mortal man, dear reader. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." But his blood cleanses from all sin, and in that dear fountain alone can its guilt and pollution be washed from our souls; and that fountain is open still, and all are invited to come. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Come, for all things are now ready." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But Philip had never read the Bible. He was very ignorant of its teachings; and when we remember that very many who have been taught from its pages all their lives still cling to this false hope, that they may yet be able to do something to recommend themselves to the favor of

God, we will not so much wonder at his sad mistake.

“I’m bound to begin a new life to-morrow morning, as sure as I’m born,” he said to himself as he turned over to go to sleep. “I’ll break off every one of my bad habits, and go to work and be industrious. I’ll do it because, as Mr. Seldon says, it’s right, whether father takes any notice of it or not.”

He kept his resolution so far that he was up before the sun, and hard at work in the garden for several hours before the others had left their beds.

Not so with Phemie. Weak and quite worn-out with the exertions of the previous day and her night watch for her brother, she slept on until roused by a rude shake from her mother, accompanied by the harsh command, “Get up this minute, you lazy thing! Are you going to lie and sleep all day? It can’t be far from nine o’clock, and the fire’s not made yet nor the kettle put on to boil.”

“Well, I don’t care; you’ve only just got up yourself,” replied Phemie, fretfully, shaking herself free from her mother’s hand; “and you’d

better have been making the fire yourself than coming up here to wake me up that way."

"Take that for your impudence, you good-for-nothing lussy!" returned her mother, giving her a violent box on the ear. "Now put on your dress and march down stairs this instant, or I'll take that cowhide to you."

Phemie obeyed, but so slowly and sullenly that before she had finished making the fire her mother again took hold of her and shook her angrily.

"It seems to have done you a sight of good to go to Sunday-school," she said. "Catch me letting you go again, if this is the way you behave after it!"

"I'll go if I choose, and not ask you, either," was the saucy rejoinder, for which Phemie received a pretty severe whipping.

She resisted with all her might, but her mother was far stronger than she; and so it only made the blows come harder and faster, until she gave up the contest and took them passively.

"Now, then, I guess we'll know who's mistress here," said Eunice, throwing down the stick. "Go to work and light that fire, and fill the

kettle, and set the table, and don't let me hear another word out of your mouth."

Phemie put a match to the fire, and then took the bucket and went down to the spring, crying bitterly all the time.

She was thinking of the Friend she had found but yesterday, and longing to go to him for comfort and help, but dared not do it. She had forgotten him and her desire to please him in the first moment of her rude awaking, and conscience told her that her conduct since must have been very displeasing in his sight: she thought that his frown was resting upon her, and it made her wretched indeed. Everything seemed to go wrong; the fire would not burn until she had kindled it several times, the little ones fretted and cried, Philip was clamoring for his breakfast, saying he had been hard at work for nearly half a day and was almost starved to death, and her mother threatened and scolded her continually; and then, in addition to all these annoyances, there was that dull, heavy pain at her heart.

But at last the miserable, scanty breakfast was made ready and eaten, she had washed up the few poor dishes and put them on the cupboard

shelves, and taking little Oliver in her arms she went down to the river bank, to her favorite seat on the big flat stone, where she could indulge her grief to her heart's content.

Tears rolled fast down her cheeks, and heavy sobs shook her slight frame as she sat down with the babe in her lap and leaned her head against his shoulder. He twisted his little hands in her hair and pulled it, but she only said, "Don't, Olly," and took it gently from him.

Then there was the sound of carriage wheels in the road beyond the house, and turning her head she saw a gig stop at the gate, and Miss Alicia Langley get down from it, fasten her horse to a post, and then open the gate and walk up the path towards the front door.

Phemie's heart beat quickly, and she longed to run to meet her kind friend, who, she felt almost sure, had come to see her; but shame kept her from doing so, and she turned away with a heavy sigh as Miss Alicia disappeared from her view, hidden by the intervening building.

Eunice was seated in a listless, lounging attitude by the fireplace, smoking a dirty pipe, while Chris, Lissa, and the cat tumbled over each other

on the unswept floor, when Philip, who was sitting in the door-way, trying to mend an old rake, suddenly started up with a smothered exclamation.

“What is it, Philip? what’s the matter now?” asked his mother, turning lazily round on her seat.

“A carriage has stopped at the gate, and a lady just got out of it and is tying her horse,” replied the boy in an under tone. “There, she is coming in now. Oh, it is Miss Langley, the squire’s eldest daughter.”

“My sakes alive, you don’t say so! What in the name of sense is she coming here for?” exclaimed Eunice, glancing round the dirty room and taking the pipe from her mouth.

“Children, get up off the floor this instant, and behave like decent folks, can’t you? Don’t you see that there’s a lady almost at the door?”

“Good-morning, my boy. I think I saw you yesterday at Sunday-school, did I not?” said Alicia, holding out her hand to Philip.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied, hanging his head bashfully. “Will you please to walk in? Mother’s at home.”

“Yes, ma’am; walk in and take a seat, won’t you?” said Eunice, stepping to the door. “I hope you’ll excuse the smoke; I can’t do without my pipe of a morning, for, what with a bad, drunken brute of a husband and a parcel of undutiful children, it’s just about all the comfort I have in the world.”

The fumes of the bad tobacco the woman had been smoking, as well as the filth and disorder of the room, were very unpleasant to Alicia; and Eunice too, in her greasy, tattered gown, and uncombed hair hanging in tangled masses about her dirty face and neck, was a disgusting object; and the young lady’s first impulse was to step back into the open air; but she resisted it, for she had not come to seek her own pleasure, but the good of her fellow-creatures; and taking the offered seat, she entered into conversation with her hostess.

“I am sorry,” she said, gently, “to hear you say that, for miserable comfort it must be, I should think. But have you really no one to look to for sympathy and help in all your troubles?”

“No, ma’am, not a soul,” said Eunice. “Whom

could I expect to befriend me, when my own husband and children turn against me?"

"God," replied Alicia, with earnest solemnity; "the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will but seek him with your whole heart. He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and whose love is tenderer and more enduring than a mother's. He will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him."

Eunice looked uneasy, and sat twisting the corner of her apron, with her eyes upon the floor, but made no reply.

Alicia too was silent for a moment; then said, rather hesitatingly, as if fearful of wounding or giving offence, "I thought you might be in want, Mrs. Shannon, and I ventured to bring a few things that I hoped might be useful to you if you would accept them."

"You are very good," replied Eunice; and Alicia, turning to Philip, asked him if he would oblige her by bringing in a basket which he would find in the gig.

He went with alacrity, and soon returned carrying a large covered basket, which he set down on the floor beside the visitor, who immediately

opened it and lifted out, one after another, some nice light biscuit, a loaf of bread, a paper of tea and one of sugar, then a large roll of sweet, fresh butter, and lastly a ham.

The faces about her brightened visibly as one by one these good things were brought to light, and placed upon the table until it was full and the basket empty.

“Thank you a thousand times, Miss Langley,” said Eunice, almost with tears of joy in her eyes: “the children will have such a feast as they’ve hardly ever had in their lives before.”

“I hope they will enjoy it,” replied Alicia, kindly; “but where is my little friend Phemie? I don’t see her here.”

“Where is she, Chris? where did she go with that child?” asked Eunice, looking round at the children.

“She went down by the river, I guess; that’s where she ’most always goes,” replied Christopher, stepping to the door and looking out. “Yes, yonder she is sitting on the big stone.”

“Run and call her in, Chris. Tell her Miss Langley wants to see her, and she’s to come right along,” said his mother, and the boy was

about starting off, but Alicia laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Stay," she said. "If you please, Mrs. Shannon, I would rather go and speak to her there. I would like to look at the river and have a little chat with Phemie at the same time, for that seems a pleasant spot."

"Well, ma'am, just as you like; it's all one to me, I'm sure," replied Eunice, blandly, for Alicia's gifts had completely won her good will.

Phemie turned her head at the sound of the approaching footsteps, and at sight of her teacher started to her feet, blushing scarlet.

"How do you do, dear?" asked Alicia, taking the child's hand in one of hers, and gently stroking back her hair with the other; for they stood in the shade of a large tree, and Phemie had thrown her bonnet off upon the grass, where little Oliver sat playing with some wild flowers with which his sister had filled his lap.

"Pretty well, thank you, ma'am," replied Phemie, shyly. Then with natural politeness she asked, "Won't you sit down? though I've nothing here but a stone to ask you to sit on."

"Thank you; it makes a very good seat," said

Alicia, trying it, while Phemie took her place beside Oliver.

“This is you” baby brother, I suppose?” remarked Alicia, inquiringly.

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Phemie, “this is Olly. I keep him out here most all the time pleasant days. I think he likes it better than in the house, and so do I.”

The little girl’s eyes were still red with crying, and her face looked sad and worn, and after a little talk on indifferent subjects, Alicia, laying her hand gently on the mass of uncombed hair, asked in a kind, sympathizing tone, “What is the matter, Phemie dear? Are you in any trouble that I can help you out of?”

The child’s only answer was a burst of tears and sobs as she hid her face in her hands.

Alicia waited a moment; then said, “I would like to help you, my poor child. Is there nothing that I can do?”

Phemie only shook her head and sobbed anew.

“Well, dear child,” whispered Alicia, passing her arm around the little weeper, “if it is something that you cannot tell *me*, can you not tell it

to the Lord Jesus, that dear Friend of whom I told you yesterday?"

"Oh no, no, ma'am," sobbed Phemie. "I can't, I can't! He wouldn't listen now, because I've vexed him. I know I have, because I've been so bad and wicked to-day. I prayed to him yesterday just as you told me to, and I'm sure he heard me and helped me every time I was in trouble; but I can't ask him any more, because I've been so bad;" and the great, scalding tears fell faster and faster.

"Yes, Phemie, he will forgive you, and love and help you still, if you are truly sorry for having grieved and displeased him, and will come to him confessing and forsaking your sins," said Alicia. "'He is very gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and ready to forgive.'"

"But you don't know how bad I've been," sobbed Phemie. "I've been real, *real* cross and hateful all morning. Mother came up and waked me all of a sudden with a hard shake, and scolding so, and it made me mad, and I forgot to say my prayer, and everything went all wrong. The fire wouldn't burn, and mother and all the rest were as cross as they could be, and so was I; and I

spoke up to mother, and she beat me ever so hard; and, oh dear! oh dear! I know it's no use to try any more."

"Yes, Phemie, you have done very wrong," said Alicia, gently; "it was very sinful to neglect prayer to God, and no wonder you could not do right when you had not asked his help; and it was very wrong indeed to speak saucily to your mother, and to be cross and ill-tempered; all these were sins, and God hates sin; and may we not well hate it too when it makes us so unhappy? But God does not hate the sinner: he loves us, and would save us from our sins, that we may be happy both in this world and the next. There is a sweet verse in the Bible, Phemie, that says, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' An Advocate. That means one who pleads for us; and oh how sweet it is to think that Jesus, who so loved us that he died that we might live, is now in heaven listening to our prayers and presenting them before his Father's throne, and pleading that our many sins may be forgiven on account of what he has done and suffered in our stead!"

"Will he ask God to forgive me all the bad

things I've done this morning?" asked the child, looking up eagerly.

"Yes, Phemie, if you are truly sorry and will go and confess them to God, and ask to be forgiven for Jesus' sake."

"And will he love me and be my Friend, and let me tell him all my troubles?"

"Yes, Phemie; he says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Oh, he is a *loving* Saviour! He never turned any away that came to him aright. Come to him, and he will forgive your sins and wash them all away in his precious blood; and he will give you a new heart that will hate sin and love God and holiness."

Phemie's tears had ceased to flow, and the bitter look was gone from her face. She was kneeling on the grass with her hands tightly clasped and her eyes fixed on her teacher's face.

"Oh," she said, drawing a long breath, "how good he was! how glad I am that he will forgive me! Please, ma'am, ask him to do it now. Please tell him how sorry I am, and ask him to help me to be good always. Oh, I do want that new heart!"

"I will," said Alicia; and rising, and kneeling

down on the grass beside the little girl, she prayed in a few simple words, confessing the sins that lay like a burden on Phemie's heart, and asking that God would forgive her, and make her his own dear child for Jesus' sake.

"Now, Phemie," she said, as they rose from their knees, "if you have prayed this prayer with your heart, you must believe that God *has* forgiven you, and *will* make you good, because it says in the Bible, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"



CHAPTER VII.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.”—JAMES i. 17.

OLLY had been fretting a little every now and then all the time that Miss Langley and Phemie were conversing, and now he broke into a loud cry. Phemie took him up and tried to hush him, but he would not be pacified.

“I think he wants mother,” she said. “It’s a good while since he had anything to eat, and I guess he’s hungry. I must take him in.”

“Yes, I think you had better,” replied Alicia, “and I will go with you. Phemie,” she asked, as they walked along, “would you like to go home with me this morning and spend the day?”

The child turned a surprised and startled look upon her.

“Oh, Miss Langley,” she said, blushing and glancing down at her bare feet and soiled gar-

ments, "how could I? I don't look fit; no, not anything like."

"No matter for that," said her friend. "I think I can find some clothes for you when we get there; and until you have been washed and and combed and dressed, no one shall see you except my good old nurse—who will not despise nor dislike you on account of your looks—and myself, and perhaps my sister Effie, who is a year or two older than you are—just enough larger, I think, for some of her last year's dresses to fit you pretty well. I think I can promise that you shall enjoy yourself. Will you not come if your mother is willing?"

"Yes, ma'am, indeed I will!" replied Phemie, her eyes dancing and her cheek glowing at the prospect of decent clothes to wear, and a day with the kind, thoughtful friend who had already completely won her young heart—a heart that yearned for love, as plants growing in the dark do for the blessed sunshine, and that hitherto had been famished for the want of it.

Alicia preferred her request for Phemie's company immediately on re-entering the house; and though Eunice at first hesitated, and muttered

something about "needing her to tend the child and help about the house," she yielded when Alicia asked it as a personal favor, and added that they had a great abundance of fine strawberries in the garden at Woodlawn, and that Phemie should bring a basketful home with her on her return.

In five minutes more Phemie found herself seated in the gig by Miss Langley's side, and driving at a brisk pace along the road, enjoying the ride extremely, in spite of her consciousness of looking very unfit to be there in so close contact with the young lady's neat, pretty morning wrapper.

"Poor child! I hope the rest and change of scene will do her some good," thought Alicia, glancing down compassionately at the little thin, careworn face. "God helping me, I will do what I can to throw a few rays of sunlight on her dark pathway."

They soon reached Woodlawn, and Alicia, driving up to a side entrance, fastened her horse, and led Phemie around through the shrubbery to the house.

"We will go in here at the back hall-door, and

then up the back staircase to my room, Phemie," she said, "and I think we shall not be likely to meet any one;" and she tripped lightly onward as she spoke, while the little girl followed, scarcely venturing even to raise her eyes from the floor, so afraid was she of encountering some one who would stare in wonder and disgust at so shabby a figure showing itself in that grand house; nor did she breathe freely until Alicia, ushering her into a large, airy apartment in the second floor, said in a bright, cheerful tone, "Well, here we are at last, Phemie; this is my room. Look about you, and tell me what you think of it."

"O Miss Langley, it's beautiful! it's splendid! I never saw such a place in all my life! I should think you'd be as happy as a king!" cried the child, clasping her hands in ecstasy as she glanced at the rich carpet, the lace curtains at the windows, the mirrors, the pictures, and the costly furniture.

"Yes, I am very happy," replied the young lady, smiling kindly at the eager child, "but it is not these things that make me so. They cannot give true happiness. Our Saviour himself said, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of

the things which he possesseth;’ and it is indeed so, for many have been very happy in the midst of deep poverty, with pain and sickness added too, while others who are rolling in wealth and appear to have all that heart could wish are very miserable.

Phemie looked at her in silent wonder.

“I will try to make you understand it better another time; but now we must see what can be done to improve your appearance,” said Alicia, opening the door of a large closet.

“Here is a suit of clothes which once belonged to my sister Effie, but are now to be yours, and I hope they will fit without much altering. They are not new, but quite good and comfortable yet, and nurse and I have mended them carefully.”

Phemie’s eyes danced with delight, and with a murmured, “Thank you, ma’am; oh, thank you very much,” she followed Alicia, who hastily crossed to the farther side of the room, saying, “Come along with me: you must have your bath the very first thing, and then you will enjoy your clean clothes.”

“Here, this is my bath-room,” she added, throwing open the door. “See, here is the tub, and by

turning these spigots you can have plenty of water, either hot or cold; and here are the towels and the soap."

"Why, where does the water come from?" asked the child, opening her eyes wide with the astonishment, as she saw it pouring into the tub.

"From a tank on the roof," replied Alicia.

"Oh, that's a heap nicer and more handy than the way we have to do," said Phemie. "Every drop we use in the house has to be carried all the way from the spring, and I tell you I get tired fetching it; 'specially wash-days."

"Doesn't Philip help you?" asked Alicia.

"Sometimes; when he's in a good humor, and doesn't have to go a-fishing or something," replied Phemie.

"Now, Phemie, I am going to leave you," said her friend; "and as soon as the tub is full enough, I want you to get in and give yourself a good, thorough washing all over, head and all, and then rub off well with these coarse towels, and put on your clean clothes, which I will leave on this chair. Here are a comb and brush, which I will give you for your own, and I want you to use them carefully every day, so that your hair

will never again look so rough and tangled as it does now. I am going out now, and you must lock the door until you get through. I have not brought in your dress, because I don't want you to put it on until nurse has combed and cut your hair, which she will do as soon as you have finished the rest of your dressing."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Phemie, in a cheerful tone. "I'll try to do it all up just about right, and come out as neat and clean as a new pin."

Alicia found her young sister in her room, standing by a window that looked out upon the lawn.

"I knocked twice, Alie," she said, turning half round, "and not getting any answer I ventured to walk in. What has become of the shabby little girl I saw you bringing round through the shrubbery? Is she the one you wanted the clothes for?"

"She is the one, and she is now in the bath-room," replied Alicia.

"That's right," said Effie, heartily. "I'd like to have all the dirty children in the neighborhood treated to a good scrubbing and a change of clothes. But, Alie, do you expect that this girl will *stay* clean?"

“No, not just at first,” replied her sister, “but I hope to be able by degrees to teach her habits of neatness. I intend to give her lessons in sewing, that she may know how to make and mend her own clothes, and to teach her to read and give her a Bible; and if she learns to love that, I am sure she will not grow up the lazy, slovenly, shiftless creature that her mother is.”

“No,” said Effie; “I think real, true Christianity teaches people to be neat and managing, at least all the very pious people I have ever known were so; and I am sure it makes them industrious, for no one could read the Bible without seeing that it teaches that diligence in business is a duty and slothfulness a sin. But, Alice, it will cost you a great deal in time, and trouble, and worry to teach such a child all that you say you mean to teach her.”

“I know it will, Effie dear, and I have not undertaken the task lightly,” replied her sister. “I have prayed over it, and asked God to give me strength and patience to persevere. And will it not be doing a great work—a work worth the expenditure of much time and trouble—if I can be the means of leading this one little lamb back

to the Saviour's fold, saving this one precious soul for which Christ died, soothing some of her sorrows, throwing some light on her dark pathway, and helping her to grow up into a good, useful, Christian woman?"

"Yes, Alice, but there is an *if* in the way, and you may not succeed after all."

"What does the Bible say, dear," replied Alicia, passing her hand caressingly over her sister's bright curls: "'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye *know* that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.'"

"Oh, Alicia, you have such strong faith; I think you will succeed," said Effie, affectionately twining her arms round her sister's neck, "because I remember it says in the Bible, 'According to your faith be it unto you.' But now tell me all about your visit to the family. Did you find them as terribly poor and dirty as you expected?"

"Yes, quite, I think," replied Alicia. "It made my heart ache; especially for this poor child, in whom I have felt a strange interest ever since I first caught sight of her face yesterday in the little school-house, and who seems to be made a

perfect drudge by her lazy mother. Ah, Effie, they have sore need of the gospel in that house."

"Tell me about it—tell me everything, do, there's a dear, good Alice," responded Effie, coaxingly, drawing her sister down into an easy chair, and seating herself on a low ottoman at her feet.

Alicia complied, taking up some light work that lay in a pretty basket on the window-seat, and employing her fingers and tongue at the same time.

She was just concluding her narrative when the unlocking of the bath-room door gave them warning of Phemie's approach.

"There she comes," whispered Effie; "now must I run away?"

"You may go and call nurse, if you will," replied her sister; "she promised to do the hair-cutting for me, and you can do as you like about coming back."

"Then I'll come back, for I want to see her try on those old frocks of mine. I hope they'll fit," said Effie, darting away through one door just as Phemie entered by the other.

"Ah, you are very much improved, Phemie, and will be quite a nice-looking little girl pres-

ently, when we get your hair cut, and one of these neat dresses on you," said Alicia, looking up from her work. "Sit down here by me till nurse comes."

"I feel a heap better, ma'am—so rested like," said the child, taking the offered seat. "I didn't know how nice it was to take a real good wash."

"I am glad you have found it out," said Alicia, smiling, "and I hope you will try it very often in future. But here comes nurse, and now we will have your toilette completed."

The hair was soon cut, and nicely combed and brushed, after which three dresses, two neat calicoes and a pretty gingham, were tried on in turn, and each pronounced quite a good fit.

"A little loose," nurse said, "for Miss Effie was always a plump little body, but that's a very good fault, and we'll hope to fatten up this poor thing till she grows into them."

"That reminds me, nurse, that she must have a good dinner presently," said Alicia. "It would not do to keep her waiting till our late dining hour; and you had better just take her down to the front kitchen and see that she is well pro-

vided for, as soon as we are done with this trying-on business."

"I'll do so with pleasure, Miss Alicia," replied nurse, heartily. "There's nothing I like better than feeding hungry folks."

Phemie felt almost overwhelmed by the magnitude of her riches when she learned that not only the three dresses, but also a good supply of underclothes, two or three pairs of stockings, two pairs of shoes, and a neat white sun-bonnet, none of them entirely new, but all perfectly whole and good, had become her own.

Words failed her with which to express her joy and gratitude, and tears came instead.

"Never mind thanking us, my child," said Alicia, kindly; "only try to keep yourself looking neat and respectable in future, and we shall feel well rewarded. The gingham dress and the sun-bonnet I want you to keep nice for wearing to Sunday-school, and the calicoes are to wear turn about on week-days, so that you need never be dirty nor untidy."

"Oh, you are so good to me, Miss Langley!" said Phemie, wiping her eyes. "I never had half so many clothes before, nor half so nice. I

can't think what makes you so kind to a poor girl like me."

"The love of Christ constraineth us,' Phemie, the Bible says," replied her friend. "I love you because I believe that Jesus died for you, and I hope that you are beginning to love him; and you must thank him for all that I do for you, because it is he who puts in into my heart and gives me the means to do it."

"I will, ma'am," said Phemie, in a low tone, and with a joyful gleam in her eyes. "I'm so glad you told me that!"

"Come now, child, and I'll get you something to eat," said nurse, leading the way. "I dare say you're hungry enough."

The room to which she was conducted was so comfortably furnished and so neat that Phemie thought the nurse must have forgotten Miss Alicia's directions, and taken her somewhere else than to the kitchen. However, she said nothing, but accepted nurse's invitation to take a seat at a little table which was very neatly set out with a clean white table-cloth and white dishes.

"Just sit down, child," nurse said, "and I'll bring in some dinner for you in a moment. You'll

have to eat alone, for the family don't dine till three o'clock, and of course the servants don't eat till after that."

She went out, and returned in a moment with a mutton chop, peas, beans and potatoes, all smoking hot, which she set down before Phemie.

They both looked and smelled very tempting, and Phemie, who was really very hungry, hastily took up her knife and fork to begin.

"Stay a moment, child," said nurse, laying her hand on the little girl's arm; "don't you ask God's blessing on your food before you eat? Have you forgotten already what Miss Alicia said to you but now about thanking him for everything that's given you?"

Phemie blushed and hung her head.

"Perhaps you don't know how," said nurse, more gently; "but I will teach you. Here, fold your hands so and close your eyes. Now repeat after me: 'Lord, I thank thee for this food, which is thy gift; I pray thee to bless it to the strengthening of my body, and grant me food for my soul, for Jesus' sake. Amen.'"

Phemie repeated the words slowly after the

good woman, and was then told that now she might eat.

“I’d be afraid and ashamed,” said nurse, pouring out a glass of water for her, “ever to sit down to a meal’s victuals without asking God’s blessing on them. I’d be ashamed to be so ungrateful, and afraid the food would choke me, as it ought, I’m sure. Now, my dear, you can use those words, or thank the Lord in your own words before every meal, just as you like; and I hope you’ll never forget nor neglect it.”

“I’m obliged to you, ma’am, for teaching me,” said Phemie; but she made no promise, for her heart quailed at the thought of carrying out those instructions before her mother, sister and brothers, and still more before her father.



CHAPTER VIII.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”—Rom. x. 9, 10.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”—Ps. xxxvii. 5.

PHEMIE, who had probably never in her life before sat down to so well prepared and plentiful a meal, enjoyed her dinner extremely, in spite of the anxious feeling nurse's words had given her; for Phemie was beginning truly to love the Lord, and to desire to do right that she might please him; and yet her timid nature shrank from the consequences that might ensue.

She had just finished her meat and vegetables, and was beginning a bit of cherry-pie, when Miss Effie came in, bringing a large bowl of delicious-looking strawberries and cream.

“Here, Phemie,” she said, setting it down beside her, “I got these ready for you myself—that is, I helped pick them over, and put the sugar and cream on them; and now I want to have the pleasure of seeing you eat them.”

“You’re very good to me, miss,” said Phemie, gratefully. “It seems to me everybody’s good to me here. It was you gave me the frocks, wasn’t it? I don’t see how you could spare them.”

“Oh, I have plenty more,” laughed Effie; “and I had rather grown out of those; and besides, they were a little faded, so that mamma thought they were not quite good enough for me to wear any more.”

“Why, I think they’re beautiful!” exclaimed Phemie in surprise, and with a downward glance at her dress.

“Yes, they look very nice on you, very nice indeed,” said Effie, kindly. “But make haste and eat up your berries, for then I’m going to take you out into the shady walks in the grounds for a little while. Sister said I might; and then she wants you to go up to her again.”

“Thank you, miss; I shall like to do both,” re-

plied Phemie, attacking the strawberries with a zest and earnestness that made Effie smile.

"I think you don't seem to know my name," she said. "It is Euphemia, but they call me Effie, for short. You may call me Miss Effie if you like."

"I will," said Phemie, elevating her eyebrows; "but how odd! that's *my* right name too, mother says; but they always call me Phemie."

On returning to Miss Alicia's room, Phemie was directed to take a seat in a low chair by the side of the young lady, who was sewing very busily.

"Can you sew, Phemie?" she asked.

"A little, ma'am; not very well," answered the child, hesitatingly.

"Well, I want to teach you to sew neatly," said Alicia; "for it is a very important accomplishment for any woman. Here are some pieces of work I have been basting for you—some handkerchiefs for yourself—and I hope you will take great pains with them."

"Oh, *how good* you are to me!" exclaimed Phemie, clasping her hands in astonishment and delight. "Yes indeed, Miss Langley, I'll do

them just as well as ever I can, to please you."

"Thank you, Phemie; that is a good motive, for it is right to be grateful to earthly friends," replied Alicia; "but there is a better motive still—love to Him who has done far more for us than any earthly friend, and in whose word it is written, 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto man.'"

Phemie looked up in surprise. "Oh, Miss Langley," she said, "does he really notice how we do our work? even such a little thing as a bit of sewing?"

"'Whatsoever ye do,'" repeated Alicia. "Do you think He whose eye is ever upon us would bid us do a thing, and then not notice whether we obeyed him or not? 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,' it says in another place; and if we obey these commands, doing well and faithfully whatever our hands find to do, because we want to please God, we are as truly serving him in doing them as if we were engaged upon some great work; and he will not fail to see and approve of our exertions and the motive which prompts them."

"That is very pleasant to think of," said Phemie, thoughtfully.

And then she looked so sad and troubled that her friend kindly inquired what was the matter.

Phemie repeated what had passed between nurse and herself at the table, and asked in a hesitating way if nurse was right and it was indeed her duty to do that.

"What do you think about it yourself, Phemie?" asked Alicia.

"I don't think I could, Miss Langley," she said. "I don't think father, nor mother either, would let me say it—out loud any how; and I'm pretty sure if father knew I said it, even to myself, he would beat me awfully."

"Well, Phemie," said the lady, "we ought always to obey our parents, except when they bid us do what God has forbidden or refrain from doing what he has commanded; but when that is the case, we must remember that the Bible says, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.' Now God's command is, 'In everything give thanks;' and so I think you must thank God for his good gifts, even if your father forbids it. But I do not say that you must do it aloud.

Probably it is not required in your circumstances; but no one can prevent you from thanking God in your heart; and if you could talk with your mother and the rest about it, and get them to join with you when your father is absent, it would be a very good thing."

"Do you think I ought to speak to mother about it?" asked Phemie, trembling. "I don't know how she'd take it. Maybe she'd beat me terribly, if she happened to feel like it; for she's very cross indeed sometimes, and I've often heard her say that she hates folks that set up to be good and pious."

"I think you ought, Phemie," Alicia said; "but ask the Lord Jesus to help you. If you put your trust in him, he will not suffer any real harm to befall you; he will not let you have any trouble or trial that is not for your real good. If you are going to be a Christian, Phemie, you must not keep it to yourself. The Bible says, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is

made unto salvation.' And the Lord Jesus says, 'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.'"

"Please, ma'am," said the child, looking anxious and troubled, "will you tell me exactly what you mean that I ought to do?"

"I mean, my dear, that you must not be afraid nor ashamed to let those about you know that you have given your heart to God, and are trying to do right, that you may please and honor him."

"I can't help feeling afraid," said Phemie, sorrowfully, "but I mean to do it, for all that. Oh, Miss Langley," she added, with sudden earnestness, while tears sprang to her eyes, "surely I could bear a few beatings for the dear Saviour, when I think how he was beaten, and spit upon, and crowned with those cruel thorns, and nailed to that dreadful cross for me."

"Yes," replied her friend, "he suffered far more for us than we can ever be called to endure for him; and, Phemie, if you ask him, he will enable you to do your duty, and deliver you from

the troubles you fear it will bring upon you, or give you strength to bear them, and turn them into blessings. Trials, though hard to bear, are often good for us, my child. Sometimes, when the wind has blown in fierce, rough blasts, have you not seen the great forest trees bending and shaking till they seemed ready to fall prostrate upon the ground? But when the storm was past they reared their heads more proudly than before, and seemed stronger than ever; and they were, for the storm that shook them so hard but sent their roots down deeper into the ground; and so it is with Christians when God blesses their trials to them: they make them stronger, and better, and more beautiful in character, because more like Jesus. The Bible says a great deal to cheer and comfort us under trials and afflictions. I wish you could read it for yourself."

"I wish I could, too," said Phemie, sighing; "but mother always says she can't spare me to go to school."

"I will teach you, Phemie, if you are willing to learn," said her friend. "It would take a long time, though, at the rate of only one lesson a week; and I have been thinking of a plan for

giving you one every day. Should you like that?"

"Yes, ma'am, very much, if mother is willing to spare me," replied Phemie.

"I will try my powers of persuasion," said Alicia, smiling, "and I have strong hopes of success."

She then unfolded her plan to the little girl, which was, that when the weather was favorable they should meet every morning at a certain hour in a pleasant spot on the bank of the river, about a quarter of a mile above Mr. Shannon's, and spend a little time in reading and sewing.

"There is nice grass there and a good shade," she said, "and I will have a bench put under the trees, so that we can sit quite comfortably. I would have you come here instead, but the walk would be quite too long; but that place is at an easy walking distance for you, and I can ride when I choose, as I have a nice little pony of my own."

Phemie looked glad and grateful; for she had begun to think that to be with Miss Langley was one of the pleasantest things in the world; and she had sense enough to see that the lady

was taking a great deal of trouble on her account.

“Oh, I *hope* mother’ll let me go!” she said; “and I think maybe she will, ’cause she’ll think if I learn to sew fast I can make all the clothes for the family.”

“I’m afraid so, indeed,” thought Alicia. “Alas! what a curse to their poor children are lazy, drunken parents!”

Phemie always looked back to that day at Woodlawn as one of the brightest spots in her life. She spent most of the afternoon in Miss Alicia’s room, taking lessons in reading and sewing, and looking at pictures and other pretty things that were brought out for her entertainment. Then followed a supper quite equal to her dinner, and after that a delightful drive through the grounds; and then the ride home, laden with a large basket of strawberries, and a small wooden box containing all of the new clothes but those she wore.

Alicia had driven her round the grounds, kindly calling her attention to whatever was best worth noticing, but it was Ben Jolley, the boy of all work, who took her home.

It was not quite sundown when they arrived, and the whole family, with the exception of the father, who had not yet returned home, were gathered about the supper-table; and loud were the exclamations of wonder and astonishment when Phemie entered dressed in her new clothes, and carrying the basket of berries, while Ben followed with the box.

"Well, I declare," said her mother, "if you don't look quite like a lady! I shouldn't have known you, hardly."

"I didn't know her," said Philip, "till I caught sight of her face. I thought we were getting company, baggage and all."

"Yes, what's in that box, PHEME?" asked Eunice, as Ben set it down and walked off with a bow and a "Good evening."

"Oh, mother," replied Phemie, with animation, "you can't *think* how good they've been to me! The box is full of things they've given me: two dresses, and ever so many other things besides; and see this dress I have on, too, and this bonnet. But the boy's going off without his basket. Stop him, Phil, quick!"

Philip shouted and ran down the path towards

the gate, and Phemie made haste to empty the basket and carry it out.

When she returned the children were at the strawberries, and her mother busied in turning over the contents of the box.

"Wel. I never, PHEME!" she said; "they've fixed you up about right. I s'pose you'll quite look down on the rest of us; but mind, as sure's you do, I'll cut up some o' these for Lissa."

"No, mother," replied Phemie, quickly; "Miss Langley said I was to keep 'em all, and keep 'em nice and whole too, so that I could always look clean and decent."

"That'll be apt to be as *I* say, I reckon," was the sharp rejoinder, and Eunice turned to the strawberries, ordering the children to let them alone till she should give to each his proper share; to which order they paid not the slightest attention until it was followed up by sundry boxes on their ears, accompanied by loud threats and scolding on her part, and angry screams on theirs.

It was some time before anything like quiet was restored, and then Phemie was told to "take off her finery and come and wash the dishes," her mother adding, "You've had your share of

good things where you've been, and needn't expect any of these berries."

Phemie felt a strong disinclination to obey, and was on the point of answering her mother in the peevish and disrespectful manner usual with her, but checked herself just in time with the thought of Him whose servant she was trying to be, and whom she wished to please.

"Lord Jesus, help me!" was the prayer that went silently up from her heart, and she answered in a cheerful tone, "Yes, mother, I'll run up and put on my old frock, and be down again in a minute."

"Why, what's come over the child?" exclaimed Eunice, looking after her as she sprang lightly up the stairs; "if that's what comes of sending her to Woodlawn, I think I'll let her go again."

This act of ready and cheerful obedience brought its own reward to Phemie. Her mother had seldom been in a better humor than she found her in on her return to the kitchen; and when, after giving an animated and—to her listeners—very interesting account of all that she had seen and done and enjoyed, she ventured to repeat the conversations she had held with the

nurse and Miss Langley on the subject of asking God's blessing upon her food, her mother gave a ready consent to her doing so whenever her father was not present.

"'Twon't hurt any of us, I reckon," she remarked, "and so I'm willing enough when *he's* away; but, Phemie, when he's here I'll set you to minding the baby, or something, to keep you away from the table till he's done, for fear he might notice; for I know well enough he'd be madder'n a hornet if he found it out."

Finding her mother in so favorable a mood, Phemie ventured to tell of Miss Langley's offer to give her daily lessons in sewing and reading, and asked if she could be spared to take them.

"Well, yes, I s'pose I can manage to spare you most days," said her mother; "it might pay very well in the end to have you to learn to be a good sewer."

"Miss Langley said she'd be in to-morrow or next day, to ask you about it," said Phemie; "and you'll tell her yes, mother, won't you?"

"Yes; as long as it makes you so good-natured to be with her, I'll say nothing against it," replied Mrs. Shannon. "I begin to think," she

added, "that Sunday-schools are very good things, after all; you're getting so good, and here's Phil been working all day like a trooper."

Phemie's eyes beamed with joy at her mother's words, and she went up to her room with so light and happy a heart that she could scarcely believe herself the same little girl who had been so wretched in the morning.



CHAPTER IX.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."—ISA. lviii. 9.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—1 JOHN v. 4.

HAVE said that Phemie carried an unusually light and happy heart to her room that night after her first visit to Woodlawn. Lissa had already crept into bed and fallen into a sound slumber, and Phemie sat down by the window and looked out upon the dark and silent woods, and up at the quiet stars, twinkling in the sky above her, with thoughts full of the strange events of the day. All along the way, as she rode home that evening, her poor, trembling, fearful little heart had been sending up its silent petitions to her unseen Friend for strength to do her duty, and for his protecting care in the performance of it; and now tears of joy and thankfulness ran down her cheeks as she called to mind

how wonderfully those prayers had been answered, and thought, too, of all that her kind Sabbath-school teacher had done for her and given her that day, and of her assurance that he had put it into her heart thus to befriend a poor, distressed and needy child. But tears of sincere and humble penitence mingled with the others as memory carried her back to the early morning, with its forgotten prayers, its ill-temper, and disrespectful behavior to her mother, and again she confessed these sins, asking for pardon, and praying for help to fight against her sinful nature and to overcome.

“Thou hast been *very* good to me, but thy goodness is altogether undeserved. O God, be merciful to me, a sinner, and save me from myself and my sins,” was the language of her heart.

Very different were the emotions that swelled in Philip’s breast as he stretched himself upon his couch in the adjoining room.

“Well,” thought he, “I’m sure I’ve been a good boy to-day; worked like a trooper, as mother says, weeding and digging in the garden all morning and fishing all the afternoon. Then I scaled

and cleaned the fish for her; and then to-night I carried up Phemie's box, though I'm sure I felt tired enough to have refused when she asked me. And I haven't said a bad word to-day, except when Chris made me mad with his poking ways and his meddling with my fishing-tackle; so provoking as he was, how could I help it? I wish I hadn't got mad and sworn, but what's the use worrying about it, now it's done? I'll try not to do it again, that's all; and I really couldn't be expected to be perfect all at once; and I think all the good deeds I've done ought to make up for that one bad one;" and, laying this flattering unction to his soul, he fell asleep.

Ah! this poor boy had never been taught that declaration of holy writ, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Phemie was up betimes the next morning, and her first act was to kneel down and repeat her prayer, with an added petition for help to do right, and a fervent thanksgiving for God's protecting care over them all during the past night. She then used her comb and brush, and washed her face and hands in a basin of clean water which she had brought up the night before, put

on one of her old dresses, stole softly down stairs, and went to work.

Miss Langley had said a great deal to her of the duty and importance of neatness and cleanliness; so hunting up an old broom, the only one they possessed, she gave the kitchen the most thorough sweeping it had had for many a day, albeit the cobwebs upon the walls were forgotten and some dirt still lurked in the corners; for Phemie was but a child in years, and only beginning to try to do with her might whatsoever her hand found to do.

When Eunice at length, rather before her usual hour, crept from her bed, she found the kettle boiling and the table set for breakfast; but instead of giving Phemie the praise the child certainly had some right to expect, she only scolded her for disturbing her slumbers with the noise she had made, though the little girl had been all the time trying to work as quietly as possible.

Phemie felt disappointed and discouraged, and an angry, indignant rejoinder rose to her lips, but she checked it with a silent prayer for help, and the thought of that unseen Friend whose eye was ever upon her, noticing and approving all her

efforts, and knowing that they were made from love to him; and a sweet, peaceful feeling stole into her heart, so that the little ones wondered at the meek and patient way in which she attended to their wants.

Philip had overslept himself, and came down in a bad humor with himself and everybody else; but presently, after breakfast, went off to catch some fish for dinner, while Phemie made haste to finish her work and change her dress, that she might look neat if her teacher called, as she had strong hope that she would. Nor was she disappointed, for Miss Langley did call, and, obtaining Mrs. Shannon's consent to the arrangement, carried Phemie off to the appointed place, where Ben Jolley had already put up a rude seat.

After this, as long as the weather continued warm and dry, they spent an hour there every morning, Phemie improving rapidly under her friend's kind, painstaking tuition; and that not merely in reading and sewing, but also in the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation.

Dearly Phemie loved those quiet, busy hours in the woods, but more highly still did she prize



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her Sabbath-school, and the storm was a hard one that could keep her away.

The class had increased to half a dozen or more, and Alicia, looking upon each one as a precious charge for which she must render up an account at the last day, labored as faithfully and prayed as earnestly for the others as she did for Phemie; yet she had a peculiar affection for her as the poorest and neediest of her little flock—for the others were all children of farmers and mechanics who lived in at least tolerable comfort—and the one who soonest gave evidence of the saving power of the truth upon her heart; for, like some in heathen lands, no sooner did Phemie hear the story of a Saviour's love than her soul melted within her, and she cried out, "Did he do all this?—did he suffer and bleed and die for me? Then he shall be *my* Saviour, and *my* God, and I will be *his* child."

And never did she repent of her choice; for though sometimes "in heaviness through manifold temptations," sometimes, through the weakness and corruption of her but partially renewed nature, falling into sin and coming under condemnation, yet her progress was steadily upward

and onward; so that with the prophet of old she could cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise: when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

She had many a hard battle to fight with her own sinful heart, many a discouragement in her outward circumstances to struggle against, but though often weary and faint-hearted, she still struggled on, and in the end became more than conqueror through Him that loved her.

With Philip it was different: his strength was in himself, and, alas! it often proved to be weakness. He would frequently make desperate efforts at reformation, break off from swearing and lying, work diligently on week-days, maintain a careful outward observance of the Sabbath, and read his Bible and offer up formal prayers: then, falling under some sudden temptation, he would give up in despair, and return to his evil courses for a time. He, too, as well as his sister, had felt sorrow for sin, but with him it was "the sorrow of the world that worketh death; not that godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life." His mourning was not that he had grieved and dishonored a holy and good God, a kind and

loving Saviour, but that he had offended against a just Judge, an Almighty Ruler, whose vengeance he feared might one day overtake him.

Mr. Seldon's instructions and prayers were not less faithful and earnest than Alicia's, but the seed fell upon stony ground, where it had not much deepness of earth, and so, though it sprang up quickly, it soon withered away, because it had no root.

Through the exertions of their friends at Woodlawn, the two boys had been supplied with a decent suit of clothes apiece for wearing to Sabbath-school, so that they were now able to make a respectable appearance there; and on week-days they looked less ragged and dirty than formerly, for Phemie had learned to mend their clothes under her friend's direction; and her persuasions, joined to the example and influence of their Sabbath-school teachers and schoolmates, had led them to form habits of greater attention to personal neatness and cleanliness.

Miss Langley had felt convinced, from her first acquaintance with Phemie, that the child stood in great need of nourishing food, and she made it a point always to bring with her to their

daily interview something to tempt the little girl's appetite and give her strength, and she always insisted upon having it eaten then and there; and Phemie very soon began to show the good effects of this kind and judicious treatment, gaining flesh and color, and losing much of the weary, careworn look that it had made her friend's heart ache to see on so young a face; and when fall came, with its damp and chilly weather, making it hazardous for them to occupy their sylvan school-room, the little girl found her strength equal to a daily walk to Woodlawn, though Miss Alicia often sent the gig for her, especially when there was a threatening of rain or the roads were wet and muddy.

This improvement in her health was a great blessing to Phemie in many ways: it was much easier now to work diligently, and to bear with patience the thousand petty trials and annoyances of her daily life, than when she was oppressed with languor and weakness: she could accomplish much more, and do it better and more cheerfully. She had other helps too. As soon as she was able to read tolerably well, Miss Alicia gave her a Bible, and the little girl never let a day

pass by without snatching a few moments to look into it. She could not read a great deal at any one time except on the Sabbath, but what she did read was carefully treasured up in her mind and heart, and carried out in her life. Her daily intercourse with her friend was also a great blessing, giving her, as it did, constant opportunities to seek for sympathy and advice, which were always cheerfully given, and wisely too, for Alicia drew all her counsels and instructions from the fountain of God's word.

"What is the matter, Phemie?" she asked one day, seeing the child's face wear an unusually troubled look.

"Oh, Miss Langley," replied the little girl, with a deep-drawn sigh, "I do try so hard to keep things clean and decent about the house, and I can't do it. They all make just as much dirt as they please, and if I say a word, mother scolds me, and they all get cross, and say I'm setting up to be the mistress, and ordering everybody 'round."

"Perhaps you do not speak quite so gently and kindly as you might," said her friend; "if you try coaxing and persuading, I have no doubt you

will succeed much better than by scolding and ordering. No one likes to be ordered."

"I am cross sometimes, I know," said Phemie; "but it is very hard to keep from feeling cross, and speaking crossly too, when they are so provoking."

"You must remember, my dear child, that the Bible says, 'Let patience have her perfect work,' and you must ask God to help you to do so," replied Alicia.

"But mother often says such hard things to me, and scolds me so when I'm doing my very best," said Phemie, wiping away a few tears.

"Then, Phemie dear," said her teacher, "I advise you to try the Bible remedy."

The child looked up inquiringly.

"Do you not know what that is?" asked her teacher. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' the Bible says, 'but grievous words stir up anger.' It is not always very easy to us, with our evil natures still but partially renewed, to make use of that remedy, but God will help us if we ask him. 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.' We must often fight hard to conquer our evil

tempers, Phemie, but if indulged they will render us unhappy, as well as those who are exposed to our influence."

"Yes, ma'am, I know it," said the little girl. "I am never so miserable as when I let myself get cross. Will you please mark those texts in my Bible, and I will learn them, and try, with God's help, to obey them too?"

"That is right, my dear child; and don't be satisfied with merely restraining the outward expression of anger, but strive earnestly to overcome the inward feeling also: ask God to help you to do this; watch against the first risings of it—watch, and fight, and pray."

At another time, when Alicia had brought a bit of cold chicken and some nice light biscuit in her basket for the little girl's lunch, Phemie, who looked unusually sad and careworn, declined eating them, and when pressed for the reason, colored, hesitated, and at last, suppressing a rising sob, said she would like very much to carry them home to Lissa, who was not well.

Alicia then questioned her, and by degrees drew from her the acknowledgment that for a week or more the family had had scarcely any-

thing to eat but the fish which Philip and Christopher had caught.

"Where is your father, Phemie?" she asked. "Does he do nothing for you?"

"Sometimes he does a little, but he hasn't this summer," said Phemie. "He's gone most of the time, and we're all glad of it, for when he does come home, he eats up all there is in the house and beats us all 'round. But we haven't seen him for four or five weeks. Mother says he told her he was going off to some of the towns 'round to try to get work; and I guess he went. Phil's real good, though, Miss Langley," she added; "ever so much better than he used to be before he went to Sunday-school: he's right industrious: he catches all the fish he can, and he's put the garden in good order too; but things don't grow well in it. Mother says it is because he neglected it so long, and the weather's been so dry too."

"I am very glad to hear so good an account of Philip," said Alicia; "and, Phemie, if your earthly father neglects and abuses you, remember you have a Father in heaven who has promised to provide for you. 'My God shall supply all your need.' 'No good thing will he with-

hold from them that walk uprightly.' Go to him with all your wants, and he will supply them. Remember the words of Jesus, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'

"You can take these to Lissa, if you wish, and I will come down this afternoon, and bring something for you all. I think God's way of providing for you at this time is by putting it into my heart to supply your wants."

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CHAPTER X.

“Your iniquities have separated between you and your God,
and your sins have hid his face from you.”—ISA. lix. 3.

FRA SHANNON'S intemperate habits and high temper had become so well known in his own neighborhood that it was now a difficult matter for him to obtain employment of any kind there; and only a week or two after the opening of Mr. Seldon's Sabbath-school he had carried out the intention expressed to his wife of going off in search of work.

He did not return until quite late in the summer; and thus it happened that he had thrown no impediment in the way of his children's attendance upon the school. In fact, he never heard of its existence until two or three weeks after his return, having been on each Sabbath morning either absent on a drunken spree, or sleeping off the effects of one at home.

At length, however, it came to his ears. He

was carousing along with several of his boon companions—men like himself—in a low groggery in the little town of Cedarville, a village about three miles distant from his home, when another entered.

“Hallo, Shannon!” he exclaimed, “how d’ye do, man? Why I haven’t seen ye this long time.”

“How d’ye do, yourself, Dolan?” said Ira, extending his hand. “Where have you kept yourself this last week or two?”

“Well, I’ve been ’round the neighborhood most o’ the time, but I haven’t happened to meet you: indeed, I haven’t seen you this six weeks, and I was beginning to think you must have joined the pious, along with those children o’ yours.”

“What d’ye mean, man?” asked Ira, fiercely, bringing his clenched fist down upon the table; then, swearing a fearful oath, he added, “I tell you *what*, if I catch any o’ *my* folks at that, I’ll flay them alive and break every bone in their bodies. I’ll have no canting hypocrites about me; but what d’ye mean? Out with it, I say.”

“Tut, tut, man, don’t be so wrathy!” returned

Dolan, patting him on the shoulder. "I reckon a little religion ain't a-going to do the young ones any harm. It's my opinion that it's just about fit for women and children."

"Speak out and say what you mean, will you, without any more words about it?" exclaimed Ira, furiously, shaking off Dolan's hand, and facing round upon him.

"Well, nothing; only I've seen your young ones several times of a Sunday morning coming out o' the little school-house down yonder at the fork o' the road, and I've heard say that that sickly-looking stranger that's visiting at the squire's this summer has set up a Sunday-school there, and talks mighty good to the children: that's all," replied Dolan, turning to the landlord and calling for a glass.

Pouring forth a volley of oaths and curses, mingled with fierce threats, Ira seized his hat and rushed out into the street.

The others called after him, but he paid no attention, only hurried on the faster in the direction of his own dwelling.

"He's as mad as a hornet; he'll do somebody a mischief," said the landlord, looking

after him. "Dolan, you'd better have held your tongue."

"Of course he had," remarked another. "Shannon's taken just enough to rouse the devil in him, and I shouldn't wonder if he kills his wife or one of the youngsters afore he gets through. Folks do say he beats 'em awfully."

"Well, I hope they'll keep out o' his way," said Dolan; "but here, landlord, give us another glass."

With the help of Miss Langley's influence, Phemie had succeeded in bringing about some reforms in the management of domestic affairs; one of which was having the washing done on Monday, instead of leaving it to the last of the week.

This was Monday, and had been an unusually hard day for the child, as not only washing but baking and cleaning had to be attended to; and, though her mother had given some assistance in the morning, she had seen fit to go off on a visit to a neighbor early in the afternoon, leaving Phemie in the midst of the work. She had left all the children at home too, and Oliver, who was not very well, kept up a constant fretting for

Phemie to take him, and Chris and Lissa quarreled almost incessantly.

Their young sister's patience had never been more sorely tried, and more than once it gave way, and she scolded them roundly.

"Yes," said Christopher, on one of these occasions, "it's just as mother says: you set up for a saint, and you're not a bit better than the rest of us—just as cross and ill-tempered as can be."

Tears started to Phemie's eyes at this, though such taunts from Chris and her mother, and from Lissa too, were nothing new to her. They expected perfection in her, though she was only a child in years, and had but just begun to learn in the school of Christ; while they seemed to think that because they refused to acknowledge his rightful claim to their service, they might indulge all their evil inclinations as fully as they pleased; forgetting, as so many do, that the Bible lays down the same rules for all, whether they are professed followers of Christ or not, and that "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

"Well, Chris," said the little girl, "if I am cross, I am sure you are very provoking; and if you

minded what you're taught at Sunday-school, you'd not be quarreling with Lissa all the time."

"I don't set up for a saint," replied Chris, scornfully, "and never did; but you and Phil do, and yet you get cross; and if you don't say bad words, I know you want to; and Phil does sometimes when he gets real mad."

"But he's always sorry for it afterwards, I think," said Phemie, "and I know I always am for my crossness. But, Chris, you don't know how hard it is to be good when you're all against me; and I don't want anybody to judge of religion by me. Look at such folks as Miss Langley and Mr. Seldon, if you want to see what a real good Christian is like."

"That's so," said Chris; "and when you get to be like them I'll believe in you."

Phemie had got the last of the clothes out on the line shortly after her mother left, but it was clouding up, and soon a drizzling rain began to fall, and she was obliged to leave her scrubbing—for she had begun to clean the kitchen—and to go out and gather them in only half dry, and hang them about the fire: then, just as she finished wiping up the floor, and was thinking how nice

and clean it looked, and how glad she was to be through at last, because it was growing late and she was so tired, Chris and Lissa came racing in without wiping their feet at all, though she had laid the housecloth carefully down by the door, and called to them to be sure to use it; and there were their muddy tracks all over the floor, for they chased each other all round and round, paying not the slightest attention to Phemie's expostulations and entreaties; and, trembling with weakness and fatigue, she burst into tears, and taking the fretting babe in her arms, sat down by the fire and cried heartily.

In the midst of her tears she heard a sound that made her start to her feet pale as death, and trembling more violently than before, and look hither and thither for some hiding-place to flee to. The children heard it also, and, darting into the next room, hid themselves under the bed. It was the sound of a man's step, not quite steady, and a man's deep voice muttering oaths and curses. His hand was already upon the latch, and flinging the door open, he strode up to Phemie, and seizing her by the shoulder, shook her violently.

“What’s this I hear, you hussy?” he cried with a volley of fearful oaths. “Is it true that you’ve turned pious—that you’ve been to that Sunday-school up yonder, and learned to sing psalms and pray and read the Bible? Answer me this instant and tell me ye haven’t been there, or I’ll—I’ll put ye on the fire there, and roast ye alive.”

Almost ready to die with terror, Phemie gasped out a faint “No.”

“Now ye’re lying to me, I know ye are,” he said, giving her another shake. “But here comes Phil, and I’ll see what he has to say;” for at that instant the boy opened the door and came in with a string of fish in his hand.

He would have beaten a hasty retreat as he caught sight of the bloated and angry face of his father, but it was already too late. With one bound Ira was upon him.

“Here, you sir!” he cried, jerking the fish from his hand and dashing them upon the floor with one hand, while he tossed off the boy’s cap and seized him by the hair with the other; “they tell me you’ve joined that Sunday-school up yonder, and taken to Bible-reading, psalm-sing-

ing and praying. Is that so? Answer me this instant or I'll—I'll—"

"Yes, it is. I've been, and I'll go again," replied Philip boldly, releasing himself with a sudden jerk, though he left a lock of his hair in the fingers of the infuriated man.

"We'll see about that," said Ira, seizing him again, this time by the arm, and dragging him across the room, he took down the cowhide and began beating him with all his strength.

Philip, however, did not take it passively, but fought with foot and hand, tooth and nail, inflicting some pretty severe scratches and bites upon his tormentor, which comforted him not a little for the drubbing he received.

While this was going on, Phemie crouched down by the fire, hugging the terrified infant close to her bosom, and wishing, oh, how earnestly! that she had had the courage, like Philip, to own the truth.

"There now, we'll see if you'll go there again!" exclaimed Ira, as he stopped, almost panting for breath; "and I'll tell you what, you've got a heap worse licking for fighting me; I'd have stopped sooner if you'd taken it quietly."

"No, you wouldn't," replied Philip, wiping his bleeding face with the sleeve of his jacket; "you'd have kept on a good bit longer, till you hadn't strength to lift the whip any more, if I hadn't given you a little too."

"Hold your saucy tongue, or I'll give you some more yet," cried his father, fiercely; and stepping up to Phemie, he laid hold of her again. "It's your turn now, my lady," he said; "you lied to me, just as I thought, and now you'll catch it worse than if you'd told the truth. I'll make you own that lie, I will. Say, didn't you lie to me a bit ago, about going to the Sunday-school and the rest?"

"Yes," faltered Phemie "but, oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Sorry for what?—lying or going to Sunday-school and getting pious?"

"For telling that lie, not for going to Sunday-school, nor for trying to serve God," replied the trembling child, speaking in low, tearful tones.

"Now you'll catch it!" he exclaimed through his clenched teeth, as he snatched the screaming infant from her arms, and tossed it into the cradle.

A terrible scene followed, and when Eunice

entered the room some ten minutes later, Phemie's bleeding, insensible form lay prone upon the floor, and Ira, bestowing a parting kick upon it, turned fiercely to her, asking, with a volley of oaths, how she dared to let the children go to Sunday-school.

"It hasn't done 'em any harm," she replied. "Phil and Phemie have both been a great deal better-behaved children since they went there than they ever were before. And so you've been beating 'em for going, eh? Don't you ever dare to lay finger on 'em again for that, or attempt to beat me again either," she added, as he came threateningly towards her, "or I'll just tell what a drunken brute you are, and swear that I'm afraid of my life, and have you bound over to keep the peace or maybe sent to jail. And I'll tell you another thing: I've found out something else this afternoon that'll send you to jail fast enough if I choose to tell it; so now you'd better let me and the children alone in future, for I've stood just as much of this beating business as I'm going to stand. Squire Langley's coming up the road now, and if you don't keep pretty quiet, I'll call to him, and have you arrested on the spot."

A jail, where he knew, from past experience, that no liquor was to be procured, was not at all to Ira's fancy, and he slunk away into the bedroom, while Eunice raised Phemie from the floor, and bathed her hands and face in a basin of cold water brought by Philip.

Phemie opened her eyes with a deep-drawn sigh.

"There, now, I'm right glad to see you coming to," said her mother kindly. "Now you'd better just creep up to bed and stay there till to-morrow morning: that's all you're fit for, and I'll send you up some supper after a bit."

With a few murmured words of thanks the poor child made an effort to rise to her feet, but fell back again utterly exhausted.

"I see I'll have to help you," said Eunice; and she half led, half carried, her up to her bed, then went down and left her alone—alone with her aching body, and a far sorer pain at her heart.

"Oh, what have I done? what have I done? how could I tell that wicked lie?" she sobbed, burying her face in the pillow. "Oh, if I'd only told the truth, 'twould have been better a great deal, even if father had put me on the fire and

burnt me to death, for then I'd have gone to heaven; but now I'm afraid I never shall. I'm afraid the Lord Jesus will never forgive me, for I remember it says, 'If we deny him, he also will deny us.'"

It was the bitterest hour Phemie had ever known. There was no one near to whisper of God's long-suffering and patience and his forgiving love—that love which is ever ready to extend pardon to the returning, penitent sinner, who asks for it in the name and for the sake of Him "who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification:" no one to speak of Jesus pleading for her above, and ready to wash her from her sins in his own most precious blood; but her mind dwelt upon such texts as these: "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;" "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie;" "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

"Oh," she sobbed, "I have not kept them, and yet I thought I loved him. Oh, I was almost sure I did, but I must have been mistaken; and

now I've been so wicked I can't pray. I don't dare to pray; but oh, I *do* love him, I do want to be like him, and to have him love me. Oh, I'd give all the world not to have told that lie! I'd rather let father beat me worse than ever than to tell another. Oh, I wish I dared pray to Jesus to help me never to be so wicked again!"



CHAPTER XI.

“Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.”—
JER. iii. 12.

“For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—
ROM. iv. 15, 16.

THAT was a sad, sad week to poor little Phemie. The next day found her utterly unable to leave her bed, and slowly and wearily the hours passed away, spent in solitude and pain, of both body and mind. Conscience gave her no rest: her sin, like a thick black cloud seemed to shut out the light of God's countenance, and she dared not pray, though never had she been in greater need of prayer. Then feelings of bitter hatred towards her brutal father would arise in her mind, desires for vengeance,

longings to do to him as he had done to her; and she knew they were sinful, for she remembered our Saviour's command, "Love your enemies," and trembled as she thought of those other words of his, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

All day long she was fighting this battle in her own heart, now half raising a cry for help, then checking the half-formed words with the thought that she, alas! had sinned too deeply ever again to venture to approach the mercy-seat.

Her mother seemed, for a time, to have some sympathy for her physical sufferings—the pain of mind she knew nothing about, and would not have understood, even had it been explained to her—and for that first day allowed her to lie in bed and sent up her meals; but that was as great a strain as her indolent, self-indulgent nature could bear, and the next morning she called to Phémie to "get right up and come down; she had been playing sick long enough, and must just come now and take care of the child, and help with the work;" and in obedience to the summons the poor child crawled from her bed and down to the dirty, comfortless kitchen, where

the breakfast dishes still stood unwashed, Olly lay crying in his cradle, Chris and Lissa, as usual, were quarreling and fighting, and her mother scolding at the top of her voice. The rain, which had made dreary music to Phemie all the time that she lay on her bed, was beating against the windows, coming in under the door, and through the walls where the weatherboarding was off, leaking through the roof and dripping from the ceiling.

Phemie's sad heart sank still lower as she glanced around, and, scarcely able to stand, tottered to a seat.

"Come ; I called you down to work, not to set yourself down and take your ease," said her mother, taking her roughly by the arm. "Set Olly up in his cradle, and give him something to play with, and then go right to work at those dishes. You'll have to help with the ironing too directly, for I'm not going to do everything myself, I can tell you."

Phemie obeyed as promptly and well as her weary, aching back and limbs and her weakness would allow, but her motions were necessarily slow ; and her mother, whose compassion seemed

to have all evaporated, scolded her vehemently, and even went so far as to box her ears.

“Now let me see you move a little quicker, you lazy, good-for-nothing thing!” she said; “in bed all day yesterday, and to-day creeping around like a snail!”

This was more than the child could bear in her miserable state of mind and body, and, bursting into a passion of tears and sobs, she replied in a very saucy and ill-tempered manner.

Her mother flew at her and shook her; then giving her another box on the ear, said, “There, take *that* for your impudence! A pretty saint you are, to be sure! You might about as well give up pretending to be one, I should say, after the way you lied to your father t’other day. I reckon you forgot all the fine things you’ve said to Chris and Lissa about always speaking up and telling the truth, and the story you told ’em about the man and woman that were struck down dead for lying. Didn’t you, hey?”

“Oh, mother,” said Phemie, bursting into an agony of tears, “I’m so sorry, so sorry I ever said it! I’d give the world not to have done it.”

“Yes, it’s all very well to say that now,”

sneered Eunice, "but you need never talk to me again about being good, repenting of my sins, and all that."

Oh what a pang those words sent to poor Phemie's already almost bursting heart! She had so longed to be the means of leading her mother and sister and brothers to Jesus, the dear Saviour whom she had found so precious to her own soul; she had prayed earnestly for them, and, though with much weakness and trembling, deeply conscious of her own many failures and imperfections, she had tried now and then to speak a few words to them, telling of the sweet peace and joy that filled her heart, and beseeching them to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

But now she dared not approach the mercy-seat on their behalf nor her own and never again must she open her lips to tell them of the great salvation; and—oh, bitter, heart-breaking thought!—it was her own grievous sin that had thus sealed her lips and hedged up her way about her.

Alas! alas! how much do the sins and inconsistencies of Christians hinder and mar their efforts to do good to others! Well might the apos-

tle exclaim, "It were better for me to *die* than that any man should make my glorying void."

Dear young follower of Christ, pray to be kept from falling into sin, and thus dishonoring your Master and hindering your own usefulness. Remember the apostolic injunction, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

This was but a specimen of what poor Phemie had to endure daily and almost hourly during that miserable week. It rained almost incessantly day after day, keeping the whole family within doors most of the time, except the father, who had gone off directly after eating his supper on Monday evening, and did not come near them again while the storm lasted; and growling, fretting, quarreling and scolding were the order of the day from morning till night, with scarcely any intermission, till Phemie felt an unspeakable longing for a little peace and quietness. Once or twice she ventured to expostulate with Chris and Lissa, entreating them to be kinder and more forbearing with each other; but they only resented her interference, and united in taunting her with her sin, telling her they thought themselves quite

as good as she was, though they didn't set up for saints or lecture other people.

Generally, Phemie bore these taunts with great patience and meekness, but at times her sorely-tried spirit was roused beyond control, and she gave way to bursts of anger that afterwards cost her many bitter tears of repentance; for she had learned at Sunday-school and from the reading of God's word that such anger is sinful; that it is the spirit of revenge, the spirit of the murderer; and that God's command is, "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry;" "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Philip was the only one who refrained from thus taunting Phemie. Conscience kept him quiet, telling him that though his braver nature had helped him to escape falling into Phemie's sin, yet he had passed the ordeal but little, if any, better than she. He was by no means clear that he had been right in fighting his father, even though he was punishing him unjustly; and, worse than all, during the struggle he had suffered more than one oath to escape his lips; so that if

Phemie had broken the ninth commandment, he was no less guilty of breaking the third, if not the fifth also.

The remembrance of these things made Philip feel very uncomfortable, but his unhappiness was far less than Phemie's, for he did not mourn the withdrawal of God's favor, never having known what it was to enjoy it. He had formed the habit of kneeling down night and morning and repeating the Lord's Prayer, which he had learned at Sunday-school; but he had always gone through it as a mere form, attaching very little meaning to the words, and not at all realizing the solemn fact that he was drawing near to the great Searcher of hearts and insulting him by the offer of lip-service alone. He had no sense of the evil of sin, no desire to be delivered from its guilt and pollution; its punishment was all he cared to escape. He hoped to save himself by his own good works, and, feeling no need of the Saviour, he had no love for him. When he tried to do right, his motive was not, like Phemie's, love to Jesus, and a desire to please and honor him; but a secret hope that, by breaking off his sins and amending his life, he might escape the

judgments of God and reach heaven at last ; and when conscious of wrong-doing, he did not go to Jesus to be washed from his guilt in his blood, and forgiven for the sake of what he had done and suffered, but either tried to forget his sins, vainly fancying that God had forgotten them too, or to quiet his conscience by resolving to do better, and so making future obedience atone for past offences—which, my dear reader, it never can do—or by performing religious duties, saying more prayers, reading more chapters of the Bible, and going oftener to church, and so making amends. Vain refuges of lies, all of them ! Nothing but the blood of Jesus can atone for sin or wash us from its guilt and pollution, and make us fit to dwell with God. We must repent and believe, but there is no *merit* in our repentance or our faith, that we should be saved an account of them, that by them we can *earn* salvation. No, it is God's *free gift*, purchased with the blood of Christ alone.

The sun shone brightly on Sabbath morning, but the mud in the roads was so deep as to render them almost impassable, and Eunice would not consent to let Phemie attempt to reach the school-

house ; and so, to the little girl's deep sorrow, she was compelled to stay at home and miss her class for the first time.

Philip went, however, and on his return told Phemie that Miss Langley was there, and had kindly inquired after her.

"Ah!" thought Phemie, turning away with tears in her eyes, "would she care for me any more if she knew how wicked I have been?"

The next afternoon she was sitting on the back-door step, with Olly in her arms, quite alone, for the boys were off fishing and her mother had taken Lissa with her to a neighbor's to beg a little corn-meal or potatoes, as they were nearly out of food, and the sun and wind of two days had so dried up the mud in the roads that they could now be traveled with ease.

With her hand over her eyes, Phemie sat lost in painful thought, while a few silent tears trickled slowly down her cheeks, when a light step sounded on the floor behind her, and then a hand was laid on her shoulder, while a kind voice asked, "What is the matter, my dear child?"

Phemie started, and the color flashed over her face and neck, as she first raised her tearful

eyes for one instant to the speaker's face, and then dropping her head on Olly's shoulder, burst into an agony of grief.

"Oh, Miss Langley," she sobbed, "I am so wretched, so wretched!"

"My poor child! and what is the cause of it?" asked her teacher, taking a seat on the step beside the little weeper. "Is your trouble something that you cannot carry to your heavenly Father?"

"Oh yes, yes. I dare not go to him now, I dare not; I have sinned so against him," she cried in tones of bitter grief. "Oh, Miss Langley, if you knew—if you knew how wicked I have been, you would never want to have anything to do with me again."

"I cannot think that, Phemie," replied her teacher, gently. "I hope I would not turn away from any repenting sinner: how should I when I have so great need of forgiveness myself, and when my Master, Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, received even publicans and sinners and ate with them? Dear child, have you forgotten his own gracious words, 'Come unto me, *all ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?'"

“But, Miss Langley, I denied him,” she answered, in a voice of agony. “I told a wicked lie, and said I had not been to Sunday-school and begun to try to serve God; and you know, oh, you know, what it says in the Bible, ‘If we deny him, he also will deny us.’”

“Yes, Phemie, and yet even that sin, if truly repented of, will be forgiven. Did not Peter deny his Lord? and when he repented did not Christ forgive him? Oh, we have a gracious, loving, forgiving Saviour, who will never turn away one truly penitent sinner. Come to him and be forgiven; come and be washed anew in his precious blood, which cleanses from all sin.”

“Oh, Miss Langley, do you think I can be forgiven even such sins as those?” she asked, a gleam of hope shining in her eyes.

“I am sure of it,” said Alicia. “What does he say?—‘Return unto me, ye backsliding children, and I will return unto you;’ ‘If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin;’ ‘Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’”

Glad tears filled Phemie's eyes: then again a look of doubt crossed her face. "Oh," she said, "but I have not told you all."

Then, amidst many bitter tears and sobs, she went on to give Alicia a full and true account of the terrible scene between her father and herself on the last Monday afternoon, and of the wretched days that followed, with their strifes and bickerings, the cruel taunts that so sorely wounded her already almost broken heart, her failures of temper under this treatment, her revengeful feelings towards her father, and her restraining of prayer because she feared God would not hear one who had so grievously sinned against him.

"My poor child! my poor child!" said Alicia. "It is a sad, sad story: you have been sorely tried, and I dare not say that I could have borne such a trial any better; yet I must not palliate your sins; they were very great, but yet not too great for our God to forgive for his dear Son's sake—not too deeply dyed for the blood of Christ to wash them all away. 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.' 'I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely:

for mine anger is turned away from him.' Are not these sweet, encouraging words, Phemie?

"And remember that if like Peter you, through fear, denied your Lord, like him, too, you afterwards repented and confessed him, and bore the terrible beating you knew it would bring upon you. I think that showed that your repentance was sincere. But, dear child, you speak of revengeful feelings towards your father; remember you must forgive if you would be forgiven; and I think it may help you to do so if you will endeavor to look upon all your troubles and trials as sent or permitted by your heavenly Father for your best good. God often brings good out of evil. David prays, 'Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword.' God saw that for some reason, perhaps to show you your own weakness and proneness to sin, you needed these very trials, and so he permitted them to come. It is no excuse for the wrong-doing of those who have abused you; but to look upon the suffering they have caused you in this light may help you to forgive them. Can you now forsake this sin of revenge?"

"Yes, ma'am, I think I can," said Phemie;

“to think that way about it does make it seem easier to forgive them; and I hope God will help me to do it with all my heart.”

“He will if you ask him,” said Alicia. “But tell me, Phemie,” she added, laying her hand on the child’s head, “if you could know certainly that God would never punish you for your sins, would you still grieve over them and try to forsake them?”

“Oh yes, Miss Langley,” she answered with fast falling tears. “It’s not the punishment I’ve thought of so much, as that I should have grieved and displeased him, when he’s been so good to me; and whenever I do wrong now-a-days, the surer I am that he has forgiven me, the sorrier I feel for what I’ve done; though I’m happy too, because I know he loves me, for oh, I do love him, and want to please him always!”

“Then, dear child, I am sure that yours is true repentance, and that he will forgive you, and receive you into his favor. Come, let us kneel down and ask him now.”

“Why, what has happened to you, child?” asked Eunice, on her return. “You look as if you had met with a piece of good fortune—as happy as a king.”

“Yes, mother, and so I am,” replied Phemie, from whose countenance the cloud of sorrow and gloom which had overshadowed it for a week had entirely passed away, leaving an expression of subdued joy and peacefulness in its stead; “for now I know that God has forgiven me that wicked lie and all my sins, and that he loves me still; and I hope he will help me to keep from ever doing such a wicked thing again; and he has helped me to forgive father too.”

“Has anybody been here?” asked Eunice.

“Yes, mother—Miss Langley; and she wants me to go to her again to-morrow morning. May I?”

“Yes, child; I’m sure I don’t care,” replied Eunice; and she turned away with a sigh, thinking to herself how strange it was that Phemie should mourn so now over one lie, when formerly she could have told a dozen without compunction. “There must be something in this religion, after all,” she muttered, as she walked into the bedroom and threw off her bonnet and shawl; “and perhaps it might be a good thing for me if I had it too.”

CHAPTER XII.

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—

1 PET. v. 7.

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—MATT. xi. 28.

IT was a bleak November day: a bitter, searching wind swept through the naked branches of the trees, tearing from them the last shred of their summer garments, sending the faded, tattered fragments hither and thither over the rough frozen ground; here gathering them into heaps, and there scattering them far and wide: the little streams had ceased their song; Phemie could no longer obtain water from the spring, and even the river was partially frozen over.

“You’ll not think of walking to Woodlawn to-day, Phemie?” Eunice said, inquiringly, as she glanced from the window at the lowering clouds. “It looks as if we might have snow pretty soon; and the wind feels like it too—so

sharp and cutting it goes right through to one's very bones; and the roads are rough and hard to travel. I'd stay at home, if I were you."

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Phemie, quickly, "I couldn't *think* of staying away to-day—it's getting so near the last; maybe it may be the very last time;" and there were tears in her voice.

"Why, does Miss Langley go so soon?" asked her mother.

"Some time this month she told me the last time I was there, but the day hadn't been set yet," replied Phemie, hurrying with her dish-washing, that she might the sooner be ready for her walk.

"Oh well, child, don't fret," said her mother; "she'll be back again next summer, won't she? didn't she tell you so?"

"She said if it should please the Lord to spare her life and make her well again, mother," replied Phemie, in a choking voice; and now the tears came in earnest.

"Tut, tut, child!" said Eunice; "what's the use of crying like that? She's taken a heavy cold and has a bad cough; but there's been many a body that's had a worse one and got over it

again; and so, I'll be bound, will she, as soon as she gets where the weather is warm and pleasant. I'd like to be going there myself," she added with a shiver. "How the wind does sift in through these old walls! It's a chance if we don't freeze this winter."

"If we could only get those panes of glass put in the windows, it would be a little better," said Phemie.

"'Tisn't one bit o' use to talk about that," replied Eunice, shaking her head; "you know it's precious little your father earns now-a-days, and the half—no, nor the quarter of it—doesn't come into the house; and what we're to live on, now that the river's frozen up and Phil can't fish, I don't see;" and she heaved a deep sigh and began rocking herself back and forth in her chair before the fire, where she was sitting, doing nothing in the world but smoking her pipe.

Phemie thought of an industrious widow, one of their nearest neighbors, who supported herself and children by knitting, sewing, washing, or anything she could turn her hand to, and could not help fancying that if her mother were like Mrs. Mills they might be able to get along pretty

comfortably; but she merely said, "I'm glad there's plenty of wood to be had, mother, and that Phil is willing to get it for us."

"Yes, that's some comfort," replied Eunice. "Phil's turned out a real good, industrious boy since he's been going to that Sunday-school; and I must say it's improved *you* amazingly too; and I'm right-down glad I let you go."

Phemie's young heart was very sad that morning as she trudged wearily along over the rough, frozen roads on her way to Woodlawn. The burden which pressed most heavily at the moment was the sickness of her beloved teacher and their approaching separation. She could not think of it without tears, which constantly filled her eyes, almost blinding her at times, and every now and then flowed silently down her cheeks. But the little girl had other causes of grief and anxiety: her father's intemperance, and her mother's indolence and want of management and forethought, threw a burden of care upon her young shoulders which they were ill able to bear. There was literally nothing provided for winter, no store of provisions, clothing, or fuel laid in; for the last they must depend upon the scanty supply which

Philip might be able and willing to procure from the woods in their vicinity, but where the others were to come from Phemie could not see. Her little sister and brothers were without shoes and stockings, and the few clothes they owned were very thin and old, and growing ragged beyond her power of mending, and it made her heart ache to see them shivering over the fire and often crying with hunger and cold: neither could they keep warm at night, for their bed-clothing was poor and scanty, as well as dirty.

Phemie had learned to love cleanliness and order, and had done and was still doing her best to bring about a better state of things in these respects in her home; but it was too great a work for her feeble little hands to accomplish alone and unaided; she had effected some improvement, but her home was still very comfortless in comparison with what it ought to have been and with the dwellings of the neighbors.

No wonder, then, that the child's heart was heavy with grief and care. It was more for others than for herself; and yet she was not without her own private causes of anxiety and perplexity. She had, under the influence of Alicia's teachings

and example, become very neat in her personal appearance; always kept her face and hands perfectly clean, her hair nicely combed and brushed, and her dress whole and tidy, mending it carefully whenever there was need for it. But in spite of all this care, the clothes that had been given her early in the summer were rapidly wearing out; and even had that not been the case, they were but ill-suited for the cold weather, and yet she could see no means of providing herself with others.

Miss Langley had given her a few articles of warm under-clothing, a stout pair of shoes, and a woolen shawl, without which she could scarcely have braved the bitter, cutting wind of this November morning; but they were but a small part of what seemed absolutely necessary for comfort and health during the rapidly approaching winter.

On reaching Woodlawn, Phemie was shown at once to Miss Langley's room, where she found her friend reclining upon a sofa with a book in her hand, which she closed on the little girl's entrance.

“Good morning, my dear child; I am so glad

to see you," she said, holding out her hand with a pleased smile. "They told me it was so cold that you probably would not venture out so far from home."

"Oh, I *couldn't* have stayed away when—when—" but Phemie's lip quivered, and she could not go on for the choking in her throat.

"My poor child! you don't know how hard it is for me to leave you," said Alicia, in a low, moved tone, drawing the little girl nearer to her, and making her sit down on a low ottoman by her side. "But, Phemie," she continued, "there is comfort in the thought that all these things are ordered by our best Friend, unto whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, who loves us with an infinite, everlasting love, and 'who knoweth that we have need of all things.' Our Father never gives his children one needless pang, and I truly believe we are both his. You are very dear to me, little Phemie, as a lamb of my Saviour's fold and the first-fruits of my labors for him. Oh, thank God that I have reason to hope that I have been permitted to be the means of bringing one little one to him!" she added, softly pressing the small hand she held.

Phemie's tears were falling fast, and a sob burst every now and then from her bosom.

"Oh, Miss Langley," she said, "what shall I *ever* do without you? Must you—must you go soon?"

"To-morrow, my dear child, and this is our last interview; but we will hope that the separation will not be a very long one. I hope, if it shall please God to restore my health—and my physician seems to feel very sanguine about the good effect of a warmer climate—to be with you again in the spring; and in the mean time, Phemie, remember who has said, '*Lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world.*' And he loves you far better than I do—oh, with *such* a love as no earthly friend can feel! He says to his own people, '*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,*' and who can fathom the depths of such tenderness! You have this precious Friend, Phemie, and you have his Word, which you are now able to read for yourself, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to enable you to understand it aright, and to bring all its sweet and precious promises and teachings to your remembrance. Have you not reason to be happy,

Phemie, even though you and I must part for a time?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; yes, I know I have, but—"

"But yet you are not?" said her friend, inquiringly, as the little girl paused, leaving her sentence unfinished. "Ah, little Phemie, I know that you are deeply grieved at parting from me, but I see that is not your only trouble. But whatever that trouble may be, Phemie, take it to your Saviour, and *leave* it with him. He says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' Not only a future rest in heaven, but rest *now*—rest from fear, and care, and sorrow, and anxiety, and perplexity. Is it the last? Take it to him, believing his promise, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' 'The way of the righteous is made plain.' Is it fear? Oh, what need of that for one who has such an almighty and loving Friend ever at hand? Is it sorrow? Remember his own gracious word, 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.' Is it anxiety or care? The word is, 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth

for you.' But, my child, I know that earthly sympathy is very sweet and comforting too, sometimes, and I would like to give you mine, as long as I am with you, if you do not mind telling me what your troubles are."

Phemie was silent, debating in her own mind whether a full and true reply to her friend's question would not seem to her too much like begging.

"I know, my poor child, some of your causes for anxiety," said Alicia, laying her hand gently on the little girl's arm. "This gingham dress is very light and thin for winter wear, and you knew of no way to supply yourself with a warmer garment, nor with many other things which you sorely need; but, Phemie dear, your heavenly Father *knoweth* that you have need of all these things, and he has already given me the means and put in into my heart to supply your need. Will you please hand me that basket that stands yonder on the window seat?"

Phemie readily complied with the request, and Alicia, taking from the basket a pretty woolen hood, put it on the little girl's head, saying, "There, my dear, I knit that for you with my

my own hands, as a parting gift from me. How do you like it?"

"Oh so much! it is beautiful! And to think that you knit it for me yourself!" said Phemie, grateful. "Oh, Miss Langley, surely no one else ever was so kind to a poor child as you are to me!"

Alicia smiled. "I hope that is quite a mistake, Phemie," she said. "But never mind: I have two warm winter dresses ready for you—one for you to wear about your work at home, and the other to be put on when you have an opportunity to go to church or to make a visit to a neighbor. There are some other things too—warm winter stockings, large, long-sleeved check aprons to put on to keep your frock clean when you are working, and so forth. And mamma tells me that she and the rest have gathered up quite a bundle of things—clothes of my father's and brother's, several half-worn dresses, and other garments that have belonged to different persons in the family—which you and your mother can make over for herself and Lissa and the boys."

Phemie knew not how to express her joy and gratitude; she tried to speak her thanks,

and say how much such things were needed in her home, but burst into tears instead.

“Never mind, Phemie,” said her friend; “I know all you would say. I hope one of your causes of anxiety is now removed; and for the others, dear, you must trust the Lord, and don’t doubt that he will help you through. He never yet failed any that put their trust in him. I will send you home in the gig this afternoon, for I am going to have you eat your dinner before you go, and these things with you. Tell Phil I heard that Farmer Frost was wanting a boy to feed cattle and do other chores, and I think he had better apply for the place; and I think your mother could get a day’s work occasionally at the farm-houses if she cares to try, washing or cleaning, or assisting at killing-time. And, Phemie, the housekeeper and her husband are to remain here to take care of things, and if ever you should be in actual want, you must come to them for help, and you will get it.”

“Oh, dear Miss Langley, you have made my heart feel so light,” said Phemie; “only, only if you were—” but the remainder of the sentence was lost in a burst of tears.

“If I were not ill and going away, you would say, dear?” said Alicia inquiringly, as she drew her towards her and softly stroked her hair. “Ah, well, you must try to be content to leave me in the hands of Him who doeth all things well, and who loves me with an everlasting love.”



CHAPTER XIII.

“The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—1 Cor. ii. 10.

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”—Rom. v. 5.

“Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”—Rom. viii. 26.

THE parting between the young teacher and her little scholar was a painful one, and Phemie's tears fell fast all the way home, for there was a sad foreboding at her heart that she had looked her last upon the sweet, fair face she loved so well; but as the gig stopped at the gate, she hastily dried her tears and climbed out, while Ben Jolley fastened his horse.

“Wait a minute,” he said good-naturedly, “and I'll carry that big bundle in; the basket will be enough for you.”

The wind still blew in bitter blasts and the snow was falling rapidly now, and with a shiver

Phemie drew her shawl more closely about her and hurried up the path, followed by Ben with the bundle.

She heard Olly's fretful cry and her mother's scolding tones before she reached the door, and as she opened it she thought her home had never worn a more squalid and forlorn aspect;—the contrast between it and the one she had just left was so very great; in the one all was neatness, order, comfort, and luxury; in the other, dirt, disorder, and the most squalid poverty were evident at a glance. The dinner-dishes were still unwashed, though it was now near tea-time—the table still standing uncleared in the middle of the floor, over which the children had scattered, in their play, sticks, chips, shavings, bits of paper, and pieces of broken dishes; the mother, in a dirty, greasy, tattered gown and apron, and hair hanging uncombed about her ears, sat reading a dirty novel beside the fire, which was smoking and giving out so little heat that the hands and face of the crying baby seated at her feet looked blue with the cold.

“So you've come home at last, Phemie?” she said, looking up from her book as the child came

in. "I should think it was about time. Here's the baby fretting after you, and the dishes wanting to be washed. But you've not come back empty-handed, I see, and I'm right glad of it; for there never was a house where things were needed more. What is it?"

"Some things Mrs. and Miss Langley sent, mother," said Phemie, emptying the basket and handing it to Ben, who deposited his bundle on a chair and retreated as fast as possible.

"Oh, that's good! just what we wanted—a great loaf of bread, cold boiled ham, butter, cheese, and tea!" exclaimed Eunice, coming up to the table and examining the articles which Phemie had placed upon it.

"Yes, mother," said the little girl, "they do a great deal for us; much more, I'm sure, than we have any right to expect. See here!" and turning to the great bundle Ben had brought in, she opened it and displayed the contents, expecting her mother to be as much delighted and as grateful for such undeserved kindness as she was herself.

But Mrs. Shannon's only remark was, "Dear me! what a work it will be to make them all over!

I'm sure *I'm* not going to do it. You may, though, if you like; and I reckon one o' these dresses would do for me without much altering."

An indignant rejoinder rose to Phemie's lips, but she suppressed it with a silent prayer for help, and turning away, began the task of putting the room to rights.

A moment after Philip came in with an armful of wood.

"So you've come home again, Phemie?" he said cheerily, as he threw it down upon the hearth. "I'm right glad of it; for now there'll be a chance for a little comfort in the house. There's never a bit when you're out of it."

Phemie glanced at her mother a little apprehensively, but she, having finished her inspection of the contents of the bundle, was again buried in her novel; and, beckoning Philip into a corner, the little girl gave him Miss Langley's message; speaking in a low tone of voice, for she felt as if she would rather not have her mother know anything about the matter until Philip had made an attempt to secure the place, lest she should discourage him; for it was her constant habit to predict that every effort to better their condition

would prove a failure, and that therefore there was no use in trying,

"Farmer Frost wanting a boy!" exclaimed Philip joyfully, though in a suppressed tone. "I'll go right off this minute, and try if I can't get the place."

"I think it would be the best plan," said Phemie; "but hadn't you better wash and brush and put on your best clothes first?"

"Yes, just as fast as I can," replied Philip, "and then I'll be off. But don't say a word about it till I come back."

It was after eight o'clock when Philip returned, and Eunice and the younger children had already gone to bed; but Phemie sat beside the scanty fire, working hard, by the dim light of a tallow candle, upon a dress which she had taken from the bundle, and which she informed Philip she meant to make over for Lissa and Olly.

"How cold and tired you look!" she whispered, as he sat down by her side; "and I dare say you are hungry too; but I've a right good supper for you."

"Thank you," he said; "you're a real good sister, Phemie; but they gave me my supper at

Mr. Frost's, and filled my pockets with apples too," he added, pulling out a large, rosy one and tossing it into her lap.

"Oh, what a beauty!" she exclaimed; "how good they were to give them to you! But did you get the place?"

"No," he answered, with a sigh; "I was just a little too late, and he had engaged a boy. But I'm to help him to-morrow with his corn-husking; and he thinks I can get a job now and then from him, or somebody else, that will help us through the winter. And there'll be one advantage in not having a place, for if I'm not busy all the time I can go to school, and be getting an education to fit me for something better after a while, as Mr. Seldon says. It's a blessing there are free schools, where poor folks can get some learning."

"Yes," said Phemie, "that's something to be thankful for; and oh, Phil, how good and comforting it is, when trials and disappointments come, to remember that our heavenly Father orders and directs it all, and that the Bible says, 'All things work together for good to them that love God!'"

"I don't know," replied Philip, shrugging his

shoulders; "I can't see any good that's to come of being so awfully poor; and it makes me feel mad when I see other folks with everything they want, while I can have nothing."

"I'm afraid I've felt so too sometimes," said Phemie, sorrowfully; "but oh, Phil, it is surely very wrong, and we ought to pray to God to help us to put away such feelings, because the Bible says, 'Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Oh, Phil, isn't that sweet? Isn't it enough to make one feel content with even poverty and want, to think of having the dear Saviour always with us, day and night, sleeping and waking; always close by; so close that he can see even the thoughts and feelings we have, and know just how hard all our troubles and trials are;—the little ones as well as the big—and to know that he feels sorry for us and will help us to bear them, and comfort us and make us happy even in the midst of them all; and to know, too, that none of them can come without his will, and that he won't let any come unless it is for our real good, to make us better and more fit for heaven. And then we needn't mind being

poor, Phil, because he too was poor when he was on earth; and because he says he knows what we need, and will give it to us if we ask him."

"That's all very fine talk, Phemie," replied her brother, turning away with a gesture of disgust; "but you might talk on till doomsday, and you'd never succeed in making me think it was a good thing to be poor."

"No, I didn't mean it was pleasant," said Phemie, "or good, except as medicine is good to make us well when we are sick. You know our souls are sick, Phil, with the terrible disease of sin, and Jesus is the Physician to make them well; but sin is such a dreadful sickness that it takes very bad, bitter medicine to cure us of it. He gives us the medicine of trouble and trial, and then he sends the Holy Spirit to bless it to us, for without that it would never do any good at all."

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"Miss Langley told me: she said that it is the Holy Spirit who shows us our sins and the evil of them, and who blesses the truth to us, teaching us to understand and love it; that it is he who sanctifies God's people, which means the

same as making them holy; it's he who teaches us to love Jesus and believe on him, and without his blessed influence we could never do or think anything as we ought—would never be made any better by all the truth we hear and read, or by any of our blessings or our trials; and she showed me a good many texts in the Bible that teach these things, and bade me pray very often for the Holy Spirit to teach me and make me just what God would have me."

Poor Philip, who was as yet, alas! a stranger to the teachings of the Spirit, turned away from his sister, with a muttered, "What nonsense you are talking, PHEME!" Then, adding in a louder key, "I say, I'm off to bed; and you'd better come too," he mounted the stairs, and left her sitting there alone.

Well has the word of God declared that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

But though Philip had not yet, like Phemie, found "the pearl of great price," he had not failed to benefit in many ways by Mr. Seldon's

counsels and instructions. He had gained a thirst for knowledge and a desire to raise himself and his family from the low position in society which they now occupied. He had become steadily industrious, showing uncommon energy and perseverance for a boy of his age, and was fast establishing a character for honesty and truthfulness; seemed to have quite given up his habit of swearing; was very careful in his outward observance of the Sabbath, attending church regularly in the neighboring village of Cedarville; read his Bible daily, and knelt down and repeated a prayer morning and evening. But, alas! his prayers were still mere repetitions of a form of words, unaccompanied by any true sense of the evil of sin, any love to God or desire after holiness. Forgetting that "God is a Spirit, and that they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," he still dared to approach him with lip-service only.

Yet in his blindness and ignorance he thought himself very good, and had no doubt that he was on the high road to heaven.

Mr. Seldon feared that such was the case—that the boy's reformation was only outward, while

his heart still remained unchanged; but he could only continue to sow the good seed, watering it with his tears and prayers, hoping that, though it might lie long buried in the ground, it would at length spring up and bear fruit an hundred-fold.

Mr. Seldon and his wife had returned to their city home early in the fall, and the squire's family were going away for the winter; the roads too were now very bad, so that the children, most of whom lived at a distance from the school-house, were not able to get there; and so it was thought best, indeed absolutely necessary, to close the little Sunday-school until the return of spring.

The Shannons—especially Phemie—were much grieved at this, for they had attended regularly from the first, in spite of Ira's opposition, and had become much attached to the school and to their teachers. The next Sabbath after the terrible beating Ira had given the two older ones he ordered them all to stay at home, threatening to repeat the punishment if they disobeyed; but his wife interfered, saying that Phil should go that day if he chose, and, though the roads were too bad for the others then, they should go too, if they liked, whenever the walking was good

enough; for it did them good: they had never behaved so well in their lives as since they had been going to that Sunday-school; and then, hinting, as once before, at some act of dishonesty she knew her husband to have been guilty of, she told him plainly that if he ever again attempted to hinder them from going there, or beat them so cruelly as he had done, she would inform on him and have him arrested.

He turned away from her with a muttered oath, but evidently much cowed, and after that made no further opposition to their attendance upon the school.



CHAPTER XIV.

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”—

MARK xiv. 38.

“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”—Ps. cxli. 3.

“He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not: he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”—Job xxxiii. 27, 28.

THE winter proved one of unusual severity, and a very hard one indeed for the family by the river. Philip and Phemie strained every nerve to keep the wolves of hunger and cold from the door, but in vain; it was more than such young hands could accomplish unaided, especially while the intemperate father and indolent, shiftless mother were so heavy a drag upon all their exertions.

Philip kept the wood-pile well replenished, but he had not the means to mend the broken

window panes ; or to stop up the wide cracks in the walls, which admitted the bitter winter wind so freely that it could be felt even when seated close by the fire ; or the leaks in the roof, where during a thaw or a rain storm, the water came dripping down, making the whole house damp and chilly ; and though Phemie, by dint of the most diligent, painstaking labor, succeeded at length in fashioning comfortable garments for the little ones out of the material supplied by her friends at Woodlawn, she could not procure shoes and stockings with which to cover the little bare feet, and her loving sister's heart often ached sadly to see them so blue with the cold, and covered with chilblains that caused the little sufferers many a fit of crying.

Eunice pitied and scolded them by turns, fretted and grumbled at her poverty, but would not so much as raise a finger to better her own condition or make her helpless little ones more comfortable. It was a sore trial of patience and forbearance to poor Phemie, to see her mother day after day lounging listlessly over the fire, reading some dirty novel borrowed from a neighbor, or smoking her pipe, or perhaps doing nothing at

all but sit and nod in her chair or lie in bed and sleep, while she toiled on from morning to night, seldom wasting a minute, and making exertions far beyond her strength. It was she who prepared the meals, and did all the cleaning, washing, ironing, mending, and making—all that *was* done, not all that *ought* to have been; for that was more than a child of her age could possibly do, as Phemie knew and felt; and it was often difficult indeed to be patient, and to treat her mother with the respect a child should ever show towards its parent.

She had constant need to call to mind the fifth commandment, and to ask help of her heavenly Father to obey it: it was a daily, almost hourly struggle; and sometimes, when her mother was more fretful and fault-finding than usual, or she herself worn out and irritable from the strain of incessant care and labor, her temper gave away, and she spoke angry, disrespectful words, for which she afterwards wept bitter tears of repentance.

But she never again doubted God's willingness to forgive, never stayed away from the mercy-seat—never ceased to fight against her corruptions;

but after each failure applied anew to the pardoning, peace-speaking blood of Christ for cleansing, and renewed the struggle more and more earnestly, crying more mightily to God for help.

Miss Langley had taught Phemie to crochet several different patterns of lace and tidies, and she managed to do a little of this work now and then in the evenings; and when Philip went into the village on some errand for themselves or a neighbor, he would dispose of it for her, and in this way she was able to earn a trifle occasionally. This, with what Philip made by an occasional day's work was all they had to live upon; for if Ira earned anything, it was immediately spent for drink. So the children often suffered from hunger, and but for the kindness of their neighbors, who, while condemning the parents as utterly unworthy of assistance, could not find it in their hearts to refrain from helping the little ones, they would have been in danger of actual starvation.

One bitter morning in December, when the snow lay thick upon the ground and frost covered every window pane, Phemie woke to the consciousness that there was not a morsel of food in the house. She had put away in the cupboard

the night before a mug of milk for Olly, and a dish of cold potatoes, which she intended to warm up for the breakfast of the others, but she had heard her father come in after they were all in bed, and knew by the sounds coming up from below that he had helped himself to all that was there.

She had gone to sleep again with a trusting prayer that God would provide for them, and with a heart resting upon the sweet words of Jesus, "Take no thought for the morrow;" and now, kneeling by the bedside, she offered up her morning prayer, repeating with trembling earnestness the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Then, going down stairs, she made up the fire and swept the room, thinking all the time, as she worked, what she could do to obtain food for the little ones, who would soon be awake and crying for it.

"I must go to Mrs. Nott, and beg a little milk for Olly," she said as she put away her broom; "there's no other way;" and though she shivered at the thought of the long, cold walk, hood and shawl were quickly donned, and taking a little tin bucket on her arm, she set off, ploughing her

way through the deep snow-drifts, and toiling on bravely over the rough, frozen ground, with no thought of turning back, though the cutting wind blew directly in her face, and seemed to pierce to her very bones.

It was fully three-quarters of a mile to Mr. Nott's, and by the time she reached his gate she felt completely chilled through, and her hands were so numb with the cold that she could scarcely lift the latch. But there was a good path from there to the house, and in another minute she was on the porch, stamping the snow from her half-frozen feet.

Mrs. Nott heard her, and, softly opening the door, beckoned to her to come in, giving her a kindly smile of welcome, but speaking no word; for they were at family worship, as Phemie discovered on drawing near the door. Mr. Nott was reading aloud from a large Bible that lay on a table beside him, and he went on without seeming to notice her entrance, while his wife silently gave her a seat near the fire, and then resumed her own.

Phemie was very glad she had come just at that time, for the words of inspiration that fell

upon her ear, as she sat there, were very sweet and comforting.

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Oh fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

A hymn of praise followed the reading of the Scriptures, and then all knelt while the father led in prayer—a prayer in which Phemie was able to join with her whole heart; and her eyes filled with grateful tears as a blessing was asked upon the little stranger worshipping with them, and upon all who were near and dear to her.

“Phemie, child, I’m right glad to see you, only that I know you must have had a terribly cold walk,” said Mrs. Nott, when they had risen from their knees. “And now you must take off your things, and stay and take breakfast with us. It is just ready to set on the table, and a good

hot cup of coffee and some of my buckwheat cakes and sausages will be the very things to warm you up nicely."

Phemie hesitated, though, hungry and cold as she was, the smell of the good hot breakfast was very tempting; but Mr. Nott kindly seconded his wife's invitation, and the good woman would hear of no refusal, but fairly forced the poor, half-starved child into a seat at her hospitable board, heaped her plate with the good cheer, and seemed to find so much enjoyment in seeing her eat as almost to forget to take her own breakfast.

No questions were asked until Phemie's appetite was fully satisfied, and all had risen from the table; but then Mrs. Nott took her aside and gently drew from her the story of their destitution.

"Poor children! it seems hard indeed that they should be left to suffer with hunger in this land of plenty," said the good woman, wiping her eyes as Phemie finished her narrative. "I'll fill your bucket with milk and give you a loaf of bread—that'll be about as much as you can carry; and I'll get my husband to send down some potatoes and meal after a little. But,

Phemie," she added, as if struck by a sudden thought, "wouldn't you like to get a place to work out? You'd be a great deal more comfortable in a good place, I'm sure. Now I'm wanting a little girl to set the table and wash dishes and mind the baby, and such light work, and I think you'd just suit me. I would give you your board and clothe you comfortably, and, though that's about all a girl of your age is usually considered to be worth, I'd give you fifty cents a week besides, because I want to help you along. That is, I would if I found you disposed to do your best, and I think you would be."

Phemie listened to this generous offer with a changing countenance. She had never had any serious thoughts of going out to service, for her mother, who was as proud as she was poor and lazy, had taught her to look upon it as a disgrace, saying that none of her family had ever lived out, and she would let her children starve before she would have them do that. Yet Phemie's natural good sense showed her that Mrs. Nott's offer was a generous one, and that she would be far more comfortable there than in her own miserable home.

"Would you like to come?" asked Mrs. Nott, looking kindly at her.

"Yes, ma'am I think I should, if mother would let me," replied Phemie, rather hesitatingly; "but then what would become of the children? I do everything for them now."

"Indeed!" said her friend, in a tone of surprise; "does your mother really leave it all to you? That is quite too bad, I think; but surely she is able enough to do it all if she would."

"Yes, ma'am, I know it," replied the child, in a low, unwilling tone.

"And then how much you could help them all with your wages!" suggested Mrs. Nott. "If you could persuade your mother to do herself what you now do at home, and let you come here and earn a little money, you might all be much more comfortable than you are now."

Phemie's face had grown very bright.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I'll go right home and ask mother; and if she's willing, I'll come to-night;" and she set off full of joy and hope.

Her father and mother were still in bed when she reached home, but Philip was piling wood upon the fire in the kitchen.

“Halloa! I was wondering what had become of you,” he cried, looking around as she entered. “What’s all that you’ve got?”

“Bread and milk,” she answered, setting them down upon the table. Then going up to him, she laid her hand on his shoulder and turned towards him the brightest face he had seen her wear for many long weeks.

“Why! what’s happened?” he asked. “I declare you look as if you’d found a gold mine.”

Then she told her story eagerly, but Philip shook his head.

“’Twould never do in the world,” he said. “There’s never a bit of comfort in the house when you’re out of it, as I’ve told you many a time; and besides I tell you, beforehand, mother’ll never consent to do the work. She wouldn’t *do* it if she did, but she’ll never consent. See if she does.”

Phemie’s face lost half its brightness, and she turned away with a sinking heart.

“Don’t say a word about it, PHEME, till mother’s had her breakfast: she’ll be better-natured after that, and maybe we can coax her to let you try it,” said Philip, kindly, more than

half sorry for having so suddenly dashed Phemie's hopes to the ground.

She took his advice, but there was nothing gained by it. Her mother received the proposal with a burst of indignation.

"Let a daughter of mine go out to service!" she exclaimed. "No, indeed—not while I'm above ground. I'd work my fingers to the bone or starve before I'd let them lower themselves in that way. I'm sure it was an insult for Mrs. Nott to *think* of such a thing, much more to *speak* of it. But I s'pose she thinks, because we're poor, we're not as good as she is, though I can tell her better about that: my father owned twice as big a farm as hers did; and I'll let her know, if ever she says a word to me about putting my children out, that I'm not to be insulted because I'm poor."

"But, mother, I'm sure she was very kind to offer me such good wages," said Phemie, deprecatingly; "and it seems to me that folks that are so poor as to have to let the neighbors help them oughtn't to be too proud to work."

'Hold your tongue!' said her mother. "You know nothing about it; and if you're mean-spir-

ited enough to be willing to work out, it's a good thing for you that you've got a mother that knows better than to let you go and disgrace yourself so."

"I'm sure I'd be a great deal better off if you'd let me go," replied Phemie, impatiently; "and so would the rest, for I'd bring all my wages home."

"And I'd like to know how I could do without you?" said her mother. "You know well enough that I'm not able to do the work."

"No, I don't," said Phemie, indignantly; "I'm sure you could do it well enough if you chose: there's nothing ailing you: you are as strong as other folks—a great deal stronger than I am."

Eunice was dumb with astonishment for a moment, for it was long since Phemie had spoken to her in so angry and disrespectful a manner.

Philip, who was greasing his boots beside the fire, was the first to speak.

"That's so!" he exclaimed, emphatically. "Phemie's not half strong enough for all you put upon her; but you could do the work here well enough; and you ought to be willing to do that

much to help along; and so you would be, if you weren't 'most to lazy too live."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Eunice, at length finding her voice. "It's a pretty time o' day when my own children must set themselves up to tell me I'm lazy. I'll put up with no much impudence. Phil, if you say another word I'll box your ears. You'll find I'm not too lazy for that. Phemie, what are you sitting down for, and the table not half cleared?"

"Because," replied Phemie, sullenly, folding her arms with an air of determination, "you are doing nothing but sit by the fire and smoke your pipe; and that's all you do half the time; and I don't see why I shouldn't take my ease as well as you."

"I'll soon show you, Miss Impudence!" cried her mother, angrily; and starting up from her seat, she put down her pipe, hastily crossed the room, and taking Phemie by the shoulders, shook her violently, boxed her ears several times, and then, letting her go, ordered her to set to work instantly.

Phemie felt too dizzy and faint to be able to obey at once. Turning deathly pale, and trem-

bling so that she could hardly stand, she caught at the chair-back for support.

Philip was frightened. "You've hurt her," he said, dropping his boot and coming towards them; "just look how pale she is."

"Hurt her!" exclaimed Eunice, in an unfeeling tone; "of course I did, and I meant to; and I'll hurt you too if I hear any more of your impudence."

"I'll tell you what, mother," replied the boy, wrathfully, "if you don't take to treating PHEME and me a little better, and quit spending so much of my earnings for tobacco, I'll run off."

"Hold your tongue!" was the fierce rejoinder, and a violent blow on the side of the head laid Philip sprawling upon the floor. He gathered himself up, white with rage, and went back to his work with muttered threats of future vengeance. The first gust of passion over, however, his appearance and behavior were much as usual; but not so with PHEME. All day long she went about her work with a sullen, downcast air, brooding in silence over her wrongs and trials, and speaking no pleasant word to any one. No prayer went up from her heart; for how could she

pray while cherishing such a spirit?—a spirit of anger, discontent, and rebellion—rebellion not against her mother alone, but also against God, who had chosen her lot for her.

Again and again Conscience whispered, “You have done wrong; you have disobeyed the command, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother;’ and you are doing wrong still. You must put away your anger and discontent, and confess your fault to God and to your mother;” but she would not listen.

“No, I have not done wrong,” was the answer of her proud, rebellious heart. “I told mother nothing but the truth; and I have a right to be angry, for no one ever had such a hard time as I do; no one ever was so abused and put upon; and I’ll not stand it.”

But when evening came, and, her mother and the little ones having gone to bed, she sat alone by the fire sewing as usual, everything quiet around, nothing to distract her thoughts, the still, small voice would make itself heard, and Phemie knew that she had sinned, and grieved, displeased, and dishonored her best and dearest Friend; she knew and acknowledged it, and her

proud, stubborn heart grew humble and penitent, and the silent tears came dropping down one by one upon her work.

Philip was outside preparing wood for the next day, and the regular strokes of his axe and the low crackling of the fire were the only sounds that broke the stillness, and they were not disturbing; and she thought on, text after text coming to her mind, and making her more sensible of the greatness of her sin: some teaching the folly and sinfulness of anger, others the duty of children to honor and obey their parents, and others still of contentment with our lot, and patience and submission under trials and afflictions, and of confessing and forsaking sin.

Phemie laid down her work, and, covering her face with her hands, silently asked forgiveness of God. Then she half rose to go and make confession to her mother, but remembering that she was probably asleep by this time, and would be much displeased if awakened, she took up her work again with a sigh, thinking that duty would have to be deferred until to-morrow, though she would have been glad to have it over.

Philip finished his out-door work, and coming

in, seated himself at the other side of the table with his book and slate, for he was trying hard to get an education.

“What’s the matter, Phemie?” he asked, presently, as he saw a tear fall into her lap. “Are you such a goose as to be fretting still about the fight we had with mother, this morning? Why don’t you just forget it, as I do, and go on all the same as if it hadn’t happened? It’s a great deal the best plan, I’m sure.”

“No, Phil,” she said sorrowfully, “I don’t think it is: we did very wrong, and the Bible says, ‘Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy;’ and surely that is what we ought to do.”

“Indeed,” he replied, “I don’t think we did anything so very wrong. I’m sure every word we spoke to mother was the truth.”

“Yes, Phil, but it wasn’t truth for *us* to speak to her, because we are her children; and it wasn’t respectful, it wasn’t honoring her as God bids us; and in the Bible it says, ‘Speaking the truth in love,’ and we didn’t; we spoke it in anger; and I know we ought to tell her we’re sorry, and ask forgiveness of her, and of God too.”

“Well, I don’t care,” replied Philip; “she did wrong too; she was as mad as fury, and she ought to own that up to us, and that she *is* lazy too, as we said; and if she doesn’t, I’m not going to tell her that I think I did anything wrong.”

“I don’t think that can be the right way to look at it, Phil,” replied his sister; “we haven’t anything at all to do with other people’s sins; we’ve only to repent of our own, and confess and forsake them.”

Philip made no reply, but seemed intent upon his work. He knew that Phemie was in the right, but did not want to acknowledge it or to follow advice so humbling to his pride.

All was quiet for a moment, and then a little fretting sound from the next room, and a soothing word in reply, told that Olly and his mother were awake.

Phemie gave a slight start, trembled on her seat for an instant, then resolutely laid her work aside, rose up and went into the bed-room.

“Mother,” she said, going up to the bed-side, and speaking in a low, tearful tone, “I was very wrong, very wicked to get so angry and speak to you as I did this morning; and I’ve been wrong

and wicked all day; but I'm very sorry; and I've asked God to forgive me. Will you forgive me too?"

"Why yes, child, to be sure I will," replied Eunice kindly, touched by the sorrow and humility in her tone; "you were saucy and bad this morning, but I will say for you that you've been an uncommonly good child in the main for the last few months; and I'm afraid it's true enough that I'm not the mother I ought to be to you. Now good-night; and do you and Phil go right up to bed; for I'm sure you must be tired enough, both of you, for you've worked hard all day."



CHAPTER XV.

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”—MARK xi. 25, 26.

“Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”—ROM. xii. 20.

PHILIP woke the next morning to the consciousness of intensely cold weather and a fearful storm raging without.

The wind shrieked, howled, and roared through the forest, every tree creaking and groaning in the blast, shook the old house to its very foundation, tore fiercely down the glassy surface of the river, sweeping the snow from one bank and piling it high upon the other, sending it in wild flurries hither and thither about the yard, dashing it against the windows, and sifting it in through all the cracks and crevices. It lay in

little heaps on the floor underneath the windows and near the doors. Philip's hair, and the tattered quilt that covered the bed, were powdered with it, and he felt it sprinkled upon his face as he started up with a shiver and looked about him.

It was still early, and no one seemed to be stirring.

"Dear me!" muttered the boy, "what an awful storm! It seems as if the house would blow over and all the trees come toppling down; and I don't believe it can be much colder in the frigid zone the geography tells about. I'll just go down and make up the fire for Pheme; poor little used-up thing that she is! it's a shame for me to let her do it."

Philip was active and energetic, not a particle of his mother's laziness seeming to have clung to him; he was growing very fond of Phemie, too, and beginning to have a manly feeling that it was his place to protect and care for her; and before the words were fairly out of his mouth he was half dressed and springing down stairs with the rest of his clothes in his hand; and when, half an hour later, Phemie came down, she found

a bright, warm fire, the hearth nicely swept up and the kettle on.

"Oh, Phil!" she said, thanking him with one of her sweetest smiles, "how good you are!"

"No," he replied, "I've only done what I ought to have begun long ago, and what I mean always to do in future; for I'm sure it's the place of the men and boys to get up and start the fires, especially in such cold weather. PHEME, every single thing's frozen hard—bread, meat, potatoes, and milk—and they'll all have to be thawed out before you can get breakfast. It's a wonder we didn't all freeze in our beds."

"God was very good to keep us from it, and to give us food and fire this morning," replied PHEMIE, in a low tone, as she stooped to warm her hands over the blaze. "Surely it was he who put it into the hearts of our kind neighbors to send us those things; and I, for one, did not deserve it."

"Ugh! what an *awful* cold morning!" exclaimed EUNICE, coming shivering from the next room with OLLY in her arms. "I'm glad to see a good fire, for it's too cold to stay in bed: I thought I should freeze there. I wonder where

your father is?" she continued, as she settled herself by the fire. "I hope he didn't try to come home last night, for he must have frozen to death if he did."

"Who cares if he has?" said Chris, who with Lissa now came running down half dressed to finish their toilette by the fire. "I don't, for one, 'cause then he couldn't ever beat us any more."

"Shame on you, Chris!" said his mother; "freezing's a terrible death to die."

"Well, he deserves it," replied the boy, "don't he, Lissa, for the way he kicks and knocks us about?"

"Hush up this minute!" exclaimed his mother; "you'll wish you hadn't talked so if anything really has happened to your father."

Getting breakfast that morning was a work of time, and it could not have been earlier than nine o'clock when they rose from the table.

"You're not going out such a day as this, Phil?" inquired his mother in a tone of surprise, as the boy took down his cap and muffler and began putting them on. "Why child, you'll freeze."

"We'll all freeze if I don't, mother," he re-



"Oh, he's dead! he's dead!"

The Shannons.

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plied, "for there's not wood enough to last till night, at the rate we'll have to burn it such a day as this. So you see it can't be helped. I'm obliged to go. I hope I'll find some tree that the wind has blown down, and then I'll soon chop off some of the branches with my axe."

"Yes, and maybe while you're at it, another will blow down on you and crush you."

"I hope not; but anyhow I'll have to risk it," he answered cheerfully, as he shouldered his axe and went out.

The wind seemed resolute to drive him back, but he pressed on manfully, and had nearly reached the woods when some object at a little distance by the road-side, half buried in the snow, attracted his attention. He hurried to the spot, and stooping down and brushing away the snow, he uttered a cry of horror. It was the apparently lifeless body of his father, and by his side lay an empty jug.

"Oh he's dead! he's dead! *frozen* to death!" cried Philip frantically, making desperate but vain efforts to raise the body from the ground and bear it back to the house.

“Oh dear, oh dear, what *shall* I do? I can't lift him, and there's nobody near to help me.”

But a thought of what Phemie would do in such an extremity flashed across his mind, and dropping down on his knees in the snow, he cried aloud, “O Lord, send some one to help me carry father home, and get a doctor to him;” then, remembering Mr. Seldon's instructions, he added, “for Jesus' sake. Amen.”

As he rose and again looked up and down the road, a rumbling sound met his ear: he listened with fast beating heart; it drew nearer and nearer; and now a wagon came in sight, rattling and rolling on over the rough, frozen ground, then dragging heavily through the snow-drifts.

Philip ran towards it, waving his cap above his head, and shouting with all his might.

“What is it? what's the matter?” shouted the farmer in return, pushing on towards the boy as rapidly as possible.

But Philip's power of speech seemed gone. He only beckoned with his hand, and hurried back to the spot where the body lay. The wagon halted close beside it, and the farmer, utter-

ing a smothered exclamation, sprang to the ground.

“Ah, this is a sad business, my poor boy,” he said—“a very sad business; but don’t let us give up; there may be life in him yet. Yes, I think there is,” he added hopefully, as he raised the body, and, with Philip’s help, placing it carefully in the wagon, sprang in after it. “Jump in quickly, my boy” he said: “we must take him home as fast as we can, and then one of us must ride after the doctor. Whatever’s done must be done very quickly.”

“Run to the door, Lissa; there’s somebody at it, I’m sure,” said Eunice; “but Phemie keeps up such a rattling with those dishes that—”

But she stopped, leaving her sentence unfinished; for at that instant the door was thrown violently open, and Philip and the farmer entered, staggering beneath the weight of their burden, which they laid down upon the floor at a distance from the fire.

Eunice uttered a groan as she instantly comprehended that the fears she had expressed that morning were probably realized; and starting to her feet she exclaimed, “Phil, run for the doctor

as fast as ever you can; and, Pheme, you must let the dishes alone and help me to rub your father's limbs. Bring a basin of snow, Chris; quick, quick, child! there's not a minute to be lost if there's any life left in him."

"There is," said the farmer, who had torn open Ira's coat, and placed his hand upon his left side; "there's a slight fluttering here about his heart. Phil, you take my horse and ride off after the doctor as fast as possible, while your mother and I do what we can to bring him to."

Their efforts were so far successful that it was soon quite apparent that life was not extinct; but the doctor, on his arrival, shook his head, and pronounced the man's limbs badly frozen, said he would undoubtedly lose one or more of them, and could hardly hope to escape with his life, though he would probably live for some weeks or months.

To say that this sad sentence caused no sorrow to Eunice and her children would not be true; but Ira's conduct as a husband and father had certainly not been such as to inspire them with a very strong affection for him, and the blow was not felt in that family as it would have been in

almost any other. They were very sorry for him at first, and felt even acute sympathy when they heard him groaning and shrieking under the surgeon's knife, for it was found necessary to amputate the right hand and thumb of the left, and a portion of one foot; so that he was maimed and crippled for life; but as time wore on and he showed himself exceedingly impatient and irritable under his sufferings, exacting and unreasonable in his demands upon them, and utterly ungrateful for their kindness and attention, they gradually relaxed their efforts to soothe and relieve him, seemed to care very little for his pain and weariness of the constant confinement, and left him very much to himself.

All but Phemie, who still continued to wait upon him with patient, unwearied kindness. Eunice had been quite a faithful nurse for a time, but now she left that unpleasant duty—unpleasant because of the character of the patient—almost entirely to Phemie, taking upon herself more of the house-work and of the care of Oliver than she had done earlier in the winter.

Poor Phemie often felt it a very hard trial to wait upon her father, and listen patiently to his

endless growlings, grumblings and scoldings; and it was only by remembering that in thus doing she was returning good for evil, and obeying her Lord's command, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you," that she was enabled to persevere.

"How can you be so kind to that ungrateful wretch?" asked Philip, one day. "He has done nothing but abuse you ever since I can remember, and nearly beat you to death only a few months ago; and now the more you do for him, the worse he abuses you. You take such pains to get him whatever he wants, cook his victuals so carefully, and then feed him as if he was a baby; and all the thanks you get are oaths and curses."

"Yes," said Phemie, "but he suffers so much; and you know he can't feed himself."

"No, but he might show some gratitude, or at least treat people civilly when they're doing the best they can for him," returned Philip, indignantly; "and if I were you I'd let him go hungry till he'd learn to do so."

"But that wouldn't be right, Phil," replied his sister; "it isn't the way God treats us; 'he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil,' the

Bible says. And oh, Phil, I'm glad of the opportunity to do something for him—for Jesus, I mean—that costs me trouble and is *hard* to do; and I do so 'love to feel that I am obeying his command: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.' And besides, I do really feel very sorry for poor father, for I know he suffers a great deal of pain; and then, too, only think how terrible it is to be so maimed and crippled.”

“I don't care: it serves him exactly right,” said Philip; “it's not a bit worse than he deserves, for when he had his hands and feet he didn't make good use of them. I heard Chris and Lissa rejoicing the other day that he couldn't beat them any more, and I thought of the awful beatings he used to give you and me, especially that one last fall, and I was glad too.”

“I'm afraid you haven't quite forgiven him, then, Phil,” said his sister sorrowfully; “and oh how can you pray, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors? Isn't it just the same as asking God not to forgive you? And what would become of you if God should grant that prayer?”

CHAPTER XVI.

"He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—Prov. xxix. 1.

"For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever."—Ps. xlix. 8.

ALL through the winter the children continued their exertions for the support of the family and their own improvement. Almost every evening they spent an hour or more together beside the kitchen fire, after all the rest had gone to bed—Philip with his slate, and Phemie with knitting or sewing in her hands and a book open on the table before her; sometimes it was the Bible, at others a spelling-book, or geography; for, as she could not go to school, and was determined not to grow up in ignorance, she learned lessons in this way, and recited to Philip when he had time to hear her.

They were sitting thus one cold, blustery even-

ing in March, when the boy suddenly laid down his pencil, saying, "Come, Pheme, shut your book for to-night; I want to have a little talk with you."

"What about?" she asked, looking up at him with a smile as she closed it.

"About our plans," he replied; "father'll never be able to earn anything again, and I've been thinking what I can do this summer to support the family. In the first place I'm going to make the garden here just as soon as it'll do to make it. Mr. Nott says he'll have it ploughed up for me, and then you see I'll have to divide it into beds and plant it; and then I'll try and attend to it mornings and evenings, and I'm to work for him days. He engaged me this afternoon. I mean to be a farmer. Mr. Seldon says I'll make all the better one for getting an education, and so I'm trying hard for that too; and you know we have a lot of wild land round here that isn't good for much now, but I mean to see what I can do with it after a while, when I've learned the business."

"Yes," said Phemie, "and I've been planning too. I'm going to get two or three hens and

some fresh eggs, and raise some little chickens. They won't interfere with your garden if you'll make a chicken-yard."

"I'll do it," he said; "and you may have ducks, and geese, and turkeys too, if you like."

"Well, we'll see about it," said Phemie; "but I hope to make a good deal raising chickens and selling them and their eggs; and besides, we can have some for our own eating once in a while."

"Yes," said Philip, "and after a while we'll have a pig and a cow."

"But there's another thing, Phil," said Phemie. "I want to have the house look a little better than it did last summer, both inside and out; and I mean to plant some morning-glories and wild cucumber vines under the windows, and to have a flower-bed along by the fence, on each side of the gate."

"And I'll sod the front yard, and set out a few trees, if I can," said Philip; "and as soon as I can get a little money I'll buy some glass for the windows and some lime for whitewashing the walls; and then, if you and mother'll clean up right well, the place will look pretty decent, I think."

Thus they talked on for some time, quite happy over their plans, and full of hope that they should be able to carry them out. And they did succeed, even beyond their expectations in some respects; for, finding them so ready to help themselves, almost every one seemed desirous to assist them. One neighbor helped Philip with his garden, and gave him seed to plant in it; another presented Phemie with several hens and all the eggs she wanted to set them with; and a third gave her plants and flower-seeds; while all were liberal with instructions and advice, and some with assistance also; and when, one day in the latter part of April, Squire Langley's carriage stopped at the gate, and Miss Alicia, looking rosy and full of health, alighted from it and gave Phemie a joyful surprise, she found a great improvement in the appearance of things, both indoors and out.

Phemie, too, was improved; she had grown taller and stouter, and had a brighter and more cheerful look, as she well might, for now she no longer lived in constant dread of those terrible beatings Ira had formerly been in the habit of inflicting upon his helpless wife and children

when coming home maddened with drink. He could still abuse them with his tongue, but he was powerless now to raise his hand against them. Nor was the little girl now so overburdened with care and labor as during the winter; for Eunice, for very shame's sake at seeing her little daughter toiling on day after day with such patient, persevering industry, had begun to take hold of both house-work and sewing; and, profiting further by Phemie's example, she had also become a little more tidy in her personal appearance. The change was slight, but noticeable, and Alicia, despising not the day of small things, rejoiced that the heaven had evidently begun to work.

Kind inquiries and mutual congratulations were exchanged, and then Alicia, turning to Phemie, and smiling at her bright, eager face, said, "I know what you are wanting to ask me. The Sunday-school will begin again next Sabbath morning at the usual hour, and I hope to see you and your brothers and sister there. Lissa is old enough to go now, is she not, Mrs. Shannon?"

"Well, yes, ma'am; if she can stand the walk, I've no objection to her going," replied Eunice. "It's done the others a world of good, and I begin

to think there must be something in religion, after all; and I mean to begin to attend church myself as soon as I can get decent clothes to wear."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mrs. Shannon," said Alicia; "and I hope you will be, as the Bible says, 'not a hearer of the word only, but a doer,' and that you will persuade your husband to go with you."

"I'll never be able to do that," replied Eunice, shaking her head. "I did think once, while he was so bad he didn't seem likely ever to get about again, that maybe he might take a turn and become pious, for he left off swearing, and let the minister talk and pray with him several times, and Phemie used to sit and read the Bible to him by the hour; but I s'pose it was only because he'd nothing else to amuse him, or was afraid he was going to die; for now I think he swears and curses worse than ever; and there's nothing sets him at it quicker than a sight of Phemie's Bible. He calls it a pack of lies, and declares he'll never see the minister again."

"I am truly sorry to hear it," said Alicia, "but we must not despair of him yet, for nothing

is impossible with God; Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and his blood cleanses from all sin! Where is your husband now?"

"He's gone out to get a breath of fresh air, as he said," replied Eunice. "He's got now so that he can hobble along pretty well with the help of a cane. He's been going round the house and yard for several weeks, and yesterday he went as far as to the woods and back; and I think he must be venturing farther still to-day, he stays so long."

After a little more conversation, Alicia bade them good-morning and went away, and Phemie, seeing that it was near noon, began getting dinner.

"I wonder where your father did go?" said Eunice, going to the door and looking up and down the road. "He's not in sight."

Then calling Chris, who was at work in the garden, she sent him for Ira, bidding him tell his father that dinner would soon be ready.

Chris was gone for some time, then came back, quite out of breath with running, to say that he could not find his father anywhere.

"Well," said Eunice, in a provoked tone, "we'll not wait dinuer for him any longer: if he

chooses to go off and stay this way, he may just go without his dinner, or eat it cold."

The afternoon wore away, and still Ira did not come. They waited supper for him an hour beyond the usual time, then sat down and ate without him.

"Shall I keep the table waiting for father?" asked Phemie, when they were all done.

"No," replied her mother; "just set something away for him, for there's no knowing when he'll get back."

Phemie obeyed, finished her work, and went out into the garden to see if any of her plants were coming up. She was stooping over her flower-beds when the sound of wheels caused her to raise her head, and she saw that a wagon was coming slowly down the road. She watched to see it pass, but, leaving the road as it drew nearer, it came towards the house, and presently stopped in front of it. She could see then that there were several men in it, one of whom jumped out and opened the gate, while the rest sat still and silent.

Phemie sprang up and moved quickly towards the man, who was now walking up the path, her

heart throbbing wildly, though she knew not what she feared.

“What is it?” she asked, in a voice trembling with agitation. “Has anything happened?”

“Yes,” he said, speaking in a hesitating way, and glancing compassionately at her, “an accident, a very bad accident. Your father—I s’pose he is; the man that lived here, anyhow—was crossing over the railroad track, just this side of Cedarville, and the train ran over him, and—”

“He’s killed?” interrupted Phemie, turning deathly pale and gasping for breath.

“Just so,” said the man, “and we’re going to carry him in now; and you’d better go and prepare your mother.”

“Prepare me for what?” asked Eunice, who had come to the door in time to hear the stranger’s concluding sentence. Then seeing the wagon and the men in it, “Something’s happened to Ira again, has it?” she said hoarsely, and catching at the door-post for support. “Is he killed this time? Well, I’m prepared enough; bring him in. Oh dear, oh dear!” and sinking down upon a chair, she covered her face and groaned aloud.

It was a ghastly object which they carried in

and laid gently down upon the bed—a crushed and bleeding form; but no groan or cry escaped him, and no one called for a doctor, or spoke of any effort to bring him back to consciousness. All knew that the last spark of life was extinct, and that the spirit had gone to God who gave it, to render up its account for all the deeds done in the body; and slowly and silently the men went out and left the horror-stricken family alone with their dead.

The injury had been to the body only; the face was left unharmed; and while the children gathered round in awe-struck silence, Eunice folded back from it the sheet which the men had thrown over him, and gazed long and fixedly.

Until that day he had not tasted liquor for several months, so that he had lost almost entirely the flushed and bloated look of the drunkard; and as she gazed upon him now, as he lay with his features settled in the stillness and calmness of death, he looked so like the young, handsome stranger who had won her heart years ago, that something of the old love came back, and tears of deep and heartfelt sorrow chased each other down her cheeks.

“Oh Ira, Ira!” she sobbed, “little did I think, when I married you, that it would ever come to this—that I should ever feel your death a release from bitter bondage!”

Philip was there, and he turned away with a quivering lip; the little ones shrank into a corner crying, “because mother did,” and Phemie, after one look at the stony face, left the room, shuddering and weeping.

“Oh,” she murmured to herself, “to think that he was killed instantly—*instantly*—without time to lift one cry to God for mercy!” and again and again a fearful text rang in her ears:

“He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

And this other: “The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.”



CHAPTER XVII.

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”—
2 Cor. vii. 10.

“To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”—
Ps. xcvi. 7, 8.

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

IT was the evening after the funeral. The neighbors had been very kind, and helped them to “bury their dead out of their sight;” but now all were gone away to their own homes, the younger children were in bed, and Philip and Phemie sat alone with their mother by the kitchen fire, for the evening was cool, as is often the case in the early spring, and the air from the river felt damp and chilly.

For some time they had sat in silence, but at length Eunice spoke.

“Children,” she said, “there is something I want to tell to you two. It isn’t well to speak much of the faults of those that are gone, but sometimes it must be done. You thought that the man we’ve seen laid in the grave to-day was your father; but it wasn’t so.”

Phemie clasped her hands together, and looked up with a gleam of joy in her eyes, while Philip started to his feet with a half-smothered exclamation of mingled surprise and pleasure.

But his mother checked him.

“Sit still, Philip,” she said, “and hear me out; this is no time for rejoicing. I loved Ira Shannon once; and though I used to think all that was over years ago, after he took to beating and abusing me, it seems to have come back since I’ve seen him lying there in his death-sleep; and I think maybe it was partly my own fault—that I wasn’t just the wife I might have been to him.”

She stopped, and the tears fell fast down her cheeks, while sob after sob burst from her bosom.

Philip waited a moment in silence; then, unable longer to control his impatience, asked, “But what next, mother? Won’t you please go on and tell us who our father was?” Then half-hesita-

tingly he added, in a tone of inquiry, "You are our mother?"

"Phemie's, Phil, but not yours," she said; and this time the expression of his face was doubtful: he scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry.

"I will tell you all about it, children," Eunice went on. "Your father's name was Philip Shannon. He was first cousin to Ira. He came here, first, fourteen or fifteen years ago, when my sister Phemie and I were young things together, and he bought a good deal of land; it was wild and belonged to Government, and he got it cheap; and then he built this house, and married my sister and brought her here, and they lived together as happy and contented as birds in their nest, for Phemie was neat-handed and managing, and as sweet-tempered a woman as ever lived; and he was industrious and sober, and the kindest and best of husbands; and when little Phil was born, they said they thought their cup of happiness was full. But Phemie took cold one day by sitting down in a draught when she was overheated, and her baby was not quite six months old when she died. I took the child from her when she lay dying, and promised to be a mother

to him. I've not been a good mother to any of you," she added, wiping her eyes and sighing deeply, "but, Phil, I've never loved any one of my own better than I have you. Your mother had been dead about a year when your father asked me to marry him, and I was willing enough to do it, for by that time I'd learned to love him with all my heart; and for one year—the happiest I've ever known—I was his wife. But then, when Phemie was less than two months old, he took a fever and died after only a few days' sickness."

Eunice covered her face with her hands and tears streamed through her fingers, while the children wept in sympathy. But presently, recovering her composure with a great effort, she went on:

"I had never seen Ira then: he had never been in this part of the country; but when I'd been a widow nearly a year he came to see me, and I could fancy there was a look of Philip in his eyes; and his way of moving about and speaking, I thought, was like him too; and so I liked him; and, though I wouldn't have believed it at first, after a while I liked him well enough

to marry him when he asked me; and so I did, in spite of all my father and mother could say; for they were opposed to the match from the first, and told me he drank and was not worth a cent, and that all he wanted me for was because he thought his cousin had left me pretty well off.

“I found out afterwards that that was all true enough,” she added with a sigh; “and it broke my poor old father’s and mother’s hearts to see how he abused me. You’ve heard me threaten to have Ira arrested? Well, it was because of the way he acted about the land Philip left—which, of course, didn’t belong to him at all, but to you two children—for I had my share of the estate in money; but he took possession, and called it all his, and sold some of it and spent the money. But there’s a good deal of it left yet, and they say—now that there’s a railroad so near—it will soon become quite valuable. And now, children, I think we’ll be able to get along better than we have for a long while. I’ll have some heart to work, now that there’s no one to take my earnings and spend them for drink. I learned the tailoring business when I was a girl, and now I mean to go right to work at it again; and if we’re

all industrious, I think we shall be able to get along very comfortably; and when Phil is able to turn the land to good account, maybe we'll get to be right well off. And I hope you'll find me better-tempered, now that I'll have so much less to fret and worry me. But come, let's go to bed and sleep, that we may get strength for our work to-morrow;" and bidding them good-night, she went into the bed-room and shut the door.

The children stood for a moment looking at each other in mute surprise: then Phil, throwing his arm round his sister's waist, pressed her close to him, whispering, "I'm so *glad*, Phemie—so glad to know that that man was not my father. I never could feel as if he was, and I always felt so ashamed of him. I was afraid, when mother began, that I was to turn out no relation to any of you; but now, that I know that you're my sister, and she's my own aunt, as well as my step-mother, I'm quite satisfied."

"And I too, Phil," she said, laying her head on his shoulder. "I'm glad and thankful that that man was not my father, and that you are my brother. But come now; we must go to bed as mother bade us."

Eunice kept her word, and from that day worked with a good deal of energy and perseverance, and scolded and fretted far less; and so, month by month and year by year, the condition of the family improved. All the children went regularly to Sabbath-school and church as they grew old enough to stand the walk; and the good influence of the lessons they were taught there was very apparent. Eunice herself also became a regular attendant at church, read novels less and the Bible more, and Phemie continued to hope and to pray, more and more earnestly, that her mother might become a true Christian.

And thus time rolled on for several years, Philip and Phemie working steadily and industriously at their different employments, and making untiring efforts to educate themselves, using well every spare moment, and spurring and assisting each other onward. They went to school when they could be spared, and when they could not, studied at home.

Miss Alicia Langley still continued to befriend Phemie, supplying her with books, giving her sympathy and advice, and frequently making her a present of some article of clothing which she

saw that she needed. Mr. Seldon, too, was still Philip's friend and Sabbath-school teacher—was still sowing the good seed in the boy's heart, and praying that it might spring up and bear much fruit. For five years he had thus labored on; for he had moved into the neighborhood, and, having recovered his health, never failed to meet his class each Sabbath-morning; but though his heart had been made glad by seeing many of them brought to the Saviour, Philip was not yet of the number. While Phemie grew daily in faith, humility, meekness and love, he continued the same proud Pharisee as of old, glorying in his outward reformation, trusting in his own good works, and in his heart saying to others, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou."

But there came a change at length: as he read the word of God his blind eyes were opened; the Spirit convinced him of sin, showing him how exceeding broad is the commandment of God—requiring not only an outward obedience, but also holiness of heart, purity of thought, feeling, motive, desire and imagination; and, determined to gain heaven, Philip began earnestly to strive to render obedience to this holy law in all the

length and breadth of its requirements. But, alas! the more he strove, the farther he seemed to be from attaining his object: the more he watched his own heart and examined his thoughts and feelings, the more sinful he found them to be, until at length he felt himself sinking into the very depths of despair, knowing not which way to turn or what new effort to make. He lost his appetite, grew pale, moody and restless; and more than once Phemie heard him walking his room at night, sighing and groaning to himself; but when she went to the door and asked if he were ill, he answered shortly that he was not. "Why should she think so?"

Then she suspected the true cause of his wretchedness, and falling upon her knees, prayed more fervently than ever that Jesus would reveal himself to her beloved brother as an all-sufficient, living, loving Saviour, whose blood could cleanse him from all his sins and atone for all his past offences.

She was thus engaged one night, after being roused from sleep by his sighs and groans, when, hearing him go down stairs, she sprang to her feet, dressed hastily in the first things that came

to hand, and throwing a shawl over her head, stole softly from the room and from the house—for she had heard him go out—and followed him with a trembling, beating heart, fearing she scarcely knew what, but with a dread foreboding of something awful upon her.

He had taken the path up the river, and she pursued him with quick, noiseless tread; on through the garden, past one or two fields which in the last year or so he had cleared and brought under cultivation, and on, on past the dark and frowning woods, guided by the dim light of the moon struggling through clouds, to a spot where a rocky promontory jutted out into the river, with a wild, eddying whirlpool at its base, and an almost fathomless depth beyond.

On the extreme end of this rock she saw her brother standing, and with a low cry of inexpressible fear and horror she sprang after him.

He stood with folded arms, gazing down into the dark, troubled waters, but he turned his head as her cry met his ear. She was already at his side, and her hand was on his arm; and as the moon at that instant burst out from behind a

cloud, sending down a flood of light upon them, he could see that she was pale as death and trembling like a leaf.

“Oh, Phil, Phil!” she gasped, “what were you about to do?”

He looked at her gloomily for an instant, then asked in a sullen tone, as he shook off her hand, “What right have you to dog my steps in this way?”

“The right of love—a sister’s love,” she replied, throwing her arm around his neck, and laying her head upon his breast. “Oh, Phil, tell me what you were going to do?”

“Nothing,” he said, coldly. “You needn’t be scared,” he added, as she shudderingly drew him away from the edge; “but it’s hot and close in the house, and I’m too wretched to sleep; so I came out to get a breath of fresh air, and—and to pray if I could, but I can’t.”

“And why not, dear Phil?” she asked. “‘Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you;’ for ‘he is always ready to hear prayer.’”

“But the Bible says, ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,’ and oh, Phemie, I’m so wicked!” he said, with a

heavy sigh. "I used to think I was as good or better than most folks, and in a fair way to get to heaven, because I'd left off swearing and lying, and was honest and industrious, and particular about reading the Bible and saying my prayers every day, and going to church, and all that; but lately I've found out that it takes a great deal more than that to make a real true Christian—'that God requires the thoughts and feelings and motives to be holy.' So I've been trying to bring my heart right; but the more I try, the worse it seems to grow; and what can I do? My very prayers are so dull and cold that I know they must be an abomination to God."

"Yes, Phil," she said, "if offered heartlessly or in your own name, or trusting in your own righteousness, your prayers may not be answered; but if you come with your whole heart, asking in the name of Christ, you *will* be heard; for he himself says, 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.'"

"But I cannot make my heart right," he said, bitterly; "I *cannot*, and why does God require of me what I can never do?"

"You cannot of yourself, Phil; but go to Jesus

and ask him to do for you all that you find it so impossible to do for yourself."

"You may be right—I dare say you are," he said, interrupting her, "but I have struggled until I am almost ready to despair. The more I try, the harder does my heart grow."

"Don't despair, Phil," said Phemie, "there is hope for you yet. You cannot fulfill the law, but Jesus has kept the law for us; he has fulfilled its requirements and borne its curse; so that now God can be 'just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' He offers to put upon you the spotless robe of his own righteousness, and to wash you from your guilt in his own precious blood; and all he asks of you is that you will come and let him do all this for you."

"But, Phemie, I am not fit to come," he said, despairingly, "and I see not how I can ever make myself fit."

"You cannot," she said; "you can do nothing but *come just as you are*; that is what he bids you do; and he will wash away all your sins. 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance, 'and he is able also to

save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.' ”

He listened eagerly.

“Phemie, are you sure,” he asked, catching her hands in both of his, and gazing earnestly into her face—“are you sure that such texts are meant for me? But, oh, you don’t know how wicked I am!” and letting go her hands, he bowed his head upon his breast and groaned aloud.

“Phil, dear Phil,” she said, “‘come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ There is no distinction; *all* are invited to come; and Jesus says, ‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ And, Phil, it was sinners he died to save. Oh, what love has God the Father shown in thus sending his own beloved Son to die for us; how great, how wondrous was the love of Jesus in offering himself up a willing sacrifice to save us from eternal death! And the love of God is shown in bearing with us, and entreating us again and

again to come to Jesus and accept this offered salvation. Oh, Phil, will you continue to turn away from so much love? The Holy Spirit is striving with you even now to bring you to Christ, and will you not come?"

He was silent for a moment; then asked in low, quivering tones, "*What must I do, Phemie?*"

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,'" she answered. "You have nothing to do but take the Lord Jesus at his word—throw yourself at his feet, and ask him to save you, according to his promise, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'"

"I will: I will—I'll not wait another minute," he said, and falling on his knees he sent up a fervent, importunate cry for mercy and forgiveness, Phemie kneeling by his side and silently echoing his petitions in her heart.

They rose from their knees, and folding his sister in his arms, Philip said, in tones thrilling with joy and gratitude, "Oh, Phemie, he has heard me, and I feel in my heart that I am forgiven and saved!"

From that glad hour a new life began for Philip: he went on his way rejoicing in the love

of Christ for poor lost sinners. He was an earnest, active, consistent Christian, living close to his Master, and bringing forth much fruit to his honor and glory. Redeeming love was his constant theme, and bringing sinners to Christ the one great business of his life.



CHAPTER XVIII.

“A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.”—Prov. xxix. 5.

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”—Prov. i. 10.

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.”—Prov. iv. 14-16.

THERE, Chris, you can go now; you’ve been a very good boy, and helped us a great deal,” said Phemie; “but it must be near school-time now, and you’d better make haste or you’ll be late, which would be a pity, especially so near the beginning of the quarter.”

“Yes,” replied Chris; “I haven’t had a tardy mark yet; and I don’t mean to have one this term, nor any other kind of bad mark, either, if I can help it. Good-bye;” and swinging his satchel over his shoulder, he started off, whistling merrily.

It was one of those delicious September days when it seems a joy to live, and a luxury just to walk out into the sunlight and breathe the sweet, pure air; and full of life and health the boy walked briskly onward, with light, elastic step, as gay and happy as the birds and squirrels that filled the woods around him. He was on his way to the little school-house at the fork of the road, where Mr. Seldon had opened his Sunday-school five years before, and where a district school was now in progress. He was traveling the very same road that he and Philip and Phemie had passed over on that first Sabbath morning of our story, but it was much less lonely now than it had been then, for settlers had been moving in and buying up the land, and farm-houses and cottages had sprung up here and there, till it was now scarce five minutes' walk from one to another, and sometimes even less.

Usually, Chris had the company of his younger brother and sister in his walk, but this was wash-day at home; and while they had gone on half an hour before, he had delayed until the last minute that he might assist his mother and Phemie by bringing in wood and water and helping to hang

out the clothes; for they had risen early and gone to their washing betimes, that they might get it out of the way, and be able to do the usual amount of sewing for the tailor who supplied Mrs. Shannon with work.

Chris had accomplished about half the distance to the school-house, and was hurrying on, fearful of being late, when the sound of a voice shouting, "Hollo, Chris!" caused him to stop and turn his head, and he perceived two boys, with whom he was slightly acquainted, seated together on a log at a little distance from the road.

"What's wanted, Jimmy Dolan?" he asked.

"Oh, come here, we want to speak to you," returned Jimmy.

"I haven't time to stop," said Chris, but leaving the road and walking towards them as he spoke. "If you've got anything to say, make haste and say it, for I must go on to school."

"Pooh! what's the difference about school? Who'd go to school such a day as this?" exclaimed Jimmy's companion, whose name was Tom Murphy.

"We want to buy your knife," said Jimmy.

"I don't want to sell it," replied Chris.

“Why not?” asked Tom. “We’ll give you a good price for it.”

“I don’t want to sell it,” repeated Chris. “Miss Langley gave it to me, and it’s a real good one, and I mean to keep it as long as I live. If you want a knife, you can walk into Cedarville and buy one for yourselves at the store.”

“Come go with us, then,” said Jimmy, coaxingly, “and choose it for us; you’re a better judge of a knife than we are.”

Chris felt flattered by the compliment, but declined the invitation. “No,” he said, “I must go on to school.”

“Now, never you mind the school, but just come with us, and we’ll give you five dollars,” said Tom.

“Five dollars!” exclaimed Chris, contemptuously. “Where would boys like you get five dollars, I’d like to know?”

The two boys on the log exchanged winks and nods. Then Jimmy said, “Come, now, Chris, if you’ll promise never to tell anybody—never to breathe a word about it—we’ll show you something.”

"Well," said Chris, after a moment's hesitation, "I promise."

"Look here, then," said Jimmy, and putting his hat on the log beside him, he dived into his pockets and brought up handful after handful of gold and silver coins, which he threw into the hat, Murphy doing the same.

"There! what do you think of that?" they asked, rubbing their hands with glee.

"Where did you get it?" returned Chris, with a suspicious glance from one to the other.

"Under a stone, way off yonder in the woods," replied Dolan.

"It doesn't look as if it had ever been buried," thought Chris; "it's for all the world like other money that I've seen;" and he shook his head doubtfully.

"Fact!" said Dolan; "we turned over the stone to look for worms to fish with, and I stuck in a stick and felt something hard, and then we dug down and presently we came to an earthen pot; and when we'd got the cover off we found all this money in it. I guess it's some of the treasure Captain Kidd hid away ever so long ago."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Chris. "Captain

Kidd, indeed, and we're hundreds of miles from the seashore!"

"What difference does that make? I guess he could have come up the river," said Murphy.

"Well, you've promised not to tell, Chris," said Dolan; "so mind you don't; and here, we'll give you a share;" and taking up a handful of money he offered it to Chris.

Chris took it rather hesitatingly, for conscience whispered, "It is probably stolen property, and you know that the receiver's as bad as the thief;" and put it into his pocket, saying, "Thank you; I'll not tell; but I must be off now, for I'll be sure to be late if I stop another minute."

He then set off at full speed, and reached the school-house quite out of breath with running; but still he was late, and in consequence received a tardy mark and a reprimand from his teacher.

"I don't deserve it," he said, sulkily, "for I shouldn't have been late if I hadn't had to stay and help my mother and sister, and then I came just as fast as I could."

Thus does one sin lead to another. Christopher knew he was doing wrong in stopping to speak to those boys, both because they were boys

of known bad character, with whom his mother and Philip had warned him not to associate, and because he had no time to spare; and again in taking money so doubtfully obtained; and now to these acts of wrong-doing he had added the greater sin of falsehood.

Nothing went right with him that day, for his conscience was ill at ease, and he could not fix his attention upon his lessons. He was punished several times for his idleness and inattention, and went home in the evening in a sullen, discontented mood, angry with his teacher and ready to quarrel with all the world.

The money in his pocket troubled him, too. He had been thinking all day what he should do with it, and there seemed a dozen ways in which he would like to spend it. He wanted a new suit to wear to church and Sunday-school in the winter, for his best suit was wearing out at the elbows and knees, and growing too tight and too short besides; and then he needed new books and a pair of boots; and he would have liked to buy a warm shawl for his mother, and a new bonnet for Phemie, and some things for the others too; and the money could not possibly be made

to purchase the half of them. But, worse than all, he was afraid to spend it. Conscience told him he had no right to do so, and something else whispered that it might be dangerous; yet he did not feel willing to give it up, nor to let any one at home know that he had it.

He sent Lissa and Oliver into the house, and walked off down to the river by himself.

“What shall I do with it?” he muttered to himself, with his hand in his pocket, turning the coins over and over and jingling them together, then glancing hastily round with a startled look to see if any one was near enough to hear the sound or notice his suspicious movements.

There was no one in sight, however, and after a little farther consideration, he went to Phemie’s favorite seat, the big flat stone, and sitting down upon it, took out the coins and wrapped them carefully in a bit of paper. The old tree, whose spreading branches made the spot so pleasant and shady, was hollow, and going to it, he placed the little package in the opening and covered it with leaves; then, again looking carefully about to assure himself that he had been entirely unobserved, he turned away and went into the house.

It was growing quite dark and the stars were beginning to twinkle in the sky as a tall man in the dress of a farmer or mechanic stopped at Mrs. Shannon's gate, and, laying his hand on the latch, stood for a moment looking towards the house; then opening the gate he walked leisurely up the path, and stopping again before the kitchen window, peeped in between the leaves of the luxuriant vines which had so well rewarded Phemie's patient care that no other curtain was needed to shut out the light and heat of the afternoon's sun.

It was a pleasant picture which met the stranger's view. A neat rag carpet covered the floor, the walls were nicely whitewashed and adorned with several good engravings; in one corner stood a little work-table, and beside it a low rocking-chair; for this was sitting-room and work-room, too, as well as kitchen. A lounge, covered with a pretty curtain calico, occupied another niche, and in the middle of the floor stood another table, looking very inviting with its snowy cloth, its pure white cups and plates, shining pewter and steel—for our friends were not yet rich enough to afford silver—and its good, comfortable, 'hough homely fare.

Around this table the family had just gathered as the stranger took his station before the window. Philip asked a blessing, and with smiling faces and cheerful, kindly chat they began their meal.

"Seems 'most a pity to disturb 'em," muttered the stranger, "but I reckon it's got to be done;" and going to the door he knocked a quick, loud, determined knock, that quite startled the little group, coming so unexpectedly.

"Run to the door, Olly," said his mother, and the little fellow obeyed.

The stranger walked in, smirking and bowing.

"Good evening, sir," said Philip, rising, and handing him a chair; "will you take a seat?"

"Sit up to the table and take a cup of tea with us," said Eunice. "Phemie, get another plate and cup and saucer."

"No, thank you, ma'am, I wouldn't choose any. I've been to supper: we always take it early," said the stranger, accepting Philip's offered seat. "My name's Fry, ma'am—Isaac Fry, and I've just called in on a little business. I've been robbed; and I don't know but that boy o' yours may know something about it;" and he looked

hard at Christopher, who grew red and pale by turns, and seemed ready to fall from his chair.

"Looks kind o' guilty, 'pears to me," muttered the man in an under tone, while the rest gazed in each other's faces in mute astonishment and dismay.

"Whát—what can you mean?" gasped Eunice, at last. "What has my boy been doing?"

"Stealing, I reckon," said Fry; "at any rate somebody's been robbing me, and he looks mighty guilty like."

"How dare you?" muttered Philip, scarcely able to refrain from jumping up and collaring the man; but Phemie looked entreatingly at him, though her own cheek burned and her eye flashed with indignation; and with a silent prayer for help, he controlled himself, and, turning to the intruder, asked calmly what reason he had for suspecting Christopher.

"Well," said the man, "I'm not suspecting the the youngster without some reason. You see, I had quite a lot o' money, not far from two hundred dollars—my savings for several years past—and I'd put it all into a little leather bag, and hid it in a corner of the hay-loft in Price's

barn. (I've been working for Price all summer.) Well, the money was all safe last night, but when I went to look for it this afternoon 'twas gone, every cent of it—bag and all."

Christopher, who had been listening with an uneasy and changing countenance, started up at this instant, interrupting Fry with the exclamation, "Oh! I found some money hid in the woods, and perhaps it may be some of yours. I found it; but I don't know how it got there; and if you'll come with me, I'll show you where it is."

"Ah, ha!" chuckled Fry, with a triumphant glance from one to another of the astonished listeners. "I thought my gentleman knew something about it. Yes, my man, I'll go along and see that I get all that's there, and then I think we'll have to call you to account for whatever's missing."

"I don't know a word about any of the rest of it," muttered Christopher, growing pale, "and maybe this isn't yours."

"Where is it, Chris? and how came you to find it?" asked Philip, a little sternly.

"It's in the hollow tree down there by the big stone," replied the boy, hanging his head. "I

just happened to be looking in there this afternoon, and I saw something covered over with leaves, and I pushed them away to see what it was, and found it was some money wrapped up in a bit of paper, and I just covered it up again and left it exactly as I found it."

"A likely story," muttered Fry, incredulously, while Philip rose and quietly lighted a lantern. Then bidding Christopher and the stranger follow, he walked out to the hollow tree, where everything was found just as the boy had described it.

Fry seized the bundle and opening it, hastily counted over the money.

"There's just fifteen dollars and thirty cents," he said looking angrily at Christopher; "what have you done with the rest?"

"Nothing," replied the boy sulkily; "that's all I ever saw."

"I don't believe a word of it," said the man. "You'd better have waited till I got to the end of my story before you tried to tell yours; perhaps 'twould have spared us a few of the lies you've been telling. Now listen, will you? It so happened that I'd been to Cedarville with a

load of hay ('twas just after I came home that I found my money was missing) and while I was there I went into King's store to trade off some butter and eggs that Mrs. Price had sent in by me; and while I was talking with the clerk two boys came in and asked to look at knives, and I noticed that they seemed wonderfully flush of money, and I thought at the time 'twas very suspicious, especially as the fellows—Jim Dolan and Tom Murphy—don't bear the best of characters in the neighborhood."

Fry kept his eye on Christopher while speaking, and the start the boy gave at the mention of the names did not escape him. Philip saw it too, and with pained surprise.

"Their characters are very bad, I know," he said in answer to Fry, "but I hope my brother does not make associates of them. I have warned him against associating with them, and mother has forbidden him to do so."

"He's not very good at minding, then," said the man; "for as I drove along the road with my hay this morning, I saw those two fellows sitting on a log, a piece back from the road, and this one standing alongside, talking with them;

and I saw Dolan give this chap a handful of something that he put into his pocket mighty quick. I can't say for certain 'twas money, but I think it was. He started off after he pocketed what he got, fast enough. But where he went I don't know, for I was driving the other way, and I hadn't missed my money when I saw them there. I've got the other two all safe, and this youngster knows the third party in the work."

Philip looked at Chris, and the boy's guilty face seemed to confirm every word that Fry had uttered. He hung his head in silence, and for a moment no one spoke.

Then, saying, "Well, I s'pose I may as well bid you good evening now, as I reckon that I've got all out of this young man that I can at present, but I'll be apt to give him another call, one o' these days, if the rest of the money's not forthcoming," Fry turned on his heel and walked away.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' Oh, Chris, if you had but remembered that, and obeyed it, what misery you would have saved yourself and all of us! What will mother say—and Phemie—when they know all this? Oh, if

you had but gone straight to school this morning, instead of stopping to talk with those bad boys!" said Philip, as he returned to the house, slowly followed by the now conscience-stricken and sorely-troubled boy.



CHAPTER XIX.

“Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward.”—
PROV. xxii. 5.

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with
it.”—1 Cor. xii. 26.

WELL,” said Eunice, turning with an anxious, inquiring look to Philip as he came in and resumed his seat at the table, “did you find the money? And is the man gone?”

“Yes, mother, we found the money, and he is gone.”

“And Chris? where is he now?” she asked.

“Here, just at the door,” replied Philip.

“Chris!” she called, “come in;” and, as he appeared, “Now tell me,” she said, with an air of determination, “every word about this business.”

“There’s nothing to tell,” he answered sullenly, sitting down and beginning his meal again.

“I don’t believe it!” she exclaimed; “you wouldn’t look so guilty if there was nothing

wrong. Philip, tell me all that passed out yonder—all the talk between you three—everything.”

Philip complied, though with evident reluctance, while his mother laid down her knife and fork to listen, and now and then cast an angry glance at Christopher.

“So you’ve disobeyed me in the matter of associating with those wicked boys!” she exclaimed, indignantly, when Philip had concluded; “and you’ve been telling a pack of lies about that money. I know you have, and the best thing you can do now is to own up and tell the exact truth. Oh, Chris, can it be possible that you’ve actually become a thief?” she concluded, in a tone of such keen distress that the boy’s heart, which had been fast hardening under her angry reproaches, was touched.

“No, mother,” he said, while tears started to his eyes, “I’m not quite so bad as that yet. I did talk with those boys this morning, and they gave me the money and made me promise not to tell anything about it, but they said they’d found it, and I didn’t know it was a lie: and I did tell a lie when the man asked about it, because I was

frightened lest he should say I stole it and have me put in jail; but I wish now I'd told the truth."

"I wish you had, indeed," she said; "but I wish in the first place that you'd minded your mother, as the Bible bids you, and not gone with those bad boys: then you'd have kept out of all this trouble; and now there's no knowing where it will end; and since you've told so many falsehoods, how can we ever know that you're speaking the truth?"

All the cheerfulness and light-hearted gayety that had reigned in the family circle before the entrance of the stranger were gone, and for the rest of the evening they were all very quiet and sober, and the older ones looked troubled and anxious.

"Phil, do you think that man will have me sent to jail if he doesn't find the rest of his money?" asked Christopher in an unsteady voice, as the brothers were preparing for bed.

"I don't know, Chris," replied Philip, kindly; "I cannot tell what he may do; but O, Chris, you ought to be more concerned about the sin against God than the consequences to yourself.

Do confess it all to him, and ask his forgiveness before you lie down to rest."

"I will," said the boy humbly; "but, Phil, you don't think I helped steal the money? you believe me, don't you?"

"I want to believe you, Chris," replied his brother, "but as you did not speak the truth at first, you know I can't feel quite sure."

Christopher sighed and turned away his head sadly.

"Let me talk to you a little," said Philip, drawing him to a seat by himself on the side of the bed, and laying his arm affectionately over the boy's shoulder. "You see, my dear fellow, how very careful we need to be about the first beginnings of sin—how we should watch against the first step in the wrong direction; for it is a downhill road, and one step leads so naturally to another that if we once begin we can never tell where we shall stop. Your first wrong step was listening to the call of those boys; the second, in stopping to talk to them; both being disobedience to mother and neglect of your duty, which was to press on to school as fast as possible. Then the third was taking the money which you could

not have supposed had been honestly come by; and the fourth—”

“Oh Phil, you don't know it all yet!” interrupted Chris, with a burst of tears. “I was so bad at school to-day! I told the master I had come as fast as I could, and I was so vexed at being punished for tardiness that I was ill-tempered and idle all day long; and then when I came home I hid the money and told those lies about it;” and he sobbed bitterly.

“And what feeling was it that led you to take that money, and then to hide it, instead of trying to find out who the true owner was?” asked Philip. “Was it not covetousness? I should have reckoned that, which breaks the tenth commandment, as your third wrong step, and taking the money as the fourth. Remember from this time forth that the Lord Jesus bids us ‘beware of covetousness,’ and watch and pray against it, lest it should again lead you into sin.”

“Won't God forgive me?” whispered Chris.

“Yes, if you are truly sorry for your sins, and ask forgiveness for Jesus' sake,” replied his brother. “But though you may obtain forgiveness of God, you will still have to bear the con-

sequences of your wrong-doing as regards man ; and you must try to bear it bravely and patiently, remembering that it is only what you have brought upon yourself, and what is justly your due."

Mrs. Shannon looked pale and careworn at breakfast the next morning, and in answer to Phemie's inquiries said, "I never slept a wink all night for thinking of that boy. Phil, you and I must go into Cedarville this morning, and see a lawyer about this business, for, you may depend upon it, Fry will prosecute the boys, and we must do what we can to keep Chris from being sent to prison, for I don't believe he stole the money, and it would be a lifelong disgrace to him."

Philip assented, and they went into the town directly after breakfast, and engaged the services of the best lawyer there, who, however, while consenting to undertake the case, advised them to try, if possible, to effect a compromise with Fry; telling them that the law was very uncertain, and they might lose their case.

"Murphy and Dolan have been to me already on behalf of their sons," he added, "and I have

given them the same advice; and I think they will act upon it."

"What kind of a compromise do you suppose we could effect?" asked Philip.

"I presume you will have to make up the man's loss among you," replied the lawyer. "Probably that will be the only one he will consent to."

"I'm afraid it will take all our savings, Phil—all we've laid by for next winter," said Eunice sadly as they walked down the street together.

"I'm afraid so too, mother," he answered, with a sigh, "but anything to save Chris from going to prison; for I'm afraid the disgrace would, as you said this morning, ruin him for life."

No wonder their hearts were sad at the prospect—no wonder poor Philip sighed—for the struggle to support the family and educate himself was still a very hard one to him. He had managed during the summer to lay by a little money, with which he meant to purchase a supply of fuel and provisions for their use during the coming winter; and, being thus enabled to leave them comfortable, he intended going to a distant town, which afforded better educa-

tional advantages than any in his own neighborhood; then to pursue his studies, expecting to pay for his board and tuition by his own hard labor out of school hours. But now he feared all this must be given up, and he would have to remain at home plodding on for another year in the old weary way.

And his fears were soon confirmed. That same evening the three men—Fry, Murphy, and Dolan—called and stated that they had agreed to a compromise, if the Shannons would do their part. It was such as the lawyer had spoken of: the friends of the three boys were to make up to Fry the loss he had sustained, each paying one-third; and as he asserted that the original sum was one hundred and ninety-five dollars, and only forty-five in all had been recovered from the boys, there were still one hundred and fifty to be made up, fifty dollars apiece—a large sum for the Shannons to raise; so large that not only Philip's savings, but Eunice's and Phemie's also, were swallowed up, and they must look forward to a winter of want and privation, pinching poverty and unremitting toil.

Christopher cried bitterly when he learned

what his folly and sin had brought upon the family; but the evil was done and the consequences must be borne.

“We will not mind it, Chris,” said Philip, kindly, “if only you will take this hard lesson to heart, and be the better for it all your life, learning from it to shun wicked companions and to watch against the first wrong step. You see how sin always brings sorrow and pain; and, worst of all, we cannot suffer alone.”

“And now you’ll all have such a hard time, and all through me!” sobbed the boy. “Oh dear! oh dear! I wish I hadn’t taken the money; and I didn’t mean to spend it all for myself. I thought it would be so nice to buy mother a nice warm shawl, and Phemie and Lissa new bonnets; and now they can’t have anything new at all!”

“The wish to help them was a kind and right one, Chris,” said his brother; “but to try to bring it about by taking money which was not your own was doing evil that good might come, which is never right.”

“But oh what shall we do? How shall we get along all winter, now that all our money’s gone?” he sobbed.

“We have enough for to-day,” replied Phemie cheerfully; “and the Bible says, ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’ We will trust in the Lord, and do the best we can for ourselves by working industriously, and he will take care of us.”



CHAPTER XX.

“Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”—PROV. i. 33.

PHILIP had not spoken of his plans for the winter to any one but his mother and Phemie; and it was not until years afterwards that Christopher knew what his brother had given up for him; but many times the boy's heart was made to ache by seeing how closely his mother and sister were obliged to economize, and how hard they, and Philip too, were compelled to work because of his wrong-doing; and he felt it all the more that it was done and endured so cheerfully, and no word of reproach ever spoken to him.

That winter proved an unusually inclement season, heavy snow storms being of frequent occurrence and the snow lying long upon the ground, so that during much of the time the roads were

quite impassable, especially for women and children. The heaviest storm of all occurred early in March. For several days afterwards the weather was intensely cold, and then came a sudden thaw.

"We shall have a freshet, I'm afraid," said Eunice, going to the door and looking out. as they were about retiring for the night; "the river is rising now, I think; and no wonder, for the snow is going off very fast. I only hope our fences won't be carried off."

"I hope not," said Phemie; "but what a comfort it is to know that our heavenly Father holds the winds and waters in his hand! Good-night, mother dear; don't let us stay awake fearing losses that may never come, and that God will enable us to bear if they do."

She mounted the stairs as she spoke, and having committed herself and her dear ones, with all their interests, into the keeping of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps, she lay down to rest, as peaceful and as free from care as a babe in its mother's arms.

Sweetly she slept for several hours, and then a strange sound roused her from her slumbers.

“Where was she? in a boat on the water?—surely she heard it distinctly washing against the side;” and she half raised herself on her elbow and looked about her. No, the sight of familiar objects told her that she was at home in her own little room; but what was that strange washing sound so close at hand? the sullen rush and roar of waters? Surely the river had never seemed so near. And now a wild shriek from below causes her to spring from her bed in sudden terror, and as she hastily throws on a loose wrapper, calling at the same time to Lissa to wake, and rushes out to the stairway, one glance from the window tells the fearful tale that the river has risen above its banks, has surrounded the house, and is pouring through door and windows into the rooms below.

“Mother and Olly!” she called.

“We’re coming,” replied her mother’s voice: “we’re not drowned yet, but everything’s swimming here; and the water’s pouring in as fast as ever it can. Whatever shall we do?” and the tones were tremulous with anxiety and alarm.

One upward glance, one earnest, trustful prayer for protection and help, had calmed Phemie’s

perturbed spirit, and made her brave and strong to meet the coming trial.

“Come up, mother?” she answered cheerfully as she sprang halfway down the stairs, and received the weeping, dripping baby in her arms. “Trust in the Lord. ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.’”

“They are beautiful words,” said Eunice; “I wish I could feel them as you seem to.”

Philip was absent from home, and Christopher, who was not easily awakened, still slept on.

“Wake up, Chris!” said his mother, going to him and giving him a shake; “why, child, we’re all likely to be drowned, and here you sleep on as if nothing was the matter. Wake up and see what can be done.”

“Done?” cried the boy, starting up, rubbing his eyes and looking about him. “Why, what’s the matter? The river’s come close up to the house.”

"Yes," said his mother, "and it's pouring in down stairs as fast as ever it can. Listen!"

"Sure enough, so it is!" he exclaimed, and jumping from the bed, and hastily throwing on his clothes, he ran to the other side of the house and looked out of the window. "Hollo!" he cried, "here it is spread out away beyond us on every side, and it looks just as if we were in the middle of a lake. I can't see to the other side; the moon doesn't give light enough. There's nothing can be done, mother, for we couldn't possibly get away unless we had a boat."

"Then we'll be drowned, every one of us, unless some of the neighbors come and help us, for the water's rising every minute, and if it keeps on 'twill soon be up here."

"Then we will open the trap-door and get out on the roof," said Phemie, who was busily employed in making Oliver comfortable, having hunted up some dry clothes for him to put on. "How thankful I am that there is one! Chris, you'd better get it open at once, so that it will be ready."

"Yes, I will," he said, springing lightly up the step-ladder that led to the roof. "Here

goes! the bolt's hard to move though, mother: won't you hand me that hammer? What a fortunate circumstance it is that I left it up here yesterday after pounding in those nails for Lissa! Why, Lis, how you're crying! what's the use?"

"I can't help it," she sobbed. "I do believe we shall all be drowned."

"I hope not," said Phemie, cheerfully; "it is too soon to despair yet. Let us ask God to take care of us. He is able to do it; 'His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.' He can cause the water to cease rising, or send a boat to our assistance, or save us in some other way that we would never think of."

Chris was hammering at the bolt now, and it was useless to attempt to converse until he had finished.

"There!" he exclaimed at length; "now I've done it. Heave oh! here goes!" and exerting all his strength he threw the trap-door open, letting in a stream of light as the wind swept the clouds from the face of the moon. "Oh, it'll be fun for us all to climb out here. Come, let's do it now,

mother," he said, putting his head up through the opening.

"Chris, you don't realize the danger, or you wouldn't be talking that way," replied Eunice. "Come down here and look out of this window."

Christopher obeyed, and one glance sobered him completely and made his cheek grow pale with fear.

"I never saw nor heard of such a freshet here before, though I was born and brought up in this neighborhood," said Eunice, shuddering; "it's terrible! it's awful!"

And well might she say so, for as she and her children looked out they could see the river rushing furiously onward, swelling, roaring, foaming, sweeping away trees and bushes, hay-stacks, barns, houses, cattle, everything that came in its way; and they could hear amid the angry roar of the surging waters faint cries for help from human voices, mingled with the bellowing of the frightened, drowning animals; could feel their own house tremble to its foundations with each successive shock, as the waves dashed up against it, and see the water every moment rising higher and higher.

Their faces blanched with fear as they looked out upon the terrific scene and realized the appalling danger of their own situation, and their utter powerlessness to escape the threatened calamity. Eunice wrung her hands and wept, gazing upon her children with an expression of heart-rending anguish.

“Oh, if I could do anything to save you!” she sobbed. “If there was any help to be had! but there’s none.”

Oliver clung to her, crying bitterly, and Chris looked on with a quivering lip. Lissa too was sobbing, while Phemie alone was calm and composed, though very pale.

“Mother,” she said, “let us kneel down and pray. God can help us, though no one else can. He says, ‘In me is thine help.’”

“Yes, we will all kneel down,” replied her mother, “but you must pray. I can’t. I’ve neglected God when I felt safe, and how can I expect to be saved if I pray to him now in time of danger?”

They knelt, and Phemie offered up a short but fervent and child-like petition for help in this their sore extremity, asking that if it were God’s

will they might be saved from the impending danger, and, if not, prepared for death.

"Now we won't be drowned, will we, Phemie?" asked little Oliver, as they rose from their knees.

"I don't know, Olly dear," she replied; "but if we are God's dear children, if we love Jesus, we needn't be afraid of drowning; because it would soon be over, and then we should be in heaven where Jesus is, and everybody is so good and happy."

As she ceased speaking Lissa uttered a sharp cry, and pointed to the floor. A little stream of water was running down it, and it was time to betake themselves to the roof. They did so, wrapping themselves in whatever warm coverings were at hand; for a cold east wind was blowing and a drizzling rain was falling.

There they passed several hours very uncomfortably, for their position was insecure as well as exposed to the weather; but at length, as day dawned, Chris joyfully announced that the water was falling, and was already some inches below the upper floor, and one by one they crept down again with stiffened limbs, but very thankful hearts.

An hour or two later, Lissa, who was at one of the front windows, gave a joyful shout: "A boat! a boat! and Phil is in it. Mr. Walter Langley too, and Mr. Seldon. Oh, we shall be saved! They will take us away!" and she clapped her hands and laughed and cried both at once.

"Oh, God did hear you, Phemie," said Chris, clapping his hands too and shouting with glee. "I thought he would. I thought he'd not let us get drowned, if we asked him to take care of us."

Lissa's exclamation had brought them all to the window, and eagerly and anxiously they watched the boat as it drew nearer and nearer. A moment more and it was under the window; and one by one they were handed into it, their friends rejoicing and thanking God for their safety.

They were taken directly to Woodlawn, where they were supplied with every comfort, and made kindly welcome until their own home was once more in a condition to receive them. When the river subsided it was found that the water had done a good deal of damage to the house and garden, had washed away their fences, and carried

off their cow, their pig, and their poultry, which, taken together, constituted a heavy loss to them in their deep poverty, and was all the harder for them because it followed so soon upon that occasioned by Christopher's wrong-doing; but truly thankful they were to have escaped with their lives; and to Eunice, at least, it had not been all loss. She had looked Death in the face and found that she was not prepared to meet him; she had felt herself overcome with terror at his approach.

But her young daughter had been enabled to face him calmly, and Eunice was constrained to acknowledge to herself that the hope which could sustain and comfort in such an hour was worth possessing; yea, was a pearl of such price that she would do well to sell all that she had that she might buy it, and with trembling earnestness she began to seek it; nor did she seek in vain, for is not the promise, "Ask, and ye *shall* receive; seek, and ye *shall* find?"

She found the promise sure, and thus was great good to her brought out of much apparent evil.

"Don't you feel discouraged, Phil, and almost like giving up trying to get along at all?" asked Lissa on the day of their return, following him to

the garden, where he stood looking about upon the scene of desolation.

“No, little sister,” he answered cheerfully, “I only feel like trying harder than ever. I hope soon to be able to repair all this damage; and as such a flood has never been known here before, I think we may reasonably hope it will not occur again, at least for a great many years.”

“But we lost so much through Chris’s badness last fall, and it does seem hard that we should have to lose so much again this spring,” she said in a bitter, complaining tone.

“Who sent the flood, Lissa?” he asked.

“God, I suppose, of course,” she answered reluctantly.

“Yes,” said her brother; “man had nothing to do with its coming; and shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, Lissa, and shall we not receive evil? What have we that he has not given us? and has he not a right to take away, when he will, what he has given? Then, what comfort and encouragement not to despair under losses and afflictions is to be found in that text: ‘All things work together for good to them that love God!’ And already I can see that good has

come out of both these troubles over which you are lamenting so sadly. That one last fall seems to have opened Christopher's eyes to the danger of having wicked associates, and he now carefully shuns the company of Dolan and Murphy, and all such boys, and is growing more steady and industrious every day; and, Lissa, I think, and so do mother and Phemie, that this more than repays us for the loss we sustained."

"And what good has come of the flood?" she asked. "I can't see any, I'm sure."

"A wonderful blessing, Lissa," he answered with emotion. "Mother told me this morning that the peril through which she passed that night had opened her eyes to the terrible fact that she had built her house upon the sand, and now she hopes it is founded upon a rock—the rock Christ Jesus."



CHAPTER XXI.

“Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner.”—PROV. xi. 31.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”—GAL. vi. 7.

TEN years had rolled away since the events narrated in our last chapter, when one beautiful moonlight evening a stranger stepped from the door of the principal hotel in P——, a young and growing city some thirty miles distant from the spot where most of the scenes of our story have transpired, and walked leisurely up the street, apparently with no other end in view than to enjoy the evening breeze, the moonlight, looking into the brilliantly lighted shop-windows, and watching the passers-by. He was a young-looking man, with a well-knit and powerful frame, and a fine open countenance, full of energy, and thought, and kindly feeling. His dress was that of a well-to-do farmer, of good

material, but not cut in the extreme of the fashion. He had not been long in the street before he noticed that the stores were closing all around him, and the throng upon the sidewalks growing sensibly less.

"It must be growing late," he thought; but still, unconscious of fatigue and tempted by the beauty of the evening, he kept on his way, walking on and on until he found that he had left the town far behind him, and was traveling on a lonely road, where the houses were scattered far apart, and no sound was to be heard but the gentle rippling of a little stream near by, and the songs of the cricket and the bull-frog.

"I must go back, or they may close the hotel and lock me out," he said, half aloud; and turning about he retraced his steps, quickening his pace very much.

The streets were now almost deserted, for it was not far from midnight, but occasionally he met a solitary pedestrian hurrying onward like himself; and as he drew near an unfinished building standing upon the corner of a street not far from his hotel, he came upon two young men of very rowdyish appearance, whose movements seemed

to him decidedly suspicious, though he did not know exactly of what to suspect them.

They stood in the shadow of the building, and were conversing in an undertone as he came up. One had what looked like a tin bucket or can in his hand, which he hastily set down upon the ground on seeing the stranger; while his companion thrust something into his pocket with a muttered oath; then, starting and pulling the other by the sleeve, he whispered, "Did you know him? 'Twas Phil Shannon, Tom, as sure as I'm alive. What brought him here, I wonder?" and the sentence was finished with another oath.

Philip—for it was he—catching the sound of his name, turned to look at them again, and they at the same instant stepping from within the shadow of the building into the bright moonlight, he recognized them as Jim Dolan and Tom Murphy, the two boys who had been the means of getting Christopher into such trouble ten years before, now grown into young men and more ripe for wickedness than ever.

"I'm afraid they are plotting some mischief," said Philip to himself, "but perhaps not; I see

they are moving on up that cross street," and he hurried on to his hotel, retired to his room, and soon after to his bed.

But it was some time before he could sleep. His thoughts were full of the two wretched young men whom he had just seen for the first time in several years; for they had disappeared from his own neighborhood long ago, and he had not known what had become of them. Wretched he knew they could not fail to be while living in sin, and he trembled to think of the end they must come to if they continued in their evil courses. He had not forgotten them in his prayers before retiring; and so concerned for them did he feel as he lay there thinking that he rose and knelt again to ask that they might be led to see the error of their ways, and to repent before it should be for ever too late.

The clock on a neighboring church struck one as he rose from his knees, and going to the window he looked out into the silent, deserted street. No, it was not quite deserted, for a solitary figure was moving slowly down the opposite sidewalk—the same on which stood the unfinished building of which we have spoken—keeping in the shadow

of the houses; and what was he doing? He seemed to be pouring something from a tin vessel all along the wooden pavement, and presently, as he moved on into the moonlight, Philip started and uttered a low exclamation, for he had recognized Tom Murphy, and behind him came another figure; yes, it was undoubtedly Jim Dolan.

Again a fear that they were engaged in some mischief arose in Philip's mind, but he dismissed it with the thought, "They are probably drunk, and don't know what they are doing;" and getting into bed again, he soon fell asleep.

How long he had slept he did not know, when he was roused by the cry of fire, the ringing of bells, the rattling of an engine, and the hoarse shouts of men and boys; and springing from his bed, he rushed to the window to find the unfinished building at the corner and several of the adjoining houses in flames, while the wind, which seemed to have risen suddenly, was sending the sparks and burning cinders far and wide.

Hastily dressing himself, he rushed into the street. The engine was playing upon the burning buildings, but with little effect, and men were busily engaged in pulling down the nearest houses

to stop the progress of the flames, while a crowd of men, women, and children were standing looking on, or helping the sufferers to remove their goods, or running to and fro with buckets of water.

"They say it must have been the work of an incendiary, for it commenced in that new building on the corner, where there hadn't been any fire," Philip heard one woman remark to another as he stepped into the street. Then his eye fell upon a stream of fire running along the wooden sidewalk, and instantly he comprehended what Murphy and Dolan had been about.

And they were in the thickest of the crowd, shouting themselves hoarse with the cry of "Fire! fire!" and uttering the fiercest curses on the wretches who had started it.

Philip grew sick at heart at the thought of their wickedness and the fear that it was his duty to report to the magistrates what he had seen. He was debating this question in his own mind, when to his relief he saw a couple of policemen single them out from the crowd and lead them away.

"What were those fellows arrested for? What

were they doing?" he heard one bystander ask of another.

"They are a couple of pickpockets," was the reply, "and they were plying their trade; and I believe there is some suspicion that they started the fire to bring a crowd together, that they might have a good opportunity to do so."

"Well, if they did it, I hope it will be proved on them, and that they'll get a good long term in the State's prison," said another man, coming up with an excited air. "Yesterday I considered myself worth from twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars, and now I'm not worth one."

Philip turned away with a sigh. Then seeing a woman at a little distance crying and wringing her hands, he went to her and inquired the cause of her distress.

"Oh, sir," she sobbed, "I've lost every cent I had in the world; my pocket's been picked, and everything else I had either burnt up or carried off; and I'm a poor lone widow, with not a soul to care for me or help me."

"*You* needn't fret, Hannah Martin; you're well off, compared to some others," said a pale, sickly-looking woman, who was seated on a door-step,

with a puny, wailing infant in her arms, and several other crying little ones clinging to her, only half-dressed and shivering in the cool night air. "You have health and strength to work, and nobody to depend on you; but look at me, hardly able to crawl, and with five helpless little children to feed and clothe; everything we had burnt up, except what's on our backs, and that isn't much; and my husband just carried off to the hospital, burnt and crushed both. Oh dear! oh dear!" and she burst into an agony of tears and sobs.

Philip turned away for a moment to hide his emotion; then tried to speak some words of comfort and hope to them both, especially to the mother, whose deeper distress made his heart bleed. He bade them put their trust in God, and He would take care of them. Nor did he content himself with words alone, but went among the bystanders appealing for sympathy and aid for these unfortunates, and himself headed a subscription with a generous sum for one of his means.

Some eight or ten buildings had been destroyed by the fire and in the efforts made to stop its progress; but at length it was so far subdued that

no more danger could be apprehended, and the crowd dispersed to their homes.

“Mr. Shannon,” said the landlord, turning to Philip, on his return, “did you see anything of those two scamps who were taken up by the police?” Philip reluctantly acknowledged that he had, for he felt loth to appear against them. He could not, however, escape the questions of the eager group around him, nor would they let him rest until he had told all he knew of the matter.

It was now broad daylight, and though Philip returned to his room to wait until the hour for breakfast, he did not again attempt to sleep. His business had been attended to and he was anxious to start for home, but he found that he must appear as a witness before the magistrate, who examined Murphy and Dolan and committed them for trial.

As Philip pursued his homeward journey, his thoughts were full of the past; and as he looked back fifteen years, he shuddered at his narrow escape from such a career as had brought Murphy and Dolan where they were.

“Dolan’s father and mine—or rather the man

whom I then supposed to be my father," he said to himself—"were at that time intimate associates, and I seemed as likely as he to turn out as he has done. Oh, what reason have I to thank God for the Sunday-school! and not only for what it has done for me, but for the whole family. What a wicked set we were when Mr. Seldon first opened his Sabbath-school and gathered us into it! Now we are respected by our neighbors, and several of us are true Christians, I trust, and traveling in the way that leads to eternal life."

Philip left the cars at Cedarville, where he found his brothers waiting for him. "We expected you by the earlier train," said Oliver, "and were beginning to fear that something had gone wrong with you."

"No," replied Philip, "but I have bad news to tell;" and he went on to relate the occurrences of the night before.

Christopher was deeply affected on hearing of the crimes of his former associates.

"Oh, Phil!" he exclaimed, "what an escape I have had by forsaking their company when I did! How thankful I am that discovery and punishment so quickly followed that first dishonest act

of mine, for otherwise I might have been with them to-day!"

Murphy and Dolan were brought to trial in the fall, found guilty of arson and theft, and sentenced to a long term of years at hard labor in the State's prison.

Philip was present at the trial as a witness, Mr. Seldon, Christopher and Oliver as spectators. They called to see the unhappy criminals after sentence had been pronounced upon them, and Mr. Seldon spoke with affectionate earnestness and faithfulness to them, urging them to turn to God while there was yet time. Murphy listened in sullen silence, but Dolan was melted to tears. "Oh, sir," he said, weeping bitterly, "I remember well when you tried to get me into that Sunday-school of yours, but I wouldn't be persuaded; but now, oh how I wish I had listened to you! It might have saved me from ruin. Sabbath-breaking has helped to bring me here."

CHAPTER XXII.

“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labor shall increase.”—PROV. xiii. 11.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”—1 TIM. iv. 8.

ON the afternoon of a lovely October day, a few weeks subsequent to the trial of Murphy and Dolan, a handsome family carriage, drawn by a pair of fine bays, might have been seen passing along the road leading from Woodlawn towards the residence of the Shannons. Its occupants were a gentleman, two ladies and a little boy and girl.

“Where are we going, mamma?” asked the latter.

“Wherever Uncle Arthur takes us,” was the reply of the elder of the two ladies—a sweet, matronly-looking woman, in whom we recognize our old friend Alicia Langley, now Mrs. Ellerton,

the wife of a minister whose charge is many miles distant; indeed so far away that Alicia seldom visits her old home, and is now doing so for the first time since Herbert, her eldest child, now nearly eight years old, was an infant. "I believe," she added, smiling at the bright little face upturned to hers, "he means to take us to see some very old friends of mine."

"The little girl that used to be your Sunday-school scholar, is it not, mamma?" asked the boy.

"Yes, Herbert, though she is not a little girl now, but a grown-up young lady."

"And you haven't seen her for a long, long time now, have you, mamma?" he asked.

"No, not since you were a baby, and then she carried you about in her arms, and seemed to love you very much."

"Because I was your baby, I suppose, mamma," he said. "And does she still live in that little old brown house by the river, that you used to tell me about?"

"I suppose so, my dear," replied the mother, while a slight smile played about the corners of Uncle Arthur's and Aunt Effie's lips, though they said nothing.

"I'm glad if she does," said the child; "because I want to see it."

"How many changes have taken place since I went away, Uncle Arthur!" remarked Mrs. Ellerton, glancing from the carriage window. "We have passed several fine farms, and pretty, tasteful residences, where ten years ago nothing was to be seen but woods."

"Yes," he said, "this part of the country has improved very rapidly of late. The farm we are passing now will soon be considered the finest in the county, I think. The owner is a scientific as well as practical farmer, and spares no pains to improve the quality of his land; and the consequence is it produces very fine crops."

"And the orchard, uncle? you must not forget that," said Miss Effie Langley, the younger lady; "he takes such pains with it, and it is such a fine one. See, Alicia, we are coming to it now; just look how the trees are loaded down with fruit, and the very finest varieties too."

"They are gathering their apples, I see," said Mr. Seldon; "and I rather think the whole family is in the orchard."

"I believe they are," said Effie; "at least all

but the mother; and I would like no better fun than to join them."

"Well then, suppose we do," said her uncle, laughing; "or at least that we call at the house and see if we can get an invitation to walk out to the orchard."

"Now, Alicia," said Effie, as they drove slowly on, "take a good look at the gardens and the house too; for it is really a pretty place.

"Ah, yes, it is indeed a lovely place," replied her sister, leaning forward to have a better view. "I should like to call here very much, if I knew the family."

"You do," said Effie, smiling; "or at least you used to; and I know they will be delighted to see you. But here we are at the gate. Now, uncle, shall we not stop?"

"Yes," he said, "we will; and yonder comes some one hurrying out to welcome us. See, Alicia, if you can recognize the young lady in that neat sun-bonnet, gingham dress and white apron."

He jumped out as he spoke, and assisted the others to alight. Alicia was the first, and she looked earnestly at the young girl, who was



Light in the Shannons' Home.

The Shannons.

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hastening towards them with a face glowing with surprise and delight.

"Mrs. Ellerton, dear Mrs. Ellerton! how *glad* I am to see you!" she exclaimed, throwing open the gate and extending both hands to welcome her old friend and teacher.

"Phemie Shannon! is it possible?" was Alicia's answering exclamation as she warmly returned the cordial greeting.

It was a joyful surprise to both, for Phemie had not heard of Mrs. Ellerton's arrival at Woodlawn, nor even that she was expected.

"Come into the house, all of you, please, will you not? Mother and Phil will be so glad to see you, and so will the others, I know," she said, when all the greetings had been exchanged; and she led the way to the house—a substantial brick building, which had taken the place of the little brown frame of former days, with which Alicia could not help contrasting it. It stood nearly in the same spot, and, with its tasteful portico in front, constituted a not unpleasant feature in the landscape as seen from either road or river. Nor did the interior of the dwelling do discredit to the exterior. Phemie conducted them into a

handsome parlor, where she requested them to take seats, saying she would call her mother.

“Stay, my dear child,” said Mr. Seldon, with the familiarity of an old friend; “your mother is in the sitting-room, is she not? Just let us go in there to her. You know I like that room, where you live and enjoy yourselves every day, so much better than this fine parlor, which is kept only for state occasions; and I want Mrs. Ellerton to see it.”

“Yes, Phemie, do take us there,” said Effie; “it is such a cheerful room; and we don’t want to be treated like strangers.”

“No, indeed we do not, my dear child,” said Mrs. Ellerton, with the sweet smile that Phemie remembered and loved so well; “we quite prefer to be looked upon as old, familiar friends, and treated as such;” and, thus entreated, Phemie led the way to a room on the opposite side of the hall.

The furniture was inexpensive, but neat, and though books and work were scattered about, showing that the room was in constant use, it was far from untidy.

A pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, in

whose neat attire and cheerful countenance it would have been difficult to recognize the slovenly, idle, complaining Eunice Shannon of fifteen years ago, sat knitting and reading in an easy-chair near one of the windows. But, notwithstanding the wonderful change, it was she, and, starting up in glad surprise upon their entrance, she greeted them with the most cordial welcome.

“My dear Mrs. Ellerton,” she said, holding Alicia’s hand and gazing earnestly into her face, “how well you are looking, how little you have changed, and how very kind in you to come to see us! Now, you will all take off your things and stay to tea, won’t you? I can’t treat you quite as well as I should if I’d known you were coming, but I’ll give you the best the house affords, and be very, *very* glad to have you.”

“Thank you, we will,” said Alicia; “and I have no fears that your tea-table will not be as well provided as we could wish.”

“Oh, how glad Phil and Chris and the others will be to see you!” Mrs. Shannon said when they were all seated. “They are all out in the apple orchard, but I will send for them,” and she

was rising to do so, but Mr. Seldon begged her not.

“Let us go out to them, if you have no objection,” he said; “we saw them at work as we passed, and felt quite a desire to have a share in the fun; and I want Mrs. Ellerton to see your gardens.”

“Certainly, if you would like it we will all go out there,” she said; “it is very pleasant out of doors to-day—pleasanter than in the house, I think;” and taking little Herbert’s hand, she led the way through house, shrubbery and gardens, showing them all with much honest pride, telling how diligently the children, especially Philip and Phemie, had worked all these years, how Philip had sold some of the land after it had risen greatly in value by the influx of settlers into the country, and with what care and labor he had improved the rest, until now the farm had become very valuable, and yielded them an excellent living.

“It doesn’t come without labor yet,” she said in conclusion; “we all work diligently, and the Lord blesses our labor, and we’re very well off, and very happy.”

"I am so glad to hear it!" said Alicia, with sparkling eyes; "it is so pleasant to see such changes."

They were entering the orchard as she spoke, and Phemie, touching her arm, asked, "Do you know that man who is coming to meet us, Mrs. Ellerton?"

"Philip!" exclaimed Alicia; "and what a fine, manly-looking fellow he is!"

"And just as kind and good as he looks," whispered Phemie, as her brother approached with outstretched hand to greet his old friends.

"You have altered a great deal, and only for the better, Philip," remarked Mrs. Ellerton, looking with kindly interest into his handsome, sun-burned face."

"Have I? Thank you," he said with a smile; "there certainly was plenty of room for improvement. How do you do, Miss Langley?" he asked, offering his hand to Effie. "And Mr. Seldon too, and Master Herbert! I am very glad to see you all. And this little lady is Miss Ellerton, I suppose?" he added, inquiringly, as he took the little girl's hand in his.

"My name is Effie Ellerton," she answered,

modestly; "mamma named me for grandma and auntie."

"Ah! that is a nice name," he said. Then turning to her mother again, "Will you let me take you to that tree yonder and introduce you to Lissa and my brother?" he asked. "You will find them as much changed as myself, I think."

"Yes," she said, moving on by his side. "Is it possible that tall girl is the little Lissa I used to know, and that those two stout, fine-looking young men are Christopher and Oliver?"

"Yes," he replied with a glad smile, "and I think them a sister and brothers to be proud of. They are now everything that I could ask. I trust, Mrs. Ellerton, that we are all traveling in the narrow way, and may hope to spend not only time but eternity together."

"Oh," she said, "God be thanked for that! You could not have told me anything that would have made me feel happier."

On returning to the house they found that Eunice, who had slipped away some time before, had, with the help of her handmaiden, spread a bountiful repast for their refreshment.

"You seem to be a very prosperous man, Philip," remarked Mr. Seldon, as they seated themselves at the table.

"I am, sir," he replied. "'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it.' It is to that I owe everything that I have—temporal and spiritual; and it was through your instrumentality that I was led to seek that blessing. Oh, sir, what do I not owe to you and the Sunday-school you first opened in our neighborhood!"

"To God be all the glory!" replied Mr. Seldon, with emotion. "'Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.'"

"How nicely they live! how comfortable they are, and how truly good and pious too!" exclaimed Effie, looking back as the carriage drove away with her companions and herself from Philip's gate. "What a contrast to what they were fifteen years ago, and what an encouragement their story would be to Sunday-school teachers if anybody would take the trouble to write it!"

"Yes," replied her uncle, "the Lord has given us a great blessing upon our labors: the good

seed has sprung up and borne fruit an hundred-fold; nor do we see the end of the good work yet; for Philip and Phemie are themselves now earnest, faithful Sabbath-school teachers, sowing the good seed day by day in many young hearts, and watering it with their tears and prayers. And their efforts are directed especially to the very poor and degraded class of children, and they labor for them very hopefully and in strong faith; for they say that, remembering how hopeless their own cases must have seemed in the beginning, they cannot despair of any; and they know that the promise is sure: 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'"



