Lake of The Woods

BY

A·L·O·E·

"Alfred grasped the dark hand extended towards him."—*p. 209.*

THE

LAKE OF THE WOODS

A Story of the Backwoods.

BY

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THE LAKE OF THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOG-HUT.

"He does not come back!" mournfully exclaimed Amy Gaveston, turning from the low door-way from which she had anxiously gazed forth into the deepening twilight.

"Would that my boy had never gone! No doctor can help me now. The sands have well nigh run out, and no power of man can turn the glass." The voice which uttered those words, faint but clear, was that of a man in the last stage of mortal sickness, who, tenderly wrapt, and softly cushioned, lay stretched on a pallet in the corner of the log-hut. No stranger could have looked upon his countenance and have doubted that the stamp of death was upon those pale chiselled features, calm in suffering; the violet tint beneath the clear glassy eyes was as the mark left by death's touch.

"Oh! father, do not speak thus!" exclaimed Amy, sinking on her knees on the rudely planked floor by his side. "You will get better,—you have less pain."

"I shall soon have no pain, my child," said Captain Gaveston, with a faint smile. Then glancing anxiously towards the door, he added, "I wish that Alfred were back! It was against my will that he undertook a walk of twenty miles, with the certainty of not returning till night-fall."

"Had the walk been forty miles he would have gone for a doctor for our own precious father!" exclaimed Amy. "Alfred is strong and hardy, as strong at fifteen as many a man at thirty; you said so yourself when you saw him felling the trees."

"Alfred was made for something better than felling trees," said the captain, sadly. "Amy, when I find how your brother's mind is developing, what a grasp of thought he possesses, how he masters every difficulty before him, I sometimes bitterly regret that I ever brought my family to settle in Rupert's Land, to bury talents such as his in a wild unsettled country like this!"

"Alfred would make his way anywhere," said the sister.

"Had he been at a school he would have risen to be the head of it; were he to enter a profession, he would win his way to distinction. How well has Alfred availed himself of his few opportunities of gaining knowledge,—the slight instructions which I could give,—the contents of some half-a-dozen volumes! Yes, it was a fatal mistake to bury him here.

"Dear father, you acted for the best," said Amy softly, as she smoothed the sick man's pillow.

"I thought so, my child, at the time; I saw no other means of securing independence; I would not be a burden on my relations; better a life of honourable labour in a free country, than the vain

struggle to make my way in some over-crowded profession at home. But I sometimes think now that I acted hastily, and rather from my feelings than my judgment; I did not sufficiently seek guidance from Him who ordereth our goings. And now I am leaving you and your brother, friendless orphans in a desolate country, exposed to such hardships as you would never have had to endure in your native land!" The sick man turned his face towards the wall, and groaned.

Amy went again to the door, less this time to look out for her brother, than to hide the gushing tears which would course one another down her pale cheeks. The prospect without had been very beautiful in the glow of sunset, when the crimson reflection of the clouds had lain like a rosy flush on the Lake of the Woods, lighting up its foliage-clad islands, now decked in the many coloured tints of autumn. But the light had passed from the sky, and the glow from the waters, and dark and indistinct loomed the islands like shadows. The wild moan of the wind, as it swept the dead dry leaves from the branches, was the only sound that reached the girl's ears, and to her it seemed like a funeral wail. For Amy, hard as she had tried to shut her eyes to the truth, could not but know that her father's days were numbered, that his orphan twins might soon have to bear his dear remains to the little grassy mound beneath which, not six months before, the form of his wife had been laid. Amy and her brother would be left—she dared not think how lonely; she but felt that the light was fading from her sky, and that life, like that silent lake, lay cold and dark before her.

As the poor young girl stood mournfully listening

to the wind, she again heard the voice of her father. "Can you see him, my child?"

"Not yet, it is growing so dark."

"And so cold," said the dying man.

Amy instantly re-entered the cottage, and closed the door; then went to the fire, which was burning low, and threw a pine-log upon it. A bright flame leapt up, with a cheerful crackling noise.

"It is so bright that I think that you could see to read to me by it, Amy. Take the Bible, my child, and let me hear some of its words of comfort."

Amy took the Bible from the bed-side, and kneeling by the fire, turned over some of the pages, seeking for some favourite passage, something to soothe a suffering spirit that might soon be taking flight, "something of heaven," she said, to herself. But then the thought arose, "I could not read such a passage aloud, I could not command my voice—I should break down—and my father must not see me in tears," and the daughter turned over leaf after leaf to hide her emotion, as one who is trying, but in vain, to find out some particular chapter or verse.

"Read where you are—you cannot go wrong," said Reginald Gaveston, observing his daughter's hesitation. "On what does your finger now rest?"

"On the twelfth chapter of Romans," replied Amy.

"That glorious chapter!" cried the sick man with more animation than could have been expected from one so wasted and worn. "When I was in the army, Amy, I used to look upon that chapter as containing the marching orders of the Christian, to direct his course through the enemy's country

in the campaign of life. Amy, he who, through God's grace, shapes his conduct by the rules contained in that chapter, he it is who is a Christian indeed. Let me hear it once again, my daughter; and in the life-long struggle with sin, which with you is but beginning, with me is well-nigh closing, when you would hear a voice, as from Heaven, to encourage and to direct, turn to that chapter in Romans, and remember that it contains all the counsel which a father on his deathbed would wish to impress on the minds, on the hearts of his children."

There was something picturesque in that scene by the lonely Lake of the Woods; the interior of the log-hut, with its rude rafters lit up by the ruddy gleam, which threw on the wall the shadows of the dying man and of the slender girl crouching before the fire, with the Bible resting on her knee. Not that Amy in herself possessed beauty to heighten the effect of the picture, though the uncertain and flickering fire-light showed not imperfections which were very apparent by day. Amy, with her silky flaxen hair, and pale broad brow, would not have been unpleasing in appearance, though never pretty, had it not been for the striking defect of a hare-lip, which not only destroyed the natural form of the mouth, but rendered the girl's speaking indistinct to those who were not accustomed to the peculiarity of her voice. The poor young maiden was painfully sensitive to the effect of this blemish upon others; it made her shrink from the society of strangers, and added, in a distressing degree, to her natural shyness. Perhaps this made Amy more deeply and intensely love the few to whom she was dear, notwithstand-

ing what she deemed her frightful defect. The young daughter's spirits had never rallied from the depression caused by the death of her mother; she had wrapped herself up in her grief, till the sickness of her only remaining parent had roused her again to effort, and sorrow itself seemed to be made an antidote to sorrow.

Amy had scarcely read these words, when the door was suddenly, but not noisily opened, and a youth entered with hasty step.

"How is my father?" he asked, in a low, quick anxious voice.

"Thankful to see you back, Alfred," said Gaveston, stretching out his wasted hand to his son.

"Is the doctor coming?" asked Amy, who had risen on the entrance of her brother.

"No," answered Alfred, almost fiercely, though without much raising his voice. "He has no more heart than that log!"—he kicked one with his foot as he spoke. "He talked of dark nights, rough road, weak health, friends just arrived, of *to-morrow*, when I had told him that the case was urgent, that delay might be"—— Alfred did not finish the sentence, but glanced anxiously towards his father. "I should like to have taken the fellow by the collar, and have forced him to come with me, whether he would or not," muttered the lad, but in tones too low for the captain to overhear.

"Sit down, my boy, you must be weary; did not Dr Clay give you refreshment after your ten miles' walk?"

"He offered it, but I would not touch it," replied Alfred; "I was too angry with him to eat bread in his house, and too impatient to bear delay."

The youth threw himself on the rude seat which Amy had placed for him, stretched his stiff limbs, passed his hand across his heated brow, and, for the first time, thought of being weary.

"Bring him food—drink," said the captain, but Amy was forestalling the command. Noiselessly she had glided to the shelf—alas! almost empty—and was taking down from it the remains of a bird which had been shot by Alfred on the previous day, and what was left of an unleavened cake of her own making. The girl herself had hardly tasted food that day; for poverty was in the house of Captain Gaveston as well as sickness and sorrow. Clouds of locusts in summer had devoured every blade of the crop which he and his son had sown in the ground which their labour had cleared. Gaveston's only horse had strayed, and, it was feared, had fallen a prey to the wolves. Since the death of his wife, the family had been unable to pay the wages even of a single servant, and poor Amy, little suited to perform household work, had had to supply her place.

The eyes of the sick man watched Alfred as the youth silently took his meal, with a heavy, anxious heart. Alfred was one on whom a parent's gaze would naturally rest with pride. He bore no resemblance to his sister; nature had more than made up in the case of the one twin for any deficiency in the other. A sculptor in search of a model for a statue of youthful David, poet and hero in one, needed not have looked beyond Alfred Gaveston to find one. There were strength and grace in the form, beauty in the features, intellect in the brow, while the keen bright eye flashed with the spirit of one who could do and dare. The

countenance usually, perhaps, expressed more of pride and ambition than would have been characteristic of the son of Jesse, but it could soften into almost womanly tenderness; and such was its expression when, after concluding his hasty meal, Alfred came and knelt down by the bed-side of his father.

"I am glad," said Captain Gaveston, "that the doctor did not come; that no stranger was with us to-night, the last night, perhaps, that we shall spend together upon earth. I thank God that my mind is clear; that I am so far free from pain, that I can tell my wishes to my children. Amy, my darling, come and sit here beside me." She seated herself on the floor, resting her clasped hands on the bed. "You will lay me beside your dear mother." A low convulsive sob was Amy's reply; Alfred pressed his lips tightly together, to keep down the rising sigh. "For yourselves," pursued Reginald Gaveston, "were it not that I can look to Him who is the Father of the fatherless, sad and heavy would be my cares for you whom I leave behind. Alfred, my brave boy, you will cherish and watch over your sister, and be to our poor Amy all that I would have been." The boy bent his head; there was no need to utter a promise aloud; the dying parent, the weeping sister, both knew that what passed not the lips, was registered in the heart, and that the silent promise would not be broken. "You," continued the captain, "might make your way to the Red River settlements, and find employment there; but winter is fast approaching; the weather already is breaking up, and Amy must not, cannot be exposed at this season to the dangers and

hardships of a sixty miles' journey on foot." The sick man paused to recover his strength; but, till he spoke again, nothing but the crackling of the fire within, and the howl of the blast without, broke the oppressive silence.

"The Brocks are our nearest, our only neighbours. I have seen very little of the man, as you know, though I have heard him favourably spoken of; but his wife's mother, who lives with him at Blackrock, was for ten years our faithful servant. I know—I am certain—that old Sarah will be kind to Amy for my sake, for the remembrance of days long past. There may be roughness in her manner, but her heart is faithful and warm. Brock will be glad of your help, my son, in his farm. I hope that you will both be able to remain under the shelter of his roof till the winter is over, or at least till you have time to hear from my sister, Lady Vane, now in England."

"The sister who has treated you with such neglect!" interrupted Alfred.

"Bring up no painful recollections, my son; if ever there was a bitter feeling towards her, let it be buried in my grave. It is my hope and desire that, by her assistance, you may both return to England, to be placed under the care of Henry White, my school-fellow, whom I have appointed your guardian. With his wife, Amy will receive gentle nurture; and he, if those means be furnished which he possesses not himself, will set you in the way of gaining such an education as may fit you for a useful station in life."

"The bread of dependence is bitter," muttered Alfred; "but if work of head or hand can avail, neither of us will eat of it long." The youth

raised his head with an air of proud determination.

"Look unto Him, my boy, without whom our strength is but weakness."

"Is not self-reliance a good and a necessary quality?" asked Alfred.

"Reliance upon the Highest is better, and more needful," replied the captain. "Alfred, your bold survey of difficulties before you, as of an enemy with whom you will grapple, and whom, in your own strength, you are confident to be able to subdue, is much like that which was my own when I entered the army. I cared not for a smooth, easy path; I would, by preference, have scaled the rock when I might have passed through the valley. There was pleasure in hardship, excitement, danger; I wished to rise—I was determined to rise—I thought that the only road to happiness lay through distinction: and here I lie now, an unknown man in an obscure corner of the world, thanking God for having disappointed my ambition, and humbled my pride!"

"You are here," said Alfred, with filial reverence, "because you preferred duty to distinction. But it does not follow that because your hopes of success failed, mine must perish also."

"If they rest on God, and not on self, the Almighty will prosper your efforts as may be best for your true welfare, my son. But the bold proud hopes of my own youth have often since reminded me of my own ignorant simplicity in childhood. My very earliest recollection is of my ambition to have an oak of my own, which should grow to be the largest tree in the world. A little plot in our garden had been given to me, and there I resolved

that my tree should stand. I gathered an oak apple, the largest that I could find, and buried it under the sod. I remember how I watched and watched for the little oak, which I was sure would grow from that apple; how I cried with childish vexation, when my nurse showed me that what I had taken for a shoot was only a weed. I have often thought since, that, till God's seed of life fell in my heart, I was constantly repeating in youth the experiment of childhood, sowing my oak-apples of hope and ambition, and looking for happiness to spring from the galls that contained not even its germ!"

CHAPTER II.

PASSING AWAY.

"*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*"—ROMANS xii. 1.

"FATHER, dearest, are you not tired, would you not sleep?" said Amy, as, after gliding softly to a different part of the hut, she brought a strengthening beverage to her parent.

"Not yet, my child, I shall sleep soundly soon," said the dying man.

"I trust that the crisis is past," observed Alfred, grasping at the shadow of hope.

Gaveston faintly smiled; he knew well that the temporary rally which he appeared to have made, was as the last bright flicker of an expiring flame, that the ease which was succeeding agony was the token that his malady had accomplished its work. He was thankful for the physical relief, the power to collect his thoughts, and the energy to express them, for Gaveston wished to speak words on that last night which his children might remember; to leave them, as his parting gift, memories of truths uttered at a time when every sentence would be treasured.

"Amy was beginning to read the twelfth chapter of Romans," said the captain; "read the first verse to me, my daughter: it brings before us what we may regard as the oath of allegiance by

which the soldier of Christ binds himself to the service of his King. Raise me a little, Alfred, and stir the fire to a blaze; it is still cold, strangely cold—at least it seems so to me."

Alfred stirred the fire; took off his own rough coat, and gently laid it above the buffalo skin which covered the sufferer's wasted form. He then seated himself again in an attitude of attention, while Amy, with a tremulous voice, read what her father had desired to hear.

"*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*"

"Stop there, it is enough," said Gaveston, arresting the progress of the reading by a movement of his hand. "How few, oh! how few of those who presume to think themselves Christians, could stand the test of that verse! A small portion of one day in seven spent in coldly observing forms of devotion, a few minutes, perhaps, given to lifeless prayer on each of the other days, an abstinence from such gross sins as the world itself condemns, and such alms bestowed on the poor as will not be missed by the giver—such is the sum of religion which satisfies the consciences of most of those who deem themselves heirs of heaven! Where is the sacrifice of *self*, that whole sacrifice which Faith requires, and which alone God will accept!"

"I do not know how we can present our bodies a living sacrifice," said Amy in a low tone of voice.

"As Christ gave His sacred body a sacrifice for us, so must we present our bodies to Him," replied Gaveston, kindling with his theme. "His was a

dying sacrifice, offered in anguish; ours must be a *living* sacrifice, presented in joy! As His powers were devoted to our welfare, so must ours be devoted to His glory. In memory of His blessed hands and feet pierced for us, we give our hands to works of charity, our feet to the walk of faith. Was the Redeemer's tongue parched with thirst? Then must the tongue of the redeemed be devoted to prayer, praise, and words of truth and love. Was the sacred head, the throne of intellect, crowned with thorns? Then must the Christian's powers of mind be dedicated and sanctified to the service of God. Was the heart, whose every pulse was mercy and love, pierced and broken for sinners? It is a small thing that our hearts, with their warm hopes and affections, be laid at the feet of our Lord! This, and nothing less than this, is our *reasonable service!*"

"But it is to be a *holy* sacrifice," murmured Amy, "and if—we cannot"—she stopped short, afraid that she had said too much. But her father, who had turned his head to listen, seemed to read the unuttered thought.

"If we cannot in ourselves offer anything that is holy, if our best works are blotted with sin, our minds warped, our hearts full of evil, how can we bring a sacrifice acceptable unto God? Oh! my child, He who has given the wish to offer, will also grant the power to offer, both come alone from His Spirit! Like Elijah we must do what the Lord appoints; then lift up our hands and pray for the holy fire from above—the Spirit to kindle the offering—the Spirit which descends to warm, to purify, and to enlighten."

Alfred had sat silent, but deeply attentive; he

now raised his head and spoke, "It seems hard in youth to sacrifice everything even to duty, and for the hope of heaven."

"It is only hard when the sacrifice is a *divided* one," said the dying father, "when we would give half to the world, and half to God. Such sacrifice is painful in the making, and dead in the offering, for to be *living* it must be *whole*. As the lip, the hand, are dead things and worthless when severed from the body, so is lip-service or hand-service, divided from the service of the heart. My son, that heart-service is *a delight*." Unearthly brightness seemed to light up Gaveston's countenance as he continued, clasping his thin hands as he gazed upwards, like one upon whose vision the glories of another world were already opening, "if we give ourselves freely, *unreservedly*, to God, our lives, our hopes, our happiness are in the hands of Him whose wisdom is infinite, whose love is eternal! Our treasure is laid up where it cannot be lost! I have had many trials in life, God knows! more, perhaps, than usually fall to the lot of many, but now that that life is passing away, or rather, opening into eternity, I can add my testimony to that of thousands who have gone before, that nothing is truly our own but what we have given to God, that no sacrifice made for His sake is ever regretted at the last, that our only grief in looking back is to think that we have been so cold, so unworthy, so unwilling to love, trust, and obey!" Gaveston unclasped his hands and extended one to each of his children, while, summoning up all his remaining strength he added, "come to the Saviour *now*, now in the days of your youth! and remember that my last parting blessing on your heads was a prayer,

that those most dear to me might offer themselves, soul and body, a living sacrifice over the grave of a dead father, to a Father who cannot die!"

Exhausted by the effort which he had made, Reginald Gaveston sank back on his pillow and closed his eyes. A deep holy peace pervaded his soul; he was now able, in full assurance of faith to commend his children to the care of their God. His working-day of trial was over, his labours were ended, sweet was the rest before him! There were no terrors around that deathbed, the Christian knew in whom he had believed. As Alfred and Amy watched through that long night the gradual painless loosening of the earthly cords that had bound the immortal spirit to dust, even their grief was hushed in a sense of holy awe. If the presence of angels, and of the Lord of angels, be ever felt and realised, surely it is in the stillness of the chamber in which the Christian is passing through death unto life!

Morning dawned in its radiant beauty, and the bright sunbeams entered the log-hut of Reginald Gaveston. They fell on the forms of two young orphans, kneeling, with their faces buried in their hands, beside the pallet on which lay the lifeless remains of a parent. Even Amy's sobs were stilled, though the tears trickled through her fingers, for she felt that an exile had returned to his home, a sufferer risen to glory.

I will not dwell on the days of trial that immediately followed. The log-hut of the Gavestons was two miles distant from Blackrock, the nearest dwelling, and more than sixty from the residence of any missionary clergyman. The orphans closely obeyed the directions given by their father; the remains of Captain Gaveston were laid by those of

his wife, and the prayers uttered over the grave were from the lips of his son. There was no funeral pomp, but there was deep heart-felt sorrow. On the wooden cross which Reginald had made himself, and placed by the grave of his Emma, Alfred cut with his penknife, another name and another date, and his half broken-hearted sister hung on it wreaths of he last fading flowers of autumn. And there, silently, but solemnly, the two young beings left desolate in a cold world, obeyed the dying request of their parent, and offered themselves, souls and bodies, living sacrifices to their father's God, praying that He would, by His grace, enable them henceforth so to live that in another world they might rejoin in glory, those whom they had loved and lost in this!

CHAPTER III.

THE CHALLENGE.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—ROMANS xii. 2.

LEAVING Alfred and Amy for awhile by the tomb of their parents, I will briefly relate the circumstances which had brought the Gavestons to their wild home on the shore of the Lake of the Woods.

Reginald Gaveston had, as he said, entered the army with hope and ambition, and a spirit that would have carried him triumphant through difficulties and dangers. Had he been thrown into active warfare, he would have headed the forlorn hope, or by some act of desperate valour, won the Victoria Cross, had that order then been known. But opportunity was wanting. Reginald served during part of the forty years of comparative peace which succeeded the long struggle against France. He was for some time located with a detachment of his regiment in a quiet garrison town, where the energies of the young officer seemed at first to be likely to be wasted. It was here, however, that Reginald found earth's best treasure in a pious wife, and a treasure more precious still, because not of earth, such a knowledge of the truth as was to influence the whole of his after life. As soon as the young officer had given himself to the service of his Heavenly King, the power of his faith

was instantly shown in its fruits. There was no chaplain with Gaveston's detachment; he became the friend, the father, the pastor of his men. It was he who formed the library; he who taught in the class; he whose words and influence drew the soldier from the public-house to the church and meeting. Nor was Gaveston's work confined to this. Well was the tall figure of the officer known in the humblest dwellings of the poor. Often would he bend his head to enter the low doorways of abodes where poverty, misery, and dirt abounded, but which gradually brightened under his influence, as if he had brought the sunshine with him. Gaveston's was a peculiarly cheerful spirit—he rejoiced in his work; and, perhaps, during the years which he spent at D——, there was no happier man in the kingdom than he.

But darker days were to come. After a while Reginald, now Captain Gaveston, was ordered to the head-quarters of his regiment, and, leaving many a grateful heart behind him, he, with his wife and children, removed to a wider and far more difficult sphere. The —— was, at that time, noted as the worst-conducted regiment in all the British army, its tone of morality was the lowest, and the example of its colonel, a man of high rank, but most depraved character, had spread its infection not only through the corps of officers, but the ranks of the soldiers also. The regiment was most unfortunate also in its chaplain, a man who was absorbed in the pleasures of the table, and who would as soon have thought of entering a lion's den, as of faithfully rebuking sin in those who held high position. Drunkenness, gambling, blasphemy and all other evils prevailed, and it

was commonly said, that if a young officer entered that regiment, he must leave his religion behind him.

It was into this festering mass of corruption that the single handful of salt was thrown. Captain Gaveston, a Christian man, found himself at once in a position of the utmost difficulty. Three courses were open before him. The first, was to let himself be carried away by the current of evil, to be as others were, to do as others did; but this was a course which he never contemplated even for one moment; Gaveston had not read in vain the command, *be not conformed to this world.*

The second alternative was, to shut himself up as much as was possible in the little circle of his family, and, except by performing the needful routine of regimental duties, avoid all intercourse with the world of evil around him. Inclination pointed this way, but inclination was not Gaveston's guide. Shrinking from showing his colours, and purchasing peace by keeping at a cowardly distance from contest, would not enable him to prove *what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* Gaveston did not shun his brother officers, though he very rarely dined at the mess; on the contrary he exercised hospitality to the utmost extent of his slender means, and the younger officers especially received from him kind and cordial welcome. But not one oath or profane word could ever be suffered under Gaveston's roof, and there was a tacit understanding that those who partook at his board, remained to be present at his family prayers. It needed no small amount of resolute courage thus to make an open, though a quiet stand against irreligion and vice. Gaveston knew that his name

became a bye-word with the mocker, that he was spoken of as a fanatic and a fool; but he swerved not either to the right or the left.

A wide field for usefulness was opened to the Christian officer amongst the common soldiers; those who were rushing on the path to that place of misery, whose name was so often in their lips, were surprised to find that there was one in authority over them who cared for their souls. Those apparently hardened in vice began to have thoughts of the days when they had heard the chimes of their village church bells, and remembered that they had mothers and sisters at home. Emma Gaveston went as a gentle ministering angel amongst the women, and the boldest blasphemer kept reverential silence as the lady passed by.

Months, years flowed on, and the effect of the leaven was seen. Gaveston no longer stood alone, he had become the head of a small but devoted band of Christian men, who were mockingly called "Gaveston's saints." He received letters, which warmed and cheered his heart, from anxious parents, whose sons he had been the means of saving from ruin. He had acted as a breakwater against the rushing tide of evil; and those who would have been swept away by the flood, were enabled, by his example and encouragement, to make some head against it.

But as the breakwater has to endure the most furious lashing of the angry waves, so had Gaveston to endure a storm of hatred and persecution that might well have overwhelmed a spirit less brave and devoted. The colonel of the regiment, Lord de Morne, hated him with a deep and deadly hatred, and swore many an oath that he would not

rest till he had got that "detestable, meddling fanatic turned out of the corps." The rank and influence of Lord de Morne made him a formidable enemy, and he was a man who prided himself on hunting an adversary to the death. Many a scheme was laid against Gaveston, and defeated by his simple uprightness of conduct, and the high character which he had ever maintained in the service.

At last, Major Portal, a man entirely under the influence of the colonel, forced a quarrel upon Gaveston, and sent him a challenge. Those were not days when the custom of duelling had fallen into just disrepute; a man's honour was then, as is still the case in some parts of the continent, considered to be involved in his acceptance or refusal of a challenge.

"I wonder why Reginald sent for Captain Trevor at so late an hour this evening, and why they remain shut up so long together," thought Emma Gaveston, with a foreboding sense of approaching evil. "Some more of these regimental annoyances, I fear. Trevor is an honourable man, and, I believe, a true friend; but upon what kind of subject would Reginald wish to consult him?"

Mrs Gaveston glanced at the clock; it was pointing past the hour for family prayer.

"I must go and remind Reginald of the time—I never knew him so unpunctual before; Captain Trevor will doubtless stay with us," and Mrs Gaveston, with a slow, hesitating step, descended the staircase, for something made her fear to break on the private interview between the officers.

As Emma laid her fingers on the door handle, she caught the sound of words uttered by Trevor, in an excited, almost angry voice.

"If you don't go out, you must quit the army!" Mrs Gaveston opened the door, and entered; but the sentence which she had overheard had struck on her heart like a knell. The two officers were seated at the table; Trevor looked flushed and excited, Reginald very pale and older than she had ever seen him appear before. Emma felt that she had interrupted a conversation on some subject of deep interest; she trembled to think what its nature might be, and was scarcely able to answer her husband's questioning look, with "it is past ten, Reginald; shall we have prayers?"

"Yes, we shall have prayers," said Gaveston calmly, rising from his seat as he spoke. "Trevor, you will stay till they are over."

"Not to-night," replied the officer hurriedly; "I have said all that I can say—you know my opinion—you'll give me your final decision to-morrow," and taking rather a *brusque* leave of the lady, Captain Trevor quitted the house.

Gaveston brought his family Bible, put it on the table, and found out his place, while Emma, with a nervous hand, rang the bell for the servants. The poor lady was ready to faint, her brain seemed turning round, and round; she could not hear one word of the portion of Scripture read by her husband—it was the twelfth chapter of Romans. Gaveston did not close the Bible when he had ended the reading, but left the volume open. Then all knelt down to pray, and if Mrs Gaveston had not listened, at least, she prayed, and that with the fervour of a soul in mortal fear.

When the servants had quitted the room, Gaveston, who saw his wife's emotion, motioned to her to come and take a chair by his side.

"You wish, doubtless, my love, to know what made me send for Trevor to-night. I had to consult him about this," and Gaveston handed to Emma the letter which contained the challenge from Portal.

"I knew it," Mrs Gaveston faintly murmured. "Oh! Reginald, could you, as a Christian, accept this challenge!"

"If I had thought that I could," replied her husband, "I should never have shown you that letter."

"Thank God!" cried the wife, bursting into tears.

"But it will be my ruin to refuse it!" said Gaveston, rising and pacing the room with agitated steps;" "I know what is before me, Trevor spoke but the truth."

"And could he, dare he urge you to expose your precious life, and perhaps stain your hand with the blood of a fellow-creature!" exclaimed Mrs Gaveston, looking up with indignation flashing through her tears. "False friend, wicked man that he is!"

"You do him injustice, Emma. Trevor knew me too well to think that I would take a man's life in a private quarrel, however great my provocation might be; he but urged me to satisfy what is deemed a sense of honour, by standing one shot from Portal's pistol, and firing my own into the air. This would be sufficient to maintain my reputation in the eyes of the world, and I have been strongly tempted to follow the advice of my friend. Nay, look not thus frightened, my love; words which I have read this night from that book," Gaveston pointed towards the open Bible, "have thrown such light on the path of duty, that at all cost, I must decline accepting this challenge. Duelling

is a practice which my reason disapproves, and my conscience condemns; it is essentially *of the world*, that world to which a Christian must not be conformed. I must not, will not sanction by my example that which I firmly believe to be wrong, and so lead those who have looked to me for guidance to think that the fear of earthly shame can excuse inconsistency in a servant of God."

Reginald Gaveston kept to his resolution, and endured the consequences. They were to a brave man, such as he, far more terrible than death. The officer was considered disgraced, degraded; a distorted account of the affair reached head-quarters —Lord de Morne exerted all his influence—and after weeks of such trial and persecution, as seriously affected his health, Gaveston was forced to give up the unequal contest, and sell out of the army. The colonel rubbed his hands in exultation, and swore, with a blasphemous oath, that he had crushed the reptile at last!

Thus was a brave and honourable man sacrificed for daring to resist a custom, which, not very long afterwards, fell into general obloquy in England, as quite unworthy of a Christian land. Most great reformations have their martyrs at first.

Cast upon the world, forced as it were to begin life anew, with a wife and two children, and little means beyond what the sale of his commission had brought him, his health undermined, his spirits depressed, Gaveston felt his cross to be a heavy one indeed; and yet he bore it bravely, looking unto One who, for his sake, had endured shame, reproach, and loss. He went up to London to arrange his future movements, and consult his friends, especially Lady Vane, his sister and only near re-

lation. This lady resided in Grosvener Square, and her brother's knock at her door was answered by a butler and two powdered footmen waiting to usher her guests into her presence.

Lady Vane received her brother with mingled embarrassment and pity. He had lost his status in society, his conduct had been sharply criticised in fashionable clubs, harshly commented on in a leading journal; he had thrown away his chance of honourable distinction. Lady Vane hoped that Sir George, or General Montleroy would not chance to call while Reginald was with her.

In the conversation which ensued between the brother and sister, Lady Vane but lightly touched on the cause of the difficulties in which Gaveston was involved.

"I daresay that you meant all for the best," said the lady, quivering her spangled fan, for she felt, or affected to feel, the weather oppressive; "I know that your ideas are peculiar, dear Reginald. It is a pity that the army was ever selected for your profession. What are you going to do now?"

"That is a subject to which I have been giving anxious thought. It is necessary that I should exert myself for the support of my wife and children."

"Ah! yes, certainly. You are not yet forty, I suppose that you will enter the Church?"

"No," replied Reginald Gaveston; "there are reasons which render my taking orders impossible."

"Certainly the Church affords but a poor provision, as there is no living in the gift of the family," said the woman of the world, reclining back on her luxurious velvet sofa, "then what do your friends advise?"

"Some have suggested business."—

Gaveston could see the pink flush rising to the cheek of his sister. She almost insensibly drew herself a little farther from her brother, and said in a very cold tone, "business! If you enter into anything of the kind, I hope that—but of course it will not be in London."

Gaveston was deeply hurt, and, let it be confessed, a little angry also. "You need not be alarmed, Amelia," he replied, rising from his seat as he spoke; "I am going to carry my cares and my poverty far enough from my father's family. I shall emigrate to Rupert's Land, as several friends have advised me to do, and lay out my little capital in setting up in a small farm there."

Lady Vane's heart smote her a little after her brother had quitted the house, and with something like a pang of regret, she watched his tall slight form from a window, as he crossed the square with a rapid step.

"Poor dear Reginald," she murmured to herself with a sigh; "it is sad to think of his banishing himself to such a dreary out-of-the-way corner of the earth! I really should be almost inclined to offer to keep his poor little daughter here, and adopt her as my own, were she not such a fright. But to introduce a girl with a hare-lip into the world would be impossible, not to be thought of! Perhaps it is better that the poor little creature should be quietly buried in a place where there will be no one to see her.

Reginald Gaveston and his family went out to Rupert's Land, and the retired officer purchased a small property on the bank of the Lake of the Woods. Here the retired officer lived and laboured for four trying years. The step of emigrating had

been perhaps too hastily taken, under the influence of wounded feelings, and, as the reader is aware, it had been regretted by Reginald Gaveston. His education and physical powers were not adapted for the life of a settler. He made strenuous and persevering efforts, but they were not crowned with success. His little capital was sunk in what afforded him and his family bare means of subsistence. An unfavourable season, mortality amongst cattle, and then the crowning plague of locusts, reduced Gaveston at length to such poverty, that he could not even remove to Montreal, far less to England, without throwing himself on the generosity of a worldly-minded sister. When it became evident that the scheme of farming, as regarded himself, was a failure, Gaveston had attempted to sell the land, though at great disadvantage, and so redeem back part of the capital sunk on it. But here again his efforts had failed. Gaveston's faith and submission were grievously tried, especially by that affliction to which all others seemed light—the loss of his wife. Reginald was not to linger long after her whom he had so tenderly loved. His earthly career had been one of disappointment, and to the world it might appear that he had lived in vain; but it was not so. Wherever the Christian had passed on his heavenward way, he had left his footprints behind him—he had exercised an influence for good which would long survive him. He had sown in sorrow the seeds of light, and he had now gone to reap the harvest of bliss which awaits those who, though in the world, are not of the world—those who, by God's grace, have deliberately chosen their portion in that blessed home where there is the fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

CHAPTER IV.

DEPARTURE.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."—ROMANS xii. 3.

"OH, that I could only lay down my head here and die!" murmured poor Amy, as she knelt for the last time beside the grave of her parents, on the day of her departure from her now desolate home.

The girl shivered, for already the icy chill of approaching winter was felt. A few large snow-flakes fell on her black dress from the cloudy sky. Above her head a large flock of white geese were winging their way to the south, the sure sign of the approach of that fearful cold which sweeps over Rupert's Land with a severity such as we never experience in our more favoured clime.

Amy heard the voice of her brother calling her, and felt that she dare stay no longer, or her limbs would become as cold and dead as her heart already felt. She rose pale, but without weeping; those swollen eyelids seemed to have exhausted their store of tears. Amy pressed her lips again and again to the wooden cross, and then hastened back to the hut where she found her brother in the midst of packages which contained the few little articles of property which the orphans were going to take with them.

"I called you, Amy," said Alfred, "for I expect every moment that Brock's cart will come for those things, as I arranged with him on Monday. You will wrap the buffalo robe round you to keep out the cold during the drive."

"I would rather, much rather walk over to Blackrock with you," replied Amy; "I could not bear to go amongst strangers all alone."

"As you will," said Alfred; "it is but a walk of two miles; perhaps it will refresh you, my poor Amy," he added more tenderly, looking with compassion at the pale face of the girl worn with sleeplessness and sorrow. Amy had not her brother's firmness of soul and elasticity of spirit to bear her through the trials of life.

"It seems dreadful to go to a new home," faltered Amy.

"Never call it a home, it is no home, merely a lodging for a few months," exclaimed Alfred with a little impatience. "If it had not been for *his* wishes and commands, which are sacred, I would never have taken my sister to pass one night under the roof of low people like the Brocks." The youth seated himself on a parcel of books, and folded his arms with an air of sullen submission.

"What would you have done?" asked Amy, who had made a seat of another large package beside him.

"I would rather have weathered the winter here, with my axe to cut down firewood, and my gun to bring in food."

"Oh! Alfred," cried Amy with an involuntary shiver, "remember last winter, the awful fearful cold, the glass twelve degrees below zero, when we had to cut our meat—ay, and our drink too,

with a hatchet, for the water froze in the very room where we kept up a fire all night!"

Alfred glanced at his sister's fragile form, and felt that though he, in his vigour, might survive the hardships of such another winter without the comforts which had softened the rigours of the last, his sister, under such circumstances, would in all probability never live to the spring.

"If we could not stay here," he observed, "I would have found my way to Montreal or Toronto, there would be some opening for me there, something beyond the daily drudgery of a settler's life, ploughing, sowing, digging, hewing. I always feel as if giving one's energies to such boor's work were like using a carefully polished sword to turn up the sod, instead of a common ploughshare."

"Would you have gone on foot?" asked Amy.

"I have no other way of travelling," replied Alfred; "you know that we must remain penniless, till I can succeed in turning this wasted land into money."

"Then you must have left me behind," said his sister, inwardly blessing the tender foresight of a parent who had thought of her weakness, her loneliness, in making an arrangement which with its many disadvantages, was the most considerate for her.

"What a selfish, thoughtless fellow I am!" exclaimed Alfred. "You must forgive me, Amy but my spirit is so chafed," he added, rising and pacing up and down before the door of the log-hut "I foresee what sort of a winter is before us. I shall be a kind of farm-servant to a fellow, who, in England, would never have dreamed of sitting down in my presence, one who will show me no

more respect than as if my birth were as low as his own! Now it was tolerable to work under my father; however uncongenial the toil might be, there was nothing really degrading in it; but to have to do the bidding of Brock!" Alfred Gaveston ground his teeth in the bitterness of his spirit.

"It will be trying and painful," murmured Amy, gazing up at her princely-looking brother, with mingled admiration and pity.

"And you, Amy, what will be your position?" continued Alfred, knitting his brows.

"I hope that old Sarah Whetstone will be kind," said Amy, sadly. "She sent eggs and nice things of her own making to dear papa during his illness. He thought well of her, and he must have known her character, for she was for ten years in grandpapa's house."

"As a *servant* she was," cried Alfred, scornfully, "and I daresay that she could prepare a meal, or scrub a floor, well enough, but she is no protector for my father's daughter! You will have to make yourself useful, Amy; you know what that means in a land like this. Just hear this,"—Alfred stopped in his rapid walk, and stood fronting his sister, as he went on with increasing bitterness of tone; "when that man Brock told me what he expected from me in return for shelter, board, and something that I was to have at the end of four months"—the proud boy could not force out the word wages—"the fellow added, 'and I hope the girl's a handy lass, and will look after the child, and help in the kitchen. This ain't a place for idle hands or useless mouths.' I should like to have knocked him down!"

"But he spoke the truth," said Amy, with a

shivering sigh; "I must expect at Blackrock, as here, to do something of household work."

"Here you were amongst *equals*," cried Alfred.

"Oh! Alfred, dearest," said his sister, "do not let us make our heavy yoke more galling by struggling against it! It is God who has sent us this trial; should we not try to bear it meekly?"

"I feel such a demon of pride rising up in my heart!" muttered Alfred.

"Perhaps all this is sent just to keep down our pride," suggested Amy.

"It does not seem as if it would have that effect with me," said Alfred. "You may imprison steam, close the safety valve, try to press down the struggling vapour with iron and brass, but the only effect is an explosion; it bursts the boiler at last!"

"But, Alfred, when we knelt together," Amy glanced mournfully towards the spot which she had so lately quitted, "did we not give ourselves *quite* up to God, not only to do what He pleased, but to bear what He pleased? Does He not bid us take up meekly the cross, so painful to our pride, and will He not help us patiently to bear it?" Alfred did not appear to be angry at the timid words of his sister, so Amy ventured to go on. "Perhaps God knows that if we were, as we would wish to be, prosperity would draw us away from Him."

"Perhaps it might," said Alfred, more calmly. "I suspect that, if I had the opportunity, I should so throw my whole heart and soul into my studies, give my time so unreservedly to gaining the knowledge that might help me to rise, that I might forget things more important still. But after all," he added, drawing himself up to his full height, "mine would be a just and honourable ambition. I could

serve God far better, and do a great deal more good, if I were in the position to which my birth entitles me."

"God knows," said Amy, very softly; "perhaps He is taking His own way of preparing you for great usefulness hereafter, by teaching you patience and submission now."

"Amy, yours is true Christian philosophy," said Alfred, after a little pause. "I have resolved to learn that chapter—my father's chapter—by heart; and I believe that it will take me a lifetime thoroughly to master the lesson taught in those few words, that bid every man *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.* The hot aspiring steam," continued Alfred, with a sad smile, as he recurred to his own simile, "requires a little of the cold water of the condenser to bring it down to its just dimensions, and make it do its appointed work."

"I don't quite understand the meaning of the last part of that verse," said Amy, "*according* as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

"I suppose that it means that we should not make our standard of greatness that which is the world's standard—rank, wealth, talents. The measure of faith is the measure of heaven; the humble here are the exalted there. We have been taught these things from our cradles, Amy, but it is hard to bring them into real practical use, and to look at worldly power and fame as we shall look at them from the eternal shore."

"There is the sound of wheels!" cried Amy.

In another minute a cart came in view, jolting over the rude track which could scarcely be called a road. The cart was driven by a man in a rough

shaggy greatcoat. The appearance of the individual was not such as to reassure the mind of Gaveston's young daughter. One glance at him made her more fully enter into her brother's repugnance to serving under him. It was not merely that Tom Brock's countenance was coarse and weather-beaten, but that it did not bear the stamp of frank honesty upon it; his was the side-long glance that never meets a full open gaze, but avoids it as if instinctively, and Brock's manner, though bluff almost to rudeness, strangely enough did not convey an impression of perfect ease.

"I guess you expected me before now," cried Brock, as he drew up his heated horse before the door of the log-hut, "but your roads," he added a curse, "might break the legs of a bison! Here, hand up your traps quickly; daylight is short, and the nights are growing uncommon cold. You, girl, tumble up; I suppose you want to ride."

"My sister prefers walking," said Alfred, coldly. "So much the better for Speedy, though she's but a feather-weight, I take it. What's in this heavy parcel?" added Brock, who was rapidly packing the cart, as Alfred handed up something to be put by the driver.

"Books," replied the youth.

"Books—trash!" exclaimed Brock, contemptuously. "I'm not going to be lumbered with such rubbish; I'd soon make a bonefire of 'em!" and Brock threw the parcel down from the cart.

Amy saw with alarm the angry flush rising to the cheek of her brother. "Take them back into the cottage, Alfred," she whispered, pressing his arm; "we will lock them up with the other things which we cannot carry away. Don't let us—oh!

don't let us begin by quarrelling with this rough man!"

Alfred bit his lip, but repressing other outward sign of anger, stooped, raised the parcel, and carried it into the log-hut, resolving to open it as soon as Brock should have driven away, and bear on his own person to Blackrock such books as he most required. The cart in the meantime was packed, Brock making jesting observations while he worked, which jarred painfully on the ears of those whose little property was to be carried away from the place which for years had been a home. It was a great relief to Alfred and Amy when the business was done; and Brock, gathering up the rein, with two sharp cuts of his whip, made his little horse go plunging down the road by which he had come.

Alfred made his last arrangements in the log-hut, while Amy stood shivering without, watching the receding cart, and listening to the sound of the receding wheels, while quite unconscious that she was doing either. Her heart was in the grave of her parents, and she could hardly refrain from returning to bid one more farewell to that spot. The day was, however, advancing, the time for yielding to bursts of tender regret was past. Alfred and Amy were soon wending their way, silent and sorrowful, from the place around which clung so many dear recollections, and from the peaceful, —and, to them—sacred spot, where the dust of their parents slept.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW HOME.

"Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."—ROMANS xii. 3.

"WELL, but if he ain't a chip of the old block, and a goodly one! Master Reginald's eyes, and his figure, just as I knew him nigh thirty years back! Ay, ay, 'time flies fast, and death is sure,' as the saying is; but I could fancy it was Master Reginald himself standing there!"

The speaker was an old woman of somewhat peculiar appearance, who stood to welcome the Gavestons at the door of the farm-house of Blackrock. Sarah Whetstone had been a tall, bony woman, active and strong, but time and toil had weakened her sinewy frame; and a stoop, caused by a painful swelling at the back of her neck, had taken several inches from her height. Instead of a cap, Sarah wore a red handkerchief tied round her head in turban shape, beneath which escaped some thin grizzled locks. The weird-like effect of this head-dress was increased by her stoop, compelling Mrs Whetstone to look up with her keen grey eyes through the thick projecting grizzled brows that overhung them. The searching gaze of those eyes was embarrassing to poor Amy, on whom it was now directed. The young girl was peculiarly conscious of the defect in her own appearance when in the presence of strangers.

"Humph! takes of the mother, I suppose," was Mrs Whetstone's only remark, but one made in a tone which conveyed no compliment. "Come in and warm yourself, poor child; you're perishing with cold, and the sun has gone down."

Amy was glad to enter the comfortable dwelling. Blackrock, though built of logs like the home which the orphans had quitted, was far more roomy, well-constructed, and warm. The site had been well-chosen—a pine-grove shielded the farmhouse from the northern blast—and it commanded a beautiful view of the isle-dotted lake of the woods. It was pleasant to the girl to find herself seated beside a blazing fire, with a bowl of steaming porridge, for her long walk and the keen evening air had made her feel hungry and weary. Amy timidly glanced around her to make a survey of her new home. The room, homely, but comfortable in appearance, served the double purpose of kitchen and parlour. Pots, pans and various articles of coarse crockery were neatly ranged on shelves, a gun was hung over the fire-place, while nets and fishing-rods in a corner showed that the lake was laid under contribution to supply the table. An open door gave a glimpse into what was evidently a store-closet; hams and a side of bacon were hanging up there, and the scent of the tea and coffee which loaded the broad shelves, suggested the idea of abundance to those who had lately enjoyed so few of the comforts of civilized life.

"Are there any means of sending letters to England from hence?" inquired Alfred of old Mrs Whetstone, as he warmed himself by the fire.

"We're far out of the reach of the post—out of the world altogether one may say," observed the

ancient dame. "But you've come at a lucky time, for there's Ben Green off to the Red River folk at day-break to-morrow, to lay in our winter supplies before the hard frost sets in. He'll carry anything for you for a little tobacco. As for us, we don't get a letter once in three months from the old country, 'out of sight out of mind,' as the saying goes."

"I shall then write at once to our aunt and our guardian," said Alfred addressing himself to his sister.

"Ay, 'time and tide wait for no man,'" remarked Mrs Whetstone. "You'll find the desk and the other things up in your loft, there, through the yard, up the steps yonder. Don't you mind its being over the barn, I've shaken down the bed myself and put everything to rights—Betsy, she's busy with the packing. You'll find everything in apple-pie order, and clean, for 'cleanliness is next to godliness.' Wait a bit and I'll give you a light. Dear heart! how it brings back old times to look on your bonnie young face!"

Shortly after Alfred had quitted the room, feet were heard clattering down the ladder-like stairs, and Mrs Brock made her appearance. She was rather a stout good-looking woman, with brown complexion and coarse dark hair. The expression of her countenance—anxiously scanned by Amy, who felt that on the character of her hostess much of her future comfort must depend—was chiefly that of careless good-humour, it had none of the keen intelligence of that of her mother, Mrs Whetstone.

"I can't get the little brat to sleep, he's as playful and mischievous as a squirrel," were Betsy's first words as she bustled into the room; then per-

ceiving Amy she advanced towards her, and held out her brown hand with a "ah! so you've come—glad to see you." Mrs Brock then by the bright fire-light took a deliberate survey of the shrinking guest. Amy's unfortunate hare-lip at once attracted her attention.

"Accident, or born with it?" asked the coarse-minded woman.

Poor Amy's pale face was in a moment suffused with crimson, and a mingled sensation of distress and anger took from her all power to reply. Old Sarah came to the rescue.

"Don't bother her about her looks, Betsy, 'handsome is what handsome does,' as the saying is."

"I've something for her to do then at once," said Mrs Brock bluntly, "for I can't be worriting upstairs with the child, when I've all the things to get ready for Ben Green to-night, and the lists to make out. A fine business it would be if I forget to lay in the salt or the soap, for the winter. Come you up with me," Betsy continued, addressing herself to Amy, "the boy can't be left alone, or he'll be getting into mischief."

Silently Amy followed her bustling conductor up the narrow steep stair, Mrs Brock carrying a light with her, and chatting as she went.

"You'll be a deal better off here in winter than you were in your poor log-hut yonder. Brock says it's right out of repair, and will be afalling to pieces afore spring. We don't spare firewood here, and Ben Green will bring a fresh cask of whisky from the settlements. There, that's mother's room," she pointed as she passed to a good-sized apartment of which the door was open, "that's your little bed in the corner."

"I hope that I may have a room to myself," said Amy, with a painful effort.

"A room to yourself! my patience!" and Mrs Brock burst out laughing; "I hope that you're not going to bring your fine lady notions here!" still laughing at the idea of Amy's absurd expectations, and repeating to herself, "a room to herself, indeed!" Mrs Brock opened the door of her own apartment, which contained, besides her own bed, a cot, roughly made, with a high wooden side to prevent its little tenant from falling out.

Above this wooden wall appeared the round curly head of a child of about two years of age, with merry black eyes, and over it one plump little bare foot was seen; Johnnie Brock was detected in the very act of clambering out of his prison.

"Ah! you little rogue!" cried the mother; and the child ducked down again amongst the clothes, laughing, kicking, and crowing. He was a playful little fellow, and having been put to bed earlier than usual to be out of the way of his busy mother, he was a great deal more inclined at the moment for romping than sleeping.

"Just you mind him a bit, I've not a minute to spare," said Mrs Brock as she put down the light; and shaking her finger playfully at the boy whose merry face was peeping up again, she hastily left the room, and clattered down the steep stair.

There is something in the innocent mirth of a little child which does not jar even on the heaviest heart. Who can look severely or sadly upon a laughing baby! Amy, miserable as she felt, was disposed to make friends with her little charge. She went up to the cot of Johnnie, patted him, spoke to him, and smiled, then, as the child was restless

and eager to be taken out, she lifted him up in her arms, wrapped him in the soft coverlet, and carried him to a chair on which she seated herself, with the curly-headed boy on her knees.

Johnnie was not laughing now; he was looking up with his black inquiring eyes at the stranger, exercising that faculty which seems to be a gift to children, that of reading the heart on the visage. Presently an expression of grave pity came over the round chubby face; a little plump finger was put softly up to Amy's blemished lip, and the child lisped out, "poor! poor!"——

The infant's unexpected word and look of sympathy unlocked the floodgate of tears. "Oh! you little darling, can you feel for me!" exclaimed Amy, clasping the little one close to her heart, and bursting into a passionate flood of weeping, which astonished and half-frightened the child. But young as he was, Johnnie recognized the close embrace for that of tenderness and love. "No cry, no cry!" he called out, almost in a tone of entreaty; and the rosy lips, which could frame no better words of comfort, were held up to kiss the tear-bedewed cheek. Amy half-smothered the child with kisses; she felt as if a sweet spring flower had suddenly blossomed in her waste, or as if a little cherub had been sent with a message of love and pity to her desolate heart.

How slight an incident will sometimes suffice to turn the current of feeling into a different channel! Amy was not as proud as her brother, but she was of a more nervously, sensitive nature, and she had entered that room with feelings bordering on despair, looking on the life before her—a life of subjection to a coarse and vulgar woman, beneath

her both by birth and education—as a prisoner might look on the treadmill. Her submission was shaken, her piety clouded. Amy, with Betsy Brock's mocking laugh in her ears, felt disposed to hate all the world. The broken lisp of a child, the touch of his hand, and his sweet little lips, had soothed and softened her spirit. Here was something to love; the little soft, warm burden in her arms, seemed to take away the chill from the bosom on which it rested. Amy soon dried her tears, and spoke lovingly to her little charge, pillowed his curly head on her breast, and gently rocked him on her knees, till at last sleep stole over the child, the eyelids gradually dropped over the bright dark eyes, and the sound of the innocent voice was changed to that of the low soft breathings of slumber.

"He trusts me, dear little boy! stranger as I am; he is not afraid. How pure and innocent he looks, just as God has made him! He has no worldliness, no pride; he cares not whether he sleep in a cottage or a palace; if he has food and clothing, and gentle loving care, he is content and happy! Oh! that I were more like a little trustful child! My God, increase my faith; let my measure be a full one! Take from me this proud rebellious spirit! Let me not only know, but feel, that the arms of Thy mercy are around me; and that, in this time of darkness and trouble, I may rest secure in Thy wisdom and goodness!"

The hour passed beside the slumbering child, whom Amy had gently replaced in his cot, an hour spent in quiet devotion, greatly revived and refreshed the spirit of the young orphan. It was with considerable repugnance that, at the close of

it, Amy obeyed Mrs Brock's summons to come down to supper, and re-entered with a hesitating step the large room into which she had been first introduced.

There Amy found the two women and Brock, with another man who had the appearance of a farm-labourer, and who was addressed as "Ben Green," seated at a large deal table, which was covered with a plentiful supply of somewhat coarse but wholesome food. A mingled scent of spirits and tobacco, mingled with the more savoury odour arising from the meal. Amy timidly took the seat which old Sarah had placed for her, close to her own, and glanced anxiously round to look for her brother. Alfred did not enter the room, however, till Amy had nearly finished her meal, and then came in through the outer door, with two sealed letters in his hand.

"Will your messenger be so good as to take these letters to the settlement for me," said Alfred, with his natural dignity of manner; "they are of some importance—at least to us."

Brock took the letters from the youth, turned them over and looked at the addresses. "Lady Vane, who's she?" asked the settler.

"My aunt," said Alfred rather haughtily.

"What fine feathers this cock-o-the-woods sports!" cried Brock with an insolent laugh; "but he'll have to crow a little less loudly here. Titles don't serve to make a clearing, or to run up a shanty, or to get a canoe over a portage. They're worth no more than an empty corn-cob, and if he'd a pedigree written out as long as my arm, why, I'd say—let him put it in his pipe and smoke it!"

A roar of laughter from the rough audience

showed their appreciation of the wit of the settler. Amy looked nervously at her brother, and to her surprise as well as relief, saw that a little heightening of colour was the only sign of annoyance that he gave. The expansive brow was perfectly calm, and a slight smile rose to the lips. Alfred had the sense to perceive that this was no time or place for retort, that the only way of upholding the dignity of a gentleman was by ever acting as became one; he was struggling to keep down and master his temper, as a bold rider reins in a fiery steed, and curbs its restless impatience. I will not say that the courser does not pull hard against the bit, or that the mental strain was not painful to Alfred; but the thoughts that passed through his mind as he seated himself at the table, were something like this.

"These fellows are rough teachers; but I may learn something from them, and it is a lesson not unneeded by a proud heart like mine. Not to think highly of myself, but to think soberly; I should never have mastered the difficulties of that verse under the roof of a partial parent, or in any place where ambition would have had room to stretch its wings."

The conversation, to Amy's relief, had taken another turn, old Sarah, perhaps purposely, having put in a word.

"Talking of smoking, Green must not forget to bring back a good store of tobacco."

"I hope that Brock will fill my pouch well for the journey," said the man, "I'm well nigh out of the weed."

"I'm right cleared out, look here," cried Brock, showing his empty pouch.

"Nonsense," said Green with an incredulous

look, "I'll answer for it, you've a private stock somewhere, I'll be bound there's some of the real thing in yonder black box?" He nodded towards a box of moderate size, strongly clamped with iron, that occupied a place in the corner.

Tom Brock looked annoyed; "there's nothing of the sort there," he answered bluntly.

"I'll bet you there is, two to one, there's a fair offer, and if you don't take it we'll know the why, and the wherefore," laughed Green.

"I tell you there's none," roared Tom Brock.

"The matter is easily settled," said Green; "you've only to open that there box, and if there's 'baccy there, why, we'll agree to share it atween us. Where's the key?" added the man, with a knowing wink.

To the surprise of the Gavestons, Brock grew greatly excited, as if a subject had been touched, where a jest would be counted as an insult. The veins in his forehead swelled; he clenched his fist, and fiercely regarded Ben Green. Mrs Whetstone marked the gathering storm, and, touching Amy lightly on the arm, observed, "child, you're tired, and had better come up stairs. 'Early to bed, and early to rise, is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise;'" and, rising from the table, the old woman led the way out of the room. Amy willingly followed, thankful to be spared a nearer hearing of the loud angry words and fierce oaths that sounded from the parlour, where the men remained to drink, while Mrs Brock returned to her packing.

"Better out of the way, child," remarked Mrs Whetstone, as she slowly ascended the stair. "If you want to stir up Tom Brock into a rage, ask

him to let you look into that box. Green's always a-worriting him about it; but 'fools should not play with fire-arms.'"

"What is in it?" asked Amy, though feeling but slight interest in the question.

"What is in it?" repeated the old dame, sharply; "tell me, and I'll tell you. I can't see further through a mill-stone than other folk. Why, his own wife don't know what's in it; every one wants to find out; and I will find out one day," she added, under her breath. "Where there's a will, there's a way."

"The box is not large," observed Amy. "I wonder that Mr Brock is not afraid of some curious person carrying it off."

"Easier said than done," replied the old woman, after she had led the way into her room, and had sat down to take breath after the fatigue of mounting the stair. "Brock has screwed it in the inside tight down to the floor, and a cart horse couldn't drag it from its place. He keeps the key in his pocket all day, and at night puts it under his pillow. 'Fast bind, fast find,' as they say. He's a strange man, is Tom Brock," continued Sarah Whetstone; "but he has married my daughter, and one must stand up for one's own. I should remember that 'little pitchers have long ears,' and that 'least said is soonest mended.'"

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUESTION ASKED.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—ROMANS xii. 4, 5.

"AND now, like a good girl, you'll give a bit of dressing to this place at the back of my neck," said the old woman, looking up at Amy through her eyebrows. "Now that you've come, I need not take up the time of my daughter."

"I know nothing about dressing sores," expostulated Amy, who felt a strong repugnance to entering on the new kind of service into which she saw that she was to be pressed.

"I suppose that you're not too old to learn," said Sarah Whetstone, rather sharply. "Every girl should know how to look after sick folk. 'Can do is easily carried about.' If I'd eyes behind my head, I'd trouble no one; but as I haven't, I cannot do without help."

The conscience of Amy smote her a little for having betrayed her dislike to performing an office of charity to a poor old sufferer. Had she not given her hands as well as her heart, as a part of the living sacrifice offered by faith, and could she now refuse to use those hands in relieving pain? To do to another as she would be done by, was a simple Christian duty; and the fact of old Sarah's

being of lower birth and less refined nature than her own, did not alter the obligation of that duty. Trying to overcome her shrinking repugnance to the task, Amy Gaveston set about dressing the neck; but the light was dim, the young nurse inexperienced and awkward, and her fingers trembled with cold. The patient was anything but patient.

"I guess all your fingers are thumbs, child! you're the most handless thing as ever I met with in all my born days!" cried the dame. "There, I'm glad you have finished at last."

"I'm sorry if I hurt you; I hope that I shall do better in time," said Amy, gently.

The soft answer had its usual effect. Sarah looked up at the pale, weary girl in her deep mourning, and repented of her peevish irritation.

"You must not mind if I'm a bit rough, child," she said; "my 'bark is worse than my bite,' and 'hard words break no bones.' I think its the pain makes me cross. I hope that you'll never know what such pain is like. Now, make haste and get to your rest; you can scarcely keep your eyes open, I see."

Amy, unaccustomed to the presence of a stranger in her room, found a new cause of embarrassment. It was her habit to read a short portion of the Bible every night, but, being of a disposition peculiarly reserved, she felt that it would be difficult to read or to pray in the society of her strange old companion. Sarah Whetstone's appearance had become more weird-like than ever, for she had removed her red turban-like head-dress, and long, thin iron-grey elf-locks were falling to her shoulders, and half-hiding her wrinkled face.

"I can't read the Bible with those sharp eyes

watching my every movement," thought the poor girl. "Oh! if I could but have the smallest corner of the house to myself! Day and night; am I never to be for one moment alone! But what ought to be done, must be done, and had better be done at once. A servant of God should not shrink from a laugh or a sneer."

Amy opened her little box, took out her Bible, and, sitting as far from Mrs Whetstone as the necessity of being near the light would permit, she began to read to herself. She had a very uncomfortable consciousness that the old dame, sitting with her hands on her knees, and her chin half sunk on her chest, was watching all that she did.

"Could you not read out while you're about it," was the sudden observation from the old woman, which somewhat startled Amy.

"If you wish it, it is the Bible," she replied. "I used to read the Bible once, Sundays and week-days, too," said old Sarah; "but print don't suit my eyes now; I haven't opened a book since I came across seas."

Here was another unexpected door of usefulness opened to Amy. She began to read aloud, timidly at first, conscious that her enunciation lacked perfect distinctness; but as she proceeded, her voice gathered strength, for Sarah was perfectly silent and attentive. When Amy had closed, and put by the volume, the old woman seemed inclined to enter into more confidential conversation.

"There's mighty little religion here at Blackrock. Green has not a thought beyond making money, smoking his pipe, and eating his dinner. Brock—well, about his religion, 'least said is soonest mended;' and Betsy—right or wrong—

so follows her husband, she has hardly a soul of her own. It was a hasty business their marriage, it was. The proverb tells us, 'happy's the wooing that's not long a doing;' but I say, 'look before you leap.' We find sometimes that 'second thoughts are best.' When wooing and wedding, and packing up, and starting off for the other side of the world is all done in a week, it makes one think of the old saw, 'marry in haste, and repent at leisure.'"

"And why was there such haste?" asked Amy.

"That's just what I wanted to know," answered old Mrs Whetstone, "but I never could get a good reason. Betsy would have me go to America with them; and as I'd saved a good bit of money in service, it made the wheel run smoother. Thinks I, 'if my girl's going to the end of the world, she shall have her mother to take care of her.' But I've been rather a care myself, than a help, since this pain at the back of my neck has come on. I was once an active woman, but 'every dog must have his day,' as the saying goes, and I suppose that my day is passed!" The poor old sufferer tried to smother down a sigh as she uttered the words.

"It must be a trial to you," observed Amy, "to have no place of worship near."

"It was a trial at first," said Sarah; "I had always been accustomed to regular church-going at your grandfather's; and after I married poor Whetstone, fair day or foul, we never missed. So, when I came to this out-of-the-way place, thinks I, 'there's no church for me to go to, but I won't forget my Sabbaths. I'll always go over the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and the Belief on Sundays.'"

"And you kept to your resolve?" asked Amy.

"I did so at first, I repeated them all, and got Betsy to say them with me. But one day Brock caught me at it when I was going through the Belief; and, says he, 'what's that you're repeating about the Holy Catholic Church! I didn't know you were a Papist.' 'It doesn't mean anything about Papists,' says I. 'Then what does it mean?' says he. I didn't know what to answer; for though I'd repeated these words a thousand times, I'd never thought of their meaning. Then Brock said something about priestcraft, and about going over words one didn't understand, like a parrot; and after that, somehow or other, I gave up my Sunday repeating."

"That was a pity," observed Amy, who, tired and cold as she was, felt interested and pleased at the old woman's opening her heart to her thus; "why did you not tell Mr Brock that 'Catholic' in the creed has nothing to do with 'Roman Catholic;' my dear mother told me that it means *universal*."

Sarah looked up at the young speaker through her eyebrows with a doubtful expression, as if turning over in her shrewd though ignorant mind, whether the explanation were satisfactory. Then she suddenly broke out in a peevish tone with the observation, "universal, I take it, means *everywhere*, and I was not the idiot to tell Brock that there was a church everywhere, when he and I knew well enough that there's not one within sixty miles!"

Amy was half-amused, half-puzzled by the ignorance of her companion. The young girl was unaccustomed to teaching, and she was not a little afraid of offending. She only ventured to suggest,

in a hesitating tone, that "church" in the Creed, as in the Bible, did not mean a building, but people who worshipped God.

"I should like to know how you make out that," said old Sarah, whose mind was inquisitive and sharp though its cultivation had been neglected.

"Indeed I know little, very little about these things," said Amy, who wished that she had dropped the conversation before it had placed her in the irksome position of a teacher to one so much older than herself. But Mrs Whetstone had a peculiar tenacity of mind, and having once laid hold on an idea, she would not readily let it go.

"You know something," she said rather sharply; "you have not been with those who have a deal of book-learning for nothing. Why do you say that in the Bible 'church' doesn't mean a building at all."

"Did not the early disciples meet in an upper room with the doors shut?" said Amy after a little pause for reflection; "did they not pray by the sea-side, or in prisons, or wherever two or three could be gathered together. They, whose very lives were not safe for a day, could not have set up building churches."

"But we do read of 'churches' in the Bible, I'm sure and certain of that," said Sarah, with decision.

"Yes, again and again," replied Amy. "No less than seven times it is written, *he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.* The churches in Asia were offered rewards, were threatened with punishments, were praised for good works, and rebuked for evil; I do not think that one can read God's messages to

them and doubt that the 'churches' were living people."

Amy was surprised at having been able to say thus much, but she had been encouraged to do so by the grave attention of her listener. Sarah Whetstone sat resting her chin on her brown wrinkled hand, her brow furrowed with thought. Presently she broke out with the observation, "You're right there, you've an old head on young shoulders; the word 'church' in the Bible can't mean a building of brick or of stone. But you spoke of 'churches' just now; does not that show that there is more than one in the world?"

"I suppose," said Amy timidly, "that the Church in Sardis, or the Church at Smyrna, were only the Christians living in those cities, as we might say, the praying people in Britain, or the praying people in America."

Amy hoped that the subject, which was difficult for her to handle, might now be dropped, but old Sarah Whetstone was not satisfied yet.

"My difficulty," she muttered, "is just with that word *catholic*, which you say means *universal*. If there be a church here, and a church there, how can there be but one 'Holy Catholic Church' all over the world?"

Amy's ideas on the subject were not clear enough to enable her at once to reply.

"And look ye here," continued Mrs Whetstone; "there are not only churches in different places, but different churches in one place. When I was in London I lived near a Roman Catholic Chapel. and saw the people going there to pray; I was a Church of England woman myself, but my landlady was a Dissenter, and went to her chapel, and my

cousin, he was of the Free Church of Scotland, and he'd a different place of worship altogether. Now every one of us thought the others wrong, and would not have gone to any church but his own, and yet I'd be sorry to think that my landlady and her friends had no true religion—setting aside the poor Roman Catholics who may have been as earnest in prayer as we—and as for my cousin of the Church of Scotland, there's not a better Christian going than he! Now, amongst all these different churches, how can one make out but one 'Holy Catholic Church?'"

"I am afraid I cannot answer you to-night," said poor Amy, now almost overpowered with sleepiness, "but I will ask my brother all about it to-morrow. He knows a hundred times more than I do, and has some thoughts of being one day a clergyman himself. Perhaps I had better now go to rest."

"Ay, ay, I've been a selfish old creature, I have, to have kept you up with my talking. But say a bit of a prayer before you go to bed; I'm an old woman, and though I'm living in a heathenish place, I shouldn't wish to die as a heathen. I can't kneel, for it hurts me, but I'll stand up, like the man in the temple, and pray."

And so they prayed together, the aged woman and the young orphan maid, blending their voices in the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples. And Amy rose from her knees with a feeling of comfort, a vague consciousness that there was some kind of tie between her and her strange old companion, which relieved her from the sense of utter loneliness and desolation. Not that Amy yet understood that blessed truth of a mystical union between all who worship in faith and sincerity,

which St. Paul shows forth in the verse which heads this chapter; but she felt that when the heart has once been opened to converse on the subject of religion, those who have thus communed together cannot henceforth regard each other as strangers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

"*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*"—ROMANS xii. 5.

"Now, mind ye, Betsy, it's all well enough for her to be looking after the child, or may be doing a stitch now and then, but her father's daughter mustn't be put to any drudgery, or have to spoil her little lady-fingers by washing or scrubbing of floors. She'll have her own rightful place one of these days, 'its a long lane that has no turning,' but while she bides at Blackrock she'll need us to put a drop of oil on the wheels, for it is a rough road as she has to go over, and she don't look like one fit for much jolting."

Such were the characteristic injunctions which Sarah Whetstone bestowed on her daughter on the following morning, before the young orphan came down to the parlour. The old warm-hearted woman had resolved to take "Master Reginald's daughter" under her wing, and Amy at once found the benefit of her kindly protection. The warm seat by the fire, the more refined food at the meal, were reserved for the "little lady;" and Sarah would have scowled through her bushy eyebrows a fierce defiance at any one who should have treated Amy with insolence or unkindness. Not but that Mrs Whetstone's own tone towards her was sometimes sharp, and her manner rough; but the con-

stant pain which the poor old woman suffered was some excuse for this, and Amy's gentle sympathy had a softening influence upon her.

"After all, I do not think that I shall be quite as miserable here as I expected to be," thought Amy, as she turned from the kindly blaze at which she had been warming her hands, and opened her arms to receive little Johnnie, who came toddling towards her, with his rosy face radiant with pleasure.

"See—see—sugar—white!" cried the child, drawing his new friend towards the window, which looked out on the Lake of the Woods.

Very beautiful was the scene which lay before the eyes of Amy Gaveston. Romantic and fair is the scenery of that lake in the summer time, when the elm and the aspen, clad in green, make each little island like a soft emerald set in the limpid crystal. The precipitous rocks which rise above the lake then wear garlands of verdure, which dip into the cooling waters, and strew the surface with floating blossoms. Beautiful is the lake then, but not more beautiful than it appeared on that morn in early winter. The lake was not yet frozen over; the wild water-birds were still in some parts able to swim, but in others their web-feet were pressing the glassy film spread over the waters. Every island, gemmed with frost, looked like a silver-filigree bower for fairies, studded with sparkling brilliants. The dark branches of the pines, whose sharp outlines cut the sky, the velvet verdure of the majestic cedar, were relieved by crystal tracery, which took from their deep hues all appearance of gloom. The rocks, in their rugged bareness, as they looked down on the freezing waters at their feet, seemed to Amy like emblems of bold, hardy spirits, bracing themselves

to meet the wild blasts and fierce storms of life. Winter, terrible winter was coming to bind the lake with his iron chain, to sweep down branches from the forest trees, to darken the sky, to shut out the sun, to make the very air with its icy chill, a minister of death. But firm and unshaken would those bold rocks endure his utmost rigour, in their silent majesty, awaiting the time when Spring should break the chain of the waters, and bid them again, dimpling in sunshine, reflect the verdant scenery around.

Amy thought of her brother and herself in adversity; he, like the bold firm rock, she, like the congealing lake. Brighter, happier days might be reserved for them both. And then she lifted her gaze towards the deep clear azure sky, and thought of beloved ones who had once endured the storm, but who were now raised beyond reach of its fury; who were where cold and hardship, sorrow and pain, could never oppress them more. Silently the orphan thanked God for the blessedness of those who had departed this life in His faith and fear.

Amy did not see her brother till noonday; he had gone out at daybreak for firewood, and she was not aware of his return.

"My brother lingers late," she observed.

"He is in the barn now, thrashing out the wheat," said Betsy Brock; "do you not hear the sound of the flail."

"I will go to him, then," observed Amy, who yearned for the sight of the one familiar face that she loved.

"Wrap this round you, child, if you be going out yonder," cried old Sarah, offering a shawl, as she saw Amy about to quit the warm shelter of the house,

to cross the little yard which divided it from the barn.

Amy tripped lightly across the open space, and entered the barn, where Alfred, having just finished his work, stood resting with the flail in his hand, and the toil-drops on his brow. Alfred's check glowed with the strong exercise, and his proud sister thought, as she gazed on him, that he looked as noble grasping the rough implement of honest labour, as ever did prince with his hand resting on the sceptre of command.

A loving greeting passed between the orphans. Amy looked down at the heap of corn which her brother had been thrashing.

"Alfred," said she, "That corn reminds me of what our loved mother told me that some old author had written. It was that when God's flail of adversity is on us, we should not be like the chaff which flies in the face of the thrasher, but like the precious grain that lies at his feet."

"A beautiful thought," observed Alfred. "I fear," he added, looking with an expression of sympathy at his young sister, "that the flail of adversity is falling very heavily on you, Amy, in this place."

"Nay, things are better than I expected them to be," replied Amy, struggling to speak cheerfully. "I have many comforts here, for which I ought to be thankful."

"But such society!" exclaimed her brother.

"I cannot say much for Brock—but he hardly ever addresses me. His child is a little cherub, and it is so sweet to have him to love! Then Mrs Whetstone"—

"That weird-looking old woman," interrupted

Alfred," whose mind seems like a faded patchwork of old proverbs and saws!"

"Nay, it is a shrewd inquiring mind," observed Amy, "and she has much real kindness of heart. I think that old Sarah Whetstone will be, as our dear father thought that she would be, a comfort to us both. Sit down and rest yourself, dear Alfred, and I will tell you all that passed between us last night, and you will help me to answer the strange questions on religion which the old woman asks."

"Are you not cold here, Amy, shall we not go into the house?"

"Oh! no, no," replied Amy, drawing more closely around her slight frame the shawl which Sarah had placed on her shoulders; "there is such luxury in having some place, though it be but a barn, in which you and I can be together without fear of our conversation being interrupted. I think that this barn will be my bower, and perhaps our church also," she added. "Ah! that word 'church' reminds me of the conversation which I had with old Sarah."

Amy related almost word for word what had passed between her and Mrs Whetstone, on the subject of the Holy Catholic Church.

"What would you have answered?" asked Amy in conclusion, "when Sarah spoke of Church of England, and Church of Scotland, Dissenters and Romanists, and then inquired how she could believe in *one universal Church*, I knew not what to reply."

"I remember asking our dear father a similar question," said Alfred, "when, years ago, we passed a Sunday at Quebec, the first day after our landing. His answer made an impression on my mind. 'Alfred,' he said, 'all *true believers in*

Christ are His Church, though they may differ in many points of opinion. There is *water* in the wide blue sea; *water* in the river running yonder; *water* in the pool on the common; *water* in the cup by the sick man's bedside; wherever we meet with it, near or afar, in an ocean or a drop, we call it water. So the Lord has His own people in every quarter of the globe; amongst South Sea savages, and African slaves; whether rich or poor, old or young, with dark skin or with fair, *all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity*, obeying Him and trusting in Him, all those form one Church, the Holy Catholic Church, and it is in this that I say, 'I believe.'"

"But still there are such great differences even between true Christians," observed Amy.

"Just as there is salt water and fresh water, soft water and hard water," replied Alfred, following out the simile suggested by his father; "but still it is all water; and when the sun draws it up into the clouds, all will be pure and bright. Look at that glorious throne-cloud yonder, that comes floating across the blue sky! We know not exactly from what source it was drawn—but what matter! There is no salt mixed with water raised from the briny deep, no mud mixed with what was drawn from the pool; all that soils is left behind! So doubtless, it will be with the Holy Catholic Church in heaven. Christians do not all think alike here, but they will all think alike *there*, because they will know, even as they are known, and because the truth will be seen there without any mixture of human error."

"I understand all more clearly now," said Amy, "and I see too, that as God's people are really one

Church, and will all think alike in the end, they ought not to be so bitter against each other now, for every little difference of opinion. And when do you think that this Holy Catholic Church first began upon earth?"

"Perhaps when Adam and Eve first praised God in Paradise," said Alfred. "We are sure at least that Abel belonged to it, for we know that he had true faith."

"Then," remarked Amy, thoughtfully, "Noah and Abraham and other saints, who lived long, long ago, belonged to the Holy Catholic Church."

"Do not say *belonged*, Amy, but *belong*. Do you forget the words of our Lord, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. Those who sleep in Jesus, as our own honoured parents sleep," the youth's lip quivered as he spoke, "are no more cut off from the Church of Christ, than the upper stones of a building are cut off from the lower, because they no longer touch the earth, but are lifted high above it. The saints who lived before the flood, and those who have lately died, and those who are in the world still, all form but one Holy Catholic Church."

Amy clasped her hands, and said, with emotion, "it seems almost as if the Church were one great family."

"It is so," replied her brother; "does not St. Paul write, *for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;* and does he not expressly tell us that believers are *one body in Christ, and every one members one of another?*"

"How sweet is the thought!" cried Amy; "how it softens the lonely feeling of being cut of from home and country, and placed, as we are, amongst strangers! And then it makes one look so differently upon other Christians! I shall have a more kindly feeling now even towards that strange old woman, I shall have more pleasure in nursing and tending her; for though she may be ignorant, I am sure that she has both a conscience and a heart; and if she be a member of the Church of our Lord, there ought to be a tie between us."

"My father used to say," observed Alfred, "that *faith* was the breath, and *love* the life's-blood of the Church. It is very difficult, at least it seems so to me, to realise that every true Christian is a brother; but I suppose that it is the pride of our evil nature that makes it difficult to us; and that as we grow in grace, we shall *feel* as well as know, that all form but one Church, one body in Christ!"

CHAPTER VIII

GIFTS FOR ALL.

"*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation.*"—ROMANS xii. 6, 7, 8.

"My father said most truly of Alfred that he was made for something higher than such a life as he leads in this wild land," reflected Amy, as she returned to the house, after the conversation which has been related in the preceding chapter. "He is not like other youths, his mind is so much more open, even as his countenance is more noble, more beautiful than that of any other being on earth whom I have ever seen! Yes, Alfred is gifted! God has showered upon him every grace that can make him loved and admired! He will be able to speak of religion to others, and lead them, as did our dear father, to love it by his words and example! I—ah! me! I have no gifts at all! I am plain in face, and slow in speech, and dull in mind! I have nothing at all to make people like me, except a heart that can love!"

The sound of a child's cry made Amy quicken her steps; on re-entering the parlour she saw little Johnnie prostrate on the floor, sobbing; while his grandmother, herself unable to raise him, was vainly trying to soothe him with her voice.

"Up again, Johnnie, darling; you mustn't be a

climbing chairs again, poor old granny can't look after you now. Oh! missy," she said, on perceiving Amy, "I've been wanting you here. Just see if the little one's hurt."

Amy raised the sobbing little boy, wiped away his tears, looked at his slightly bruised brow, and "kissed the place to make it well," that sovereign recipe for the small hurts of children. Johnnie was really more frightened than pained, and a few playful words from Amy soon made him smile through his tears. He looked up in her face, laughed, then threw his little arms round her neck and kissed her.

"Ah! you've a gift with children," observed old Sarah Whetstone; "you'll be a real blessing here, for Betsy's always busy about the house, and I'm not the woman I was, and yonder little man is always getting into trouble."

Amy thought little of these words when she heard them, but they recurred to her as she sat alone at a later hour of the day with her Bible open at her father's favourite chapter. "A gift with children," she repeated to herself, "then I am not quite useless; I can make some one more happy in the world, if it be only a little child. If God bestows any gift upon me, such as St. Paul writes of here, it must be that of ministering. Let me reflect on how that passage of Scripture bears on me and my present position. I can minister to the relief of that poor old sufferer, I can minister to the happiness of Johnnie, I can minister to the comfort of my brother. But these services are all so trifling! Yes, certainly, I was never born for great things. But will not my heavenly Father be pleased if I try to do His will in the little things? Alfred re-

minded me that it is written that as the Church is *one body*, so are Christians *members one of another*. Perhaps," reflected Amy, following out the analogy suggested, "they that 'prophesy' are like the bright far-seeing eye, without which we should be in darkness; they that 'teach' and 'exhort like the eloquent lips, breathing out words of wis dom and love; they that 'minister' are like the hands; they have a lower place, but they are ready and active in work. But there is a difference between the two hands—the great earnest workers are as the right hand that grasps the sword, the axe, or the pen, and is able to do much in the world; but poor feeble creatures like me, who have rather the will than the power to serve, are like the feeble left hand. But that hand is not useless, oh! no, nor is it despised although it is weak! What it has not skill to guide, it can grasp; it helps its stronger brother, and the two are equally clasped in prayer! Yes, let me be content with lowly ministering, which is my duty,—Oh! rather let me call it my *gift*, that word sounds so much sweeter! I am to *wait* upon it, surely that means that I should be watching for occasions to minister, not despising any work for God because it is mean, or refusing it because it is painful; but just trying to do what I am able to do, thankful that I am allowed, however feebly, to serve my Heavenly Master."

It is wonderful how such thoughts as these brightened the existence of the orphan girl, or how many opportunities of ministering she found, after having recognized that to be her own peculiar office. The invalid had not long occasion to complain of her young nurse being handless.

"Ah! 'can do is easily carried about,' as the saying is; may be you'll one day be glad that you've learned a bit about nursing, even from an old woman like me," observed Sarah one night, when Amy's gentle ministry had afforded her some relief. And Mrs Whetstone took every opportunity of returning kindness for kindness. When she found that Alfred and Amy liked to be together in the barn, Sarah gave her daughter no rest till a stove was carried thither to warm it. Many a little comfort Amy owed to Mrs Whetstone's considerate care, nor would the old dame listen to thanks. "One good turn deserves another," she was wont to observe; "'a friend in need is a friend indeed,' and I've found one in you, Missy Amy."

Mrs Whetstone, keen, shrewd, and decided in character, exercised considerable influence over her daughter, who was a bustling, active, easy-tempered woman, with not much will of her own. But there was a kind of antagonism, rather felt than avowed, between the old dame and Brock. Sarah mistrusted her son-in-law, and though he tolerated her, probably on account of those savings of which she had spoken to Amy, the Gavestons soon learned a fact of which Mrs Whetstone had long been aware, that she was disliked by her daughter's husband. Sometimes Brock burst out into sudden fits of violent passion against her, which old Sarah bore with a quiet self-possession which surprised the Gavestons.

"I wondered at your patience to-day," observed Amy after one of these explosions, when she and Mrs Whetstone were together alone.

"My dear, I don't want to quarrel with him; mind you, not for my own sake, but my daughter's; 'blood's thicker than water.' If it comes to a regular

split between us, I am the one who must go hence, and if I go I must leave Betsy and the boy behind, and I feel—somehow," Sarah lowered her voice to a whisper, "as if I could not be easy leaving them with Brock. So I let him say what he will, 'hard words break no bones,' 'it needs two to a quarrel,' as they say. If winds and waves didn't daunt me from following my girl to the other side of the world, now that I'm here I'll not be blown back by a little puff of ill-humour. After all, Brock himself would be sorry to bid me good-bye, though," Sarah chuckled as she added, "he loves me as men love the bees for their honey; their love does not hinder them from smoking the hive."

Amy could not divest herself of the idea that the presence of her brother, young as he was, served as a protection to old Mrs Whetstone, as it certainly did to herself. Strong willing hands are valued where labourers are scarce, and Alfred possessed not only these, but a readiness of resource, a quickness of invention, which made him of the utmost service to the settler. The lad's genius for mechanics enabled him, not only to suggest, but to carry out a little scheme for making a rapid brook that flowed into the lake, available for turning the wheel of a mill. The only clock at Blackrock had never told the hour truly, till Alfred examined the works. And it was not only from what he did, but from what he was, that Captain Gaveston's son exercised a kind of restraining power over the lower nature of the man whom he served. Brock never could meet the clear blue eye of the young English gentleman, and Amy noticed that even his language appeared more guarded in the presence of her brother. To herself personally Brock was tolerably

civil; perhaps her kindness to his child was the secret of this, for if there was a redeeming point in the character of the man, it was his affection for his merry, dark-eyed boy.

Once, and once only, did Amy hear Brock utter a harsh word to the child. The arrival of anything like news from a distant land was an event of such very rare occurrence at Blackrock, that it was always the cause of a good deal of interest and excitement. Ben Green had returned from the Red River Settlement with not only a large supply of such things as he had been commissioned to procure in exchange for goods from the farm, but also with an English letter for Mrs Whetstone, and a bundle of newspapers from "the old country" for Brock. Well-thumbed, dirty, and smelling of tobacco as were these old papers, they were eagerly seized upon by the settler and his wife. Betsy was soon deep in the account of an accident in a coal-pit, while her husband was buried in the police reports, which to him had all the interest which some find in a sensation novel. Little Johnnie, who could not share the amusement of his parents, soon drew Amy into a game of hide-and seek, and the sound of his merry crowing laugh, and his little feet pattering over the floor, did not at first disturb those engaged in reading.

At last, however, Johnnie, engaged in a hunt after a bunch of keys, hidden by Amy, took it into his head that they must be concealed within the black box which, as the reader will remember, was in the corner of the room. The child ran up to it and struck it with both his soft palms, with such energy, that the noise made his mother look up, and turn round to see what he was doing. Johnnie

in vain tried to pull up the lid. "Open! open!" he cried; and as no one answered his appeal, the child ran up to his father, and pulled him by the skirt of his coat.

Brock's eyes were intently fixed on his paper, and as he read he muttered to himself broken sentences of comment, such as "blundering dog! did'nt know his business! fully committed for trial —served him right! why, if I'd been he—"

"Open! open!" repeated Johnnie, pleadingly, giving the coat a more vigorous pull with one hand, while with the other he pointed to the black box in the corner.

Brock started as if he had been stung by the touch of the soft little hand, and uttered a fierce curse, while such an expression passed across his face as he turned suddenly round and looked at the innocent child, as chilled Amy's blood with a sense of fear, and sent little Johnnie, with a burst of tears, to hide his curly head on her lap. Nothing more was said; Tom Brock went on with his reading, Johnnie's tears were soon dried, but that one look often haunted the mind of Amy, as if a curtain had for an instant been withdrawn to give a glimpse of some dark image beyond it.

"Was it anger at being disturbed that caused that fearful look, that word?" the young girl often asked herself; "or is some gloomy mystery really connected with that black iron clamped box screwed down to the floor?" Amy could not answer the question, but it was clear that a deep impression had been made on the infant mind of Johnnie, for though the child often played merrily in the parlour, Amy remarked that he never again ventured to touch, or even to approach the black box!

CHAPTER IX.

SNOWED UP.

"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation."—ROMANS xii. 7, 8.

THE short "Indian summer" came and went, that brief respite which gives to days in November some of the warmth though not the beauty of April, as if departed summer had sent back on the breezes a kindly promise of return. Winter now fully set in. The thermometer in that wild land of the West fell below zero; icicles hung from the eaves, deep snow covered the ground. No room at Blackrock was habitable without a stove or a blazing fire; meat froze in the larder, and milk in the pail. White hares and foxes were occasionally seen; snow-birds abounded; and Alfred once, when bringing home fire-wood in the dusk of eve, had heard the howl of wolves. Blackrock seemed to be completely shut out from communication with the rest of the world, and it was well for its inmates that it contained in itself all the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life.

On one December day, when the lake could hardly be distinguished from the land, such a thick white pall covered both, as the family at the farm were about to sit down to the substantial meal which smoked on the board, Ben Green entered,

with the frost on his eye-brows and hair, and his broad shoulders white with new-fallen snow.

"I guess there's some one down yonder in a fix," said the man, pointing in the direction from which he had come; "I saw something like a sleigh sticking in the deep snow in the valley, and I heard the dogs howling in distress."

"You saw some pine-log lying across the path where the wind had thrown it," muttered Brock, with his mouth full, "and there may have been a hungry wolf yelping beside it."

"I guess I know a sleigh from a pine-log, and the whine of a dog from the bark of a wolf," said Green, in a surly tone.

Alfred rose from his seat. "Some traveller may be in distress," he said; "let us go to his rescue."

"We'll wait a while," replied Tom Brock, intent on the meal before him.

"If you wait long," observed Green, glancing at the huge flakes, which like feathers were filling the air, "sleigh or log, dog or wolf, it will be all one, there will be but one white heap in the valley."

Alfred did not even hear the last words, he was already off to the tool-house for a spade, and thither, at a slower pace, and grumbling at "the folly of any idiot who would travel in such weather," Brock followed him, accompanied by Geeen. Amy and the women with interest watched the party set out on their errand of mercy, their feet fixed in huge snow-shoes, without which they must have sunk deep in the white masses at every step that they took.

"It is for them to save; it will be for us to minister," thought Amy. "Some poor traveller may be brought hither half frozen to death!" and,

turning from the window darkened by snow-flakes, the young girl instantly set about making such preparations as might be required in case of frost-bites, or other such injury from the intensity of the cold. Betsy carried back the smoking viands to the fire to be kept warm during her husband's absence, while Mrs Whetstone took her place at the window to watch for the men's return.

"The watched pot never boils," she muttered to herself, as the minutes rolled slowly on. "Ah! there's the barking of dogs—they're coming at last. Hear how old Cæsar and Towler are answering them from within! Here they are, men and all—"

"How many men?" eagerly interrupted Amy.

"Four," replied Mrs Whetstone; "they look like so many white bears walking on two legs; they're so covered with the snow! Yes, that's right; stir the fire to a right roaring blaze, and pour out the steaming hot soup. They'll all need something to warm them, for its cold enough to freeze the very blood in their veins!"

Almost immediately afterwards Brock and his companions re-entered the farm, accompanied by a delicate-looking elderly man, whose grey beard and hair were matted with icicles, whose lips were blue with cold, and who appeared to move his stiffened limbs with so much difficulty, that Alfred had to support him across the threshold.

"Don't bring him to the fire, 'tis dangerous," exclaimed old Sarah; "rub him with snow, and here —I'll pour out for him a hot glass of brandy and water. Poor gentleman! he's well-nigh frozen into an icicle!"

"Attend to the clergyman, Amy take care of

him," said Alfred, "while I go and look after his poor dogs. We were just in time to save them."

Amy quickly carried the steaming hot beverage prepared by Sarah to the traveller, who appeared to drink in new life with the draught, for he was able to smile and thank her as he returned the empty glass. There was something in the smile and the courtesy with which the few words were uttered, that made Amy recognise the Christian gentleman in the half-frozen guest.

While Brock and Green at the table made up for the time which they had lost, Amy was quietly bringing the buffalo robe which had so often been spread over a sick parent, to replace the cloak, stiff with frost, which had enwrapped the traveller. Kneeling down she helped to draw off the boots which seemed to be frozen to the traveller's feet. The guest was very reluctant to let her perform such humble acts of service, but Captain Gaveston's daughter felt no degradation. She heard from Brock, to whom the traveller's person was well-known, that he was a missionary from the Red River Settlement. *Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me,* seemed to Amy to change her lowly service into such as an archangel might regard as an honour. When the Lord was on earth, blessed were they who ministered to Him, who strewed his couch, or filled His cup, or unloosed the latchet of His shoes! and still the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, deigns to accept the ministry of love offered to Him in the persons of His servants.

Mr Atherton, such was the missionary's name, soon revived sufficiently to take his place at the board, to partake of refreshment, of which he stood

greatly in need, for his strength was almost exhausted. Brock and Green had already emptied their plates, but Alfred had just come in, and none of the women of the party had yet tasted a morsel.

Before sitting down to the meal, the clergyman, in few but fervent words, thanked God for all his mercies. It was the first time that an audible grace had been heard at that table. The orphans and Mrs Whetstone responded with an earnest "amen!" and Brock and Green were awed into something like reverence by the manner of the guest.

"'Prayer and provender hinder no work,' as the saying is," whispered old Sarah to Amy.

As the meal proceeded, Mr Atherton gathered strength for conversation, and expressed much gratitude to those who had dug his sleigh out of the snow.

"How came you to be travelling in these wild parts in such weather, sir?" asked Betsy.

"It is a sad story," replied Mr Atherton. "Very great efforts had been made at the Settlement to collect sufficient funds to establish a regular mission to a tribe of Red Indians scattered around, some of whom have already received the Gospel in the simplicity of faith. Much self-denial had been practised by the members of our congregation, and the needful sum had almost been made up, when the whole of the collection was suddenly carried off by a man who had appeared to be a respectable settler, but who broke at night into the treasurer's house, and decamped with all the money!"

"Could the rascal not be caught?" asked Ben Green.

"We have been anxiously trying to trace him," replied the missionary. "Information led us to

believe that he had gone off in the direction of the Lake of the Woods, and was actually attempting, in the name of our community, to collect further contributions from the scattered farms around."

"The villain!" ejaculated Alfred.

"He has never ventured here," said Betsy.

"And if he comes, shall get a pretty kind of welcome," muttered Sarah; "but 'give such a fellow rope enough, and he's sure to hang himself at the last.'"

"It was to counteract his designs, and, if possible, identify and arrest his person, that I undertook this journey," said Mr Atherton; "and also," he added, glancing around him, "to endeavour to interest Christian brethren in a cause which has suffered such grievous loss from the dishonesty of man."

The idea of giving money to further missionary efforts was something very new to Tom Brock, and it was perhaps to turn the conversation that he asked, "What is the rascal like, and what is his name?"

"He is a short, stout man, marked with small-pox," replied Mr Atherton. "He called himself, at the Settlements, by the name of Smith; but we have received information since, that he is one of whom the police in England have long been in search as one concerned in the well-known Darkdale affair of burglary and murder."

"What makes you start so, Tom Brock?" inquired old Sarah Whetstone.

"Plate's hot—burnt my fingers," growled the settler, pushing his chair back from the table.

"We have heard," pursued Mr Atherton, "that Smith's real name is Coxall."

"Coxall!" repeated Mrs Whetstone thoughtfully, looking up through her bushy grey eye-brows at Brock; "why, surely you once knew a man of that name."

"Never did in my life!" exclaimed Brock with a blasphemous oath.

The minister of God fixed upon him a gaze of grave but gentle rebuke. "My friend," he said, "truth requires not an oath, and the word of God forbids it."

There was profound silence in the room for several seconds, and then he whose "gift" it was to teach and to exhort, proceeded to give a very interesting account of the object of his mission at the Red River, pleading with earnest eloquence for the poor natives of the soil, whose fathers had lived without God, and died without hope, but who now seemed to be stretching out their hands to Christian brethren with the cry of the man of Macedonia, "Come over and help us!" The words of the missionary left a deep impression on the hearts of some of his hearers.

It was arranged that Mr Atherton should remain at Blackrock till the following morning, when his tired dogs having had time to rest, he might pursue his perilous journey. During the rest of the day the Gavestons scarcely quitted the stranger, whose refinement of manners, and charm of conversation, drew them towards him like a magnet. His name, as a devoted and successful missionary, was known to all who dwelt within a range of hundreds of miles, and though the Gavestons had never seen Mr Atherton before, they could not regard him as a stranger.

The short winter day soon came to a close; it was needful that the wearied traveller should retire

early to rest, to gather what strength he might for the journey of the morrow. Before doing so, he turned towards Brock, who sat by the fire, cleaning the lock of a gun, and said, "It has long been my custom, my friend, wherever I may be travelling, to ask the permission of the master of each house at which I receive kind hospitality, to gather the inmates around me before going to rest, for a few words of exhortation and prayer. Have you any objection to my so gathering your household this night?"

Brock looked a little surprised at a question so unexpected, but replied carelessly that the parson might do what he liked, and the Gavestons, who for many months had had no opportunity of attending the ministry of a clergyman, gladly made the slight preparations needful for the service. Amy could hardly believe that the presence of one man could transform that room, the scene of rough feasting and occasional riot, whose walls had not unfrequently echoed the oath or the curse, into the place where two or three being gathered together in the name of the Lord, he would Himself deign to be in the midst.

The missionary was so exceedingly weary that when he began he doubted his ability to utter more than a very few words; but he looked on his congregation, the scattered sheep in the wilderness, and as he spoke on, his heart warmed, his voice became stronger, the fire from heaven seemed to have touched his lips! Mr Atherton taught and exhorted as one who throws his whole soul into his appointed work, nor would miss this his first and perhaps last opportunity of sowing the seed of life in the hearts of his hearers.

The soul of Alfred Gaveston kindled under the glowing words, and when he listened to the pastor's comment on that part of Scripture, which describes St. Paul before Felix, and realised the position of the persecuted prisoner, the suffering saint, even in bonds bearing testimony to God's truth, and glorifying Him in the fires, the young Christian felt his spirit roused to more devoted obedience, more unshrinking endurance. Brock, who had at first appeared restless, became motionless, as if fixed by a spell. He had not entered a church since the day of his marriage, and had seldom been in a place of worship before it. Truths, familiar to the younger hearers, came upon this man's conscience with a startling effect. *Righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come* were forcibly presented to a guilty soul, and it was as a sudden flash of lightning breaking on darkness. When the rest of the household knelt to prayer, Brock also fell on his knees, and his hoarse voice was heard swelling the deep "amen" at the close.

CHAPTER X.

OFFERINGS.

"*He that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth with diligence, he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.*"—ROMANS xii. 8.

"OH! did not Mr Atherton's words make one's heart glow!" exclaimed Amy, when alone at night with old Sarah.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," observed Mrs Whetstone; "if the parson's sleigh had not stuck in the snow, we should never have heard his preaching. It was wonderful powerful," she added; "did you look at Tom Brock? I didn't think that any angel's words, let alone a man's, would have had more effect upon him than on the rocks yonder; but he flushed right up to his brows as if the weather had been hot, and didn't stir hand or foot, and looked. I couldn't help wondering whether Felix looked like that when he trembled!"

Amy's thoughts had not rested much upon Brock; not fear but love had been the fountain unsealed in her own heart by the holy eloquence of him whose gift had been that of exhortation. A strong desire to help forward the good cause for which he had pleaded at meal-time was uppermost in her mind, and she broke out with the observation, "one can't help wishing to be rich."

"Gold is a good or a bad thing according to

what one does with it," remarked shrewd old Sarah; "a fool and his money are soon parted, and if one sets a beggar on horseback, we all know where he rides to."

"It is—it must be so delightful to help on a good work, to give freely, bounteously," exclaimed Amy, pursuing the train of her reflections.

"And the parson is about a good work," said Sarah; "I don't mind giving him something out of my own savings for it, it will go to my good account, and," the old dame added thoughtfully, "one must do something for God upon earth, or one can't look to going to heaven."

There was something in this observation that jarred upon the feelings of Amy, though she could scarcely tell why. It seemed to her as if her companion's alms, instead of being a freewill offering of grateful love laid at the feet of the Saviour, was regarded as an item in an account which was kept by her conscience with heaven, to be summed up at length and balanced! Could this be the giving *with simplicity* which should be regarded by the Christian not as a mere duty, but as a delight! Amy was, however, too anxious to find out some means of herself giving to the mission, to dwell long on the motives of her companion.

"I cannot give money—I cannot give labour," reflected the orphan girl, as she laid her head on the pillow. "While that aged woman, once a servant in my grandfather's house, is able to contribute out of her savings, I have not even the two mites, such as the poor widow dropped in! I have nothing to offer to the good cause, except my prayers. And yet—yes, there is the little gold chain given to me years ago by my aunt, the only thing of real

value which I possess, except my mother's precious wedding-ring and hair-brooch, with which I can never, never part. Might I not quietly—very quietly, give that gold chain to the mission, and so have the joy of bringing something—some little offering to my Lord?"

The thought of devoting her ornament to the cause which her parents had loved, and which her Heavenly Master approved, sent a thrill of joy through the orphan's soul, such as no jewelled gift to herself could have brought. *It is more blessed to give than to receive;* that divine sentence from the lips of Him who gave life itself for the world, rang like heavenly music in the ears of Amy, as she peacefully dropped asleep.

Amy was awakened by a sound below her window, such as she had never heard before at the midnight hour. The sound was not loud, but suggested to her mind the idea of something stealthily scraping up earth or snow. The room was not dark, for when winter was most severe, a fire was kept up during the night; the flames were now flickering and dancing, and sending strange restless shadows over the rough ceiling and walls, as unlike the steady shadows cast by sunbeams, as fancy's wild visions to the sober realities of truth. Amy lay awake for some minutes, rather nervously listening to the unusual noise, and then, gently rising, wrapped her buffalo robe around her, and glided to the window to look out.

It was a starlight night, but without a moon. Snow whitened the country round, and its reflection relieved the deep shades. The projecting roof of the dwelling, on this its western side, had kept a few yards of earth comparatively clear of the snow

which lay so thick around. It was on this clear space, a little to the right of the spot just under her window, that Amy could indistinctly see, after rubbing the frost from a portion of the glass, some large dark object below that seemed to be scraping up earth.

Amy watched the object for a few moments, with mingled curiosity and fear, and then went and awoke Sarah Whetstone.

"Mrs Whetstone," she said, in a low, but rather excited tone, "I think that there must be a grizzly bear down close by the house, digging."

"A bear!" ejaculated Sarah, who was wide awake in a minute; "I never knew them gentry come so nigh a dwelling, though I've heard of them in the woods. If it be a bear we'll call up Brock and your brother, and the parson will breakfast on bear-steak for once in his life!"

Sarah was soon at the window, but the pain at the back of her neck made it difficult for her to turn her head sufficiently to catch a glimpse of the object to the right. She gave up the place to Amy.

"Look, child, and say what you see, is it a bear?" she inquired.

Amy strained her eyes to pierce the darkness; "it does not look like a bear *now*," she said, lowering her voice.

"What is it like?" asked Sarah.

"A *man*," replied Amy very softly, with a nervous sensation of fear at her heart.

"A man!" repeated her companion in amazement, "and digging on a night such as this!"

The flame in the grate leapt up higher and brighter than ever, and Amy suddenly started back from the window with a faint exclamation of alarm.

"What ails ye, child?" cried old Sarah.

"It is Brock, I am sure that it is Brock, faltered Amy, with a shiver; "he just lifted his head and looked up at the window, and he must have seen that some one was at it, the fire was so bright at that moment!"

"He must be crazy to be out at this hour!" cried Sarah, "the parson's preaching must have turned his brain. What could he be after out there?"

"I feel almost quite certain that he had the black box with him," murmured Amy, her heart throbbing fast, she scarcely knew why.

The mention of the black box so aroused the curiosity of Mrs Whetstone, that she was at the window at once, looking out in defiance of pain.

"He's been startled—he's moving off—he doesn't care to be watched," said the old dame, turning away, after an eager survey. "There *is* some mystery about that black box, depend on't; and I'll never rest till I've found out what it is. 'Where there's a will there's a way.' If Brock has been burying it there, I know who will dig it up. These old eyes of mine may see as far through a millstone as better ones can!"

The two companions returned to their couches, but for a considerable time neither of them could sleep. Amy felt very restless and uneasy, and when at length slumber fell on her heavy eyelids, she dreamed that the black box was changed into a block, and that some one, she thought that it was Brock, was to suffer for murder upon it.

When Amy arose in the morning, the strange incident of the preceding night was still fresh on her mind, and the first thing which she did when

she entered the parlour was to look in the corner for Brock's black box. When she saw there the familiar object, Amy was inclined to think that her eyes had deceived her in the darkness, and that she had only fancied that what she had beheld was Brock with his mysterious treasure. On going close up to the box, however, Amy observed that though as closely screwed down as ever, it was not in exactly the same place as it had occupied on the day before. A narrow mark on floor and wall, where the wood looked lighter from not having been exposed to the air, showed that there must have been a slight displacement, and confirmed the impression of Amy that the box had actually been removed and put back again on Brock's becoming aware that his movements had been watched. This curious circumstance, coupled with the remembrance of that scowl which Amy had seen on the settler's face when his child had asked him to open that box, made Amy feel almost afraid of the lifeless thing, as if its contents must be something that might bring a ban on the house and its inmates. Amy was even uneasy at the idea of meeting Brock, lest he should question her sternly as to what she had seen on the preceding night.

Brock, however, never opened his lips on the subject. He looked restless and ill when he made his appearance in the morning, and complained of frost-bites from the effects of the cold which he had had to bear when digging out the parson's sleigh.

"There's nothing so sharp as the night air," observed old Sarah, looking significantly up at her son-in-law through her eye-brows, and slightly nodding her head.

Brock turned on her a sudden inquiring glance;

Amy could not help feeling glad that it was not directed upon herself. The entrance of Mr Atherton was a relief to Gaveston's daughter. The presence of a minister of the Gospel seemed to make the place more safe and more holy.

The permission of the master of the house to have family prayer, was again asked, and again accorded.

"I will call Alfred," said Amy.

"No use in that," said Ben Green; "Gaveston's been down at the bridge working these two hours, to get all safe for the passage of the sleigh, that the parson mayn't get into grief again, any ways in these parts."

"That is my Alfred's offering to the good cause," thought Amy; "he gives his time, his labour; there is little of self-denial in *my* offering, but still my Lord may accept it, for it is an offering of love."

The missionary's comment this morning was on the parable of the good Samaritan, and it gave him occasion once more to plead the cause of the poor heathen lying helpless, stripped and wounded by Satan, and ready to perish.

After the prayer was concluded, Brock, looking awkward and shy, thrust his hand into his large pocket, and drew it out with a good deal of silver in it, broken fragments, as it seemed, of old plate.

"I suppose you could make something of these, they'll melt down," said the settler, offering the handful to the clergyman, and averting his eyes as he did so.

"And here's a gold sovereign, honestly earned, that will need no melting down," said old Sarah.

"Nay, then, I'll not be out-done!" exclaimed

Betsy, and, hurrying off to her room, she returned in two minutes with a pair of gold ear-rings which Amy had seen her wear; and, with a smile of self-satisfaction, gave them to the missionary cause.

Amy shrank from such ostentatious offering. She waited for a quiet opportunity of giving her chain of gold. When Mr Atherton turned to give her his parting blessing, and a few words of counsel and comfort, then, when no one else witnessed the act, she timidly placed a tiny packet in his hand, whispering, "will you take it—for the poor heathen?"

Then there was the noise at the door which announced that Alfred had brought the dogs, ready harnessed in the sleigh. Mr Atherton expressed his thanks for hospitable kindness, shook hands with each inmate of the solitary dwelling, kissed and blessed the little child, and started on his difficult journey. Alfred accompanied the sleigh on foot for some distance. Brock went off to his tool-house, Green to his work, Betsy to her household employments. Mrs Whetstone and Amy stood for a few minutes warming themselves by the fire, while Johnnie played quietly beside them.

"I think that the parson must have a spell for conjuring people's money out of their pockets, such people, I mean, as never gave before, and will never give again," observed the old dame, as she held out her wrinkled hands to the blaze. "As for Brock, his doing anything for the Red-skins, whom he hates like poison, quite passes my understanding. Betsy was tired of these ear-rings; I've heard her say so, and she's one who likes to make a good show, and get a good word; but as for Brock!" Sarah peered hard into the fire, as if the crackling pine-logs held the solution of some prob-

lem as she slowly and emphatically went on, "what made him give, I can't think, unless it was as a sop to conscience! I've heard of folk doing that, 'robbing Peter to pay Paul,' as the saying goes in the old country, but I did not give Brock credit for having a conscience that required a sop!"

As was not unfrequently the case, the shrewd old woman's conjecture had hit the mark. The long dormant conscience of her son-in-law had been startled and roused by what he had heard from the clergyman's eloquent lips. When a case such as this occurs, when the unwonted sound of the voice of conscience echoes through the dark chambers of the soul, the enemy makes an instant attempt to silence it. Not unfrequently, perverting good to purposes of evil, Satan tries to satisfy the awakened monitor by outward acts of devotion, by penance, or by alms-giving, as may suit the individual character of the soul that he would keep back from true repentance. Have not fair abbeys risen as the tyrant's bribe to conscience? Will not the Italian bandit lay a part of his blood-stained spoils upon the Madonna's shrine?

The four contributions which the missionary cause received at Blackrock, may be taken as exemplifications of the various most common ways of alms-giving. Contributors to charitable funds are usually influenced by one of the following motives:—*necessity*, *ostentation*, *fear*, or *love*. As charity is commended by God, charity is looked upon by many, like Sarah, as a *necessary tribute* levied by the King of heaven on all who believe themselves to be His subjects; it is regarded in the light of a *tax* to be paid regularly and faithfully indeed, but who ever paid taxes with joy? These contributors

are not the *cheerful givers* who are beloved of the Lord.

Some give because others give, because free liberality gains for them praise from the world. These are they who barter good deeds for applause, and make merchandise of charity itself. These do their alms to be seen of men, and in the approbation of men, verily they have their reward. These are not they who give with simplicity, letting not the left hand know the act of the right.

And there are others, like Brock, who bestow alms from the low motive of *fear*. Conscience, armed with the terrors of the law, actually scares them into liberality! They resemble poor wretches, who, when an enemy is within their gates, tremblingly bring to him a portion of their treasures, to stay the destroyer from burning their roofs over their heads!

The alms-giving which is acceptable in the sight of our heavenly Master, is that which springs from *love, the love of Christ*, which *constraineth*. And as love and joy, which will be indissolubly joined in heaven, are closely linked together on earth, so that which is given for the Lord's sake, is that which is given with delight. The world may talk of sacrifices, connecting with them the idea of loss and pain; but the Christian, like the Israelite of old, *feasts* on the sacrifice which he makes, *if he offer it for a thanksgiving!* Lev. vii. 12.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORLD'S SNARES.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."—ROMANS xii. 9, 10.

"OF what are you thinking, Alfred, dearest?" asked Amy on the following day, as she gently laid her hand on the shoulder of her brother.

Alfred was sitting by the stove in the barn, mending his fishing-tackle; for when the weather permitted angling, fish from the Lake of the Woods formed an important article of food at Blackrock. Often had Amy, at the time when she had dwelt in her parents' log-hut, watched with pleasure the sturgeon leaping out of the water, as the evening drew on, or gazed on them through the crystal depths of the pure transparent lake.

Alfred had been, as I have said, mending his tackle, but had fallen into a reverie while thus engaged, and was sitting motionless with the rod in his hand, when his sister came up behind him.

"Of what were you thinking?" she repeated, as she seated herself at his side.

"I was thinking, Amy," Alfred replied, "that the iron frost which seals up the waters, and shuts out the sun, gives to the fish at least security from the angler; and that, in the same way, adversity may serve as a protection against our subtle enemy,

we have at least no hook baited with flattery to fear!"

"That is a danger of which I have known so little," said Amy with a sad smile, "that I have really never taken it into account. But doubtless flattery may have its perils for the rich, the beautiful, and the great. I don't think that I should ever care much for society as I am," added the young girl, with a humbling remembrance of her blemish, "but if I could have shone in the world, if I had been what you are, Alfred, then——"

Her brother stopped her with a gesture of his hand. "I suppose," observed Alfred, "that every position in life has its own dangers and antidotes. I have been learning our father's favourite chapter by heart, and it has struck me that the ninth and tenth verses seem an especial safeguard against the perils of what is called the world, that of which we as yet have seen nothing, and heard but little, but which may one day be our sphere of action. There is in the very first line a warning against that fawning flattery to which even Christians sometimes stoop, that French polish on the surface which the world calls politeness, but which is too often deceit. Give me the man who will speak the truth to me honestly, boldly, without dissimulation or flattery, one who cares more for my welfare than my favour.

> 'Who speaks not needful truths—lest they offend,
> Hath spared *himself*, but sacrificed *his friend!*'"

"But roughness, bluntness, want of consideration for the feelings of others, these surely are no necessary parts of Christian candour?" said Amy, whose tender nature shrank like the sensitive plant from a rude touch.

"Nay," replied Alfred with a smile, "take away the dissimulation, but leave the love. There is no polish of mere politeness equal to that which would be given by close obedience to the precept, *be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.* The affected humility expressed in polite gestures, low reverences, forms and phrases by the proudest worldling who treads a court—what is it but a mimicry of the Christian courtesy enforced by St. Paul? It has been cleverly said that 'hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue,' and in nothing is this more seen than in hollow forms of politeness. True courtesy is so attractive, that pride, selfishness, and even malice will wear its semblance as a mask!"

"You speak of the world as if you had seen it,' observed Amy, "instead of having been buried in the wilds amongst boors."

"I have heard something, read something, and thought a good deal," replied Alfred. "I never regard our stay here as more than a temporary halt; I am looking forward with impatience to a reply to my letters from England. This life of rude toil will not last long; I regard its discipline as a kind of rough preparation for the trials and struggles before me, when I shall grapple with other difficulties upon a wider arena. While I am trying to brace myself to physical endurance, I am also using what means I possess for cultivating my mind." Alfred glanced towards a few books ranged on a little shelf which he had put up in a corner. "Many an hour of the night I pass by torchlight in study, and when I am carrying provender for the cattle, or firewood for the stove, I

am repeating to myself passages from the classics which I have committed to memory. My time is not wasted, I hope, Amy, though Blackrock seems to be a strange academy for one who pants for scholastic distinction."

"It is an academy for patience," said Amy, looking with fond admiration at her brother; "but who would have thought of Brock as the tutor for such a scholar as you!"

"I have sometimes thought," observed Alfred, "that if my father had known more of Brock he would hardly have chosen his house as even our temporary dwelling. And yet with our want of money, and your want of strength, there was hardly an alternative. I do not so much as know the name of one other married man living between this and the Settlement."

"Brock was spoken of to our father in our presence," observed Amy, "as an honest, good-hearted, though rough-tempered man."

"I have my doubts about the good heart," said Alfred, with a meaning smile, "and perhaps," he lowered his tone, and glanced at the door before he added, "and perhaps about the honesty also."

"Oh! Alfred!" exclaimed Amy, laying her hand on his arm; "your words just give shape to a kind of—of vague suspicion which sometimes will haunt my mind!" The young girl's voice sank to a whisper as she went on. "You remember Brock's angry manner at the bare mention of Coxall, how he swore that he never had known him· and then that box—that mysterious black box!" and Amy rapidly went over the circumstances regarding it, that had seemed to her so strange. Alfred listened with interest and attention.

"There is something wrong," he said sternly, as his sister finished her narration; "truth and honesty fear not the light. Green has spoken to me more than once about that black box; he believes it to be full of jewels and gold, and it seems to me, lets his own mind dwell on its contents much more than is for his good. It is strange how some minds sum up their ideas of happiness in the one word gold! As for Brock, I believe that wealth is his sole idol."

"Yet I think that there is some good even in Brock," observed Amy: "he loves his little boy dearly, but who could help loving Johnnie! Then the words of the clergyman did certainly make some impression upon Brock."

"Such impression as the dash of the oar makes on the water," said Alfred Gaveston, rising from his seat as he spoke; "it has served to stir up the mud. Brock's language last night, after you and the women had left, was more profane than I had ever previously heard it. I think that he was the worse for liquor; Brock always drinks a good deal, but I never knew him so much affected by drinking before."

An expression of trouble and distress passed over the pale face of Amy. "Alfred what did you do?" she nervously asked.

"I rose and left the table," replied the youth, "after there had been some words between us. Do not look frightened, Amy; it did not, nor is it likely to come to anything more than words. He wished me to drink deep, and I would not, nor would I stop to listen to what I loathed!" Alfred knitted his brows, and compressed his lips, with an expression of stern determination.

"You have learned indeed to *abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*," murmured Amy; "you will ever try to act as becomes your father's son!"

"I sometimes think, Amy," said Alfred, resuming his seat at her side, "that our father, as regards the abhorrence of evil, was placed in a position of far greater difficulty than mine. In such a regiment as the —th, he was compelled to be a witness of evil of many kinds, and by his unflinching firmness he bore constant protest against it; but it must have been hard indeed to do so when over vice itself was thrown the glitter which worldly advantages give."

"I scarcely understand your meaning," said Amy.

"Brock's intemperance and profanity simply inspire one with disgust; evil with him looks—as it really is—low and hateful. But when luxury and refinement fill high the glass, when profanity is pointed with wit, when the mind is amused and the senses charmed, when dissipation is called pleasure, irreligion—freedom of thought, then is real principle brought to the test, then is it hard indeed to *abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good!*"

"Yes, Alfred, that must need much"—Amy was about to say "firmness," but she changed the word to "grace." Painful as it was to her to know to what trials the high and noble spirit of her brother was exposed from association with a nature so utterly uncongenial as that of Brock, Amy felt that to one like Alfred, the world in which he was formed to shine, might indeed offer yet greater perils. If she, in her blind affection, could have shaped her brother's course of life, how smooth and flowery

would have been his path, how he would have been encircled with admiring friends, what opportunities would have been given him of gaining distinction and winning applause! God had appointed him at present a very different lot. Poverty, labour, obscurity, nothing to gratify ambition, nothing to flatter pride. And did not the All-wise know what was good for His child? Amy tried to realise, through faith, that blessed truth which human nature finds it so difficult to believe, *we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*

CHAPTER XII.

DUTIES AND PLEASURES.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."—ROMANS xii. 11, 12.

AN incident of an annoying, though not a very serious nature, occurred at Blackrock on the afternoon of that day. Mrs Brock was carrying a bottle of hot water, when she stumbled over a toy which Johnnie had left in the way, and a quantity of the boiling fluid was thrown over her right hand and arm. Amy did what she could to relieve the sufferings of Betsy, the injured part was carefully bandaged up from the air; but it was evident that the active bustling housewife would for days be unable to use her hand, even to assist herself in dressing. Instead of attending to everything, Mrs Brock would herself require attention, while, almost at the same time, from the severity of the cold, her mother was attacked with illness which confined her to her bed!

Amy, who had hitherto been spared anything like hard labour at Blackrock, suddenly found herself the only one of her sex in that household who could do anything at all, and this at a season when the very faculties seemed to grow torpid under the benumbing influence of cold.

Had all this occurred on Amy's first arrival at Blackrock, she might have given way to listless despair, and scarcely have made even an attempt

to fulfil duties distasteful by their nature, and overwhelming by their number. But the orphan's mind had a little regained its tone; the comparative rest and comfort of Blackrock had in some degree restored to her the health which anxiety, watching, and sorrow had shattered; above all, Amy had gradually been gaining a deeper knowledge of the love of God, and more simple confiding faith in His wisdom, and whatever duties He might appoint for her, she trusted that He would give her strength to perform them.

"I have a busy time before me," thought Amy, as she retired to her room that night, after an evening of unusual exertion. "Mrs Brock is quite disabled; poor old Mrs Whetstone cannot rise from her bed; who is to look after the house, make the fires, prepare the meals, care for the child, and knead the bread? Who is to iron out the linen which was washed yestermorn, mend the clothes, keep everything right, be housemaid, cook, and sick-nurse in one? I am not fit for all this; I am not clever, active, or strong; I have always disliked such drudgery, and the cold so increases my indolence, that I almost envy the dormouse, that makes one long sleep through the winter! But indolence is, perhaps, the peculiar enemy against whom I have to struggle. *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.* I must take that for my watchword! On one thing at least I must firmly resolve, to rise long before the sun; to rise at least two hours earlier than I have been doing of late, for without this, it is clearly impossible that I should get over half of my needful work. Indolence, selfishness, pride—Oh! God give me grace to conquer them all! Let mine be willing service.

Have I not offered myself, body and soul, a living sacrifice unto Thee?"

"Misfortunes never come singly; 'it never rains but it pours,' that's true enough," moaned old Sarah from her couch of pain. "Here am I, laid up with rheumatism; poor Betsy's hand is useless; there's not a neighbour we can get in to help!"

"We'll do our best, and hope for the best, and the cloud may soon pass away," said Amy, in a more cheerful tone than usual.

"Ay, and 'every cloud has a silver lining,' they say," replied the old dame; "there's sunshine on one side of it, only 'tis not the side that we see! I'm not one given to grumbling; 'there's no use crying over spilt milk;' 'what can't be cured, must be endured.' But I was always an active woman; 'better wear out than rust out,' was my motto, and it frets me that everything should go to sixes and sevens, while I lie here, able to do nothing!"

"There is one thing that you can do," suggested Amy; "you are always awake very early; please call me then, for I must be up and stirring, to light the fires, and get the early breakfast ready for the men before they go to their work."

"You, poor child," said Sarah Whetstone, in a pitying, regretful tone; "that is no work for your father's daughter!"

"The work for my father's daughter is whatever God gives her to do," murmured Amy, as the moisture rose to her eyes.

The thoughts which had passed through the mind of the orphan girl during the day, rousing her to efforts unwonted and painful, shaped themselves at night into the form of a dream. Amy thought that she was one of a multitude of youthful maidens

about to start on some journey. In beautiful contrast to the wild wintry desolation of the scene upon which her waking eyes had rested, Amy in her dream beheld before her quantities of flowers, a rich luxuriance of blossoms, which filled the air with perfume, as if April, May, and June had all emptied their laps before her, throwing down heaps of violets, cowslips, primroses, with summer's treasures of roses, all fragrance and beauty. Beside the fairy hillocks of blossoms, were ranged a number of earthen jars, filled with grain, but these at first scarcely attracted the notice of the dreamer, so charmed was she with the blooming flowers.

As Amy gazed on the floral treasures with delight, she became aware of the presence of one beside her, who seemed not to belong to earth. A beauteous form, with glittering wings, was hovering near, indistinctly seen through the mantle of light which encircled it like a halo; and sweeter than music was the voice which fell on the dreamer's ear.

"Mortals," said the bright angel, "you see before you the flowers of pleasure, and the ripe grains of duty. You are starting on life's journey, bear with you which ye will. The choice is set before you, take up pleasures or take up duties, even as ye choose now, so shall your future portion be."

Amy beheld most of her young companions rush eagerly forward and fill their arms with the flowers so beautiful and so sweet; and she thought in her dream, "how much lighter and how much pleasanter these to carry! who can wonder that the young and the gay choose to leave the dull heavy duties behind them!"

"Thou hast not chosen, my child," said the bright one; and when Amy gazed up on the glorious being who spoke, she thought that the starry eyes that gazed down on her wore a strange resemblance to those of her father. She knew what that father's choice had been, and slowly, half reluctantly, she turned from the paradise of flowers, and with bending form and trembling hands, lifted one of the heavy jars of grain.

Then it seemed as if soft music filled the air,—such music as is only heard in dreams; and as the young sower went on her way, words resembling these came floating down from the clouds–

> "Scatter wide the golden grain,
> Not a seed shall fall in vain.
> Each shall spring to life again
> When the Lord returns to reign!
> Harvest bright of joy and light
> Shall be reaped on Zion's height!"

The dreamer's heart grew joyful, the heavy jar grew lighter, and wherever the pilgrim trod, under her feet sprang up fragrant blossoms,—sweeter, fairer, than those that she had forsaken. Again breathed the heavenly music—

> "Who vain pleasures leave behind,
> On their path new pleasures find;
> Bright with sunshine, bright with showers,
> God Himself provides the flowers!"

Then joyfully in her dream Amy sped on her path, till she turned to look at her companions who had filled their arms with the loveliest blossoms of earth. Alas! they were withering and fading away in the grasp of those who held them! If Amy's path was strewn with living grain,—the way of those who made pleasures their choice, was strewn with dying leaves and flowers! Not even

the dew of bitter tears could ever revive them again!

Then, more sadly and more softly, in a minor key, again sounded the music in the dream.

> "Joys are flying, flowers are dying,
> Earth around is barren lying;
> They who scorned the golden treasure,
> They must clasp the withering pleasure;
> Theirs to-day the parting sorrow,—
> Desolation theirs to-morrow!"

"Ah, but it seems a sin and a shame to awake ye, child; you were sleeping so sweetly," cried the voice of old Sarah, breaking the spell of slumber, and rousing Amy to the duties of the day.

Amy sprang from her couch with an energy new to her nature. With no languid lingering regret would she lift up the heavy burden before her; if she went on her way sowing for eternity, should she not go on her way rejoicing! With active haste she made her rapid toilet by the light of the kindled pine-log; but as Amy completed her preparations she was struck by a peculiar glimmer upon the ice-frosted window, which surprised her, as the casement not opening towards the east, the light could not be that of sunrise.

The young girl went up to the window, rubbed away some of the coating of frost-work, and looked out upon that which, in its strange wild beauty, seemed like a continuation of her dream. Amy had before beheld the aurora borealis, but never in such splendour as in that hour before the dawn of a winter's morn. A broad belt of quivering light almost surrounded the polar star, which glittered like a living gem in the sky. From this belt streamed forth wave after wave of soft radiance. as

billows from an ocean of light. Suddenly the waves ceased, the ring grew brighter, and here and there it broke into yellow streamers, more splendid and yet more splendid—darting upwards even to the zenith, a rosy flush like that of the morning mingling with the brilliance of the gold!

"It is like a vision of the harvest of light, the golden sheaves of glory waving over the sky!" murmured Amy to herself, as she stood for some minutes with clasped hands, gazing upwards at the magnificent spectacle before her; "had I not risen till daybreak, I should not have looked upon this. Winter has its beauties, and night its glories. And so may it be with our darkened lives. In heaven there will be rejoicing in glory, the full sunlight of happiness is there; but for the *patient in tribulation* is the *rejoicing in hope* which light up the Christian's hours of trial like the aurora borealis, which owes its being to the winter, its brightness to the darkness around!"

Cheered and animated to unwonted efforts, Amy went to fulfil her round of lowly duties, prayer on her lips, and hope in her heart. The music of her dream seemed to haunt her; "God Himself provides the flowers," rang in the orphan's ears, as she stooped to her humble tasks. The very efforts which circumstances called her to make, were bracing to the spirit of Amy. Had the young sensitive orphan been in an English home, where she could have freely indulged in the luxury of giving way to her grief, she would have nursed her sorrow until it became almost an idol, and health might have entirely given way. Amy had been, as it were, dragged out of the seclusion which sorrow seeks; she had been made to work when she would fai

rather have wept, and obedience to the call of duty brought its own reward. She had learned, as those who know only ease and comfort never can learn, how to go on the narrow, thorny, yet blessed path to heaven, *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.*

"You don't mean to say that everything has been done, and done by those little hands!" cried old Sarah, as Amy re-entered the room of the invalid, bearing the warm breakfast which she herself had prepared.

"Not well done, I fear, but done with good-will," replied Amy, with a brighter smile on her pale face than had been seen there since her great troubles began.

"Ah! well," observed Mrs Whetstone, "'God helps them that help themselves,' and that help others, say I. There's nothing like putting one's shoulder to the wheel. You've come to this house as a blessing, Missy Amy, and none of us will ever forget how you, a lady born and bred, have assisted us in the time of our trouble. 'One good turn deserves another,' you'll one day find the truth of that saying."

CHAPTER XIII

THE INDIAN WANDERER.

"*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*"
—ROMANS xii. 13.

IF Alfred's spirit recoiled from seeing his sister engaged in occupations that he deemed beneath her, if he felt her position in the house of Brock far more keenly than he did his own, he yet could not avoid acknowledging to himself that the lower she stooped, the higher her character seemed to rise. There is a dignity in true humility, a grandeur in self-forgetfulness, and a beauty in holiness, which give glimpses through the veil of the flesh of what the future seraph will be. Alfred never asked himself now whether his sister were plain or fair; He who had redeemed her by His sufferings, was renewing her by His grace, and on the feeble child of earth there was already the impress of heaven.

Alfred's own mind was by no means so calm and resigned as that of Amy. The difference between himself and Brock, to which he had lightly alluded in his conversation with his sister, became more and more a source of daily annoyance. Brock's mind had become darker and more suspicious, and his temper more irritable since the clergyman's visit to Blackrock. Alfred had difficulty in avoiding an open quarrel, nor perhaps would he have made any effort to do so but on his sister's account, and from the daily expectation of receiving such

answers to his letters from England as would free both Amy and himself from what he regarded as hateful bondage. To quit the spot to which those answers would be directed, might be to run a risk of never receiving them at all; and this consideration would have had weight, even had not poverty and a snow-blocked-up road, been as chains to bind the Gavestons to their present uncongenial abode. There was more of what was earthly in Alfred's hope than in that of his sister, he was therefore less able to "rejoice" in it; and though by no means neglectful of prayer, he was not so "instant" in it; it naturally followed, therefore, that he was less "patient in tribulation."

Towards the close of the third day after her accident, while Mrs Brock (who, though yet unable to use her right hand, did what she could with her left) was engaged in bringing groceries out of her stores to Amy, in preparation for the evening meal, a sound from outside the house, like a feeble wail, attracted the attention of both. Johnnie's little pattering feet soon carried him to the window, and clambering upon a bench he looked out.

"Ma, woman—baba—baba cry!" exclaimed the child, whose tender little heart was touched with pity; and clambering down again with a rapidity which nearly occasioned a tumble, Johnnie ran to the door and tried to pull it open, though his small hand was unable to reach the bolt, far less to turn it.

"Ma—open—open—let baba in!" cried the boy.

"Surely there can be no woman nor child out upon such an evening as this!" exclaimed Betsy.

Without even waiting for Mrs Brock's permission, Amy hastened to the door, and let in the poor

wanderers who had been shivering without. An Indian woman entered, bearing on her weary back the "pappoose," or child, whose wailing cry had pleaded for admittance.

To Amy the appearance of a Red Indian was not strange, as she had occasionally seen at the door of her father's log-hut these wandering children of the wild. The unexpected visitor had all the characteristics of her race; the low forehead, high cheek-bones, the nose long and flat, the teeth whose whiteness looked more glistening from contrast with the dark reddish skin. The poor stranger glanced timidly around her as she crossed the threshold, and drew closer her blanket-robe; she seemed afraid to enter that warm and, to her, luxurious abode, where the faggot was blazing in the grate, and the kettle singing on the hob, and where the table was spread with what to the Indian were the unwonted dainties of civilised life.

"How came you to wander here with your child at such a season?" asked Mrs Brock, a feeling of hospitality and pity struggling in her mind with that of annoyance at what she regarded as a most inconvenient intrusion.

"Anook way lost—wigwam far—squaw weary—pappoose cold! window shine red, white squaw good, white squaw love pappoose," and the poor Red Indian pointed to little Johnnie, who was gazing up into her face with his eyes full of wondering pity, in order to strengthen by this appeal to the Englishwoman's maternal feelings, the pleading which she could hardly put into words.

"What's to be done!" exclaimed Betsy, turning to Amy.

"You will show hospitality, I am sure, to these

poor creatures; you will give them food and drink, and let them rest here for the night."

"Baba cold—baba hungry—poor baba!" lisped Johnnie, as Anook removed from her shoulder the dark little living burden which she had carried for many miles through the snow, and pressed it to her heart, and stilled its wailing.

"I wish that they had gone somewhere else," said Betsy; "to give them food is easy enough—yes," she added, answering Amy's inquiring look, "you can fill that bowl for the woman, she's welcome to it, poor soul! But I can't keep them here through the night; my husband would as lief give house-room to a wolf as to an Indian, he hates all the race; he looks on every Red-skin as a thief, since he caught one of them in the attempt to carry off that black box! The thief, if he lives, must bear marks of Tom's hand to this day; it was after that attempt that the box was screwed down to the floor; never again will a Red-skin be allowed to sleep under this roof."

"You could not turn out the woman and the child to perish in the night air," exclaimed Amy. "Will you not plead with your husband, will you not entreat him to let the poor creatures sleep to-night in the barn?"

"I daren't ask him," said Betsy, shortly; "Tom has been like a chained bear these three days. I went to him just now in the tool house, it was but to speak to him about what could be done to relieve poor mother, and he was ready to strike at me with the hatchet which he held in his hand."

"So he is in the tool-house still?" asked Amy.

"Yes, but I'm afraid he'll come in here shortly, and if he find Red Indians before our fire, and

eating of our bread, we'll be having a storm with a vengeance! I tell you, I dare not for my life ask him to let them stay here for a single hour!"

"If you dare not, I must," said Amy, her heart throbbing violently at the thought of the effort which she was about to make. Gaveston's daughter, though living under the same roof as Brock, had scarcely ever addressed a word to him, she had practically kept almost as much apart from intercourse with the settler as the forms of society would have made her do in her own land. Brock did not attempt to break through the reserve of the shy retiring girl; he might have called that reserve pride, and have resented it as such, had not Amy shown her humility by readiness to perform offices of kindness to those around her. Whether from respect for her character, or pity for her sorrows, Brock, coarse as he was in his manner towards every one else, had never, after she had once entered his house, offended Amy by familiarity of manner. He seldom appeared to notice her at all, and Amy, thankful for this, had secretly resolved that the ice of reserve between them should never he broken on her part. She shrank, with extreme repugnance, from the idea of asking any favour from Brock, or exposing herself to the chance of receiving from him an insolent word. Amy had seen how fiercely he could scowl at, how savagely he could speak to others, even to an innocent child, and she regarded the settler with mingled mistrust and fear. But an occasion had now arisen when mercy required that Amy should put aside this fear, and plead the cause of the helpless strangers who were seeking hospitality The effort must be made at once, before Brock should leave the tool-house,

and Amy, with something of the feelings with which she would have entered the den of a sleeping lion, trembling lest she should waken the savage beast, hastened to the place where she could hear Brock chopping up some wood.

The settler, hatchet in hand, was standing with his back to the door; the dimness of twilight was closing in, and the place was very obscure. Amy felt so nervous and timid, that she could hardly articulate the words which should draw on her the attention of the man before her.

"May I speak with you, Mr Brock?"

The settler turned sharply round at the sound of the soft timid voice; Amy thought how sullen and repulsive was the face which she saw indistinctly through the gloom.

"What do you want?" asked the man.

"I want to ask your kind hospitality for a poor traveller, a mother with her babe, who has lost her way in the snow. Unless they have shelter to-night, both must perish from cold. Will you not let them sleep in your barn?"

"None but born idiots would be abroad in such weather," said Brock; "but I'll not refuse them a place in the barn for a night, unless," he added, suddenly checking himself, "unless they should be Red-skins, none of those varmint shall ever cross threshold of mine again!"

"And even if they should be Red-skins," said Amy, nervously; "do not Indians suffer from cold, weariness, and hunger—are they not God's creatures even as we? When the good Samaritan saw a poor traveller bleeding on the road, did he, ere he helped him, stop to think to what race he belonged?"

"That preaching may go down with women; it won't go down with me," said Tom Brock. "Let the Indian and her whelp be off before I see them, if they wish to leave the place with whole bones!"

Amy's heart swelled with indignation at the brutal manner, but she kept down all outward expression of what she felt. She knew that human life was at stake, and that one who would plead successfully, must plead perseveringly, and not be daunted by the first repulse. The young orphan lady clasped her hands, and approached nearer to the settler.

"Mr Brock," she said, "I have never asked a favour of you before, but I ask one now, nor," Amy added, with earnestness, "can I quit this spot till you grant it! Should that mother and babe perish, I could never know peace, nor could you! You are a father yourself; your little one is dear to your heart. Think of *him* out on a night like this, and show to the child of another that mercy which you would ask for your own!"

Amy had touched the one tender chord in the parent's heart, and she had again awakened that almost superstitious fear which had been aroused, though but for brief space, by the fervid eloquence of Mr Atherton. Brock remembered something that he had heard long ago of the sins of the father being visited on the child, and his darling boy was a more powerful pleader with his soul than the words of the pale orphan girl. The sullen spirit did not choose, however, to own that it could be moved by any such motive.

"Sure enough you've never asked a favour of me afore, for you've had everything that my house could give you without the asking," growled out

the surly host, reverting to the first part of Amy's appeal; "but I'll not deny that you've made yourself useful, now that my wife's laid on the shelf, and that you've always cared for the boy. So, as you've set your heart so upon it, these savages can kennel to-night in the barn; but don't let me set eyes upon them, for if I'd my will I'd sweep the whole race clean off the face of the earth!"

Amy gave first a gasp of relief, then an exclamation of thankful joy, as with light eager steps she hastened back to the parlour, scarcely conscious of the icy chill of the air through which she passed. She found poor Anook swallowing, with the eagerness of a half-famished creature, the warm food which had been placed before her by Betsy, whose natural kindliness of heart was struggling against her dread of her husband. Johnnie's plump white hand was softly patting the dark little stranger, that lay, closely swathed after the Indian fashion, on the knee of his mother.

"Pat baba sleep, Amy," said the child, who from the instinct of his loving little heart was showing such hospitality as he could to the stranger.

"What said my husband?" asked Betsy, anxiously.

"They may stay in the barn for the night, but they must go thither at once," replied Amy, "he must not find them here;" and to the disappointment of Johnnie, Anook and the "baba" were hurried off to the barn, where Amy hastily made what preparations she could for their comfort. She supplied the stove with fresh fuel, shook down a bed of straw, and brought to throw over it her own warm buffalo robe, the one luxury which she had carried with her from her old home. The poor

Indian watched the young girl's movements with a wistful expression in her dark eyes, then putting her palms together, murmured in her broken English, "Lord pay back—good Lord remember kindness to pappoose and squaw."

"Have you heard of the Lord, then?" asked Amy with interest, for the Indians whom she had seen before had been ignorant heathen.

"White missionary visit wigwam—speak words very good—teach red man pray—Lord hear! Anook lost in snow—weary—come dark—come cold—pappoose much cry; Anook pray Lord—show light—show house—show friend—Lord bring Anook safe—pappoose safe—Anook bless good Lord!"

"And here then," thought Amy with deep joy, "in this poor creature, one of a despised and wandering race, I may have found a member of 'the Holy Catholic Church,' to whose simple prayer of faith God will as readily listen as to that breathed from the eloquent lips of His most gifted servants. How thankful shall I be to the latest day of my life that I have been granted this opportunity of serving this poor wanderer and her babe! *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares;* such is the Divine command, and, like all God's commands, it is linked with a blessing!"

When Amy visited the barn on the following morning she found that Anook and her child had already departed. The buffalo robe was neatly folded up and laid on the straw, and on it had been left a necklace of beads, the Indian's simple tribute of gratitude for kindness received from a stranger. This seemed to be the only memorial

left of an act of Christian charity which had cost the timid Amy more, perhaps, than any other effort which she ever had made, for not only had it been painful at the time, but Gaveston's daughter suffered for days from the chill caught by parting with her fur-wrapping on that sharp winter's night. But Amy had, in lowly obedience, sown her golden grain, which, buried in the past, must spring up in the future, unlike those oak-apples of pride and ambition of which her dying father had spoken, the galls which can never spring up into life!

CHAPTER XIV.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.
"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."—ROMANS xii. 14, 15, 16.

STILL the long winter rolled on, dark day succeeding to dark day, and no tidings had come from England. Betsy's hurt had healed, and Sarah Whetstone, more gaunt and withered than before, with form more bent, but with mind just as keen and curious, had again joined the family circle.

One morning Brock sat mending his snow-shoes by the fire, while Amy was trying on Johnnie a little warm dress which she was making for the child, and Sarah, seated opposite to her son-in-law, was watching him through her grey eyebrows. No one else was present, Alfred and Green having gone out shooting, and Betsy being busy in another part of the house.

"I remember all perfectly now," said the old woman, without any introduction, giving voice to the thoughts which she had been revolving in her mind.

"What do you remember, old dame?" asked Brock, without looking up from his work.

"You said that you never knew such a man, but it seems that my memory's better than yours,

for I've been turning it over in my mind, and I remember now, as if it were yesterday, that the very first time that ever I saw you, it was in the lane down by the mill, you were in company with a short, stout, red-haired man, and that you called him by the name of Coxall."

Amy had often wondered at the temerity with which the strange old woman would draw upon herself the anger of a violent man, by some imprudent observation of this kind; it was one of the peculiarities of Sarah's nature to fasten on any mystery, as a bloodhound fastens on a scent, so eager to track it that she looked neither to the right nor to the left, to mark the dangers into which she might be running. It was one of Mrs Whetstone's favourite maxims that truth lies at the bottom of a well, and that if you go deep enough you'll always find it, but she did not sufficiently calculate the possibility of any one breaking his neck in the descent. That dark expression which Amy dreaded, passed like a thunder-cloud across the countenance of Brock, and he muttered such imprecations as it almost curdled her blood to hear.

"'Curses, like chickens, go home to roost,'" observed old Sarah Whetstone.

To the terror of Amy, Brock started from his seat, and made one step forward with uplifted hand, as if to dash the speaker to the earth with the huge snow-shoe which he grasped! It was one of those fearful moments, when action seems rather instinctive than the result of reflection; Amy caught up the child at her feet, and springing forward threw him into his grandmother's arms, thus interposing both his body and her own between his infuriated father and the woman who had provoked him!

"Kiss Grannie — dear Grannie — who loves Johnnie so much!" gasped out Amy, scarcely able to articulate from fear.

She had gained her object, Brock's uplifted arm fell, he threw down the snow-shoe, ground his teeth, glared at Mrs Whetstone, then taking up his fur-cap quitted the house.

"Oh! Mrs Whetstone!" exclaimed Amy, "how could you dare to rouse him like that!"

"He's a bad man," muttered old Sarah, who was both alarmed and angry; "he'll meet with his deserts one of these days, and I'll live to see it! 'God's mill grinds slowly, but it grinds to powder!'"

"Pray, pray do not speak thus!" entreated Amy; "it sounds too much like cursing!"

"Did not he curse?" asked Sarah sternly.

"But his conduct is no example for us. Oh! is it not written—*bless them which persecute you, bless, and curse not!*"

"Is it not also written, *abhor what is evil,*" said Sarah.

"But surely—surely it is the sin and not the sinner that we should abhor!" exclaimed Amy. "My dear father was wronged—deeply wronged, all his heaviest trials in life came through the malice of one cruel enemy, who ruined his fortune, and tried to ruin his character also. But never did I hear one bitter word spoken against that man. Oh, no! one of the last acts of my parent's life was to pray for his persecutor!"

Sarah remained silent for several moments with her eyes resting on Amy before she observed, "I always prided myself on being a good lover and a good hater, the one as much as the other. It's nature, and one can't change nature."

"God can," said Amy, very softly.

"It seems to me," remarked Mrs Whetstone, "that people have very different notions of religion now-a-days from what they had when I was young. I was told, when I was a girl, that if I read my Bible, said my prayers, went to church, and kept the commandments, I was safe on the road to heaven. That was plain enough, and easy to be understood, so I did my duty, paid my way, and looked to find all right in the end. But now," continued Mrs Whetstone, knitting her brows, "the word is *faith*. We are told to believe and we shall be saved, and that sounds easy enough too, for I was never given to doubting in my life. But then on *faith* there follows so much that we must *do*, and that we must *be*, that the way to heaven seems harder to find than ever! What were those words that you were repeating last night, that you said that your parents took for their rule of life?"

Amy repeated with reverence the inspired words of the Apostle. *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil.*

"Now I say that an angel might follow all that, but not a woman of flesh and blood," observed Sarah doggedly. "Why, such rules go down to the very thoughts and feelings, and if we can only get to heaven by keeping every one of them, heaven's like to be but an empty place as regards poor human creatures like us."

Amy felt greatly perplexed; she had long sus-

pected that Mrs Whetstone viewed happiness on the other side of the grave much in the light of wages to be earned by a certain amount of work on this. The young girl's own views were Scriptural, but they had rather been imbibed from intercourse with her parents, than acquired by any reasoning process of her own, and she had not the power to explain them. Amy could not convey to the mind of another that which was clear to her own, that the kind of religion which is so natural to the human heart, is not the religion of the Gospel. It was with pleasure, therefore, that she heard her brother's well-known step at the door, and saw him enter the house. Alfred came in, gun in hand, and threw down a brace of birds that he had shot, winter visitants from more northern latitudes to the shores of the Lake of the Woods.

Little Johnnie ran eagerly to examine the "beauty birds," stroke their soft plumage, and then look sadly at the red stains left by the death-wounds. The tender young heart could not understand why any creature should suffer or die.

Old Sarah had fixed her mind on the subject before her, and was not to be diverted from pursuing it. Amy's life had been a silent sermon to her companion; Mrs Whetstone had felt that Gaveston's daughter had a loftier standard of right and wrong than her own; that she was more watchful over her heart and her feelings, and yet that there was more of love than of fear in the orphan's religion. From conversations which they had occasionally held together, Mrs Whetstone had gathered that Amy had been taught to rest more upon faith than upon works, and that she shrank from the idea of ever *meriting* anything from God by service

however devoted. To the old woman's mind there seemed a contradiction in this. Why should Christians be so careful to maintain good works, if good works gave no title to heaven; and why should they speak of being justified by faith *only*, when the constant aim of their life seemed to be to grow daily more holy in thought, word, and deed?

"Master Alfred," said Mrs Whetstone, addressing herself to young Gaveston, whom she always called by this name, "your father, I take it, was as good as a parson, and he taught you many a thing that's dark to one like me that never had much book-learning. Now I want you to answer me a question. Here's the Apostle Paul telling us that we must be feeling for every one, even for enemies, that we must live like saints or angels, and yet think little of ourselves; that we must not be proud, or selfish, or revengeful, even in our secret thoughts! Now how can this be, seeing that it's our very nature to hate when we're hated, and to care more for what pleases ourselves, than for what may please our neighbours?"

"I suppose," said Alfred, after a pause for thought, "that your question is much like that of the ruler, *how can a man be born when he is old?* We need a thorough change of heart and nature, and that is only to be given by God's Spirit, that is what my father always told me."

"But if all this is necessary," persisted old Sarah, "why say that we want nothing but *faith?*"

"What does yonder poor bird want to make it stretch its wings and soar upwards?" asked Alfred, pointing to the dead game.

"Only life," replied Mrs Whetstone.

"And *real faith* is *the life of the soul*," said

Alfred. "If we really from our souls believe that Christ died for us, and that He loves us, our thoughts, our hopes, our feelings, will rise above earth, towards Him who is the Fount and Source of all goodness."

Mrs Whetstone did not look satisfied, her difficulty was not yet solved; she was still confusing the distinction between faith and the striving after holiness which is the needful result of faith.

"I don't understand what you say about soaring," she bluntly remarked; "is faith enough to take us to heaven, or must we have all the patience, and meekness, and forgiveness of wrongs that are commanded in that difficult chapter?"

Alfred had put down his gun, and taken a seat opposite to the window; he was now looking out of it, with his blue eye fixed on a weather-vane which Brock had raised on a pole in front of his dwelling. Without appearing to notice Mrs Whetstone's question, the youth observed, "how weary one is of seeing that arrow always pointing to the north!"

"Ay, when it veers round to the south," observed old Sarah, "we shall have warm weather again, the ice on the lake will melt, and we'll know that spring is coming!"

"Would it not be well then," said Alfred, turning suddenly round towards her with a look of animated inquiry, "would it not be well if I could manage to climb that pole, turn the arrow round, and fasten it well, so that it should always point to the south?"

Mrs Whetstone gave a low chuckling laugh, "'The most learned clerks are not always the wisest men,' as the saying is," she observed,

"what good would it do to turn the weathercock? would you make the arrow tell a falsehood? 'Truth may be blamed, but it never can be shamed.' Let the wind blow from the south, and the arrow will turn fast enough, and point there."

"Man's conduct is as the arrow," said Alfred earnestly, "and the wind as the breath of God's Spirit that *bloweth where it listeth*, that we see not save in its effects. To control our outward conduct, merely to win human praise, or from some wild hope of gaining heaven by our goodness, is to bind the vane, and because it points southwards to believe that spring has arrived. The spring and the south wind are both from God. Living faith in the heart is the first smile of that spring, the first breath of that wind that gradually melts the ice of sin, and makes the vane of outward conduct necessarily point to holiness of life, and earnestness in good works."

Whether Sarah Whetstone thoroughly understood the simile may be doubted, or whether she was fully aware that she had hitherto been only binding the vane by mere human efforts to keep the commandments that she might earn a claim to the kingdom of heaven. One of the most difficult lessons for the proud human heart is to learn that all that is good comes from God, and that even the *desire* to love Him is from the inspiration of His Spirit. Strikingly is the connection between faith and good works, as cause and effect, exemplified in the story of the jailor at Philippi. He had been, we have reason to believe, an idolater, an alien from God, and cruel to man; yet his cry of "what shall I do to be saved?" was not answered by "throw down thy idols, confess Christ openly, per-

form deeds of mercy and love," it was simply, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Faith came like the gently breathing south wind, and what was the immediate result? His prisoners saw the inward change expressed in the outward conduct, clearly as the shifting of a vane. *He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptised, he and all his, straight way . . . . and rejoiced, believing in God!*

Amy had paid little attention to the conversation going on between her brother and Sarah Whetstone for her nerves were yet quivering under the excitement of the scene which she had recently witnessed, and the remembrance of Brock's muttered curses, seemed to shut out from her ears the calm arguments of young Gaveston. Amy was alarmed lest old Sarah, with her incautious curiosity, should one day provoke her son-in-law to some act of open violence. Brock was evidently jealously guarding some secret which Mrs Whetstone was resolved to wrest from him, regardless of the personal peril which might attend her attempts. The aged woman's blindness to the risk which she incurred, increased the anxiety felt on her account, and as soon as the orphans were alone together, Amy imparted her uneasiness to her brother.

"Had I not been present," she said to her brother, after describing what had happened, "I am certain that he would have struck,—I almost fear that he would have killed her! When, oh! when will poor old Sarah learn caution in dealing with that dark and dangerous man!"

CHAPTER XV

AN ESCAPE.

"*Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*"—ROMANS xii. 17.

THE dim red light of the wintry dawn was gleaming in through the windows of the lonely farm on the shore of the Lake of the Woods. Already had the men gone forth to their labours; the sound of Green's hatchet might be heard from the wood, Alfred was with the cattle, Brock had sauntered out with his gun. Sarah, to whom, as she was wont to say, habit was a second nature, had resumed her custom of early rising. The old dame liked to feel herself of use to the family, and although able to do but little, she crept about the dwelling, to perform such household work as had been familiar to her from her girlhood. Sarah was one to whom idleness was more intolerable than either fatigue or pain.

Mrs Whetstone was slowly moving about the parlour, duster in hand, when a small object lying upon the floor attracted her attention. She stopped, touched it with her foot, then moved it with the stick with which she was staying her feeble steps; her stooping form bent lower, there was a look of more keen curiosity in the eyes that gleamed from underneath the thick brows.

"A key, and not a door-key, he must have dropped it as he went out. What if it should be

the key which lies every night under his pillow, that which opens—the black box!" Tremulous with eagerness, the old dame attempted to lift the key from the floor, but the pain caused by the movement forced a low moan from her lips. Again Sarah tried, and again without success; and one less stubborn in pursuing a purpose might have given up the attempt in despair, but Mrs Whetstone was not one to be easily discouraged. Painfully sinking down on her knees, she succeeded in getting the key within the grasp of her bony hand.

The black box was so near, that, without rising, Mrs Whetstone dragged herself to the spot where it had stood for many months, the object of so many conjectures, doubts, and suspicions. Sarah put the key into the lock, it fitted exactly; it was evident that the desire fostered for so long, might now in a minute be fulfilled, that the mystery, whatever it might be, that had hung over that box might be solved.

And yet, on the very point of gaining that knowledge which she had eagerly sought, Sarah Whetstone stopped and hesitated. Something seemed to keep her back from turning that little piece of iron which she held in her hand. Was it fear—was it conscience? Sarah had not the refined delicacy of feeling which would scorn the meanness of stooping to pry, and yet there seemed a voice within her whispering, that to rob a man of his secret might be conduct as dishonourable, as unworthy of a Christian, as to rob him of his purse, that curiosity might be akin to covetousness, and that it was wrong to do that behind her son-in-law's back which she dared not do before his face!

Sarah's hesitation, however, from whatever cause

it might arise, did not last long. The thirst for forbidden knowledge was very strong in this daughter of Eve. Mrs Whetstone turned the key in the lock, which seemed rusty and old, and unwilling to give up its trust; she half started at the little noise which it made, glanced round to make sure that she was alone, and lifted the creaking lid of the box.

There were various articles within it; some coin, some pieces of plate, silver and silver gilt, and some implements which Sarah took out one by one and regarded with a keen suspicious gaze, shaking her head as she laid each down. There was also one folded sheet of paper, in an envelope directed to Brock, which had evidently passed through the post. This Mrs Whetstone opened, but it was some time before she could make out the sense of the ill-written scrawl enclosed within. The letter was dated almost three years back, about the time of her daughter's marriage, and the post-mark which it bore was "London." The letter when deciphered ran as follows:—

"The old screw will give but £300 for the dimonds as are worth as many thousands, but he has us under his thum. Coxall has got charge of your share; the hounds are hot on the scent, so, if you don't hear from him you'll guess he's gone over the big pond, and the sooner you follow the better for you. When you meet show him this letter, and he'll count down the cash. You've plenty in hand from what we shared from the desk, and you said the girl you're after has the ready. I hope you'll get clear off without the hounds running you to earth. The £200 reward offered makes 'em keen. I'm in close hiding like a badgerin his hole.

"Yours, P—— Gower."

"Gower!" exclaimed Sarah Whetstone, almost dropping the letter from her trembling hand, when

her eye fell upon the name at the end, a name but too well-known, far and wide, as that of a man who had been tried, convicted and hanged for a burglary attended with murder. "Coxall, too—Coxall, all is clear as day, or rather, blacker than night. There were at least three concerned, and Brock, no doubt of it, was one of them! Murder will out, murder will out! Oh! woe worth the day when he first saw my daughter! woe worth the day when she first touched money of his, there's a stain of blood upon it!" Sarah shuddered as she looked on the contents of the box, and threw the letter upon them as if the touch of it were pollution. "And that's why he keeps so carefully that vile paper, that cheque on the bank of Mammon, that, when he meets his old comrade in guilt he may claim his share—his one hundred pounds—as if ill-gotten money could ever thrive, as if it would not lie like a curse upon him, and his innocent wife and child!" Sarah rocked herself to and fro on the floor where she knelt, in anguish of soul! Long had she suspected that Brock was very different from what she would have wished him to be, but the certainty of his guilt was to his poor old mother-in-law a terrible shock. Blind and ignorant upon many points Sarah Whetstone might be, but her ideas of honesty and justice were high and noble, and when she had been but a poor servant girl, struggling to gain her living, she might have been trusted with uncounted gold, so strictly had she obeyed the command, *provide things honest in the sight of all men.* The character of Sarah as regarded integrity had been ever above reproach, and she had prided herself on the belief that none of her "kith or kin" had ever disgraced himself in

the sight of the world. Now the idea that the finger of scorn might be pointed at her own little grandchild, as the son of a thief, if not of a murderer, was as gall and wormwood to her spirit.

"What shall I do! O! what shall I do!" groaned the poor old woman, sorely punished for her indiscreet curiosity by the misery which knowledge had brought. "It is not for me to disgrace him—it is not for me to ruin him—he has married my girl—he is the father of my Johnnie! I will shut up this terrible secret close in my breast, as he tried once to bury that box! I will turn the key, and throw it far out on the snow, just on the track of Brock's steps, that he may fancy that he dropped it there, and that no one else has touched it. If he but guessed that I had read that paper"—a shudder passed through Sarah's frame as the thought rose before her—"he'd be the one to remember the proverb, 'Dead men tell no tales.'"

Mrs Whetstone attempted to put her plan into execution, but to her mingled surprise and alarm she found that she could not shut down closely the lid of the box. Something had given way in the lock, so that the upper portion would not fit down into the lower, and she could neither turn nor draw out the key, nor prevent the lid from appearing slightly raised, though but to the extent of the fraction of an inch. In vain Sarah desperately pushed and pressed, exerting all her strength, regardless of pain, till the moisture streamed down her wrinkled face. No effort of hers could close that box, nor could her weight overcome the resistance offered by some unseen obstruction within the lock. Almost in despair Mrs Whetstone at length felt constrained to call in the aid of a stronger

hand, and hearing Alfred whistling outside the house, she hurried to the door, opened it, and implored the youth to come in, in a voice that trembled with nervous excitement.

"Has anything serious happened?" asked Alfred, his face in some degree reflecting the anxiety so strongly painted on that of Sarah.

"Oh, come in, come in, Master Gaveston, you won't betray me—you'll help me to close and lock that fatal black box!" The last words were uttered in a voice so low that Alfred's ear could not catch them, and only aware that his help was required in some distressing emergency, he hastened into the house, neglecting to close the door behind him.

"Shut it down. Oh! shut it and lock it," exclaimed Sarah; "would it were sunk into the bottomless sea!"

"The black box—what—you have opened it?" exclaimed young Gaveston, in surprise.

"In a fatal hour for me and mine," groaned Sarah, "for I have learned that of Tom Brock which it were better to have died than have known!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Alfred, stopping in his attempt to force down the lid of the box by pressing his knee upon it.

"It's not for me to bring him to justice—no, nor for you, who have eaten his bread; but, oh! be quick, be quick. If any one were to come in and find the box open—we should be lost!"

"Go and prevent Mrs Brock from coming down," said Alfred, "I think that I hear a step on the stair."

Mrs Whetstone hurried off as fast as her tremb-

ling feet would bear her, and Alfred was left alone, exerting all the power of his young sinews in the effort to close that which obstinately refused to be closed. It seemed as if a spell were on that black lid, and that it would never again lend its aid to cover up from the eye of justice the guilty secret of its possessor. Alfred spared no exertion; for all that his sister had said to him on the subject of Brock's conduct towards his mother-in-law, rose before his mind, and with it a fixed resolve, that, come what might, he would never betray Sarah Whetstone, but rather himself bear the brunt of the storm, if any storm should arise. Kneeling on the box to press down the lid, Alfred had his back towards the door, but the icy chill of the air that came in, reminded him of the fact that it was open, and instinctive caution made him turn his head to see if any one were approaching from without. That slight movement saved the youth's life, for even as he made it there was a loud report from a gun, and Alfred felt a bullet whiz past his ear, singeing his auburn locks ere it struck the wall close beside him, and buried itself in the timber!

"That gun has a second barrel!" The remembrance flashed like an electric spark through Alfred's brain, and with the instinct of self-preservation, he sprang to his feet, and darting past Brock —striking up his arm as he did so—bounded through the doorway, over the snow, making straight for the pinewood, which afforded the nearest shelter. In these two seconds of desperate peril, there was scarcely space for thought—Alfred's movements had been so rapid and startling that Brock had had no time to recover himself and take aim before intervening trees would have rendered

that aim uncertain. He hesitated as to whether he should attempt pursuit of the youth who was, he doubted not, in possession of his secret, or remain to guard that secret from the eyes of others, for terrified voices and hurried steps were heard on the staircase, and Brock dared not leave open and exposed to the gaze, even of his wife, the box which he could not lock. Gloomily the settler sat down upon the small iron-bound chest, trying to keep down his fears of exposure with the thought that Alfred dared not for his life return to the house, and that if he remained out at night in the woods, the wolves would have a feast ere the morning.

Meanwhile, Alfred paused, panting under the shadow of the pines, to collect his thoughts, to realize what strange thing had happened to change thus in five minutes the whole current of his life. But a short space of time had been passed since he had been calmly occupied in making plans for the future, revolving a system of self-education, and building up a fair fabric of hope; now he was in the position of an outcast, a wild animal driven from the abodes of man, to be hunted down as soon as seen, and this without any fault of his own! To return to the farm must be to return to a death-struggle with its owner, in which one or both must fall, for Alfred had no means of proving to Brock that he had never tried to penetrate his secret, without betraying the unhappy woman who had trusted him, called him to her aid, and who had been a kind protector to his sister. But if Alfred were not to return, whither could he go? He had not even a gun with him by which to procure food to keep soul and body together. Could his active young limbs bear him sixty miles to the Red River Settlements,

when night—the fearful long night—would come on before he could accomplish half the distance! True, there were a few scattered dwellings on the way, where he might seek some hours' shelter, but without guide over the pathless waste, Alfred was quite as likely to miss as to find them. The perils of the journey would be great, but it was not the knowledge of this that made young Gaveston hesitate, and almost resolve at all hazards to return to Blackrock. He could not endure, after what had occurred, to leave his young sister unprotected under the roof of Brock. Though reason suggested that her brother's presence might rather draw down the lightning upon Amy, than in any way shield her from danger, Alfred could not help feeling that flight resembled desertion, and had he not silently vowed to be as a father to the orphan? It was this that made him waste many precious minutes, drawing him with magnet-like attraction towards the dwelling which he knew that it might be death for him to enter.

While Alfred was in this state of indecision, he heard his own name called out by a timid voice, so faintly that it was evident that the speaker feared that the sound might reach some other ear than his own. Alfred instantly whistled in reply, for he recognised the call to be that of his sister, and in another minute he saw through the trees, the form of Amy approaching him as rapidly as the burden of the heavy buffalo-robe would permit.

"Oh! Alfred, mine own darling, are you wounded?" was Amy's anxious exclamation as she came up to him, breathless and panting.

"No, thank Heaven—though the bullet actually singed my hair. It was a narrow escape," said

Alfred, passing his hand through his thick curly locks.

"The sound of that shot—it will haunt me as long as I live!" cried Amy, with shuddering horror.

"Do you know the cause of the attempt on my life?" asked Alfred.

"I can but guess. Brock uttered some words, terrible words! Oh! Alfred, you must never go back!" exclaimed Amy, clinging to her brother.

"Where am I to go?" inquired the youth.

"Anywhere rather than back to the house of murder. When I understood something of your danger, I thought what dreadful things might happen if you were left hungry out in the cold, I went back to my room, took the brandy-flask out of the medicine-box, and some pemmican which Sarah had been preparing, wrapt myself up in furs, and (because I dare not venture through the parlour) I flung open the window, threw down first this soft robe on the snow, and then sprang down upon it!"

"You did! brave girl!" exclaimed Alfred Gaveston, "you would not desert a brother in need. But did you not strain yourself in the leap?"

"No, no, God helped me, God took care of me, and He will help us still. Alfred, we must start at once, every hour of daylight is precious."

"If you mean—start for the Red River, Amy, you must know that it is utterly impossible for you, slight delicate creature as you are, to accomplish such a journey on foot," said her brother.

"Nay, forbid me not to try," replied Amy, her pale lip quivering with emotion; "I dare not go back, I dare not face Brock, he hates you with a deadly hatred, and I am your only sister."

"But the peril—the hardship"——

"I know all," interrupted Amy, "I know the suffering and danger, the hunger and cold, but I feel with David *let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, and let me not fall into the hand of man.* God can make a way for us even in this terrible wilderness of snow, and at least you and I will live or perish together, not even death shall divide us!"

Alfred glanced at that wan, earnest face, so eloquent in its look of pleading; he could not drive from his side the loving being whose safety at Blackrock might be imperilled by the effort which she had just made to bring him succour. Another thought, however, rose in young Gaveston's mind, "What will be the fate of Sarah Whetstone?" he muttered.

"She is in no danger, she has done no harm, Brock said nothing to her, though her terror was as great as my own, and it was seeing that terror that made me feel sure that something dreadful must have happened. She almost shrieked at the report of the gun—we were together on the stair."

"Then suspicion did not fall upon her?" asked Alfred.

"Brock did not take the slightest notice of Mrs Whetstone," replied Amy; "it was upon me that he turned his terrible scowl, it was upon me that he glared when he uttered his dreadful threat."

"Then indeed we must linger here no longer," said Alfred, taking from his sister the flask and the case of pemmican, and flinging the heavy robe over his left arm, while he gave her the support of the right. "It is well that the snow is now hard enough to bear us, and offers a smoother road than ground

in summer would have done. We must shape our course almost due westward, and when the sun sinks, may the stars be sent to guide us!"

And so they started, these lone ones, on their long and perilous journey over the bright glistening snow. Amy was so anxious and eager to press on, that her brother had gently to restrain her, and warn her to reserve her strength for the coming strain upon it. Every additional furlong of distance between the wanderers and Blackrock seemed to Amy something gained, she was nervously afraid of being pursued, and in the excitement of an escape, for such she deemed it, she fondly believed herself to be almost insensible to fatigue. Alfred was anxiously on the look-out for anything like the habitation of men; but no, as the Gavestons pressed on in the direction of the red lurid sun, now sloping towards the west, not a single log-shanty broke the white expanse, nor did sound from any living thing break the oppressive silence. Not even the foot-falls of the wanderers were heard on the snow. The extreme dryness of the air, and their own constant motion, prevented the cold from being distressing; but after several hours of walking Alfred saw that rest was quite necessary for his sister, and he proposed that they should make a halt in a pine-grove which they had just entered.

"Do you not think that we may be overtaken if we stop?" said Amy, in whose mind the greatest danger was that of being pursued.

"No fear of that," replied Alfred.

Amy sank rather than seated herself on the snow, for now that the immediate necessity for effort was over, a terrible sense of exhaustion came over the young girl.

"Oh! Alfred, I feel as if I must sleep, and if I sleep out in the cold I shall never wake more."

"It shall not be cold where you sleep if I can contrive to light a fire," said Alfred, in a cheering encouraging tone; "and in the meantime let us take something from the case and the flask, and let me wrap you up warm in this buffalo hide, like a little squirrel snug in its own soft fur."

Alfred tenderly folded the thick mantle round the slight form of his sister. He placed her in a spot where a bank of snow sheltered her from the north and east, he gave her refreshment, himself too busy yet to touch any. Alfred gathered pine-branches to put over Amy, which, with their peculiar property of warmth, served as a valuable protection from the rigour of the climate. Other branches he heaped together for a fire, and after a troublesome search for a flint, he succeeded in striking a spark from his large clasp-knife, and a bright cheerful blaze soon rewarded his efforts.

"Oh! how good you are!" exclaimed Amy, "and I seem so idle—so useless!"

"You are worn out, poor child," said her brother, who, from his own weariness, could judge of the greatness of hers. "We will now take our meal together, thanks to your foresight that we have any to take, and then you shall sleep while I watch. It is safer to rest now than at midnight; the moon rises an hour after sunset, we will pursue our journey by her light.

Amy was too much exhausted to reply, except by a futile attempt to make her brother take some of her warm wrappings for himself. The food of which she partook refreshed her a little, and after a faintly murmured prayer to Him who alone could

shield and save, the young orphan gave way to the overpowering sense of drowsiness. She was soon wrapped in as deep and sweet a sleep as if she had been pillowed on down, and had had a velvet canopy above her, instead of the boundless expanse of the deep blue frosty sky, seen through the spreading pine-boughs.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOURS OF PERIL.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—ROMANS xii. 18.

"AMY, awake, the moon is up, it is no longer safe to linger." Such was the voice in the sleeper's ears which roused her to a consciousness of her perilous position. Poor Amy felt extreme repugnance to obeying the call of her brother; her senses were drowsy, her limbs were stiff, she fain would have slept again, but mastering the inclination, the orphan struggled to her feet.

The large round moon was gleaming white and cold through the pines. The red embers of the fire were dying out. The air was perfectly still, not a breeze made the branches tremble.

Alfred looked pale and ghastly in the moonlight to the eyes of his sister.

"You have not slept?" she anxiously inquired.

"No, I have watched," replied her brother. "Empty the flask, Amy; but a few drops remain in it, and you will need the support. Nay, I will not touch it; I would rather pour out the contents on the snow."

Amy was obliged to comply, and the refreshment, scanty as it was, refreshed her. Alfred gave her the support of his arm, and the two set forth together from their wild halting-place in the wood.

The daughter of Gaveston soon felt again so

weak and weary that she could scarcely restrain her tears; one drop escaped from her drooping eyelid, and froze on her cheek. It was some time before she could command her voice sufficiently to speak, and then she was rather thinking aloud than addressing herself to her brother.

"Oh! if we could but have lived there in peace till the winter had been passed!"

"And did I not try to do so, Amy? If you but knew the struggle—the perpetual struggle which it has cost me of late to keep down my temper, to endure in silence, and not bandy word for word! As much as in me lay I *did* live peaceably, even with Brock; I am afraid less because it was my duty to do so, than because of the necessity which I felt to keep matters smooth between us for your sake. I cannot reproach myself even now with having given wilful cause of offence;" and Alfred related in few words to his sister the story of the fatal black box.

"How unfortunate- how very unfortunate, that the lid would not close down!" exclaimed Amy, who had listened with keenest interest.

"So it seems to us," observed Alfred, "and yet, Amy, we must remember that our father ever said that there was a 'need's be' for circumstances such as these, over which we have no control, and yet which affect the course of our lives. We are no blind puppets of fortune."

"How long and black our shadows look on the snow!" murmured Amy, after a pause.

"Because we have our backs to the moon. Shadows seem to me like our cares; when we turn *from* the light they lie before us, darkening our path; they move as we move, we cannot escape

from a sense of their presence. But when we turn *to* our light, then we are able to cast all our cares behind us!"

"Alfred, you have much more faith than I have," sighed Amy.

"Nay, dear girl, I have more strength and nerve," replied Alfred; "lean, lean hard on me, Amy."

They walked on for some time in silence, then Amy uttered an exclamation of joy.

"Oh! what a blessing; we are near some dwelling! I heard the howl of a dog!"

Alfred made no reply.

"Surely you heard it too; there again! Let's turn aside in that direction."

"No need to turn aside for that, Amy. But, stop a moment, I want to cut a good stick from yon tree," and Alfred drew out the large clasp-knife which he always carried on his person.

A terrible thought flashed across Amy, and made her limbs tremble beneath her. "Can that be—a wolf's howl?"—she gasped forth.

"Don't be frightened, Amy, wolves are cowardly brutes; but there's no harm in having a stout cudgel in one's hand, when walking through these wilds in the night," said Alfred, as he cut down a branch, and began stripping from it the smaller twigs.

Amy was dreadfully frightened, especially as she heard the wild howl echoed by another more near.

"Come to my left arm, Amy, and leave my right free. Why, how you are trembling, poor child! Do you forget that God is as near us here as if we were in a church in England?"

"We cannot feel that," faltered Amy.

"But we must believe it," said Alfred.

Though the youth spoke bravely and cheerfully, he felt a weight of painful anxiety pressing upon him, less on his own account, than on that of his feeble charge. But Alfred would not allow Amy to see that anxiety—it was his part as her earthly protector to comfort as well as to defend.

"Here we come to a broad stream," observed the youth; "in summer time we might have had difficulty in crossing it, but winter, that we deemed our enemy, has thrown for us a strong bridge across it."

Tremblingly Amy descended the steep bank, the shadow of which lay so dark on the ice-bound stream.

"It is well for us," pursued Alfred, "that the air is so still; a little wind would have turned us into icicles, and if we had not had those clear stars to guide us on our way, we might have been wandering round and round in a circle."

It was difficult for poor Amy to realize the greatness of these blessings, for her mind was so much engrossed by the idea of wolves, that she could hardly listen to her brother. The painful difficulty which she felt in dragging her weary limbs up the further bank, made her bitterly, though silently, regret that she had come with Alfred at all.

"I shall be but a drag upon him—I shall lessen his chance of escape—selfish, selfish that I was to urge him to take me with him! I was following my own headstrong will, thinking of my own foolish fears, he will never desert me, he cannot save me, I shall have sacrificed my loved brother!"

"One is glad to get into the moonlight again," observed Alfred, as with his strong aid, Amy succeeded in scrambling to the top of the bank.

A wide snowy waste lay before them ; to Amy's eyes it appeared as if nature were wrapped in a shroud.

"Alfred, surely, surely," she gasped forth, "there is some dark thing moving yonder!"

"It keeps its distance," said Alfred, calmly. Again that hateful howl rose on the still night air.

"There's another!" faltered the shuddering girl. "Oh! if they should come nearer, if they should attack us!"

"Then we must remember who gave strength to the arm of David."

Again there was a silence. A forest now lay before the wanderers.

"Must we pass through that, Alfred, it is so dark, one feels safer when one can see open space around!"

"We must keep bearing to the west," replied Alfred, "yonder to our right is the pole star, the wood lies direct in our way."

They entered the gloomy forest. Here walking became somewhat more difficult, though a path to the west had been cleared in the summer, and was tolerably free from brushwood.

"The very fact of there being a path shows that human hands have been busy here," observed Alfred. He whooped loudly, but the only reply was a dismal howl from behind, which chilled the blood in the veins of Amy.

Just as the wanderers emerged into a part of the wood a little clear of trees, where the moonbeams could fall on the snowy ground, Amy gave a violent start of terror.

"Look there, before us, glaring eyes, we're lost! there's an enormous wolf coming towards us!"

"A more formidable adversary than a wolf,' thought Alfred. "Here, Amy, take this!" he said quickly, throwing the heavy buffalo robe to his sister, "I must have both hands free." And hardly had the words passed his lips, when a huge grizzly bear, that lord of the American forests, rushed out of the thicket into the moonlight, then reared on his hind legs, his terrible white fangs gleaming in the cold ghastly rays.

Alfred had both bludgeon and open knife ready, but what were such weapons against such an assailant as this! Gaveston felt that his last hour was come, but resolved to make a desperate struggle for life.

"Fly, Amy, fly, while I keep him in play," exclaimed Alfred, there was no time for another word.

But Amy had no thought of flight, of saving herself and leaving her brother to perish. Her whole soul was wrestling in a wild agony of prayer as she saw the fearful monster close on her brave young protector. With the same instinctive rapidity of action which had, on a former occasion, appeared like the effect of inspiration, the girl suddenly interposed between Alfred and his savage assailant the large buffalo mantle which she held, and the bear's white fangs and long terrible fore-claws were instantly buried in the shaggy hair. It made Amy's blood run cold to see the fierce rage and mighty strength with which the monster, growling savagely as he did so, tore into shreds the thick tough hide, which he seemed to take as belonging to some living antagonist, rolling it over and over on the ground. Alfred seized the moment when he saw the fury of the fierce beast thus diverted from him-

self, and its claws entangled in the shaggy mass; Amy beheld her brother's knife flash bright in the moonlight, she saw it again and again, but it flashed no longer! Then a dimness came over her view from excess of terror and excitement, she sank on the snow, only conscious of growls more loud and terrific, expressive of pain as well as of rage, and then there came a strange stillness, and the almost fainting girl felt the touch of her brother's hand, and the sound of his voice, as if through a dream.

"Thank God, that peril is over. Amy, your courage has saved us both."

Amy opened her eyes, trembling to think on what they might look. "Where is the bear?" she faintly gasped.

"There!" replied Alfred, pointing to a huge mass lying motionless on the gore-stained snow.

"Oh! God is good!" exclaimed Amy; "He has had mercy upon us!"

"We must hasten on now," said Alfred; "and leave to the dead beast the spoil which has cost him his life; even in death he holds the robe with such a grasp that no power could wrench it away. You gave me glorious help, and just at the right moment, my own brave, noble little sister!"

Amy had a very indistinct impression of having done anything but cried out to God in her terror, she scarcely understood the words of her brother, but she saw that, though his garments were stained, he appeared to be unharmed; she heard his voice sound cheerful and strong, and her whole soul was filled with gratitude for what seemed to her a miraculous preservation. Making a strong effort to shake off the torpor which was creeping over both

mind and body, Amy started to her feet and pursued her way with her brother. She was afraid that the bear might be only wounded and stunned, but not dead, and she was so anxious to escape from the terrible wood that she forgot even her weariness in her impatience.

"I do not think that we shall be troubled any more by our neighbours the wolves," said Alfred cheerfully; "nay, don't start at their joyous yells, they have found the feast which we have provided for them, and their hunger being satisfied with the carcase of the bear, they are likely to leave us in peace. If wolves be gifted with intelligence, they may possibly conclude from the fate of bruin that you and I are tough customers to deal with, and be less disposed to attack us."

Alfred was right in his conclusion; the noise of the wolves that were already gorging themselves on the dead body of the bear, grew fainter in the ears of the wanderers, as their hurried steps bore them further from the scene of Alfred's desperate conflict. Not but that Amy's excited fancy saw a wild beast in every dark bush, and that her ear was painfully strained to catch the sound of a growl. She was relieved when the wood was passed, and again the calm stars were seen more distinctly overhead, and the gleam of the moon on the snow.

"Our course has been anything but due west, while going through the forest," observed Alfred, noticing the relative position of the glittering orbs above them.

"Ah! there are wolves again!" exclaimed Amy, just as the sense of utter exhaustion made her feel that she could not fly farther.

"No!" cried Alfred joyfully, "that is a dog's

bark at last! Friends are near!" and he gave a loud whoop, which was responded to by a chorus of angry barks.

"I can see no house," said Amy faintly; she dared scarcely indulge hope, so terrible would disappointment have been.

"There is something down in yon dell—perchance an Indian wigwam. Keep up your courage, dear Amy; anything in human shape would come as an angel to us now."

Alfred put his arm round his sister's slight form; but for that support she would have fallen. Now that there was prospect of safety and shelter being near, all the strength which excitement had given, failed her. Amy could walk no more; there was a loud rushing sound of water in her ears, her brain seemed to be turning round, she was barely conscious that voices—strange voices, sounded near her, and that there were moving forms at her side, to her they seemed not like forms of earth. Amy was borne somewhere—she knew not whither; she was only aware that the cold became less piercing, and that some light was falling on her half-closed eyes more ruddy than that of the moon.

The first words which Amy could understand were uttered in a voice not quite unfamiliar, though the exhausted girl could not at first recollect where or when she had heard it before. The tones fell pleasantly on her ear, as a warm refreshing beverage was held to her lips, a beverage which she drank with feverish eagerness.

"The Snow-bird has come with weary wing to the nest of the Red Eagle. Indian squaw hungry—pappoose cold—God bring squaw and pappoose to white man's wigwam; pity—give bread—bowl—

warm blanket—no turn wanderer away. White sister hungry—cold—sick—God bring to red man's wigwam! Anook's heart much glad—Anook's heart white as milk—Anook's heart one big welcome—Anook bless de Lord!"

And so, with the measure with which she had meted, was mercy measured to Amy again; and she who had shown hospitality to the stranger, and ministered to the saint, herself found shelter in the hour of her need in the rude home of the grateful Red Indian.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WIGWAM.

"*Live peaceably with all men.*"—ROMANS xii. 18.

A STRANGE wild place of refuge was that into which the orphans had been led; a rude hut covered with birchen bark, and strewn within with sapins, or branches of pine, where the only divisions were formed by curtains of skins, and the smoke of the fire found its way through the door in default of a chimney. Segoskee, the husband of Anook, had built it himself in the summer, and it was one of a group of huts erected by Indians of the tribe of the Red Eagle, rude dwellings that would probably be deserted in the course of the ensuing year, by the wandering race who cared for no settled abode. Christianity had shed its softening influence even here. Dark faces were no longer disfigured by war-paint, nor was an enemy's scalp worn as a trophy. The tomahawk had been laid aside, and the sound of the "medicine man's" drum was unheard. Some superstitions, indeed, still lingered amongst the simple natives. Satan was still to them the manitou, the evil spirit, though no longer to be propitiated by offerings, but to be overcome by faith; heaven was thought of as a land resembling the "happy hunting grounds," where there would be endless abundance. where hunger and cold would never be known; but the children of the Red Eagle could rejoice in the knowledge

that the sunshine of that land would be the presence of the Lord their Redeemer.

"This is another strange change for us," observed Alfred to Amy, as he seated himself on the sapin-strewn floor beside Amy, who was too much exhausted to be able to rise.

"It is like a wonderful dream!" she murmured. "I was just thinking that our life of late has been like a kaleidoscope, where every movement brings out something so new, so utterly unlike that on which one had just been looking." And Amy gazed round the low smoky hut, as if she could scarcely realize the position in which she so unexpectedly found herself.

"Your idea of the kaleidoscope rather pleases me, Amy," said Alfred; "I think that we might follow it out farther. When all seems fair and bright before us, then our great enemy shakes the glass, to disturb, confuse, and perplex us. But out of the confusion God is ever bringing new harmony, some combination of beauty which we should have missed but for the shaking. Look at last night, for instance——"

"That fearful night! I dare scarcely let my mind dwell on its horrors!" exclaimed Amy, closing her eyes.

"And yet, but for them, should I ever have known by experience how God can save in a moment of utmost peril by putting courage and wisdom into the heart of a timid girl? You twice preserved my life yesterday, Amy; first, by the nourishment which you brought me, and then by your presence of mind in flinging the buffalo-robe over the bear."

"I am so thankful—so deeply thankful!" mur-

mured Amy, as the tears slowly stole from beneath the closed eyelids.

"Then again, see us as the guests of Red Indians," continued Alfred; "hardships matter little to me, but to a young English lady, albeit somewhat accustomed to 'roughing it,' there might be something repulsive in this dark smoky hut, and the society of those who—though not savages—can scarcely be called civilized people."

"Anook is so kind—so hospitable, she gives all that she can," said Amy.

"True, and there is a pleasure in receiving such kindness, for you know that it is a tribute of gratitude fairly earned, and it is sweet to you to recognize a fellow-Christian, even in a poor Red Indian. Here is a new strange combination of circumstances, which is not without its harmony and beauty. If there be only faith, hope, and charity in our kaleidoscope of life, and the light of heaven shining on them, the most violent shock of adversity can but bring out some fairer, more striking manifestation of Christian grace, and of God's power to give peace at all times, and by all means."

"You look at trials with such a cheerful spirit of hope, dear Alfred. My weak heart is full of anxieties and fears. My feebleness may detain you here for some days, and I cannot help dreading ——"

"What do you dread now?" asked Alfred, smiling.

"That you may in some way offend these strange wild people, about whose customs we know so little," said Amy, half raising herself as she spoke, and glancing timidly around her. "I was roused this morning from a dreadful dream about bears and wolves, by a strange voice, oh! so strange,

in the hut; drawing aside the skin which Anook had hung up as a curtain, I caught a glimpse of a savage with flashing black eyes, and hair hanging in wild elf-locks, a savage whose appearance brought to my mind all kinds of terrible stories that I have heard of Red Indians, their cunning, their fearful cruelty, their stealing at night on their foes, stories of the tomahawk and the scalping knife," Amy shuddered at the recollection.

"You saw Segoskee, the husband of Anook, I doubt not, a wild-looking individual, I grant, but one cannot judge of the kernel by the husk."

"Alfred, if you should unintentionally give offence to one of these fierce revengeful savages—"

"Why trouble yourself with such fears, dear Amy," said Alfred, laying his hand on his sister's cold trembling fingers, "a frank and kindly manner, free from fear and suspicion, is likely to win its way with these wild beings, as well as with more civilised men, I trust the Indians, and will never give them cause to distrust me. Conscious that I intend wrong to no man, I am not afraid of receiving wrong. I believe that the same religion which bids us live peaceably with all men, by the frankness and honesty which it enjoins, generally enables Christians to do so. Are you satisfied now?" inquired Alfred.

"I am trying—trying to cast my cares upon One who careth for us," murmured Amy, whose depression chiefly arose from physical exhaustion, and the excitement of her nerves from the trials which she had lately undergone. Her voice faltered as she spoke, and Alfred, bending forward, said in a more tender tone, "is there anything else on your mind?"

"It is wrong, so very wrong, so very ungrateful," answered poor Amy, struggling, but in vain, to keep down her tears, "to think of—to care for smaller things, when life itself has been in danger, and so wonderfully—so mercifully preserved; but I cannot help grieving that we left behind at Blackrock our Bible, our precious Bible, that out of which I read to our father, when, when——" the poor girl broke down entirely from weakness, and her voice was choked with sobs.

Alfred knitted his brows. "One would be loath indeed to leave *that* in the hands of Brock," he said half aloud; and then his mind recurred to other things which had of necessity been left behind by the orphans in their sudden flight, and which both he and his sister would be very unwilling to lose. They had not with them so much as a change of garments, nor any means of showing gratitude to the hospitable Anook and Segoskee. Amy's faint voice broke on her brother's reflections.

"Poor little Johnnie, he will miss me," she faltered; "how my heart has clung round that child! and poor old kind Mrs Whetstone, I hope, I trust that Brock's suspicions may never fall upon her!"

"I do not know why they should do so," observed Alfred, "unless in her unguarded way she should let out her own secret." Amy's words had roused an uneasy feeling in the mind of young Gaveston, and when he remembered the whistling sound of the bullet as it passed so close to his ear, and the peril which, to himself, had so nearly proved fatal, there was something horrible to Alfred in the idea of an old feeble woman being left with-

out protection to the mercy of one to whom she had given real, though secret, cause of offence. Alfred quitted his sister with a silent resolution to ascertain, if possible, the state of affairs at Blackrock, and to rescue the property which he had left there, from the unprincipled Brock.

Alfred found Segoskee at some twenty yards distance from his wigwam, engaged in harnessing dogs to an Indian-made sleigh. The appearance of this son of the wilderness, wrapped in his blanket-garments, with his tangled hair, keen eyes, and dark tattooed skin, was sufficiently uncouth and strange to account for the nervous alarm with which it had inspired Amy, on her suddenly awaking from sleep. Anook was near, with her pappoose strapped to her back, employed in carrying to her husband a few skins, and mocassins neatly made by herself.

"How far is it from hence to Blackrock?" inquired Alfred, as he approached the Indians.

Segoskee paused in his occupation, and looking up with a keen intelligence in his wild black eyes, which partly supplied the deficiences in his English vocabulary, replied, "in moon when choke-berries ripen (June), from sunrise to midday," he pointed first to the east, then to the zenith, "Indians go to Blackrock—back to wigwam—Indian's foot not weary. In moon when deer shed horns (December), dog-sleigh go sunrise—back before sun-down—snow hard to bear—quick go, quick come."

"Then, by your account it cannot be more than ten miles to Blackrock. It seemed a much greater distance last night."

Segoskee showed his rows of gleaming white teeth in a grin. "White man go like river—this way—that way," the native made a zig-zag move-

ment with his hand to denote a wandering track, "Indian go straight as arrow from bow."

"We must have taken an indirect course," said Alfred, "and there is little to be surprised at in this, as we had no guide but the stars, and no definite point to aim at. But whether are you going now?" he inquired, as Segoskee resumed his task of harnessing in the dogs.

"Segoskee go Blackrock—sell mocassins—get flour. Snow-bird no eat Indian food—hard—dry. Snow-bird fall much sick."

Alfred was struck by the generous consideration of the poor natives, who were thus willing to sell their little treasures to procure more delicate food for the stranger guest. He felt all the more anxious to be able to make such a return for their kindness as might at least prevent himself and his sister from being burdens on their hospitable hosts. If Alfred could but get his own gun from Blackrock, he knew that his skill in using it might assist materially in procuring food for them all.

"If you are going to Blackrock, Segoskee," he said, "will you let me come with you, that I may get possession of my gun, and of other things that I left behind in my haste?"

Again Segoskee showed his white teeth in a grin; it was evident that Alfred's confession of having left behind what the Indian deemed most essential had by no means raised his character for sense in the eyes of the son of the "Red Eagle."

"Sun shine by day—white brother choose night; wolves prowl—lynxes on trees—white brother leave gun; no learn way—go by stars—take Snow-bird through dark—cold; Snow-bird much weary—white brother much foolish."

Alfred was somewhat mortified at the sarcasm of the Indian; it was not gratifying to a sense of personal dignity to be treated as an ignorant boy, and that by an uneducated savage. Gaveston was resolved, however, to take no offence; *only by pride cometh contention*, and to have let pride overcome gratitude and prudence would have been to have shown himself deserving of the character for folly which Segoskee had already given him. Suppressing any sign of ill-humour, Alfred repeated his request to be allowed to accompany the Indian in his sleigh excursion to Blackrock. Segoskee did not appear anxious to have his company, but offered no objection to his going.

"You will take care of my poor young sister during my absence?" said Alfred, addressing himself to Anook. The dark woman smiled. "Snowbird sleep safe; Anook keep watch," she replied.

"And do not tell my sister where we are going," said Alfred, who was aware that the idea of his returning to Blackrock under any escort, or from any necessity, would strike terror into the heart of Amy It would have been vain to have attempted to soothe her with assurances that the wild beasts of the forest would not be likely to attack a sleigh by daylight, that Segoskee's javelins and Alfred's large knife, would afford sufficient protection. The forest path had its dangers, and while the brave youth might fearlessly dare them, his sister would greatly dread his being exposed to such risks. Alfred himself would have avoided revisiting Blackrock and its dangerous master, but for the destitute state in which he found himself, and the anxiety which he could not but feel in regard to Sarah Whetstone.

"It is not for the honest heart to know fear," said Alfred to himself, as he seated himself in the low dog-sleigh by his wild companion; "Brock has more reason to shun meeting me, than I to shrink from facing him. He may already have repented of his rash attempt on my life, and be thankful that the blood of a fellow-creature does not lie on his head."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DARKNESS.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"—ROMANS xii. 19.

I WILL now return to Blackrock, and take up the thread of my story at the period when the women and Amy, terrified by the report of the gun which Brock had fired at Alfred, rushed in alarm into the parlour, and found the settler, his countenance dark with contending passions, seated upon the black box, with his dangerous weapon still in his hand.

Amy had spoken truly when she had described the terror of Sarah Whetstone as having been as great as her own. With that unhappy woman, remorse—the fearful consciousness that her own curiosity had done the mischief, and drawn an innocent youth into danger—greatly aggravated natural fear.

"Oh! Tom Brock!" she wildly exclaimed, clasping her withered hands, "speak, in mercy speak—ye have not shot the lad!"

"He has escaped me this time," muttered the settler; "but he has provoked me—and," he added, savagely, glaring at Alfred's sister, "let who will provoke me, I'll have my revenge!"

Amy, shuddering, glided from the room, and the course which she instantly took is already known to the reader. Sarah remained in the parlour, in an agony of doubt and indecision, afraid alike to keep silence or to make confession of her own part in the transaction. Should Alfred return, then she must speak—she must clear him from Brock's suspicions—yes, even should it cost her her life to do so. So thought the unhappy old woman, as she cowered on a low seat in a corner of the room, now looking through her knitted brows at Brock, then turning her anxious eyes on the door, which Betsy had closed to keep out the piercing cold.

It was evident that Brock did not suspect his wife's mother of having been a party to the opening of the box; he scarcely seemed to notice her presence. He, like herself, was watching the door, perhaps expecting that the severity of the weather must at length drive the fugitive back to seek the shelter of a home. There sat the guilty man, with the witness of his murderous attempt, the bullet in the wall behind him, and beneath him the proof of another crime which, though committed years before, might yet draw down upon him the vengeance of the law. There was for some time not a word uttered; Betsy, with her usually merry face clouded with anxiety, made preparations for breakfast, daring to utter no question; even little Johnnie, who had joined his mother, seemed afraid to make any sound, till, when summoned to the meal, he whispered, "Where's Amy, won't Amy come?"

"Hold your noise," said the father, angrily, and the child relapsed into silence.

Betsy felt afraid to ask her husband to come to the table, though the viands were growing cold upon it, and when she made a gesture to her mother, the unhappy Mrs Whetstone only shook her head. Suddenly, however, Brock rose from his seat, came to the board, threw himself on a chair, and shared with the rest a breakfast partaken of in silence, and with a general sensation of discomfort and uneasiness. Alfred and Green were often absent from the early meal, taking their breakfast with them, therefore the child did not miss them; but Johnnie could not feel that anything was right while Amy was away, and again, though very softly, he whispered, "Poor Amy—have no breakfast?"

After the meal was concluded, Brock abruptly ordered his wife to bring him certain tools from his box in the shed. While she went to obey his command, he went up to the box, which his weight had not sufficed to shut closely, opened it, and took out the paper, whose contents Sarah knew but too well. Brock then walked up to the fireplace, stood for a moment as though in doubt, and then threw the paper into the flames. There was a transitory blaze, and then a wrinkled black piece of tinder was all that remained of the letter which the burglar had written to his companion in crime.

Sarah gave a little sigh of relief. Whatever might be her feelings towards Brock, she could not forget that he was the husband of her daughter, and that if he were convicted by the law, the innocent must be involved in the ruin and shame of the guilty. She could not but desire that her son-in-law should escape the avenging hand of justice; but even if his fatal secret could be hidden for ever

from men, were there not fearful words inscribed against him, like those which startled the Assyrian monarch, in characters of fire? *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Is not the earnest of that vengeance given to transgressors in the withering heart, the gloomy foreboding, the haunting fear, which rob the sinner's pillow of rest, and while they embitter life, clothe death with a thousand terrors? It seemed so to Sarah as she watched the changes in Brock's dark countenance, as the paper, which fear of disclosure led him to sacrifice thus, curled and blackened in the flame, and with it perished his power of claiming from his former associate his share in ill-gotten gains.

Betsy returned with the tools from the shed. She was shivering and blue from the cold, and perhaps yet more from fear; for though she was by no means a woman of tender feelings or quick perception, the bullet aimed at an orphan youth had left its impress on her heart as well as on the wall, and neither in her ears, nor in those of her mother, had the report of the gun yet died away. Brock took the tools from the hand of his wife, and kneeling down, at once set to work to remove the lock from the box. Little Johnnie, whose childish curiosity was roused, stole up to his side, and looked on with inquiring eyes, peeping into the mysterious box, putting out his soft hand to touch the strange things within it, then timidly drawing back, as his father suddenly turned his head towards him.

"If you touch, you'll repent it," exclaimed Brock.

"Is there something as bites?" asked the child, who had always had a vague fear of the contents of

that box since the day when he had met with a fierce rebuff on asking his father to open it.

"Ay, bites like an adder," muttered Brock under his breath; and, he mentally added, "I have never known a day of peace, or a night of sound rest, since that box came into my hands."

Brock removed the lock entirely, and then fastened down the lid securely with nails. Every stroke of the hammer jarred painfully on the ear of Sarah Whetstone; it reminded her, she scarcely knew why, of nailing down a coffin. She did not dare to quit the room, painful as it was to remain there, for she felt that she must stay at her post, lest Alfred should return, and some terrible scene ensue. A frank confession on her part might be the means of saving his life; but only the most dire necessity should drive her to make such confession.

So sped the weary, anxious hours, till Green came back from his work, and the warm broth was simmering in the pan, and the noon-day meal would soon be ready. Then Sarah Whetstone, with slow step and heavy heart, mounted the stair, half dreading to meet Amy, after the painful occurrences of the morning. Great was the surprise of Mrs Whetstone to find her room empty, and the window wide open; the fire which she had left burning brightly had long since died out, and the place was deadly chill. Heedless of the piercing cold, Sarah hastened to the casement and looked out. The marks on the snow beneath, the track of small footprints, told at once the tale of Amy's escape. A cry of anguish burst from the old woman's lips, as she turned from the window. "The child will perish—perish in the snow! both will be lost, and

all through my fatal fault! Would that I had died ere I touched that box—miserable old wretch that I am!"

The unhappy Sarah hastened down stairs with all the speed that her trembling limbs could command. Re-entering the parlour, in which the rest of the household were gathered, she exclaimed, wringing her hands as she spoke, and addressing herself to Brock, "Oh! you have driven them forth to die in the cold! Call them back—call them back—or their deaths will lie at your door, and bring down the curse of an avenging God upon you and yours for ever!"

"Amy gone!" exclaimed Mrs Brock in alarm, while both the men rose from their seats, and Johnnie burst into a wail of distress."

"You do not mean to say," cried Brock, "that the girl has had the madness to leave the house?"

"She's gone after her brother; she'll cling to him, come life, come death! Oh! fetch them back before it's too late!"

Green, who saw that something had gone wrong, though he knew nothing of the attempt on the life of Alfred, took up his fur cap and went forth, hallooing loudly as soon as he had crossed the threshold. Brock, with a gloomy scowl, resumed his seat.

"I never harmed the girl by word or deed," he muttered; "she had nothing to fear from me; but if she chooses to throw life away, I have no power to hinder it. As for the boy, the false, treacherous spy, I care not what becomes of him; let the blast freeze, or the wolves devour! he has wronged me, and I'm not one to forget a wrong, or forgive an enemy!"

"He is no enemy—no spy—it is false that he ever wronged you!" cried Sarah, trembling with violent excitement.

"He opened and searched that box during my absence," said Brock, glancing fiercely towards her who had dared to give him the lie.

"He never opened, nor searched, nor so much as looked into it!" cried Sarah, in the extremity of her anxiety for the Gavestons, disregarding all caution in regard to herself. "'Twas I who found the key and opened the box, and 'twas I who called Alfred to help me when I could not shut it again. He is as innocent as that child of your own!"

Again Brock rose from the table, his face was deadly pale, he set his teeth and clenched his hand, and terrible was his look. Sarah Whetstone cowered beneath it! Happily, at that moment Green re-entered the dwelling.

"I can see nothing of either of them," said the man, "and there is no answer to my shout."

"The sound of a gun-shot will be heard further," cried Brock; "I must try to find the girl—she must not perish;" and snatching up his gun, the settler went hurriedly forth in search of the helpless Amy.

"Oh! mother—mother—come up to your own room, you are not well, you must not stay here!" exclaimed Betsy, laying her hand upon Mrs Whetstone's trembling arm, and drawing her by force towards the inner door which opened on the staircase. Sarah suffered herself to be hurried on, but muttered in an almost inarticulate voice, "My room—it is as cold as the grave."

"I will warm it—bring you food—whatever you will—but you must not—oh! you must not come

near *him*," added Betsy, who was now beyond the hearing of Green. "Mother, mother, you have provoked him, and you heard him yourself, he never, never forgives! Think what he did but this morning."

"Ay, ay, there was One who saw, and will keep reckoning," said Sarah Whetstone under her breath. "God have mercy on those orphans, to think of them out in the awful cold!"

Betsy did what she could for the comfort of her shivering mother; she closed the window, she lighted the fire, she spared not the crackling fuel. She laid Mrs Whetstone, who was trembling with cold and excitement, on her bed, and heaped over her all the warm wraps at hand. She brought to her mother food and drink; but nothing could induce old Sarah to eat, nothing could take the chill from her burdened heart. "Oh, that box—that fatal black box!" she moaned forth, swaying herself to and fro, and wringing her withered hands.

Betsy came close up to her parent, bent down, and while her lip quivered and her eyes dilated, asked in a tremulous whisper, "Mother, what was in that box?"

"Do you think that I would tell you, child!" exclaimed Sarah; "have I not done mischief enough already, you'll have thorns enough without more of my sowing. There, there, your husband's a-calling you—go down, and if he has found them—but he will not have found them—they'll never be found in this world alive!"

Fearful to Sarah Whetstone was that day, and yet more fearful the night which succeeded. The once strong nerves of the energetic old woman had received a violent shock, and weakened as she

already was by illness, she was less able to endure it. Sarah was in an agony of apprehension regarding the orphans. She had been proud of the "young master," and her warm affections had clung round the gentle Amy, who had so patiently nursed her in sickness, so meekly borne her occasional petulence of temper. Many a time Mrs Whetstone fancied that she heard the voice of Amy faintly calling from the couch on which she had usually slept, or from the waste without; and the poor invalid would start up, in mingled hope and terror, and perhaps drag her feeble limbs to the window, to listen with agonizing intentness, straining her ear to catch sounds that had never existed save in her disordered fancy. To this anguish on account of others was added personal fear, especially during the night. Sarah, nervous and weak, felt herself unsafe under the roof of Tom Brock; she exaggerated the part which he had taken in the burglary at Darkdale, and believed him capable of committing any revolting crime. He hated her —he had spoken of revenge—what protection had she against him? There was not so much as a lock on her door. Sarah, with the utmost difficulty and pain, dragged every article of furniture that she could move, and barricaded that door, so that it should at least be impossible for any one to enter without awakening her, however deep her slumber might be. But there was no slumber for Sarah on that night. Amy herself, wandering through the dark forest, or over the chill waste, with the howl of wolves in her ears, was far less to be pitied than the unhappy old woman in her solitary chamber. For in that hour of misery Sarah could not look up to her God. The formal, lifeless kind of

religion which had been all that she ever had known, was not that which could sustain an agonized soul in the time of conflict. A vague persuasion that a certain amount of obedience to God's laws, and observance of the forms of devotion, are needful for acceptance here and hereafter, had been as the cord binding the vane of outward conduct, and making it point in a direction which the world at least would call a right one. Sarah, like the thousands who resemble her, had been self-deceived regarding her spiritual state, and had believed that to be respectable before men was much the same as to be righteous before God. The storm of terrible trouble had, as it were, snapped the cord, and left the vane free to whirl round wherever the blast of wild passion should blow. And a hurricane was sweeping over the soul of Sarah. Within was not only grief, terror, self-reproach, but that which is more fearful than them all, a wild questioning of the love and justice of God, rebellion against His will, doubt of His providential care. If the eyes of Sarah were opened, it was only to look out on a chaos of darkness. She was convinced of sin, perhaps for the first time in the course of her long busy life, for she felt sin raging within her, but knew not whither to turn for refuge. She thought of Amy's loving child-like confidence in God, and contrasted it with her own mistrust. She knew what comfort Amy had found in prayer, and trembled to find that she herself had now no power to pray. It is in such periods of trial that we experimentally learn the difference between a cold assent of the reason to the truths of religion, and that fervent, Heaven-inspired devotion which makes the Christian offer himself a living sacrifice to his Lord—the difference

between *real* faith and the poor imitation of it with which too many, alas! are satisfied. When all is calm around us, we may rest content with *hoping* that we—at humble distance—are tracking the Master's footprints; but in our anguish we need to *know* that the Almighty Friend is near—is close beside us, to feel, as it were, the grasp of the living loving Hand that can bear us safe through the whelming flood. We need to lay hold on something to which we can cling—even in darkness—something which has power to lift us above the waves of despair.

Sarah believed that neither of the Gavestons would survive to see the light of the morning, and she felt that her own life might also be drawing to a close. But death seemed so strangely different viewed in relation to herself—or to the orphans. They would be happy, they would be safe with the Lord whom they loved; Sarah felt no doubt regarding their salvation; their passage to glory might be dark and terrible, but still it was only a passage—to them there was light beyond, "a home and a hearty welcome." But how was it with herself? Alfred had spoken of being "born again," of having "a change of heart and nature," only to be given by God's Spirit. He had spoken of living by faith, and he and his sister had shown by their lives that they were influenced by motives which Sarah could hardly even understand. What if she had been passing a long life under a mist of ignorance, and so had lost her way? What if she had been following a shadow, and had thus turned aside from the path of salvation? Sarah Whetstone writhed under the torture of such thoughts. And yet was she safer then, than when, in quiet self-reliance, the

honest, sober, respectable woman had been pursuing a course which she scarcely doubted would end in heaven. She was learning her own helplessness, nothingness, sinfulness, in the sight of her God. She had not yet caught a glimpse by faith of our Saviour walking on the waves, but—though yet unseen—He was approaching her tempest-tost soul.

The dreariest night must end at last, and the lingering morning broke on Blackrock. Exhausted by mental struggles, Sarah Whetstone sank into a broken, troubled sleep, from which she was startled by a noise at the door of some one attempting to enter, but unable to do so from the barricade of furniture within.

"Who's there!" exclaimed Mrs Whetstone, in nervous alarm.

"It is only me, mother," replied the voice of Betsy; sad and anxious it sounded, for a pang had shot through the heart of the daughter and wife, to find such precautions taken for security in her own dwelling.

"The children—have you heard of them?" exclaimed old Sarah.

"No tidings, none," replied Betsy, sadly.

Sarah groaned aloud, as with painful effort she dragged or pushed aside the furniture which prevented the entrance of her daughter.

When Mrs Brock went into the room, she was shocked by the ghastly appearance of her suffering mother. Anguish was written on every line of Mrs Whetstone's face, and in the fixed stare of the tearless eye.

"You have slept ill, mother," said Betsy.

"He—could *he* sleep!" muttered Sarah Whetstone.

"Brock has been very restless and uneasy; he rose two or three times during the night."

"I think that he will never rest more," said Sarah, sternly, "it is not written in vain, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WHIRLWIND.

"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."—ROMANS xii. 20.

ALFRED found the smooth rapid motion of the sleigh over the hard snow exhilarating; the love of novelty and adventure, so natural to a young fearless spirit, was strong within him, and notwithstanding the sharpness of the weather, there was enjoyment to him in the drive over those dreary wastes which he had trodden so painfully on the preceding night, with Amy trembling at his side. Alfred had a very different companion now. It was interesting to him to try to draw the Indian into conversation, and to make him speak of what related to his own wild mode of life, his hunting the bison, or spearing the muskionge, and especially, Alfred wished to question Segoskee on the circumstances which had led to his embracing the Christian religion.

"What was your first knowledge of white men?" asked young Gaveston, as the sleigh swept over the snow.

A dark expression flitted across the face of Segoskee, "Traders come—white traders—want much skins—beavers—foxes—squirrels—bring beads—bring fire-water to Indians. Wise chief once say, 'wherever white man sets down his foot, he never

takes it up again, it grows fast, and spreads wide,' that word true. Your people, trees fell—bush clear—house build—high—big—drive away bison—drive away buffalo—game grow scarce. Poor Indians know not where to find it. Eagle tribe hate the white men; dig up war-hatchet; warriors hold council—near Red River. There where hunting-grounds of our fathers—there graves of our fathers be."

"And what passed at the council?" asked Alfred.

"Indians hold palaver," continued Segoskee, speaking in the short broken sentences by which he tried to convey his meaning in an unfamiliar tongue; "the chief of Eagle tribe said, 'white man foe to red man, as wolf foe to deer. Red warriors take rifle—take tomahawk—take spear—go by night to wigwams of people that came from the land of the sunrise, that came across the big water. Burn dwellings—carry off spoils—bring back scalps!" Segoskee's wild eyes flashed at the recollection, and Alfred almost expected to hear the wild war-whoop burst from his lips. "And the warriors heard and said, 'good are thy words—we will burn, and spoil, and slay.' So they painted their faces, and danced their war-dance, and stole by night to the white men's home, as steals shadow over prairie grass, when cloud rolls over the sky."

"You are speaking, I suppose, of the unsuccessful attack on one of our settlements which took place some years since," observed Alfred, "I have frequently heard it mentioned."

The Indian nodded his head in assent, and went on with his narration. "White man sleep with

one eye open—white man hear in dreams. Your people keep rifle loaded—fire and never miss. Red warriors driven back, back to the wild wastes and the forests—leave the graves of their fathers behind—leave white man to corn sow and potato plant where the cariboo deer fed on the springing moss."

"And you, doubtless, were borne along with the rest of your tribe," said Alfred.

"Segoskee could not fly—bullet strike leg," replied Segoskee, sternly; "Segoskee prisoner to the white man—no fear, heart strong, make ready for stake, sing death-song; white man torture, kill—no conquer red warrior." Alfred glanced at the countenance of his wild comrade, and read there all the pride and fierce courage of his race. But the savage expression of the Indian softened as he went on. "Pain no conquer—death no conquer—kindness conquer soul. White teacher, Atherton, come—look pity—wound heal—good words speak to poor Indian. Segoskee came to kill foe—Segoskee find friend. White teacher tell of Great Spirit, high above sun, above stars—loves His children *all*—pale tribes from the land of the sunrise, and red tribes in the west. One Great Father—all men brothers. Teacher tell of Holy One coming to die for all—white men and red. Manitou, evil spirit, make Indians hate, revenge, kill; Christian's God bid His children pity, love, forgive. Christian's God strongest, crush down spirit of evil. Word fall as seed on Segoskee's heart, spring up as tree of forest. White teacher go with Segoskee back to his tribe—not fear red man; carry good news—Indians much glad. Trader bring fire-water, teacher bring water of life: white men

came with gun and sword—sweep tribes from the earth; teacher came with Holy Book, hold out hand of friendship, arms open wide; room in land for white man and red man—room in the heaven above, room in the heart of the Great Father who loves and cares for all."

Alfred listened with interest to this artless account of the power of Christian mercy and forgiveness from the lips of one who had been a blood-thirsty savage. How much mightier the conquests of love than those of hate! Samson was strengthened by God to rend a lion as if it had been a kid; but how much greater the power of the angel who visited Daniel in his den, and closed the mouths of the lions so that the prophet lay amongst them as safe as a shepherd surrounded by innocent lambs! Mercy is still the angel who transforms enemies into friends, as if anticipating the blessed time when *the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*

Without incident or adventure Alfred and Segoskee approached the Lake of the Woods, on the western shore of which lay Blackrock. Alfred had, however, observed that during the last half-hour of the journey, Segoskee had frequently gazed towards the northern sky; and though, like the rest of his race, the Indian would not let his impassive features betray any emotion of anxiety or fear, it was evident to Alfred, as well as to himself, that a storm was gathering, which was likely soon to burst in fury. The huge mountain-piles of clouds which lay on the horizon were beginning to break, and chase each other over the sky towards the

zenith. There was a moaning sound through the pine-forests, presaging a tempest, such as occasionally rages in Rupert's Land, with the violence of a tornado.

"Leave track—shelter seek—wind crash down trees like reeds—not shake rock," said Segoskee, turning his dogs from the direct route, and urging them to their utmost speed, in order to reach a broken mass of rocks that stood up like the ruins of a natural fortress, forming a complete screen from the northern blast. The sleigh reached the sheltering rock in time, but barely in time; for scarcely had the panting dogs drawn it close to the natural wall, when a tremendous tempest of wind burst over it, and Alfred and his companion, gazing on the valley which sloped down to the Lake of the Woods, beheld a scene, the wild grandeur of which was never likely to be effaced from their minds. It seemed as if the angel of destruction were sweeping over the land in the form of a gigantic column of mingled dust and snow, reaching from earth to sky, and whirling round and round as it rushed onwards in a course which no power could stay. Wherever it passed it cleared for itself a path of desolation, uprooting great forest-trees as a child might tear up grass, and whirling aloft in circling eddies broken branches and withered leaves. The travellers listened in breathless awe to the rushing roaring sound of the mighty wind, and the sublime description of the Psalmist recurred to the memory of Alfred. *The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.* "Yet," reflected the youth, with the converted savage beside him,

"grand as is the display of Omnipotence seen in the stormy tempest, more sublime, more divine, the power of the *still small voice* in the human heart, casting down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against God, sweeping away deep-rooted prejudices, and clearing a pathway before Him who cometh to reign!"

The tempest raged for about two hours, during which time neither Alfred nor his companion ventured to leave the shelter of the rock. To the English youth the delay was annoying and perplexing, for the short daylight would soon wane, and Alfred foresaw that it would be impossible to accomplish his purpose of returning to the wigwam before night-fall. Again to dare the dangers of a night journey in the dead of winter, would be rashness, amounting to presumption; while the only alternative—that of remaining till morning at Black-rock—was not only extremely repugnant to the inclinations of Gaveston, but might, under present circumstances, be attended with peril to his life. Alfred was naturally averse to asking hospitality from Brock, and was annoyed at the anxiety which his prolonged absence must cause to his timid, nervous sister. Alfred was thus tempted to regard the storm, which had lengthened his journey, as a most untoward event. He could hardly restrain his impatience to proceed until the tempest had spent its fury, and it became safe for the travellers to resume their journey towards the settler's home.

Their path lay much in the same direction as that which the whirlwind had taken; marks of its ravages appeared on every side, and the progress of the travellers was much impeded by fallen tim-

ber, over which it was sometimes necessary to lift the sleigh. The sun was sinking towards the western horizon before Alfred came in sight of the familiar gables of the large log-dwelling.

"Brock will marvel to see me again, living," thought Alfred. "What kind of a reception am I likely to meet with in that abode which I quitted under circumstances so strange? Will my welcome back be the same as my dismissal—a bullet aimed at my head? Come what may, I must set my mind at rest as to the safety of Sarah Whetstone, and rescue my little property from the villain who has repaid my services by attempting my life."

Alfred's reflections were disturbed by a sudden exclamation from the Indian at his side.

"See, see!" exclaimed the red man, pointing to a large tree, which, levelled by the hurricane, lay prostrate in the snow, a little to the left of the path.

"A pine torn up by the blast," said Alfred. "Man struck down—crushed—dead," added Segoskee, in a calm, imperturbable manner.

Alfred started up in the sleigh, and beheld what the keen practised eye of the Indian had more quickly detected, that some object, almost hidden by the evergreen foliage of the tree, was lying beneath it. Alfred sprang out on the snow, and rapidly made his way to the spot.

"It is indeed a man—it is he—Brock!" exclaimed young Gaveston. "Let us rescue him from this terrible position, Segoskee," he added, to his companion who had followed: "cannot you and I drag off this fearful, crushing weight which is lying on the poor wretch?"

The Indian shook his head. "No use—man dead—tree much heavy—night come—wolves."

"I cannot rest till we have done it," cried Alfred. "Life may be lingering yet—I will not leave him to perish."

"Friend much—brother?" inquired Segoskee.

Alfred made a slight gesture in the negative. It was indeed no friend—it was an enemy who lay before him; but in the spirit of One who said *love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,* Alfred resolved not to quit that spot till he had rescued from the fangs of wild beasts the body—whether living or dead—of the man who had persecuted, insulted, and sought to slay him.

The Indian silently gave his help, but the strength of the two, exerted to the utmost, was insufficient to stir the tree.

"Let us lash the dogs to one of the branches," said Alfred, "and cut away the others that press against yonder bank."

The suggestion was carried out; the dogs were brought to help in the heavy labour; with the hatchet which Segoskee carried with him, and the large knife which had already done such good service to Alfred, branch after branch was struck off, so as both to lighten the weight of the tree, and to remove obstructions. The red globe of the sun had dipped behind the snow-covered bank before the two travellers, by straining every muscle to aid the efforts of the struggling dogs, succeeded in dragging the tree about a foot from its first position, so as to render it possible to release from under it the body of the miserable settler.

Brock had hitherto lain senseless—motionless as

a corpse; but the stirring of the heavy mass, one of the largest branches of which had been pressing him to the ground, seemed to waken him to agony, for a groan of anguish from beneath the dark foliage was the first announcement to Alfred that he was not releasing a dead body. Gaveston was almost exhausted by violent exertion; the toil-drops were thick on his brow, notwithstanding the intense cold, but that sound from the living lips of his enemy seemed to give him new strength for the work of mercy.

"Hear howl—wolves," said Segoskee, whose quick ear had caught a more terrible sound, while the dogs gave unmistakeable signs that they had heard it also.

"Whatever the risk may be we cannot leave him—he lives!" cried Alfred, plunging amid the thick branches, and tearing them aside to the right and to the left, to reach his suffering foe, while Segoskee—either less generous or more prudent—directed his attention to preparing dogs and sleigh for speedy flight.

With the utmost difficulty, in the now deepening gloom of twilight, Alfred at length succeeded in dragging Brock from his fearful position, the miserable man by groans showing the agony caused by motion.

"Quick—let us place him on the sledge, we have not a moment to lose!" exclaimed Alfred, for the howls sounded louder and nearer, and the dogs were exceedingly restive. "Drive him on to Black-rock—yonder—down the gorge—I will follow on foot, there is not room in the sledge for three."

Segoskee made no remonstrance, unless such might be expressed in the single word, "wolves."

"Give me your hatchet, Segoskee," said Alfred, "it is well to be armed in case of attack."

And so they parted in the darkness; Segoskee urging on his frightened dogs down the narrow gorge that led to the settler's home; Alfred following with a rapid step, quickened soon to a run, and firmly grasping his weapon of defence as he heard the sounds behind him.

CHAPTER XX.

A CHRISTIAN'S REVENGE.

"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."—ROMANS xii. 20.

THE distance to Blackrock was not great; but it appeared tediously long to Alfred; his ear was painfully intent to catch the slightest stirring sound in the brushwood that bordered the bank, and he was in momentary expectation of seeing a gaunt wolf spring from the bushes upon him. The youth's heart was however glad with the consciousness that he had done a generous deed to a foe, that he had acted as a Christian was bound to act, and his soul was braced against fear. The God whom he had sought to obey would not forsake him now.

Alfred drew a sigh of relief, however, when he reached, unharmed, the threshold of Blackrock. The door was on the latch, he opened it, and entered, from the chill and darkness, into the warmth and light of the settler's home. The scene within was a sad one. Mrs Brock, pale and anxious, with her dishevelled hair hanging upon her shoulders, was kneeling by a mattress, which she had dragged from an upper room and placed by the fire for her suffering husband. No attempt had been made to carry the unhappy Brock up the steep staircase.

Grave—motionless—like a bronze statue—Segoskee stood beside this low couch, watching the countenance of the injured man, convulsed as it was by paroxysms of pain. Little Johnnie, frightened and wondering, crouched near his mother, conscious that something terrible had happened, but unable to understand why poor father lay there groaning, and why mother would not look at her child, and why that strange dreadful looking man stood there. The child had a vague idea that Segoskee was in some way the cause of the misery which he saw, and did not dare to approach him. At the sight of Alfred, a friend and protector, the little boy started up joyfully, and running towards him exclaimed, "Oh! isn't Amy coming back too?"

Mrs Brock lifted up her head on hearing the exclamation of her child. Most welcome was the appearance of Alfred to the poor woman, not only from her urgent need of counsel and help, but because it was a weight off her heart to find that he was yet among the living, and that he had not perished, a victim to the cruelty of her husband.

"Oh! Alfred Gaveston, what is to be done!" she exclaimed, turning, in pleading helplessness towards the youth, without rising from her knees.

"I fear that your husband is grievously hurt," said Alfred, going up to the sufferer, who was quite unconscious of his presence.

"He will scarcely let me touch him, he just lies there and groans! Oh! that we could but get a surgeon, I'm certain that bones must be broken."

"There is no surgeon, I fear, nearer than the Red River Settlements," said Alfred, who chanced to know that even the doctor, whose help he had sought for his father, had retired thither as the

winter advanced. "Were it possible to travel at night——"

"Not possible," interrupted Segoskee, with decision; "good life thrown after bad—both lost—never reach Red River alive."

"Then at daylight, Mrs Brock, I will mount one of your horses——"

"Green got horses—one—two horses!" cried little Johnnie, looking up into the face of Alfred, with an eager intelligence which struggled to find words to express a meaning.

"Green! where's Green?" exclaimed both Mrs Brock and Alfred, in a breath; while the former added, "Surely he was with my poor husband when this dreadful accident happened!"

"Me see Green," cried the little boy; "me see Green ride away—far away—ride one horse, Speedy—hold bridle oder horse, Dobbin—put big bundle upon it. See, see," continued Johnnie, trying to draw Alfred towards the black box, which has held so prominent a place in this story, "see what Green do—Green break it open, when father well—father will be so angry; but Green gone far, far, away!"

Alfred, with some surprise, saw that the lid nailed down by Brock, had been violently wrenched off the box, and that the coffer itself was quite empty. A very little questioning of Johnnie, who had been the sole witness of the deed, drew out sufficient information to make the base dishonesty of Green clear to the mind of Gaveston. When the labourer had seen his master killed, as he believed, by the fall of the tree, impelled by the love of money, which had been stimulated by what he had seen and heard at Blackrock, the unprincipled man had taken advantage of the helpless condition

in which Brock's family were left. The black box had ever excited Green's curiosity and cupidity; it had seemed to his fancy some mine of mysterious wealth, and now that its guardian could protect it no longer, it tempted Green to commit an act of the basest treachery. He had broken open the box, possessed himself of its contents, which were of considerable value, though far less than he had expected; he had then taken his master's two horses, had loaded one with plundered goods, and then mounted the other, and galloped off towards the Red River. Mrs Brock had known nothing of what was passing, her whole attention having been at that time engrossed by her mother. Excitement and sleeplessness had thrown Mrs Whetstone into a nervous fever, and Betsy was watching by her bedside, while a heartless villain was plundering one whom he believed to be a widow, even in the first hour of her bereavement!

Dark and terrible was the retribution which had thus overtaken Brock; the dishonest man had become the victim of dishonesty. The property, on which no blessing could rest, had tempted his dependant to desert him in his hour of sore need. The ill-gotten treasure was snatched from the burglar for ever, but it had left behind it the stain—the guilt attached to its possession. Even in this world the gains of the wicked are as the treasure of which an apostle speaks in language so solemn—*Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

"Would it be possible to convey tidings to the Settlement of the state of this afflicted family?"

said Alfred to Segoskee. Mrs Brock was too much paralysed by her troubles to be capable of thinking for herself.

The Indian reflected for some moments before he replied. "To-morrow Segoskee return to wigwam—find swift-footed Indian—message carry to white men—but white men fear journey—winter—cold—wild beasts!"

"I will write a note to Mr Atherton, he, a servant of God, will do all that can be done to help in a case of such misery," said Alfred. "You will see my sister on your return; but no," he cried, interrupting himself, "I will be the messenger myself."

"Oh, do not desert us, Alfred! Alfred! in mercy stay here!" exclaimed Betsy, who regarded with terror the idea of being left in sole charge of husband and mother, both in a precarious, perhaps a dying state, with none other beside her but a helpless little child, who could only add to her burden of care. Young as Alfred Gaveston was, the poor wife felt his presence a comfort and protection, and were he to desert her now, all would be utter desolation.

Alfred was exceedingly anxious to return to his sister, but he could not turn away from the appeal of that miserable wife. It was therefore arranged that Segoskee, after resting at Blackrock during the dark hours, should go back in the morning, carry news of what had happened to Amy, and then either procure a swift messenger from amongst his tribe, or himself proceed onwards to the European Settlement, bearer of a letter from Alfred. It was indeed very uncertain whether any help could be expected from such a distance, and at such a sea-

son, when travelling was perilous and painful; but no other resource was open to the distressed inmates of Blackrock, as surgical skill could be found at no nearer place. Under the most favourable circumstances, the delay which there must be before any assistance could be given must be likely to prove fatal to Brock, and Alfred looked forward to days of heavy trial, and nights of weary watching by the couch of the miserable man. Betsy was ill-suited to bear the shock of sudden adversity · active in frame, but indolent in mind, she had never looked far beyond the present day, she had never disciplined her soul for suffering; when misfortune came it took her by surprise, and she was prostrated under the blow. Mrs Brock's feelings towards her husband had latterly been more those of fear than of love; she had habitually been the servant of his will, had obeyed him without reflection, and she was utterly unfitted to take a lead should any emergency arise. She now appeared almost as helpless as her own little child; her attempts to help her husband only increased his pain, and though he was scarcely conscious of what was passing around him, the wailing of his wife seemed to disturb the sufferer. Alfred suggested to Betsy that she should take away her little boy, as any noise might injure his father, and bear to her mother the good tidings that Amy was in safety. "Mrs Whetstone needs your care," continued Alfred; "your husband does not at present know who is beside him, and you may depend on my keeping here on the watch while you are away, and calling you at once if I see any decided change for the worse."

Mrs Brock followed Alfred's suggestion; it was

a relief to the poor woman to escape from the sight of suffering which she could not relieve; she was accustomed to lean on her mother's stronger nature and shrewder intellect, and at the present time filial duties were more congenial than conjugal, and far more easily performed. Segoskee went to attend to his dogs, then coil himself up in his blanket, and go to sleep in the barn. A sick-room was no place for the Indian, who had been taught from childhood to regard as unmanly any outward expression of pain, and from whom no torture at the stake would have forced the groans which burst from the lips of Brock.

Through the greater part of the night Alfred Gaveston was the sole watcher by the deathbed of his miserable foe. The youth had nursed his own parent in his mortal sickness; but oh! how different had been the calm decline of the Christian, the sunset gilded by faith, and hope, and joy, to the terrific scene now before Alfred's eyes! Though Brock saw nothing of surrounding objects, his mind was not dead, but fearfully active; conscience was awake, though reason might sleep, and from those lips, blackened by fever, Alfred learned more than could ever have been revealed by the fatal black box. Very painful was the office of a watcher to Alfred; he had had no sleep on the preceding night; he had passed through great fatigue and excitement, and nature yearned for repose. The youth had to struggle against an almost overpowering sense of drowsiness; he dared not sit down to rest lest sleep should overcome him. Alfred tried to keep himself awake by repeating texts from Scripture, or by uttering prayers, but the very occupation seemed to have the sooth-

ing effect of a mother's lullaby, and the watcher would suddenly start to find his weary head sinking upon his breast, while an unfinished sentence was yet on his lips. And for whom was he thus wrestling against nature, watching through the dark hours, denying himself the repose which he so greatly required? Not for a parent, not for a friend, not even for a stranger. It was for the enemy who had wronged him, who had hated and insulted him, that the young Englishman trimmed the fire, poured the cooling drink, denied himself the luxury of rest; for there were sacred words which Alfred not only repeated to himself in the endeavour to banish sleep, but which he turned into a prayer, that God might enable him to fulfil the divine command which they conveyed: *If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RETURN.

"*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"—ROMANS xii. 21.

IN the meantime, the prolonged absence of Alfred has caused extreme uneasiness to his sister. Anook had at first obeyed the injunction to give no information as to the route which he and Segoskee had taken, and Amy hoped that they had only gone in pursuit of game. As the day advanced, however, and the wild storm which had overtaken the travellers raged round the wigwam, though with less terrific power than at Blackrock, Amy's fears were aroused, and she closely questioned Anook as to where her brother had gone.

"Anook bid no tell," was the reply of the simple Indian.

Then her conversation with Alfred in the morning flashed across the mind of poor Amy; she had spoken to him of treasures left behind; she had expressed anxiety regarding Mrs Whetstone; she had let him see the depression which she should have concealed within her own heart.

"Oh! say that he has not gone to Blackrock!" exclaimed the poor girl, with a sudden burst of anxious alarm, fixing on the dark face before her a look of searching inquiry, beneath which the mild eyes of the Indian fell.

"White brother bid Anook no tell," was the

reply, which sent a thrill of anguish through the soul of Amy Gaveston, for it answered her question but too distinctly.

That anguish deepened as the shades of evening drew on, and then came the long dark night, and still there was no sign of the travellers' return. The only earthly comfort which Amy received was from the calmness and simple piety of her Indian companion, who had at stake the safety of a life as precious to her as that of Alfred was to his sister.

"Segoskee all to Anook," said the Indian wife clasping her dark hands as she spoke, "light of eyes—vein of heart—breath of lips! Segoskee stay of wigwam—hunter of game—father of pappoose," Anook cast a look of deepest tenderness on her sleeping child; "but Anook say, God love Segoskee more than Anook love—Anook far—God near—Anook weak—God strong—Anook trust Segoskee to God. White sister know much—pray much—love much; white sister *trust* much also!"

To be "patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer," this was the lesson appointed for Amy during many hours of terrible suspense—hours during which her brother was practising Christian duties of a different nature, but almost as difficult of performance. The one was struggling against mental depression, the other against physical exhaustion—one exercising submission towards God, the other mercy and forgiveness towards man. Both had to fight the good fight of faith, and both were strengthened to overcome by the power of grace, and the comfort of prayer.

The succeeding day was little more than an hour old when Amy, who was watching with intense anxiety for any tidings of her brother, caught sight

at a distance of Segoskee's returning sleigh, which a bend in the track then almost directly hid from her view. Eagerly she ran onward to greet, as she hoped, her brother, and great was her alarm when, on the sleigh again coming in sight, she could see in it the dusky form of Segoskee sitting *alone*. Amy stood rooted to the spot till he drew up, and then wildly stretched forth her clasped hands towards the Indian, asking with her eyes the momentous question which her lips had no power to frame.

"Brother safe—well," cried out Segoskee, as he passed without stopping, and Amy, relieved from her overwhelming burden of anxiety, burst into tears.

Little time, however, could now be given to the expression of either sorrow or joy. Amy hastily followed in the track of the sleigh to obtain more circumstantial tidings, but could not at once gain speech of Segoskee. His first care had been to find out Uncas, an Indian who dwelt in the wigwam nearest to his own, and who was the envied possessor of the fleetest horse owned by the tribe of the Eagle. Necklaces of beads, a hatchet and a gun, should be his if he would undertake at once the dangerous mission to the nearest English settlement, to bring aid to the sufferer at Blackrock. Few words were required; the hardy son of the wild had brief preparations to make, and had started on his journey almost before Amy had opportunity to learn from Segoskee the details of what had happened to Alfred on the preceding day.

"My own noble brother!" exclaimed Amy, as Segoskee concluded his narrative, "but in what a position is he left! Brock dying—his wife help-

less—Sarah ill—sickness—desolation—misery in that lonely dwelling—and I here idle and useless, when help is so sorely needed! Oh! surely my post of duty is at the side of my brother!"

Segoskee pointed to the empty sleigh, from which he had not yet unharnessed the team of dogs. "Snow-bird fly back with Segoskee?" he asked.

The timid English girl shrank back for a moment from trusting herself in that desolate waste, in that bear and wolf-haunted land, alone with this wild-looking being who had seemed to her almost as much an object of dread as the fierce beasts of the forest. Could she venture alone with this savage, for the sleigh could hold but two? Segoskee seemed to read the cause of her hesitation, for a slight smile passed over his dusky features, and raising his hand towards the sky, he said, "one faith—one Father—what Snow-bird fear?"

"I will go with you," said Amy, recognising in that son of a wild and wandering race, a member of the church—a believer in Christ. It was not that her heart did not flutter as she bade a grateful farewell to Anook, who, without remonstrance or murmur, parted again with her husband for the sake of the helpless stranger; it was not that Amy did not feel as she seated herself in the low strangely fashioned sleigh, while Anook carefully covered her with furs, that she was going, as it were, with her life in her hand; but Amy's fears did not arise from any doubt of the wild Red man. No vision of tomahawk or scalping-knife rose again in the young girl's mind. Segoskee and Anook served the Lord whom she served; loved the Saviour whom she loved; difference of race, hue, manners, were all merged in the sense of that

blessed connecting tie which binds together the children of God throughout all the world.

Scarcely a word was uttered during the journey; Amy passed much of the time in silent prayer. She was surprised at the utter stillness of the wilds; no terrible sound came on the breeze, no gaunt wolf crossed the track; she looked in vain for any trace of Alfred's encounter with the bear, on which she could hardly think without shuddering. Segoskee pointed out to his young companion the devastation wrought by the tornado, and especially the large prostrate tree which had crushed Tom Brock in its fall. A few minutes more, and Amy came in sight of the gable-ends of Blackrock, astonished at the ease and safety with which she had accomplished what had appeared to her so perilous a journey.

As Segoskee drove his team of panting dogs up to the door of the farm, Amy sprung out of the sleigh, too impatient to wait for the aid of the Indian. She opened the door without knocking, it was, as usual, on the latch. Betsy rose to meet Amy from her low seat beside the fire, with her finger on her lip. There were two sleepers who must not be awakened; one exhausted by a night of watching, the other snatching a few moments of such feverish repose as it is said that Indians can find in intervals between torture. Amy gave but one glance at the face of Brock, that glance was sufficient to imprint an image of horror on her mind which years could never efface. She turned with a shudder towards the other sleeper stretched near him upon the floor. So calm, so peaceful, so sweet the repose of the wearied Alfred, so gentle his breathing, so serene the expression of his features,

that Amy was reminded of the wanderer of old whose sleep was hallowed by a vision of heaven.

Amy glided silently through the room to the inner door which she noiselessly opened, and ascended the staircase. The first sound that greeted her was from the chamber of Mrs Whetstone, the soft familiar tones of a child uttering the plaintive question, "won't Amy neber come back?" Amy gently opened the door in reply, and Johnnie's cry of welcome as he caught sight of the dear familiar face, was the first announcement to the suffering old woman of the return of one for whom she had so bitterly mourned.

It was sweet to the young wanderer to feel the child's little arms clinging closely around her, the curly head now buried on her bosom, now suddenly raised that the soft rosy lips might cover her face with kisses. To Amy, ever since the first evening of her arrival at Blackrock, the love of that child had been one of the most precious cordials of life. But still dearer to her now was the welcome of the aged and afflicted woman, who sat up in her bed, trembling with emotion, tears coursing down her withered cheeks, while she stretched out her arms to one whom she greeted as more than a daughter.

"Oh! Missie—Amy—darling! what I have suffered since last I saw you!"

"You have indeed suffered terribly," said Amy, taking both Sarah's hands within her own; "the shock of this fearful accident—your own illness,"—

"Child, child!" exclaimed Mrs Whetstone, "the worst shock has been within, the worst sickness, that of the heart! Sit down beside me here—close, take the boy on your knee; he won't be happy but in your arms, and I'll tell you what a

storm has been in my soul—how I well-nigh let go all hope. God has sent you back to comfort a poor broken-hearted old sinner, who has learned that she was weak and wicked, poor and blind, when she thought herself honest, just, and righteous, and safe on the way to heaven."

Then, in a broken voice, Sarah Whetstone poured forth an account of what she had felt and endured during the last two terrible days and nights. Amy did not attempt to interrupt her, while Johnnie fell asleep, with his curly head resting on the shoulder of his newly recovered friend. Sarah described in her own homely language how she had felt all her trust in God shaken; how wicked rebellious thoughts had swept over her soul; how full she had been of fear, anger, despair, the tempest of trouble opening her eyes to the truth that she had no anchor to hold by; that the sober, respectable life which she had led, could no more fit her to appear as justified in the presence of God, than a straw could suffice to support her weight on a foaming torrent.

"I seemed just whirled round and round, child, sinking and drowning in trouble, afraid to think, afraid to pray,—most of all, afraid to die; but still there was one thing that just kept my head above water, it was what you, in our quiet little talks at night, had said about the Saviour, and how He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I had not thought myself much of a sinner before, but I knew myself to be a sinner then. But the Tempter would put into my mind that I was too old to change; that if I had lived all these many years under a mistake, God would not let me turn just at the last. I'd chosen to get to heaven in my own way, and He would leave me

to wander alone. Then I tried to remember what I'd heard about being justified by faith, but I could not make out anything distinctly, my head was like in a maze. I could understand nothing at all, but that I am a lost old sinner; and that as Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, may be He'd find me, and pity me, and take me just as I am."

"Surely," exclaimed Amy Gaveston, "that is true Christian faith!"

"I scarce dare hope it," said Sarah, doubtfully; "things are so dark to me still."

"But you are 'looking unto Jesus,' trusting only to Him—you are seeking salvation through His death, and His spotless merits alone?"

"I have nothing else to look to," cried Sarah; "I am no more able to save myself than is that poor child."

"And is it not written," said Amy earnestly, "that whoso receiveth not the kingdom of heaven as a little child shall in nowise enter therein? and is it not when we feel ourselves weak and helpless that we are most like children?"

Mrs Whetstone raised her hand, and pressed it against her forehead. "It's old I am in years, and old in trouble, and much of evil have I seen—can I now become as a child? I thought," she continued, fixing her keen anxious gaze upon Amy, "I thought that the Christian's life was a long battle against sin, an overcoming of the wicked one before one could enter the kingdom of heaven, or become a child of God."

"I believe—my parents believed," said Amy, "that it is by faith in the Saviour that we become children of God and heirs of heaven, and that *after*

that—and not *before*—that same faith overcomes evil."

"But can faith rid me of all these wicked thoughts that haunt me, and drive me away from God!" exclaimed Sarah Whetstone. "Can faith make me patient in tribulation, can faith make me lowly and loving—a new creature from what I've ever been afore?"

Amy hesitated a little before she replied, "is not the Holy Spirit promised in answer to the prayer of faith, and are not love, and joy, and peace, the fruits of the Spirit? Oh! if we make sure that we have really come to Christ, that with all our weakness and sin we have truly given ourselves unto Him, then we may ask, and hope, and believe, that He will give us the power to obey and serve Him according to His own gracious word, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

Sarah Whetstone bowed her head on her clasped hands, and remained for some time motionless in silent prayer. When she again raised her face, the expression of perplexity and pain had passed away. After the long dreary winter of cold formality and heartless profession, the sunshine of lively faith was shedding its light and warmth on her soul; the stormy tempest was lulled, the soft south wind was breathing over the spiritual waste, and soon would its power be visible in the blossoms and fruits of a holy life. It is when we are willing to become as "babes in Christ" that we receive grace to quit ourselves as men; it is in God's strength, and not in our own, that we can stand fast in the struggle with temptation, not overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHANGES.

I WILL not dwell on that most painful scene, the death-bed of an unconverted sinner. Before midnight the soul of Brock passed to its great account. It was Alfred who remained at his side to the last, it was Alfred who moistened the lips of the dying with the last cup of cold water which he was ever to taste.

The whole burden of every preparation, every care, fell upon the Gavestons. Mrs Whetstone, though convalescent, was still too weak for exertion, her daughter could do nothing but wring her hands and weep. Great was the comfort to all at Blackrock when Mr Atherton himself arrived from the Red River, having again undertaken, in the cause of humanity, a similar journey to that which had before so nearly cost him his life. The doctor had been unable to leave his patients, but the missionary, who had acquired some surgical knowledge, came with one of the members of his congregation, bearing with him such things as he thought that the sufferer might require. As regarded Brock, help arrived too late; even could it have been proffered at once it would have been of no avail. Mr Atherton, with all his faith and zeal, would have had no more power to give spiritual comfort to the soul, than to have restored health to the crushed members. But his ministrations and his counsels were

of great service to the family at Blackrock, and he was received by them as a messenger from heaven.

The missionary brought with him two letters which had arrived at the settlement, and had been lying at the post-office awaiting an opportunity for their transmission to Blackrock. These letters were the answers to those sent by Alfred Gaveston to Lady Vane and his guardian in England.

Amy saw the letters placed in the hand of her brother, and felt a natural anxiety to know their contents, as upon them the future plans of the orphans might depend. After watching Alfred's countenance as he read them, she glided softly up to his side, "What has my aunt written?" she inquired.

"Words, words," replied Alfred, handing to his sister a letter with a deep black border, that nominal badge of sorrow which is too often its substitute rather than its sign. Lady Vane had written a very long, and what she intended to be a very feeling epistle, lavishing expressions of tenderness, expressing the fondest affection, the deepest regret for the "cherished brother" whose long struggle with poverty she had not lightened, even by sympathy. Yet Lady Vane's sorrow was not altogether assumed—a feeling of remorse had arisen in the bosom of the woman of the world; sweet recollections of childhood had been recalled to her mind when her earliest companion and playmate had passed away to his rest. Again the idea of adopting Reginald's orphan girl had recurred to his only sister; but the same obstacle that had before arrested her, again prevented her from making in her letter any offer of the kind. "If the poor little creature had only been presentable," murmured the

lady of fashion, as she pressed her seal on the black wax, "but I cannot introduce a girl with a hare-lip into the world!" Amy's blemish was her safeguard, preserving her from a home where, surrounded by the atmosphere of frivolity, selfishness, and pride, she might have exchanged for worldly luxuries the blessings which were a thousand-fold more dear to her gentle, loving spirit.

The letter of the guardian of the Gavestons was full of kindness. Gladly would he offer a home to both the orphans of his departed friend, but his income being limited, he could not advance the sum requisite for the long journey to England.

"We seem destined to remain in this wild land, Amy," said Alfred to his sister, as she returned the two letters.

"We have much to make this land dear to us now," said Amy. A sigh accompanied the words, for there had been a strong desire in her heart to return to her native country, and the refinement and civilization of which she had lately seen so little. Amy had scarcely acknowledged even to herself how strong was the wish, till it was shown by the keenness of the pang of disappointment.

Alfred seemed to read Amy's thoughts; "let not your heart be cast down," he said, as he took her hand tenderly within both his own, "God has raised up for us a friend. There is no need that you should remain longer in this place where you have suffered so much, Mr Atherton—noble and generous as he is—has just offered to us both a home. He says that his house is larger than he needs—that his wife will receive you as a daughter, his children as a sister, and that he will endeavour to find means for my going as far as Kingston or Toronto, where

friends of his, as he hopes, may procure for me some employment."

The eyes of Amy lighted up with pleasure. There were painful associations connected with Blackrock which made her regard it almost in the light of a prison. The shadow of its possessor's guilt seemed to her ever to rest upon it, and there was little to render a residence in the solitary log-house tolerable to one whose childhood had been passed in England. Amy had no taste for a wild life of hardship, and the idea of sharing the missionary's peaceful home, where she might associate with girls of gentle nurture and training, after such companionship as that of the Brocks, was as a glimpse of Eden to Amy.

"And what was your reply to Mr Atherton?" she eagerly inquired.

"I told him that, as regarded myself, it was impossible that I should leave Blackrock at present. There is none but myself to take charge of the farm, look after the animals, bring in the firewood. It would be a shame for me to desert the widow in her distress," said Alfred. "But it is different with you; your movements, Amy, are free; you can go and stay as you will."

"Then will I stay also," cried Amy; "how could I be so selfish, so heartless, as for one moment to think of leaving Blackrock at a time like this! We will remain together, dear Alfred, and try to help one another to be comforts to those who are now left so desolate and lone! Perhaps a day may come when we shall be able, with an easy conscience, to accept the kindness of our friend."

That day was not so far distant as Amy feared that it might be, when, with a heavy heart she

watched the departure of Mr Atherton. Mrs Brock, after the death of her husband, felt herself utterly unequal to the task of managing a farm. Her great desire was to dispose of the log-house and land, and to retire with her mother and child to one of the settlements on the Red River, where Sarah Whetstone's savings joined to what she herself possessed, might enable her to pass the rest of her days in retirement and peace. Nothing had been heard of Green or his ill-gotten treasure, and it was generally believed that he had fallen a victim to the perils of the forest through which he had to pass. It was certain, at least, that he never reached the Red River, nor was he ever seen by Segoskee or any of the tribe of the Eagle. The spoils of Darkdale seemed to bring a curse upon whomsoever possessed them.

Mr Atherton took the interest of the widow under his care, and exerted himself to find a purchaser for Blackrock, who would give a fair honest price for the land. In this he met with success. He also tried to dispose of the small property which had belonged to Captain Gaveston, for the benefit of his orphans, and subsequently accomplished this also, though not till after the date at which my story concludes.

In the blush of early spring, the late inmates of the farm by the Lake of the Woods set out on their journey towards the dwellings of civilized men. The missionary had engaged a small lodging for Mrs Brock and her family; Alfred and his sister were to be Mr Atherton's guests.

With very mingled emotions Alfred and Amy bade a last farewell to the Lake of the Woods, dimpling in beauty under the rays of the rising sun,

and gazed back on the dwelling in which they had spent so dark and troublous a winter. With something of the same feelings, can we imagine a freed spirit pausing to give a last look at the scene of its earthly trials, the school for eternity in which it had learned and suffered so much. There had the orphans drunk deep of the cup of bitterness, but had experienced how the love of God can sweeten even that cup; there had they breathed many a prayer in sorrow, and had received an answer of peace; there they had endured insult and wrong from man, and had been taught that forgiveness is the noblest revenge; there had they wrestled with temptation, and been strengthened to overcome evil with good.

Life, with fairer, brighter hopes lay now before Alfred and Amy. The winter had passed from earth, the lake lately ice-bound, laughed in sunshine, "the larch put her silken tassels forth," and the soft air was full of music. The snow-birds, guests of winter, had winged their flight to the north; wolves no longer haunted the wastes; wild geese abounded on the moors, and the glades were enamelled with flowers. Little Johnnie laughed and clapped his hands at every new object that met his gaze, as the heavily-laden waggon rolled slowly along. The journey was full of delight to the child, and he turned from his mournful mother to Amy, who could share his innocent joy. Sarah Whetstone sat quiet and thoughtful, with her back to the horses, not looking forward with the eager impatience of her younger companions, but watching familiar objects receding into distance behind her, till, as a turn in the woods hid Blackrock for ever from her view, the thoughts which filled her

soul, were breathed forth in words of praise, too low to reach the ears of her fellow-travellers, save as an indistinct murmur, but rising on high as a hymn of gratitude and love.

"I thank Thee, O God, for all the mingled mercies and trials which I have known in that dwelling, the joys and the sorrows, the pleasures and the pains! I came there in darkness. Thou hast shown me light; I came there trusting in myself—now my only trust is in Thee! I leant on a reed—it broke beneath me—I have cast it away as worthless, and now I fear not to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, for the Lord, my Shepherd, is with me; His rod and His staff they comfort me!"

The journey to the Red River occupied two days. At the Gavestons' earnest request, the first stage was ended by a halt at the little Indian hamlet, where they had met with such hospitality on the night after their flight from Blackrock. Anook and Segoskee came forth joyfully to greet the travellers, and were offered by the orphans such tokens of gratitude as the Gavestons' slender resources could supply. Alfred wished to give even his gun, almost his sole possession of value, to Segoskee, whom he looked upon as the preserver of his sister and self; but the Indian, with an expressive movement of his dusky hand, declined the present of the youth.

"Red man want other gift," said Segoskee; "go to white man's land, the land of the sunrise, where shines the great Gospel light; tell brothers there of poor Indian's darkness, learn the good Word that can make poor Indians glad; then come back to the Red man's wigwam, bring not gun, but

THE BOOK; teach Indian live to the Saviour; teach Indian way to bright Spirit land!"

Alfred grasped the dark hand extended towards him, and a silent prayer arose in his heart, that he might one day repay his debt of gratitude to a race deeply wronged by his own, by returning as a missionary of the Gospel to the wild children of the West. That prayer was at a future time to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Red and bright streamed the rays of the setting sun into a pleasant room in the missionary Atherton's dwelling. No wealth had been lavished on its decorations, yet was there a simple elegance about its arrangements that told that the taste of an English lady had transplanted to Rupert's Land the refinement, though not the extravagance of European civilization. Water-colour landscapes hung on the wall, needle-work adorned footstool and cushion, but the chief ornament of the room was the exquisite flowers with which two golden-haired girls were filling glasses on mantle-piece and table. Their mother, a bright happy looking matron, was giving the finishing touch to the arrangements of a supper, where little home-made dainties, such as were not for every-day fare, showed that guests were expected. Mr Atherton himself, resting on an easy-chair, after a day of labour, watched the movements of the ladies with a smile.

"I thought that they would have arrived ere now, papa," said Gertrude Atherton, looking up from her flowers.

"They travel slowly, my child, and the Gavestons may pause awhile with their companions at their new home to see that all is comfortable there for the widow and her invalid mother."

"But I saw to that this morning," observed Anna, the missionary's eldest daughter; "the little cottage looks so bright and cheerful to receive the travellers from Blackrock."

"How delightful it will be to have another sister!" said Gertrude. "You say, papa, that Amy Gaveston is so gentle and good, and that she has known so much of sorrow. I am sure that we shall all love her, and I hope that we may keep her here always."

"We can hardly hope that," observed Mr Atherton, taking from his breast pocket a letter, and unfolding it as he spoke. "I have been so busy to-day, my love," he continued, addressing his wife, "that I have not had the opportunity before of reading to you a letter which I received this morning from my friend Benson, the lawyer, who writes from London. Part of the letter concerns the young friends whom we are expecting to-day."

Both mother and daughter drew near to listen, while Mr Atherton read aloud as follows.

"I feel particularly interested in your casual mention of the Gavestons, as I hope that you may be able to assist me in communicating with them if they are, as I infer from your letter, the orphans of the late Captain Reginald Gaveston. My poor client, Lord de Morne, of whose death you must have read in the papers, has left a considerable sum to be applied to the purpose of their education and support."

There were expressions of pleasure at the news, and Gertrude remarked that Lord de Morne must have been a great friend of their father.

"I should not think so from what follows," remarked Mr Atherton, resuming the perusal of the

letter. "This bequest is contained in a codicil which I drew up at my client's desire but a short period before his death, and after he had casually heard of the decease of Captain Gaveston. That event seemed to prey upon his mind; he frequently alluded to it, and always with regret. 'If there ever was a Christian, Reginald Gaveston was one,' he observed to me a few days before his death; 'I'd give my right hand to recall the past, as regards my conduct to him.'"

"Then Lord de Morne must have been an enemy to Captain Gaveston," observed Anna.

"And how remarkable it is," said her father, as he laid down the letter, "that an enemy should be the instrument employed by Providence to supply what is needful for the support of those fatherless children!"

"It makes one think," said Anna, "of the honey which Samson found in the carcase of the lion."

"If we take that lion, my child, as a type of the difficulties and the opposition which a Christian meets with in this world of sin, and overcomes by the strength of his faith, we shall find in another world, if not, as we often do, in this, that the sweetest honey is stored in the lion's carcase still."

"Here they come!" exclaimed Gertrude, as Alfred, with Amy resting on his arm, entered, on foot, the little garden which surrounded the missionary's dwelling.

"It is so foolish," whispered the shy young orphan to her brother as they passed through the gate, "but I still have a feeling of skrinking and fear in going amongst perfect strangers."

But that feeling could not last for many moments under the genial influence which pervaded the

Athertons' home. Amy found herself at once welcomed as a daughter and sister, and the glowing sunshine from without seemed to be reflected on the bright kindly faces within. Under the missionary's roof, the orphans could realize indeed that the members of "the Holy Catholic Church" are one family in the Lord, united by *faith* towards one living Head, *hope* of one glorious home, and that *charity* which never faileth, because it springs from one fountain of heavenly love.

So full of thankfulness and peace were the hearts of Alfred and Amy that the tidings conveyed in Mr Benson's letter hardly added to their enjoyment save as affording proof that justice had at length been done to the memory of their honoured parent. To Amy especially, after the life of trial which she had led, shut out for years from intercourse with young companions of her own sex, and the innocent pleasures suited to her age, the society of Mr Atherton's daughters was a source of keen delight, and when she felt on her brow the tender loving kiss of his wife, it seemed to her as if she once more might know the blessing of having a mother.

Rapidly sped the hours till the time came for family prayer; and then the innocent mirth of youth was exchanged for quiet seriousness, under which lay deeper joy. "If kindly welcome and social converse be so sweet on earth," thought Amy, "what will they be in heaven where all is peace and love!"

Mr Atherton unclosed his Bible and read aloud the twelfth chapter of St Paul's epistle to the Romans. It was with deep emotion that the orphans listened to that familiar and deeply prized portion

of God's Holy Word, so inseparably connected in their minds with the remembrance of a parent now resting in glory. Each verse recalled the solemn scene in the log-hut by the Lake of the Woods, when a dying Christian lay awaiting his summons to the presence of his Lord. Gertrude wondered why Amy's lashes should be dewed with tears; she neither knew their cause nor guessed how much of sweetness was mingled with the mournful remembrance which called them up in that hour of thankfulness and peace.

Mr Atherton closed the sacred volume, and proceeded, as was his wont, to give a few words of comment on the portion of Scripture which he had read.

"This glorious chapter," said the pastor, in conclusion, "forms, as we know, part of an epistle of the Apostle Paul; but whoso shall, by God's grace, transcribe it into his own life, will become a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. For what are the lowly self-sacrifice, the humility, the brotherly love, and ready forgiveness here enjoined, but the very handwriting, as it were, of the Spirit on the tablet of the Christian heart? If we are grieved and disheartened on comparing what *we are*, with what we here learn that it is our duty and our privilege to be, if the epistle which should be traced in letters of living light is in us marred and blotted by many imperfections, let us turn for encouragement and hope to those words at the commencement of the chapter, which serve as a key to the whole, THE MERCIES OF GOD. It is through these 'mercies' in Christ alone that we have been given even the *desire* to serve Him; and He who has given the desire, can

also bestow the strength. It is through these 'mercies' that our imperfect sacrifice is accepted, on account of the great Sacrifice which hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified in Christ. The mercies of God are our motive for service,—the mercies of God are our hope; even could our whole lives be a transcript of this beautiful chapter, our only plea for admission into the kingdom of glory would be the salvation purchased by Christ for His ransomed people,—the unsearchable, unfathomable, unspeakable MERCIES OF GOD."

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