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THE

OLD WHITE MEETINGHOUSE;

OR,

REMINISCENCES

5167  
OF A

COUNTRY CONGREGATION.

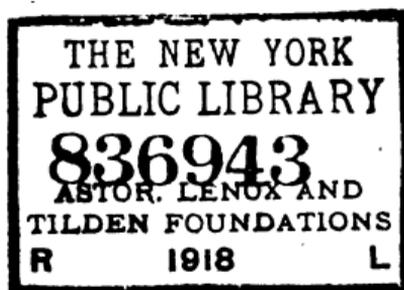
"At church, with meek and unaffected grace,  
His looks adorned the venerable place;  
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,  
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray."  
GOLDSMITH.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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**THE** following pages are the records of truth. They are given to the public with a good motive, and the reader will find that "still life" in the country, may furnish scenes of interest as intense and stirring as the realms of fiction.

The writer has aimed at doing good by these sketches. Evils in country congregations, more or less common to all, he has rebuked with an unsparing hand; while in the good pastor and many of his flock, there are bright examples of faith and works, that he has loved to portray for the admiration and imitation of those who may

contemplate them. If the *characters* here described are recognised, the writer trusts to the good sense of the people, to pardon him for the liberty he has taken with those whose *kindness* he remembers with gratitude, and whose *faces* he can never forget.

NEW YORK, *March* 26, 1846.

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**REMINISCENCES**  
**OF A**  
**COUNTRY CONGREGATION.**

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**CHAPTER I.**

**EARLY SCENES AND IMPRESSIONS — THE OLD  
WHITE MEETING-HOUSE.**

**DRIVEN** about for many and weary years on the world's wide sea, I have at last made harbor here in this goodly city of Gotham, better known as New York. But my heart turns often and fondly to that spot away up in the country, where my boyhood and youth were passed, where those dear to me are buried, where I first learned to read and to pray, where I thought to live and to die. It was in the old town of ———, in the state of ———, and those who know not

the geography of that part of the world, must be told that the town is a wide, fertile plain, some ten or twelve miles across, circled with hills, watered by lovely and gentle streams, and peopled by a set of independent farmers, who are well to do for this world, and the most of them have been wise enough to make provision for the world to come.

It was in this town that I had my "bringing up," such as it was; this was the scene of a thousand youthful adventures in school-boy days, and of a thousand incidents of social and domestic life, that now come back to the call of memory, like the spirits of those we have loved, pleasant to meet again, but mournful as the truth comes with them that they are gone to return no more.

But there is little that is *mournful* to the reader in these sketches. He shall find nothing but pleasure in the reminiscences, and as I tell him of the "Old White Meetinghouse," and the "Minister and his Family," and the "Elders and Deacons," and

‘A few of the Neighbors,’ and then go abroad in the congregation, and speak of the habits of the people, their business and amusements, and enter into their church matters, and mention the quarrel they had about the old minister, how they all loved him till one of them took offence at the truth and stirred up strife and drove him away, how they quarrelled about a new minister, and *how* they have prospered since—as I go over all these, and fifty other things, which these will suggest as we go along, the reader will not be tempted to the melancholy mood. We will keep clear of that, though we speak of serious things in a serious way.

I could spend some time in describing “our house,” and the things in and around it, and it might not be out of the way to do so, as the natural course to matters of more public interest. There was a stream close by the door that was my resort in the trout season, and there was a grove of pines but a short distance off, into which I often in

childhood wandered alone, and long before I ever heard of Coleridge, or his hymn in the Vale of Chamouni where he says,

“Ye pine groves, with your soft and soul like sounds,”

I had loved to sit down on the moss, and listen to the spirit-melody of the still air among the tree-tops: sighing to my soul, and saddening, I could not tell why, my young heart. There I used to think of communing with God and the spirits of the good in heaven, and in the solemn twilight of those deep shades, I had thoughts of loving and serving God which are now working themselves out in life's struggles, and will never be fully answered, till He who called me *then*, shall call me to himself. Then there was the old schoolhouse, and a hard set of boys, and I might spend an hour or a week in making chronicles of the first dozen of them that now leap up before the mind's eye, like young tigers, begging me to draw their portraits, and send them down the stream of time with these rough

sketches. But the boys must wait. We have no room for them. Some of them will come in by the way, and we shall here and there set up a stone to the memory of some poor fellow, at whose fate we drop a passing tear. It is the religious life of the people that I want to bring out for the entertainment and instruction of those who may read, and unless I greatly mistake, the history will not be without its uses, although I feel full well that it will suffer much from the insufficiency of him who has ventured to be the historian.

“THE OLD WHITE MEETINGHOUSE.”

—So it was called, and by this name it was known all over the country. Not but that there were other white meetinghouses in that region, but this was by way of eminence *the* White Meetinghouse, as the largest, and oldest, and most respectable, and when a political meeting, or general training, or a show was to be held at the tavern opposite, the notice was given that the gathering was to be at the White Meetinghouse

corners, and everybody for a dozen miles around, knew at once where it was to be.

It was a large square building, with a steeple whose lofty spire gave me my first and strongest impressions of "amazing height;" and now as I look at "Trinity" here in Broadway, and the men dwindled into dwarfs on its all but "cloud-capt towers," it does not look half as tall as that steeple, with a *fish* for a *weather-cock*, wheeling in the breeze. How often have I lain on "the green" in front of that church, and wondered how in the world they ever got that fish away up there; or who hitched the lightning rod to that spire, and how any one ever dared to shingle the roof of that awful steeple almost to the very summit. And sometimes in the night when I had "bad dreams," I fancied that I was clasping that steeple in my little arms, and sliding slowly down, the steeple widening, and my hold relaxing, till at length down I came, down, down, and just as I was to strike the ground, I would wake in terror, and be

afraid to go to sleep again, lest I should repeat that terrible slide.

The church had square pews, with high partitions and sash-work between, which were great inlets of amusement to the children who would be always thrusting their arms through, and sometimes their heads, in the midst of sermon, but more particularly in prayer-time, for then they were more likely to escape observation. These *square pews* the minister always was free to say he regarded as an invention of the devil, and there was some reason to believe that the devil had the right to a patent. As half of the congregation must sit with their backs to the preacher, it was customary for the parents to place the children in this position, and it is easy to see that thus situated, it would be next to impossible to secure their attention to the services of the sanctuary. Of course the devil would be pleased with an arrangement which so effectually prevents the young from becoming interested in divine truth, and I do not therefore won-

der at the good minister's notice of the origin of the plan.

The pulpit was like unto an immense barrel supported on a single post. Its interior was gained by a lofty flight of steps, and the preacher once in possession, had certainly a most commanding position. I can recollect often thinking how easy it would be with a saw to cut away the pillar on which this old pulpit tottered, and then what a tremendous crash it would make, coming down with the minister in it. And this reminds me of one of the minister's boys, an arch rogue, about five years old, who was so much in the habit of misbehaving in meeting, that he had to be punished often and soundly but with no sanative consequences. His father threatened frequently to take him into the pulpit with him if he did not behave better, but the youngster never believed that he was serious in the threat, or if he was, Dick had a very natural idea that there was as much chance for fun in the pulpit behind his father's back,

as there was in the pew before him. At length the pastor was as good as his word, and one Sunday morning, to the surprise of the people, he led his roguish boy up into the pulpit, and proceeded with the service. Richard began to be uneasy, but remained comfortably quiet until the long prayer began; then he fidgeted up on the seat, and peaked over upon the congregation below; and, finally as a sudden thought struck him, he threw one leg over the pulpit, and there sat astride of the sacred desk, drumming with his little heels upon the boards. The good pastor was at prayer, and could not turn aside to dismount his hopeful boy, but between his fears that the child should fall, and the indications of mirth among the young folks in the church, the minister had more than he could do to keep his thoughts on the service, and he therefore speedily brought his petitions to a close, and seized the youthful Richard in the midst of his ride. We never saw Dick in the pulpit again, and a marked improve-

ment in his manners gave us reason to believe that certain domestic appliances were resorted to, which have the recommendation of the wisest of men, as useful in cases of this desperate nature.

The old church was the haunt of swallows that built their nests under its caves; and it was no unusual thing for one of those swift-winged birds to dart into the open window on a summer sabbath, and by some strange perversity, to persist in flying everywhere but out of the window again, till wearied with flying to and fro it would light on the sounding-board over the minister's head. These gyrations were quite an amusement to the children, and I remember that on one of these occasions, the same young Richard, who has already been introduced, thought he had hit upon something smart when he turned up the 84th psalm in Watts:—

“ And wandering swallows long  
To find their wonted rest.”

But that pulpit or that house was no place for mirth. Never in all the wanderings of

after-life, in splendid temples, where the wealth of princes has been lavished, to make honorable the house of God, where the stained windows shed dim religious light over the solemn courts, and the great organ poured its deep thunders on the ear, never there, or elsewhere, have I seen or heard so much of God as in that old white meeting-house. It was a *plain* house, it is true. Except the pulpit and the front of the gallery, the whole interior was innocent of paint, and the bare floor rung under the heavy tread of the substantial farmers as they came up the narrow aisles, with their horsewhips in their hands: and they were a plain people in that church; some of them in hot weather sat with their coats off, and some stood up in sermon-time when they became drowsy by sitting; it was all the plainness of a country congregation in a country meeting-house; but *God was there*. I have heard him in his preached word, when the strong truths of the gospel were poured with energy from that sacred desk, not in enticing

words of man's wisdom, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. I have felt him when the Holy Ghost has come down on the congregation as on the day of Pentecost, and strong men have bowed themselves under the mighty influence of subduing grace.

But all these I shall have occasion to speak of hereafter, when the minister and his preaching and its fruits come up in review.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE OLD GRAVEYARD.

IN the rear of the meetinghouse was the graveyard, and all my early recollections of death and the grave, are associated with that quiet and solemn spot. It was a large enclosure which had never been laid off in "lots to suit purchasers," but a decent interval was left between families, and all came there on common ground. A few pines of a large growth were scattered in it, and with the exception of here and there a rose-bush, the place was unadorned. But it had attractions. For every sabbath-day, during the interval of divine worship, the people from a distance, who remained at church, "bringing their dinner" with them, were in the habit of walking among the

tombs, meditating upon themes suggested by the inscriptions they read upon the headstones, and speaking to one another of the virtues of those whom when living they had known and loved. And often of a summer sabbath evening, the young people would stroll into the yard, the gate of which was always left open on the sabbath, and at such time there was never heard the slightest indication of levity or irreverence for the holy day.

But observance of the sabbath was a strongly-marked feature of that place and people. A simple fact will show the state of public opinion on this subject. On one occasion, several young men, chiefly from some mechanical establishments lately set up in the neighborhood, not having the fear of God or the laws of man before their eyes, made up a party and went off to the mountains to pick whortleberries. The minister and a few of the good men held a consultation, and it was determined to put the statute of the state into execution and

make an example of them, to prevent the pernicious influences which might result to the whole community, if such a flagrant breach of morals were suffered to go unpunished. Accordingly the whole party were arrested, brought before 'Squire Jones, and fined one dollar each. There was no help for them, and they paid the fine; but they watched the opportunity for revenge. And it soon came in a small way, for on the next sabbath afternoon they saw the 'squire's daughter, a fine girl of seventeen, in the garden picking a few currants, and they complained of her to her own father, had her arrested, and the fact being too clearly established by proof to admit of any evasion, the 'squire was compelled to impose the fine and pay it himself! This was quite a triumph for these low fellows, who, however, were very careful not to go after whortleberries on the sabbath again. But this is wandering out of the old graveyard.

There was a simple beauty and solemnity in those country funerals that I have not ob-

served for years. A death in the country is a widely-different event in its relations and effects, from one in the city. The other day I observed an unusual gathering at the house of my next-door neighbor, a man whom I had never known even by sight. Presently a hearse stood in front of the house, and I soon learned that it had come to take away the body of my neighbor to his burial. It was sad to think of, that I could have been living with only a thin wall between me and a brother-man, who had been for weeks struggling with disease, and who had finally sunk into the arms of death, while I had never even *felt* the tenderness of sympathy with him or his, in the days and nights of suffering and sorrow which they had known. Yet so it is in this city. Your nearest neighbors are utter strangers, and may sicken and die and be buried, and you will know nothing of it, unless you happen to be at home when the hearse comes or goes. It is not so in the country. There in L——, when one was

sick all the neighbors knew it and felt it ; kindness, like balm, fell on the heart of the sufferer from every family near, and when death came, solemnity was on every heart. All the countryside, from far and near, without being *invited*, came to the funeral, and filled the house and the door-yard, and when the services were concluded, the coffin was brought out in front of the house, and the multitude were permitted to take a farewell look of the departed. Then the remains were borne away to the grave, followed by a long train, not of hired carriages, but of plain wagons filled with sympathizing friends, and the procession moved on slowly and silently, often many miles, to the place of burial. As it reached the yard, those who lived near, would drop in and join the crowd that was now gathering at the open grave, and the children of the neighborhood, especially, were sure to be present at such times. Frequently have I been deeply moved by the scenes around those graves—for there in the country, na-

ture revealed itself in its simple power—and the deep but half-stifled groan that has come to my soul when the first clods fell on the coffin, was as if they fell on the warm breast of a sleeping friend. We see no such funerals here in this great city—itsself a mighty charnel-house. We take our dead to the narrow cemetery, and for thirty pieces of silver purchase the privilege of putting the precious dust into a great cellar. Some time ago, a friend of mine wanted to remove the ashes of his wife from one of these receptacles, and he applied to the keeper for that purpose; the man objected on account of the time that would be consumed in the undertaking; my friend offered to defray all the expenses, and reward him liberally besides, but it was of no avail; and he was finally told that it would be impossible ever to find or recover the remains. These are city burials. Rural cemeteries are now becoming more *fashionable*(!) in the neighborhood of cities. Let them be encouraged. Dust we are, and

when we die let us go back to our mother's bosom and rest there till mortal puts on immortality.

This last thought reminds me of the great excitement which once pervaded the community when it was reported that a grave had been violated in that peaceful yard, and the lifeless tenant carried off by the doctors. The appearance of the grave led to suspicion that there had been foul play. It was examined, and the suspicions were found to be too true. The body of a girl some fourteen years of age, of respectable family, had been stolen from the sepulchre to be cut up and made into a "natomy," as the people expressed it. The whole town was aghast. Such an outrage had never been heard of in that part of the world, and the good people could scarcely believe that such monsters lived, as men who dig up corpses to hack them in pieces. They met in righteous indignation, and appointed a committee of investigation, who never rested till they got upon

the trail of the hyenas; they never rested till the perpetrator of the deed was in prison, and the instigator—Dr. ——, who escaped by some flaw in the indictment—was compelled to remove from the town.

These events naturally led to great apprehensions respecting other graves, and many were searched by anxious friends, who now watched the tombs with more vigilance than did the guards set over the holy sepulchre. The impression became very strong that a certain grave had been robbed. It was the grave of a lovely woman, the wife of a drunkard; and the fact that he was dead to all feeling, and consequently would not be likely to care what became of the body of his wife, seemed to confirm the grounds of suspicion, and finally it was determined to make the examination. It was the afternoon of a warm day in the midst of summer, when I, a mere child then, was attracted into the yard by seeing a number of men around a grave. I soon learned what was going on, and creep-

ing between the feet of those who were standing nearest, I was soon immediately over the head of the grave which they had now opened down to the coffin. Having cleared off the earth and started the fastenings of the lid, which were all found secure, they raised it, and the full light of the sun flowed upon the most horrid spectacle which my eyes before or since have seen ;—

“ Corruption, earth, and worms,” were there.

I waited not for a second look, but ran from the spot in awful terror, and have, from that time, had an image of “ death’s doings,” which I never could have obtained but for the loathsome revelations of that graveyard scene.

These are not the things that I intended to record of that hallowed spot. Yet they are, perhaps, among the most vivid impressions that I retain of it ; unless it be my fears to pass it alone after dark ! And I should as soon have thought of setting fire to the church, as of *playing* within the en-

closure. I looked upon it with reverential awe as "God's acre;" and I wish with all my heart that the feeling of regard for sacred places, and times, and things, which we felt in our childhood, might return. It had its faults and its weaknesses, but *they* were better than the care-for-nothing, dare-devil spirit of the rising generation now-a-days. But I shall have more to say of this hereafter.

## CHAPTER III.

### "OUR MINISTER."

"We never shall see *him* more," I know very well—too well; and it is a matter of great doubt with me whether we shall ever see *the like* of him again. Yet there were no eccentricities of character, natural or artificial, by which he was made to differ from the men of his own times or the men of our times, and which are now to be recorded for the amusement and not the instruction of others. There have been such men, and when we are reading their oddities, it is very easy to believe that if you take away the oddities of the man, there would be little or nothing left. The usefulness of such men is often looked at as proof that their eccentricities were real vir-

tues, and not blemishes upon their characters ; but I am inclined to the opinion that they were usually useful in spite of their peculiarities, and would have been far more so, if they had been as other men, and without those "bonds."

Our minister, the excellent Mr. Rogers, had no one singularity of which I can now think, and if the reader jumps to the conclusion that he was therefore a moderate, every-day sort of man, not worth knowing about, he must even skip the description, and go on to something more to his taste.

That I always *looked up* to Mr. Rogers with such a reverential awe as the present degenerate age knows very little of, is very likely ; and it may be that if he had lived in this day, when all ministers are so good or all children so much more advanced than they were thirty years ago, perhaps he would not stand out before the world with so bold a prominence as he did in my eyes, when he walked slowly but modestly up the aisle, and climbed the lofty pulpit. I

thought he was the holiest man in the world; he seemed *awful holy!* I have never had the least reason to suppose that I was mistaken in those notions about him, yet much allowance may doubtless be made for a child's reverence for his pastor, in days now gone, to come back never, I sadly fear.

He was thirty-five or forty years of age when I was five or six, and consequently he was *always* an old man in my eyes; and I have no other recollections of him than those associated with the deepest reverence. That he ever *sinned*, I never supposed; and if any one had mentioned anything to his disadvantage in my hearing, it would have shocked me very much, as it would now to hear of a peccadillo in an angel. This is no place, and I have no time, to go into the reasons of the change in the sentiment of children respecting their minister, but, from the bottom of my heart, I wish that the good old times of Edwards would come back again, or if that is wish-

ing too much, the times when I was a boy! Those were good times compared with these, though I have no hope to convince the young of it.

He had an extraordinary voice, that is a fact. Perhaps this ought to be written down as a singularity. It rings this moment in my ears just as it did thirty years ago, and not with the most pleasant music, for it was harsh and strong, and when he was roused by the great theme of pulpit discourse, the gospel would come down in such torrents of overwhelming sound, that it sometimes seemed to me the people must be carried by storm. Yet was he far from being a *violent* preacher. He had too much of the milk of human kindness in his soul to say hard things in a hard way, but the power of which I speak was the voice of a mighty man on the mightiest theme that ever employed the lips of man, and how could he be otherwise than overpowering? At times his voice was terrible! That is to say, when he sud-

denly raised it in a tone of command, he would start every dull soul in that assembly as if a thunderbolt had hit the old white meetinghouse in the middle of the sermon. I remember one sabbath, when the congregation was unusually silent and solemn, a half-crazy man, but more mischievous than mad, rose in the gallery and commenced making various gesticulations to amuse the young people, who sat in that part of the house. The congregation below did not know that anything was going on, but the minister saw it in a moment; and to try gentle means at first, he made a sign to the man to sit down and be still. Wilson kept his fun in operation till the forbearance of good Mr. Rogers was quite spent, and looking sternly at him, he thundered out, "*Mr. Wilson, sit down, sir!*" The man fell back in his seat as though a bludgeon had smote him, and never raised his head during the service. He called the next day on Mr. Rogers and made an apology, and sealed it by sending him a load of

wood. But it was the effect of his voice upon the congregation of which I was speaking. If the roof had fallen in, the people would scarcely have been more startled than by this pastoral explosion. Every heart trembled, and it was some time before the children could get their breath. Yet there was no sign of impatience or any other unholy passion in the sudden blow of his voice, by which the worthy minister had lain low his disorderly auditor; but there was majesty and power in those tremendous tones, which carried conviction to every conscience, that Mr. Rogers was not a man to be trifled with, and that, standing in God's name and house, he would teach every man to keep in his place.

And here it is *in order* to speak of the *authority* which Mr. Rogers wielded in that congregation. It was the *beauty of power*. It was right that he should rule in the church, according to the laws of the church and the word of God; but his rule was

that of love, so kindly, yet firmly dispensed, that no man thought of quarrelling with it, who did not also war against divine authority. The pastor *was* the pastor. As shepherd of the flock, it was his office to watch over them and keep them, as far as in him lay, from wandering into dangerous ways, and from the covert or open assaults of enemies who go about, like their master, the devil, seeking whom they may devour. And when any one, or any dozen of the *sheep* took it into their heads that they knew more about the proper mode of managing the flock than the *shepherd* whom the Lord had sent to tend them, they soon found that they had mistaken their calling, and would consult their happiness and usefulness by quietly minding their own business. Now you would not do Mr. Rogers exact justice, if the inference should be drawn from this fact that he was regardless of the wishes of his people, or kept them at a distance, when they wished to take counsel with him on the interests of the

church. Far otherwise were his temper and practice. They were taught, and they learned to come with all freedom and lay their hearts before him, and the patience and sympathy with which he listened to their individual, and all but endless stories, is a matter of wonder to me, now that I call to mind how much of it he was compelled to endure. I used to be often, when a child, at his house, playing with his boys, and had the most frequent and favorable opportunities of observing that of which I am now speaking. And while he was ready always to enter with kindness and freedom into the varied wants of those who came to him with "something on their minds," he knew his own duties too well, and his high responsibility to God, to suffer them for a moment to dictate to him as to the mode in which he should manage the flock of which he had been made the overseer. Even in those days, the people would sometimes have "itching ears" to hear a new-light preacher of great renown,

who was turning the world upside down with his eloquence, and they would take some roundabout way to hint to Mr. Rogers that it would be a good plan to send for him to come and give them a few rousing sermons. But they were not long in finding that Mr. Rogers held the keys of the pulpit in his own hand, and asked whom he pleased, and none others, to feed his flock. If this uniform course of conduct now and then chafed the necks of some of the less judicious of the congregation, the pastor had two rich and all-sufficient sources of comfort—the support of all the better sort of his people, and the approbation of a good conscience.

Mr. Rogers's intercourse with his people did not confine itself to their visits at his study or house. He sought them at their own homes, and around their firesides and tables he mingled with them, in such easy and cheerful conversation, that they felt him to be their friend, while they never forgot that he was their teacher and guide to

heaven. We children never felt altogether at home when the minister was there. We were not quite so free to come into the room, and we hung down our heads, and perhaps kept one thumb in our mouths, as if we were very much ashamed of ourselves when we were summoned into his presence "to say the catechism," and receive such good and wholesome advice, as he never failed to administer, in tones that sunk deep into our young hearts. Those were often very solemn seasons, and if the practice is passing away from the churches of our land, I would that it might be restored again. In these good days of Sunday-schools, and other excellent but modern modes of training up children in the way in which they should go, the old-fashioned plan of pastoral-catechizing has been laid aside in very many parts of our land. I speak not of the catechism of any particular creed. All those who call themselves *Christian*, have a duty to perform to their children, and if the pastor and parents

would imitate the example of our minister, they would bless their children and the country. In these pastoral visits, and in the instruction which the young received in preparation for it, were laid the principles of that attachment to the doctrines of the gospel, of the order of the church, and of submission to law of God and of man, obedience to parents, respect to those who are older, wiser, and better, that ever marked the youth who were trained under the ministry of this man of God; and I am inclined to think, that if you follow the whole generation that passed their childhood in that congregation at that time, you will find very few who have not become, and remained till death, sober, quiet, substantial citizens, and useful, honest men. But this is not getting on with the story.

As soon as Mr. Rogers arrived at any house in his scattered and extended parish, all the ordinary cares of the family were suspended, and the whole time of every member given to him. On his first induc-

tion to this people, it was the custom of the good woman of the house, to begin to fly about when the minister came to fix up the best parlor, and get ready some warm biscuit for tea, or a pair of chickens for dinner, if he came before noon, and thus all her time was spent, like that of Martha, in much serving. Mr. Rogers soon put an end to that mode of entertainment, by informing his people from the pulpit, that when he came to see them at their houses, it was not to be feasted, but to feed their souls and the souls of their children; and, therefore, if they wished to please him, they would do as Mary did, sit still and listen. This hint, after sundry repetitions, had the desired effect, and he was able to enjoy the whole time of his visit in those great duties which he felt to be of unspeakable importance to the spiritual welfare of the family. The heads of the household were first conversed with freely on the progress which they were making in personal religion; if they had doubts, and fears, or any

other difficulties about which they needed direction, they were encouraged to make them known, and from the stores of his well-furnished mind, and the richer treasures of a deeply spiritual experience and great familiarity with the word of God, he was able to impart just that counsel which their trials seemed to require. If they were backward in their performance of any of the acknowledged duties of Christian life, if the worship of God in the family was not faithfully attended to, if they were at variance with any of their neighbors, or slack in the discharge of their obligations to their fellow-men, he would in all kindness, but with skilful decision, as their soul's physician, give them those prescriptions without which it was impossible for their souls to thrive. Such fidelity and freedom on his part, so far from alienating their affections, did but endear him to them the more, as they saw his affectionate interest in their souls' concerns, and felt the power and truth of the admonitions which he gave. And then

these admonitions were often blessed of God to the great comfort and edification of the people, who thus found in their own happy experience, the ineffable value of a faithful pastor, whom they loved even when he came to wound.

The children were then called in, and were examined, as I have hinted, in the catechism, in which they were regularly instructed by their parents. The doctrines therein contained were then familiarly explained, and the young were most earnestly persuaded to give their hearts to the Savior, while yet in the morning of their days. As the congregation was widely extended, it was common for Mr. Rogers to give notice on the sabbath, that during the week on a certain day, he would visit in such a neighborhood, and at three o'clock in the afternoon he wished the families in that vicinity to assemble at a house named, for religious conversation and prayer. And those were good meetings, you may be sure; the farmer's house in which it was held, would

be filled with parents and children, the halls and the stair-case crowded ; a little stand, with a bible and psalm-book, would be set for the minister at some point from which his voice could easily be heard over all the house, and such prayers and such appeals would be then and there made, as the spirit of God delights to attend and bless. How many tears did the children shed in those meetings ; not alarmed by terrible words of coming wrath, but melted with the pathos of gospel love, and moved by the strong appeals of that holy man. Impressions, I know, were made at those meetings, that eternity will only brighten and deepen, as the memory of those solemn, yet happy hours, mingles with the joy of immortal bliss. I mention those scenes, although I can hardly expect that others will take any interest in the record, hoping that some will gather hints from these to go and do likewise, and because I love to linger among recollections that are the sweetest and strongest of life's early hours.

In speaking of Mr. Rogers's voice, I touched incidentally upon his power as a preacher. He was eminently an instructive preacher. It was his aim to produce an intelligent conviction in the minds of his hearers of the truth of the great doctrines of the gospel, to elucidate them with so much distinctness that they should readily admit their force, and thus he would lay the foundation for those overwhelming appeals to duty that so marked his pulpit ministrations. *He was great on the doctrines.* I make his remark in this blunt way, that the fact may stand out the more distinctly. He thought the religious system of the Bible was a system of great truths, having an intimate relation to one another, and an inseparable connexion with the character, and consequently the destiny of men. Instead, therefore, of spending his time and strength in exhibiting himself, or in amusing his people with theories and speculations of his own, instead of merely practical exhortations which constitute so great a part of the preach-

ing of many excellent and devoted men, he labored to bring home to the minds and the hearts of his people, those cardinal doctrines of the gospel which lie at the root of all true faith and holy living, and by a course of regular and lucid expositions of the sacred oracles, he led them to behold these doctrines shining with lustre and majestic beauty on every page of revelation. And when these strong truths were thus unfolded, he would stand upon them as on a mount of glory, and thence urge the claims of God and the gospel with words of fervid heat and strength, that melted the hearts on which they fell, and mingled their saving power in the mass thus dissolved in the breasts of the assembly. The effects of this ministry were, as might be expected, immediate and permanent. The word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. The young grew up to manhood with strong attachments to the faith of their fathers, the members of the church were steadfast in their adherence to the truth as they had re-

ceived it, and it was rare to see a man in the community who was not a professor of religion. The institutions of the gospel commanded the respect and reverence of the whole people. *Impiety* was scarcely known in the town, so deep-settled and widespread was this regard for the truths of God's word and the ordinances of his house.

Here I was on the point of speaking of the great revivals of religion which followed such a ministry, but they will demand more space than I have now left. In a future chapter, these may come before us with some of that tender interest that now clusters in the region of my heart, as memory runs back to scenes when the Holy Spirit displayed his omnipotent grace, subduing sinners and winning them to the feet of Jesus. Precious revivals! come back and dwell with the church for ever.

Yet I have not half drawn this portrait of Mr. Rogers, nor told one of a thousand incidents that ought to be thrown in to convey even a faint idea of the man, to those

who know nothing of him except what they gather from these sketches. If there were any traits of his symmetrical character that ought to be brought out in bolder relief on this page than the rest, they were his *fixedness of purpose in right*, and his *unterrified moral courage*. These features blend in fine proportions in the life of every right man, but they are worthy of distinct recognition. It was our minister's great study to learn what God would have him to do ; in one word, what was *right* ; for as he was always doing something, he merely wished to ascertain what was right, and he went on to achieve it, as easily and naturally as he would eat to appease his hunger, or rest when he was weary. It was no objection to any line of policy or the attempt of any enterprise that the people would not like it, or that the world would oppose it, nor even that it would probably fail for the want of support ; enough for him that it was a duty to which he was called, and like Luther on the way to Worms, or his Master on the way to crucifixion, he marched steadily onward,

and if he did not succeed, he nevertheless had his reward. Let a new sect seek to propagate some pestilent heresy within the bounds of his parish ; let a reformer, with zeal and without knowledge come and attempt to sow the seeds of revolution among the people ; and then see with what calm and holy boldness he would rouse to the defence of the truth, and how error, affrighted, would flee away before his stern and manly rebukes. Let vice, under some insidious garb, begin to gain a foothold in the congregation, among the young in their follies, or the old in their pursuits of gain, and the "Old White Meetinghouse" was sure to ring with righteous denunciations and the threatened judgments of an alienated God, before the people knew that the mischief had reached the pastor's ear.

And when the storm of opposition burst upon him, as it did at last, and as we shall see hereafter, he was calm and unshaken like the rock at whose base the waves have broken for centuries. True, he was finally overthrown, but he fell as I have seen a

great oak which the river overflowing its banks has dashed against without harm, but anon the waters have subsided, and working their way under the roots, have at last worn away the soil, and the tree that an overflowing deluge could not move, has fallen headlong by the silent and unseen influence of an under-ground foe.

But I will not dwell longer on my old pastor. I know I have not begun to give him to you as he was, and as he still is in my soul's recollections of years now gone. But if I should prolong the sketch interminably, I should probably get no nearer the perfection of the portrait. You have now an outline only, and as we mingle with the congregation, and bring under review the various sorts of men and women that made it, and recount the many and wonderful scenes through which they passed, you will catch more of the tact and talent of “our minister” than I can convey by piling ever so many words upon those already written.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE PEOPLE — SCENES IN THE CHURCH — ELDER BUTLER—MRS. BURTIS AND HER CHILD—ELDER VAN SLATE—MRS. SNIFFLE.

AND now, as faithful historians, come we to the people of that congregation. Come from your graves, old men and women of my native parish; come stand up before me while I draw your portraits and write your history! But they come not. Of all that were the men and women grown when I was a boy, how few of them are there now! A few years ago I broke away from the city, and made a flying visit to the old town. I reached there on Saturday. No one knew me. A friend—yes, one whom I had grown up with from childhood, and knew me as well as an own brother, nodded to me as I passed, as they do to all

strangers in the country, but the smile of recognition was wanting, and I felt truly a stranger in a strange land. I stopped and claimed his acquaintance without mentioning my name, and he looked steadily at me, but declared he had never seen me before. Alas ! what work time makes with us. I look in the glass, but can see *no* change ; and why should others find it out ? Yet I see it in them, and they in me. "*Tempora mutantur,*" &c. Times change, and we change with them. We are hastening to the great and last change.

On Sunday I went to church in the new meetinghouse on the site of the old one, and what a change was here ! The square pews had yielded place to the modern cushioned slips, the high pulpit overhung with a threatening sounding-board, which I was always afraid would one day fall and crush poor Mr. Rogers when he preached so loud as to make it and me shake, had been supplanted by a railed platform and desk. But these were nothing to the change in

the faces of the people. Those old familiar faces ! Where were they ? I looked here, and I looked there, and everywhere, but I found them not, and shall not find them, till the "old marble" of the graveyard breaks at the sound of the last trump, and the tomb resigns its trust. Holy men ; the salt of the earth ; men of faith and prayer ; men of God ! Some of you were like Enoch, and no wonder that God took you ; one was like Elijah, and went after him ; and many of you were men of whom the world was not worthy, and so earth lost you that heaven might gain you ! Peace to your ashes ! O that each of you had left a son in your own image to perpetuate your name and your virtues ! Good men were always scarce, and will be scarcer now that you are gone.

They were farmers mostly, those men were. They wrought with their own hands in the fields and the thrashing-floor, and were INDEPENDENT men, if there ever were independent men on the face of the

earth. There was no river, or canal, or railroad, by which their produce could be transported to market, and by which the vices of the city could be transported to them ; and thus were they saved from many of the sources of corruption that blight the villages which the march of improvement has reached. Often we see a secluded hamlet where purity and peace nestle as in their native heaven, till the rage of the times drives an iron pathway right through its heart, a great tavern rises by its side, fashion, folly, and vice, come along in the cars and stop, and then farewell to the quietness and virtue of that rural abode. Not so was it with our town. When the harvest was gathered and thrashed, the farmers loaded up their wagons with the great bags, and drove off thirty or forty miles to market, and returned with some of the comforts, and a few of the luxuries, of life ; the rest of their wants being readily supplied from the farm and the country store. Thus were

their days spent in the peaceful pursuit of the most honorable and worthy calling to which man was appointed. Fewer temptations, and more pleasures, cluster around the path and home of the farmer, than of any other man. He is not free from the reach of sin or sorrow, it is very true, and who is? Adam was a farmer, and the forbidden tree stood in the middle of his garden, and sin entered and made his paradise a prison. But of all earthly callings, there is none in which there is so much to lead the soul to God, to take it away from the vanities of the world, to train the mind for communion with heaven, and prepare it for unbroken intercourse with heavenly and divine things, as in that of the farmer who with his own hands tills the field, breaks up the fallow ground, sows the seed, prays and waits for the early and latter rain, watches the springing of the grain, rejoices in the ripening ear, gathers the sheaves in his bosom, and with thankful heart fills his storehouse and barn, and sits down content

with the competent portion of good things which have fallen to his lot.

But let us come back to our farmers. They were men of principle and prayer. I will give an instance of the power of principle among them. Long, long before the era of the present temperance reform, Mr. Rogers, the minister, awoke to the evils resulting from the use of ardent spirits, even in an agricultural district like that in which he lived. The farmers, in those days, were wont to purchase their rum by the barrel, and to drink it freely, not only without any apprehensions of its ever doing them any harm, but in the firm persuasion that they could not do without it, and that it was one of the blessings of Providence, of which they should make a free use with thankfulness. But Mr. Rogers, with a longsightedness for which he was remarkable, foresaw the mischief the practice was begetting, and determined to lift up a standard against it. Accordingly, the "Old White Meeting-house" thundered with an anti-drinking

blast, in which the evils of the practice, in all their moral, physical, and social bearings; were set forth in words that fell like burning coals on the heart, and electrified the congregation. The good people wondered and meditated. There must be something in it, or Mr. Rogers would not have brought it home to them with such pungency and power. They thought of it with earnestness. Mr. Rogers visited some of the largest farmers, and proposed to them to try the experiment of "haying and harvesting" one season without rum. It was such a strange idea, that almost every one said it would be impossible to find men to do the work, and the crops would rot in the field. But two or three of the best of them were induced to try it. The result was most happy. They gave the hired men the usual cost of the rum as an advance upon their wages; they were perfectly satisfied. The work was done in better time and in better style, and the experiment was pronounced on all hands, successful beyond

controversy. The result was proclaimed through the town. The next year it was tried by several others, and soon it became a general practice among the farmers of that congregation, although the date of the temperance reformation is some years this side of that movement which was as decided and important as any one instance of reform which has ever since been made. Indeed, I have now a sermon which this same Mr. Rogers preached against the use of *intoxicating drinks*, from the text, "Who hath woes," &c., and which was delivered and printed *before I was born*, yet I can remember the opening of the modern temperance reformation.

Yet there was very little intemperance even prior to this period. There were a few drunkards whose portraits I would add to these sketches, but that they are very much like unto modern drunkards; and their portraits are not very pleasant pictures. There was not, however, *one* in that whole town so given to the use of rum, as a man

whose house I passed yesterday, and who is now on his *thirteenth hoghead of rum*; he is seventy years of age, he buys his rum by the barrel, and drinks steadily, year in and year out, and hopes to live to exhaust some hogheads more! The generation of such men, we trust in God, is rapidly drawing to a close, and that they may leave no successors to tread in their footsteps, we will never cease to pray.

The firmness of principle which marked some of these men, seems *now* incredible when I observe the general degeneracy of the times on which we have fallen. You might as soon turn the sun from its course, as to seduce from the path of virtue the Roman Fabricius, or elder Joseph Butler, of our congregation. In business he was true to the right, as the needle to the pole, and when questions of doubtful propriety were dividing the opinions of men, when you had found where truth and righteousness meet, there was Joseph, as calm, but

firm as a rock, or the angel Abdiel, "faithful among the faithless."

He *would* do his duty, come what might. Here he had learned much of Mr. Rogers, but more of his Bible. When the enemy came in, like a flood, or in the still small current of seductive vice, Joseph Butler was at his pastor's side, true as steel, holding up his hands like Aaron or Hur, and there he would have stood in the face of all the Amalekites of the universe. Such elders are rare now. One Sunday, there was a family in church from the far city of New York. They had come up there to visit some country relations, and two or three of these gay city girls burst out laughing in the midst of the sermon. The cause was this. The old aunt, whom they had come to visit, had stopped in at one of the neighbors on the way to church, and had borrowed some little yellow cakes, called *turnpikes*, and used I believe for some purpose or other in baking bread. She had thrust them into her work-bag, which she carried on her arm,

and during sermon having occasion to use her handkerchief, she drew it forth suddenly, and out flew the *turnpikes*, rolling and scampering over the floor. The city girls tittered at this, as if it were very funny. Their seat was on the side of the pulpit, so that the pastor did not see them, or he would have brought them to order by a look, or a blow on the desk, which would have sent the blood out of their cheeks, though their cheeks would have been *red* after that. But Joseph Butler saw them, and rising in his seat, struck with his psalm-book on the top of the pew—the preacher paused—the congregation sat dumb—the good elder spoke, calmly but with energy, “*Those young women will stop that laughing in the house of God;*” they did stop; the pastor proceeded; Joseph sat down, and the city girls gave no occasion for the exercise of summary church discipline, during the remainder of their summer visit. The old aunt was at first disposed to resent the rebuke as an insult, and did complain to

Mr. Rogers, but she soon saw that the offence deserved the punishment, and she submitted.

I am a little fearful that the reader will think these *incidents* were so common that they were characteristic of our sabbath services. Not so. They were "few and far between," years rolling away unbroken by a single circumstance to disturb the profound solemnity, the almost monotony of sacred worship, in those venerable walls. The people always the same, the services always the same, the preaching, the singing *almost* always the same in style, there was little variety; and consequently, these incidents occurring in the lapse of years, have made the deeper impression on my mind, and now start up with freshness and life when I sit down to chronicle the past. Thus another comes, and I must tell it, whether or not in its proper place in the chronicles of this country congregation.

There was among the people always at church, an old man by the name of Riding.

He was not a pious man, and withal was very hard of hearing, so that having neither interest in the truth, nor the power to hear it with ease, he went to meeting from force of habit, took his seat with his back to the minister, and quietly sinking into slumber, slept steadily to the close of service. This was his constant practice. There was also a woman, Mrs. Burtis, whose mind was slightly sprung, and whose nervous temperament was specially excitable by scenes of suffering, whether real or imaginary, meeting her eye or her ear. Thus the sight of a fellow-being in circumstances of sudden and dreadful distress, would throw the old lady into fits, when she would scream so terrifically that it would have been nothing strange if all around her had gone into fits to keep her company. She sat in the same pew with old Mr. Riding, and directly in front of him, looking up to the minister. Mr. Rogers was describing the destruction of Jerusalem as a wonderful example of the fulfilment of prophecy.

He came to speak of the awful fact that delicate women took their own children, and killed them, and cooked them, and ate them, so fearful was the power of ghastly famine over all the strongest and holiest impulses even of the mother's heart. He had wrought up the description with great skill and effect, and being excited with the theme, he portrayed with great pathos and power the scene where the Roman soldiers burst into a house, attracted by the smell of meat, and demanded it of the hands of the trembling woman within. She goes to the closet and brings forth upon a dish the fragments of her half-eaten child, and places it before the horror-stricken soldiers. Mrs. Burtis had been listening with riveted ears to the dreadful tale; the fire in her brain had been gathering fierceness as the preacher proceeded, but when the dish with the baked babe came out of the closet, she could stand it no longer; reason let go the reins; and springing from her seat, Mrs. Burtis pounced upon old Mr. Riding, who

was sleeping in front of her, and with both hands seizing his gray locks, she screamed at the very top of her shrill voice, "*Where's the woman that killed my child?*" The old man waked in amazement, but so utterly confounded, that although his hair did not stand on end, for the very good reason that Mrs. Burtis held it down with her eagle talons, yet his "voice clung to his jaws." Not a word did he utter, but with meekness worthy of the martyrs, he held his peace until Joseph Butler and another elder rose, and disentangling her fingers from the hair, conducted her quietly from the house, and the preacher went on with his narrative.

This was the most exciting scene I ever knew to transpire in that or any other church in the ordinary course of things. Some years afterward, I was travelling in the state of Massachusetts; and spending the sabbath in a country town, I attended church, where an incident of not a little novelty occurred. A farmer, who, I was afterward informed,

had a great fancy for driving spirited horses, got asleep in the middle of the sermon, and probably dreaming of his favorite pursuit, and thinking that the horses were getting away from him, started to his feet, and in a stentorian voice cried, "WHOA!" The effect was to bring the preacher to a dead halt, but the effect upon the startled people is not to be described.

I have mentioned the traits of one elder. There was another, Warren Kirtland, a man of faith and prayer, whose life was the best of sermons, and who being dead, yet speaks in the power of his memory, which is cherished with reverence among his posterity. He was not endowed with more than ordinary powers of mind, but he read his Bible much, and prayed much, and conversed much with his minister, and listened with devout attention to the instructions of the sanctuary, so that he was indeed an intelligent Christian, able to teach by word, as well as by the power of a godly life. If, as sometimes was the case, Mr.

Rogers was prevented from being with his people on the sabbath, it was customary to read a sermon to the people. This was usually done by a worthy lawyer, and then Elder Kirtland was called on to pray; and such was the respect which the sincere and humble piety of that good man commanded, that I venture to say the prayers of the minister were never more acceptable to the people, or more efficacious in the ear of Heaven.

The greatest funeral which was ever known in that town, was at the burial of another of the elders, named after the father of the faithful, and worthy to bear the name. He was the friend of God; a pillar in the church, and worth a score of the half-dead and half-live sort of Christians which abound in our congregations—dead weights, some of them, and others curses. At Abraham Van Slate's funeral, there were miles of wagons, filled with people from all parts of the surrounding country, who had come to testify their respect for one of the best of

men. • He was gathered to his fathers, but he left a son bearing his name who was chosen to bear also his office, and whose wisdom and piety fitted him to sustain the high trust he received with his ascending father's mantle. Good men and true, were those men, and there is a secret reverence around my heart as I thus record their virtues, which shows me how easy it is for poor human nature, under the ignorance and superstition of popery, to be led into the false but natural notion of seeking the prayers of departed saints.

These were leaders in the church. There was as great a variety of character as is usual in a country congregation, but I am not permitted to fill the book with their history, or the reader should hear more of them. I wanted to tell of "Old Jack," a blind negro, once a slave, now free, and the Lord's freeman, one of the most remarkable examples of the power of divine grace that the world can show. He was small in stature, old, hump-backed, blind, and black.

After such a description, true to the letter, it will hardly be credited that he was a useful member of the church, qualified to lead in prayer and to make a word of exhortation to the edification of others, and that his gifts were often called into exercise in the social meeting. His piety was deep and fervent, and his faculties so shrewd and strong, that his remarks were always pointed and pertinent, and often displayed an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and such close conversation with God as few of the most intelligent Christians enjoy. Many of his sayings might here be recorded, or his life and conversation might be written out as a tract, to the glory of Him who thus perfects his own praise out of the mouths of the most humble and unlikely instruments.

I wish you could see old Mrs. Sniffle, the gossip of the congregation, in her rounds of absorption, fastening herself upon every one, to take in, like a sponge, whatever they would impart, that she might have the sweet

satisfaction of leaking it to others. Her harvest-time was at the close of the morning service, when the most of the people remained in their respective pews to eat their dinner, which those from a distance brought with them. This was the favorable moment for Mrs. Sniffle's expedition, and darting out of her own seat, she would drop in at another, out with her snuff-box, pass it round, and inquire the news. Staying just long enough to extract the essence of all the matters in her line to be met with there, she would make all haste to the pew of some one from another neighborhood, where she would impart the information she had just received with her own edifying comments, pick up as many additional fragments of facts as she could find, and pass on to another pew, spending the whole of the interval of divine worship in this avocation, and the leisure of the week to come, in spreading among her neighbors these items of news, especially such as come under the head of scandal. It is only just to the peo-

ple, however, to add that Mrs. Sniffle was a black sheep in the flock; there was not another like her, and we may well say, happy is that people which is so well off as to have only one Mrs. Sniffle. Of the good people in our congregation, I have given but examples of a whole class, while such characters as Mrs. Sniffle were single and alone.

Take them in mass, and they were a sober, temperate, orderly, devout people; delighting in the ordinances of God's house, and striving together to promote the glory of the Savior. If you saw them standing in groups around the door before the service began on the sabbath-day, it was not to trade horses or talk politics, as I have known the practice to be in other places, but more likely it was to speak of the state of religion in their neighborhoods or their hearts, though the young and thoughtless doubtless found topics of conversation more congenial to their unsanctified tastes. And then there was a set that always went over to a little red tavern across the green, where

old Mr. and Mrs. Doubleby lived ; and what they said and did when they got there, I will not undertake to say. I wish you could see old Mrs. Doubleby standing in the front door, with her hands folded under her checked apron, and her spectacles on her forehead, chatting with everybody that passed, or scolding the boys who loved to stone her geese and sheep which she pastured on the green or in the graveyard. She *was* a character ; but her virtues, if any, and faults, if many, will be alike unknown to future generations, for her only chance of immortality in history is while I am writing this paragraph, and this is done.

And so must this part of this record be brought to a close, even in its very opening. How many of that people would I love to mention, for now they come thickening around me, and I see their faces as if thirty years ago were only yesterday !

“ Oft in the stilly night,  
Ere slumber’s chain hath bound me,  
Fond memory brings the light  
Of other days around me.”

And now in this still night, the thoughts of those friends of my youth come back with such sweetness, that I fear to drop the pen, lest the illusion should cease and the vision vanish.

‘Guides of my life ! instructors of my youth !  
Who first unveiled the hallowed form of Truth ;  
Whose every word enlightened and endeared ;  
In age beloved, in poverty revered ;  
In friendship’s silent register ye live,  
Nor ask the vain memorial Art can give.’

But I must stop, for the chapter gains upon me every moment that I write : as the same poet saith whose sweet words we have just recited :—

“ Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,  
Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain.  
Awake but one, and lo ! what myriads rise !  
Each stamps its image as the other flies !”

## CHAPTER V.

## OUR SINGING-SCHOOL—THE BRIDGE WAR—DANCING-SCHOOLS.

WHY is it that the choir of a country congregation is always, or often, the source of discord? Every one who knows the internal polity of these societies, has met with the singular fact that *the singing* is the most difficult subject to be managed with harmony, yet a matter that, one would think, should never make any trouble, much less be a cause of quarrels and divisions. Yet true it is, and in making these records I must introduce the reader to OUR SINGING-SCHOOLS, and let him into some secrets which may be both entertaining and profitable. You will therefore understand that the singing had become about as bad as it could be and retain the name. Deacon

Small—a very large man, who could sing nothing but base, and that very badly—had sung tenor and led the singing for ten years, until forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and some of the congregation, whose nerves were not made of steel wire, began seriously to talk of doing something to improve the music. The deacon said that for his part he should be glad to do anything reasonable, and he had sometimes thought the singing would be better if the young folks would come together once a month or so, and practise the tunes with him; he would give his time for nothing, and perhaps something might be done.

But this was not the thing. The deacon's singing was as bad as the choir's, in fact worse; for what he lacked in skill and taste he made up in volume; and his voice, in a part for which it had no fitness, would swell above all the rest so as to make such dire music as no gentle ears could endure without grievous pain, causing strong temptations to *feel wrong* even in church. When

therefore the reformers heard that Deacon Small proposed to drill the choir into harmony, they thought of hanging up their own harps; for the deacon's instructions could manifestly avail nothing but to make bad worse. They therefore held another consultation, and determined to submit the matter to the congregation, in full meeting, and make a desperate effort to bring about a change.

Accordingly, when the people assembled for the annual "letting of the pews," the matter was introduced with great caution, and it was proposed, after much discussion, to send to Connecticut (where else should they send?) for a singing-master. Deacon Small was roused. He could see no necessity for such a sudden and expensive measure; he knew as much about singing as any of them, though he said it himself, and he *knew* that they had as good singing as they could expect, and if they wanted any better they mustn't go off to hire anybody to come there and teach them a new

set of tunes, to go away when they were about half learnt and carry all the singing away with him. But the reformers carried the day, and next sabbath, the choir, taking in dudgeon what they chose to consider an affront put upon them and their leader, took their seats in the body of the church below, leaving the front seats of the gallery empty. The pastor saw at a glance the state of things when he went into the pulpit, and beckoning to one of the elders who was a good singer, and always led on communion occasions, to come up to him, he made the necessary arrangements, and as soon as the morning psalm was announced, the worthy elder rose in his place, and "pitching the tune," led off Old Hundred, to the edification of the congregation and the discomfiture of Deacon Small, who thought there could be no singing unless he took the lead.

By a vote of the congregation a committee was appointed to obtain a singing-master to teach one quarter, for which he was to receive a hundred dollars, and all were at

liberty to attend. The committee heard of a teacher and hired him. He came. His name was Bridge; and he very soon afforded fresh proof of the saying of the knowing old ladies of the place, that "a good singing-master is good for nothing else." He was a good singer but a great fop, and a low, ill-bred, but cunning fellow, who soon ingratiated himself into the favor of one part of the congregation and disgusted the rest. The school, however, was vastly popular, especially among the young people, who were fond of coming together twice a week and spending the evening sociably. Bridge always gave a long intermission, which was the occasion for all manner of fun among the young people; and then by coming early, and staying after school was out, they managed to make the entertainment quite as diverting as a dance, which latter amusement was rarely allowed among the sons and daughters of that church. But before the quarter was out, the singing-master was detected in some peccadilloes that

rendered his admission necessary in the estimation of the more discreet of the congregation. The communication of this decision to the school was the signal for an explosion. A part, perhaps a majority, acquiesced in the decision and sustained the committee, but others resented it and resisted, declaring that he should stay, and they would hire him for another quarter. The parties were now pitted against each other, and for a long time the contention raged with a fierceness that threatened the unity of the church. The pastor, of course, took ground against the teacher, for his moral unfitness to lead the worship of religious people was apparent, and this decided stand of the pastor brought down upon his head the wrath of all the Bridge men, who did not scruple to say that they would keep Bridge even if they lost their minister.

The Bridge party circulated a subscription paper, and had no difficulty in raising the money to hire the teacher for another quarter, for when men get mad they are always

willing to pay to have their own way  
The elders refused to have him in the choir  
on the sabbath-day, and so the strange and  
disgraceful spectacle was presented of part  
of a Christian congregation employing a  
man to instruct them in the worship of God,  
while the officers of the church very properly  
refused him a place in the service. And  
this wicked war was prolonged until the  
second quarter of the teacher expired, when  
he and his friends resolved to have a great  
musical festival, to wind off with due honor  
the controversy in which they flattered themselves  
they had been victorious. They  
wished to have an address on the occasion,  
and applied to the pastor to deliver it. He  
answered that he would not speak if Bridge  
was to lead the singing, but would cheerfully  
give them an address if some one  
else were selected to take the place of a  
man whom he regarded as utterly unfit to  
conduct the devotions of God's people.  
The answer was far from being satisfactory.  
Bridge must sing, as the festival was de-

signed for his glory. So the party cast about to find a speaker for the great occasion, and were at length successful in obtaining one in the person of a noted pulpit orator in a distant city, deposed from the ministry, who was glad to make his way into another congregation where he knew he could never speak on the invitation of the pastor. This irregular and disgraceful act of the Bridge party closed the campaign. The last performance was condemned by the people, and the second engagement having run out, Bridge departed, to find employment elsewhere, the party that had supported him became ashamed of their own conduct, gradually return to their respective duties, said as little as possible about their late rebellion, and submitted themselves in silence to the constituted authorities.

But it was not until after many years that the wounds which this affair had made, were healed. The feelings of one part of the people were alienated from the other :

the more serious and substantial of the congregation had opposed the Bridge party, which was composed of the younger and lighter portion; the pastor had been so deeply involved in the struggle that his preaching was not received with so much affection and tenderness by those from whom he had differed; and it may be that the word of God was not accompanied with that spirit of prayer, without which it can never be effectual, and the day of final account can alone disclose the extent of the mischief wrought by those men who determined to put in peril the peace of the church for the sake of carrying their own points.

I have been so particular in stating the facts in this transaction that it may serve as a warning to other churches; for great is the responsibility incurred by that man who puts himself in the way of the peaceful progress of the gospel. The Holy Spirit never lingers among a people after strife has begun, and who will answer for the guilt of

grieving away the Messenger of Heaven's saving grace ?

And now that the root of bitterness was cast out, the good pastor addressed himself with all diligence to repair the breaches that had been made. He brought the mighty power of divine truth to bear upon the consciences of the congregation, and with his characteristic fidelity, tenderness, and skill, he plied them with those considerations which, in the course of time and under the blessing of God, resulted in the restoration of peace. Some of the most reasonable and pious of the Bridge party were frank enough to go to him and confess their error, and to express their strong sense of admiration of his firm and Christian deportment during the whole affair ; but others quieted their consciences by treating their minister with a little extra attention, while they saved their pride from the manliness of an apology, when they knew they were wrong. But the singing : that was no better, but worse rather. Those on whom reliance had long

been placed as permanent singers, were disgusted and driven from the gallery; a set of tunes unknown to the people was introduced; the new choir were unable to sing without their leader—they soon scattered; Deacon Small returned to his post and rallied a few of the old singers, and for a time “Dundee,” and “Mear,” and “Wells,” with one or two other tunes of equal claim to antiquity, were performed upon the return of each sabbath, with a regularity and uniformity worthy of striking commendation.

This state of things lasted until it could be borne no longer. And I make this remark seriously. It is *intolerable* that God should be mocked with such *praise* as is offered to him in some of our churches. Not to say anything of it as a matter of taste, to gratify the ear of man, and exalt the affections of the worshipper, there is another light in which it should be viewed, and a light in which it is very seldom viewed by our churches. I refer to the great truth,

that *God deserves better praise* than he gets in those temples where little or no attention is paid to the culture of sacred music. If that consideration were imprinted on the hearts of Christians, they would from principle spend time and money in qualifying themselves and others to sustain this part of public worship with "spirit and understanding also."

A short time since I was in Boston, and on sabbath morning went to the church where Lowell Mason leads the singing, with a choir that has long enjoyed the instructions of that eminent and able master. I did not know that he was the leader, and was not prepared to expect anything more than the ordinary singing of a church in that refined city. But those words,

" Welcome, sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise,"

came over my soul as if the morning stars were singing their Maker's praise with the opening of another sabbath; and as the hymn, sweet in its own melody, but sweet-

er in the melody which rich music lent it, swelled on my ear, I was carried away by the power of the *praise*, now rapt into a glow of ecstatic feeling, now subdued by the melting tones that fell softly and sweetly on my responding heart. Yet did I not think of the singers, or the leader, or the great organ whose deep base rolled through the temple. I forgot all these, and *felt* only that we were praising God, in the beauty of his sabbath and sanctuary, and that He who delights in a pure sacrifice, was receiving a warm tribute of praise from that worshipping people.

“ My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss.”

Now it is very true that all congregations can not have Lowell Mason or Thomas Hastings to teach them to sing, nor is it needful in order that the music may be such as shall be pleasing to God and edifying to the people. It requires no sacrifice. The practice essential to success in this

delightful art, is itself a source of elevated and rational pleasure to those engaged in it, especially to the young, and when the science has been cultivated until *skill* is attained, there is scarcely anything that contributes more to the harmony and happiness of the social circle than this. And if our country churches would regard this department of public worship as an *offering to God*, who is not willing to be served with that which costs nothing, but who loves to lend his ear to the music of his children when they sing as they ought, it seems to me that there would be a wonderful change in the style of music. In every church there would be an association of those who have musical taste and talent, and they would labor diligently to elevate the standard of public sentiment on this subject, and of their success there could be no doubt. Pastors have failed of their duty in this matter; for if the pulpit had been faithful in exhibiting the claims of this part of divine worship upon the conscience of the

people, there can be no reason to suppose that it would be looked upon with that indifference with which most of our churches regard it. But I must come back from this digression.

Our old congregation having become thoroughly satisfied that the singing must be improved, and placed on a basis of progressive advancement, sought and found another teacher, who, at the general desire of the people, came to establish a school and lead the singing on the sabbath-day. This time, Deacon Small and all agreed to the proposition. The young people, and some of the older ones, attended a school one evening every week for several months; the old standard tunes, as Old Hundred, St. Thomas, Tamworth, Silverstreet, &c., were practised over and over again, till the whole "rising generation" could sing them with propriety; a few new tunes were learned, and learned well, and when the teacher went away there were several in the school who were well qualified to take the

lead. The selection was made by the school, who voted by ballot; the elders confirmed the nomination, and, after that, everything went on smoothly. Deacon Small was considerably mortified that nobody voted for him as chorister, but he kept his mortification to himself, and each succeeding winter a school was opened for the instruction of the young in sacred music, and no difficulty was afterward heard of on that head. But there is reason for the question propounded at the opening of this record, "Why is the choir so often the source of discord in the church?" I have heard it said that singers are naturally nervous, sensitive people, or (to go a little farther into the philosophy of the thing), that the mental and physical organization of those who have the faculties essential to a good singer is so delicate that this class of the human race is more easily discomposed by trifles than any other. But without speculating upon the hidden cause, the fact is well known that trouble from this quarter

often comes—trouble that the influence of the pastor and the wisdom of the officers are sometimes powerless to remove or relieve. Frequently have I seen old established congregations shaken to their very centre by these musical feuds, when the matter in controversy was so unimportant, the ground of offence so puerile, that it can be reconciled neither with religion nor common sense. Perhaps some one of the singers has heard somebody say that some one else said that the singing was not as good as it used to be. This remark, perhaps made inadvertently, is repeated and magnified; the choir hear of it and refuse to sing. Sometimes an unpopular individual takes a seat in the choir, and the rest resolve to quit the seats unless the unwelcome guest withdraws, and he determines to stay if he stays alone, and so they leave him in full possession. But the most of these troubles grow out of the employment of unsuitable men as leaders of singing in our churches. I have known men of notoriously immoral lives to be ap-

pointed to this responsible office, and then most righteously would the sober and discreet members of the church rise in opposition and refuse to be led in their hymns of praise by a man of profane lips. Here is no place to argue the question whether an unconverted person should ever be allowed to lead the singing in the house of God, though I can not avoid entering a dissent to that doctrine sometimes advocated, that because you would not call on a man of the world to pray in public, so you should not invite or allow him to sing God's praise in public. There is a natural distinction in the two cases which can scarcely be made plainer by illustration. But it ought to be borne in mind by all parties, in every congregation, that the singing is a part of divine worship, the regulation of which belongs exclusively to the church, or the spiritual officers of the church, and while the authority to order it is in their hands, it is not to be expected that any man of corrupt life will be allowed to take the lead.

And if on them rests the responsibility of excluding from the orchestra those whom they regard as unfit to be there, most emphatically does it devolve on them to take measures so to train the voices of the people that with every sabbath's services there may go up to God acceptable praise in the courts of his house.

Rather than suffer the evils which so frequently arise from the system of "choirs," I would greatly prefer the good old-fashioned way of having a leader or presenter, who shall stand in the face of the congregation and lead the praises of the people. This plan, which still prevails in a few churches in our country, and in many of the churches in "the old country," secures several important ends. It leads the whole people to feel that they are to unite in the public song; that singing is an act of divine worship in which each of them is expected to bear a part; that they must qualify themselves and their children to perform this duty acceptably, and therefore they must

*all learn to sing.* There is something delightful in the sight and the sound of a whole congregation lifting up their voices in unison and harmony in the praise of their God and King, and sweeter far to my ear, and sweeter far, it seems to me, must it be to Him who listens in heaven, to hear the warm, full hymn from the great congregation, than the most finished and exquisite performance of a worldly choir, if the *heart* is not there.

I perceive that this chapter has taken the form of an essay on church music, rather than of ancient history, as I proposed. But the subject suddenly took this turn, and has run to this point, where I must leave it. And I would not leave the reader with the impression that such troubles as I have described were common in our old congregation. The farthest from it possible. Years would roll by and not an event of a troublesome kind would occur to make one year memorable rather than another, and to show how rare were such occurrences as those

which laid the foundations of this chapter, I may say that these events transpired when I was so young as to know nothing of what was going on, but they were talked about for many years after, and I have written the history according to tradition and not from memory. People would often speak of the Bridge excitement very much as we speak of the Shay's rebellion, or the revolution—something that happened once, but never to be expected again. Probably few churches could be found in the length and breadth of the land where there was more peace and less contention than in ours, during the ministry of Mr. Rogers.

DANCING-SCHOOL.—Do you suppose, indulgent reader, that they had dancing-schools within the limits of that congregation? I am at a loss for an answer to my own question, for if I have not mentioned before I should now remark that there were other congregations intermingled with ours, so that a large part of the population was under other influences, and there were

families also that belonged to no church, for whose views and practices no one could answer, and when these facts are remembered it will not seem so strange that now and then the young folks were foolish enough to get up a dancing-school in the winter. Mr. Rogers was not in the habit of denouncing the amusement of dancing as sinful in itself, or of threatening church discipline if any of the members indulged in it. But he frequently alluded to it among other follies of youth, as an amusement unsuited to persons of sense, an idle waste of time, and leading to evils many and serious. In this way he was able to repress the desire for a dancing-school among the most of the young, and the more intelligent and pious of the church discountenanced and forbade it in their families. Once in a great while when the young folks went off for a sleigh-ride, or assembled for an evening tea-party, they would wind up with a dance, and sometimes a "ball" would be had at the tavern in front of the Old White Meeting-

house, but in these cases the leaders were usually young men from the neighboring villages, who had a sort of acknowledged right to set the fashions, and our boys and girls were not slow to follow.

One winter some of the youngsters determined to have a regular dancing-school at the tavern just named, and after a great deal of management they succeeded in getting enough to agree to attend. The school was kept up through the winter, and toward spring they were to have a "public," or a grand *finale* to their winter performances. Invitations were sent to all the villages within twenty miles, for the fashionables to attend, and every arrangement was made for one of the most splendid displays which that old quiet town had ever witnessed. No expense was spared to adorn the room, and many of our young ladies, by dint of coaxing and crying, had obtained, *for the first time in their lives*, permission to attend a ball. Close by the tavern and in full view of the ball-room window, lived

one of the young ladies who had in the early part of the winter been a member of the dancing-school, but who had been taken sick, and as the time for the ball drew nigh she was evidently drawing nigh to death. She died on the morning of the very day on which the ball was to come off in the evening. The news of her death fled rapidly over the town, and the most active of the getters-up of the performance were in doubt as to what course it would be necessary to take. One of the *managers* was said to be betrothed to the young lady, a member of the school, now a corpse in sight of the windows. What should they do? The managers met in the afternoon and held a consultation. The *betrothed* was not there, but he sent word that there would be a manifest propriety in postponing the amusements of the evening. But the rest demurred. Everything is now ready, all the expense is incurred and will be doubled if they defer; the company will assemble; and so it was decided to go on. They did.

The young ladies came together, but before the dancing began, one of them was looking out of the window and saw a dim light over in the chamber of death, where watchers were sitting by the corpse of one who had hoped to be on the floor with them. A chill came over the young lady as she was looking out; she mentioned to one near her what she had seen, and how *it made her feel*; the sadness spread over the group in that corner, and one began to complain of sickness and to make an excuse for going home, and then another, till all whose consciences were any way tender, had fled from the hall of mirth. But there were many left. "On went the dance." And though death was at hand, and one of their number was in his arms, they danced till morning. This was the last dancing-school, and the last ball for many, many years, in that place.

The next sabbath Mr. Rogers gave them a discourse on the subject with special reference to the events of the past week. It was the funeral sermon of Mary Leland;

have attended in the course of my life, was at the house of Elder Warren Kirtland, when I was about ten years old. I was younger than that, rather than older, and now am older than I would like to say, but I remember *that* meeting, the men that prayed, what they prayed for, *how I felt*, and how the tones of their voices fell on my young heart, like the voice of the living God. It was a meeting of the pastor, the elders, and all their families, with those parents and children that lived near the house of the elder in which they met. The house was crowded, and the stairs that went up in the hall were covered with children. I was in the number. It seemed that Mr. Rogers, the pastor, had observed that through all the families of the elders, embracing a great number of children, not one was a professor of religion ! The fact was a painful one, and the good man was alarmed. He laid the truth before the elders, and they were deeply moved. They prayed over it, and after serious deliberation, re-

solved to assemble all their children, and commend them unitedly and affectionately to Him who had promised to be a God to them and to theirs.

The meeting was held as I have said. And when Mr. Rogers stated the solemn fact that had called them together, there was a stillness like death over the house, and as he went on to speak of the prospect before the church when the young were thus growing up in sin, and the prospect before the young when they were thus hardening their hearts under religious instruction and in the midst of the gospel, you might hear a deep sigh from the hearts of the fathers, and see the tears on the cheeks of the mothers, and soon the children caught the impression of the hour and sobbed in the grief of their souls, at the thought of coming judgment and no preparation to meet an offended judge!! The pastor prayed, and one after another of those elders, mighty men in prayer they were, went down on their knees, and with earnestness

that would take no denial, and with such strong crying and tears as parents only know when pleading for their perishing offspring, they besought the Lord to have mercy on them and save them by his grace. And then they sung psalms, Elder Tompkins leading, and such of the company joining as could command their voices in the midst of the deep emotion that was now pervading all hearts. I know the Holy Spirit was there that day. I felt his convicting power. I feel the force of the impressions then made, this moment. It was not then that I was led to the Savior. But afterward when the allurements of a gay world were around me, and a thousand influences combined to draw me down to ruin, the impressions of that meeting, and such meetings, were like hooks of steel to hold me out of hell. God be praised that I was there, and I hope to praise him for the privilege when I meet those elders with the other elders around the throne. There were many children present older than myself, and they, too,

were much affected by the exercises. I recollect that we were out of doors at the intermission (for we met at eleven o'clock in the morning, and with an interval of half an hour remained until three P. M.), and then we had an opportunity to talk the matter over together. We were all solemn; not one was disposed to play or to make fun of any kind, but we said to one another in our own way, that we meant to try and be good. Some of the girls got together in one of the bedrooms up stairs, and had a little prayer-meeting by themselves during the intermission; and all went from that place, that day, with serious minds, and some were pricked to the heart.

Another meeting of the same character was held the next week in the house of an elder in another part of the congregation, and so they were continued from house to house for three months. And God heard the prayers of his people. Three of the children of Joseph Butler were converted immediately, and are living now, to bless

God for those meetings ; and three children of another elder were also converted, and some of the others, and the good work extended beyond the families of the elders into the congregation, and many precious souls were brought into the fold of Christ.

But I am perhaps running too fast. I would like to go back to one great revival that pervaded the congregation, bringing the whole town under its influence, and from the commencement, progress, and fruits of it, show what old-fashioned revivals were, and what revivals the churches need now. May God send them often, and mighty ones, till the day of final consummation !

The Rev. Mr. Rogers had been long lamenting the apparent withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the church. His ministry did not seem to be blessed to the conviction and conversion of sinners, and his hands began to hang down in discouragement. Perhaps his own soul had partaken of the general apathy, and his preaching had been less pungent, his prayers less fervent and

faithful, and his anxieties had subsided. As the hands of Moses sunk unless they were held up by Aaron and Hur, so did Mr. Rogers's. About this time he was called to attend a great ecclesiastical meeting in a distant part of the country. He was necessarily absent several weeks. During his absence the people met regularly on the sabbath-day to hear a sermon which was read by one of their own number, and to pray for themselves and their beloved pastor far away. They did not run to other churches to hear other ministers, but hovered around their own altar, and enjoyed themselves *there*, far more than in strange temples. This gives a hint worth remembering. Mr. Rogers was also benefited by his intercourse with ministerial brethren whom he met at the assembly from all parts of the country. Twenty-five years ago our ecclesiastical assemblies were more *spiritual* than they are now; they were less divided by the introduction of exciting party questions, and ministers came together as so

many brothers of one family, running into one another's arms after a long separation. We sometimes had such meetings on a small scale up in the old congregation; the ministers from neighboring churches would assemble to transact church business; and it was all done with such a spirit of harmony and brotherly love, and so much time would be spent in preaching and praying, that a hallowed influence always was exerted by them on the people. And as the ministers quartered at different houses during the meeting, they conversed freely and faithfully with parents and children on the concerns of their souls, and lasting and saving impressions were thus made on many minds. So it was, in a still higher degree and in a more extended circle, when the great assembly of ministers from widely distant places was convened. Its sessions were expected with intense interest, as holy convocations of holy men; it was attended with demonstrations of strong fraternal regard and so many tokens of the divine

favor, that the annual meeting was a precious season to all who were permitted to enjoy its delightful influence.

From such a meeting as this, Mr. Rogers returned to his scattered flock and secluded parish. His own soul had been refreshed and quickened. He had heard of the power of the gospel in other parts of the land ; of great revivals of religion, such as he longed to see among his own people ; he had been roused by the exhibitions of zeal among his brethren, and had been impressed more deeply, perhaps, than ever, that *each* pastor is responsible for the improvement of his own vineyard. He came home with a firm determination, relying on the strong arm of sovereign grace, to deliver his own soul from the blood of his people, by doing his whole duty in the fear of God. Mr. Rogers was not a man of impulse, and when he took a resolution like the one just named, it was a *principle* in the framework of his soul, to be developed steadily and totally, until all its meaning and power were

answered. He would do what *duty* had bade him, and if sinners were saved and saints edified, he would rejoice and give God the praise; if his labors were vain, and the seed never bore fruit, he would still be clear, and God should accomplish his own righteous will. He now entered upon a thorough exhibition of divine truth, in a light more vivid and in a style more pungent and convincing than he had ever preached before. He took the law of God and held up its majesty and purity with a grandeur that startled the hearer, as if the distant thunder of Sinai were breaking on his trembling ear. Perhaps his *forte* was to take what we call *the strong truths* of the gospel, and present them before the mind with such transparent clearness, that men could not shut their eyes against the convictions thus brought home to their hearts. When he had pressed on them the claims of the divine law, its high requisitions, its exceeding breadth and strength, which no man since the fall of Adam had fully met

and answered, he then set forth the utter helplessness of self-ruined man without the interposition of divine recovering grace. Then came the duty of the sinner to repent and turn to God, and the rich provisions of salvation in the full and glorious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish you could have heard him on these themes, at this period of his ministry. He was in the prime of life and the very acme of his physical and mental powers; his soul roused by communion with kindred souls and with God, while the souls of his people were before him as priceless, yet perishing treasures, for whose salvation he must labor and give account. O how the gospel shook the walls of the Old White Meetinghouse, when he opened the terrors of the law to persuade men to flee from the wrath to come, or hung out the love of a crucified Redeemer, to win the wandering back to the foot of the cross! Often do I seem to hear those calls, as if time had travelled back, and I were again sitting under the old high pulpit, listen-

ing to the trumpet-voice of my old pastor. But it is past.

Such preaching, joined with prayer, for he was a man of prayer, could not be in vain. It was followed up with judicious and efficient means to awaken general attention among the people. Prayer-meetings were established, if not already in operation, in all the neighborhoods. The elders met often with the pastor for private supplication at the throne of grace, and from house to house they went, two and two, warning and entreating men to turn unto God. Soon the effects became visible. The house of God on the sabbath-day was solemn as eternity. The evening meetings were attended by greater numbers than before, and a spirit of prayer was evidently poured out upon those who met. Here and there a sinner was awakened and came to the pastor to learn what to do to be saved.

The devil saw it and trembled. He knew that his power was in danger, and re-

solved to have a fight before he gave up. His first attempt was a cunning stratagem to lure the young away from serious things, by stirring them up to the vanities of the world. The "fourth of July" was just at hand, and the devil put it into the hearts of the young to get up a grand "ball," to be held in the tavern that stood across the green, directly in front of the meetinghouse! This was a masterly stroke of policy. A ball was a novelty almost unheard of in that place; and at that season of the year, it was altogether a singular affair. But with the aid of some blades from distant villages, the arrangements were made in spite of the remonstrances, and even the entreaties of the pious portion of the people. Some of the *daughters* of church-members were so much elated with the idea of going to a ball, that no means short of compulsion would avail to deter them. Mr. Rogers, true to his office, on the sabbath before it was to come off, having failed by private counsel to break it up, went into his pulpit girt with

the armor of God, and there denounced the intended dance as a bold and damnable device of Satan to resist and quench the Holy Spirit, that in great mercy had at last come down among them on a visit of salvation. He warned the young of the desperate game they were playing, of the madness of rushing against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, and of the peril in which they put their immortal souls by engaging in worldly amusements with the avowed design of dissipating religious impressions, whose presence they could not deny. This note of alarm had the desired effect upon some of the more conscientious, but the most of them had gone so far in the arrangements that they were not willing to give it up. So Mr. Rogers had supposed; and, therefore, in anticipation of just this result, at the close of his sermon, he gave notice that the church would be open for public prayer in behalf of the "ball," the meeting for prayer to commence at the time set for the "ball" to begin!!

Was there ever such a thing heard of since dancing was invented? Who but Mr. Rogers would have thought of a prayer-meeting for a "ball"? And both meetings were held; the praying people, fathers, and mothers, and many of their children with them, came to the meetinghouse, and (it being in July) the doors and windows were wide open while they sang and prayed, and within hearing, the young folks assembled in the ball-room, and to the sound of the fiddle danced while the church prayed. The solemn psalm was heard in the ball-room, and the screech of the fiddle crossed the green and grated on the ears of the worshippers of God in his sacred courts. But the ball broke down. It was hot work to dance in hot weather, with the fire of a guilty conscience burning like hell in the breast. It is a fact that some of the company were convicted of sin on the floor, that very day, and were afterward added to the church. One of them said he felt when he tried to dance, as if his heels were made of lead.

He had no heart for it. The revival went on gloriously, and the devil determined to try again.

He next got up a horserace. This is a sport peculiarly his own. In it and about it there is so much of *his* spirit and *his* work, that any one might know that the life-giving genius of the whole thing belongs of natural right to the devil. There was a cluster of houses around the meetinghouse, and another half a mile from it on each side, and the ground a dead level between, and this was the arena selected by a set of devil-inspired men for a horserace. In a quiet community like ours, an operation of this kind could not fail to set the whole mass in commotion. It was very rare that in any part of the town the thing was attempted, but to try it in the very heart of the place, in the public street, in front of the church, was monstrous, and it seems incredible that men could be found with hardihood enough to undertake it. When Mr. Rogers saw the handbills posted up in the streets announ-

cing the race to come off the next week, he called on two or three leading men to engage them in the necessary steps to prevent the projected outrage. But, as if to show how successfully the evil one does sometimes manage his plots, these men, who were usually as bold as a lion, now frankly said that he could do nothing; people would race horses, and perhaps it was best to let them have their own way—there was only one way to stop them, and that was to threaten legal prosecution, as it was against the law, and this might only make the matter worse. Mr. Rogers's holy soul was moved with righteous indignation. To be deserted at such a crisis by those on whom he was wont to rely, was a blow he had not expected, and he took his own measures accordingly. He went to his pulpit the next sabbath and announced his text, "When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." In words of fire he warned his people of the flood of vice which

was coming in during the week before them, and having stated what unsuccessful steps he had taken to put a stop to it, he entered his solemn and public protest against it in the presence of God, and threw the responsibility on the heads of those who, holding the power to administer the law, had determined to sit still and see it trampled upon by a crew of lawless men. This was the standard which the Spirit of the Lord raised up to meet the emergency. The people were struck with the words of power and truth, as well as with the holy boldness that clothed the preacher's brow, as he portrayed the impending evil, and their consciences smote them that they had been so quiet while the storm had been gathering. At the close of divine service, 'Squire Garret, the "Old Lawyer," as he was called, one of the oldest and most influential of the people, rose in his pew and asked the heads of the congregation to remain for a few minutes while they considered their duty in view of the truth to which they had just listened.

A resolution was then introduced by him, and unanimously adopted, appointing a committee to prosecute to the extremity of the law all persons who should engage in the proposed races, and denouncing the practice as one which no good citizen or Christian would uphold. That was an end of the horserace. Mr. Rogers broke that up effectually. The managers heard of the determined measures that had been adopted, and very wisely *postponed* the race on account of the *lameness* of one of the horses, that never got well enough to run in that neighborhood. The revival went on.

There were many things about that revival which I remember with peculiar interest, but which will not strike the reader as peculiar. The stillness of the evening meetings was most remarkable. These were held in the district schoolhouses, and being conducted chiefly by the elders, consisted almost entirely of singing and fervent prayer. There was no irregularity, no noise, seldom a sob, sometimes a deep sigh

that might be heard over the whole house, but there were at all times such tokens of Divine power as could not be mistaken or evaded. And when the hour was spent the people seemed unwilling to go, and would still sit on the seats, and converse with each other on the state of religion in their own souls, and sometimes they would pray together again, or some one would strike up a tune, with some favorite hymn, as,

"Jesus! and shall it ever be,  
A mortal man ashamed of thee,"

and then the meeting would seem to be begun again. We had no "anxious seats," but the pastor urged all those who wished to have conversation on the subject of religion to visit him at his study, or to call on any of the elders; and he spent as much time as he could in going from house to house, instructing the young, directing the inquiring, examining the grounds on which the new converts were resting their trembling hopes, and exhorting the careless to awaken from their stupidity and lay hold on

eternal life. In labors he was abundant. But no labor was too great for him, if thereby he might save the souls of his people. And the Spirit of the Lord seemed to be on him and with him, so that his words were set home upon the conscience with a cogency that impelled conviction, and made any open resistance useless. The deep depravity of the human heart was in the way, and Mr. Rogers was as powerless to deal with that as a child. But he dealt out the potent truth and the *omnipotent* Spirit did the rest. Sinners were slain and made alive, and there was joy in heaven over repenting souls.

I do not know the reason, perhaps others can account for it, though I only know the fact, that in the revivals of twenty-five years ago, conversions were not so sudden as they now are. It was no unusual thing for a person to go six weeks, and sometimes even six months under deep conviction of sin, and it was not considered strange, though at present we should give a man up almost

as a hopeless case who should resist serious impressions so long as that. Perhaps the mode of instructing awakened sinners is more philosophical now than it was then—I do not believe it is more scriptural—and they may be led more directly to the contemplation of those classes of truth which demand the entire acquiescence of the heart in the act of submission to God. But one thing is quite as certain, and that is, there were fewer spurious conversions then than now; and our modern revivals are to be tested as to their comparative value by this as well as other facts. Where the instruction given to the awakened is evangelical and sound, calculated to lead the sinner to look well to the ground on which he rests his soul and to make sure work for eternity, few cases of “falling away” occur when the revival subsides. But in those excitements where sinners are told to submit, and as soon as *they say* they are willing, are assured that they are converted, as it is often the case, it is to be expected that

many will deceive themselves, and, by-and-by, will manifest their mistake to the grief of the church and the shame of the cause.

This revival began in the heart of Mr. Rogers, and spread gradually but widely among the hearts of his whole people. The most remote hamlets of the congregation, some of them lying twelve miles apart, and six from the church, were pervaded by the power of the Holy One, and many an humble home was made joyful with the songs of newborn souls. It was confined to no age. The young were the most frequent subjects, for there were few hearers who had grown old in sin. But many young heads of families were brought in, who immediately erected the family altar, and as long as they lived were consistent and active Christians. One or two grayheaded men, who had stood for years as monuments of sparing mercy, were now made monuments of sovereign grace; rescued at the eleventh hour from the verge of ruin.

A stout-hearted and stout-bodied farmer

who had reached the half-way house of life was convicted of sin. He had been a pattern of morality in the world, and no man could say that Mr. McAlley was ever known to do that which was wrong to a neighbor. But he had in his breast a wicked heart of unbelief; and when the Holy Spirit touched that heart, Mr. M. felt that he was a sinner and must be born again. At first he tried to build a hope of final salvation on the moral life he had led, and the many good things he had done for the church. And no one was more liberal to support the gospel and to contribute to every charitable object than he; but what were these things to quiet a conscience that God had roused, and to save from hell that God had threatened to all who do not repent and believe. The stricken sinner turned with disgust from his own righteousness, and sought the Savior as the only ground of hope. He went to his pastor, the good Mr. Rogers, for advice in this hour of deep distress, and was told to *repent*

and *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ. He went away and came again. Again he received the same counsel, and Mr. Rogers prayed with him, and endeavored to convince him that he was resisting the Holy Spirit, refusing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel, and accept salvation as the free gift of God. Mr. McAlley would not believe that he was thus proud and rebellious, but declared again and again that he was willing *to do anything* in the world, if God would only have mercy on him. Thus he was flying back to his own works all the while, and trying to work out a plan *of his own* that would answer instead of that plan which strips the sinner of his own merit, and lays him a helpless beggar at the footstool of sovereign mercy. One sabbath-day, after he had been under conviction for some months, he followed Mr. Rogers home from church, and entered it just as the good pastor, exhausted with his arduous labors, had thrown himself into his great arm-chair. Mr. McAlley began:—

“ Well, Mr. Rogers, I’m pretty much discouraged. I have tried to do what you have told me ; I have prayed and prayed, and tried to repent and believe, and I do not see that I can do anything more.”

The kind-hearted pastor looked up at him as the farmer stood in the middle of the study, and said :—

“ O, yes, there is one thing more you can do ; you can go down to hell with your sins on your soul.”

The farmer’s spirit was broken by that sudden and awful thought. Was it true that nothing remained for him but a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation ? Had he sinned away his day of grace ; grieved the Holy Spirit and made his own destruction sure ? He turned away in silence, and with a crushed heart left the pastor’s house for his own. He had some miles to go, and it was in the cool of a summer sabbath. On his way homeward, he was enabled to yield his proud spirit to the gentle reign of Jesus, and to embrace

the Savior in his beauty and love. From that sabbath he was one of the most exemplary Christians in that congregation. Some years afterward he was chosen an elder in the church, which office he still adorns, if he has not been translated to a higher service.

Several other instances to illustrate the skill of Mr. Rogers in dealing with inquiring sinners, but more to magnify the riches of God's grace, occur to me, but I have made this narrative already too long. Yet it is well, it is sweet, instructive, animating to recall those seasons of revival when the whole congregation, from the centre to its wide circumference, was shaken by the power of the Spirit; when every house was filled with the influences of the work, and many were brought out of darkness into the gospel's marvellous light. Revivals have since been enjoyed in the same congregation, but the one to which I have referred was the most pervading and powerful, and its fruits the most permanent.

This is no place, even if I had time, to speak of the means to be employed in the promotion of pure and undefiled revivals of religion. But the experience of past years is full of instruction on this great subject; a subject intimately allied with the prosperity of Zion and the salvation of men. A pure revival is the work of God's Spirit, whereby the church is awakened to a sense of its obligations and privileges, and in answer to the prayers of God's people, sinners are convicted and converted. The *theory* of revivals is very simple, but he that winneth souls is wise. The pastor who desires to see his congregation revived, will seek the Spirit for his own soul, and will preach as a dying man to dying men. He will be instant in season and out of season to reprove and exhort. He will not fail to declare the whole counsel of God. Leaning on the arm of the Almighty, he will address himself to the work, and wrestle like Jacob, and plead like Paul. God will hear, and he loves to bless.

“O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## SPINNING-BEES—APPLE-PARINGS—WEDDINGS.

IN the retirement of a secluded parish like ours, you would hardly look for much in the way of amusements. Of course, we had no theatres nor circus, nor any of the hundred playhouses that abound in, and curse this great city. But we had some means of amusement, and if they were not so fashionable or refined as a comedy or the opera, they were far more rational, useful, and free from all objections on the score of evil. Now I may be able to tell you something of our COUNTRY PASTIMES, which will serve to compensate for the dullness of some of my former chapters; yet if they should prove to be no better than they, I shall not be greatly disappointed. And I will begin *in the first place* (as Mr.

Rogers used to say), with our SPINNING-BEES. Many a city reader never heard of a spinning-bee! Was it a general gathering of the good women of the parish with their spinning-wheels? This may have been the fact in a period of time to which my memory runneth not back, but such was not the meaning of the term in the days of my boyhood. A "bee" was, and is, the name given to a union of forces for the accomplishment of any given enterprise, which the strength of one farmer and his "hands" could not achieve. Or it might be that the work ought to be done up at once, and time would be saved by getting the help of the neighbors, or it might be again that they wanted a frolic more than they wanted work, and in all these and other instances, it was a common thing to invite the people far and near to come and take hold; and at such times there was plenty of cider and fun, so that the work was play, and such gatherings were looked upon as pastimes, rather than as labors. Such were chopping-

bees, and husking-bees, and apple-bees, and the like, some of which may come into this chapter, when I have finished the description of the one I have begun. Very likely in old, very old times, the people did sometimes come together with their wheels, and in concert spin ever so many skeins of yarn at once, helping one another by mutual gossip, and cheered by a social cup of tea. But in the comparatively modern times that embrace the period of my youth (how respectable that sounds), a "spinning-bee" signified a visit given to the minister by his congregation, on which occasion they presented him with various articles useful to him in the way of housekeeping, of various sorts, according to the taste and ability of the donor. It was usually held in the winter, and as yarn, of linen or woollen, was the principal article of donation, it came to pass that the name of "spinning-bee" was given to it as its distinctive application, though, as I have said, it may be that formerly they brought their wheels also.

The plan of operation, or the order of exercises, was somewhat on this wise. Very early in the afternoon, the wagons, or sleighs, if there was snow, began to arrive. This coming to tea at *eight, ten, or twelve* o'clock at night is a pestilent practice, never heard of up in the country where I lived. In that goodly place, and in those goodly times, no sooner was dinner over (and dinner was at noon) than the women began to get ready, if they were going out to tea, and by one or two o'clock they were on the way. *Three* was late, and if by any accident the company was delayed till *four or five*, they were given up as "not coming" that day.

As the various teams arrived, the farmers' wives came with baskets and bundles, the former well stored with biscuits, doughnuts, and crullers, which were designed for the tea-table, and the bundle containing the more substantial *present* which they had brought in token of their attachment to the pastor. Some retired room was set apart for the reception of these gifts, and there

the pastor's wife received each friend as she arrived, and thanked her kindly for the very welcome offering. One would bring two or three pairs of nice woollen stockings, and she was assured that nothing could be more acceptable. Another had brought some homespun and home-made linen, white as the driven snow, or woollen which her own hands had woven into good substantial cloth for children's clothes, and as she drew forth her goodly gifts, an air of conscious pride was in her face, as she expressed her regret that she could offer nothing better. Mrs. Rogers expressed her gratitude in very few words, and was scarcely heard before she turned to shake hands with another lady who had just arrived with a noble cheese ! This was the fruit of the giver's own labor ; she had managed her dairy herself, with the help of her two daughters, each of whom now presented sundry rolls of golden butter, that kings might long to have and not be able to get. Then came others, and by this time the room was full of ladies, all of whom

had come laden with the produce of their own industry, and now found a sweet reward of their toil in the thought of bestowing it on those whom they loved. In another part of the house the menfolks were gathered, some of them having taken pains to put into the wagon a few bushels of grain, or a quarter of beef, or something in that line, and they found a place to deposit it, and Mr. Rogers was now engaged in profitable discourse with them; a privilege which the most of them had intelligence enough to appreciate and enjoy. Soon the company was all assembled in the parlor of the parsonage, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in free and easy conversation. Here was a fine opportunity for those living far apart to form acquaintance with one another, and thus the most distant portions of the congregation were united in friendship and good neighborhood, as they never would have been but for these annual gatherings at the minister's house. In one corner of the room, or in another room, the young

people were together, amusing themselves as young people will ; some of them, perhaps the children, engaged in some innocent play, and the rest making such entertainment as became their years, while the smothered laugh, and the half-hid practical joke which was now and then attempted, showed that they understood very well that they were in the minister's house, and that the old folks were within hearing. Thus the afternoon passed away, rapidly and pleasantly, until the tea was ready. The tables—all the tables in the house—were spread in the kitchen, if there was no other part of the house that could be used for such a service, and loaded with the good things which the company had brought. It was not expected that Mrs. Rogers would furnish any part of the entertainment. Some of the more notable women of the parish superintended the table, seeing that every thing was in "apple-pie order," and when this was done, they would ask out to the "first table" as many of the older set as

could be accommodated at once. Perhaps there were places at the table for thirty, and when these had "well drunk," the next set was invited out, and then another, till all, including the little ones, who waited till the last, had been served. These various tables were waited upon by some of the young ladies, who esteemed it an honor to distinguish themselves on such an occasion, by showing their skill in one of the most important parts of housekeeping, and if they should thus commend themselves to the favorable notice of any observant youth of the other sex, it would be no matter of surprise.

These operations being now concluded, the company were once more assembled in the front rooms of the parsonage, and the shades of evening giving notice that it was about time to be "getting their things," and starting for home, Mr. Rogers begs them to sit still a few moments longer. He then in few words, and with great propriety of language, speaks of the pleasure which he

and his family had enjoyed in the society of their friends, the gratitude which they desired to feel for the varied and substantial proofs of their kindness, and of the rich occasion which he and his people had for thanksgiving to God for the bounties of his providence with which their lives were crowned. He rejoiced that their lot had been cast in the midst of so much that called for grateful acknowledgment, and he indulged the hope that they would so improve their manifold mercies, that the good Giver of them all would not be tempted to take them away to bestow them on those who should improve them more to his praise. He then read a psalm which was sung with great spirit, after which they all knelt down, and Mr. Rogers led them to the throne of Divine Grace in fervent prayer, invoking the choicest of Heaven's blessings on them and their households to the latest generation.

This was the signal for breaking up. Each family, as they retired, shook hands with the good pastor and his wife, and made

them "promise to come and see them," and with many assurances of continued regard they found the way to their respective vehicles and homes. After they had all gone, or perhaps on the following day, Mrs. Rogers proceeds to parcel out the various commodities, to see what use could be made of matters and things in general which had been received. The most valuable presents had been linen yarn, which was now to be sorted according to its quality, and woven by hand; for in those days there were few factories in the country, and none in those parts. Perhaps the whole value of one of these visits to the minister and his family was somewhere about a hundred dollars, but the chief value was in the pledge thus given of affectionate interest, and in the opportunity of bringing the people together sociably, on common ground, once in every year. It has always seemed to me to be a fact deeply to be regretted, that in our city and village congregations, the members have so little social inter-

course, and are oftentimes utterly unacquainted with one another. They sit in the same sanctuary, and at the same communion-table, often follow each other in prayer at the so-called *social* meeting, yet they can not shake hands at the close of the meeting, for they have never been introduced! It was quite a different state of things in our country church. It was altogether a different state of things among the primitive Christians, where the mutual love they bore, the tender interest which they discovered in each other, was pleasing to God, and astonishing to the unbelieving world. When one member suffered, all suffered; but where the brethren are not known even by name, as is often the case in our city churches, how can the flame of Christian love pervade their hearts and cement the whole as the heart of one man? I do not know that "spinning-bees" would be the thing for a city church; but the establishment of some meetings at the pastor's house, or at some other suitable place where all might come

together on an equal footing for the purpose of familiar conversation, to exchange views and feelings on subjects alike dear to all, and especially where the circle of acquaintance might be extended and the chain of friendship brightened, could not fail to exert the most salutary influences. This is an inference which I did not intend to draw from my first chapter on country pastimes, and it may strike the reader as it does me, out of place; but I trust the importance of the suggestion will be admitted, and we will go on with the story.

APPLE-PARING BEES.—The name defines the thing. But they were fine times, I assure my readers, and I have not grown so old but sometimes I feel as if I would give more for one of those winter evenings in the long kitchen, paring apples and telling stories, than for all the fashionable parties, with music and mirth, that I have ever attended. They were chiefly confined to the young folks, and were usually held in the latter part of autumn, or early in the

winter. It was customary in those days, when as yet there was no objection to the free use of cider, to make a large quantity of apples into "applesauce," which was done by boiling apples in cider after they were peeled and quartered; after which they were stored away for winter consumption. A large quantity of apples were also pared, quartered, and dried, by spreading them on boards and exposing them to the sun, or by stringing them and hanging them in the kitchen or on the sides of the house. Now it was no small affair to prepare a dozen bushels of apples in this way, but the work was light and pleasant, and just such work as it is far pleasanter to do with others to help you, than to do alone; so it was common to assemble the young men and maidens from all the country side, or at least, as many as the kitchen, the scene of action, would accommodate, and each guest being provided with a knife, and a dish for his chips, the work was begun and carried on with all the sprightliness and fun which

you would naturally expect in such a gathering. Plenty of new cider, not strong enough to do any mischief, was at hand, and often passed around, together with the apples and nuts, and all went "merry as a marriage bell." The boys and girls were interspersed to give variety to the company ; not all the young men on one side, and all the young women on the other, as is the foolish practice in some of the churches where the seats are free ; but each choosing his own place, and showing his preferences by slyly locating himself alongside of the fair one whose ear he wished to command during the evening. For the space of a couple of hours the work would go forward with spirit, some paring the apples, and passing them to others, who would quarter and core them ; while others still would, with a large needle and thread, string them (like enormous pearls) prepared to be suspended for the process of drying, or to be reserved for boiling. But after *hard work*, the young folks would begin to complain of being tired,

and some of the more forward would hint the expediency of taking a rest. Soon the labor of the evening was suspended, and an innocent but diverting play was proposed, in which all joined with more spirit and glee than the ballroom would show, while the merry laugh and the happy hit gave the best evidence that these young people could be cheerful and gay without even the knowledge of one of the ten thousand means of amusement which our city-bred youth deem indispensable. Yet these fashionable folly-seekers would probably affect a blush, and perhaps an exclamation of contempt, if I should add that these country plays not unfrequently sent a young beau to inflict a kiss upon the half-hidden and reluctant cheek of the "one he liked best," or the "handsomest girl in the room;" penalties to be paid for failure in the game; but dreadful as such rustic practices must appear to the refined people who can sit half the night and see a half-dressed girl dancing on the stage, or sit in the Tabernacle, as I

have, and see a girl with bare arms and bosom singing for the edification of the Christian people of New York ; dreadful, I say, as our old-fashioned rustic plays must seem to the more chaste and delicate sensibilities of the refined generation that now dwells in these parts, I beg to indulge the opinion that the state of society where these dreadful things were tolerated, was a thousandfold more virtuous and lovely than the artificial laws of our world of fashion can ever secure. Certain I am, that if any young woman had ventured into church, or into an evening party, dressed, or rather undressed, as I have seen married and unmarried females in parties and concerts, &c., in the city of New York, she would have been driven out of society as one who was lost to the first dictates of female propriety, and unfit to mingle with the virtuous and pure.

But these rural amusements were more commonly and more heartily enjoyed at the COUNTRY-WEDDINGS than at any other

gatherings. These parties were more select, and being often composed of those families only who were connected by marriage, or intimately acquainted, there was less restraint thrown around them, and the young people gave themselves a wider margin in the selection of their sports and the imposition of their penalties. Now, I can readily imagine that some of my readers will be so fastidious, as to slightly turn upward their facial projections, if I go on to recount the sports of the young at a country-wedding, and so I must confine myself to as general and cursory a view of the facts as will be consistent with my duty as an impartial and fearless historian of those times. Am I at liberty to say nothing of the state of society then and there? May I pass by in silence the very form and feature of the folks, in those circumstances where character is developed, and the power of the instruction they received was likely to exhibit more or less of its fruits? I shall therefore tell the truth, and here I

will add that you may probably search the country over in vain, to find a community where fewer youth were led into habits of vice than in the old country congregation where it is my pride to say I had my "bringing up." But the weddings.

These were not merely times for fun. A marriage ceremony performed by Mr. Rogers, was a solemn season, long to be remembered by those more immediately concerned, and well calculated to produce a good impression upon all who heard it. The form which he used was simple and expressive, the vows which he required were tender, scriptural, and strong, the counsels he gave were weighty, plain, and so affectionately urged upon the youthful pair, that they could scarcely fail to be remembered and referred to in after life. And then his prayers—with what earnestness and strength he would commend them to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and invoke upon them the blessings promised to the families that call on his name.

In the midst of these services the most devout solemnity always reigned ; and the parents of both parties appeared to feel (as they should) that a most momentous step was taken by their children, and the friends around looked on as if each had an interest at heart in the future happiness of the parties now united in tender and holy bonds. After the ceremony, "cake and wine" were handed around, and moderately partaken of by the company, the days of total abstinence being in the future. But there was no more *drinking* after that single glass, and I never heard that any weddings were disgraced by such scenes of excessive indulgence in liquors as have become common in these latter days. Doubtless many have thought it right and proper to drink wine freely at weddings, though they would abstain from it at other times, and thus the example of sober men has encouraged the young to indulge with less restraint.

So long as the minister remained, there was very little in the way of amusement ; not

because he would frown upon it, nor because the amusements were to be such as would offend any serious people ; but there was a silent reverence always felt for the pastor that forbade any mirth in his presence, and sobriety was therefore a tribute involuntarily but cheerfully rendered to his exalted worth. The young folks did not feel free to laugh very loud or to play very hard when the minister could see or hear them. Mr. Rogers understood this very well, and after a little pleasant conversation with the family and the friends he withdrew and returned to his home. This was the signal for the sport to begin. Two or three youngsters immediately proposed as many different plays, which were responded to according to the various tastes of the party, till at length one was selected by the prevailing voices, with the promise to play the others afterward. As at the "apple-paring," the great attraction of these plays was found in the fact that whoever was "caught," either by failing to "catch the plate," or to "find

the slipper," or in any other of the operations set on foot, was *condemned* to "measure off so many yards of tape" with such a young lady, or to walk so many times around the room in company with another, or to perform some similar *penance*, the more of which he had to suffer, the more agreeable it was to him and his partner. Many of these plays required not a little "bodily exercise," and there was quite as great a demand for gracefulness and agility as in the more fashionable amusement of dancing, which I never knew to be attempted at any of these parties. Sometimes the older folks would catch the spirit of the times, and enter with great zest into the amusements of their children, being reminded of the days long since gone by when they too were young, and delighted in the same "childish things." Often have I seen a grave man of gray hairs thus renewing his youth, apparently the happiest of the party, and the zeal with which he engaged in the pastimes of the young, gave new life to their spirits,

and all were as blithe and gay as the birds are on this bright May morning while I write.

It was no very rare thing for them to wind up the plays of a merry evening like this, with an amusement which certainly was censurable, and now that I look back upon it I am led to wonder that they should ever venture upon it; I mean a "*wedding in fun.*" True, this performance was not attended with any of the *solemnities* that belonged to the serious service, but it was taking an improper liberty with a subject and ceremony not to be trifled with, and I am sorry that I ever had a hand in any follies of that sort. Usually a young couple would be found who had no great objections to standing up side by side, and one of the company would repeat some doggerel poetry, being a burlesque upon a marriage form, which was no sooner over than the whole company would come in pairs to *salute the bride*; which performance, by the way, was the real object of the play. In

such sports as these, the youth amused themselves until ten o'clock, which was always looked upon as a late hour to be out. Yet it was nothing strange for them to be so much engaged in their sports as to forget the flight of time, until some of the older ones were obliged to remind them that it was high time to adjourn.

No space is left for me in this chapter, and it will not do for me to resume the theme again, to say anything of several other "country pastimes" which were common in the days whereof I am now writing. I doubtless had a taste for those things then, and if any one should say that the frosts of age had not killed the taste quite yet, perhaps I should be compelled to the soft impeachment. "Corn-huskings" were seasons of great enjoyment among the young farmers, when they came together in the barn and husked the Indian corn which had been cut up by the roots and drawn under cover for the purpose. This was a combination of labor and pleasure which I never fancied,

and of which I shall have nothing to say. But the great attraction in the way of outdoor winter amusement, was sleighing; parties being often formed of young people, and older ones too, to drive off some twelve or fifteen miles, and back again, to the sound of as many strings of bells as each man could raise for the occasion. And I should like, if I had room, to say something about a "wood-bee" that took place every winter, when the farmers brought each of them a "load of wood" to the good minister; or they would meet at his house with their teams, and proceed to the forest where a lot of wood had been cut ready for his use, and in the course of the day they would haul enough to his door to keep him warm for a year. But all these things must be left untold. I very much fear that these chronicles will be the only authentic records to which posterity can refer for information about my native parish, and it pains me to think how much I must leave to pass into perpetual oblivion.

Those who have but a slight acquaintance with the ways of the world in a great city, or in our thriving villages, and, indeed, in the country at the present day, will be struck with the contrast which these scenes present. I am arrested painfully by the thought that while light literature, and handsome books, and popular lectures, and public meetings, offer intellectual entertainment to our youth, they are also tempted continually by the seductive influences of a wicked world, to indulge in those pleasures that endanger the immortal soul. Here in the city I would live as I would in China or India if duty called me there; and, therefore, the children whom God has given me, must here be trained for this world and the world to come. But often does my heart turn to that secluded parish among the hills, as the very spot where I would educate my children for eternity. What though the elegances of life were there unknown, and nature was in her own dress, and men and women walked and talked

without any other rule than virtue and good sense prescribed! What though there were no such schools of morals as *the theatre*, and no schools of manners like the dancing-schools of the metropolis! They had what was better far: the high and holy principles of truth and honesty were taught to them by the fireside, and from the pulpit; they saw the power and beauty of virtue in the example set before them, and early learned to fear God and keep his commandments. And then it was something to have the character formed in the midst of nature's glorious works; to have communion with God in the wide temple not made with hands; to hear and see him, not in the wilderness of men's workmanship here in the city, but in the majesty of the forest, in the simple beauty of the purling stream, and to admire his ever-active goodness in the springing, growing, ripening grain. O! it is a good thing to get a chain from these to a child's heart; in after-life the links will hold him fast, and may be among the

last to yield if he is tempted to become a prodigal. Better to make an honest man, though he never wear anything but a tow frock, than to train a finished gentleman and a finished rogue. The chances are a thousand to one in favor of the country. Our city merchants advertising for clerks, often say, "one from the country would be preferred." They know where to look for good boys. And although many may have thought my account of our up-country plays not sufficiently refined, I will trust to their good sense to acquit me of any intention to offend their delicate tastes, while I have been yielding to the associations of early life and running back to the days of "Auld Lang Syne."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE SECRET DISCIPLE.

NEAR my father's house lived a farmer, who, for a rarity in that neighborhood, was not a religious man. The family was an irreligious family; attending church, it is true, and so far as a public example went, paying a decent respect to the means of grace. This they must have done, or they could have had no favor in the eyes of the people among whom they must live. It was never known that any one of them (and there was a large number of children) had had any convictions of sin or serious thoughts on the subject of religion. They were rapidly growing up; the parents had become old, and almost beyond the reach of gracious influence; several of the sons and daughters had married, and settled near by,

and all were apparently indifferent to the concerns of their precious souls. Some of the boys were openly profane ; neglecters of divine worship, and known in the community as bad men. The girls were not gay, but had never made any pretensions to religion ; living in the midst of the gospel as if it were sent to all but them.

Of the three or four girls now grown to womanhood, there was one who was known to be more retiring in her manners, gentler in her disposition, and more inclined to attend religious meetings than any of the rest. Yet was it altogether unknown to her own sisters and parents and to every one else that even *she* was ever concerned about her soul ; and her quietness of manner and occasional seriousness were attributed to the fact that her health was delicate, though there was no thought of her being disposed to any peculiar disease. It was now drawing nigh to winter, and as the cold weather increased, it was observed that Sarah had a slight cough and her cheeks, which were

naturally free from color, were slightly tinged with a hue that looked like returning health. But it came and went again, and the cough increased, and Sarah's strength, never great, was failing, and before winter was over she was confined to her bed, the marked and sealed victim of consumption. Mr. Rogers had watched her for a long time, as he had seen her quietly dropping in at an evening prayer-meeting, or he had detected a fixed attention and apparent interest under the preaching of the word, and when it was known that her health was failing he had sought an early occasion to see her and speak with her of the things belonging to her everlasting peace. As soon as she could converse with him in private, and so privately that none of the family could hear the *confession* she had to make, Sarah stated to Mr. Rogers that for more than a year past she had cherished a secret and trembling hope that her sins had been forgiven, and that Jesus was her Savior! Mr. Rogers was astonished, almost as if he

had seen a vision. To have found a disciple of Christ in that family was a discovery he had never dreamed of making; and sooner far would he have thought of being met with a cold repulse when he came, as a faithful minister and pastor, to urge the claims of the gospel on one who he feared was insensible both to her duty and danger. He begged her to open her heart with all freedom, and tell him by what way she had been led to cherish such a hope as seemed to be hovering round her soul. Taking courage from the kindness of her good pastor's tone, and finding a sweet relief in the very thought of having one to share a secret which she had never *wished* to keep, Sarah proceeded at once to say that for many years she had been more or less anxious as to the future: she had listened with attention to the preaching of the word, and had read the Bible when no one would know it: but the family were so much opposed to religion, that she had shrunk from making any disclosure of her feelings, lest

she should encounter the ridicule and opposition of her friends. Often the words of her Savior spoken to those who were afraid to confess him before men, had fallen with dreadful power on her burdened heart, and she had prayed for strength to overcome the fear, which as a snare had bound her, but hitherto she had not been able to resist the temptation to silence. But now the ice was broken. She had told some one of it, and she was willing and anxious that the world should know that she would be the friend and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her parents, and brothers, and sisters, were struck dumb at the announcement that one of their number wished to be a Christian! Yet Sarah had always been so mild and patient, silent, and sometimes sad, that they were ready to admit they had always thought "Sally was trying to be good," though she had said nothing about it.

A new scene opened in that house on the day that this revelation was made. Sarah

was confined to her bed, and symptoms had appeared too plain to be mistaken, that a disease which never rests was silently working its way through the frail tenement that confined her spirit, but a joy and peace of more than earthly lustre and loveliness glowed upon her face, and her tongue, loosed as from a silence of life, was now constantly speaking of the wonderful love of Him who was her soul's comfort and stay. She called her aged parents to her bedside and told them that she was soon to die, that *they were soon to die*, that the precious Savior who had spoken peace to her soul was also able and willing to forgive their sins and prepare them for heaven, but they must make haste to repent, or they would fail of eternal life. And then she pointed to the skies, and spoke of the judgment-seat of Christ, before which she and they would shortly stand, and with all the tender emotion that must swell a dying daughter's heart, as she pleads with her grayhaired parents on the verge of the

grave, she besought them to seek the Lord till they found him, and make sure work for the dread eternity before them. Then she called her brothers and sisters around her, and from time to time, as she had strength to speak, she commended the Savior to them as the guide of their youth, begging them to forsake their sins, and to embrace him as their portion. The cold indifference with which these affectionate appeals were received would have been discouraging to any one but a sister who felt that there was hope for them as well as for her, and as long as life lingered with her, and she could summon strength for the dying effort, she ceased not to warn them of the danger of their ways, and to press upon them the love and compassion of Him whom she had found so precious.

She lingered along through the winter and the spring; and in the midst of summer, death came to her chamber and set her spirit free. There was a vast assembly at her funeral; all the young people from the

whole country-side assembled ; many of them had long known her and her sisters in the days of their youthful vanity ; and having heard that she had secretly turned from the world to God, they were arrested for a moment by the voice of Providence, and came to follow her remains to the grave. It was at this funeral that I heard these facts, and also from Mr. Rogers, a narrative of the death-bed experience of this young lady. Mr. Rogers said that it was one of the most triumphant and wonderful scenes he had witnessed in his whole ministry. From the hour that she had found grace to confess Christ before men, he had revealed himself to her soul with a fulness of love that passed all understanding. It was dying grace, displayed with a richness and depth that filled her with joys and rejoicings which no words were adequate to convey. If any regret was mingled with her thoughts of an early death, it was drawn from the fact that she had so long concealed her feelings ; perhaps if she had, at an

earlier day, avowed the Lord to be her God, she might have persuaded those she loved to come with her in the way to heaven. As the weeks of weariness and declension wore away, her soul renewed its strength, and delighted in flying nearer and nearer to the celestial world. Visions, not of fancy, but visions of revealed glory such as the soul sees when sin is dying daily, and loveliness is rising in beauty and strength on the ascending spirit, now opened to her enraptured eye, and she described her glorious views with an eloquence and fervor that filled her friends with wonderful awe! They knew not what it meant. Their ears had never heard such sounds; the very walls of the house were strangers to the voice of prayer and praise, and with silent amazement the old parents sat by the side of that dying bed, and, as if stupefied by the sight, beheld their daughter trying her wings for a flight to the throne of God. For many days before her departure, she lived in a frame of mind such as few saints

attain, and at last, when the hour of her departure came, she cried, "O grave! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?" and with a smile that would have looked sweet on a seraph's brow, she fell asleep in Jesus.

The relation which Mr. Rogers gave at the funeral, made a deep impression on the great assembly, and not a few of the young people were awakened to a sense of their own condition. The death of Sarah was thus made the life of others, so that what she had failed to do by her living precepts, the grace of God was able to accomplish through her dying testimony. Her youngest brother had always been known at school and among his playmates, as one of the dullest boys in the neighborhood, and there was a roughness about him that defied all attempts at polish or improvement. Some time after the death of Sarah, it pleased the Lord to awaken this youth to a sense of sin, and to rouse him to a view of his danger. With characteristic bluntness he spoke

of it in the family, and they laughed at him! *They* would not believe though one rose from the dead, and they made fun of the seriousness of this lad. He was very tall, and they told him in derision that if he “kept on growing he could get to heaven easy enough;” when he went to the garret or some retired part of the house to pray for his soul, they would follow him and mock his anxieties, and annoy him so that he could find no peace. He then took to the barn or to the haystacks, and often he would go far away into the woods, and there, where no ear but God’s could hear him, he would cry for mercy. And the Lord God heard and answered. His soul was set at liberty, and he rejoiced in the sweet assurance of acceptance and pardon. He suffered persecution for Christ’s sake, and took it joyfully. Without any delay, he avowed his purpose to be the Lord’s, and in the face of the taunts of those who had not long ago wept at the grave of a pious sister, he stood up before the world

and confessed Christ Jesus to be his portion and all. From that time he was a decided Christian. It was interesting to observe in him, what has doubtless often been observed in others, that divine grace seemed to supply the deficiencies of education, and in some respects even of natural talents. Sure I am that some of the most *eloquent* prayers, if I may use the terms, to which I have ever listened, have come from the fire-touched lips of holy men who had known little of any book but the Bible, or of any school but the school of Christ. It was eminently true of this young disciple. At a single step, he took his place among the most acceptable and useful Christians in the church. When called upon in the social meeting to lead the devotions of the people, he prayed as if the language of prayer had long been familiar : the words of inspiration fell from his lips as fitly and readily, as if he were an old student of the Scriptures, and it was an occasion of frequent remark that such attainments could never have been

expected in such an unpromising youth. It was doubtless a fact that in him, as in the case of his sister, their strong natural powers of mind were never developed until grace was implanted in the soul, and then they shone to the praise of Him who polished them for himself. I can mention a single remark of this young man that will show his spirit and his acuteness. Some years after his conversion, and I had removed to a distant place of residence, he came to see me, and very soon I said to him, "Is there anything interesting in the state of religion in the old church?"—"Nothing," he answered, and I added:—

"Are the people united now?"

"Oh yes;" said he, "they are *all froze together.*"

Many and many a time since that, I have seen a church *united* in the same manner; not united as a band of brethren, loving one another and the service of a common master, striving together to build up the cause of Christ and save sinners from perishing

in their sins ; but united as a stream whose waters have been chilled by the frost, and its separate drops have been congealed into one cold mass. O that the Sun of Righteousness would shine upon such unions, dissolve them, and cause them to flow on together to water and fertilize the earth !

Another, and widely different *reminiscence* rises this moment to my view, and I know there will be a lesson of painful interest in its recital. I feel some compunctions about putting the facts on these pages, but my scruples "for old acquaintance sake," must yield to the duty I have undertaken, and I shall therefore write as freely as before. If these sketches should ever fall in the way of those who recognise the portraits, my trust is that they will acquit me of any evil design in giving them to the world.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE FORGER.

IN our congregation, but residing at some distance from the church, and in a populous neighborhood, there was a family of more than ordinary intelligence and refinement. The gentleman had been in professional life in a distant city, and having acquired property retired to our pleasant region, and fixed his residence on a large farm which he had purchased. Dr. Jones mingled but little with the people, his tastes leading him rather to the retirement of his books and the society of a few friends who sought him out. His chief pleasure was in his family, consisting only of his wife and daughter, with a nephew of his own name, who had lived with him as his son, and was

destined to be *in law* acknowledged as such, when the young man and the doctor's daughter were old enough to be married. Young Jones had studied law, and having been admitted to practice, he settled down in the village, near the Old White Meeting-house, and entered life with the finest prospect of property and honor. He and his cousin had loved from childhood; both were gifted with charms of person and mind that are not often equalled, and when they were married it was a common remark that "a handsomer couple were seldom seen." Young Jones was known as an amiable youth, and without those bold and manly traits of character that command attention at first glance, he was silently and gradually winning his way into the confidence and esteem of the community. His father-in-law cheerfully supplied the young beginners with the means of starting in the world, and never did a brighter life lie in the distance than that on which they looked. But Jones found it slow work to get into business.

He went into court with no cases of his own to manage ; while others less able than he, were busy, and some of them had more than they could do, he was idle. He began to be discouraged. It occurred to him that he must make a show of business if he had none ; he would live in style and make a dash, and people would then open their eyes and say, "What a smart young man that must be, to get ahead so fast." To carry out this bad purpose required more means than he could command. He drew upon the doctor as far as he could, until the judicious parent counselled him to live within his income, and by-and-by told him with some plainness that he feared he was going too far and running into debt beyond his ability to pay. The young lawyer had by this time got a taste of the pleasures of *free living*, and had no notion of retracing his steps and coming down. His sweet wife whispered to him that they were not as happy as in simpler days, but he spoke to her of the time when she should shine

as one so lovely ought, and flattered her; as women may be flattered by those they love, into silence.

Soon the funds were running low. He borrowed where he could, and his credit, based on his father-in-law's known ability, was sufficient to keep him up, and a suspicion of his integrity had never crossed the mind of any one. Suddenly, and as if one of the hills had been shaken, it was told in the streets that young Jones had presented a FORGED NOTE at a bank in a city about thirty miles off. The people could not believe it. But the fact was too true, and he had been successful so far in his wickedness. He had indeed forged the names of some of the most substantial citizens of the place to a note, he had even written his own father-in-law's name, he had got the note discounted, and when it became due it was of course protested, and sent up to our quiet town to be collected, when in an instant the forgery was discovered. What a blow was this to his young wife: happy

in her ignorance of his crime, she had caressed him to the hour of the fatal disclosure, and then the sympathy of friends would have fain concealed it from her ; but he, the husband of her youth, strained her to his heart, and told her that he was a villain and must fly from an infamous punishment that might speedily overtake him. He did fly. It was late in the autumn—I think the latter part of November, when he left his wife fainting at the horrid news his own lips had brought, instead of the kiss that she had been wont to receive, and just in the edge of evening, of a cold, dark night, he started from his house to fly, he knew not whither ; he cared not, if he could but get away from himself and justice.

As soon as it was known that he had fled, the proper steps were taken for his arrest. Yet such was the general feeling of pity for the poor wife that no one was in haste to pursue him. A warrant was however issued, and officers despatched who succeed-

ed, after a while, in overtaking him, and he was brought back for trial. Now was the time to test the strength of principle among our plain people. It would have been a very easy matter to raise the money and pay the note, and perhaps the affair could thus be compromised; and there were many thoughts of doing something to stay the arm of the law. But it would not be right; that was very plain; and justice must be done, though hearts break. The prisoner was kept in close confinement for several days, while there was some delay in the attendance of witnesses; and young Jones, watching his opportunity with sleepless eye, found a chance, in the dead of night, to get out of the house where he was kept under the care of two constables, who had *taken turns* in sleeping *both at a time*. When they waked up, their prisoner was gone. The alarm was given, and in a few minutes a number of men were mounted to give chase. A thought struck one of them—he must have been a man of feeling—and

stopping the rest, he said to them that "*he knew Jones would not go out of the village till he had seen his wife ; there was no use in chasing till they had searched his own house.*" The party therefore proceeded with great caution to the house where the stricken wife still resided, and as they stealthily approached the door, there came a cry of anguish from the chamber, which told too terribly that innocence and guilt were wailing in each other's arms. Not one of the pursuers had a heart to enter, and disturb those lovers in their wretchedness, but quietly surrounding the house, they waited for him to emerge and fly. They were not long waiting. The embrace was too painful to be long ; the guilty husband tore himself away from the sheltering arms of her who loved him in his fall, and kissing their first-born that lay in his place, he rushed once more from the home he had cursed, and which he should never enter again. They arrested him but a few steps from the door, so gently that *she knew*

nothing of it, and conducted him back to his confinement.

Again he managed to escape, and fearing to repeat his visit, he fled to the mountains. They tracked him first through a light snow that had fallen, but he eluded pursuit for some time; wandering in the woods, sometimes venturing to a farmhouse where he was not known, to get something to eat, but uncertain where to go or what to do. It seemed to be a public duty to secure him if possible, and a large number of citizens turned out in a body, and making diligent search, they found him behind a heap of rubbish in the garret of an old house in which he had taken refuge. He had found already that the way of transgressors is hard. In his haste he had fallen repeatedly, and bruised his face and hands; he had suffered terribly from hunger and cold; and when he was dragged from his hiding-place his whole appearance was so changed that his own acquaintance would scarcely believe

that this was the young and handsome lawyer whom they had often seen before.

His trial came on, and he had no defence to make. He was sentenced to the state-prison for ten years, and with a gang of felons was taken from the county jail, and transported in chains to his solitary cell. His heart-broken wife returned to her father's house to wear out her worse-than-widowhood, while he who was the author of her misery was to drag out his years of punishment in a gloomy prison. He never lifted up his head after he entered. Now and then an old acquaintance would be permitted to look upon him, as he plied his needle, working at a trade, but he gave no sign of recognition. The iron had entered into his soul. His health sunk under the load of ignominy which he felt upon him; and after five or six years' imprisonment he died a convict felon, in a prison hospital, far from that young wife who would have died for him, or with him. Miserable man! And such an end! Yet such is the misery,

the interlinking misery, that crime must bring. How many hearts are pierced by that one sting! How many tears, bitter, burning tears, of mingled grief and shame did that one wicked deed bring from eyes that else would ever have been lighted with love and joy! It is always thus with sin. It has misery in its train. It makes all the misery there is in this world; crushes all the hearts, blasts all the hopes, digs all the graves, waters them with tears of anguish, and then stretches itself into the dread eternity, and kindles the fires that feed on the soul for ever and ever. Oh, sin, these are thy victories, these are thy stings!

Why do we seek the works of fiction for stories of *exciting interest*, when truth so moves the heart?

But I do not like to leave my reminiscences at this melancholy point. There were others whom I knew in youth whose history would be read with more pleasure than the sad tale just finished. Do you recollect Dick Rogers mentioned in the

first chapter of these sketches? I mean the roguish son of the minister, whom his father took into the pulpit to punish him for playing in meeting, and who straddled the pulpit while his father was praying, and drummed with his heels on the boards! Yes, you recollect Dick. And perhaps you would like to know what has become of that same boy. I saw him in this city yesterday, and know his history as well as I know my own—in fact, we have never been far apart. In childhood he was always full of fun and frolic, and as ready for anything in the way of innocent sport as any boy in the parish. At school he sobered down a little, and was wide awake at study, as he was at play. Ambitious and ardent, he was determined to be “up head.” At eight years of age he was in the Latin: at twelve he was fitted for college, and Mr. Rogers ventured upon the hazardous experiment of sending him there. In the midst of the many temptations to which he was thus suddenly and early exposed, it would have

been nothing strange had he fallen into the snares that are laid for the unwary. Such might have been his fate, as such has been the fate of others, had not the grace of God interposed and renewed his youthful heart. With the same ardor that had marked his childhood, he now desired to consecrate his youth and manhood to the service of his Savior. He studied for the ministry and became a preacher of the gospel. But his health early failed, and, leaving the pulpit, he sought a field of usefulness in the scarcely less useful department of the public press. The little Dick Rogers whom I saw on his father's pulpit in prayer-time, less than thirty years ago, is now discoursing weekly through the columns of one of the most "widely-circulated" newspapers in this country, to his hundred thousand readers. He is growing prematurely old; his brow is wrinkled, and he stoops as he walks, but he laughs just as he did when we were boys. I met him in a bookstore, and he spoke with all the glee of childhood of those

bright sunny days, when "the world was all before us where to choose."

How widely varied have been the paths by which those early friends of mine have wandered thus far through life ! How many of those paths have already led to the grave ! How few to glory ! There was one fine boy who was my constant playmate ; generous and true, we loved and trusted him : he was the *first* one from whom I ever received a letter : that was when we were yet boys, and he was removed to the city to be a clerk in a store. *That* was thought to be something very great ; a certain passport to independence. He wrote to me a few times while his heart yet yearned for the green hills and forests of the country ; but he found new friends and new pleasures in the city : he ceased to write to me, and I ceased to hear of him. He grew to the verge of manhood, ran a brief career of folly and vice, left his business and lost his character, and died as a fool dieth. This was one ; and then there were others who

have left the old town to be leaders in the church and the state ; and many, the most of those who were my companions in youth, are sober, substantial citizens and farmers, tilling the lands their fathers tilled, and worshipping their fathers' God.

## CHAPTER X.

## MY FIRST GRIEF—TAKING IT EASY.

IN the congregation that joined upon ours, but at the distance of several miles, lived a youth whom I tenderly loved. I have never known any love of the same sort since he left me. We were boys at school together when we first became acquainted, and both being of the same age, with similar tastes and pursuits, it was not strange that we should bind us to each other with an absorbing devotion, such as is not felt when the coldness and cares of the world steal around our hearts. George Williams (I write his own name, for I can not bear to look on a fictitious name in the place of his), was a manly boy, and I remember well that he was always known

among his classmates as above everything mean or low ; despising such things for their own sake, and seeking to be known and loved as a boy of honor. We studied many of our lessons together, and both being fond of the Latin and Greek, we found mutual, and often intense delight in detecting and admiring the beauties which these classics unfolded to our young eyes. But this was not the true secret of our attachment.

We were both away from home, at college, neither of us yet seventeen years old, when we were simultaneously awakened to a sense of our sinfulness in the sight of God, and together we set out to seek the Savior. Often did we meet, and kneeling down by the same chair, we poured out our hearts in prayer for mercy, and many were the vows we made together that if God should pardon our sins, we would consecrate ourselves for ever to his service, and live to his glory. Those hours of deep distress, when we seemed to be cast off of God, and

we had not our parents near us to whom we could go with our load of grief, those hours drew us closely to each other's hearts. There we could unburthen our souls, compare our emotions, pray for one another, and thus gather encouragement to persevere in seeking eternal life through Christ. We found peace very nearly at the same time, and in all the ardor of new love we devoted our whole souls to God. It seemed as if this were the very beginning of our attachment, so new, so deep, so joyous, were the emotions that swelled our hearts when we entered the way to heaven, and together sought and found those pleasures which ripen only under the sunlight of the divine eye.

A few months after this, and while we were yet in the ardor of new converts' love, we returned to our respective homes to spend a vacation of four weeks. One morning I was walking out with a friend about sunrise, and as we were passing along the street he left me for a moment to speak

to a gentleman whom he recognised, and who was travelling by. The young man returned to me, and we resumed our walk. In the course of a few moments he observed casually, that the gentleman with whom he had just been conversing, mentioned to him a very sudden death in the neighboring town, the day before. He said that a young man had been cut down after a few hours' sickness. I asked if he mentioned his name. "Yes," he said, "*his name was GEORGE WILLIAMS.*" Had a spear pierced my heart, the poignancy of the pain had scarcely been more acute. Rather, had a bolt from heaven fallen on my head, I could not have been more stupefied. For a moment I reeled, like a drunken man, and then partially recovering strength, I put my ear close to the mouth of my friend, and asked him to tell me what he had said, and *to speak loud*, for I was not sure that I had heard him aright. He begged me to be calm, and refused to repeat the fact. I sat down on the grass, and in the silence of a

desolated heart, waited for the storm of passionate grief to pass by.

Almost twenty years have crept by since that morning, and yet I feel this moment something of the smothering sensations of that hour. The sun was just climbing in the east ; but it was dark, very dark ; and the whole face of nature, a moment before smiling in the charm of a summer morning, was hung with black. I went home, and rushed to my parents' chamber, and throwing myself across their feet as they lay in bed, I sobbed out (tears then first coming to my relief), "*George Williams is dead !*" In an instant they comprehended the power of my grief, and, rising from the pillows, threw their arms around me, and we all wept together—I for my Jonathan whom I had lost, and they in sympathy with me and the parents who had lost *their* boy. In the course of the day I went up to the funeral, and stood petrified with sorrow over the remains of my dearest friend. He was buried. Night after night he came to me

in my dreams, sometimes as in the days of our youthful love, and there was nothing to remind me that he was not as in days that were past ; and again he would come to me all clothed in white, an angel from the skies, and would beckon me to follow him ; and touching the strings of a little harp of gold that he held in his hand, as the gentle music fell like the light of heaven on my ravished ear, he would spread his wings and vanish into thin air. Often after such meetings and partings I waked and found my pillow drenched in tears. This was my first grief. It is easy to see that my mind was quite unprepared for such a blow, and that the loss even of *such* a friend *now*, might be borne with more composure. There was no manliness in that sorrow. But it was good for me. O how vain the world seemed to me from that date ! It was an epoch in my life. I felt that everything my heart was set on here was so uncertain that I would live for God and heaven. And then, in my folly, I thought

I would never love anybody again, for fear they too would die. How soon I got over that, it is needless to write.

This is a tale of boyish love and sorrow that will be read with various emotions according to the taste of those into whose hands it falls. There are some who will push it aside as soft and sentimental, while a few will believe me, when I say that it severed the cords that bound me to earthly love, and led me to consecrate every faculty to the Lord, who had bought me with his own blood.

**TAKING IT EASY.**—In almost every country town in which I ever became acquainted there might be found one man at least, and sometimes several, who take the world so easily that they never give themselves any trouble as to what they and their family shall eat or drink; and this indifference they carry to such an extent that they use no means to provide for their daily wants. Now where a simple-hearted trust in Providence is followed up by diligent

industry, we are always pleased to see it, but in the case of Peter Fish, the carelessness about this world did not appear to be so much the result of trust in Providence as of constitutional laziness, and such a passion for *fishing*, that for the sake of it he neglected everything else, and lost his property while he caught trout. He inherited a handsome farm and a beautiful house, and around him bloomed one of the loveliest families in all our town. His wife was a sweet woman, his daughters were very pretty, and he had a fine boy of my own age; and with such a family one would think that he had motive enough for diligence in business, to keep them in respectable circumstances, if he had no desire to add to his possessions. But Peter was one of those good, easy souls, who think that everything will take care of itself, and there is no need of his taking trouble about it. He took to fishing, and though fond of the water he drank but little of it, unless it was mixed with something stronger. Yet he

never drank to excess, according to the pattern of those days. He was a sober man, and everybody liked him. He would go far and stay long, to do any one a good turn ; and if he heard of any one being sick to whom a nice trout would be a delicacy, Fishing Peter, as Peter Fish was universally called, was sure to hear of it and supply the article, with such readiness, too, that it was plain he found more pleasure in giving than receiving. I can see him now, creeping stealthily down the beautiful brook that meandered through the meadows near my father's house, with his fish-basket hanging at his back, a smashed hat on his head, and a trim pole in his hand ; pursuing his prey with an earnest but quiet enthusiasm that Izaak Walton never attained, and with a skill in the use of *the fly* that the old master of the piscatory art would have envied had he followed him, as I have many a live-long day, to see the speckled, beautiful trout leap from the swift stream and catch its barbed hook as if they were glad to fall into

the hands of Fishing Peter. He took to me, and I took to him, and we both took to fishing; and if I could have had my own way about it, I should, in all probability, have given up my time to it, and been a fisherman instead of a —, but my good parents had sense enough to order otherwise, and I was saved from floating down stream with my lazy friend. Peter Fish, I said, was a man of property, and in his way very religious: when he came into possession of a handsome house and farm of his own, he said he thanked God for it; and when he let his fields lie untilled, or his crops waste for want of attention, and one year after another his possessions slipped away from him by his inattention, and he was at last compelled to see his fair acres passing out of his hands, while he sought a home for his family in a little dwelling that a few years before they would never have dreamed of occupying, even then did this easy soul lift up his eyes to heaven and say, "Blessed be nothing." And, verily, that

was about all he had. He finally tried to turn his fishing to some account in the way of supporting his family, and by driving a little business in the line of fishing tackle, he did contrive to earn a trifle. But that was all; he would often go off for weeks together on fishing excursions, managing perhaps to support himself while he was gone, by his favorite pursuit, but leaving his family to look out for themselves. So he lived, and so he died. I have told his story as a sample of a class of men often met with in the country, who would rather at any time serve their neighbors than help themselves; averse to labor, but fond of doing *chores*, and apparently happy and contented, while their affairs are going to ruin rapidly and surely. Industry in the country is the only road to prosperity. A man must rise early and work hard who would make money by the sweat of his brow. I find it hard at that here in the city, where I have more *brow-sweat* than I ever had in the country.

## CHAPTER XI.

## RICHARD ROGERS'S FIRST SERMON.

I MET with Richard Rogers here in the city the other day, and strolling down one street and up another we found ourselves in the neighborhood of the South ferry, and, tempted by the cool breezes that fanned the bay, we struck across, and were soon wandering toward the Greenwood cemetery. On the way he told me of his first sermon to the old congregation, and I begged him to give me a sketch of his visit, and the heads of his discourse, that I might work them up in the series of "Reminiscences" which I am just drawing to a close. That very night he complied with my request, and from the materials which he placed in my hands, I make the rest of this article.

I have said that Richard was the minister's son, and in the next chapter I shall go into the history of his father's separation from that people; but, in the meantime, that must be passed over, while we come to a period some years later, when great changes have passed upon the face of things—old people have grown older or passed away, and children are in the places of their fathers.

After Mr. Rogers's removal from the place, the people called one and another minister, and the various distractions that followed would furnish themes for a volume of historical recollections. At length they settled the Rev. Mr. Luce, a man of singular powers of mind, great pulpit abilities, and so strikingly eccentric in manner and matter as to render him the "observed of all observers" wherever he raised his voice. Seldom have I heard a man of more brilliant powers of fancy, united with the severe logic of a philosopher. His sermons were written with beauty, and delivered with an

energy and *naturalness* that delighted the ear, and seemed to carry the truth directly to the heart. The congregation were delighted with him, and he was rapidly gaining a hold upon their affections that promised to be more strong than any pastor they had had since the days of Mr. Rogers. One sabbath, at the close of sermon, it was a bitter cold day in the dead of winter, and the fire in the old meetinghouse served only to rarefy the air *within* a little, so that through the crevices and windows it rushed in with greater violence from *without*; it was just the day for the purpose which Mr. Luce had in his heart, which was nothing less than the destruction of the old house, and the erection of a new one on its ruins; I say, at the close of sermon, Mr. Luce closed the Bible, and surveying the temple as if he had never seen the building before, his brow contracting as if he were growing indignant at some remarkable discovery just made, he broke out in the following novel strain of pulpit eloquence:—

“My grandfather has a barn—” the congregation started in their seats at the communication of a fact so very probable, but so very strangely out of place; Mr. Luce began again—“My grandfather has a barn that is altogether better for a place to worship God in than this house.” Amazement sat on the faces of the people. For half a century many of them had worshipped the God of their fathers in that venerable house; there they had consecrated their children to his service; there they had heard the words of eternal truth, and learned the way to heaven, and to be told that any man had a *barn* better than that *church*, was nearly enough to drive them mad. Mr. Luce paused a moment to see how the first blow would be received, and then proceeded with more calmness to point out the obvious reasons why the congregation should set about building a new church, and that, too, without any unnecessary delay. He was able to make a strong case, and his arguments fell like hailstones on the hearts of

the people. They could not resist them, though they would gladly have escaped them. It was plain that the knell of the old church was tolling. After the meeting was out, the farmers put their heads together in little groups as they went for their teams, and discussed the great subject which had so suddenly burst upon their attention. Before they started for their homes it was generally admitted that the thing must be *thought of*, if nothing more.

Mr. Luce followed up the success of the first blow, and the next sabbath he went more fully into the matter, preaching on the subject, and, if I mistake not, preaching all day on it, that the duty and expediency of the project might be brought to bear on the mind with all the power of regular pulpit instruction. In the course of a few weeks the congregation were wide awake, some *for*, and some, of course, *against* the enterprise; and then came the tug of war. There was a little knot of men who always wanted to have their own

way about the doing and the mode of doing everything, and their dignity was hurt because they had not been consulted before the minister made the first movement ; and a new set of men, who had not been used to taking the lead, espousing the project with great warmth, two parties were very soon formed. The anti-building party threw every obstruction in the way, and this but inflamed the zeal of the other, who pushed on the work, the minister leading the way, and almost every Sunday making a distinct allusion to a barn which was built by an ancestor of his, and which, in his humble opinion, was a better building for a church than that old meetinghouse.

The old house was torn down, and after a desperate struggle about the site of the new one, some contending for another location, and some going for two houses in different sections of the congregation, the majority decided to build on the spot where the other had stood, and accordingly it was done. The money was raised, and large

donations were made of *materials*, and much of the work was done by *bees* of the people, and so it came to pass, by one means and another, that the new house, a very neat, spacious, and comfortable edifice, was erected; and it now stands there to the praise and glory of God.

I was going to speak of Richard Rogers's first appearance here, when I was led into this digression; but it was necessary. He told me that it had been a favorite desire of his heart, after he devoted himself to the ministry, to go back to the old place, to stand in the old pulpit where his father had carried him when a boy, to keep him quiet in church, and there to speak of Christ Jesus to the people whom he had grown up with, and toward whom his spirit turned as the needle to the pole. He was disappointed in this, for when he arrived in the place, he found that a wonderful change had passed over the people and the whole face of society. The hills were there, and the fields were there; but many of the people

were not there, and what was more than all to him, the *old* meetinghouse was not there. He did not know how much he loved it till it was gone. A goodlier structure stood in its place, but it was not *the* church about which he had run a thousand times in the sports of childhood, and in which he had received the first impressions of the value of eternal things. He said that he felt hot tears falling on his cheeks as he walked over the green, and tried to recall the tall spire and the wheeling weathercock that had been his admiration in days long gone by. He found *friends* there, and the minister of the place hearing of his arrival, called on him, and invited him to preach the next day, which would be the sabbath. Richard was glad of the opportunity, and had indeed come prepared for the very occasion that had now occurred.

He went to the house of God at the appointed hour, and it was evident from the appearance of the people that few of them *knew* the young stranger who ascended the

pulpit-stairs. He cast his eye over the congregation, and the sight of his eye affected his heart. What a revolution a few years had wrought! In one respect the change was total: the pulpit was in front instead of the rear of the church, and not a family sat in the same relative position as in years past. He looked from one seat to another, detecting here and there *features* with which he had once been familiar, and which would generally suggest the *name* to which they belonged. But there were many missing. There was the family of this and that man, but the head was not there; and there was a pew filled with people whom he had never seen before; and where could be the family of his old neighbor—he looked over and over the congregation, but found them not; they had removed, probably to the great west, and their places there would know them no more. Rogers gave me a sketch of his sermon, but I have room only for an outline of it. His text was in the

book of Zechariah, first chapter and fifth verse :—

“ YOUR FATHERS, WHERE ARE THEY ? ”

Everything around us is tending to decay. The grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth. The mightiest monuments of human power are not proof against the silent touch of time. The fashion of this world passeth away.

As with the works of men, so with man himself. Everything within him as well as around him, reminds him that he must die. He comes into the world, and spends his appointed time, eats, drinks, and rejoices in the blessings that drop on his path, or mourns among the griefs that are strewn in his way ; and then passes off into another world. His frail body becomes the tenant of a tomb, the food of worms, and his spirit returns to God who gave it. So it has been, and is, with the race of man. Where now are the millions innumerable whose feet once trod the earth ? The nations beyond the flood ? The generations since ? Where

the tribes that once roamed over these hills?  
 Where the men that first tilled these fields?  
 Your fathers, where are *they*?

You do not feel the power of this inquiry as I do, who for the first time stand in this pulpit and look around me among a people with whom I have lived; and as my eye searches in vain for many whom I revered and loved, I may ask with the deepest emotion, "Your fathers, where are they?" [The good people now saw plainly enough that it was the son of their old minister, and listened accordingly.]

How painful the ravages of time! So noiseless is his step that we hear him not as he moves among us: nor when on his swift wing he bears us onward toward the other world, do we heed his flight. But we look around us, and the signs of his power and progress are many and fearful: You must revisit the scenes of your childhood and youth, after an absence of years, if you would *feel* the fact that time is on the wing; you must look among the living for

those you knew, and find them not; you must walk among the tombs and find old familiar names on the head-stones, and start at the thought that their epitaphs are graved before you have heard of their decease, and with such an experience you will sympathize with me, coming among you as a stranger, and asking, "Where are your fathers?"

*They are in their graves.* The hoary heads that were an ornament to this congregation, whose wisdom was valued, whose precepts were revered, are laid low. The places that knew them once shall know them no more for ever. Their children are now in their seats, while the grass grows on the graves where their dust mingles with its mother earth.

*They are in eternity.* Long as the lives of many of them seemed while they were here, they have but just begun to live. It is the mortal only that has been laid in the tomb, and even that mortal shall burst its prison and rise to immortality. Already

their spirits have begun their flight through infinity, but never, never will they be nearer the end than now.

*They are in heaven.* We thank God that so many of those who have been called from this world, have left behind them this blessed assurance that the world's loss is their unspeakable gain. The elders have joined the elders round the throne. With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, they walk, and speak, and praise. They are at home with God. The earthly temple of the Lord they loved—here their voices mingled in the worship of the Most High; now they kneel in the unveiled presence of the Holy, and offer incense on the altar of eternal love. Blessed spirits! Sainted spirits! O that your mantles might fall on those that bear your names!

And this is a fitting time to speak of the virtues of the men who have gone before us; their integrity, piety, industry, prudence, zeal! They were men of faith and prayer; there were giants in former times

here ; mighty, through God, to resist the floods of sin ; mighty to build up the church of Christ ; and the strength of their virtues will be felt in generations yet to come.

[Here follows a glowing eulogy upon the men who were at the head of affairs when the speaker was a boy, and a warm appeal to those who were coming on the stage, to emulate their example.]

Where our fathers are we soon shall be. Many of us will fall long before we reach the age of many of them. Our friends will mourn over our early graves, and others may struggle on until the half-way house is reached, and die there, and a few may live to have almond-blossoms, the flowers of the tomb, scattered on their heads. But the most of us will die before that time arrives. Let us then be wise to-day ; and while the pulse of life is full of health, let us make ready for the hour when the sudden summons of the Son of man shall come.

The rest of the sermon is an application of the solemn lesson which the occasion

could not fail to suggest; and the young people, the most of whom had been the playmates and friends of the youthful preacher, gave fixed attention as he exhorted them to make sure work for eternity.

But there was something strange in it—it did not seem to be a reality, that one whom they had but a few years before known as a roguish boy, should be so soon transformed into a *preacher*, and be in their pulpit. One of the elders expressed the general feeling of the people when he observed, at the intermission: “ Well, I don’t know anything he has been talking about: all I know is, that *Dick Rogers has been preaching!*”

And he has preached a great many times since; but I have no thought of inflicting any more of his sermons, and only one more of these sketches, upon the reader.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE DISMISSAL OF MR. ROGERS.

“OUR minister must be dismissed,” has been said by many a parish, when, for the life of them, not one of the people could tell why. The words of heavenly grace have fallen with continued power from his pure and holy lips; his blameless life and godly conversation have been an ensample to the flock, and the very atmosphere has been fragrant with his piety and his deeds of love; but the feeling has become general that *he must* be dismissed. This was not the feeling of the people toward Mr. Rogers; but I speak of it as no strange thing among country or city congregations, and there was just enough of this feeling with a few of Mr. Rogers’s people to make it necessary for me, as a faithful historian, to

record the facts. Mr. Rogers might have stayed with that people to this day, had not the stern voice of duty called him to another sphere of usefulness ; yet this call came at a moment when the unhallowed opposition of the few, by underground machination, had brought matters to such a pass that it was far more comfortable for him to be in a better place, than to be resisting the attacks, and watching the wiles of those who wanted to get him out of their way. It is curious to see how this disposition to drive away a pastor begins and grows. As it happened in our old congregation, so it happens often in others.

One day Mr. Rogers was sitting in his study, very busily engaged in preparing for the approaching sabbath, when one of the most active members of the church called to see him. Mr. Gridley was very kindly received, and, notwithstanding the good pastor would have preferred to be uninterrupted, he urged his parishioner to take a seat, and very kindly asked after his own health and

that of his family. Mr. G. sat down, but seemed to be uneasy; evidently something was on his mind, and he did not know how to get at it. The pastor again asked him if he was well, and this assured the parishioner that his disquietude was apparent, and he might as well be out with the cause. Twirling his hat between his knees and looking down on the floor, he at length mustered courage to begin, and once underway, he was compelled to proceed till he had made out a case. His communication was something after this sort:—

“I never like to have anything on my mind against a man, without going to him and telling him of it.”

“That is right,” said Mr. Rogers; “the gospel requires you to go to one who has offended you, and make known your feelings. What is the matter now?”

“Well,” said Mr. Gridley, “I do not think it was right for you to preach about me as you did last Sunday, and it hurt my feelings very much. I have been distressed

all the week, and I thought it was my duty to call and talk with you about it. I suppose you know well enough what I mean, and I need not be any more particular."

"Which sermon do you mean, Mr. Gridley, which you supposed had a special reference to yourself?"

"Why, the afternoon sermon, of course. It can hardly be that Mr. Rogers has forgotten it so soon. Everybody noticed it at the time, as I knew by their looks, and several have spoken to me about it since. You spoke of people who go around stirring up strife, and trying to injure others, whom they have not the manliness to rebuke in public; and although it was generally understood that you meant me, I wanted to call and just say that your suspicions are altogether unfounded, and that I have never done anything of the kind. It was very hard for me to be thus pointed out before the whole congregation, and I am sure if you had known me better you would not have done it."

Mr. Rogers listened kindly to these observations, which were evidently made in very bad temper; and when Farmer Gridley had made a full end of his complaints, the pastor deliberately remarked—

“It gives me pleasure to be able to say to you, Mr. Gridley, for your relief in this matter, that in writing the sermon to which you refer, and in preaching it, I never once, to my present recollection, *thought of you*. The instruction was general, but was designed to be applicable to all those whom the coat would fit; and you must allow me to say that I do not see how you could take it to yourself, and suppose that others applied it to you, unless there was some peculiar fitness in the truth for your case. Perhaps you can explain it.”

No, he could not. He tried very hard, but he was fairly caught, and the most mortifying part of it was that he had been the means of revealing to Mr. Rogers the very thing he wished to deny, and he felt he must now be known, as having been secretly

at work to undermine the influence of his pastor, while he was mean enough to deny it when his conduct was providentially brought to light. Now he could never forgive himself for the blunder he had made in going to Mr. Rogers; and, as men never forgive one whom they *have injured*, Mr. Gridley was his minister's enemy from that hour.

The mortified farmer, mad at himself, and more mad at his unoffending minister, went away with a fell and full purpose to do what he had long desired—to drive away Mr. Rogers. Thinking over the names of the people, to find those most likely to join him in this work of vengeance, he saw Mr. Vinton coming toward him, and it struck him in an instant that *there* was the very man for his purpose. Mr. V. was one of the oldest and most influential men in the congregation. He was more than sixty years of age, and for nearly forty years had been *the* leading man in all matters of business. Previous to the settlement of Mr. Rogers,

he had *ruled* the people ; his opinion had been law, and his *counsel* was looked upon as commands, to be followed as a matter of course. The good, easy ministers who had preceded Mr. Rogers, meekly acquiesced in Mr. Vinton's measures, and thinking it less troublesome to let him have his own way than to attempt to oppose him or to make him keep his place, they had just let him go on according to his own notion ; and as he was in the main judicious in his measures, no great harm was the consequence of his officiousness. But a new order of things came in, when the Rev. Mr. Rogers was set over that flock. He had a mind, and will, and way of his own ; and while he rejoiced in the counsel and co-operation of all the good and the wise of his people, he did not, and would not, suffer any one else to take the reins out of his hand or assume to be the leader. So Mr. Vinton had to see his influence gradually waning. For some years it went on well enough, for he liked Mr. Rogers as well as

the rest, and not until they differed in judgment, and Mr. V. found that the people would listen to the pastor's advice, and adopt the pastor's plans, and would not follow his own; did he begin to think that his day was over. In the great Bridge, or singing-school war, Mr. V. had taken hold with the minister, and their united influence had borne down all opposing forces. Had it been otherwise, the consequences of that struggle might have been more permanently disastrous. But in many minor matters Mr. Vinton had been compelled to see and to feel that the *power* was no longer his; and *envy*, one of the most hateful passions of the human soul, took possession of his heart. He actually regarded his pastor as in his way. In meetings of the congregation for the transaction of secular business, he saw that if Mr. Rogers's opinions and wishes were known, they decided the question, whatever views *he* might entertain, and the fact was a source to him of incessant vexation and anxiety. He wanted to

have it otherwise, but the fact that it was so, was the very obstacle in the way of remedy. He hated Mr. Rogers because the people revered and loved him, and because they were thus attached, it seemed absurd to think of making matters better for his purposes. But Mr. Vinton knew something of Farmer Gridley's feelings, and, as he saw him driving up in his two-horse wagon, he resolved at once to stop and have a talk. Mr. V. had a very pleasant way of speaking to people whom he wished to conciliate, and slackening his lines as he drew up to the farmer, he gave him the usual salutation with great cordiality, and they were soon leaning over the sides of their wagons in close conversation in the middle of the road. Mr. Gridley let out the result of his interview with the minister, giving as unfavorable a coloring as the thing would admit of, in respect to Mr. Rogers, and hinting that he was far from being satisfied with the explanation he had

received. Here Mr. Vinton suggested that Mr. Rogers was generally understood in his allusions on the last Sunday, and it was not honest in him now to deny it, when a parishioner went to him in all frankness on the subject. The mortified farmer now began to take comfort. He had not thought that Mr. Rogers might have deceived him, but *here* was a hint that let him into the secret of the whole matter. Mr. Vinton followed up the impression that he had made, by suggesting that he thought the minister was altogether too overbearing and dictatorial—he would have everything *his* way or not at all—he would not seek advice, and when it was offered him, he would receive it in silence, and do as he pleased about it afterward.

“For my part,” said he, “though I have not mentioned the thing out of my own doors, I have pretty much made up my mind that it is nearly time for Mr. Rogers to look out for some other place. I don’t like him as well as I used to, and

I guess there's a good many who feel the same way."

"I do, for one," said the farmer, "and I have been sounding around a little to see how the land lies. Some of the folks think Mr. Rogers is just the best man that ever lived, and they would rather go with him than stay without him. The fact is, the more I talk about it, the more discouraged I get; and I never dared to say anything to you about it, for fear I should find you the strongest on Mr. Rogers's side."

"So you would, if you had talked to me some time ago, but lately my mind has been a good deal worried about it, and I have come to the conclusion that he will be more useful somewhere else. He is a man of talents, there's no denying that, and if he should go where the people are all united in him, he might do a great deal more good than he can do here. Let's talk the matter over among the people, and see whether it is best to do anything about it. By the way, my wife was saying yester-

day she wanted you and your wife to come to our house to tea. What's the reason you can't come over next week some day and see us? We will get some of the neighbors in, and then we can have some more talk about this matter, which, I tell you, is a very serious business."

Mr. Gridley agreed upon a day, and bidding his friend "good day," drove home with more of the devil in him than he had felt in a year. He hated his minister, and he had found somebody who sympathized with him in his wickedness, and this eased his conscience and deepened his guilt. It is a long step down hill, when a man convinces himself that he is doing God service in sin, or that others think he is.

The next week a party of disaffected ones, with their wives, talked of the matter over a cup of green tea at Mr. Vinton's, and when they separated it was with the very general determination that Mr. Rogers *ought to be dismissed*, though for what cause there was not one of them able to say. Not a

wrong had he done one of them ; not a slight had he put upon one of them or their children ; he had visited them as often as he could consistently, though of course not as often as they would like to have him—and what minister ever did ? and if it had been put to them to name any respectable ground of complaint against the pastor, they would have been dumb. But the people (they pretended to themselves) are getting tired of him ; and what is the use of a minister's staying among a people after they are tired of hearing him preach ? It's a great deal better for him to go somewhere else, and for them to have somebody else ; both will be better off ; and it's a great pity Mr. Rogers can't see it just as we do.

In this way the little clique of malcontents deceived themselves, and then set about deceiving others. In various parts of the congregation, and on every favorable occasion, they would drop remarks, the purport of which would be, to develop or implant a feeling of unkindness toward Mr.

Rogers ; thus pursuing a systematic and steady course of factious opposition, without the least ground for it, in truth or reason. Oftentimes we see the same course taken to get rid of a minister, when the only *crime* or rock of offence which can be laid against him, is that he is GROWING OLD.

“ Is he not a good man ? ”

Oh, yes, he is one of the best men that ever lived.

“ Is he not faithful to the people of his charge ? ”

Never was a shepherd more devoted, self-denying, and persevering.

“ Are not his sermons sound and valuable, spiritual and edifying ? ”

He is one of the best preachers in the whole region of country.

“ Are not souls converted, and is not the church strengthened under his ministry ? ”

Yes, hundreds have been added to the church while he has been the pastor, and the truth can not be denied that we never had a man here who has been more suc-

cessful than he as a minister ; but his usefulness seems to be at an end ; we have had no revival now for three or four years ; he is getting dull and heavy, and the young people are not as well pleased with him as they should be, and on the whole we think it would be better for him and better for us that he should retire.

“ But where shall he go ? if he is too old to please you who have known and loved him so many years, is it to be supposed that he will be acceptable to a *new* people, who have had no previous attachments for him ? will you turn him out, like a broken-down horse, to die by the way-side ? ”

There is no reply to this question. One of the wickedest cruelties ever perpetrated by a Christian people is this expulsion of a pastor because he is growing old. It is a common affair among the Hindoos, when their parents have become so old as to be infirm and helpless, to take them to the river-side, and leave them to perish, and sometimes in kindness they fill their throats

with mud, and put them speedily out of misery. This is called HEATHENISM. But when a congregation has had a faithful pastor, who has spent the youth, and prime, and strength of his life, in their service, employing his talents, which in another sphere would have made him independent, but in this have brought him no property to live on in his old age; I say, when a congregation drive away such a pastor and let him spend his old age in want or in anxious dependence on those who can ill afford to sustain him, the cruelty, inhumanity, and shame of the deed are not less offensive to God than the conduct of the poor heathen, who are "without natural affection," because they are without the gospel which this Christian people have enjoyed, and whose minister they turn away, when the blossoms of the grave begin to whiten on his venerable brow.

But it was not old age that could be laid to the charge of Mr. Rogers. He was in the vigor of life, perhaps forty-five years

old, when the conspiracy was formed to eject him from the parish. He was as active, energetic, sound, discriminating, clear, and powerful, in his sermons as ever, and as strong in the hearts of the people as at any previous period of his residence among them. And this the plotters found to their cost the moment they began to move. They commenced their operations by gently sounding this and that one, as occasion presented itself, to find on whom they could count when the time for open action should arrive. But it was wonderful to see what a storm they raised at the very onset of their underground career. The old elders rallied around their pastor as if he had been their father instead of being younger than most of them; and all through the congregation, as soon as it was known that there was a plan on foot to dismiss Mr. Rogers, his friends rose in such numbers and strength, and their devotion was manifested by such substantial evidences of sincerity, that it really seemed as if he ought to be

thankful to his enemies for waking up his friends. But there were not a few who had found Mr. Rogers's strong doctrines and rigid views of Christian duty *irksome*; some had never forgotten hard feelings that were awakened when he crushed the opposition in the time of the singing-school snarl; some had views of liberty for young people in the way of dancing, and the like, that were not approved by Mr. Rogers, and which they could never gratify while his overshadowing influence was felt, and they were willing to join with the party who thought it expedient for Mr. R. to leave.

However it would please me to follow these men in their manœuvres, step by step, and expose the little artifices by which they sought to alienate the hearts of the congregation, it will lead me into a longer chapter than I could give, and I must content myself with merely stating the results. After the work of undermining had gone on for six months, it was thought that the time had come for a public meeting, to take into

consideration the state of the congregation This was resolved upon, after no little fear and trembling on the part of the conspirators, and accordingly the people assembled by notice on the sabbath-day. On the day appointed there was a large attendance of the congregation ; many who for years had retired from active service in the church were constrained by a strong sense of duty to be on the ground, to do their part in the hour of trial ; and to show by their votes and voices that they were the friends of their friend. The subject was then maturely discussed, and the question proposed for decision whether or not it was expedient that the relation between Mr. Rogers and his people should be dissolved. When a vote was taken it was found that an overwhelming majority were in favor of Mr. Rogers ; especially was this true of the members of the church as distinct from the members of the congregation, or those not professors of religion. The piety of the people was with the pastor. Never was a

clearer fact. The elders of the church, almost to a man, stood by him like pillars, and wavered not when the storm raged the fiercest, and men's hearts were failing them for fear. Some of them never knew till that day how dear their pastor was, and they then resolved that, come what might, they would never give him up to gratify his enemies. Thus ended the first meeting. It strengthened the hands of Mr. Rogers, but did not encourage his heart. It showed him that he had the people on his side, and that he could not be overthrown; but he knew enough of human nature to understand that his opponents having now given public expression to their dissatisfaction and desire of change, would be more active, unscrupulous, and bitter, than ever; and consequently that his situation must be more and more uncomfortable. This he found to be the fact in his immediate and ultimate experience. His words and actions were misconstrued and misrepresented; his motives were often impugned; his *good* was

evil spoken of; his very looks and motions were watched and made the theme of ungenerous remark; he was charged with visiting at this house more than at that; of showing his partiality in various ways, as if it were a crime in him to love the society of his friends more than that of his foes; and thus watched by such eyes with such spectacles, it is not strange that every week furnished some new theme for scandal, or that the ingenuity of enemies should invent occasion when none could be discovered. This was not the state of things that the soul of Mr. Rogers could dwell in. Providence had not formed him for enjoyment in the midst of strife, and he had aspirations after usefulness and improvement that could not be realized among a people distracted and contending.

I believe I have never mentioned the scholastic tastes and attainments of this excellent man, yet my readers will not have failed to perceive that he had a mind of high cultivation and of well-developed and

disciplined powers. His early education had been highly finished, and during the years of pastoral duty which had elapsed, he had never suffered his knowledge of elegant literature to pass away. Rather had he, by diligent industry, followed the leadings of his early tastes, and made progress in ancient and modern learning; so that it was impossible for him *not* to be known among his ministerial acquaintances as a man of letters. And as Providence had not fashioned him for dwelling contentedly in the midst of turmoil and confusion, so now it opened another door of usefulness to which he was led by all the indications necessary to make plain his duty to enter. He sought counsel of his faithful elders, and of his neighboring brethren, and after much prayer and consultation, he came to the conclusion to seek a release from his engagements to his flock. It was a sad hour to many when this was announced from the pulpit. There was weeping over all the church. Those who had been in-

strumental in bringing about this result, and who had often expressed a desire for it to come, *now* felt that it was a solemn business to part a pastor from his people, and *perhaps* they should have to give an account for what they had done when they should come to stand before the Judge of quick and dead.

Others, who had stood by their minister through evil and good report, could not be reconciled to the dispensation. They looked upon it as a triumph of his enemies, and said they knew it never would have happened but for the opposition that had been made, and they would not consent on any terms to the dismissal. When the "opposition" saw the state of feeling, they made haste to lay down the weapons of their rebellion. They were willing to unite with the other party (or rather with the people), in a request that Mr. Rogers would reconsider his determination, and still remain with the congregation where he had been so long and eminently useful. But

this was repentance too late. It is a dangerous experiment for a pastor to come back to a people from whom he has parted with divided feelings: still more hazardous is it for him to *stay* after the opposition is organized and a decided stand assumed, and he has once yielded to its power. Then they have learned their strength, they feel that they can never enjoy the pastor's confidence again, and of course they can never *cordially* sustain him. They are ready on the slightest occasion to make war, and nothing can be looked for but repeated contention and trouble. Mr. Rogers knew all this, and having marked out his line of duty, was not easily to be tempted to take any steps backward. He told them plainly that there were reasons altogether independent of their difficulties why he should prefer to enter upon the new field of labor that opened before him, and when he considered the divided state of the congregation, he thought it for their interest to have a pastor in whom they could all unite, and who

might be more useful than *he* had ever been. He therefore resisted all their entreaties to reconsider his intentions, and announced his fixed purpose to bid them farewell.

To one who has read this chapter it would be a curiosity to see the *resolutions* which were now adopted, UNANIMOUSLY, by the old congregation, expressive of their ardent attachment to their pastor, their great regret in parting with him, and their fervent desires for his future happiness. This and his farewell sermon, which came in connexion with these resolutions, were the closing scenes in this drama, and Mr. Rogers, after nearly twenty years of most unremitting and laborious service, retired from the field. How many were the changes that had passed over that people since he came among them ! He had buried nearly one generation ; those who were children when he came there had now grown to be the active members of the congregation ; and many who were then pillars had fallen. It was a melancholy duty to resign such a charge, but he had

the blessed satisfaction of knowing that he had delivered his soul of the blood of his people; that he had declared the whole counsel of God, and that he had been the means of turning many to righteousness, whom he hoped to see again in the diadem of his Redeemer. There were floods of tears, and many hearts that would, but could not, weep when Mr. Rogers took his leave. Those who had been converted under his preaching, and those who had grown up with him, and in fact it was hard to say which class more than another, clung to him as to a dying father, when the time of final separation came. Such ties ought never to be sundered. The pastoral relation, like the marriage bond, should bind till death doth part. Unfaithfulness on the part of the pastor or people may render a divorce expedient and justifiable, but the unfaithfulness is criminal, and great is the responsibility which they incur who stir up strife in a happy and united congregation, and render the removal of the pastor a mat-

ter of necessity, with all its disastrous and deplorable results.

If we should follow this people a few years further on in their history, we should find the living and terrible consequences of driving away a minister. No sooner had Mr. Rogers been dismissed than the people began to look out for a successor. Two parties were formed, mainly divided by the same lines as in the last war; and the man whom one party took a fancy to, was sure to be opposed by the other. And however desirable the man might be who should secure a majority of voices in his favor, he could not be expected to accept a call in the face of a most determined and powerful opposition. The meetings that were called to discuss and determine the merits of rival candidates for the pulpit, were stormy, and dreadful in their influence on the feelings of those engaged in them. Bitter and lasting alienations among *friends* were the fruits. In fact, it went on from bad to worse, until persons of the same family connexion were

divided, and unhappy controversies were engendered, the extent of which, of course, could never be known. At last, after many trials, a man was found who expressed his willingness to accept a call made out by a part of the congregation, notwithstanding the protest of a very large minority. More than half of the church-members were opposed to his settlement; nearly the whole bench of elders requested him not to accept the call, and an earnest written remonstrance was laid before the ecclesiastical body that was convened to instal him. But he had a majority of votes in his favor, and he hoped to overcome the opposition by fidelity and wisdom. I cast no censure on him. He meant it for good, and doubtless thought it would be a blessed thing to succeed in restoring harmony to a distracted people. But he failed. The opposition embarrassed him, so that he could not even do himself justice. Sometimes he scarcely knew what he was about when he went into the pulpit, so distressed was he at the thought, that a

large portion of his hearers were wishing him a thousand miles away. On one occasion he gave out his text from the "gospel according to Acts," and proceeded with his sermon without perceiving his blunder; a fact which shows the confusion of mind he often experienced when coming before his people. He stayed but a little while and left. Then the battle was to be fought over again. And stoutly fought it was. Another and another was called, and one minister would stay awhile and then quit, and then another would try. Some of the people wrote to Mr. Rogers and begged him to come back, assuring him that he and he only could make a permanent peace. He did return to labor a little season with them, and they hung on his lips as if an angel had come down from heaven, but his duties would not suffer him to entertain the thought of again resuming the charge of that once happy and still interesting people.

Years have now rolled away, and God

has been pleased to bless them with faithful pastors, whose labors have been attended with the Holy Spirit, and the wounds of former years have been in a great measure healed. I do not believe that the congregation has ever recovered fully from the dissensions and distractions that followed Mr. Rogers's removal, but many of the actors in those scenes have passed away, and the furrows of division have been overgrown, so that a stranger's eye would not detect the marks of former ruin. But God has marked them and will never forget. Whosoever offends one of his people must answer for it; and the day of reckoning hastens on.

And now I leave these reminiscences; grateful to those who have followed me through, and far beyond my original intention, while many things which I purposed to record have been overlooked. Mingled melancholy and pleasure have been mine, as I have followed the wanderings of my heart among the scenes of childhood and youth;

and when the forms of those dear to me then have returned, it has been with a sadness that I can hardly dare to speak of here ; so many of them are gone, to come back never. I must be growing old. Those who were young when I was young are growing old ; I see it in their looks, and they tell me so. It must be so with me. I ought to know it, if it be true.

“ Naught treads so silent as the foot of time,  
Hence we mistake our autumn for our prime.  
'T is greatly wise to know before we 're told  
The melancholy truth that we are growing old.”

Shall I ever go back and renew the associations which for so many years have been sundered ? Should I find many, or any there, who would greet me as an ancient friend, and welcome me back again to the scenes of earlier days ? Ay, well do I know that *some* have not forgotten me, and I would love to meet them and talk of days long gone, and feel young again when the scenes of youth were thus revived on the tablets of an unforgetting heart.

But youth is gone, and childish things are put away. The stern hand of DUTY urges us on in life's great work. It would be vastly pleasant to be ever young, and never feel the pressure of the overmastering hand of *duty* in the toils that manhood brings. But this is not our rest :—

*" There's rest in heaven. I'd wish to live  
So that my tomb might tell,  
The highest praise that friends could give,  
That I had labored well."*

It may be, doubtless it will be, that those friends of my youth will be met no more on earth, but there is joy in the thought, that with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, the redeemed of the Lord shall meet, and go no more out for ever. In that CONGREGATION, kind readers, may we all be found !

**THE END.**

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