

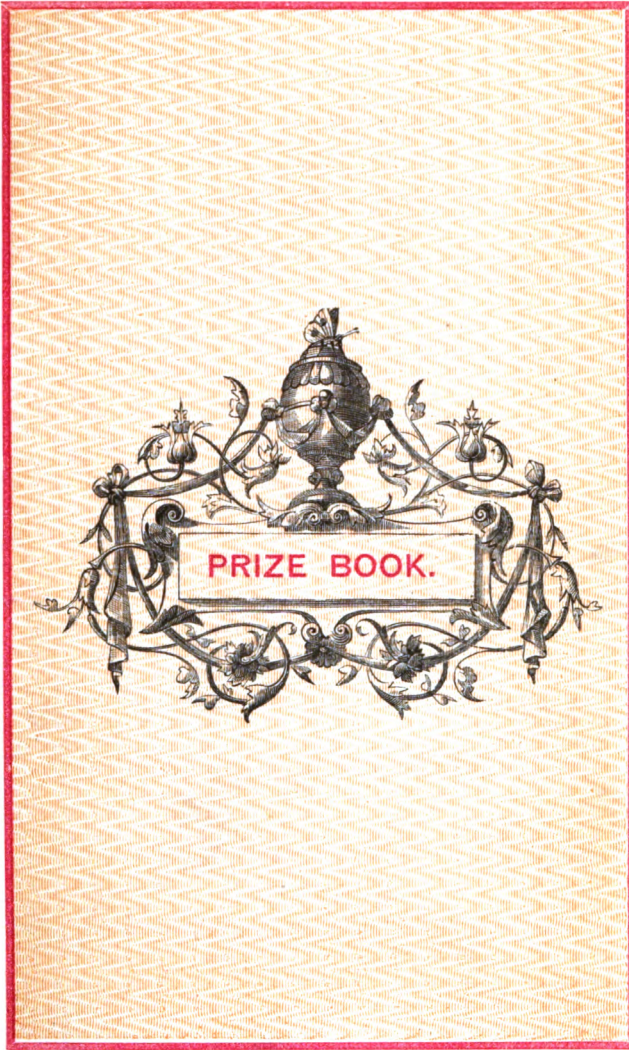
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FRONTISPIECE.—Chap. 1.

Moth and **D**ust.

A Very Plain Tale.



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PREFACE.

OUR story is one of fact. Those instances of selfishness and hardness, which, for the sake of our common humanity, we might wish were fictions, are the veriest realities. We are, in truth, simply editing one of the many volumes of living providence, and have endeavored neither to soften nor darken the lights and shadows of this picture of daily life.

We have deemed it well to write a tale whose moral is, "Beware of the beginnings of evil." How surely and fatally, even if slowly, do the Moth and Rust creep over the heart and life and happiness of the covetous!

THE AUTHOR

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MOTH AND RUST.



CHAPTER I.

MORLEY'S CHOICE.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

SATAN had desired to have Ralph Morley, that he might sift him like wheat. What heavenly intercession had been made for this child of earth, we cannot tell. We know a gray-haired woman, and a girl in the first flush of youth, and a man of God who would not walk heavenward alone,

had prayed for him ; and whether after all this his faith failed, perchance you may gather from his life's unvarnished history. Satan put him in a golden sieve, and shook him right thoroughly.

Ralph Morley was forty, and dwelt among his own people. He had a home, the special pride of his heart. The house was not palatial, but it sufficed for those who lived in it. The house had a stained-glass door in the hall, a bow-window, and three marble mantles ; it had a dry cellar, and a light, roomy attic ; the chimneys were not given to smoking, nor the roof to leaking ; altogether, though not magnificent, it was comfortable ; and, when Ralph first *owned* it, it satisfied him. Ralph would walk through his house on Sunday afternoons, when, to say the truth, he was weary of sabbatic rest, and would say in his heart, " Is not this great Babylon which I have built ? "

The house had a garden, which was the

pleasure of Ralph Morley's wife. The garden had beds, round, square, and triangular; it had nooks and borders of bloom. It had four green-painted boxes, wherein flourished an orange, a lemon, a fig, and an oleander. Mrs. Morley had achieved both a blue and a purple hydrangea, and possessed a morsel of hot-house.

The house and the garden were near to the church, and this was the chief joy of Aunt Stacey.

At the time when our story begins, Aunt Stacey was in the kitchen stirring cakes for tea. Helen, the youngest olive-plant of the house of Morley, could inform you that "Aunt Stacey was a tulledd pusson, and very nice."

When the first of the juvenile Morleys had burst into a wail of mingled grief and indignation at finding himself an inhabitant of a world of colic and semi-starvation, Aunt Stacey had come to his rescue, had warmed his restless toes by the fire, supplied him liberally with

catnip tea, and remarked, "Now she 'sposed she'd have to stay: she knew a heap more 'bout nussin' a baby dan dem chil'en;" thus designating the infant's respected parents. When, at intervals of about three years, Richard's juniors made their appearance, they had all found Aunt Stacey ready with a welcome and plenty of catnip: and in due course of time considered her almost as indispensable to the family comfort as the mother herself. If Aunt Stacey had made any remark about leaving the household, consternation would have reigned, from Mr. Ralph down to Helen. Hitherto Aunt Stacey had betrayed no traitorous intention, but early and late had been alert for the domestic good. Aunt Stacey had been the faithful servant of Grandma Morley since Ralph, Esq., could run alone. A grandma, as we all know, delights in making sacrifices for the rising race. When old Mrs. Morley sent Aunt Stacey to Ralph and his wife, who had

hitherto lived humbly without any servant, she virtually deprived herself of any home; for, finding she could not keep house without the tried assistant of so many years, she broke up the pleasant little establishment, and went to live with her only daughter, Mrs. Douglass. I do not think Ralph or his wife realized the extent of the sacrifice that had been offered on the altar of their household comfort. They loved grandma after a mild fashion; indeed, admitted that she was one of those saints upon earth, who, like a glass, reflect the lovely image of their risen Lord: but she was growing older, and young people ought to live alone; and they were quite satisfied to have her live with Mrs. Douglass, — a woman, who, being like-minded with her mother, received her rapturously.

Ralph Morley and his wife had united with the church shortly after their marriage. They had been brought up in pious families, had both religious instincts, deemed church-mem-

bership a badge of honor, and wanted to get to heaven when they died. As for Mrs. Ralph, she was likely to fashion all her life after the model of her husband: he could lead her upward with himself, or bind her to earth. She had very little individuality, no strong motives; but she always meant to do her duty, if nothing hindered.

We have hinted that Ralph began life in humble circumstances. His father gave him a couple of thousand: he moved to Fenton, and went into business. He lived in a small hired house, which was plainly furnished; and here, on the very threshold of his life, Ralph made the grand mistake of looking more to the earthly than the heavenly inheritance. In Ralph, two instincts seemed almost equally strong, — the religious instinct, and the desire for making money. Had he resolved to serve God first, and himself second, all had been well; but he made up his mind “to do as

well as he could in the circumstances. Get a home and a good business foundation first, and then be able to serve God respectably, as a well-to-do man should."

Said Ralph, — and we wish he had not been so trite, — "Charity begins at home." And Aunt Stacey confided to the baby she was putting to sleep, that "Charity sometimes growed dar, like a stupid old houseleek, and nebber got no whar else."

Ralph also remarked that, "he that careth not for his own is worse than an infidel." And, on hearing this much-abused text, Aunt Stacey threw out one or two remarks, as she polished the fire-irons and fender, to the end that "some folks cared a sight too much for their own; and she'd like to know wherein a body's 'own' consisted, we being not our own, but bought with a price," &c.

Working steadily with one end in view, a good business man as far as this world goes, a

pleasant man, and a courteous gentleman in his bearing, Ralph, when his son Richard was ten years old, had the comfortable and pretty home we have described, wherein to shelter his four children. The home was free of debt and well furnished, and several thousand dollars lay snugly in the bank.

During this time, while putting his hundreds in the bank of Fenton, Ralph had been too busy to lay up any treasure in the bank of Heaven, and had dealt so little in celestial real estate and Jerusalem bonds and mortgages, that he had even failed to use any of those promissory notes delivered to us by one Jesus, who, passing into the skies long ago, left the Church as his heir.

While Ralph had been thus busy with his muck-rake, and had indubitably scraped together many pretty things, his mother, his sister Mrs. Douglass, and his niece Stella, had been making some requisitions on his account,

which had been duly honored ; and Ralph felt cheerful, and believed himself to be doing well. Ralph duly gave his children their penny to take to Sunday school ; but he gave it indifferently and as a matter of form, so that it was a very copper penny indeed, with not a gleam of gold on it. For the support of religion in the town of Fenton, or in the world in general, Ralph had done very little. A few fives would represent his donations ; and he liked no sight so little as the church officers with their willow baskets. Ralph meant some day to be able to give liberally. He was not willing to go on giving each year until he felt it, and growing glad in giving ; but when his house was made just right and all paid for, when his garden was ornamented and the house furnished, when the business was firm and the stock in the bank large enough, Ralph meant to do things handsomely, and give like a gentleman. He despised giving such trifles, and he needed the

money just now in his business. The time had come when Ralph possessed what once he would have called abundance : but his ideas had grown ; he had four children to educate, and establish in life, and he must make a move. Matters went too slowly.

We said Ralph had religious instincts : he had also a faithful pastor, who touched and stirred this instinct in a fashion that put the devil in terror. Ralph's heart sometimes burned within him as the pastor talked ; he was moved sometimes to hold out both hands towards heaven, and run a few steps thitherward with all his might. In Fenton, Ralph had religious society, a church, a prayer-meeting, a pastor, a Sabbath school ; in fact, every surrounding suitable to a Christian family. Ralph observed all the ordinances faithfully : he went regularly to prayer-meeting, but did not pray in public ; for he was no fool, and recognized the fact that his giving and his

working would not be in harmony with his praying. Just now he needed every religious influence and pressure that could be brought to bear upon him; and, lo! the devil got behind a money-bag, and beckoned him away from all! How, may be gathered from a conversation of the children, as they sat behind the house on two empty boxes and a barrel.

“How would you like to move?” demanded Richard, the patriarch of the group, a pretty lad of twelve, with an irresolute face that argued ill for days to come.

“I never!” cried Helen, in instant danger of growing lachrymose. “I wouldn’t leave pa and mother, and Aunt Stacey, and the chickens!”

“Bah!” said Freddy, who, being six years old, knew every thing. “Of course they’d go too.”

“I don’t believe father ’d do it,” quoth Frank, second in age. “He knows better than to sell *this* place.”

“ Oh ! ” said Richard the dishonorable, who had been listening at the parlor-door, and was now revealing state secrets : “ he could sell this place for lots of money more than he gave for it, and more than it’s worth, — for twice as much as would get another ; and he could go away up somewhere into lumber, where money ’s as thick — well — as thick as gravel,” cried Richard, looking desperately round for a simile, and beholding the walk leading about the house.

“ Money ! ” cried Helen : “ that ain’t much. We’ve got flowers here, and blue and red glass, and a play-room, and peach-trees ; and I’ve got five cents father can have.”

“ There, now, you don’t know any thing ! ” retorted Richard. “ Money is a great deal ; it gets every thing : you can buy any thing you want ; and it’s so mean to be poor. I hope father’ll go ; for, when I get big, I want to drive a buggy and a pair of grays, like Mark Thorn.

Five hundred dollars ain't any thing to him. Why, money'll send a man to Congress: I've heard father say so often; and, when people come to the office, they talk about money; and so do father and mother. I guess I know."

Richard had caught the prevailing sentiment of his father. "Be a good boy, Richard, and say your prayers," instructed Ralph Morley's lips. "Money, money, get money, be rich," was the lesson of his life; and his son caught the tone of the daily practice, while dully on his ear fell the form of precept.

While the children discussed family affairs on the boxes and barrel, their mother mended the garments that had come from the wash, and meditated upon the proposed change of residence. Mrs. Morley had imbibed her husband's opinions, — it would be a trouble to move, but pecuniarily profitable. Now was the time to roll up a fortune: by and by, in old age, they might sit down and enjoy it. Yes: to

leave such a pretty home, and go among strangers, was a trial: but the children would not mind it; it was a duty to the children to acquire wealth to educate them, and put them on a good footing with the world. Never mind now: by the time Helen was a young lady, the fortune would be made, and nothing left but to enjoy it. Would Stacey go with them? Certainly she must. Mrs. Morley would be appalled at the idea of parting with Stacey.

Ralph Morley was in his office, outwardly busy at his books: but, instead of the figures before him, the change proposed in his business occupied his thoughts; and he forgot that Aunt Stacey's cakes waited, that the mending was finished, and the four children getting hungry.

If the glory and joy of change shut all loss and disadvantage from his children's view; if pliability, and wifely and motherly self-sacrifice, and real misapprehension of circumstances, set

the future before his wife in a false light, Ralph Morley himself knew very well what he was doing. About his present abode clustered every advantage. He had a home, a business that permitted him to lay up a small sum each year, and he had privileges of church, Christian society, and education for his children. But this home he could sell at a clear gain of three thousand dollars, a profit unexpectedly large; he could dispose of his present business without sacrifice; and he could go to a place in the lumber-region, where living would be cheaper, — poorer undoubtedly, also, — and where he could clear twice as much in a year as now. Ralph had been up in the lumber-region at the head-waters of the Alleghany. He had seen the lonely woodland, the great, desolate mill, the brawling stream, the workmen's shanties, the large, ill-built house, the wretched log school-house, — for which, and *money profit*, he would exchange the pretty dwelling, the

refined neighborhood, and the excellent academy, of his present home.

Aunt Stacey grew impatient, the children clamorous, the wife weary of waiting; and the columns of figures in day-book and ledger began to represent the thousands of an amassed fortune: thus and so for educating the children and setting them out in life; so much for himself and his wife to grow old gracefully upon, — oh, yes! so much to give away; so much for churches and missions, and hospitals and schools. Ralph Morley instructed himself, that, if he would be a benefactor of the human race, he must be rich; if he would be a pillar of the Church, he must be rich; if he would lay up a treasure in heaven, he must be rich.

Ralph put on his hat and went home, feeling more settled in his mind.

“It won’t be pleasant for you out there,” he said to his wife, referring to the lumber-regions, as he was getting ready for bed; “And I don’t

wish to take you where you'll be unhappy. But we have four children ; and, if I am taken away, the property we have will not be enough to support you and educate them properly. I feel it my *duty* to increase it."

"Yes," said Mrs. Morley dolefully, laying cuffs and collar in a drawer.

"And it will not be permanent, you know : just a few years, and then some better opening yet ; and, by the time the children are done going to school, we shall be handsomely established where we can give them the best advantages." Ralph had given up the idea of being "taken away," and his wife grew more cheerful.

"Yes," she said, "we'd better go. I do dislike leaving this house, but" —

"But we'll have a finer by and by," said Ralph. "This *is* rather small."

"I hope Stacey will go with us," said Mrs. Morley.

“Oh, to be sure! it can make no possible difference to her,” said Ralph Morley.

Now, after this, a note of preparation began to be sounded through the household, and it woke for its echo a note of warning.

“We’re going to take you up into the lumber-regions, Aunt Stacey,” said Ralph easily to his ancient servant, as she polished the dining-room windows.

“What you goin’ dar for?” asked Stacey.

“To make my fortune,” said Ralph Morley.

“When you was a little boy, I seed you lots of times grabbin’ at so many nuts dat you loss all you got,” said Aunt Stacey, speaking in a parable, and rubbing the window violently.

“My hands are bigger now,” said Mr. Ralph, laughing; “and my motto is, Keep all you’ve got, and get all you can. We’ll keep you, Stacey, among other things.”

“Got any school up dar for dem chilen?” asked Stacey, selecting a new pane for her operations.

“Well, yes: a common country school; but their mother and I can do their teaching.”

“Any Sunday school?”

“Ah! no, not yet; perhaps we can start one; very likely we shall.”

Aunt Stacey looked as if she thought it very *unlikely*, and gave a short grunt. “Any church dar?”

“Why, no. It’s a new place, Stacey; and we cannot look for all these privileges: we must make them for ourselves. Somebody must pioneer.”

“You aint goin’ to pioneer, but to make money; told me so yourse’f,” said Stacey; and she set her rainbow turban on high, a fashion she had when wrathful indignation stirred her mind.

“To be sure,” said Mr. Morley, who had seen Stacey’s turban set on high from his earliest recollections, and knew her to be as faithful and indispensable as she was outspoken.

“It is my duty to my children, indeed to myself and the world, to make money. Come, now, Stacey, who’s going to take good care of you when you get old?”

“De Lord!” said Stacey promptly. “Make you his hand to do it mebby, and mebby not. But it don’t look right to me, Mr. Ralph, to take your own soul and five other souls belonging to you, to say nothing of old Stacey, away off where dey’ll be just left to starve for de law and ordinances. Here de Lord’s feedin’ you with food convenient for you’ soul and body: my ’pinion is, you’d better make yourself contented, and don’t run away from de gates of de Lord’s house.”

“Nonsense, Stacey! It is my duty to make all the property I can for my children, — and to do good with, of course. And, as the lumber-region promises large returns, I’m going there to live for a few years at least.”

“Like dat ar foolish Lot!” cried Aunt

Stacey, turning from the last shining window, her turban towering threateningly. “*He* went to live in Sodom and Gomorrer for the sake of gettin’ rich, and whatever come of it? Why he fly out wid the skin of his teeth, and mighty glad to get dat, and hardly a rag left to his back. Nebber saved nothing but dem two sassy gals he might much better lef’ behind. Don’t ketch me going ’long with you to turn into a heathen in my old age!” And Aunt Stacey stalked out of the room.

Here was an unlooked-for calamity; and, moreover, Ralph’s heart smote him that he had scarcely *thought* of the religious destitution of the region where he was going, and the great privileges which he was leaving. However, as he went down the street, he remarked to himself, that, if everybody staid away from places where there were no schools and churches, neither the church nor the commonwealth would flourish; and certainly he should take

great pains in the home instruction of his children. A fine resolution ; but, hitherto, Ralph and his wife had left the religious training of their children entirely to the church and Sabbath school ; never even so much as asking what they learned there. In this shirking of parental duties, we know that Ralph Morley and his wife were not alone. Canvass our churches, and you will find that fully one-half the parents suppose that their whole duty is done when they send the children off to Sunday school, and tell them they may stay to church if they choose. Ralph and his wife did better than many others, in that each Sabbath they had the four children in church with them.

Ralph Morley's pastor heard that he was to lose this family from his congregation. He regretted it ; for they were pleasant people, and their place might not be easily filled. But the pastor's sorrow was more for these members

of his flock than for himself. He felt, that, if Ralph cut loose from the restraints of religious society, he would be swept away in a vortex of worldliness. He did not believe that Mrs. Morley was capable of making any firm stand for truth in behalf of herself or her children; and hardness of heart, and distance from God, would most likely be the family portion. The pastor went to Ralph's place of business, and, in the retirement of the little office, began to urge these considerations upon him. Ralph saw his minister coming, and wished that minister had been less faithful. Heretofore Ralph had trembled under warning, and melted at exhortation, and resolved to do better when a higher Christian life was set before him; and he really feared that this man of God might force him from his present determination, and bring him to forego the worldly advantage upon which he had set his heart.

You may imagine how the pastor began with

his parishioner : showing what danger he incurred in going apart from godly influences, and devoting himself entirely to money-getting ; how especially dangerous it was to take his children among the rude and irreligious, and form their plastic minds away from the ordinances and practices of piety.

“ My wife and I,” replied Ralph, “ will feel ourselves more than ever bound, both by example and precept, to make up to our children for the religious destitution of their neighborhood.”

“ To be plain with you,” said his pastor, “ how high value will your children set on those spiritual advantages which you abandon for a mere matter of dollars and cents ? ”

Ralph winced. “ Is no one to be the first in unsettled countries ? Must no Christians go to these destitute regions ? ”

“ Yes,” said his friend. “ God *drives* some men there ; and he sends them intent on labor-

ing for him as well as for themselves, and pressing the work of the Church, at least shoulder to shoulder with their own. But have you not told me that you are going to *make money*? that this is your main object, and, as soon as it is accomplished, you will come away?"

"Ah! but it is necessary that I should make money. My family demands it: they are to be liberally educated. And suppose any of them should be cripples, or life-long invalids, or early left orphans, there must be money to back them."

"Leave those things with God. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Suppose you gain all the world's advantages for your children, and lose their souls?"

Ralph shuddered. He believed in eternal loss and gain, and desired the salvation of his children; but also he felt that the worldly gain

of these children was his first affair, and the spiritual good was to be indefinitely obtained. He shook his head: he suddenly steeled himself to all arguments and entreaty. "The thing is settled," he said crossly; and when good friends and church officers sought to argue with him, and turn his mind's eye to the spiritual rather than the temporal view, Ralph still said, "The thing is settled." And when his mother wrote, begging him to stay with his family, where all outer influences accorded with heavenward drawings, Ralph tossed the letter in the fire, and growled, "It's settled: what's the use of talking?"

So the house was sold, the mill and dwelling in the lumber regions bought, and Ralph's business passed into other hands. His bank-stock doubled; and lo! his idea of a fortune doubled also. Twice what he had heretofore secretly craved became his goal; and he could hardly endure the slow process of winding up

affairs in Fenton, so eager was he to get where the ripping and tearing of saws, and the rolling wheels, should coin money for him faster and faster. On Sunday, Ralph was engaged in furtive calculations about cost of moving, price of lumber, &c., and so on: yet rousing himself spasmodically to listen to the sermon, he heard something about Satan sifting folks like wheat, and a few forcible remarks that conscience applied sharply; and he spent the time occupied by the last prayer and hymn in concluding he would give lumber "some day" to build a church, and be the founder of a flourishing congregation, far up among the woods and hills. Meanwhile at home, curtains and pictures came down and carpets came up; boxes and barrels were packed; and furniture, too heavy to move or unsuited to their new home, was disposed of among friends.

Mrs. Morley looked and felt sad; and Ralph had severe twinges of heart and con-

science. He wished twenty times that this change had never been proposed; but he thought of his bank-stock, and was consoled. Twenty years would make it all right. Fortune and success achieved, — what a man he would be! The children were jubilant as birds in spring-time: they got in everybody's way, imagined a thousand grand adventures, and accepted the future as one long holiday. The pastor and the officers of the Sunday school had counsel to give these children: they could be little missionaries, and start a Sunday school; they could spend Sunday afternoon in reading to, and questioning each other and any children who lived near them. They would be shut out from church privileges, but they must remember that the Sabbath was God's holy day. To such talk Richard said, "Yes, sir, — yes, sir," eager to get rid of it; secretly glad that he need not go to church twice a day; privately considering if the penny

might stop in his own pocket, instead of getting into the contribution box; and gleeful over the idea, that, instead of learning six verses for his next lesson, he might read "Arabian Nights" on Sunday afternoons. Frank, of an ardent, impressible disposition, shed tears at the instructions of his friends, and resolved henceforth to be perfect in all his ways. He would be a small apostle, and convert the whole community about the lumber-mill, without stopping to consider whether or not he were converted himself.

In the distribution of Christian counsel, Mrs. Morley had not been neglected. Hers was a shallow nature, but it had been stirred to its depths: she felt her maternal responsibilities as she had never felt them before. She suddenly saw that the salvation of her children in great measure rested upon herself: she had duties to perform which had until now been neglected; and her mind became a confused

mass of resolutions, without any defined plan of carrying them out. Here was the most important hour of this woman's life. Had she kept her desires steadily fixed on household piety and the salvation of her children, all the crooked way would have been made plain before her. God would have wrought strength out of her feebleness; desiring first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, abundant entrance into that kingdom might have been ministered to her. She could have tempered her husband's worldliness; and, when his mind trembled in the balance between earth and heaven, she might have turned the scale, and secured "so great a weight of glory." But I might as well tell you that Mrs. Morley did not strive until she had attained. She kept her resolutions to do something; but beautiful order never grew out of the confusion, because she gave her chief thinking and planning to the earthly rather than the heavenly interest.

Just now, Mrs. Morley was determined to do great things, and was busy packing the family linen and china, and carefully wrapping up the books.

During these days,—indeed, during these three or four weeks,—Aunt Stacey's turban never came down from its lofty elevation: it towered over wash-tub and coffee-pot, and threatened its own reflection in every shining tin. She packed dried fruit and jars of preserves in barrels, saw that dried beef and hams were duly boxed in straw, and made store of ginger-crackers and yeast-cakes. Beholding Stacey's half-yard of turban, and considering the labors of her hands, Mrs. Morley was miserable in the confidence that she could never supply her place; and she wished many times that moving had never been thought of. She kept her wishes carefully to herself, determined, on fitting occasion, to request old Stacey to reconsider, and follow the

family fortunes. Aunt Stacey forestalled her mistress, however; saying, as they cleared out the parlor, "Bettah sell dat ar big glass: get all broke trabbeling, and we won't want no such out dar!"

"O Aunt Stacey! *are* you going with us?" cried Mrs. Morley.

"Yes, I'm goin'," said Aunt Stacey tartly: "like to know how you and de chil'en get along if I didn't go: nobody to look after you. S'pose I'll hab to go."

"I'm so glad: I thought you maybe couldn't make up your mind, on account of the church; and it will be hard certainly."

"De Lord's gib me a duty to you and de chil'en, and I'm bound to go and do it," said Stacey. "He knows well enough I don't want to go away from de door of his house. You and Mr. Ralph got a duty too; and it don't look to me like your doin' it, kiting off from de ordinances. No," added Aunt Stacey,

wiping a tear or two, "you're taking de bread ob pribilege out of de chil'en's mouf: 'tain't surprising you take it out ob mine too."

Mrs. Morley made a new resolution or two, as she packed the mantle vases. She would be a Christian friend to Stacey, and not so backward about talking on religion. These resolutions were jumbled away with others. The household goods were packed decently and in order; and, good-bys being said, the happy home at Fenton was left, and the Morley family turned their course towards the lumber-regions, where their fortune was to be made. Abraham went out from his father's house, called of God, vowed to the service of the Lord, and God blessed him; but, like Aunt Stacey, we must set Ralph Morley's hegira with that of Lot, who, for worldly gain, made his dwelling where the God of Israel was not so much as named. Lot lost his family and his wealth, but remained himself righteous before God. Ralph Morley

sinned against higher light and broader privilege. He had been shown the beauty of righteousness under this new dispensation, and he had vowed to serve the Lord ; and now, to serve mammon, he deliberately turned from the holy commandment delivered unto him.





CHAPTER II.

AUNT STACEY.

“A heart have they exercised with covetous practices.”

STEAM-CAR and steamboat soon carried Ralph Morley and his family away from the advantages and pleasant associations of Fenton. When the journey had been concluded by a day's travel in great wagons, I promise you that Ralph was weary of his new bargain. The children were cross, Mrs. Morely dependent, and only Stacey, who had come thither not from covetousness, but a sense of duty, possessed any equanimity and was capable of good-natured effort. Down the hills, and from the heart of the dark wood,

brawled the stream that turned the mill. Vast piles of lumber, and tons of sawdust, lay around. The mill was large, neglected, and out of repair: about it half-a-dozen laborers' cabins swarmed with dirty children and slatternly housewives. Ralph's new home was a two-story wooden house, boasting one coat of paint on the front, with small, ill-fitted, shutterless windows, and doors too numerous and badly hung.

There had been a rail-fence about the yard, but some shiftless householder had carried half of it away for fuel. Cistern and sink were unknown quantities; trees were abundant in the region, but had all been carefully removed from the vicinity of the house. The place had never seemed so miserable, nor his trade so reckless, to Ralph, as it did when a turn in the rough country road revealed the new purchase to his weary family, sitting in the heavy, jolting wagon.

Helen broke into a loud wail, protesting that she wasn't a beggar, and wanted to go home. Richard's lip curled in scorn of his new abode, and disgust at the children who rushed from the cabins to gaze at the new-comers. Frank remarked that he didn't mean to live here long; and Freddy indulged in contemptuous observations about the broken platform that served for a back piazza, and the absence of any front steps. "Come, come," said Ralph Morley rubbing his hands, and trying to look cheerful, "we mustn't get discouraged. We will soon make this place look comfortable; and, after all, it is only the stepping-stone to something better. Come, Mary," he added to his wife, "when you have a fine house in town from the profits of this old mill, you will laugh at to-day!"

The time was the last of April: part of the furniture had already arrived, part was just behind them on the road, and the remainder

would follow them within a week. The men from the cabins were summoned to assist in lifting and carrying the household goods, and the next three hours were busy ones indeed, though the children were in every body's way; and Mrs. Morley had found time to retire to the small, inconvenient closet, and indulge in a cry over lost comforts. At last the neighbors were gone, Stacey had arranged a supper and brought the family about the table, and Ralph endeavored to cheer the meal by explaining how nicely he would order every thing; how much better the place would look; what a nice quiet home was there for the children, with nothing to distract them from their studies. And then, oh, then! — Ralph Morley held it up higher than all, — here was a fortune to be made. Laying up wealth was to be the order of these present years, and by and by would come the time to spend it. Did not Ralph Morley know, how, when years had been spent in

accumulation of wealth, the love changes from love of money for what it will buy to the love of money for money's self? He who is a miser that one day he may be lavish, often ends by being a miser altogether.

Supper ended, and the children being half asleep, Ralph suggested that they be sent to bed immediately. Aunt Stacey took a Bible from a newly-opened box, and, handing it to her master, remarked significantly, "You needn't wait for me to eat before you hab worship. You got to do your own preachin' and prayin' out heah."

Now, about family worship, let me tell you, that Ralph had been of that description of Christian that indulges in family prayers on Sabbath mornings, — seeming to consider it a form appropriate to holy time, but not demanded by daily exigencies. Now, when Stacey gave Ralph the Bible for evening worship, and that on a week-day, Ralph was startled. He

had made many fine resolutions, but here he was suddenly pressed to put them in practice.

He felt awkward. "Ha! Oh, yes! but to-night the children are so sleepy," he observed, gazing about with the Bible in his hand.

"Poor beginning makes a bad ending," quoth Stacey, pushing up a chair for her mistress, and seating herself on an overturned tub, with Helen on her knee.

Mrs. Morley was quite contented to have a new order about prayers. She bade the boys sit down, and signed to Richard to hand his father a chair; so, if not against his will, yet undeniably beyond his expectation, Ralph Morley ended a week-day with family devotions.

Tuesday evening closed over the arrival of the Morleys at their new home, at what was popularly called "Dodson's Mill," or, for short, simply "Dodson's."

Stacey, with a quiet face, kept the matter of worship morning and evening attended to, un

til she supposed that it was established on a firm basis. That was a busy week ; and Aunt Stacey's turban had no time to threaten, as, from daybreak until ten o'clock at night, she pushed the toil of " getting settled " towards completion. Stacey's faithful heart begrudged no service : she was willing to work hard. She had been accustomed to doing most of the indoor work ; and, the second day after their arrival, she said to Mrs. Morley, " Come, now : fine wedder, and you never feel at home like till you get a pretty garden. You take dem boys, and make a nice yard, and lef me 'lone to fix dis house. I get him done."

Accordingly Stacey put down carpets, and hung curtains, adorned with pictures the walls, — rough white-washed walls they were, in place of the dainty, tasteful hangings of Fenton, — and ornamented with roses and pretty toys the high, narrow, pine mantles. Well-cleaned and well-furnished, the house was more attractive.

Ralph had the kitchen porch repaired, a fence made, and steps put to the front door. Brown beds of moist earth, shaped into many forms, promised flowers by and by; frames marked where dahlias were expected to rise in their beauty; and trellises and lines of cord showed where one might look for blossoming runners, and frail climbing plants.

Still, make the best of it that one could, a dismal contrast was presented to far-away and ever-to-be-regretted Fenton; and the contrast was never more apparent than on Sunday morning.

The fire-places and chimneys were all out of order, and bedroom fires were an impossibility. Mrs. Morley was driven to wash the two younger children in the kitchen on Saturday night; and, while she was thus occupied, Stacey found time for valuable hints, and even for plainer speech.

“You don’t find no good teachin’ and

preachin' to-morrow to give dese chil'en a pull towards heaven. Sunday ain't a day for standing still : it's a hill, and slippery at dat. If you don't go up towards de Lord's kingdom, you slides down into de Devil's dominions, dat's sure ! Chil'en find it long day to-morrow ; but Bible stories and catechize and teachin' will help to make it shorter. *His* mother" — thus referring to old Mrs. Morley — "'stonishing hand at 'structing people. She teach me all I know. No ; now, dat too bad. She teach a good deal : but God's good Spirit is de great teacher ; and he teach even a poor, stupid, cul-lered pusson. If Mr. Ralph had a sarmont-book, and read out one to us, and did some talkin' and prayin', and you and the chil'en sing so mighty pretty, 'pears to me it would be a little meetin' de Lord would bless."

Such a family service would have been like the gate of Paradise to old Stacey ; but Mrs. Morley knew it was quite out of the question.

However, she meant to do something, certainly.

Sabbath began by a breakfast nearly two hours later than common, after a fashion some people have of robbing the Maker of a few hours off each end of that seventh of time which he claims for himself. Aunt Stacey was up early; and, looking for something congenial, had read half through the Lamentations of Jeremiah before the family made their appearance. Ralph found himself at a disadvantage the first thing: there was no Sunday school, that he might ask where the lesson was, and was it learned, and who was teacher; there was no church where he could bid the children be present, keep awake, and remember the text. And these things had been the staple of Sunday-morning conversation; and, lacking them, he knew not what to say. His seat at table overlooked the mill; and he detected himself considering what repairs must

be made. He roused himself, and ordered the boys not to leave the yard during the day, and to learn a lesson as usual; and, when a man came to ask about some work, he was taken by surprise, and blundered out, "Yes, no, he would see." Not having a clear conscience before God or himself, Ralph was easily disconcerted.

The Morley children had been taught in a general way that the Sabbath is holy to the Lord; that it was, or could be, a delight, had not entered into the teaching. They were bidden to neither work, play, nor make a noise; and sacred time had been very much of a bore. That the parental mind was not dissevered on the Sabbath from worldly interest, had been proven to the children by hearing their mother forecasting of the week's washing and preserving, and their father giving hints of his business. Richard was sharp enough to see that the agricultural and

general news columns of the religious paper attracted his father more than "Missionary Intelligence" or "News of the Churches." To this whole family, Herbert's poem on the Sabbath would have been the wildest and most incomprehensible rhapsody. It is an opinion common to perhaps half the members of our churches, that a child cannot be brought to any religious enjoyment of the Sabbath: if the younger members of the family maintain some silence and propriety of demeanor, and do not disturb the half-somnolent meditations of their elders, it is all of which they are supposed to be capable. The Morleys were of this variety of church-members: they had no family religion, no cordial religious intercourse among themselves, no mutual questioning upon the Scripture; indeed, they did not apprehend that these things could be. When one spends a large portion of his time among church-members of the Morley description, and recalls the

old-time question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" the natural reply seems to be, that it is not likely that he will; or, if he does, it will be faith of that extremely diluted quality that scarcely retains any similitude to the genuine article. However, thank God, the Morleys are not types of all the Church: there are those who begin with God's blessing, and walk in his love, and serve him with all their house and with all their heart.

But we must leave moralizing, and show you how this first Sabbath spent out of the hearing of church-bells was sanctified. Mrs. Morley, and Ralph also, considered it a duty to read their Bibles, especially on Sabbath: the children were expected to read theirs. The three older ones could read; and Mrs. Morley, after breakfast, established her sons on chairs, well removed from each other, and, giving them Bibles, ordered them each to learn six verses.

Where? Anywhere they chose. Mrs. Morley did not know that one part of Scripture was more suitable to such exercise than any other: she had no idea of asking questions, or making the lesson a means of grace. The boys knew remonstrance was useless: they had fortunately been brought up to obey. They opened their books, though Richard wore a deeply-injured look, as if the gospel were being imposed upon him. Helen found herself counted out, and lamented. Her mother suggested that she go and stay with Stacey. Helen wanted to be read to; and, finding it easier to assent than to deny, Mrs. Morley took her youngest on her knee, and began to read the third chapter of Romans to this three-year-old infant.

Perfectly contented with the attention shown her, Helen counted the figures on her mother's dress, and was satisfied.

“I can't learn while you're reading to *her*,” growled Richard.

“No, Mary,” said Mr. Morley, who had a volume of Church History open before him ; “and I cannot read while you do. If you will read to Helen in the other room, I’ll see that these boys keep quiet.”

The boys were accordingly kept quiet for nearly two hours ; during which time they had looked out of the window, and all over the room until they were weary ; had spoiled several leaves in their Bibles ; had flung paper-balls at each other ; and had marked the wall and their chairs with knives and pencils. Meanwhile, their father had grown weary of Church History, had looked over the last newspaper, and had a nap ; and their mother, having got through five chapters of Romans, had reviewed the past, present, and future, and decided upon what sewing she should begin in the ensuing week. The boys now reported their lessons ready, and rattled off the verses with some blunders. No sooner was the task

ended than they declared themselves hungry, thirsty, and sleepy. A visit to the pump and the apple-barrel revived them. Richard got the "Arabian Nights;" Frank, a pencil and paper to draw; and Freddy his slate to play puzzle with Helen. But, before dinner, the three boys had all been shaken for quarrelling, and teasing Helen; had murmured that they hated Sunday, and had audibly wished it were to-morrow, which wish their father had echoed in his secret heart. Now, after dinner, Mrs. Morley saw she must do something, if peace was to be maintained. So the boys were again distributed over the room; a catechism given each, with orders to study five questions. And, amid grumbling and twisting, and scowls fearful to behold, the questions were learned and recited without comment.

"Now read your Bibles," said Mrs. Morley.

Richard declared he hated the Bible; Frank, that he wished there wasn't any; and Freddy,

that he was sick. Freddy, in consideration of his tender age, was excused from reading; and straightway beguiled Helen to make a dirt-pie behind the house; which amusement their father (out examining his new property, and projecting improvements), nipped in the bud, as Sabbath-breaking. And now old Stacey, through with her work at last, did what the mother should have known enough to do. She called these two little children, and told them, in simple language, a Bible-story, asking questions; she sung them a hymn, and helped them learn a text; and had just got them quietly looking at some Scripture prints, when those Goths and Vandals, Richard and Frank, invaded her empire, and brought confusion: their mother had dismissed them that she might shorten the day by a nap. Stacey could not prevail upon the elder boys to "learn something good." They had had enough of learning; were free, and meant to enjoy their

liberty. Away went the four, and Stacey was alone with her big Bible. Stacey sat on the door-sill, with the beloved book on her knee. Over the Bible Stacey's turban never reared an offended front: it settled calmly over the bowed head, and content filled the eyes that scanned the familiar pages. Bible-reading was no form or task to Stacey. It was consolation in trouble, strength for days to come, and food for a spirit hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Bless you! Stacey would not have read five chapters of Romans or of Jeremiah, without being able to tell what they were about half an hour afterwards. She read with heart as well as eyes, and applied what she read.

Ralph Morley had finished his examination of his place, and, feeling weary and dissatisfied, came round by the kitchen-door. It had been a long, dismal, unprofitable day, — a day threatening of future trouble, and giving unde-

sired time for self-examination and self-accusation. Ralph Morley came to the kitchen-door: his wife was asleep, and his servant was reading. Where were his children? Helen, perched upon the fence, watched a game of marbles going on outside, and had the full benefit of all the slang and swearing of the untrained urchins that played it; Freddy had cut an irregular oval from a newspaper, notched holes in it, and, running broom-straws through the holes, had improvised a kite, which he was surreptitiously flying from the garret-window; Frank was drawing a pair of chickens fighting, on the blank leaf of a "Pilgrim's Progress;" while Richard had fashioned himself a cigar of corn-husks, and was desperately trying to smoke it. All day, Ralph had snapped and ordered and shaken his juveniles, and yet could not prevail upon them to spend the day more holily in letter than he was doing in spirit: he was weary of crying "Go" to his

children when they wouldn't "go" heaven ward. Had lip and life cried "Come," they would have followed him freely; but, poor man, he did not understand that. Ralph knew Stacey could sympathize with him: he looked desperately about and sighed, "See those children, — what *can* I do with them?"

"Take 'em back whar you come from," said Stacey. "You ain't got de knack of bringing 'em up right here. You go where you get help for 'em, and help for your ownself. O Mr. Ralph! I knowed you ever sence you was a little boy, and you' mighty dumb scholar in de Lord's ways yet. Don't you stay here and get ruined: you go back whar you get somebody to pull you 'long to hebben."

"It is too late to say go back, when the bargain's made, the house sold, and the expense of moving undertaken," said Ralph bitterly.

"Somebody buy dis place: fools 'nough in

dis worl' 'sides you, Mr. Ralph, and more houses 'long side churches for you to buy. You got money in de bank will pay for moving. Bettah, a sight bettah, to lose dis here mis'able worl', than to lose your own soul, and all de soul you got, and de chil'en's souls in de bargain."

"Poor policy to throw away property like that: I must stay and make the best of it. It isn't possible to leave now, Stacey: it would be a dead loss."

"See here," said Stacey, running her finger along the page open before her. "Let me read you 'bout dat ar King Amiziah, when he went and paid a hundred talents of silver (and dat's more 'n you got), to de army of Israel to help him fight. Says de Lord, 'You send dem men home: I don't like 'em, and I can't fight long wid dem.' Says Amiziah, 'But what shall I do for de hundred talents I have given to de army of Israel?' De Lord he say, 'I am

able to give dee much more than dis.' Now de king see he got to lose de Lord's help, or lose de money; so he made up his mind to stick to de Lord whatever else he did; and he had good luck. Dat ar was de only sensible thing Amiziah ebber did, and de only time he had good luck. Now 'sposin' he had let go de Lord, 'stid of dat ar money? Why he loss de money and de battle he were fightin'. Now you look out, Mr. Ralph, and don't you hold so fast to de money dat you lose de Lord, and den de money slip through your fingers too."

Ralph turned away: Stacey's doctrine was too hard for him. Wearily ended the Sabbath day, with form of prayer that was but a form. The children were cross, and were sent early to bed. Ralph felt relieved when it was time for him to go to bed himself; and Mrs. Morley would have been surprised had she realized how glad she was that there were six days

before another Sunday. Was Mrs. Morley alone in this feeling? How many so-called Christian families are there, the language of whose life is, "When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?" But what says Amos? "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their works." We write no book of rules for family living; but is it not the duty of every parent professing religion to have suitable Sabbath reading, attractive Sabbath exercises, and warm, lively, and constant home instruction on the Sabbath; that by variety and earnestness the duties of the day may be useful and interesting, shall not weary and disgust the children, but shall cause the holy time to be desired as bringing a blessing and a pleasure beyond all other days?

We told you Stacey quietly and constantly pressed the matter of daily worship. She accomplished this by a private understanding

with Helen, who, as soon as she finished her breakfast and supper, was to run to her father with the Bible. For this service, Helen daily received from Aunt Stacey a horse elaborately made of gingerbread. This noble steed she first drew up and down the kitchen-table a few times with a string, and then bit off its tail; next she bit off the head to preserve the balance; the legs then fell victims, to prevent running away, and lastly Helen devoured the shapeless body, "to save it." It is quite fearful to consider that Stacey contemplated Helen's eating three hundred and sixty-five gingerbread horses in a year; but this immense sacrifice our old servant was quite willing to offer at the shrine of family worship. The plan worked quite well for some time.

Family worship is a sort of religious thermometer. Ralph Morley's family prayers indicated a low state of spiritual temperature. Ralph had no heart in the act: it was a form,

and very formal. You will notice that a man who prays because he must, and for the sake of appearances, never prays *too short*: he looks to the quantity rather than the quality of his prayers; and the Devil bids him give good measure, that the deficiency of fervor may be the more apparent. Ralph duly took the Bible from his little daughter, and opened it at random. He did not know that portions of Scripture might be peculiarly suited to certain occasions; he did not know that times and seasons, joy and woe, Sabbaths and working-days, faults and repentings, and yearnings after better things, all found their parallel in the written Word. He believed it his duty to read a full chapter, however long it was; and, if he were pressed with business, he crucified the flesh by selecting some particularly long chapter, and reading doggedly through it. Meantime he wondered if the men were sawing the right logs, if the planking were made the requisite

thickness, if John Thomas were drunk, and if Peter Perkins had measured the last pile of boards.

There is no more wretched man than a formalist who has religious instinct, and a little religious training. Conscience goads him on to certain duties, and then lashes him because he finds them uncongenial; he is forever tortured because he has no vital interest in things divine, when he knows he ought to have it; and he will not cast himself on God's mercy, crying, "Help thou mine unbelief," because a higher faith will combat some darling sin or greed that he is resolved to have and to hold.

Business at the Dodson Mill had been for so long a time under the supervision of King Whiskey, that it was very much disordered. Ralph Morley was a very energetic business man; and he rose early and went over to his mill, putting his hand and his brain

everywhere, busy enough until breakfast time. Ralph was willing to reply to the bell, energetically swung by Freddie. He was hungry; he had too much sense to eat so fast as to bring about dyspepsia; and he took his seat at the table prepared to do full justice to the food and to himself. But after breakfast was that little Helen at his elbow with the Bible. The Bible, bread and water of life; but Ralph's soul was not hungry, and he felt that this celestial food was forced upon his spiritual appetite. For form's sake he would have enough; but Ralph was not in fear of religious dyspepsia, and did not understand that this disease is contagious when it seizes the head of a house, and is too frequently imparted from the soul of the father to children or servants. Mindful of that dainty, the gingerbread horse, Helen thrusts out the Word of God, "Here, pa," — and a glance of monition to Stacey.

Ralph has strong drawings towards the mill,

where the saws are whirring through white, pine logs of mighty growth. Ralph takes the book, and turns to the fifth chapter of Genesis, and begins, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," &c. His heart is on the pine logs, his mind's eye on John Thomas and Peter Perkins. He rushes on through names, ages, and deaths; the chapter being, as we all know, a biblical cemetery, with each separate verse a grave-stone, sacred to the memory of otherwise forgotten antediluvians, and rather fit for the close student than for the hour of domestic worship. Ralph was not so wise as that famous old man, who, entangled in the mazes of this portion of Scripture, coolly remarked, "And so they went on marrying and dying to the end of the chapter." He rushed on through it, making no judicious remark on man created in God's likeness, calling no attention to him who walked with God, refreshing no youthful memory with a word of

those famous men, — who lived the longest, and who built the ark. No: Ralph considered it his duty to his religious profession to read that chapter through, and his duty to himself to get it done as soon as possible; and in vain did Freddy whimper at the twenty-seventh verse: “Oh, I’m sick of so much dying!” As to Frank he made a pin-hook, tied it to a thread, and carefully fastened it in the hem of Richard’s pantaloons. The chapter was finished, to the relief of all the family; and Ralph was now to add a prayer of length suited not to home and heart needs, but to the length of the chapter. As he knelt down he pushed his chair towards the door, that he might be prepared for a rush, and glanced to see that his hat was near his hand. Ralph did not pray that his own heart might be delivered from idols, and brought nigh to God, but he prayed that Japan might be brought out of heathendom: he did not supplicate for Richard, who

had a bad temper ; for Frank, who was fickle ; and Freddy, who was idle, — that they might be made meet for the kingdom of God ; but he took a mental excursion to the islands of the sea, and to the head-waters of the Nile ; and, instead of beseeching the All-Father to lead the family in ways of righteousness all the present day, he made a few general remarks to the Lord about the Millennium, and lions lying on straw, and bears eating grass. O Ralph, Ralph ! taking tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and forgetting the weightier matters of the law ! These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

We were just about to add that Ralph's "Amen," and turning the door-knob, were almost simultaneous, and that he was half-way out of the door before he was fairly off his knees ; and perhaps it would have been not much of an imagination.

Mrs. Morley was doing some baking that

morning, and Aunt Stacey was ironing. The old servant polished shirt-bosoms and collars, more in sorrow than in anger, and finally remarked, "Dem chil'en get most mighty tired and oneasy at prayers."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Morley: "I don't know what to do with them."

"De ox won't go to an empty crib," quoth Stacey. "Mr. Ralph don't begin to hold prayers like his old fader used to do. *He'd* say, 'Chil'en! I'm goin' to read 'bout de Good Shepherd. Chil'en, here's 'bout a wonderful ting de Lord Jesus did: you hark!' Den when he pray, — 'O Lord, Ralph played truant yesterday, and dy eye was on him while he was disobeyin' his parents and wastin' his time: make Ralph do better dan dat. Here's Fanny, Lord; she's vain, but dou wilt dwell wid de humble in heart.' Now I tell you, Missus, dem chil'en looked sharp at prayer-time to see what was comin'."

“Well, it may have been a good plan,” admitted Mrs. Morley; “but I don’t exactly like personalities: and, any way, Mr. Morley has not the knack of instructing that way; people are differently constituted.”

“Well,” said Stacey, “de Lord’s got a great variety of chil’en; but it’s all dar duty to get to bein’ just as nigh like de hebbenly Fader as dey kin.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Morley, pinching down a pie-crust. She called herself constitutionally backward about speaking on religious subjects.

“Dar’s sech a ting,” said Stacey, “as sittin’ down under de Lord’s shadow wid great delight, and ’pears to me dat’s what we ought to do at family prayers. We can get togeder to hear de good word, and talk to de Fader in hebben, and *enjoy* it.”

“Well, yes,” replied Mrs. Morley; “but Mr. Morley is very much pressed and worried with his business: it must be looked after care-

fully and constantly, and borne in mind all the time, or it will go to ruin.”

“Bless you, Missey dear!” cried Stacey: “Dat’s just de condition ebery one of our souls is in, and de little lookin’ a’ter dey gets jest amazes me.”

No reply coming to this, Stacey remarked as she got a hot iron and rubbed it, “Yes, missey, you can hide de sun wid a dinner-plate; and you can hold up a little old lumber-mill so close to your eyes dat you hide de good Lord of hebben and earth, and it’s mighty dangerous too.”

One or two Sundays, very much after the pattern of the first, had made holy time a terror to all the Morleys; when Frank, recalling some stories he had read, the exhortation of friends in Fenton, and, moved by a desire for change, proposed that himself and his brothers be allowed to spend Sunday afternoon in a room at the mill, having Sunday-school with the children from the neighboring cabins. Ralph

received this idea with rapture. To use a common phrase, it took the curse off present doings. He would be relieved of Sunday noise and pet; his children would be properly occupied in a way of their choice; and then how suitable it was thus to make the wilderness blossom like the garden of the Lord. Ralph was sure that was worth coming to Dodson's for: he was *almost* ready to think it was what he had come for. It would have been more consistent had Ralph led this movement, and been the head of this Sunday-school, organizing his children and working with them; but this was not in his line of conduct: so he gave permission, and the use of the room, and let the boys go on as they chose. Mrs. Morley declined to let Helen be of the school-committee, until she saw how the matter worked: but she gathered up the papers, cards, old Looks, and Testaments that her sons ordered; and, on Sunday afternoon, the three boys rushed over

to the mill with laden arms. Two girls and five boys were in waiting, come from the workmen's cabins. There was some dispute between Richard and Frank about the superintendency; but Frank yielded when Richard threatened to go home if he might not have the post of honor. Richard pompously read a chapter, but got very angry when the boys laughed. Other devotional exercises were dispensed with; and the seven pupils were about to be divided into three classes, when one and all declared they would not have poor Freddy for a teacher; one of the girls adding insult to injury, by pronouncing him "a little snip." Richard now put Freddy among the pupils, and made two classes of four each; but Freddy retired weeping to a corner, and said "he would not play." It took a long time to be suited with seats, and a long time more to be suited with books. Teaching began, and proceeded for about fifteen minutes. But now Richard told his eldest neophyte that he was a sinner.

“ I ain’t no more of a sinner than you be,” said the boy.

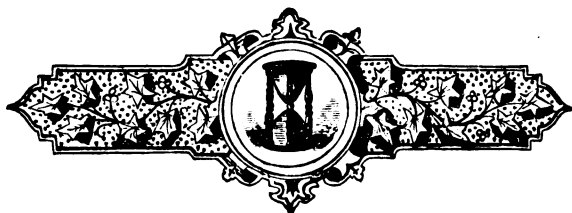
“ Yes, you are,” retorted Richard rashly.

“ You lie !” cried Peter Perkins’s heir.

Richard’s hot temper blazed, and he struck young Perkins in the face. It was the signal of an affray : the three Morley brothers on one side, the five cabin boys on the other, and the two girls cheering on both parties. Blows were given ; books flew through the air ; oaths and howls were heard ; and Stacey, listening for mischief, heard and ran to the rescue. Words, shakes, slaps, and general efficiency parted the combatants. Richard was minus the sleeve of his jacket ; Frank had lost an important part of his trowsers ; and Freddy was short one tooth ; but that, Stacey said, was loose, and “ would soon have come out any way.” The remnants of the school-books were collected ; the mill-boys vowed they would never come there again ; and Richard and Co.

promptly declared they “ didn’t want them to,— they weren’t worth teaching.” Stacey drove her flock of nurslings home ; and Mrs. Morley shed tears over this misadventure. Ralph indignantly declared his neighbors a low set, neither reproved nor questioned his own children, and thus ended the first attempt at religious improvement at Dodson’s lumber-mill, — ended thus because Ralph’s heart was more exercised with covetousness than with eternal life





CHAPTER III.

DODSON'S MILL.

“ He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.”

FOR some weeks after the affair of Sabbath afternoon at the mill, the gospel and Morley piety were very much at a discount at Dodson's. Ralph, with hasty parental feeling, informed Peter Perkins that the Perkins's eldest was “a rascal;” whereupon Peter, with equal parental feeling, had quickly replied, that he did not care, and had declined to work any more at Dodson's. Peace was made between master and man,

however, though the boys were inveterate foes.

During these weeks, Mr. Morley was incessantly occupied at the mill, and his wife was over-pressed with spring sewing: neither of them had time to inaugurate that "home school" that had been projected; and the children were rampant, wasting their time, learning nothing but mischief, destroying their dry-goods, and getting to look and act like young Hottentots; insomuch that Ralph was forced to leave the mill three several times to read the Riot Act, and administer condign punishment with birch-rods to the violators of the public peace. Matters were coming to a crisis; and Ralph and his wife bestirred themselves. A room was set apart for a schoolroom: three desks were made, books put in order, the mother's work-table was set by a window, and Helen's little chair placed near; and, on Monday morning, the three young Americans were

put in their places, and ordered to begin a general review.

By noon, Mrs. Morley had begun to envy Stacey, and feel that she preferred doing the family washing to shooting such truant ideas as were indigenous or exotic to the youthful Morley brain. But a mother is capable of almost any exertion in behalf of her children: these lads *must* be taught, and there was only the mother to do it at present. So she bravely held her post while they spent an afternoon-hour in looking over next day's lessons, and gave them to understand that six mornings in a week would find them busy with their studies.

Mrs. Morley's post as teacher of these infants was not particularly enviable: it was up-hill work. Richard was proud and morose: if he failed in his task, he became angry at himself, his book, and his mother. Frank, of a jollier temperament, rushed at his book as some would-be heroes rush at a fortification,

loudly resolved to do or die ; but, like these same braves, fell back when he encountered a real resistance. Frank was gloriously successful over what was easy ; but the rivers of Europe could at any time cause him to beat a retreat. Long-division took him a hopeless prisoner : he hung out a white flag in the shape of a wet pocket-handkerchief at the first charge of a battalion of three-syllable words. Freddy had an inconvenient habit of falling ill as soon as school-time begun. The First Reader gave Freddy a severe headache ; his copy-book caused his eyes to smart, and a ringing to be heard in his ears ; while the multiplication-table acted like a green apple, and occasioned a violent cramp in regions unspeakable.

One may be inclined to think that Mrs. Morley's task was hopeless ; that, in view of all these difficulties, she might as well have yielded at once, and resigned her sons to mental anarchy. But perseverance is a grand con-

queror, and has won more laurels than Cæsar, Alexander, or Napoleon. Mrs. Morley persisted, and she achieved some success; but there was a way in which she might have made more peaceful and satisfactory progress. There is a certain parable of the talents, which many professing Christians, and some possessing Christians, fail to see lies at the groundwork of all successful training. Why not give the child from its earliest day, first in short and simple speech, and afterwards in more extended instructions, to realize that it holds all its advantages from One who will, at the great day of account, demand his own with usury. If only the one talent of time is possessed cannot the child be taught to respect that? Why keep the soul tied to the lower matters of earthly praise and blame, of holidays and dollar-prizes, when over all is the high thought of Him who keeps and balances the books of reckoning, and will say, "Well done! enter

into joy"? It seems to me that Mrs. Morley might have dedicated the study-hour to God by words of Scripture and prayer *suited to the work in hand*; that she might have taught her children that even these initiatory studies took hold on eternity, and that God could be glorified even by the geography and grammar lesson well learned, the spelling and the reading properly recited, and the morning honestly devoted to improvement. When shall we have a higher standard of Christian living in Christian homes? Lacking these higher incentives to effort, matters moved on at the mill in some slow fashion; and we do not wish it to be inferred that the Morleys were unhappy or disappointed. Ralph found his business a pecuniary success: he began to make money even beyond his expectations. Very unfortunately, he was given the desire of his heart; and whatever he did had a worldly prosperity.

Mrs. Morley rejoiced in her husband's joy.

She felt contented to live at Dodson's just now : for she lived in her children, and thought the place suited them ; therefore it suited her. The children exulted in the freedom of the woods and perfect health. They had picnics and walks ; they built houses about the mill, and set up housekeeping ; they had ovens where they roasted apples and potatoes ; and they caught squirrels and rabbits. They had a cow and plenty of chickens ; they had a buggy, a wagon, and three horses ; and with childlike facility accommodating themselves to new circumstances, they were glad.

Had the Morleys gone to Dodson's Mill from duty or necessity ; had they been earnest, practical Christians, — we know they might have strengthened the kingdom of Christ in themselves, their children, and their new neighborhood. But we admitted from the beginning that they went to Dodson's Mill from covetousness ; and, as we do not intend to trifle with

wickedness, we refer you to the declaration that the Lord abhorreth the covetous. How, then, could the Morleys look for a blessing while they held to their greed? The logs came to the mill, and sawn lumber went from it. The saws cut and whirred, and planks rattled down upon planks. The spring grew into summer. Mrs. Morley's flowers blossomed in bright succession; vines grew over the bare porches and about the shutterless windows. The family — we except Stacey — became accustomed to the loss of church and Sunday school. Mrs. Morley did not remit the learning of verses and catechism; neither did she arrive at any profitable way of applying this learning, nor of conducting Sabbath exercises. A walk in the afternoon became tacitly permitted to the boys; and when the *tasks* — for they were tasks, and nothing higher or better, under Mrs. Morley's administration — were ended, they were allowed to read any kind of book or paper to be found in the house.

Stacey, as opportunity offered, taught and interested the younger children Sabbath evening; and sometimes the elder pair were beguiled into listening and learning by her quaint speech and evident earnestness.

We wish we could tell you, as they do in some story-books, that, in less than six months from the arrival of the Morleys at Dodson's, Dodson's became Eden restored; that John Thomas left drinking, and preached the gospel; that Peter Perkins was an ornament of his race; and all the little Morleys, and Perkinses, and Dodson juveniles generally, held prayer-meetings, while a church's white steeple pierced a sea of leaves, and a pastor was settled among a band of primitive Christians. We can tell none of these things, because none of these things happened. Had Ralph been a live Christian, we believe we might tell you of a Sunday school and a temperance society; for we think these would have been the natural outgrowth of his godliness.

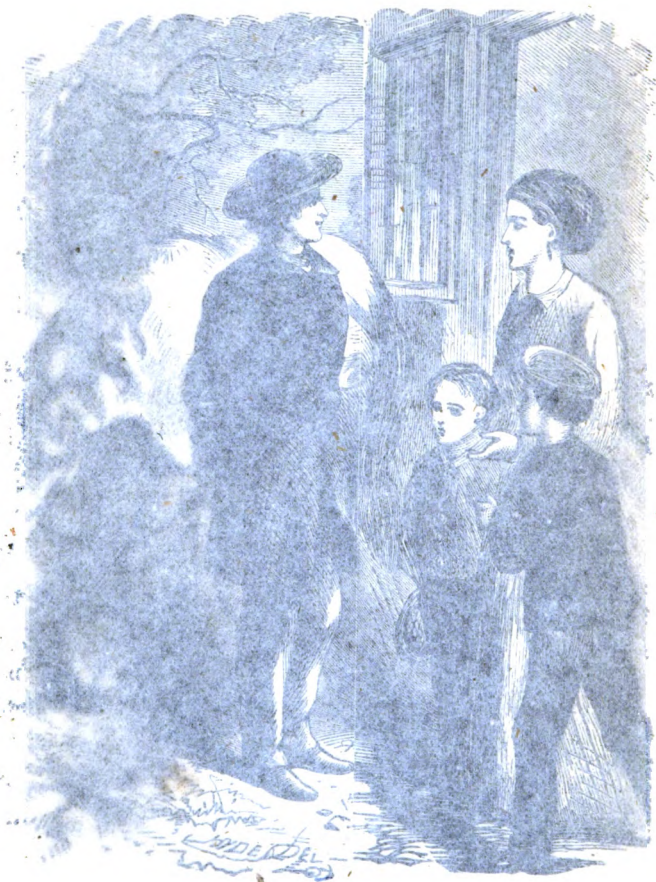
Had Mrs. Morley been an active Christian woman, we feel sure, that, by the time her dahlias bloomed, her neighbor women would have been tidier, quieter, more Sabbath-keeping, less lazy and gossiping, and better mothers. And, above all, we are *sure* that the four Morley children, like that immortal Child, would have grown "in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." Had the life of Ralph Morley and his wife had all its springs in God, this verdure and beauty had blessed its flowing: but, as it was only a poor, bitter spring of earth, it ran on through the devil's territory; and swearing and Sabbath-breaking, drinking and fighting, coldness and hypocrisy, were the ill weeds that flourished unchecked about them.

Before the dahlias reached their decadence, a stranger stopped at the Morley gate. He was mounted on a stout horse, and had a pair of large, well-filled saddle-bags, and a big parcel. His name was Luke Rogers; and,

as he laid the rein on his horse's neck, a look of surprise and pleasure brightened his eyes, as he noticed the air of taste and thrift that prevailed at Dodson's, and especially at the healthy appearance of the four well-dressed children who were playing at a swing near the kitchen-porch. Helen Morley was surely a dear little girl, and the pet of her brothers: tastefully dressed, with floating sash and curls and happy face, she would have won an approving smile from the surliest, to say nothing of a man so genial as Luke Rogers. It was Helen, indeed, who was the bright spot in this family. Helen learned her primer and hemmed her seam when her brothers were sulky or idle; and Helen soothed wrath and placated offended powers when open war had been declared in the family. Lastly, Helen, sooner than any other, could bring Stacey's turban down from its loftiest altitude. Ralph Morley, at his mill-door, saw the stranger alight by his gate, and



• “The stranger introduced himself as Luke Rogers.”—Page 87.



"The stranger introduced himself as Luke Rogers."—Page 87.

came over with a hearty hand-shake and bland smile ready, which he counted it good policy to give to every man he met. Mrs. Morley rose from her sewing, and appeared on the threshold. The stranger introduced himself as Luke Rogers, a colporter, who paid a yearly visit to that region, looking after the spiritual interests of the community. He usually spent several days at Dodson's, and had heretofore been entertained in that house, the only one suitable in the vicinity. Mr. and Mrs. Morley at once made him welcome, and hoped he would remain with them as long as suited his convenience. Frank showed the guest to the spare bedroom; Richard led the horse to the stable; and Stacey, hearing the stranger's words, patted her turban down to its lowest, smiled all over her face, and proceeded to broil a chicken for tea in her best style, singing meantime, "Here I raise my Ebenezer." Ralph went back to his mill, not decided whether to

be glad or indifferent about Luke Rogers's visit. He decided that he ought to be very glad, and regard it as a high privilege; and he *was* very glad, and regarded it accordingly. Mrs. Morley was delighted at any relief to Dodsonian monotony; and Stacey fairly smacked her lips, as she said to herself, "Now we hab some religion."

The colporter and the family met at the tea-table. "Were the Morleys Christians?" Indubitably, yes! Ralph answered in the affirmative without a moment's hesitation: he regarded his name on the church-rolls as earnest of his right and title to an inheritance with the saints in light. If his view were correct, dear friends, heaven would be fuller!

Luke Rogers took his acquaintances at their word, and rejoiced. He questioned of religion at Dodson's, — what was doing and what might be done. Ralph woke up to eloquence: he

meant to build a church, and call a pastor, "as soon as he got fairly on his feet." Might Luke hold a meeting in the mill Sunday? Oh, certainly! perfectly delighted to have him. And Ralph, without intending to be false, gave such hints of the effort at a Sunday school, that he held the Morley boys up as saints beside the Perkins sinners. Luke Rogers patted Freddy's head, and said, "they would make it all right now;" and Freddy incontinently observed, "It *was* all right now, his tooth had grew!"

Tea over, and lo! Helen at papa's elbow, holding the Bible. A happy thought struck Ralph, and he gave over the book to Luke Rogers; and Luke grew happier than ever to know this was a home where they had family worship.

"Are you reading in any special place," asked Luke, as the family took their seats.

"No," Ralph said; "no."

"Just dip in anywhere, and get done;" whispered Richard to Frank. But his mother

caught the whisper, and motioned him to a place at her left, which he took promptly.

Luke Rogers chose the account of the transfiguration. "He took Peter, James, and John," Luke read; and asked, "Who were these, Frank?"

"Sir!" cried Frank, who fell into chronic deafness at prayer-time, and heard nothing.

"I always ask questions when I am reading," said Luke. "Richard, do you know who Peter and James and John were?"

Richard was fully prepared to say, "No, sir!" but his mother whispered, "Apostles;" and he answered accordingly.

The Morleys showed, during the colporter's questioning, that lamentable ignorance of Scripture common to children who are not instructed in the Bible *by their parents*. However, Richard came out brilliantly once, recalling that Elias meant Elijah; and Helen electrified the family, by knowing that Moses

“went sailing in a basket, when he was a teeny mite of baby.” She added also, “Stacey told me so!”

Luke Rogers saw that there was a painful laxity in religious teaching in this family, but he trusted they might reach better things. He read only nine verses, but he forced attention to those verses. He explained them, he brought out their meaning and bearings, and impressed them upon the minds of the family. At the thirty-sixth verse of the chapter, Luke turned to the corresponding account in Mark, and read the words “Jesus only,” On these he paused to make some remark. “Notice this, Richard, ‘Jesus only:’ Why? because in him all fulness dwells. ‘Jesus only:’ Frank, why? because he is enough, — enough for time and for eternity: he supplies all our need. Having Jesus, dear friends, we have all things. Jesus ours, and we want nothing more, — nothing more!”

“Oh!” said Helen, rising from her chair, with big, wise eyes, and hands clasped in eagerness. “Jesus ain’t enough for my papa. He wants lots of other things : he wants a lot of money, — he *said* so !”

Poor Helen was drawn back into her chair by Stacey ; and her two eldest brothers went into indecorous convulsions of laughter. But alas, should not Ralph’s life rise up in the judgment, like this little child, to condemn him, that he had not made God’s beloved Son his chief good, and followed him first of all before his children and the world ?

We question if any man is allowed to run unhindered towards destruction. The divine call comes to every heart, and to some hearts right often. This is especially the case with those, who, coming swiftly along the world’s way, keep turning their faces ever and anon towards a heaven, which lying, far enough out of their present course, they nevertheless hope

to reach at last. Helen's remark, that Jesus was not enough for her papa, cut Ralph sorely: nor was this the only time during Luke Rogers's stay, that circumstances wielded heavily the lash of conscience. Ralph was fond of talking: he tried to make up for what he did not do by telling what he meant to do, — a kind of promissory note or mortgage on the future, that is fully a hundred per cent below par.

Said Ralph to Luke Rogers, "I intend to set up a school here. My wife teaches our children now, but it wears on her: and I feel interested in the children of the vicinity; they ought to be educated. Now they have only a district school, poorly taught and thinly attended; and, for three months in the year, I want some well-informed and pious young man, — one who can take charge of a Sunday school. Do you know of any such?"

"Yes," said Luke promptly: "I know of one who will be the very man for the place.

I will write to him to-day if you like. When would you want a man whose recommendations suit you? and what salary would be given?"

"Hm, ah, um," said Ralph, drawing back. "Yes, I am glad you know of such a man. I will bear it in mind. I shall start this matter as soon as I get on my feet fairly. In a year or so. Yes, certainly."

"But, as to the Sunday school, that could be started at once," said Luke.

"Oh!" replied Ralph hastily, "*that* has been tried and failed."

"Try again," said Luke briskly. "Your colored woman tells me that in these houses near you are twenty children, all of whom spend Sabbath in playing or quarrelling. The salvation of these souls is precious, and a Sabbath school might be the appointed means to that end. Let us start one next Sunday: after our service we will organize. Yourself, your wife, and Richard would be teachers; and you

would, while benefiting the neighborhood, teach your children to come up early to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

"The fact is," said Ralph, "that my wife and I have no knack at this sort of thing. We are not accustomed to it: it would be useless to undertake it; and then I, — I am just now so very busy, my mind so occupied, that I could not do the work nor myself justice."

"My friend," said Luke seriously. "Would it not be well to consider, that the work of the Lord is the most important business we can possibly have? We are not called to serve ourselves, but to serve him. I think it would pay you well in time, and in eternity, to put the work of the gospel first. Let me beg you to start this Sunday school."

"It cannot be done," said Ralph: "I could not undertake it. I am not fitted for that business."

"My God shall supply all your need,"

began Luke ; but Ralph retired into himself, like a snail in its shell, and was inaccessible all that day. Luke spent the time visiting the laborers' homes, and having in the afternoon some serious conversation with Mrs. Morley. He found this lady, like the eldest son in the parable, assenting but never doing. Aunt Stacey was more satisfactory : talked with as she prepared biscuits for tea, she admitted herself "starving for religion" in the Dodson territory ; but brightened with the confidence that "she couldn't lib forebber ; but up dar was feastin' and no famine all de time."

Next morning, at breakfast, Ralph was still in his shell, and not at home to the outer world ; but, by dinner-time, he returned from distance, and Luke approached him on the subject of temperance. "I see that man Thomas makes you some trouble, drinking."

"Yes," assented Ralph : "he understands his work, but he is a miserable sot."

“Then there is another man who keeps a little groggery, consisting of one barrel of beer and one barrel of whiskey. Does he work for you?”

Yes: this poison-seller worked for Ralph!

“Couldn't you start a temperance society; beginning at your own family, for example and fashion's sake, and drawing in every man, woman, and child in the community?”

Luke warmed up at the proposition; but Ralph felt no kindred glow. Ralph liked temperance; wished there were a society; had no objections to signing the pledge, and wanted his family to do so. But to start and keep afloat a temperance society required time; and time was money; and time was something Ralph needed very much more of than he had. Several of the men drank; one or two of the women took a little; but the failing wasn't universal. And what could Ralph do, any way?

The failing would be universal by the next

generation if it wasn't nipped in the bud. Now was the time to resist successfully. What could Ralph do? If Luke were in Mr. Morley's place, he thought he should have Henry Brown leave his employ or whiskey-selling, and John Thomas give up his place or his dram; and, having thus vindicated his thorough temperance principles, Luke thought he would fight King Whiskey, and hold up the standard of abstinence, if it took half his money and half his time. Luke was warm on the subject, for souls were at stake.

Ralph felt ashamed of his own chilliness; he was rebuked for his selfishness; and, as he finished his last cup of coffee, he said he should certainly look after this matter very soon, and have a change. As he stood in the mill ordering, inspecting, and putting his own hand to the work, conscience cried out to him, how this younger man was distancing him on the road to glory, and how much more in earnest was Luke

Rogers than Ralph Morley. Ralph felt angry. He roundly declared, "It was no wonder : religion was Luke's business, and he ought to be well posted in it ; but lumbering was his own business, and he meant to make his mark in it." This blow quite stunned conscience ; so much that it fell down senseless, and revived no more until Sunday.

Very likely Luke Rogers, who felt himself the messenger of God, and was neither afraid nor ashamed to deliver the message wherewith he had been charged, chose his text for Sabbath with some reference to the people by whom he was surrounded. Luke had made friends already with the people near the mill : indeed, most of them had seen him in other years ; for Luke had cultivated, to the best of his ability, this part of the Lord's vineyard during a past year or two. The trouble had been, that hitherto he had no one to second his endeavors, no one by example and precept to

uphold the good work while he was gone. When Luke came to Dodson's, and found a family professing religion there, he thought his chief hindrance had been done away; but he soon began to wonder whether a greater hindrance had not been added.

"My lad," said Luke to Peter Perkins's eldest, "come over to the mill to-morrow: we are going to have a very nice meeting."

"Is that Richard Morley going to be there?" asked young Perkins. "'Cause if he is, I ain't going. He'll sass me. I know his tricks. He told me I was a sinner, — a bigger sinner nor him," went on this wrathful and illogical scion of the Perkins tree; "and I told him he lied, for I wasn't. And, even if I was, he lied all the same. And he needn't go to crowing over me 'cause I swear; for I guess I wouldn't neither, if I had on my good clothes every day, like he does."

By this, we see that it is much easier for

enmity to be stirred up than quelled. Luke Rogers, however, perceiving that good clothes were considered by this Perkins an antidote for swearing, advised him to don his best, and appear at the mill next day; promising that Richard should give no more offence. "I am sure he did not mean to provoke you," said Luke; "but he took a wrong way of trying to benefit you. You must blame his head rather than his heart." The Perkins, however, was implacable, and replied that he "blamed Richard all over, from his head to his feet."

A Sunday service did not occur more than once a year at Dodson's Mill; and the occasion brought out some forty people,—all that dwelt thereabouts, in fact. A room had been cleared out. Some of the lumber put up on tressels served as seats; and Mrs. Morley sent over a chair, a stand, and a large Bible from the house, for the use of the speaker. The seven mem-

bers of the Morley family occupied one corner of the room ; and the people from the neighborhood were scattered about on the improvised seats, — sunburnt and freckled faces, some of the men with hats on all the time of service, homespun dresses and blue overalls, and the best suits of some of the juveniles being such marvels of color and cut that Richard gave more attention to them than to the sermon.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.” Clearly came the monition from the preacher’s lips. Sharply he showed his hearers the fatal results of cleaving to these lower things. The infinite soul twines itself around finite treasures : time and change perform their work. How low the soul has fallen when all its support has gone ! The gnawing moth of care destroys the beautiful fabric of our patient weaving ; the slow rust of time, the damps of tears, and the secret cor-

rosion of unbelief and injustice, eat away the precious store, in winning which heaven has been lost. Beggared and hopeless, the soul reaches eternity, and stands a stranger at the gate of a city where no friends or kindred in spirit are dwelling, where none know the comer's name, where no Surety has been bespoken, no Advocate retained to plead its cause, no treasure sent before, no mansion prepared; and the glorious accents of that far-off land are all unknown to the tongue that has hitherto made only bargains, and counted the gains of that dim planet Earth, that has faded out of its sight. Luke Rogers quoted from the Koran: "When a man dies, the people, as they gather round his coffin, will ask, 'What *property* did he leave?' but the angels, as they bend over his grave, will question, 'What *good* did he send *before* him?'"

Now, as he said this, he glanced over his little congregation, and his eyes settled in

a full gaze at Ralph Morley, and the look cut Ralph to the heart. This arrow had not been shot at a venture, and it had gone home. Now, shall Ralph fly to the Healer of Gilead for relief, or go to one Dr. Delay, and be cured with the salve of "by and by"?

At evening, Luke instructed the family. When the boys were gone to bed, Ralph walked out of doors, and looked at his lumber-mill in the moonlight. The moonlight was flickering and treacherous; and to Ralph, looking, it seemed as if his mill and all his logs and lumber were worm-eaten so as to be utterly worthless. He thought of his bank-stock in Fenton; and over it all a rust had crept, thick and red, that cleaved to his touching fingers, and would not be wiped away. Before his fancy rose the palatial city home, on obtaining which his heart was set; and lo! its carpets and its hangings, its velvet and brocade, were riddled with the moth. Ralph shook

himself to see if he were asleep, and turned to go into the house. "Pshaw! what a fool I am!" he cried impatiently; and truly he was a far greater fool than he thought. At night, his troubled thoughts swarmed in his brain as he slept: they took no settled form; but he trembled and woke suddenly, and sat up in bed with the impression that he was covered with rust and eaten with moths, and that the room was full of imps laughing at him. The room was orderly; the moonlight fell whitely over him; there was no sound but the happy Helen, laughing in her sleep over some bright remembrance of the day. "Nonsense!" said Ralph: "it is right to make money, it is necessary. I shall do good with it; I shall build a church, ah" — and again he slept.

Luke Rogers went away on Tuesday. The children and Stacey were sorry to have him go. Ralph shook hands, and said he was sorry too; but as Luke's horse whisked his tail at the first

turn of the road, and the colporter's bags and bundle disappeared in the shadow of the autumn leaves, the sunshine to Ralph grew brighter, the mill-wheel creaked a glad refrain, and the saws whirred merrily through the logs.

Luke had stirred the impressible Frank up to do something. Richard also was moved — partly by Luke's words, partly by weariness of doing nothing, and a natural go-a-head-ativeness — to make further efforts for the improvement of Dodson's, and the exaltation of himself. Luke, among other things, had left at the Morleys a story of a Temperance society started by some boys, and having in it a pledge and proceedings. Richard concluded to write the pledge on foolscap, get the children in the neighborhood to sign it, and, when he had twenty-five names, to organize a society, with himself for president. He quite liked the idea. Mr. Morley was quite willing to give a lead-pencil, a sheet of paper, and his consent, but said he

had no time to give any thing more : and this Richard was not sorry to hear ; he wanted to be leader himself. The pledge was against whiskey, beer, and tobacco. Richard and Frank were diligent, and at last had fifteen names. They concluded they could not wait for any more, and appointed a meeting for Saturday afternoon. Seven boys came first ; and, waiting the arrival of the others, a big ring was marked out, and our juveniles began a grand game of marbles "*for keeps*," wherein Frank lost all the marbles he had, but Richard won ten.

Three boys more came. Marble-playing was a drug in the market ; and a riot of "hi-spy" ensued, which lasted for an hour, when it was four o'clock, and the remaining four signers had come. Richard called the meeting to order, and, mounting a barrel, made this speech :—

"Boys, we're going to form. You have all signed the pledge, and you've got to keep it.

If you don't, we'll turn you out. You must do what I say; for I'm going to be president" —

A voice from Frank, "That ain't fair, Dick!"

"And Frank's going to be vice-president."

A voice from Frank of a more cheerful tone, "All right."

A loud voice from the eldest Perkins: "Who said you two could be presidents? Who 'lected you? I guess I'm a year older than you, Dick Morley; and I have just as good a right to be as you have, if I don't wear my good clothes every day:" this angrily.

General cries of, "That's so!" from the boys, who looked on the Perkins's hope as their leader and the defender of their rights.

The Perkins continued, "I ought to be president 'cause the most of them rather have me."

"I know more than you do," said Richard the lofty.

“No, you don't. You don't know a beech from a butternut, nor a squirrel from a chipmunk.”

“Well, but I know English grammar, and can beat you at making a speech,” said Richard still from his barrel.

“Bah!” said the expressive Perkins: “I can beat you at— at” — casting his eye about, “at running on stilts.”

“I bet!” said Richard defiantly.

“And so I bet! Get out of the way, boys, and hand over the stilts!”

The stilts were handed over. Richard and the Perkins sprung upon them, and began frantically tearing about the yard, while the other boys cheered them, crying, “Hurry up, Perkins! Run, Dick! That's you! Dick for president! Perkins for president!” The racers were growing weary, when a small John Thomas shouted, “Who gets first to the bar'l's president!” Both the stilters made a rush

for that high end ; but, each taking a cross-cut towards the summit of his ambition, they ran violently against each other. Both fell backward, and lay at full length on the ground. Up they sprang fiercely. " You did that ! " " You meant to ! " " You did. " " I didn't. " And there was a lively mixing of blows with words, when Mr. Morley ran up, parted them, ordered Perkins " never to step into the yard again, " reproached his son as a " rowdy, " and bade him go in the house ; and finally, looking all about, proclaimed the Temperance Society broken up, disbanded, and dead.

Was it dead ? Yes, — dead like the flowers that had withered in the woods ; but, like them, it should have a resurrection in the spring.

Winter came : it killed the flowers, and chilled the earth and trees, and piled the snow over the summer's buried beauty. It was a cold winter, a long winter, a winter of no

outward incident ; but during it died many of the blossoms of Ralph Morley's fair profession. That church-membership wherein he sheltered was chilled at its root, and the cold snows of manifest indifference lay over all religious practices. Despite Helen and Stacey, the family-prayer was dead and in its coffin. It breathed a little in its shroud on Sabbath mornings. The neglect began by Ralph proclaiming himself one while too busy, and another too weary, and again saying that the children were too sleepy. Sunday mornings were not all spent with church history held decently in hand, nor even with the newspaper : but Ralph was lost for an hour or so in the mill ; and a smoke was seen to curl from his office-chimney ; and it was understood by those sharp observers, the children, that papa was looking over his books. No one will be surprised to learn, that, with this certainty pressing upon their brains, the

Morley children were more than ever restive over catechism and Bible-lesson.

In February, Mr. Morley went off on business for a week, going in his sleigh, and taking Helen with him. Helen found at the house where she staid a very delightful institution called a grandmother. When she came home, a grandmother filled all her thoughts, and was the height of her ambition. A grandmother she must have. Her father was importuned to set up a grandmother immediately: he must invest in a grandmother if it took all his fortune. The mail brought a black-bordered announcement that Helen was to be satisfied; for a fever had carried off Ralph's only sister and her husband, Mr. Douglass; and Grandmother Morley and Cousin Stella were now without a home. Ralph was sincerely sorry to hear of these deaths, and he set off at once to bring his mother and niece to his own house. But I

must not conceal it from you, that, as he pursued his journey, he thought that his mother had some property which he would now put in his mill, and that Niece Stella was undoubtedly an heiress, and he would act as her trustee, with much profit to herself and to him. Thus Ralph mused of increased wealth, in the midst of poverty of soul.





CHAPTER IV.

THE MOTH.

“For the moth shall eat them up like a garment.”

WHEN Ralph Morley reached Pittsburg, the earth had been for several days lying over the quiet breasts of James Douglass and his wife. Ralph found the house silent, the shutters bowed, the two maids going noiselessly about their tasks, and his mother and niece seated on either side the hearth, in the warmth and light of the blaze in the grate. The old lady was pale, wrinkled, mild, in her long-worn widow's cap and weeds, with eyes that had wept much in years that were gone, but were now fixed more on heaven

than earth, and had the light of hope rather than of possession. The young woman, heart-broken by her life's first loss, startled by the sorrowful garb of mourning which she had never worn before, leaned forward, the flames reflected in her large, bright eyes, and a wealth of waving hair tied back from her face with a ribbon, and falling over her shoulders and arms. Between the two sat, as the servant ushered in Ralph, a short, thick-set man, iron-gray of hair and beard, with a face that would have passed for the portrait of old Father Honest. When Ralph had been duly welcomed, he sat down by his mother. "I wish I could have got here sooner," he said: "your letter was delayed."

"Our friends were very kind; and our loss was sudden," said his mother. And, after various questions and replies, and suitable regrets and remarks, — for Ralph was never behindhand in what was suitable, — the con-

versation turned upon what was to Ralph the most important point, the property and arrangements of his brother-in-law.

Now, here we must state that the deceased Douglass was a singular man. He had no confidants in his business: none knew what he owed, how much he owned, or where it was. Money for all demands had ever been in readiness; and he was supposed to be rich. There were rumors afloat of certain thousand-dollar bills that had been in his possession; but nothing certain was known of his estate, and, indeed, in these few days no effort had been made to ascertain any thing. Death had come very suddenly to James Douglass. He had been seized by disease in the carriage, as he came home from his wife's funeral; and loss of reason had been the first intimation of danger. Once he had come back to consciousness, with a surprised and earnest look, as if he fully realized his state. He had taken Stella by the

hand, and begun, " Daughter! choose Waters for your guardian and sole trustee; and you will find every thing in the back part of the lowest" — and here the cold hand of Death was suddenly laid over his lips; and where was the lowest, or what lowest, and what was in the back part, and which back part, were matters of doubt which he had no time to explain. Despite his oddities, James Douglass was a good man, and " God was with him." God was especially with him in this his last dying speech; for, if he had begun by what was to be found in the back part of the lowest something, and left the monition about Waters to be cut short by death, matters would have been much worse than they were. However, God had shown him what words to set first, and that another moment of time was not left to finish what came last was one of those providences which we call " mysterious;" otherwise, a providence beginning in darkness and ending in light.

When Ralph Morley led the conversation from his brother's eternal state to his brother's worldly estate, John Waters, otherwise Father Honest, remarked that nothing had been done, pending his arrival. Father Honest was to be Stella's guardian; but, as Ralph was her uncle, they awaited his coming before taking any steps about settling the property.

"I had expected to act as guardian to my niece myself," said Ralph stiffly: "it is surely most natural."

Mr. Waters looked at the fire, Stella shook her veil of hair, the mother spoke. "Son James's last word to Stella was to choose Mr. Waters for her guardian."

"That was very singular!" said Ralph shortly.

"Son James was always singular," said Mrs. Morley; "but Mr. Waters was near, and you far off, and" —

"And Mr. Waters was always father's

dearest friend," said Stella, speaking up briskly.

"Yes, ah, yes!" said Ralph; "but if Brother James had known I was ready, and now that I am ready, doubtless" —

"I should not like Stella to act contrary to her father's last wish," said the old lady mildly.

"You needn't be afraid, grandma," said Miss Stella: "I shall obey it implicitly."

"Well, well," said Ralph, smothering his vexation; "and what property is there, and how invested? and where is the will?"

"We do not know yet," said Father Honest. And it was quite a pity that James Douglass, deceased, had not put fuller confidence in his dearest friend.

During his illness, James Douglass had spoken, incoherently, of a "second left-hand drawer;" and after his death, in that long, lonely period when that stiff figure under white

draperies had held its state in the drawing-room, all the second left-hand drawers in the house had been examined, with the result that five one-hundred-dollar bills were discovered; with a memorandum to the effect that the three thousand dollars of property that belonged to Mrs. Morley had in his hands become four thousand, and were to be found in the Grand Central Security Bank. Old Mrs. Morley wiped her eyes when she considered what a faithful steward her son-in-law had been. She might have wiped them two or three times more if she had known she was never to find such a steward again.

Now, the next three or four days were spent by Ralph and Father Honest in searching Pittsburg, in all likely and unlikely places, in person and by advertisement, to discover some traces of a "will," or of the property of the late James Douglass: but no information on these points rewarded their efforts; and all that could be

discovered was what everybody knew, namely, that James Douglass owned the house he lived in, and its furnishings, and was free of debt. As he had no creditors, he had apparently no debtors; and, to all appearances, Stella would have to content herself with her house, and nothing more.

Ralph Morley took charge of his mother's property, and said she was to come home and live with him; and for many reasons he said the same of Stella. He gave three reasons: first, that Mr. Waters had no home wherein to receive his ward; second, that her grandmother could not be separated from her; and lastly, that he, Ralph Morley, with affection natural to an uncle, desired her presence. But Ralph was what Peter Perkins called "long-headed;" and the reasons which he kept to himself were as many as those he divulged to the public.

Stella did not want to sell her paternal residence. The house was a pretty stone cottage,

well-built, under her father's supervision, and seemed as dear to her as part of herself. Most of the furniture was sold; physician's and undertaker's bills, taxes and servants' wages, were paid; the new mourning and the dress-makers' dues were settled for; and Stella, having stored her choicest possessions, and sent a box or two on to Dodson's Mill, found herself with very little money, and only the rent of her house to look to. The house was rented to Mrs. Piper Quick, — a sharp-nosed, sharp-voiced, and generally sharp widow-woman. Stella had always been at good schools, and her education was well advanced.

“Perhaps,” said Father Honest, “you had better go to school a year longer.” Stella was now seventeen.

“I could not leave grandma,” said Stella. “She has always had mother and me; and, now dear mother is gone, I think she would die if I left her. No one knows her ways and feelings as I do.”

“That is true,” said Mr. Waters, who naturally had looked more to the advantage of his ward than of her grandmother. “Yet, as you seem to have but small property, a year more at school might put you in a better way of supporting yourself if it becomes needful. Taxes and insurance will eat up a good part of your rent.”

“I shall study where I am,” said Stella; “but the care of grandma, and not my own education, seems the present duty.” And here was the key-note of this girl’s character. The present duty was ever in her mind: that she would do steadily and faithfully.

Ralph Morley’s interest in being his niece’s guardian had so visibly decreased with the apparent decrease of her property, that Father Honest deemed it safe to have a little plain talk with him.

“What board do you intend to charge Stella?” asked Father Honest blankly.

“ Oh, well ! ” hesitated Ralph: “ why, we can settle *that* some other time.”

“ As her guardian, I prefer to have it settled now.”

“ As her guardian, yes,” said Ralph. “ If I had been her guardian, I would have made no charge at all ; and it would have been for her advantage to have a guardian who had a free home to offer her, rather than one who had none.” Ralph was smooth, bowing, and polite.

“ And as you are not her guardian,” pursued the inexorable Honest, “ will you tell me what price per week you mean to charge for Stella’s board ? ”

Ralph named a sum.

“ Board, washing, fuel, and lights ? ” pursued the guardian.

“ Yes, all of them,” said Ralph, warming his left foot.

“ The price is as high as here in the city,” said Honest.

“I expect to give as good board as could be found in the city,” said Ralph, warming his right foot.

“Knowing her narrow means, I am surprised at your asking so much,” said Father Honest.

“Business is business; and I never spoil a bargain for relationship’s sake,” said Ralph coolly.

Father Honest consulted Stella. “I could get you a place here, among suitable people, where you would have the advantages of teachers, books, and church, and cost you perhaps less than he names; and there will be travelling expenses besides, if you go with him.”

Stella’s face flushed. “If it were not for grandma, I would not go,” she said: “but, as it is for grandma, I go; and, as I shall not need expensive dressing out in the woods, I can get along.”

“And you are resolved to go?”

“At present, yes,” said Stella: “it is my duty; and we do not know what work God may have for me there.”

Thus, in two weeks after he reached Pittsburg, Mr. Ralph Morley set out for Dodson’s Mill, carrying captive in his train his mother and his niece. Stella was kindly allowed to pay all her own bills on the journey, even lunch and carriage-fare; but this she had expected.

When our travellers reached Dodson’s, spring was fairly inaugurated. The flower-garden was being put in order; and that exemplary woman, Mrs. Morley, had safely finished her house-cleaning. The largest upper room had been arranged for grandma and Stella, with the furniture sent from the Pittsburg home. Mrs. Ralph Morley gave the relatives a friendly greeting. And now the wish of Helen’s heart was gratified, and her father had invested in a grandmother; or, as we are inclined to be

strictly truthful, we will say, the grandmother had invested in him to the amount of four thousand dollars.

Now, by this time we fear that Ralph has shown himself so ungracious that all interest in his fortunes is lost. As an impartial historian, it becomes our duty to offer to the public those excuses which he made for himself. During these days of disappointment, he had been turning the worst side of his character towards the light of others' eyes. He felt himself deeply aggrieved, and justly angry, that James Douglass had not left more property, and because what he had left had not come into the hands of Ralph Morley. By that perversity so often developed by our fallen nature, because he was angry at not having possessed somebody's confidence, he inconsistently set about showing himself unworthy of it! All the way to Pittsburg, Ralph had been considering how, by the use of the funds of his mother and niece, he might

double his business and his gains, and make handsome returns to them. All these good intentions had been frustrated by James Douglass deceased, who seemed to be reaching his arm from the new-made grave where they had laid him, and keeping a strong grasp on the property he was supposed to have left behind him. Ralph wished, that, in going into eternity, James had not retained a lien on the transitory things of this mundane sphere. Still, Ralph had too much generosity to retain these vexations and littlenesses over-long. He brightened as he drew near home. Ralph was fond of his wife and children: and their greetings exorcised the demon of selfishness that had of late seemed to take full possession of him. When he had distributed the gifts he brought, — not forgetting Stacey, — he became genial; when he found that all the mill-work had been well done, and contracts exactly fulfilled, he beamed irresistibly; when made aware that a most excellent

bargain was newly open to him, the injuries offered by the late James faded out of his memory. He forgave all mankind ; and though, in that small estate and the Waters guardianship, cap-stone and corner-stone of the castle he had reared on the way to Pittsburg had been struck away, he concluded that there were in the world other materials whereof to construct other castles. Having thus decided, he became so radiant, such an urbane pater-familias, that Stella gave a sigh of relief, dismissed the past, and resolved to like her Uncle Ralph. Home air was beneficial to Ralph. Travelling, which changes the best of men into porcupines, could not be expected to make an angel of Ralph Morley. We suppose the philanthropists of society go abroad sometimes : if they do, how do they go ? One never meets other than misanthropes behind a steam-engine.

In the Morley family that night, when the head of the house came home, was to be found

no happier heart than old Stacey's. Her turban had never been so low within the memory of the juveniles, if we except the happy occasion when the long-desired "girl in the family" had arrived in the person of the infant Helen. Years of service with old Mrs. Morley had cultivated a strong affection between the colored woman and her mistress, the elder Mrs. Morley; and Stacey thought that work would seem a great deal easier when part of it was done for her best earthly friend.

Stella Douglass was beyond her years in decision of character and in executive ability. She saw plainly her own position. She realized something of her powers: for those powers she felt herself accountable, and could see no reason why, being a girl, she must lead a life of indolence which would expose her to contempt if she were a boy. Had Ralph Morley been a different man, Stella could have gone into his mill, kept his books, aided in his

business, and been thoroughly up to the lumber-market. Uncle Ralph not being exactly the partner Stella desired, she looked about her, and selected what is supposed to be the more feminine occupation of teaching the district school. Old Mrs. Morley was an invalid; and Stella could give her all the aid and comfort that were necessary, and be doing something else at the same time. You will readily believe that the immense wages of twelve dollars a month, which this liberal backwoods-district allowed its teacher, was not Stella's sole inducement, when she requested Uncle Ralph to get the school for her. She felt that she owed it to herself and the world to be doing something. Uncle Ralph, while assigning his niece the lower motive of money-making, yet respected her more for that motive. To the magnificent salary of twelve dollars per month was added the delightful privilege of boarding around: this was, of

course, in Stella's case commuted, so that she boarded at her uncle's all the time. When Stella received the position of district school-teacher, Mrs. Ralph Morley rejoiced greatly. She would now send her four children to school, and have no longer the daily torment of teaching them. Mrs. Morley having no natural ability for teaching, the children's progress towards the heights whereon the Temple of Knowledge is represented in ancient Webster's Spelling-Books as standing had been slow, stony, and thorny indeed. While the mother exulted in seeing her progeny start off on Monday morning, with books and dinner-baskets, the children were no less elated. Mrs. Morley might do well enough for a mother, but she was not the woman for a teacher. The lovely Cousin Stella would doubtless make education as palatable as sugar-plums; and, thus thinking, the four children formed her body-guard along the mile of woody

mountain-road that led to the log schoolhouse, with its small windows, big fire-place, much-abused benches, and general rusticity and forlornness. One quarter of the mile being safely traversed, lo! the eldest Perkins, with a band of brothers and sisters, like assorted needles; the Thomas faction, broadly asserting themselves in general fleshiness, red-head-ness, and butternut-dyed homespun; the Brown boy and girl, who evidently had small acquaintance with water, except in the vernal and autumnal equinoctials, when it came through a treacherous roof, — appeared before them.

“Don’t speak to ’em,” says Richard: “they’re nobodies.”

“My scholars, aren’t they?” questioned Stella.

“Yes; and I hope you’ll give it to ’em good: they knocked out my old teeth!” cried Freddy.

“Yes,” said Frank: “we tried to get ’em up a Sunday school and a temperance society; but they’re so bad they don’t want to be made better.”

Already the Perkins faction had privately arraigned and condemned their teacher for “partiality;” had, in imagination, seen the Morléys set at the head of all the classes, allowed to look in their books during recitations, and given credit-marks for whispering. They were quite comforted when Stella deserted the Morleys, and came over to the opposition, bestowing smiles, kind words, and handshakes all around. For the first time within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the school was opened by prayer. After prayers, Stella hung up a brown towel by the door, and sent what Richard in a whisper to Frank denominated the “Dirty Brigade” to the neighboring stream for a wash. This brigade was headed by the Brown brother and sister.

Names were now enrolled, seats assigned, progress inquired into, and classes formed. To the intense relief of the Perkins, position in class was determined by drawing numbers from a box of numbered cards, — a system which the Perkins denominated “downright fair.”

Noon now. From the recesses of the old-fashioned, time-browned desks, parcels of dinner were drawn out. Said the new school-mistress, “Let us make a grand place out of doors with rocks and bushes, where we can eat our dinner, and I will tell you a story while we eat.”

“Will it be a pious story?” asks Brown, junior, general of the before-mentioned brigade.

“What sort of a story is a pious story?” asks the teacher.

“A story wot makes folks pious, and kills ’em when they gets twelve year old. *I* know!” Gen. Brown speaks knowingly.

“Is it possible?” cried Stella. “Well, my story is about a fairy and a hobgoblin!”

“Three cheers for goblins!” cries Perkins ecstatically; and all the brigade, and all the school not in the brigade, respond, “Hoo-roy-a-a-a!”

The booth is built, and the story told. We do not expect to repeat it; and the only hint of its intention we give is the fact, that, pursued by its memory, Gen. Brown next morning scrubbed himself, shook his tattered garments, and combed his hair, as a preparation for going to school. Miss Stella made a few flourishes of red chalk on the black-board. “Whatever pupil studies and behaves best during the day will have his or her name written in this chalk, high up on the black-board, as leader of the school for the next day.”

Again, “I should be pleased to have somebody get me a bunch of flowers from the

woods, to keep in this brown jug on my desk." At this suggestion, the school developed floral tastes to a wonderful degree. Another move was to wash out all the old ink-bottles accumulated behind the house, and ornament each with a picture, set one on each desk, and fill it with flowers: thus thirty-eight small bouquets responded brightly to the teacher's big bouquet.

Friday evening. Attention! Miss Stella unfolded a square book, not very thick, turned over the leaves as she held it up, and, on every second page, a large picture in colors.

"Oh, my eye!" cried Master Perkins.

"Jolly for us!" shrieked Gen. Brown.

"Whoever wants to look at this book and others like it, and see some pictures, will meet me in the mill on Sunday afternoon."

"Any stories?" asked a bare-footed miss.

"Yes, plenty."

"Pious, or general?" said a scrubby boy.

"Come and see: that is a secret."

Walking home, says Richard, "Cousin Stella, are you going to start a Sunday school?"

"Yes," replied Stella.

And Richard, taking his own promotion for granted, asked loftily, "Which class had I better have?"

"I want you in my class," said Stella quietly.

Richard, more than amazed, said presently, "Who can you get for teachers, if you don't have me?"

"Grandma and Stacey and myself," said Stella, who had by plain inquiry ascertained that she would have no active aid from her uncle or aunt.

"Why don't you want me for a teacher?" asked Richard, affronted.

"I think no one should be a Sunday-school teacher who is not a Christian," replied Stella. "A teacher should not tell a pupil to go to a

Saviour whom they do not care about themselves, but call them to come to one they love and trust."

"Plenty of teachers in all Sunday schools are not pious," said Richard.

"Some teachers in most," corrected his cousin; "but I do not like the practice, and will not have it so in my Sunday school. But there is another reason, Richard. There is some enmity between you and these boys; and they would not come to the school to be in your class. They call you proud. I wish you to show them they are mistaken, by being an earnest pupil in a class with them. They look to you for an example also; and I want you to set them the example of being attentive in class, and learning your lesson."

The Morley children were fond of their cousin, and, moreover, thought they might as well do with a good grace what they would otherwise be compelled to do; for Ralph Mor-

ley was strict about keeping his children up to their duty, and insisted on their accepting of every religious opportunity: they might have accepted more whole-heartedly, had they had their father's example as well as his precept.

By putting Freddy and Helen in Stacey's class, Stella made it seem suitable for the other small children of the neighborhood: grandma took the remaining girls, and Stella the boys. Testaments and books were re-collected. Stella could sing; and her pupils, like all juveniles, enjoyed that exercise. In a few weeks, the Sunday school was making very respectable progress, was quite orderly, and tolerably popular at Dodson's; and Ralph, kindly entering it one Sabbath and looking about, went home cheered and satisfied, and taking much credit to himself for having come to Dodson's for the benefit of the neighborhood! That afternoon Sunday school served as a balm to Ralph Morley when conscience

gave him a cut for looking over his accounts and making plans for the week's work on Sunday morning. "Pity 'tis, 'tis true," that in the same room where, in the afternoon, the children gathered to "sing the name of Jesus," and learn of Jesus, Ralph, who called himself a Christian, sat in the morning of the holy day, with his account-book instead of his Bible, and from the depths of his heart offered a sacrifice to Mammon instead of God.

The doing one good work is apt to encourage one to do more. The success with the Sunday school led Stella on to other efforts and other success. Her first business had been to secure the confidence of her pupils, and cause them to feel that she was entirely just in her dealings with them. When once sure that his foe Richard would not be unduly set above him, the Perkins was willing to listen to reason. The enmity between the boys was softened by their teacher, but could not be done away

so long as the Perkins was envious and Richard was proud. If Stella had any new plan to propose to her school, she took the time just before they repeated the Lord's Prayer at closing. Therefore, when, one evening, she turned a paper-box upside down on her desk, and emptied out a number of rosettes of blue, the thirty-eight pupils were all attention. The rosettes were of blue worsted material, with a white button in the centre. Stella had considered the grimy propensities of her pupils, and had chosen her badge with a view to its needing washing.

Said Stella, "I am going to form a temperance society. These badges are for the members. I have a pledge here on a sheet of paper; and whoever wishes to become a member of the society can put his name down. If any one wishes to ask a question, let them do so; but don't all speak at once."

Master Perkins's hand, held aloft, indicated

that he desired free speech ; and the liberty was decreed him by a nod from Stella.

“ Who’s goin’ to be president ? ” demanded the Perkins.

“ I am ! ” responded the autocratic Stella.

The Perkins visibly relieved, and Gen. Brown’s five digits displayed. Nodded at, the general inquired, “ Who’s goin’ to be vice-president ? ”

“ Peter Perkins, junior,” said Stella ; and the junior Peter brightened like the morning.

“ Who’s going to be secretary ? ” asked Richard, without the formality of holding up his hand.

“ Richard Morley for secretary,” replied Stella. Richard smiled at the depths of his ink-bottle.

“ We shall have meetings, speeches, reports, and, in the fall, a grand dinner celebration,” explained the teacher ; and, after a few remarks on the extent of the pledge and the

obligation of keeping it, Stella gave liberty to come to the desk and sign, with their own hands or by proxy, and had soon twenty names under her pledge. Richard set down in a blank-book the organization proceedings; a meeting was appointed in the schoolhouse, for after school on the third Friday; badges were pinned on, and Stella's school went home jubilant.

"I say, Cousin Stella," quoth Richard, pulling his cousin's sleeve, "you did a good thing when you made me secretary."

"Yes, you can write very well," said Stella.

"And I'd just as lief Peter Perkins would be vice-president," continued Richard.

"I am glad to hear it," said Stella cordially.

"Because, you see," said Richard, "he can only act when you're away; and you'll never be away, and so he can never act at all: and it's just a name, and nothing more; but he don't know it, and thinks he's got something

grand. *I'm* secretary, and *I* can act all the time."

Summer passed. Sunday school and temperance society flourished. The day-school was remarkably efficient; and Dodson's improved. The improvement was due to Stella, who worked that stony corner of the vineyard with all her might. The improvement was not due to that business-absorbed man, Ralph Morley; but he took all the credit, because he was the worker's uncle! In the household, the warmth of grandma's piety kept up a little flickering show of such feeling in the lives of her son and his wife. But, over her son and his wife, grandma often wept in secret, considering them so much given over to the beggarly elements of this world.

Besides the instruction the children had from Stella, grandma often had Freddy and Helen in her room, to teach them as the little children of the kingdom should be taught; and perhaps,

if these two had lived somewhere with grandma for sole guardian, they might have grown up like Samuel in the precincts of the Tabernacle, or Timothy beside Lois and Eunice: but the influence of parents over children is all-powerful; and the good these infants got from grandma was mostly done away, not by the precepts, but by the subtle influence of parental example.

The autumn came again; and once more the bay horse and the well-filled saddle-bags stopped before Ralph Morley's house, and Luke Rogers, the colporter, opened the gate. No one saw him enter, although it was Saturday morning, and all were at home; for all were busy. Luke was unseen until he passed along the kitchen-porch, where, by the open window, Aunt Stacey was busy at the baking-table.

“Aunt Stacey, don't get too much entangled with the affairs of this life!” cried Luke.

Aunt Stacey looked up, her face all broadened by a smile at seeing him.

“Don’t aim to,” she replied, putting both floury hands up to crush down the turban, which had erected itself over poor saleratus; and, as she patted it, she left a well-powdered fleece sticking out like an areola about her black face. “No, sah, I don’t aim to; but I can’t always help—oh, dem biscuits’s burnin’!”—returning from an excursion to the oven,—“I can’t help it allus; but sometimes I git de victory, praise de Lord for it, and it makes me mighty glad. You Freddy, keep dem fingers out of dat plum-sass. Helen’s a much bettah girl dan you be, Freddy. Come in, Mr. Rogers, and welcome to you. I’ll call missey and old missey, and young missey, all of ’em; and I’ll bet dey’ll be glad to see you. You Freddy, go out of he-ar while I go, or else your fingers will be in every ting all de time!” With this cheerful flow of talk, Stacey brought the guest into the sitting-room, called the ladies, and sent Freddy to the mill for a man to come and take care of the horse.

Ralph Morley was not particularly glad to hear that Luke had come. The name was as a trumpet that waked a sleepy conscience to cry, Moth and Rust! Moth and Rust! Moth, Moth, Moth!

Ashamed of himself for not being glad, Ralph thought what a comfort the colporter's visit might be to his mother, Stella, and old Stacey; of the welcome that he, as the only man professing religion in that vicinity, owed to the servant of God: he trembled a little when he thought how indifferent he had of late become, and how willing he was to be set apart from all the practices of piety. He caught up his hat, and rushed over to see Luke; and shook his hand so warmly, and said he was glad to see him in such a tone, that his mother's heart sung for joy that her son was not so indifferent as he had seemed, and Stella took herself to task for having misjudged her Uncle Ralph.

While Luke was brushing and dressing after his long ride, Ralph congratulated himself on the improvements that had taken place at Dodson's recently; and, as he meditated, he felt as if he had done a great deal to bring them about. When Luke came down stairs ready to walk over to the mill with him, Ralph, without intending to be false, conveyed the impression that he had put his shoulder to the wheel, and labored for the spiritual good of Dodson's himself. "We won't need the young man we spoke of, sir. I got my niece here, a pious girl, and the very one to take hold of this work for me. Used to it, and does it well. She has our district school; and we have done a great work up there, I assure you. The school is a pretty picture for visitors. Hope you'll call." Thus far, the only visitors had been a robin and some blue-birds that flitted in at the windows, and a rabbit that scuttled in at the door and out

again. Ralph continued, "We have a Sunday school now doing finely, and a temperance society that is really creditable. I sent over all I could find in our house for the Sunday school; and I intend to buy it a library, and have John Thomas make them a bookcase. Oh, yes, you'll find us improved!"

This Luke was very glad to hear; and as no one is perfect, and pride equally with hope springs eternal in the human breast, Luke began to flatter himself that his sermon on *Moth and Rust* had been the happy means of bringing Ralph to better things.

The neglect of family prayer was not evident to Luke; for Ralph, glad to have somebody on hand to do what was suitable, gave him the Bible evening and morning, and asked him to conduct worship. Luke chose, that first evening, a portion of the second chapter of the first Epistle of John. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with

the Father." "What is an advocate, Richard?"

"It's a newspaper," said Richard the reckless, who had not thought it worth his while to pay any attention.

"What paper?" inquired Luke.

"The Advocate and Guardian," asserted Frank, recalling one he had seen in grandma's room.

"An advocate," said Luke, in tones that won attention, "is a lawyer, one who pleads a cause. We poor breakers of God's laws have an Advocate in the court of heaven. Who is that Advocate, Aunt Stacey?"

"De blessed Lord Jesus," said Aunt Stacey.

"Yes. The Lord Jesus is our only Advocate with the Father," said Luke; and the family listened now, and tears stood in grandma's eyes at the thought of him who 'ever liveth to intercede.'"

When Luke next day found that Mr. and

Mrs. Morley took no part in the Sunday school, his opinion of the effect of his sermon lowered a little. He preached again, however, as well as he knew how; and Ralph's heart was again cut to pieces, and he stood just on the verge of repenting and improving for more than a week; then he fell back, not into the slough of despond, but into the worse slough of indifference, — a slough which lies so far out of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness that it is ever half-frozen, and very chilling to those who walk into it.

Having got into indifference quite up to his neck, Ralph got crosser and stingier than he had been: so much so, that Stacey, setting her turban aloft, remarked to the tea-kettle, —

“Mr. Ralph pretty soon git to be like old Nabob, so stingy dat he up and died just 'cause his wife give King David a little mess of vittles!”

The temperance dinner passed off joyfully,

five months of school-keeping ended, and the country school closed for winter: and Uncle Ralph suggested to Stella that she might as well teach her four cousins at home during the winter; so their education proceeded in the house.

There was a thaw at Christmas, not in nature, but in Ralph's pocket. He went to the city, and, coming back, had gifts for every one, and just what each one wanted; so it was quite a delightful occasion.

Sad, during every passing month, was Ralph's diverging from the path of life. Sabbath in a quiet way dedicated to business, the Bible unopened, prayer on Sunday morning a weary form, religious conversation tabooed, — where was his garment of praise, where his heavenly armor? Good friends, they were the prey of Moth and Rust.

On a day early in spring, Stella was in the garret with Stacey, helping her look over some

boxes Stacey shook out an ancient cloth cloak which had belonged to Ralph's father, and held it up against the light. It was full of round holes. Stacey held it long and meditated ; then turned to Stella, who was kneeling by an open chest, "Chile ! you know who dat old ragged, moth-eaten cloak look like ?"

Stella shook her head.

Said Stacey, "Blessed ting, you don't, den, all I got to say ;" and, bending down to fold it up, she murmured to the cloak, "De moth shall eat 'em up like a garment."





CHAPTER V.

THE RUST.

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.”

THE trailing arbutus, loveliest flowers of spring, garlanded the roadside; all the woods were vocal and fragrant; the log schoolhouse had been scrubbed, white-washed, and trimmed with evergreen; and to her little kingdom marched the royal Stella, followed by her subjects, — Brown Brothers and Company lagging in the rear, bearing their sole possessions, a paper of bread and beef and a ragged reader, being less burdened with this world's goods than their trans-Atlantic relatives.

A summer's work, and a year of Sabbath school and temperance society, had not been lost on the children at Dodson's Mill. Stella, reaping of what she had sown, found herself sovereign of a half-civilized, rather than a barbarous community. Booths for eating dinner and learning lessons on warm days were constructed; an oven for roasting apples, potatoes, and chestnuts was prepared; no word of the teacher was needed to bring bouquets to every desk; and once again Sanders's First, Second, and Third Readers were studied in a high, sing-song, peculiarly district-school key, which Stella's utmost efforts could not tone down. Again Richard made havoc with Rollin, and ruthlessly destroyed any number of emperors and potentates, and legions of common soldiers, before he ate his dinner; again Frank failed to be interested in interest, either simple or compound; and Freddy fell violently ill over polysyllables, was attacked with bronchitis

while bounding the United States, and suffered from St. Vitus' dance over the multiplication table. Despite all these distresses, despite a small rebellion over jackstones, and an internecine war between Peter Perkins and Richard Morley, Stella's kingdom increased in population and intelligence, grew rich in marbles, kites, and popcorn, and was solvent in apples and chewing-gum.

Capital punishment was seldom necessary; and the debtor's prison, a corner assigned to bankrupts in general information, was usually without occupant. Stella had been busy with her pencil all winter, and now gave less time out of school-hours to her pupils, and more to her drawing. The happiness of being sketched in diverse attitudes compensated the children for the loss of their teacher's society; and Stella sketched with zeal, as she was not working without an object.

The temperance society having been a suc-

cess, Stella established an anti-swearing society. From the box which had held the blue and white badges came a number of circular bits of tin with a red star in the middle: each had a narrow red ribbon to pass around the wearer's neck. These badges were bestowed on all who were willing to abolish bad language. As long as the terms of agreement were kept, the badge might be worn: at every failure, it must be hidden in the pocket for two hours. The tin badges were eagerly appropriated, and a decided improvement in forms of speech was noticeable among the juveniles at Dodson's.

It cannot be supposed that life at the Mill was very desirable to Stella. She was deprived of books, society, and religious privileges: she had not, like her Uncle Ralph, an absorbing and daily gratified passion for money-making, to compensate her for the loss of all these advantages. She staid at Dodson's solely on



“ They finally found themselves behind the Mill ”—Page 161.



"They finally found themselves behind the Mill"—Page 161.

account of her grandmother ; and if she could have persuaded that dear old lady to go back to Pittsburg, smoky and dirty as is that famous city, she would have returned thither without delay.

Early in May, Father Honest, staff in hand, toiled up the wooded heights, and presented himself at Dodson's Mill. Ralph Morley believed he owed him a grudge, but nevertheless received him like a friend and brother. Stella was at school, of course ; and her guardian had the whole day to discuss business with her uncle. Ralph showed his guest the mill and the lumber, and rubbed his hands as he told of the money he was making. They finally found themselves behind the mill, Father Honest luxuriously seated on a pile of lumber, and Ralph accommodated on an ancient stump, while near them slowly creaked and turned the dripping wheel.

“And how is Stella enjoying herself?” asked Honest.

“Finely, finely, getting plump and rosy. It is healthy up here among the pines.”

“I wish to settle about her board,” said Father Honest, with a quick glance at this money-making uncle, to see if he were not ashamed.

“Yes, yes, certainly; easily done,” said Ralph.

“Have you made out the bill?” asked the guardian.

“That’s a very simple matter, — so many months at so much a month. Since the fall term closed.”

“And what has she been doing this winter?”

“Oh! a little of every thing, just as she pleased.”

“Has she not been acting as governess to your children?” asked Father Honest.

Ralph's face became the color of a cedar log that lay beside him.

"No, he had never regarded her as *govern-ess*. She had heard the children's lessons, — a small matter: she was their cousin."

"And she is your niece, and her board is a small matter," said Father Honest. "Set one off against the other: it is the least that can be done. You are not doing yourself justice, Mr. Morley. You are letting the accumulation of a fortune absorb your whole mind, and eat up your natural kindly impulses. Excuse my freedom. Are you not growing less liberal, less genial, thus shut out from the church and from society, and bound to one idea?"

"It might be so," Ralph slowly admitted; "but it would not be for long." His children were growing up, and were to be provided for: it was necessary, it was duty, to make money for them. In a few years, Ralph would see his way clear to go back to the bosom of the

church and of society, and should have money enough to do good with : he did not wish to be misunderstood.

“ I do not wish to misunderstand you,” said Father Honest ; “ but do not forget that the best of weapons can be destroyed by rust.”

That little word “ rust ” meant a volume to Ralph. None but himself knew how conscience had used it to sting him ; none but he knew how it had been set before him on the sacred page as in letters of fire. It stirred within him the mouldering embers of repentings and good resolutions : his face softened a little from its pride, its coldness, its sharpness. “ There, we will call up this matter no more,” he said. “ I regret that it was ever mentioned : it was a mistake.”

Yes, it was a mistake ; but all Ralph’s life of late had been mistakes.

Old Stacey had been known to Father Honest years ago. She felt moved to speak her

mind to him, when he stopped by her kitchen-door to polish his boots, cheerily asking, meanwhile, "Well, Stacey, how do you get on?"

"I get on mighty bad," said Stacey. "My heart pretty nigh broke over Mr. Ralph. He allus was keen after money, and mighty sharp a lookin' after hisself when he was a mite of a boy; but he's sot his heart on dis ebil and wicked worl', so it spilin' him drefful."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Father Honest. "But he has many good feelings, and I hope they will get the upper hand of him yet."

Stacey scrubbed her table with needless vigor as she responded, "Don't de wise man say de wicked blesseth de covetous whom de Lord abhorreth! Thar now! I don't lay out to be such. No, not even for Massa Ralph, like I nussed when he was a baby. Might just as proper be Nebuchadnezzar settin' up his golden image to get it worshipped; and I shan't do it. And I tell you now, Mr. Waters,

his ole mudder just walkin' in a furniss of fire on 'count of him, if ebber anybody did it. And I tell you nodder thing, — de good Lord walkin' right straight 'long wid her. Thar now ! ”

Stacey's speech was incoherent, her ideas confused, but she was in earnest ; and she finished her scrubbing with a heavy sigh, and dropped a tear into her scrub-pail, as Mr. Waters hung up the blacking-brush, and went into the family sitting-room.

“ Have you got any clew to what Stella's father tried to tell her before he died ? ” asked Ralph of Honest.

“ Not in the least. ”

“ And you've searched every thing carefully — drawers, closets, tables ? ”

“ Every thing thoroughly. ”

“ I'd give a good deal to know what the 'back part of the lowest' — meant, ” said Ralph.

“So would I,” said Father Honest; “but I don’t think it likely we ever will.”

Father Honest did not stay long at Dodson’s. He said nothing to his ward about returning to the city; for he saw she was doing her duty, and a good work in her new home. When he went away, he passed out at the gate near the kitchen; and Ralph went with him so far, to shake hands politely, as he said, “Good-by! come and see us again.”

Father Honest grasped Ralph’s hand, and looked closely in his face, saying, “My friend, set your heart on higher things than riches of this world. They are not to be depended on; for, when we cling to them most, they ‘take to themselves wings and flee away, as an eagle towards heaven.’”

“You’re out there,” remarked Stacey, who had overheard him, to her favorite tea-pot, as she scoured the handle. “Don’t none of Mr. Ralph’s riches fly towards hebben, to my cer-

tain knowledge. I'se libed wid him fourteen year; and, if he ebber sent a hundred dollars to hebben, why, I'm mighty mistaken. Pore chile! he don't know what's for his own good."

Old Mrs. Morley had long pondered on the unhappy course of her son, and wept and prayed in secret as she saw him daily getting farther and farther from God. She was shut up in her room for a short time, suffering from a heavy cold; and Ralph dutifully went up to see her each day, for half an hour after supper.

"I'm sorry you ever came here, Ralph," said his mother.

"I'm not," said Ralph. "It's the best stroke of business I ever did. I'm getting rich."

"And what good will your riches do you?"

"A great deal," said Richard cheerfully; "and my children too."

His mother shook her head. "Brought up

in this way, without religious training and example, your boys may become such men that a large fortune will be wasted in ruining them, while, under other circumstances, a small property would have been amply sufficient to make them successful men. As for yourself, Ralph, you may grow old in a grand home, and with money in plenty; but, if you have lost your hope of a home above, and have no treasure in the skies, what shall it profit you?"

"Why, you're rather hard on me, mother," said Ralph. "Don't you think I'm" — he wanted to say, "a Christian?" But the word stuck in his throat: he changed it for the phrase, "Don't you believe in my religious profession?"

The old gray-haired mother looked at her son a moment, and burst into tears. "O Ralph! Ralph! I'm afraid it is but a profession! Could you for money tear your-

self from the house of God and from pious friends, from all helps heavenward? Could you neglect your Bible, waste your Sabbaths, forsake family-prayer, and be so indifferent to the salvation of your wife and children, if you were indeed a Christian? O my son! my son!"

Alas for Ralph Morley, so often warned, so often half-repenting!—the Devil stood at his ear, and whispered that his mother was weak and nervous, and she must be soothed; that her anxieties were causeless, and he must not share them; that here was a subject that could be looked at in many ways, and his view was as good as any.

He said pleasantly, — though, truth to tell, beneath the pleasant words there was for himself a sting, a smart, and a fearful chill, — “You misjudge me, mother. I hope I’m not so far out of the way as you think. I may be a little rusty now,” he stumbled accidentally on the

word and it hurt him, — “but I shall be done here by and by, and go back where I can have all the advantages I have left, and you shall see how brightly I will come out.”

“That might satisfy you, my son, if you were sure of living until that day, and sure that, if it came, the hope and faith long neglected would awake in strength. They may perish before then,” said Mrs. Morley, wiping away her tears.

“Don’t be down-hearted, mother,” said Ralph. “You must get well, and be about the house again. You are melancholy, shut up here.”

“No man,” says Scripture, “liveth to himself.” Ralph Morley proved that this summer.

That poor, ignorant sinner, John Thomas, had been much touched by the sermons and exhortations of Luke Rogers. He had read the little books that the colporter had scattered about among the cabins, and had treasured up

the scraps of information his children brought from the Sabbath school. Moved by the example of the little temperance band, the poor fellow had given up drinking. He was feebly struggling to reach light, like a plant in the dark ; but he was grossly ignorant, and the Testament and the tracts, unexplained, gave him little help. He was ashamed to go to the Sunday school, or to address himself to Stella for instruction : but he had heard Mr. Morley spoken of as a church-member, and he supposed that meant a Christian ; and being rendered very anxious by reading a plain tract, asking, " Why will ye die ? " he went in his trouble to his employer.

John Thomas took an unfortunate hour : for he watched Ralph going into the mill one Sabbath morning ; and, having brushed himself up a little, he followed him thither. Ralph had just got himself comfortably established, his chair tipped back against the wall, his

feet up on his desk, a cigar in his mouth, a paper of estimates lying near, "The Times" at his right hand, and his day-book open on a chair.

The quiet morning of the Lord's Day would have been a suitable time for a Christian to welcome and instruct a sinner seeking Christ; but Ralph was annoyed and mortified, when, after a fumbling at the door-latch, John Thomas entered the mill-room. However, Ralph concluded that John could make no reflections on the inconsistency of his Sabbath occupation; so he said, "Ah! John, good-morning. Want any thing this morning?"

"Yes, sir," said John nervously. "That is, I wanted to ask" — He took off his hat, and nervously changed it from hand to hand.

"Want some money? Is that it?" asked Ralph.

"Well, no, sir: I'm not in a hurry before pay-day comes."

“Want leave to go off for a day or so?” hazarded Ralph.

“Well, sir, no. It is a longer going I’m worried with. See, sir, *that* wexes me!” He held out the soiled tract; and Ralph took it, supposing it a Pike’s Peak or El-Dorado advertisement. He started when he saw the title.

“What is this?” he asked.

“It’s a bit book I picked up, and it worried me.”

“Well,” said Ralph, ill at ease. “I suppose you know you’ve got to die some day.”

“Aye, aye. I knew that always.”

“And what then? What’s the fuss?” asked Ralph, feeling himself utterly incapable of saying a word in season to this weary heart.

“It’s the being ready, sir,” said John Thomas anxiously. “I thought, being as you was pious like, and belonging to the Church, as I’ve heard, you’d tell me what to do.”

“Haven't you got a Bible?” asked Ralph desperately.

“Yes, sir. But I can't understand it; and if anybody would talk a little simple-like to me, until I could take hold of it. Why, sir,—there—I've tried to do better. I quit drinking two months bye.”

“Yes, yes,” said Ralph, eagerly catching at a straw. “I'm very glad to hear it. It is very creditable to you. I don't see but you are doing very well. Read the Bible: it is plain enough; and, if you keep on reading, you'll know what it means.”

“Is that all, sir? I'm that wexed and worried,” said John, “I take no rest for fear I'll die all wrong.”

“Oh, no!” said Ralph. “You ain't expected to do more than the best you can. Quit drinking, be steady and honest and industrious, and the rest will come. Rome wasn't built in a day. You're doing very well; and there,

now, Mr. Rogers will be along in two or three weeks, and you can talk to him. I'll mention your state of mind; and, being a minister, he'll know what to say."

Ralph took up his paper. He *could not* go on with this conversation. John Thomas looked bitterly disappointed. His expression of trouble and anxiety and fear cut Ralph.

"Don't drop reading your Bible. Do the best you can, and you'll come out all right," he said. "There, now, cheer up, and wait until Mr. Rogers comes."

I leave it to the public if any worldly-minded man, who had never made a pretence of piety, could not have dealt as well with poor John Thomas as Ralph Morley, member in good and regular standing of the — Church of Fenton.

O Ralph Morley! why could you not say something better to this wounded spirit? Why, feeling yourself so cold and far away, did

you not have honesty enough to send him to your mother, or your niece, or even to old Stacey?

Day by day, with the trouble darkening on his face, John Thomas waited for Luke Rogers's coming; and, in all these days, Ralph gave him no word of comfort or of counsel. Precious days of opportunity going, going, gone forever! For one morning, busy in the mill, this poor John Thomas was caught and dragged in the machinery for a few horrible instants that seemed ages; and then what had just been a strong, striving, sorrowing man was but a shapeless, gory corpse.

Ralph was there; and when the men placed this lifeless clay, that had been John Thomas, upon a shutter, and decently covered it from sight, Ralph dropped on the floor like a dead man; and the mill-hands said, as they carried him home, that they never "knew the master had such a tender heart."

A black day was that for Ralph ; and, when he could no longer control himself, he stole out of the house when the family were at supper, and rushed off into the pine-woods, and screamed, and tore his hair, and groaned, almost cursing himself in the bitterness of his self-reproach. Then, in the midnight, when he lay in his bed, his grief having worn him out, the Devil came to his pillow, and told him that John Thomas was safe. God would not desert John Thomas because Ralph Morley could not speak. Ralph's will had been good, but he had not known how. Many men did not know how, and no blame to them. This distress was idle over-sensitiveness. Had he not sent John Thomas to the Bible ? What better could he have done ? So, when Luke Rogers came next day, Ralph cheered up, and told him he had reason to believe John Thomas, deceased, was a converted man : he had reformed, read his Bible, and he, Ralph,

had had some talk with him, and was very hopeful of him. And thus they buried John Thomas.

Ralph won golden opinions from the men by sending the widow a barrel of flour and a barrel of pork, and giving the eldest boy work in the mill. And now, whether John Thomas was saved or lost, the blame to Ralph Morley remained the same. He had spoken no good word for Jesus ; he had made no effort to save a soul from death ; he had been, when eternal interests were in jeopardy, a silent traitor to his profession and his public vows.

The verdict over John Thomas's body was accidental death ; but, if his soul was lost, it had been miserably slain with that rusty sword, Ralph Morley, professor of religion.

It was very long before Ralph could stand in the mill on the spot where he witnessed John's death : he did not feel himself as free of blame as he pretended ; and John's widow

and John's children were daily torments to his galled conscience, reminding him of his shortcomings.

The summer passed away, the harvest months were ended, and Ralph's life had borne no spiritual fruit, gathered no harvest save of earthly gain. Darker and darker grew the change in Ralph's outward conduct. The Sabbath morning, spent in secular employments, was followed now by a long afternoon walk, and a nap as long. On one pretence or another, family prayer on Sunday morning had been dropped, and no one ever saw him Bible in hand.

Old Mrs. Morley had morning and evening worship in her room for whoever would come; and these were generally Stella, Stacey, and the two younger children.

After Luke Rogers came and went, Dodson's Mill had no visitors save a stray pedlar or two; and of one of these Stacey purchased a new tin cup, which, much to her

indignation, went to the well one day and never came back. Stacey asked for it, and looked for it, but was not rewarded by discovering the hiding-place of the cup, and its loss became a standing grievance. Stacey had little troubles, over which she made much complaint; she had greater troubles which she kept to herself. Yet, with all the little troubles and the big troubles, Stacey was not unhappy: she had a source of comfort unknown to Ralph, amid all his money-making.

Winter came on, cold and stormy enough, away up among the hills. Within doors, fires were many and cheery in the big fire-places; and Ralph, going into the kitchen one evening, found it clean and shiny, and Stacey comfortably placed before the fire. "Well, Aunt Stacey," he said, "you enjoy sitting before the fire, don't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Ralph, I injoy it when my work's done, mighty well; but dere's another

ting I injoy a proper sight more, — and dat's religion. Yes, truly, Mr. Ralph, it's a heap of comfort to poor humanity. Hope you feel it?"

"Well, not as much as you do, perhaps. People differ," said Ralph, looking uneasy. He dreaded Stacey's plain speech.

"De Lord don't differ none," said Stacey; "and, if you don't injoy de light ob his face, it's your fault, and tain't his'n, Mr. Ralph. 'Pears like you're digging so constant in 'beggarly elements' dat you don't injoy noffin'!"

Stacey never said a truer word. Ralph enjoyed nothing. "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" but "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Ralph had set himself upon having that which never satisfies a craving spirit. Years ago, what he now possessed seemed as much as he wanted; but, now it was obtained, it whetted his appetite for

more. Making money, growing rich, successful in business, prosperous in worldly things, — all this could be said of Ralph Morley; but lines of care were written on his brow, his eyes were restless, his hair sprinkled with gray. He was weary, anxious, fretful, growing less tender and thoughtful to his family. The husband, the father, the son, and the uncle were being lost in the money-maker, and — shall we write it — in the sharper.

Three years had passed away since Ralph Morley brought his family to Dodson's Mill: three years they were of spiritual loss and material gain. Next to the ill effects of life here upon Ralph, must be counted the change for the worse in his son Richard. Richard was growing coarse, noisy, and idle. Mrs. Morley said her son was awkward, and needed good society to tone him down. Richard said he hated Dodson's, and wanted to go away. He had been alone in his studies now for a

long while: he had no ambition to excel, and would not study. He asserted, that, if he could go to boarding-school, he would take a pride in learning his lessons, and would keep at the head of his classes. Ralph was too busy to govern his son Richard, — too busy to be a companion for him; and Richard, running with the most wicked lads for miles about Dodson's, was a much worse boy than his parents suspected. Richard must certainly go away to school. Ralph had said he must make money to educate his children, and here was a demand for it. A school was selected; and Ralph escorted his first-born to the new sphere, where, being his father's son, he had no doubt but he would shine.

A serious matter this, — the going of the child from the restraints, the care, and the affection of home, to the bustle, the selfishness, and the temptation of a distant school. Ralph loved money; but he had not yet arrived at the point

where he loved it for its own sake : he loved it, thus far, for what it would buy for himself and his family, and because it would make him honorable in the eyes of the world. He, as we know, told himself that by and by he would love his money for the good it would do on a large scale. But he that is unfaithful in that which is least will be unfaithful also in much ; and the man that is stingy when he has moderate means is not likely to be a generous millionaire.

Ralph meant to do well by his oldest boy ; and he felt himself very magnificent when he selected an expensive school, and supplied him with fashionable clothing. He saw to it that the boy's room possessed every convenience, — looked, indeed, a little better than the rest ; got him a supply of well-bound school-books ; ordered him to take good care of them, so that they would do for Frank : gave him three times too much pocket-money

(that most dangerous temptation to a young boy); bade him be careful how he spent it, and not be wasteful; asked the principal to have an eye to Richard's welfare, and casually mentioned that he had two other boys to follow him some day; and then, with a charge to Richard to mind rules, dress like a gentleman, be at the head of his class, and not go with wet feet, this man, who called himself a Christian father, left his son to fight it out with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, as best he might!

Ralph Morley had not looked out for a school where Richard should have *religious* training; where the teachers were pious men, who remembered that their pupils had hearts and souls as well as heads. There were enough of such safe schools as these under the auspices of the church to which he belonged; but, though his old mother charged him to make the religious tone of the school a chief

point in his selection, he had not made it a point at all. Where was the Christian counsel, where the prayer and the earnest benediction, that a child might naturally expect from a professedly Christian parent? Manifestly, these were not in Ralph Morley's line. They should have been; but his daily life was such that they would have been incongruous. And yet what thousands of fathers are just in Ralph Morley's case, scarcely considering that this state is dangerous, not only to their own souls, but to the eternal interests of their children. Few, very few, are the parents who can go to destruction alone!

Hardly had Ralph returned home, when Father Honest made his appearance at Dodson's Mill. Father Honest was manifestly uneasy in his mind. The world had somehow run counter to his wish; and how it had done so, he made known to the family, when the children had been sent to bed, and

the seniors were quietly established in the parlor.

“I’ve got bad news for you, Stella,” he said. “There’s a man named Rudkins brought a claim against the estate for several thousand dollars.”

“I don’t believe father had an unpaid debt,” said Stella.

“Neither do I; but we cannot prove it. We have nothing to show for the payment of this note. The man held it back, and only brought it in at the last legal minute. He said he did not wish to press you, as your property was small. We have held off payment, and searched everywhere for information; but the upshot is, that we must sell the house, and pay up.”

Stella grew pale. It was a bitter thing to her to sell her house. She had hoped to go back to live in it one day.

All the household had something to say.

"It's scandalous," said Ralph; "a complete swindle."

"I wouldn't pay a penny," observed Mrs. Ralph inanely.

"What will be left for Stella when that is paid?" asked grandma.

"It must be settled. It is better to suffer than to do wrong," said Stella.

"The interest of what is left will not be enough to support you, Stella," said Father Honest.

And here Mrs. Ralph Morley came out with a brilliant proposition. "She need not limit herself to the interest. Why not use the money as she wants it, and get married by the time it is gone?"

"Reduce myself to getting married for a home and a support!" cried Stella, her eyes flaming the indignation her lips did not utter.

"One need not put it just that way," said her aunt. "You would marry somebody you liked and respected."

“And now, suppose I used up the money, and by some accident became blind or crippled or an invalid, would I do without either marriage or property?” asked Stella the practical.

“That is not a likely case,” said her aunt.

“I shall not run the risk,” said Stella. “I shall support myself.”

“I am glad to hear you speak so independently,” said Ralph, that model uncle. “You can go on with this school here, and perhaps I can get the pay raised somewhat. And, when we move, I will get you a school elsewhere.”

“Thank you, uncle,” said Stella calmly. “I am economical; but I cannot live on a hundred dollars a year, especially if I am ever to own a book or a picture, or make a journey.”

“There, my darling,” said grandma, “do not worry. I have a little money; and an old woman needs nothing, if she has a good home as I have. Your Uncle Ralph is not a poor man; and you are his own niece. Of course, he

would make up all you needed ; so why say any more about it."

Father Honest stole a look at this fond uncle who was not a poor man, and saw he neither relished the idea of providing for Stella, nor of having Stella share with her grandma.

As for Stella, she did not steal any looks at any one, but responded promptly, "You are the best grandma that ever lived, and much obliged to Uncle Ralph," — graciously pretending that he had accorded with his mother ; "but I should be better and happier providing for myself ; and, if Mr. Waters will wait until to-morrow, I will tell him what I want to do."

Up-stairs that night Stella studied the contents of several portfolios for some time ; then covered a sheet of foolscap with intricate calculations, and at midnight retired satisfied.

Next morning she started for school an hour before time, Mr. Waters walking with her. And, as they went, she unfolded her plan. Stella was

going to New York, to learn designing and engraving. She would spend part of her little capital in acquiring her business; and, when that was done, she could earn a good income. To make her expenses less in New York, she would have a friend there procure her a place to teach penmanship and drawing in a ladies' school. She would stay at Dodson's two months longer, to make her preparations, and give her uncle time to find a teacher in her place.

“It will be hard to leave grandma, and she will miss me,” said Stella: “but never mind, I will do my best; and some day, when I am able to take care of myself, grandma shall come and live with me, and I will furnish some rooms, and do my work at home. Won't that be lovely?”

Mr. Waters having consented to his ward's plan, it was put in execution, — Uncle Ralph repining a little at the loss of a better teacher

than he could expect to hire for Dodson's; grandma sorry to lose her best companion, but seeing it right for Stella to go; and Stella at the last greatly grieved to leave her school, her Sunday school, and her temperance society.

“I am glad, dear,” said grandma on that last evening of Stella's stay at Dodson's Mill, “that your heart is set on something higher than money. This loss of property would be harder if you loved money well. I know you feel it as it is.”

“Certainly I do;” said Stella, “but it is not overwhelming. Was I not always taught, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal?’ This is a case of thieves, I suppose, from what I can learn of it; but thieves cannot steal our best treasure, can they, grandma?”

Ralph Morley was smoking on the doorstep: and it came to him that thieves could steal his

best treasure ; and he remembered how many night-hours he was disquieted by fear of thieves and fire. Surely Ralph's enemies were many, — thieves and flames, and moth and rust.

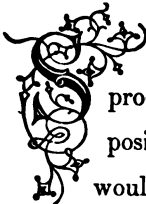




CHAPTER VI.

RICHARD'S DOOM.

"There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept for the owners thereof unto their hurt."

 TELLA had asked her uncle to procure a Christian teacher for the position she was leaving, one who would take the Sunday school in hand, would engineer the temperance society, whereof Frank was now secretary, and would open school with worship.

Uncle Ralph had made reply, with that indifference he could not now conceal when practical piety was the theme, that such a teacher would meet his ideas exactly; but he had doubts whether one so efficient could be

obtained. "You are an exception to general rules, Stella. You are not bashful; you are self-reliant; you have command of language. Some one else might have just as good a will, but not attain to such a way of expressing it. I'm a case in point, myself. I *cannot* teach in Sunday school, lead in prayer-meeting, or even hold family worship, like other people. I would like to, but it embarrasses me. I never could do it."

As Ralph said this self-complacently and self-justifyingly, up spoke poor, long-repressed and despised conscience, "That's because you never had any heart in it."

The new teacher was not even a professor of religion: but she was a well-disposed piece of stupidity (with a third-class certificate); and she obeyed grandma about opening the school with reading from the Bible, and the Lord's Prayer said in concert, though under her administration it became a disorderly custom. She

took a class in the Sunday school, for this institution was managed by grandma and Aunt Stacey; and Master Peter Perkins, now an overgrown lad, ran the temperance society, much to the satisfaction of all the boys but Frank and Freddy, with whom there was some jarring.

With Stella went away the best work and happiness of Dodson's. It was a slow, dull place when she was gone. Every one missed her, as none but a warm, practical Christian is ever missed.

Perhaps Stacey was in some measure consoled for the departure of her young lady, by the unexpected re-appearance of her long-lost tin cup, which arrived from a lone corner behind the well, but in such a forlorn condition as to make its future usefulness a matter of question. Having ascertained that an attempt to brighten this article would be fruitless, and only reveal its broken and leaky estate, Stacey

hung it on a convenient peg, as a memento of the carelessness of the children and the vanity of earthly treasures. The tin cup became to Stacey a synonyme for all transitory wealth; and, when Ralph gave new evidence of greed for gain, Stacey would briefly remark that "he was a settin' his heart on a tin cup." Secular business on Sabbath was now considered as "forsakin' Scripeter for a tin cup;" overwork was destroyin' a body's own-self for a tin-cup;" and Stacey's phraseology soon became current in the family, very much to Ralph's delight undoubtedly.

Stacey, wary soul, was very careful of saying any thing condemnatory to or of Ralph before his young children. She kept her criticisms for his private ear, as a general thing; though she sometimes uttered them to Mrs. Morley or the old lady.

There came a certain morning when Ralph was going to make a very early start for a long

day's ride. No matter how early Ralph must be off, old Stacey was ready with his breakfast : she would have got up at midnight rather than have him go away without a hot meal. On this morning, Ralph sat down to the table, where all was neat, well-cooked, and in order, save that, instead of the usual china cup and saucer, Stacey's worn-out, rusty tin cup stood by his plate. Ralph knew well Stacey meant something by this arrangement, and his first impulse was to take no notice of it. On second thoughts, he called Stacey, and indifferently told her to take that old cup away, and bring one suitable to the occasion.

Stacey took her cup, saying quietly, "'Scuse me, Mr. Ralph : I tought you liked dat kind."

At night, there was the tin cup again, and again it was removed with the same remark ; and Ralph thought he might as well face the matter out with his old mentor.

"I don't see what you meant, Stacey, by

giving me that cup," he said, entering the kitchen where Stacey was washing the dishes.

"That were a parabol, Mr. Ralph," replied Stacey sententiously.

"You'll have to explain it, then, for I don't understand it."

"Well, Mr. Ralph," quoth Stacey, wringing out her dish-cloth, "if you don't tink dat ar rusty cup good 'nuff for you to drink out ob, do you 'spose de Lord gwine to have any patience keepin' grace in a soul dat's 'lowed to rust clean and clar through? Dere's vessels ob de kingdom fine and common, for honor and for dishonor; and one ought to be satisfied to be ob de kingdom at all. It's a mighty privilege; but, if a vessel gets clar rusted out, 'taint no use, and ain't ob de kingdom nohow. It's a mighty bad ting you're doin', spilin' yourse'f for de Lord's use; and, ef you'd come round bettah, here's one ole woman would die contented; and mebbly dar's anudder."

Stacey wiped her eyes, wiped her dishes and her table, and sat down on the door-step, while Ralph walked out and about the yard, whistling, but really not as undisturbed as he pretended.

Up came Freddy to the old woman at the door, "Aunt Stacey, weren't you named Eustacia?"

"I dunno," said Stacey.

"Well, *I* know you were; and Eustacia is prettier than Stacey; and I wouldn't let any body nickname me."

"Bress your little heart," said Stacey. "*I* don't care: it makes precious little difference to me. Why, chile, I'm getting to be an ole woman, and 'fore long I'll die. Don't matter what I'm called in dis yere yarth; but, boy, up in hebben I'm gwine to hab a new name, nobody'll know 'cept de Lord an' me!"

Ralph heard this with a desperate longing for Stacey's calm assurance. Like all the rest

of his better impulses, this speedily passed away.

Still dripped the mill-wheel, its bucket rising and falling in the river; still through the logs the saws went grating and tearing; and as the tons of sawdust gathered, and the piles of lumber grew, and were taken away, and grew again, Ralph Morley increased in riches. The mill was only one of his adventures. He had money invested here and there; his toiling brain was busy over gains and risks far apart; and, while others slept, his money-mad heart was waking still.

“There is,” said Solomon, “a sore evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt;” and undeniably riches were the bane of Ralph Morley’s life. Unpossessed, they tortured him to continued covetousness; gained, they increased his greed, and filled him with an agony of apprehension lest they should be lost; and

lost, they evolved the hidden demon within him and destroyed him. All this not because of any evil in the riches themselves, but because of his greedy, absorbing love of them.

Richard came home for the summer holidays, swaggering, full of petty importance, despising Dodson's, loftily contemptuous of his brothers and sister, and bringing reports of lessons and conduct far from satisfactory. Richard had excuses enough for his shortcomings at school: "he had been alone in class so long that he did not know how to study like other boys. The next term it would be different." "He did not understand the rules and practices of school at first: he knew them now, and should not get into trouble." These excuses were accepted as sufficient by Richard's father and mother. Ralph was too busy to search very deeply the records of his son's life, and Mrs. Morley never troubled herself particularly about any thing more than

her flowers and her pies. I have no patience with such inane mothers as Mrs. Ralph Morley. They are a curse to the community ; and they are never shaken out of their littleness and indifference until their share of the population is damaged beyond repair.

Young Richard sometimes deigned to dazzle Frank with tales of school-life that made Frank restless : beside the fun and daring and tricks and rollicking at boarding-school, life at Dodson's seemed so tame and poor ! Frank was wild to go to school, and his longings he made known to Richard.

“ Make yourself a torment at home,” said this crafty elder brother, “ and then you'll be sent away. Tell 'em the teacher can't learn you any thing,” continued Richard, with a royal disregard of proprieties in his own conversation. “ I'll drop up there some day, and hint to you where she's amiss ; but, mind, you're not to plump it to the governor all at once, or he'll

know you've been primed. Give him the dose by degrees, and it will work well."

After this witty and wise advice, Richard the magnificent performed the feat of "dropping-up" to the log schoolhouse; and, when the session was over, he took a by-path home with Frank, and benevolently pointed out to him his teacher's failings.

"She reads through her nose," quoth Richard the wise: "she'll never make a reader of you in the world. And then she can't teach you to speak; and, when you go to other schools, the boys will make fun of you. She looks on the book at spelling-class all the time, and don't know whether you're right or wrong, unless she looks. She writes like a namby-pamby, and is only fit to teach girls."

Frank went home greatly edified by his brother's conversation; and, as a token of his gratitude, blacked Richard's royal boots.

After Richard returned to school, Frank set

himself, according to his brother's instructions, to worry the family into sending him to school with Richard. He complained of the teacher, and exhibited to his father a thousand faults in her system of instruction. He kept the school in such a ferment, that complaints were entered against him continually. He bullied and fought the boys at the mill; he irritated Stacey, and reviled Dodson's, and importuned his mother, until at Christmas time he had borne down all opposition, and was sent to join Richard. The teachers did not receive Frank with enthusiasm: they thought if he was like his brother, their market would be rather overstocked with that style of boy.

That winter, Luke Rogers spent several weeks preaching at the town where the boarding-school was situated. And when the boys filed into the church-gallery, a teacher gallantly leading the advance, and another teacher skilfully bringing up the rear, Luke's

keen eyes singled out from the throng his two acquaintances of Dodson's Mill. Despite their faults, there was a great deal that was pleasant in these lads; and Luke felt a friendship for them. A few hints that drifted to him suggested that the brothers were not doing themselves much credit. So he renewed his former intercourse with them, visited them, and had them come and take tea with him.

Richard, shrewd lad of sixteen, with his ambition yet fixed on idleness, a pair of gray ponies, and wine suppers, told his thirteen-year-old brother and disciple, "that the parson needn't come any of his games over them, doing the polite, and petting them up, and then striking in to preach the first fair chance." Frank thought he felt as Richard did; and he puffed himself up, and wagged his head, and responded, "No, indeed." Nevertheless, when Luke did begin to preach, — if preaching it was to set brightly before these

boys life's highest aim, to show the shortness and bitterness of life wasted, and the beauty of virtue, — then Frank was moved, and believed what was said, and seriously meant to practise upon it. Very likely he might have done so, if he had had example or encouragement in well-doing from Richard. But Richard boldly declared, that “that all sounded very well; but he didn't believe it. What was the use of admitting all that, and then not living up to it, and being a whining hypocrite all your days?”

“No one wants you to be a hypocrite. Believe it, and then practise it.”

“Nobody does that,” said Richard. “I never saw one.”

Oh! if this friend could have said, “Look at your father and your mother: their faith and their lives agree. But, of course, he could not; so he said, “Do you call me a hypocrite? Don't I practise what I preach?”

“Oh, there now!” said Richard. “I don’t see you all the time; and, besides, you’re a preacher, and you have to live it.”

“There’s Aunt Stacey,” suggested Luke.

“Pooh!” replied Richard airily, “she’s only a nigger.”

Luke looked indignation at this disrespectful mention of the faithful nurse and friend, but continued, —

“Well, there are your grandmother and your Cousin Stella: do they not by their lives recommend their religion?”

“Oh!” sneered Richard, “they are only women: they don’t know any thing else. But I’m going to have a good time. You needn’t try to tie me up with such stuff. Father don’t care any thing for it. He used to say he did; but he’s let it drop. I’m going to have money, and I’m going to spend it.”

Richard’s professions and practices agreed

closely, — so closely that his father was rendered nearly frantic by news that Richard had smashed a hired buggy, lamed a hired horse, run in debt for a twenty-five dollar supper, and drank so much champagne as to be in a state to swear at his teacher. This report was accompanied by a bill of costs, and hints of expulsion from school if these transgressions were repeated. One would suppose this present outbreak, added to a long course of insubordination, would have obtained for Richard ignominious dismissal from the school; but the master (like all others!) was made of patience; and judgment tarried.

With little profit to himself, much anxiety to his parents, and vexation to his teachers, Richard passed two years longer at his school. At eighteen, his instructors said he was ready for the sophomore class, if he chose to go to college. But this boy, about whose liberal education his deluded father had said so much,

did not choose to go to college. He hated study; could not see the use of education; loved fast horses and wine suppers; was an idle, drinking dandy, unfit for any useful occupation. While laying up money for Richard, Ralph Morley had succeeded in making his son unworthy of a fortune, and incapable of managing one.

Richard roundly declared that he would not live at Dodson's Mill and help his father in the lumber business: he meant to live in town. Ralph saw that the lad was not to be trusted in a town alone, and began to think the time had come for him to leave Dodson's, and establish himself where his sons could and would stay.

Frank, rashly making Richard his model, was growing very like him. His father meant to keep him at school two or three years longer, — if any school could be found to put up with his pranks for that space of time.

Mrs. Morley wanted much to move. She

was very weary of Dodson's Mill. Her idol, Helen, was nine years old; and the mother wanted a good school, and the company of other girls, for her. Freddy was twelve; and his mother, warned by past experience, did not want him sent to boarding-school.

In all these years, Ralph had sent great rafts of lumber down the Alleghany and Ohio Rivers, finding safe journeys, good sales, and quick returns. Men said he had "wonderful luck." Besides the lumber business, Ralph had other ways of making money: he speculated in real estate, and was perfectly willing to take usury. He always had ready money, and for enormous interest was kind enough to accommodate unhappy friends and brothers who were in difficulty. Up rolled the fortune; and, devoted to accumulation, how reluctant was Ralph, even for the sake of his family, to leave Dodson's Mill, that place of profit and loss!

Frank was in school. Richard came home after his father had settled great debts and many for him; but, incapable of reformation or gratitude, Richard felt that he conferred a favor by coming home at all, and vowed he would not stay long. He shocked Helen, grieved his mother, and almost broke his grandmother's heart, by proclaiming himself an *infidel*, — foolish lad! He seemed to regard this as a display of keenness, and an evidence of manliness!

In all these years, Stella had become an adept in her art; and happy in taking care of herself, and having something to do in the world, she was amply maintaining herself, and looking forward to a day when she would have a home of her own providing, to which to bring her grandmother. To Stella's art, the two years at Dodson's had not been lost. Into her pictures crept queer faces and fantastic attitudes caught in her log schoolhouse. Rare

bits of woodland light and shade, chill winter scenes, and depths of summer forest, mills and cabins, and piles of logs and lumber, were reminiscences of that home far up among the wooded hills.

Ralph, hesitating and delaying, and divided in his mind whether or not he should sell his mill and move to accommodate his family, was in the winter helped to a decision by a serious illness. Hitherto almost unbroken health had been the portion of the family at Dodson's Mill. Ralph was seized with pneumonia, — he was supposed to have inherited consumptive tendencies from his father, — and his terror about himself was only equalled by the uneasiness of his family for him. There was no good doctor near Dodson's Mill; there was no drug-store within fifteen miles. Physicians and medicine must come from far; and when young Peter Perkins, full of zeal, went to bring these requisites in the teeth of a furious storm, the storm

blocked the roads and prevented travel ; and this man lay at death's door, delivered over to mental distress, the despair of his wife, and the trembling ministrations of his mother and Stacey. Dark days were those ; and in them Ralph was so excited by his danger, so eager to get well, so wild for the physician's coming, that he did not realize the fearful unpreparedness of his soul for its last change, his cold and hard and hopeless heart.

The doctor got to Dodson's at last ; and, after days of doubt, Ralph began to amend. Mercy, that the man might be without excuse, granted him another lease of life ; but he entered upon it without a thought of making good use of it in getting ready to die.

In these days of trouble, Richard had come out brightly, and atoned for the past. He had charge of the business, and comforted the family ; and his mother fondly declared that her son was just right, and only needed a chance to

develop himself into all that they desired for him. Ralph, softened into new tenderness towards all who had shown such affection for him, declared that Richard should have a chance, and they would move from Dodson's. Ralph had a stronger motive than Richard, however; for he was resolved not to run a second risk of dying without a doctor to help or hinder the matter. He saw, at last, what a dismal place Dodson's was to be sick in; and the idea of dying and being buried in that lone spot was unendurable. In March, Ralph went about the house, well wrapped up, and leaning on a cane; in April he sold the mill—at a good bargain, of course; for when did Ralph Morley ever make a poor bargain, except in that matter when he exchanged heaven for earth, and eternity for time?

The first of May saw the Morley family moving. They had bought a fine house and grounds at Alden, a river-town; and, sell-

ing to the new mill-owner most of the worn furniture and household goods that had done six years' service at Dodson's, they departed for their new abode, Mrs. Morley now seeing at hand that magnificence which her husband had so long promised her. The new home was a large, stylish house, with a good garden and fruit-orchard. It was re-papered and painted, and richly furnished. This was called a very eligible situation. The church was near at hand; there was a flourishing academy for Freddie and Helen; and there were plenty of rich families in the neighborhood, who, without doubt, would be the "very best society." The Dodson's venture had been heavy payment for this flourish at Alden, but Ralph Morley and his wife thought it was worth it.

The Morley family were received with enthusiasm by "good society" at Alden. They had a carriage and a pair of grays;

their furniture was of the best; Richard bragged preposterously; Ralph held his head high, and paced the street with the air of one who felt his pecuniary responsibilities; and Mistress Rumor liberally quadrupled their fortune in her very first bulletin.

The first three months in Alden were devoted to getting settled in the new home and in business. Frank came for vacation, and was kept home, being sent to the academy with Fred and Helen; at which he grumbled, considering it an invasion of his rights and privileges.

At length Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Morley concluded that it was eminently proper to send to Fenton for their letters of church-membership, hand them in at the adjacent church, and buy a pew. Going to church was a novelty with the Morleys at first, and therefore popular. By degrees, the fervor of their attendance cooled; and grandma and Helen in the family pew,

and Stacey in the gallery, were the only representatives of the Morleys who might be relied on at all times. Ralph and his wife made a business of going to church Sunday mornings, unless it stormed. They never went to church in the evening. Ralph had had pneumonia once, you know, and that hindered him from going out Sunday evenings; other evenings, the pneumonia made no difference. Mrs. Ralph was constitutionally tired evenings, and never went out, unless to a party or concert by way of getting rested!

The three boys seldom went to church. They did not like to go, and that was reason enough for staying at home. They did not like to get up early mornings, but their parents did not fail to make them do it (on week-days); but they had scruples about levelling parental authority at the church-question. They did not like to force religion on their children. They were afraid it would

disgust them with piety. Joshua, that old-fashioned captain of the Lord's host, believed he had a right to speak for himself and his house in the matter of serving the Lord. Ralph Morley did not agree with Joshua, and had scruples about prejudicing his sons and daughter in favor of holiness. He supposed they would catch it some day from somebody, as they had the measles. There was no danger of their catching it from him, for his piety was not of a contagious type.

Much business success and the flatteries of his acquaintances had made Ralph Morley self-sufficient and vain. He began to esteem it impossible for him to be mistaken. He felt that he was set forever above adversity, and like Petra said in his heart, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?"

Ralph had been tried by prosperity, and had shown himself unequal to the test. He was now to be tried by adversity, — by a double adversity.

For the first year at Alden, Ralph sported his wealth and honors bravely. He set himself up as a money-king of the place. He was polite, he was lofty, he was magnificent. He really believed himself as great a man as he pretended to be. In his family, Ralph had a trouble, a fretting, daily care; and that was Richard. Richard was like the lilies, in that he toiled not, neither would he spin, and was arrayed more brilliantly than Solomon in all his glory. Richard was a very expensive boy to his parents, wasting like a spendthrift what he had never earned. He was an expensive boy to himself, in that he wasted his strength and health, and made drafts on his constitution beyond his credit, — drafts which were openly dishonored, — and Richard before he was twenty was an utter bankrupt in health. Plain living, industrious habits, and strict temperance had in Ralph conquered a pre-disposition to consumption; but Richard, the indolent, the

reveller, and the wine-drinker, tempted the return of the hereditary enemy. Richard's face blanched and grew hollow, his hands were white and thin, his eyes sunken and bright; he had no vigor, no appetite; he was low-spirited, and worried with a hacking cough. The doctor was applied to, and gave some medicines; and he also told Richard that the only way to amend his health was to amend his habits. He must leave his wine and his roistering, and his late hours. Richard paid no attention to this advice. He took his medicine, and any amount of patent nostrums, and washed down cod-liver oil with many pints of Bourbon whiskey, — “and nothing grew better, but rather grew worse.”

Ralph was disappointed that his son was not a better man at making money. He believed morality was indispensable to the accumulation of wealth. He was likewise pained that Richard's health was bad; but how bad it was he did not dream.

To be a millionaire was now Ralph's ambition. How petty was a fortune that did not count a million! A million was necessary to his comfort, to his children, to indulgence in the expensive luxury of liberality. Slow accumulation was now impossible to this greedy man. He had tested the delights of successful speculation. The highest joy he knew was to make money by some bold move; to hold thousands at night, which the previous morning had been all unpossessed. There were sharper men than Ralph Morley, though this Ralph did not understand. These sharp ones got the would-be millionaire, the eager speculator, into their hands. A dazzling scheme was held out before him. Ralph rushed off to New York to stay a few weeks, make the million, and buy a palace on Fifth Avenue, and another palace on the Hudson. He hastened away, leaving his wife slowly waking up to the miserable realization of Rich-

ard's danger ; leaving Richard taking long, daily strides graveward ; and Frank and Freddy, altogether beyond their mother's control, following in Richard's course, and growing up to meet Richard's fate. But what of all this ? The money-mad husband and father had gone to make — a million !

At New York, Ralph was too busy and too absorbed to search out his niece, Stella. Besides, she was only an engraver and designer ; very well in her way, but a nobody after all, not able to help him, and would give no aid towards getting the million.

Days passed, in a wild fever of excitement and magnificent prospect of success to Ralph, — in anxiety and danger in the rich man's home at Alden. The day came, the hour when he was to have achieved — a million, and he achieved — ruin ! The day came when he was to have gained all his desire, — and lo, instead he lost his all. From the lofty pinnacle of a

hope so strong that it had been certainty, Ralph was plunged into complete despair; and the speculators who had won by his loss were not to be found to succor his extremity. The morning papers detailed how Mr. Ralph Morley, a wealthy gentleman from Alden, who had been largely engaged in certain speculations, had been suddenly reduced to ruin, and was lying very ill at the Astor House, having been seized with fits induced by grief and excitement.

This pitiful story met the eyes of Stella, in the pretty upper room where she pursued her beloved art; and she laid aside her tools, and hastened to the Astor House, to take care of her uncle. She had just received a letter from her grandmother, telling that her Cousin Richard was very ill, not expected to live but a few weeks, and that her Uncle Ralph was in New York. Stella had felt angry that her uncle had not visited her; but, as she read that sad story

in the newspaper, she forgave him promptly, and flew to the rescue.

Lying in his darkened room, tenderly nursed by his niece, Ralph, coming back to consciousness, considered whether he had better yield the battle, and die defeated and despairing, abandoning his family to the ruin he had achieved for them; or whether he should return to life and the toil for money, face the triumph of his enemies and the pity of his friends, and strive by some future speculation to retrieve his loss.

He debated the point during weary hours of night and day, and concluded he should strive to get well, to recover health and money.

Stella sitting by his chair in his days of convalescence, working quietly and faithfully at her chosen occupation, soon knew exactly how her uncle stood with the world. He had a few hundreds to settle his bills and take him home. He had his furniture, and his house; but there

was a mortgage on that. Besides this he had nothing. His own property, and his mother's little fortune, were gone to the last penny.

And now that his idol had been smitten, had proved so transient and so easily destroyed, was not Ralph led to value it less, and more nearly at its real worth? No: infatuated, insane, he loved money more and more, now that he had lost it. It seemed the only real thing worth living for, — dearer than wife or children, dearer than life or his own soul, a prize he must win, if he perished in that winning. Stella saw this. The sick and disappointed man's eyes would blaze and his cheek glow, as he schemed and craved and hoped. No labor was too arduous, no humiliation too great, if by it he might once again become rich Ralph Morley.

Stella had written to the family at Alden of her uncle's failure, and of his illness; and the reports that came back of Richard were so discouraging that she cautiously unfolded them

to her uncle. She might have been less careful, for her uncle had received a blow compared to which all others were light. His heart was benumbed: once he could have wept over his son; but now he was overwhelmed by an agony too great for tears, and the peril of his child was small in comparison. He might lose his eldest boy; but oh, he had lost his money! Death might invade his family; but financial ruin, a blacker shadow, had entered first! There might be an empty chair, and a vacant room, and a voice forever lost and still; but more, aye, ten-fold more, there was an empty bank-book, and a safe all vacant of its treasures, and a fortune lost! This was the heart of Ralph Morley, who had said he labored for his children, and had learned to esteem his wealth more than the children for whom he ostensibly gathered it.

Stella took her uncle home to Alden. He was morose, despairing, sick. They found a

household in tears, and death delaying at the door. Death determined to enter, and not to go out alone. Death, almost ever unwelcome, was present here in his most repulsive shape. Here lay a young man, cut down in his early youth, who had made the world no better or happier for his having lived in it, and who was all unprepared to meet the fate he could not escape. Death uncheered, hopeless, fiercely battled, and vainly dreaded, was the doom of Richard Morley, — a doom tempted, incurred for him, by his now beggared father, who had laid up money for Richard to Richard's hurt, and was now bereft at once of his fortune and his son.

People pitied the Morleys, — “they were such a nice family, and misfortunes had fallen so heavily upon them.” The world is not so cold and selfish as some would make it. The Morleys were not despised and deserted because they had suddenly become poor; but almost every-

body was ready to hold out two helping and comforting hands to them, and to wish that the two were a dozen. The neighbors were very kind during the short remainder of Richard's illness. They wept with the family over the young man's death, and came in crowds to his funeral, pretending to a respect for the dead which they did not feel, and looking a sympathy which was abundantly in their hearts.

Stella, the keen-eyed, soon saw that the greatest favor she could confer on her uncle's family was to relieve them of grandma. Mrs. Morley said she meant to reduce the number of her servants, and take boarders. She was resolved by some means to hold the house and furniture until Ralph had made another fortune, which would enable them to live in the place comfortably.

A cemetery had been laid out at Alden, but was not yet ready for burials. Ralph had no money to expend for a costly lot and monu-

ment. He said he should have by and by, when the cemetery was in readiness; and so for the time being they buried Richard in the garden, in a corner under an evergreen, and mosses and a few ferns and lilies of the valley, things which love the shade, kept ward over his grave.

Grandma easily forgave her son for losing all her money: she was also so glad to be with Stella that she forgave Ralph and his family for parting with her so easily. But of the family we must except Helen and Aunt Stacey, who wept bitterly at losing grandma. Stella knew that to go to New York would be a remove too great for the old lady, and would also put her entirely among strangers. She therefore hired and furnished part of a little house in the suburbs of Pittsburg, arranged to pursue her work there, and thither she went with grandma, resolving to be better to the good woman than ten sons.

Nerving himself to a renewal of the long strife for wealth, Ralph Morley entered the world, after his double loss, an altered man.

The trial by adversity had signally failed. The crucible had revealed neither the silver nor the gold, but a lump of dross. Ralph might have forgiven the Lord for taking his son, but he could not forgive him for taking his money. In the first bitterness of loss, without any one to counsel him to evil, he had been ready to curse God and die. We presume he was a descendant in a direct line from Job's wife. On second thoughts, Ralph resolved to live and be rich in spite of Providence. He did not put his resolve thus plainly either to himself or others; but that was what it meant, and what many men mean. Ralph had no idea of throwing off that cloak of religious profession, — a garment very useful in hiding some men's deformities. He went to church Sunday morning; listened to the remarks of pious ministers

and friends with a silence which was mistaken for courage and resignation; and thus Ralph Morley, retaining his church-membership, sold out to the Devil to win the world.





CHAPTER VII.

CHURCH MATTERS.

"Your gold and silver are cankered, and their rust shall eat into your hearts as it were fire."

FRIENDSHIP and sympathy united to give Ralph Morley the position of cashier in the Alden Bank. The cashier's salary was a good one, and furnished Ralph something to speculate with; for he speedily turned his family into producers rather than consumers.

Mrs. Morley was as anxious as her husband to retrieve their fallen fortunes: she had just begun to taste the sweetness of being rich, when the cup of delight was struck from her lips. She was willing to toil and pinch and

save, in order that she might once more command fine clothes, fine furniture, plenty of servants and a full purse. Mrs. Morley was a woman of sound health and accustomed to exertion: she dismissed all her servants but Stacey and a small boy, sent her grand furniture and rich carpets into a retirement of chintz and brown linen, and filled her house with boarders.

Frank and Freddy were taken from school, and given clerkships. They were young for this, especially Freddy; but their father said he could not afford to educate them any further, and they were only wasting their time at school. This was but too true. Frank and Freddy were emphatically idle and wicked boys: their father had been too busy making money, either to set them a good example, or correct their faults, and his sons were virtually lost before his money.

To have learned from his heart Agur's

prayer would have been eternal wisdom to Ralph Morley. "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," — a prayer earnestly to be recommended for the daily use of every young man setting out in life, who would not, like Ralph Morley, grasping for this world, come short of heaven.

Long, very long, seemed the next two years to Ralph Morley; daily he cursed his poverty in his soul, daily he rebelled against the providence of God, daily he craved wealth as to him the one thing needful. Much of this strife and bitterness he locked in his own heart. He sometimes said to his wife, "I will be rich again, if I die for it!" Sometimes at some fancied slight he would grind his teeth, and mutter, "Wait until I am rich again, and

then, and then," — but this was only in hearing of his family. The world said he was an energetic, trustworthy, praiseworthy, business man; the Church said he was saddened by misfortune, and, if he were rich, would be very useful, a leading man in the Church. They took this view from himself. Ralph knew there was capital in good opinions, and he laid out considerable well-sounding speech to win them.

During these two years we have mentioned, Ralph and his wife were too busy and too stingy to visit Pittsburg; but Aunt Stacey so pined for a sight of her "old missey and her youngest missey," that she laid by enough of her small wages to make them a visit. She offered to take Helen with her, — gentle, pretty little Helen, the only one in the family who in these days of vexation was allowed to study and to play. Mrs. Morley thought she could not spare the girl: it was spring vacation, and Helen must help her about the housework

while Stacey was gone. So Stacey went alone.

Stella's home was an entire contrast to her uncle's; the three rooms where she lived with her grandmother were so tasteful, so quiet, and so daintily neat. The laundry work was put out. Stella had a secret understanding with the baker's wife, by which her table was nicely provided. The remainder of her household tasks vanished as by magic before her active hands. Prayer began and ended the day. There was never an unblessed meal; the Sabbath was a holiday spent in God's house and service; the weekly meetings of the church were never neglected; and, as the apostle had commanded them, these two women weekly laid by in store for the Lord's service, as the Lord had prospered them.

After the noise, the bustle, the private avarice, and the spiritual coldness of Ralph Morley's big boarding-house, Stacey felt that here she had drifted to the gate of Paradise.

“ O child ! ” said Stacey on the first evening of her stay, after she had insisted upon finishing the work and waiting upon old Mrs. Morley to bed, and had come back to Stella. “ O child ! dis seems right hebbently. What a peaceable life we poor sinners might live in dis yere worl’, if we only knowed it ? ”

“ How is my uncle getting on, Stacey ? ” asked Stella. “ He doesn’t write very often : he says he is too busy. ”

“ Dar now, ” said Stacey, “ dat’s just it. He is too busy for any ting but bein’ busy. Dear child ! how he toils and moils for dis yere ebil and wicked worl’ ! Your poor uncle is been trying to do what nobody ebber made out yet : to serve God and mammon, and get ’em both. It’s clean agin’ Scriptor, and it can’t be done. I keep hopin’ de Lord will bring him up wid a short turn yet. Sometimes I tink he will, and sometimes I tink he won’t. ’Pends on whéder he’s got any root in him or

not. 'Dat which is crooked cannot be made straight, and dat which is wantin' cannot be numbered,' says de preacher; and, if he's dat kind, why all de Lord's dealin's won't make him different. You can't raise grain whar dar ain't nuther seed nor soil."

"Uncle Ralph had pious parents," said Stella meditatively; "and the promise is unto Christians and their children."

"Dat's so," said Stacey; "but many anudder ting comes in right dar; and it's my mind, dat, if his fader and mudder had him to bring up over agin, they'd brung him up different."

Aunt Stacey was keen-eyed, and had her opinions about almost every one with whom she came in contact. The last evening of her visit, she was again alone with Stella. Stacey had washed the supper-dishes, and made all preparations for breakfast, and now sat down to pare apples near the door of the room used for a kitchen and dining-room.

Stella had finished reading the evening paper, and laid it away. "Well, chile!" cried Stacey, "how's you comin' on yourse'f? What's de Lord been doin', and how you growin'?"

"There, now, Stacey," said Stella, "I've not been growing at all. I feel that I am at a stand-still; and next comes going backwards, you know, unless one takes heed in time. I am very busy with my work: I love it; my thoughts are on it. I try to keep grandma comfortable and happy. My time seems all filled up, and I feel as if I progressed more in every thing else than I do in religion; and that isn't as it should be, you know, Stacey."

Stacey had been waiting for something of this kind. She pared an apple carefully, cut it in quarters, and put the quarters in the preserve-kettle. Then she slowly pared another, and laid it down. She was ready to speak at last. "Chile! you just clean

starved: dat's what de matter wid you! You can't work, 'less you eat. You can't grow 'less you eat. You don't thrive on nibblin'; nobody don't. What you want is a good, square meal. You wouldn't tink of keepin' up your strength day by day, just peekin' here and dere at a bite of somethin', and doin' dat in a hurry. De law wa'n't for de Jews to eat in a hurry but onct a year. Ef dey'd done it often, would hab give dem de dispepsissewa. No, chile! and how you sarves your body is how you must sarve your soul. You needs to read, larn, an' inwardly digest. Take your time for your religion, like you takes for oder tings; feed your soul as fair as you feeds your body; and you thrive wonderful on de milk ob de word, and on good solid meat doctrums too. Yes, honey!"

This plain talk came closely home to Stella. She saw that Stacey was right; that she had been giving too much attention to her work,

and her favorite amusements of reading and music ; taking for these part of the time that should have been devoted to her spiritual improvement.

“ There, Stacey,” said Stella, “ I am glad to hear what you say. I know it is true. What a wise old woman you are ! ”

“ Laws, no, chile dear ; but when an ole woman lives so long like me, and keeps dere eyes open, why dey sees, and dey speaks. Wish it did more good to some people,” added Stacey, with a thought of Ralph Morley.

Ralph Morley’s ruin was hastened, or made sure, by his obtaining the desire of his heart. He might have been ruined even if he had been denied his wish. His fortune was made the second time almost as suddenly as it had been lost the first. There was a certain furnace at Alden ; the owner died, and the property was offered for sale below its value. The iron market was depressed ; indeed, was at its lowest.

Ralph saw the change that was coming; and, desperately gathering all he could borrow on his house, all he had saved and made, he became the owner of the furnace, brought in his sons as clerks, and threw his whole energies into the iron business. He reaped his reward, when the opening of the war trebled the value of his new property, and created a demand for all iron that could be made. Ralph said the tide of fortune had changed at last. It set towards prosperity, and was a spring-tide at that. Whatever Ralph put his hand to brought him money in these days. He looked hopefully towards the million now.

There was no mortgage on the house; the boarders were banished; the furniture came out of retirement, and found itself in good society. Mrs. Ralph Morley did not care to buy new furniture just for fashion's sake, when what she had was good and handsome. These

people had felt the want of money too keenly to be willing to waste it. But Mrs. Morley was prepared to indemnify herself for past distresses by bringing in a fine corps of servants, and coming out gorgeously in the matter of dress; tribute was levied on nearly every land beneath the sun to afford a wardrobe for Mrs. Morley and Helen.

In these days, when Helen, quietly dressed, should have had exercise in plenty, and attended carefully to her studies, her foolish mother transformed her from a little girl to a young lady, with scarcely any warning at all. The miserable performance one beholds every day — the unformed girl coming out as “grown-up and finished;” and presented, all awkward, bashful, and immature, to a society that has already too many such members shuffling through their roles — must be re-enacted with Helen, who, for her part, was a modest blossom, thriving best in the

shade, and very unwilling to be forced into prominence by her ambitious mother.

Clerks in their father's iron business, Frank and Freddy were not indifferent to the change of fortune that had come to them. Money, to them, meant fast horses and fancy suppers; trips to great cities; and theatre-going and card-playing. Just this it had meant to poor Richard, whose body was not carried to the new cemetery, but slumbered, apparently forgotten, under the evergreen.

The fires in the furnace roared and glowed. From the chimney, smoke and flame poured forth night and day; night and day, through the vivid light and the black shadows, rushed sooty-faced men with leathern aprons and bare, brawny arms, stirring the mighty fires to fiercer heats, turning the streams of burning metal upon beds of sand, or clashing down upon each other the heavy bars of iron. Daily, we said; and so it was, for the fires in

this great Alden Furnace never went out. When Sabbath bells summoned God's people to the house of prayer, the clangor of the furnace mingled with the music; and, though Ralph obeyed the morning call to worship, the men he hired to work his fortune out continued at their ceaseless toil. From twelve till twelve one set of laborers kept their place; from twelve till twelve again, another gang succeeded them; and in all the months there was no day of rest. Seven years, in the hands of a man who openly avowed himself an infidel, this iron furnace had defied all Sabbath law; and now, under the authority of a man who called himself a member of Christ's visible body, the profanation still went on.

Is it necessary to tell you of the astonishment, the grief, the indignation, of Christians at Alden, when smoke and flame, ascending from the tall black chimneys, made it plain that Ralph, like his predecessor in the busi-

ness, was resolved to trample on the sacred day?

We gave you only a glimpse of Ralph Morley's life at Fenton. There he commenced his career, a poor man, and during his stay became possessed of but very moderate means. At Dodson's, Ralph was richer, but he was far from all the ordinances of religion. He told much of what he would do in more favorable circumstances. Now, at last, he is at Alden, beside the church, surrounded with Christians, a wealthy man, with good work waiting to be done, and with ample means to do it; and we propose now to show you Ralph Morley as a member of a church.

We may as well plainly state that his course will prove that "he that is unfaithful in that which is least will be unfaithful also in much." The Ralph, who, because he was not rich, would not be diligent and liberal in Christ's cause at Fenton, nor at Dodson's because

he was busy, is the very Ralph who will not be helpful at Alden because he does not want to be. Here I may be assailed with the objection, that it may have a bad effect on the youth of our land to show them the deceived and deceiving church-members. It may make them undervalue religion.

Dear friends, we have just such church-members as Ralph Morley, and young people are sharp enough to discern their deficiencies. Let us meet the matter fairly in the face. It will only bring religion, vital piety, into contempt, to cry out, These men and women are without fear and without reproach, *because* — they are church-members! No! Let us rather admit the truth. Since Judas walked among the twelve, and since Ananias and Sapphira lied to Peter, there have been false, fair, and flourishing professors of piety. We do not esteem these people, we do not ask you to esteem them. They are hateful in the eyes

of God. That God would have his Church rid of these false professors he made plain, when he brought such a judgment on Ananias and Sapphira as terrified all hypocrites, and probably kept the Church pure of them for the next generation. Behold how loathsome are these false ones stripped of their disguises! See how poor a thing is piety that is a name, and nothing more! Examine yourselves, all ye who would enter the Church on earth, and see that ye hold in your hearts root of grace, the earnest of the Spirit, that shall surely secure you entrance into the Church in heaven! Having such root, nourish it as your chiefest wealth and joy: let it bring forth blade, ear, and full corn in the ear, that great may be the sheaves of your life-harvest. Let none despair of obtaining. Lo where stands Jesus! with whom is the residue of the Spirit; "who giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not;" and who supplies the need of every desiring soul. It is only to ask and to receive.

Men like Ralph Morley are foils to show off better men. This is the pretender ; but there, beautiful contrast, stands the true Christian. Ralph's devious ways show in full relief that right line that daily leads some men nearer to God.

The church of Alden was not wealthy: it had some hard struggles to get along. It had been an unfortunate church in loss of property and members, and in accidents that had incurred heavy expenses. It was an honest, earnest, hard-working little church, and had the sympathy and respect of the community. When Ralph Morley became rich the second time, the members of the church thought they might rely upon him for a good deal of help which they greatly needed. This rich man, who had talked so well, would doubtless be an excellent example of generous giving. The giving did not begin immediately, but people were willing to think it would come in time.

To give Ralph a chance, if he were bashful or forgetful, those whose business it was to obtain the pastor's salary, went to Mr. Morley for a subscription suitable to his circumstances. Ralph gave them about one-fourth what they expected, fully one-third less than he might easily have given ; but then, as he told them, he gave twice as much as any other man in the church. Oh, this contemptible habit of measuring one's self by other men, rather than by one's personal duty and ability !

Ralph Morley made his house very beautiful : he ornamented it with frescoes and mouldings, with balconies, and rare and beautiful woods. He had good taste, and a perfect right to exercise it. His home became a pleasure to look at. But from the airy balcony that graced the left wing of Ralph's house could be seen the miserable, leaking, paintless, shutterless, beggarly place where lived Ralph's pastor. Such a place for a minister's home was a disgrace to the con-

gregation. Hardly a church-member, perhaps not one church-member, but had a better dwelling than that. The bedroom seemed prepared for the suffocation of those who slept in it. The study was seven by nine, the dining-room crowded the kitchen. The cellar was delivered over to rats and mud, the attic was but five feet high in the centre. The parlor was in the upper story! Yet here Ralph allowed his minister to live; and the minister, whose patience had amounted to a vice, made no complaint.

Ralph, pacing pompously towards his furnace, was met by the pastor of another church at Alden. This was a pastor who owned his parsonage, and had money in his pocket. He stopped and shook Ralph's hand. Did he say, "Glad to meet you, Mr. Morley. Hope you'll find time to call, and I'd be happy to see you over at our church some day"? No: he said with delightful frankness, "I've been

to visit your minister ; and I am surprised to see what a wretched hole you let him live in. You should build him a nice parsonage which would be an ornament to the place, a credit to your church, and show suitable respect for a servant of God. It is your duty to look to it, Mr. Morley. If no one was ready to help you, you could do it yourself. But plenty will help. My congregation will help."

Did Ralph walk on thinking, "This is true. Here is the opportunity I have waited for. My minister shall have a decently-comfortable home." No: he said, "Oh, confound it! What an everlasting bore it is to be the richest man in a church! No end to the demands upon one, as if I toiled for my money to give it away. A parsonage! His parsonage is no worse than it was before I got rich. What would they have done if I had remained poor?" Then, as Ralph hung his hat above his desk, he said "Confound" again; but this

time it was, "Confound those boys!" For Frank and Freddy dashed past, each smoking a stogy, and seated in a buggy behind a reeking horse. The lads were racing, careless of their beasts or of the safety of people on the streets.

The matter of a parsonage was not mentioned soon again. But one hapless day, the church-bell slipped from the stanchions, and came crashing down in such fashion as to get an ugly crack. It must be re-cast. The pastor and one of the church officers went about the congregation to get subscriptions. They went to Ralph Morley.

"How much do you expect me to give?" asked Ralph grimly.

"If you would give half," said the gentlemen, "we could easily raise the remainder."

Now, as Ralph did not intend to give a parsonage, he might have made the renewal of the bell his thank-offering to the Lord for

his prosperity. Instead of this, he put down twenty-five dollars, and growled that he had "so many demands upon his purse."

"Papa," said Helen, "our Sunday school needs a new library. May I be one of the committee to collect for it?"

"No," responded Papa Morley promptly: "you are not to turn beggar. It is just one requisition after another on a man's pocket, until he has not a cent that he can call his own."

"The mirrors for the parlor are come by express," said Frank, at the front door. "Collect on delivery, five hundred dollars."

"Yes: I will draw a check when I go to the office," said Ralph complacently.

"I'm so glad they've come before our card-party," exclaimed Mrs. Morley.

The pastor, officious man, — though he did not object to living over a quagmire, and under a sieve, — did object to Mrs. Morley's card-party.

“My boys are gay,” said this truly estimable woman and mother: “if I did not let them have a card-party at home, they would have it elsewhere. It is Frank’s party. I try to do what is best. No one understands how we are situated.”

Other girls than Helen went about to collect funds to buy a new library for the Sunday school. Ralph gave them two dollars, saying, “he thought that was his share ; only one member of his family attended.” Ralph’s two dollars nearly killed the undertaking. For, after the rich man put down his name for that trifle, nobody felt called upon to give any greater sum ; and the amount raised was contemptibly insufficient to its purpose. Ralph felt that he had had a good many aggravations in his life ; but he came to consider the aggravation of being the richest member of a poor church the greatest of the grievous list.

A donation was proposed. Would Ralph

help? No! emphatically no! He gave on the salary all he felt it a duty to give. Pay was pay. He did not believe in supplementing it with donations. Nobody gave him a bonus on any transaction of business.

O Ralph Morley! You wretched miser! What was the Lord giving you every day? When did you ever make any thing like a return for favors conferred? Nay, more: when did you show ordinary gratitude to the Giver? Did not God give you existence; the condition of your service being implied? and did he not give you as a "bonus" all you possess? And did you ever perform for him any work, — even any that could be discovered with a magnifying glass of a thousand-fold power? Verily, Ralph, if it were not that you were now — well, no matter. One very nearly despises you; and it puts me to the blush to write your history.

This downward course Ralph Morley was

not left to pursue unhindered. In all his life, Mercy was calling after him, "Return! for why wilt thou die?" And there were times when this voice pierced his heart, and staid his steps; caused him to weep and tremble, and *almost* be saved. But "almost saved" is only another form of speech for "entirely lost."

Frank had pursued a reckless course of extravagance and rioting. He was known, as Richard had been, as one of the worst youths in Alden. An attack of fever prostrated him: in his feeble state, consumption was rapidly developed. Drinking had destroyed his constitution; and a few weeks sufficed to bring the lately gay and careless Frank to the borders of the grave. The physician was a Christian man: he would not permit his patient to die unwarned; and honestly told him that his case was hopeless, and that he had but a little while left in which to make preparation for eternity.

Richard had met his fate cold, hard, unbelieving. There had appeared to be no religious instinct in Richard. Frank was different: his emotional nature was deeply stirred by his danger. All the great truths of religion were to Frank matters of fact. He did not cavil at eternal loss and gain; he did not accuse God of injustice in allowing a sinner to perish; he knew himself an open and flagrant transgressor of God's laws; he believed repentance a necessity; he believed that there was no hope out of Christ; he was in an agony of fear; groans and tears testified to his anguish. To this distressed son the parents could minister no consolation. He openly upbraided them. "You did not bring me up to be a Christian. You never seemed to care very much about it. I was always easily led; and you let everybody lead me wrong, and never tried hard to lead me right. Father! why did you not act as if this was

a matter of life and death? Mother! why did you only take care for this world, and never show me such an hour as this?"

Again he would turn to Freddy, and warn him to prepare for death. "Richard is dead, and I am dying, and it will be your turn next, Fred; and you are not ready any more than I am! The doctor says it is drinking that brings us into this horrible consumption. Oh, if I had never broken my pledge! but nobody seemed to care but grandma and Stella, and they were so far away. Yes, Stacey often talked to me, but I didn't mind her so much: if *mother* had only talked like that, then I would have listened."

What dark days were these! This greatly culpable mother wept uncomforted. She could not endure to be absent from her son, neither could she endure to listen to his reproaches.

The father, who, in sacrificing his own soul, had done so much to destroy his children, was

in the bitterness of despair. His lips were sealed: he could neither encourage nor instruct.

While Fred and Helen fled from their brother's room, unable to endure the horrors of that unhappy death-bed, and wandered weeping about the house, or in the library strove, by reading, to distract their minds from present griefs, the pastor and Christian friends were constantly endeavoring to afford help to this unhappy Frank: They read, they prayed, they reasoned, they exhorted; but ever Frank's mind went back to the past. "Why was not this or that said or done long ago? Why have I been permitted to take this course? Why cannot I get well? Why did nobody care? Why, oh, why, must I die?" This excitement and distress aggravated the young man's disease. It made rapid advances. Feeling himself growing worse, his terror augmented. "O mother!" he cried, "why were you not such a

Christian as Stella, as grandma? Then I would have been one too. Father, you cared more for making money than for making me a Christian; and your money has ruined me. If I had been a poor fellow, I might have grown old, and been a good man."

Evening was closing in, when the door-bell rung, and Aunt Stacey went to answer it. The bell was continually ringing now: people came to sympathize, to read and pray with the dying youth, or to share in nursing and watching by his bed. It was one of these kind people, old Stacey thought, as, heavy-hearted, she passed along the hall. She opened the door, — and there stood their old friend, Luke Rogers.

"De Lord bress you, Mister Rogers!" cried Stacey: "you hab come to a mighty mis'able house dis time. Come in den. Dat boy allus liked you more'n anybody almos'; an 'mebby de Lord send you 'long wid a message foi him now."

Luke knew that the Morleys had been living some time in Alden. He had heard of their reverses, of Richard's death, and Ralph's present financial prosperity. Passing through the town, he had concluded to stop one night, that he might visit them. Of Frank's illness Luke had not heard. As soon as Frank learned that Luke Rogers was in the house, he greatly desired to see him.

"He always could do me more good than any one else," cried Frank. "He used to talk to me, and I could feel what he said. I can't feel what anybody tells me here."

Ah! Luke had talked with Frank in the sunny, impressible days of early youth, when the heart is as open to good influences as the earth to spring-time showers. If parental example and faithful teachings had followed up Luke's instructions in those auspicious days, what would have been the result? Surely, not this early and despairing death-bed.

When Luke was brought to Frank's side, the poor lad grasped his hand with feverish energy. "Oh, help me, help me! no one does me any good; and I am not prepared to die. *Can* any one feel ready? *Can* any one die, and not be afraid?"

"Yes, Frank," said Luke: "the hour of death *can* be the most blessed hour of one's existence; dying can be but going home, and a very glad going home."

"How can it be?" asked Frank. "It all seems so dark, so far off, so cold and cheerless."

"It would not if you had a Father, and Jesus the Elder Brother, waiting to welcome you."

"But I haven't!" cried Frank; "and how can I have them?"

"All power is in that Elder Brother's hands, and he is willing," said Luke, sitting down on the edge of Frank's bed, and looking earnestly

in his face. "He has set the door of his house wide open, and says 'I will not cast out *any* that come. Knock and it shall be open unto you. Come, for all things are now ready. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it.' All you have to do is to take the Elder Brother at his word."

"Stay with me; don't leave me; stay until I lie, and talk to me!" cried Frank with desperate eagerness, holding fast to Luke.

For three days, Luke remained at Frank's side, reading to him, praying for him, urging him to pray for himself, arguing, exhorting, entreating; soothing him to rest with low, tenderly-sung hymns. Frank would hardly suffer his friend to leave him for an hour. As Frank took short naps, Luke would watch him with tearful eyes. Was this haggard, wasted, trembling creature, the joyous, rollicking, lovable, easily-moved Frank of other years? Oh, what a miserable wreck! such a contrast to what might have been!

Gradually Frank grew calmer. One could not tell whether it were spiritual peace and a rest in Christ, or whether it were exhaustion, and the stupor that precedes death. In Luke's presence and words seemed Frank's greatest comfort. "You have done me good. I am glad you came. I like to hear you pray: keep on praying."

Ebbing, slowly ebbing, the tide of life was drawing back, at every pulse-beat growing feebler. You could mark the lapses of the life-wave in the cold, gray face and purpling fingers, as walking on the sea-shore you note the falling of the tide by marks upon the sand.

Silently, surely, through all the mid-watches of the night, the tide ran out. Drifting, drifting farther and farther away, the son and brother who had been with them so long was being carried out by the retreating tides on a shoreless sea. He would be out of hail very soon,—so far out, that he might not tell whether

it were with him well or ill. Luke bent down and put his lips near the deadening ear: "Frank! Frank! tell us, are you now ready to die?" Painfully Frank's lips formed the word, "Perhaps!"

"Frank, O Frank! once again before you are out of call, and while you can come within sound of our voices, — once more tell us, do you trust in Jesus? have you peace in him?"

And slowly now Frank replies, "I hope so."

"Frank, yet this last time, answer us. Can you cast your soul on Jesus, that he may save you freely and fully?"

But Frank has drifted so far away that our call and his answer are lost in immeasurable distances. The tide has run entirely out. It is a gray, cold dawn; it is neither night nor day. And so for Frank we have a gray, cold hope, that is neither assurance nor despair.

The son was dead. The father, self-

reproachful, yielded to despondency. He roamed about the house, groaning, wringing his hands, recalling every bitter but truthful word of Frank's upbraiding. Christian friends strove to improve this time of affliction: they deemed it might be the good hour of grace to this perishing soul.

Mrs. Morley was far less affected than her husband. She mourned for her child, because he was hers, and death is always mournful. But eternity and the future existence were to Mrs. Morley so intangible, so hard to realize. Hers was a shallow nature; and its strongest movings were feeble enough. She said Frank was penitent, converted, saved. It was hard to lose one's children; but her loss was his gain of course. She had known for many weeks that she must part with him: she was thankful that he was ready. She wept a good deal, and was much interested in getting sufficiently deep mourning.

They laid Frank in the garden beside Richard. People thought it strange that these sons lay just before the house, where feet and voices echoed every day, their graves unmarked except by the green things that would thrive beneath the evergreen's broad arms. Ralph said he was weary of Alden, since so much trouble had come upon him there: that he should move before long; and when he went, he would take the coffins of his sons, to lay in a cemetery near his new home.

With much solemn parting council to the family, Luke left Alden.

When the funeral was over, Ralph became more calm. He began to take his wife's view, and his anxieties were quieted. They did not die,— these distressful thoughts,— all at once: they wore out by degrees. Stacey found him sitting alone in the dining-room; the Bible, so long unused, lying on the window-seat, and a wan, pained look brooding in his face. Her

faithful heart ached for him. Going up to him, she laid her withered hand on his arm, and, with the plea she would never use for her own sake, urged his confidence.

“ Mr. Ralph, don’t you know I’ve followed you all your life, carried you ’bout when you was a baby. Dar’, now, won’t you tell dis ole woman what ails you.”

“ Well, Stacey,” said Ralph reluctantly, “ I feel, as if, well — as if I had not made religion what it should be to me. That — well, that the Lord is a long way off, and I do not exactly find him, and — and — I feel unsatisfied.”

“ O chile!” cried Stacey in her uneasiness, “ de Lord is far off from you, ’cause, in huntin’ money, you go so far from him. Course you ain’t satisfied. Dere’s no satisfaction outside of him. Don’t look for it. Turn and run after de good Lord. He’s been runnin’ after you dis many years. Don’t you

know ef you seek him he'll be found of you? Didn't he say so? Dar', now, I speak plain to you. You've got to seek him wid *all* your heart. He ain't to be found ef you go huntin' him, and countin' your coppers all 'long as you go. No, sah. Seek him like he was gold and jewels!"





CHAPTER VIII.

TURNING OVER A LEAF.

“Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries which shall come upon you.”

THREE months after Frank's death, Luke the evangelist — we do not mean him who wrote the “Acts,” but Luke Rogers — came again to Alden. He went to Mr. Morley's, and was warmly received. The family felt that Luke had been dear to Frank, and had striven hard to do him good. Indeed, they believed he had been the means of doing the lost son great good. But though Luke's kindness to Frank was remembered, and though Frank's new grave was in

the garden within stone's throw, Luke found Frank's name virtually tabooed. It made the family melancholy to have the dead mentioned. It hurt their feelings. It made the remaining son and daughter sad; and youth—Mrs. Morley said—should not be made a time of sorrow. Ralph was so busy, and making money so fast, that he said no more about leaving Alden. His remorse, his repentance, his tenderness about Frank, had faded away. He did not want them recalled, and persisted in talking with his visitor only on worldly business, iron, stocks, banking, real-estate. He could not be persuaded to touch upon spiritual themes.

Ralph was president of the Alden Bank now. He liked the position. The title of *president* had always had a rare attraction for him, since he had been president of a "debating club," when he was a lad. As he could not be president of the United States, he was

glad to be president of Alden Bank, and he lived in hopes of one day being president of a railroad.

Luke Rogers discovered three facts which grieved him.

Discovery first was, that Mrs. Morley's highest and only aim for mild, easily-led Helen was, that she should shine in fashionable society, and marry a rich man (Mrs. Morley had a great regret about Helen. It was not that the girl did not possess a hope in Christ, but that she did not possess pretty, even teeth).

Discovery second was, that Ralph Morley's furnace was kept going, and the men working, all day Sunday.

Discovery third was, that Freddy was in no wise warned or improved by the circumstances of Frank's death, but was as wild as ever. Burdened by these discoveries, Luke went to bed, and was so distressed that he could not sleep.

Luke had ordered his letters to be sent to Alden, and the morning after his arrival he got one which set him thinking. The letter was from a friend, stating the case of a clergyman who had been for several years disabled by paralysis, and whose only son was dying with consumption. The family were poor, and in great need of help. Luke read the letter several times. He was very sorry for this good man's affliction. Like Peter, Luke could say, "Silver and gold have I none." He had not even what stands for silver and gold in these days, — fractional currency. Indeed, Luke was desperately poor. He was one of those whom the Church expects to run from place to place, doing the Lord's work, toiling like a coal-miner, live on nothing and have plenty left over. Church arithmetic is frequently a trifle beyond La Place. When Luke had considered sufficiently on his letter, he put it in his pocket, saying, "Mr. Morley

must give this man fifty dollars. It will do him good."

The money would do the recipient good undoubtedly; but that was not what Luke meant. He meant that it would do Ralph good to give.

To the bank went Luke. The cashier was busy at a desk in a small inner room. There was a neatly-furnished outer room; and there Ralph sat on a sofa, reading his paper. Luke sat down beside him. Luke told the story of his friend. Ralph coolly said it was a hard case, but he did not offer to make it easier by a donation.

Luke said Christians ought to provide for this man, who had given his strength to the service of the Church. Ralph hoped they would, and looked at the price of gold. Luke demanded fifty dollars. Ralph could not think of it. Luke plead that Ralph was rich. Ralph referred to the many demands he had

to meet. He might give until he beggared himself, if he would.

“You couldn’t do it,” said Luke. “No man ever gave until he impoverished himself. The Lord can beat you in giving if you try him. He has promised to repay, not at ten per cent, but ten-fold. ‘He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord,’ and will get his own with the highest kind of usury. Giving is a first-rate investment.”

“I’ve been told that before; but it is all nonsense,” said Ralph. “I look on giving simply as a matter of business. As a member of the community, I must do something. Churches and schoolhouses must be built. They are necessary to a town, and bring their return to property-owners and business men. No, no, Mr. Rogers. I look upon giving as a simple business matter, and not a paying business at that.”

Now, Luke Rogers made up his mind that he

would have this fifty dollars from Ralph Morley, if there was any power on earth that could get it out of him. He pitted his strength against Ralph's. He turned upon him, demanding this money in the name of humanity and friendship. He urged it as a favor due himself. He pictured this dying youth, — dying, like Frank and Richard, of consumption. Could not Mr. Morley sympathize with that case. He enlarged upon the woes of a father who could not help his dying son. He spoke of Frank; and, as Mr. Morley still resisted his appeal, he recalled Frank's dying bed. Would not Mr. Morley give such a trifle as fifty dollars for Frank's sake, to Frank's friend, who had helped him to meet death calmly, who had soothed the terrors of his last days. An hour — a whole long hour — did Luke Rogers persist in this pleading. He meant to have that money, if it took an argument of twelve hours. If necessary, he would devote that day

and the next to getting this fifty dollars. He did not say so ; but he meant so, and he made his meaning apparent by his persistency. Luke believed that Ralph had some vulnerable point. His heart seemed encased in steel ; but there must be a joint to the harness. He found it in memories of Frank, in his dying words and anxieties, and in the hindrance that money had been to Frank. Was not Mr. Morley, in thus wildly gathering a fortune for his children, — gathering it in despite of generosity, Sabbath-keeping, and religious living, — laying up for them a curse rather than a blessing ? Ralph's reserve was conquered. The panoply of ice was melted. He suddenly bowed his head, and burst into tears. When he had subdued his weeping somewhat, he rose and went to the inner room. One would think he would order a check drawn for a thousand, or at least five hundred dollars ; but, no. He could not give even a hundred. It was

impossible for him to give more than had been asked ; and, truth to tell, he would begrudge that to-morrow.

“ Mr. Pettis, draw up a check for Mr. Rogers for fifty dollars.”

“ *Fifty dollars?* ” asked Mr. Pettis, who had heard much of what had passed between the president and the evangelist.

“ Fifty dollars, Mr. Pettis,” reiterated Ralph. It would probably have ruined him to give a hundred.

Mr. Pettis drew up the check, whispering to himself something about “ pulling teeth.”

Luke sent his fifty dollars to the friend for whom it had been obtained. We hope it gave this person more satisfaction than it did Luke. Luke regarded it as a pledge of the most outrageous and consummate selfishness. He felt in despair over Ralph Morley. He was joined to his idol, mammon, in a bond that seemed indissoluble.

But, while this scene had been enacted in the bank, Freddy Morley had been getting up an excitement of his own in a different part of the town. Fred was imagined to be a young man of business. He had a position under his father in the furnace. But Fred spent the greater part of his time idling or riding about town. On this morning, he meditated a long jaunt on horseback, and rode his horse into the edge of the river to water him. The beast, through Fred's ignorance, slipped into a deep hole and was drowned. This was not all. Fred, getting free from his struggling steed, was swept out into the river, sunk twice, and was in imminent danger of drowning also.

A lumber-raft was floating down the river; and one of the raftsmen, seeing the excitement on shore, and catching sight of Freddy's disappearing head, leaped into the river, and succeeded in bringing the insensible lad to the bank.

“What’s his name?” asked the stalwart rescuer, as he assisted in restoring the lad to consciousness.

“Fred Morley,” was the reply.

The lumberman redoubled his efforts; and when at last Fred opened his eyes, his preserver grasped his hand, crying cordially, “Well, old boy, how do you find yourself now?”

Fred replied that he felt as if he had had a close chance for his life, and, if this man had saved him, he thanked him more than words could say.

“Hoh!” replied this friend in need, “don’t speak of it. I’d do it for any man; and I knew you when you were knee-high to a grasshopper. Know me?”

Fred confessed his ignorance.

“There, I’m Peter Perkins, coming down from Dodson’s with lumber. Own part of the mill now. How *are* you, Fred? and how are the other boys?”

“They are dead,” said Fred sighing, “both are dead.”

“Oh, come now!” said Peter Perkins, “don’t tell me that. We quarrelled a bit, as all boys will, but don’t say they’re dead already! Why, I’m as stout as a moose!”

“They’re both gone, and I’ve very nearly followed them,” said Fred.

“You’re all right now,” said Peter heartily. “Now tell me where the school-ma’am is.”

“She’s up in Pittsburg,” replied Frank feebly.

“Well, she was the making of me, with her temperance and her no swearing, and her Sunday school. I wish you’d let her know it, and tell her I’m everlastingly thankful to her. Good-by, Fred: my raft and the other fellows are way down the river by this time;” and, shaking Fred’s hand, Peter hurried in a small boat after his raft.

Fred, lying wrapped in a blanket in the

office where he had been taken, fell asleep; dreaming, as he slept, of his child-life at Dodson's, of his grandmother and his cousin, of the school and the lessons and the Sabbaths of long ago. His dream wandered on to his plunge under the turbid water, and his danger of drowning. He awoke with the horror of death in his mind.

Dry clothes had been sent from home. He dressed, and returned to the house. His danger had been great, and he was sobered by it: suppose that strong-armed raftsmen had been far away; and suppose that now, instead of going home on his own feet, Fred were lying drifted by an eddy to a corner of the muddy bank, or, all white and dripping and nerveless, were being carried home on a shutter to be laid in a coffin. Fred felt serious enough: he had never met death so closely. The life he had been leading had not been such as to make death tolerable.

While the family rejoiced over Fred's escape, and while his father warned him about the river, and made a few reflections on the lost horse, and while some questions were asked about Peter Perkins, Fred's mind was occupied with thoughts of what would come to him after death.

Luke Rogers was not at the Morleys to dinner, but called in the evening, and, finding Fred lying exhausted on the sofa, sat down and had a plain talk with him. The next morning, before leaving town, Luke called again. Fred was in the library, in dressing-gown and slippers. He was feeling the effect of his yesterday's wetting. To what Luke said, Fred replied, "I know all this is true. I have been thinking of it myself. I acknowledge that I have been leading a bad life, and now I am going to turn over a new leaf."

"I am glad to hear it," answered Luke; "but what do you find on this new leaf you are turning over?"



THE MAN OF THE HOUSE



“Fred was in the library, in dressing-gown and slippers.”—Page 286.

“ Well, in the first place, I find I must quit swearing, drinking, and gaming.”

“ Very well. Can you do it ? ” asked Luke.
“ It may be hard.”

“ I can do it. I can do any thing I make up my mind to,” said Fred proudly.

“ You are more happy in that than other people. I have known many good resolutions to be broken. What else do you find on your leaf ? ”

“ Oh ! I find that I must leave idling, or I will fall into mischief again ; and I must help father, he has been so disappointed in us boys, poor man.”

“ Do you find nothing else ? ” asked Luke sadly.

“ Yes : I find that I will go to church every Sunday, once, — in the evening, I guess ; for most of the girls go then, and father and mother go mornings ; so I think our family had better be represented by me in the evening.

And — well, there, you look as if something else was needful ; so I will make up my mind to read my Bible, a chapter every Sunday, when I don't forget it. What! don't that satisfy you, Mr. Rogers. What in the name of wonder *ought* I to find on my new leaf?"

"You should find repentance unto life!" cried Luke.

"And what is repentance unto life?" asked Fred.

"It is being truly penitent for sin ; hating it and fearing it, and flying to God to save you from it."

"Didn't I just tell you I was going to leave these sins I have indulged in, and take a different course?"

"I do not find in your intentions any trusting to Jesus, any desiring for a new heart, any becoming a Christian."

"I shall be as much of a Christian as the rest of our folks," said Fred, with something of

poor Richard's sneering. "It would not do to set up as better than others. This devoutness that exists in some families—in the Rogers, for instance—does not seem natural to the Morleys. I wonder if there isn't such a thing as hereditary piety?"

"Yes," said Luke, "I think there is. It seems an heirloom in some families; and it is thus because, like other heirlooms, it is cherished and held precious, talked of, exhibited in the family, and bequeathed from parents to children."

"Just so," said Fred lightly. "Now, I've heard Timothy mentioned as a case of that kind; and I should say my Cousin Stella was another; grandma, too, perhaps, though I'm not well enough acquainted with the family history to be certain; and now it strikes me that this piety—what there is of it in our family—is entailed on the female line, and we poor rascals don't get any of it."

Luke looked gravely at this youth, who was thus trifling with sacred subjects. His gravity only urged Fred to further folly.

“There’s my respected father,” said this irrepressible youth. “I should say he caught his piety in his early days by contact with his parents. The piety was infectious ; but he was a poor subject, and had only a mild type of it : it did not come out well.”

“Can you not be persuaded to take a more serious view of this greatest question which will ever be presented to you? Can you not feel that this is the day for decision, and that your soul may be lost or saved according to the determinations of this hour?” said Luke.

“No, I really can’t,” replied Fred. “It does not look that way to me at all. I told you what I found on my new leaf. I think it reads up pretty well, and I shall put it in practice from this time out.”

Luke Rogers walked towards the depot

thinking, that, though Fred sneered and jested, there was yet a good deal of truth in what he had said of his father and his family.

After these experiences at Alden, if Luke thought of selfishness, Ralph Morley at once came before his mind as its most perfect type; but Luke was not the only one who came in conflict with Ralph's besetting sin. No member of his flock so tried the pastor as Ralph; and, in the matter of giving, Ralph was especially at fault. Although he spoke so much of "the money demands" upon him, as if he met them all, Ralph was finding means to escape from every one. On the Sunday when the collection for Foreign Missions was taken up, Ralph invariably was at home with a sick headache. When the day for providing for Domestic Missions came round, Ralph was absent in the city: he had business there, and he made it convenient to be about that business at this particular time. "Church-Exten-

sion Sunday," as Ralph called the Sabbath for that collection, found Ralph ill with neuralgia. He shirked the Tract-Society subscription on the plea that "he hadn't looked over all their books, and did not know as he should approve them!" The Bible Society was denied on the pretence that it was too well supported already, and had too many salaried officers! If the agent for this cause was *very* persevering, he, maybe, got two dollars. As to the cause of education, Ralph flatly condemned that. People would educate themselves if they were worth any thing. "The Freedmen" were a "new-fangled charity, and he wasn't sure that aid to them was judicious."

It was time for a new library in the Sunday school. Two ladies who were collecting for this went to Ralph. He referred them to his wife. This "came within her province: she would give what she thought proper." Ralph

well knew that his wife was even stingier than himself!

Mrs. Morley told the ladies that she did not feel particularly interested in the Sunday-school library. None of her family attended the school. She benevolently offered them two books which she had had in her library some ten years. One was the autobiography of "Mrs. Mary Anna Eliza Hinks." This delightful volume was somewhat tarnished with age, and had several dozen of leaves uncut: it had been very popular in its time, having passed through an edition of five hundred in eight years. The other book was a twelvemo of six hundred pages, being the history of the "Kiang Ho Kiang Mission," which had been successfully planted, but, being too far north, had frozen out in the seventh month of its existence. The committee declined to accept these valuable works: they feared the pupils of the school might perversely fail to be interested in

them ; they also thought the donation ridiculously unsuited to Mrs. Morley's means. As they would not take what they could get, they got nothing ; but the library was obtained at last.

At Christmas - time a " Tree " was wanted for the Sunday school, and another committee went about to solicit contributions. They did every thing by committees in Alden. This committee was young and inexperienced. Mr. Morley sent them to Mrs. Morley ; and Mrs. Morley offered these " TWO VOLUMES " — she spoke them in capitals. Not old enough, wise, or brave enough to refuse the gifts, the crest-fallen committee accepted with thanks. It was supposed to be a great relief to Mrs. Morley's mind to get those books off her hands. A mischief-making young gentleman wickedly did the VOLUMES up in a neat parcel, and, directing them to Ralph Morley, Esq., hung them on the Christmas - tree ; but the minister's wife —

excellent woman! — considered herself the guardian of congregational peace, and so quietly abstracted the package, and hid it in her rat-haunted attic. If it had been another minister's wife of my acquaintance, she would have let the book hang!

Ralph's pastor confided some of his troubles to a brother in the ministry: "Mr. Morley is very wealthy, and ought to give one-third of all our contributions; but I can hardly ever get a cent out of him. He is invariably away when a collection is taken up. Indeed, we spoke of having a mite collection taken up every Sabbath morning for current church-expenses; and we had to give up the idea because he said he would leave the church altogether if he had a contribution-plate thrust in his face every time he came out to service."

"I'll tell you what," said the ministerial friend; "try the card-system on him, — that will bring him."

“What is that?” asked Ralph’s pastor.

“Instead of passing about the plates in church, get cards with the object printed upon them, enclose in envelopes, and direct to each church-member. Send them around, and make a few remarks from the pulpit, telling your people to write their donations on the cards, and that you do not expect only the head of each house, or the male members, to give; but let wives and children set their names and contributions on the cards. Tell them they must regard giving as a family matter and a family privilege.”

“I’ll do it,” said Ralph’s disconsolate spiritual shepherd; “but I dare say he’ll get out of it some way.”

The card-system was tried as recommended; and, as the pastor prophesied, Ralph “got out of it.”

“I did not find your card, Mr. Morley,” said one of the officers of the church, meeting the redoubtable Ralph on the street.

“ Oh, — ah, — no! It was mislaid somehow. Not taken out of the church-seat, very likely. Ah, yes, overlooked, I suppose.”

“ I will give you an opportunity to subscribe now,” said this truly accommodating church-officer.

“ Oh! well, don't trouble yourself. Any other time will do equally as well,” replied Ralph, and went his way.

“ I will manage him now,” thought the pastor. And the next time a contribution was in order, a person was deputed to make the rounds of the congregation, distribute the cards, and afterwards collect them. This time Ralph Morley was fairly caught. He took the card, and wrote down — five dollars.

“ We should be glad to have giving a family matter in our church,” said this “ Vigilance Committee.” “ We would like to see the names of Mrs. Morley and your children.”

“ I give for the family,” said Ralph

haughtily. "And this is as much as any one gives, — and all I can put down besides, there are so many demands on me!"

"Have you cornered our friend Morley yet?" asked the ministerial adviser of Ralph's pastor.

"Yes, at last," groaned this afflicted watchman on the walls of Zion.

"And what was the result?"

"Five dollars!"

"*Five dollars!* Five dollars after all that trouble. Oh, five dollars! What a blessed thing is benevolence!"

"You are getting very gray," said the pastor's wife to her husband.

"No wonder," replied this martyr to a good cause. "If I had two Ralph Morleys in my congregation, to run their furnaces Sunday, and shirk benevolence, my head would be as white as the snow on Hermon."

Ralph never got back that five dollars with

a blessing. The Lord loves a cheerful giver ; but all Ralph's heart ached over parting with that five. He had a more than fraternal affection for the group of Spaniards on its back, and, with tears in his eyes, looked his last at Columbus landing. They gave up trying to make him liberal after that. He had been reasoned with and prayed for. He had heard a sermon on giving, which convinced every man in the church but Ralph Morley ; and, as he would not be turned from the error of his way, they let him alone ; and he went his own way very much to his satisfaction, — giving nothing but the moderate portion he chose to pay for the minister's salary. The church bought a house for a parsonage after a while ; and one of the members, — a director of the Alden Bank, — making it a personal matter that Ralph should give fifty dollars towards it, Ralph gave it, considering it a matter of business, and because he had many dealings with

the director, and the director was a member of Congress. But, though Ralph begrudged help towards buying a parsonage, he did not hesitate to buy a new place for himself, much more beautiful and valuable than the one where he had lived since he came to Alden. He could sell his present home at a bargain. He could buy a new lot at a bargain; and he would build a house that should astonish all Alden by its magnificence. He did not think of leaving Alden now. He reasoned that it was better to be the greatest man there than only one of many great in New York or Philadelphia. And now the furnace roared and glowed, and workmen's hammers and chisels rung, saws grated, and trowels spread the mortar; and poor Ralph Morley, who had no mansion prepared for him above the skies, was preparing a very nice mansion for himself here below.

If Ralph had deliberately set himself to take his portion in this world, his conduct

would have been consistent. If he meant to have no good things except on this side the grave, then let him eat and drink and be merry while he could. If he found satisfaction in selfishness, let him be selfish. If money and a fine house, a good table and expensive clothing, represented to him the highest happiness, by all means let him have them ; and let us pity the man whose desires were so narrow, whose loftiest reachings were so low, whose choice was so vain. But Ralph was miserably inconsistent. He held fast to his church-membership, as if that would give him a claim on God's eternal blessing. He would not live up to his duty, and be a whole-hearted Christian ; and he could not be a whole-hearted man of the world, for all his early education, and what we have called his "religious instincts," forbade it. Ralph had not grace enough to serve the Lord, neither had he callousness

enough to heartily serve the Devil. He got no satisfaction anywhere. Oh, if he had only made up his mind to follow after holiness, how different had been the record of his life!

Amid a great deal of fuss and bustle, the grand new house was built and furnished, and the family moved into it. They celebrated the removal by a grand party, — a crush party, which amazed all Alden. They had a supper and waiters sent from the city. There were music and dancing, and cards and wine. And worldly people were envious, and church-members were scandalized. And Mrs. Morley was in the height of her glory, and perfectly contented. Wearing a ruby-colored moire-antique, trimmed with lace at twenty dollars a yard, with a new set of jewelry, and a fifty-dollar head-dress, Mrs. Morley sat magnificent in a velvet-lined chair at the head of her saloon parlor; and, while the young men jested and laughed in the wine-room, the elder people

devoured luxuries in the supper-room. The chandeliers trembled, and wreaths and bouquets shivered in the tumult of the music and the dancing; and a circle of gray-headed men bent over the card-table. Did Mrs. Morley think of the price of souls, that had been paid for all this, and of the two sons who were lying under the dahlias and the violets, in somebody else's garden?

Ralph Morley walking through his fine house, in this evening's splendors, flattered by obsequious guests, and seeing Fred and Helen enjoying themselves in all the carelessness of youth, held his head high, and tried to think that he was happy. Yet, for all this trying to be pleased, there was an under-current of disappointment and of unrest stealing coldly along somewhere; and he felt its chill, and heard its murmurs among all the song, the music, the laughter, the feasting, dancing, perfume, and flowers.

O Ralph! to us has come down the echo of stern James's speech, "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you." This life in which you heap up gold, and flaunt your fine array, and hold yourself above your fellow-men, is such a little space, and over it darkens and closes, narrowing the horizon every day, that future which you never can escape.

If Mrs. Ralph Morley had an idol besides herself, that idol was Helen. As the mother scanned the gay assembly that evening of the party, her mind was full of plans for her daughter. Helen was a meek, timid, gentle little creature, — delicate enough to have filled many mothers with apprehension; so sensitive and yielding, as to have made a wise mother guard her with the tenderest vigilance, lest the happiness of her guileless life be suddenly and fatally wrecked. But Mrs. Morley was troubled with none of these anxieties. She

meant to mark out a line of life for her child, and place her in it. She could move her piano, her pictures, her sofas, here and there as pleased her ; and she had some vague idea of proceeding in the same way with her daughter. As Mrs. Morley saw one and another paying to Helen those attentions which courtesy and the girl's own prettiness and mildness made natural, she considered how she should marry her daughter. And money was the requisite with Mrs. Morley. The young man she would select for Helen must have money. She did not consider whether a person were suitable in age, morals, or disposition ; money would make him eligible, and money only. Mrs. Morley performed many examples in mental arithmetic that evening. This young man had a very rich father ; but the father was likely to live so many years, and might lose his money half a dozen times before he died. Here was the son of an old man ; but

there were five brothers and sisters to divide the property, and each would have but a moderate slice. Mrs. Morley divided hundreds of thousands by three, four, five, and six that evening; and when the party was over, the lights put out, the house locked up, and Mrs. Morley ready to go to bed, she had not yet made up her mind what she would do with poor Helen.

When Ralph Morley retrieved his fallen fortune, one would have expected of him two suitable actions. The first would have been to pay back to his mother the money he had lost for her; and the second to ask her to return to live with him, instead of leaving her to be supported by the labor of Stella's hands.

Four thousand dollars looked so much to Ralph Morley, however, that he could not make up his mind to pay it over to a person who would not go to law with him for it. He tried not to think of it very often; and, when

he did, he reasoned that old people had no use for money, and that the sum would be his when his mother died ; and it made no matter these few years. You see, he coolly set Stella's claim out of the question. Ralph said nothing in his short notes to his mother about his renewed prosperity. He had a favorite sentence about "hard times ;" another about "killing one's self with work ;" and a third about "the great expense of supporting a family : " he put these, with slight variations, in every letter.

Father Honest was the first person to bring this matter clearly up to Ralph. Father Honest was no longer Stella's guardian ; but he was her good friend and adviser. And, when the news drifted to him that Ralph Morley was again wealthy, he made it his business to go to Alden, and suggest to Ralph that he should refund to his mother the little property he had lost for her. Father Honest was not

authorized to do any thing, however : he could only talk of justice, and decency, and appeal to honor ; and Ralph was not the man to give up four thousand dollars when he could by any means keep it. He growled out that he “supposed his mother was comfortable, and not in need of any thing.”

“That may all be ; but your niece works for it,” said Honest.

“She would work any way,” said Ralph : “it’s in her, and she likes it. She might have got married a dozen times if she chose. She enjoys being independent, and taking care of her grandmother.”

“I shouldn’t think you would enjoy having her do it,” said Mr. Waters with scorn.

“Mother wouldn’t be contented living with us,” said Ralph evasively. “My young people are gay, and like society. My wife sees a good deal of company ; and my mother has some old-fashioned notions, which suit Stella.

I regard her happiness, when I do not send for her to come here.”

“And do you regard her happiness when you do not send her money that is her own? Even old ladies like to be independent!” cried Father Honest, who had a wholesome contempt for a man who would cheat his mother, when he dared not cheat any one else.

Old Mrs. Morley, desiring to do justice to Stella, wrote to her son about money, when she fairly realized that the furnace was bringing him a fortune yearly. He sent her a check for five hundred dollars, saying, he would send more *when he could*; and adding some remarks so painful to the aged mother, that she never made any further applications for what was her just due.

“I know,” said this fond old grandma, one day to Stella, “that your father left a great deal more property than you ever got. I

wish we knew what he had done with it; for it seems hard that you are kept out of it, and have to work for yourself and for me."

"If I had come into possession of a large fortune when my father died," replied Stella, looking up from the block upon which she was drawing, "it might have made me proud and extravagant. By being poor, I have learned industry, economy, and sympathy with the poor and toiling, — three experiences worth purchasing at almost any price. I think the good Lord is such a tender parent that he will not deny his children any indulgence which is safe for them. If wealth would have been a true benefit to me, I should have had it. I sometimes wonder what dreadful sort of person I should have become if I were rich, since it has been necessary for me to be so poor."

As grandma looked at the fair face, bent smiling over the daily task, she felt that noth-

ing could have spoiled this generous and joyous nature. But God knew best. There was work for Stella in the world, and this was her preparation.

One would think that a man who could defraud and neglect his *mother* was incapable of showing gratitude to any one. But, as we are willing to give Ralph Morley all his due, and rake up from the general ruin of his character any little scraps of goodness that may remain, we must state that his conduct to old Stacey was that of the kind and faithful friend. From Stacey, Ralph would receive reproofs and advice that no one else would venture to utter to him. True, he did not amend at the reproofs, nor follow the advice; but he bore them, and esteemed the giver. Stacey was getting too old to work much: but she had her tidy room on the lower floor, to save steps for her; and she sat by a cheerful little fireplace, knitting Ralph's socks, and mourning

over him in her heart. For Stacey there was always a cheerful "good-morning;" for Stacey a birthday and a Christmas gift of a new gown. And, for the life-long devotion wherewith she had served him, Ralph was giving the old woman as good a home and as happy a life as the most Christian and liberal man on earth would have done. And, though Stacey saw and lamented Ralph's sins, she persisted in saying, he was "not so bad as he seemed, and would come right by and by."





CHAPTER IX.

THE MOTHER'S CHOICE.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal."

THE considerations which had occupied Mrs. Morley's mind, on the evening of her grand party did not vanish with the morning light. She was still looking about for some young man who should be in her eyes an eligible match for poor Miss Helen, who, for her part, was so shy and nervous that she asked nothing better than to be let alone. Mrs. Morley had taken pains to procure for her daughter careful instruction in music, dancing, and French. It is true, that, in other branches of education, competent

judges would have pronounced the young girl deficient. But what mattered it that her ideas of geography were desperately confused; that grammar and history had been so carelessly studied as now to be quite forgotten; that her arithmetic scarcely sufficed for her own shopping. Helen could sing, dance, and play on the piano. Her songs were limited, and she did not keep good time; but her dancing, and especially her waltzing, were enchanting; and she had read *Télémaque*! What more could Mrs. Morley desire? There remained but one thing further for Helen to do,—she must get married. How Mrs. Morley longed to have a wedding in the family!

Fortune favored this admirable mother; and she found the very young man she had been looking for. He was illiterate, he drank a little, he swore a little, he gamed a little,—not very much of either; and Mrs. Morley had those ancient sayings on her tongue,

“You cannot expect old heads on young shoulders ;” and, “Young men must sow their wild oats.”

As a set-off to his little sins, this happy young man had high virtues. He drove a fine carriage, and a pair of beautifully-matched horses ; he dressed elegantly ; he was the only child of a very wealthy man ; and, crowning glory of all, his father had been to Congress !

No one will be surprised to hear, that, when Mrs. Morley singled out this youth for especial attention, smiled on him, and asked him to her house, he speedily began to admire Helen ; for Helen had a most amiable disposition, a pretty face, very beautiful dresses, and a rich father. Mrs. Morley's little suppers, and social card-parties, and family picnics, and select excursions, became very numerous. She had just now but one idea ; that was to get her daughter married. Ralph had but one

idea ; and that was to make money faster and faster.

There were people in Alden, however, who had other thoughts, and whose minds were occupied with higher themes : these were of those who bore the welfare of the Church in their hearts ; who longed that the power of God should be shown in that Church ; that its coldness and deadness might pass away like the winter snows, and flowers of hope and love and faith might bloom, and make it the garden of the Lord. These were the praying people of the Church : they knew how to work as well as pray ; going abroad in the congregation, and speaking to one here and another there, they believed the hour of especial effort had come.

Many of the Alden people knew Luke Rogers : they knew also that his ministry had been greatly blessed in many places ; and they resolved to invite him to pass some weeks

among them, to hold a series of meetings. When this measure was discussed by the pastor, the church-officers, and some of the more zealous members of the congregation, the fact was adverted to, that Luke was a friend of the Morleys, and might be expected to have much influence over them. That the Morleys were in a desperately cold and hardened state, every one recognized; and the pastor believed that church-discipline had been too long delayed over the flagrant violation of the Sabbath in which Ralph persisted. They had hoped that patience and exhortation would have their effect; and now they hoped that the preaching of Luke Rogers, a personal friend of Ralph's, as they believed, would be God's instrument to bring this backslider to a sense of sin and to hearty repentance. Said the pastor, "We can hope little for the young people as long as their parents persist in their present course. Mr. and Mrs. Morley are

stumbling-blocks over which their son and daughter are likely to fall, and never to rise."

That Ralph might not be set against the meetings by any appearance of neglect, his pastor called at the bank to converse with him on the subject. He mentioned a "religious interest that seemed to pervade the community." To this Ralph replied indifferently, "Ah, he hoped so! Glad to hear it. Did not know any thing of it himself. He was very much occupied. Had so many cares."

"We think it advisable to send for some earnest-minded man to labor among us for a while," said the pastor.

Ralph foresaw a call for money to recompense this new worker in the vineyard, and curtly replied, "Where I was brought up, the pastor was expected to take charge of all his meetings himself. I never call any one to aid me in my business. It would be a detriment to me to do so. What we want well done we must do ourselves."

To this fling the pastor made no reply, but said, "We have spoken of inviting Mr. Luke Rogers. He is a friend of yours, I think; and we hope his ministrations will be acceptable to you and to your family."

"We have no objections to Mr. Rogers. He is a good man enough, for all I know," replied Ralph stiffly; "but, as I have just remarked, such exertions and such measures seem unnecessary to me. I do not believe in religious excitements (he believed in commercial excitements when he could make any money by them). These new-fangled ways grate on my feelings. If we believe the work is the Lord's, why don't we let him do it? To me it seems very presumptuous to interfere."

"Well, Mr. Morley, I am sorry the plan does not at first sight please you," said his pastor. "But I am sure if you attend the meetings you will become reconciled to it, and get a blessing to your soul."

“I may drop in occasionally,” said Ralph, eager to get rid of his visitor. “But I am very busy, never more so. I cannot command my time. I must be at my work. You need not depend upon my being out often.”

“Mr. Morley,” said the pastor, “you may be destroying yourself by this course. Dear brother, I am greatly pained on your account. I fear you have got far from God. Now may be the hour — the last hour — for return. Oh, as you value your soul, cease this wild pursuit of wealth, and seek the favor of the Lord. Do not, I beg you, receive all your consolation in this world. What says the Scripture? “Woe unto you that be rich, for you have received your consolation.” And oh my dear friend, what a poor consolation is that which will desert you at the hour of death, and will not meet you on the other side the grave!”

“Really,” said Ralph, his face darkening,

but his tongue preserving its usual smooth tones, "I cannot understand why you hold such language to *me*. I supposed these meetings — these *revival* meetings — were intended for the unconverted, for those who were not *church-members*."

"I sincerely think," was the reply, "that the hour has come when judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. Let us begin the revival where it ought to begin, in the hearts of *church-members*. Let us begin to let our lights shine, and exhibit good works, that the power of our Lord and Master may be confessed in us.

"Oh, well!" replied Ralph hastily, "I certainly hope good will be done. People have different ways of thinking. And it is uncharitable to condemn men as all wrong, because they do not think and act as we do."

"As Mr. Rogers is a friend of your family, do you wish to invite him to pass part of his

time while in Alden at your house? It might be a benefit to your children."

"No," burst out Ralph hastily. "I don't want religion thrust down my children's throats in that manner. It will be sure to make them hate it. Let those entertain Mr. Rogers who sent for him. I like him well enough; but, as I told you, I don't approve of this way of forcing matters, and shall not be made a party to it. My house would not be congenial to Mr. Rogers. My young people see a good deal of company, and I do not wish them to be interfered with. It will be a hindrance to them."

Now, the honest truth would have been, had Ralph spoken it, that he did not want Luke at his house, by words or example, to waken up his slumbering conscience, and make him dissatisfied with himself. Ralph wanted to be let alone. At home, Ralph mentioned the projected meetings. He spoke fretfully, sneer-

ingly, called them "unwise and new-fashioned nonsense," and prophesied that they would "prove a dead failure."

Mrs. Morley in reply, said, "that she was very much disappointed in their pastor. He was not the man she expected him to be, — not the man for the position. She wished there might be a change. He was inquisitive, he was pharisaical, he was meddling, he was censorious. She did not like his preaching; and, indeed, she had never liked Mr. Rogers's preaching. It seemed very hard that one could never get a preacher to suit them!"

To these remarks, Fred, seated on one side the dinner-table, and Helen, seated on the other, listened, with what advantage and edification may be imagined. We wonder if parents realize what harm they do their children by such conversation about preachers and preaching, how they harden the young hearts, and bring the word of God into con-

tempt, making its preaching too often of none effect.

Fred, putting his cigar in his mouth, and strolling down to the office at the furnace after dinner, coolly made up his mind to keep out of Luke Rogers's way. Fred had kept to the resolutions he formed when he had "turned over a new leaf" as he called it. Fred was very well satisfied with himself. He considered himself an exemplary young person; and, as to his needing religion or piety, Fred curled his lip in contempt, and privately remarked to himself, that he did "not see what good his father's and mother's piety had ever done, except to make them ridiculous and inconsistent."

To Alden came Luke Rogers. The churches of the town cordially united as churches should; the pastors jointly taking part in the religious exercises, and the services being held in the churches in turn. It was a

good time to Christians. There was a spirit of brotherly love, of humility, and God-serving abroad. It was not a good time to Ralph Morley and his wife. Every prayer-meeting was a reproach to them, every conversion a refutation of their arguments; every warm, working heart was a tacit condemnation. Among his first calls in Alden, Luke Rogers went to see the Morleys. He timed himself judiciously, and found them all at home. He spoke of the meetings and the awakenings, but they were irresponsive. Mrs. Morley was silent and uncomfortable; and Mr. Morley said, "Oh," and "Ah," and "Yes," several times over. Luke asked Fred if they should not see him out to service that evening.

Fred replied that he "meant to keep clear of the meetings. He didn't believe in them; and, if Luke would excuse him, he was going out. He had an engagement at once.

Luke excused him, and he went to play

billiards. That was all the engagement he had. Luke then turned to Mrs. Morley, "As a help heavenward to herself, and to set a good example in the church to which she belonged, was she not going to attend these meetings?"

Mrs. Morley responded that she was getting very fleshy, and was asthmatic. Evening air was bad for her health. She could not go out after tea.

Luke suggested that there were morning meetings and noon-day prayer-meetings.

Mrs. Morley politely and falsely wished she might attend. But housekeepers had many duties. Servants were not to be trusted. Charity begun at home; and maybe Mrs. Morley might find time to go occasionally.

"Helen? Did not Mrs. Morley want Helen to go?"

Mrs. Morley nodded and smiled importantly. "Young ladies had company so often, — guests

that they could not leave. Helen had visitors every evening. Very popular was Helen, — quite a belle,” said this foolish, fussy, absurd woman. “And she had her practising, and was learning to keep house, as all young ladies should. And Helen was delicate, and her fond mother did not wish her to become fatigued by sitting long in church. When Mrs. Morley was a young lady, if people went to service Sunday it was all that was expected of them.”

“Mrs. Morley,” said Luke Rogers, fixing his eyes steadily upon her, “I see — I am pained to see — that you are opposed to this work of grace.”

Mrs. Morley would not have admitted the truth for any consideration. She was determined to defend herself from this accusation, and cried out, “Opposed! Why, Mr. Rogers, how can you say so? Here I have put off house-cleaning for a fortnight, entirely that

there might be a *little* chance for us to get to church on week-days !”

She saw a smile curling her husband’s lips, and caught Helen’s gaze of astonishment, and recollected that the new carpets were waited for, that must come from the city before house-cleaning ; and she said, “ Well, yes, for that and *other reasons*. How can you call me opposed ? ”

“ Well ! ” cried Ralph, whose wickedness was of a type less mean than his wife’s, “ I *am* opposed, — conscientiously opposed, Mr. Rogers. I may be wrong ; and, if so, I hope to see it. For the present, the matter does not meet my views, nor possess my sympathy. It is new-fangled, as I may have said before.”

He *had* said it before, more than twenty times.

The interest of the religious meetings at Alden daily increased. People came from adjacent towns to be present at sermon, morning con-

ference, or noonday prayer-meeting. Those who had no spiritual appreciation of this work of grace went frequently to the churches from curiosity. Not a few scoffers, who went to ridicule or interrupt, remained to be benefited. Fred Morley held fast to his first determination, and would not be persuaded to enter a single meeting. He intermitted his usual Sabbath-evening attendance at church, saying, that "when the excitement was over he would make up for past deficiencies by going twice a day."

To this son, thus setting his face against salvation, his parents had not a word to say. Their own lives had shut their mouths. Religious instruction would have been absurdly at variance with their daily practices.

To Christian friends who spoke to her about her son, Mrs. Morley would sigh, and remark she "wished some one could do something with Fred, he was so singular."

To Helen, and to young Harkness, Helen's lover, Mrs. Morley would exclaim with a laugh that "Fred was the most obstinate creature in the world. It was impossible to turn him when once he had made up his mind, and he had made up his mind against these meetings."

"And so have I made up my mind!" cried young Harkness. "I don't see why these preachers should stir up such a fuss, and want to cheat us out of all the pleasure of our lives. It takes all kinds of people to make a world, — saints and sinners; and I'm content to be one of the sinners!"

"Oh, for shame, Mr. Harkness!" said Mrs. Morley, her tones insinuating what a very witty and uncommonly lively young man Mr. Harkness was. "Come, now, I am sure you go to church, and behave like all other respectable folks. Of course, all you object to is carrying matters too far."

“Yes: that is it, — too far. I like to see people moderately good. And going to church Sunday evening is a fine way to pass one’s time. But all this fuss and worry about our being in such a desperate condition just because we don’t do as they do. Why, if they had their way, we’d never touch a glass of wine, nor a card, nor dance, nor go to the theatre! There, now, I won’t have any thing to do with such fanatics.”

Having heard Mr. Harkness thus plainly express his opinion, Mrs. Morley thought it more than ever expedient that Helen should not get “excited or carried away by her feelings.”

Helen, however, had some friends among the young converts, and the church-members who had been stirred to a new sense of duty; and these set themselves to bring her to the meetings. For a time they were thwarted by evening company, and fears of evening

air, about which Mrs. Morley had suddenly become nervous. At last, not to be singular nor to excite remark, Mr. Morley took his wife and Helen to church on two evenings. He professed himself greatly displeased by the way the meetings were conducted. The services were twice too long. The room was crowded, and the air was bad. And, worse than all, very young people — lads of fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen — were encouraged to rise and tell their experiences, or exhort. Mr. Morley thought these young people had better hold their tongues until they obtained age and experience (like himself, probably, and got where they were unable and unwilling to say a word for their Master). When Mr. Morley was a young man they had no such doings (Mr. Morley's growth in grace had not been such as to establish the excellence of his early training). If Mr. Morley must go to church to be instructed

by youths not as old as his own youngest, why, he would beg leave to stay at home. This strain of remark, indulged in immediately after the meeting, prevented any impression being made upon Helen; but, taking a morning walk with a young friend, she was persuaded to enter the conference meeting. She was much interested, and promised next morning to call for her friend and go again. The third day she ventured to the noon prayer-meeting, and the next day at conference again. She was greatly touched by an address to the young, and wept, as one and another of her acquaintances spoke of having entered into a new life.

Mrs. Morley had noticed a shade of seriousness growing over Helen's usually placidly-smiling face. It made her uneasy. She had no objections to Helen's uniting with the church, in a formal sort of way; but she did not want her stirred up to the energy and entire consecration, common to the converts in

this revival. Seeing Helen's attention and tears, a good member of the church, much more interested in the girl's conversion than her mother was, and not quick enough to apprehend Mrs. Morley's views, called on Mrs. Morley that afternoon, to talk with her about her daughter. Helen had withdrawn to her own room, to meditate on what she had heard lately, and to discuss the question whether or not she should yield her heart to God. A Christian mother's prayers, instructions, and entreaties, might now have turned the scale in this wavering heart, — for God or for this world, for earth or heaven. Helen's soul trembled in the balance; and it was the mother's hand that should touch the scale, and decide it one way or the other. Mrs. Morley's friend began her conversation by stating that "she was glad to notice Helen's attendance at the meetings. That she thought her emotion gave proof that her heart was not indifferent

to the subject of religion. She hoped that nothing would occur to distract her attention, and that, knowing the present state of her feelings, her mother might be able to speak to her a word in season."

"Of course I should be pleased to see my daughter a member of the Church," said Mrs. Morley; "but I do not think young people should be urged or over-influenced. It may do harm. Helen is sensitive and excitable: she might be pushed to a step now which she would regret by and by. When the time comes, I have no doubt she will make a profession of religion. Helen is a very good girl. She is delicate, and must not be excited. I hope people will appreciate that."

After tea, Helen said she was going to church. Her mother advised her to stay at home: "somebody might come."

"I do not care," said Helen. "I want to go to church."

“But you cannot go alone,” said her mother. “Fred won’t go; your father is busy; and my asthma is bad to-night, — I cannot go.”

“Aunt Stacey will go with me,” said Helen; “and it is not far.”

To church went Helen; and her mother was left alone, undecided what to do. She was not alone very long. Young Harkness came in.

“Oh, bother it!” he cried, when informed that Helen was gone to church. “Don’t you let them make a fanatic of Helen, Mrs. Morley. She’s been as mute and as dull as can be all this week. A little piety is pretty enough in a woman; but the way that these new converts go on, — and their strictness is enough to give one the horrors! Why, they won’t take a ride or a walk on Sunday; and, as to a waltz, it is not to be heard of!”

“Oh! never mind,” said Mrs. Morley.

“Helen is just curious to see and hear; and her young friends persuaded her to go. She’ll be home to-morrow night.”

Harkness did not stay long: he said he would “go play billiards a while.”

Helen came home with Stacey.

“Dere nebber was sech a meetin’,” said Stacey: “it jist like de berry gates of hebben! Wa’n’t it, honey?”

Helen made no reply: her eyes filled with tears. She sat looking at the fire, which was yet lit in the cool spring evenings. Stacey went to her room, humming a hymn in her feeble, cracked voice. There was a weight on Helen’s heart. Oh, if her mother would only say a good word to her about her soul! Did nobody care?

Her mother said presently, “Helen, I’m sorry you went to-night. Tom was here; and he felt lonesome, and went off to play billiards.”

Helen did not answer: she only sighed. Her mother assumed the pathetic. "If there's any harm in these billiards, young men ought not to be driven to them for want of quiet company in the house. Go to bed, my dear: you're all worn out, and will get sick. Poor Tom, he was *so* blue and lonesome!"

Next morning, Helen felt discouraged, and did not mean to go to the meeting; but a friend came and coaxed her to attend. Luke Rogers walked home with her after the conference was out. Helen admitted that she knew she ought to be a Christian; that she felt uneasy and dissatisfied; that she envied the peace and joy of her young friends who had found a present Saviour: but, she said, her family would not help her any; did not sympathize with her; would think her feelings all nonsense.

"We must not be ashamed of Jesus," said Luke; "but must take up our cross daily, and

follow him. Do right, and leave the event to God. Jesus cares for you, and can sympathize with you. Will you not resolve to leave all and follow him. Give yourself to Christ to-day."

"I ought—I'll think of it—I do not know," faltered Helen. They were at the gate. She ran up to her room, and did not want any dinner.

All night and all the morning, Mrs. Morley had thought about her daughter. Not with tender sympathy in her spiritual struggles, and prayerful longings for her conversion; but wishing, yet hardly daring, to draw her back to the world. If Helen were converted, if she came out heartily and bravely for Jesus, as others had done, Tom Harkness would be disgusted. He would not marry a sincerely pious woman. If Helen ceased to follow worldliness, Tom Harkness would find somebody better suited to him than Helen; and

Mrs. Morley had made up her mind for this marriage.

After dinner, Tom came running in. "They're just spoiling Helen," he said fretfully. "They are gabbling about her, and that Parson Rogers was walking home with her. I say, Mrs. Morley, you're going to let them make a fanatic of her. Why can't you get up something jolly, to put an end to this moping."

Tom Harkness, standing behind Mrs. Morley's chair, tempted thus, and a devil in the woman's heart tempted stronger even than he. Her mind was made up. The die was cast. She chose this world for her daughter's portion.

"Yes, Tom," she said: "they'll mope Helen into a consumption like her brothers. We won't allow it. Go and get up a riding-party. Get Fred and your Cousin Nell, and two or three more. I'll have an early tea; and there will be ices and so on for you, after you

get home. I'll make Helen go. And we'll give a croquet-party Monday afternoon, and get up a card-party for Tuesday evening. There, run along and see to your company and the horses; and I'll see to Helen." Mrs. Morley bustled into the kitchen, and prepared a server of the dainties that were Helen's chief favorites: she then carried it up to her child's room. Helen sat moodily by the window.

"Helen," said her mother, "here is your dinner, and I insist upon your eating it. You will mope yourself sick; and what a fright you are making of yourself! Tom has invited a party to go riding, and you are to go too. Come now, eat your dinner, and we will go out and buy that long blue plume for your riding-hat, and some new riding-gloves."

Helen delighted in horseback exercise. She had a very elegant habit, and looked well in it. As she began to pick listlessly at the delicacies her mother had placed before her, Mrs. Mor-

ley brought in the blue velvet jacket and long skirt, the very shade of blue that most became Helen. She laid the floating veil upon Helen's pillow, and displayed the gold-handled whip, — Tom's last present. "There isn't such a habit, nor such a horse, whip, nor rider, in town," she cried. "I've heard a thousand compliments about your appearance on horse-back; and the roads are excellent, and the air delightful. I told Tom the party should all come in when you got back, and I'd have a pyramid of ice-cream and some fruit for you. Strawberries, the first of the season, — and they're eighty cents a quart, by the way. Did you tell me that plume was fifteen dollars?"

Helen began to be interested, and believed that this was the price.

"I don't begrudge it," said her mother, "you will look so lovely in it." So she went out shopping with her daughter, ordered the fruit and cream, got the gloves, and looked so

forbiddingly at all the church people she met, that no one dared approach Helen.

I don't know that Tom Harkness was very complimentary; but he remarked to his dashing Cousin Nell, that "Mrs. Morley was a regular brick!"

Mrs. Morley's eager eyes watched Helen as she came with her friends from her ride, and she saw that the shade of seriousness was gone from her face. It might return; but Mrs. Morley had discovered that society and amusements were a spell to chase it away. The trap of the card-party she sprung upon her unsuspecting daughter, by inviting all the young people who were eating strawberries and ice-cream after the ride, to come on Monday for croquet, and on Tuesday for cards.

"That's right, Mrs. Morley!" cried Harkness, quite elated. "You give just the jolliest card-parties of any one in town."

The following day was Sabbath, and Mrs.

Morley's schemes were nearly defeated. Perhaps Helen would not have gone to church, the gayety of the previous evening having jarred her newly-awakened feelings ; but some of her friends stopped for her, and she went. Ralph had the headache, Mrs. Morley the asthma, and Fred was in bed reading a novel.

Early on Monday, Mrs. Morley produced a fashion plate, saying, "Here's something quite new, Helen! a suit for playing croquet. We must get it up for you. I dare say the seamstress could have it ready for this afternoon, if I helped her. No one here has any thing like it."

"I don't feel like croquet," replied Helen, tears springing to her eyes. "I wish the girls were not coming: I am unhappy."

"You're moody, and have spring-fever," replied Mrs. Morley. "Croquet is just what you need. It is a healthful exercise."

So it was, but the best of things can be ill timed.

Mrs. Morley sent Helen to bake some cake, and herself sat down to work at the new dress. Looking up, she saw Luke Rogers entering the gate. She went to the hall, motioned the servant, and told her to inform Mr. Rogers that the ladies were both busy, and could not be seen. Mrs. Morley could hardly have been more careful to guard her Helen from small-pox than from the contagion of religion.

“Helen,” said Mrs. Morley, “run in and ask Miss Tracy to our card-party to-morrow.”

“She won't come,” said Helen. “She thinks it's wrong; and indeed, mother, I believe you had better not have it. People will talk; and — and — I don't want it, mother!”

“Nonsense! Why, Miss Tracy has been here to cards a dozen times!” cried Mrs. Morley.

“Yes; but she thinks it inconsistent, and is sorry for it. She told me yesterday that she had set me a bad example; and she did not think

church-members should play cards, and she never should again."

"There, Helen!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley angrily, "that is sufficient. I am a member of the church, and very likely as good a guide for you as Miss Tracy, if I am not fanatical. Go up stairs, and take off the puffed trimming from your blue silk. I shall have white lace put on instead for to-morrow night."

Helen obeyed: she always obeyed; and, as she began to rip her dress, she mused what use was it to contend against her mother's stronger spirit. Mother said all would come right; and Helen could join the church at some suitable time, when she was settled in life. Why should she not be happy now, and have all these amusements which were offered her. Ought she to condemn her parents, her brother, and Tom Harkness, just on Mr. Rogers's say-so? These were new doings in Alden, and people had got on very well without them these many

years. Then the thought of Stacey, of grandma, and of Cousin Stella came to her : but she argued to herself that Stacey was an ignorant colored woman, and the same rules would not apply to her and to Helen Morley ; grandma was very old, and old people, who had nothing to do but die, were different from a young girl ; and finally Cousin Stella was said to be odd and queer and strong-minded. Here the maid brought Helen a bouquet from Tom Harkness's hot-house, and then she ran down to her mother with the blue dress. She was very merry at the croquet-party ; and, when the card-party came, she was quite herself, her mother said, — lively and trifling, and without a shade of seriousness.

Yes, Helen had cast aside penitence and prayer, and yearning after holiness. She had resolved to follow after the world, as her mother desired. Some other time the convenient season might come to hear the voice

of the Spirit; but she would not listen now. No more to the revival meetings went Helen Morley. Her days were filled up with fashion and amusement; and she spent next Sabbath laughing and chatting with Fred and Tom. The harvest of souls was gathered in. God's reapers had reaped the white fields; but Helen's love and faith had not been laid up in the heavenly garner. Whether ever again a season of awakening shall come to her, when earthly tempters are put away, and she shall yield to the Holy One, long resisted, we cannot tell. She may drop suddenly out of life, unprepared to meet her God. She may live to old age, and die a careless sinner; and her soul's blood be required at the hands of that infatuated, that most criminal mother, who chose for her child a portion in this life, and cast away the offer of the life to come. Oh, for this mother! had not Richard's hardness and cynicism, had not Frank's remorse and

anguish, and Fred's obduracy been enough, that she must deliberately deny her daughter a part in Christ ?

Luke Rogers had gone his way. Extra meetings at the church came to an end ; but the churches were full of a new life and power. For that particular church which Ralph Morley so greatly honored and blessed by his membership, it had doubled in strength and numbers. Its services were well attended; and the heart of the pastor was made glad by the zeal of his people.

The case of Ralph Morley, who kept his furnace running on Sunday, was discussed ; and the church authorities in solemn assembly declared to him, that, unless he put an end to this violation of Christian duty, he must be cut off from the church. They were dealing with a smart man when they took Ralph Morley in hand. Ralph declared that he was not responsible for the Sunday work. He had,

when he bought the furnace, entered into a ten years' compact with Mr. Trot, the iron-maker, who had the whole management. And Mr. Trot said it hurt the furnace and the business to let the fires cool off on Sunday; and Mr. Trot's interest and pay were mixed up with the work, so that it would not be according to the compact to interfere with him. When Mr. Trot's time had expired, the furnace should go out on Sunday. Ralph professed himself deeply hurt by the suspicions and remarks of his brothers in the church. Mr. Trot, when visited, took the whole responsibility of the Sunday work; was very bluff; said it was nobody's business; *he* wasn't under the parson's thumb. Mr. Morley had nothing to say about it. *He* (Trot) run that machine; and visitors weren't allowed, except on business, — iron business too. Then Mr. Trot leered after his departing visitors, and put his tongue in his cheek, and thought of a

certain sum set to his credit in the First Alden Bank ; and, in his inmost heart, he was forced to respect these men who respected the Sabbath, and despise, as a miserable hypocrite, the owner of the furnace and President of the First Alden Bank.

To the Alden Bank came, one day, a tall, whiskered, sun-browned raftsmen, whose cordial grip almost crushed Ralph Morley's hand ; and who asked after Fred in tones that shook the ceiling. It was Peter Perkins, junior. And as Ralph believed bland civility never thrown away, and would have shaken hands and bowed low to the Devil himself if he had met him in the street, — and, perhaps, this is not saying much more than has been said already, since he so often met and shook hands with him in his heart, — Mr. Ralph, we say, welcomed Peter Perkins kindly ; and, to do him justice, he remembered that Peter had drawn Fred out of the river, and he felt

kindly. Perkins had much to tell of Dodson's. There was a church there now, and a minister, and a school-house. And they had prayer-meetings, and were flourishing. Stella and Luke Rogers and the man (a *pious* man) who bought the mill of Ralph, all had helped work the change. "Why, sir," cries Peter, "if you had but put your shoulder to the wheel, and tried to make Christians of us when you came there, what a work you might have done! No offence, sir. You were busy, I know; but you might have lost nothing by lending a hand to the Lord's work. You mind what the Scripture says, that those that turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and ever. Land, sir! you might have gathered a big sheaf there among us, if you had thought of it."

Yes, Ralph might have done this. When Peter Perkins was gone, the banker thought what might have been. His thinking had

no good result, however, in making him work in Alden.

Summer came, the year after the revival. And, as the pastor was weary and overworked, the congregation resolved to raise him a purse, and send him and his family to Mackinaw for the hot weather. They came to Ralph for a contribution ; and, by pressing the matter, got something from him. But how Ralph writhed over it ! It seemed like giving his very life to give that money for which he had perilled his soul. O poor, wretched, self-destroyed Ralph !





CHAPTER X.

THE OLD LETTER.

"For this ye know, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

THE money had been raised, and the overworked pastor had gone on his journey. Ralph was yet fretting secretly about the money, which he declared to himself had been forced from him. He was not in a frame of mind to meet any other demands. Indeed, as Ralph remarked to his wife, he "had rather leave the church than give them any more money."

The pastor had not been long absent, the church being under the care of a young minis-

ter who had just concluded his preparatory studies, when, during a heavy rain, the church-roof began to leak, and the dampness caused a large portion of the ceiling to fall. Ralph heard of these accidents, and regarded them as a personal injury. The energetic pastor in charge declared that the old church was not worth repairing, — they should build a new one. And most of the leading members of the congregation took this view. The general idea was to build a new church. And some began to consider where and how to raise the money, and others to estimate how much a new edifice would cost. These hints and whispers disturbed Ralph greatly. He was sure that he would be expected to give largely. Indeed, he knew he was able to do it, and it was his duty to help this enterprise liberally. But Ralph Morley had been so long shirking duty, and hushing the voice of conscience, that he could hardly be expected to do what was

right now. After a consultation with his wife, — who, if she was not like Jezebel “his counsellor to do wickedly,” was certainly not a better self, urging him to do well, — Ralph Morley called upon the young pastor *pro tem.*, and begged to be given a letter of dismissal from the church. Ralph asserted that he had long felt uneasy, and been troubled with doubts. He could not yield hearty assent to the doctrines of the church, nor to the form of government. This was indeed the church of his early choice; but long thought and wider study had convinced him that his feelings were more in unison with another body of Christians. Love for his mother had prevented his making any change when he first moved to Alden. But his aged mother no longer resided with him, and would not be disturbed by a transfer of his church-membership. Mrs. Morley felt much more strongly on this subject than himself. His children, perhaps,

would be more open to religious convictions if their attendance at the church indicated were allowed. Ralph alleged that he was governed solely by a sense of duty to his own convictions and to his family.

The pastor with whom Ralph was speaking was almost a stranger, and did not thoroughly know his man. The officers of the church were secretly glad to get rid of a member who was a hinderance to the cause of Christ, and a stumbling-block to the unconverted. The letter of dismissal was granted to Ralph and his wife; and the banker locked it up in his private desk, with a feeling that it was likely to save him a thousand dollars. He did not hand it over to the church to which he had seemed so anxious to fly; but he would not have thrown it away for any thing. Finding himself *in articulo morto*, Ralph would have presented that letter, and demanded to be received into the church, and to have admis-

tered to him all the aids and comforts of religion. And this letter and this assistance of external piety would be to him what the roll, the robe, and the mark on the forehead, were to Bunyan's pilgrim; that is, he would trust in them on this side of the river. But mayhap they would deceive his confidence when, lonely and forlorn, he essayed to climb the hills that lie along the other side.

Fred went to church where he pleased after this; but Ralph, and his wife and Helen, except on rare occasions, scarcely went to church at all. And now, while Ralph has accomplished his recent chief object, — escape from the demands upon his purse incident to church-membership, — and while Helen's wardrobe is being prepared, that Helen with all due magnificence may be married to Tom Harkness, — let us return to the cottage in the suburbs of the smoky city where Stella lives with her grandmother. They have a little

servant-maid now, and the cottage is a gem of neatness and good taste. Books, flowers, pictures, have been gathered; but all are paid for, and the little establishment supported, by the work of Stella's tireless hands.

Down the dismal streets into the dirty and grimy thoroughfares which lie along the river, strolled Fred Morley. He had come to Pittsburg on business at the close of winter. He had called on Stella several times. He liked and admired his cousin; but her humble abode was not stylish enough for Fred, and he had put up at the hotel. Some of Fred's business took him to the wareroom of one of those dusty establishments devoted to the purchase of rags and waste-paper, by the wholesale, for the supply of paper-mills. Fred had an acquaintance here, — the junior partner of the firm; and when the business of the famous Morley furnace, upon which he had come, was concluded, the young men began to make

arrangements for a ride in a particularly fine turn-out, which, to tell the truth, was eating up most of the junior partner's profits. Fred and his friend, standing together switching with their canes at bags of refuse, as they talked of the horses, the roads, and the weather, beheld a great wagon stop at the door, and a hump-backed Frenchman began carrying in more bags stuffed to their fullest capacity. The last bag, rolling from the top of the pile, broke open, and discharged an avalanche of pamphlets — dusty old things they were — at our Frederick's feet. These pamphlets had a history. They had been the property of James Douglass, had been looked over by Father Honest and Ralph Morley on several occasions, and when the house was sold had been left on the top shelf of the library closet, where Mrs. Piper Quick had believed them to be much in her way. After all these years, in a phrensy of house-cleaning, Mrs. Quick had

sold the obnoxious pamphlets to the rag-man for two cents per pound; and here they were upset over Fred Morley's well-blacked boots. Fred was politely stepping out of the way of the waste paper, when he saw the name upon one, — M. D. & V. J. R.R., — an exploded humbug, which had robbed James Douglass, and Father Honest, and many others, of considerable investments. Moreover, Fred had heard his father remark that he had come very near being swindled himself by this scheme, but had been too sharp for them; and, as we know, Ralph Morley was particularly sharp about all the affairs of this transitory sphere. Fred, attracted by the name of this broken bubble, picked up a pamphlet. Most of the leaves were uncut, but he began turning it over; and, holding it daintily lest he should soil his buff kid-gloves, a leaf suddenly tore away and the book fell to the ground, while out of it fluttered a letter that had once been white,

but was now yellow with age. Fred picked it up, and saw that the seal had never been broken, and that it was directed to his cousin, — Stella Douglass. He slipped it into his pocket, and thought no more of it, until, having returned late from the projected ride, he was safely established in his room at the hotel. Then he took the letter out, held it between himself and the light, wondered who had written it, what was in it, and why Stella had never received it. But, though he wondered, he was too much of a gentleman to open the letter, and said to himself that he would call and deliver it. As he thought this, his eye fell on a dusty calendar that hung over the mantle; and, fond of fun, he cried out to himself, “No, I won’t! Day after to-morrow is Valentine’s Day, and I’ll send it to her for a valentine. Won’t that be jolly. It is such a musty, yellow old thing. And then I’ll ask if she got it. So Fred put Stella’s present address on the

letter, stamped it, and laid it by to mail next afternoon. And this is how, when valentines were flying all over the city, — valentines of all costs and styles, — to Stella was going a valentine many years old, the costliest valentine of them all.

While Stella and her grandmother were sitting at breakfast on St. Valentine's Day, the maid came in with a letter, and laid it by Stella's plate, face uppermost. Stella caught her breath. Here was a letter from the dead, a letter from a hand that had long since returned to dust, — a letter from her father. Grandma's sight was failing from age, and she did not see that her Stella grew deadly pale; but, though Stella could eat no more, she patiently waited until grandma had finished her egg and toast, and then took her letter up stairs. She sat down and waited for a few minutes before she broke the seal that had kept its trust for years. She knew the handwriting perfectly well. None

but her father wrote her name in that peculiar way; but the rest of the direction was in an unknown hand, and it was so strange altogether, that she needed a little time to recover herself. She opened the old yellowish envelope; and out of it came a yellowish sheet of paper, a note addressed to herself, and dated at a time when her father and mother were going on a trip to New York. It said, —

“DEAR DAUGHTER, — As your mother and I are going on a journey, and as travellers are always liable to accident, I write this note to tell you, that, in the event of our not returning in safety, you will find all my important papers, and a large amount of money, in the back part of the lowest shelf on the right-hand side of the library closet. Draw out the shelf, and you will at once see where these valuables are deposited.

“JAMES DOUGLASS.”

And thus, after so many years, James Douglass's dead hand explained what his dying lips had striven hard to say.

People had always called this man singular, and here was one of the ways in which his singularity was exhibited.

Stella paused a while to think how little likelihood there was, that during all these years the important shelf had remained as her father had left it. Indeed, he himself might have removed his papers before his last illness. When Stella had somewhat quieted herself by thinking of all these chances, she dressed herself with her usual deliberate care, and walked out to call on Mrs. Piper Quick. Her grandmother was quite amazed to see Stella going out to walk during her usual hour for hard work. Mrs. Piper Quick was no less surprised at a call from Stella: they had scarcely any acquaintance. Stella said she had always loved the house, and would like to take a look at it. **Might she see the library?**

Mrs. Piper Quick was willing she should see the library; only it wasn't a library any longer, it was a sitting-room. What was the use of a library where there weren't any books? asked Mrs. Quick briskly. Stella went into the ex-library, and made herself agreeable to the daughters of the family. There was the closet where her father kept papers and magazines. Might she look at the closet?

Mrs. Quick replied that she might look if she chose: but it was kept for pickles and preserves now; and, as servants were so deceitful, it was locked, — but here Mrs. Quick produced the key, — and the upper shelf had been lumbered these years with some old books which Mr. Waters had looked over and said were of no account, and which had greatly aggravated Mrs. Quick; and finally she had sold them to the ragman. She wished Stella had taken them away long ago.

Stella was looking in the closet, and hastily

measured the depth and length of the lower shelf with her arm. She meant to say nothing of her hopes, fears, and uncertainties, to these almost strangers. Were these the shelves, the *very* shelves, that had been in the house when her father died? "Land, yes!" Mrs. Quick replied. "She had no money to spend changing good, stout shelves."

"And do you take them out to scrub at house-cleaning time?"

"No, indeed!" responded Mrs. Quick, in a lively way. "The shelves may be thankful to get washed up where they are: besides, I suppose they're fast."

"Oh, certainly!" Stella said with a sigh, and soon took her leave.

As she went to a cabinet-maker's, she absurdly felt as if she had betrayed her anxieties, and that Mrs. Quick would at once begin a rigid examination of the closet and the shelves; but, even if she did, what harm to Stella?

At the cabinet-shop, Stella gave the measure of a shelf that was to be finished in an hour, and then set out to find Mr. Waters.

Father Honest was in his counting-room, and invited Stella within the semi-circular railing which was supposed to set him in retirement from clerks and porters, and all the rest of the world.

“Why, Miss Stella, what’s the matter?” asked Honest.

“I think I have solved the mystery of these many years,” said Stella, “and found out what father meant to say, and — there’s a letter from him, Mr. Waters!” Here Stella held out the letter, and suddenly her firmness gave way, and she retired into the depths of some six inches square of cambric pocket-handkerchief. Father Honest rubbed his glasses, and looked horror-struck. He felt sure his admired Stella was either crazy, or had gone over to Spiritualism, which, indeed, may only be another name

for insanity. However, he felt that it was proper to read the document Stella had produced; and he proceeded to do so before offering his opinion. When he saw the handwriting he sprang to his feet. When he had read the note six or eight times, Stella came out of the handkerchief, and began to speak.

“I have been there, and looked at the closet; and Mrs. Quick says that the shelves are the same we left there. It remains to be seen whether there is any thing in that lowest one.”

“Been there!” cried Father Honest, quite ecstatic at the prospect of a rise in Stella’s fortunes. “I should think you would have pulled out that shelf and looked.”

“I couldn’t,” replied Stella, quite calmly: “it was full of preserve-jars.”

“She could have moved them, and must at once,” said Honest, seizing his hat.

“I ordered a new shelf; and we will go there and change them, taking the old one as a

relic. Very likely there's nothing in it; and I don't want the affair and my disappointment talked of all over town. We will take the shelf, and go home quietly; and, if it is only a plain piece of wood, very well, — only you and I will know it was expected to be more."

Stella's quietness moderated her old friend, and they proceeded leisurely towards Mrs. Quick's, getting the new shelf from the shop as they passed by.

Mrs. Piper Quick growled a little over "notions," and did not seem quite happy to move her preserves; but moved them, nevertheless. Father Honest, in some trepidation, pulled the shelf out. It came hard; and Mrs. Quick remarked, as he substituted the new one, "Land, I didn't know those shelves would move!"

Father Honest took the old shelf under his arm. "Much obliged, Mrs. Quick! Come, Miss Stella, we will not make our friends any more trouble to-day."

As they went along the street, Mr. Waters said, "This shelf has a place where it can be opened. I saw it in a minute; but what is in it?"

"Nothing, very likely," said Stella, resolved not to show how much she felt on the subject.

Seated in Stella's little parlor,—and all at once Father Honest thought what a very little parlor it was, what a low ceiling, and what common wall-paper!—Father Honest quickly took two small screws from the back edge of this famous shelf, and, removing the piece of wood, behold a cavity neatly filled with papers. The first paper was almost priceless to Stella; for it was a receipt for the payment of that debt for which she had been deprived of her home.

"Oh, the rascal!" groaned Father Honest, "to get his bill paid twice! To rob an orphan! There is no punishment severe enough for such villany!"

"I don't feel like punishing anybody," cried

Stella, with an eager little laugh, holding the precious paper fast. "I shall have my home again! Poor Mrs. Quick! she will have to move all her preserves this time."

But the old gentleman had got out more papers in his hands, — papers, that, after process in the courts, gave Stella fifty thousand dollars; and over which the excellent guardian was in a speechless rapture. When Father Honest recovered his voice, his first use of it was to threaten the severest penalties against the man who had deliberately robbed Stella.

But here Stella interposed.

"He must be made an example of!" cried Mr. Waters.

"Don't you suppose in all these years he has lived miserably, in terror of discovery? He is not to be envied. He has a wife and children who would be as heavily punished as he; and I do not wish to make my happiness

a misery to them. We will be satisfied to settle the matter quietly, and get the house, and rent for the time it has been out of my hands."

For the next few weeks, Stella's engraving was at a stand-still. The business of the property was quickly concluded. The miserable man who had perpetrated the fraud on Stella refunded what he had taken; was abject in his thanks for the mercy that was shown him, and in an agony of shame.

"How strange," mused Stella, "that a man will thus sell himself for money! I have found that people can be very happy without it."

Mrs. Piper Quick, receiving the money she had paid for the house, bought another, and effected her removal, with wonders as to where Miss Douglass's money and papers had turned up; and never dreaming of the secret depository, and the letter that had been under her own hands so long.

Workmen were busy restoring Stella's home to all its former elegance. A gardener toiled zealously about the grounds. And, almost daily, grandma had to be taken to see how matters were getting on. A carriage was one of Stella's first investments, that grandma might ride out every day. And Mr. Waters smiled a pleased smile, as he saw Stella dressing grandma up in the softest lace caps, the thickest of black silks, and the most tasteful and elegant shawls. All at once, Stella seemed to think that her grandma had suffered many privations during these last years, for which she must be compensated. But the old lady declared she had never known a want, and had been perfectly happy.

Said grandma to Stella, "Now, my dear child, I suppose you think money will be good for you, since you are given it."

"Yes," said Stella: "I hope the Lord sees that I know how to use it; and I hope he will

help me to use it well, that it may not be a hinderance to me. Indeed, dear grandma, I think wealth much more perilous than poverty ; and I must watch and pray that I may be delivered from temptation. I find myself, now, thinking what I shall get for myself, my house, and my flower-garden, far more than what I shall give to the Lord. And indeed, grandma, I did so well living on what I earned myself, that I think I have now more than I need ; and, as I believe no one ever lost any thing by giving to the Lord, — what do you say to tithing this property, and dividing the tenth among different charities ? ”

“ Why,” said grandma, admiring her idol more than ever, “ I think it would be just like you, Stella, and you would get the Lord’s blessing for it ! ”

“ You see,” said Stella, “ I think of it as a spiritual sanitary measure. I want to give myself a good lesson, and nip selfishness right

in the bud. If I failed to do this, I'd very likely lay it out on myself in diamonds, or some such thing; for you've no idea what an extravagant taste I have."

Of course, Fred was one of the first to be informed of his cousin's good fortune. All St. Valentine's Day, Fred was delighted with the thought of the old letter he had sent Stella. In the evening, he hurried to call, and found his relatives eagerly talking together. "I say, Stella, did you get any valentines?"

"I got one," replied Stella, half smiling and half sad at thought of it.

"Oh, gay!" cried Fred. "Let me see it, won't you? Where did it come from?"

"I don't know who sent it; that is a mystery," said Stella. "But I know who it was written by: it was a letter from father."

"Oh, there, Stella!" cried Fred penitently, thinking he had stirred sorrowful recollections,

and deeply grieved for it. "I hope you'll forgive me. I thought it was from some old beau. Upon my honor, if I'd dreamed who wrote it, I'd have handed it over in the most solemn manner!"

"You sent it, Fred: where did you get it?" cried grandma.

And Fred, in tones suited, as he imagined, to the melancholy of the occasion, narrated how he found the letter.

"It is a providence, a special providence!" cried grandma.

And Stella at once told Fred what a valuable note this had proved.

Now, to Fred, educated to believe money the chief good, this was the most delightful news. He capered about the room; congratulated his grandma, his cousin, and himself; persuaded himself that he was the source of all this good fortune; and secretly believed that Stella ought to be deeply grateful to him.

Finally, he declared his intention of celebrating this event in due form; and, rushing out, ordered a little supper, which was presently carried in by three white-aproned waiters. And Mr. Waters arrived in time to shake hands with Fred, and share the refectio-

When Fred went home, the bearer of such astonishing news about Stella, and carrying to Stacey a new lustre dress and three turbans, — turbans utterly incapable of ever rising in wrath, so soothing were they to the old servant's feelings, — and, with dress and turban, were a large-print Bible, and a pair of silver-bowed spectacles, which gave so much joy that Stacey sung hymns about "Jerusalem" all day; and when, besides gifts for Stacey, Fred produced a rich set of pearl jewelry for Helen, and some cobweb collars, of exquisite beauty and high cost, — how did all the Morley family prepare to fall down and

worship this cousin, to whom in charity they had given casual thoughts, and still more infrequent letters, when, as designer and engraver, she was quietly earning bread and butter for herself and grandma.

O Stella, kind and radiant Stella! how did a fortune of seventy thousand dollars lift you high in the esteem of these most tender and disinterested relatives! Fred will no longer disdain to stop at your dwelling when he goes to your city for business; your aunt will have the pleasure of spending a few weeks with you; your uncle would be happy to call upon you. And while you were of small account, and undeserving attention when you were simply heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ, and possessor of a waiting mansion in the skies, you shall be petted and flattered, and invited to Helen's wedding, now that you have bank-stock and mortgages, and a handsome house whose value is constantly rising!

Yes, indeed, while paper-hangers, masons, and painters were busy refitting Stella's house, Stella and grandma must yield to the most ardent entreaties, and go to Helen's wedding.

You may be sure grandma, with the fondness and garrulity of age, did not fail to report how Stella was beginning in earnest to use her fortune, as a steward of Him, who, at his coming, will demand his own with usury.

We must be sure also, that Ralph, who had long been privately uneasy, ashamed, and self-reproachful, over his treatment of his mother, and sequestration of her small property, was now contented and thankful to find that she would be surrounded with every luxury, and gratified in every whim, and ministered to by money, none of which need come out of his pocket.

Thus peace was proclaimed through all the Morley borders

Stella and grandma had gone at last to the

new old home. Helen and Tom were married; and, as neither of them cared to shoulder the responsibilities of housekeeping, they pretended to board at the Alden Hotel, but, in reality, spent the greater part of their time with their parents.

At an age when many men begin to think of retiring from business, and when Ralph had formerly said he would lay aside active exertions and take life easy, he was yet increasing his cares and his money ventures. He had learned to find no pleasure so great as the accumulation of property. And, as if the bank and the furnace were not enough, he was largely interested in a factory in a town some miles from Alden. At this factory, Fred acted as his father's agent, spending nearly all the week there. You might suppose Ralph and his wife would be lonely, when, after all these years when they had had their children about them, they were for the most part left

alone, two of their family asleep never to waken, and the other two finding other homes and other ties. But, as we know, these parents were not of the sentimental type ; and so long as Mrs. Morley could polish her furniture, deck herself with new collars and head-dresses, and Ralph could "buy and sell and get gain," they were quite well satisfied. The monitor in Ralph's bosom had been this long while silent. Conscience grows weary of warning and rebuking, when it is unheard or deliberately disobeyed ; but, with conscience silent, Ralph was not unhappy. Though the "way of the transgressor is hard," it is often only hard at its ending, and not particularly thorny when one is going over it. As Ralph had set his chief desire on money, it was not to be expected that his heart and his purse would grow heavy at the same time. Ralph's heart can only be heavy when his purse is light.

To Fenton and to Dodson's Mill we are to

go no more. Luke Rogers we shall never meet again, but may God bless the faithful servant in his word and work !

As for Stella, we have only to tell you, that as in her poverty she had been upright and liberal, so in her wealth she lived as one who should give account, and was keeping her books properly posted for that great day of assize when they shall all be opened.

Blest is the death of the righteous. What need is there to follow Grandma Morley the few remaining steps of her pilgrimage, to tell you that He who promises to carry his people even to old age and hoary hairs, was not forgetful of his word !

Do we doubt that old Stacey, going out of this life, shall find the Master whom in her low estate she has lovingly served ?

We come at last to a summer evening when the workmen were going home from their labors, and all the Alden families were sitting

down to tea. Mrs. Morley's table was spread with shining glass and silver and costly china, and was waiting for the coming of the head of the house. Ralph had been spending the afternoon at the furnace-office, — a neatly-furnished room at the upper end of the iron-works. Tom Harkness had gone to the city, and Helen had come to stay with her mother. And when Mrs. Morley had wondered some dozen times why her husband did not come to his supper, the two ladies concluded that he had gone down the river to visit the factory, as was frequently his custom; and they sat down to eat alone.

Tea was ordered for Mr. Morley at nine o'clock, when the evening packet came up; but even then he did not come, and the wife and daughter yawned over the magazines until ten.

Said Mrs. Morley to Helen, "Go to bed, child. You're tired. Your father hates those

hot little packets, and is waiting for the larger steamer. I'll nap in my chair. It will be up about midnight."

Helen went to bed; and Mrs. Morley locked up the house, turned down her lamp, put her feet up on an ottoman, and took little, uneasy naps. The steamer whistled; and shortly after steps came up the walk, and a hand was on the bell.

Mrs. Morley went to the door. "Why, Ralph! Where did you stay so?"

"What are you up for, mother?" asked Fred's voice. "Is father out?"

"Isn't your father at the factory?" cried Mrs. Morley, alarmed at once.

"No," replied Fred, coming in, and closing the door. "I came up to see him. The men have struck for twenty-five cents more a day. How long has he been gone?"

"He didn't come in to tea. I asked some

of the hands, and they had not seen him since the middle of the afternoon."

"He'll turn up all right," said Fred, dropping on a lounge. "Hadn't you better go to bed?"

"No. I'm dreadfully worried about him. You must go and look for him."

"Pooh!" replied Fred. "Folks will think he's turned defaulter, and decamped with all the bank-stock. We won't cry him as 'lost, stolen, or strayed,' yet a while."

Helen woke up about three with such a sense of loneliness and dread upon her, that she crept to the door of her mother's room. It was open. "Mother!" said Helen. Then louder, "Mother! Has father come?" Then hearing no answer, she stole to the bed, and felt with her hand in the dark. The covers were smooth. No one was there; and, thoroughly frightened, Helen wrapped herself in a shawl that lay over a chair, and ran down stairs.

Mrs. Morley's anxieties were by no means soothed by Helen's terrors.

Fred sat up, rubbed his eyes, and looked at his watch. "It is nearly daylight," he said; "and I'll call the coachman, and we will go and look for him. Very likely he left some word at the furnace.

Fred called the coachman; and the two set off to look for the missing man, just as the morning was growing gray. Helen was sure she could sleep no more, and so went up stairs to dress. Fred did not think himself alarmed by his father's absence; yet, as he strolled along in the dim morning light, the black man plodding behind, he could not help thinking, what if, lying in some nook by the river, half in and half out of the tawny water, he should see that well-known form, and the head that had always held itself so high. He saw a little boy running swiftly along, and shivered with an apprehension that he was bringing him

bad news ; but the lad passed him, bound on some other errand, and at length Fred and his attendant reached the furnace. The night-gang were at work. The black chimneys poured out flame, here and there in the deep shadows disappeared a man trundling before him a glowing ball of molten metal, and the iron wheels rumbled away in the distance ; and out of the blackness came grimy figures armed with long bars, whereof the ends were red-hot ; and beside the shadows were vivid depths of flame, and caldrons of red, melted iron, and little iron doors swung open, and showed the seething fires in the clay furnaces. Going in and out through strong lights and deep shadows, Fred asked news of his father. No one had seen him, since he had been in his office the previous afternoon. Leaving the furnace, Fred went on towards the office. Mr. Trot's house lay above there, but he let the coachman lead the way now. The curtains

were nearly down in the office ; but the man stepped back, saying, " Mister Fred, the office-door ain't locked, and it is not latched ! "

The summer morning had now fully dawned : the yellow sunlight brightened under the rosy curtains of the east. The birds were singing in the trees along the bank, and about the gardens.

" Open the door," said Fred ; but he hung back until the man obeyed, and obeying cried out, " O Mister Fred, he's here ! "

He was there, all of him that was anywhere in mortal reach.

Perhaps he had drawn his office-curtains down that he might doze in the hot afternoon when his last visitor had gone. Passers-by had supposed the place shut up. None had gone there. None had disturbed a sleep that was lasting over long. He sat in his favorite high-backed chair, his hands grasping its arms, and his feet resting upon a tall stool. There

was no need that the son and the servant should tip-toe so gently on each side his chair, and look forward so carefully in his face. Be their foot-falls never so heavy, they would not echo in his ears. His eyes were wide open, but had been filled already with sights so great, beyond all earthly seeing, that the shadows of finite things should fall athwart his vision no more. Ralph Morley's eyes could not brighten now, even at the sight of gold; his ears could not tingle to the ring of precious coin. He had learned, we doubt not, how evanescent is the wealth he could not carry out of this little world. He had found how small is earthly success, and how narrow is earthly ambition. He had learned it, as we may never learn here clad in flesh; but learned it, — oh, too late! — too late!

Ralph's office was so public a place, thronged daily by so many people, that permission was sometimes asked to hang placards on

the wall. There was one hung there now, advertising a loss; and, as Ralph's head leaned back against the chair-cushion, his open eyes were fixed upon the heading of the placard, a word in long, black letters, — *LOST!* We wonder, Ralph, — poor, hapless Ralph, — if you had found that there are other things that can be lost, besides pocket-books and purses and United States five-twenties.

There is no echo of ill can reach the golden streets, or jar the beauty of the New Jerusalem; else we might think that slowly through the heavenly city might go some angel-crier, with a voice like a sad-toned bell, calling, “Lost, lost, lost! a man who might have reached here. Lost, a man who gave eternity for time! lost, a man who bartered his soul for money! Lost, lost, lost! And no reward is offered, for none can find him ever again!”

Carry him home. A very little portion of Ralph Morley's property will be needed to buy

a rosewood box with silver-plate and handles. He need not have toiled so long and so hard to purchase the little space of ground he must be contented with at last. Carry him home! They weep for him, it is true; and people say the kindest things of him, and are tender of his faults; but yet we think he would have been more sincerely mourned, if four Christian children had followed after the coffin of the pious father who led them to Jesus, and whom they were sure of meeting at their Master's feet. We think, that if this new-made widow were forced to wear plain weeds, and had no great fortune left her, but was left to find her solace in three loving, God-fearing sons, while she waited to rejoin her husband in the house eternal, she would not be so much the object of our pity as Mrs. Morley is now.

The long-talked-of lot in the cemetery is bought at last. This Morley funeral will be some while remembered, for the two sons

who have been under the evergreen these years are taken away ; and each, in a separate hearse, follows Ralph's hearse along the summer roads that wind among the hills.

There is that church-letter, which saved Ralph that precious thousand, — that letter which he would neither use nor lose : perhaps, if it would do him any good, we might lay it on his breast, held fast in the hands that can now grasp nothing else, that the resurrection-angel might know this dust and ashes professed once to be a Christian. Alas ! it will do no good. The church-letter is valueless ; for when this grave is opened again, and Ralph comes forth in his grave-clothes, what good will it do to profess, “ Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets ” ! For he who sifts all motives, and knows all hearts, may perchance reply, “ I tell you, I know not whence ye are : depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. ”

My history of this life is ended ; for the end of the life has come. After the tale comes the moral ; and of little use is a moral that has not been fully developed in the tale. We have shown you how Ralph Morley was sifted until nothing good of him was left. There is a sifting going on for us all. Pray Heaven our faith may not fail !

And so farewell to you. And take this lesson home : flee covetousness, which is idolatry ; for ye cannot serve God and mammon. And ours is a God who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, and will accept nothing less than entire consecration unto himself.



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