# STORIES OF A GOVERNESS

Annie Allen
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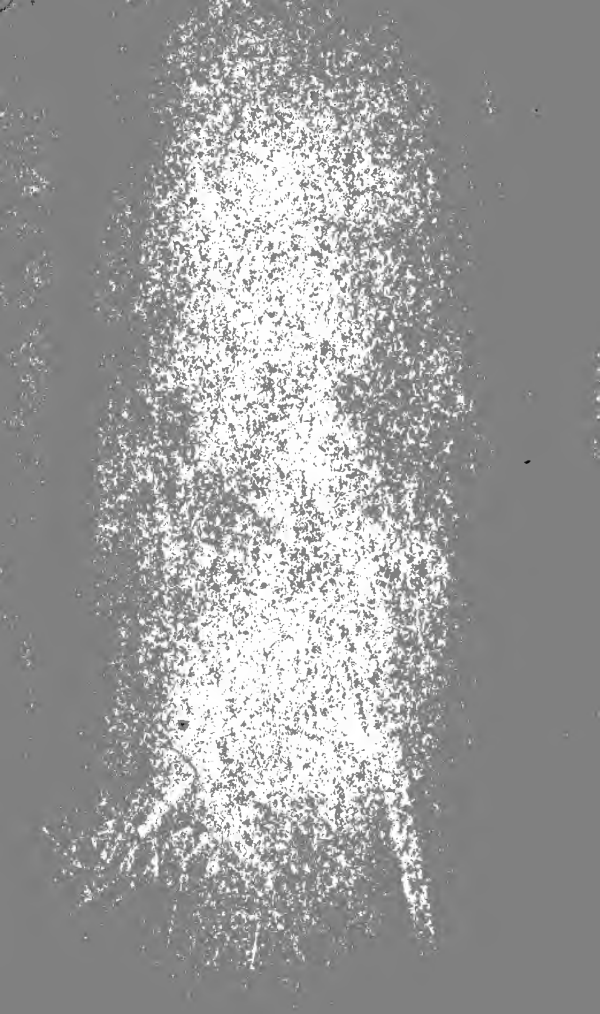

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# OF A GOVERNESS.

BY

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IN REMEMBRANCE

OF PLEASANT DAYS

AT "SOUTHSIDE."

# STORIES OF A GOVERNESS.

## CHAPTER I.

THE children had all been very eager about the new governess. They had sat full three minutes at a time, more than once, discoursing about her, wondering whether she was young or old, whether she was pretty or ugly, and whether she was cross or good-tempered. In short, there had been no end to their wonderings; but they could not agree, and so sat waiting full of curiosity till she should come down stairs.

Lillie sat on the floor in front of the grate, her chin on her hands, her eyes fixed on the bright fire. Frank was watching the door, in a very unnatural sort of quietness for a boy, with Tan curled up at his feet; and Jennie was nervously

tearing off the corners of her book, since it had grown too dark to read it, thinking that Miss Lane was a very long time in taking off her cloak.

On the sofa lay a plump little darling, with a pair of dark soft eyes shining out of the stillness; one round rosy cheek rested upon her pretty brown hand, and the silky hair was tangled by her race with Tan on the piazza. Nobody knew what Rosie was thinking, for Rosie did not talk much—did not tell all the puzzles in her child-brain, though it was quite full of them, like any other child's.

Outside, the wind had gone down, but the bare trees, the naked lawn, and the great wide stretch of waste land beyond that, looked bleak enough in the gathering gloom of the winter twilight. Softly fluttering down, like white birds, came a few light flakes of the first snow, and now and then the swaying back of a thick cedar-tree, showed a grave at its foot, receiving the downy covering. It was the resting place of the children's mother; she had lain there a

year, and the little ones had grown quite used to the sight of that which had once made their hearts ache for "poor mamma out in the cold."

There was a wistful look in the little faces, and a yearning for love in the little hearts all unsatisfied, since the good mother had gone to rest; but none, even down to little Rosie, had forgotten the prayers she had taught them, nor to lift, night and morning, their innocent hands to the All-Father.

And now Tan had risen, snuffed about, gone from one child to another, pattering about on his soft paws, saying, "good night" to all. He sprang noiselessly upon the sofa, by Rosie's head, and taking in his mouth a beautiful white kitten lying there, carried it off to his basket in the corner.

At this movement of Tan's every child was on its feet, to witness this nightly performance, which afforded the lookers-on the most intense delight. Kitty submitted very quietly, as a matter of course, and the puppy trotted off as gravely as mother cat might have done. He

put pussy to bed first, turning her over to her own side with his paws, if she encroached upon his, and then, ensconcing himself snugly in his corner of the basket, he winked himself to sleep with much satisfaction. When Tan had gone to sleep, the children grew tired of waiting again; but presently, a shout from Frank, who had gone to the window, roused them.

"There's papa!" he cried, and in two seconds, all, even sleepy Rosie, were in the hall, waiting for his greeting. In they came, a joyous party, clinging to their papa's arms and knees, claiming kisses and answers to a multitude of questions in one breath, forgetting their late interest in the new governess who stayed so long in her own room, and caring only to welcome him who claimed a double share of their love, now that they had no mother.

Jennie rang the bell, ordering James, when he answered it, rather imperiously, to take her father's coat and to bring his slippers, bustling about uneasily, and overturning a light stand near her in her haste.

"Softly, Jennie daughter; not so much noise," chided her papa, rubbing his hands before the blaze, as if he were glad to be at home again. Gently as the words were spoken, they brought tears to the eyes of the sensitive child, and she drew back with a shadow fallen upon her gladness.

With shy ecstasy Rosie was rubbing her brown face against her papa, much as pussy might have done; and Lillie performed a joyful dance with Tan, who had waked up with the commotion, holding him by the fore-paws, and endangering the costly vases by her romping. Frank was pouring out a history of the day with great glee, standing first upon one foot, then upon the other, winding up with:

"And Ben brought Miss Lane from the cars at half past four. We have not seen her yet. But papa—"

He stopped. There she was.

"How do you do, Mr. Graham? How do you do, children?" said a sweet voice, and they all, including Tan, became as mute as mice.

James came with candles, and then the examination began. Miss Lane was not old, neither was she very young; she was almost as small and slight as Jennie, and not at all pretty, as Frank declared more than once, though he liked to look at her face too.

She was dressed neatly and well; her collar shone, her hair shone, her teeth shone, her hands were almost lily white, and her step as light as the snow-fall out of doors. She had a quiet sort of grace that was very fascinating, and from the crown of her head to the sole of her small walking-shoe, stood before them the perfect lady.

## CHAPTER II.

THE breakfast bell had been rung, Miss Lane came in at its last tingle and saw the children waiting for her.

"Good morning! Where is your papa?"

"Gone: he goes to his office at six every morning, and doesn't come home till evening," answered Jennie.

"Who reads prayers?"

"No one, since mamma died."

The lady stood silent a moment; a little tinge of red colored her cheek, and she did not trust her voice for a few seconds, lest it should tremble.

"I cannot," was her first thought; "it is not my place; they may think it presuming."

"I will," was her next; "God has put it in my way; it is plainly my duty." Then speak-

ing aloud to Mrs. Hill, the housekeeper, she said calmly:

"If you will call in the servants, I will read prayers: I suppose Mr. Graham would not object."

"Oh, no, ma'am."

In a little time they came in and sat down, wondering at the new ways of the teacher, but joining in the prayers quite reverently, and as they went out again, casting curious glances at the pale quiet face of the reader. As for the children, their appetites were quite forgotten in this new and interesting study of the governess, and Jennie secretly determined to imitate her in her mode of eating. It was really a pleasure to watch the neat, graceful fingers at any work, and the children began to find and to feel something of that subtle charm in perfect grace and tact which mere beauty cannot supply. Though she spoke but little, and did not seem to watch them at all, not a word, not a motion, scarcely a glance of her new pupils escaped her. She was silently deciding upon the character of each.

After breakfast, the whole party ran to the windows, to admire the snow-fall; Miss Lane among the rest. It lay white and pure upon the lawn and the trees, and the sun sparkled over it.

"He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes," said the teacher.

"Who? God?" asked Rosie, who could not be content without caresses, and so had crept shily to the side of the teacher.

"Yes, and do you know why it is like wool?"

"Because it is white," answered Frank, coming up softly, while the rest followed after a moment of hesitation, and closed round Miss Lane with bashful but eager glances.

"Yes, and for another reason. Because it is warm; it protects the tender wheat, keeps it alive in the ground till the spring opens. It is like your cloaks and overcoats, only so much softer, so much more beautiful."

"Warm? snow warm? I thought it was cold."

"Persons have been saved from freezing by burying themselves in snow."

"Do you know stories?" questioned Rosie, with a flush over her brown face.

"Yes, a great many. I will tell you one about a person who had no bed but one of snow for many nights."

"Did you know him? did you ever see him?" were the eager questions; and the children crouched at her feet, forgetting their reserve.

"Yes, very, very well, all my life. This person, this gentleman, when he was young like you, cared only for books, books all the time, and wandering about over all the rocks, through all the woods in the neighborhood. After a while, when he grew older, he wanted to travel. He went to Asia, to Africa, to Europe—he saw all the great world, but he forgot God."

"Forgot God! oh, how dreadful!"

"Forgot God; forgot to love him and pray to him—tried to live without him. But God remembered him. He never forgets any one, you know—not even the smallest bird or worm. He counts the tiniest blade of grass."

"By and by a very sad thing happened to him. A beautiful lady whom he had loved a long, long time, and who was to have been his wife, died suddenly. She was deaf, quite deaf, but so very patient and sweet, living such a holy life, so near to God, that all her goodness shone in her face, making it so lovely, so radiant, that no one could look at her without loving her, and wondering if angels were not like her. She was lost at sea. She had been in England with her father, and was returning to America, when the ship was lost. They both went down together, and when this gentleman heard it, he seemed as if he could never be happy again.

"He looked quite broken-hearted; but the taking of her who was to have been his wife to the rest of the blessed did not seem to draw him any nearer to God, and after a while he wandered off again, and was not heard of for years. He lived for months near the shore of the Gulf of California, alone, excepting the company of two pet seals, which he learned to love dearly. He used to go out on the sand and watch the

seals there. Sometimes the young ones, when left by their parents on the beach, would make the most pitiful moaning and crying, like a little child in pain. It used to melt his heart to hear them; he said it made him think of the voice of the lost, crying out of the sea; and so his melancholy grew deeper and darker than ever. He would have stayed there perhaps till he died; but his seals were lost, and then, in his loneliness, he roamed away again.

"He settled at last in New Mexico, and though he lived so much alone, his gentleness and kindliness won him many friends, and he began to think he had found a home. But at length he longed to return, and when he set out he sped towards the mountains. He dared not travel through the valleys, for fear of the Indians, but had to keep out of their sight, if he wished to preserve his life. The mountains were covered with snow. The cold was bitter, and he knew that many days must pass before he could reach a safe shelter; but his heart did not fail him, for he began in those fearful,

solitary nights to beg for God's aid, to think of him as he had not done in years before.

"Every night he lay down in the snow, hungry and tired, for it was dangerous to shoot game. If the Indians had heard the report of his rifle, they would have been upon him quickly; and he suffered severely for want of food. His shoes gave out too, but not his courage and trust in God, which had all come back to him as he lay under the stars, in his snowy bed, so awfully alone, shut out from humanity. On the thirteenth day, he limped into a fort, almost barefooted, hollow-eyed and gaunt, very weak, but joyful over his deliverance, and, with a new heart, praising God."

"Where is he now?" asked Rosie, when Miss Lane paused.

"Gone to rest," she answered solemnly.

By this time the hour for school had arrived, and all were eager to begin the work of learning, so they gladly followed the teacher as she led the way up stairs to the school-room.

## CHAPTER III.

BEFORE many days the children had learned that Miss Lane intended to be obeyed; so the idea of resisting her authority gradually faded out of their minds, if they had ever entertained it. She went about her duties in her quiet, graceful way, showing in every action that she worked for God, and made the thought of her accountability to Him the rule of her life.

"There was a promptness and decision in her manner that irresistibly drew every child into her way, and very soon there was no complaint of tardiness or carelessness in the school-room. Jennie's hair was brushed smoothly, because Miss Lane's satin braids made her ashamed of her tangled locks. Lillie thought of her own ten ragged finger-nails with a blush, when the rosy tips of her teacher's fingers glided over the

piano-keys; and Frank scraped his shoes before coming into the parlor, because he had once left a stain on the clear gray of her dress with his muddy boots; he could not forget her distressed look as she noticed it, and reformed accordingly.

A taste for beautiful things began to be developed in their minds too, and the stars, the sunset, and a snow-fall were seen with new eyes. They learned, too, to know that God was about them, around them, above them; that there was no thought in their heart but he knew it altogether; that he must be the Guide in the daily walk of his baptized children. So the days went on in content.

There came sometimes a girl of Jennie's age to visit the children; Mary Noel was her name; her parents lived on the opposite shore of the lake, about a quarter of a mile from Mr. Graham's, and were very careless, worldly people, keeping but a loose watch over their child.

Miss Lane did not fancy her from the first,

and disapproved of the intimacy with her young charges; but she had never seen anything positively evil in the child's behavior, and therefore could not forbid it. But one afternoon, while Mary Noel was there, something occurred which decided her to prevent all intercourse between the children.

Lillie and Mary in passing Miss Lane's door found it ajar, and looked in curiously at the pictures, curious boxes and books that adorned it, all arranged with most exquisite neatness and taste.

"Let us go in," proposed Mary. "She is not there, is she?"

"No; but I would rather go in when she is there," answered Lillie.

"Well, I'd like to see those pictures; come," and she pushed the door open.

"I don't think Miss Lane would like it," persisted Lillie.

"Why? what need you care?" The room's in your father's house."

"I don't think it would be quite right, quite polite; Miss Lane is so precise."

"I know; such a stiff old maid, too. You'll all be just like her. Well, I'm going in. I wonder if there are many pictures in that album; I'm going to look."

"Come out, Mary; we had better not disturb anything. I am sure Miss Lane would be displeased."

"You all act as if you were afraid of her. She isn't mistress here yet. Mamma said may-be she'd be your stepmother sometime; how would you like that?"

The child's face became scarlet; she stamped her foot.

"It is not true; it is a wicked story. You are very bad to say so. I'll ask papa;" and Lillie sat down in the window with tears in her eyes.

In the mean time, Mary was examining one by one the contents of the room, opening books and boxes, and peering about, full of curiosity.

"Oh, Lillie, here is this bottle; it is so deli-

cious! Oh, just smell—Cologne! And isn't the bottle pretty?"

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Lillie, springing up and taking it out of her hand quickly—too quickly; the choice ornament fell from her grasp, and lay broken in two pieces upon the floor, while the odor of the Cologne water filled the room.

Lillie's cheeks crimsoned; she stood with clasped hands and loud beating heart, surveying the fragments.

"What *shall* we do?" she exclaimed.

"Let us go away—she'll find the bottle broken; we need not say anything. She will not know that you did it."

So, conscience-smitten and miserable, the little girl followed her tempter down stairs; her first thought being an earnest desire to escape the blame. Lillie was nervous and sensitive and very timid; the idea of her teacher's displeasure overshadowed all the sunshine of that day, and made it indeed a time of wretchedness. She trembled with terror when she heard Miss Lane's

step, and shrunk back with a guilty flush whenever she caught her eye, growing pale and chill at the sound of her voice, lest the dreaded question should be asked, and contending with her ever rebuking conscience which urged her to confession.

"Ah!" she thought, "if I had only not given up at first—if I had only never touched it—it was so wrong. Mamma used to tell us that we were always punished for doing wrong, even if no one saw us: and now I know that is why I broke the vase. Miss Lane cannot trust me when she knows it; and, oh, she said she would rather we troubled her every minute with mischief than to see us do *one dishonorable* thing. She will be sure to find it out too, oh, dear! and I never can tell her; it frightens me to think of it. What shall I do? I am so unhappy;" and the child buried her head in the sofa cushions, sobbing aloud.

By and by she crept into the parlor, quite pale and subdued, worn out by the ceaseless reproaches of her conscience, and waited in much

sadness for her papa's coming. The children were in great glee watching the snow as it came softly down, and listening to the loud howling of the wind round the house, happy in their good home, the loving hearts around them, and the bright firelight.

How little they knew of the great world, with the sin, suffering, and death in it; of the dying, despairing thousands on God's earth, crying out to him in sore pain and need, the day of their rejoicing long since passed!

Presently there was a shout, as Miss Lane came at a quick pace up the walk, struggling against the wind and storm, holding her cloak fast around her. She came in merrily, laughing, and with a vivid color in both cheeks.

"It is perfectly delightful," she cried, as soon as she saw the children. "How happy is the dog rolling in the snow!"

"Where have you been? We were lonesome; we've been hunting you everywhere."

"I have been to visit my Sunday scholars,

and I came round by the post-office for my letters, and I have two such pleasant ones."

"Did you go to see all the scholars? And did you find out who it was that sat on the end of the bench last Sunday?"

"Yes; her name is Phœbe Birch, and I went to her house. She has a stepmother who is not kind to her. Her father was sitting in a corner of the room; he had been drinking; and when I went in, Phœbe was crying. Her eyes were quite red and swollen; she brightened at the sight of me; but I was too much afraid of both the father and mother to talk much to her, poor child! At last I asked her if she would not come regularly to Sunday-school, and gave her a little Prayer-book, which seemed to make her very happy. The mother scolded and said, 'She was good for nothing already, and she did not think going to Sunday-school would make her any better.' I told her that I hoped it would. But when I had got out of the close little room, from that hard scowling woman and the drunken man, into the fresh air, I could

scarcely bear to think of poor little Phœbe's spending all her life there."

Miss Lane looked round the beautiful rooms, her eye glancing through an open door to the glittering table awaiting them with its delicacies, and she sighed heavily. Her cloak lay on the sofa; she was holding her hat by one string, and Lillie was trembling, lest any moment she might go up to her own room to put them away, and so discover the mischief that had been done. What would she have given to live over that day again, that she might have left *that* undone?

It was too late then, and her face blanched as Miss Lane, gathering up her things, went gaily up stairs to brush her hair. In a little while she came down again, and Lillie's watchful eyes saw —as no doubt she expected—a change in her face immediately.

"Has any one been in my room to-day?" she inquired. There was a chorus of Noes, and she continued:

"Some one or some *thing* has knocked my

Cologne bottle off the bureau, and I found it lying shattered on the floor."

"It must have been Sallie," said Jennie, "she is so careless; she spilled all the ink in my bottle on the parlor carpet yesterday."

"What were you doing with ink in the parlor?" asked Miss Lane.

"I was writing my exercises: Mary Noel and Lillie made so much noise in the hall that I could not write in my room."

"Don't go there to write again; it is not the proper place; and I wish none of you to have anything to do with Mary Noel; she is not a proper companion for you, I am sure. When she comes here to ask you to walk with her again, just tell her I do not allow you to go. I must speak to Sallie about breaking my things; there is no occasion for such accidents."

She walked toward the door. Lillie started up to stop her; but the words died on her lip. She could not utter them; she could not bear to see the expression of disapproval gathering upon

her teacher's face, to know her trust was forfeited, and feel the punishment deserved.

"What did Sallie say?" asked Jennie, when she returned.

"She says she never touched the bureau, and seemed much hurt at my suspecting her," answered Miss Lane, sitting down by the window with a grave air, and looking out upon the snow in silence.

"You need not believe her," continued Jennie, "she is not true. Mrs. Hall can't teach her to be."

"I have good reason to believe her," was the answer; and Mr. Graham's arrival at that moment caused the children to rush with a shout to meet him, forgetting Sallie and the Cologne bottle.

## CHAPTER IV.

"BUT if you go to-night, Miss Lane, we cannot finish Evangeline."

"Why not, Jennie? *You* can read aloud to the rest."

"But I don't like reading aloud."

"Neither do I like reading aloud. I do a great many things I don't like to do."

"I'll read it to myself—then the rest can do the same."

"I don't *like* to read aloud a thing that I have read again and again. I don't *like* to play games that you little ones like. I don't care to play for you, when each one can do it for himself."

Miss Lane looked at Jennie gravely. The little girl's lip began to quiver, her eyes filled.

"Oh, Miss Lane!" she faltered.

"Suppose I were never willing to do anything for your pleasure, Jennie, just because I did not fancy it, wouldn't you think me a little selfish?"

The tears were rolling over Jennie's cheeks now, and Miss Lane sat in silence, wishing the child's sensitiveness were not so exquisite. The gentlest chiding touched the quick—it was almost a cruelty to rebuke, even when rebuke was needed. That word "selfish" had set Jennie's heart-strings to quivering; and thoughtlessness, as much as anything else, had prompted her first speech; so she sat downcast, bearing her pain in silence, while her teacher was almost as much grieved as she.

"I think it would not be quite kind to sit alone and read to yourself all the evening, when the rest are so anxious to finish the story, and you know but one can have the book at a time."

There was no answer; but Jennie had forgotten her great repugnance to reading aloud in remembering that only the day before, Miss

Lane had left her book for an hour, to tell baby stories and read Mother Goose to Rosie, when she was lying peevish and sick in bed.

"She could not have liked it," pondered the child, and the first dim consciousnes of duty rose in her mind to puzzle her. Sorely troubled was Jennie; she did not fancy giving up her own will in anything. She had an instinctive dislike to law and order, to getting up early, setting things to right, and losing her own pleasure.

A little flash of light seemed let into her soul, and all her daily wrong-doing lay clear before her. She read selfishness on all, or at the best, thoughtlessness for others' pleasure. Before her like a picture, she saw her dear mother stretched on her patient bed of pain, smiling ever to keep sadness out of the hearts of her little ones, and fading slowly day by day out of their beautiful bright world into what seemed loneliness, chilliness, darkness to Jennie in her fresh youth. Now and then the sweet weak voice had begged her daughter to read the Word of Life to her as

she went through the valley of the Shadow of Death; and many times this seemed a wearisome task. How glad the child would have been to remember having volunteered *once* to cheer her mother's waiting-time with the words of Jesus! Such anguish as it was then to know that many times the mild request for a Psalm or the lessons of the day had been met by a frowning, fretful compliance. Too late, too late, thought Jennie with anguish and yearning for

> "The touch of the vanished hand,
> And the sound of the voice that was still."

And almost the last words that dear mother had uttered were:

"Jennie, be good to the little ones, dear—patient, loving. They will have no mother, and the world is dreary without love, my child; give it to them, all that you can, and fill my place."

It had been long ago in her child life, when time is counted by hours and days, and we think a year so long, since her mother went to rest,

but it was not till that hour that the meaning of her mother's words came to her. There had never seemed to be much need for the exercise of her care over the little ones; so she thought. It seemed as if there were nothing she could do—at least nothing that she *liked* to do—teaching the Catechism, reading aloud, telling stories and such things were so disagreeable, and she could not have patience with the little ones.

While Jennie was sitting at the window, looking out on the winter scene and thinking, with the tears drying on her cheek, Miss Lane had gone to the piano, and was playing softly—she was singing too, in a low voice, and the silent darkness was creeping over the lawn under the trees and into the room, gathering shadows on the walls and settling stilly over the fields and sky.

> "Broken-hearted, lone and tearful,
> By that cross of anguish fearful,
> Stood the Mother by her Son."

Deep and touching was the voice, as were the words, and a feeling of awe, pain, and strange longing love filled the heart of the child, and

her soul went out in prayer to the Saviour who died for her, to keep her in his ways and make her spirit white.

That same evening, after Miss Lane had gone to stay with poor dying Phœbe Birch, Jennie finished the story to her little brother and sisters; played her papa's favorite songs, and went to bed infinitely rewarded for her sacrifice in the "peace of mind which passeth understanding."

The dreaded messenger who walks among us unseen at all hours had called for the lonely child in her comfortless home, and Phœbe's soul was passing to the land of rest, where many saints had gone before.

The morning before, Phœbe had gone down stairs to make the fire and prepare breakfast. It was a chilly morning, and the child's garments were very thin, but she was very happy. She had a friend. In all the wide world, a few weeks before, there had been no one to greet her pleasantly, no one to care whether she lived or died, and her poor heart was aching, aching all

the time for that love which every child claims as its right.

All day long it was toil, and wearying at fault-finding, sometimes weeping at blows from her drunken father or her cruel stepmother, till there seemed neither rest nor brightness for her on earth.

At last, one Sunday, as she stood wistfully watching the children going into Sunday-school, an impulse to follow them seized her. So, trembling and with flushed cheeks, she glided through the door and sat down on the first vacant seat.

How beautiful it all was! The children were singing; and into the sensitive, wounded spirit of the child crept a strange, soothing peace, as if the great world of pain and sin were shut out from her forever.

Heaven must be like that, she thought, and her eyes rested on a fair face near her with a sort of reverent admiration. It was a face patient and calm, with a touch of sadness in it though the eyes looked ever upward, and the

lips smiled. The brow was clear and broad and white, the hair bright and smooth, and children's faces turned lovingly to meet the gentle glances cast upon them from those unclouded blue eyes.

For one moment, this lady with her grace and exceeding refinement, passing her delicate fingers over the organ keys, seemed as far off from the child as the angels in heaven; but when her soft voice had inquired Phœbe's name, when those lily hands held her own brown hand, some of Phœbe's awe vanished, and a warm, grateful love sprang up in its place.

And after that the working, suffering days never seemed so long. Somehow, the thought of Sunday brightened all the week, and Phœbe lifted up her heart. Sometimes, indeed many times, Miss Lane came to see her and gave her books. Once or twice the child had spent an hour in her kind friend's own dainty room. And when at last she became "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," Miss Lane stood near to

encourage, and ever since had been pointing out the way in which she should walk.

No one could dream then, how inexpressibly sweet and strong was this tie that bound her to her benefactress. No one knew how the thought of this earnest love warmed and lighted that cold room in the gloomy December morning. And but little could the outer world of those more fortunate than she, guess how exquisitely beautiful were the thoughts and feelings of this poor, untaught child, whose one joy had changed the earth into a Paradise.

So she lighted the fire and sat fanning it into a blaze with her apron, thinking, with a thrill of delight, that to-day Miss Lane was to begin teaching her to knit fancy knitting. She had promised to find sale for any articles that Phœbe might make; and such a bright vision rose before her fancy that she clapped her hands and laughed aloud — such a picture of a winter cloak, a hood, and a little offering to the Sunday School, which it burned her cheek to think she had never been able to give. And on

Christmas morning she would go herself to Lyle's to buy a bouquet for Miss Lane, one made up of delicate, pure flowers like the lady herself, with heliotrope and geranium leaves.

Inside of her Prayer-book was a withered, faded blossom, which Miss Lane had given her weeks ago, and told her it meant, "I love you," and Phœbe kissed it night and morning, and many times in the day, if hard words brought tears to her eyes or tempted her to lose her trust and hopefulness. It all came back when she touched this talisman, or read, "Let not your heart be troubled."

She used to think a great many strange thoughts, these lonely days, when sometimes, for many hours, there was no human friend to whom she could speak, and only the wide, blank snow, with the leafless trees waving over it, for her to look out upon.

She liked to look at the sky, and watch the clouds at sunset, for God seemed just beyond them, and her loneliness left her when she remembered that He was her Father, and a beau-

tiful hope was in her heart, that she, the believing child, might save that erring, earthly parent.

So, when the blaze sprang up, Phœbe, under the influence of its warmth, grew drowsy and fell asleep, and dreamed. While she dreamed, the messenger came; slowly the flame crept towards her, and a spark rested on her cotton dress; it glowed and spread and crackled, then burst into a flame and bathed her in a stream of fire. Her father and mother were asleep up stairs, but her dreadful, agonized screams soon reached their ears.

When they burst into the room, the panting, trembling, shrieking child was rolling on the floor, blackened, burnt, a pitiful sight for human eyes. She had wrapped a piece of carpet about her, and so put out the dreadful fire; but the agony of those few seconds who can tell?

She bore it all, the dreadful, sickening dressing of the burns, her faintness, and the coarse words of the step-mother, who reproached her even then; she bore it because Miss Lane held

her hand, whispered her words of Jesus, and cooled her brow, praying God to help her bear it. He did help her, and a wonderful patience and sweetness came into her soul, so that heaven seemed to lie not far off.

She could not bear, at first, that her comforter should leave her, but one word on the duty of resignation dried her tears, and she waited in calmness till her dear friend came to her again.

Every moment that she could spare from her duties, Miss Lane devoted to the sufferer. Her soft fingers soothed when none others had the power, and when the pain was torture she sang the young girl into quietness, lifting her soul to God in prayer, and cheering her when the fear of death was strong. So two days passed, and a second night of watching came.

## CHAPTER V.

ILLIE had never spent such miserable days as those two when the warfare with her conscience was waging continually. Everything went wrong, nothing gave her any pleasure, she was thoroughly miserable, and so irritable that she had to be sent two or three times each day to her room for cross answers and ill conduct.

She knew quite well that she could have no peace till she confessed her fault, she saw that she could not do right till that spot on her usual truth and sincerity had been washed out. But timidity held her back; she kept putting off the evil day, and rose each morning with a sense of heaviness and depression about her, resolving to get rid of the weight before another night came.

She could not pray, for while she said the words she knew the act was mockery, because she was continuing in wilful sin. So, this safeguard being removed, the child fancied herself falling into sins innumerable, and darkening all the hours of the day with the shadow of one fault.

Two or three times she had gone to Miss Lane, intending to confess; but when there, the words died on her lips, and remained unsaid—such a trembling and terror seized her. She tried to persuade herself that opportunity was wanting, as her teacher was so much engaged with the dying Phœbe that she was only seen at meals and in school hours; but that was poor comfort.

The very next afternoon Lillie determined to meet her teacher in the hall, and tell her the whole truth; but when she heard Miss Lane going quickly down the steps, her feet almost refused to move, and when she opened the hall door, Frank was there, kneeling on the rug, and fitting on the small over-shoe for his idol.

She could not speak before Frank; he would consider her so mean, her cheek crimsoned at the thought, and a glimpse at Miss Lane's pale, sad face frightened her still more; it looked so fixed and settled, so far off from things of earth, that she could not bear the idea of those eyes falling on her in shocked surprise and reproach.

She drew back, the soft "good-bye" was uttered, the slight figure flitted through the door, and in a second was skimming down the lawn with quick, graceful motions. It was too late!

About half-an-hour later, as she and Jennie were drawing in the school-room, the latter, looking out of the window, exclaimed—

"There's Mary Noel! What brings her here, I wonder?"

Lillie was putting her drawing materials away hurriedly, a look of eagerness taking the place of the weary expression that had before rested upon her face, when Jennie continued—

"You must not go down, you know, Miss

Lane told us not to have anything to do with her."

"I don't care!" exclaimed Lillie.

"For shame, Lillie! I'll tell papa. What would *he* say if he heard you speak so?"

"I'm not going to sit still, shut up in the house all day. Besides, what is the harm? Mary Noel don't hurt anybody."

"It is wrong to do what your teacher tells you not to do. You know Mary Noel is not a good girl."

"She's as good as anybody. You don't like her, nor care to play with her at all, or you would not be so obedient all at once."

Just then the door opened, and Mary appeared.

"Don't you want to go and slide? It is fine on the ice, Lillie," she exclaimed.

"Miss Lane and papa don't like Lillie to go on the ice alone," answered Jennie, quickly.

"That was when the ice was thinner," interposed Lillie, angry at her interference.

"What a baby you are, to care for everything

Miss Lane says. I don't see what right she has to rule you."

"She don't rule us," cried Jennie, indignantly; but Lillie, whose wrong-doing had not been without its effect upon her sense of justice and natural nobleness, began to consider herself an ill-used person, and flushed crimson at the thought of being "ruled."

"She does," continued Mary; "why, the other afternoon, Lillie was afraid——"

A quick, imploring gesture from Lillie stopped her words, and Jennie, facing round, eyed both girls suspiciously.

"What was she afraid of? What have you been doing?"

"Oh, nothing. Come, Lillie, are you going?"

"No, she isn't," uttered Jennie, imperatively.

"You can't hinder me."

"I'll tell papa."

"Well, tell him."

"I'll go now, and Mrs. Hill will lock you up, if I speak to her."

"Oh, dear, there's another mistress, is there?

Why, it's a wonder you get liberty to eat or sleep," exclaimed Mary, mockingly.

"I did not care about going on the ice," said Lillie, standing up and looking wrathfully at Jennie, "but since you have made yourself so disagreeable about it, I *will* go. So there's nobody to blame but yourself. Papa has told you never to speak to me in that manner, many a time."

The two strode down stairs and out of the house with much dignity, leaving Jennie in great anger. But presently, the excitable girl's nerves grew more quiet, a feeling of sorrow took the place of her wrath, and her tender conscience began to accuse her of hastiness and sinfulness in provoking her sister. It was not long before every other thought was forgotten in an intense feeling of self-reproach, and, like all impulsive persons, she went quickly from one extreme to another, and acquitted Lillie of all blame, laying it upon herself.

"Oh! if I had only not been so quick. Oh! if I had governed my tongue—and I have been

warned so many times—Lillie would not have gone, I'm sure; she nearly always does what she is told. May-be she will be drowned. I will run and coax her to come back. I could never hold up my head again."

She ran out along the bank of the lake, and called the two girls loudly. They were sliding near the shore, and Jennie's anger and impatience returned at the sight of them in safety, disobeying the commands of those to whom they owed obedience; so that another scene of quarrelling took place, and Jennie went back sobbing with vexation, and Lillie continued to slide, more obstinate and hardened than before.

"Let us go out further," proposed Mary, "the ice is smoother nearer the other side."

"Are you sure it is sound?"

"Yes, Tom drew a load of wood over it yesterday."

So on they slid till they reached a broad, square place, where Mr. Graham's men had been cutting ice, with a thin coating as smooth as glass upon it.

"I'm not afraid to cross that. Are you, Lillie?"

Foolish child that she was, Lillie could not bear to acknowledge that she was afraid.

"You are afraid!" exclaimed Mary, with a loud laugh, seeing her hesitate. "I dare you to cross it. It is not thin."

"You're afraid yourself."

"I knew you were. See, you're only trying to get out of it."

With a crimson face and her heart beating loudly, the little girl advanced upon the treacherous ice. She had just gone beyond the edge of the thick part, when a crack and a shriek rang upon the air, and she felt herself going down. It was all the work of an instant, like a flash, though neither remembered exactly how it happened. Mary caught the clothes of the sinking child, and drew her out, dripping, shivering, and pale with fright, upon the thick ice. There they looked at each other an instant, and then began to sob with nervous excitement.

Lillie was so touched and awed by the emo-

tion of her usually insensible companion, that she had not the heart to cry out against her for tempting her to her death, as had been her first impulse. So, in that deplorable plight, with the dripping water freezing about her, she hastened home.

She was too much subdued to heed Jennie's "I told you so," and "You might have known," but submitted to Mrs. Hill's rather rough usage in meekness, obeying her sentence of going to bed and taking a hot drink, in silence.

And there she lay in solitude, weeping over her sin, resolving to do better in the future, starting up with a great thrill of terror when the thought that she might even then have been in God's presence with the unrepented sin on her soul, came into her mind.

"I will tell Miss Lane just as soon as she comes home," she said to herself again and again, and as the night came on, she sat listening eagerly for the light steps of the teacher. Jennie came creeping in with a penitent face, after a while, to show her completed drawing,

and to tell her, shyly but earnestly, how sorry she was for her share in the afternoon's disaster.

"Papa will punish me, I suppose," remarked Lillie, at last, when there was a pause. "But I think I am cured of going with Mary Noel any more. I wonder if he will be very angry!" And the old dread of reproaches came upon her with such force, that she was about to utter an entreaty to Jennie for silence concerning the events of the afternoon, when her better soul came to her again, and she resolved to bear whatever might be given her in patience.

Presently, as she lay there alone, listening for sounds in the large, still house, she heard the joyful outcry that welcomed her papa, and a few seconds after, the light, tripping step of Miss Lane sounded near the door. Pretty soon, she was heard descending, and then the buzzing of voices, as the parlor door was opened, came confusedly to her ear.

A moment more and the sound was shut out from her, and Sallie came up with a tray, and

her nice tea arranged upon it—she saw at a glance—by Miss Lane's own hands.

But Lillie was almost too sad and depressed to eat. Her heart was very full of tears by this time, as she thought that her own fault had shut her out from the light and warmth and pleasure down stairs. She heard the piano soon, and voices of happy laughter reached her faintly, borne through the long empty halls and quiet rooms up stairs. But these sounds of mirth, instead of enlivening her, only made her sadder.

The great tears ran down her cheeks as she thought how little she was missed, and wondered if her papa would come to say "good night" to her. The moonlight began to shine in at her window. She got up and looked out at her mamma's grave, and wept again in her loneliness and gloom. The door opened softly, and turning round quickly, she saw her papa standing grave and sorrowful before her.

"I'm sorry to hear what my little Lillie has been doing," he said, sadly.

The child covered her face with both hands.

"Indeed, indeed, papa, I am so sorry," she sobbed.

"But that will not undo it, my child, it cannot give me back my *trust* in your honor and truth."

It was very bitter. What would she have given to blot out all those last days? Her guilty pleasure seemed so very worthless now, and she had given in exchange her papa's esteem, Miss Lane's confidence, her peace of mind. She sat with her head bent down in humiliation, while her papa stood over her with the face which he had worn when her mamma died. Lillie could not bear it.

"Oh! papa, please forgive me, please trust me again; I cannot bear it."

And Lillie felt his arms around her, and his kiss on her cheek, while she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"I will take any punishment, papa, so you'll let me be your little Lillie again. It has been so miserable."

"My dear, I forgive you—you must not for-

get that there is some one else whose pardon you must ask. You have displeased God no less than me—and you are His baptized child, you know."

Lillie hung her head, and her papa, kissing her again, left her to seek that pardon, which she did seek humbly and with tears. Before she slept she opened her heart to her teacher also, and received an assurance of forgiveness.

"Never try to conceal anything, Lillie," said Miss Lane; "your punishment is sure to come sooner or later. Your sin will find you out in some way. God allows not the slightest wrongdoing to pass unpunished—and a hidden fault is like poison in the soul, blackening and corrupting it. Little children can hide but little from those who are older. I guessed much from your manner, and Sallie told me you and Mary had been in my room, when I asked her if she knew anything of the accident."

"Then what *could* you have thought of me, Miss Lane!"

"I was very much disappointed in you, my dear, I will tell you frankly. I thought you incapable of concealment or deceit."

"Oh, Miss Lane, I have been so unhappy. I wanted to tell you, but I was afraid, and I really thought it very mean to go into your room without permission."

"But you listened to the tempter *twice*, my dear, and you see what the consequences have been. If you had resisted the first time, it would not have been so easy to fall the second. Every time we yield, we lose one portion of strength, and by familiarity with sin, our horror of it passes quickly away. There might come a time, my dear, when a deceitful, disobedient action would not trouble your conscience at all."

"Oh, Miss Lane! But, indeed, there are so many things to make me naughty, and Jennie was so cross and overbearing that I *would* go."

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the

crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him," was the answer, as Miss Lane, kissing the little penitent, went out and left her with God.

## CHAPTER VI.

"The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night,
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white."

IT was Saturday, the children's holiday. Miss Lane was walking through the glen towards the village, and looked at everything with pleasure. The ground was covered with a light snow, and the trees wore a sparkling coat of mail. It seemed as if a new earth had been created during the night, so strange and beautiful was the aspect of the forest.

The air was soft and fresh, and quite still; the snow was like an exquisitely pure carpet under her feet, and here and there, a branch, laden with its weight of pearls, bent over the path.

It was more like a dream than anything real, for the trees wore a foliage fairy-like in its delicacy, and a gray sky hung over the whole. Sounds came muffled to her ears, and the brook was ice-bound. Everything was so strangely, wonderfully beautiful, that her heart was thrilled, and she was half afraid to think how very glad she was — how very fair the world seemed. So, moving on quickly in the lightness of her heart, pushing the snow with her feet, she came out of the long avenue of crystal, and knocked at the cottage door.

"She was took bad in the night, ma'am," was the step-mother's reply to her inquiries, and the awful nearness of death fell upon the marvellous loveliness of the day, changing the bounding gladness of the lady's heart into a calm, quiet sadness, and leaving an impress of wonder and fright on the hard face of the woman, as they stood in the presence of that soul so near the borders of the silent land.

"She's been lying just so for two hours, Miss. I can't get her to open her eyes or to speak.

The doctor's been here, and he says 'taint no use; so he went away again."

The perfectly white face of the child was upturned towards them, her eyes were closed, and deep black circles enclosed them, sunken in their sockets. The battle of life was almost over. The little gleam of brighter days was about to broaden into the full sunlight of the celestial abode, and a land of love was opening for the lonely heart.

"Phœbe, it is I, your friend, Miss Lane. Can you not speak to me?"

The heavy lids were lifted, and a ray from the dimming eyes rested upon the lady's face, as she leaned over the miserable bed, the tears dropping silently.

"The doctor said he thought nothin' wouldn't rouse her, ma'am. She is nearly gone, for sure;" and the step-mother lifted her apron to her eyes.

The father, haggard from drink, yet with a certain expression of awe on his face, too, came in and stood on the other side of the bed.

With great gentleness, Miss Lane administered a cordial, and soon the deathlike look left Phœbe's face a little. The fingers lying languidly in her friend's palm closed in a slight pressure, and her lips moved in a whisper. The teacher put down her ear and caught the words, "The Holy Communion—send for Mr. Payne."

In a moment the step-mother was hastening for the man of God.

"Father," said Phœbe again, speaking with much difficulty; and the wretched man came nearer, so that his child's eyes rested upon his face. "I am going to leave you—oh, be ready to meet me; promise:" and the solemn tones of her voice broke up the ice of wickedness and hardness about the man's heart, till he wept.

There was a great stillness in the room again, and it was only broken by a low moan of pain from the dying child.

"Do you suffer, Phœbe?" asked Miss Lane.

"Oh yes, and it is dark—lonely."

"Jesus is there, my dear; trust in Him."

"I cannot see—oh, save me."

"Our Saviour is waiting, Phœbe. He is near. Do not fear. Lift up your heart unto the Lord."

A light broke over her face, and the moaning ceased. She moved her hand to her breast; and, lifting the sheet, Miss Lane saw lying there, the little Prayer-book she had given her, with its faded heliotrope between the leaves. The tears fell faster, and she kissed the poor, wasted cheek of the girl.

"That makes me happy—" she murmured, with such a look of delight that a great pang passed through the teacher's heart, as she thought of how little love had brightened the poor girl's life, when one kiss was felt amidst her suffering to be such a joy.

"I'll remember it in Paradise—you have taught me the way there," she continued.

And now Mr. Payne came, and the solemn sacrament began. Kneeling round the bed of that departing soul, the broken body and shed blood of the Lord were received by chastened

spirits—while "the peace which passeth understanding" rested in the hearts of all.

It was over, and Phœbe lay on her pillow exhausted, but with a calm mind, and an expression of perfect joy on her face. And now the end was very near. For one, two hours, the soul wrestled with the body, and the pain was hard to bear: but then a calmer time came, when she was free from pain, and before sunsetting she fell asleep, or rather woke into light and life.

Her friend smoothed back the soft hair, closed the eyes, took the little Prayer-book from the dead hands, gave it to the humbled father with a silent prayer, and reverently kissing the marble brow, went softly home through the quiet woods, feeling as if she had been close to heaven.

At the sun-setting, its brilliant rays illuminated all the trees and shrubs till the forests were resplendent. The sky was blue, and a few clouds floated near the horizon, tinted with a border of gold. In the distance, the heaven and the woods seemed to meet; the clouds, the

millions of branches sparkling with diamonds, appeared—one might conceive—like the gates at the entrance of Paradise, and shining upon them was the splendor of the sun behind.

A soul had entered into rest, and God's world, held in his hand, was made all beautiful by the reflection of his glory. Suddenly, darkness came, and the wonderful beauty faded away.

## CHAPTER VII.

IT was a dull gray morning, and it had been raining all night. Jennie was very unwilling to get up—it was a daily trial to her—but this morning it seemed absolutely impossible, she could not keep her eyes open; and yet, half dozing as she was, she was uncomfortably conscious that she was doing wrong.

Seven sounded from the clock—half past—and then she heard Miss Lane and the children descending. She lay still, idly watching the drops as they fell against the panes, trying to make up her mind that she did not care for the disapproval of her own conscience nor for the reproof which she was quite sure awaited her from Miss Lane. In fact, she was indifferent to everything but the dreamy, lazy delight of lying

there and hearing the dripping of the rain drops. Presently, her charming reverie was rudely disturbed by Lillie, who rushed into the room with the command from Miss Lane that she should come down immediately.

A disrespectful answer rose to Jennie's lips as the blood rushed over her face. A month ago she would have uttered it, disregarding the consequences; but she had learned a little, a very little, of the meaning of self-control, from her teacher's words and example; so she kept her lips closed.

"You'd better come," continued Lillie, "Miss Lane's going to show us about the Christmas things as soon as breakfast is over."

"I don't care," murmured Jennie, shutting her eyes slowly.

"Very well then;" and Lillie went down stairs, in a state of great indignation, to report to Miss Lane.

"Jennie says she don't care, and is going to sleep again," she exclaimed, not without a little triumph at her own superior goodness, in her

tone, and waiting to hear her teacher's comment upon such unprecedented conduct. But Lillie was disappointed; neither frown nor flush changed the fairness of her face.

"Very well," she said, in a quiet voice, looking at the child steadily, showing that she read her thought, and calling a blush of consciousness and shame to her cheek.

About an hour afterwards, Jennie, coming down, found some bread and butter and a glass of milk on the dining-room table for her. She rang the bell impatiently, and Sallie presently appeared.

"Sallie, I want some muffins. Did you save any for me?"

Sallie closed the door carefully, and coming near her, said in a half whisper,

"Miss Lane said you were to have only this; but I saved you some hot muffins and a piece of steak. I'll bring 'em in."

And she did so accordingly.

"I suppose," exclaimed Jennie, her face in a blaze, "I'll eat what I please in my own father's

house. If she thinks she's mistress here, she'll see she's mistaken. Dear me!"

"And that is what she *does* think. I declare I never see anything so imposed upon as you all are. You have to come and go at her beck. I wouldn't stand it," answered Sallie.

"You must not speak so!" said Jennie, rebukingly, recalled somewhat to her senses by the servant's words; and Sallie retreated abashed.

Jennie buttered a muffin and put a piece of the steak upon her plate. She was quite hungry; the steaming viand increased her appetite, but could not quiet her thoughts.

"I am doing wrong, wrong, wrong," kept floating in her mind. She leaned her head on her hand. "I have made a bad beginning, the day will go wrong. I hate to give up—but this is mean—and Miss Lane has never done a harsh or unkind thing to me since she came here. It is deceitful to take these things when she cannot see me. But then, what right has she——" her face flushed for a moment, but

strangely enough, these words, "Submit yourselves to all your governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," occurred to her at that instant, and all doubt as to her duty in the matter was cleared away.

Pride still remained to be conquered.

"She need not think I am afraid of her, either, though she does think her word is law. I would have this if I wanted it—but I know it is wrong; it is not Miss Lane that I care for."

She put away the tempting breakfast, and ate her bread and butter quickly, and when Sallie came in, said shortly and with averted face, "I did not eat those things because it was not right. I ought to have been up in time. It was wicked in you to try to cheat Miss Lane though,"—seeing Sallie's face of mortification—"I suppose you meant to be kind to me." And Jennie walked up to her own room, angry with herself, Miss Lane, and Sallie, yet with an uncomfortable sense of having been most deserving of blame.

Only the evening before she had promised

herself that it should be such a pleasant day. Miss Lane had intended to teach her and Lillie to knit. They were each to make a pair of stockings for a poor little girl in the village, and had looked forward with intense delight to the time for commencing them.

This little child, Alice Ross, had lost her father; and her mother, who was a poor woman in every way, having very delicate health, found it difficult to keep her daughter and herself from starving, and worked all day long with her sore heart to keep the wolf from the door.

Alice's pale, sorrowful face was sad to see, and she came shivering to Sunday school in her thin dress, with her little bare hands stiff and red from the cold, and sat silent and dejected among the bright, childish faces around her, and often wiping scalding tears from her hollow cheeks.

Such a pitiful thing it was to see this little one, in the beginning of life, bearing a burden so heavy for her weak shoulders, that the chil-

dren's tender hearts ached for her, and they poured out their compassion into the ears of their sympathizing friend.

"Papa has plenty of money," said Rosie, "he might buy things for Alice's mamma." And when "papa" came home, the eager sprites sur-surrounded him with designs upon his purse, and entreaties for charity to Mrs. Ross.

"Well, I'll give you money. I'll help her. Miss Lane shall tell us what she needs—on one condition."

They were eager for the "condition;" of course, *they* would do anything.

"That you deny yourselves enough to pay me for what I give."

"Of course; but what can we do without, papa? We have everything——" They were rather disappointed for the moment that he had not given them something *great* to do—some extraordinary self-sacrifice to perform.

"We *must* have dresses and shoes and stock ings, and we can't do without cloaks, unless we stay in the house all the time—and that would

not be right, because we must go to church,' mused Rosie. It was such a novelty to all, that they seemed in great glee, and Jennie began to feel exceedingly virtuous immediately.

"We might sell our skates," exclaimed Lillie, looking up brightly, but Frank cried out against "taking away all their fun."

"You must be willing to give up some 'fun,' Frank; but I want you to keep your skates. Exercise is good and healthful," said his papa. "But if you don't give up something you like, it will not be denying yourself; don't you see?"

Frank hung his head.

"I'll tell you all, to-morrow morning, what you can do. You must say good night now, and think about it seriously. Because God has been very good to you, my dears, in giving you all you desire, you must be willing to share with others, even at the sacrifice of some of your pleasures. It is not good for us to have *all* we wish, and I will see how my little ones bear doing without some gratification for the sake of doing good."

And so they went to bed, full of curiosity, though without much comprehending the real meaning of their father's words. But when the morning came, each child was about his chair at his early breakfast.

"What early birds you are! What brought you down stairs at such an hour? Isn't this the first time you have seen the sun rise this year?"

He glanced smilingly at Miss Lane, who appeared in the back ground, looking over the glossy heads of Frank and brown Rosie.

"I must confess, *I* was curious, too, and hearing the commotion, I followed to learn the mystery."

"Now, 'brown Rosie,' how much do you suppose you thought of it all last night? The sand-man had arrived when you kissed me—did he wait till you put your head on the pillow?"

"I *did* think of it, papa," said the little one, putting her head on one side, like a bird; "and," she continued in a low tone, so that only her father could hear, "I asked God about it."

"Bless you! my love," he exclaimed, pressing the soft face close to him.

"We *can't* think what it can be," cried Jennie, in much impatience. "Oh, do, papa, tell us quickly."

"Well, my dears," — a profound silence reigned, four little hearts beat quickly. "Last year your Christmas tree and the presents on it cost me sixty dollars." A shadow gathered over more than one face. "This is such a sad time for so many, and we must do with less ourselves to help them. If you are willing to do without your presents this year, Alice's mother shall have the money."

Lillie sighed, Frank made a wry face, and Jennie could not quite help the exclamation:

"Oh, my bracelet!" but little Rosie's brown eyes remained quite bright, and she stroked her father's cheek contentedly.

"Well, my dears, what do you say?"

"Oh, papa, you could not think us so cruel; of course we are willing," the three cried in a breath. "We did not think of *that*, you know,

and so it can't help being a disappointment just at first."

"Anything would be better than that, papa," ventured Frank. "It will be so dull — and then, no Christmas presents. Why, who ever heard of such a thing?"

"Little Alice, I dare say," his father replied; "I imagine she has never had a present in her life."

Frank seemed amazed at the idea. His imagination had never fathomed the depth of such misery.

"But," continued his papa, "you can sell Robin, or your watch, or your gun."

"Oh, papa, Robin! And, you see, I'm so used to the watch — and my gun, why, just think, I couldn't stand seeing the ducks on the lake with nothing to shoot at them."

"Well, my boy, Alice has no stockings, and Mrs. Ross no wood—just think of this room without a fire this morning!"

"I know it, it is all right, papa—I'm agreed!" cried Frank, abruptly, leaving the room.

"Very well, then, here's the purse. I'll put it into Miss Lane's hands—she'll be prudent. Are you satisfied, Kitten?" pulling Rosie's ears.

"Yes, papa, for I thought you might want Dolly, and you know I love Dolly—that would have been sad."

"I think we must manage a dolly for little Alice, too, Miss Lane," said Mr. Graham.

Rosie started a little anxiously. A look of perplexity puckered her smooth forehead, and all day she moved about in an unusually thoughtful manner. Towards evening, as Miss Lane was going to her own room to get her bonnet and cloak, before setting out for Mrs. Ross's dwelling, in order to make inquiries into her necessities, she heard a little voice talking in the nursery, and going to the door, peeped in. Rosie sat on the floor, with her little bureau of doll's clothing before her. She had the precious plaything in her arm, and was soothing it with gentle words.

"Now you must not cry, for I shall come to see you sometimes, and I hope Alice will be

good to you. But, you know, she never had a dolly, nor a present in all her life—just think how dreadful, and her papa's gone, and they have no wood to make a fire: so you must comfort Alice, for she must be very unhappy. I am sure I love you very much, better than anything I have, and that is the reason I give you away. You have made me so happy that I think you'll make Alice happy too, and then she won't cry when she comes to Sunday school any more. It makes me so sad to see her."

The tears were in Rosie's eyes, her lip was quivering. Her sacrifice was greater than that of all the rest. Miss Lane stole away on tip-toe, much touched. When she was ready to go, a timid voice begged leave to accompany her, and the little girl carried her treasure in silence to the poor child, whose face lighted with such joy on seeing it, that content came into Rosie's face immediately; so that, though her voice trembled, she smiled in begging Alice to "take good care of it," and trotted home briskly and happily.

It was the very next day that Lillie and Jennie were to begin the stockings for Alice, and Lillie, knitting-needle in hand, was trying patiently to follow Miss Lane's directions about the beginning, while Jennie sat sullenly looking out of the window, wishing she had no stain on her conscience to make her ashamed of going into the parlor with the rest.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"JENNIE," called a full, clear voice twice before there was any answer. At the second summons Jennie slowly opened the door, and saw Miss Lane waiting at the foot of the stairs. "Get your work-box, thimble, and scissors, and come down stairs. I want you and Lillie to make a knitting-bag before you begin the stockings."

"Yes, I will," answered Jennie, glad that the first trouble, the meeting with her teacher, was over.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. Miss Lane was about to despatch a messenger for her, when the door opened, and a discontented, frowning face appeared. The work-box was dashed upon the sofa, and Jennie exclaimed angrily,

"I don't want to sew—I have been hunting and hunting for my scissors—somebody's always meddling with my things—and now, when I found those, I can't find my thimble. I wish—" she cried, turning passionately upon her sisters, "I wish you'd stay out of my room. You have no business there—you know it."

There was a sob in her voice. Lillie's color rose violently, while Rosie looked grieved and frightened. The former opened her lips to retort, but at a sign from Miss Lane, restrained herself.

"Take your work-box and go up stairs, Jennie," said Miss Lane, quietly.

The young girl started in a sort of amazement, and looked into her teacher's face. She had not the slightest intention of obeying her, and felt in a whirl of anger at being ordered about so like a child; but the clear, steady eye met hers unwaveringly, not the faintest tinge of color dyed the smooth cheek. There was power there not to be resisted—and before that quiet *will* she bowed.

Taking her box in her hand, she obeyed, as a matter of course, and went to her room again, in loneliness. She lay down on the bed and sobbed. Oh! how everything darkened around her! How far off now lay the beautiful, new life of which she had been dreaming! That fair, clean white leaf which she had promised herself should have no stain, was soiled already; and the sun was shining on a day begun without prayer, without a thought of God, and the clouds of idleness, disobedience, and anger, were rising to dim it all.

Only yesterday, everything had seemed so bright—only yesterday, Jennie had resolved to give herself to God entirely, had felt a waking up to work in His cause, and promised that at Easter she would be confirmed. But now, how fearfully she had failed! It was always so! she could not keep her resolutions, there was no use in trying—she knew it would never be any better.

All her life long she would have that struggle about getting up in the morning, and she so dis-

liked that same dull, every-day work. If it were only right to do just what one pleased! A wild, thrilling wish filled her heart that it were so, and for an instant, the chains that conscience and a sense of duty cast around her, seemed too galling to be borne. Sad, discouraged, and restless, she tossed from side to side of the bed, making herself more miserable by indulging in her sinful thoughts.

Presently a hand touched her cheek, and Miss Lane said: "Come, Jennie, get up; brush your hair, and I will help you to find your thimble—the day is passing away."

Mechanically she obeyed, bathing her face and hands, smoothing her hair, and feeling more cheerful for the pleasant smile beaming upon her all the time.

"When had you your thimble last?"

"Yesterday, I believe. I was braiding a little at papa's slipper; but I don't know where I left my work."

"Where were you working?"

"Let me see." She paused to think a min-

ute. "I was sitting on the window-seat in the library. I must have left it there."

"We'll go down and look. Have you no place for keeping your things?"

"I have that basket for larger things, but that was not down stairs. It takes so much time to run about, putting things away."

"Do you think it would have taken as much as it has done to hunt the thimble this morning?"

"I never thought of that! So it does," exclaimed Jennie, flushing into animation at the discovery.

"Besides," continued Miss Lane, "did it never occur to you that it was sinful to be careless, even in little things?"

The look of weariness returned to her face.

"Miss Lane, I *can't* do right, there is no use in trying! I do think I'll try, but it never lasts."

"May-be, you think you can do it without help, my dear?"

"I did not think of praying about such a

little thing," she answered, in a low tone, her face flushing.

"Little things make great things, my dear. Our lives are made up of little things. Constant, little vexations are harder to bear in patience than some great grief. If we want God's help in our life, we must ask it for little things, because great things may happen only once in a life-time, and the little trials are of hourly occurrence. Which was harder to bear—giving up your Christmas tree, or the vexation about your thimble?"

"About the thimble," answered Jennie immediately.

In the mean time they had reached the library. On the floor lay a beautifully bound and illustrated copy of Percy's Reliques, with the print of Tan's paws on its open leaves; and among tangled braids and silk lay the torn, soiled, half-finished slipper. Miss Lane gathered all up in silence, and continued the search for the thimble without a word.

"You see," said Jennie, thoughtfully, stand-

ing in the middle of the room, with her head on one side,' "I was sewing here, and I was in great haste to get done. Rosie came in and wanted me to read her 'The Children in the Wood.' So I got up there to reach the book—you see, there is just where it was on the shelf—and then, I don't remember anything more about the thimble. I did not sew again, and when it was too dark to read I forgot all about the slippers and book, too—because you were playing a favorite piece in the parlor."

"I wonder what your papa would say to those mud stains on his 'Reliques?' You must have left the book on the floor, and Tan trod on it. If it were my book, I should not value it after it had been so defaced."

"Oh!" answered Jennie, carelessly, "he can easily get another one."

"You can buy more material for the slippers, and another thimble, too; but don't you know that the money for those things would buy Mrs. Ross a cloak, or pay for the splitting of all her

winter's wood? The book must have been an expensive one, and your thimble was gold."

"I never thought of it in that light," said Jennie, slowly. "Then I suppose we ought to be careful, even if we have everything we want."

"Certainly, we have to account for the way in which we spend or waste money, as well as time."

Jennie looked up in dismay.

"Oh! Miss Lane, what an array there will be against us at the time of reckoning. So many things I have done wrong, though the day is not half done!"

"You began wrong in the first place!"

"I know it, and I meant to do all right. I don't believe there is much use in trying;" and she sat down despondently.

"I have not seen you try yet. You yield at the slightest temptation."

The tears sprang to Jennie's eyes; she seemed much grieved.

"You are not to have the victory without a

battle, my child; not to wear the crown unless you have run for it. And it seems to me that you make resolutions in a fit of enthusiasm, thinking *that* the only thing to be done, whereas it is only the beginning. Have you really tried not to be careless? Have you really prayed for God to help you to conquer that fault?"

"No," she answered slowly, "it never seemed so serious before. I did not think of its being a sin."

"Don't you see it now?"

"Yes, but you must show me. I don't know how to begin. I wish I had some rules to follow that I dare not break."

"You have a rule. God's laws must not be broken wilfully. I cannot give you rules more binding."

"Well, I should like to be as careful and as neat as you are; but how am I to learn?"

"Put your things in order, and keep them so. There is nothing easier. Then you never have any hunting to do—and thus your temper is not

excited so often. I suppose we might as well give up the search for the thimble, it does not come to light. I have no doubt that Tan chewed it up. I'll go up to your room and help you put your things in order, so that you may make a beginning. Come."

"I am so sorry about the thimble. Do you know, it is almost the last thing mamma gave me of her own? I dropped her ring in the orchard, and Frank trod on her pearl pin. I had it in my scarf, and left it on the hall table one day. Tan pulled it on the floor, and Frank crushed it with his boot. And now the thimble has gone. Lillie has all her things safe, and Mrs. Hill keeps Rosie's for her. Oh, I'm *so* sorry!"

"Well, there is no use in regretting it now—or rather—I hope it will do you good. I thought you loved your mamma."

"Oh, Miss Lane!"

"Well, my dear, you do not seem to care for anything she has given you. I should think you would cherish everything she has touched.

It shocks me to think of your allowing her gifts to lie about the floor."

Jennie's tears flowed fast as they walked up stairs together.

"This is the way I keep my drawers," said Miss Lane, opening one after another, and exhibiting piles of neatly folded handkerchiefs, snowy collars and cuffs, stockings rolled up compactly, and dainty garments with sprigs of lavender between.

"Oh, how beautiful! It is a pleasure to look at them. Mine are so different," cried Jennie, as she looked.

"Here is my work-basket. Here are the cases for my thimble, for my spools, and for my scissors. Here is my needle-book, too, and in this bag are silks wound upon ivory winders. I keep this long silk bag with the shallow basket in the bottom for my knitting, and I must tell you that I never lose anything. Shall we go now into your room awhile and make an examination?"

"I am ashamed that you should see my

things. I always *stuff* them in. It takes so long to put them away particularly."

"We agreed a little while ago that time was saved by being careful, you know. I think you must confess that most of your morning has been wasted in hunting what would not have taken you twenty minutes to put away properly."

In the top drawer of Jennie's bureau were a comb and brush, one shoe and a slipper, a Prayer-book, several pairs of gloves, a heap of stockings, one dumb-bell, a pair of *graces*, and a half eaten apple. In the second, among a pile of incongruous articles, was an overturned work-basket, with all the silks and cotton in a snarl, and, one by one, Miss Lane placed various pieces of unfinished work on a chair by her side. The first was a slipper partly embroidered.

"I began that for papa's birthday, but I did not like the pattern—so I bought the others," explained Jennie, as it came to light.

"Those were mats for mamma's cologne bottles: but I lost my crochet needle, and could

not finish them," she continued, as a crimson worsted mat, minus the border, appeared.

"That was a purse I was knitting for Mrs. Hill: but just look at the silk—it is one knot; so I had to give it up.

"That was a drawing I promised to do for Dr. Sprague; but I got so tired of all that shading—and I don't care to finish that embroidery—it is out of fashion, you know.

"That is a story I commenced; but I spilt ink on the last pages, and it soaked through the bottom of my drawer, and stained my white dress till it is totally ruined. Here it is. I can never wear it again. Wasn't it provoking?"

After much work the drawers were reduced to order, the gloves matched, excepting two which remained unmated, the work-box righted, and all soiled, rumpled articles removed. Jennie surveyed the whole with much pleasure, and felt as if nothing could induce her to allow chaos to prevail again.

"All you have to do now, Jennie, is to remember that, after using a thing, you must put

it into the place from which you took it, and then it is always there." Touching the pile of things on the chair, she continued: "Here you have a lesson. I don't know that I need say anything. You see all that begun and never ended. Is your life to be incomplete, full of plans given up almost as soon as formed,—like that, with all the threads broken, tangled—no harmony in it—no use in it—no work in it? Are you going to fritter away all your energy in devotion to an object for an hour or a day, only to lay it aside after the first novelty has passed, and a new interest takes its place? Are you going to fade away from the world without having done anything in it? Did you ever finish one thing?"

Jennie could think of nothing—not one thing. Drawing, music, French, German, Italian, all sorts of fancy work, visiting the poor, being constant in her attendance at church, zealous in good works, had all been tried successively, and dropped before anything had been accomplished, any habit formed, so that Jennie, with excellent

opportunities, was really not so well-informed as many girls of her age.

In her desultory reading, she had gathered a mixture of facts and fiction, till her brain was in as much confusion as her bureau. She could not converse five minutes in French without a mistake, though she could skim over a French story and manage to get the substance of its contents in a very short time indeed. Though passionately devoted to music she could scarcely play a single piece through correctly. When the drudgery came, Jennie's interest flagged. She exhibited much taste and talent in drawing, but her lack of application had prevented her from making any progress, and half-finished sketches littered her table and writing desk.

Her teacher's words awoke her thoughts. She saw herself as she was, dreaming, impractical, useless, with her mind undisciplined, full of weeds like a neglected garden, which, no matter how beautiful in the beginning, cannot thrive without care and cultivation. She recalled her mother's many warnings against this her beset-

ting sin, which she had allowed to pass unheeded, because it had never been shown to her clearly before; but there lay the proofs of her folly and wrong-doing, and on her soul were wrecks of broken promises and resolutions, duties forgotten, prayers hurriedly said or omitted altogether.

A great fear and dread possessed her. Must it always be so? And at the great Day, must she be weighed in the balances and found wanting? Oh, if she could but change it all! But she *had* tried again and again. This trying was like the rest; her enthusiasm died away and she gave it up. Miss Lane said nothing—she was putting the unfinished articles into a large empty basket. At last Jennie broke the silence.

"Miss Lane, I am going to try again. Will you help me? Please make rules for me. Please tell me what I am to do."

"First, you must expect to do nothing without God's help: for that you must ask: to ask it, you must rise earlier, so as to have the time. Never begin the day without prayer: your life,

without that, is like a boat rudderless upon the broad ocean. Never do anything upon which you cannot ask God's blessing. Finish what you undertake, no matter how great your disgust may be before it is ended. And do but *one* thing at a time."

"I will try. Then I shall finish Alice's stockings and burn all these things so as to begin anew."

"No, Jennie, you must not burn them: you surely cannot meditate such a sinful waste."

"But, Miss Lane," she exclaimed, comprehending with a flash of dismay her teacher's meaning, "you cannot expect me to finish all those things now. Why, I hate the sight of them. I could never untangle that silk, and the worsted is all to wind. I have another pair of slippers, too, down stairs—those that Tan tore: and I promised Dr. Sprague the drawing a year ago—I should be ashamed to give it to him now."

"It is time you were telling the truth about it, Jennie. You promised—did you not?"

"Yes."

"There has been nothing to prevent your doing it, excepting your distaste for finishing your work, has there?"

"No."

"Then, my dear, it seems to me, there is but one thing to be done; you want to bring a clear conscience into your new life. Can't you see your duty plainly in this case?"

"Yes, I do. Well,—" with a grimace, "I suppose it must be done. Oh, dear, it is not going to be easy at all! I shall be glad to get that Bristol board out of my sight—it is a torture every time I see it."

"I think you are old enough to know that it would be wrong to finish any one of these things in such haste as not to do it well, Jennie?"

"Yes," she answered, alarmed at seeing how Miss Lane took it for granted that all must be done. "But, indeed, I shall have no time for Christmas things—and I did *so* want to knit Alice's stockings."

"I know it is a great trial; but you must

begin right; and the lesson will have no effect if you get off so easily. I leave it to yourself—you may do as you think best. I should not hesitate if it were myself—the duty is so plain."

Miss Lane walked out of the room, and Jennie, taking the basket on her lap, sat down, to think intently. In a few minutes she rose, read the morning lessons, said her prayers, and, going to the library, searched perseveringly till she found her thimble. It was on the top shelf, where she had left it in taking down the "Reliques." Then setting herself to work at her drawing, she became so interested that the dinner-bell startled her quite unpleasantly, and she saw with a thrill that much towards beginning her new life had been done.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE sun had gone down; the gay, busy voices of the children were hushed as twilight came on. Jennie put down her silk, which she was patiently trying to untangle. Lillie laid aside her stocking, and Rosie crept to Miss Lane, putting her brown head on the lady's knee, while Frank stretched himself with Tan on the rug before the crackling fire.

The wind whistled and howled and moaned, the sky was gray and wintry; but within doors everything was comfortable and nice.

"It is just the time for a story!" suggested Lillie, slyly, and — "Oh, please do," began Rosie, while Frank and Jennie started forward eagerly.

"I think I have nearly exhausted myself: it

would really be a difficult matter to get up a story now, I have told you so many."

"Oh! tell us one about yourself—something about you when you were a little girl," exclaimed Rosie.

"Well, I will tell you about something that happened to me once. I cannot promise that it will be very interesting, but it is all true. My mother died when I was only a little baby, and I had always been with my father. He took the care of me that usually falls to a mother's share. I was very fond of him, indeed, and he called me his 'Joy.' He gave me a great many beautiful things, and taught me every day. I never played with other children, because I scarcely ever saw any, and did not go to school. I think I shall never forget our long evenings together, when sometimes we sat for hours without speaking, and papa only roused himself when the light began to grow dim.

"I was timid, and used to be very much afraid of going through the long hall alone to my own room, but I never told papa of it, and

kept up my courage by feeling that God was around me always.

"It was a lonesome old house, too, with heavy, trailing vines covering the long porch and darkening the lower windows. We seldom entered the parlor; it was a dark room, with rich, thick carpet, and old, heavy furniture, and between the two front windows was an immense mirror, which always showed me my demure, frightened little figure, the first thing when the door was opened.

"There were dark, curiously shaped vases on the tables, and over the mantelpiece hung my mother's portrait. I used to stand in awe of that, though the face was a young and laughing one, but the bright, dark eyes seemed to follow me wherever I moved, and the half-opened lips seemed ever going to speak. I used to have such a longing to hear one word from those lips. I could remember nothing of my mother, and papa never mentioned her name. It was only when I went to my aunt's that I learned the manner of her death even, and I was ever

yearning, with the curiosity of childish love, to know something of her.

"In papa's room there was a casket of letters, and another of jewels, and under a glass case were kept a crimson riding cap, with a long black feather, and a pretty silver-handled whip, with a pair of tiny gloves, which they told me had once been my mother's; but he never spoke to me of them.

"I think I was very happy then, too, though they declared I was unnaturally quiet and moping. In the summer time I gathered flowers, and papa told me marvellous stories of their meaning and form, until the frailest anemone seemed to me like some wonderful, beautiful friend, and I could find the modest, smiling faces of the very earliest violets, and purple and pink-tinged hepaticas under the green, graceful lady ferns, or among the moss that covered the rocks in the glen.

"There was a certain mysterious, dear, delightful garret, too, with its store of enchantment for rainy days, in the shape of old chests

filled with various wonders,—such as worn, but most charming books and magazines, and curious old pictures, while others held dresses, antiquated cloaks, bonnets, and shoes, and many a beautiful thing gone out of fashion long ago.

"Many an hour I sat there, oblivious of dinner, absorbed in some entrancing book, or speculating about the wearers of these cast off garments, until the shadows of evening warned me that papa must be waiting for me down stairs.

"But I had certain warm, living friends there, about which I must not forget to tell you. At the head of the stairs, behind the chimney, there was a hollow log, in which some little, brown birds made a nest every year. There was a little round hole in the side of the house, which served them for a door, and they came flitting in and out there many times in the day. I used to be in a state of great excitement from the time of their spring house-cleaning till the first egg was laid, and was a shy, silent, but frequent visitor while the lady-mother was sitting.

"I think she must have learned to know me very well, for after a while she scarcely stirred when I approached, and used to turn her cunning, black eyes upon me, with her little head on one side by way of welcome. I should have clapped my hands the first time this happened, had I not been afraid of startling her, as she had such quiet ways; but nothing could restrain the expression of my perfect delight when the wee, helpless, open-mouthed birdies appeared. Then I shouted till papa came in amazement to see what was the matter, and even sober Allie and James hastened out of the kitchen to see what it all meant.

"But the first time I put my hand, all trembling with eagerness, into the warm nest, and took out a soft, round, brown creature, scarcely daring to kiss the pretty head, and putting it back in all haste, lest it should be hurt, such a thrill of love and ecstasy passed over me that it was almost painful to bear.

"So these tiny, twittering elves grew so near and dear to me, that when the time came for

them to fly away, I used to feel sadly lonely and forlorn for many days. And when spring came, I mounted the garret stairs daily, in expectation of their return.

"Then there was my music. Papa brought the piano out of the gloomy parlor and put it into his own pleasant study, and there he taught me to play. So it was an ever new pleasure to sit before it hour after hour, playing whatever suited my fancy.

"We had an Æolian harp, too, in my own little window; and I used to gather roses, white and crimson, by putting my hand out through that window.

"Papa taught me to keep my room in perfect order. He was very particular, and could not tolerate dust or confusion. I soon became so very precise that Allie used to shake her head and declare I was born for an old maid. When I came to be with other children, I found that this being so *set*, as she called it, in my own ways, was rather inconvenient, and it was a hard lesson to learn that I must give up my

cherished plans, for others' pleasure, till I saw how selfish it was to persist in my own ways—orderly, systematic, and right as they were, in one sense—without any regard to the wishes or inclinations of any one around me. It has taken me many long years to *unlearn* some things which my isolated child life taught me, and the lesson has been a very hard one."

Miss Lane was silent a moment, and the children heard her sigh. But she proceeded:

"So the summer and winter days went on, and papa began to walk feebly and to look pale: he coughed, too, and ceased to run and play with me as he had formerly done; and once or twice Dr. Lee came to see him. I knew nothing of sickness, and death seemed like something far off in the future, that had come to my mother, I knew, but I fancied it could not approach papa or me. The years that stretched far before me, seemed unending, and I had never dreamed of a life without papa. He was as my life. Never for one day had I been out of his sight: he seemed a part of me.

"It came upon me very suddenly, that I might lose my dear father. I was sitting in the library one afternoon, partly hidden by the curtain of the window, reading; and I had been quiet so long that, I suppose, papa had forgotten I was in the room. I remember it all quite as well as if it had been yesterday. Dr. Lee came in, and he and papa began to talk. I did not quite understand at first; but when Dr. Lee said:

"'You'll never get well—there's no physician on earth can cure you; but you may prolong your life by going abroad,' it all came upon me. My heart seemed to stand still. I peeped out, panting, from my screen, and saw the dear, mild face, with the settled paleness and gravity on its features which I had ever seen there, the tall figure a little bent, the beautiful hair growing gray about the temples; and, as the doctor spoke, his hollow cough began to sound through the room: and then I knew he must leave me! The word of doom had gone forth.

"I rushed from the room, I ran up stairs,

thinking only to hide myself from the sunshine and from everything. Oh! my dear, dear father —how could I bear it? I lay on the floor in agony, sobbing and thinking God *would* not leave me so alone, till I grew quiet from the very intensity of my suffering; and when I lifted my head, throbbing with pain, the darkness was resting upon the room, and shadows were flickering on the wall.

"I half fancied I must have been asleep, and it was all a horrible dream: but in a moment, the anguish and heartache returned, and, fleeing as if from some awful presence of grief, I sped down stairs again. I reached the door and put my hand upon the knob. But my heart failed me—I could not open it. I heard a step—a slow, feeble step. A thrill of piercing sorrow made me shudder—for how long was I to hear that step?—and then I opened the door.

"Papa turned round, and I stood quite still. He saw my face and my tears, I suppose, for he stopped and held out his hands—and, in a mo-

ment, I threw myself on his breast, only able to cry as if my soul were leaving my body,

"'Oh, papa, papa, papa!'

"'Poor, poor Mary,' he said, smoothing my hair, and pressing me tightly in his arms, and kissing my cheek till I grew quiet. I looked up at last—he was there with me—I held his hand, his eyes were just as kind—he was alive—he spoke to me, my great love must keep him—I put my arms round him as if I would *never* let him go—and resolved to die when he died—never, never to loose myself from him. Surely, surely, I could keep him, I thought. God must know how dreary the world would be to me without him.

"Papa was so calm that I began to lose my fear at last, and to think it was not true; when, as I lifted my face to kiss him, there dropped on my cheeks two bitter, awful, *man's* tears. I shrank back affrighted. I bit my lips to keep from screaming. I clasped my father as if I must grow to him, and began to gasp and sob

as if my heart was broken. Those tears touched me, I have no words to tell how much.

"'Papa, I cannot bear it—I cannot have it so!' I cried.

"'Don't, my daughter, don't say so. It is God's doing.'

"'Oh! papa!'

"'It will not be long, my child, that you must be alone!'

"'But I cannot, cannot live without you—you must not die.'

"'You have God, my child. It grieves me to hear you speak so.'

"'But, papa, I cannot see God—He is not near.'

"'Oh, Mary, He *is* near, He is about you, He will care for you.'

"I moaned myself to sleep—and woke in the night with a great cry—for I had dreamed that my father was gone. But he was near to soothe me, and from that time till our parting, kept me with him, day and night.

"And so there began to be this shadow over

my life. It hid the brightness of the fairest day from my eyes, and came between me and all childish enjoyment. When papa played, I wept because it was so soon to be that I could listen no longer, and his laugh sounded hollow, while my own always ended in a sob. As the time passed, he tried to teach me to receive the blow in meekness, as coming from the hand of the All-Father; and it makes me happy to remember that his own faith and trust in God never wavered.

"So, after a while, I came to think of this life as but a short one at best, and to look forward to the one in which we could be together forever. At these times, he spoke of my mother, and I began to know more of her, and to understand better his joy at the prospect of seeing her again. By the time the winter had worn away and spring had come, when I was counting the days, one by one, which we had together, I had learned, at last, to bear in patience, and did not grieve him by violent outbreaks of sorrow.

"In May, he was to go to Italy. It was not

likely I should ever see him again, though if I had allowed myself to feel that fully, I could not have borne it all as I did. He thought it best for me to remain in America; indeed, it was impossible for me to go with him—though I poured out my heart in entreaties to be allowed to do so. I am always sorry when I think of my undisciplined spirit—my unwillingness to submit at this time; it added to papa's grief, and he wore himself out in trying to show me the *good* in it all, which seemed so hard for me to see.

"Dr. Lee had told him that to go abroad was the sole chance of adding to his days, and he thought it his duty to cherish the boon of life as long as possible; or else, I believe nothing would have induced him to leave me. I was to stay with aunt Marion Bell, my mamma's sister, whom I had never seen; but the prospect of cousins for companions, and a pony to ride—of a free, fresh country life did not rouse me in the least from my sadness.

"At last it was all over, and he was gone.

He had kissed me again and again, had bidden 'God bless me!' and torn himself away. It was very dreadful."

Miss Lane paused, while each of her little hearers remembered the parting of a year ago, when their dear mother went away.'

"But all the time," she then resumed, "I kept in my mind these last words of my father: 'Be patient, my child, be patient always;' and that helped the time to pass away.

"At first, I used to wake with the heavy weight of sorrow upon me, morning after morning, and sit apart, pale and sad, with the tears starting at the slightest word—and was no doubt an object of wonder to my merry, boisterous cousins, who looked on me from wide open eyes, with wondering glances, scarcely ever approaching me or speaking to me.

"But by and by, I began to look out of my corner with some interest upon this new scene, though as yet I was not an actor in it—and I had made up my mind not to *live*, only to *wait* till papa returned—thinking all those around

me, with their ways so different from his, unworthy of much notice; and as for affection, it had never even occurred to me that there was enough room in my heart for any body but my idol.

"There was my grandmother, an old lady, with the daintiest of caps, and hair as shining white as silver. She always wore a black dress, with the whitest of inside handkerchiefs fastened by a beautiful old-fashioned pin of seed pearls, and on her finger glittered a diamond ring that dazzled my eyes. Those white unwrinkled hands used to be busied with most delicate work, or with her Bible and Prayer-Book, which lay always on a table by her side.

"I stayed by her side mostly, and she lavished tender words and caresses upon me: these made me sad, because they reminded me of papa; but I was attracted by something in her face that made me think of mamma's picture, and so I studied her features with eager, wondering eyes. One day, while I had been watching her intently, I suddenly exclaimed:

"'Grandmamma, tell me something about mamma—you are so like her picture.'

"Aunt Marion, who was sitting upon the sofa opposite to me, gave me a quick glance, frowned, and shook her head; then, getting up, said:

"'Mary, please run and get my thimble out of my work-basket—it is lying out on the piazza.'

"I ran and brought the thimble. What was this about my mother? Was I never to know? My face flushed hot, my heart began to beat fast and loud. My father—oh, my father! Alone, alone—the world seemed so empty and hard and cold. I suppose grandmamma noticed my loneliness and sadness, for one day she said to me:

"'Why don't you play with your cousins?'

"'I don't care to play—they are so rough.'

"'But, Mary, don't you know your father wished you to be well and strong by the time he came back?'

"'Yes, ma'am.'

"'You will not become so by moping in this melancholy way. My dear, I think you take

but a poor way of showing your affection for your dear papa.'

"'But, grandmamma, I'm quite sure I never can be happy without him; there is no use in trying. The time will seem so long before he comes back.'

"'My dear, I know how much you love him; but I must say to you that you may have to spend the rest of your life without him; and do you think that he—that God would be satisfied if it should be passed in grieving?'

"'Oh! grandmamma, it cannot be so!'

"'My child, you must be patient and take what comes. God afflicts us all our days, and does not tell us why, but we must receive the cup, no matter how bitter, knowing whose hand it is that offers it. I cannot bear to see you thus resisting His will.'

"'I did not think—I did not mean it. I will try to be better; but indeed, indeed I cannot help feeling the heart-ache about papa, and sometimes I wake, feeling so sad that I am almost afraid to stay alone.'

"'I think it would be very strange and unnatural, my dear, if you did not grieve; but sorrow may be selfish, too. It is the duty of every one to strive to be happy and cheerful for the sake of those around. Every one has a certain influence—the youngest and feeblest of us. Your sad face makes many an unhappy hour for those around you. I have passed through more pain and sorrow than you can dream of, my child, and yet I am content—because I trust it all to God, and know that whatever befalls, "He doeth all things well." It is your duty, my dear, to join with the rest and try to feel more happy.'

"I did not think this possible, and could not understand how I was to control my *feelings* at all. I had learned to *act* according to certain rules and laws of conscience, but *feeling* seemed another thing. I think, if a long letter from papa upon this very subject had not come to me, I should have gone on in ignorance of the meaning of her words. He called this trouble my 'cross,' and told me to bear it 'ever pa-

tiently, looking upward in hope and cheerfulness.'

"So I tried, and soon learned to laugh and be gay with the rest. I had been called a good child and gentle tempered; but sometimes the wild, undisciplined children vexed me beyond measure, and after some outbreak the tears would come in abundance, for fear I was going backwards, and papa, when he came, would be disappointed. I used to be frightened at my own anger and vehemence, and once, after a quarrel, ran to grandmamma in great grief, to complain that—

"I had never seen such children in my life—that they were making me as bad as themselves.

"'My dear,' answered my wise grandmother, 'remember, you have never been with children before—your temper has not been tried—you have not known yourself—these temptations are showing you to yourself—be careful not to let them get the better of you. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

The trouble with you is that you want to have every thing your own way, and because others are not so neat and so precise as yourself, you lose patience, and so make trouble about you. There are not two persons in the world alike. If it were not for love and the beautiful spirit of patience which God gives us if we ask Him, there would be nothing but jarring and wrangling everywhere. You cannot live alone; no one will find happiness in such a life—neither would it be right. Therefore you must learn to bear and forbear; your life will be a sad mistake if you do not.'

"So I endured Cora's sleeping in my room and leaving her clothes in a heap in the middle of the floor, in grim silence. I tried not to wince when she turned over, so carelessly, my books and music, and when she overturned my inkstand in my writing desk, I restrained my tears, and after the first flash of angry feeling, I tried quietly to repair the damage without a word. Cora seemed much amazed at this conduct, so unlike the past, and after a stare of

astonishment, told me heartily and freely that she was very sorry.

"By-and-by, much to my amazement, she began to touch my possessions carefully, and now and then, gathered stray articles of her own off the sofa or bureau, or from under the bed, with a praiseworthy effort to set things to rights. Before the summer was over Aunt Marion declared that Cora was as particular as myself, and I was convinced that patience was a good rule to live by; and so often was I called upon to exercise it, that I learned always to be on the watch."

"There!" Jennie started, "I expected to hear that bell, and here is papa! Miss Lane, you *will* tell us more after tea?" she said, imploringly.

"If you care to hear it!"

"Yes, oh! yes," cried all in chorus, and the party filed out to tea.

## CHAPTER X.

THE children could scarcely wait to finish their tea before they begged for the continuation of the story.

"Miss Lane is telling us her life, papa," they exclaimed, as they gathered closely about her, with wide awake faces.

She went on:

"There were two boy cousins, Robert and John, and a little Nellie, a sweet, gentle-natured little thing, whom I learned to love very soon. Besides these two cousins, there was another boy, a good deal older than any of us, who spent all his vacations at Uncle Bell's. He had neither father nor mother, sister nor brother. Uncle Bell was his mother's brother and his guardian, so that he called that his home. He was to have a great fortune by-and-by, so we all knew; but I remember pitying him so much,

and thinking I would not give my dear father for a thousand times his wealth. One day, when we three girls were talking about this, and thinking how very dreadful it must be, he heard us, and coming out of the library where he had been reading, said:

"'You need not pity me, I shall never have to *grieve* for my relations.'

"It struck me then, and made me thoughtful and sad many times afterwards, that I might soon be called upon to mourn for papa over the sea; but I learned to like Willie better than the rest, because he, like me, was alone in the world. He used to tell us stories, and play on the piano for us very often, and was so gentle and good tempered that everybody loved him.

"I remember how the dog started up and ran at the sound of his footsteps, and there was no place pussy liked so well as his shoulder or knee for a sleeping place. His voice was very sweet, and his eyes so bright and kind, that every one was happier for a glance from them. I liked him so much that, after a while, no place seemed

so charming as the seat by his side, and he always smoothed away difficulties as if by magic. Once I asked him if he ever got angry.

"'Oh, yes, a great many times—I am provoked half the time—something is always vexing me.'

"'You never seem to be. You never show it. How can you help it?'

"'It only makes things worse to talk. I whistle when I am angry.'

"He smiled, too, I believe, for his face was always sunny, and in its cheerful light I sometimes grew ashamed of my melancholy feelings and of being vexed by trifles. He had faults, for, afterwards, I found them out; but in those days he seemed a perfect being to me, and by and by, I became almost as enthusiastically devoted to him as I was to papa.

"He never talked to us much about being good—he *acted* a lesson for us—and untruth, meanness or anger fled from his presence. I never saw him hurt any thing, though he was tall and strong and active. When you are older,

you will read Sir Galahad, or sometime, if you like, I will read it to you, and then you can know better what he was like, than I can tell you.

"He had a pet dove—we called it Daisy. It was hatched late in autumn, in the barn, and he brought it to the house, to keep it from freezing. He fed it with his own hands, and much trouble it gave him. It learned to know him, and often went with him in his walks, perched upon his shoulder, and when he went to college, he carried it with him. So in his daily life, he bore with him patience, pity and love, which shone in his face and blossomed into good deeds to those about him.

"But aunt Marion was the comedy of the house. I think she never knew where any thing was; and, much as we loved her, pleasant as she was, we avoided her as much as possible, for fear of being sent upon explorations after missing articles. There was no occasion for giving us lectures upon order where Auntie was. She was a *living* lesson to us against carelessness.

She was full of childlike spirits and bright ways, perfectly simple and ingenuous, a charming woman; but the one fault had mastered her completely; it had grown with her growth, strengthened with her strength, and was the drop of bitterness in the cup of happiness which we all drank there.

"If we sat down to read—the luckless individual who first caught her attention had no sooner become interested, than her voice roused him with,

"'Robbie, have you seen my ball of yarn? perhaps Carlo carried it into the garden: I had it on the piazza the last time I saw it. Do run and get it.'

"A moment more, it would be:

"'Cora, do you know where my thimble is? I had it in the kitchen when I went to see about the pudding. Ask Jane for it.' Or,

"'Mary, do run up to my room and see if you can find my other slipper. I had to put on one of your uncle's this morning. I could not see mine.' Or,

"'Where *do* you suppose I left my clean linen collars? Sarah certainly brought them up stairs yesterday, and I have not seen them since.'

"My uncle Bell was exceedingly orderly and systematic. This failing of his wife's annoyed him. He never could depend upon her for being in time, or entirely ready for any thing, and lived in a state of continual discomfort. One of aunt Marion's coaxing smiles used to disarm him and chase the frowns away, for the time, only to return, when dinner was late, the dessert forgotten, or Auntie was absent at prayers because she could not find her morning dress. I remember once sitting and speculating upon the best way of remedying all the evil and trouble arising from this failing, till aunt Marion, struck by my thoughtfulness, asked me what made me so quiet.

"'I was wondering why you don't know where your things are, when it is so easy and would make every body more comfortable,' I told her.

"'It seems almost too late to begin now,

Mary—my habits are all formed—I should find it very hard work to change indeed. My dear, when I was a little girl like you, was the time to do that.'

"'And must it spoil all your life, and Uncle's, and Cora's, and John's, and Robbie's?' I said, not thinking how my words would affect her.

"'So it does, my dear,' said Auntie despondingly. 'Oh, Mary, our lives have all been spoiled—they have been a mistake—all the years before me will not make it right. Never let a failing overcome you, never give up to it. Learn the meaning of self-control, then learn to practise it—when you are young. Take out all the germs of evil when they are young and tender, for after a while, it is like taking your life, to dig out the strong, knotted roots.'

"So I tried to remember *that*—and my terror of becoming, like poor aunt Marion, the victim of any weakness, kept me on the watch continually.

"And how uncomfortable she was herself! She missed so much happiness or pleasure be-

cause she could not be ready in time. She was always too late for church. She scarcely ever finished any work, because some of the materials were lost or destroyed before it was half done. And every day, something neglected, many things undone, reproached her.

"I remember one time, in particular, when her failing caused much vexation and trouble. A very dear and near friend of Uncle Bell's had died. He was anxious that the whole family should attend the funeral, which was to take place in the morning. We were all ready—Cora, Robert, John, Willie, Uncle Bell and myself—the carriage was at the gate, the coachman holding the horses' heads, but still Aunt Marion did not appear. Uncle began to pace back and forth—a sure sign of impatience with him—Robbie was fretting and wondering why his mother did not come, and we had grown quite weary of waiting, when I ran up stairs to see what was the matter.

"A scene of confusion presented itself. The bureau drawers were all pulled out, the closet

doors all opened, a bandbox was on the bed, a pitcher in the middle of the room, on the floor, brushes and combs on the chairs, and a heap of garments over the sofa. Aunt Marion herself, arrayed in bonnet and shawl, was limping about the room, with one foot shod, and a face of great perplexity.

"'Auntie, we've all been ready for ten minutes. What is the matter?' I asked.

"'I can't find my other boot—I've looked in every place,' was the answer.

"'Can't you wear another one?'

"'I have none fit. Slippers will not do.'

"So I began a search, and presently, the children, the servants and, at last, Uncle Bell himself, were called up to assist.

"We looked in every imaginable place where the shoe might have been left or lost, but could not find it, and at last left Auntie, sitting forlorn and puzzled in the middle of her room, while we set out, vexed and tired, for the funeral. Poor Uncle wore a grave, stern expression of countenance all day, and we were

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so awed by his silence and gloom, that we dared not talk to each other, and so we were very glad when the day was over and we could say good night.

"Some weeks after, the shoe came to light. It was discovered in a bandbox, with Auntie's best winter hat. How it came there will remain among the mysteries, I suppose; but that lost shoe made me determined to have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.

"I think I shall never forget those long summer days—the fishing on the rocks, while the trees, leaning over the banks, left green, quiet shadows in the water—the wandering hour after hour among the beautiful flowers and ferns, or the rowing in Willie's boat while he told us stories or sang to us. But though it was all so charming then, there is not much to tell you about it now.

"My father had taught me to speak the truth. I scorned an approach to a lie, and many times I expressed my contempt for my cousins' dishonorable proceedings in no very measured

terms. Cora was timid and careless: it did not occur to her that many little words were wrong, that the intention to deceive made the lie, not the false statement itself—and much trouble I made for myself and her by my anger at her disregard of truth.

"I became so suspicious of her that, by-and-by, I doubted almost every word she uttered. Childlike, I did not consider that she had never had any training, that she had never had the lectures upon honor and frankness that I had received—indeed, she scarcely knew the meaning of the words—though she was good at heart.

"Morning after morning I used to say to her,

"'Cora, aren't you going to say your prayers?' as she was hastening down stairs without doing so.

"'Oh, I'll be late to breakfast, and papa will scold. At night is enough;' and down she would run, leaving the door open. Vexed by this, I used to get up and close it after her with a noise, and then my mind was not in a state for praying and reading. Sometimes I would

find myself in the middle of my prayers, forgetting the words in recalling her misdeeds, and, shocked at myself, I used to cry and think how far back I was going—consoling myself always at the last, by laying the blame upon those around me.

"Once poor Cora got into sad disgrace. I never think of that without a feeling of self-reproach. Aunt Marion had sent her with a small pitcher to bring some cream from old Ricy, who kept the dairy. Cora came down with a pretty silk apron on, and Auntie sent her to change it for a gingham one, telling her she might soil it.

"I don't know how she came to be tempted to disobey; she was not usually a self-willed child; but, instead of obeying, she put on two aprons, the gingham one over the silk, and as soon as she was out of sight of the house, took off the former, hiding it by the fence, intending to put it on when she came back.

"She was gone a long time—I remember it quite well. Willie had promised to take us all

to a pic-nic in his boat when she returned, and I waited impatiently for her return. He was to row us down the river to a certain shady, cool place, and there we were to spend the day with a party of children from Newton. We had been looking forward to this time for weeks past, and had danced with joy when the day came so clear and bright. I watched and waited and fretted about her getting back, till I had worked myself quite into a state of excitement and indignation. 'I never saw anything so selfish—so mean. She knows we can't go without her. She does it on purpose,' I said to grandmamma two or three times.

"'Don't be unjust, my dear. Settle yourself. You'll be tired before the time comes,' was all the answer I received, while the knitting-needles continued to move as slowly as ever. How it fretted me! I felt it a positive injury that she did not care more—that she could be so calm. At last, Cora appeared. She came into the yard, swinging the pitcher unconcernedly. I ran out to meet her.

"'What *did* keep you so long?' I cried when she was near enough to hear.

"'Have I been gone long?' she asked so coolly as to provoke me beyond measure.

"'Of course you have; we're all ready; Willie and the boys have gone down to the boat. Where's the cream?'

"'I did not get any,' she answered in a low voice, flushing uneasily.

"I did not believe her. I knew something was wrong, but I feared if aunt Marion suspected anything it might delay us longer—and it seemed to me then that I could not bear to be kept ten minutes longer. I was in a fever of impatience already.

"'Go, get your bonnet, I'll tell Auntie,' I cried hastily, and Cora, with a look of relief, gave me the pitcher and ran up stairs. I carried it into the dining-room, and gave it to Auntie. 'Cora could not get any, Auntie,' I said, and I was conscious of looking guilty, so that I dared not raise my eyes.

"'Oh, I'm so sorry. But you have been good

to wait so long—now you must go—good-bye,' said kind Auntie, and so she began to search through the spice-box with a puzzled expression on her face. I escaped for fear of being sent upon a search for something. Had I told a lie? That fearful thought flashed through my soul like lightning as I shut the door, and I stopped with a loudly beating heart. How fearful it seemed! How all the beautiful, glad day had changed!

"I half turned back. Like a flash, clear as noon-day, it looked to me then—that Cora had done some wrong, and that I for fear of losing my pleasure was helping her to deceive. Those words burnt themselves into my heart. I put my hand on the door-knob, and then the thought came—'What shall I say? I have nothing to tell—it will be mean to get her into trouble, when I know nothing.'

"Ah! but I *did* know. The fluttering fingers, the downcast eyes, the bright blush, had told me as plainly as words could tell, that all was not right. But a whistle, a shout of 'Come,

girls!' made my blood dance again, and a great thrill of pleasure shot through me, as I ran swiftly out of the gate, forgetting every thing, eager only for the sport. Cora was coming out from behind the hedge of box as I passed through the garden. She started when she saw me.

"'Come, Cora—quick, they are waiting,' I cried, running on.

"'What did mamma say?' she asked, reaching my side.

"I stopped short. 'Nothing, only that she was sorry,' I answered, scarcely daring to look at her. 'Cora, I hope you have not been doing any thing—you know Auntie would send you back if you had, and then we should be late.'

"I was scarcely conscious of what I did. If I had reflected at all, I should have shrunk in horror from persuading any one to deceive, and yet I said those words with the hope of frightening her into silence lest we should miss our pleasure. I knew how easily she could be moved for good or evil. I thought only how we should

miss our boating if she should be inclined to confess, and so I put a stop to any such intentions, effectually, by rousing her fears. Cora understood.

"'You must never tell, then, and mamma won't find out. I hid my apron, and Ricy will never think of the cream,' she said confidentially.

"A day, an hour ago, I should have repelled any efforts to make me an accomplice in a lie, with scorn, loathing, wrath; but three handkerchiefs were waving for us to come, and shouts of 'all aboard!' were borne to our ears from the river bank. I did not stop—I did not even hesitate—busy whispers were at my heart, my face was flushed. I disregarded the reproaches of conscience. Deliberately, consciously, and with a clear knowledge of what my sin was, I stepped into the boat. A few strokes of the oars, and with a long breath of relief, I told myself, it was too late.

"We were wild with delight—the boat glided on so swiftly, the sky was cloudless—the birds

seemed too happy to sing, and the bright sunshine gilded tree and rock and water—and then, as we turned at a bend in the shore, a white tent appeared, and groups of children shouted welcome to us. We had music, refreshments, and games, and the hours passed only too swiftly.

"I shall always remember Willie's kindness in amusing the smallest, settling all troubles, and inventing new pleasures for us that day. He was the life of the party, and with his merry ways made many friends among the little ones. I was so full of excitement that I had no time to think, but towards evening a quieter time came, and I sat down apart.

"Cora was near by in a ring of girls and boys, shouting with pleasure, her limbs and face all alive with play, and then I grew sad. What was it worth? It was all gone, nearly over now—the laughing and sport—but the pain of the sin still remained—it had been there all day, like a shadow haunting me, but I would not think of it. I had had my will—and did it satisfy?

"Presently there was a call.

"'Come, Mary, Cora, Robbie, Johnnie, we are all ready—come,' and Willie appeared with Nellie in his arms.

"'Oh! just a little longer, Willie,' cried Cora, 'do—it is *so* early.'

"'No, not a minute; Auntie bade us come before the dew had fallen;' and off he marched.

"We knew there was no use in saying one word, but the spirit of naughtiness was strong within us, and we pouted and grumbled much at being obliged to leave before the rest. In the boat, there was a gentleman, who gave me a seat beside him, and said he had just come from Italy, and that he had seen papa. He was a Mr. Percy, and was going with us to make a visit at uncle Bell's. When he mentioned papa, a whole flood of feeling came into my heart; I could not say a word. I looked down at the water and shut my lips tight.

"'He was in an old tower, with hills—purple hills all about him, and a white mountain not far off. There was a valley, too, and a glimpse

of the deep blue sea. The air is always soft—and the sky, the sunshine makes one think of heaven.' This he said to Willie.

"Oh, the great aching and longing that came upon me! the yearning for one touch of that dear hand, for a glimpse of that 'blue sea' which shut him out from me! It was so sore that I could scarce keep from sobbing. But I could not ask if he were well. I could not trust my voice, and he must have taken my silence for indifference, as presently, he began to speak of something else, and we went floating on with that hungering in my heart for more tidings of dear papa in his tower.

"I thought of him as looking out upon the white mountain with the glory of the sunset on it, and the sea dancing, and I wondered if his heart ached for me as mine did for him; and then the dreary time of our separation stretched out and lengthened till it seemed unending, and I had almost cried out in the anguish of my longing. The tears were dropping one by one into the water, and the dreamy talk of the

others went on till we reached the shore. Mr. Percy took no further notice of me, as I saw with much pain; he thought I did not care for papa, and so I walked up to the house, listening feverishly for one word more of Italy.

## CHAPTER XI.

"THE evening passed away; I lingered for a word; but though there was much talk, I still remained unsatisfied. I was restless, impatient.

"'Come, Mary, we're going to play in the dark dining-room,' said Robbie, after tea, and while the elders were all gathered in the parlor.

"'No, don't trouble me,' I answered shortly, afraid of losing a word of the conversation.

"'You need not take my head off for asking you,' said Robbie, running off in anger, and my face flushed as I saw both Willie and the stranger glance towards me. I was very sorry; I liked Robbie; though sensitive, he was kind to me, and we had never quarrelled. My first impulse was to run after him and tell him I did not mean to be cross, when the fear that the

coveted news might be told in my absence, restrained me. I waited and listened and grew weary with hoping. My nerves had been so excited all day, that the slightest sound which might prevent my catching every word, caused me to start and flush. The children were boisterous, the noise of their play came through the hall. I closed the door quickly and impatiently and hastened back to my station.

"'Don't shut the door, Mary,' said aunt Marion. 'Why don't you go and play with the rest?'

"'I don't want to play,' I answered pettishly.

"'Then you must be tired—you had better go to bed. Willie, ring the bell, please.'

"'No,' I cried passionately, in a heat at this interruption, 'no, I am not tired.'

"I watched for the striking of the clock. I knew that at eight we must all retire. There would be no help for it then, and I listened as if my doom were to be sounded. John came in with the letters, the nurse carried baby away—I knew it was almost time. I was on the rack,

my eyes were wide open, my cheek burned, my ear almost ached, my heart fluttered—I held my hands tightly clasped.

"'There! clear and prompt, one, two—till eight strokes rang out, and the children filed in, flushed and sleepy, to say good-night. I unclasped my fingers; nerveless, weak and trembling, I tottered to aunt Marion—the unnatural strain had relaxed and left me ready to drop. I looked up at her imploringly, saying:

"'Oh! Auntie, let me stay a little longer;' and waited for her answer, as if my life hung on her words.

"'No, my dear, you will be ill—you look wretched now; I should think this day was enough. Are you never satisfied?'

"Something in my throat choked me, the tears began to come, they rained over my cheeks. I *must* stay.

"'Just a little longer, Auntie—oh, please.'

"'Well——,' began Auntie, relentingly, but the rest cried out, indignantly,

"'Then we'll stay too; 'tisn't fair.'

"'How can you be so foolish, Marion? Send those children all to bed. Mary don't know what is best for her,' interposed Uncle, and we were sent away. I ran up to my room; I threw myself on the floor; I panted, and sobbed, and moaned.

"'Oh, papa, papa, take me away; I cannot, cannot bear it. Oh, I cannot—so cruel—so wicked. Oh, papa, papa!'

"'Why what *is* the matter?' inquired Cora, with much concern.

"'Oh,' said Robbie, who had come to the door at the prospect of a scene, 'this is our nice, good girl—our pattern, grandmamma said: but you see she can be like other people when she gets her temper up.'

"Conviction came to me. I ceased to sob. I answered not a word to his taunts, though they cut deep, for right sure was I that he never would have uttered them, but for the one unkind word I had given him in the evening, in return for his kindness. Surely every wrong word or thought or deed, or even look, brings its own

punishment—and who can count the harm wrought by once giving up to anger? the harm not only to ourselves but to others? My forgetfulness, my impatience was causing my cousin to sin grievously—to go to sleep with anger in his heart, instead of lifting it to God in prayer.

"I was not yet willing to yield. This desire to know of my dear father's welfare was turning into a strong purpose of having my own will. Self-will was my bane, though I was only half conscious of it. My own way, my own wishes, seemed best. My dear father's gentle, loving sway had never seemed irksome. I had known nothing of this germ of evil in my own heart, which was to grow and blossom and bear fruit in anger, in wrong doing, in deceit—and so had not yet strength to resist it. The weed was taking root firmly, displacing the flowers of gentleness, truth, obedience, slowly but surely, and poisoning my thoughts of duty to God and man with its breath. I had been conquered by it in all the deeds of that day.

"I undressed myself, inwardly chafing against what I was pleased to think Uncle Bell's oppression, and contrasting papa's indulgence with it. '*He* would not have made me come up here, when I wanted so to hear it all,' I said to myself, with the hot tears on my cheeks. 'He would not have been so cruel, so unkind. I will not stay here—I will write to him to-morrow. They are all so wicked—so wrong—I shall be like them if I stay. I am getting like them now,' I continued, with a sudden fear that struck me like a chill, and I paused, and threw myself on my knees, and poured out a fervent prayer to be kept, through God's mercy, in the straight path.

"Wave after wave of sorrow, trouble, self-reproach, and penitence passed over me.

"I had hated them; and the vision of our Holy Saviour, bleeding, suffering, praying for his murderers, rose before me.

"They had been kind to me—most kind, most indulgent. Because their ways were not my ways, must they be condemned? and I had

cast them off in my arrogance, thinking I could govern myself.

"How could they guess what feelings of yearning and love, and what agony of expectation had been in my heart all the evening? The wrong lay in my own thoughts—kindness made them insist upon my going up stairs at the right hour. Must they not have thought it weariness that prevented my joining the plays of the others?

"Oh, how humbled I felt. And that cross word to Robbie—could I ever wipe out the evil it had done? Could I ever get back the love he had given me so freely before? Oh, sad, sad thought! The anger, and taunting, and neglected prayers, were they not written in God's great book? It was my sin—mine. I fancied my poor cousin, trembling before God's awful look, and the sin caused by my impatience brought before him. And had I not brought shame on Christ? I who called myself his child, and said I lived by his rule, and yet could bear up no better than that?

"I took my candle, and crossing the hall, I knocked at my cousin's door. Robbie opened it. His eyes were red—he had been weeping. I was so touched that, for a moment, the words would not come; then I said:

"'Oh, Robbie, I am so sorry I was cross this evening. I wanted to hear about papa, and I was so afraid your speaking to me would make me miss something. Indeed, I'm sorry.'

"'Never mind—I was more cross to you—I'm sorry, too,' was his answer.

"'It was so wicked in me—and—and I was afraid you would not say your prayers right when you were angry,' I continued, afraid to look at him.

"'I will now. Don't worry. Good night;' and he shut the door, pretending to be gruff that he might not show how much he felt.

"I was almost happy now; but I thought I should keep awake till aunt Marion came up stairs, that I might tell her of my sorrow for not obeying her promptly. When I went back, Cora was tossing about restlessly on the bed,

her face was burning hot—she muttered words in her troubled sleep.

"'In the large bush of box-wood,' she muttered, as I leaned down to hear. 'I meant to tell—but—' here she moaned and seemed distressed, her brow contracted into a frown, and then a look of pain crossed her face. 'Mary was in such a hurry,' she said. She was quiet a moment, and then began again: 'you might scold—I did think at first—oh—'

"In her sleep she was thinking of it—that wrong at which I had guessed, and which, at one word from me, she would have confessed at first. I had not given her credit for conscientiousness. I thought she had forgotten the whole thing. Here was another growth in my harvest of the day's wrong doing. Oh, what was I to do?

"'Cora, Cora, wake up. Tell me, what was it? What is it? Let us go down to Aunt Marion.'

"I shook her in my fright, but she only turned and muttered, and would not wake. I

lay down in sore distress—I could only wait in patience, I durst not go down stairs. Presently, sight and sound and troubled thought faded away, and I was asleep before I knew that I was growing sleepy.

"I had been dreaming uneasily, and woke with a start of fright. A great weight was upon me—the events of the day, the sin and pain and weariness flashed upon me and were almost too grievous to be borne.

"I could not tell what time it was—but the feeling that I must tell all to aunt Marion was strong upon me. I heard no sound in the house—perhaps they had all retired—my natural timidity made me tremble at the thought of the stillness of the house. The moon was shining brightly—its rays were streaming in at my window, and shadows lay silently on the wall and about the floor.

"Cora was asleep still. I could not bear it. I thought I should go down the hall and listen at aunt Marion's door, hoping to find her awake, that I might tell her. I listened a moment,

holding my breath. It seemed so lonely that I feared to rise; there was a sound like the clicking of a key in the lock, then a stirring, murmuring sound, as if a breeze were passing. I lifted my head, noiselessly, but my heart fluttered with fear, a faintness came over me, terror kept me still, I could not have screamed if I had tried.

"At the foot of my bed was a door opening into a room which was never used, and very seldom entered. There was a sort of closeness and dreariness about it even in the day time—and none of us cared to open the door. Now and then, I had stolen in, on tip-toe, to look at some cast-off pictures on the wall, or to hide with my book from Cora's teasing; but such a proceeding was of rare occurrence and only took place on sunshiny days.

"I was always particularly careful to lock the door upon retiring, and had with my own hand turned the key before getting into bed that evening. Now the door stood wide open—there was a blank, black space in the white wall. I stared

with eyes wide open in horror, but in a moment fell back faint with the relief. It was the foot of our French bedstead. The dark mahogany, being between me and the door, gave it the appearance of being open.

"Trembling and chilled with the fright, in my nervous, feverish state, ready to start at every sound, every shadow, I rose, and stepping timidly, felt my way along the hall, carefully, quietly, praying God to keep me. I reached the head of the steps and looked down into the black, empty hall below. There was no sound, but from the library door a little stream of light wandered and wavered over the carpet.

"Going on softly, scarcely breathing, I reached the door and looked in. I cannot tell you what I felt at the sight which met my eyes. I could not have moved or spoken if I had tried, so great was the terror which seized me.

"There was a lighted lamp on the window seat, and a tall woman was busily taking books from the shelves and piling them in the middle of the room. She was dressed in a long white

wrapper, and her hair streamed nearly to her feet. Her face was towards me. I saw that her eyes were black and large, and there was a wild expression in them.

"Presently she ceased in her work, and, lighting a taper, put it to the books. Then, the spell was broken! I don't know how I reached aunt Marion's room, but I remember shrieking at the top of my voice and fleeing as if wings were on my feet. Such agony of fear I am sure I never can feel again. I burst into the room, I threw myself trembling, panting, cowering, on the bed—only able to sob out, 'In the library—oh! a woman—she is burning the books.'

"That is all I remembered of what took place then, but in the morning I saw the woman again, and spoke to her, even touched her hand gently, and kissed her cheek, though a good many of my favorite books lay blackened and charred on the floor of the library. The long hair was bound up, and the wild, black eyes were very sad now,—oh, so sad, so wistful, so full of dumb questioning, like those of some

beautiful, caged animal; and she sat with her hands clasped, looking down, very pale, grief-worn and quiet.

"But after a while they took her away again. She was my aunt, my mother's sister, and had been insane for years. She had been taken to an asylum, but escaped occasionally from her keepers and returned to her old home. They tried to keep her there, but she was better away from her friends, and though years had passed they had never given up the hope of her recovery.

## CHAPTER XII.

"WHEN morning came, the fears and troubles of the night passed away like a mist, and I felt less inclined to tell aunt Marion my short-comings. In the excitement about the crazy girl, I forgot it almost entirely, and indeed she was so busy that I had no opportunity of speaking to her alone. So, when the bustle was over and my whisperings of conscience returned, I made *that* an excuse to myself—and tried to dismiss the whole matter from my mind.

"But how surely our sin finds us out! how one spot on our souls, not washed clean by repentance, spreads itself and poisons the good in us: and one step taken in the wrong path leads to another and another, till we are sinking hopelessly in the mire of mistakes and sin, and lose

time and strength in struggling back to the broad, clean way, if indeed the mire be not too deep for our force, and we remain there ever going deeper and deeper.

"Remember, dear children, to pluck out, by the grace of Jesus, every root of sin and keep a clear conscience; don't let any stain rest there, or it blackens the whole. And then, think, is the pain, the embarrassment of confession, equal to the fear of being found out, the depression, the stings of conscience which last so long?

"Mr. Percy remained all that day, and I had the satisfaction of hearing all about papa. If I had but had patience to wait. I was angry with Cora, for having been the cause of my discomfort; I avoided her, feeling guilty; and as for her, she moped alone almost the whole day.

"After a while, grandmamma called me to her room and told me my mother's story—my poor, dear, young mother! She could not tell it without many tears, neither could I listen unmoved, and it seemed to me that I had lived a life-time in hearing it.

"My father was a lieutenant in the army. He and my mother were very young when they met each other, and they became much attached. There was so much opposition to their marriage, for many reasons—one, their youth, another, my father's profession—that at last, unhappily, they disobeyed their parents and displeased their friends by marrying secretly.

"Soon after, papa was ordered with his regiment to Florida, to fight the Indians, and my delicate young mother accompanied him. Her friends had never forgiven her, never seen her; and grandmamma wept when she told me what she fancied must have been my mother's grief at leaving her home without a word of tenderness for those whom she had loved so dearly. But she went, and months passed without any tidings from her.

"At last there came a letter, telling of my birth, and then they longed to see her again. The yearning was so sore that grandmamma would have gone herself, had it been possible. That being out of the question, Aunt Millicent,

her twin sister, whose light-heartedness had left her when my mother went away, determined to go. They had friends in Florida, and she could make her home with them; so it was arranged.

"In the mean time my mother fancied that but one thing was wanting to her perfect happiness. She lived in garrison, and was the light of the old colonel's eyes, as well as of her husband's. Gay and simple-hearted, full of childish spirits and happiness, they could think but little of their hardships where her bright, fair face appeared.

"At last the tidings that the home hearts had melted for her, that her dearest sister was on her way to meet her, came to her, being the one thing she craved to make life beautiful to her. Aunt Millicent was to travel with a party bringing supplies and reinforcements to the garrison, thinking it the safer plan.

"A party was sent out to meet them, on the day upon which they were expected. My mother, in the gaiety of her heart, begged to be of the company; and as the Indians had

been quiet for some time, my father allowed her to go. He could not accompany her, being officer of the day, and saw her mount her horse and ride off laughing in the sunshine without a thought of the grief which was to fall upon him like a thunder-bolt before night.

"Several hours afterwards a horse came galloping back to the garrison, riderless, and when my father saw it he fell to the ground as if a bullet had struck him. It was the horse my mother had ridden. It was not long before they went in search of those who had set out so fearlessly in the morning, with sad forebodings. They scarcely hoped to find the remains of any; it was the habit of the Indians to mutilate fearfully the bodies of those slain by them, and the agony of all was increased by the thoughts of the tender young form hacked and torn by the savages.

"Very soon they reached the spot where the work of death had been done. Three bodies lay upon the ground, and at some distance, under a tree, to which he had dragged himself with

much pain, lay a soldier mortally wounded. They gathered round him. Close at his side, with his hat over her face, lay my dead mother, shot through the heart. The soldier could just speak.

"'Lieutenant,' said he, 'I would have protected your lady with my last drop of blood: they would have had to tear me to pieces before they should have taken her body.'

"And when the strong men around, with tears on their cheeks, lifted the hat, there was the young face, with almost a smile parting the lips. Before they had left the place, the rest of the party returned from pursuing the Indians, and they heard the particulars of the sad event.

"It seems, as they were riding along gaily, not dreaming of danger, the Indians fired upon them from the woods, and killed one man. My mother, in terror, sprang from her horse, and attempted to reach the baggage wagon, thinking she would be safer in that, but as she was running towards it, a bullet struck her, and she fell instantly dead. The men rallied and

turned, and the few Indians, taking alarm lest there should be help for the whites at hand, fled.

"The wounded soldier died on the way back, and when my aunt arrived in the afternoon, she saw only my mother's dead face, and found only a deaf ear, into which she poured all the tardy messages of love and forgiveness from home.

"Neither Aunt Millicent nor my father ever entirely recovered from the shock. My father's poor health and spirits were caused by this grief in the beginning of his life, and he shut himself up with his child, refusing to see any of my mother's family for years: it was not until he was going to Europe that he had any intercourse with them.

"Aunt Millicent was so shattered, so shocked, by this dreadful occurrence, that her nerves never recovered from it. She was morbid, ailing, and delicate for a long time; and, taking to heart a great disappointment which happened to her several years after, she became hopelessly insane.

"'My dear,' said my grandmother, when she had finished her story, 'let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' You cannot tell what sorrow and punishment the morning may bring you. The pride and stubbornness of age need severer lessons to train them into gentleness and patience than the same faults in youth—and so surely, for every fault, God sends a pain to cure it.'

"And how inexpressibly I was touched! My dear father! I resolved that in the future, nothing that the most loving care, the utmost devotion to every wish, could do towards making his days brighter, should be left undone—and Paradise seemed not so far off now, because I knew that there waited for us both, the bright-eyed, gentle, young mother, whose kisses and glances I had never consciously received. And so another evening came, and I forgot the yesterday resolutions in my new thoughts.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE next day Cora was sick. She lay in bed, moaning in a feeble way, her face very much flushed, her lips dry and parched. She was very ill, they said, and the doctor was sent for. My first thought was that she would die with her sin unrepented.

"So she lay in a kind of stupor for many days. There was silence, or only whispers and soft steps over the house, and we neither laughed nor played. It was very solemn and strange. Once, when the door was ajar, I caught a glimpse in the darkened room of a hot face on the pillows, and a shorn head bound with white bandages.

And thus the time passed. Every morning I woke in a fright, thinking the pale messenger

had come in the night; and at each assurance, 'She still lives,' my spirits rose, until night and gloom coming again, I became sad and fearful. And then we wondered what death was, and it seemed to our young lives very dreadful, and we sat pale and grieving together over our many unkindnesses to Cora, thinking if she were only well, only with us once more, that we could never be vexed with her again.

"I had been sitting alone in the library, one afternoon, trying to forget my pain in a book. The blinds were down, there was only a glimmer of light here and there, and the gloom, the stillness, grew so deep that I went out into the sunshine, looking for life to take my thoughts from death.

"There was Cora's pretty Italian greyhound, Fairy, on the piazza. She put her pretty head into my hands, looking wistfully into my face, as if asking for her mistress. I could not bear that. I went into the garden. There was her flower bed, full of weeds, and the buds were withering for want of water. I began to pluck

out the weeds, working zealously, glad to do something for her—and resolved to tend her garden till she was well.

"The old white-haired gardener came near while I was thus employed. He shook his head.

"'Poor Miss Cora! I 'spect she won't work no more in this garden.'

"He was an old man, bent and worn. To have seen the child's and his figure moving together about those walks a month ago, who would have dreamed the lighter, younger form must lie low first?

"'We're in the Lord's hands,' said the old man, looking upward. 'I did not think her time would come first;' and he hobbled on. I watched him. It seemed strange to me to see him so content. Day after day, he plodded on in the same dull routine. I never saw him without that same sense of wondering pity. He did not read, he could not play, he worked, worked from morning till night. What was life to him? I asked myself. Presently he came limping back, he held something in his hand.

'I got this in the biggest bush of box. It is an apron, isn't it?'

"Yes; it was Cora's little silk apron, with the greasy spots from the spilt cream on it. I took it into my hand with such a pain shooting through my very heart, tears rushed to my eyes, and I could scarcely stand. And the thought that she was now near the threshold of that unseen world, where all must render an account of the deeds done in the body, made me shudder with dismay.

"I did not know what to do. Words cannot describe my feelings of self-reproach, the pain of knowing that *I* had prevented her from easing her conscience by confession. I went back to the house, carrying the apron. Aunt Marion, in her white wrapper, passed quickly along the hall, with ice on a plate for the sick-room, too anxious to think of any one but her suffering child.

"While I was still standing there, she returned. Tears were on her cheeks She came to me and clasped me in her arms, sobbing. 'I

cannot bear it—it seems too hard,' she said. Seeing what I held in my hand, the weeping was renewed.

"'Where did you find her apron—poor, dear Cora?' she asked, after a while, touching it tenderly, almost reverently, as we do the veriest trifle belonging to the dead.

"'Baines found it in the garden, Auntie,' I answered, looking down. The opportunity was near for making my confession.

"'In the garden? How could it have come there?' said Auntie, still smoothing out the creases with her gentle fingers, the tears dropping all the while.

"I did not answer. Aunt Marion looked up at my silence, she saw my tears, my pale cheeks, my down-cast looks. 'Do you know any thing about it, Mary?' she asked.

"'Yes. Cora put it there,' I said, 'in the box-wood—the day of the pic-nic;' and then, with tears and broken words, I told her all. She listened without saying a word; but it was painful to see the mother's face, flushing, paling, full

of pain. She rang for Ricy, who came in a moment or two.

"'Did you give Miss Cora cream the day the children had their pic-nic, Ricy? I sent her for some in the morning,' said Auntie.

"'Yes, 'pears like I did,' answered Ricy, meditating. 'Yes, Missis, I did; bressed lamb! and she had that bery apurn on, 'cause I thought she'd spill de cream on't, an' tole her so. Laws, 'taint no countin' on life dese yer days; to see her then, so peart, and now——,' and Ricy, at a gesture from my aunt, went away in tears.

"'If she had only told me of it—if she had only said one word of sorrow for her faults,—one word,—it would not have seemed so hard,' moaned Auntie, rocking herself to and fro.

"'Oh! Auntie, I think she meant to tell you —she talked about it in her sleep, she was troubled, she did not seem the same afterwards: but—but—' and then I faltered out my own share in the guilt, and told her of Cora's hesitation, and of my fear that we should be late, and

of offering to tell about the cream while Cora ran for her bonnet, being afraid she would confess and so delay us.

"My gentle aunt's look of displeasure, her repellent gesture and cold words: 'I must go to my child and leave you to your thoughts; they cannot be pleasant ones,' were bitter indeed to bear. Surely my sin had found me out.

"So she went up stairs again, and left me in my grief alone. It seemed as if the sun never could shine again—that a great black cloud had shut out my sky, and there was nothing but despair in the world. And so I lay there, too sad to weep, only choking and sobbing, till Willie came and carried me into his own cool room, and with gentle words soothed me, till I had poured out my grief to him and so lightened the burden.

"He told me I must not mourn so, and showed me that I must not follow my own will even in this, since it was that self-will which caused all my troubles. In his beautiful way,

he told me where the wrong lay, and pointed to the one safe path for avoiding pitfalls and thickets, and before the hour was spent, stilled even my cries at the thought of Cora's dying—saying, 'God's will must be our will, and we dare not murmur.'

"Willie himself sat by my bedside till I went to sleep, and he it was that brought Aunt Marion to kiss me before I closed my eyes. It was a very tender kiss, for anger and bitter feeling melt away in the presence of death, and her heart was stirred too deeply to wish to inflict pain on one already suffering.

"Daylight was streaming into my room when I opened my eyes. I heard the birds singing, the doves cooing, and busy sounds of life everywhere. I dressed myself, and the cheerful light drove away the sadness of the day before Surely one need not fear under such a sky and such a sunshine.

"I opened my door and glided noiselessly down stairs. I passed Aunt Marion's door. Grandmamma was kneeling by the bed, and

Uncle Bell stood at the window with his back towards me. Fairy was whining at the door of the sick room. The front door was open; there came in a fresh smell of pure air and new hay from outside, and I heard a laugh from the lawn. A face—one, two, three, Nellie's, Robbie's, Willie's—appeared. There were smiles and tears both on them, and in joyful tones, they poured into my ear the good tidings, 'Cora is better.'

"So she was. In a week we gathered about her as she reclined in her chair, pale and quiet, and we brought her June roses, June cherries, and young, downy June chickens to inspect—enchanted at winning a smile, and ready to run at her slightest bidding.

"But the lesson taught me through pain and suspense lasted all the time of my stay there; and patience and self-denial, with a whole train of good feelings, came out of Cora's illness and suffering.

"She, too, was changed. When winter came, and I went to boarding-school, we bade each

other good-bye with real sorrow, and we have continued friends all the years of our life.

"I think neither of us will ever forget the spilt cream, the picnic, and the little silk apron.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"OH, Miss Lane, is that all?" cried the children. "Please tell us the rest. What became of Willie? and did your papa come back?"

Jennie's silks were untangled, and Mr. Graham's eyes were wide open; but bed time had come for Tan and Rosie, and so they had to be satisfied for that evening.

Christmas came and went. Allie Ross and her mother were made happy, and Lillie finished the stockings. Poor Jennie succeeded only in finishing her "odds and ends" by New Year, and very sad and dispirited she grew over the work many times; but when it was over, and she began fresh and with a clear conscience, she was glad of the discipline.

Christmas Day did not seem dull, though not

a single present filled the stocking of any. Mr. Graham had no idea of making the sacrifice incomplete: he intended that his children should feel what self-denial meant, and learn to practise it.

It was some time before Miss Lane finished her "Life," as the little ones called it. It was rather a mild day—one of the January thawing ones—before they heard the whole.

"Did your cousin Robbie get to be a good boy, Miss Lane," asked Rosie, while they were all in the parlor, before evening came on.

"Yes. I told you about my cousin Robbie when I first came here. It was he that wandered in the snow, trying to escape from the Indians in New Mexico."

"Oh, what a pity!"

"I don't know, my dears; he did his work, and God gave him rest," was the answer.

"It seems sad to die, though."

"Not to every body, my children."

"And Johnnie and Nellie, and Cora and Willie?"

"Johnnie is a dignified gentleman now, very rich, very honorable, with a beautiful wife, and two pet children that call me Auntie. Cora married a clergyman, and is in China, teaching the heathen: she is very noble, very true, and full of zeal.

"Little Nellie grew to be a lovely woman, so very bright and happy that it lightened one's heart to look at her. She stepped as if treading on air, and was full of music, playing and singing through life, with a promise of joy in her future. Every body loved Nellie Bell, and admired her as we do some beautiful, rare flower, thinking her about as fit as a blossom to bear the ills and cares of life. And yet Nellie was the heroine of the family, caring for her mother, who grew blind, with the most beautiful tenderness, bearing the burden of her papa's moroseness and repinings, and putting away, with a sublime self-sacrifice, all the fair and lovely dreams that must have filled her heart, to be the comforter and helper of their old age.

"By and by, uncle Bell lost his property, and

Nellie generously gave up her own dowry, left by her grandmother, to support him—wearing a plain dress, when she delighted in gay colors and soft fabrics; giving up her books, her pony, her music, and doing many things with her own dainty fingers, that they might not miss the servants, some of whom she was obliged to dismiss.

"And her natural gayety softened into the loveliest, calmest content. Her eyes grew deep and radiant, and her lips smiled always; her brow was as smooth too as ever, and nothing could change the child look of ingenuousness in her face.

"I think I have never seen anything so pure and sweet as her ways. She seems living ever near to God, taking blessings from His hand, and when He sends sorrow, smiling with the same patience; because both alike come from her Father.

"A few years ago, there was a new joy in her life, and the cup was dashed from her lip as she was about to drink it. A sudden death came to one who was to have been her husband, death

from home, when he was not dreaming of it, and while she was even waiting and watching for him day by day.

"She was waiting for the words, 'He is here,' and they told her, 'He is dead'—and the strange event threatened to put out the light and warmth in her young heart for a time; but it brightened again, and she took up her duties with patience, sweetness, peace, even happiness, because God is good, and his presence in the world is beautiful, because a long life teaches us much, and we must thank the Giver for it."

"How very sad," said the children.

"You would not call her sad, if you were to see her. She, I am sure, would not have her lot changed."

"And you and Willie?" suggested the children, after a pause.

"I am here, my dear," continued Miss Lane with a little sigh, looking thoughtfully out of the window. "You know all about me. My fate, I suppose, was to tell you stories. I never saw my dear father again alive. In the next spring,

he sailed for home, he died on the sea, and they buried him in the water. It was very hard to bear at first. To this day, I have not recovered from the yearning for one more touch of his hand, one more sound of his voice. It seemed as if I were dying of hunger for a sight of his face once more, and I grew so pale and weak that every body feared for my life. It seemed as if my soul's food had been taken away, and I pined for many months, till a good man, even dear, gentle Willie, showed me my sin in grieving so much, and I tried again to lift up my head.

"And when I finished my education, because there was other need greater than mine, I gave up my little fortune, and took this work of teaching upon myself. Willie is your Dr. Sprague."

"Our Dr. Sprague! our Dr. Sprague your Willie! Hurrah! Papa, Dr. Sprague is Miss Lane's Willie!" cried the children, running to the door as Mr. Graham appeared.

"Whose Willie am I?" said a voice, speaking from out the depths of a great-coat, as another

gentleman appeared behind their papa; and four young forms were held tight in a strong pair of arms, as their turns came.

"*Do* you know Miss Lane?" inquired Lillie, when, tea being over and some degree of quietness restored, she sat curiously watching the two faces of her friends.

"Yes, a little," answered the gentleman, nodding and smiling in a wonderfully contented manner.

A moment after all were moved to mirth, as little Rosie said, deliberately bringing out her words, as if she had come to the conclusion after much study, and looking meditatively into Miss Lane's face:

"I think she likes him yet—Willie, I mean."

On the next day, they learned that in the spring, Miss Lane would have her own home and fireside, to which, she assured them, when their tears fell at the thought of parting with her, they would ever be welcome.

Many new lessons were learned during those winter months, habits of order were acquired,

and self-control became no longer so difficult to exercise.

Though Jennie did not become a *model* of neatness and punctuality, she did much in the way of improvement, and learned to subdue her temper, though tried severely.

Lillie, too, and Frank found there was another ruler than their own will, and made a good beginning in the straight, narrow way, before Miss Lane departed, her dear face looking fairer and brighter than ever to her ardent admirers, the young Grahams.

THE END.