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FULL PROOF OF THE MINISTRY

A SEQUEL TO

THE BOY WHO WAS TRAINED UP TO BE A CLERGYMAN

BY

JOHN N. NORTON, A. M.

RECTOR OF ASCENSION CHURCH, FRANKFORT, KY.

“I have taught you publicly, and from house to house.”—ST. PAUL.



REDFIELD

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1855.

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TO THE

REV. THOMAS C. PITKIN, A. M.

ASSOCIATE RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, NEW HAVEN, CT.

I BEGAN my ministry, my dear and reverend friend, as your assistant, in St. Luke's Church, Rochester, New York;—by your advice, I took charge of the little missionary station at Frankfort, where God of His goodness has poured down upon us the abundance of His blessing;—at your suggestion, this sequel to a former unpretending work has been prepared;—I can think of no one, therefore, to whom it can be with more propriety inscribed.

O BLESSED LORD! how much I need
Thy light to guide me on my way!
So many hands, that without heed,
Still touch Thy wounds, and make them bleed!

So many feet, that day by day,
Still wander from Thy fold astray!
Unless Thou fill me with Thy light,
I can not lead Thy flock aright:
Nor without Thy support, can bear
The burden of so great a care,
But am myself a castaway!

LONGFELLOW'S GOLDEN LEGEND.

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the author had given a conditional promise at the close of a former work, that a sequel might at some future time be written, he had little idea that his pen would be so soon employed upon the task. But so many encouraging words were spoken in reference to what he had ventured to publish, and so many hopes expressed that the other volume might not be long delayed, that he has yielded to the force of circumstances, and, as far as possible, complied with the wishes of his friends.

Should this volume meet with as kind a reception as its forerunner, and prove an instrument in God's hands, of aiding any one to render himself more useful to the Church, the writer's fondest anticipations will be fully realized.

AUGUST, 1854.

ONE of the most certain marks of a Divine call to the ministry is, when it is the full purpose of a man's heart to live for Jesus Christ and His church. They that recommend eternal possessions to others, ought to show by their lives that they are themselves verily persuaded of the vanity of all earthly pleasure, avoiding superfluities. Jesus Christ preached up the contempt of the world, by contemning it Himself.

BISHOP WILSON.

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FULL PROOF OF THE MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

Old Friends — Sunday Night — Anxious Conference — Inclination and Duty — Rockford — A Forced Smile — Distant Regions have Claims.

THE opening chapter in almost any narrative is apt to be somewhat dry and tedious. A formal introduction takes place between the reader and the characters who are to figure upon the stage—the author acting the part of master of ceremonies, with the best possible grace.

Then follows a description of houses, and scenery, and other matters, to which the mind must first become accustomed before it can regard them as familiar things, or feel any particular interest in them.

I flatter myself that, in *this* instance, the difficulty complained of may be in some measure avoided.

The readers of the little book, “The Boy who was trained to be a Clergyman” (and I am thankful to say

they have not been few, nor altogether fault-finding), are no strangers to the prominent characters whose words and actions are now to be recorded. They will look with pleasure upon the faces of familiar friends, and, we trust, derive some advantage from a renewal of their acquaintance.

The *scene* opens in the city of New York: the *time*, Sunday night. A bright fire is blazing upon Mr. Mason's hearth, and three persons are sitting around it, enjoying the warmth which the chilliness of November made necessary for health and comfort. The parents are conversing with their son; and judging from the earnestness of the father's manner, and the shade of gloom which has spread itself over the mother's cheerful countenance, it must be a question of some moment which they are discussing.

"And you really think, my son," said Mr. Mason, "that you ought to go and take that poor, forlorn missionary station at the southwest?"

"That is my firm conviction, sir," answered Edward, who, the reader must bear in mind, is the Rev. Edward Mason, who had a short time before been ordained to the holy "office of a deacon in the Church of God," as duly mentioned at the close of our last volume. "I received my commission to go forth as a herald of the Cross nearly four months ago, and it grieves me to think that I have not yet got fairly at my work."

"I am sure you have not been idle," remarked the

kind mother, unwilling that her son should thus depreciate his labors. “You must remember that you travelled with the bishop for several weeks, and aided him on many occasions; and since then, you have preached every Sunday twice, and sometimes thrice, at the request of some of the clergy. Why not accept the invitation which you received a few days since, to become assistant to our old friend the doctor?”

The young man answered not a word, but, looking steadily into the fire, appeared lost in thought and deeply agitated by conflicting emotions. Two courses of life were spread out before him: the one, toward which interest and inclination beckoned; the other, a more rugged and less inviting way—the path of duty. By yielding to his mother’s wishes, and becoming assistant minister in a wealthy city parish, he would be sure of a good support, be surrounded by pleasant associations, have comparatively an easier lot, and, most of all, be enabled to remain among his dearest friends. To accept the missionary appointment which his father spoke of, would be throwing himself into the midst of hardships and trials for which he was not any too well prepared,—obliging him to live upon a scanty salary, and make full proof of his ministry in labors abundant, and self-denials multiplied. This is the *dark* side of the picture. But, with all these discouragements, would it not be a great satisfaction to think that he was following in the steps of the apostles and martyrs of earlier and better days, going out

into the highways and hedges to “seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world” — that they may shine as jewels in his crown of rejoicing at the final day? The young clergyman felt that the Church was Christ’s KINGDOM, and that he has sent forth his ministers to *work*. The field is *the world*. *Sickly* places, and *poor* places, and *unpleasant* places, must be cultivated as well as others. The Master will give *strength* suited to the *occasion*. The Church’s *work* is a *real* thing. The *rewards* of Heaven will be *real*, too.

Mr. Mason breathed a heavy sigh, and as if to interrupt the long-continued silence, turned to his son and said: “Edward, do you think that a southern climate would agree with your health?”

“I hope so, father,” answered the young clergyman, rousing himself from his revery. “But even if this were not so certain, I think we ought to go where duty calls, trusting God to protect us while we do his work.”

“Rockford must be a poor, miserable place,” said Mrs. Mason, who, although she felt that this was a weak argument to urge, still cherished a faint hope that it might weigh somewhat with Edward, and keep him nearer home.

And here allow me to interrupt the thread of the narrative a moment, for a word of explanation. I freely confess that the history which I am writing is

a true one, but it will be needless for the curious to spend any time in trying to settle the localities, or to find out the originals of the characters herein described. The name Rockford has been chosen, in order to avoid the awkward blanks which must otherwise have been used, and because Rockford is as unlike the real name of the town as any I can think of.

“Since you talked of going there, Edward, I have looked over all the old numbers of the ‘Spirit of Missions,’” continued Mrs. Mason, “and the reports from that point are meager enough. Indeed, the last time that Mr. Latitude writes on the subject, he only reports *two* baptisms for the past quarter, and a diminution in the number of communicants from thirteen to nine!”

“I believe he is the missionary,” said Edward, with a forced smile, “who reported to the committee that service had been held regularly, except when the weather was unfavorable or himself indisposed. These two causes, by a liberal construction, might be made to cover a good part of the year!”

Mr. Mason, without seeming to have observed that the conversation had taken a somewhat different direction, returned again to his inquiries about the climate. “I believe your friend Turner’s report was rather favorable than otherwise. Is he settled near Rockford?”

“Within forty or fifty miles,” answered Edward.

“He has had a pretty good opportunity of judging, having been there ever since our ordination.”

“I must say, my son,” remarked Mr. Mason, seriously, “that, aside from my natural desire as a parent to have you near us, there is indeed a good deal of force in the arguments you urge for going to a new and destitute diocese. City congregations can readily be supplied with clergymen. Distant regions *have* claims, *undoubted* claims, upon us. If *all* parents should allow their private wishes to influence them in such cases, *whose* sons would go forth to do battle for the Lord against the mighty?”

“Thank you, father, for saying so,” said Edward, his eyes dimmed with tears. “I do not mean to decide hastily in this matter. Let us take another week for consideration, and for asking guidance from above—and at the end of that time I must answer yes or no, as it is important that the place should be speedily supplied.”

CHAPTER II.

Duty triumphs.—Good-bye.—Cannibals.—New Field.—Kingdom which shall never end.—Rev. Moses Latitude.—Parsonages on Wheels.—Service in the Courthouse.—Contrast.—Bird's-Eye View of the Congregation.—First Sermon.

DUTY triumphed over inclination, and the Rev. Edward Mason was appointed missionary to Rockford. The people of that place had pledged themselves to raise three hundred dollars, and the missionary committee promised two hundred more. I shall make no attempt to describe the parting scene. Suffice it to say, that when every provision which parental kindness could devise had been made for his comfort, he set out with a stout heart and a resolute determination to do his duty.

When the carriage had actually driven away from the door, Jenny, the Scotch chambermaid, came running after it, to bring some little article which had been forgotten; and, as she handed it to our young friend through the open window, she begged him, in a very earnest tone, not to let the black people eat him up! In her simplicity, she thought they must be *cannibals*.

The journey, like most long ones, was tiresome, and oftentimes not free from danger: but a watchful

Providence brought the new missionary safely to the end. Rockford was not a very large town, and a northerner would have laughed to hear it dignified with the name of *city*, although many of the inhabitants were accustomed to speak of it as such. It was, in some respects, a pleasant place, and offered a wide field for usefulness. The whole ground was occupied, indeed, by various religious denominations, with one or the other of which most of the influential people had already united themselves. But this fact presented no insurmountable obstacle in the way of the Church. It might hinder her growth for a season, and try the faith and patience of her ministers, but nothing can withstand the steady advance of God's universal kingdom. The beginnings may be small, but the final triumph is certain. Zion will come forth, with songs of rejoicing, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Rockford was almost a new field for the Church. It is true, the Rev. Moses Latitude had been there for a year or so; but all that the majority of people knew about his mission was that he was a very liberal-spirited, polite man, who read prayers out of a book, and long rambling sermons from a thick manuscript of foolscap, and enjoyed sociable tea-parties, and on Sunday night went to hear his brethren of the "evangelical denominations" preach, and did nobody any harm. The salary not being sufficient to meet the wants of a growing family (fortunately for the

church in Rockford, whatever might have been the effect upon other places), he moved away.

A wit once suggested that the houses of the clergy should be built upon wheels. Until the laity show a little more sense of obligation to support them comfortably, perhaps this plan might serve a good purpose.

As Mr. Mason reached his home late in the week, he saw little of his parishioners until Sunday morning, when they assembled for public worship in the courthouse, having as yet no more suitable building for the purpose. At the ringing of the bell, a few persons might be seen going toward the appointed place, but the *tide* moved in other directions.

The young clergyman carried his gown under his arm, and, being instructed by one of the vestrymen as to the custom of his predecessor, he stopped in the passage, behind the door, to put it on. He then entered the courtroom, and took his station at a sort of desk, which had been fitted up on the platform, with a green baize covering, and an old candle-box for a kneeling-stool. While the people were coming in, Mr. Mason found the lessons and psalms, occasionally casting his eyes around upon the novel scene before him. What a change since his last Sunday in New York! On that day he had preached, in the morning, in old, time-beaten St. Paul's—and in the afternoon, in the beautiful church of the Ascension.

I said that he looked around, now and then, upon

the strange scene which presented itself to view. Perhaps the reader may have some curiosity to know whom he saw, and what was done. And first, there was the widow Peyton, a venerable old lady, with spectacles and large prayer-book, sitting on the seat nearest the desk. The two nice-looking little girls are her grandchildren. The small, dried-up man behind Mrs. Peyton is Mr. Chambers, the senior warden, who keeps a large clothing establishment in Rockford. He has a wife and five children, who are all with him in the courthouse, except the infant. Next, you will notice two ladies in black. They are sisters, both unmarried, and their name is Jones. A little higher up (for the seats are arranged in a semi-circle, and rise one above another), is Mr. Perkins, the junior warden. He is a shrewd lawyer from New York, and accustomed to see the church service conducted in good style, in his youth. He is very energetic in all business matters connected with the parish, and, though not a communicant responds aloud, and is really a most important person. He is a bachelor. Do you observe a beautiful girl just bursting into womanhood, seated with her mother, to the left of Mr. Perkins? She is the daughter of Captain Forrester. He is an officer in the navy, and is now absent on a cruise. His wife and daughter live in a snug house in one of the retired streets of the town.

There are some vacant seats behind the persons

just introduced, and then we come to two young men who are employed in Mr. Chambers's store. Old Mr. Thompson and his wife have seated themselves somewhat higher up. He has a foundry, and is an Englishman by birth. Of course he is attached to the church. Those neatly-dressed children belong to the little Sunday school, which good Miss Claxton has organized. That is her showing the larger girls how to find the places in their prayer-books. And now I have nearly got through with the list—for after directing your attention to a few colored persons near the door, and the five or six gentlemen and ladies who constitute the choir, I have told you all who were present.

There was a dead silence in the little congregation waiting for the service to begin, and some were most curious to hear the sound of the minister's voice. At length Mr. Mason rose, and in a quiet, subdued tone, began: "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.*"

All stood up during the exhortation, except Mr. Chambers's clerks, but when the clergyman came to the general confession, only about a dozen kneeled down. Probably the floor was very dirty. This is apt to be the case in courthouses. Perhaps those who continued sitting did not know that kneeling was the proper posture for prayer:—or perhaps they thought that such trifles were unimportant,

provided the heart be right. The chants were pretty well sung, and the responding much more hearty than in some long-established congregations. The ante-communion was very properly omitted, as Mr. Mason thought the state of things in Rockford quite too unformed, as yet, to allow every rubric to be rigidly observed. The sermon was plain and unpretending, and earnest, from the well-chosen text, "*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!*" — (Psalm cxix. 117.) The preacher described in few words the nature and extent of the solemn responsibility which he that day assumed; — stated the ground of confidence upon which his hopes were fixed for usefulness in his work, — and laid down some general principles by which he proposed to direct his course.

When the sermon was ended, the congregation quietly dispersed.

CHAPTER III.

Tempter's Visit. — The Enemy vanquished. — Sitting during Prayers. — Itching Ears. — Smart Preacher. — A Little Puseyism. — Do you go to Church to-night? — Dr. Gadsby. — Evening Hymn.

As no arrangement had been made about a boarding-place, the young clergyman was staying for a few days with Mr. Chambers. At the close of the morning-service he retired to his room; and then "the tempter came to him" (not in *bodily* form, indeed, but no less *really* and *effectively*), and whispered: "That is rather a small congregation, Mr. Mason, for a man of your abilities. The position of assistant-minister in the city, with a good prospect of the rectorship in a few years, certainly presents a more inviting prospect. You might feel awkwardly about resigning this charge so soon, but you can easily plead some plausible excuse for so doing. The place which was offered you in New York may yet be secured."

The evil one did not wish to see an active laborer begin the war against him in Rockford. The artful suggestions sunk down into the young clergyman's heart. He felt very low-spirited. He contrasted the dingy-looking courthouse, and the handful of people, with the fine churches and the crowded congregations

he had left. In the midst of these disheartening reflections (a stranger in the land of strangers, as he felt himself to be), another voice seemed to say: "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*" — "*Lo, I am with you always.*" Mr. Mason lifted up his heart in earnest prayer, and the tempter departed from him. When Martin, the colored boy, called him down to dinner, no one would have supposed, from his placid face, that he had passed, thus lately, through a struggle so severe.

"We had quite a good congregation for the morning," remarked Mrs. Chambers, as they seated themselves at the table; "but we shall have more out this afternoon."

Mr. Mason *hoped* so, but said nothing.

"The other denominations," observed Mr. Chambers, "have no preaching in the afternoon, and some of them are very apt to drop in to see how we get along. Indeed, our flock at first was so extremely small, that Major Jackson, a good Methodist, told me, one day, that he came out of sheer pity!"

Mrs. Chambers was right. When the two-o'clock bell rang, there was quite a gathering at the courthouse, and Mr. Mason reproached himself somewhat for having given way to despondency at noon. There was evidently, however, a good deal of work to be done in the way of instruction and reformation. Many more beside Mr. Chambers' clerks sat still when they

ought to have been standing; and the same dozen persons who had humbly kneeled during prayers in the morning, did the same now. The sermon was a simple, practical one, suited to the solemn advent season, and drawn from the startling words of the prophet: "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me,*" etc. (Mal. iii. 1-3.)

There were many itching ears listening to God's ambassador that day. The good people of Rockford, like the Athenians of old—and indeed like most of the descendants of Adam—were fond of running after new things.

"A right smart preacher, Mr. Perkins," said an old man with a crutch, as he hobbled down the courthouse steps. The junior warden acquiesced in the remark. Soon the whole street was in a buzz.

"He don't preach half so long as Mr. Latitude," remarked a prim young lady in a blue bonnet, addressing a fop, who flourished a little cane, the silver head of which he had been sucking all through the service.

"No, indeed," replied the gallant, "and he is much more of an orator. I hear that Mr. Mason is from the city."

Mr. Williams, a Baptist, and Mr. Manuel, the new-school Presbyterian preacher, now passed along.

"And pray, sir," asked the former, "what do you think of the new minister?"

"Why," answered Mr. Manuel, "I can hardly

say. I like him, and I don't like him. The sermon was well written, and delivered with unction; but I thought I discovered a little Puseyism toward the close."

"Well—now you speak of it," said Mr. Williams, "I noticed something, too—but it escaped my mind till you mentioned it."

And so I might go on, and fill a long chapter, with the remarks which people made about the preacher.

The Episcopalians were all pleased, and declared without hesitation that the new missionary was just the man for the place. Some of the young ladies spoke of his good looks, while others mentioned the sweetness of his voice, or his emphasis in reading, or the force and pithiness of his sermons.

After tea, Mr. Perkins came down to Mr. Chambers's, and congratulated his pastor upon the favorable auspices under which he had begun his labors. In the midst of the conversation, several bells began to ring, and Kate Chambers inquired of Mr. Mason whether he meant to go to church anywhere that night. He said no, and, without giving any reason for this determination, went on to make inquiries about the size of the town, the character of its inhabitants, and various matters which might help or hinder the growth of his congregation.

"We have pricked up pretty smartly since we began to have regular services," said Mr. Chambers, "but we have plenty of room left for improvement."

“Yes, indeed,” interrupted his wife: “only think of it, Mr. Mason—you have now about a fourth of your flock sitting with you around the fire.”

“O, there must be a beginning to everything,” said the clergyman, in a cheerful tone. “‘Rome was not built in a day.’ The largest houses are formed of single bricks.”

The door-bell now rang, and Dr. Gadsby came in to pay his respects to Mr. Mason. I owe the doctor an apology, for not having mentioned before that he was the leader of the choir. He was a very agreeable man, of thirty years or so, and highly esteemed in his profession. The conversation soon became general and animated, and bedtime came before any one was aware of it. At the request of Mr. Mason, the doctor struck up the evening hymn:—

“Glory to thee, my God, this night,” etc.

Prayers were offered, and soon all had retired to rest.

CHAPTER IV.

Bookworms. — Out-Door Work. — Mrs. Peyton. — The Foundry. — Skyrocket Preaching. — Plain and Practical. — Miss Claxton's School. — Persecution. — One Visit more.

OUR young missionary had too much good common sense to suppose that the work of building up the Church in a new place could be done in *the study*. It is true enough, we want some thorough scholars in the ministry, with logical minds, and the other requisites to constitute learned men, who, in times of need, may come forth as controversialists and champions for the truth. Such clergymen can find a snug shelter in our colleges and theological seminaries; and there, in their own province, exercise a wide influence for good.

The active, out-door, working clergyman, who is to lay the foundation of new parishes, can not expect to be a *bookworm*; and so far as Hebrew, and such studies are concerned, must rest satisfied with what he has already learned during his preparatory course.

Entertaining these views, Mr. Mason began, on Monday morning, to go about among his parishioners. The good shepherd, whose portrait our Savior drew, was able, from familiar acquaintance, to "call his own

sheep by name." Although Mr. Mason was well aware what a city rector at the east might reasonably expect in the shape of attention and etiquette, upon taking charge of a new parish, he felt that it would be perfectly absurd in him to set up at home waiting for formal calls. He had already seen the principal members of his vestry, and, feeling that he had come to Rockford to do his "Father's business," he set about it without delay.

Little Tommy Chambers, a bright boy of ten years, acted as *cicerone* upon this occasion.

The first visit was to Mrs. Peyton, whose advanced age gave her a fair claim to this attention. She welcomed her new pastor with great warmth, expressing over and over again, the pleasure which his coming among them had afforded her. In the course of the conversation, she gave a simple outline of her history, and although I can not spare the space to record her words, it will be essential to make some things plain which will appear hereafter, to let the reader know who she was. Her husband, a Virginia lawyer of good standing, had removed to Rockford, years before, and at his death left his widow in easy circumstances, but by no means rich. They had two children, the eldest a daughter, who married Mr. Lucas, a young man who had studied with her father;—the other a son, who, upon reaching his majority, took it into his head to go upon some mercantile speculation to the East Indies.

Mr. Lucas and his wife were both carried off in one sickly summer, by a fever which then prevailed, and their two little daughters, Kitty and Fanny, were confided to the care of their grandmother.

When Mrs. Peyton spoke of her long-absent son, she could not refrain from tears. It had now been several years since she had heard from him, and no one could tell whether he were living or dead. An hour passed quickly away, while the old lady told her tale of sorrow, and when the clergyman rose to go, she begged that he would first offer up a prayer for the absent one. Mr. Mason read some of those comforting psalms which have poured consolation into so many mourning hearts, and then, partly in the familiar language of the collects, and partly in words of his own, besought Him who is the Father of the fatherless and the widow's unfailing Friend, to send down grace and strength for this time of need. The little guide then led the way to Mr. Thompson's humble dwelling, not far from the foundry. The chubby-faced Englishwoman was sitting in a low chair by the fire, darning stockings, and at the same time attending to something in a kettle, the savory smell from which betokened the approach of dinner. Like most old-country people, she prized a visit from the clergyman very highly, and they were soon engaged in a friendly chat—but Mr. Mason did not sit long, fearing that his presence might interfere with her preparations for the noonday meal. As he went out

the door, Mrs. Thompson called after him and said, "Won't you be pleased to step over to the furnace and speak with the good-man?"

"Certainly, madam," answered the clergyman, right glad of the opportunity, in this informal way, to become acquainted with his people.

Mr. Thompson was very busy with his workmen, in casting ploughs; but wiping the smut from his face upon his shirt-sleeve, he came forward and gave Mr. Mason a hearty shake of the hand, and showed him the various arrangements about the premises, for carrying on his business.

Tommy now gave some broad hints that dinner-time was not far off, and they accordingly turned their steps toward home. Mrs. Chambers kindly offered to make some calls with Mr. Mason, in the afternoon;—so, when he had spent a few hours in arranging his books, writing letters to friends, and looking over the few scattered records which his predecessor had made in the parish register, I must beg the reader, although, perhaps, already tired of visiting, to go forth with our missionary again. I can answer for it, that had he consulted his own inclination, he would have remained quietly in his room, reading a pleasant book, or taking some pains in the preparation of his next Sunday's sermons. Mr. Mason had, however, made up his mind to aim at nothing more than to give short, plain, practical discourses, such as all could understand;—and satisfied

if, instead of being praised for making a grand display in the pulpit, a few times during the year, he could be *uniformly* respectable and instructive.

“Our best way to find Miss Claxton,” said Mrs. Chambers, as she walked along with the clergyman, “will be to go to the schoolhouse. I am sure the children will be glad to see you.”

“I must follow your directions now, madam,” answered Mr. Mason. “As I am a perfect stranger in the town, you will best know where and when we should stop. By the way, did you tell me that Miss Claxton’s father had been a methodist minister?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Chambers. “He was a very popular preacher in his day. About the time of his death, this young lady got hold of Cooke on Episcopacy, and a life of Wesley, which put her upon the right track, and, although bitterly opposed, I might almost say *persecuted*, by her friends, she persisted in joining the Church.”

“You say *persecuted* by her friends,” said Mr. Mason, with interest. “Do you mean that she suffered the loss of temporal good for the sake of her religion?”

“Indeed she did,” answered Mrs. Chambers. “Finding her condition almost insupportable among her kindred, who are very well off, she came here, and maintains herself by teaching school.”

A group of little girls were now seen playing about the door of a small building, but at the sound of a

bell they all ran in, and our friends followed them. Two of Mrs. Chambers's daughters belonged to the school, and Mr. Mason also observed Kitty and Fanny Lucas. The children were called up to recite, and when the clergyman had heard several classes, and asked a few questions, and spoken encouragingly to the little ones, he took his leave.

The next visit was to the Misses Jones, the maiden ladies in black, whom we saw at the courthouse on Sunday. The elder was rather prim and starch in her ways, and some people even called her by the odious name of a *busy-body*, but as we have so lately made her acquaintance, it is impossible to say whether or not this serious accusation be true. Miss Martha, the younger sister, was much more attractive in every way. They both seemed gratified that Mr. Mason had called upon them, and begged him to come often, and without ceremony.

CHAPTER V.

Two Rainy Days. — Sudden Summons. — Muddy Ride. — Sharp Doings. — The Black Gown. — Country Funeral. — Old Prayer-Book. — Getting over Difficulties. — Dark Corner. — Service at the Grave.

TUESDAY and Wednesday proved to be rainy and unpleasant days, and little out-door work could be done. Mr. Mason took advantage of this time to prepare for Sunday; and at night, when Mr. Chambers was at leisure, he got him to look over the parish register with him, making particular inquiries about the various persons, great and small, whose names were contained therein.

The reader must be under no apprehension that I have an evil design upon his patience, by giving a minute detail of all that our hero said and did upon every day of his life. I have quite too much regard for my own convenience for that. But, in order to accomplish the purpose for which I began this task, it will be necessary for me sometimes to travel slowly.

Thursday morning was brightened by the clear sunshine, and Mr. Mason had already marked out his plans for the day, when a carriage bespattered with mud drove up to the door, and presently the bell rang with violence.

“A gentleman wants to see the minister,” said Martin, who had gone to answer the summons.

Mr. Mason went out, and was accosted in a familiar way by a stranger in homespun, who, without ceremony, thus explained his business:—

“Neighbor Smith’s wife died yesterday, and he asked me to come and fetch you out to preach the funeral. It rained so hard, he could not send word before.”

Mr. Mason. When is the funeral to be?

Stranger. At one o’clock. We had better start as soon as we can, as it is a right smart drive out there.

The clergyman assented, and, running up stairs, tied his gown and prayer-book in a handkerchief, put on his cloak, and was soon out of town.

The man who drove (whose name was Ford) struck up a friendly chat, which lasted the whole way. It was something so novel to Mr. Mason to be thus unexpectedly called on to preach, that he would have preferred to have kept silence, in order to collect and compose his thoughts; but perhaps it was all for the best.

Ford. Mrs. Smith will be a powerful loss to our neighborhood.

Mr. Mason. She was a good and useful woman, I presume.

Ford. You may be sure she was, and so was her mother before her.

Mr. Mason. Did Mrs. Smith belong to our church?

Ford. I can't say positive. She was christened in Virginia, I know, by old Parson Belmaine, if I haven't mistook the name, and I think she always had a leaning towards the English Church, or the Episcopalian as they call it now.

Mr. Mason. Do you belong to any religious denomination, yourself?

Ford. My wife and I joined the Freewill Baptists about four years ago.

Mr. Mason. Have you ever attended our services?

Ford. Why yes; once or twice, when Mr. Latitude preached in town, I dropped in to hear him, and to see too, to tell you the truth. I had been told so much about the formality, and the getting up and sitting down, and the queer dress he wore, curiosity got the better of me.

“Well,” said Mr. Mason, laughing, “how did you like it all?”

“It was pretty sharp doings, I thought,” answered the farmer, touching his horses with the whip, as they ploughed their way through the miry roads. “As I told one of my friends, afterward, who was making fun of the gown, if officers on parade appear in their uniform, I don't see why preachers may not wear theirs too. And if I read the good book right, the priests there had dresses which they only used in meeting-time.”

Mr. Mason. Did not the service strike you as being very solemn and appropriate?

Ford. I hardly know what I thought as to that. I had gone expecting to hear something bran-new; and lo and behold, the words all sounded to me like an old song. And come to look, I found that Mr. Latitude was reading out of a book such as my wife had used for years. Indeed, she went through it so often, she wore all the cover off, and I had to take it to Rockford to be bound over."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mason, gratified by this undesigned compliment to the prayer-book. "And did you not know before that this book was used in the public worship of the Church?"

"Why no," answered the farmer, "I thought it was some good old set of prayers that my wife's mother had got hold of somehow, and never asked any more about it."

"If you could trace the history of your family back for a few generations, my friend," remarked Mr. Mason, "you would find that your great-grandfathers and mothers all worshipped God according to the forms of the prayer-book; for then the unhappy divisions which now disturb the Christian world did not exist."

"That is Mr. Smith's," said the farmer, pointing to a house which stood at some distance from the road, and making no answer to the last remark.

A number of horses were fastened along the fence,

and several men were seen sitting in the porch, or leaning lazily against the stile. The farmer saluted them as old acquaintances, and Mr. Mason, although he had never met with any of them before, shook hands with them all, as though he had known them for years. A clergyman who waits for a formal introduction, before he will make advances towards strangers, will wait a long time, and lose many occasions for doing good. *Everybody* knows *him*; he may therefore safely go upon the supposition that *he* knows *everybody*.

It was now after twelve o'clock, and some considerate woman, who seemed to have the management of affairs, whispered to Mr. Ford to bring the minister in to get a morsel to eat before preaching, which invitation was very gladly accepted.

The largest room in the house had been prepared for the funeral, by placing rows of chairs along the walls, while rude benches of boards covered with bed-quilts instead of cushions occupied the centre of the floor. When the neighbors had all assembled, the clergyman took his station by a little stand in one corner. The burial service loses part of its magical effect when the responses are not made; and such was the case on this occasion; but it can never be heard, even under the most unfavorable circumstances, without producing deep feelings of solemnity and awe.

It is extremely awkward to have *no singing* between the prayers and the sermon, and at the same time somewhat difficult to *have singing*, when the

people are not supplied with books. Mr. Mason got over this difficulty very well, by giving out the familiar hymn —

“There is a land of pure delight,” etc.,

and then handing the book to Mr. Ford, who started the tune, and several persons joined with him. The music might not have been as fine and *operatic* as some of our churches can boast of, but it was really quite respectable.

I am certain that Mr. Bilger, the Seventh-day Baptist preacher, who happened to be present, was greatly disappointed when Mr. Mason, instead of drawing a written sermon out of his pocket and trying to read it in that dark corner of the room, selected a verse for his text from the chapter which had just been read, and in a few fitting, extemporaneous remarks, endeavored to impress upon the minds of his hearers the solemn realities of death and the resurrection.

The grave had been dug at the back part of the garden, and here, beneath a venerable oak, whose broad, leafless branches were shaken by the December winds, the mortal remains of a “deceased sister” were committed to their kindred dust.

The bereaved husband and children, and the servants of the household, wept bitterly as the hollow sounds came up in answer to the heavy clods; and many eyes, which were seldom wet with tears, glistened now, while the minister of God repeated, from memory, the tender and consoling words which are used at the burial of the dead.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Forester. — Little Paradise. — Ivanhoe. — Hour and a Half. — Aunt Edy. — Gipsy Hat. — Sweet Orange. — Blind and Bed-ridden. — “Master, do I pray right?” — Stone Church in Maryland. — Blind Eyes open in Heaven.

“WE must be sure and call upon Mrs. Forester, this afternoon,” said Mrs. Chambers to Mr. Mason, on the morning after the funeral. “The weather is so uncertain, we may be prevented from going to-morrow, and I should be glad for you to see her before Sunday.”

Mr. Mason acquiesced in the arrangement, and at the hour agreed upon they set out.

Captain Forester’s house stood on the very outskirts of the town, and even at this unpropitious season, when neither trees nor flowers added their peculiar attractions, it was a beautiful residence. Everything was on a miniature scale, it is true, but the effect of the whole was striking in the extreme.

Mrs. Forester and her daughter appeared in a few minutes, and at once made the visitors feel themselves perfectly at home. The mother attended to the daughter’s education herself—having ample time for the purpose; and the intelligence written upon the

young lady's countenance, and the gentle composure with which she shared in the conversation, her sensible remarks, and freedom from affectation, showed that these advantages had not been thrown away. If I were writing a novel, this would be the proper place to describe Grace Forester's personal appearance. She was considered very handsome in Rockford, and some fancied that they discovered in her a striking resemblance to Rebecca. Allowing this supposition to be true, I must refer you to *Ivanhoe* for the portrait as drawn by a master's hand.

Mrs. Forester took the young clergyman to see the green-house, and the library—which last contained many rare and valuable books. There was also an interesting cabinet of curiosities, collected by the captain during the many years of his wanderings. Grace, also, played a few pieces upon the piano, with exquisite taste, and sang a song which Mrs. Chambers asked for. Take it all in all, it was a most delightful visit, and Mr. Mason was somewhat frightened when, upon going out of the gate, he looked at his watch and found it nearly six o'clock;—so that it was clear that an hour and a half had passed very swiftly. It is certainly most agreeable for a gentleman of refined taste and feelings, to associate with those whose minds have been cultivated by reading and study, and mixing with the world—but beware, Mr. Mason, lest even such harmless enjoyments as intellectual conversation, and books, and pictures,

and music, and flowers, cause you to lose sight of your work!

On Saturday, at dinner, Martin was absent from his place, and when his master inquired why this was so, Mrs. Chambers said that the boy's grandmother was very sick, and that he had asked leave to visit her.

"O, ma," exclaimed little Sally, "may I go down to Aunt Edy's, and carry her an orange?"

"I have no objection," answered Mrs. Chambers, "but I have not time this afternoon, and your sister is engaged, and you are too young to be trusted so far by yourself."

"Who is aunt Edy?" inquired Mr. Mason.

"She is an old servant of ours," answered Mrs. Chambers, "who nursed most of our children. For two years past, as she has been blind and bed-ridden, I have hired a little cottage for her about a mile from this, where one of her daughters lives with her."

"I will go with you, Sally," said Mr. Mason, looking across the table at the rosy-cheeked little cherub. Her eyes sparkled with delight, and long before the hour fixed upon, she was at the clergyman's door, with a gipsy hat upon her head, and a tiny basket in her hand.

As they approached Aunt Edy's house, Martin espied them, and informed his grandmother of the important circumstance.

"O, aunty," cried Sally, running up and seizing

the old blind woman's hand, as she lay upon the bed ;
“ O, aunty, I have brought you a nice, sweet orange,
and a custard !”

“ Bless your precious heart, my child,” said Edy,
raising herself up as she spoke. “ But where is the
minister that Martin told me was coming ?”

“ Here I am,” answered Mr. Mason, giving her a
friendly shake by the hand. “ I will sit down here
by the bed and talk with you awhile.”

Edy. Lord bless you, sir, you are very kind. It
is so long since I heard a minister's voice !

Mr. Mason. It is a sad trial, to be blind, as you
are, aunty, but you must ask God to give you patience.
I hope you pray to him in your troubles.

Edy. O yes, master, but I don't know whether I
pray right. I learned my prayers when I was a
child, and maybe I have forgotten to say 'em as
mistress learned me once. Please hear me.

Mr. Mason. Very well, Edy.

So the old woman, having folded her withered
hands, and lifted her sightless eyes to heaven, re-
peated, with great devotion, the creed and the Lord's
prayer.

Edy. Is that right, master ?

Mr. Mason. That is all very good, aunty. The
first which you said was the apostles' creed, or *belief*,
and the other was the prayer which our Savior left
for us to use. Whenever we need anything, whether
it be the pardon of our sins, or relief from suffering,

or comfort for body or soul, we should ask God our heavenly Father to grant us such favors for the sake of Jesus Christ his only Son.

Edy. I am a poor sinner, Mr. Mason, but I feel that my Savior cares for me.

Mr. Mason. Indeed he does, Edy. He cares for all, even for those who sadly abuse his love.

Edy. God has always been mighty good to me. My old mistress, in Maryland, had me christened in the big stone church, and every Sunday she used to come into the kitchen and sit down and hear all of us colored folk say the *cate*—

She hesitated, and Mr. Mason helped her out with the hard word—“Catechism, I suppose you mean, aunty?”

Edy. Catechism!—Yes, that is it. All my life my masters and mistresses have been so kind. God bless 'em.

Mr. Mason. Shall I read a chapter in the Bible before I go?

Edy. Indeed, sir, I should like it mightily.

The clergyman accordingly took a small Testament from his pocket, and read a part of the fourteenth chapter of St. John's gospel, connecting with it the closing portion of the Apocalypse, in which the blessedness of heaven is described. Then, shutting the book, he said, “Only think, Edy, what a happy home our blessed Savior has prepared for those who love him. In heaven there will be no sin. There we

shall not suffer from sickness, nor sorrow any more."

"And there," interrupted Edy, "there my poor blind eyes shall be opened!"

"Yes, Edy," answered Mr. Mason, "you shall see God, and our Savior, and the holy apostles, and all the good who have ever lived. There we shall be united again to our dear friends, who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

When the clergyman kneeled down by the bed to pray, Sally and Martin, and Malinda, Edy's daughter, kneeled down too. We may believe the earnest prayer was heard, for the gracious promise has been given, "Where two or three are gathered together in MY name, there am I in the midst of them." (St. Matthew xviii. 20.)

CHAPTER VII.

Missionary's Letter. — Everything. — Manners of the South. — Rainy Sunday. — New Recruits. — Sunshine after Dinner. — Mr. Smith's Young Housekeeper. — Bone and Sinew. — Big Carriage — Mrs. Ford. — Sight of Blood. — Surgeon without a Diploma. — Approach of Christmas.

INSTEAD of carrying on the thread of the narrative in this chapter in my own words, I am happy to be able to introduce a letter from Mr. Mason to his mother, which will perhaps afford the reader an agreeable change.

“ ROCKFORD, *December*, 18—.

“It was with sincere pleasure, my dear mother, that I received your last kind letter, which contained abundant assurance that all my New York friends are well. You ask me to give a particular account of everything—the people, the prospects of the church, etc. These various matters cover a wide field, but I will do my best to answer your inquiries. My parishioners have shown themselves to be extremely considerate and kind, and, generally speaking, I am much pleased with them. The manners of southerners are polished, and the tone of public sentiment is high. There is little of the starch and stiffness which sometimes render it so difficult to form acquaintances

at the north. Tell Jenny that I feel quite sure of receiving no damage from the black people, and most certainly not in the particular way which she seemed so much to dread. .

“The colored population are happy and contented. I wish that all the poor white people at the north were half as well off.

“In my last I gave you an account of my first Sunday in Rockford. Supposing that you may have some curiosity to know how we made out on the second, I purpose now to enlighten you upon this subject. The people had been hoping all the week, that Sunday would prove to be a fine day. I must confess I was somewhat anxious for it myself, inasmuch as I had reason to fear that *fair-weather* Christians might be found here, as well as in those parts of the Union with which I am better acquainted.

“Providence, however, saw fit to order it otherwise, and Sunday morning brought with it an abundance of rain. A very small congregation assembled for worship—so small, indeed, that when the prayers were ended, I took my text from the gospel for the day, and preached without notes. In one particular I felt rather pleased than otherwise that the day had turned out to be so inclement. Having been rather provoked the Sunday before to see Mr. Chambers’s clerks sitting still during the whole service, I took a good opportunity after breakfast to give them each a prayer-book, and show them how to find the psalter,

and a few other places, and begged them to help in the responses. They seemed gratified with the attention, and promised to do so. Had the weather been favorable, and the usual number of persons in attendance, most likely my new recruits would have felt some backwardness about reading aloud. As it happened, however, they stationed themselves near Mr. Chambers, and did their duty right manfully. In the afternoon it cleared off, and the congregation was even larger than on the first Sunday.

“On Monday I took Mr. Perkins’s horse, which had been politely offered for the purpose, and rode out to Mr. Smith’s, whose wife I buried last Thursday. He appears to be a plain, sensible, straightforward man, and conversed with me very frankly about his affairs, and the unsettled and wretched state in which he found himself since his irreparable loss. His eldest daughter, Julia, about sixteen years of age, a sweet, modest-looking girl, had already taken upon herself the care of the domestic concerns, and judging from the tidy appearance of everything about, she must possess considerable talent for housekeeping. I advised Mr. Smith to send his two younger daughters to Miss Claxton’s school at Rockford, and he made a conditional promise to do so. While we were talking, on this subject, his son Robert came in. He is a fine, well-grown youth, and I was surprised to learn that he was only about fourteen years of age. Out-door exercise, and a wholesome diet, have certainly helped

nature most effectually in the development of muscular vigor.

“Julia told me with a good deal of satisfaction, that her father had just bought a large carriage, which would enable them to attend church—a privilege which they had hitherto seldom enjoyed.

“On the whole, my visit was pleasant, and I hope not unprofitable. Having left a few tracts on the table, and been repeatedly urged to come out again very soon, I mounted my horse and rode over to Mr. Ford’s, who had made me promise to give him a call. The farmer had gone to town, but his wife could not have received me more cordially if I had been a friend of thirty years’ standing. In the course of our conversation, the story of the old prayer-book came up, and Mrs. Ford even went beyond her husband in heaping up superlatives to express her estimation of its worth. Just then, a little colored girl burst into the room, in great fright, and told her mistress that Andrew had nearly cut off his foot with the axe. At this alarming information, Mrs. Ford and myself both hurried to the back-yard, and found the poor negro sitting upon a log, howling dreadfully, while several men and women, almost beside themselves with terror at the sight of blood, were running this way and that, evidently not knowing what to do. Although my surgical knowledge is not very extensive, I immediately tied a handkerchief tightly about the gaping wound, and sent one of the servants to the

house for more proper bandages. I had hardly finished adjusting these before Mr. Ford arrived, and joined his wife in thanking me for my timely assistance.

“Ever since going to college, I have been so fully impressed with the vast importance of presence of mind, and composure, that I have tried very hard to cultivate them, although naturally, as you well know, I am chicken-hearted enough.

“It was now so late that I could not return home to dinner, as I had intended to do, but sat down to the plentiful table of my new friends. We had much agreeable chat, and a favorable opening being afforded for the purpose, I did something, I hope, toward the removal of prejudice, and sowing good seed for the church.

“And now, my dear mother, having answered some of your inquiries, and crossed and recrossed my paper until it refuses to be scribbled upon any more, I must take advantage of one little corner to add, with much love to father, and all friends, that I am, as ever, your affectionate son,
“EDWARD MASON.”

Christmas was now close at hand, and as it would come this year upon Sunday, the ladies determined to put up some evergreens in the courthouse, although, as may be readily imagined, no adorning, however tasteful, could render such a place very attractive. But the evergreens were not carried to the courthouse, and that for a reason which I shall shortly explain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Confusion in the Camp. — Mr. Bilger's Plot. — Neighbor Larkins. — Preaching on the 25th. — Short Horse soon curried. — Hating the Church. — Mrs. Peyton's Parlor. — Effects of Persecution. — Hard Anvil. — Evergreens. — Mr. Holton absent.

THE church people of Rockford had enjoyed undisputed possession of the courthouse on Sundays, during the whole of Mr. Latitude's incumbency; and as most of the leading denominations had places of worship of their own, there seemed little probability that Mr. Mason would have any difficulty in securing the same privilege.

But, in sailing over even a smooth sea, it is not always possible to say what breakers may be ahead. In describing the funeral of Mrs. Smith in a former chapter, I mentioned incidentally that Mr. Bilger, a Seventh-day Baptist preacher, was present, and enjoyed his own cogitations on the occasion.

I must now beg the reader to go with me, a few miles out of town, to the house of this important personage. Mr. Bilger was a farmer as well as preacher; and not being called upon very often to officiate in the pulpit, he had ample time to attend to his stock and his crops. Although belonging to what is called

the Baptist Church (a powerful body in some quarters of the Union, so far as number is concerned), the particular division to which he was more especially attached, did not present a very formidable array. Be the Baptist rock ever so large, if you suppose for a moment that it is *one* solid mass, yet by the time that you have analyzed its component parts—and separated the Seven-Principle Baptists, Church-of-God Baptists, Free-Communion Baptists, Free-Will Baptists, Hard-Shell Baptists, Soft-Shell Baptists, Little-Children Baptists, Glory-Alleluia Baptists, Christian Baptists, Ironsides Baptists, and divers other sorts which might be mentioned—the great rock is reduced to a number of comparatively small fragments.

This explanation will show why Mr. Bilger's time was not fully occupied in his ministerial capacity. But he seems to have some scheme on foot just now. Let us try to find out what it is. That is Mr. Bilger, sitting with his white hat on, puffing away at his pipe, by the large fireplace. His thick-set, robust figure shows that he does not much regard St. Paul's practice of being "in fastings often." He is conversing very earnestly with his neighbor Larkins.

Bilger. There will be no trouble, I tell you. We can get the courthouse.

Larkins. Don't the Episcopalians use that?

Bilger. What if they do? We have as good a right to it as they have, and I am determined to have preaching there at least one Sunday in the month.

Larkins. Well, if the thing can be done, I shall be mighty glad. The winter is so open, it won't take much coal to warm up, and I reckon some of the neighbors will give that.

Bilger. O, the expense is nothing. I mean to ride in, and have notice given for preaching on the 25th.

Larkins. How many members have we got in town, neighbor?

Bilger. Why, a pretty smart chance. There is Presley Baker and his wife, and Billy Dorchester, and Miss Pullin, and old Mrs. Starkey—

Larkins. I thought she gave in her letter to the Reformers, last fall?

Bilger. Maybe she did. But we have a plenty left. Let me see: There is Miss Pullin—Presley Baker and—

Larkins. You counted them before.—But it don't matter: many or few, we are bound to hold meetings, and the sooner we begin the better.

Bilger. So I say. As soon as these tormented Episcopalists get rooted anywhere, you can't stop them; and I mean to do my best to cripple the old, proud, formality church.

If the reader has not heard enough to ruffle his good temper somewhat, I freely acknowledge that he is more happily constituted than I can claim to be. There are some other persons who will be interested in this matter.

Our friend, the missionary at Rockford, was busily

engaged on Friday in writing his sermon for Christmas—now only two days off—when Mr. Perkins came in, with rather an excited look, and said: “I fear, Mr. Mason, that we are headed this time. Mr. Bilger is to preach in the courthouse on Sunday.”

“On Christmas?” exclaimed Mr. Mason, with surprise.

“Yes,” answered the lawyer, his dark eyes flashing as he spoke—“here is the notice in this morning’s Gazette.”

Mr. Mason took the paper and read as follows:—

“By Divine permission, the Rev. Obadiah Bilger, of the Seventh-day Baptist Church, will preach in the courthouse on next Sabbath, the 25th inst., at 11 o’clock, A. M.”

“How can this be?” asked the clergyman, returning the Gazette to Mr. Perkins.

“The case is simply this,” returned the lawyer: “those folks hate the Church, and are afraid of her; and, knowing that the courthouse is common ground, they have claimed and secured their share in it.”

“Although it was rather discourteous to interrupt our arrangements so unceremoniously, we can not complain,” said Mr. Mason, “and we ought to have anticipated something of the kind. But I should regret extremely not to be able to have our Christmas services. Is there no large room about the town which we can get for that occasion?”

Mr. Perkins shook his head. “There is a ball-

room at the hotel," he said, "but it would not answer our purpose at all. The only chance I see is to get the loan of a good-sized parlor in some private house."

"A happy thought," observed the clergyman, brightening up a little, "I wonder if Mrs. Peyton would not allow us to have hers?"

"I am sure of it," answered Mr. Perkins, starting up at once, "and I will go and ask her this minute."

To make a long story short, the old lady gladly gave her consent, and Martin was sent around to the different church-families to inform them of this change in the place of meeting.

We are told in the good book that during "a great persecution against the Church at Jerusalem," the apostles, who were thus scattered abroad through distant regions, "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts viii. 1-4)—so wonderfully does God, in his providence, make the wrath of man to praise him. Perhaps the efforts of Mr. Bilger to injure the feeble tendril of the same vine, now taking root in Rockford, may also prove to be a short-sighted and foolish plan. Indeed, it might have been well enough for him to have remembered what old *Beza* used to say: "The Church is an anvil which hath worn out many a hammer!"

Christmas morning came, and the courthouse bell, which had hitherto summoned the church-people to prayers, now rang loudly for quite another purpose.

It seemed somewhat awkward to Mr. Mason's flock

not to assemble in the accustomed fold, comfortless and unattractive as it was; but they made the best of circumstances, and at the usual hour found their way to Mrs. Peyton's parlor. Fortunately it was a large room, and Kitty and Fanny (the old lady's grand-daughters) had dressed it very prettily with evergreens. The congregation was unusually good, and, for the most part, devout during the service, and attentive to the sermon. Christmas is not altogether like itself without the celebration of the Lord's supper. But, for this deficiency there was no remedy, and the people were thankful for the blessings afforded them. One thing—a trifle, indeed, comparatively speaking—worrying the young clergyman somewhat. He had taken considerable pains, as I mentioned, in showing Mr. Chambers's clerks how to find the places in the prayer-book, and was gratified by their behavior upon the last Sunday. To-day, however, Mr. Holton, the elder of them, was not present at service at all; and Mr. Preston, in whom Mr. Mason felt an especial interest, sat bolt upright, as if nailed to the chair, and did not utter one vocal sound. Perhaps he was embarrassed by being so close to Grace Forester.

CHAPTER IX.

Council of War. — Plans for the Future. — Christmas Dinner. — Empty Chair. — Could not be helped. — Good Measure. — Unlooked-for Arrival. — Long Chat. — Gates of Zion desolate. — Sowing broadcast. — Kindling for the Oven. — What to do with Tracts. — Lot for a Church. — Better Courage.

WHEN the services on Christmas morning were ended, several of the congregation tarried behind to make arrangements for the future. After much conversation, during which sundry plans were proposed, it was concluded to be inexpedient to meet any longer at the courthouse, because they would be liable to constant interruptions, and nobody could tell how soon the disciples of Joe Smith, or of Matthias, or the founder of some other new-fangled sect, might come along, and claim their Sunday for preaching. It was accordingly agreed that Mrs. Peyton's kind invitation should be accepted, and services celebrated at her house, until better accommodations could be provided. At this stage in the proceedings, Farmer Smith, who had brought in his family to church, proposed that there should, now and then, be preaching at his house in the country; and, as the neighborhood was thickly settled, Mr. Mason cheerfully consented, and promised to come out on the next Sunday

afternoon. Thus much having been accomplished, all went home to enjoy their Christmas dinners.

Mrs. Chambers had provided bountifully for the occasion, and the large and happy family seated themselves at the table. One chair was vacant. "Where is Mr. Holton?" inquired several voices at once. No one could answer. Toward the close of the dinner, which had occupied more time than usual, the young man made his appearance, and, with some hesitation of manner, accounted for his tardiness by saying that he had been to hear Mr. Bilger preach at the courthouse.

"The next time you go there," said Kate Chambers, with an arch look, which conveyed more mischief than her words, "you had better take a lunch with you!"

"I shall certainly do so," answered Mr. Holton, if I am ever caught so again. I should not have gone this morning, but Miss Pullin met me on the street, and insisted so strongly upon it that I could not well refuse."

In reply to various questions from Mrs. Chambers and the children, Mr. Holton went on to give a full description of what he had seen and heard; and, from his account, it would seem that Mr. Bilger, if he did not equal Scott's "Mucklewrath" in impassioned eloquence, certainly rivalled him most successfully in the length of his prayers and sermon.

Mr. Mason had been wondering why he had seen

nothing of his old friend Turner, who lived only about sixty miles from Rockford, where he had a small church and school. A day or two after Christmas, the gentleman made his appearance at Mr. Chambers's door, and was ushered into the study and seated in the big chair, and a thousand questions put to him, before he could fairly realize where he was. There was so much to ask about college and seminary acquaintances, and so many reminiscences of the past to be recalled, that the two clergymen had to postpone any particular discussion of their own private affairs, until the evening session, which commenced soon after dinner.

“Well, Turner,” said his friend, stirring up the fire preparatory to a long talk, “how does the Church flourish with you?”

“Rather poorly,” answered Turner in a desponding tone. “I have worked hard enough, I am sure, but I see very few tokens for good. Indeed, I sometimes get so disheartened, that I am almost determined to go off to some more kindly soil.”

Mr. Mason. The work is difficult anywhere, and all have their vexations and trials.

Turner. True; but mine seem a little worse than common. We are completely cowed down by the overpowering influence of opposing sects; and I am almost disposed to believe that Jeremiah must have had our peculiar case in view, when he said, in such feeling words, “The ways of Zion do mourn, because

none come to her solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate. Her adversaries are the chief; her enemies prosper.”

Mason. So things will continue to be, until the world is better instructed; and that requires time and patience.

Turner. Instructed! Why, man, I brought a whole trunk full of tracts on apostolical succession, and the other distinctive features of the church, and have scattered them broadcast; but there is the end of it.

Mason. By no means. I venture to say that the good deacons and elders into whose hands they fell, lighted their pipes with them, and the old female bigots committed them to the fiery oven!

Turner. Then you agree with me that the distribution of books and tracts will not do the work.

Mason. They will *help* to do it, if you prepare the ground properly, before you sow the seed. My plan is to keep a good supply of choice tracts on hand (a very few varieties are enough), and, upon all fitting occasions, to give them away.

Turner. And pray, what would you call fitting occasions?

Mason. Why, for instance, when visiting a family in affliction, I would leave a tract suitable for their ease. If, in the course of a conversation with any one, doctrinal subjects are introduced, whether relating to the ministry, or the worship of the church, or what not I content myself with a few leading

remarks, and avoid all angry and excited discussion, which always does harm; and, before parting with the person with whom the conversation has been carried on, I offer to give him a tract, which he can read calmly and quietly at home, and thus learn what the Church teaches us to believe. You may depend upon it, Turner, that your plan of dosing people with tracts, *nolens volens*, is a very unprofitable business.

Turner. I have certainly been playing the fool in this particular, and, with the hints you have dropped, will try and improve.

Mr. Mason was on the point of making some reply, when a servant announced that Mr. Perkins was waiting down stairs to see him. The active lawyer had been bustling about since Sunday, and had opened negotiations for a lot suitable for the erection of a church-building, and the object of his visit was to make known this fact to the clergyman. The two gentlemen went off at once to see the ground; and, after a careful examination, they concluded that it would answer admirably.

Before the week was over, Mr. Perkins had raised the money and bought the lot. So far, so good: but without a building upon it, the congregation would be as badly off as before, and certainly they were too feeble yet to erect a church. Mr. Mason had not much faith in begging help from abroad, which some of the vestry proposed, and it was finally determined

to put up a plain house, on one side of the lot, which would answer for a school and a church, until money became more plenty. The purchase of the lot, and the preparations for building, made quite a stir in Rockford; and I am in hopes that the evidences of life which Mr. Turner witnessed may cause him to carry back a more cheerful heart to his own parish, whither he turned his face toward the close of the week.

CHAPTER X.

Martha Jones. — East Indies. — Hope Deferred. — Country Congregation. — Twelve Prayer-Books. — Giving out the Pages. — Every Man a Penny. — Hitching about in Chairs. — New Doctrine. — Bright Eyes. — Planting Acts. — Brother Bilger's Church.

“WHY does Mrs. Peyton take so much interest in the youngest Miss Jones,” inquired Mr. Mason of Mrs Chambers one day.

“Did I never tell you about that romantic story?” replied the good woman, in evident surprise that such a choice bit should have been left untouched so long.

“No, indeed,” said the clergyman, whose curiosity was somewhat excited. “What is it?”

“Why,” returned Mrs. Chambers, “Augustus Peyton and Martha Jones were about the same age, attended the same school, and played together for years and years, and, as might have been expected, when the young man got to be twenty, he offered himself to the fair one in due form. Miss Jones, who is considerably older than her sister, and had taken sole charge of her since the death of their parents, opposed the match on the ground of the extreme youth of the parties; and so matters stood until Augustus became of age. He then renewed his suit, and the

objection was urged that he was engaged in no business, and if he married, he would be obliged to depend upon his mother for support. This touched the young man's pride, and he went away rather hastily, declaring that he would never show his face here again without an ample fortune."

"Is it supposed that Mr. Peyton was actually engaged to Miss Martha?" asked Mr. Mason.

"This is what many persons believe," answered Mrs. Chambers, "and things certainly look like it. For a long time they continued to correspond, and since his letters have stopped coming, the young lady has looked most woe-begone and wretched, as if mourning for the dead."

"Whether they were engaged or not," remarked the clergyman, "the relations which existed between the parties would readily account for the interest which Mrs. Peyton so evidently cherishes for one who might have been her daughter-in-law. Poor girl—this state of uncertainty is most distressing indeed."

"She shuts herself up so much at home," said Mrs. Chambers, "that her health will certainly be impaired. I have been thinking that I would ask her to ride out with us to Mr. Smith's next Sunday afternoon. As she is an excellent singer, it will be a great help in the service."

Mr. Mason highly approved of the suggestion; and as nothing important happened before the Sunday

referred to, I may as well go on to say something of the events of that day.

The regular morning service having been held in Mrs. Peyton's parlor, several persons set off after dinner, in carriages and on horseback, for Mr. Smith's. The country people were all waiting when the clergyman arrived, and considering that it was a farming community, and several miles from town, we may be allowed to speak of it, without much risk of being accused of unreasonable exaggeration, as "a very great company." Mrs. Ford was there with the old prayer-book, which had outlived one cover, and had been honored with a new one;—and Mr Larkins, who had so warmly seconded his friend Bilger's proposals for giving a sermon in the courthouse, on Christmas;—and a good many more whom Mr. Mason had met at the funeral. Mr. Chambers had brought out a dozen prayer-books in the carriage, and when the congregation was seated, he gave them to such as he thought would be most likely to take part in the responses. These books were all alike, and the clergyman, with one of the same edition in his hand, announced the page where the evening service began, and invited all who chose, to join with him in the worship of God. Any one who has never seen this simple arrangement carried out, would be astonished with what spirit and propriety those who are wholly unacquainted with the prayer-book before, will follow the service to its close—more than

gratified at the opportunity of having their share in what the preachers of their own denominations monopolize for themselves.

The sermon (extemporaneous, of course) was upon the much misunderstood parable of the laborers in the vineyard, in which the preacher showed, that while the Gentiles, who were only called to labor at the eleventh hour, would rightly receive an equal reward with the Jews, our Savior gives no encouragement to the comfortable doctrine that waste our lives as we may, if we only repent at the last, our measure of happiness will be equal to that of the most devoted saint. Mr. Mason proved conclusively from the Scripture, that there will be different degrees of rewards in heaven;—and that the sooner we enlist as soldiers of Christ, and the longer and more faithfully we serve, the brighter our diadems of glory;—and the nearer we shall stand to the throne.

The language of the sermon was so simple that the children seemed deeply interested, and the negroes, who crowded the porch and the door-steps, paid the most devout attention. Two or three old gray-headed men, who had been waiting all their lives long for the Spirit to move them in some miraculous way, and who had settled down into the belief that as “*a penny*” was all that the best Christians got, it was just as well to die without having done or denied themselves much for Christ, and expecting that a few prayers in their last hour would secure quite as good a place in

heaven as those would enjoy who had devoted their lives to God, were evidently somewhat discomposed, and hitched about restlessly in their seats. May God fasten the truth upon their hearts.

Martha Jones started the tune at the close of the remarks, and perhaps those who heard what they thought a *new doctrine* in the sermon, discovered something of the same in the hymn:—

“O, happy is the man who hears
 Religion’s warning voice,
 And who celestial wisdom makes
 His early, only choice.

* * * * *

“Her right hand offers to the just,
 Immortal, happy days:
 Her left, imperishable wealth
 And heavenly crowns displays.

“And, as her holy labors rise,
 So her rewards increase;
 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
 And all her paths are peace.”

Mr. Mason noticed a bright-eyed little girl during the service, looking over in the prayer-book with her father, and responding with evident satisfaction. He accordingly singled her out after the service, and gave her a book, with which she was much delighted. This attracted the notice of other children, who gathered around, and soon the whole dozen was distributed. Mr. Mason told the little folks that he hoped they would read in their books every day, and when

he came out again to preach, as he proposed to do in two weeks, they would be able to respond very well.

As Mr. Chambers was about starting off with his carriage-load, Mr. Larkins bustled out, and thanked the clergyman for the sermon.

“I belong,” he said, “to Brother Bilger’s church, but I am no bigot, and I like the truth wherever I hear it preached.”

Mr. Mason smiled, and Mrs. Chambers could not resist the temptation to ask the farmer how many churches we read of in the Bible, and in what chapter and verse “Brother Bilger’s church” was mentioned.

The controversy might have been a long one, had not Mr. Chambers cut short the thread of the argument by driving away.

CHAPTER XI.

Stories for Little Folks.—New Plan.—Too Methodistical.—Low Mutterings.—Wednesday-Night Lectures.—Hewing Timber out of the Thick Trees.—Day of Small Things.—Rising higher.—Eagle Hotel.—Bishop Leighton.—Somebody from Egypt.—Milk and Honey.

MR. CHAMBERS'S children, who had at first been rather shy of the strange clergyman, soon took a great fancy for him, and made the happy discovery that he possessed a wonderful faculty for entertaining little folks, by encouraging their harmless sports, and by telling them pleasant stories. It therefore soon came to be regarded as a settled thing that the hour immediately after supper belonged to them, when the whole group might be seen gathering about Mr. Mason's chair, to hear again and again, with increasing delight, his account of a rabbit-warren which he had when a child, and of Tom Hall, the miller's boy, and of many other wonderful matters; all of which the reader will find duly recorded in the earlier portion of these authentic memoirs.

They were, however, now to lose this entertainment upon one night in the week, in consequence of more important business. Since Mr. Bilger's two-hours' sermon in the courthouse, our friend had been more

and more convinced that the wide gap between Sunday and Sunday ought, if possible, to be filled up with some intervening service, by which his little flock might be brought together, and their zeal and engagedness kept alive. There was no suitable place for such a service, and to tax Mrs. Peyton's kindness for Sundays and week-days too, would be rather an imposition upon good nature. But when there is a will, there is a way; and so Mr. Mason found it. It was determined to have a lecture on Wednesday nights at the houses of the parishioners, the names being arranged in alphabetical order, and the announcement duly made on Sunday as to where the next service would be held. Most of the people were very much pleased with the plan, but a few expressed themselves doubtful of its expediency or usefulness. Indeed, Dr. Gadsby, to whose powerful voice the Church was greatly indebted for the excellent music which was so generally admired, did not hesitate to say that the idea seemed to him quite too *Methodistical*, and he could not think of countenancing such irregularities.

Mr. Perkins came manfully to the rescue, and argued, very plausibly, that as their clergyman was a churchman of the Bishop Hobart stamp, there could be no great danger of his introducing customs contrary to canon-law, and that the life and thriftiness of the Church would best be promoted by some additional effort of the sort. The low mutterings of the

chorister did not interrupt or delay the perfecting of the plan ; and the very next Sunday, notice was given that a lecture on Wednesday night might be expected at Mr. Chambers's, his being the first name on the list.

At the time appointed, the people came together—not as many, of course, as on Sunday, but still a very respectable number of old and young. A hymn was sung, and the Lord's prayer, and general confession, and some collects were said ; and then Mr. Mason began with St. Matthew's Gospel, and having read a chapter, commented upon it in a familiar way. This pleasant and profitable exercise was closed by singing and prayer. Besides other advantages of this system, it proved, in the end, to be the means of establishing family worship in several households, where this most important duty had hitherto been sadly neglected.

And now the spring came, and the days began perceptibly to lengthen, and all kinds of work went on more vigorously, and the carpenters were busy in getting out timber for the little building which was to serve for a church. The several denominations who sat under the droppings of the pulpit in large and comfortable structures of brick, smiled as they watched these efforts of the feeble body of Episcopalians, and apprehended no danger from beginnings so small and unpromising. The work was urged on as fast as possible, because the Sunday-school could not be

expected to flourish without a convenient place in which it might be gathered, to say nothing of the still greater obstacles in the way of building up a congregation.

About this time it became necessary for Mr. Mason to change his lodgings. The arrangement at first had been merely temporary, and Mr. Chambers, in addition to his own large family, expected a visit from some relatives early in the summer.

The family gave up Mr. Mason with reluctance, and he began to have a kind of home feeling himself, which rendered a removal far from agreeable. But where was he to go? There were no private boarding-houses in the town of much reputation, and a tavern seemed the only alternative. This, at first thought, might appear to be the very worst place where a clergyman could take up his abode: but it certainly has its advantages, especially for an unmarried man. He is more free to go and come; visitors will call upon him with less hesitation; he can readily command a larger share of his time; and he is thrown in the way of forming many acquaintances, and rendering much incidental service for the church.

Mr. Mason weighed these various reasons well, and then carried his books and inkstand to the Eagle hotel. Perhaps he never felt more desolate and forlorn in his life, than when upon the first night, in this fresh page of experience, he took his place at the long supper-table, and saw a crowd of persons swal-

lowing their food in hot haste, as if some unreasonable taskmaster had limited them to five short minutes for the purpose; and, having finished his disagreeable meal, he retired to his lonely and not over-comfortable room. I am sure he sympathized very little with the saintly Bishop Leighton, whose desire, for years, it had been that he might die at an inn—which singular wish was finally granted him.

Dreary as such a home most certainly was, to a person who had hitherto enjoyed the pleasures of social life, it brought with it a realizing sense of dependence upon ONE who has promised to be with his people at all times, and under all circumstances—a Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother.”

Mr. Perkins considerately called in before bedtime, to see that everything had been conveniently arranged, and found the clergyman engaged in placing his books upon his shelves, and putting matters to rights as well as he could.

“Our neighbors, the Presbyterians and Methodists,” observed Mr. Perkins, “are preparing a rich treat for the curious on next Sunday.”

“What is it?” asked Mr. Mason, expecting to hear of a quarterly meeting, or missionary sermon, with a live Chinese or Indian to grace the occasion with his presence. “Oh, nothing alarming at all,” replied the lawyer. “The paper of to-day merely announces in large capitals, that the Rev. Cicero Smith, from Egypt, will preach in one place, and the Rev. Eupho-

nious Brown, a great revivalist, will hold forth in another.”

“It is a bad sign,” remarked Mr. Mason, “when recourse must be had to such announcements to attract people to church. Although *we* are seldom guilty of this offence against good taste and propriety, we are not altogether free from the fault. The bishop’s visits to a parish may very properly be published in the newspapers, but the ordinary services should be quite enough to take us to the house of God, without the promise of milk and honey, from the lips of any orator or divine.”

CHAPTER XII.

The Priest wanted. -- Lantern for the Darkness. -- Broad Cap-Border. -- All the Babies of the Settlement. -- Which is the Bride? -- The Green Tumbler. -- A Whole Dollar. -- Euphonious Brown. -- Revival. -- Hopeful Conversions.

I HAVE just discovered, when too late to avail myself of this valuable assistance, that Mr. Mason, in a letter to his father, had spoken of some of the changes and chances which I have had the trouble of describing in the last few chapters. I will, however, give an extract from a communication of somewhat later date, which may not prove uninteresting.

“I am sure,” writes the young clergyman, “that mother and yourself would have been somewhat amused with a wedding at which I was called upon, lately, to officiate. About a mile from the town, at the end of a rough, and narrow lane, there is a little settlement of Irish, and wonderful to relate, *protestant* Irish. They always send for me to christen their children; and when we are able to furnish church room for them, I hope they will regularly attend upon public worship. Well, now for my story. The other night I had taken my seat at my writing-table, for a good long study of two or three hours, when lo! and

behold, a summons came that a man was in the hall, inquiring for the priest. Although I have not yet purchased to myself that good degree, I had no doubt that I was the person wanted, and accordingly went down. An Irishman addressed me as I approached, saying, with a slight brogue, 'Will your riverence please to go with me to a widding to-night?'

" 'Certainly,' I answered; 'where is it to be?'

" 'At the sittlement,' said the son of Erin, 'and I have even bro't a lantern to carry you safe thro' the dark.'

" We accordingly set off, and in due time reached the little village of cabins—rather an improvement upon the pig-styes so abundant in the Emerald isle, but after all, bearing a marked resemblance to the original copy. My conductor led the way to one of the largest of these, and we went in without ceremony. An old lady, arrayed in a cap with a bountiful supply of ruffles, welcomed me, as I entered, and handed me a chair. Some arrangements appeared yet to be completed, so that I had abundance of time to look about me. In one corner of the room stood a large bed upon which all the babies of the settlement appeared to have been placed, for the sake of keeping them out of the way, and the sides of the room were lined with men and women, waiting in silence, to see the end. The centre of the floor was occupied by a table, which contained the wedding feast. Having waited until I was tired, and no one

showing a disposition to take the lead, I observed, that if everything was ready, we would begin the ceremony. Again there was a pause. At last, in my perplexity, I turned to the old lady in the broad ruffled cap, and inquired which was the bride. She pointed to a bashful, blushing damsel, and then informed me that the young man in the blue coat was the husband elect.

“I requested the parties to stand up, which they readily did, the man in one corner of the room, and the woman in another, as far apart as possible. This arrangement being corrected, and the space between them somewhat diminished, I went through with the service in due form, except the ‘ring part,’ as children call it;—because I deem it an utter absurdity for one who does not even own the coat on his back, to be endowing anybody ‘with all’ his ‘worldly goods.’

“As soon as Michael and Judy had been pronounced man and wife, and the blessing had been given, I shook the happy couple by the hand, and was about to withdraw, when my old friend with the conspicuous cap-border again drew near and said, ‘And sure, your riverence will not be afther laving without taking some noorishment?’ I was in great doubt as to what this word might mean, but supposing that she referred to eating, I thanked her and declined, on the ground that I had so lately been to supper. She looked so disappointed that my heart smote me, and

I told her that I would change my mind and 'take some nourishment.' A kindly smile lighted up her honest face as she took a whiskey bottle from the table and poured out a generous libation into a green glass! It was now too late to draw back, so screwing up my courage to the point of having my mouth burned with the fiery stuff, I raised the liquor to my lips, and wished the company much happiness. At this stage in the proceedings there was quite a stir in the back part of the room, and the old lady, turning quickly in that direction, said, with some sharpness, 'Can't ye keep quiet from yer kissing, and his riverence still in the house?' Several men followed me out of doors when I left, and among them my guide with the lantern. I supposed they had merely come out of politeness, but one of them, who acted as spokesman, very gravely inquired how much I charged for my services. I replied, that people gave us what they pleased, but that we never charged anything. 'Oh, and indade, yer riverence mustn't take this long dark walk for nothing,' said the man, at the same time pulling out a small piece of silver from his pocket, the others doing likewise. The whole amount was about a dollar, which, from fear of hurting their feelings, I thought it best to accept. And so ended the wedding. You must tell Forter all about it. I am glad that he is pleased with his position as assistant. There is no man whom I would rather serve under in that capacity than the

good doctor, but I do not at all regret that I took the course which I did.”

I suppose that the Rev. Euphonious Brown, whose appointment to preach in Rockford was duly announced in the “Observer” of Saturday, must have been a very eloquent man, for the Methodist bell rang three times on Monday night, and on several nights afterward, and upon inquiring the cause, Mr. Mason learned, with sorrow, that a revival was in progress. I say with *sorrow*, for the most skeptical and hardened men now living in the town had formerly been converted during excitement of this kind, and when the fever had run its course, they were ashamed of their weakness, and strayed off farther from the right path than before. But people are very reluctant to learn by experience—they would rather try experiments for themselves. And so Mr. Euphonious Brown kindled the fire, and fanned the flame lustily, and the pastor, Mr. Greenfield, exhorted, and shouted, and groaned, and threatened, until crowds came forward to the anxious-seat, and were prayed for in turn by the preachers, and by Brother Stone, the grocer, and Brother Allen, the blacksmith, and Brother Bradshaw, the squire, and Sister Briggs, and Sister Lewis, and Sister Brown. The result of it all was, that after the town had been kept in a state of confusion for a fortnight, and household affairs had been neglected, and the quiet, unobtrusive duties of the Christian life forgotten, a great company of old and

young were declared to have “experienced religion.” Upon the second Sunday night after the beginning of this revival, Mr. Greenfield read out in meeting, with a very complacent countenance, the names of the new converts;—a motley list indeed!

It may be anticipating matters somewhat, but I may as well mention in this place, that of the forty persons who were thus “hopefully converted,” at the end of six months the names of *two* remained upon the church books as those of members in “*good standing!*”

So much for attempts to force religion in hot-beds, instead of being satisfied with slow and certain growth, such as the Scriptures speak of—first, the blade, then the ear; last of all, the full and ripened grain.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mysterious Whisperings. — China and Japan. — Mother's Perplexity. — The Best Adviser. — New Chapel. — Grateful Hearts. — Growing Sunday-School. — Pappy wants you. — Rickety Staircase. — Death-Bed Repentance.

EARLY in the season there were mysterious whisperings in Rockford, about news which had been received from Augustus Peyton. No letter had arrived by the mail, for the postmaster and his clerk had carefully scanned every package, and would certainly have known the fact, if any had come to hand. It seems that a merchant of the place, while buying his spring goods at the east, had by chance fallen in with somebody just returned from China and Japan, who reported that he had seen Mr. Peyton at a trading-port, the name of which this somebody had forgotten. This rumor was quite enough to set the gossips at work, and an abundance of satisfaction they derived from it. But, however the truth might be exaggerated in this way, thus much seemed highly probable, that the long-absent one was yet alive. Of course the tidings soon reached the ears of those most interested in the matter, and hearts long saddened by apprehension and despair began again to flutter with hope.

One day, Mr. Mason was hastily summoned to go to Mrs. Peyton's, and, upon reaching the house, he found the old lady in a very nervous and excited state.

"I have sent for you," she said, as soon as the clergyman entered the door, "to consult with you on a subject which disturbs me night and day."

The clergyman bowed, as an intimation that she should go on.

"You know all about my poor dear boy," she continued—"his departure from home, his long absence, and the months and years of anxiety which I have suffered on his account. Have you heard any of these rumors which have been floating about of late in reference to him?"

"I have, madam," answered Mr. Mason, "and I should have approached you on the subject before, had I not feared that it might have seemed indelicate and obtrusive to do so."

"By no means," said the old lady with earnestness,— "if there is a person on earth to whom I should desire to unburden my sorrows, and apply for counsel, it is my pastor."

"Have you seen the gentleman, yourself, who brought this report to town?" asked Mr. Mason.

"O yes," returned she, "I have conversed with him several times, and have gleaned every item of information which he could possibly give; but, as he has even forgotten the name of the person whom he

saw in New York, I can not devise any plan for prosecuting the inquiry.”

The clergyman sat for some time, lost in thought, and at last remarked :—

“If I only knew the precise line of business in which this city merchant is engaged, it would bring the inquiry into a more tangible shape.”

“He is a tea-merchant,” said Mrs. Peyton.

“Keep up good courage, madam,” said the clergyman, rising in haste—“I hope that something may be done. My father has such an extensive acquaintance in New York, that, even with the unsatisfactory information which I can give, he will, very likely, be able to find the person we wish.”

The letter went by the next post ; and while it is wending its way to the east, we must confine our attention again to church affairs at Rockford.

By the middle of September, the little building was finished and used for divine service. It was very plain, and many an ordinary schoolhouse in the older states would surpass it in every respect ; but it was neat and unpretending, and would serve a good purpose, like the tabernacle of old, until times and circumstances should become ripe for the erection of a temple. I venture to say that grand cathedrals have been set apart for the service of Almighty God, where there were fewer really grateful hearts than when the songs of Zion were, for the first time, sung beneath this humble roof.

The Sunday-school now stood a much better chance for growth and usefulness; and Mr. Mason at once persuaded Miss Forester, and Miss Chambers, and Mr. Holton, and several others, to engage as teachers, in addition to the few stand-by's to whose devotion the school owed its existence. In order that the interest might not flag, he proposed to meet the teachers on the first Monday night of each month, to hear a report upon the state of their classes, and to read to them such extracts from books and church-papers as had a bearing upon the business in which they were engaged.

A trifling circumstance sometimes paves the way for an important discovery, or throws down obstacles which have hindered the carrying out of a favorite measure. Mr. Mason had engaged to take tea at Captain Forester's. It was seldom that he indulged himself in this way,—but the very pressing invitation, and the prospect of meeting with several of his most intelligent parishioners, had induced him to accept. Just as he was preparing to go, a little girl, covered with rags and dirt, presented herself at the door, and stood sucking her thumb, evidently afraid to speak to the minister. Hearing a slight noise, Mr. Mason looked behind him, and said to the child, in a kind tone: “Well, my little girl, do you wish to see me about anything?”—“Yes,” she answered, with Quaker simplicity—“Pappy wants you.”

The clergyman found, after a careful cross-ques-

tioning, that the child's father was dangerously sick, and wished him to come and pray for him. In such a case it was impossible to refuse: so, having written a line to Mrs. Forester apologizing for his absence from supper, he went with the ragged girl.

It would hardly be fair even to *conjecture* which way Mr. Mason would have decided, had there been only *inclination* to consult—Mrs. Forester, and Grace, and other agreeable people in one scale, to say nothing of the supper, and the edifying discourse—and a hovel, and wretchedness, and the pains and agonies of a dying man, in the other. The clergyman, however, had a conscience—*an enlightened conscience*—and he followed its guiding. The little girl led the way to a miserable dwelling, at the door of which a coarse, repulsive-looking woman was busy at the wash-tub, while several squalid children indulged without restraint in their noisy sports. The woman seemed so cool and unconcerned, that the clergyman thought it hardly possible that any one could be dying in the house; and, fearing that there might be some mistake, he inquired whether Mr. Avery lived there. The woman answered, “Yes,” and pointed to a rickety staircase which led up into a dark garret, with only one little scuttle-hole to let in the air and the light. Here was the abode of wretchedness indeed—poverty and sickness, and their attendant ills, being all crowded into this narrow space. The sick man was coughing violently when Mr. Mason entered, and,

exhausted by the effort, sank back speechless upon the bed. His wife hastened to moisten his lips with some water in a cup, and, when he had somewhat recovered, took up a baby from the blanket on the floor, where it was manifesting its disapprobation of such neglect by loud and deafening cries.

The clergyman now sat down by the bed, and began to converse with the poor sufferer, inquiring kindly as to the nature of his sickness, and the length of time he had been confined to the house, and then very naturally turned his thoughts from his perishing body, to the more important concerns of the soul. There was no time to be lost, for it was evidently a case of rapid consumption, and the sands of life had nearly run out.

The sick man expressed great sorrow for his past misdoings, and begged Mr. Mason to pray for him, and to tell him what he must do to be saved.

Alas!—it is the most trying position in which a clergyman can be placed, to be called upon to give advice to one who has waited until the eleventh hour is almost spent, before he can make up his mind to close in with the offers of salvation.

Mr. Mason felt his responsibility deeply, and looking to God to guide him in a matter so all-important, he kneeled down, and prayed earnestly—saying, in the touching language of the visitation for the sick, “O most gracious Father, stir up, we beseech thee, in this thy servant, such sorrow for sin, and such fer-

vent love for thee, as may in a short time do the work of many days, that among the praises which thy saints and holy angels shall sing to the honor of thy mercy through eternal ages, it may be to thy unspeakable glory, that thou hast redeemed his soul from eternal death."

CHAPTER XIV.

Sick Man Again. — Faithfulness. — Baptism. — Brand from the Burning. — School for the Poor. — Raising Money. — Miss Oliver. — Mustering the Children. — Sweet Promises. — Green Primers. — Blooming Beauty. — Never lend Sermons.

It was a late hour before Mr. Mason left the sick man's bedside, and the next morning he returned again. Mr. Avery was much worse, so low indeed, that he seemed scarcely to breathe at all—but when told by his wife that the minister had come, he opened his eyes, and expressed his thanks in a feeble voice.

Although the clergyman was not one of those who would encourage the baptism of whole nations of savages, as a thing most desirable, even if the reluctant candidates must be dragged to the font by force, he conscientiously regarded this holy sacrament as “generally *necessary to salvation*,” and he thought that the various instances recorded in the book of Acts afforded full warrant for administering it to those who exhibit repentance and faith, without requiring any very long time for preparation. Above all, he believed that such liberty should most certainly be allowed in cases of extreme sickness, and

accordingly he had spoken to Mr. Avery very seriously upon this subject, the night before. He now went over the ground again, and finding that in spite of extreme ignorance, and a long-continued course of sin, that he showed much sorrow for his evil deeds, and an anxious desire to throw himself upon the Savior's mercy, pleading the merits of his complete atonement; he took a cup of clean water, and having offered the prayer for consecration, baptized him in the name of the Triune God. With the setting sun the sufferer's soul winged its way to another world. May not the faithful pastor hope to meet this "brand plucked from the burning," among that company of the blessed who shall ascribe glory and honor and thanksgiving unto the Lamb, who redeemed them to God by his blood?

The sickness and death of Avery was the first occasion upon which the church had been brought into direct contact with the very poor, in Rockford. I do not include the Irish settlement in this statement, because these people were generally industrious and thriving. After the occurrences just described, Mr. Mason set vigorously to work to devise some plan for elevating and improving the class of poor, neglected creatures, which had been thus providentially brought to his notice. It would be quite impossible to perform miracles in changing the manners and habits of the old, but the children could be trained up under a different system. The first thing therefore to be

done, was to establish a school for them. He spoke to a few persons on the subject, but they doubted the practicability of the measure, and declined taking any part. An unwillingness to spend money, sometimes influences our judgments! Mr. Mason felt so well convinced that the plan, if properly carried out, would render most essential service to the church, that notwithstanding these discouragements, he resolutely persevered, heading a paper with a liberal subscription himself, and then handing it to Mr. Perkins to circulate among such as chose to give.

The sum required (which was only a small one) was soon raised, and Miss Claxton, by the consent of the vestry, removed her school to the little chapel—thus leaving her old room to be occupied by the parish school. The next thing was to find a teacher. The moderate compensation which they were able to offer, made it out of the question to expect to employ one with extraordinary accomplishments—but these were by no means requisite. Any person qualified to teach the ordinary English branches would do quite as well for the kind of school proposed as a walking polyglot, boasting of an acquaintance with every branch of learning which could be mentioned. Mrs. Chambers suggested that they should employ Miss Oliver, a neat, tidy, and industrious young woman, who had often done sewing for the family. The only objection was, that she did not belong to the church, and had always been under Baptist influences. Of

course Mr. Mason would have preferred that the teacher should be a communicant, but as it was not absolutely necessary, he authorized Mrs. Chambers to engage Miss Oliver's services, with the understanding that the school should open the next week. He then went to Mrs. Avery, and asked her to send her two oldest children, which she gladly promised to do, and remarked, that her neighbor down stairs would probably like some of hers to go also. The clergyman accordingly extended the same invitation to Mrs. Potts, and with the same result.

Suppose we look into the little schoolhouse on the next Monday morning. Miss Oliver is sitting by the table, and Mr. Mason is showing her the places in the prayer-book. "I have brought a supply of prayer-books for the scholars who can read," he said, "and the school is to be opened every morning with the Psalms for the day, and the general confession, and the Lord's prayer."

As this was a new business for Miss Oliver, he then found the psalter for the children, and went through with this little service himself, that she might know how it was to be done in future.

About a dozen boys and girls of various sorts and sizes, had collected—all evidently the children of poor parents; some dirty, and ragged, and rude enough; and others clean, and neat, and well-behaved.

"We must have a name for the school," said Mr.

Mason, when the opening exercises were finished ; “and as most of the scholars are girls, and we have a female teacher, I think we will call it St. Mary’s school. You may tell any children whom you see wandering about in idleness, and learning nothing but evil, that they can come here and be taught to read and write, and spell, and sew, without expense. And I think you will all like the school,” he continued, “for we shall do everything in our power to make it pleasant. On Christmas and Easter, I will have a feast for the children, and give prizes to the six best scholars.”

Here the little people smiled with great satisfaction, and looked first at the clergyman, and then at the teacher, and then at one another, a little flaxen-haired girl smoothing down her check-apron, and a boy, whose chubby bare feet did not reach the floor, swung himself backward and forward upon the bench, and began to study his spelling-book, most ambitiously.

“I shall come in often,” said Mr. Mason, “to see how you improve, and will hear you recite the catechism which is in those little green primers on the table. The first thing I want every child to learn is to say its prayers.”

He then informed Miss Oliver that the ladies of the church would take turns in visiting the school, and showing an interest in its welfare ; and having wished her great success in her labors, he took his leave.

As he passed along the street, he met Grace Forster, who looked even more blooming and beautiful than ever.

“O, Mr. Mason,” she said, as he stopped for a moment to speak to her, “mamma desired me to ask you, in case I saw you, if you would not be kind enough to lend her the sermon which you preached yesterday morning. There was one part on baptism which she would like to copy and send to a friend who has long been living outside of the pale of the church.”

Mr. Mason must have desired to say yes. Who could refuse a request coming from such a quarter, and so sweetly expressed?

The young clergyman hesitated. At length, however, he replied, with his accustomed decision, “I am very sorry, Miss Grace, to appear disobliging, but from the beginning of my ministry, I have resolved to observe Bishop Ravenscroft’s rule, *never to lend a sermon.*”

Would it not be better for the clergy and for the Church, if more would do likewise?

CHAPTER XV.

Other Denominations. — Fourth of July. — Agree to disagree. — Mr. James. — Appeal to one of the Fathers. — Cold Shoulder. — Vengeance. — Training for Confirmation. — Holding by the Button. — How many are to be confirmed.

NOTHING has, thus far, been said in regard to Mr. Mason's intercourse with the ministers of the various denominations in Rockford — although, soon after his arrival, Mr. James, the Presbyterian, Mr. Greenfield, the Methodist, and Mr. M'Gruder, the Baptist, had called upon him, which visits had been duly returned. They were, no doubt, good, conscientious men ; and, in the society of the Episcopal clergyman, all questions which might give rise to unpleasant and vain discussions were scrupulously avoided. Matters had gone on very harmoniously, each one confining himself to his own particular sphere, until a few days before the glorious Fourth of July, when Mr. Mason was informed by his Presbyterian brother that there would be a Sunday-school celebration on that day, and that the Episcopal Sunday-school was invited to attend, and the clergyman to share in the religious services of the occasion. Mr. Mason tried to avoid coming to a direct issue with his well-meaning neighbor, by saying

that there had been a celebration of his Sunday-school at Easter, and that he did not see the particular fitness of the Fourth of July for such a purpose. These reasons did not satisfy Mr. James, who renewed his proposal with more earnestness than before, until Mr. Mason was obliged to tell him that he thought the only way for different denominations to get on quietly together, was to manage their affairs in their own way, and not to attempt unions, until the only true basis of union, *a common faith*, could be amicably agreed upon. Mr. James turned very red in the face, choked and stammered, and at length said, with considerable warmth:—

“I had hoped, sir, that in the progress and improvement of this enlightened age, the exclusive and uncharitable features of your Church system had disappeared.”

“You must excuse me,” said Mr. Mason, “but really I have said nothing which should call forth this feeling. I heartily desire to keep peace with my neighbors, and honestly believe that the only way to do it, is for each one to act according to his own conscience, and leave others to do the same.”

“Mr. Latitude always united with us in these objects where all Christians can readily agree,” remarked Mr. James, who had now got better control of his temper, but was still unappeased, “and I see not how any other course can escape the charge of exclusiveness and intolerance.”

“My eye fell upon a passage in Abbott’s ‘Corner-Stone’ this morning,” answered Mr. Mason, “which has a bearing upon this subject, and as the book is a sort of a standard with you, I will beg your permission to read it.”

So saying, he took up the volume from the table, and read as follows: “If a class of Christians think that a certain mode of ordination is the only valid one, or that certain views of religious truth are essential, they can not, of course, include those who differ from them in these respects in the circle of *official* ministerial intercourse. There is no bigotry or intolerance in this. There is certainly no bigotry, or intolerance, in a man’s doing what he himself thinks is right, if he does not molest his neighbors, or prevent, by other means than moral ones, their doing what they think right.”

Mr. Mason closed the book, and paused to give his visiter an opportunity to make some remark; but he waited in vain. Mr. James seized his hat, and pleading an engagement elsewhere as a reason for haste, took his leave. It was his last call upon the Episcopal clergyman. They afterward exchanged the usual compliments on the street, but the Presbyterian ever cherished a secret grudge, which betrayed itself often enough in his sermons and otherwise, in the shape of severe remarks upon formality, and exclusiveness, and the absurdity of the apostolical succes-

sion, and the dangers of Puseyism, and the usual favorite topics of abuse.

Mr. Mason had no time to waste in unavailing regrets at this disagreeable interview, but kept steadily on in the even tenor of his way. The building of the chapel, and the organization of the parish-school, engrossed his attention until September; and, as the bishop was expected toward the close of the next month, much time was requisite for looking up candidates for confirmation, and preparing them for this solemn rite. As soon as Mr. Mason received official information of the bishop's coming, due notice was given in church, and persons who wished to become candidates were invited to send in their names. But he was too well acquainted with human nature to expect that many would avail themselves of this permission. The timid, and irresolute, and desponding, must be privately approached by the clergyman, and their minds directed to the subject in such a manner as to interest and encourage. This, then, was to be the chief employment of the next few weeks. Mr. Mason accordingly made out a list of all the persons in the parish who ought to be confirmed, and sought a favorable opportunity for conversing with each one separately, giving some a tract, and others a book, according to the taste and time which they had for reading, and their several ages and capacities. Neither did he rest satisfied with *one* effort, but renewed the conversation, again and again, as occasion was

afforded him. One thing, however, he carefully avoided,—and this was, giving advice or instruction to an individual in the presence of a third party. Many persons are backward about speaking on religious subjects at all: and if a clergyman desires to drive them from the church altogether, he need only make it a practice of holding them by the button, and delivering them a homily on the street, or upon occasions when other eyes and ears will be open. As there never had been a confirmation in Rockford, considerable curiosity was felt to witness it, and the matter was often talked of at the tea-table and social gatherings.

But, besides his efforts in private, Mr. Mason's sermons for several successive Sundays were directed to this subject. He began with a plain discourse, presenting the scriptural authority for this rite, and the qualifications required in those who came forward to receive it.

Several good Presbyterians and Methodists looked astonished when, in order to show how generally confirmation had been practised in the Church since the time of the apostles, he quoted the language of Calvin and Wesley, and even an acknowledgment made in the Presbyterian general assembly in this country. The sermons which followed were practical, and consisted of warnings to the slumbering and the headstrong, and encouragements to those who were afraid

to assume responsibilities which they feared they might be unable to meet.

“How many are to be confirmed?” was a question put to Mr. Mason twenty times a-day; but, not being certain himself, he invariably answered that he did not know. And then, if the more inquisitive asked, “*who* the candidates were,” he gave them no satisfaction. It is extremely unpleasant to sensitive persons to have such things talked about; and not a few would be kept back from the altar, if the fact must be published beforehand that it was their intention to present themselves.

CHAPTER XVI.

Tidings from China. — Sun-Bonnets and Slate-Pencils. — Big Letter. — Anxiety relieved. — Turner's Experience. — Baptist Leaven. — Bishop's Visit. — Extra Prayer-Meeting. — Reformed Drunkard. — Well-chosen Lessons. — Twelve Candidates. — De Quincey.

“A LETTER from Augustus Peyton, I declare!” exclaimed the postmaster at Rockford, one day, opening the various packages which had just arrived from the four quarters of the globe. I speak advisedly when I thus include the whole earth, because a post-office has even been established among the savage islanders who but a few years ago devoured Captain Cook for breakfast.

The postmaster's exclamation attracted the attention of his clerk, whose nimble fingers ceased for a moment to distribute the letters and papers among their appropriate boxes, and gazed intently upon the thick epistle with its foreign marks, which had been so long and so anxiously waited for. As was perfectly natural, the postmaster told his wife about the letter, at dinner-time, and the clerk spoke of it among his acquaintances—the shop-boys in the neighborhood, and young misses, with sun-bonnets on, grinding slate-pencils between their teeth, who stopped to

ask for letters as they passed the office-door on their way to school—so that by night nearly every person in the town was duly informed that Mrs. Peyton had received a letter from her son. From the size and weight of the package, it was shrewdly conjectured that it must also have contained some communication for Martha Jones, which was even so. As Mr. Mason's efforts in discovering the New York merchant who had met with Augustus had been thus successful, the mother, full of thankfulness, sent for the clergyman without delay, to tell him the good news, and that they might rejoice together. Her son was safe, and most prosperous in business. He had written several letters home, as it appears, to which no answers had been received. The first disappointments he had attributed to irregularities in the mails, but when months and years had passed, and no tidings came, he feared, nay, he came to the settled conviction, that those whom he loved most on earth must be numbered with the dead. The earliest information which he got, relieving his mind from this painful suspense, was a letter from the tea-merchant of New York, written at the request of Mr. Mason, senior, who had become much interested in the subject from the representations of his son.

And now, while speaking of letters, I may as well mention one which came about this time from Turner, in which, among other things, he says: "I can never be too thankful about the hint you gave me as to the

proper mode of distributing tracts. Soon after I took charge of my parish, I was surprised to find that one of my communicants, who had formerly been a Baptist, had been so thoroughly indoctrinated with some of the peculiar views of that denomination, that she had never yet had her children christened. I discussed the question with her, and lent her tracts on the subject, but all to no purpose. Indeed, this plan only served to rouse up the old Baptist spirit within her, and she really seemed to take a pride in trying to rebut my arguments, and to detect fallacies in the reasoning of the tracts. At last I resolved to leave time and other influences to do their work, and actually gave the whole subject the go-by for many months. Soon after my return from Rockford, I called upon this person, in the regular course of pastoral visiting, and, before coming away, barely remarked, that several children would be baptized the next Friday afternoon, at service-time, and added in a careless way, 'Suppose you bring yours around.' My tone was such as to convey the idea that I took it for granted she held the views of the church on this important subject, and that as a matter of course she desired to do right. She answered, without the least hesitation, that she would do so; and true to her word, upon the day appointed the children were brought. I am convinced from this and other cases which I could mention, that our best way to succeed, with many persons, is to teach positive truth, and not

trouble ourselves as much as some of us are wont to do, in rubbing up and reviving old prejudices.”

But I must not finish the chapter without saying something about the confirmation, which was so anxiously expected. The bishop came, according to the announcement which had been made, and a crowd turned out upon the occasion. It is true, Mr. James held a prayer-meeting at the same hour in the afternoon (a thing he had never done before), and Mr. Greenfield promised his people a rich treat in the shape of an address from a reformed drunkard; and the clappers of the Presbyterian and Methodist bells produced a great deal of noise on that bright Sunday—but it made no difference. Mr. James and his deacons had the prayer-meeting to themselves, and Mr. Greenfield and the reformed drunkard having waited in vain for a congregation, concluded to go and see the confirmation themselves. The bishop had another clergyman travelling with him, so that there were three who took part in the services. Instead of the regular lessons from the calendar, which might have been entirely inappropriate, the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah was read, in which the blessings of salvation, under the beautiful image of living waters, are freely offered to every creature—and then a part of the eighth chapter of the book of Acts, where a confirmation in the apostles’ days is spoken of, thus pointing out one of the regular channels through which these waters are conveyed to the fainting soul. After the

bishop's sermon, which enchained the attention of the congregation from the opening to the close, an inspiring hymn was sung, and the candidates for confirmation came forward.

Curiosity was on tiptoe to see who they would be. We are able to recognise some acquaintances among them. Here is Mr. Smith from the country, and his daughter Julia, and Kate Chambers, and Grace Forster, and (do not be surprised, my reader, for stranger things have happened before) Frank Holton — one of Mr. Chambers's clerks, who enjoyed the benefit of the Rev. Obadiah Bilger's two-hour sermon, on Christmas day, at the courthouse. There were twelve candidates in all;—a large number, considering the infancy of the parish, and the many drawbacks to its prosperity. At the close of the confirmation service, the choir struck up the Gloria in Excelsis, and the new recruits went back to their seats, while men and angels seemed thus to rejoice together over a spectacle so cheering.

I seldom witness the administration of this beautiful apostolic ordinance without recalling De Quincy's golden words: "Our English rite of confirmation, by which, in years of awakened reason, we take upon us the engagements contracted for us in our slumbering infancy—how sublime a rite is that! The little postern gate, through which the baby in its cradle had been silently placed for a time within the glory of God's countenance, suddenly rises to the

clouds as a triumphal arch, through which, with banners displayed, and martial pomp, we make our second entry as crusading soldiers militant for God, by personal choice, and by sacramental oath. Each man says, in effect, ‘ Lo!—I rebaptize myself; and that which was once sworn to on my behalf, now I swear for myself.’ ”*

* “ The Vision of Sudden Death.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Can it be Possible? — George Patterson. — Afraid to Commune. — Eating and Drinking Damnation. — Velvet Bonnet. — Dressing the Chapel. — Everybody Glad. — The White Cravat. — Do you charge Preachers? — Diet of Worms.

MR. MASON had stopped in at Mr. Perkins's office one day to inquire about some church business when he found the lawyer reading a letter. — Having given the clergyman a seat, he turned to his clerk and said, "James, go down to the Eagle, and see if a room can be had for Mr. Patterson. — He will be here by Christmas."

As the youth went out to obtain the desired information, Mr. Perkins remarked, that the person for whom he wished to obtain lodgings was to study law with him.

"You called him Patterson, I think," observed Mr. Mason, not supposing, however, that he could have much interest in the matter.

"Yes," answered Mr. Perkins, "George Patterson."

"George Patterson!" exclaimed the clergyman, and his eye kindled so brightly, and his tone expressed such an interest, that the lawyer looked sur-

prised. "Can it be possible that this is my old college chum?"

"His mother is a widow," replied Mr. Perkins, "a very old friend of mine."

"The same—it must be the same," said Mr. Mason, "this is an unexpected pleasure indeed."

The clerk soon returned, and reported favorably, and the clergyman having finished his business, went to call on Mrs. Forester.—It was not a mere visit of ceremony, but one which had a particular object in view. He had observed with surprise and sorrow that she did not receive the holy communion on the day of the bishop's visit, although, until that moment, he had supposed that she would have been one of the first to avail herself of this precious privilege—a privilege which they had during a long time past, so seldom enjoyed.

The subject was approached by the young clergyman with great prudence and caution, and in the course of the conversation he simply remarked, "I was afraid, madam, that you might have been unwell the Sunday when the Lord's Supper was administered, as you left before that solemn service."

"No," she answered with some embarrassment, "but I have never yet been able to persuade myself that I was worthy to receive it."

"I should be very sorry," answered Mr. Mason, "if any one could bring himself to think that he was worthy to partake of a sacrament to which none are

invited to come but such as feel themselves unworthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under the Master's table. We ought not to regard the holy communion as a badge of saintship, or a reward placed upon a high shelf which we can only properly receive after we have really earned it, but as a means of grace."

"There is a passage in one of St. Paul's epistles," said Mrs. Forester, bringing forward her objections and difficulties in the strongest way, "which has always alarmed me so much, that I am afraid it will be a long time before I can venture to run the risk of bringing down upon myself its terrible denunciations."

"I know to what you refer," interrupted the clergyman, and taking up a Testament from the table, he turned to 1 Corinthians, xi. 29, and read "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

"Yes, that is the passage," said Mrs. Forester, "it almost makes me shudder to hear it."

"You ought to recollect, madam," continued Mr. Mason, "to whom these words were spoken, and why. St. Paul had heard of the irreverent and profane behavior of some of the members of the church in Corinth, a wicked and dissolute city, in which it was no easy matter to live free from contamination of some sort. These Christians at last had become so

perfectly shameless in their conduct, that even the temple of God was turned into a scene of riot and intemperance. It was on account of such terrible abuses, that the apostle indignantly asks, 'What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.' You see for yourself, that under the circumstances, very strong language was necessary to convince them of the heinousness of their sin."

"I wonder that I never looked at that frightful verse which has been a stumbling block to me, in connection with the circumstances which you have mentioned," said Mrs. Forester. "Your explanation has certainly cleared up my difficulties not a little. You think then, Mr. Mason, that the apostle's threatening is not to be considered as referring to our ordinary sins of omission and commission, which all of us must be conscious of, day by day?"

"By no means," answered Mr. Mason; "St. Paul would thus have pronounced sentence against himself, since he, as well as others, were subject to infirmities. He also would have been the last person in the world to say one word which should discourage the humble and the penitent from approaching the table of the Lord."

The clergyman might perhaps have added more, had not Grace at that moment entered the room, having just returned from a walk. She blushed

deeply when she found herself thus unexpectedly in the presence of a visiter—for in her haste to tell her mother something about the purchase she had made, she did not notice at first that Mr. Mason was in the room. Her new winter bonnet was wonderfully becoming, and when the young clergyman asked her to play some favorite air, and the velvet head-piece was removed, I believe he debated with himself for some minutes, whether she looked better with or without it, and I am disposed to think that he was unable positively to determine.

His visit was much longer than he had intended, and as he took his leave, he promised to send Mrs. Forester a tract on the subject about which they had been conversing. I will mention the name of the tract, in hopes that other clergymen will be led to circulate it among those of their people who may be perplexed by like fears and difficulties. It is entitled "*Why are you not a communicant?*" and is one of the publications of our Tract Society.

As Christmas drew near, the young people began to make their preparations for decking the little chapel with evergreens, and congratulating themselves that nobody would be able this year to hinder so beautiful a tribute of affection and gratitude to the infant Savior.—Miss Claxton dismissed her school two days before the festival, in order to give time for a thorough sweeping and scouring, a process by no means undesirable. The scholars of St. Mary's

school had their own reasons for being glad that Christmas was so near—and all, whether old or young, whom the Church embraced in her ample fold, felt the pulse beat quicker, and forgot many pains and sorrows of the past, in the pleasant anticipation of a merry Christmas.

In the midst of these preparations who should arrive but George Patterson, a fine-looking, intelligent young man, who was as much delighted to meet his old college friend, as that friend was to see him.—Owing to some accident, he had been obliged to leave the carriage, in which he had accomplished most of the journey, and finish it on horseback. “Twelve miles on a hard horse was no very desirable sport,” he said laughing, “but I got a good deal of amusement out of an old codger, claiming to be a divine, who rode along with me. When we reined up at a turnpike-gate, and the woman came out for toll, my companion raised up his long neck to its fullest extent, and pointing to his white cravat, said in an insinuating way, ‘You don’t charge preachers of the Gospel, do you?’ But in spite of the white rag, he was obliged to pay, though very much against the grain. Finding him somewhat verdant, I began to spin yarns, and among other things, asked him what he thought of Luther and the Diet of Worms. ‘Well, I declare,’ he answered with all sincerity, ‘did the sap-head take to that diet? Why it was enough to kill a horse!’”

When the two or three persons who were listening to this discourse had recovered from the effects of immoderate laughter, Mr. Perkins asked what sort of a looking man the preacher was. "Thick-set, and burly," said Patterson, "and rather sunburnt."

"Mr. Bilger!" exclaimed all in one breath.

"Bilger — Bilger," answered the young man, "it was even he."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Our Savior's Birthday.—Children's Feast.—Good Behavior.—Widow Avery.—Hired Seats.—False Witness.—Wishing in Jericho.—Turkey and Cranberry.—Who first kept Christmas?—Something new.

CHRISTMAS! thrice-glorious Christmas! The church-people of Rockford were impatiently waiting to welcome its coming.

It had been agreed that the school-children should have a little feast at ten o'clock, when the prizes were to be distributed, and then all were to march to church. Long before the hour appointed, a crowd of happy faces had gathered about the schoolhouse-door, and many eyes were turned in the direction from which Miss Oliver, the teacher, was expected. She made her appearance in due time, and soon afterward Mr. Mason came with a large package of books under his arm, followed by two colored men carrying a huge basket of good things for the feast. When all had quietly taken their seats, the Christmas hymn was sung, and then a vigorous attack began upon the contents of the basket; and at the conclusion of the collation, six prizes, consisting of interesting books, were presented to the best scholars in the school. A joyful sunshine seemed to spread itself over the little

company; and when all these important matters had been duly attended to, Miss Oliver showed the children the places in the prayer-book, and having arranged them two and two, the girls ahead, they went on their way to church. Benches had been placed in front of the reading-desk for their accommodation, and their behavior during the service did them great credit. Children who are thus trained up to regard the Church as a tender mother, are not apt, in later years, to wander from her fold.

After a quiet dinner with Mrs. Peyton and her grand-daughters, the clergyman went out to make some visits to the poor. Among the houses he stopped at was the Widow Avery's, where he found the children in high glee, telling their mother about the events of the morning. The apartment looked somewhat more tidy than it had done before, although there was still great room for improvement.

"You don't go to church very often," said Mr. Mason, with a view of urging this obligation upon Mrs. Avery's attention.

"No," she answered—"mighty seldom. A lone woman with five children has a slim chance to go anywhere."

"True enough, my friend," said the clergyman; "but our duty toward God is so very important, that we should not allow trifles to keep us from attending to it."

"O, I am no heathen," observed the widow, per-

haps a little nettled, although it may have been nothing more than her brisk way. "I have set under a heap of good preaching in my day, and old Elder Simmons dipped me the first of March will be five years ago."

"You are a Baptist, then, I suppose," said Mr. Mason.

"Yes," she answered, "a Close-communion Baptist."

A discourse on apostolical succession not seeming to promise much success with such a beclouded mind, the clergyman merely inquired whether she had ever attended the Episcopal Church.

She replied: "Why yes, I went once to satisfy Sally Ann, my little girl, who set at me every Sunday; but I don't think I shall go again in a hurry."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Mason with surprise—"Did you not like the service?"

"O, the doings in meeting were all well enough," said Mrs. Avery, "so far as I am any judge; but I don't like to feel poked up in a hired seat, when I am afraid all the time the owner may wish me in Jericho."

"*Hired seats!*" exclaimed the clergyman, "what do you mean by that?"

"Joel Briggs's wife told me," answered the widow, trying to untangle the matted mop of hair upon her baby's head—"Joel Briggs's wife told me that the

Episcopalian seats was all rented, and that nobody was to sit in them but them that paid."

If Mr. Mason had not been a very mild man, I suspect he would have wished Mrs. Briggs with her lying tongue much further off than Jericho; but pausing a moment, lest an unguarded expression should escape his lips, he observed:—

"Mrs. Briggs is very much mistaken: we have no hired seats. Ours is a house of prayer, free to all people—and to none more free than to God's poor."

"Well, it is monstrous strange how people will talk," said Mrs. Avery, more astonished by this statement than her manner and words betrayed. "I declare I didn't see the tall candles they told me about, and the gennyflexions, and the puppet-show. It was all mighty solemn."

"We pray to God for our persecutors and slanderers every Sunday," remarked Mr. Mason with a sigh, "and I hope he will one day hear and answer us. Many persons seem to forget that there is any commandment which forbids our bearing false witness against our neighbors."

The clergyman made one or two more visits before night, and then retired to his study. I dignify it by this name, although, in fact, it served the purpose of dormitory and parlor too. The lights are burning brilliantly in that fine house opposite, and through the thin gauzy curtains a gay company may be seen at the supper-table.

Mr. Rice, a wealthy merchant, and one of the right-hand men of Mr. James, the Presbyterian pastor, is entertaining his friends in a style becoming his wealth and standing. It is surprising, however, that one who traces back his pedigree to the worthies who came over in the May-Flower, should condescend to notice this sacred festival of the Church, even by a feast.

“I wish Christmas came every week,” said a pretty little miss of fourteen, who sat at that festive-board. “But pa, where does Christmas come from? I mean who kept Christmas first?”

“I don’t know, my child,” answered Mr. Rice—“perhaps Mrs. Peters can tell us, as she is well posted up in such matters.”

The lady whose authority was thus appealed to, graciously replied that the custom of keeping Christmas was supposed to date back to the times of the apostles.

This statement seemed to produce no more effect than if she had named the Great Mogul, or General Bolivar, as the first to establish this time-honored festival. Mr. Rice ate his roast turkey and cranberry-sauce with undoubted relish, and his worthy helpmeet pressed good things upon her guests.

Again the little miss made herself heard above the unceasing activity and noise of knives and forks: “If Christmas is so old, pa, why don’t we have our church open and keep it?”

Mr. Rice was taking the stopple out of a decanter as she spoke, and, without raising his eyes, he said: "I have no time to answer you now, Anna;" and then bowing to Miss Porter, requested the pleasure of a glass of wine with her.

My readers may perhaps be as sorry as I am that the good man could not spare a few minutes, to explain to us why the very people who lay most stress upon keeping the birthdays of temporal deliverers, show such contempt for the anniversary of the Savior's first appearance in the flesh. It is curious how our thoughts wander; but a little reflection will show that a natural chain connects the last link with the one so far removed, which was really the cause of the whole. Thus Mrs. Rice had heard this conversation about Christmas; and, from this, she began very naturally to remember what denomination of Christians observed that day; and then she breaks out with a question, which seemed dragged in most abruptly by the head and ears, because the company had not been allowed to watch the current of her thoughts:—

"Did you know, Mrs. Boardman, that Mr. Mason is engaged to Grace Forester?"

The lady thus addressed confessed her ignorance on the subject; and I should not be surprised if the parties most interested in the matter would have been equally astonished at the intelligence.

CHAPTER XIX.

Diocesan Convention.—Many Baptisms.—Ohs and Ahs.—Gloominess.
—Parochial Visiting.—Leaning on the Gate.—Job Orton.—“I do no
Good by Preaching.”—Hammering a Rock.

MR. MASON was absent for a few days during the spring to attend the diocesan convention. It was not altogether convenient to go, and the distance and expense were considerations of some moment to one with no spare time and a slender purse, but he felt it to be a duty, and this consideration outweighed all others.

As the proceedings of the convention were published at the time, and those who choose can even now examine them in the journal, I shall not take the trouble to describe them. Toward the close of the session, the parochial reports were read, and much surprise was afterward expressed, that in a new and feeble parish like Rockford, the number of baptisms should be so great.

“I do believe, brother Mason,” said one fat, good-natured rector, “that you go about the town, and sprinkle all the babies you see!”

Mr. Mason laughed, and answered that he took good care to baptize all whom he could lawfully reach, and

that he used every effort to bring this matter before the minds of parents.

“I thought that they were nearly all Baptists in Rockford,” remarked another clergyman; “of course you make no inroads on them.”

“Why do you say of course?” answered the young missionary. “The Baptists are a reasonable people, and if kindly and properly approached, are quite as open to conviction as their neighbors. Would you believe me when I tell you that I baptize as many children of Baptist parents, as those of any other denomination?”

Here the “Ohs!” and Ahs!” and “Is it possible,” and “How can this be,” began to multiply, and Mr. Mason, who had no wish to make his own affairs conspicuous, took advantage of the first opening to change the conversation. Our old acquaintance Turner, was however not to be thus easily satisfied, and as he walked with Mr. Mason to his lodgings, he began to retail his own difficulties and trials.

“I am sure I take pains enough,” he said, “in writing my sermons, and I am careful to give variety in the topics discussed—but still the congregation does not grow much.”

“Perhaps you are *too* particular in this respect,” remarked his friend, “something is needed besides good preaching. Dr. Chalmers used to say that ‘a house-going minister makes a church-going people.’

Faithful pastoral visiting, I am fully convinced, is the surest way of gaining a foothold in the affections of those whom we would win over to Christ and the church."

"But I have no tact that way," said the other, mournfully.

"Practice makes perfect here, as well as in other things," replied Mr. Mason. "There are a thousand little attentions a clergyman can show, which will do far more than his most elegant sermons. A relative who belonged to Ascension church, New York, once told me, that whenever Dr. Eastburn (that model of a parish priest) noticed one of the family absent from the pew on Sunday, he was sure to come around on Monday to inquire what was the matter."

"But how upon earth can one make any headway with his studies," asked Mr. Turner, "if he is to run here and there and everywhere to look up the stray sheep?"

"If *both* can not be properly attended to," answered Mr. Mason, "we ought to let the studies go—the other duty is unquestionably the most important."

They had now reached their destination, and while Mr. Mason opened the gate to go in, his companion leaned his head upon the post, and looked so woe-begone, that the other took him by the arm, and while walking up and down the retired street, tried to say something encouraging.

“You look for the fruit of your labors too soon,” continued Mr. Mason; “we must learn to wait and hope. Job Orton once wrote to an eminent clergyman something after this manner: ‘You say you do no good by preaching. This is talking weakly:—I had almost used a harder word. Should you not be chided for it?’—‘Why do you leave off preaching?’ said old Bishop Latimer to a complainer like you. He answered, ‘Because I do no good, my lord.’ The bishop replied, ‘That, brother, is a naughty, a very naughty reason. You do not know what good you have done, are doing, and yet may do, even after you are dead. No good man preaches, I am confident, without doing some good, and more than he knows of till the great discovering day. To do our best is our duty, and God will graciously accept and reward it. As to our blessed Master himself, it was said, “Who hath believed His report?” Who would have thought that you should ever have talked of doing no good by preaching, when God hath done you so much honor already in your clerical character? I am ashamed of you, and almost angry with you. Labor more and pray more still. “If the iron be blunt,” as Solomon says, then put the more strength. If you begin to be lukewarm, whatever your motive is, it can not be a good one. I am not clear if I ever was made an instrument of considerable usefulness; yet I do not repent my attempts. I am humbled and ashamed daily that they are not better. Remember that preaching

is of God's own appointment, and, when faithfully delivered, and agreeable to sound doctrine, the Divine Spirit will bless the messenger more or less, as seemeth good to the end he has appointed it, and to His all-wise sovereign purpose.' ”

“ If I had a good friend like you to talk with now and then,” said Mr. Turner, “ I think I could keep up better courage, but really the opposition is so strong, and our growth so exceedingly slow, that it can not be wondered at that a man should sometimes be low-spirited.”

“ By no means,” replied Mr. Mason, “ and I occasionally get the blues myself; but plenty of out-door-work among my people soon drives them away. And then as to success, we ought to do our duty, and leave events to God. I remember hearing of a clergyman who became very low-spirited because his ministrations seemed so little blessed. About this time he had a dream, and thought that a person had hired him to work, and the price of his labor per day, was stipulated. On inquiring what his employer would have him go about, he was told he must hammer a certain rock to pieces. ‘ That,’ he replied, ‘ will do no good; for the rock is large and hard—I could never break it to pieces.’—‘ That is nothing to you,’ said the gentleman, ‘ follow my directions, and I will pay you your wages.’ The laborer then went to work; and though it appeared an endless, and therefore useless task, he labored with diligence and pa-

tience for the sake of his wages. After awhile, contrary to all his calculations, the mountainous rock broke into shivers. The minister saw that the dream contained instruction for him; he felt the reproof, resumed his courage, and was again blessed with seeing the rocky hearts of many of his hearers broken by the hammer of God's Word."

CHAPTER XX.

Professor Crossdale. — Where they ought not to be. — Two-Hour Sermon. — Gratified, and the Opposite. — Print the Sermon. — Buying a Bell. — “Where can we hang it?” — Tompting Call.

THE little church at Rockford was shut up for one Sunday, in consequence of the clergyman's absence at convention;—and when he reached home, early the next week, the whole town was in a buzz. Mr. James, the Presbyterian pastor, for reasons already familiar to the reader, had for a long time been cherishing a secret grudge against the church, and although too politic—if not too timid—to make any violent assault himself, he was more than willing to have it done by somebody else. He had accordingly invited the Rev. Professor Crossdale to come over and preach for him, giving him an inkling of what sort of a sermon would be acceptable.

The meeting-house was crowded on that morning, and among the rest were some of Mr. Mason's flock, who preferred gratifying their curiosity to the safer and more satisfactory enjoyment of reading the service quietly at home, and learning wisdom from those valuable religious books with which the Church is so bountifully supplied. For one, I am very glad that

the wandering sheep met with the reception they did, as it may, perhaps, be of use to them hereafter.

It was evident from the very short chapter which Mr. James read, and the unusual curtailment of his stereotyped prayer, that the learned professor, who sat fanning himself on the sofa at the back of the spacious pulpit, had something very important to say. The hymn being finished, the stranger rose, with a thick manuscript in his hand, and having tucked a flaming red silk handkerchief under the big Bible, he cleared his throat and gave out the text. As there was no necessary connection between this verse of Scripture and the discourse which followed, it does not matter so much that it has escaped my memory. Suffice it to say, a sermon of two hours in length was devoted to the abuse of the Episcopal Church—a favorite theme with those whom it is so difficult to convince that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against the kingdom of our Lord.

Some of Mr. James's people were delighted—he himself had drank in every word with greediness, and in imagination saw the little church in Rockford scattered to the winds—while the better classes, with refined feelings and Christian hearts, were mortified to see their preachers thus forgetful of self-respect, and acting so contrary to the precepts of the Master whom they professed to serve. The church people who had so profitably spent their Sunday morning in listening to this famous sermon, were indignant

enough, and expressed themselves without reserve. Two or three of the vestry called upon Mr. James the next morning, and requested him to get a copy of the professor's discourse to be published at their expense. He promised to do so, but there is no possibility of knowing how much exertion he put forth to obtain possession of the manuscript, and I can only say that the valuable document has never appeared in print.

Mr. Perkins was the first to tell his pastor the news, and he became so very energetic, that he walked up and down the room, gesticulating as if in a case of life and death. "The thing must not be allowed to pass without notice," he said; "the sermon must be answered."

Mr. Mason, as usual, was not thrown off his balance in the least, and tried to convince the excited lawyer that the attack was undeserving of attention—that the church people had better keep their tempers, and show themselves to be Christians by not rendering railing for railing—and that the spirit which had been stirred up might be turned to some account, by spurring up the congregation to buy a church-bell, which was so greatly needed.

Mr. Perkins held out for some time, but finally, being convinced that the clergyman was right, he went away, saying that he would send out Patterson with a subscription paper that very day.

The next Sunday more people than usual came to church, fully expecting that Mr. Mason would attempt

some reply to the attack of Professor Crossdale, but, very much to their surprise, he went through with the service as if nothing had happened, and preached a sermon on humility. But although, according to the wise advice of their clergyman, the Episcopalians abstained from retaliating upon their neighbors by counter abuses, and thus keeping up an angry war of words, they bestirred themselves, and before two weeks had passed, they had purchased a bell, "large enough," as some of the sanguine ones said, "for a new church!"

Mr. James and Professor Crossdale would have thought them crazy—but, fortunately, these gentlemen did not hear them.

Well, one Monday morning the bell was seen lying on the ground by the church gate;—but what next? There was no place to hang it, and the little chapel would not support a belfrey. Every one who was consulted had his own notion as to how the difficulty might be met, but no plan proved altogether satisfactory until old Mr. Thompson, the founder, gave it as his opinion that four strong posts might be set up at the back of the building, and the bell be hung there, until the parish was able to give it a more appropriate habitation. This plan was accordingly followed; and although it looked rather odd, the clapper did its duty most effectually; and whenever the festivals of the church came about, even during the busiest time of the week, everybody in Rockford knew, from the

silvery sounds which it sent forth, that the people were summoned to the sanctuary to keep holy-day.

About this time, when the commotion excited by Professor Crossdale's onslaught had hardly died away, the church people were alarmed from a different cause. General Rumor (a very busy and important personage, by-the-way) reported with confidence that Mr. Mason had lately received a call to an important city parish, where a large salary was offered him. He said nothing about it himself, and I can scarcely conceive how the news got abroad;—but it soon became the town talk—and some of the vestry called upon him, to express the hope that he would not leave them. They said they were fully sensible that other places might offer much greater attractions, but that it was all-important that the favorable beginning which had already been made in Rockford should not be suffered to be lost; and that no stranger could take up the work where he left it, and go on with the same success.

My reader, who is perhaps seated in his cushioned chair, beneath his own roof, and so sure that a good dinner will be ready at the accustomed hour that he has not troubled himself to inquire what the cook is preparing to satisfy the demands of appetite—my reader may say, without costing him an effort, “Of course, Mr. Mason ought to remain.”

But let him remember the lot of the faithful missionary—stinted as to salary—over-taxed with

labor—and suffering inconveniences not a few, from being deprived of the comforts of a home—and I am sure he will give Mr. Mason more credit for declining a call, which would have afforded him so many advantages.

CHAPTER XXI.

Rev. Dexter Doolittle. — Slow and Easy. — Lifting up the Eyes. — The Little Foxes. — Bearing Testimony. — All going to Rome. — Four Boys dipped. — Clerical Courtesy.

It was so very seldom that a travelling clergyman stopped at Rockford, that the arrival of such a personage was rather an important event. One day, when Mr. Mason, for a wonder, had been engaged for an hour in his study without interruption, a visitor was announced. He proved to be a tall, lank figure — arrayed in a suit of black, with a white cravat so stiff and high as to threaten the loss of his ears — who, with a stately bow, announced himself as a brother clergyman, the Rev. Dexter Doolittle. Mr. Mason received the stranger with his usual politeness, and the new-comer soon made himself perfectly at home, throwing the books and papers into marvellous disorder, and spitting tobacco about the floor without ceremony. He soon showed himself to be such an intolerable bore, that Mr. Mason, who had been using all despatch to finish his sermon for Sunday, gave up in despair; and when Saturday came, and Mr. Doolittle still showed no symptoms of departing, he was obliged, in self-defence, to ask him to preach. The invitation

was readily accepted, and on Sunday morning the two clergymen made their appearance in the chancel. The children, and even some of their elders, were attracted by Mr. Doolittle's very peculiar manner of folding his hands, and devoutly lifting up his large, pale-gray eyes, in various parts of the service. But what surprised them most, was the long psalms and hymns which he gave out. The congregation had been accustomed to sing two or three verses only, which had a direct application to the subject of the sermon, and to the sacred seasons of the Church; but the strange clergyman seemed to go upon the principle that singing was singing, and he accordingly thought that no psalm or hymn could possibly be too long; and, by way of impressing the language upon the mind and heart, read it all over with a nasal twang, and then repeated the first verse a second time. It is a wonder he did not say the prayers twice, for the same purpose. But now for the sermon. I am sorry I am such a poor hand to remember texts, for I can not say positively whether the verse chosen on this occasion was, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines" (Sol. Song, ii. 15), or, "Their power is in their mouth, and in their tails" (Rev. ix. 19); but, at any rate, it was one of the two, and either would have answered the preacher's purpose equally well. After a startling introduction, in which flowers and stars were mingled together in sad confusion, Mr. Doolittle began with

great boldness to give his testimony against the insidious leaven of Puseyism, which, according to his idea, was fast preparing the true Catholic Church of Christ for the deadliest errors of papal Rome—the scarlet lady of the seven hills.

Mr. Mason sat very uneasily in his seat, and wishing most heartily that the sermon would soon be finished. But he had plenty of time to calculate the chances of mischief from the delivery of such extreme opinions, as the preacher held on for a good hour.

I have always been taught to believe that Puseyism is a very bad thing; and as Mr. Mason was a good and true man, I am sure he could not have held to any doctrine contrary to those taught by the Church from the beginning. It was therefore the more mortifying to him, that after all his efforts to build up a parish in the faith of Christ, and to shelter his little flock against excitements from without, a stranger should stand in his pulpit, and tell the weary and distracted ones who had abandoned the loose and changing religious systems of modern date, and come to Zion as a quiet home—that even here, in God's own kingdom, there was no security nor peace. Everybody was glad when Mr. Doolittle had finished—some because they were tired, and some because the sermon was so disheartening; and old Mr. Thompson, the English founder, was heard to say to a neighbor, as he went out: “How the old Mother Church must have changed! Who would have thought to live to

see the time when all the bishops and clergy would be going back again to the pope—the monster who roasted Cranmer and Ridley at the stake!”

In the afternoon, Mr. Mason had an appointment in the country; but he was not sorry that his conscientious brother declined going with him, in consequence of a headache. The young clergyman came home at night, hoping and praying that the mischief done that day might soon be undone—when, to his utter amazement, he was told, upon inquiring for Mr. Doolittle, that he had gone to the Baptist meeting in the afternoon, and had not yet returned. “What will the people think,” he said to himself, “to see such diversities of preaching and practice among us? I teaching them, on one Sunday, that the Church has the truth, and that there alone they ought to seek it; and my meddling brother protesting, on the next Sunday, that the Church is rotten to the core, and setting the example himself of attending upon unauthorized ministrations.”

In the midst of these painful cogitations, Mr. Doolittle made his appearance.

“Well, Brother Mason,” he said, “I have about concluded I won’t go to hear our neighbors preach any more. They always give me a sly rap over the knuckles. I heard a bell ring about the time I woke from my nap, this afternoon, and following the crowd, I found myself in the Baptist church, and when the

sermon was done, I went to the water and saw four boys dipped—the fruit of a late revival.”

“Four boys!” exclaimed Mr. Mason. “How old were they?”

“The oldest was ten, I suppose,” answered the liberal-minded clergyman, “and I must say, I did not know before that this denomination practised infant baptism!”

The conversation soon flagged, as Mr. Mason was not altogether pleased with the events of the day, and, at the same time, did not think it would serve any good purpose to tell his obtuse friend what he thought of his conduct. What a pity it is that some of the clergy will not have a little more regard to courtesy, when officiating for their brethren.

Although there are various shades of opinions among them, they can easily mingle together as fellow-laborers in the same glorious work, by making up their minds to be careful about rubbing against the sore places, and by touching chiefly upon those points where all can readily agree. The Apostle's Creed is a common bond of union. The high and low repeat, with the same unfaltering tone: “I believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, and in the holy Catholic Church.” A high-churchman who occupies for a Sunday (by courtesy or exchange) the pulpit of his (so-called) evangelical brother, can easily select a theme which will cause no jar upon the ears of a congregation

trained up in a different school; while the disciple of Simeon and Milner could readily reciprocate the kindness and consideration toward him who sympathizes most with the doctrines of Laud and Hobart.

Let it not be said of any of us that we "preach Christ for envy and contention."

CHAPTER XXII.

Nervous Excitement.—Dont tire out your Sunday School.—Changing Opinions.—Coming without a Letter.—Robbing a Hen-Roost.—Exclusiveness.—Robert Smith.

ON Monday the troublesome visiter took his departure, most probably to bear his well-intentioned, but not always acceptable testimony elsewhere.—While Mr. Mason is recovering from the nervous excitement into which this painful infliction had thrown him, I may as well mention two or three things, which the hurry of the narrative has caused me to overlook.

And first I ought to speak of the wonderful improvement in the Sunday school. The opening of the little chapel, and the purchase of a nice library had given it a start, and the interest manifested by the clergyman, and the faithfulness of the teachers, increased its prosperity week by week.

Mr. Mason had learned at least one important lesson in Sunday-school teaching, during his residence in New York, which he did not forget to act upon in his own parish. This was the wretched policy of wearing out the patience of the children by long lessons and exercises, thus rendering Sunday the most

oppressive and disagreeable day of the week, and totally unfitting them for joining in the services of the church with either pleasure or profit.

The Sunday school at Rockford was opened punctually at nine, and when the town clock struck ten, the closing hymn was invariably sung, and the scholars dismissed; in this way allowing them an hour for rest, before church-time.

While speaking of schools, it will be proper to state, that the parish school for poor children, which was taught during the week, was quietly doing its blessed work. When Mr. Mason went in to catechize the children (as he usually did two or three times a week), if any of them were absent, through sickness or other cause, he made it a rule to go and see them at their homes, no matter whether he was acquainted with the parents or not. Parents and children both were gratified at this attention, and the fruit of these familiar instructions at the school, and intercourse with the little ones at home, soon sprang up, and many of the old and young, presented themselves for baptism.

I stated at the time of the organization of St. Mary's school, that the teacher employed was a Baptist, and that some objection had been made to Miss Oliver upon this account.

The result showed that all such fears were groundless; for by the time she had been a few months in the school, and had learned something about the

church, she began to feel an interest in it, and to enjoy the services. No improper influence was used to accomplish this object. It is true, some of the young ladies of the parish occasionally invited her to go to church with them, when there was no Baptist preaching; and one lent her the "History of a Pocket Prayer-Book," and "Keble's Christian Year," and "The Double Witness," but she showed no decided disposition to change her religious opinions, until after the bishop's visit. The confirmation service seemed to impress her very much, and soon she began to attend the church services every Sunday, and within a few weeks applied to Mr. Mason for baptism, which excited considerable surprise, and called forth some bitter remarks. The clergyman was roughly and roundly abused as an unprincipled proselyter, and the members of the church as a body, were branded as bigots. Miss Oliver met with one obstacle in making this proposed change, which she had not anticipated—the refusal of the Baptist preacher to give her a letter of dismissal. Mr. Mason, however, obviated this difficulty by assuring her that the church did not expect nor require such letters from those coming to her bosom from different denominations, and that he himself must be the judge of her fitness to receive the ordinances of the Gospel. The baptism accordingly took place.

About this time, George Patterson, who boarded at the same house with Mr. Mason, had begun to

take a good deal of interest in theological questions, and by a careful study of Chapman's Sermons and other works of the kind, had become master of the incontrovertible arguments by which the Church supports her high claims, and was ready, at all times, to break a lance with her adversaries.

A day or so after Miss Oliver's baptism, happening to go into the store of Mr. Pryme, a worthy Baptist, the merchant opened a charge upon the Episcopalians, and waxing warm in the discussion, he said with great bitterness, "I would just as soon think of robbing a hen-roost, as to be going about stealing away members from other churches, as your minister does."

The young lawyer found some difficulty in preventing his indignation from boiling over, but biting his lip, and holding his peace for a moment, he answered with comparative composure, "You, Mr. Pryme, are a democrat, and I am a whig. Would you consider it quite as disreputable to try to convince me that my political opinions were wrong, and that it was my duty to vote your ticket, as to be guilty of the low and contemptible offence, to which you have had the politeness and presumption to liken the conduct of my pastor?"

Mr. Pryme wriggled and twisted in his seat, but made no reply.

Patterson continued: "You conscientiously believe that *democratic* principles are just and right, and you try your best to bring over others to your

way of thinking. Mr. Mason as honestly holds to the opinion that our Savior has but one church in the world, and he is most active and earnest in his endeavors to draw all people into the true fold. Now I leave it to your own sense of propriety, whether he ought to be vilified for showing what you call a *proselyting* spirit, in the all-important concerns of religion, while you, and thousands of other men, exhibit the same spirit in the trifling matter of politics."

The merchant felt the ground giving way under him, so far as argument was concerned, and he began a graceful retreat. "Nobody denies that Mr. Mason is a gentleman, but the fault which I find with you Episcopalians is, that you are so extremely illiberal."—"What do you mean by illiberal?" asked our young friend with spirit. "Do you consider any persons as baptized except they have been immersed?"

"Of course not," answered Mr. Pryme, crustily.

"Well then, your little fragment of a sect," said Patterson, "is certainly very liberal to pronounce all the rest of the world as unbaptized, and out of covenant with God, because, forsooth, they have not been plunged under the water, a mode of baptism, by the way, for which there is precious slim authority to be gleaned from the Bible: and you are the last people in the world who ought to be harping about the exclusiveness of others."

Mr. Pryme did not say that he was glad to have the discussion broken off, but he looked very much

relieved when a customer came in, and occupied his thoughts about the price of calico, and tape, and buttons.

As this chapter was designed to bring up arrearages in our history, I will change the subject rather abruptly, to inform the reader that Mr. Smith's son Robert, whose intelligence and manly appearance had attracted Mr. Mason's attention upon his visit to the farmer, after his mother's funeral, was now studying the classics with the clergyman. There being no good school for boys in Rockford, Mr. Mason had proposed that the lad should ride in every morning, and recite to him, secretly hoping that he might gradually bring such influences to bear upon his mind, as would lead him to confirmation, and ultimately, perhaps, to the study of theology. It was not altogether convenient or pleasant to have a student in a room so cramped and confined as his own; but Mr. Mason regarded this as a slight cross, which ought to be gladly borne, if it even *promised* in any remote degree, to be the means of accomplishing good.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Sticking close at the Work. — Orientation. — Brass-Rubbings and Altar-Cloths. — Preaching the Gospel. — Another Funeral. — The White Horse. — Red and Blue Coats. — Pelting Storm.

ALTHOUGH I have not allowed my reader to wander away much from Rockford, even so far as to keep him apprized of the active correspondence which Mr. Mason carried on with his kindred and near friends. I beg that it may once for all be understood, that none of these persons were forgotten. It may have excited surprise in the minds of some, that the young clergyman should not have stolen away from his work long ere this to pay a visit to his parents, for whom he cherished such tender affection. In this respect, however, as in all things else, he acted not from inclination or interest, but upon purely conscientious principles, and remembering our Savior's solemn words, "Whosoever loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me," he could not bring himself to believe that, under existing circumstances, it would be right for him to leave the feeble church in Rockford, unless some imperative duty required it.

Among those college acquaintances from whom Mr. Mason received letters once in two or three

months, none was more dear to him than Porter, who, as you will recollect, was now an assistant minister in the city of New York. It would seem from some passages of a letter to this friend, which I shall now do myself the pleasure to quote, that he took a great interest in the affairs of the Ecclesiological Society, and some other kindred associations of the day:—

“ ROCKFORD, *November 18th.*

“ You must not be provoked with me, my dear old friend, for being somewhat amused at the glowing enthusiasm, as breathed through your last epistle, in regard to *orientation*, and *brass-rubbings*, and *altar-cloths!* It is true, I have a decided taste for architecture, and no one rejoices more than I do that the frightful, misshapen-looking buildings which our fathers called churches, are giving place to structures fashioned after correct models, and appropriately adorned. God’s temple can not be too grand nor beautiful. But here in this broad western land, when I see the ignorance and destitution of religious privileges which everywhere prevails, it makes my heart sick to think that any to whom Christ has given a commission to preach the gospel, can be content to waste the jewel hours of life in discussing the question whether the altar should be covered with white or red, in Advent, or whether the consecrated water from the font should be thrown out of the door or window (as good Mr. Palmer always did himself, and which very proper practice I myself observe) or rev-

erently emptied into the piscena! Pardon me, dear Porter, if I have been too blunt and plain spoken — but you know of old, that I always honestly say what I think. Now, as a sort of salve for your wounded feelings (if, perchance, you do think hard of me for this), I will tell you about a funeral in the country, which I attended yesterday; and I may as well premise, that it was quite different from any ceremony you ever witnessed in your life.

“It was a gusty November day—more blustering than we are accustomed to in this mild clime—and your humble servant was quietly seated in his study, hearing his pupil, Robert Smith, construe some lines of Virgil, when a middle-aged man, soaked with rain, knocked at the door, and requested that I would hold myself in readiness to go with him to a funeral in the course of an hour. I cheerfully assented, and it was not until he had departed, that it occurred to my mind that the stranger had neglected to tell me whether the deceased was man, woman, or child. By this time, however, I have become so accustomed to the loose ways of attending to such matters here, that the circumstance gave me little uneasiness, and at the end of a long two hours, when the summons came that a carriage was waiting at the door, I hurried down, with my cloak wrapped about me, as some protection from the driving rain. The vehicle was pretty well crammed already, with old and young, of both sexes—relatives, as it turned out—of the elderly

matron who was dead ;—but room was made for me, and we were soon splashing on our way. After a drive of about six miles, over a frightful *dirt* road (as country roads are called, to distinguish them from turnpikes), we came to a small, comfortless-looking cabin by the wayside. A crowd had assembled for the funeral, although the inconvenient hour appointed must have obliged all to lose their dinners in order to attend. After singing a familiar hymn, and reading the chapter from the burial service, and the usual prayers, I preached, off-hand, such a practical sermon as promised to be most useful to the promiscuous assembly which filled the house and stood about the door. When the procession was about to move to the grave, the man who had called upon me in the morning said, in a low whisper, ‘There are so many children to go, and it is such a smart ways to the burying-ground, if you will ride my horse, some of the youngsters can take your place in the carriage.’ I begged him to make whatever arrangement he pleased ; and you can imagine the strange figure I cut, mounted upon a raw-boned white horse, with rope bridle-reins—my long cloak flapping in the wind—and followed by the procession, something in this order : Next to the clergyman came a baggage-wagon, labelled in yellow letters, ‘*Eagle Hotel*,’ in which the coffin was borne ;—then the nearest relatives of the deceased, the women in a carriage, and the men on foot ; next, several men on horseback, with blue

and red blanket over-coats — some with a boy or girl riding behind them — then the carriage with the children ; and last of all, a company on foot, trudging silently through the wet and mud. As the procession passed up and down the little hills, or wound along the high banks of a running stream, it presented a most picturesque appearance, and I could not help contrasting this genuine manifestation of neighborly sympathy for the sorrowing, with the cold and heartless proceedings which a fashionable city funeral so often presents.

“It was at east a mile and and a half to the graveyard — a little enclosure at one corner of a field — and when the coffin was about to be lifted from the wagon, and borne by hand to the spot, my friend, the master of ceremonies, again approached, and inquired, with a sober and mysterious look, ‘Do you wish to administer any more services before we put the old lady in the ground?’ I shook my head, and suppressing the smile which, in spite of the solemnity of the occasion, involuntarily curled my lips, I took my station, beside the mourners, at the head of the grave. When everything had been properly arranged, I repeated the service, as I always do, without the book ; and I can truly say, that never in my life did the touching language of our ancient ritual seem to me so appropriate and beautiful, as when uttered over that rude grave, amid the ceaseless peltings of the storm.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Christmas Eve.—“Who comes here?”—Wedding.—New Firm.—Present for the Bride.—Christmas Gifts.—Indelible Mark.—Marriage-Feast.—The Good Degree.—Priests’ Orders.—Encouragement.—“That was solemn.”—Bishops’ Sleeves.—“Not five Dollars among the Lot.”

MR. MASON’S third Christmas in Rockford was attended by some important events; and, among others, by an arrival and a wedding.

On the eve of our Savior’s birthday—while the stores, and shops, and market, were crowded with people buying good things for the morrow, and little folks were busy in their preparations to receive Santa Claus with becoming honors—who should make his appearance at his mother’s door but Augustus Peyton!

But we have no time to go in and listen to his story now, for we have a wedding to attend at Mr. Chambers’s. The bride is the fair and cheerful Kate, the senior warden’s eldest child; and the happy bridegroom, none other than Frank Holton, from whose intimate relations in the family we might have anticipated such a consummation long ago. The wedding was a very handsome affair; and, as the young people were to remain at home as usual (Frank having that day been admitted as a full partner in the busi-

ness, under the style of "Chambers and Holton)," I am spared the pain of describing one of those distressing scenes with which, not unfrequently, even a happy marriage ends—the parting between mother and daughter. At the close of the ceremony, when the clergyman called the bride by her new name, and wished her much happiness for the time to come, he presented her with the beautiful prayer-book which he had used in the service. Many a stray sheep, now wandering from the fold, might have been kept within the green pastures, and beside the gentle and refreshing streams of Zion, if every clergyman had thought of offering this most appropriate remembrancer.

Bright and early the next morning, the whole colored population of the town was wide awake, and, with ivory smiles, asking "Christmas gifts" of the friends they chanced to meet. What an indelible mark the Church has made upon the world! The books of law, the courts of justice, the assemblies of state, and even the untaught negroes, recognise the approach of Christmas, and Easter, and Whitsuntide; and, though they may profess to despise the *Church*, they can not help paying some regard to her *institutions*.

In the sermon on that day, Mr. Mason mentioned this striking fact, and tried to convince all who heard him, that while enjoying the benefits secured to them through the instrumentality of Christ's body, thus manifested in the world, they should not forget nor

undervalue the source from which such privileges are derived.

The Christmas dinner at Mr. Chambers's was also the wedding-feast, and the clergyman and several other friends were among the invited guests. But the festivities of this glorious day must not make us lose sight of the solemnities looked forward to upon the next Sunday. The bishop was expected, and Mr. Mason was to be admitted to priest's orders. Certainly, if devotion, and self-sacrifice, and unceasing toil, are qualifications which entitle one to claim the "good degree" promised to such as "use the office of a deacon well," our young friend need not be backward in seeking this gift at the bishop's hands. Beautiful as our ancient ritual is, it is nevertheless an undisguised fact, that as the service for the ordination of priests is commonly performed, it is so extremely long as to wear out the strength and patience of the most devout—to say nothing of its effects upon those who feel little or no interest in religion. To obviate this serious difficulty, it was proposed, on the present occasion, to have morning prayer at nine o'clock, which was accordingly done.

At eleven o'clock, the usual hour for divine service, the appropriate words from the 106th selection were sung, beginning—

"Clothe Thou thy priests with righteousness," etc.

And then followed the sermon.

The two presbyters, required by long-established

usage, laid their hands upon the head of the candidate, who humbly knelt at the chancel-rail; thus giving their sanction to the solemn act which the bishop, by virtue of the authority of his office, is alone empowered to perform.

There was breathless silence throughout the crowded congregation, while the venerable successor of the apostles, with faltering voice, uttered those solemn words, which imply so much, "Take thou authority to execute the office of a priest in the Church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy sacraments: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

That man is to be greatly pitied who lightly, or unadvisedly, can take upon himself the awful vows of the priesthood. But, although Mr. Mason trembled to think what an additional weight was then placed upon his shoulders, he had been touchingly reminded, in the language of the prayer-book, of the unfailing Fountain of grace and strength, to which it was his privilege to resort; and as the searching questions, one by one, were asked, what a satisfaction it was to disclaim all self-dependence, and humbly say: "I will endeavor so to do, the Lord being my helper!"

He could sympathize most deeply with the devout emotions which prompted a poet of our own to say—

“ Alas for me, if I forget
 The memory of that day,
 Which fills my waking thoughts, nor yet
 E'en sleep can take away!

* * * * *

‘ How oft the bishop’s form I see,
 And hear that thrilling tone,
 Demanding with authority
 The heart for God alone :
 Again I kneel as then I knelt,
 While he above me stands,
 And seem to feel, as then I felt,
 The pressure of his hands.

* * * * *

“ O Thou who in thy holy place
 Hast set thine orders three !
 Grant me, thy meanest servant, grace
 To win a good degree ;
 That so replenish’d from above,
 And in my office tried,
 Thon mayst be honor’d, and in love
 Thy church be edified.”

“ Well, I declare that was solemn !” said a stout, coarse-looking man, with a white cravat, addressing himself to Miss Claxton, the teacher, as the congregation dispersed after the administration of the holy communion.

“ Our services are all solemn, Mr. Bilger,” she answered ; for it was indeed our old acquaintance, the Seventh-day Baptist preacher. I believe he began to make some lame excuse about his having been brought out that morning by curiosity to see the bishop’s sleeves : but we have already lost sight of him in the crowd, and we shall hardly be repaid for our trouble in elbowing our way to get near him again.

In the afternoon, twenty persons were confirmed, several of them very poor people, whom Mr. Mason's faithfulness had gathered into the church.

I know that one good Presbyterian remarked with a sneer, the next day, that "there was not five dollars' worth of property among the lot!"

Perhaps he forgot that such persons had souls, and that our blessed Savior himself took pleasure in going about preaching the gospel to the poor.

At any rate, the scoffer might have spared the remark, out of compassion for the mother who had brought her infant up with her to the chancel, when she came to be blessed in confirmation, having no one to leave it with at home.

CHAPTER XXV.

Airing in the Stage.—Wind and Snow.—Proselyting.—Not so Fast.
—Field ripe for Harvest.—Baited Hook.—“What have you Read.”
—Prayers to the Virgin.—John the Baptist’s Three Heads.—Fast
Asleep.

BESIDES holding service at Mr. Smith’s and other places in the country, Mr. Mason was also accustomed to preach once a month on Monday nights, in a town about twenty miles from Rockford; and in order to meet this last appointment, he generally went in the stage. Upon going to the office early one morning, after having officiated the night before, he found the seats all taken, and although the wind blew cold, and snow was falling, he got up with the driver, and they were soon engaged in a friendly chat.

The clergyman finding that the man was a native of the “Old Dominion,” referred in the course of conversation to the ancient church of Virginia, and inquired whether some of his ancestors had not belonged to it.

“O yes,” answered the driver, “and I was christened in it myself, when a child.”

“I never see you at our services in Rockford,” remarked the clergyman.

“No,” said the driver, “my wife is a Reformer, and when I attend anywhere, I go with her.”

Without presenting the matter in an obtrusive way, at all, Mr. Mason tried by such a train of remark as he thought would strike the mind of his companion, to kindle some interest in the old church of his fathers, —and he succeeded so far as to draw from him a conditional promise to come to church the next Sunday.

The stage now stopped at a sort of half-way house, and all of the passengers left except one man, and as the storm was increasing, our friend took shelter inside.

If any person is disposed to blame Mr. Mason for this attempt to bring back an erring sheep into the right path, it will be some satisfaction to find that the stranger who remained in the stage, had some designs upon *him*.

For the first mile or so they rode on in silence, with the exception of a few common-place remarks upon the weather, and the condition of the roads. Although Mr. Mason could not be certain that he had ever seen this person before, the stranger evidently knew him very well, as the course of his remarks soon showed.

Stranger. Have you had any late news from Oxford, sir, in reference to the reformation there?

Mr. Mason. I suppose you mean by reformation,

the excitement about the party commonly known as Puseyites?

Stranger. Yes. I think that the prayers of Catholics will soon be answered, and the Church of England will submit again to the authority of the pope.

Mr. Mason. Your hopes are rather sanguine, my good sir, considering the slight indications toward such a marvellous change.

Stranger. Surely the hundreds of your clergy who are joining the Catholic church, furnish some authority for my assertion.

Mr. Mason. Not so fast, if you please; let us look at facts. In the Church of England we have more than *sixteen thousand* clergymen. Out of the *ninety thousand* who have officiated at the altars of our Mother Church since the days of Elizabeth until now, not *a hundred and fifty* have gone to Rome; and out of the *five thousand* who have lived and labored in our own land, not *twenty* have apostatized from the faith. And certainly you would not argue that the crumbling of a few grains of sand from the mighty mass, is any evidence that the rock will fall.

Perhaps the stranger felt that he had played his cards badly, for he changed the subject somewhat abruptly, and spoke of the favorable reports he had heard of our friends' benevolent operations in his parish, and of his astonishing success.

Mr. Mason bowed, and the other continued; "America is a field ripe for the harvest, and all that

the Catholic Church requires is to secure the help of devoted priests who will do for her what you are doing for your own church.”

And then, after a connecting remark or so, to conceal, so far as might be, the appearance of a hook beneath the bait, he added, “Those of your clergy who have come to us, have been advanced at once to responsible and honorable positions. I have two young men in my eye just now, who have lately attained to dignities in this way.”

Our friend who was somewhat puzzled whether he ought to be sorry or angry at such a bare-faced statement, having a particular object in view, preserved a dead silence, until the stranger inquired whether he had ever read Milner’s “End of Controversy.”

“Yes,” answered Mr. Mason, “and Dr. Jarvis’s reply.”

“Have you met with Moehler’s Symbolism?” continued the stranger, resolutely determined not to be driven from his purpose.

“I have read that too,” answered the young clergyman, “and I may say all the popular works which treat of the differences between the Church of Rome and us.”

Stranger. We are very often calumniated and abused, and opinions and doctrines are attributed to us, by Protestant writers, which we do not hold.”

Mr. Mason. I readily grant you this, and I have too much self-respect to encourage the reading of

such fictions as “Maria Monk,” and others which might be named—but when a man of the standing of Mr. Seymour pledges his word and honor for the startling statements which he makes in his “Mornings with the Jesuits”—I require no further evidence to convince me that Rome is essentially corrupt.

Stranger. Corrupt! What am I to understand by that?

Mr. Mason. Why that she exalted the Blessed Virgin to an actual equality with our Divine Lord, and offers prayers much more frequently to her, than to Him—and that she encourages a superstitious reverence for dead men’s bones, and chips from the holy cross, and——

Stranger. Allow me to interrupt you, sir, if you please. Whatever the doctrines of the Catholic Church may be in regard to the Holy Mother of God, she does not oblige the new converts from Protestantism to receive all these things at once. They are only expected to adopt them as fast as their judgment is convinced. And as to relics——

Mr. Mason. That whole subject is soon settled, so far as I am concerned. When I am presented with the head of St. John the Baptist, as a sacred relic, in one city in Europe, and I know that I can go to other places and find the same saint’s head there also, and being well satisfied that no living man ever yet had more than two heads, I am well assured

that a system which encourages such pious frauds, can not be very sound at the core.

The conversation now began to flag, and by the time they reached Rockford, the two controversialists were sleeping, and nodding and starting this way and that, each on his own side of the coach.

But Mr. Mason's adventures for that day were not yet done. After dinner a servant announced that a gentleman had called to see him in the morning, and would be in again toward night. Our friend accordingly went out and made two or three visits which he had promised to pay, and attended to Robert's lessons, and then waited with resignation for a fresh trial, if such it should prove to be.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Rabbi Marks. — Gullibility. — Bear's Oil and Brass. — No Sect in Particular. — A little Deceit. — Extensive Acquaintance. — Preaching for Bishop Doane. — Levying a Contribution. — Visit to New York. — Soon back in the Harness.

TRUE to his word, the visiter came back about supper-time, and introduced himself as the Rev. Dr. Adonijah Marks, a converted Jew.

Mr. Mason had learned to look with suspicion upon these travelling celebrities; — for during his residence at Rockford several had come to the place, and created considerable excitement by heart-rending appeals in behalf of some charitable object, who afterward turned out to be arrant knaves. But the good people of the town were slow to learn, even by dear-bought experience, and each new arrival found many to credit his story, and contribute to the supply of his wants.

Our friend scanned pretty closely the sun-burnt, swarthy face of his new acquaintance, and it must be confessed that the well-greased soap-locks, and the display of rings and gewgaws, and the bold and pushing manner, did not give him a very favorable impression of the character of Dr. Marks.

The descendant of Abraham, after some rambling chat, explained his business. He was travelling about, preaching and raising funds for the purpose of extending the light of Christianity among his benighted brethren.

“A very commendable object, said Mr. Mason, when the fluent speaker allowed him room to edge in a word. “With what body of Christians are you connected?”

Dr. Marks looked a little confused, but quickly recovering himself, answered, “I don’t belong to any in particular;—I am friendly with all, and preach for all.” He might have added, that he levied large contributions upon all, but he had his own reasons for not saying so.

“I should think,” remarked Mr. Mason, “that your countrymen would much sooner be convinced of the claims of Christianity, if the religion of Jesus should be presented to them in a more definite shape.”

“O let me assure you,” interrupted Dr. Marks, “there is no difficulty on that point. We prefer your church, because you have forms of worship as the Jewish religion has.”

“Indeed!” said the clergyman. “And how do our neighbors relish this preference of yours?”

“Why, they do not know it,” returned the Jew, winking with his eye as he spoke.

Here is a little evidence of deceit, thought our

friend, but I will not be in haste to condemn; and so he very quietly asked what Episcopal clergymen he knew.

“O, great many—hundreds,” said Dr. Marks. “I know Bishop Doane, and Bishop Lee, and Bishop”—here he hesitated a little.

“You are acquainted with Bishop Doane?” said Mr. Mason inquiringly.

“Yes, very well. I have preached in his church.”

Our friend now looked amazed. A man without ministerial authority preaching in Bishop Doane’s church! He had *suspected* deceit before—and now he was certain of *falsehood*.

After some further conversation, Dr. Marks requested permission to make his appeal in church the next Sunday, but Mr. Mason positively refused. The fierce dark eyes of the Jew flashed with anger, and he made use of some strong expressions, with which I am unwilling to soil the white paper of this narrative, and then abruptly withdrew.

Our friend took pains to caution those of his parishioners who would be most likely to be imposed upon, against putting anything into the treasury of the Israelite, and, so far as he was concerned, there the matter ended.

Dr. Marks could not have told Mr. James, the Presbyterian, and Mr. Greenfield, the Methodist, and Mr. M’Gruder, the Baptist, of his partiality for the Episcopal church, or they might not so readily have

allowed him to occupy their pulpits and collect money from their people. As I shall not have occasion to refer to our Jewish acquaintance again, I shall simply add, that in the course of a few months, all who had given him money had the satisfaction of knowing that they had been helping to buy satin vests, and jewelry, and ale, and wine, for a false pretender, with a good appetite, who spent a pleasant life in traveling about the world at the expense of the credulous public.

Early in the spring, a favorable opportunity presented itself to Mr. Mason for visiting his relatives in New York, which he had scarcely ventured so soon to promise himself.

Mr. Turner, by acting upon the hints given him, had got matters into such a good train in his parish, that workmen had actually begun to enlarge and beautify his small and inconvenient church. As a short vacation occurred in his school about the same time, our young missionary applied to his friend to know whether he would be willing to spend a month in Rockford, while the repairs in his church were going on ;—to which proposal he cheerfully assented. We shall find, hereafter, that some important consequences grew out of this arrangement.

I have so scrupulously avoided occupying any space by unnecessary episodes, that I shall not run the risk of fatiguing my readers by taking them on a journey to the north. It will be enough to say, that

Mr. Mason's trip was of essential service to his health, and a great source of gratification to his friends.

After an absence of nearly four weeks, he was again in the harness at Rockford, making up for lost time by increasing diligence and faithfulness.

No matter how perfectly competent a clergyman may be, so far as learning and eloquence are concerned, to render the kind service for a brother which Mr. Turner did for our friend, yet many little matters will of course be neglected, and the congregation will generally be right glad when their own pastor returns.

Mr. Mason certainly felt that he was well repaid for his vexations and labors, when he saw the happiness among old and young which his arrival occasioned; and he thanked God and took courage.

I must acknowledge, however, that he was rather cramped and uncomfortable for several days, as he involuntarily contrasted the size and appearance of his dingy cell in the third story of the tavern, with the more comfortable quarters he had so lately occupied in New York. But like the great apostle whose life should be a pattern to Christ's ministers, in all times, he prayed for grace to be contented in whatsoever state of life it might please God to place him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Sickly Summer. — Dr. Highpost's Daughters. — Discord in the Choir. — Playing Boatman. — The True Church never changes. — Bad Example. — Wasting Time with Paupers. — "What does Turner mean?" — Women without Souls. — Somewhat melted.

THE ENSUING summer was warm and unhealthy, and Mr. Mason found a great deal of outdoor work to do, in the way of visiting the sick.

Perhaps some extracts from his private journal will be the most satisfactory method of giving some idea of his toils and trials:—

"*July 24.*—The Widow Avery was baptized at service this afternoon. I have been trying to prepare her for this step ever since her husband's death; but really it costs a world of trouble before old prejudices can be overcome, and light be let in upon the darkened mind. Her house now looks so much more tidy than it once did, and the children's clothes are so carefully mended, that I am encouraged to believe that the widow is improving in many respects.

"*July 26.*—A pleasant Sunday in some particulars, but a painful one in others. We had a larger congregation than usual, and I was hoping that our music

would be very good, when, much to my mortification, the first chant was a complete failure; and, although there was a slight improvement afterward, the whole thing dragged dreadfully. When I saw Dr. Gadsby, our worthy chorister, sitting down with the congregation, I knew that something must be wrong, and was sorry to learn, after service, that his sensitive feelings had been wounded by a remark innocently made with reference to the tunes generally sung by the choir. Musicians are so easily offended, that I fear I shall have no little trouble in bringing about harmony again.

“*July 29.*—The sickness seems to increase. Kitty and Fanny Lucas are both confined to the bed. My boy Robert has not been able to attend to his lessons for two days. It has been a great satisfaction to me to witness George Patterson’s kind attentions to the poor during the continuance of the epidemic.

“*August 2.*—I have been out the whole afternoon in the rain and mud—not for my own pleasure, but, I hope, after the example of my Divine Master, ‘who went about doing good.’ Although I am a poor boatman, I managed to row myself over the Big branch, which I was obliged to cross.

“*Aug. 17.*—The sickness has almost disappeared, and we offered a thanksgiving in church, this morning, in behalf of some whose feet have been mercifully turned back from the grave. It made my heart glad to hear Dr. Gadsby’s voice once more in the choir,

and I sincerely hope that it may be a long time before our peace is again disturbed.

“*Aug. 18.*—While visiting Mrs. Syle, a Baptist, who had been confined to the house by the rheumatism for two months past, I read to her some portions from the prayer-book. She seemed much moved, and said:—

“‘Why, sir, I used to hear my grandmother say these same words!’

“‘Very likely,’ I answered—‘The prayer-book is so old, that our ancestors, for ages back, have been familiar with it, and it has come down to us unadulterated, being the pure and ancient faith.’

“She paused a moment, and then remarked: ‘*I think that, after all, must be the true Church, because it never changes.*’

“There has been many a worse argument than this, and the world would certainly be much better off, if all people would hold fast to a certain and settled faith.

“*Aug. 25.*—Several vexatious things have happened during the last few days. Two daughters of the Rev. Dr. Highpost have been visiting in town for a fortnight. Knowing their father’s standing in the church, I had hoped that the presence of accomplished ladies from abroad would give our folks a good idea of what rare fruit our system would produce under favorable circumstances of soil and culture. Much to my surprise, they have put a multitude of absurd

and fashionable notions into the heads of our young people; and yesterday, in church, they kept their seats during the whole service, and pretending not to know how to find the places, allowed Grace Forester to do it for them. There must have been something wrong in their early education, if there be any truth in Solomon's declaration, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' I do not hold to the commonly-received doctrine that the children of clergymen are worse than those of other people; but if a few more Dr. Highposts should send out their offspring as specimens of the class, the point would soon be established.

"I heard of an unkind remark made lately by one of my own people, which has troubled me more than the silly affectation of Dr. Highpost's daughters. It was to this effect—that 'if Mr. Mason chose to spend all his time among the paupers, he might look to them for support.' It is hard, when one sacrifices inclination and comfort, and everything, for the sake of discharging his bounden duty, that he should be misrepresented and found fault with. I hope at the last day to hear those gracious words addressed to me, unprofitable servant as I am: 'I was an hungered, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me.'

“*Aug.* 28.—I wonder what makes Turner so much more punctual in writing to me than he used to be! Can it be that the little messages in the shape of compliments, etc., to be delivered to Miss Claxton convey a meaning not apparent on the surface? He even speaks of coming to Rockford before a great while!

“*Aug.* 30.—As it is my custom to call upon sick people, whether belonging to my own congregation or not, without expecting to be sent for, I stopped in to-day to see Mr. Ginnings, who is wasting away with consumption. It is almost amusing to observe the skill with which irreligious men will try to parry all attempts to approach them upon the great subject which should engage their attention. They hear you gladly so long as you confine yourself to the weather and the news; but when you hint, even very remotely, about the duty of thinking of death, they become restless and alarmed. Finding that I was disposed to broach this tabooed topic, Mr. Ginnings shrewdly asked me where I could find a passage in the Bible which taught that women had souls,—at the same time repeating the verse which declares that God breathed ‘a living soul’ into Adam, although nothing is said of his having done so for Eve. I felt grieved that one so near to death should manifest such a trifling disposition, and told him, plainly, that he would find it quite unprofitable to be spending his time in vain speculations—that I had no doubt myself women

had souls, as well as men —and that, even if he persisted in declaring they had not, *he* belonged to the favored sex which *had* been blessed with souls, and I hoped he would not forget that it might be saved or lost eternally. Then, without allowing the discussion to advance farther, I turned to the account given by St. John of the raising of Lazarus, which so touchingly displays our Savior's love, and asked permission to read to him. He bowed assent; and at the close of the chapter, his mind seemed so melted and moved, that I ventured to kneel down and offer prayers in his behalf. As I took my leave, he urged me to come again; and his manner was so sincere, that I am sure he had taken no offence."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Hundred Communicants. — Commendatory Letters. — Explosion, and Mischief. — Sermon for the Occasion. — Vision of an Hospital. — Dr. Percival Jebb. — High and Dry Preaching. — Stunted Tree.

“THE day of small things,” which so many are apt to despise, seemed now, by God’s blessing, to be passed, so far as the church in Rockford was concerned. During the fourth year of Mr. Mason’s ministry, the number of communicants had increased to about a hundred. But this statement, of itself, would not show the real growth of the parish, because a good many who had been brought under church influences, and partially moulded according to the pattern which she gives, besides several regular members, had moved away. Mr. Mason took great pains, however, that none of these should be lost to the church; for, not satisfied with merely putting into their hands an unsealed commendatory letter to the clergyman into whose neighborhood they were about to go, he also addressed a private communication to him by mail, that he might know precisely what course had best be pursued in order to keep alive any partiality for the church, or prevent those already established from falling away. The carrying

out of such a plan costs trouble, but a faithful minister of Christ is willing to take his full share of this.

There were some manufacturing establishments near the town, which gave employment to many poor people, and where, also, children could make themselves very useful. One Saturday morning, while everything was in successful operation, and no person dreaming of danger, a steam-engine, connected with one of the establishments, blew up, doing much damage to property, and killing and wounding several who were engaged at work. These accidents are of so common occurrence, that I had no intention of producing a startling sensation by speaking of the catastrophe in this place, but have only introduced it as incidentally connected with something which will follow.

The next morning, at church, the clergyman laid by the manuscript sermon which he had prepared, and delivered an extemporaneous discourse, adapted to the occasion;—drawing from the terrible circumstance which had cast a gloom over the town, those important lessons which it was so well calculated to convey.

The sight of the sufferers whom he visited, reminded Mr. Mason more forcibly than ever, of the great need there was of an hospital, where the poor and the outcast could, in cases of necessity, be properly attended to; and he made it the subject of especial prayer, from that time forward, that God of his

goodness, would in some way, provide means for this end.

I had occasion, in a former chapter, to describe a visit made to Rockford by the Rev. Dexter Doolittle; and many peaceful months rolled by before another travelling clergyman came along to spend a Sunday in the place. At last, however, such a personage appeared—in the shape of Dr. Percival Jebb—with whose polished manners and general intelligence our young missionary was much pleased. This worthy clergyman belonged to the class of very old-fashioned high-churchmen, who look with suspicion upon the efforts of such as strive by unwonted energy and zeal to wake up the Church to a sense of her responsibilities, and to make her keep pace (not by changes in the faith, but by more abundant labors) with the necessities of the times. He honestly thought it perfectly unreasonable that the Church should be expected to adapt herself to circumstances—but that she ought to sit up in stately dignity, waiting for people to come to their senses, and bow to her Divine authority. Accordingly, Dr. Jebb was much horrified to find that Mr. Mason had for some time omitted the ante-communion service, upon the ground that the whole service, however well adapted for settled congregations, was too long for one in a transition state. In all essential points they were perfectly agreed; while in smaller matters, but those very essential to

success in missionary operations, there was a wide difference between them.

“What shall I preach to your people to-morrow?” inquired the doctor, as his young friend showed him the way to his room on Saturday night, after a long talk, which had left the candles marvellously short.

“The gospel, of course,” returned Mr. Mason, with a smile. “I never dictate to my brethren, and the only thing I insist on is, that they must not be unreasonable as to length.”

“The gospel” which the doctor preached to the promiscuous congregation on Sunday morning, was a well-digested, conclusive argument on the apostolical succession, which would have been admirably adapted for the chapel of a theological seminary, or an ordinary occasion, but which here was entirely out of place. The colored folks and children could not understand one sentence, and the poor people who were fond of attending “Mr. Mason’s church,” as they called it, because the preaching was simple, sat with their mouths wide open; or, giving up in utter despair, composed themselves for a comfortable nap; while the intelligent members of other denominations who were present, did not relish it at all.

“Perhaps I have been travelling over ground this morning, my good brother, which you have lately trod yourself,” said Dr. Jebb, while unrobing himself after sermon; “but I think we can not go back to first principles too often.”

“Those of my people who can appreciate the arguments,” answered Mr. Mason, “study these points for themselves, in the church-books, with which we are pretty well supplied, but I seldom devote a whole sermon to the purpose.”

“Indeed!” said the doctor, in amazement. “Why, I have just finished a course in my own parish, which has occupied me for three months past.”

Mr. Mason looked with too much respect upon the doctor’s hoary head, and felt too well convinced of his sincere devotion to his Master’s service, to SAY anything which might perchance wound his feelings, but he could not help THINKING, that in all probability this constant harping upon one string, “THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH,” to the exclusion of the practical duties of religion, might be the secret why the good man’s parish, like a stunted shrub, with root, and trunk, and branches, and all the essentials of a tree, never increased in size.

The Church HAS the apostolical succession, for which great blessing God’s holy name be praised. Her clergy need not spend much time in proving to the world the validity of their credentials. Let them show forth the zeal, and love, and self-sacrifice, and perseverance, which those to whom such authority has been intrusted ought to manifest, and nobody will have the presumption to deny that they are, in deed and in truth, ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Journal.—Augustus Peyton.—Vexations.—Too Much Whipping, and too Little.—A Wedding.—Bishop Stewart and Bishop Selwyn.—Something done every Day.—Jemmy Bates —Lame Pedlar.—Lent.—George Herbert.—Aspirations after a Mitre.—A Magdalen.—Ellen Cox's Funeral.—“I always kneel.”—Safe in the Jail.

I QUOTED, a few pages back, from Mr. Mason's private journal, and I am only sorry it is so fragmentary in its character, that much must be supplied from other sources. Here follow some items more.

“*January* 18.—Although my school for poor children, in the main, affords me great satisfaction, it is also the source of a thousand petty annoyances, which it requires much patience to bear with. Sometimes the teacher is sick, and there is trouble in finding a temporary supply; then again, children will be kept away because they have been punished, and others, because they are not punished. Some object because the ears are thumped, or the hands feruled, or the birch applied to the back; or because the disobedient urchins have been made to stand up for fifteen minutes in the middle of the floor. Upon the whole, however, by calling into use a great deal of that virtue in which Job so much excelled, I have managed to get on without any serious outbreak.

“*January 20.*—Augustus Peyton to be married at last! The ceremony will take place on Tuesday next. Things which are so long talked of, do not excite much surprise.

* * * * *

“*January 24.*—The wedding passed off delightfully. I never saw Mrs. Peyton in such good spirits before. The bride and groom had made a very happy selection of friends to stand up with them. I could not but think as Grace Forester came in, leaning upon Patterson’s arm, that perhaps one of these days they may follow the worthy examples which have been set them of late.

“*February 1.*—I have been reading with great satisfaction the life of the excellent Bishop Stewart of Quebec. From the letters of Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand, I judge that in many respects, their characters are very much alike. May the labors and sacrifices of these devoted men stir me up to be more faithful! I feel every day to be lost, in which something is not accomplished for the Church; and hence, unless actually confined to the house by sickness, I make it an invariable rule to visit one or two families every afternoon.

“*February 15.*—One of the first scholars in St. Mary’s school, was Jemmy Bates, a poor boy with a withered arm, and unfortunately the *right* one; thus rendering it impossible for him to work, and more difficult to write and cipher. He must have been

at least twelve or thirteen when he came to us, and it looked rather odd, to see his tall frame towering up above the pigmies by his side. Although naturally not very bright, Jemmy has applied himself most faithfully to his books, and can read and write, and do sums in the simpler rules of Arithmetic without much trouble. What is better than all this, he is a good boy, and was confirmed at the bishop's last visit.

“Being rather too old to continue much longer under Miss Oliver's care, he has been desirous of getting into business of some sort. But here again his withered arm is a sad drawback, as he could not very well perform the duties of the humblest clerk. It has been a favorite plan with him to go out as a sort of foot pedlar, making short circuits through the country with a pack on his back. I am by no means certain that such an arrangement will succeed, but it will be a satisfaction to know that we have at least helped him to make a trial. Our ladies have accordingly set him up in his unpretending business, and he started yesterday on his first journey. I am in hopes that Jemmy may prove to be a little missionary, and I have given him a parcel of tracts to scatter as he goes. We shall think of our poor crippled boy whenever the clouds look threatening, or the rain begins to fall.

“*March 2.*—Lent comes pretty early this season. I do hope that those of my people who were so unfortunate as to forget that amusements are not becoming

for Christians during Lent, and attended concerts and other public exhibitions last year, will have more regard to appearances now. Would that we all had more of dear George Herbert's spirit!

“ ‘Welcome, dear fast of Lent! Who loves not thee,
He loves not temperance or authority,
But is composed of passion—
The Scriptures bid us FAST: the Church says NOW,
Give to thy mother what thou wouldst allow
To every corporation.

“ ‘True Christians should be glad of an occasion
To use their temperance, seeking no evasion,
When good is seasonable;
Unless authority, which should increase
The obligation in us, make it less;
And power itself disable.’

“ *March 7.*—I understand that some of the Methodists currently report that I am so very ambitious as to be aiming after a mitre, and that this is the reason why I am anxious to have all the baptisms and confirmations possible—because (as these wise ones say) the clergyman whose parochial statistics count up the largest, is sure to succeed to the Episcopate! I can't imagine what they will contrive next. Mr. M'Gruder actually mentioned me by name, not long ago in his sermon, and cautioned his people to beware of the artful proselyter. Alas! he does me too much honor. I do not deserve such a distinction.

“ *March 16.*—Poor Mary Harrison! And some worthy people will be so horrified if this repentant sinner (fallen because of the treacherous arts of men) is admitted to the fold, that they will not attend

church any more! How little can they have of the Savior's spirit. Mary has been very attentive during the Lenten services, and if I see no good reason to change my mind before that time, she shall be baptized at Easter. It has come to a fine pass, indeed, if the Church is to be dishonored by caring for the poor, and made more respectable by having the countenance of those who can afford to wear silks and broad-cloths.

“ *March 30.*—Just returned from little Ellen Cox's funeral. She was one of the sprightliest girls in Miss Oliver's school. I was at her father's yesterday afternoon when she died. A long and lingering sickness had wasted her to a shadow, but weak as she was, she took her mother's hand, and said ‘I am going home!’ Then making an effort to raise herself up in the bed, her mother inquired what she would like to have. ‘O please lift me up,’ she feebly whispered, ‘that I may say my prayers once more.’ I told her that as she was so very sick, she had better lie quietly, and say her prayers in bed. ‘No, no,’ she persisted, making a great effort to speak, ‘I always kneel down to say them, and I must do it now.’ Her mother accordingly raised her up, and supported her while she repeated in a voice scarcely audible to mortal ears, but heard no doubt in Heaven, ‘Our Father,’ and

“ ‘Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep!’

Sweet, gentle lamb! the Good Shepherd removed her within an hour's space, from this world of sorrow, to a safe resting-place in His own bosom. The school children were all present at the funeral, and it brought tears to many eyes, to hear their little voices singing to a plaintive tune, the familiar words:—

“ ‘How short the race our friend has run,
Cut down in all her bloom,
The course but yesterday begun,
Now finished in the tomb!’

“ *April 2.*—Sent for in great haste to go to Mr. Stacey's. In one of his drunken frolics he has been beating his wife again—and she, poor woman, in her feeble health, can scarcely survive many such cruel assaults. I entered a complaint with the proper authorities, and have had him safely lodged in jail, where he will be boarded at the expense of the county, until he learns to behave himself better.”

CHAPTER XXX.

Another Confirmation.—Robert Smith.—Crowded Fold.—Diverse Plans.—Lack of Money.—House of Cedar.—A Better Church.—Appeal to Conscience.—“I will think of the Matter.”—Letter to the Vestry.—Astonishment and Gladness.—Satisfaction in doing Good

DURING the fifth summer of Mr. Mason's residence at Rockford, the bishop made another visit to the parish, and among the goodly number of persons confirmed were our old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ford, from the country, George Patterson, and Robert Smith. The last-named person was improving daily in his studies, and made himself so useful in the Sunday-school, that Mr. Mason felt more and more encouraged to hope, that his wishes in regard to this promising youth might yet be realized.

The congregation had now quite outgrown the little fold appropriated for its use, and there began to be frequent and serious discussions in regard to the erection of a larger building. Some proposed to add to the old chapel; others insisted that it would be better to build a new church out and out. There is no doubt that many persons will subscribe liberally toward a fine building, which promises to be an ornament to the town, who would give nothing for making

alterations in an old one. Mr. Mason, therefore, took sides with those who advocated the building of a new church. Mr. Perkins, with his usual activity, went about with the paper ; but, with all his efforts, a sufficient sum could not be obtained to put up such a building as it was considered the necessities of the church required. What next was to be done ? The clergyman had his own plans, and he now set about putting them into operation.

By this time, Mr. Augustus Peyton was most comfortably settled with his bride in a mansion which he had built since his return from India ; and Mr. Mason thought within himself, “ Can this man, whom our Heavenly Father has so signally blessed, be content to dwell in ‘ a house of cedar,’ while the ark of the Lord, if not resting ‘ within curtains,’ is most wretchedly provided for in this small and inconvenient school-room ? ” He also remembered a much-neglected rubric in the visitation of the sick, where the parish minister is told “ often to put men in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates while they are in health,” and to point out various channels in which a fair share of their worldly goods may be properly directed. Mr. Mason felt the extreme delicacy of the task which he conscientiously believed he ought to perform, and prayed most fervently for direction from above. After weighing the matter thoroughly, and feeling more and more convinced, every day, that there was an abundance of

money lying idle in his own parish, which ought to be invested for the good of the church, he sought a favorable opportunity for conversing with Mr. Peyton upon the subject, and for trying to persuade him to give a much larger sum toward the projected building than he had promised. Very likely the successful merchant was somewhat surprised when he discovered the reason for Mr. Mason's special visit; but he was too well bred to manifest irritation, even if he had felt any. The clergyman presented the whole subject to him in its various lights, showing that the Church in Rockford had now reached a critical point—a point when, if a suitable building could be erected, it was certain, by God's blessing, to go on prosperously; but if this effort should fail for lack of means, much which had been already gained, at the cost of so much toil, would be irrecoverably lost. He also spoke of the favor with which the Almighty regards the bounty of those who contribute toward the spread of the gospel, and the promises which have been left as an encouragement to such liberality. When Mr. Mason paused, and looked to the merchant for a reply, he simply remarked: "I will think of the matter, my good sir, and will give you an answer in a few days."

That night, Mr. Peyton mentioned the subject to his wife, and the next day to his mother, and both warmly seconded the clergyman's petition.

About a week after this interview between the

clergyman and his friend, a meeting of the vestry was called, at the request of Mr. Mason,—who, having taken his seat as chairman, handed the following communication to the clerk, to be read aloud:—

“TO THE VESTRY OF ——— CHURCH, ROCKFORD:

“*Gentlemen*: Having learned, from various quarters, that the efforts which you have been making for the erection of a church-building have not been altogether successful, and intimations having been given that the enterprise must fall through unless the present subscription can be largely increased, I respectfully present the following proposal: If the vestry, with the funds already contributed, will erect a good and substantial parsonage upon one side of the church-lot—which, by your wise foresight, is sufficiently large for the purpose—I will, at my own expense, put up a church which shall satisfy the desires of all, so far as regards size and proportions. I shall only insist upon this one point—that I may be allowed to consult my own taste as to the style of architecture to be employed.

“Yours, very respectfully,

“AUGUSTUS PEYTON.”

So great was the astonishment and delight called forth by this epistle, that the formality of a vestry-meeting was almost lost sight of, in the mutual congratulations and expressions of thankfulness. Mr. Perkins was the first to recover his self-possession,

and he proposed some appropriate resolutions on the occasion, which, of course, were unanimously adopted.

At the close of their deliberations, Mr. Mason, who recognised the hand of God in this unlooked-for good tidings, felt that it would be wrong to separate without some expression of thankfulness to HIM who alone can open the heart, and provide means for the necessities of his Church. He therefore read with deep feeling the twenty-fifth hymn, and then united with those present in appropriate devotions. Could all of our rich men know how much satisfaction Mr. Peyton felt, after having penned the letter which has been recorded above, they would be encouraged to follow his noble example. As has been most truly and beautifully said, "All the wealth which, with an honest and true heart, we consecrate to the holy work of aiding in God's purposes of love to man, is a potent enemy subdued, and changed into an effectual friend. If our thoughts could go no further, and ascend no higher than the narrow bounds of time, how enduring and precious is the monument which is erected by the founder of a church to perpetuate his name and memory! An earthly conqueror may build a pyramid of skulls as a monument of his worse than brutal ferocity. Less disgusting memorials attest but the pride, the ambition, and the idle ostentation of the rich and great. The erection of a house of prayer passes on to distant generations, at once a name, a memory, and a blessing."*

* Rev. James Craik, D. D.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Plenty to talk about. — Model for a Church. — Hopes of a Parsonage. — Breaking Ground. — Laying the Corner Stone. — Prayer for the Workmen. — With Heart and Voice. — No Regrets. — The Devil again. — Something added to an old Prayer. — Sneers and Falsehoods. — Dying Robber.

As may be very readily supposed, the circumstances detailed in the last chapter created considerable sensation in Rockford, and some, who at first had laughed so heartily at the idea that the church would ever be established in the midst of so much opposition, began to change their opinion. The persons engaged in the good work were resolute and determined, and although it was too late in the season to think of building before the next spring, preparations were made to lay the foundations of the church and parsonage the same autumn.

Mr. Peyton had been struck with the appearance of some church in England, and he concluded to adopt this as the model for the one in Rockford. Fortunately, he was acquainted with an English architect, in a city not far off, who had seen the original building in our father-land, and he therefore employed him to carry out his designs.

“We are very glad that you will soon be able to move out of your uncomfortable quarters into a more commodious dwelling,” said some of the parishioners, every day, to the young clergyman. “But you will need a help-mate to manage so large an establishment.”

Mr. Mason returned for answer that the affairs of any parish were placed on a much more permanent footing by the erection of a parsonage, and that he could readily find some respectable family to board him for the use of the house; but that until the congregation was able to pay a better salary, he had no hope of changing his condition.

I shall not mention, particularly, the style of architecture employed in the new church; but although I am thus on my guard lest any one should be able to settle to his satisfaction where Rockford is, I trust, most sincerely, that after having told my simple tale, of what faith, and hope, and labor, by God’s help, have already done, there may be many more Rockfords in the land.

The day that the ground was to be marked off for the church, Mr. Peyton took the clergyman around to see the beginning of a work in which both felt so much interest, and Mr. Mason had the pleasure of throwing out the first spadeful of earth from the foundation. Shortly before the wet and inclement weather of winter set in, everything was ready for laying the corner-stone. The bishop’s presence is not indispen-

sable upon such an occasion, but as Mr. Mason especially desired it, he put himself to some inconvenience to come.

On a bright and pleasant afternoon, a procession moved from the little chapel toward the site of the new church, consisting of the clergy in their robes, the vestry, the choir, the children of St. Mary's school, and a large number of the congregation.

When it reached the spot, the beautiful service appointed for such occasions was performed, in the course of which a box was deposited in a cavity prepared beneath the corner-stone, containing a Bible, a prayer-book, a journal of the last convention of the diocese, and various church papers. The ponderous stone was then lowered to its place, and the bishop, striking it three times with a hammer, pronounced the solemn form commonly used for the purpose. The workmen, in their rough attire, stood watching the appropriate ceremonial; and it must have been a satisfaction to them to find that the Church did not forget them in her prayers.

“Guard by Thy Providence” (thus the office runs) “everything which may appertain to the building which is now begun in Thy fear, and in dependence on Thy blessing. Excite the skill and animate the industry of the superintendents and workmen. Protect them from accident and from danger. And grant that all who are in any way connected with this temple to be made with hands, may seek those influences

of Thy Holy Spirit, by which their souls will be made temples holy unto Thee, and prepared for that city of the living God which is eternal in the heavens."

And then the whole multitude sang with heart and voice:—

"These walls we to Thine honor raise,
Long may they echo in Thy praise;
And Thou, descending, fill the place
With the rich tokens of Thy Grace.

"And in the last decisive day,
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear,
Thousands were born for glory here."

Can any one suppose that Mr. Mason regretted, now, that he had come to Rockford, instead of preaching in some old city church, built, and filled with people, long before his birth?

The devil, who is always busy with his arts, could not appeal to the same motive which he did, upon the first Sunday noon, of which we have left memorable record, but he tried very diligently, to arouse some feelings of self-gratulation. I am happy, however, to be able to add, that the clergyman put him to instant flight, by calling to mind those words of Holy Writ, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." (Zechariah iv. 6.) "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Corinthians iii. 7.)

At the next meeting of the Sunday-school teachers

after the events just described, Mr. Mason introduced into the prayer used at the opening of their exercises words to this effect, that God's good Providence might be ever kept in mind: "O Lord, bless all those who by their benefactions and kind offices have contributed toward the prosperity of this church. Remember them all for good! Put it into the hearts of others also, to be liberal and open-handed, remembering the rewards which are promised to the cheerful giver. Grant that thy blessing which has been so abundantly bestowed upon this parish, may continue to descend."

Just in proportion as the affairs of the church began to prosper, in the same ratio did the strength of opposition increase. Some people spoke of it sneeringly, as "Mr. Peyton's church!"—while others, professing to have reached perfection, did not hesitate to coin and circulate the bald-faced falsehood, that Mr. Mason had paid five dollars a piece to each poor person who had been confirmed during the two years past!

His meager salary would soon have been expended at this rate; but those who hope to accomplish anything by story-telling, are willing to draw pretty largely upon their imagination.

While the enemies of Zion were thus provoking the displeasure of HIM who has made her foundations strong and immovable, like the everlasting hills, our friend quietly went on to do good. Among others

who enjoyed the consolations of the gospel, through his instrumentality, was a dying robber, who for a long time had been paying the penalty of his evil deeds, by confinement in prison. It seemed almost a useless task to attempt to make any impression upon him; but kindness and perseverance finally brought him to acknowledge with repentant tears, his many offences against God and man, and before his death, he was made a member of Christ's body by baptism.

Blessed are these latter days of the Church, when, as in earlier times, even the gloominess of the dungeon is lighted up by the brightness of the Heavenly Truth, shed forth from the golden candlestick which she has been commissioned to hold.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Teacher Lost and a Bride Found.—Ingratitude.—Well-nigh Starved.—Sad Tale.—Kindness in Trouble.—Another School.—Everybody does something.—Surprise.—Eating Opium.—Picking and Stealing.—Old Comrades.—Good Hopes.

ALTHOUGH I have not taken the pains to keep the reader duly informed of these important matters, Mr. Turner had nevertheless made several visits to Rockford since the period when he had temporary charge of the parish, and in the March after the occurrences of the last chapter, he came on another errand, viz., to rob our young missionary of one of his most efficient co-workers. In other words, Miss Claxton now changed her name to Mrs. Turner. This was indeed a serious loss to Rockford, and yet nobody could really regret that one so admirably fitted to be a clergyman's wife, should have found a husband worthy of her.

Mr. Mason experienced much difficulty in finding another teacher to supply her place, and even when at last his diligent search proved successful, it was no easy thing to keep matters moving on, as smoothly and prosperously as before.

Perhaps one of the greatest causes of discouragement

ment to those who are anxious to show kindness to the poor, are the instances not unfrequently to be met with, of heartless ingratitude.

On a rainy Saturday night, a poor starving creature was led to Mr. Mason's door, but so much exhausted by the effort to climb the stairs, that for some minutes he sunk down speechless on a seat which was offered him. The clergyman suspecting the cause of his weakness, immediately sent down to the kitchen for tea and other refreshments, and insisted on the young man's taking some food, before he attempted to tell his story; which request was yielded to with grateful looks.

Being now considerably revived, the stranger informed Mr. Mason that his name was Percy Douglass, that he left England two years before, and since that time had been engaged for several months as a clerk in a mercantile house in Canada, and more recently in various other employments. One misfortune after another had come upon him, until at last he was obliged to work as a common laborer upon the railroad; and the Irish who were engaged in the same occupation, did all in their power to add to his wretchedness.

Young Douglass, brightening up as he went on with his story, showed so many marks of good breeding and refinement, that the clergyman felt greatly interested in his case, and when he concluded the narrative by describing his sufferings during

two days past from sickness and hunger, Mr. Mason hesitated no longer, but felt that he was in duty bound to do what he could to relieve his wants.

After a few moments reflection, he sent for old Mr. Thompson, thinking that he would take an especial interest in the stranger, from the fact that they were both Englishmen. The founder soon arrived, and after listening to the tale, which Mr. Mason told in as few words as possible, he invited the young man to go and stay at his house until he was sufficiently recovered to engage in business.

And so Douglass was borne away, supported by Mr. Thompson and another friendly arm. In ten days' time he was nearly well, and showed a very becoming restlessness at the thought of being longer idle. As no opening could be found for a clerk, the clergyman gathered for him a little school, which he was amply qualified to teach. Those who heard his story, showed themselves most kind. One of the best physicians in the town attended him through his sickness without charge. When convalescent, wine was recommended, and this a merchant gave, prompted by the same generous spirit. At the opening of the school, others showed themselves quite as considerate. One agreed to board the young Englishman at a price, which would by no means recompense the cost and trouble. A jeweller furnished a clock for the school-room. Another individual provided benches and desks. Mr. Mason went the new teacher's

security at a clothing store for a decent suit. All things promised well. Some children were taken from other schools, for the sake of encouraging the enterprise. One day, after matters had got fairly under way, a brother clergyman who had stopped on a journey to spend a few hours with our friend, was inquiring about the affairs of the parish, and in the course of the conversation, Mr. Mason casually remarked that he had lately established a boy's school. Now as boy's schools are very common things, and teachers for the same, quite as common, no person could have predicted that the visiting clergyman would ask the schoolmaster's name. But as it happened, he did inquire, and Mr. Mason told him.

"Percy Douglass, did you say?" asked the visiter in evident surprise.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mason, "do you know him?"

"Very well," said the gentleman, "rather too well perhaps. I hope he will not serve you as he did me."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Mason, beginning to be alarmed.

"Why, he came to me," continued the other, "in rags and wretchedness, and I rigged him out decently, and got him a clerkship, but something odd about him soon led me to suspect him of being an opium-eater. This I afterward found to be the case. Well, to make a long story short, although I did my best for Douglass, he got intoxicated one day, and having

stolen a trifling sum from his employers, took himself off. Since then, I have heard of him in connection with some low circus.”

Mr. Mason felt very unpleasantly, as may be well-supposed, but even after having heard such a painful account from his friend, he determined still to allow the young man full opportunity to reform. He therefore sent for him to come to the study, not letting him know, however, who was there. When Douglass entered, and saw in the visiting clergyman a benefactor whom he had so grievously wronged, he seemed ready to sink through the floor. Mr. Mason, however, immediately rose up, and taking him by the hand, said in his kindest manner, “I have brought you here, Mr. Douglass, out of real friendship. This gentleman has told me your whole story, but you may rest assured that neither of us will ever use it to your disadvantage, and I shall do all in my power to enable you to hold an honorable position in society.”

Thus reassured, the young man made the most solemn promises of amendment, and went back again to his school.

Mr. Mason having found out, subsequently, that his relations still lived in England, offered to write to them, giving an account of his present encouraging prospects, and making no reference to the past—which he did accordingly.

Douglass daily improved in health, and by regularity at church and attendance to other duties, showed

an anxiety to do right. His equanimity was somewhat disturbed one day by the arrival of the circus, with which he had been formerly connected, and a cruel threat which an old comrade made to expose him, in case he refused to pay a certain sum of money, drove him once more to drink. The clergyman managed to save him from disgrace this time also, and having carefully smoothed over the difficulties which seemed almost certain to arise, he most anxiously hoped that all would in the future be well. Soon after this, Mr. Mason received a letter from Douglass's brother in England, expressing much thankfulness on behalf of himself and his aged parents, for the kindness shown to the prodigal son. A way was now opened for the young man to begin a correspondence with his friends, of which he very gladly availed himself.—Mr. Douglass's school began to be spoken of as one of the well-established institutions of the town, and he seemed in the high road to success.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Better and better. — One Glass too much. — Mysterious Disappearance. — More Letters. — Encroachments of Selfishness. — Somebody grateful. — Wise Rules. — Sick Baker. — No Bread in the Oven. — Who brought the Dollar?

I SHALL be running before the regular current of events in other respects, — but perhaps it will be best for me to finish in this chapter what was begun in the last.

After the mortifying circumstance referred to on a former page, the young Englishman was more watchful over himself than ever, and our friend began to have sanguine hopes that he might consider him as perfectly reclaimed, and had even advised him to receive the holy communion at the beginning of the next month, a duty and a privilege which he had long neglected. Perhaps the solemnities attending the administration of the Lord's supper might, by God's grace, have so strengthened the impressions for good already made, that he would have been fully able to withstand the temptations to which he was more especially exposed. But, unfortunately, our national independence day drew Douglass off to a neighboring town, and there he felt, most likely, that no friendly

eye was watching him, (he forgot that GOD saw all he did!) and he freely indulged in intoxicating drinks. One excess led to another, until* he may have been ashamed to return to Rockford. Be this as it may, he has never shown his face there since. At first, his prolonged absence occasioned much anxiety and surprise, and I do not know that the mystery would ever have been explained, had it not been for information received from England. A few days after his disappearance, another package of letters came from the young man's relations, directed to Mr. Mason's care. He kept them a reasonable time, hoping that something more encouraging might yet turn up; but, having delayed until the various debts which Douglass had contracted about the town were brought to him to be paid out of his own pocket, he thought it right to tell the whole story. It was a painful task, but none the less a duty. About a month afterward, the following letter was received from England, in reply to his own:—

“REV. AND DEAR SIR: I have delayed answering your very kind but painful letter—not so much with any expectation of giving you tidings of my unhappy brother, as from a sense of my inability to express our sorrow for his shameful ingratitude toward yourself, and his other benefactors at Rockford. His conduct, indeed, sadly justifies your remark, that he seemed not to know what the word gratitude means. Some of his acts even before he left England beto-

kened this, and it is a most pitiable and melancholy thing to contemplate. Odious as selfishness becomes in its development (for I regard that encroaching vice as the mother of many of his faults), it is far more hateful when combined with intemperance and recklessness. It is further displayed in a letter received from him to-day, in which he adverts neither to the manner in which he treated you and his friends, nor to the pain your report (for he takes it for granted you have written) has occasioned to the various members of his family. Since leaving Rockford, he has been wandering about from place to place, and I fear doing little good. 'I must have excitement,' he writes, 'or I shall lose my mind.'—And, shortly afterward: 'Do not imagine that I suffer nothing; you can not form an idea of what I undergo, when remembrances of home and kindred force themselves upon me. Reproaches only make me worse, therefore send me none.' This distressing letter has not yet been communicated to his parents; but it may become necessary hereafter that they should be made acquainted with it. Your prayers, I am sure, are still offered on behalf of this lost sheep; and I most sincerely trust that he may yet be snatched as a brand from the burning, and brought to a deep and humbling consciousness of his ingratitude, and to a full acknowledgment of his sin. For all your charity toward him—for the sacrifices you have made—and for your kind consideration, accept, Rev. and dear

friend, our united and hearty thanks, and believe me,

“ Faithfully, yours,

“ FREDERIC DOUGLASS.”

However mortified and injured Mr. Mason might have felt before, after reading this touching letter, he could not regret that he had tried so hard, and risked so much, in his anxiety to reclaim this unhappy youth ; and now his daily prayer goes up to Heaven that the God of mercy and of peace, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil, may soften the heart of the wayward one, and save him at last from the bitter pains of eternal death. He was afraid, however, lest such a flagrant instance of ingratitude might discourage his people from being kind to those who were really objects of charity, and he did all that he was able to prevent this evil result. After much experience in such matters, and having convinced himself that he had sometimes given alms unadvisedly, he adopted a few general principles by which he would be governed in future. And first, he determined resolutely to shut his ears against the piteous complaints of beggars, who travel about with printed certificates describing their escape from shipwreck, or from an irruption of a terrific volcano, or other marvels of the sort. And next, other things being equal, he thought it best to help the poor in his own town and neighborhood, with whose real condition he might be perfectly acquainted. And thirdly, he made up his mind, as a general rule, not to give away money—

but if one was hungry, to feed him; if he needed clothing, to provide for his wants in this respect, and so on,—thus making sure that the funds were properly employed.

Mr. Mason had been for some time, during the summer, visiting a baker named Austin, who was confined to his bed with the dropsy. The man had been sick so long that his affairs had become involved, and he really suffered, now and then, from want. Although he belonged to a denomination which I need not name, our friend went to see him, as he would one of his own flock, and always did something for supplying the necessities of soul and body. The baker had no family except his wife, and when she went out the poor man was of necessity left alone. On Monday, when the clergyman called upon him, he exclaimed, as soon as Mr. Mason had seated himself by the bed, “O, sir, I had such a strange thing happen to me last Saturday! My wife had gone up in town to carry home some work, and I was tossing restlessly upon my bed, and wondering what we should do for food upon the Sabbath—when I heard a gentle tap at the door; and then the latch was raised, and a hand was thrust through a small crack, while a person said, in a disguised tone of voice, “Mr. Austin, here is a dollar I will drop on the floor, which lawfully belongs to you. About a year ago, I took some bread from your wagon while you had gone into a house to leave

a loaf, and now I wish to quiet my conscience by paying back your own with usury."

"Have you any idea who the person was?" said Mr. Mason.

"Not the least," returned the baker. — "He must have watched until my wife had left the house, and come in the way he did, knowing that I was confined to the bed."

Mr. Mason remembered that a few Sundays before, in a sermon on the eighth commandment, he had spoken of the duty of making restitution in cases where we had been guilty of defrauding others. Whether the instance mentioned by the baker had any connection with the advice thus given, can only be known to HIM "unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

High Picket Fence.—Weathercock.—Threats of an Organ.—Punctuality.—The Church that is never Shut.—Cholera.—“Not as good as She might be.”—Two Kinds of Influence.—Deep Gloom.—“I have remembered the Church in my Will.

I HERE resume Mr. Mason's journal again :

“*July 16.*—Our new church is getting on finely. I watch every brick that goes up with the greatest interest. May the top-stone thereof be brought forth with shoutings, saying, Grace, grace unto it!

“It is really amusing to see the efforts which our neighbors are making to keep pace with us. Unfortunately for their new-born zeal in the way of church adornment, the places of worship which they occupy were built before the time when much attention began to be paid to architectural proportions, so that they are obliged to be satisfied with rather questionable improvements. The Methodists have shown their ambitious spirit by putting up a high picket-fence, with two green gates; the Baptists, more aspiring still, have erected a needle-shaped spire, covered with tin, looking every bit as well as silver; and the Presbyterians, determined to climb higher than the best, have set a beautiful brass weather-cock upon

the vane, where he serves a very useful purpose in showing the direction of the wind. When noticing the constant changes going on in their system, and the various divisions among them, already fully organized into rival sects, each with a banner and leader of its own, I have wondered whether this brazen emblem might by any means be considered as referring to a state of things which St. Paul describes when the bewildered mind should be '*carried about by every wind of doctrine.*' I have even heard of loud threats of buying an organ, on the part of some of Mr. James's people. But this is not at all likely for two reasons; the first is, that some of the most substantial members are opposed to such an innovation upon their previous customs; and the second, that a good organ costs money, and it is far easier to say that we intend to do thus and so, than to put the hand in the pocket and do it. But besides these two reasons, there is still a third, which may not have occurred to them, and that is, that even if all the silly objections to the use of an organ could be overcome, and the price paid down, they have no music suitable for such an instrument. Of course they would not be so inconsistent as to borrow the glorious old chants of the Church; and to grind off long metres and common metres upon what is designed for Jubilates and Te Deums, would be tame and insipid enough.

“*July 20.*—It is always my aim to begin service precisely at the hour appointed, and to arrange the

length of the Psalms and Hymns, and sermon, so as to close about the same time every Sunday. In this way the people know what they have to depend upon, and they learn to be much more punctual than they otherwise would be. Last Sunday a furious thunder-storm came up just at service time ; so furious, indeed, that only about a dozen persons turned out. But this made no difference, and everything went on as usual. I do not wish to lose the good name which we have already gained for our little church—one which all churches would find it to their advantage to strive after,—*the church that is never shut!*

“*July 26.*—I was placed in rather an awkward position this morning. There have been a few cases of cholera in town, and among the rest, a woman of no very good repute has been at the point to die. Learning that she had expressed a wish to see me, I went without hesitation, although I saw some people smiling as I entered the gate, and I also remembered an unkind speech which some Baptist woman made, when I had occasion, several months ago, to attend to a similar call of duty. I am sure, however, that I shall be safe in going to any place where my Savior would have gone under like circumstances, and if an uncharitable world chooses to ridicule and abuse me for it, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is only treating me as it treated Him, and surely the servant is not greater than his Lord.

“*August 1.*—I have long been convinced that

there are two kind of influences which the Church must bring to bear upon the masses with whom she comes in contact, direct and indirect. The young, and the thousands of every age who are not committed to any particular religious system, and those who have become dissatisfied for any cause with the denomination to which they now belong, and those again, who although thus far, directly hostile to the Church, have logical minds, or a fondness for reading, or such refined tastes as may be impressed by the order and beauty of our services—all of these classes may, by a proper course of training, be brought within the true fold. On the other hand, there are great multitudes of people, who, for years and years have been devout and consistent members of various religious denominations, and who can no more be made to change the peculiar notions to which they have become so closely wedded, than the Mississippi can be forced to flow up stream. But the views of such persons will be modified and improved by mixing with the members of our church, and becoming accustomed to her peculiarities, and every shade of prejudice which is worn away by this imperceptible friction from their minds, is making the way smoother for their children to return to the old paths. And all good men must heartily rejoice that those, who by no human power can possibly be brought to agree with us, so far as the outward organization of the church is concerned, are daily deriving from the church, that spiritual nourishment which feeds their souls. An

old gentleman, who lived and died a Presbyterian, told me, in his last sickness, that he had always used our Prayer Book in his daily devotions, and that he knew of nothing which could supply the place of this precious treasury of ancient holiness and faith.

“ *August 17.*—Deep gloom overspreads our town to-day. A mother in Israel has gone to her rest. Mrs. Peyton, who has been sick for a fortnight past, expired about three o’clock this afternoon. Alas! alas! how much she will be missed. This morning, sensible that her end was near, she had the whole family called together, and partook with them for the last time of the most comfortable sacrament of Christ’s body and blood. Her son Augustus, who has been very seriously disposed for some time past, communed with us, much to the satisfaction of his dear, good mother.

“ ‘The place was bright
 With something of celestial light—
 A simple altar by the bed
 For high communion meetly spread,
 Chalice, and plate, and snowy vest.
 We ate and drank; then calmly blest,
 All mourners, one with dying breath,
 We sat and talked of Jesus’ death.’ ”

“ Just before our dear friend left us, she drew me close to her and said in a low whisper, ‘ *I have remembered the church in my will.*’ I have no idea in what way she proposes to befriend the parish, but I am sure she has made a wise disposal of her property. ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the spirit; for they rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.’ ”

CHAPTER XXXV.

Opening the Will. — Just what was wanted. — Crowded Stage. — Reappearance of Jemmy. — Friends, though not Familiars. — Feet turned back from the Grave. — All Churchmen will be found Fault with.

As there is always great curiosity in the world to know about the provisions of the last wills and testaments of the deceased, I shall so far gratify this weakness of human nature as to state, that Mrs. Peyton left a handsome legacy to her two granddaughters (who were now to live with their uncle Augustus), and various little tokens of remembrance to her friends. But the part in which, as an historian, I feel the most lively interest, is that where the old lady directed her house and grounds to be given to the church for an orphan asylum, setting aside also, several thousand dollars, the interest of which was to go toward the support of the institution.

Mr. Mason's heart leaped for joy when he heard these glad tidings, and he blessed and praised God who had thus provided means for carrying out his favorite and long-cherished plans.

I have so nearly filled up the whole space which I can fairly claim for the purpose of recording my story,

that I must study more brevity in future, and content myself with saying, that within a few months' time, the necessary alterations had been made in Mrs. Peyton's premises, to fit them for the noble purpose to which they were henceforth to be devoted, and that Miss Oliver's mother (an energetic, thorough-going woman, who had followed her daughter into the church) was appointed the first matron of the orphan asylum.

At the time when this narrative closes, about twenty little ones, left to the cold charities of the world, are enjoying in this excellent institution, the inestimable blessings of a Christian home, where they are trained up, from day to day, for lives of usefulness hereafter.

The small and contracted stage to which the reader's eye has been thus long directed, has become so crowded with characters, of all sorts and conditions, that it is quite impossible for me to permit them all to have a fair hearing. There is one, however, who, I am sure, some persons will be glad to recognise again—and this is Jemmy Bates, the lame pedlar. We saw him setting forth manfully upon his first circuit—a mere experiment, as we thought—but it proved successful. The poor boy came back to Rockford after three weeks' absence, having sold his little stock of merchandise to good profit, and I hope the tracts which he left at the farmhouses where he stopped may not be lost. Jemmy remained over one Sunday to rest himself and attend church, and then went forth again. This time Mr. Mason gave him some small

prayer-books to distribute as he had done the tracts. It may be many long years before any person into whose hands these volumes shall fall will be brought into closer contact with the Church, and during all that period they may never hear one of our ministers preach, and much less see a bishop on his visitation, "confirming the churches," but no one can tell how much good the books will do, by teaching people to pray aright, and by settling their uncertain faith.

Although from some things which have been said, the conclusion might be hastily drawn that all the denominations in Rockford had assumed a hostile attitude against the church, and that they opposed its growth with inveterate and determined hate, such an inference would be hardly fair. It is very true that some of the preachers and prominent men had their own reasons for speaking in disparaging terms of the Episcopal church—calling in question the piety of its members, and accusing Mr. Mason of being a proselyter and a bigot;—but this was all perfectly natural. No one likes to feel that his own peculiar system is crumbling away beneath him, and that another which he has been taught to despise, is gradually securing possession of the field. And yet such must be the conviction of all those from without who watch the unparalleled growth of the Church. But although, as I have said, the *leaders* among the various denominations at Rockford turned the cold shoulder upon our friend, good people of every name gave

him full credit for being a faithful and devoted clergyman; and as they saw the wretched and debased gradually reformed—the poor taught to study industry and thrift—the orphans provided with a home—and all, without distinction of rank or class, instructed and encouraged to love and obey God—the acknowledgment was frankly made, “Mr. Mason has done more good than all the ministers who ever lived in Rockford.”

Some of his best and most esteemed friends belonged to other folds, and it was often in his power to show them kindness in return. One day, in making his usual round, he met Dr. Gadsby coming out of a house, and, upon inquiry, found that there was a sick child within, for whose recovery there was no remaining hope. Ready, at all times, to “weep with those that weep” as to rejoice with those whose cup of happiness was full, Mr. Mason went in, and found the household overwhelmed with grief. He begged them not to give way to overmuch sorrow, and reminded them that all things were possible with God, and that no one could tell, whether in answer to believing prayer, the dying might not be restored to health. The mother, who was a Methodist, cheerfully consented that the child should be baptized, after which the clergyman most heartily besought our heavenly Father, that if consistent with his holy will and pleasure, the desire of their hearts might be granted them, through the merits of the Divine Redeemer. A few

days after, when passing that way again, the mother espied Mr. Mason, and called him to give thanks to God for his wonderful goodness in having heard the voice of their supplication. The boy was well, and playing about the yard. Who knows but he may grow up to officiate hereafter in Mr. Mason's place, when his work on earth is done?

I am well aware that many of the scenes in this book may seem overdrawn and unnatural to such as only know the condition of the Church in our cities, and I think it but justice to assure my readers that such is not the case. I am not writing a romance, but a real history. Neither do I think it would be right for the rector of some snug parish in a large town to pronounce a rash judgment upon the wisdom of our friend, Mr. Mason, in some of his views and plans, for the two fields of labor are as unlike as can possibly be conceived. Different classes of churchmen would have the same difficulties to encounter; and good Dr. Milnor, the well-remembered and beloved rector of St. George's church, New York, would find plenty of Mr. Obadiah Bilgers quite as ready to harass and head him, as to show their hatred of the Church, by opposing one of Dr. Pusey's stamp.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Books and Reading.—Cultivating Different Sides of the Brain.—“He knows all about Race-Horses!”—Dropping Hints.—New Church.—Fresh Falsehoods.—Consecration.

I HAVE been so busy in following Mr. Mason about in his daily outdoor work, that I have had little opportunity of saying much about his habits of study, and such other matters as usually form a part of every clerical biography. He had gradually been collecting books—carefully selecting good and useful ones—until he could claim to have quite a valuable library, embracing works in every department of literature; and by rising early, and saving the dribblets of time which so many waste, the amount of reading which he got through with was astonishing. No clergyman can remain long in one parish without pursuing some such course as this. Neither will it answer merely to cultivate one side of his mind. All theology, without a due admixture of other kinds of reading, will soon produce a stagnation of the brain, which will be sure to show itself in dry and prosy sermons. In order to be fresh and vigorous, and able to throw the charm of novelty about old and oft-handled subjects, history, and biography, and travels, and poetry, and

romance, may be read to advantage. Besides the direct and indirect bearing which every kind of reading may be made to have upon his preparation for the pulpit, a clergyman may constantly have it in his power to turn secular knowledge to the spiritual benefit of his flock. Many a pastor, possessing some acquaintance with medicine, has been able, without trespassing upon the province of the physician, to gain an influence for good over the souls of men, while suggesting some trifling remedy for bodily disease.

Bishop Ravenscroft was once riding in a stage-coach through his diocese, with a company of southern planters, all strangers to himself, when the conversation turned upon the subject of *race-horses*! As the discussion waxed warm, and the passengers took different sides, an old gentleman, one of the champions, appealed to the bishop to sustain the opinions he had expressed, not at all suspecting that he was addressing a successor of the twelve. The bishop happened, at an earlier period in life, to have been thoroughly versed in matters of the sort; and, when thus unexpectedly called upon, he came to the assistance of the perplexed controversialist with a hearty good-will. As usual with him, he carried the day. Some time after, the old gentleman discovered who his valuable ally was; and in speaking of him to a friend in the highest terms of admiration, he added, as a climax to his praises, "*Why, he knows all about race-horses!*" Learning that the bishop was endeav-

oring to build a church in some desolate place, he sent him a generous contribution toward the object.

The clergy ought certainly not to make themselves so common as to lose influence and breed contempt; but they may accomplish much, very much, by showing an interest in the every-day concerns of their people, and by offering kind and timely suggestions when they can.

Now, although Mr. Mason was not much at home upon the subject of *race-horses*, he had picked up a rich store of practical knowledge, which he turned to good account. Many a dose of medicine has he administered to sick children—many a useful hint has he given to the farmers in the neighborhood; and indeed, it would be difficult to find any class in the community which was not somewhat indebted to him in this way.

But a very important event was now drawing on apace—the consecration of the church. Although Mr. Peyton had, with the most liberal spirit, advanced money as fast as necessary, in order that there might be no vexatious delay, still the building of a temple to the Lord is a great work and requires much time. When the church was nearly finished, the tongues of busy-bodies began to be more active than ever. I am not able to explain why it is, but I believe that we generally imagine this troublesome class of creatures to be of the feminine gender: in this instance, however, such was not the case. Some,

who would have been horrified not to be thought most respectable and high-toned gentlemen, currently reported about town that the poor were to be left in the old church, and none but the upper classes were to occupy the new one. Mr. Mason had felt indignant enough at stories of the sort which had been circulated before; but the design of this cruel falsehood was so apparent, and its effect upon the minds of the poor so bad, that it required all the patience he could summon to keep him from expressing what he thought, in the plainest Saxon. But he hoped and prayed that the deceitful lips and lying tongues might yet be put to silence: which was indeed the case, when the new church was at last completed, and the door thrown wide open—a house of prayer free to all people.

The spacious courts of the temple were crowded on the morning of the consecration, and the imposing ceremony was opened by the bishop, whose voice was heard from the church entrance, reciting the opening verse of the twenty-fourth Psalm: "*The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is; the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein.*" A procession of clergymen headed by the bishop, and attended by the wardens and vestrymen, passed slowly along the broad aisle up to the chancel, repeating alternately the remaining verses of the psalm. The clergy then took their places within the rails; a deed was read conveying the building and its appropriate furniture,

in perpetuity, to the congregation of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the beautiful services appointed for such occasions proceeded, and were concluded by a sermon from the bishop, in the course of which he gave an interesting narrative of the early struggles of the Church in Rockford.

It would not be easy to overrate the value of such a munificent gift to the community, as this beautiful temple must prove to be; and many a grateful heart was lifted up in prayer that the generous donor might live long upon the earth, in happiness and peace, and find everlasting blessedness in the world to come.

Amid the sordid turmoil and feverish struggles of life, here at least was one spot whence evil passions, and the demon of party strife, and the worship of mammon, are for ever excluded; a home to which the weary in spirit may repair, to drink in its soothing and solemn influences, and to bathe the soul in its holy calm; an edifice devoted to the relief of man's spiritual wants; a small space wrested from the world, and for ever set apart and consecrated to the worship of the Most High; a temple from which hymns of praise and thanksgiving will perennially ascend, as the revolving seasons bring round the returning cycle of the time-honored fasts and festivals of the Church.

“Hark! what a thrilling utterance is there!

‘Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!’

As God's high-priest, with apostolic care,

To HIM this tent of glory consecrates.

* * * * *

Come in, thou King of Glory! — Yea, come in ;
Rest here awhile, great Conqueror for good :
Bless thou this font to cleanse from Adam's sin ;
Spread thou this table with celestial food ;
And, kindled by thy grace to gratitude,
May thousands here eternal treasures win,
As, hither led from time to time, with joy
They seek their Father. Lo, before mine eyes
Visions and promises of good arise :
The tender babe baptized ; the stripling boy
Confirm'd for godliness ; the maid and youth
Wedded in love ; the man mature made wise ;
The elder taught in righteousness and truth ;
And each an heir of life before he dies."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mr. Greenfield. — Coming like Nicodemus. — Perplexity. — Playing Bishop — Charles Wesley's Sarcasm. — Turning a Cold Shoulder. — A Common Case. — Parsonage Filled. — Right about Face. — No Lack.

“MR. GREENFIELD, sir!” said a servant, ushering the Methodist preacher into Mr. Mason's study, one dark, December night.

“You see I come like Nicodemus of old!” remarked the visiter, putting down a bundle of books upon the table.

“I am always happy to see you,” returned the clergyman, “whether you come by day or by night.”

I ought to interrupt the conversation long enough to explain, that Mr. Greenfield was a great favorite with his own people at Rockford—so much so, indeed, that having lived among them two years—the longest period which the rules allowed—he had removed at the end of that time to another station, but now, in answer to a strong petition sent in to the last conference, he had been permitted to return. Mr. Mason, who had always been on tolerable friendly terms with him, became more intimate during this second period of his sojourn in Rockford, and had been trying to be of some service to the good man, by lending him books which might perchance open his eyes somewhat.

“This is a very spicy little affair,” said Mr. Greenfield, holding up a plain, unpromising-looking tract, printed on black paper, and entitled, “METHODISM AS HELD BY WESLEY.”

“Indeed it is,” answered the clergyman. “And what renders the course of argument more convincing is, that all the authorities quoted in the pamphlet are Methodist. With Wesley as a witness, it is proved beyond a doubt, that even in his own estimation, Methodism is not a church, and has neither a valid ministry or sacraments.”

“Chapman’s Sermons, in addition to this,” continued Mr. Greenfield, “have quite driven me from my old anchorage, and I am really puzzled to know what to do. In reading one of our papers the other day, I noticed the appointment of several new bishops, as we have learned to call them; and really, with the light which your books have given me, I think the men who accept this empty honor might with as much propriety proclaim themselves as emperors of France or Russia, as to profess to hold this lofty dignity in God’s kingdom, without the shadow of a lawful claim.”

This was no hasty conclusion to which Mr. Greenfield had been blindly led, for he had devoted several months to a fair investigation of the subject, and, if the truth must be told, he had been most anxious to satisfy himself that John Wesley, the *priest*, had full powers to ordain the higher order of bishops!

But again and again, when he had begun to flatter

himself that he had patched up a theory which would satisfy his bewildered mind, he bethought him of the sarcastic but truthful lines of John Wesley's own brother Charles—himself a Methodist too—in the way in which Methodism was then understood, not as a society distinct from the church, but an organization within it:—

“So easily are bishops made,
By man or woman's whim;
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?”

Mr. Mason deeply sympathized with his Methodist friend in his perplexity, and promised to do all he could to help him.

And here permit me to say, that the coolness and reserve which the majority of churchmen manifest toward those who are more than half persuaded to come over to our ranks, is one great reason why we do not increase much more rapidly than at present.

Take the case of Mr. Greenfield—a preacher in good standing with the Methodists, and receiving for his services a decent support. He is convinced that ours is the true Church of Christ; and desires, with all his heart, to have a valid commission to do the work for which he is every way well qualified. A year must pass before he can receive ordination. During that time his Methodist friends will forsake him, and Episcopalians might not be ready to come forward to welcome him. There is no doubt that the dread of being placed in a position so mortifying and

painful, causes multitudes to shut their eyes to the truth, and continue their connection with systems which they know to be without any solid foundation. You may say, "They ought to trust to Providence," and other very common expressions of the sort; but I insist that it is our duty to show a disposition to receive them with open arms, and to provide means to meet such cases as I have described. Some of the noblest and most devoted men now living upon the earth are Methodists, and if our good mother the Church of England had thought a little less of her dignity and a little more of the true principles of the gospel, she would have made bishops of Wesley and Whitfield, who would have done honor to the mitre, and then there would have been no Methodists wandering away from the ancient fold, and none of this slow and painful process of finding the way back to their home.

Mr. Mason, after consulting with the vestry, went to Mr. Greenfield and proposed that he should remove at once to the new parsonage with his family, and that he himself would board with them. The offer was thankfully accepted; and by teaching a few pupils, the late methodist preacher was able to meet the expenses of his household, besides having ample time for study. This unlocked-for change made another great sensation in Rockford; but although many hard things were said, nobody was killed; and the sun rose, and the stages and cars arrived at the usual hours.

The bishop licensed Mr. Greenfield as a lay-reader at the same time that he was received as a candidate for holy orders, by which arrangement he was enabled to render considerable service at some of the outposts, which had begun to multiply upon Mr. Mason's hands.

It did one's soul good to hear Mr. Greenfield's hearty responses in the church on Sundays; and very likely some of his old congregation came to see how he would look, sitting in his pew and countenancing those things which they regarded as sadly wrong, but in which he now preferred to worship the God of his fathers.

But others followed him from a different motive. They reasoned very justly, that if so sensible and good a man as their late preacher gave up from conscientious motives his comfortable position with them, and humbly confessed before all the world that he had been living in error, and had been trying to do what he had no authority to attempt, and condescended to keep boarders and teach until the time of probation should pass, when he could lawfully go forth to preach and administer the sacraments — they reasoned, I say, very justly, that when one did all this, he *must* act upon principle, and it was worth their while to inquire with diligence whether or not he might not be right. The consequence was, that the truth spread more and more, and many began to ask for "the old paths," and to walk therein.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Brudder Jeff.—Dark Night.—Turkey which clapped his Arms.—
Call to Preach.—“What must be done?”—Good Thought.—Poor
Hymns.—“Who can shout loudest?”—Waning Glory.

“WHICH way is you been, Brudder Jeff?”

“O, I’s been to hold a converse with Brudder Jim,
about what I was talking of tudder day.”

“You means de preachin’?”

“Yes, and I has finally made up my consideration
to do it any how—I don’t keer who conjeets. I do
b’leeve seriously, and satisfactorly, that I is been
called by the Sperrit to dis work. Brudder Toney,
jest as sure as I is standin’ here, de tudder night,
when all was dark and still, and when de night was
so black dat de chickens was ’fraid to crow, and not
even de watchman stirred on de street, I was gwine
a little bit out of town. Jest as I got dar where dat
big elum-tree is by de road whar de man was hung,
for killin’ tudder white man in his own door, ’pon my
soul, Brudder Toney, on de top of dat big tree dar
sot something what looked like a whappin’ turkey.
Well, when I got by dat big tree, ’pon my life, de
thing hit his arms togedder and hollered out loud to
to me. Den I thought it was a sperrit, sure; and I

took off my hat, and bowed, and said 'Here I is!' And den I thought, maybe it's not a sperrit, or it may be a bad spirit; and I tuck to my clippers, and away I went. In de mornin', I found myself safe in my bed, all 'cept a mighty shiverin' in my j'int. Now, I does think I is called to preach, don't you say so, Brudder Toney?"

"Brudder Jeff, I does actially think so. Is you gwine to preach next Sunday?"

"To be sure I is, and I is got my tex pickt out now. It's in de second Epistle of de Apostle Isaiah, where he says, 'You may polish de plant, and you may polish de water, but God gives de increase.'"

Such was the conversation which Mr. Mason accidentally overheard one day, shortly before removing from the Eagle hotel to the parsonage. His room opened upon a balcony, and two of the servants about the house, who were lounging there in the sunshine at their leisure, were the speakers in the dialogue given above.

"Poor creatures!" soliloquized the clergyman, amused at the strange conceits exhibited in this discourse, and, at the same time, distressed to discover the gross ignorance in which these immortal beings were living in a Christian land—"can the Church do nothing for you?"

He afterward talked over the whole subject with Mr. Greenfield and others, and then resolved to make the attempt. There can be no doubt that, so far as

his soul's health is concerned, the ability to read is very often anything but a blessing to the negro. It at once makes him conceited and headstrong, and nothing will do, but he must put his own interpretation upon every passage of Scripture, and nobody upon earth is wise enough to instruct him.

In proposing, therefore, to hold a service for the colored people on Friday nights, Mr. Mason recommended that all who chose to attend should be taught to say the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, and one or two selections of Psalms by heart; that in this way they might be able to unite in the form of public worship which he wished to use. Novelties are almost sure to please, and the whole colored population in and around Rockford began to talk of little else besides the meetings which were to be held for them in the white people's church.

Had Mr. Mason been one of those very rubrical men who would think it quite as wrong to deviate a hair's-breadth from any little nice point of canon-law among the Blackfeet Indians as in Trinity church in New York, or St. Paul's in London, I can answer for it, that one or two services would have satisfied the negroes to their heart's content. But, following his usual plan of being guided by common-sense, he only used a part of the service, and gave out a hymn which everybody knew, and then preached a sermon, very much as he would have done to his white congregation. If the colored people discover that you are

talking to them as to a parcel of children, they go away in high dudgeon.

Some writers in our church-papers find considerable satisfaction in criticising the hymns in the prayer-book, and in proving that some of them are not only bad specimens of poetry, but also of theology. They may be perfectly right in both of these respects; but the highest order of poetry is not absolutely essential for the purpose of lifting the heart in praise, and I have too much confidence in the committee appointed by the General Convention to revise the hymns, to believe that any very dangerous doctrines are taught therein. I make this remark, because the very hymns to which most exceptions are taken, are those with which the servants at the South are familiar, and it prepares their minds to receive the teachings of the Church with more readiness when they hear us give out their old favorite hymns from our books.

Mr. Mason labored under one disadvantage in Rockford, and this a very serious one. The negroes, instead of being taken to church with their masters, had been allowed to have meeting-houses, where those of their own color who could shout and sing the loudest, and who had the greatest *power of continuance* in exhortations and sermons, were chosen to fill the pulpit. It was upon such a throne of glory for a vain and conceited man that Brother Jeff, who appears at the head of this chapter, proposed to make a display of his marvellous gifts. The effect of all this is pre-

cisely what might be expected. The black preachers take great delight in such notoriety, and the people enjoy the noise and excitement hugely.

It therefore requires much tact to interest them in a service conducted upon such different principles, and where the powerful voice of Brother Jeff must be subdued to a moderate pitch.

The first Friday night on which Mr. Mason preached to the colored people, the church was crowded, and, by having a few white persons to lead in the responses, everything passed off very well. Only one lesson was read, and some other slight changes made, which necessity required. The servants were highly delighted, and nothing occurred to disturb the smooth surface of the waters, until about three weeks after, when Brother Jeff and Brother Pompey (who had both been called to preach, in some such marvellous way as that spoken of in the beginning of the chapter), thinking, perhaps, that their glory was on the wane, ceased to attend at the church, and resumed their nightly howlings in their own meeting-house.

Mr. Mason had anticipated discouragements of this sort; so that, instead of losing heart, he kept on without seeming to notice such things;—and in the course of time a great many colored children were baptized, quite a number of men and women confirmed, and a decided attachment for the church sprang up among the descendants of Ham.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Communion Service.—Wearying Children.—Book-Keepers.—Prophecy Fulfilled.—Weak Arguments.—Long Sermons.—Church Sleepers.—Running away from the Text.—Signing Testimonials.—Wedding.—Lawyers make good Clergymen.

ANOTHER instalment of Mr. Mason's journal :—

“*Sunday, July 5.*—This being communion day, we began our new arrangement of dividing the service ; having morning prayer in the Sunday school at nine o'clock, and at eleven, the litany, anti-communion, sermon, and Lord's Supper. I had no idea, until we tried it, what an improvement this is upon the old, exhausting system, of crowding three distinct services into one.

“Several parents have asked my opinion as to the expediency and propriety of obliging children to remain in church during the administration of the communion. As a general rule, I am opposed to such a requisition. It is better to leave it to their own choice whether they will remain or not. When kept in so long against their will, even this most sublime service appears irksome. Mrs. Chambers has also been troubled to know how much strictness should be used in the observance of Sunday. I am well con-

vinced that a great rigidness in keeping children in the house the live-long day, and casting an unnecessary gloom over the brightness of this festival, is a sure way of training up worldly, thoughtless daughters, and godless, skeptical sons.

“*July 6.*—Several of the shelves in my library begin to look quite deserted; the occupants have been so long absent. I can honestly adopt Sir Walter Scott’s witticism, and say of some of the members of my flock, as he did of some of his friends, that, ‘Although they are bad *arithmeticians*, they are excellent *book-keepers*!’

“I often lend Chapman’s Sermons, and the Double Witness of the Church, and other works of the sort, not much caring whether they come back to me or not, provided they be kept in active circulation; but then again, there are other books which one would much prefer to have returned. I am reading good Bishop Chase’s Reminiscences. No one can go through with these two volumes without pleasure and profit.

“*July 10.*—I begin to think that I have some small *prophetical* powers, for George Patterson *is* to be married to Grace Forester, as I suggested might be the case long ago. She is a charming girl, and would make anybody a good wife. George’s mother is expected next week, and the ceremony has been hastened somewhat on Captain Forester’s account, who must soon leave us again on a long cruise.

“*July 11.*—Mr. Greenfield met with some difficulties to-day in his studies, which I have been trying to clear up for him. The points were in regard to infant baptism and immersion. Not that he had any doubts in his own mind that the position held by the Church on these subjects is the true one, but the weak reasoning in some of our commentaries bewildered him a little. A poor argument is worse than none. Why should we press into the controversy about infant baptism the statement in Acts xvi. 33, where it is said, that the jailor and his household were baptized, inferring from this, that children as well as adults then received this sacrament! Such may have been the case, but a keen Baptist would immediately refer you to the very next verse, and read that the jailor ‘*believed in God with all his house,*’ and insist that if they exercised faith, they could not have been *infants!* We have plenty of *good* arguments, and I wish most sincerely that our authors would content themselves with these.

“I now and then have a pleasant dispute with Mr. Greenfield about the proper length of sermons. He still holds fast to his old Methodist notions in regard to this thing, and prefers a liberal allowance of preaching. My own opinion, however, remains unshaken; and indeed, I have no sort of doubt, that one most serious drawback to the popularity, and of necessity, to the growth and prosperity of the Church, is the too common practice of preaching long sermons. It

is not worth while for men to argue, as some sticklers for old customs are wont to do, that in former days people listened patiently for one or two hours to discourses from the pulpit. They *will not* do it *now*. Brevity is the order of the day. A clergyman with us (as I insist with Mr. Greenfield), can adopt no surer plan for emptying out his church, than to weary the congregation with long sermons. He may possess the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes, and the wisdom of Solomon and Solon, but the effect will be the same. It costs more trouble to write short sermons, until habits of condensation have been formed, but a minister who wishes to be useful will not complain of this. Sermons of *twenty minutes* seem about the happy medium between long and short. No person will ever complain of being weary. The lessons thus pithily expressed will be much more likely to be remembered. There are special occasions, indeed, when, after the example of St. Paul (Acts xx. 9), '*long preaching*' may be indulged in. If such occasions, however, be suffered too often to arise, '*deep sleep*' will fall upon more than one, who, with a shorter sermon, would have gone away edified. I remember two lethargic old gentlemen in one of the city congregations who so regularly composed themselves during the sermon for an hour's nap, that they went by the architectural name of '*the Church Sleepers*!' The most admired models of modern English sermons are short, well-digested, and easily delivered

in twenty minutes. Of course, to be able to speak to the purpose in so limited a space, long, rambling introductions must be left off; and the preacher will be obliged to begin with his subject and stop at the end. I reminded Mr. Greenfield of the Methodist exhorter, who, having announced his text, and declared his intention to 'preach *from it*,' kept his promise to the letter, by never *coming back* to it again! Sermons prepared in haste, and without careful weeding and pruning, will be apt to run off in the same direction.

"*July 13.*—Had the pleasure of making out the required testimonials to-day, recommending Robert Smith as a candidate for holy orders. How many promising youths are lost to us, so far as the ministry is concerned, who require nothing but advice and encouragement from the clergy, to induce them to put on the armor and help us in the fight. Mr. Smith is much gratified at his son's choice of a profession. Robert is to pursue his theological studies with me. Besides being less expensive than going to the seminary, he will have this advantage, that of learning something about parochial duty, by accompanying me in my walks.

"*July 15.*—To-day Grace Forester has changed her name to Patterson—not quite so romantic and poetical to be sure, but the name of a good and true man, and one who will do well in the world. I wish that George could be persuaded to follow Robert Smith's example.—Any one acquainted with the his-

tory of those whose names stand upon our list of clergy, must have remarked, how many who have proved themselves most useful to the Church, were, originally, trained for the bar. While there is no necessary connection between *law* and *divinity*, it can not be questioned that the habits of mind which a thorough lawyer will be apt to form, fit him in several important particulars for a successful discharge of clerical duties.

CHAPTER XL

Sickly August. — Angel of Death. — From House to House. — An Old Friend Sick. — White Hat on the Bedpost. — Shadow. — More mournful still. — Clouds and Darkness. — Asleep in Jesus.

THE month of August proved to be one of the hottest and most sickly ever known in Rockford, and many persons were dangerously ill, and many were borne to their last resting-place. But the epidemic was not confined to the town. The country people, who so often congratulate themselves upon their pure air, and cool shade, and wholesome water, had their full share of trouble. Mr. Mason was almost worn out by his unceasing attentions to the sick, and in spite of the scorching sun, he might be seen, at all hours of the day, going from house to house, about the town, or hastening, on horseback, to visit some distant parishioner, to whose bedside he had been suddenly summoned.

Rockford lost its usual air of cheerfulness, and deep gloom sat upon the countenances of all. Still, while worldly business was much interrupted, and amusements were forgotten, the church-going bell continued, with its accustomed regularity, to summon the people to God's house for worship.

Among those in the country who were sorely tried, was Mr. Ford's family. Several of the servants died, and then Mrs. Ford herself, being worn out with nursing, took to her bed. The clergyman went to see her as soon as he heard the afflictive tidings, and while there, was told of the dangerous illness of another old friend of ours—the Rev. Obadiah Bilger. So, having found Mrs. Ford convalescent, he turned his horse's head toward the Seventh-day Baptist preacher's farm, which was about two miles off.

Several large dogs set up a terrific barking as the clergyman approached the house, and it was not until a colored woman emerged from the kitchen and commanded them to be silent, that he ventured to dismount.

Mr. Mason was shown the way to the sick-room without ceremony, and Mr. Bilger looked somewhat astonished when he discovered who his visiter was.

“Why, Mr. Mason, is it possible that this is you?” said he, holding out his trembling hand as he spoke. “Well, this *is* kind, I declare.”

Finding him very weak and exhausted, the clergyman begged that he would not exert himself to talk, and after repeating a hymn, and offering a prayer in his behalf, he took his leave.

As Mr. Mason went out, he noticed the old white hat hanging on the bedpost—a hat which the owner had so often worn—and the homespun clothes which were equally familiar to everybody in the neighbor-

hood, thrown carelessly across a chair; and again and again, on his way to town, he found himself involuntarily repeating aloud the verse of the hymn:—

“ We lay our garments by,
Upon our beds to rest;
So death shall soon disrobe us all
Of what is here possessed.”

Perhaps there was nothing very remarkable in this—but the merest trifles assume an importance in our eyes, which they would not otherwise possess, when they have linked themselves on to circumstances either joyous or grievous.

On the morning after this visit to the country, the mournful announcement spread through Rockford that Mr. Mason was dangerously sick.

People are so accustomed to see the clergyman at all times attending to his business, that they look upon his life as a charmed one, and seldom imagine that any evil will happen to *him*, no matter how many may be struck down by disease on the right hand and on the left.

Mr. Mason's sickness was no idle rumor. The symptoms from the first were of the most dangerous kind, and by the middle of the afternoon his life was despaired of. He had a presentiment that he would not recover, and the few intervals of ease between paroxysms of pain, he spent in giving directions about the affairs of the church, and in secret prayer. Every attention which affection could prompt was

freely bestowed, and some would almost have given their own lives, if the clergyman could be spared.

The ways of God are mysterious : but we have this consolation, that HE doeth all things well. Toward night, Mr. Mason dropped into a gentle slumber, and those who watched by the bedside, anxiously hoped that he might awake refreshed. But he spoke no more. No one knew when the spirit took its departure ; but when the physician came in and felt the pulse, it had ceased to beat.

* * * * *

In one of his conventional addresses, in which a record is made of some faithful laborers who had entered into their rest, the bishop of Kentucky beautifully remarks :—

“What is one life, compared with the perpetuity of the Church? Silently and slowly the walls of that temple of God upon earth are rising from darkness and dust. The mark which any one workman leaves behind, is as if *his* hand and *his* blow had never been there. Even the more vast additions made by some master-builder are lost in the magnificent proportions of the whole. Yet every stone is in its place. Not a stroke is lost. Not a workman could be spared. The infinitesimal point upon which the humblest laborer spent his hour and died, was destined to that finish. And, at last, this temple of God shall stand, with foundations, strong as his throne, and broad as the compass of the earth ; with towers and turrets

reaching to the skies, and reflecting back the glories of heaven!"

Upon the right hand of the altar in the church at Rockford, may now be seen a neat marble slab with this inscription:—

Sacred to the Memory of
THE REV. EDWARD MASON,
FOR TEN YEARS THE FAITHFUL MINISTER OF THIS CHURCH.

"He being dead yet speaketh."

How eloquent are the dead! Often and often, there comes from the pastor in the grave a more persuasive and melting voice than from the pastor standing in the pulpit. His spirit, the fragrant memory of his life, lingers with his flock.

Thus has it been with him, who during the short period allotted him for labor in the vineyard, made "full proof of the ministry."

THE END.

GLICK

JAN 31 1972

