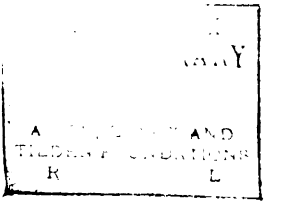

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MARION

THROUGH THE BRUSH.

A Border Story.

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MARION THROUGH THE BRUSH.

Chapter I.

SEPARATION.

LET us go back to the October of eighteen hundred and sixty-two. On a bright afternoon, about the middle of that gorgeous month, we find ourselves at a handsome residence near the village of F———, in Arkansas. The house is nearly buried in towering cotton-wood and oak trees; and to the broad verandah, that runs about three sides, cling jessamine, ivy, and honeysuckles, and a rare climbing rose that even in October unfolds a profusion of

radiant blossoms. The windows of the large front room open to the floor, admitting the mild fragrant breeze, and now and then a butterfly straying in from his revellings among the creepers without. On a lounge at the farther end of the apartment, lay a little girl asleep. The book she had been reading had slipped from her hand to the floor, her fair curls were brushed back from her forehead, she had evidently gone there to read and rest from her merry sports, and fallen asleep unawares. The fairness of her complexion was increased by the contrast of her deep mourning dress, which told that though so young, Marion Hamsted had known sorrow. Deep, indeed, was the shadow that had fallen over her childish life. From the back window of that room can be seen under two cypress trees a small enclosure containing four white stones, grave stones; over those mounds the grass has not had time to grow. There every day loving hands lay bunches of flowers, the choicest treasure of the luxuriant garden. Within one week of that year's September had those four narrow

beds been made. There slept Marion's mother, brother, sister, and aunt. Marion alone was left to her sorrowing father. Mr. Hamsted was pacing up and down the room, his arms folded, and his head bent down upon his breast. As he approached the lounge in his restless walk, he would look upon his little daughter with a face of bitter grief. Poor man! he had a heavy burden to bear, and knew not of Him who calls to the weary sons of men, "cast your burden on the Lord." No, the weight of his afflictions and anxieties lay heavily upon him, his heart fainted under the load, yet bore it from day to day, forgetting that there is a Burden Bearer for the children of earth, One who long ago "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" who, "in all our afflictions was afflicted;" who carries the trials of all his chosen in his sacred heart. Presently, the door opened, and a black turbaned head was put in. After a short survey of the apartment, the owner of the head, a stout negress, came in, and went up to the lounge, "Bress her heart!" she murmured, as she looked at the sleeper,

then turning suddenly round, she bustled off toward a closet, exclaiming, "Laws a me, massa John, 'pears like you 's do n't know what you 's 'bout, lettin' that bressed chile lie thar ketchin' cold ebery single minute. Sech folks as men is, do n't know nothin' nohow," she added, in an under tone, taking from the closet a bright hued afghan, and covering Marion lightly with it. Then after a satisfied inspection of her work, she left the room. The door nearly closed, then opened again, and the turban appeared once more. "Thar, now, massa John, I disremembered to tell you, but Dick's been to the village, and Mister Race say he comin' bimeby, before long." Thus having delivered the message that brought her to the room, she shut the door.

A ray from the declining sun shot across the cage of Marion's canary, and roused him to such an eloquence of song as woke his little mistress; sitting up, she passed her hand sleepily across her eyes. Then going to the table, helped herself to a drink of ice water from a pitcher that stood there; bit a golden-cheeked pear that lay in a bas-

ket, and then thoroughly awaked, said, "I guess I've been asleep, papa."

"You have, indeed," replied Mr. Hamsted seating himself, and holding out his hand, "come here, Marion, I have a good deal to say to you."

Marion promptly took the proffered seat on his knee, her favorite place.

"How old are you, Marion?"

"Nine years old, last August, papa, don't you remember?"

Yes, Mr. Hamsted did remember; he recalled nine years before, and could almost see once more old Dinah walking up and down the verandah, expatiating on the beauty and wisdom of the baby Marion she carried in her arms. Lost in thoughts of those pleasant days, he was silent for a time.

"Come, papa," said the little girl, tapping his cheek, "what is it? I am sure you did not call me here just to ask how old I am, did you?"

"No. What do girls of your age usually do, daughter?"

"Why, play with dolls and dishes, and read stories and learn a few lessons, and

how to sew some. Like I did last summer," replied Marion. She had felt little like dolls and dishes since her two playmates had been taken away.

"Very true. And I wish that my little girl could go on with just such amusements, and be a little girl as long as she pleased. But, my child, this cannot be just now. For a time, you must lay aside your toys and childishness, and endeavor to act like a brave and sensible woman."

"I will try, indeed. And now what shall I do first?"

"You must be sure to keep to yourself certain very important things which I shall tell you."

"I can easily do that. I know it is very disgraceful to tell secrets, papa."

Mr. Hamsted could hardly help smiling at the look of importance his little girl assumed.

"Then you must resolve not to be cowardly, if you feel afraid, you must not show it, but just quietly do as seems right. Then you will have to go away from me for a while, and you must bear it bravely."

"Go away from you! Oh, you are all that I have left!" cried Marion, throwing her arms around her father's neck, and hiding her eyes. Mr. Hamsted bent his face down upon the fair curls, and waited a few moments to regain courage for what he had to say.

"Now, daughter, listen to me. It is not safe for you to stay here any longer. Everything is in a very unsettled state. If any thing should happen to me, you would be left entirely alone. I want to send you to your grandfather Hamsted's, in New York. I shall follow you there as soon as I can. It will be for you a lonely and wearisome journey, but I feel sure it will be safely accomplished, and then before you know it, I shall be there too. Do you remember how very entertaining you used to think your grandma Brown, when she told you stories of the war of 1812? Bye and bye, when you are an old lady with cap and spectacles, and with a white 'kerchief trimly pinned about your shoulders, you can tell all the little folks tales of the days when you went from Arkansas to New York."

"But who am I to go with?"

"With Egbert Race, the schoolmaster of the village. You like Master Race, do you not?"

"Oh, yes."

"His mother lives in New York State, and Mr. Race is going there and will take you to your grandpa. Cheer up, and look ahead. By the time your aunts have a grand turkey and plum-pudding, and a magnificent Christmas-tree all ready, I shall be coming along, and mind you have gifts on the tree for me; nice ones, too, or I shall feel slighted."

Mr. Hamsted spoke cheerfully, though in his inmost heart he feared he never again should join in Christmas festivities about his father's hearth.

"And when am I to go, father?"

"When? Ah, there 's the trouble. Now you know I depend on you to act like a little woman. In such matters, delay is bad. Mr. Race will start to-night."

"To-night! Oh, no! to-night!" then Marion remembered that her father de-

pended upon her, and so, by a vigorous effort, kept back her tears.

"Now, daughter, I want you to put this trouble about leaving me out of your mind, and listen to what I have to tell you. Mr. Race will take with him some money and papers that belong to me. Do not forget that, they are papers that I am anxious should reach your grandfather's safely. I will have some money sewed in some of your clothing. You will take but a few articles that will go in one of Mr. Race's saddle-bags. When you get to your grandpa's, tell them how you left me, give them my best love, and tell them that as long as I live, they will all be very dear to me, and that I thank them for all their love to me."

"Why, father! you talk as if you were never to see them again."

"By no means, my dear," said Mr. Hamsted, recollecting himself. "I hope to see them soon."

"I wish I might wait, and go with you, father."

"That cannot be. Be a good girl. Obey your aunts and grandfather. Strive to

improve in all things. Remember what a woman your mother was, and try to grow like her. And now, Marion, I see Mr. Race coming, he and I must have a little talk. Do you go to Dinah, I have told her what to do, though she does not know you are going far off. Get your supper, and go and lie down for as much sleep as you can get."

Marion slipped from her father's knee, and went out of the room just as Egbert Race entered.

"How is she going to bear it?" he asked her father.

"Well, I hope," replied Mr. Hamsted, taking the young man's hand. "But oh, Race, this is a hard thing, and then to think I may never know that she has got to a place of shelter!"

"Trust in God," said the young schoolmaster. "It is good to fly in our weakness to His care who neither slumbers nor sleeps. This is my comfort. 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.'"

"True, true," replied Mr. Hamsted, feel-

ing as if some answer were due his guest's remark, yet comprehending but little of its spirit.

"I have friends here who are dear to me, and it is hard to part from them thus suddenly. Still I go but a year sooner than I have ever intended, my work yet lies before me, my preparation for it has scarcely begun."

"You expect to study for the ministry, and have your three years in the seminary yet to take?"

Race bowed.

"I wish you all success; I hope I shall yet hear you preach many a good sermon. You say you have again been warned to leave?"

"I have, and I do not expect I shall be molested as I go. I do not know that I have done any thing to make enemies, during my stay here."

"There is a horde of men about here, Race, such as is ever evoked in time of war, lawless desperadoes, claiming any party, or none; Ishmaels, whose hand is against every man. Were it not for such men, I dare

say you and I might live here in peace, if we so wished. I must stay longer. I have a large family out there to care for," and Mr. Hamsted pointed in the direction of the negro quarters. "It cuts me to the heart, to leave some friends here," he added, "but most of all that spot," he glanced from the window towards the graves beneath the cypress-trees. The two paused in their walk, for each had been too restless to sit still, as he talked. Mr. Hamsted was gazing gloomily at the burial place of his family.

"This is for you, sir, a bitter hour," said Race. "It is one in which I can offer you no words of worldly cheer. These trials are from God, it is his hand that presses heavily on you. Take your griefs as an earnest of his good will towards you, as tokens of his fatherly care; 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.'"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Hamsted, hurriedly, hearing almost without realizing what had been said. The good word had entered his ears, but was, apparently, lost.

What a parable is there in the sowing of

the seed! The grain falls on the earth the mould hides it. Sun and shower smite on the covering soil. Who can tell when, by these outward ministeries, the latent life is evoked, when first the hidden principle wakes into motion, when the restless germ first presses off its multiplied envelopes, struggling after light and air? Each of the million growths that cover the fields, holds in myriad capsules this emblem of the potent word. Year after year, parents and pastors, teachers and friends, drop the word into the mind. God sends his providences of prosperity and adversity, then, by his Spirit, gives the increase, "first the blade, then the ear, and the full corn in the ear."

The conversation now turned on the approaching journey. Plans were laid, directions given, hopes and fears expressed. It was nearly supper time. "I must go now," said Egbert. "At eleven I will be back here."

"Dick will have Peacock ready for you. You will find him gentle, powerful and spirited. He will not fail you if you put

him to his speed, and then Marion is used to him."

"That will be an advantage. Good evening."

Mr. Hamsted went to his lonely meal, he drank part of his coffee, sat balancing his spoon on the side of his cup for a while, and then pushed back his chair.

"Better eat your supper, massa John. Nuffin raise up your sperrits like a good meal."

"Nothing more just now, Dick. Have you minded what I said about Peacock?"

"Peacock all right, sah. He feel his oats now, I 'sure you; steps about right smart, I tell you."

"I hope he 's not too gay."

"Peacock never forget heself, massa John, you be sure ob dat."

"Well, I shall want him at eleven o'clock."

"'Spose I'll never see Peacock again, sah?"

"Very likely you will not."

"Thought 'praps you 'd keep him for me

to go off on," said Dick, with some dissatisfaction.

"Really that *is* a cool request. I guess when you go, you 'll do well to travel quietly away on your two feet."

"Anyhow," resumed Dick, regaining his equanimity. "Aint goin' 'till you do. It 's tree months since youse give Dick dem papers; serve you jest as faithful now as before. Am n't goin' to disgrace myself dis time of day. Wait 'till you say 'go,' and den I 'se goin'."

"Won't you be sorry to leave the old place, Dick?"

"Do n't know, de worl's big, an' I 'se haint seen nothin' but dis yer little bit of it."

Mr. Hamsted left Dick to remove the supper and indulge in dreams of the great world he hoped soon to see.

For some time the father was busied concluding Marion's preparations he had yet to make, then he went up to Marion's room, and, dismissing Dinah, he sat down by the bedside of his child to give, unobserved, full

vent to the painful feelings that distracted him.

Marion, on leaving her father, had found her supper not quite ready. Taking her garden hat, basket and shears, she went into the garden, and cut off a profusion of its fairest blooms. With these she lavishly strewed the four dear graves, her last offering to the cherished spot. While thus engaged, Dinah came for her. The old nurse, as well as her son Dick, understood pretty well what was to be done. "Come along, now, honey, and let ole Dinah do what she can for you once more," she said, in a trembling voice. Marion half turned to go, but she could not leave thus that sacred place. "Go away, Dinah, I'll come pretty soon, go away, oh, *do* go away!" Dinah obeyed, and when once more alone, Marion clasped her mother's grave-stone as if she could never leave it. "Oh, mamma, mamma, my dear," she cried. "You are gone, and I must leave papa all alone. Oh, Bessie and Charlie, you are safe with mamma, but your poor Marion must go away to-night." An impulse of prayer, a half memory of prayer,

the well-loved resource of her mother, entered her mind. But Marion's idea was immediate escape from her present difficulties. "Oh, God," she sobbed, "let me go to my mamma, let me die now, I can't live any longer; oh, let me go to my mamma!" In the violence of her grief all her resolutions were forgotten, she sat down between the graves of her sister and mother, with an indefinite idea of never getting up again, and, hiding her face in her lap, gave way to a passion of tears.

"Oh, honey, honey, dis will neber do. Dere 's work for little missey Marion, and she must do it good and true. Dry up your eyes, missey, dear; de good Lord take care ob you dis time. Miss Kate hab gone to de shinin' lan', but de King ain't goin' to go and forget de chile she left in dis yer ebil worl'." And Aunt Dinah, who had returned, mistrusting how matters stood, lifted the half-resisting girl in her strong arms.

"Let me go, auntie, let me die here by my mamma!"

"You'se not goin' to die now, missey.

All dat 's lef massa John ain't goin' to be took away. He 'pends on you, and you'se goin' to walk right on in de way de Lord 'points for you."

This mention of her father was just what Marion needed; besides the violence of her excitement had nearly exhausted itself; she sobbed, but more quietly; suffering Dinah to put her down, she took her hand and walked to the house. She felt very sure she could not eat any supper, but Dinah placed her at the table and set before her such a tempting array of her favorite dishes, that, almost before she was aware, she made quite a hearty meal. While Marion was eating, Dinah loaded a large platter with sandwiches, cold chicken, jumbles, and whatever else she thought might be of use for a journey, and then carried it up to Marion's room. The eatables were placed conspicuously on the table, a change of clothing and a few handkerchiefs were made into a small parcel and laid near. Then Dinah went after Marion.

"Come now, honey, and let me fix you'se up like a good chile, den you'se res' your-

self a bit," she said, coaxingly. Marion, considerably cheered by her supper, went up stairs.

"No need to undress, missey, but Dinah fix you all comfortable. Here 's new shoes, and a bran new 'rino dress, las' you a long while. What a good thing you'se handy, little missey, and can comb you'se hair and sew holes up. Here dat little pocket-comb massa John give you'se, and de needle-book dat you Aunt Lucy make, needle and tred, an' all 'plete like. Put dem handy in de pocket. Massa John say put you on you ebry day coat an' hat, so here dey be, but *I* tink folks ought wear good tings goin' out. Hope missey Marion won't forget dat de good Lord be ober all de worl', and watch you'se day an' night whereber you'se be. Here you ma's little red Test'ment; put it right in de coat pocket, an' two pair gloves in de oder, you'se see?"

"Yes, I see auntie, but you seem to think I 'm going a long way?"

"Oh, honey, ole Dinah know heaps widout waitin' to be tole. When you'se gone, missey, Dinah pray de good Lord for

you. Miss Kate teach Dinah to read an' pray, and now I 'se pray for her chile."

By this time Dinah had Marion dressed to her satisfaction. "Come, honey," said she, "lie down and sleep."

"Oh, I can't sleep, I'm not the least sleepy," said Marion, but to please her old nurse she lay down, and then Dinah substituted for talking the singing of various hymns. Soothed by the mellow voice of the good negress, and wearied by the day's excitement, it was not long before Marion forgot her cares and fell into a quiet slumber. Dinah sat by her, often whispering a broken prayer, until she heard Mr. Hamsted's foot on the stairs, then pressing a kiss on the hand of her sleeping charge, she prepared to leave. Mr. Hamsted entered and dismissed her as we have stated.

Chapter II.

THE JOURNEY.

R. HAMSTED sat for some time gazing on the child he greatly feared he should never see again. There was much of danger about them both. At times he felt ready to draw back from what he had undertaken. Still he remembered that his present step was the result of much careful thought, that he had considered the subject in all its bearings, and that he must not, from the impulse of the moment, destroy the work of many days, and leave himself only in deeper perplexity. Could he have felt with the Christian that he had

laid the case before the Lord, that he had waited for the leadings of Providence, that One mightier than man directed all his steps, how great a weight would have been lifted from his mind. Oh, suffering children of God, how strong is your consolation! In every path of sorrow you see the footprints of the Man of Sorrows passing on before you, shining footprints leading upward to the Land of Day.

It was growing late in the evening when Dick brought up a pair of saddle-bags. Mr. Hamsted put in them the parcel of clothing, and as much of the lunch Dinah had provided as they could conveniently hold, reserving a small space for any thing Egbert might have.

Mr. Race arrived punctually at eleven. Mr. Hamsted aroused Marion, and finding her at once wide awake and ready to attend to what was going on, he called up the young schoolmaster. Race wore a coarse, home-made suit, and carried on his arm a new but rough coat, of the color known as "butternut." Furnished with a pair of woolen mittens and a felt hat, he presented

the appearance of a homely country lad, which, added to his being rather an awkward rider, made him exactly such a figure as is commonly seen upon the roads in that part of the country. Mr. Hamsted's papers and a considerable amount of money were sewed in between the lining and outside of the "butternut" cloak; Marion's deft fingers accomplishing the matter very neatly. Some gold pieces were also safely concealed among her own garments. Mr. Hamsted then urged the two travellers to partake of some sandwiches in anticipation of the tedious journey they were about to commence. At last all was ready. Mr. Hamsted took Marion's hand. "Now my little girl," he said, endeavoring to speak cheerfully, "I expect great things of you. Do not allow yourself to get frightened or excited, act just as Mr. Race bids you; and now I think of it, you must lay aside ceremony, and call him Egbert."

"What for, that sounds very funny," said Marion.

"It will occasion less question. People

will take it for granted that you are brother and sister."

"Very well, I'll try and remember."

"Come, then, I hear Dick down by the door with Peacock," and so saying, Mr. Hamsted led the way down stairs.

It was a fine, bright night, the gentle breeze was almost as warm as summer. Not a cloud shadowed the sky, the moon was just rising behind the woodland that darkened along the horizon; under the light of the stars lay the grassy fields and clumps of shrubbery just changing from summer green to the rainbow dyes of autumn; nothing was to be heard but the pawing of Peacock's impatient hoofs, the faint stir among the garden flowers, and now and then a sleepy chirp as some bird stirred uneasily in its nest.

The saddle-bags were fastened on, Egbert sprang to his place, Mr. Hamsted lifted Marion to her seat behind him.

"I wish you would put this around her, and so tie it about my waist," said Race, handing Mr. Hamsted a long woolien scarf,

"I should then not feel afraid of her falling in case she got sleepy."

"That is a good idea," said Mr. Hamsted, and in a few moments it was securely fastened. "Now all is right, you have a fine night for a start, take care of yourself and of Marion, my friend; good bye, my darling," and the father bent forward from the mounting-block where he had stood to tie the scarf, and kissed Marion's cheek, which had grown ashen in the grief and dread of starting. The poor child bravely choked back a sob. "God bless you, my daughter, God protect you," groaned her parent, his own helplessness, and the danger of his child, wringing from him a cry for the help that never fails.

"Good bye, missey Marion; 'pears like de light clean gone out ob de house!" cried Dick, from the shadow of the porch, where he had lingered to see the departure. Egbert wrung Mr. Hamsted's hand, "God lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace," he said, then striking his horse, they dashed down the avenue. Dick ran after them to close the gates which

he had opened a short time previously. He stood in the road flinging something far up the road after the sound of Peacock's ringing feet, then closing the gate, returned to the verandah, where his master still stood. "Dey 'll do, massa John, I done gone and gib 'em all I could for good luck; trow'd all mammy's ole shoes after 'em, and dey went straight away clar up de road. Sure sign ob good luck, massa John."

"I thought I had told you enough about that nonsense, Dick, you know well enough there is no such thing as luck," said Mr. Hamsted, sharply; but superstition was rooted and grounded in Dick's nature to such an extent that all his master's reasoning could never eradicate it.

Alone in his bereaved home, in the silence and the night, it was a bitter hour for Mr. Hamsted, but there we must leave him.

Egbert Race had started off at a rapid rate; he wished to shorten the agony of parting between the father and the child; the journey must be begun, and the sooner the better. Besides he hoped that the excitement of rapid riding would raise

the spirits of his little companion. If an awkward, he was not a timid rider; it would take more pranks than Peacock was disposed to play to unseat him, and Marion had, for several years, been accustomed to ride as she then did, or in the saddle alone; riding was her favorite exercise, and Peacock her favorite steed.

For about an hour they cantered on at a round pace, then Egbert drew his rein, and they began to go more slowly.

"Well, Marion, are you afraid?"

"N-o," said Marion, slowly; she felt uncomfortable, but could hardly say she was afraid.

"That is right. We are having a fine night for a ride."

"How long will it take us before we get to the railroad, the way we are going?"

"It will be about a week of such journeying as we can do. We will have to stop and rest, and may be a great deal delayed—"

"So long! But how far is it to that place, L——, in the Union lines, where you told father it would be all right, Mr. ——."

"Eg——"

"Bert. How far to there, Egbert?"

"Oh, three or four days."

"Do you think my father will ever get safe to grandfather's, Egbert?"

"Yes, I hope he will, and, as far as I can see, there is no reason why he should not. He is much respected and generally liked about here, and with so many who wish him well he has quite a good prospect."

"But I heard him say that while he was a magistrate he made a good many enemies among a lot of bad fellows, and you know here every one does as he likes just now. At least so they say, and I'm afraid some of them will do something bad to father."

"Well, you must not think of that, it will do him no good, and only add to your present troubles which are quite enough for a little girl. You know who it is can take care of your father, do you not?"

"Yes, God."

"Well, then, trust him in his hands. Whatever God does is right and best, and we must rest calmly in his care, satisfied that his way will be the best way."

"I could n't feel as if it would be the best way for my father to be killed," said Marion, with a trembling voice.

"There are a great many things which now we think could not be best if they should happen, but we may be sure when we get to heaven we shall see God's plan running clear and beautiful through every joy and sorrow that has filled our lives."

"Egbert, could you feel as if it would be best to die on this journey and never get to see your mother. To have her wait for you day after day, and never come?"

"If God has so planned it for me I trust I shall accept it calmly, even thankfully. In that case I believe he would take me away from the evil to come. That he would give me abundant entrance into his heavenly inheritance; and as for my dear old mother, he could be 'better to her than ten sons,' and cause her to say, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'"

"Well, for my part, I never could see any good in trouble. I should think since God is so good, he would fill up our lives with pleasure."

"God's love and service can be greater pleasure than any other, and sometimes we can only fully reach them through trial. Trials rightly used we are told work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God can see the end from the beginning, and so knows what will be best for us. We can only see a little way, and so often think things would be best which really would not. I suppose you have seen a baby, after its mother had given it a great many pretty things, cry because she could not give it the candle which was prettier than all, or because she took away a fine toy when she found the paint was rubbing off into the baby's mouth?"

"That was because she saw such things would hurt it. But do you truly believe I shall some day see the good of having to leave papa and go off in this way?"

"You may see it in this world; or, as I said before, you may not see it until you get to heaven."

Marion was silent. She sat thinking of all they had been saying, and felt quite sure she could never feel as Egbert did. She

presently lost these thoughts in watching the moon slowly climbing the cloudless sky, the stars growing pale in the brightness of her light; or, casting her eyes to the earth, Marion watched for the scattered houses with their cluster of negro cabins; the great shadow made by Peacock with Egbert and herself on his back, and growing drowsy thus, she let her head rest against her companion's, and clasping her arms firmly about him, fell asleep. After a short time Egbert spoke to her gently once or twice, and finding her unconscious concluded to allow Peacock to proceed for a while at the rapid and easy walk into which he had fallen.

Trustful and cheerful as was Egbert, both by natural disposition and by grace, he yet felt anxious and depressed. The responsibility he had undertaken in regard to Marion, and the money and papers of Mr. Hamsted, weighed heavily upon his spirits. He had been led to take this charge, not only by feelings of sympathy and friendship to one who had for two years been a kind friend, and was now in great trouble, but by the hope of being of service to his aged

mother. Mr. Hamsted had agreed that in case the schoolmaster lost his life on the journey, while he himself was successful in returning home, he would provide for the old lady; and if Race reached New York he carried with him a paper that would secure for his mother an annuity which, though but slender, would secure her from want. The care of his mother had for three years devolved principally on Egbert, and faithfully indeed had he striven to fulfil the trust. To care for his infirm parent, and at the same time prepare himself for the ministry had been a heavy task, and in the performance the schoolmaster had unconsciously overtasked himself. He had taught a large day-school, had private classes, and studied himself far into the night, for nearly two years. Doing this he had grown thin and nervous, almost unfit for such an exertion as was now imposed upon him. Riding along in the quiet night, thoughts of the laborious past, of disappointed expectations, of his feeble mother, of the distance between him and that goal of his hopes, the Gospel ministry, crowded upon him, until the heavy

pain in his head that had been by no means unusual during a few weeks past, almost prevented his retaining his seat. A sigh from the sleeping Marion recalled their recent conversation; he started, "where is my faith," he asked himself. "I will commit my way unto the Lord, and he will bring it to pass."

Peacock now roused himself into a gentle trot, the jarring aroused Marion. "Dear me," she said, "I 've had a nap."

"I 'm glad of it, I hope you feel rested, but now, if you can keep awake, we will go on faster."

"I 'm ready, go on," said Marion.

Away then, Peacock! and the pure air of the early morning refreshed them as they rushed along. The fences and trees seemed to fly by, the rythm of Peacock's falling hoofs seemed to sound escape, escape! On! on by the scattered farms, by yards where early fowls were sounding their challenge to the tardy sun, on under the scattered trees and where the road wound through narrow woodland belts, went coal black Peacock and the fugitives he bore. Again, after a somewhat

lengthened gallop, they slackened their pace. The moon had set, the stars had paled away in the gray light of dawn, the East was rosy with the rising day. Beyond them, on the road, they dimly saw another traveller coming toward them. It was a negro mounted on a mule, with a rope for a halter; in a loud, but musical voice, he sang one of his prayer-meeting hymns,—

"Oh I' se bound to lib in de service ob de Lord,
Oh I 'se bound to die in de service ob de Lord!"

Thus singing, he drew near, when, peering steadily from under his ragged hat rim, he suddenly brought his mule to a stand still, by a jerk at the rope, and in a low but distinct voice said, "Now dar, massa Race, sure as I lib!"

"Why Pompey, is that you?" said Race.

Pompey rode close to Peacock. "You'se gwine off, sah?"

"Yes, Pompey."

"You'se look out, massa. De country full ob wild set, don't care for nobody. Dere 's Pete Wilkins you witness 'gainst de time dey call you'se up in court. He say

he cotch you he kill you for sure. Den dat 's a fine hoss to go fast on, but de berry fust party you'se meet scoutin' for hosses, dey nabs him, and leabs you'se to go on de best you'se can."

"Well, what 's to be done, Pompey. It would be worse than useless to go back?"

"You see dat road jus' here dat runs west? Well, by'em bye, somebody come say Pompey, you see massa Race. Now got to say yes, 'cause *hab*. I say, 'yes, see him dashin' 'long dat west road like he possess—long in de night sometime."

"But I can't go *that* way, Pompey, to get to S———."

"Oh, laws, massa Race, if you had any sense when Pompey got trudgin' 'long wid his back turn, you come into de road agin and trabbel on to close thick wood. Den ef you'se had any sense you take right han' road, and keep takin' right hand roads for 'bout two mile, den you fin' nice quiet little shed, and lie by 'til night, den you goes on agin. Dat 's what you do *ef* you hab *sense*, but laws, den, spect you haint got no sense."

Egbert caught the negro's meaning.

"Good morning to you, Pompey, I am going the west road."

"Go you'se own way, sah," replied Pompey.

Egbert whipped up Peacock, and galloped a short distance up the west road. Then returning, he saw old Pompey jogging along on his mule almost out of sight, on the rolling land. Proceeding a mile further onward, he reached the thick forest. Few leaves had fallen, luxuriant boughs, climbing vines, and dense underwood furnished an almost impentrable shelter. In a few moments, a narrow bridle path presented itself on the right. Egbert rode briskly into it, and as the first rays of the sun touched the tree-tops, he disappeared in the shadow of the woods.

Chapter III.

THE WARNING.

R. HAMSTED did not leave the great gate until long after the dark forms of Peacock and his riders were lost in the distance. A chill seemed to have crept into the balmy quiet of the night; there was a baleful shadow quenching the silver fullness of the moon; from swamp and grove the lonely cry of the night-bird, was a note of woe and warning. He felt, as it may be a father feels, when fastening his child to some fragment of a wreck, he flings it from a burning deck into the sea, where he will soon cast himself. Cold are the surges and distant the shore, while human help is far

away; the new-born hope that his darling may find safety, is strengthened by a grim despair, as flame above and foaming waves below, each seem to claim the victim. Desolate, indeed, was that home where the father had fondly sheltered his family; wife, children, sister, all were gone, and when slowly turning from the gate, he at length approached the threshhold, such a vision of deserted chambers, of a solitary table and forsaken halls, rose up before him, that he could not enter, but passing around on the verandah, he threw himself on a rustic settee to finish the night as best he could. But even here morbid memory found plenty to feed her pain. Should those walks, winding amid the shrubbery never again be trodden; must those favorite vines again be trained by careful hands; should those flowers perish neglected; no voices echoing in the arbors? And a picture too soon to be realized, of a desolate heap of charred and smouldering ruins of abandoned cabins, of weeds and brambles marking all that remained, came visibly to his mind. So in sorrowful hours of waking, and in short and

troubled snatches of sleep the night wore on to dawn.

Nor did Marion's departure cause sorrow to her father alone. The light of Aunt Dinah's heart seemed to have been taken away. When that worthy old woman proceeded as usual to the kitchen at an early hour to prepare the biscuits for her master's breakfast, a task she never delegated to any one, she unfortunately found in her path a pair of gloves and a pocket handkerchief, dropped the preceding day by her somewhat careless idol. These, relics "a 'cause of grief," did Dinah unadvisedly hang up conspicuously on a peg opposite her baking table. At one moment sifting flour or plying the rolling-pin, at the next viewing those sacred mementoes and shedding tears, which were vigorously wiped away with her flour besprinkled apron, Aunt Dinah presently arrived at such an inextricable state of tears, flour, bits of dough, rumpled gingham and powdered wool and turban, that Clarissa, a lively yellow girl, was forced to come to the rescue, and finish the baking.

"Oh laws, oh me," groaned Dinah, aban-

doning herself to her distress and sitting down on an inverted tub, while a large towel took the place of the apron in wiping her eyes, "I 'se done broke down sure 'nuff ef it 's come to a lettin' somebuddy else git massa John's biscuits ready. I 'se no more use for dis world, dat sure. I 'se been keepin' up, and keepin' up, for de sake ob missy Marion and de biscuits dis yer while, now missy gone, and Clarissy make de biscuits, guess Dinah had better go down to her grave a mornin' !"

Dick no less affected sought his favorite retreat, the stable, but utterly overcome by the sight of Peacock's empty stall, and useless brush and halter, set down on the door-sill, and cheered his spirits by liberally dispensing his hat full of Peacock's corn and oats to Marion's pet chickens and turkeys, who rejoiced in the unexpected feast, quite regardless of the painful circumstances that had occasioned it.

"Dat allus de way," muttered Dick, reproachfully, "'cant hab no trouble but somebuddy glad ob it. 'Spect if I was to die, dat Joe he be as glad to git my good coat an' a

chance to wait on massa John, as de chickens is to get Peacock's corn," and unduly excited by the inconsiderate behavior of the chickens, and the imaginary elation of Joe, Dick shied his brush among the brood; forgetting for the instant that they had been the pets of his beloved "young missey."

Breakfast over, Mr. Hamsted took up the duties of the day, following quietly his usual routine, though while busy in his library, or abroad, he could give but half his heart to his work, his mind being so much fixed on his child. "Where can they have got by this time? How will Marion bear such unusual fatigue? I hope Peacock will keep up well. Egbert's face looked badly, I wish he were more robust. Perhaps I have done wrong after all! Such thoughts were constantly crowding upon him. But why dwell on this, there are few who do not know all these feelings by hard experience.

But two days had gone by, when Mr. Hamsted's light slumbers were broken about midnight, by a clicking sound at his window. In a moment it came again, as if some one

were throwing gravel against the blind. He rose, opened the shutter, and looked out. The night was dark, with gusts of wind and flurries of rain, he thought he saw a form, as of some one standing on the path beneath, but could distinguish nothing clearly.

"Hamsted!" said a familiar voice.

"Is it you, Moreland," said Mr. Hamsted.

"Yes, come down here, gently now," and in a little time, Mr. Hamsted unfastened the side door near where his friend was. "That will do, set the door ajar, but do not come out. You can hear me there, and I may have to take my oath soon that I have not seen you nor been in your house. Do you still retain the same opinions you held when we conversed a few days ago?"

"I do," answered Mr. Hamsted, firmly.

"Well, I too am in the same mind I was then; heart and soul I espouse a different cause from that you hold, yet that shall not change the friendly feelings I have always held for you. I come as a friend to warn you to hasten your departure. You are not safe here, you must get northward at any risk."

"But my business?"

"Better lose your property than lose your life," replied Moreland, drily.

"But my negroes, what will they do?"

"Turn 'em loose, and let them shift for themselves. It is coming to that any how."

"It does n't seem right to desert the helpless creatures."

"They 're not helpless, and at all events you cannot help them if you are killed. There now, I 've warned you, be wise in time."

"I will Moreland; God bless you; I trust we shall meet in happier times."

"I have staked my life, that I will win or die," replied Moreland, lightly. "Good-bye, Hamsted," and Mr. Hamsted heard his spurred heel ringing for a few seconds on the gravel walk, as he passed quickly to the gate.

"I might better have gone with Marion: I can effect nothing by remaining. Perhaps I can overtake her at S——, maybe, if Egbert delays." Many things that it seemed absolutely necessary to do presented themselves to his mind, and after a little consideration, he resolved to depart on the second

day from that time. In the meantime he would use extreme precaution. In pursuance of this resolution, he said to Dick, as that youth took his place behind his master's chair at breakfast, "Dick, I wish you to keep a sharp lookout, and if you see any strangers or suspicious looking persons near the premises do you quietly let me know as soon as you can."

"Sartain, sah," said Dick.

"Let that be your chief business until you get further orders from me."

"'Spects I 'd better step out and gib a look now," said Dick, disappearing through the window. In a moment he rushed back with rolling eyes and open mouth, "Two men gallopin' like mad, marse John," and, indeed, two reckless riders dashed through the great gate and up to the very porch, vociferating to a little darkey, who lay there basking in the morning sun, to go and call his master.

Mr. Hamsted seeing no other way, coolly rose from the table, and walked out to meet them. "We are appointed, Mr. Hamsted, to inquire into the political views of persons

in this section. It is needless to ask in your case; the opinions you hold are well known, unless they have undergone some recent change."

"They have undergone no change, whatever," replied Mr. Hamsted, decidedly.

"We are also appointed to request certain individuals considered hostile to the liberties of this country, to find themselves other homes. You are one of these. You will be given one week to get yourself out of our limits, at any period later than that we cannot answer for your safety."

"I will hold you responsible for no longer a time than you have indicated. The hour is early, gentlemen, and my breakfast is on the table, I shall be glad to offer you a cup of coffee, if you will dismount. Here, Jake and Tip, come hold these horses!" he cried to a pair of little woolly pates who were peeping around the corner of the house.

The unexpected guests were presently seated at the table. Dick placed before them an additional cold chicken and Dinah sent in another plate of biscuit. The meal passed agreeably, no further allusion being

made to the object of that early call. As the strangers prepared to depart, one took Mr. Hamsted's freely proffered hand, saying, "Sir, we esteem you highly, and regret that on a very important point we differ so widely. As a friend, I warn you not to delay your departure an hour beyond what is necessary, for there are bands of lawless men about for whose acts we cannot be responsible. You have much here to tempt depredation."

These remarks urged Mr. Hamsted to hasten as one fleeing for life, and he determined to set off that very night. Calling Dick into his library, he opened a little drawer of the writing desk, showing some money and two papers. "Here Dick," he said, "here are the manumission papers left you by your good mistress. And Dick, if you find that I have left this place, do you take your papers and this money also, and do you make a good use of it."

"Whar de key?" asked the prudent Dick.

"Dick, if I am absent, and it is evident to you that this house will be plundered, do you suggest to the servants that I prefer

they should get a share. And now do you go and mount guard as I told you."

And mount guard did Dick sure enough. In a few minutes Mr. Hamsted's attention was attracted by an unusually noisy crow, and, glancing out, he perceived that Dick had climbed to the very top on a tall sycamore, where he was imitating a crow with much success. The next hour passed rapidly enough, a silence brooded over all the place, no laugh or song from the cabins penetrated to the library, and Mr. Hamsted labored on undisturbed, until a rushing sound in the sycamore caught his ear. Dick was descending with extraordinary agility, and the moment he touched ground, darted to the library window. "Massa, dey comin', a dozen, I do b'liebe, a mighty bad set, sah."

"Dick, to-night!" exclaimed Mr. Hamsted, thrusting a parcel of papers into his bosom, and catching his cap. Dick had pointed to the south as the direction in which the new comers were approaching, and, stepping from the north window of the library, Mr. Hamsted rapidly disappeared behind the shrubbery on the north of the

house. Dick drew a long breath, and feeling sure that his master could easily reach a safe hiding-place in that direction, hurried into the kitchen garden, and tossing his neat jacket behind a bush, went down on his knees in the dirt, and began industriously working among the various roots yet left in the ground. It was not long before the dozen rough men he had seen from afar, had alighted, and were rudely searching for Mr. Hamsted through every room in the house. The alarm spread, and fear quelling curiosity, all the little and big darkies about the place had taken refuge in their own cabins. Dick perceiving all his colored brethren finding shelter in the quarters, concluded to betake himself thither, but was, unhappily, intercepted by a couple of the "bushwackers," for such were the invaders of the homestead, who had found their way out of the back door. They immediately ordered him to conduct them to where they could get something to eat and drink, and poor Dick, seeing no course but that of obeying orders, took them with a rueful face to the spring-house, pantry, and cellar. In the

cellar they found, among other things, a store of liquors, small indeed, but large enough to do mischief. Justice to Mr. Hamsted requires the remark that with the exception of what was used for cooking purposes, this supply of liquor was kept strictly for medical use, as the dust and cobwebs gathered over it might testify. A bottle of brandy shared between Dick's two captors made them sufficiently noisy to call down their companions, who had been ransacking above stairs, and, forgetful of their first intention, of finding and hanging Mr. Hamsted, they proceeded to eat and drink. The men who seemed to have taken possession of Dick, after a time bethought themselves of the stable, and taking each a half-filled bottle, and pushing Dick before them, went to the stable-buildings, some little distance from the house. Here, after much searching, threatening, and disputing, when they were pretty thoroughly drunk, they found a halter. It would have done nicely to hang Mr. Hamsted, and by some subtle association, could do equally as well to hang Dick. They at once threatened

him with capital punishment if he did not reveal Mr. Hamsted's retreat.

"Him gone, him gone," cried Dick, taking refuge in a falsehood with all the facility of his race, "him done gone to White ribber, nigh 'bout a week ago."

"Not so! He was here yesterday. Quick, where is he?" cried one.

"I dunno, dunno at all, only gone to White ribber."

"Let's hang him," said the other, and after a somewhat prolonged struggle, the two proved more than a match for the negro, the halter was fixed about his neck and he was drawn up into a tree. A few moments more would have put a sudden end to Dick's adventures, but just as the two ruffians were preparing coolly to watch the lad's dying struggles, a loud shout caused them to turn their eyes, and lo, their comrades in their frantic revellings, had fired the house. The house burning and they with no share in the valuables it contained! Abandoning Dick to his fate, they rushed to obtain a share of the booty, and as they left in one direction, old Dinah came panting up in an-

other. There was her darling son swinging like a pendulum from a limb of a tree, his arms tossing wildly, and his eyes starting from his head. Governed by instinct more than by a course of reasoning, Dinah caught hold of her boy's feet and lifted him up with all her strength. Dick, getting a second's relief, grasped with his hands the leather above his head, and thus relieved the strain on his throat. A moment more, and gasping for breath, partly upheld by his mother, partly by his left hand, Dick succeeded in getting his knife from his pocket, and cutting himself loose. He fell helplessly on the ground, but old Dinah unfastened the halter, flung over him two or three basins of water from the horse-trough, and the two betook themselves for safety to the bush not far from the house.

Late that night Mr. Hamsted, surrounded by a few lingering servants, stood by the smoking ruins of house, barns, and cabins. Of all he had called his own there was but the soil he must abandon, and that smouldering pile. What wonder that a few bitter tears fell slowly on his cheek, as shaking a

hand of each of the little group of humble friends, he mounted his horse, a poor one that had, by straying in the brush, escaped the general seizure, and started on his way.

He had not proceeded many miles when a gathering storm darkened so sullenly over the earth that he could scarcely see the way to direct his horse. A few miles more, and the animal, evidently frightened by the heavy fall of rain, the rolling of thunder, and the thick darkness, had to be left to his own guidance. Filled with apprehension, carried rapidly through the darkness, he knew not where, Mr. Hamsted rode a few miles further, then there was a wild blaze of lightening as if the heavens were rent in twain, a glare of water before them, the horse reared, plunged forward, made a false step, and his rider was flung over his head, while a shrill shriek of pain, told that the horse had suffered severely.

Mr. Hamsted being but little hurt by the fall, soon regained his feet. An occasional flash of lightning served to reveal the position of his horse; one of his forelegs was

in a deep hole, and Mr. Hamsted speedily perceived that the limb was probably broken, and the position of the animal was such that he could not possibly extricate him. To wait for daylight would not only be useless but dangerous. Mercy demanded that the poor brute should be put out of his misery; drawing his revolver, the unwilling master shot the poor creature through the head, and then, thrusting the weapon into his breast-pocket, and pulling his felt hat close down over his face, unhorsed and bewildered, he recommenced his journey, pressing on in the darkness he knew not where.

Chapter II.

EGBERT AND MARION.

THE progress through the wood was necessarily slow, and Egbert soon dismounted and led his horse. The dew lay on every leaf and blade, clusters of bright berries here and there gemmed the green foliage, gay asters flaunted in clusters near the path, brilliant goldenrod seemed to light up the shady nooks; rank ferns in the moist hollows, rose almost to Peacock's head, the birds darted from their nests with a song; from nightly hiding places sailed the varied insect tribe. So much life and beauty almost wiled thoughts of gloom and fear from Marion's mind.

Race had almost begun to fear that he had lost his way, when a short turn to the right, disclosed, in a clump of evergreens, a little shed. It was roughly constructed; two large posts held a slender pine trunk reaching between them, and logs resting from this to the ground, laid close together, formed a long sloping roof; earth and branches piled on this made it impervious to rain. Several stones and blocks of wood were put under the shed for seats; at the back, a quantity of branches seemed to have furnished a bed, while blackened brands, and a heap of ashes in front, marked where there had been a fire.

"Here we are at last," said Egbert, lifting Marion from her place.

"It would be right pretty if we had come here for fun, and had folks to make a picnic, like we used to have," replied Marion, going under the shed.

"You had better keep out of the tall grass until the dew dries off, it will be gone in an hour or two. See, the sun finds his way even here," and Egbert pointed where the bright sunbeams slanted through the

trees, and lay in golden bars upon the ground.

Marion sat down on a great stone, while her companion relieved Peacock of his trappings. He brought the folded blanket on which Marion had set, with the saddle and bags under the shed. "Now sit here while I go and find some water for Peacock, and bring some for our breakfast," he said.

"What will you bring it in?" asked Marion.

"Peacock can go with me and help himself, and for us, see, here is a cup," and Egbert unfolded a leathern drinking cup, which he carried in his pocket.

"But where will you find water?"

"From the shed being here, and the appearance of vegetation, it cannot be far off. From the way the bend lies, and from the streams we have passed, I judge it to be in this direction. Then I shall let Peacock walk on, and his instinct will doubtless guide him to it. Will you wait here?"

"Oh, yes, only don't be gone too long."

In about a quarter of an hour, just as Marion was getting uneasy, Egbert returned carrying his cup full of water.

"Peacock found the way," he said.

"That is very queer. I do'nt see how he knew."

"The scent of the horse is keen, he felt the freshness of the water in the air, I suppose. We read in the accounts of travellers, that they are frequently indebted to this instinct of the horse and other beasts, for the finding of water in countries where it is scarce. Here we have plenty."

Marion opened the saddle bags, and taking out a small towel, spread it on one of the stumps, she then placed on it some of the provisions, and the two sat down to eat their breakfast. Egbert first asked a blessing on the food. "We realize," said he, as they began to eat, "one of the promises of God, 'thy bread and water shall be sure.' The apostle also exhorts us to 'be content, having food and raiment.'"

"Well, I'll try to be content, only I hope we won't get out of lunch before we get to S——."

"We can get plenty on the road. Peacock seems to be helping himself well," said Race, glancing where he had fastened the horse, giving him as much room as possible to move about.

"You do'nt eat anything. Now I'm hungry," said Marion.

"I hav n't any appetite. To tell the truth, I have a very bad headache, and think I will try and sleep it off. You had better take a nap too."

"No; I'm not sleepy; and then its too cold so early. I'll wait until bye and bye," said Marion, finishing her breakfast. "You go to sleep, and I'll watch Peacock, and get on very well."

Egbert spread the blanket on the branches, fixed the saddle for a pillow, and wrapping his cloak about him, soon fell into a heavy slumber.

Marion took her testament from her pocket, and read a chapter or two, then she got up, and began to walk about a little. Near the shed grew a clump of thistles. Here was a favorite amusement for Marion. She gathered a quantity of the heads, and

taking them to her seat manufactured a number of baskets of various shapes and sizes. Then taking those out of the shed, she filled them with moist earth, and covered the top with a collection of berries and blossoms, gathered from the woods. "Now I will have a horticultural fair, such as papa used to read about," she said, and soon one corner of the shed grew radiant in baskets, wreaths, and bouquets of flowers. Growing weary of this, she looked about for new amusement. "Poor Peacock," she said, "you must go to a new place, you have eaten up all you can find there, I know. I wish I could tie you to that little crooked tree, there 's a splendid lot of grass there."

She looked at the schoolmaster, he breathed heavily, and a bright flush was creeping over his face. "He is very tired, how soundly he sleeps. I won't wake him up. Come, Mr. Peacock, I 'll fix you myself." Marion untied the horse, and leading him to the desired spot, fastened him up again. This was rather a dangerous manœuvre, as of course, she could not do it very securely. Still, Peacock though spirited, was gentle as

a kitten, and after all was pretty well taken care of. Marion then went into the shed, put a small log near the stump, and sitting down rested her folded arms on the stump, and leaning her head upon them fell asleep. Uncomfortable as was her position, she slept well, it was noon when she awoke. She roused herself with a feeling of loneliness and terror, at finding herself in the heart of the quiet woods. She rose and walked about a little, then stopped where Egbert slept still on the branches. His face was pale and haggard, his breathing inaudible. "How he sleeps! I wish he *would* wake up!" she said to herself. Again she paced about the shed. "I wish I'd never left my papa. Who knows what will happen to me?" again she stood by the sleeper. In her nervous excitement, a horrible fear that he might be dead, swept across her mind. It strengthened; she felt sure he must be dead. Her distress was too great to be quietly endured, she must put an end to her uncertainty, she touched him once, twice, he did not stir; she shook him with all her strength, crying, "wake

up! wake up!" With a heavy sigh he opened his eyes, and gazed stupidly at her. "Mr. Race, Mr. Race, Egbert, what is the matter?"

He sat up, and then seeming to recollect himself, said, "Oh, Marion! Ah, I understand it all now. I've slept a long while, hav'nt I?"

"I thought something was the matter, you looked so queer," said Marion, hesitatingly.

"Did I? Oh, no, I'm all right, only I believe you were wisest about sleeping so early. It is cold; I think I've taken cold; I ache all over."

"Your feet were damp, you should have taken off your boots, and wrapped yourself up in the blanket."

"You are right, I must be more thoughtful. Why there is Peacock!"

Sure enough, Peacock had worked himself loose, and following the sound of their voices, came walking into the shed, where he unceremoniously began to demolish Marion's horticultural fair.

"Now, Peacock! I told you to be very

careful, and there you got away. Shame on you!" cried Marion.

"I will tie him up again, and then we will have our dinner. Will you come with me to get some water? I think a drink of water out of that stream will make me feel better. Have you been asleep?"

"Yes, for quite a good while."

The two took a narrow path which led them to a clear stream, flowing smoothly over stones and under the bending branches, reflecting the bright forms of the flowers that grew near, and the gaudy wings of the dragon flies that darted over its surface. The wanderers bathed their faces and hands in the limpid wave. Marion took out her pocket-comb and curled her hair. "How good cold water is!" she exclaimed.

"Good for everything they say. I shall use it for medicine," replied Egbert, taking long and feverish draughts.

After their noontide repast, Marion feeling the unwonted fatigues of the previous night, slept a long time. Egbert also dozed at intervals. When Marion finally awoke,

she found him sitting with his pocket Bible in his hand.

"Are you reading?" she asked.

"Trying to, but it hurts my head.

"I will read to you," she said, and then the child's soft voice uttered in the hushed heart of the forest the words of life.

At nightfall they set out again. It was a wearisome night, colder than the preceding one had been. Toward midnight a cold wind blew violently. At length Egbert said, "Marion we 'll have to stop for awhile, you can 't stand this, nor I either I 'm afraid. I see something dark way over yonder; it is probably a house, we 'll stop there."

This was good news to Marion, whose hands and feet were chilled from the unwonted exposure, and over whose cheeks tears, caused by the biting wind, were flowing freely. A few moments brought them to the place indicated. It was a log hut with heavy door and shutters. Egbert knocked, then rattled at the windows, but received no answer. "I don 't believe there 's anybody there," said Marion. "No, I am afraid not. That is bad for us;

stay, I 'll try the door." Egbert found that the latch opened by a string; he pulled it, to his surprise the latch raised, and the door, pressed by the wind, flew open. The dwelling consisted of one room; a large fireplace occupied one side, but with the exception of three rough stools, there was no furniture. A half-burnt log lay across the two stones used for andirons, and in one corner was a pile of chips, paper and small sticks. The place was deserted.

"Come, Marion, we 'll take possession long enough to warm ourselves," said Egbert, lifting her to the ground. Marion went to the door and looked in, everything was plainly revealed in the moonlight.

"Egbert," said Marion, "this is a large door, suppose you lead Peacock in and put him in one corner, then we can shut up the door, and nobody that passes will know we are here. I don't believe the light will shine through any where."

"That is a good idea. Come, Peacock, walk in, sir."

The two travellers and their horse were soon sheltered.

"Now I'll make a fire and get out something to eat. We'll get warm and then go on," said Egbert.

It was not long before a bright fire sparkled and glowed in the chimney, lighting up its murky throat and irradiating all the room, then Egbert suddenly began pulling it to pieces, and speedily reduced it to a poor struggling flame.

"Why did you do that, you had such a splendid fire," cried Marion.

"Don't you know smoke and sparks leaping out of the chimney at that rate would tell tales for miles around?" I didn't think of it until I saw it burning."

"That's true. Well here's fire enough to get warm by," and Marion brought up a stool and bent over the little blaze to warm her hands. Egbert took two apples from his coat pocket and put them close by the few coals to roast.

"Ah, that's a good idea, something warm to eat will be nice. Whittle me out a long sharp stick and I'll toast some of those biscuits." Egbert prepared two sticks; Marion brought out several sandwiches and

began to toast the biscuit, holding it on a stick. Egbert took the other stick and heated some of the ham.

"How I wish Peacock had something to eat," said Marion, "he is n't thirsty, for he drank by the stream, but I know he 's hungry, suppose I give him a sandwich."

"Very well, it will mark our sympathy for him, even if it does not prove a substantial benefit."

Marion chose the largest sandwich in the bag and carried it to Peacock, who stood mildly in the farthest corner of the cabin.

Returning to the fire she found the apples done and proceeded to share the supper with the young schoolmaster. In the midst of the meal, the door opened and the two looking suddenly about saw a little bent old man standing on the threshold.

He looked hurriedly and nervously from one to the other and then the horse fixed his attention. He went up to him, examined him carefully, scrutinized the saddle, bridle, bags, and folded blanket, all without speaking. Then, taking the vacant stool,

he coolly sat down opposite the schoolmaster.

"'Taint enough to come in yourselves, but you bring in the hoss without leave."

"I beg your pardon, sir, we really thought it was a deserted house, and we were nearly perishing with cold."

"And you brought the hoss in for fear somebody 'ud see him?

Race's silence was his only assent.

"He's a fine animal, certain. You come from F——?"

Race nodded.

"And you're going to S——?"

Race gave no reply.

"Oh, *I* know. I've seen things these times. *I'm* old, but *I* aint safe; leastwise, not here. I burrow up in those hills yon, where not a mother's son could find me. I came down for victuals to-night. *You* don't travel without provisions I see."

Egbert had been putting several ginger cakes and two biscuit together, and handed them over to the old fellow, with the brief invitation, "Eat that."

"It's good," said the man approvingly.

"I haint seen one of them since I was so high." And he poised a cake on a finger held about three feet above the floor.

"I'm glad you like it, I wish I had more to offer you, but we have almost exhausted our supply; saddle-bags don't hold very much."

"And the hoss goes hungry?"

"For now he does, but I hope to get him something to eat in the morning."

The man walked over to Peacock, and taking him by the bridle led him to an opposite corner. Then picking up an old piece of hoop iron, he inserted one end in a crack in the floor. Marion was watching him intently, and, to her surprise, saw one of the boards rise up as he pried it with the iron. He lifted it, and lo, under it a store of golden ears of corn. Gathering a liberal supply, he took them to the animal, who pricked up his ears and looked upon his benefactor with a grateful eye. While the horse ate, the man went out and brought back an old bucket with some water. "I always *did* love a hoss," he said, as he supplied the creature's wants, patting his well-

arched neck and glossy sides. Then he replaced the board, and looking at Egbert, who was arranging the saddle-bags, said, "Going on?"

"Yes," replied Egbert, briefly.

"You 'd better, you look weakly like. You can't keep on the road long at a stretch, 'sides it gwine to rain. A matter of eighteen mile from here thar 's a log house, chinked red like brick. Thar 's an old sign hangin' out near it. You 're safe thar. Hold on, I 'll fix him, I *do* love a hoss."

Peacock was prepared for the start by his self constituted groom. Egbert took out a two-dollar bill. "Here 's for your kindness, sir," he said, offering it. The old man's eyes glowed with an eager fire. He grasped the proffered note. "I don't know when I can use it, but, howsomever, I 'll take it all the same, I never lets them kind slip. I do *love* hosses and bank-notes. There 's *sich* a satisfaction in *keepin'* of 'em," he said, hurriedly thrusting the precious strip of paper deep in his pocket. Then, drawing near, he added, in a low confidential tone, "That 's why I do n't stick to the other side,

they 'll be as poor as March medder pickin', what a mule 'd turn up his nose at."

Egbert laid his hand on the man's shoulder, "Stay, old friend," he said, earnestly, "gladly would I give you a precious thing you lack, the knowledge and peace of God."

"Them 's something I don't know nothin' of."

"I see you do not. Your time to learn them is getting short, ask God for Christ's sake to forgive your sins."

"That 's talk I haint heerd since I was that high," said the man, again extending his hand over the floor. "Marm used to make us all say our prayers, six white little heads in a row, round her. But," he added, impatiently, as if shaking off an irksome memory, "don't talk to me, I ain't got nothin' God wants."

"You have. You have a soul he wants to save from eternal burning."

"He don't care for me."

"He does. He cares for every creature of his hand. *Won't* you serve him with your few remaining days?"

The man jerked himself free from the

detaining hand. "You mean well young man, but hold your tongue. My days may be few, but I've seen a heap of folks, and I know your'n are fewer. Go on."

"God be better to you than you are to yourself," said Egbert, and putting Marion in her accustomed seat, and rising wearily to his own, they rode on.

Marion had full occupation for her thoughts in the scenes of the preceding hour. For Egbert, the parting words of the old man had been an echo to fears of his own. The way still between him and S—— was long. The money, papers, and especially the child he had in charge, were a heavy burden to him. As he rode on, his soul was lifted up in strong crying to God, to make plain his path, and cause him to feel safe under the shadow of the Almighty wing.

The wind was still strong and had now an added chilliness from the moisture of coming rain. No moon or stars lit up the way. There were no grotesque shadows, no quiet houses, no clumps of woodland to watch, in darkness and silence they went along, Eg-

bert trusting rather to his sagacious steed than to his own efforts to guide the way. The warmth and rest of the little log-cabin were gone long before the eighteen miles to the red-chinked house were finished. For all Marion's feet were drawn under her dress, and her hands were cased in fur-lined riding gloves, they got numb and chilly. She felt very sleepy, yet was too uncomfortable to sleep. Other children might have proved exceedingly troublesome under such circumstances; but she was a resolute little creature, and nerved herself bravely to endure the necessary discomforts of the journey. Now and then, more for the sake of saying something, and thus gaining the consolation of hearing a friendly voice, she would say, "How far do you think we have gone?" or "How long will it be before we get there?" Then Egbert would strive to answer in a cheery tone. Once he continued, "the night is long, Marion, and dark, and cold, but we know the day *must* dawn at last. So, my child, you may find your life lonely and hard, but it will end bye and bye in an eternal day. Never forget

that the deeper the darkness, the greater the trouble, the closer Almighty God will come to your soul if it cries out after him."

"Mr. Race, I mean Egbert, do you always think so much about God?"

"I think a good bit about him, but not as much as I should. But my reason for speaking so at present, is that I want to draw your mind to the thought that though you are in much trouble just now, more may come upon you soon. And if you *should* find yourself left entirely alone, or only with strangers, and those, maybe, of a rude wild sort, you must remember that God is a friend who 'will never leave you or forsake you.' Who is 'nigh unto all them that call upon him;' who has 'all power in heaven and in earth.' Marion *will* you remember this. *Will* you remember that the prayer of faith must prevail with God, that he has pledged himself to hear and answer?"

"Yes, Mr. Race," said Marion, solemnly, "I will."

"May God help you to do so," added Egbert.

Morning dawned at last, but gray and cold, with driving rain. Right glad were the wanderers to see, in the distance, the broken sign beating about in the wind, and hard by the log-house where they were to find shelter. Their halting at the door brought forth a group of tow colored heads, and butternut garments. It was really surprising that the place could contain so many inhabitants. There was a toothless old woman leaning on a stick, and a toothless baby in a yellow flannel gown hanging over its mother's shoulder. Between these two extremes, were the father and mother, and a band of children, from a stalwart son of six feet high, down to the baby who could walk next older than the baby that could n't walk.

"I was told that I could find accommodations here. We are on a journey, and the rain prevents our going on," said Egbert.

"Wa'al, perhaps you may, such as we have; come in."

"Can you take care of my horse?"

"Can't promise much. Can try. Do my best and that's all you can ask."

"Certainly."

"Here, son Joe, pack in the saddle and the bags, and the blanket. And you, Jem, carry the animal down to the far shed, and give him hay and corn, and rub him down. I daresay, old woman, you can get up a breakfast?"

Marion and Egbert were ushered in and seated by the fire-place. The old woman took her seat in a high-backed, splint-bottomed rocking chair, close to Marion. The mother, who possessed evidently great executive abilities, disposed of her host of children with wonderful celerity. "Sally set that table. Jane make an ash cake quick as possible. Betty cut some pork to fry it. Here Dick rock that cradle, and you, John, keep out of the way or I'll put you to bed." And thus matters "set in order," she was ready to put her arms akimbo and survey her guests.

The house consisted of one large room with a loft above. Three beds occupied

three corners of the apartment, under two of them were stowed trundle beds, while the third in a gorgeous quilt, and with pillow cases glorious in wide cotton lace, was evidently kept for show and strangers. The place was clean, and from the rafters, and upon the walls hung ham, bacon, beef, and strings of onions and dried apples. The furniture was only that demanded by necessity, the old woman's chair being the nearest approach to luxury, and was evidently all home-made.

Though eyeing her visitors with great curiosity, the dame did not cease to exert her sovereign authority in every corner of her domain. "Jane put that ash cake whar it'll bake better. Betty cut a plenty o' pork. Eat while you've got is my motto in these days. No tellin' how long we may hev any thing."

"You seem to be blessed with an abundance at present, ma'am," observed Egbert, glancing about.

"Laws yes, plenty o' stuff an' plenty of mouths to put it in. But thar's folks go gallivantin' and skrimigin round these days,

till a body do n't know what they may call their own. I lost as fine a cow as was ever raised last week, and the week before that a pen full of the prettiest sort of pigs was carried off right under my eyes and nose. Now *I* do n't know but this very night somebody might take every mite that 's hangin' on these walls, and not leave me a thing to get breakfast with."

"I certainly hope they wont do that ma'am. If God guards your home, you may lie down and rise up in peace and safety."

"I 'spose so," replied the woman, carelessly. But the Divine Name had fallen on one ear with a welcome sound. The old woman, long in her dotage, could respond, though in feeble fashion. She leaned forward, put her long bony hand on Marion's light curls, and cried, in a voice whose mellow notes had long been lost in a shrill, quivering tone,

"I 'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

"Now, mother," remonstrated the mis-

tress of the family, "just you do n't. Folks wont know what to make of you."

"I know I'm a great sinner," persisted the old lady.

"And I hope you 've found Christ a great Saviour," said Egbert, quickly.

"Just that. Jesus Christ is my all in all."

"She 's doting. She croons that over and over again," said the woman, apologetically.

"I hope she was a Christian before she fell into her dotage. And that these remarks of hers are a remnant of that unspeakable wisdom taught her by the Spirit and Word of God."

"She were a good woman sure enough, and did her duty by all her young ones. I'm the only one left now, and I'll never grudge to keep her and care for her if she lives forever."

"Forever with the Lord," said the old woman.

"She was different from the most of folks. She was allus a good woman."

"I'm a great sinner," said the old woman.

"I'm thankful to see one who has followed the Lord. I trust he will take her to eternal joy, and that you and your children will follow her example."

"I wish we could. I thank you, young man. I'm used to seein' folks as stop here, laughing at her talk, and it works me to see her laughed at, for all she do n't know it nor mind it. Betty fry that pork brown. Quit rocking that cradle, Dick, and go fetch some wood. Young man, there 's a heavy look in your eye and a red spot on your cheek I do n't like. I'll make you some dittanny tea afore you go to bed, and a cup of good bohee now."

She went to work to fulfil her good intention, and Egbert pleased to see under her rough exterior so much of kindly attention and filial affection for her aged parent, sat thinking how many flowers and plants of different kinds grow in the Lord's garden, planted in this earth, and asking God in his heart to make this woman one of those who share the great Gardner's tender care.

Marion found fried pork and ash cake very good after her night's ride, but Egbert, with aching head and limbs, could partake of nothing but the tea, of which he drank freely.

Chapter I.

A DEATH.

THE morning was spent by the two travellers in endeavoring to rest. Mistress Boggs did her best to keep her children quiet and secure the comfort of her guests. Egbert threw himself on a low settle with a cushion under his head and his blanket thrown lightly over him. He felt as if the feathery softness of the resplendent "best bed" would be unendurable. At times he slept, and then Madam Boggs cast many a glance at him as she labored at her spinning wheel. As for Marion, the bed was a luxury, and

though she insisted upon only lying down on the outside, and not, as she said, "going to bed for a regular sleep" until night, she still obtained much delightful rest. For awhile after she lay down the unusual scenes about her kept her awake. Mr. Boggs and the three elder sons had gone off to their daily labor. Despite the rain, Dick and Teddy kept at work chopping wood, and the blows of their axes might occasionally be heard as the hum of the spinning wheels subsided for a moment. Mrs. Boggs and Sally were busy with their wheels; Jane twisted some yarn and Betty knit and took care of the baby. Little John built cob houses, and a pair of twins, called Het and Mat, shelled corn. Marion counted the family over and over again, there were surely twelve children. Fifteen inhabitants for that little log house, and all seemed to go on very well. They were evidently all sober, industrious and good-natured, though ignorant, loud, and rude. By degrees the hum of wheels and voices became indistinct, the room and its occupants faded away, and Marion was sound asleep. While the little

girl thus enjoyed healthful slumbers, poor Egbert rose from the settle and went close by the fire, his skin was flushed and hot, but nevertheless he felt stiff and cold. Mrs. Boggs came to his side and felt his pulse, and passed her hand over his burning forehead. It was a rough, hard-working hand, still there was a motherly kindness in its touch that soothed the sick man's feelings.

"Young man you're sick, and no mistake. I've seen a heap of sick folk, and them symptoms of yourn is bad."

"I know it, I *am* very sick. I'm afraid I shant get through this journey. I have full forty miles yet to go."

"And you haint no whar to stop, and no one to take care of the little gal?"

"No."

"What'll you do with her, s'posin' you *don't* make it out?"

"God only knows."

The woman looked about—"I wish I could help you, but things is mighty oncertin', and I've twelve of my own. 'Sides you see the place, it's not for the likes of sich a dainty little lady."

Egbert shook his head, "You can't help me. You are very kind, and I thank you all the same. I must try and push it through. Don't you think I can, by resting until morning, and then pushing it through all in one day?"

"You *mought*. I can't say. I'll tell you young man. I'm somethin' of a doctor. You jes let me tend to you to day after my fashion, and mebby I can bring you round so as to start you to-morrow."

"Anything you like, only help me to get on."

Thus given permission, Mrs. Boggs bustled about. To say the truth "doctoring" was her chief delight, such a case as Egbert's gave her an unusual opportunity for exercising her skill. She made up a comfortable bed on the settee, soaked her patient's feet, bathed his head, gave him a bowl of tea compounded of various herbs; applied a mustard plaster to the back of his neck, and put onion draughts on his feet. Then having established him on the settee, she shaded his eyes from the light, and covered him with a multiplicity of blankets.

"There, now," she said, surveying her work with great satisfaction, "I think you'll do. Ef *that* don't bring you round I don't know what will. *I* ain't one of your new-fangled doctors, *I* goes in for rale good, old-fashioned sense. Now go to sleep."

Completely overpowered and exhausted, by the good dame's summary way of treating his case, Egbert resigned himself to the blankets and blisters, feeling perfectly helpless, but as if he never could sleep. At length the hum of the wheels seemed to fall on his ear as a lullaby, a monotonous, but not unpleasant music, and to it floated through his brain, words of an old-timed hymn, his mother's favorite of the Songs of Zion. Then words and hymn were lost in a deep sleep. Mrs. Boggs removed the blister at the back of his neck at the proper time without disturbing his rest. "He's gettin' better," she said to herself. Marion awoke, dinner was prepared and eaten. The afternoon found tasks similar to those of the morning. In the chimney corner, the old grandmother held the skeins that Dick

wound, pleasing herself with an idea of usefulness, and amid her indistinct mutterings, Marion now and then caught the couplet—

> "I 'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
> But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Marion with the readiness of childhood to forget trouble, finding all quiet and herself somewhat rested, began to take an interest in the amusements of her new acquaintances. Mat and Het, the twins, had a small box mounted on rockers whittled out by Dick, and in it, among a collection of fragments of homespun check and linsey, were two corncobs dressed up for dolls. Marion thought of her own collection of wax and china babies, and wondered how these little girls could be contented with such a poor apology for toys. Then rose the wish to help them to something better, so drawing her well filled needle-book from her pocket, she offered to make them "some real nice dolls." She was an ingenious child, and placing one of the six-year old twins on either side, and emptying their box of treasures on her lap,

she went to work. Old Dinah had placed in her young lady's pocket a small parcel of black silk and white muslin, for any mending that might be needful on the journey, this Marion appropriated to furnishing the corn-cobs with heads and wigs. Black and red sewing silk made eyes and mouths, arms were well tied on, and lo, soon two comical-looking little dolls, in plaid linsey dresses and check aprons, with a jaunty outer sack of butternut flannel. The twins were in ecstacies. The mother and elder sisters looked on surprised and pleased. Emulating the skill of the little stranger, Betty having "toed off" the stocking she was knitting, made a bed, and a pair of pillows for the cradle, and Jane bound and lined a stray block of patchwork for a quilt. All these unwonted favors were referred to the presence and example of Marion, and on her the little girls lavished their gratitude. With the agility of squirrels they climbed the narrow ladder to the loft, where the boys slept. There hidden in dark corners, under the eaves, were their stores of winter dainties, just laid up, but what more

auspicious occasion than the present for their being brought forth. Ears of "popping corn," little hoards of nuts and sassafras root were brought down, and Marion saw the nuts cracked on the door stone, and the corn popped out white on a pan over the coals. To crown all Sally put on a small skillet of molasses and boiled them some candy. Marion quite enjoyed the afternoon, and hardly thought of her dangers or troubles during the whole of it. She was surprised when night came.

It was nearly dark when Egbert awoke, he felt decidedly better, and set up to the table and ate some gruel.

The family were gathered about the table, that is, the elder members were eating, for the little ones had previously been furnished with a great dish of mush and molasses, with an iron spoon, and had very amicably stood about it, "taking their turn," until their appetites were satisfied. In the midst of the meal another traveller entered. A stout cheerful sort of a man, who was warmly welcomed by the whole family.

During the evening, Egbert's journey to S—— and his illness were mentioned.

"You don't look much like roughing it, my lad, neither does the girl," said the man, kindly. "You must make the way as short as you can. If you take the fust right hand road airly in the mornin', and can make thirty mile to-morrow, straight on, you 'll strike a train under Col. ——. Thar you 'll find friends, and some one to look arter the youngster."

This plan was discussed, and Egbert determined to adopt it.

"Pervided you has your hoss, which is oncertain," said Mr. Boggs.

"Not much, it ain't, remarked Jem, "I don't reckon any body 'll be likely to find him, unless they 're very sharp."

"Jem allus looks out well for what he takes care of," said his mother, approvingly.

"I 'm afraid the roads will be powerful heavy after this fall of rain," suggested Joe the eldest son.

"What do you say, Mr. Michael?" asked Bob, of the new comer.

"Not so bad as you think. They was

very dry and hard and took up the rain, nigh about as fast as it fell. Then when a body 's not out for pleasure, they need n't mind the mud, but splash right on, that 's my plan, if the horse is strong."

"He 's a grand beast," said Bob, energetically.

"So much the better, if nobody sees you, and so much the worse if any body as wants him sets eyes on him. A good horse is a good thing to get away fast on, but then a poor creature is better than none, and horse thieves is plenty. These are like the days of the judges in Israel, every body does what is right in his own eyes."

"I shall put my trust in the Lord, and remember the warning in Scripture, not to fix my dependence on my horse. I am glad, sir, to hear you speak as if you had read the Holy Bible," said Race.

"I 've read a mighty heap of it, my lad. It 's nigh about all I *do* read."

"I trust it has been made of use to your soul."

"I can 't say that it has. I read it, but I do n't feel it. In fact, I do n't *expect* to

feel it; I do n't care to *feel* it. I read it cause it 's int'restin', 'cause I gave my word to a preacher named Baker, down in South Arkansas, that I 'd read it, and 'cause I find things in it that come pat to every thing in life."

"That is true. The Scripture has wisdom for every day. But since you made Mr. Baker, whose name I dearly love, one promise, and have kept it, won't you make me another? Will you not pray every day, or, at least, each time you read the Scriptures, that God will make them effectual to the salvation of your soul?"

"Stop, young man," said Michael, sternly, the genial smile dying out of his face, "stop. I can't talk on this here subject. Let me alone. I do read the Scripture, but I *can't* pray."

"Then," replied Egbert, "since you can not pray for yourself, I shall pray for you, Thomas Michael, by name, every day, until my prayers have been answered.

Michael got up hastily and left the room, and did not return until all were in bed. He had been assigned with Egbert to the

"best bed," and reluctantly prepared for rest. Marion, from the trundle bed, saw him open a window shutter, and strive by the starlight to look into Egbert's sleeping face. Then he closed the window and all was darkness. Later in the night, the shutter swung open with a jar that aroused Marion; the moon was up, and a flood of silver radiance poured into the room. Marion raised herself on one arm, and looked about. She saw Egbert sitting up in his bed, his hands clasped, and his face lifted absorbed in prayer.

Morning came mild and sunny, with a promise of warmth by noonday. The family were early astir. Mrs. Boggs hurried her breakfast, Jem led Peacock to the door, apparently in fine condition for a start.

"I hope you'll feel like travelling, my lad," said Mr. Michael. "I should n't think you would, you tossed from side to side, and hardly slept a wink."

"My head was very painful,—I am sorry I disturbed you," said Egbert.

"'Taint no consequence, I'm tough," said

Mr. Michael. Mrs. Boggs looked at the schoolmaster and shook her head.

Breakfast over Egbert paid Mr. Boggs, thanked Jem for his care of Peacock, and going to Mrs. Boggs who was putting a liberal luncheon into the bag, said, "You have been very kind to me, may God reward you."

"I hope he 'll take you safe to Col. ——'s train," said Mrs. Boggs, furtively wiping her eyes with her apron.

"Good-bye, mother," said Egbert, to the old woman, who sat in her high-backed chair.

"I 'm a poor sinner," said the aged dame.

"You have a Saviour, hold fast to him," said Race.

Mr. Michael's strong arms lifted Marion to her place. "Good-bye, sir, I won't forget you," whispered Egbert, wearied by the mere effort of mounting. Michael nodded, and looking after the departing pair, said to Mr. Boggs, "If I had n't pressin' business, I 'd follow after that lad; I 've fears for him, great fears for him."

In the bright light of that morning, with

joyous birds singing about her, with all nature gay and brilliant in autumn hues, all thoughts of danger were far from Marion's mind. She imagined herself safe at the end of the day. She thought of a speedy journey to her grandfather's. She looked forward to merry Christmas times, and her father's arrival in his childhood's home. Unconsciously she broke into snatches of her favorite song, and betimes chatted merrily to Egbert of the surrounding scenery; of the train they expected to reach; of S——; of the journey east, of his mother, and her own relatives. In her cheerful flow of spirits she scarcely noticed that her companion was dull and silent, that when he replied at all to her remarks it was in a vague, wandering way, that would lead a more experienced person to suspect that his brain was unsettled.

They rested for an hour at noon, out of mercy to Peacock. Marion ate, but Egbert refused all food, drinking eagerly of the stream where he led Peacock to water. Marion, in her confident expectation of reaching friends by night-fall, gave the

horse all the bread and corn cake that remained in the bag. Egbert hardly noticed what she was doing, and it was only when she herself suggested that they must have waited quite an hour, that he roused himself to proceed.

Marion's fears began to be excited in the first part of their afternoon's ride. Egbert seemed to have lost all care as to their progress. He allowed the horse to take his own time. "Oh, Egbert, why *don't* you go faster," she would say, "we shall never get to that train." "Ah, yes," he would reply, and bid Peacock to go on, and shortly suffer him to fall into a trot, and then a walk, again. The animal was feeling the effects of his journey, and did not travel as well as at first. Thus things went on, Marion getting nervous and excited, until she was amazed to see the horse turning up a narrow unfrequented road.

"Why, Egbert, what *are* you about, you are going wrong. You must keep to the main road." she cried.

"Oh, yes, so I must, I didn't mean to pull the rein," replied Race, with a violent

effort of his failing powers, and then turned into the right way again.

Marion drew the whip from his unresisting hand, and drove the horse on at a rate to suit herself. After a long gallop she permitted Peacock to walk for a way. It was about three o'clock.

"Egbert, how far are we from that train?" she asked.

A groan was his only answer. The next moment Race lost all command of himself, and swayed heavily in his saddle. Marion loosed her hold upon him, and strove to keep her own seat. The sagacious steed stood still. Egbert falling forward, mechanically grasped his horse's neck, and swung over to the ground. Marion slipped safely from her place, and bent over the fallen schoolmaster. His eyes were closed, and he lay apparently lifeless on the earth.

For a moment Marion bent over her unconscious friend, almost stupefied. Peacock carefully stepped out of the way and after eyeing the two travellers in seeming surprise, began to bite at the grass by the roadside. Feeling that all now depended on her-

self, Marion roused to action. She led the horse to the fence, and climbing upon it, unfastened the blanket from his back. Then with all her strength drawing Egbert into an easier position, she placed the folded blanket beneath his head.

"Oh, if I only had some water," she said to herself; then looking about, she saw that she was not far from a small stream. Egbert had fallen as they were going down a gentle descent; at the foot of it was a little water-course filled by the recent rains. Across it a hill rose steep and long. Taking the leathern cup from the schoolmaster's pocket she hastened to fill it. When she had done so, she took off her white apron and wet it in the stream. This done, she hurried back. As she bent over the young man's prostrate form, she thought she saw a faint quivering in his eye-lids, and a tremulous motion in the veins of his neck. She laid the dripping apron upon his head and strove to get a little of the water in his mouth. Failing in this endeavor, she wet his face, neck, and hands plentifully, and then went to fill the cup again. Returning

the second time, she succeeded in forcing Egbert to swallow.

"Oh, what shall I do? I don't know how to help him," she sighed, as she continued her ministrations. "What is the matter? When Aunt Lucy fainted she was quite white, and then come to after a while. But he is all purple, and looks as if he was choking. Oh, what can I do?"

Again and again she brought water, and wet the apron she had about his head, and, at last, he revived enough to speak.

"Marion," he whispered, faintly, "I am going to die. My poor little girl, what will you do?"

"Oh, you must n't die. I can't have you die," cried Marion, bursting into a passion of tears.

"God wills it, Marion. You cannot help me. When I am dead leave me here. Mount Peacock, and go on to the first house.—Or, Marion, stop crying, and listen, time is short. Can you reach that train? It is about ten miles further on this road."

"Yes," sobbed Marion, "I can reach it; but, oh, Egbert! can you not get on Pea-

cock, and go just a little longer,—only two hours more?"

"Marion," faltered the dying man, "I cannot. I have but a few moments to live. Do not waste time by me. Let me see you start. Go, child, mount your horse, and in two hours you will be safe, and I shall be dead." All this was spoken with many a pause, and a failing voice.

"No, no," replied Marion, resolutely. "You shall not die alone. I'll stay here, Egbert; don't think of me any more. I will go on bye and bye. God will take care of me."

"He will," whispered Egbert, and his lips moved in prayer. Marion seated herself on the ground, lifted his head upon her lap, and endeavored to cover him with the blanket; a faint smile rewarded her efforts.

"Egbert," whispered Marion, "what shall I tell your mother?"

"Tell her not to grieve that I died here. All is right. My dust shall hear His voice, 'Thou wilt call and I will answer thee.' 'I will wait until my change come.'"

His mind seemed to wander. He mur-

mured various passages of Scripture, and then seemed to grow unconscious. For some time Marion watched him, his breathing growing heavy, and with longer and longer intervals between each respiration. The sun was going down. A great awe of the silence, the coming night, and the presence of death, filled the child's heart and seemed to freeze her very blood. She did not cry, her feelings were too intense to find that relief. She hardly dared breathe, and her face grew cold and white; a nervous tremor shook her frame. How she longed for human sympathy, a hand to touch hers, an eye to meet her own, a voice to speak to her. Slowly, at last, Egbert unclosed his eyes. She spoke to him, and her voice recalled his wandering mind.

"Good-bye, Marion, tell mother, 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' Are you all alone, Marion? I am cold; all is dark to my eyes. Are you all alone?"

"Yes!" said Marion, looking hurriedly about in her distress. "No! They are coming, some one is coming—a white wagon

drawn by oxen, some people. Oh, Egbert, live, they will help you. Why do they come so slowly?"

"Thank God! They will take care of you. Earth is dark—the light dawns forever—Father, into thy hands I——"

Marion saw the shadow of death fall over his face. His eyes closed peacefully, the flush was exchanged for an ashen paleness—his head weighed heavily upon her lap. "Oh, Egbert! Egbert!" she cried in frantic terror, "come, oh, help! oh, help!"—and she reached her hands toward the slowly moving party coming towards her, down the long hill. Then she bent her face over young Race, no breath parted his lips—the hand she raised fell heavily back when she released it from her grasp. She rose, spread her apron on the ground, placed his head gently upon it, folded his hands over his bosom, drew the blanket decently over his still form, and stood in mute despair beside the dead.

Closer to her came the strangers down the hill. There was a cart with a low canvas cover, drawn by two oxen. A boy sat in

front driving, while by the heads of the animals walked a man whom she saw when he came nearer, was ragged, dirty, and with a face hideously disfigured by some loathsome disease. Behind the cart walked a girl of some sixteen years, shoeless and bonnetless, leading a rough coated donkey by a rope halter. Near her followed a girl of Marion's age, bearing a ragged straw bonnet and a pair of india rubber shoes, tied to her feet with leathern strings. In the cart was a collection of household stuff of the most miserable description, a terrier dog, and a small boy.

Frightened even more by the near approach of these disagreeable strangers, than by utter loneliness, Marion silently waited to see if they would accost her, half in hopes that they would pass on. Not so; after a long gaze which embraced herself, the covered body, and Peacock, the man drew near, and in a rough voice said, "How's this, young one?"

Marion made no answer. The ox team was stopped and the whole family clustered about her.

"What 's wrong?" asked the man, pointing to the body on the ground.

"He is dead," said Marion in a faint voice.

The man drew back the blanket, touched the quiet face and folded hands and muttered, "This is a queer fix now, aint it?"

"I say youngster, are you all alone?" asked the eldest boy.

"Yes," sobbed Marion.

"What," said the man eagerly, "all alone, hain't nobody gone for help or so on?"

"No," said Marion, "all alone. Oh, Egbert, Egbert!"

"I don't believe a word on 't," muttered the man distrustfully.

"I do, dad," said the oldest girl hastily, "all on 't; see, that 's not put on," and she pointed to Marion's falling tears.

"She 's a fool to tell it," she added in an undertone.

"See here, are you telling true? An if you be, what do you mean to do?" asked the man.

"Won't you bury him?" asked Marion, pointing to the body of her friend. And

then I 'll take my horse and go on. There is a train ten miles along on this road and they 'll take care of me if I reach it."

The man looked on the ground, and seemed to be pondering the matter. He looked bad enough himself, but the elder girl went behind him, and like a very genius of evil began whispering in his ear. Her words seemed to meet his approval, for he nodded continually. "See here, young one, I 'll tell you what I 'll do—I 'll bury him down in yon hollow to-night, and to-morrow I 'll take you to that ere train."

Marion's face brightened, "but why not to-night? To-morrow it will be gone farther on."

"It 's too late. It 's sundown and by the time we get a bite to eat and bury that there young man it 'll be pitch dark."

The man stooped down, and all Marion's confidence in his promise of assistance died away as she saw him proceed to rob the pockets of the dead even of the knife and handkerchief.

"Well, we 'll fix up for the night," said the man concluding his search. We 'll camp

down by the brook. Drive on, Neb. I 'll lead this 'ere stranger hoss. Gal, we 'll come back for that in a minit."

Marion saw Peacock led off, and sank down crying by the side of her departed friend. A sudden thought struck her, she drew her needlebook from her pocket and taking out her scissors severed a lock of Egbert's hair; folding it in a paper, she unfastened from his throat the narrow grey silk neck-tie he wore, and then put it with the little packet of hair into her bosom. Surely some good angel had put it into the child's mind even in that hour of grief, that there was one widowed, and now childless, in a distant home who would treasure those mementos of her departed boy.

The younger of the refugee girls had lingered behind the rest and stood closely eyeing Marion's proceedings. As Marion returned the dainty needlecase to her pocket the little vagabond cried, "I 'll have that of you, you see if I do n't, afore I 'm a day older."

Just then the man and his son came back and wrapping the body in the blanket, began

to carry it toward their camping ground. The girl snatched the apron from the ground and went on tying it about her waist and calling out to Marion, "I 'll have your hat, I will." "I 'll get your shoes, I shall." "See if we do n't change dresses." Thus they came to the wagon, and the little desperado was just crying, "I 'll get your coat, see if I do n't!" when a ringing box on her ear given by her sister, who was building a fire, drew her attention from Marion.

A sort of battle between the two sisters ensued, which ended in the younger one retreating with loud cries; to the shelter of the ox-cart. The large girl, called Pol by the rest, prepared to get supper, the small boy assisting her. Jake and his father began to dig a shallow grave, and Marion unmolested sat down to weep by the form so soon to be hidden from her eyes. When she saw that preparations for the burial were nearly finished, she went to the saddle bags, and took from her small bundle two handkerchiefs. The impish Kiz, seeing her do this, flew from the cart to search the bags. Marion forbade her, and finding this of

course unavailing, cried to the other girl, "Please, Miss Pol, make her stop!" Pol pursued the offender with a long stick wherewith she had been stirring mush, and secured the bags from further molestation. Jake and the man approached to take up the body. "Wrap him up in the blanket," pleaded Marion. But the man refused, declaring it to be a foolish waste.

"But it's mine, and I want it used so," said Marion.

"Yours!" the man laughed loudly.

Passing him, Marion laid one fresh white handkerchief where the head of her friend was to rest, and when they laid him down, spread the other over his face. The man was about to interfere and take the handkerchiefs into his own possession, when Pol, who seemed to be the ruling spirit, advised, "Let it go, dad," and Marion's arrangement was not disturbed. In less than a quarter of an hour, a loose pile of earth marked Egbert's humble resting-place, and near it sat Marion on the saddle-bags, alone with that wild family in a desolate country.

The child gazed on the dark mould until

it seemed to grow transparent under her eyes, and she felt as if she could see Egbert's pale, peaceful face. She thought of the mother who waited for him far away. Then she thought of him as already a glorified spirit in his Father's kingdom. She thought of him as looking down from his radiant home on that little mound that covered his mortal frame, and at her sitting mourning by it. She recalled all she had read of the resurrection of the just, when God, who has all in his keeping, shall call them from their graves, free from all spot or taint, to dwell in his presence. How glorious would Egbert then arise, triumphing in redeeming grace, to join the hosts of the ransomed. Again and again did Marion repeat to herself his last words, that she might fix them well in her mind to tell his mother when they should meet.

Poor child! alone there in that dreary night, with those evil-minded refugees, there seemed indeed a long and troubled way before her, if ever she was to reach that quiet home where friends were looking for her.

Chapter XI.

THE FATHER'S ESCAPE.

UT while following Marion on her journey, we must not forget her father whom we left benighted in the storm and deprived of his only horse. As the morning dawned, the tempest subsided; the grey light revealed to him the road, and taking out his pocket compass he found himself not far out of the direction he intended to take. Crossing some fields and strips of wild land, he entered, just at sunrise, in the same road that had been pursued by Marion and Egbert, but, of course, not nearly so far advanced in it, as they had been by their

first night's travel on the gallant Peacock. Besides, being almost worn out by unusual exertions, Mr. Hamsted saw that it would be unsafe to travel by daylight, and so looked about for a hiding place. Some distance from the road, in the centre of a field, was a stack of winter fodder. It was not likely that any one would visit it that day, and Mr. Hamsted concluded that, in default of all other shelter, he could secrete himself in that. On his way to it, he came to a little branch or creek swollen by the night's rain, where he bathed his face and hands, and, somewhat refreshed, proceeded to the stack, and, climbing it without difficulty, he hid himself in such a manner that one could only detect him by getting up on it. As he did so, a thought of boyish frolics years before, when he had hidden thus from brothers and cousins, flashed into his mind; recalling scenes in painful contrast to the present. Lying down in the nook he had prepared, Mr. Hamsted was resolved to be wakeful and watchful, but nature demanded rest; the fodder stack felt soft as a bed of down to his weary limbs. The cawing of

crows seeking their morning's meal, and the shrill chatter of wheeling jays was sweet as a lullaby to his drowsy ear. Sleep stole upon him unawares, and held him fast until high noon. But then sleep was driven from her tender ministry by a more ungentle guest; hunger took violent possession of the fugitive. It was a new thing for Mr. Hamsted to be more than twenty-four hours without food. From a dream, wherein he gave Dick an order on Aunt Dinah for an unlimited supply of good things to be served immediately, he awoke to find himself lying in damp soiled clothes and soaked boots in the middle of a fodder stack, without a prospect of a single morsel. What! the owner of a fine farm, a handsome house, a large amount of bank stock, and a host of negroes, in this forlorn condition! *Sic transit, &c.*

The clamors of appetite were not to be disregarded. Mr. Hamsted raised himself cautiously, and looked abroad. No one was in sight, but some distance off he descried a small shabby house. Between it and himself was a tree that he decided he would

climb, and from which he could take a fair view of the dwelling and its inmates by means of a small telescope, which, with his compass, he had taken care to secure about his person early the morning before. Arriving at the tree, and still seeing no one, he clambered among the branches; and now behold him diligently prospecting for his dinner. An hour's watch convinced him that there was no one at the house but a girl of about twelve, and two quite small children; a cow and a few sheep being housed near. The girl moved about now and then as if engaged in household duties, but most of the time sat on the door-sill holding the younger child.

Almost fainting from his prolonged fast, Mr. Hamsted grew desperate, and set off as briskly as he could toward the cabin. The girl, a good-natured, stolid looking creature, sat gazing at him as he came up, evidently too dull of mind even to wonder at his appearance.

"Young woman, can you furnish me with something to eat, I am travelling and very hungry?"

"Dunno, haint got much."

"Are you living alone here?"

"Yes all but Dad, he's been gone two weeks now, and Mam, she's off to do a week's spinnin,' and Bill, he's off to a day's workin' an' wont be home till night."

Drawing a long breath to find himself thus relieved from fear of the inopportune appearance of any of the elder ones of the family, Mr. Hamsted renewed his application for something to eat.

"Wal, got some corn dodgers," said the girl.

"Those will do, bring them out."

"And some pork what was biled yesterday."

"That will be very good."

"Mebby, a sup of milk."

"That is plenty, let me have it."

The girl set down a year old baby, as stupid a specimen as herself, and went into the cabin. After a little rattling of boxes and pots she came out with three large corn dodgers piled on one hand, and a large square of boiled pork in the other. These she unceremoniously handed to Mr. Hamsted, who though somewhat dashed by the

absence of all dishes, took the edibles, and providing himself with a tolerably clean little board to serve for a platter laid them thereon, and drawing out his pocket-knife, went to work, a strong appetite supplying the lack of sauces and side dishes. The girl again entered the cabin, and coming out with a not over clean tin pail, set it before him and said, "drink your milk from the bucket and when you're done, kiver it up." Her guest needed no farther urging, but ate and drank in a manner that astonished himself, and, indeed, was imprudent after his long abstinence and exposure. Having secured two corn dodgers to put in his pocket, Mr. Hamsted handed the girl several small coins, at which she stupidly stared, and departed. Taking care to pursue a route that did not lead to the fodder stack, until he was out of sight of the cabin, Mr. Hamsted, turning his course at a safe distance, regained his hiding place, and slept comfortably until sundown. Lighted by the stars, he briskly pursued his way, rapid exercise sending the blood freely through his limbs, that when he first awoke seemed too

stiff and sore to permit of walking. Pressing on, now stepping behind a hedge or crouching in the shadow of a clump of bushes if he heard approaching footsteps or the ring of hoofs upon the sand, the traveller made such good progress through the night, as at morning to be near the place where Egbert and Marion had met the old negro. Finding daylight coming on apace, he made up his mind to take the first path that led him into the woods. This, as may be surmised, was the path followed by his daughter and her companion, and ere long, he arrived at the very shed that had sheltered his child. He did not have far to look for water, for the recent floods of rain had filled several hollows in the ground with water, cool and pure. In one of these he took a delightful bath, then ate his corn dodgers, wishing the two were half a dozen, and throwing himself on a pile of leaves, fell asleep. A sense of insecurity, and the anxiety that oppressed his mind operated to shorten his nap, and in the course of two hours he was up and walking restlessly about the shed, to see if there were any signs of intrusion. All

was quiet, and turning to try and obtain a little more rest, he came suddenly on the nook where Marion had had her horticultural fair. The little burr baskets with their faded flowers were evidently the playthings of a child. Who could have placed them there?

Looking about for a solution to this question, he saw a little white card at the root of an old stump, picking it up, lo, in childish, but well-known chirography, "Marion P. Hamsted." Here then had been a stopping-place of the dear fugitive. Thus far had she safely come, and here she had been happy enough to beguile an hour with flowers and burr baskets as she had done at home. What would have purchased from that father the little enamelled card that had fallen from his child's testament?

More cheerful thoughts of his child than any in which he had lately indulged, and a feeling of nearness to her, calmed his nervous excitement, and he slept to dream that the songs of the birds that came trilling into his sleeping fancies was Marion's merry laugh, and the light breeze that played on

his cheek was her kiss. He woke at last to find himself faint and hungry. Well knowing that there could be no habitation near, he began to calculate the chances of making a good night's journey without food, when a rabbit springing up among the grass and sitting on its haunches, gazed wonderingly at him. Mr. Hamsted instinctively picked up a short stout stick, the little creature instinctively sprang aside at the movement, then lifted himself up and gazed as before. He paid for his temerity with his life; the stick well thrown knocked the pretty rabbit senseless, and afforded Mr. Hamsted a supper. Dressing it with his knife, he spitted it on a stick and cooked it at a little fire, built in a hollow stump. Greatly strengthened, with the earliest twilight he hurried on his way.

A few hours walking sufficed to show him that his strength was failing; his head ached violently, chills shivered through his frame; giddy and discouraged, he was almost ready to lie down in the road, but still the natural love of life and the memory of his child urged him to struggle on. The

latter hours of the night were hours of pain and slow progress, and early in the morning he again turned into the woods, and finding a little clump of bushes crept into them to try and get repose. To rest was impossible, and after nearly half a day spent in the vain hope of feeling better, Mr. Hamsted crept from his hiding place, and set out to look for a habitation. Pursuing his way through the woods in any direction where he saw clearings or a promise of finding human beings, at last he was rewarded, not by the sight of a fellow-mortal, but by meeting an old cow who stood contentedly browsing on the hazel bushes. The cow had doubtless owners, and to drive her from the bushes might put her in mind of going home. Mr. Hamsted tried this expedient, which proved entirely successful, and a walk of a mile and a half brought him to a log house of one room, chinked with mud, and having shutters but no glass for windows. In the room sat a woman of perhaps fifty, engaged in spinning. Uncouth in appearance, but kindly of heart, she saw that Mr. Hamsted was suffering, and leaving her

work, she proceeded unasked to make him comfortable. Giving him a chair and going to the spring for a tin basin of water, she next drew out a clean pine table, covered it with a home-made cloth, and briskly prepared corn coffee, boiled eggs and milk toast; not until her guest was seated at the table did she ask a question, but longer curiosity could not be repressed.

"You 're a travelling, stranger?"

"I 'm going north," replied Mr. Hamsted, frankly. "I was given time to get away, but a set of men called 'bushwhackers' got after me. I have lost my horse and must try for it on foot and secretly."

"Haint got no family then, mister?"

"I have one child, a little girl, whom I sent to try to make her way with a friend into S——. Where she is or how she is, I do not know. She is all I have left, my wife, sister, and two children died last spring."

"Do tell," said the woman, tears of sympathy gathering in her honest eyes, "only one child, why, I 've got six, and all right small too. You set great store by your

little gal, *I* know. My old man's dead, and I make out the best I can with the children."

"You must have hard work."

"Tolable hard, stranger. You don't look over peart; I reckon you aint used to campin' out and goin' without vittles and its done made you sick."

"I *am* sick," replied Mr. Hamsted, pushing back from the table, "I thought I was hungry, but I can't eat a bit even of this good fare."

"I'll tell you, stranger, you must lie by and rest a few days more or less."

"I don't see how I can, and yet I am not able to go on as I am."

"I can tell you how you can," replied this good Samaritan of the backwoods, "I've got a right safe place about a quarter of a mile from here, and I'll toss you up a bed there and give you your vittles and look after you a bit till you git spry agin."

"And will I be safe? will you be safe to do this for me?"

"I reckon I will. Thar could n't nobody know it, but the biggest gals. I can't keep

you here, for them very sort of bushwhackers comes here to git their meals off and on. I can't help it. They'd take it if I didn't give it to 'em; they pays me most generally, seein' I treat 'em kind like. A lone, lone woman like me's got to git on as she can."

"I see. I do not blame you. Show me the hiding place you spoke of, and I promise you shall not lose by your kindness."

"Ye kin trust me, stranger. Don't fear. Better get off now; I sent the childer out a gittin' yarbs and wood and sich; layin' in for winter, ye see. Now the two big gals will keep all safe, but them ar little ones mought tell if the bushwhackers axed them, and so git us all in a box, so we wont let them little chaps know of your bein' here."

The woman made a large bundle of blankets and quilts, which she took on her head, put a pillow under her arm, and a tin pail with a cup in one hand, and set off at a swift walk through the woods. There seemed to be no path, but she threaded the forest without hesitation, finding difficulty only from her bundle and pillow, which

caught in the trees or underbrush at almost every step. At length she came to a hilly place, and in a few moments more stopped at the mouth of an opening, like the mouth of a cave. This was not apparent until she had pulled aside bushes and vines. She next took a piece of candle from her pocket, lit it, and stooping down, crept into the cave, taking her bundle with her. In a short time she re-appeared, and bade Mr. Hamsted enter. He did so, and found the cave a small room. A bed had been prepared on a pile of leaves, and by it stood the pail of water and the cup.

"Here you are, snug as a squirrel. Just lie down and make yourself to hum. There wont nobody trouble you. The gals and I will see to comin', mornin' and evenin', till you get up smart like. I 'll leave the candle and the matches, and you kin strike a light if you want, but better not unless you hev to."

"Thank you," said Mr. Hamsted, despondingly. His prospects looked rather gloomy. Little did Mr. Hamsted think for how long a time he should be the inmate

of that cave; little did he think that the sharp pains that shot through his limbs were the beginning of an inflammatory rheumatism, that would cripple him until the return of spring. Early the next morning he heard a rustling in the bushes before the cave. Accustomed to the dim light, he easily discerned two children of about Marion's age, who came in bearing a little pail and a basket. "Are you here?" said one, her eyes so blinded by coming from the sunshine into the darkness of the cave, that she could not see.

"Yes, I'm here, have you brought me my breakfast?"

"Yes, and we're got hot coffee, and we run so it would n't git cold," said the other girl. 'Do you feel better,' mam says?"

"No, I feel very sick. Let me have the coffee, I do n't feel as if I could eat any thing."

The girls chatted a little while, their frank, artless remarks calling up a smile to Mr. Hamsted's face, despite his pain.

At night the good woman herself came, bringing what she called "hot yarb tea."

"Oh, you're laid up with the rheumatiz," said she, and so it proved. For weeks the sick man lay in his cave, kindly tended by his humble friend, but growing worse rather than better. At last, despairing of recovery in that damp dark place, he urged her to take him to her cabin, even if such a proceeding put him in the hands of the bushwhackers. "Hev yer own way. Maybe I can hist ye up on the floorin' above the room, and put a bed by the opening where the chimney rises up. Yees would git the fire heat there and more light like, and if yees keep whist by day, the gals and me will do our best and keep yees from the childer and the bushwhackers. They don't come over often now."

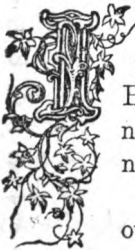
With great difficulty the change was affected, and the "yarb teas," hot blankets, and the other remedies of the kind hostess being continued, he began to recover. Before long he discovered that poverty was pressing close on the helpless family, the money he gave the woman being of no present use on account of the distance from a town.

The cabin was seldom visited by strangers. As he grew better, Mr. Hamsted at times sat in the lower room. His hostess freely discussed her plans, she could get no one to help her work her field, her pigs and sheep had all been stolen. A two-wheeled wagon, a pair of steers, a broken down horse, and ancient cow composed her whole stock. The cart would hold her supply of bedding and furniture with the younger children; the girls could ride the horse by turns; for herself she could walk to California, if need were, and setting out in this style as a refugee, she would seek a place where she would be sure of food. "Thar 'll be a famine here next spring. Did you know Z—— was burnt a week ago?" Thus she would talk, and only waited Mr. Hamsted's recovery to put her plan in execution. They had heard that men were being impressed into the Southern army wherever they were found, and while the woman and her little cavalcade felt as if they could safely take the travelled roads, having nothing to tempt the cupidity or excite the ire of any they might meet, Mr. Hamsted must

set off by himself, and go secretly as before. It was the last of March before mild weather and renewed strength appeared to promise well for a continuance of the journey. At last one bright day about sunrise, the oxen were yoked, the cart was filled with her household goods, one girl mounted astride the drooping-headed old hack, the sole equine possession of the family, the other daughter drove the cow and calf, while the mother holding a short rope tied to the horns of her oxen, and a stout stick to quicken their lagging steps, all were ready to depart. She closed the door, not without a tear or two, for it was all the home she had. Mr. Hamsted, with hearty thanks, placed his largest gold coin in her hand, and with a mutual "God bless you," they parted company, and all went on their way.

Chapter XX.

THE REFUGEES.



IN our last we, of necessity, related the adventures of Mr. Hamsted several months. Let us now return to Marion on the night of Egbert's death.

The shades of night darkened over the little encampment. The fire kindled by Pol lit up the rude faces of the refugee family clustered about it, but sent no gleams so far as where Marion sat in the gathered gloom. Jake and Pol finally came to her saying, "Gal, come over to the fire."

"I don't want to," replied Marion.

"Aint you afeard?"

"I'd rather be alone."

"Wal you sha n't, you aint too good for us. *I* aint gwine to let you set here ketchin' cold," said Pol, roughly, and taking Marion by the arm, with a rudeness that seemed more habitual than malevolent, dragged her to the fire. Jake followed, laden with the blanket, saddle, and bags. These he threw down, and Marion sat moodily upon them.

Kiz and Nat were disputing over the mush-pot from which the family had taken their supper. Kiz no sooner saw Marion seated, than she darted up behind her, and thrust her hand into her pocket. Marion, nothing daunted, seized it fast, and turning promptly, cried, "how dare you?"

"I want that pretty thing what's got scissors in."

"You shall not have it, nor any of my property."

"Hi yi! We'll see, let go my fist. I'll hev just what I likes," and she gave Marion a violent pinch with her free hand.

"Please, Mr., please Miss Pol, make this bad girl let me alone," called Marion.

The man laughed as if enjoying the scene,

but Pol springing to her feet, with a cat-like bound, cried, angrily, "I'll tell you what, dad! ef you don't make that ther Kiz keep quiet, *I* won't have nothin' whatever to do with this thing."

"Kiz," shouted the father, apparently appreciating the full value of his elder daughter's threat, "you keep yourself clar of that ther gal. Get to bed, you and Jake, and you, Nat. Leave, I say."

The three children, with their sullen brows and mutterings of anger, obeyed, and crept into the ox-cart. The oxen were fastened to the back of the vehicle. For some time loud and wrathful words were heard passing between the boys and their sister, as they strove about their places in the cart, but in the course of half an hour these subsided, and all was still.

"Come, gal," said Pol, going up to Marion, "get to bed, you have a long way to go to ketch that train to-morrow; get into the cart, there's room, and they're all sleepin' now."

"No," replied Marion, "I'm going to stay here to-night. I don't choose to go sleep

by that bad girl. I can wrap up in my blanket, and do very well."

"Do n't go to sassin' of me. Who 'd look out for you ef you sot me agin you," said Pol, crossly.

"I 'm much obliged to you for making her behave, I 'm sure," replied Marion, with dignity.

"Oh, you are, are you!" cried Pol, in a mocking voice. "Wal, I knows how to look out for fussy folks what do n't know how to take care of themselves. Here, now! *I* ain't gwine to put up with no whims, and hev you ketchin' cold, and a dyin' on our hands. Ef you *wont* go in the cart, stay out, but I fix you decent here. Get up! Wot 's in them bags, any thing hard wot will hurt your fine yeller head? No, nuffin' but a little bunch of clothes, and some eggs. Are they biled?"

"Yes; Mrs. Boggs cooked them for me this morning."

"Eat 'em then. Here, you lay down on this half of the blanket, and put your head on the bags, and I 'll cover the tother half over you."

Marion thought it best to obey. "Where's Egbert's coat? I want that over me, too."

"Wot, the butternut cloak? That ain't fine enough for you. Leave it on the saddle. You 'll be warm enough."

"I want it over me," said Marion, firmly.

"Oh, you do! Here it is. *Now will* you be peaceified?"

"Thank you. Good night."

Pol went off and sat near the father, each lighted a clay pipe, and began to smoke. Marion watched them; the man in all his hideous deformity, crouching over the smoking brands; Pol, now seated at his side, now rising and hovering here and there in evil unrest, wizened, wild, and hopeless, more like some ill-omened carrion bird than a human form. A sudden wisdom, born of her lonely and perilous situation, leaped into Marion's mind. What! was she to contend with this desperate crew? She resolved to feign slumber and watch them, if possible to ascertain their dispositions and intentions toward herself. At last, Pol, after stirring from oxen to Peacock, from ox-cart to fire, sat down, and shaking the ashes from her

pipe, began to address her father, but in tones whose harsh snaky hiss alone fell on Marion's eager ears; by the utmost attention she could distinguish nothing of their meaning.

"I say, dad, we must strike side roads, and clear that train, some how."

"Oh, say."

"We must put that stuff in the bottom of the cart, and the hay and the traps on top."

"Like 's not thar ain't nothin' wuth gwine to the trouble fur."

"There 's the blanket, and the saddle, and the bags, and the gal's things, and the cloak," said Pol, counting on her fingers; "and, I say, dad, you searched *him* well."

"Oh, ay; afore I buried him; nothin' went hid on him, only a handkercher, and five dollars in the pocket-book."

"Well, that 's suthin'. And I 'll *bet*, dad, you 'll find some 'at hid in the saddle or butternut, most like in the butternut."

"And thar 's the hoss."

"We 'll lose him. Some set will find him

and take him off. Sech a beast do n't often travel tied with a donkey ahind ox-carts."

"Thar 's the rub. What 'll we say 'bout heving him?"

"Say we found him wanderin', and took him off," replied Pol, boldly. "Everybody 's doin' it, now-a-days. And we must keep the young one in the cart out of sight."

"You seem to shine up to her."

"I do!" cried Pol, bitterly. "Oh, do I! I *hate* her with her yeller curls, her fine frock, and her airs. Oh, I ain't as good as she, be I? I 'm keener by a long way. Oh, I love her! I *hate* the gal."

"You keep Kiz off her."

"See here, dad, there 's ekal chance that she 's found, then thar must n't be nothin' for her to tell of bein' bad treated, nor nothin' we can't put a smooth face on. When we gets nigh Rolly, I 'll take her into the town by night and leave her there, and slip off. Kiz can change duds with her afore that. 'Till then she 's got to keep her fixin's."

"I do n't want to lose the hoss," said the

man, dolefully; "can't one of the boys ride him off, and meet us somewhar?"

"No, they ain't big enough, nor sharp enough," said Pol, decidedly.

"Can't you?"

"Me! Why you rest haint no sense to get along alone. Stupid, you'd be in some box afore I was two mile."

"Oh, ay," said the refugee.

"I wonder if that gal's asleep, so we can look into the butternut," said Pol, and presently she came hovering over Marion, and supposing, from her closed eyes, and placid face, that she slept, she drew the coveted cloak gently off her, and carried it to the fire. Marion watched her as, stirring up the blaze for a brighter light, she sat down on the ground and turned about the garment. Outside and inside she examined it, twisted and turned it, rubbing it in her claw-like hands.

"Thar's some 'at in it!" she cried; and, in a moment, dexterously ripped the lining in various places to seek what was hidden under it. She drew out the papers one by

one, the little packet of bank notes, and, at last, the gold sewed in the collar.

She must have been used to such work, thought Marion, for her fingers accomplished it with uncommon dexterity. Her eyes gleamed with delight at the success of her schemes.

"Thar, dad, doubt me agin!" she exclaimed triumphantly, pointing to the hoard on her lap.

"Hi yi!" chuckled the man, who had set with open mouth, and outstretched hands, eagerly watching his hopeful daughter's proceedings. "Oh, you're one rare one, Pol. Oh, you know it all, Pol. What's 'em papers?"

"Them's money," said Pol, holding up the bank bills.

"No, them white bits?"

"Thar's where I don't know nothin', never larnin' to read, I can't tell. Them ain't of much 'count to us, I 'spect."

"Oh, what is it, Pol, what is it?" said her father, eagerly, holding up a piece of white paper. "Oh, it may be a fortin', Pol."

"Not for us," said Pol. "Now, I'll put all

back and make it snug, and I'll borrey this coat at nights to sleep in, bein' cold, and she hevin' the blanket, and by day I'll have it in the bottom of the cart for safe keepin', ye see. And when I let's her loose in Rolly, why, we'll hev' the cloak, and the bills, and the gold; and the papers we'll burn up some time ef we can't get nobody to read 'em."

"Oh, you're one, Pol, you're one," said the old refugee, turning his ugly head from side to side, and snapping his eyes and teeth together, like little traps suddenly sprung.

Pol took from her pocket a needle, stuck in what she called a "hank of slack," namely, a skein of black linen thread. She restored all she had taken out, and sewed up every rip, if not as neatly, so securely as Marion had done. It took a long time, and it was fully midnight before she had finished. Then she shook it out to see that all was right, and restored her thread, needle, and iron thimble to her pocket.

"Oh, you butternut! You precious old butternut!" she cried, hugging the garment

in her arms. Then wrapping it about her, she said, "Throw on sticks, dad, and let 's go to sleep. I 'm going to stay by this little gal, I 'm afeard she 'll be scary in the night," and, with a mocking laugh, Pol pushed the saddle near Marion, and lay down.

The man piled some brush on the fire, and betook himself to the cart. Marion gently drew as far as possible from her unwelcome guest, and lay, thinking painfully of what she had seen. She made up her mind that they did not intend to help her on her way, but would rob her of all she had, and desert her somewhere, and she concluded her best plan would be to run away from them at the first village they passed through, or throw herself on the protection of the first soldiers she met. Meanwhile, she resolved to allow her new companions to think she did not suspect them of any evil design, or know that they were aware of the treasures of the cloak.

With this difficulty and danger wherein she found herself, Marion's courage rose,

and she felt little like the merry dependent child of a few days before, living under her father's care, and with faithful Dinah to heed her every whim.

Chapter XXX.

TRIALS.

DESPITE her troubles, Marion slept at last. When she awoke the eastern sky was streaked with the rosy dawn. Pol was awake, and leaning on one arm gazing upon Marion's face. That face had grown thin and pale during her short but perilous journey.

"I borreyed your butternut," said Pol, coolly pointing to the cloak which was wrapped about her. "I stayed out of the cart on your account, and I knew you would be glad to give me part of the kivers to keep me from ketchin' the dilsey."

For all her condition was so forlorn, Ma-

rion could not forbear a smile at the familiar word whereby Dinah had been wont to characterize her asthma.

"If you are going to get up you can give it back," she said, quietly, stretching out her hand for the garment.

"Oh, can I? I know you'll be glad I should wear it while I'm fixin' your breakfast; my health ain't very good; don't you see how thin I be?" and Pol jumped up and called Nat to bring sticks for a fire, and Kiz to get some water.

Marion considered some time before she could make up her mind whether to leave the blanket and bags and go to the little stream to wash her face and comb her hair, or remain by her property, to the detriment of her comfort and appearance. Concluding, as she had previously done, to make an ally of Pol, she waited until that woodland sylph flitted near her, and asked,

"Miss Pol, will you keep that little girl from meddling with my things while I go to the brook?"

"I'll keep my eye on 'em. Kiz will keep clear of me. She's bin crockin' the bucket

an' will stay out of reach a bit," replied Pol.

Thus reassured, Marion made some attempt at performing her morning ablution.

Returning, she took the eggs from the saddle-bags, and, as Pol's cooking did not look very inviting, prepared to make a breakfast upon them."

"Oh, you do 'nt like my victuals!" cried the amiable Pol, "may be you will afore you get quit of us."

"I thought I would not trouble you, so long as I had something of my own," returned Marion politely.

"Oh, you 're sly! Come, dad."

The refugee made his appearance with a black bottle, from which he took a drink, and then passed it over to Jake and Pol. Kiz and Nat demanded a share, but were refused; however, Marion saw them helping themselves freely, after the bottle was restored to the wagon, while their father was yoking the oxen.

"Sir, won't you please hurry so we can get up to that train," asked Marion.

"We 'll try. But they 're ahead, and oxen go slow."

"If you 'll fasten the blanket well on Peacock, I will try and get on by myself. I was told they were right on this road," said Marion.

"Hi yi! Could n't do it. 'Twould n't be safe by no means."

"I 'm not afraid, and—you may—keep the saddle and bags—"

"Wot else?" asked the man.

"That 's all. I 'll wrap the cloak about me, and sit on the blanket."

The man stepped back by Pol.

"Do you hear her," he whispered. "Let 's do it. The blanket aint much 'count, and if she 'll throw in the cloak to us, let 's let her go.

"Oh, dunce," cried Pol respectfully. "Oh, block! Oh, stick! you want her to ride on an' ketch that train and tell 'em we 're got the gold and the money, and the white papers, and set a grist of sogers trackin' after us to put us up in that stockade Pete Ryan knows on. She 'd do it. She knows. An' then—I hate her white hands

and yeller curls. We 'll keep her. She 'll eat our victuals, she 'll sleep in that cart wot she turns up her nose at. An' she 'll know how it feels to be turned loose in Rolly.

"Then we won't let her go, Pol. Oh, you 're one, you are."

After appeasing his angry daughter by this compliment, the refugee returned to Marion.

"Can't do it. *She* says the hoss 'd break your neck. You 'd lose the way. You 'd never find the train. Must stay till we catch up to it."

"Well won't you hurry, the sun is way up?"

The man proceeded to gear his oxen.

"Can't I ride on Peacock beside your wagon?" asked Marion.

"Not a bit," cried Pol. "You 'd get into some trouble, and then folks 'd say we did it a purpose.

"Well, give me my cloak," said Marion despairingly.

"It 's too soon for it, and I 'm afeard you 'll spile it. I 'll put all your goods

in the bottom of the cart. Come, Jake, help me fix 'em."

Marion stood by and saw all her possessions put under the vile rubbish belonging to this excellent family.

"Now," said Pol, "this young lady is too nice to walk, she shall ride all the time, an' Kiz and Nat will take turns. Here you Kiz, get in ther, and, Jake, 'ef she gets to cuttin' up any shines, you give her a crack or so with that whip and bundle her out."

Marion took her place as near Jake as possible, that she might have the consolation of a little pure air, still the canvas of the low top was drawn down so closely, that she could see but little and could not easily be seen by one outside. Kiz crowded close to her, deriving great satisfaction from Marion's evident discomfort.

Peacock was tied behind the cart, and Marion saw that Pol and her father frequently mounted him, while Nat, when weary of walking, bestrode the donkey.

As they crept slowly over the rolling prairie land, among the rank weeds and

underbrush, Marion felt almost wild with excitement. At such a rate of speed they never could reach the desired train. Besides she soon saw that they were leaving the main road for one wilder and less travelled.

She remonstrated with the refugee, who was walking by the oxen, concerning this deviation.

"We 'll strike 'em sooner by this road," he answered gruffly.

Marion then considered, that, as the refugees had overtaken her at the foot of the hill where Egbert had fallen from his horse, they must have entered that road by some little used path, of which there were several opening into it, or she and Egbert would in their more rapid travelling have passed them during the day. It was evident that they chose secret ways, as much as possible, and only entered the highway when they could not avoid it. She argued that her only hope of seeing any one who could aid her, would be in those times when they had to enter villages to buy food, or the main road to find suitable fords for the va-

rious streams they must cross. As she sat thus, musing on the difficulties that thickened about her, her hand rested upon something hard in her pocket. She drew out the little morocco testament. Here was her mother's unfailing source of comfort, here were the words that had been strong consolation to her beloved ones in life and death. It seemed a friend in her friendless state, a ray of light in her gloom. She opened the little book, and her eye caught the words, "Now, when he came nigh unto the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." These attracted her attention as the case of Egbert Race rose in her mind. She read on. The sweet and soothing words beguiled her from her cares. Unconsciously all began to seem brighter, she had more hope for the future, more realization of God's guarding presence. All Egbert, in anticipation of such an hour of loneliness, had said to her of confidence, of prayer, of the All-Father's tender love, came home to her. Chapter after chapter she read. Then the low monotonous motion,

the steady light, neither sunshine or shadow that crept through the canvas, and the long continued reading made her sleepy, and she began to nod, finally her head rested against the side of the cart, and she was lost to all about her.

Kiz had been watching her opportunity and softly stole the testament from Marion's relaxing grasp. The red binding of the little volume had attracted her, and then she had an innate delight in theft, that prompted her to seize anything and everything she could lay her hands upon. The quick-eyed Jake saw his sister's deed. As far as Marion was concerned, he did not care whether she was robbed or not. Indeed, anything that would distress her gave him pleasure, as like Pol he felt envious and spiteful, and took the neatness and refinement of the poor little girl as a deliberate insult. Still in this refugee family no passion was so powerful as their mutual dislike for each other. Hate Marion as he might, Jake hated Kiz yet more. They seemed to keep together as a family simply for the pleasure of daily tormenting one

another, or because they could not endure the idea of abandoning to the others the miserable family possessions. Kiz was interrupted in her inspection of her new prize by receiving a blow on the hands from the stock of Jake's whip, which caused her to drop the book. A scuffle ensued, Kiz seeking to wrest the whip from her brother and return the blows with usury. Failing in this, she hunted out an iron spoon of threatening dimensions and attacked him with spirit. The tumult of this warfare, which was carried on with words, as well as blows, awoke Marion, who quickly discovered the cause of the contest, and picking up her testament, restored it to her pocket. After that, she was careful not to fall asleep except with her hands deep in her pockets, guarding the treasures they contained.

The day wore on, and Marion felt herself compelled to share the loathsome family fare, and again at night bivouacked in her blanket with Pol at her side. The next day was the Sabbath. It brought no change in the daily life about Marion. Every one, by word and deed, seemed to insult the sanctity

of the day of rest. There had been no chance for Marion to find friends, and her heart sank, when at the noonday halt she found herself still at the mercy of the refugees. As they sat about the little fire, kindled to mitigate the sharpness of the October air, Marion sought comfort in reading. Presently Pol noisily desired her to read aloud, for she was "mazin" fond of a book! Marion read the parable of the Prodigal Son. In the midst of it Kiz and Nat fell into a rough and tumble quarrel about a square inch of ash cake. Jake dashed after the donkey, who seemed to be treacherously deserting the encampment. Pol waited until the end. Then bouncing up like a rubber ball from the earth she cried out, "Oh, la! is that all! What 'mazin stupid stuff! 'Taint by no means so nice as Ball Perkins used to read us, when he put up at our shebang in his tramps. La, his was full of gold and dimonds and welwet frocks and robbers and hangin' and ridin' and all kinds of nice reading. Then the covers was all fine yaller ones, with a big pictur' on each side.

Let's see your book, has it got any picturs?"

"No," said Marion coolly, putting it in her pocket.

"Come, dad, wake up, it's time we was gettin' on," cried the tireless Pol, who, in a few moments got the whole cavalcade in motion. They had not gone far when there was a clatter of feet behind. Jake and Nat, who occupied the cart with Marion, looked back and reported, "bushwhackers."

Marion had heard of "bushwhackers" and she shuddered. Hoping the boys were deceiving her, she crept where she, too, could look out. She saw two rude looking men, armed with double barreled shot guns, and mounted on the most unhappy looking horses. They stopped when they reached the cart, and ordered the refugees to do the same. They were behind the cart, and Jake pushing Marion well inside, threw the brown blanket over her, and bid her keep quiet. As the family halted they were recognized by the bushwhackers as old neighbors.

"Hi thar, dad! How are you, Pol, where did you get that fine hoss?" The refugees

gave no answer. "You stole him, you know you did," said the first speaker.

"It 's no more nor you 'd do," said Pol surlily.

"No more it taint. Hand him over. We 'd take your whole caboose, only we know you haint nothin' worth taking, and we 're in a hurry. The old refugee slowly unfastened Peacock from the back of the cart, one of the men mounted him, and they dashed on past the cart, and taking a cross road soon disappeared. The party had entered among the Ozark hills. Marion felt sure they were passing S———, her destination, and taking by-roads to some other town. She could get no information from Pol or the man, they still in words assured her they were trying to find a train or friends for her and would soon do so, while their sneering laughs, triumphant glances and sly hints convinced her they had in reality far other intentions.

The party wound slowly up and down the long slopes, over the rustling autumn leaves that carpeted the woodlands, under the frost-dyed arches that stretched over head,

but all that would have been sources of delight, if viewed in safety and with friends, grew tiresome to Marion's weary eyes, and her heart sank with a sickening fear of abandonment among those desolate hills.

Chapter IX.

ON THE ROAD.

IT WAS Tuesday. The day was clear and cold. Marion, unused to exposure, felt the keen temperature severely. Kiz, delighted at the sight of Marion's sufferings, skipped on either side of the cart, making antic contortions and triumphing in the hardness of her own bare hands and feet. As they rode slowly along, they crossed a small but rapid stream. Jake laid down his whip and lines and holding them firmly with his foot, coolly caught hold of Marion, and jerking off her gloves, tossed them into the water. They were swiftly lost to sight among the whirling eddies. Marion called to Pol, but that young lady was sedulously

attentive to the donkey she led, and appeared not to hear. In fact, Pol began to feel pretty safe as regarded Marion. As she walked along, she glanced now and then into the cart, through the small opening left in the back part of the cover, and sought to cheer her flagging spirits by apostrophizing Marion in an undertone, after this fashion: "Oh, there you sit! You keep your yeller hed curled and your face clean, don't you? fond of nice looks, aint you? How do I look? Oh, bad, do I? Not fit for a miss like you, be I? Your hands are getting red, for all your pockets; oh, they're thin skinned; they'll ache, wont they? One night more! Oh, how can I wait for to-morrow night? Oh, how'll you like it? left alone in the dark, in the middle of the night, wearin' Kiz's old rags, and I'll cut your yeller curls off every one! I will, I will, and I wont give you no supper. Oh, oh, how can I wait? You'll cry, yes, you will! How I hate you!"

"Not me?" said the old refugee, who had come behind the cart to get a drink from his black bottle.

"Yes, you, bad enough, but not like I hate that yeller hed. Oh! I can't wait for to-morrow night!"

"Why not to-night then; turn her loose in these woods," suggested the refugee, lifting the bottle to his lips.

"'Cause these hills is alive with sogers, and sogers like young ones, and are spilin' for somthin' to do. And she'd tell 'em a tale, an' they scrape the hills with a harrer but they'd find us and tear every rag up, and not leave us a chip of the cart nor a hair of an ox or a donkey."

The man had listened with his head thrown back in the act of drinking, he took the bottle from his greedy lips. "It's gone, all gone. What'll I do?" he sighed.

"Do as well as I will waitin' for to-morrow night. You'll get some when you get to Rolly."

"You like it too, you know you do," said the father snappishly.

"Yes, I like it. It's all the comfort I hev in life," replied Pol drearily, looking, with longing eyes, at the inverted bottle.

"An' you wont get her off till we gets to Rolly?"

"No, I *wont*. I stick to what I say. The longer I wait the sweeter it 'll be to do it."

"She 'll eat us all out afore that," growled the refugee.

"She wont, she 's fair starvin' herself. She do n't eat a bird's pickin.'"

"Somebody 'll pick her up there in Rolly."

"Yes, for a *refugee*, an' give her refugee treatment and rations. Oh, no more fine shoes, no more fine gloves, no more fine house, no more daddy and mammy settin' store by her. Oh, no, I 'll fix her! She 's a *refugee*, and she 'll live and die a *refugee*."

Oh, what a bitter hatred for the unoffending Marion, quivered in every shrill, cracked tone of Pol's voice as she thus allotted a miserable life for the object of her hate.

The hideous father of this well-dispositioned Pol whistled his approbation of his daughter's spirit, as he walked back to the heads of his oxen. Ah, what a vile, more

than brutish thing is the natural heart, "desperately wicked" indeed, "more bitter than death," "a hater of God," "utterly corrupt." Such is every heart of man. It is only when we see it working unchecked by education, by any restraint of society, by any of those bonds which civilization has cast about it; it is only when we see it in all its bareness, in all its unbridled extravagance, as in this miserable refugee family, that we can realize how totally depraved we are by birthright. When we reflect that under all those restraints that curb and cover man from the eyes of his fellows, God sees him as he is, bad as these offscourings of humanity, how sure can we be that none but an all-powerful and spotless Being could ever undertake the reformation with any hope of success.

Another night gathered about them. Again the refugees encamped near a little stream. With the customary quarrelling, swearing, and general confusion, the fire was lit, the dirty meal prepared, and, owing to the ill humor of the refugee and his two children, on account of the precious black

bottle being empty, matters were even more unpromising than usual. Kiz had seen Jake throw away Marion's gloves, and had since been actuated by a desire to accomplish some similar feat on her own responsibility.

An opportunity presented itself. While all seemed busy arranging the encampment, Marion sat down on a stone by the stream to wash her face and hands, and tempted by the milder air and by being alone, proceeded to bathe her feet. She sat upon her shoes and stockings to keep them safe. She had just got ready to put on the stockings, and held them in her hand for that purpose, when Kiz darted near, snatched them from her, and going to the fire flung them in the midst of the blaze.

"Fool!" hissed Pol in her ear. "You have burned them, when after to-morrow you might have had them to wear."

Kiz gave a howl of rage and chagrin.

Marion hastily tied on her shoes, and climbing to the cart, sought for the parcel in the saddle-bags. It was gone. Pol declared she knew nothing about it, guessed it

had never been there, or thought it had rolled off through the cracks in the floor of the cart. Marion saw there was no help for her, she must go stockingless; and keen was the cold wind sweeping about her bare ankles. In fact, Pol, fearing Kiz might seize upon the parcel, had removed it to a hiding place of her own. Lying alone that night, poorly protected from the cold by the brown blanket, for Pol still claimed the butternut cloak, Marion prayed with all her heart for help, for speedy deliverance from the clutches of this abandoned crew. Tears ran plentifully over her cheeks as she recalled the luxuries, the love, the tender care of the home she had so recently left, but which seemed to lie ages away. With bitter grief, she thought of her father, of the friends in the East who were looking for her coming, and of old Mrs. Race longing for Egbert, who would never come. Then she felt the little packet of mementos she had taken for the bereaved mother from the dead body of her son, and wondered if ever she should lay them in that mother's hand and tell her the mournful story of Egbert's

death. Her heart cried out like him of old, "Up Lord to my help! Make no long tarrying, Oh my God."

Marion hurried to the shelter of her blanket as soon as she had made a pretence of eating supper. As she lay there weeping, praying, and meditating, a new clamor filled her ears. She half raised herself to see, and found that the occasion of the confusion was the arrival of another refugee family who had been travelling rather late. They seemed not unknown to Pol and her father, and the strife for some time seemed to be which family should find out most about the other and tell least about itself. Presently, the matter of getting a fire and something to eat interrupted the questioning.

Marion watched as the new comers drew off on one side and made their arrangements for the night. The family consisted of a very old man, a younger man and his wife, and a host of sons. Long haired, black-eyed, swarthy, stalwart lads were they, who looked as if the race of Anak had not all died out, and in such numbers they swarmed about the fire that one would think

they had sprung up by the wayside, like weeds of the prairie, or grown like turnips in some well sowed field. There was, evidently, no community of interests between these two refugee families. Pol would on no account lend a consenting ear to Bobby asking "for the loan of a spare bucket;" and when Pol's father endeavored to beguile from the aged man a portion of the contents of his black bottle, the whole horde rose simultaneously to the rescue, and drove him back to his own fire.

Marion under the blanket had evidently been seen, and excited suspicion; every possible means was taken to find something out about her. To compass this end, the mother of the family went so far as to cross over to Pol with a bit of bacon toasting on the end of a long stick, and offer it to that gracious damsel, who sat thrusting her feet in the ashes to get them warm. Pol took the bacon, but was inexorable on the subject of questions.

The woman retreated to her own household. Marion watched her as she strode about, wearing big boots, a short linsey

gown, a coarse shawl, a begrimed cap, and a butternut apron. Pol soon was at her wit's end to repulse the curiosity of her unwelcome neighbors. Two or three boys beset Jake with insidious inquiries, and Pol nearly winked her eyes out, and bobbed her head off in signing him to maintain a false appearance of ignorance on the subject. As for her father, the dutiful attentions she paid to him surpassed all description. The two men and the eldest boy had fastened upon him as the most likely subject from which to extort information, and by hints about a "taste of liquor" in case he spoke fair and open among friends, almost won him to confidence.

Pol, however, kept close by his side, spoke to him and for him, and kept all safe, but was driven almost to distraction by seeing two tall boys behind the ox-cart where Nat and Kiz had gone to bed, bribing their youthful hearts by sweet potatoes ready boiled.

Alas for Pol; never had Marion and the butternut cloak been such a torment, and how she longed for the next night to come.

She talked and laughed, but her laughter was like that of a fool, "as the crackling of thorns under a pot," and covered heaviness of spirit. Poor Pol, no black skinned dweller on the shores of Lake Ngemi, no tawny worshipper, prostrate under the wheels of Juggernaut's car, is more of a heathen than she. Without God, without hope, without happiness in this world or the next; degraded and miserable, such she is, and as such, your sister, and mine, and Marion's. Our sister, akin in her humanity, to share with us in death and judgment. "What shall we do for our sister?"

Quiet reigned at last. Everybody crept off to find a sleeping place. When all was still, Pol, wrapped in the butternut, went up to the ox-cart, and gave a rough push to somebody sleeping inside. Her father's head was speedily thrust out from under the cover.

"Wot 's wantin'?"

"See here, dad, them Gibbses are huntin' arter somethin'. Ef they takes it into their heads to search us they 'll do it, and they 'll not leave us a stiver of the gal's things.

Thar's too many of them boys. We must get up quiet afore light, and take to the main road afore breakfast."

"We'll meet the stage, Pol."

"The stage wont hurt us. Leastwise, 'taint so like as those Gibbses."

"Wal—and Pol, thar's a shebang on the road whar we can git the bottle filled afore noon."

"I'll wake you up airly, mind you, and Jake step 'round spry and quiet, and we'll slip off afore them Gibbses get stirrin'."

"Mebby they'll take to the main road too, Pol."

"No they wont. Them oxen of their'n's too fat for 'em to show off whar thar's sogers. And they've two hosses tied behind the cart; they'll keep this road."

"Wal, I say, Pol, we've got to travel most all to-morrey night after we get rid of the gal, and now you'se gwine to rout us up afore day. Don't you never want to sleep none?"

"Not when thar's work to be done. Go to sleep, stupid; I'll rout you out bimeby."

Pol retreated to Marion's side. She slept

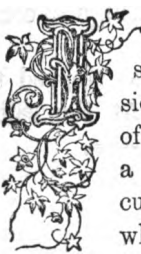
but little, and the stars were yet bright when, like a grim spectre, she haunted the ox-cart again. A few shoves and pulls sufficed to bring out Jake and the old man.

To insure greater quiet, Kiz and Nat were left undisturbed. The oxen were yoked, the donkey was tied behind, Marion was put in the cart near Jake, and the little procession moved off towards the main road, while the Gibbses were scarcely awake enough to comprehend what was going on.

At seven o'clock the refugees stopped to breakfast by the roadside. At the same hour the stage left Rolla for S——.

Chapter X.

THE RESCUE.



IT WAS now noon. The sun shone brightly down on a wayside post-office, situated at the foot of two of the Ozark hills. It was a desolate place. The office occupied one corner of a small store, where salt-fish, meal, whisky, and molasses were offered for sale. At a bend where the stony gorge widened a little, a cluster of tents showed where a company or two of soldiers were posted. In front of the store stood a captain, a lieutenant, and a merry faced ensign, while a tall corporal leaned against a tree; two or three soldiers with their muskets in hand were clustered about half a score of mounted

brothers-in-arms, who formed the guard for the stage. The stage itself was slowly descending one of the hills mentioned, and in a few moments drew up before the post office. The driver sprang from his seat,—thrusting his head into the stage door, he cried,

"Turn out, if you please, gentlemen, and walk up this next hill, it 's a hard pull, and we 're heavy loaded."

Six or seven soldiers got out at this summons, and, seeing the store, went in. The officers hurried up to the stage, from the back corner a lady leaned out.

"Heigh ho, there you are, Carrie," cried the captain, springing in by her side, "how does my small sister like stage-riding?"

"Not well, in such company," said the lady, pointing to the soldiers about the store bar.

"Why, there are Charles, and Freddy, too," and the lady leaned over to shake hands with her young cousins.

"We 've watched for you every stage for a week, to say a cheering word as you passed on," cried Ensign Freddy. "Stag-

ing's dismal, is n't it? Keep your courage up and you 'll get through safe. We expect to be sent into S—— in a week or so, then you 'll see us often."

"The oftener the better, I 'm sure.'

"And see here, sis, if the stage gets fired into to-night, do n't scream," said the captain, mischievously.

"I 'm not given to screaming about trifles, and, I dare say, I 'd be as brave as you for all your shining straps. See, there are more of those odious refugees coming down that opposite hill. What horrible vagabonds they are."

"Yes, as a general thing, they are a set of miserable thieving vagabonds. Now and then one seems to be an object of pity rather than disgust."

"I have n't seen any such. But before I saw what they were, the very word, 'refugee,' filled me with sympathy. I looked on them as a second edition of persecuted and fugitive Arcadians, driven from some abode of peace and plenty. In every refugee girl I imagined an Evangeline, devoted and pure; I find a drinking, noisy, dirty,

half-dressed wretch, sunk below all hope of improvement."

"Extravagant as ever in your feelings, Carrie," said the lieutenant, smiling.

"See, now, that cart is coming near, and they will stop right here to quarrel and swear. When in the world is this stage going on?"

"Oh, don't get uneasy. On this route you must take things cool. They never get the mails ready until the stage is at the door, and then there is so much buying and selling that it becomes a work of time. Besides, you are to change horses here, and as no more is made in that line, I give you an hour longer."

"Ah, well," said the lady, resignedly. "Brother Louis, I'm tired of sitting still, and I've more than a hundred and ten miles yet to ride, help me out, I'll rest by standing still."

So the lady got out, and having little else to do, turned her attention to the cart descending the hill. It was drawn by two lean oxen, a man walked at their heads, and two girls and a donkey followed behind. It was,

in fact, the same establishment Marion had watched as she stood over Egbert Race's dead body.

Various emotions filled the hearts of the refugees at sight of the post-office and the stage. Nat and Kiz were eager to see the sights, and hoped for some chance for petty theft about the shop. The filling of the black bottle occupied the whole of the man's mind. Liquor he must have, the craving thirst of the inebriate had full possession of him. He berated and goaded his slowly moving team in his eagerness to get the liquid fire. Pol feared some trouble on Marion's account, but she had began to feel secure in her schemes, and shared the father's longing for drink. Whisky and tobacco she must have at the store.

As for Marion, peering from the cart upon the stage and the group clustered about it, she felt as if deliverance was near at hand, while a terrible fear that she might be prevented from obtaining help filled her with anxiety. She clasped her thin chilled hands, and prayed with all her heart to God to work for her and rescue her, and keeping

by a great effort very quiet and not seeming to notice the stage, she endeavored to plan some way of escape.

Pol and her father now began a strife as to which should fill the black bottle. Each suspected the other of an intention to get a glass extra besides the filling of the bottle, and neither was willing to resign the privilege.

"I 've got the money," said the father.

"I 've got the bottle," said his dutiful daughter.

"I 've the best right," persisted the refugee.

"You shant do it," said Pol stoutly.

Still the cart kept on its way, and now it stood near the stage.

Kiz and Nat darted like a pair of hornets about the baggage, the store, and the soldiers.

Carrying on her dispute, Pol and her father disappeared within the shop, bidding Jake mind the cart and things. No one was ready to fill the bottle; a small boy supplied them with some tobacco wherewith they filled their corn-cob pipes, and

presently they secured a glass of vile black liquor, and in the enjoyment of this, and in the progress of their mutual quarrel, and criminations and recriminations, Marion was forgotten.

The lady looked at the cart and at Jake with great disgust, but lo, behind Jake looked forth a wan, sorrowful child-face shaded by flaxen curls, and two tiny hands were clasped close together, as if appealing for help. The lady called the attention of her brother and cousins to Marion. "See, Carrie, fallen in ecstacies over one of those refugees," laughed the young man. "Corporal," said Mrs. Carrie Kemp indignantly, "Corporal, you take that little girl out of the cart, I want to see her, I know she do n't belong there."

The tall corporal gathered himself up from his lounging attitude, and touching his cap turned smiling to the cart. Jake at that moment, unable to resist the attractions of the shop, threw down the lines and abandoned his post. Marion was just about to jump from the cart, when the corporal

caught her up as if she had been a kitten, and put her down by the lady's side.

"Oh, madam!" cried Marion, her voice trembling and tears of excitement raining over her cheeks, "can't you take care of me. I'm Marion Hamsted, and my father is John Hamsted of F——. Oh, won't you take me away from those dreadful folks?"

"How came you with them?" asked the corporal.

"Father gave me to Mr. Race to take to S——, and then get me on to grandpa's—and father was going to get away when he could, and Mr. Race died when we had been three days out, and these folks came up and got me."

"And were you alone?"

"Yes, only Mr. Race, and he was dead. Lying dead on the ground."

"And were you walking to S——?" asked the lieutenant.

"Oh, no, we were on one of papa's horses, big black Peacock, but the bushwhackers stole him from the refugees the next day or so."

"When was all this?" enquired the ensign.

"Mr. Race died last Thursday."

"Indeed," cried Mrs. Kemp, "I must take care of this little girl. She shall go to S—— with me, and I will find her friends."

"Do you know who your friends are?" asked the captain.

"My grandpa is John Hamsted, of C——, New York. I don't know any one in S—— but if you 'll write to my grandpa, he 'll take care of me. You won't let those refugees have me!" cried Marion, seizing fast hold of the lady, as she saw Pol, Jake and their father, coming out of the shop.

"No indeed!" cried Mrs. Kemp. "Brother you must send those creatures away."

"Softly, let us hear what they have to say for themselves. Old fellow what do you wait for? Better drive on."

"I want my gal," said the refugee sulkily, pointing to Marion.

"She says she is not your girl."

"She is just the same as that un," returned the man indicating Kiz.

"It is very plain she does n't belong to your flock. Where did you get her? said the captain.

"Speak up," cried the ensign, "or I'll help you; come, tell the truth, old man."

Pol now pushed herself before her father, and said, "do n't pay no 'tention to him, he 's drunk, he is. We got the gal just where she says, and hev been goin' all round out of our way, puttin' ourselves out to find her friends. We 've boarded her, an' took care on her and let her ride all the way, an' if you be her friends, I hopes you 'll pay us summat for our trouble?"

"And how much do you want?"

"Why a matter of ten or fifteen dollars. We buried her brother for her."

"I dare say you found enough on him to pay you for all you have done," said the lieutenant.

"Not a stiver, not a cent, an' we 've had lots of bother with the gal. If you 'll pay me, I 'll move on."

"Have they been good to you?" asked Mrs. Kemp.

"I do n't know as they 've been bad, only Jake and Kiz threw my gloves and stockings away," replied Marion.

"I aint 'sponsible for 'em. They 's bad uns. The gal knows I dun my best," said Pol.

"Well, I'll pay you something," said the captain, taking out his pocket book.

"Please, sir, they 've got the saddle and bags and blanket. I do n't know as they 're worth much, but they have Egbert Race's cloak, and that 's worth a great deal."

"We haint got no cloak, not a bit of one. If you won't pay us we 'll move on and wont help gentry agin," cried Pol, hurrying to the cart.

"Stop," said the corporal, getting his gun in order and stepping in front of the cart, "you don't go until you get leave."

The affair had now attracted most of the soldiers about, and propositions were freely made to shoot the oxen, to hew up the cart, to make a bonfire of the loading, and various other acts of summary justice, which almost reduced the refugee and his two elder children to maniacs.

"Stop," cried the captain; "little girl, tell us what property you have in that cart."

"A saddle, a pair of bags, a blanket and Egbert's cloak. It is a rough butternut

cloak, but it's got bank notes in it, and gold money, and that big girl and the old man know it, for they got it all out one night, and then sewed it back. I saw them."

Pol here fairly shrieked and foamed with rage.

The captain ordered two soldiers to unload the cart, and presently Marion's property came to light.

"Whew-w-w," whistled the lieutenant. "The refugees were going to make a fine game. That saddle is worth forty dollars and the blanket is large and fine. Here is the cloak," and a slight examination served to show where the money had been taken out and returned.

"Burn their old duds up, they are a set of thieving scamps," cried the corporal.

"No," said Marion, "if you please sir, let them go on, and," she added, the proud blood flushing up in her pale cheek, "I don't wish ever to remember that I am in debt to refugees. They got enough money off Egbert to pay for burying him, but wont you please take some of my money and pay

them for what time I was with them. I cannot eat their food, and ride in their cart for nothing."

"They don't deserve a cent, they ought to be thankful if they are allowed to move on."

"I should feel better," said Marion quietly.

Here then, tumble your dry goods into your cart, and move off with you. Here are five dollars, which you do not deserve. I give you ten minutes to get in moving order."

The captain pulled out his watch, and before the hand had moved over ten minutes, Marion, to her intense relief, saw the wagon starting slowly up the hill, the man goading his oxen cruelly as he walked in front, Pol beating her donkey unmercifully as she followed behind, and Kiz and Nat, being driven from the cart by Jake, kept up a running fight alongside. And then, in the very excitement of relief, Marion sat down on the roadside, and began to cry.

Meantime Mrs. Kemp and her brother hastily made their arrangements.

"I will take her to S——," said Mrs. Kemp, "and then write to her grandfather. You know I expect to go on to New York in six weeks or two months, and can take her to C——, and leave her with her friends."

"Very well, and as for this saddle, there is an officer here who wishes to buy one, and I will sell him this, and send you the money to give the child. You may be able to get word through to F—— to her father about her, but I fear not."

"She looks forlorn," suggested the ensign; "you surely can't take her all the way to S—— in that fix."

"The stage will stop some time at W—— for supper and change horses, you can get her comfortable there," said the captain. "There, they are harnessing up. I'll go and settle for her seat. You'll see us in S—— in about two weeks; remember me to brother Richard," and while the captain hurried off to make arrangements for Marion, Mrs. Kemp devoted herself to soothing the excited child.

Marion was nearly worn out, and besides

could hardly realize that she was out of the hands of the refugees. In a few moments, she found herself seated beside her friend, retracing, in the stage, the route she had just travelled in the ox-cart.

Chapter XI.

NEW FRIENDS.

THE roads were rough, and the fifteen miles to the next post were slowly travelled. Marion knew but little about them. Her weary head soon found a resting place in the corner of the seat, and she fell fast asleep. The stage toiled slowly up long hills, rattled over short stretches of level road, swung and jarred down rough descents, and still Marion slumbered on, until a gentle shake and Mrs. Kemp's merry call, "wake up, little one!" aroused her.

The stage stood in front of a log tavern, the driver was unharnessing the horses, and a soldier waited on one side ready to make

a clumsy effort at helping Mrs. Kemp and her charge out. Marion followed Mrs. Kemp into the front room, the floor was bare but white as snow; two beds in gay quilts of red, white, and green, occupied one side; the pillow-cases and curtains were ornamented with broad knit lace. On the wall hung several gaudy prints in wooden frames, and on one side of the fire-place stood a cupboard with doors of perforated tin. Mrs. Kemp asked for a room where some improvement might be made in Marion's dress. The landlady, a fierce vixen, declared there was none to be had. Mrs. Kemp, however, insisted, and at length was shown to a small room up stairs, whither two soldiers carried her trunk. Supper was long in process of preparation. The more the driver railed and the passengers remonstrated, the more slowly did the amiable hostess move. This delay was quite acceptable to Mrs. Kemp, as it gave her ample time for Marion's toilette. When all was done, the lady indulged in a hearty laugh at the queer figure she had dressed up. Marion's dress and coat, from riding in the re-

fugee's wagon and sleeping on the ground, were unfit for further wear. Mrs. Kemp had, therefore, basted a deep tuck in one of her own dresses, that it might reach to the top of Marion's boots. A light shawl was substituted for the coat, and gloves and hose, belonging to Mrs. Kemp, supplied those Jake and Kiz had thrown away.

"Oh, you look too funny!" cried Mrs. Kemp.

"I feel right comfortable," said Marion.

"We'll try to get a new wardrobe in S——, so that you won't frighten your grandfather when you go home."

"I think if I had some supper I should consider my troubles about over," said Marion.

Here a red haired girl burst off the button of the door in a resolute attempt to get in without knocking, and announced,

"Eatin' time, folks!"

Mrs. Kemp strapped her trunk, made a present of Marion's late wardrobe to the courteous red head, and, with Marion, descended to the "dining-room."

This was a long shed with a table of

rough boards in the middle, and benches of no elegant construction on either side; two tallow candles with long smoky wicks, alone lit up the gloom. There was a plate and a cup for every guest, but some had a knife, some a fork, some a spoon to eat with, none had all three, few had a knife and fork. However, as each was ready to lend, they managed to get on pretty well. The meal was a heterogeneous affair which would have shocked an epicure, but was speedily disposed of by appetites sharpened by thirty miles of riding in the keen mountain air. It was dark when they again took their places in the stage. The agent put his head in the door,

"How many of you are in there?"

"Seven," cried some one.

"All right, drive on," and once more the stage went clattering over stony roads.

Again Marion slept; she had become accustomed to danger, and the thought of an attack by "bushwackers" did not keep her awake. Now and then, in moments of drowsy half-awaking, she heard the soldiers narrating to each other their experience with

these land pirates. At times, as some shaded cove, or dark clump of trees, or bold mountain shadow was passed, some one would say, "Here 's a good place for an attack," and there would be a hasty glance out on the road dimly shown by the starlight, and a click as revolvers were grasped for use, and then the stream of conversation quietly flowed on again.

Once Marion was kept awake for some time by her interest in the tale told by a sunburnt soldier of middle age, who occupied a corner of the front seat.

"My wife is dead," he said, "and I have six children. Missouri is my State, and I could n't stand to have her invaded, so I told the children to keep up a good heart and see to my little place, and I 'listed and went off. I've a boy eighteen and one fifteen and a gal sixteen year old. The others are little fry. After six months I went home on a furlough and took my money. Joe, my big boy, could n't content himself, so he went out as one of the scouts, and he 's a good scout too. I stayed my time, and gave Jenny the money, and told her and Ben to

look out for the others, and went off. The next night the bushwackers, two of them neighbors, mind you, that I 'd never suspected, and shook by the hand when I was home, came in the night to my house. They carried off the horse, and the pigs; they took all the money I gave Jenny; they took every thing they could carry, even to the shoes off the girl's feet, and the beads off the baby's neck."

"And what did your boy do?" asked one, eagerly.

"Poor Joe, he snapped an old pistol at 'em, but it missed fire, and then they spoke of hanging him. After all they took the clothes-rope and carried Joe off and tied him to a tree, and Jenny went and cut him loose after they left."

"How did your children get on then?"

'Well the best cow had to be sold to buy things to make up for what the bushwackers got. And my second gal, ten year old she is, got such a fright that her mind 's been wrong ever since. I 'm going home to see 'em now."

"And will you see that neighbor that robbed them?"

"Better not for him," said the man, and a quick snap, as his hand involuntarily closed on the trigger of the revolver, betrayed emotion that had found no expression in the steady monotone in which he told his tale. Marion was just falling asleep again, when the wheels grated and sunk in the sand and gravel, and there was a rush and splash of water. She roused and looked out; they were fording the Gasconade. The mountain stream, well worthy of its name, rippled, and dashed, and shone silver bright, and foam-flecked beneath the stars. On either side the dark woods climbed the hills, and seemed to press the bending skies. The dark forms of the guards and their horses were seen grouped about as the beasts stooped to drink, and the stage waited for the watering of its four weary grays.

"We wont be attacked to-night," said one, "we've passed the California house, and that's the worst place on the road."

The river was forded; the stage had toiled

up half the ascent beyond. Suddenly there was a flash and crash of rifles; a shower of balls rattled through the cover of the stage and on the baggage behind. The horses reared and plunged, and from one came a loud wild cry that told of suffering. The guard dashed closely about the stage; for a moment everybody was crying out to know if any one was hurt. "All safe," shouted the driver; but already the searching of the woods had begun. For fifteen minutes there was a dashing about, discharging of arms, and a general tumult, then the guard gathered back in the road with two captured men, one of whom had an arm hanging heavily down by his side, and a torn and blood-stained sleeve.

"This here off leader's dead," said the driver, who, with one of the passengers, had been busy unfastening the injured horse from the traces.

"You'll get another at the post above," observed one of the guard.

"Well this is about the boldest thing that's been done, and I can't understand

what they meant, for they were few and they saw the stage was guarded."

"There! there come those other fellows now," said a soldier, pointing where three of the guard were coming up the road. One of them led a riderless horse. In the glossy blackness of his well-made frame, and the three singular feather-like marks on his breast, Marion recognised her own faithful Peacock.

"Where did you get him?" some one called out to the guard.

"Tied not far off beyond the turn. It's my idea they were going to try and seize the mail, and then one of them carry it off on this fellow."

"That's my very horse that the bush-whackers stole from me," cried Marion.

"Whereabout?"

"Last week, when I was coming through the brush."

"Aye, aye, they likely stole him for this very affair. Hitch him up, driver, in place of your gray. Look out for your prisoners, men, don't let them escape or be rescued. Now, eyes sharp about you, and don't be

caught napping. Move on," shouted the sergeant in command of the guard, and on went the stage, every one on the alert for further adventure. The remainder of the night passed without disturbance.

There was no thought of growing sleepy after the attack, and Marion watched the stars lose themselves in the gray dawn, and then the rosy flushes of the East brightening into gold before the coming of the sun, until the sky was clear deep blue, the air all mellow with light, and the dew lay trembling and gleaming on every grassy blade. About ten o'clock the stage stopped at a station for breakfast. The two neat little houses, the tidy matron and her daughters, the comfortable fire blazing on the hearth, the table with its plain but wholesome fare, seemed to Marion almost like a glimpse of home after her wanderings through the brush.

"Only thirty miles more," said the weary passengers. "Only thirty miles to S——. We shall be there by sundown."

Marion looked eagerly forward to a place where she could rest. And, moreover, she

was in hopes that word might be sent to her father, and he would join her in S——. The journey was again resumed, but the prospects of a pleasant day was soon withdrawn. A cold strong wind blew from the south-east, clouds shadowed the clearness of the smiling sky. Then when the whole heaven was dark with gathered clouds, the lightning flashed in broad red sheets, and the pealing thunders seemed to shake to their very centres the Ozark Hills. The strong trees of the forest trembled in the storm, the birds flew, with troubled cries, to the unsteady shelter of the boughs. Even the rude spirits of the guard, and the soldier passengers, were awed into silence. Marion, ever susceptible to all the changing influences of nature, grew pale as the storm increased. The sublimity of the tempest was forgotten in its terrors, and while Mrs. Kemp, with brightening eye, watched the shadows lit up by the lightening, and the swaying trees, Marion full of dread, longed only for calm.

"Why how is this?" said Mrs. Kemp,

"you are more timid in a storm than I am, while you are less afraid of bushwhackers."

"I seem more used to them. To be sure I have seen hard storms, but then I was at home. I could run into some room all shut up, where I need not know much about how stormy it was, or I could get by papa or mamma, and then I never felt afraid. Besides, bushwhackers are only men at best, but in such a storm one seems to come near to God."

"And do you not desire to be near God? I fear you do not love him."

"I fear him more than I love him, I think. He seems to me very great and far off generally, so I cannot know much but his power."

"But as that power is ever exerted for our best good and highest happiness, it should move us to love him. God commands us to love and reverence him; he also presents himself in such a form that it would seem impossible to avoid doing both."

Marion did not reply. Her thoughts had been divided between the awe of the storm and the words of her friend. And

besides, while Mrs. Kemp's remarks appeared so true that she could not cavil at at them, her unconverted heart was not ready to assent.

A soldier leaned forward from the front seat and remarked, "Lady, what you say is very true, I dare say, and I often think when I get done with this war, and go home, I'll try and get religion."

"Why not ask for it, and have it given to you now?"

"I can't see as war and camps are any place for it. They're too bad."

"The worse they are, the more you need it."

"Just as I said; I mean to look arter religion when I get home. My woman'll help me, she's a Methody and mighty good. Parson Gregg, he calls her a burnin' and shinin' light."

"I'm glad to hear you have so good a wife."

"I have, that's so. I haint nothin' agin her."

The storm was at last over. The evening became quite clear, and the five miles

of prairie lying next the town were quickly passed. The stage rolled up to the door of the hotel, and Marion, almost too weary to stir, was lifted to the ground by the amazed Major Kemp. Marion followed her friends slowly up to their room, not a little annoyed by the gazing and ejaculating of half a dozen mulatto servants, who had gathered in the hall and were quite attracted by the queer fashion of apparel. Meantime Mrs. Kemp exclaimed about the tedious journey, the delight at arriving in S——, and the manner of meeting Marion, until by the time the trunk was carried up and bonnets were laid aside, her husband had managed to arrive at a tolerably clear comprehension of matters.

A small room near Mrs. Kemp's was secured for Marion, and, to her great relief, Mrs. Kemp promised to have her meals sent up to her, until she had clothing suitable for her appearance at table. A letter was prepared to go out by the next day's mail, informing old Mr. Hamsted of his granddaughter's safety, and asking if she should be sent on to him at once or wait until Mrs.

Kemp went East. Then, early in the evening, Marion, completely worn out, sought her comfortable bed, and for the first time for many nights, she lay down feeling secure. A few troubled thoughts of her father, anxious and in danger, flitted across her sleepy brain, and then all was forgotten in a heavy sleep. Still those few thoughts had called the grieved look to her young face, and the tear that Mrs. Kemp saw on her cheek when, somewhat later, she went in to see that all was right with Marion before retiring herself.

When Marion awoke the next day, the sun was streaming brightly in through the small white curtain of her window, and Mrs. Kemp was standing looking over the foot of her bed.

"Is it time to get up?" asked Marion.

"Not if you don't feel like it."

"Is it breakfast time?"

"We all had breakfast long ago, and I have been out to the store and bought you two dresses, and some white aprons, and quite a parcel of other goods; and brought you up gloves and shoes to try on. When-

ever you are ready you can dress, and I will have a nice breakfast brought up into my room for you."

Marion did not feel sleepy any longer, and was soon in the next room.

A seamstress was found, and one or two ladies in the hotel offering their assistance, Marion had soon a sufficient outfit to last until she reached her friends. Mrs. Kemp sent to St. Louis for a hat and cloak, and Marion began to feel like herself again.

Major Kemp made several attempts to get a message to Mr. Hamsted, but never succeeded in obtaining an answer, or in ascertaining whether or not he had left his home. In about a fortnight, a letter came from old Mr. Hamsted, stating that as he was too infirm to take a long journey, and had no one to send for Marion, he preferred to have her remain with Mrs. Kemp and accompany her East. After that, every week brought letters to Marion from her grandfather and aunts. Loving letters they were, and written in a genial encouraging tone, though there was a vein of sadness running through them all, for Marion's father had not

yet reached his home, nor had any news of him gladdened the hearts of his family. Old Mr. Hamsted had written to Mrs. Race, informing her of Egbert's death, and promising that, when Marion reached C——, she should go and visit her, and tell her of her son's last hours.

Three aunts wrote frequently to Marion, but one, Aunt Susy, became dearer through this correspondence than the others. Her letters seemed such a free outpouring of a wise and loving heart that they were ever eagerly looked for and often read. "I feel as if I know Aunt Susy so well," Marion would say.

Mrs. Kemp's departure was delayed from time to time, much to every body's disappointment. Every one did all in their power to make Marion happy, walks were taken, visits made; books and work occupied the morning hours, and frequently a ride over a sweep of prairie land, where a faint green yet lingered despite the lateness of the season, brought back the bloom and roundness of form that Marion had lost while wandering through the brush.

Christmas came, the Christmas when Mr. Hamsted had bidden Marion have the tree and gifts prepared for him in his father's house; and though thoughtful friends had covered Marion's table with many a kind token of remembrance, the morning was greeted with a burst of tears.

"Oh, papa, papa," she cried, as raising on her arm, she looked in the early light to the table spread with gifts, "where are you, my papa, you said you would be home?" and, hiding her face in her pillow, she wept bitterly.

"Cheer up, Marion," said Mrs. Kemp. "You must have a merry Christmas after all, my dear. Mr. Kemp says we will doubtless start home in a fortnight, and all will be right then you know."

"Oh, Mrs. Kemp, what shall I do for my papa?"

"Keep your courage up and wait patiently; he will get home when you least expect him, I dare say."

Chapter XX.

A BATTLE.

THE fifth and sixth of January were busy days. At last Major Kemp was ready to start, and Mrs. Kemp and Marion were very busy packing their trunks to leave on the seventh. Mr. Hamsted's papers and money, except what Marion had used, had been put by Mrs. Kemp in a small desk which was placed in Marion's trunk. With it lay the lock of hair and little silk neck-tie she had taken for Egbert's mother, and also the Testament and needle-case, both bent and soiled, but ever to be kept as mementoes of her dangerous flight. Marion would look at them sometimes, and, mindful of her

father's half-jesting words, picture to herself a grey-haired, wrinkled old lady in cap and spectacles, with a large silk apron and book muslin handkerchief, like the portrait of grandma Kemp, showing those worn relics to a group of merry children, and telling of that parting and escape, that peril and rescue.

"There you are," cried Marion, as the last article was laid in its place, and she beheld her trunk neatly packed. "Now the next one that touches those things will, I dare say, be my Aunt Susy, taking them out!"

"I 'm sure it 's quite delightful to think of being home and in a safe and quiet place once more," said Mrs. Kemp, locking her own trunk. "Now, before I go to bed I will pack that travelling bag and all will be done. To-morrow, by this time, I hope we shall be many miles on our way. It will be a hard journey, particularly if it comes up cold."

"There comes Major Kemp, and your brother, the captain," said Marion, "I hear them on the stairs."

Mrs. Kemp jumped up from the floor

where she had sat to lock the trunks and buckle the straps, and went dancing to the door to meet her brother and husband.

"Congratulate me, all is packed, and to-morrow we shall be 'homeward bound,'" she exclaimed, merrily, catching a hand of each.

There was no response to her mirth. The two gentlemen looked very grave, and Major Kemp, closing the door, said,

"Is there any one in there?" pointing to Marion's room.

"Oh, no, we are all alone, Marion and I. What in the world has happened to you? You look as if the whole responsibility of the war was resting on your shoulders."

"Come, rattle-box, lend me thine ear a minute," said the captain.

"You and Marion know how to keep your own counsel. What I tell you is not to be spoken of. We cannot go to-morrow. The scouts have just come in and report a large force, under Marmaduke and others, marching on this place. We shall, doubtless, be attacked to-morrow."

"And can the place be defended?"

"We *shall* defend it as long as we can."

"But do you think the enemy can be repulsed?"

"In my opinion, Carrie, all we can do will be to hold the forts, and that I hope we can do until aid comes to us."

Mrs. Kemp and Marion each drew a long breath. Marion glanced at her trunk; a moment before the distance between herself and her grandfather's seemed very short. Now suddenly it widened, and an infinitude of time and distance appeared to spread itself between her and her kindred. Mrs. Kemp, metamorphosed in a moment from the gay, almost childish creature she had seemed a moment before, turned quietly around, and asked,

"What do you wish me to do? Anything?"

"Simply maintain a calm exterior, and also pack up any valuables and money you and Marion have, as compactly as possible in a box, and mark it carefully, so if we have to take refuge in the forts, it can go there at a minute's notice."

"Is this generally known?"

"By no means; it would create a panic and do no good. From our position we know it, and also that every moment is being occupied in the best possible measures of defence. We must be off again for a while."

The major and captain departed. Marion following Mrs. Kemp's example, proceeded to take her money from the trunk, and her box of treasures. The floor was strewn with the articles of clothing they had taken out, when a tap at the door was followed by the entrance of one of the ladies boarding in the house.

"Dear me! unpacking, what is that for?" she exclaimed.

"I am about to make some change in the arrangement of my goods," replied Mrs. Kemp, smiling as serenely as if she had never heard war news.

"My! my! so much trouble for a notion, you must love packing better than I do. I tumble things in as fast as I can."

"Maybe I am more whimsical than you. But I don't mind packing at all; I am used to it."

"And you are going to start to-morrow?"

"There, do n't ask me!" cried Mrs. Kemp, holding up her hand playfully. "Every time I have set a day for going, something has happened. I have told you a dozen times I was going home, and have always been disappointed, *now* I wont say so until I am in the stage."

"Do n't then, or all the stage horses may die for your detention. Good-bye for the present, you have too much business for company, I am sure."

The lady went out, and Marion looked at Mrs. Kemp, who had grown pale and grave the instant the door closed, and wondered at her self-possession.

"Now, Marion, here are a number of old handkerchiefs and garments, you and I must put the other things back as soon as possible. Lock the door, and tear these and this bundle of linen into lint and bandages, and pack it in that travelling basket. We will put in a tea-spoon, a bottle of wine, and some brandy, a towel or so, and a few wash-cloths, and be all ready to do our part for the wounded; God help them."

During the evening, Mrs. Kemp and Marion sat silent, working on lint and bandages. Each heart was busy with the dangers of the morrow. Mrs. Kemp thought of her husband, brother, and young cousins, who must peril themselves in the fight, and as now and then one of them came in to say a few bright words, and see how she was feeling, she could scarcely command her voice to reply steadily. It seemed to those two, as they wrought on what must bind mangled limbs and staunch the bleeding wounds of those who were now all life, and health, and daring for the combat, that through the stillness of the night they could hear the steady tramp of hostile armies marching over the prairie land.

It was growing late, when Mrs. Kemp said, "Come, Marion, we must go to bed. We know not what demand may be made on our strength to-morrow, and we must get all the rest we can, to be ready for any emergency."

"I 'm sure I do 'nt feel sleepy. I seem to hear shots whistling about, and armies coming on, all the time," replied Marion, gather-

ing up a large handful of lint to put in the basket.

"A sure sign that you are nervous, and need repose. If you are afraid you can leave the door between the rooms open."

"I am not afraid," answered Marion; nevertheless she left the door ajar.

Once or twice as she lay in her bed, Marion heard the little clock on Mrs. Kemp's mantle strike the hours, then she fell asleep, and did not rouse until she could easily see to dress herself in the grey light of dawn. She rose with a strange feeling of terror and oppression, and went to the window to look out. The streets were filled with soldiers, a cannon was being taken to a small fort a short distance from the hotel. Citizens, aware now of their danger, were thronging out to take part in the defence. She hastened to dress herself, and as she was doing so, heard the voices of the major, the captain, and the two young lieutenants, Mrs. Kemp's cousins, in the next room. Just as she had finished her toilette, Mrs. Kemp opened the door. "Are you ready, Marion? come out if you are."

Marion saw tears on her friend's cheeks and heard them in her voice. She went half reluctant into the room. The young men were evidently ready for their duty.

"Keep a good heart, little refugee," cried the captain gaily, "you 'll get safely through this trouble like all the rest, and go to grandpa's bye and bye. Only one more adventure to tell."

"Wish us good fortune, curly-head, we are going to fight for you to-day," said the merry second lieutenant.

"Oh, I hope, I hope nothing will happen to you," exclaimed Marion, the tears rushing to her eyes, so she could hardly see the four stalwart forms and healthful faces she might never behold in life again.

"We 'll hope for the best, but do you keep calm and quiet; fear will do you no good. I trust we shall all be safe here to-morrow."

"Major, the coffee you ordered is on de table," called a servant at the door.

The four officers went down to the dining-room, accompanied by Mrs. Kemp and Marion. All was confusion through the house.

People were hurrying to dress and pack their valuables, and many ladies, who should have been more sensibly employed, were rushing about, asking questions it was impossible for any one to answer, or sobbing and crying hysterically. To these Mrs. Kemp spoke mildly but firmly, urging them to maintain a firm demeanor and be helps, rather than hinderances, in the hour of trouble.

"It 's all very well for you to take everything so coolly, you are but a stranger here. But if this place is taken my husband's store will be plundered of thousands of dollars worth of goods, and we shall be nearly ruined. I have so much at stake," cried one lady.

"And have not I," replied Mrs. Kemp, in a low tone, pointing to the four officers who were taking their coffee and some sandwiches. "This battle may take from me a husband, an only brother, or two dear cousins, or all."

"How can you be so tranquil!" exclaimed another lady who had hurried into the dining room with uncombed hair, and a wrapper and shawl hastily flung about her.

"It is your northern blood, you are made of snow or milk of roses, but with my nervous temperament how can I bear it. It will kill me, I am sure. Oh, to hear shot and shell flying over one's head. I am trembling every minute to hear the first gun. I shall have my horse saddled and brought round at once."

"Do not be so foolish. What good would a horse do you? If the town is taken, you could not escape on horseback. Pray, dress yourself as usual, and wait to see what it is your duty to do," said Mrs. Kemp rebukingly, and then passing by, she took her place by her husband. In a few moments the hasty meal was over. There was a tearful, almost silent, farewell, and Mrs. Kemp and Marion having watched the major and his companions until they were lost in the throng in the street, hurried up stairs.

Mrs. Kemp, apparently forgetful of any presence, threw herself on her knees by the sofa, and hid her face in the cushions. Marion quietly withdrew to her own room and closed the door. After some little time she heard steps in the next room, and look-

ing in saw her friend setting everything in order. "The servants are too much frightened to work, Marion, we must regulate the rooms ourselves," said she. They had hardly began to do this, when the sound of distant firing fell on their ears.

"The battle has begun," said Mrs. Kemp, throwing up the window to listen to the sound. Turning in a moment she said, "Marion, I am going up to the top of the house to see what I can."

"Let me go with you," said Marion, dreading to be a moment separated from her friend.

"Come, then, if you like," and in a short time the two were in the attic of the house. Fixing the steps in their place Mrs. Kemp unhooked the shutter in the roof, and looked out in the direction of the firing. Smoke and flashes of flame were to be seen in the distance, but the sound of the skirmishing was almost lost in the tumult of the streets. After looking for a few moments, Mrs. Kemp said, "Well, Marion, we must go down and arrange our room, we may need things in order."

They hastened back and quickly completed the task. As Marion saw the arrangements her friend was making, the thought flashed upon her that she was preparing everything in case any of her friends were brought in wounded. They were almost through their task, when some one tapped at the door. It was a lady boarding in the house, who held in her arms a baby boy.

"Mrs. Kemp," she said, "I want to stay in here. The noise disturbs baby in my front room."

"Come in, certainly, I am glad to have you. Harry looks sick."

"He is, his teeth trouble him."

"Where is your nurse?"

"Combie?" Why, she is so frantic with terror, she is quite unfit for work, she is hiding under my bed, and I cannot get her out."

Marion drew up a chair for Mrs. Templeton, but she had scarcely sat down before Combie, her nursemaid, a tall mulatto girl, ran in, and taking refuge in a corner behind her mistress's chair, sat down on the floor, and hiding her face on her lap, began

to sway herself backwards and forwards, moaning and crying.

"Really, Combie, I wish you would act more sensibly, you are as safe as I am. I want you to take care of Harry, or set my room in order."

"Laws, missis, I can't, I'd let him drop right out of my hands."

"Combie, I had a mind to ask you to go down stairs and help me carry something up," said Mrs. Kemp.

"Sakes alive, missis, I could n't no how; I'se dat bad scared, I'm nigh about dead."

"I'll go," said Marion, and she followed Mrs. Kemp into the cellar kitchen of the hotel. The lady got a pot, made some coffee, and arranging some cups on a waiter with a bowl of sugar and a pitcher of milk, she and Marion carried all up to their room. The tray was set on the table, the coffee-pot on the stove. "Now," said Mrs. Kemp to Mrs. Templeton, "I have something to refresh our friends if they come in for a moment. We will keep a good fire and leave the door open, so you can see your husband if he should run up to make you a call."

Mrs. Templeton shook her head. "Henry is in the fort farthest off," she said. "I am afraid he won't get here."

The hours were dreary ones. The noise of the firing increased and came nearer. Marion held Harry while Mrs. Templeton set her room in order. After some time, she went out into the hall to watch for the coming of any friends. Presently she called out, "Here's the lieutenant!" Mrs. Kemp poured out a cup of coffee, supplied it plentifully with milk and sugar, and had it ready to hand to her cousin as he entered the door. "We're all safe yet," he said, as he drained the welcome cup.

"And what is the prospect?"

"The enemy are nearer and are planting their cannon," and he darted off. Confirmation of his report was soon given in bursting shells and the crashing of cannon shot. Combie redoubled her moans and cries, and still kept her corner.

"Combie," said Mrs. Templeton, "you really must go down stairs and bring me up a tin cup, to heat something for Harry."

"Laud, missis, could n't do it. I 'se *too* 'fraid."

"But Combie, the child is sick, and I must have the cup."

"Wish I was dead," said Combie.

"I am sorry you are adding to my troubles in this way, Combie."

"I 'se down sick, I am, I wish I had n't nebber see de light."

"I 'll go," said Marion, starting up, out of patience with the girl's caprices. "I had as leave go as not." She had gone half way down the stairs, when a shell dashed in the front porch, and tearing its way in the side of the door, burst, scattering splinters and fragments of wall about. She waited, overcome with surprise for a moment, for it was an unexpected encounter, and then with a quick thought that the danger was past, and she could as well do her errand then as when she started, she ran down for the cup.

"Marion! Marion!" cried Mrs. Kemp anxiously from the top of the stairs, and presently Marion came tripping towards her, somewhat flushed and panting but all unharmed. "You must not leave the room

again," said Mrs. Kemp, drawing her to her side.

"I am no safer here. A shell may come in among us," replied Marion. Mrs. Templeton pressed Harry closer in her arms, and Combie gave a loud shriek.

Evening came at last and there seemed a lull in the combat. Several ladies gathered in Mrs. Kemp's room. "Our new church is badly injured, I'm afraid," said one, "I saw it struck and the bricks flying a number of times."

"Mrs. ——'s has been almost a target one would think, from the number of balls and shell that have hit it. I should not be surprised if some of them had been killed." Here Mrs. Templeton saw a soldier coming up the stairs, and ran out into the hall. "Orderly, what is the news?" she asked breathlessly.

"The captain is safe, ma'am. He says not to be uneasy, he will sleep in the fort to-night."

"But he is worn out, orderly, he will need something to eat, too."

"They are getting us coffee and bread ready in the forts."

"Here, orderly," said Mrs. Kemp, going into the hall, "drink this cup of coffee and eat a biscuit, for your good news." As she gave the lad the cup, she looked about and saw the major coming up the stairs. "Thank God, you are safe. How are the boys?"

"Safe, as far as I know," he replied, entering the room.

Marion saw that he was covered with dust and blackened with powder, and hastened to pour out a basin of water. With a nod of thanks, he dashed it over his face and hands, while his wife drew up an arm chair and poured out coffee for him. "I can stay but an instant, I must go back to the fort," he said.

"And what is our prospect now?"

"The enemy are repulsed on every side. To-day's attack has been a failure. What they will do to-morrow, I cannot tell you."

"Here comes the captain," said Marion.

"Brother, you bring bad news," said Mrs. Kemp, catching his sorrowful eye.

"Lawrence is wounded. They are bringing him in here. Are you ready?"

"All ready," replied Mrs. Kemp, sadly, handing him some refreshment, and turning to prepare the bed.

Three soldiers entered carrying the powerless form of the merry ensign. Major Kemp looked at him and shook his head. "Take good care of him, Carrie. God bless you. I'll be in early in the morning," and he went away.

"Have as few in the room as possible, Carrie. I'll try and get a surgeon here. Keep him quiet and follow your judgment about him," said the captain.

"Can't his brother come in and see him?"

"I'll try and send him. Poor boy, his hours are few."

The captain went away. Mrs. Kemp made every one but an old lady, Marion, and herself leave the room, and began to attend to the wounded man. She loosened his clothing, bathed his head, gave him water and wine, and endeavored to dress his wound. He seemed insensible to any of her atten-

tions. At last the doctor came in. After a hasty examination, he said, "poor lad, all I can do is to make him a little more comfortable. I don't think he will last until morning."

Late in the evening the lieutenant came in and bent over his dying brother and clasped his hand, "Lawrie, Lawrie," he cried, "don't you know me!"

The boy's eyes unclosed for an instant. He looked feebly about.

"Do you suffer any?" asked his brother. Lawrence shook his head.

"Do you feel sick, Lawrie?"

The wounded lad's lips parted slowly, "Dying," he whispered.

"Lawrie, dear fellow, are you afraid to die?" asked Mrs. Kemp bending over him.

A wan smile parted his lips, "All is right," he said calmly.

"I must go," said the lieutenant, looking at Mrs. Kemp. "I must, but it is hard to leave him. How will poor mother bear this?"

"Your duty calls you, John. God help

you, I know your heart aches, you have been loving brothers."

"He was our youngest, our family darling," said the soldier, a tear rolling down his manly cheek, and kissing the forehead of his dying brother, he left the room. Mrs. Kemp, her old friend, and Marion were alone with the wounded youth. At last Marion lay down on a lounge and fell into a light slumber. At times, opening her eyes, she saw the two ladies bending over the bed, busied in cares for the wounded man. It was nearly morning when he seemed to grow restless, and Mrs. Kemp supported his head on her arm. Marion got up and went near the bed. Lawrence breathed with difficulty. The old lady looked at Mrs. Kemp, "My dear, he is dying."

"Lawrie do you know me?" asked Mrs. Kemp.

Lawrence turned his eyes on her with a flash of the old light, his voice came clear as of old, "All is right, Carrie, all is right!" It was the flash of the expiring life, his head dropped on his cousin's arm, the ensign was dead.

With falling tears they straightened his limbs and closed his eyes. They smoothed his golden brown curls and folded his hands, then reverently drew a snowy sheet over all that was left of the soldier lad.

The morning dawned amid a quiet that seemed to presage good to the little city. Even those who, like Mrs. Kemp and Marion, had received no news from the outside world of besiegers and besieged, breathed more freely, and felt a brightening hope. At last their anxious ears were rewarded for long listening, by hearing the major's step in the hall. He opened the door with a more cheerful face than he had worn the day before, but a glance at the bed with the still, covered form, brought a tear to his eye. He gently drew down the sheet, and gazed at the rigid face beneath.

"Poor Lawrie, poor lad, this is the work of war."

"He is happy Lawrie now I trust. He did not wait until yesterday to prepare for death. What news do you bring this morning?" asked Mrs. Kemp.

The enemy were yesterday repulsed at

every point and have retired during the night. We are now, I hope, safe once more, or at least for the present."

"And our loss?"

"Very slight. We have a good many wounded, but few dangerously. They are taking them into the stockade, and this brick church near here."

"Can you not rest now? you look exhausted."

"I have no time. Let me have breakfast, and a change of clothes. That is all I have leisure for."

Marion went to her own room, and relieved at the idea of the departure of the hostile force which had been threatening the town, threw herself on the bed for a moment's rest. She, however, fell into a profound sleep. Mrs. Kemp at last aroused her. "Marion, they are going to bury dear Lawrie in about an hour. His brother has gone to bring a chaplain here. We have just put him in a coffin. I knew you would wish to be up. There are very few of us to gather round his grave. I have brought

you a bowl of bread and milk, you forgot your breakfast."

Marion started up, ate her breakfast and combed her hair. She was hardly ready, when the lieutenant entered with the chaplain of his regiment. The major and captain came in with most of the ladies at the hotel. Several soldiers had offered themselves to carry the coffin of a young officer they dearly loved, and these clustered at the door. A prayer and a few words of remark were all that time allowed, there were many wounded waiting for attention, and officers and men had duties pressing on them.

The short prayer ended, Mrs. Kemp and Marion kissed the placid moveless face with a thought of the mother, who would mourn her boy, and there was a tear left on Lawrence's lifeless forehead as his brother bent above his coffin.

The coffin was closed and carried away.

The next morning Mrs. Kemp said to Marion, "We have no right to sit here thinking of our loss, and our disappointments when so many are wounded and

suffering whom we might help. I shall go over to the church and see what I can do for our boys there. I wish you would go with me."

"I 'd be very glad to," answered Marion.

"Then I wish you would put those things that are on the table in that white basket. You can carry it. It will be rather heavy but it is not far. I am going to take the one we filled the other evening."

Marion began putting some oranges, apples, a glass or two of jelly, some spoons and cordials in a basket.

"Mrs. Kemp, what does it mean by works of supererogation," she asked.

"Works above what are asked or expected of us. It is a theory of the Roman Catholic Church, that some good people are better than God requires them to be. That they perform meritorious acts beyond what is their absolute duty and these acts are set down to their account. They also hold that these works form a sort of fund or bank of good deeds, credited to the Catholic Church, and at the disposal of the Pope."

"What does he do with them?"

"They have brought a good deal of money into the coffers of the church by being sold to selfish sinners who are not supposed to do all that God desires of them, and thus buy the virtuous acts of others to cover up their own misdeeds."

"Mrs. Kemp are these things true? *Can* a man do more than he needs to do of good works, or buy the acts of others, to make up what they lack?"

"No, Marion, that can never be. God demands of each of the full exercise of our powers in his service. He commands us all to do our very best."

"And then?"

"And then, we must feel that our very best is wrong and feeble. We are unprofitable servants after all."

"And what does the Bible say about it?"

"It says, 'So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do.' But then you know, Marion, we can none of us do all that we are com-

manded. We have all sinned and fallen far short of that."

"Then it seems as if we are in a very discouraging case."

"By no means. We are not expected to appear before God justified by our own good deeds. Christ has been made the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. But what put these things in your mind just now?"

"I was thinking," replied Marion, blushing and hesitating, "that you were always trying to do good, and I had heard about these works of supererogation somewhere, and I thought I'd ask about them and make sure."

"And," rejoined Mrs. Kemp, smiling in turn, "you thought you helped me very faithfully in all the good works I do, and so you might come in for a share of the credit."

"Yes," answered Marion, blushing still more, "I guess that was it."

"Well, now, having set that puzzling question at rest, and being quite sure that we are doing all our best works very imper-

fectly, but feeling thankful that God is helping us to follow in Christ's footsteps, though thus feebly and afar off, let us go out to our soldiers."

A very short walk brought them to the church, yet far from completed, and much injured by shot and shell; the upper portion of which had been taken as a shelter for the wounded. The injured men lay on straw and blankets upon the floor, and surgeons, towns-people, and their uninjured companions-in-arms, were passing, doing what they could to relieve pain. Mrs. Kemp handed her stores of lint and bandages to a surgeon, and began to distribute the contents of Marion's basket.

She found many longing for hot tea and coffee, and determined to go back to the hotel and make a large pailful of each and have a black boy carry it over for her. She was just about to tell Marion of her intention when the girl exclaimed,

"Oh, Mrs. Kemp, there is Mr. Michael! may I go and speak to him?" She was pointing to a middle aged man in a distant corner.

"Certainly. Here is one more orange and a few spoonsful of jelly. Take it to him, and if you get tired of staying you will find me in the hotel kitchen."

Marion made her way to Mr. Michael. He was lying with closed eyes, apparently suffering.

"Mr. Michael, Mr. Michael, I am Marion, don't you remember me?" she called softly, bending over him.

He opened his eyes. "Wal, now! Ef here isn't the little gal that was with the schoolmaster! Where is the schoolmaster?"

"Here is some jelly, Mr. Michael, and an orange, they may make you feel better. You look as if you had a fever."

Mr. Michael took the fruit in his left hand, but turning away from the proffered spoon of jelly repeated, anxiously,

"Where is the schoolmaster?"

"Mr. Michael, he is dead. He died that very day you saw him, and some refugees buried him for me by the side of a little brook."

"Don't, don't, little gal, don't tell me he 's dead."

"He is, indeed, sir."

"He was a man that always kept his word, was n't he?"

"Yes, sir, I 'm quite sure he was."

"Well, little gal, the last thing he said was whispering in my ear, 'Mr. Michael, I shall keep praying for you until God has mercy on you.' That 's followed me ever since. Whatever I do I think he 's praying for me, and I can 't stand it. I meant to tell him to stop if I had to go the world over to find him, and now he 's dead!"

"I should n't think you 'd be sorry to have any one pray for you, sir."

"I can 't stand it. Say, do you think he can keep on prayin' for me up there," and the left hand pointed heavenward.

"Indeed, sir, I can 't tell," replied Marion, greatly perplexed.

"What can I do about it? *Do* tell me little gal."

"I do n't know, sir, only Egbert wanted you to be a Christian, and I 'm sure you ought to be one,—why do n't you?"

"And how am I to do that? You talk as if it was easy."

"I'm sure, sir, I don't think so. It seems very hard to me. It is only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but I'm afraid I hav'n't done it myself, and how can I tell you? I'll ask Mrs. Kemp to talk to you, for she feels it, and I'm afraid I don't, and I might tell you wrong." Marion looked down, blushing violently.

"Come now, friend, let's see what's to be done with that arm. The other lads you wanted looked after first are attended to. You'd better take that jelly the young lady is offering you, it may do you good," said a surgeon, coming near.

Marion then saw that Mr. Michael's right arm hung powerless by his side, and his sleeve was tattered and covered with blood.

"Good-bye, Mr. Michael. I'll come and see you again, and get Mrs. Kemp to come with me. I hope your arm will get well."

"That's of no account, only a flesh wound I reckon. I wish he was n't dead."

Marion hastened to the hotel where she found Mrs. Kemp just starting for the church, accompanied by two black boys, one carrying a pail of tea, and the other one of

coffee, while Mrs. Kemp had two tin mugs. Marion had seen enough of wounds and fevered faces, heard enough of moans and sighs for that day. She went up to her room. There resting in her easy chair with her feet on the stove hearth, watching the flickering of the flames through the door, she thought of Mr. Michael, and much she wished she could have spoken to his troubled heart from the fulness of a happy experience of her own.

Chapter XIII.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED.

SPRING came, the faint green of the young grass crept over the prairies; the currants unfolded their crimped leaves; the honeysuckle hung out bunches of pale tinted foliage. The blue birds flitted here and there, saucy jays shook their tufted heads and clamored noisily at one another. The tide of battle had rolled far away from S——. Business was resumed, the wounded had recovered or been taken to the hospital, and again people journeyed to and fro.

And now, at last, Marion and her friends had really started for their eastern home,

and though the road was no less rough, the stage no less crowded than during her fall journey, Marion forgot the discomforts of the way, and with smiling eyes, watched the silver clouds that floated in the sky, the few flowers that were starting from the sod, the twittering birds, and the guards dashing hither and thither on their fresh horses. Her buoyant spirits threw off every care in the prospect of meeting her friends and having once more a home; and in imagination she saw her father forming the chief figure in the group that was to greet her at C——. True, her father had not been heard from; others had hoped against hope, and begun to despair, but Marion could not believe that when all else was gaining a new life, and basking in light and joy, her father could be lost to her.

Mr. Michael was one of the guards for the first stage of the journey, and as he rode near, he would smile back the pleasure that greeted him in the blue eyes of his little friend. When the second stage was reached, and he was to go no farther, he came up to say good-bye.

"Good luck to you," he said, as he held out his brown hand. "I'll never forget you, that was a good day when I met you and the schoolmaster."

Marion looked back as long as she could see him standing by the roadside, his arm thrown over his horse's neck, and she felt as if she was losing a friend. All who had met her in those troubled days of her journey through the Brush, held a firm place in her memory.

The morning after their arrival in St. Louis, Marion being dressed somewhat before Mrs. Kemp, went out on the balcony of the Lindel Hotel. Her attention was soon attracted by a voice from the street, and leaning over to look for the cause, she saw, to her astonishment, her former detested companions, the refugees. Several policemen had them in custody; and a detention was occasioned by the violent resistance of Pol, and the dropping of her drunken parent on the pavement.

"What have they been doing?" called out a bystander.

"Shop-lifting and fighting. They're a bad set."

"What's to be done to them?" shouted another.

"I reckon the man and the gal will get the Penitentiary, and the other three the House of Refuge."

"My, ain't they a bad looking crew," said one, as the man was placed on his feet, and the policeman, who had Jake in charge, took the old fellow by one arm. Pol required two to escort her, and, apparently resigning herself to her fate, covered her eyes with her hands, and her captors held her by the shoulders. In this manner they were proceeding on their way, the policemen secure in their greater strength, when Pol's hands suddenly flew out on either side, and clutched the hair of each with a right good will. The officers strove to release themselves, but the damsel held on relentlessly. Her father, who staggered behind, his head bobbing about like that of a China mandarin in a tea-shop window, seeing his daughter thus gaining an advantage, cried, "Go it, Pol! Oh, you're one, you are."

"Hold your tongue!" shrieked Pol, looking venomously back at her honored sire, "Ef it had n't bin fur your bein' a dumb, foolish, stupid headed, drunken old block, we would n't none of us got took up."

"My faith," said the policeman, extricating his head from her grasp, "how everlastingly strong you are. Pity you did n't spend your strength earning a decent living; you 've got about ten horse power in them skinny arms."

Pol verified his observation by jerking her wrist from his clasp, and throwing up her hand knocked his hat from his head into the gutter.

"You 're the viciousest case I ever fell in with," said the conservator of the public peace, ruefully surveying the tarnished glories of his hat, which an obsequious boy handed back to him.

Marion had been so excited at seeing the situation of her former foes, that she had walked along on the balcony, following their course in the street. She was just at the corner, and looking earnestly down at them, when the keen-eyed Pol saw and recognised

her. In her excitement, she forgot her animosity to her father, and looking back, cried out, "Dad, Dad! there's yeller hed up in that grand house. Hi! yeller hed, nobody 'd think you ate my wittles, an' slep' in our cart."

Marion, terrified to see the eyes of the throng in the street thus directed towards herself, retreated into the parlor windows, which reached to the floor, and had just been flung open by the chambermaid. Going out cautiously a few seconds after to see what farther occurred, she saw the policeman putting their refractory charge into a prison-like cart, whence, through the little barred window, Pol's vituperation of her father in particular, and her family in general, echoed down the street. That was the last view of them. No stray companion of that flight from F—— has ever crossed her path again.

Chapter XII.

THE FATHER ON HIS WAY.

THE time of year, the cheerful early spring, when Marion saw her refugee companions meeting so well-deserved an end of their evil ways, was the same in which her father, rejoicing in recovery from sickness and ability to renew his journey, bade good-bye to the family with whom he had spent the winter, and turned his face northward once more. In a few moments after that "good-bye," the cheerful but masculine voice of the mother, as she drove her oxen, the shouts of the elder girls to the cow and her unruly calf, and the vociferous

glee of the little ones all died away, and the traveller seemed alone in the forest. Mr. Hamsted's personal appearance was so changed since the days of his prosperity that his former friends would not have recognised him. His face was thin and pale, his hair was slightly streaked with gray. His clothes, carefully though he had kept them, were threadbare, and even patched; his good friend had made him a shirt of homespun, striped cotton, such as his field hands had been used to wear, and had generously cut him a cape out of a coarse butternut blanket. Hideous as was this last-mentioned garment, and distasteful as was its color to Mr. Hamsted, he found it both safe and comfortable, shielding him from the dews by night and keeping him dry during transient showers by day. One night of sleeping in the chilly spring air and two days of walking through the woods, greatly taxed Mr. Hamsted's strength, and when the second night came, threatening to be rainy, and his little stock of provisions proved exhausted, he found that he must

look out some obscure habitation and obtain help.

Taking the first path that presented itself, and on which he saw the marks of children's bare feet in the moist earth, he hastened on until dark, and at last rejoiced to see a light twinkling from a cabin window. Going near softly he proceeded to reconnoitre the premises, before venturing to discover himself. The house was even ruder than the one where he had spent the winter, being made of logs with the bark on, chinked and banked with mud, a roof not more than seven feet from the ground, and a simple hole left for the smoke to escape instead of a chimney. The window through which the light had shone was an aperture about a foot square. Behind the house was a little pig-pen made of brush, with a cow-shed roughly formed of the same material. Several boxes and casks served as chicken-coops, while the embers of a fire, and the sight of one or two large pots, indicated that the chief part of the cooking was done in the open air.

Mr. Hamsted next stole to the little win-

dow, and peeped in. By the fire sat a very old woman; her high-backed chair and the quilt that was wrapped around her were the only decent articles the place contained. A shelf held a few dishes, another shelf seemed to serve for a table. An elderly woman, three large girls and a boy were seated on stools before the fire, two small girls and a little boy were lying on a bed made of branches, covered with blankets. So crowded was the small space with these occupants, that the absence of furniture was not particularly noticed. Mr. Hamsted knocked at the door, and presently the woman opened it cautiously a little way, and put her head out.

"What 's wantin'?"

"A traveller wants a shelter and something to eat."

"Wal, you come to a proper poor place."

"I will be thankful for whatever you can do."

"Come in then," said she, slowly holding the door open. Mr. Hamsted stooped down, the doorway was so low, and presently was inside.

"Wal," exclaimed the woman, closely scrutinizing her guest, "you *do* make a poor show for travellin'! Bin sick?"

"I have been ill with the rheumatism all winter."

"Rheumatiz? 'Flammatory rheumatiz ov course. You 'se got good to be startin' out so airly in the year; better ha' waited a spell, till it got warmer."

"I could not. I am not going of choice, but because I have to."

"Oh, oh! Take a stool, haint got no cheer but granny's. Keep a good heart stranger, we all have to do as we kin."

Mr. Hamsted sat down wearily. The woman's sympathies were roused. "Take off yer boots and git yer feet dry. Will you have a cup of pen'ryal tea, haint got no other kind. Days was when I could have gin you as good a cup of Bohea as ever a man sot down to. Mebby them times will come back agin', I aint no ways down-hearted."

"Mother 's never down hearted," said one of the young women.

"Oh, you, Jane, go 'long, I aint no cheer-

ier than other folks. Jest you fry a bit of that mush, and Betty put a scrap or so of bacon alongside on 't."

While the two girls went out to resuscitate the fire, their mother put her tea on to steep, took a stool and begun to entertain her guest. "Time was, stranger, when I 'd made you egg bread, and fried a chicken, and sot cakes and pies before you, but things has changed; but keep a good heart, stranger, things will come back right yit. Last fall the bushwhackers killed our stock, all 'cept that pig and cow out yon; they was runnin' in the brush, thank Providence. Then they burnt our house and everything we had, 'cept what was in the milk-house, and what we carried out in our hands durin' the burnin', and the big boys carried out the granny in her cheer, with her quilts and sich wrapped about her. That riz my old man and my five boys,—I had five as likely lads as ever you sot eyes on, and their guns was hid in the woods. Sez they, 'Mother kin you and the girls git on alone?' Sez I, 'Yes, we *can*,' so off they goes, and may the Lord be with 'em. Then me and the girls

and Joe and the little ones come down to this shanty, and we brung the milk-house door and roof, and sot up for ourselves. Joe he sets traps and ketches a powerful sight of rabbits and squirrels and sich, and soon there'll be wild geese and prairie hens. The little gals dig roots and sich, and so we get on right peart. Dad had hid some corn and seed, and we 're going to try to plant enough to do for grannie, and soon the salad will be fit to eat."

"What kind of salad?" asked Mr. Hamsted.

"Why, oak salad."

"*Oak.*"

"Laws! yes. You aint up to these things. There 's heaps of folks ousted from their houses will live on oak salad and we can make out on it too, till dad and the boys and Cousin Michael get back again from the war. You take the young oak leaves and bile 'em down and that's oak salad."

The two little girls had risen from their bed and now stood on either side of the stranger, they were twins. "Only think," said one, "and when our house got burnt,

me and Mat lost our dolls, such *sweet* dolls. The nicest little girl made 'em. Oh, she was *so* lovely, and we called 'em after her, Marion."

"Marion!" cried Mr. Hamsted, starting at the familiar sound.

"Law yes," chimed in the mother. "She was jest the purtiest creeter! She and a young man, a schoolmaster, was tryin' to git to their friends. She had n't no mother nor brother, nor sister, only jest a father, and her dear little heart was most broke on his 'count. Dear heart, I would ha' done anything for either of 'em, I took to 'em so. The young man was sick and I doctored him jest as well as I knew how, but he had death in his face, and I know he did n't live a week. They sot off to ketch a government train early one morning, but a curous thing happened a little while arter. There was two bushwhackers come to our house with that very hoss the gal and the schoolmaster had. Nobody could n't fool me on 't, it was a fine, tall, black horse, with three white spots like feathers jest on his breast. I axed them 'bout it, but they

stuck to it they got it tied to a refugee wagon and there was n't no schoolmaster nor little gal with it, but I guess I know. Them men got to fightin' for that hoss to go on a 'pedition to ketch the Rolly mail, and one of 'em killed the other right afore our door and left him lyin' thar. Afore we got him buried, a lot more come up and sed we killed the man, an' so they burnt our house."

"But the child—the girl—Marion?"

"I can't tell you no more, only I know it was her hoss. Gals! the man's in a dead faint, bring some water, Mat. Land's end, I wonder *what* the gal is to him?"

Mr. Hamsted had indeed fallen insensible on the floor, and it was long before the woman could restore him. At last consciousness returned. "My child, my child!" were his first words.

"Was that dear blessed little gal your'n?" asked Mrs. Boggs, for of course it was she.

"Yes my child, my only child."

"I wish I'd ha' known afore I scared you so. Keep a good heart, man—"

"But my child, my poor little child she has been killed."

"'Taint no ways likely, stranger. Mebby the hoss was tied to a wagon, and some folks was a takin' her on to S——. Perhaps the young man got wus, and some one giv' 'em a lift. Now 'taint possible any body 'd kill or hurt that dear little gal. You jest chirk up and go on to S—— as fast as you kin and see if she aint thar or got to her folks. Ef she aint, you must come back and hunt her on the road."

There was sound sense in this, and with the new demand upon him, Mr. Hamsted felt new strength; the rescue of his child rested on him, he must up and be doing. Calmness of mind and strength of purpose were now his, he lifted himself up, and though slightly trembling, took his seat as before. "I must eat and sleep so as to get far on my journey to-morrow," he said.

The supper was brought and partaken of, then after listening with greedy ears to all they could tell him of Egbert and Marion, he lay down by the youngest boy on brush and blankets to sleep. Daylight found all

waking. Mrs. Boggs had prepared the best breakfast she could, and roasted a rabbit that her son had caught the night before; this she gave her guest to serve for his dinner.

With many kind wishes, the anxious father bade them good-bye, they refusing to take any payment for their services. With feverish haste, Mr. Hamsted renewed his journey, going, indeed, too rapidly at first, for his strength could not sustain so violent an effort, and before evening he had to find a resting place. Eating the rabbit and taking a few hours' sleep, he rose about four to pursue his way. The underbrush and fallen logs hindered him, his compass was out of order, and did not accurately indicate his way, and at last, tempted by his longing to reach S—— as soon as possible, he left the brush and took the road. Just before nightfall he was congratulating himself on having made this change, when suddenly a party of guerillas in full gallop were to be seen dashing near. His presence of mind deserted him, and instead of trusting to his miserable appearance and his butternut

cloak to get him off unquestioned, he started from the path at full speed. It was a false move, as he soon found to his cost, he was overtaken and confronted with the guerillas. His answers not being deemed satisfactory, the suspicions of the men had been aroused, and he was declared a prisoner. That they might not be delayed, he was ordered to mount behind one of his captors, and to his utter dismay, found himself rapidly carried back over the road he had so wearily come, until they finally took to the woods at a point farther back than his whole day's travel.

There was another prisoner, mounted like himself, a handsome, well-knit, young fellow, in a rebel uniform. The guerilla camp was on a small branch or creek, a lonely spot, well hidden by vines closely woven among the trees and carpeted by the new smooth green grass almost as smoothly as a lawn. The guerillas tied their prisoners to separate trees, picketed their horses, and built a fire. While their supper was being prepared by two lads, the rest discussed the fate of the prisoners. Several urged that they be taken to the woods some distance off, and

hung or shot, but this was overruled by the leader and a majority, who decided that it would be the best policy to keep them on hand, for a time at least. This consultation was freely carried on in the hearing of the prisoners, and from it Mr. Hamsted learned that his companion in captivity was a young scout who had come out in disguise. Pity for the fine youth, whose certain fate would be death, so filled Mr. Hamsted's heart that for a time he forgot himself; the lad, however, had a cheerful courage that nothing seemed able to daunt. The guerillas had just returned from a successful expedition and were in a tolerably good humor; they shared their meals with their prisoners and even gave them a blanket at night, fastening them both to one tree in such a manner that they could rest, though not escape.

Days passed on, the vigilance of the captors seemed unabated, and hope died out in the heart of Mr. Hamsted. The courage of the young scout seemed yet undiminished. A strong friendship was formed between this ardent youth and Mr. Hamsted; they related to each other their past histories.

Mr. Hamsted told of his own hardships and his fears concerning his child; the scout told of his old parents and a young girl whom he expected to marry when the war was over.

At last the guerillas departed on another expedition, leaving an elderly man and two lads to guard the camp, the prisoners, and the spare horses. During a violent thunder storm one night the horses broke loose and escaped, and the next morning the man and one lad went to search for them. The other lad, a good-natured, heedless fellow, permitted himself to be persuaded to unfasten the scout while he ate his dinner, leaving only his feet tied. A significant look from the scout to Mr. Hamsted bade him prepare for escape.

"Bring me some more mush, there's a good fellow," cried the scout; and the lad accommodatingly lifted the mush pot from the fire, and carried it him. Hatfield, the scout, seizing him by the legs, flung him over, and holding him down, got his knife from his pocket. It was an instant's work to free his feet, and saying, "I cannot kill

you, lad," he took his own discarded bonds, bound and gagged him, having, meanwhile, flung the knife to Mr. Hamsted, who made good use of it in freeing himself.

The scout then dragged the boy into the woods and fastened him to a tree, while Mr. Hamsted overhauled the camp-baggage, and procured a suit of clothing and a revolver each for himself and the scout. He also took back the money, papers, and jewelry, of which he had been deprived. Speedily did they alter their dress, and snatching each a piece of meat, they hurried away.

Mr. Hamsted's health had improved wonderfully at the camp, and the stiffness from long rest soon wearing away, he kept pace with his eager companion, who threaded the forests with true backwoods skill. The rain which had held off during the morning, fell in torrents, but all day and night and until late the next morning, they pressed on, slowly, at last, as Mr. Hamsted's strength was failing. The next morning they set out, but overcome with hunger, soon were compelled to stop. They dared not shoot any thing for fear of bringing enemies upon

themselves. The scout, well skilled in wood craft, dug some nutritious roots, and boiled some oak salad; a dish Mr. Hamsted found exceedingly unpalatable in spite of his hunger. Hiding during the day, at evening Hatfield went off alone, and in the course of an hour returned with two old hens and half a dozen eggs. The eggs he boiled for their supper, the hens he hastily picked and roasted, and each carrying one, they set off.

Several days of such travelling and adventures passed, and, at length, they came to a point where they must part company.

"You are now," said Hatfield, "but twenty miles from S——. You know the road, and can easily make that before to-morrow morning. My regiment lies in this direction, and it would be a waste of your time and strength to go with me. Don't forget to use caution."

Mr. Hamsted grasped his hand. "Good luck to you, my brave fellow, may you be spared for a long and happy life. Take this as a mark of my friendship, and let it be used in the most useful way for you."

He put on his finger a handsome and valuable diamond ring. Hatfield would have refused it, but Mr. Hamsted said,

"Keep it, not as payment or an attempt at reward, but as a mark of esteem." With kind wishes they turned each on his own way.

Proceeding rapidly along, Mr. Hamsted began to feel as if his escape were sure. So near the town of S——, he had little fear of foes. Laying his plans for finding his child if she had not reached her relatives, and indulging, by times, in dreams of a happy meeting with her, he was passing a clump of thorny bushes, when out sprang a man clad in "butternuts" carrying a gun and revolver.

"You're my prisoner," said this individual, who, though a smaller and less athletic man than Mr. Hamsted, felt secure in being better armed, ready for action, and having a better position in a military point of view. Taking his revolver in his hand, and holding it unpleasantly near Mr. Hamsted's head, he bade him go on, and not try to bolt out or play foul on pain of death.

In this disagreeable manner they proceeded a mile or so until they came to a "branch." Here Mr. Hamsted saw his last hope of escape. Pretending to slip, he fell down in the water, and while apparently scrambling to his feet, caught at his captor's leg, and flung him on his face. Jumping on his back, and snatching his own revolver out, he reversed the position they had previously held to one another, and disarming his butternut, he left his gun and revolver lying in the water, and ordering him to rise and walk quickly on he pushed towards S——.

Driving on his crest-fallen prisoner, after a run of three miles he fell in with a corporal and two men, whose blue uniforms were, to his longing eyes, like the sight of home itself.

Giving up his prisoner to them he was shortly taken to their camp. His story won him friends at once. He was advised to rest at the camp that night and accompany a part of the regiment into town the next morning. Food and clothes were brought out, and Mr. Hamsted began to feel more comfortable.

That evening as Mr. Hamsted was strolling about the camp, he found the corporal he had first met, sitting behind his tent reading his Bible.

"I am glad to see you so well employed," said Mr. Hamsted.

"I 've read my Bible for many a year," replied the corporal, "but it 's only lately I 've got to comprehending it. God, through a young schoolmaster, Egbert Race by name, stirred up my feelings, and I got no rest till I gave all to Christ."

"And where is Race?" exclaimed Mr. Hamsted.

"In heaven."

"When did you see him? Where?"

"Last fall at Cousin Boggs'," replied the corporal, eyeing his excited questioner with some astonishment.

"And the girl, the child that was with him, Marion, where is *she?*"

"I saw her up nearly to Rolla along in April. She was travelling with about the nicest lady I ever saw, and expected to get to her grandpa's very soon. God bless her! I hope she found her father there waiting

for her, for her heart was set on it, and she was just the sweetest little creature. Gracious me! you 're as white as a dead man, ain't *you* her father?"

"I am, and you have told me the best news I ever heard. Are you *sure* it 's true?"

"True as can be," and Mr. Hamsted sat down while Corporal Michael related all the incidents of his acquaintance with Egbert and Marion.

Ten days later, Mr. Hamsted stood in Rolla ready to take the train for St. Louis. Confident of the safety of his child, he had concluded to travel homewards unannounced, and give his anxious family a joyful surprise.

Chapter XI.

A HAPPY REUNION.

HEN Marion had seen the last of Pol, her loving father, and agreeable brothers and sister, she returned to her room to be ready when Mrs. Kemp wished her to go to breakfast.

The major's business detained them in the city for a few days, but at last all was done, and they were ready to set forth again. Marion had been so preoccupied by thoughts of her new home and friends, and speculations concerning her father, that she had taken but little pleasure in visiting the various places of interest that St. Louis contains.

Travelling in the cars is more convenient and uneventful than in ox-carts, or even on horseback and in stages, and in a few days Marion found herself in the depot at C——.

Even before the cars stopped she and Mrs. Kemp were sure they recognized old Mr. Hamsted and two of his daughters in a group on the platform; and sure enough, Marion was almost immediately claimed by the tall old gentleman, whom Marion thought looked very like her dear missing father would when he grew old.

At first, she felt unaccountably shy, and disposed to cling to Mrs. Kemp, and not know how to leave her; but for bashfulness there was no time, and surely no hesitation should be felt in going with those who welcomed her with such a warmth of affection, poor little wanderer, so long from the sunlight of home, and somehow in a few moments her aunts seemed nearer to her even than dear Mrs. Kemp.

"I could n't help knowing you, you look so like your Aunt Susy," said grandpa.

"And where *is* Aunt Susy?" asked Ma-

rion, who was in some danger of being smothered by her eager aunts.

"At home, waiting for you."

And now came the hard task of saying good-bye to dear Mrs. Kemp, who, after all, seemed to Marion dearer and nearer than her own relations, Aunt Susy not excepted. The parting was cheered, however, by promises of letters to be exchanged and visits to be paid during the summer, and Marion saw the cars steaming off and turned from the depot to go to her grandfather's, without feeling utterly cast down.

Spring was coming in C—— too, and the streets were full of children going home to dinner from school, and there was such a din of merry child voices, and barking of small dogs, and shouting of lads playing ball, with a shrill trilling of canaries hung out by door-posts, that Marion was quite bewildered, and hailed the large lawn before her grandfather's house, where were servants raking up last year's leaves, and martins making homes for themselves in the small boxes set in the trees, as a haven of rest. Aunt Susy was standing by the door

and held out her arm to Marion with such a welcoming smile as would have quite won her heart, even if she had never heard of Aunt Susy before. She was a fair young girl, with just such an abundance of curls as Marion had, but they were gathered up in a net of crimson silk cord. Marion was quite enraptured with her large violet eyes, her gentle smile, and graceful figure. She had not long to admire just then, for Aunt Catharine said she must go up stairs and prepare for dinner, for she was sure that she must feel tired, and dusty, and hungry—three things which Marion was too excited to feel. When Marion came down stairs again Aunt Susy was sitting in an easy chair on the verandah, and at her feet, across her footstool, lay a pair of crutches. Marion stopped, overwhelmed.

"Why Aunt Susy, Aunt Susy, I didn't know—"

"Didn't know I was a forlorn old cripple? Well, you see I am."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Just for this reason, if I had written I was forced to go on two crutches, you would

have felt very sorry for me, and there would have been an entire waste of sympathy. You would have thought me very much afflicted, while I am just the most fortunate person that was ever seen. Why do you not admire my crutches. They were a Christmas gift from sister Catharine."

"They are pretty, I did not know that crutches could be made so beautiful," said Marion, taking one up. It was a light, beautifully made rosewood crutch, with silver ornaments and a crimson velvet cushion with springs.

"There is the dinner bell," said grandpa, taking Marion's hand, and pausing for Aunt Susy to take up her crutches and go before them. They were hidden in the soft folds of her fawn-colored cashmere, and as she glided easily along before them Marion cried, "Why Aunt Susy, one would n't believe you were lame or went on crutches at all."

"That is true," said grandpa, "and now we won't say any more about it. We have a pleasant fiction here, that Susy is not lame

at all, and never mention the word crutches."

All seemed very bright and cheerful at grandpa's, but just as they were going to the table, Marion remembered the Christmas tree, and the place she was to keep for her father, and a cloud seemed to sweep over her sky. "He'll come, he'll surely come, to-day, to-morrow, very soon. I know he'll come," she whispered for her self-encouragement, yet still her heart seemed sad.

The visit to Mrs. Race was not long delayed. The sorrowing mother had through many months looked forward to meeting the girl who had heard her dear boy's last words, who had seen him laid in his grave. Among the papers Marion brought her grandfather was one empowering him to purchase an annuity for Mrs. Race, which, though small, would suffice to enable her to keep her little cottage, and provide for the few wants of her declining years. In this cottage Marion found her one afternoon. Aunt Catharine and Marion reached the village sometime before sunset, and were to stay with Mrs.

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