

In My Youth

SUNSHINE SERIES

ROBERT DUDLEY

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Robert Dudley

Libraries of Hope

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Sunshine Series

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INTRODUCTION

In My Youth is said to be an autobiography of James Baldwin who wrote under the name of Robert Dudley.

James Baldwin grew up in a humble cabin in the New Settlement of rural Indiana, with little opportunity for formal education. He was largely self-educated. He never had children of his own, although the book was written for his unseen posterity which is actually all of us. In addition, he not only wrote fifty books for children, including biographies, histories and the retelling of classic stories, at one time, of all the school books used in the United States, over half of them had been written or edited by him. He also compiled the Baldwin, Harper and Expressive Readers. Over 26 million copies of his books were distributed worldwide, including China and Indonesia. William Bennet drew heavily from Baldwin's writings for his *Book of Virtues*.

The editor for the original publisher for this book wrote:

"It is difficult to describe just what there is so remarkable about this book, but it is undeniably wonderful. It is literature. It is a strange combination of autobiography and fiction, and records only the simplest happenings in the life of people in the Indiana backwoods, the primitive life, the commonplace experiences, the visits between neighbors. To tell about it in this way does not make it sound remarkable yet it is. The style is simple and clear; there's a quiet humor running through it, and in other places, the reading brings tears to the eyes."

The is an enjoyable book for the whole family.

IN MY YOUTH

From the Posthumous Papers of Robert Dudley

Editor's Note

When Robert Dudley began to write the chapters composing this unique autobiography he had no thought of their ultimate publication. His object was rather to produce something to be preserved to the edification and entertainment of his remote posterity, and for that reason he addressed his work to Leonidas and Leona, his imaginary descendants in the fourth degree. But to a man who dies childless there is not much hope of posterity; and it has seemed to the friends of Mr. Dudley that to withhold these sketches until the advent of impossible great-great-grandchildren would be to deprive the world of as many rare chapters of literary worth and historic interest. They are, therefore, now offered to the public with the confident hope that as contributions to the early history of life and manners in "the Middle Ages of the Middle West," they will have an enduring value.

It will be observed that the author has taken his readers unreservedly into his confidence and has concealed none of his own frailties nor the peculiar and humble environments of his youth. Although his narrative is sometimes illuminated with the colors of his exuberant fancy, he has related no incident that was not a matter of actual occurrence. Wherever a revelation of identity might cause embarrassment to sensitive souls, the names of persons and places have been thoughtfully disguised. In the case, however, of historical personages or of men in public life no such caution has appeared to be necessary.

CHAPTER I
The Center of the World

The picture which I would paint on your mental canvases, my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, is that of a backwoods settlement in the Middle West at the time when such settlements were by no means rarities. It lies deeply sequestered in the forest, ragged, raw, and of uncertain extent. Its prevailing rudeness and uncouthness may at first repel you, but its air of newness and simplicity will surely deserve your admiration. Here you may see the beginnings of things. The roads, the fences, the houses, the clearings, the farms are all just emerging from the embryo state; they are the promises of what are to come in later days. And the people—how old-fashioned they are, and how unspoiled by the ways of the world! The simple life exists here in its primitive purity, the rawness of innocence prevails.

Now imagine in the midst of that settlement a squatty, little log cabin standing quite alone near the edge of a clearing. It is one among many of its kind, and is in perfect harmony with the mingled newness and old-fashionedness of its environment. It is such a habitation as cannot be found today in the whole length and breadth of Hoosierdom; but, in that backwoods period to which I am introducing you, it is the type of hundreds and thousands of homely dwellings. The logs which compose its walls are unhewn, some having the bark still clinging to them, and the spaces between are chinked with clay and moss. The roof is low and covered with broad split clapboards which are held in place by long and heavy poles. The chimney is of the stick-and-clay variety,

cavernous at the bottom and tapering narrow at the top, and rivaling the proverbial mud fence in its unapproachable ugliness. At the end of the cabin, opposite the chimney, there is a lean-to shed, made of poles and puncheons, and called the "weavin'-room" because it contains the loom and other appliances for making homemade cloth. Beyond this shed rises the skeleton of a new frame house which, when completed, will be the wonder and admiration of the entire New Settlement.

There is but one doorway in the cabin. The door itself is broad and strong, and it is hung on wooden hinges and fastened with a wooden latch. To lift the latch, you must pull a string that is passed through a gimlet hole in the board above it. At night, or when there is no admittance for intruders, the latch-string is drawn inside and the cabin becomes a castle. But, see now! The latch-string is hanging out—a signal that all comers are welcome. Let us pull it, lift the latch and walk in.

The smooth floor of basswood puncheons, scoured to a snowy whiteness, invites our admiration and admonishes us to linger on the threshold and wipe our muddy soles. We enter. On this side of the room are a few splint-bottomed chairs ranged with precision against the wall, a three-legged "candlestand" and an ancient bureau. On the opposite side are the spinning-wheels, a square table, and a corner cupboard wherein are contained rows of tin cups and shining pewter plates and an array of "chany cups and sassers" and blue-figured dishes reserved for use "when company comes."

The rear end of the commodious room is curtained off into three sleeping apartments, each exactly large enough to contain a single spacious bed with a trundle-bed for children and emergencies beneath it. And see, now, the huge fireplace at the opposite end. It is a poem of comfort in winter, and a magazine of homely cheer in all seasons. Dinner is in preparation. The fire is blazing on the hearth. Steaming pots and

skillets, on beds of glowing coals, send out savory odors to whet the jaded appetite. Potatoes are roasting in the ashes, a fowl is broiling in the "reflector," a "mess of greens" is boiling in the big dinner pot. A feast shall be ours if we will but accept the housewife's kindly invitation to "take a cheer and wait a bit."

The ceiling over our heads is low; it is made of rough clapboards laid upon a series of smoke begrimed poles which serve the purpose of joists. From these "j'ists" many things are suspended: hunks of jerked beef and links of homemade "sassage," bunches of dried catnip and fragrant camomile and pennyroyal, strings of red peppers for medicinal uses, and ears of choice seed corn. And if you look for it, you may see the square hole in the ceiling through which access is had to the boys' sleeping-room above—a dark low loft, the abode of mud-wasps and spiders and creatures of the night.

And now, having these pictures well outlined and impressed upon your imagination, direct your eyes once more to the open door of the cabin. A boy is standing there—a little pale-faced fellow with tow hair, and with eyes indicative of the shrinking shyness of his heart. He is clothed scantily in a coarse shirt of home-woven linen and long "britches" (trousers) of brown jeans; other apparel he has none. The "britches," which are much too large for him, are held in place by a pair of "galluses" (suspenders) made of narrow strips of blue-colored tow-cloth. The lad's feet are bare, betraying a familiarity with the soil and showing the marks of many conflicts with briers and sharp-edged stones. His large frowsy head is also bare.

Observe him as he stands in the door, looking out and listening to the varied sounds that come from the fields, the clearings and the dense wild woods. Birds are singing, frogs are croaking, bees are humming, the fresh new leaves of the cottonwood trees are rustling to every movement of the morning air. The voices of nature are calling, and the lad's face

beams joyously as though he were enraptured with the melody and the mystery that surround him.

Looking straight ahead of him, he has a somewhat obstructed view of what he believes to be a very large portion of the known world—the hundred-acre farm which his father has literally hewn out of the wilderness. In the foreground are the garden and orchard, a dozen cherry trees loaded with white blossoms, a straggling "laylock" bush, and a crooked rail fence overgrown with briers and tangled vines. Here also, at a bow-shot's distance from the cabin, runs the "spring branch," a little stream that never goes dry; and spanning it, amid a lush growth of calamus and cattails, is the "spring-house," a frail structure in which numerous crocks of milk and cream are standing to be cooled in running water. Beyond are two large corn-fields, dotted with charred stumps and separated by a narrow lane which leads down to a tract of wet alluvial land known as "the bottom." There, an irregular line of white-trunked sycamores marks the meanderings of "the crick"—a stream so broad that the boy has never been able to jump quite across it, and so deep that in places it is impossible to wade without getting wet above the knees.

On the farther side of the "crick," and extending to the southernmost border of the farm, lies "the new deadenin'," where hundreds of leafless trees stand in mute agony, lifting their gaunt arms toward heaven as though dumbly protesting against the cruelty of the man who has girdled their trunks and doomed them to a lingering death. And finally, beyond this landscape of fields, pasture-land, bottom and deadening, rises the forest primeval, "the big woods," a region of mystery, stretching away and away to the very rim of the sky, the edge of the world.

As the boy gazes upon this scene, so familiar and yet always wonderful to him, his heart grows big with pride. For do not all these orchards and fields and "deadenin's" belong to his father? Is there anywhere in the world another farm

such as this? Is there in the New Settlement or elsewhere another lad so blessed as he with every comfort and, more than all, with a parent so strong, so wise, so well-to-do as his father?

Elated and well contented with his outlook on life, he leaps from the doorstep and runs round to the other side of the cabin in order to view the northern half of the universe. There the scene is quite different and the landscape more extended. The rim of hazy blue where the sky, like an inverted dinner pot, rests upon the earth, is more plainly visible. The forest survives only in patches and strips of timberland between the fenced fields of friendly neighbors. The roofs of two or three dwellings may be seen, indistinct in the distance; and an orchard of apple trees, snowy white with bloom, crowns the summit of a little hill not far away.

Scarcely more than a stone's throw from where the boy is standing, there is a high rail fence which marks the northern boundary of his father's domain; and here is the big gate through which visitors enter and depart, and where egress is had to the unknown regions of the circumambient world. The gate opens outward into a broad lane, green with burdock and soon to be flowery with dog-fennel. At the end of the lane, not more than half a mile distant, the great highway known as "the big road" invites acquaintance with foreign lands.

The big road is here but little more than a wagon track, winding this way and that between stumps and stones, chuck-holes and decaying logs. But if you should follow it toward the right, it will lead you in due time to the Dry Forks, where you will see a meeting-house, a schoolhouse and a blacksmith shop. If you should take the opposite direction, you will by and by, so people say, come to a mighty river and the half-mythical city of Nopplis, and then to Pogue's Run and the jumping-off place.

The boy is familiar with the road to the Dry Forks, for he has traveled to the "meetin'-house" there twice every week

since he can remember. But of the other end of the great highway he has no knowledge save that which he has gained through hearsay. The country through which it passes is a region of mystery and dreams, where worldly and wicked people dwell and the sun shines but dimly.

Suddenly a strange impulse comes into the lad's mind, and he climbs to the top of the gate-post to study the problem that is perplexing him. He looks around. The view has improved, but not much. He reasons that he is not more than eight feet from the ground; what would happen if he could be a hundred? What vistas of creation might he not behold from so grand an elevation!

Quite near at hand there stands a giant oak which the settler's ax has reverently spared because of its size and beauty. The trunk is studded almost to the ground with branches small and large, and as the boy looks that way, the leaves of the great tree begin quivering and dancing, and a sweet voice seems to murmur, "Come and climb me! Come and climb me!"

He leaps down from his perch on the gate-post, and the next moment is swinging himself up into the oak, clinging with hands and feet as best he can, and steadily ascending toward the sky. He thinks of himself as a squirrel—a big clumsy squirrel—and the thought causes him to forget the fear which otherwise might have unnerved him and set him trembling. Up, up, up he goes, panting, courageous, aglow with eagerness. At length, at a height far above that of the neighboring trees, he pauses. There are now no more lateral branches large enough to support him. He can go no farther. His heart thumps hard, and he clings with both arms clasped around the slender trunk which is here no larger than his leg.

Soon his courage revives and he begins to gaze around him. From his lofty perch he can look down on the trees in the deadenings and the forest. He has an unobstructed view of the entire horizon, the rim of the sky encircling the world.

How vast and strange! Looking toward his right, he sees clearing after clearing and farm after farm; and, seeming almost directly below him, he recognizes the meeting-house and the blacksmith shop at the Dry Forks—but, oh! how small they have become, and how near they seem!

He turns and looks in the other direction. Nothing but woods, woods, woods as far as the world extends! But in one place he sees a great smoke ascending. It is near the edge, where the sky is very low, and he wonders whether this may not be Nopplis, of which he has often heard—or whether it may not be that vague region of vanity and wickedness where George Fox used to preach to a godless people, or perhaps the wilderness wherein the Israelites wandered with Moses. He raises his eyes and sees how evenly, like the interior of a monstrous bake-oven, the sky curves upward and inward from the horizon until it reaches the highest point, which is exactly above the dear, glorious log cabin which he calls his home.

His whole being throbs with exultation as his mind grasps at the mighty truth. "Yes, yes!" he whispers to himself; "the world is round, and we live at the very center of it. I wonder if father thought of that when he picked out this place for our home."

But hark! What gentle voice is that, calling him from below? "Come down, my boy! Come down, come down!"

Ah! he has been forbidden, often and often, to climb this tree—to climb any tree. His mother will see him—and then what will happen? He hears the voice again: "Come down! Slide along my great body. Don't be afraid." It is the old oak itself that is speaking, as the wind passes through its branches and its thousands of young leaves are set to rustling and quivering.

With imminent peril to neck and limbs, the boy slides rapidly down, swinging himself from branch to branch like an experienced athlete, and finally leaping lightly to the ground. No one has seen him—no one but the kind, sweet, mighty

oak, and oaks never tell secrets.

He runs to the house. He bursts in upon his mother, busy with her baking and stewing, and cries out, "O mother, guess what I know! Guess what I know!"

"It is not best for little boys to know too much," says the mother, much accustomed to such speeches.

"But, mother, listen!" persists the child. "The world is round—as round as that plate in thy hand. I know it is so, mother; and our house is right in the center of it!"

And now, my dear presumptive descendants, it is time that I should whisper in your ears a momentous secret. The simple backwoods lad whom I have tried to portray to your imaginations was myself—myself, Robert Dudley, in one of the various forms that have been mine. It was sixty years ago—yes, more than sixty, more!—that I thus climbed the giant oak, gained my first outlook upon the world and awoke suddenly to the consciousness of existence. Since then I have passed through many transformations, I have experienced many changes, but in all things essential, I remain the same individual that I was on that day of sudden waking.

Did you speak, my dear Leona? Did you say, "Impossible"? And Leonidas, do you smile at what you are pleased to call an old man's foolish conceits?

See this sheet of paper so white, so spotless, so free from the slightest defect—a pure creation fresh from its maker's hands! It is the young lad; it is myself, a mere infant, inexperienced, innocent, just starting on the journey. But wait a minute—only a minute. Here is the identical sheet of paper: it is covered with scrawls and blots; it is discolored, creased and wrinkled; it has had rough usage. And yet the same combination of elements is here; it is the young lad after seventy years of contact with wind and weather; it is myself. I have described the appearance of the lad at the beginning of his career; if you would see him when nearing its end, look at me now.

I count it my peculiar good fortune that I first saw the light of day in that humble log cabin which I have endeavored to picture to you. It was not the sort of dwelling which most people would, nowadays, choose for a birthplace. Indeed, I myself would probably not have chosen it, had my prenatal preferences been consulted; and there have been times when I have bitterly complained of Providence because of the humbleness of my beginnings. But it is not the palatial home, the gilded cradle, or the silver spoon that makes the happy life or the successful career. The child of the log hut, naked, and toyless, and strange to luxuries, is nearer to Heaven (and often in a double sense) than is the pampered offspring of wealth with no wish ungratified, no comfort unprovided.

Providence—at least, let us say it is Providence—has wisely decreed that no one can choose the place of his borning. If it were otherwise, royalty would be congested, and the common people would be too few to serve and support the myriads of princely paupers that would rush into existence: the case of the Countess of Heneberg would be duplicated in every palace of Europe![1]

And here let us have an end of moralizing.

[1] "Among the chief remarkables of Holland are two brazen dishes in the village of Losdun, in which were baptized (anno 1276) by Don William, suffragan bishop of Treves, 365 children, all born at one birth, of the Countess of Heneberg, daughter of Florent IV, Earl of Holland; the body of one of which children (although the whole matter of fact is called in question) being now preserved in the Museum Regium at Copenhagen."—Senar's *Modern Geography* (London, 1702).

CHAPTER II
Possessed!

Of all my earliest and pleasantest memories, by far the greatest number are in some way connected with books and reading. Often have I heard my mother say that I was born, not with a silver spoon under my tongue, but with a book in my hand. Book love, that peculiar passion which has shaped and controlled my life, was strangely manifested even in my cradle. I cried for books as other babies cried for the nursing bottle or the sugar teat; and a copy of Emerson's *Primer* or George Fox's *Journal*, if laid within reach of my fingers, seldom failed to soothe my feelings and hush my infantile wailings. The very feel of the paper, its smoothness, its thinness, the cabalistic marks which it bore, had a magical influence no less potent than mysterious.

To the good people among whom fate had decreed my birth, this strange predilection seemed little short of miraculous—it was the source of much curiosity and speculation in which contempt was sometimes more strongly manifested than admiration. To my poor mother, the thought that her only son was "queer" brought seasons of infinite disquietude and silent grief. Ancient aunts and busy-minded neighbors were not slow to suggest various prenatal causes of so strange, so unnatural a twist in the mind of a child. Some wondered, and some pitied, while others were moved to the making of remarks which were neither complimentary to myself nor kind to my parents.

As I grew older, my queerness became accepted as a thing which could not be cured and therefore must be endured; and

our home folks, instead of continuing to grieve about it, gradually became proud of the fact that the household included at least one person of bookish habits. They humored my taste for reading, and sternly apologized for it while they were inwardly unable to understand it. Nevertheless, the friendly women of the Settlement never quite ceased to gossip and wonder, and sometimes they felt called on to show their interest by condoling with mother concerning her unfortunate son. I remember overhearing a conversation that occurred between two of our neighbors long after I had grown to the years of understanding and could fully appreciate their intended kindness. Seeing me sprawled upon the floor with the inevitable book before me, they began their palaver, as indifferent to my presence as though I had neither ears nor intelligence.

"Laws a me!" cried the elder of the two, an ancient maiden whom we knew familiarly as Mahaly Bray. "If there ain't that booky boy that we've heerd so much about. Now, it don't seem possible that sich a leetle feller as him can read, does it?"

"Well, it surely ain't nateral," answered her companion, friend Liddy Ann Dobson, the sturdy mother of six overgrown sons. "It ain't nateral, and I reckon it ain't right, nother. Why, there's my Eli, he's goin' on sixteen, and he's jest now beginnin' to read in the Bible, and the rest of my boys, they seem to jest naterally hate the very sight of books—and they're bright boys, too. Thee may rest sure, Mahaly, that a screw's loose somewhere, when thee sees such a leetle feller as that there Bobby Dudley a-porin' over his letters and a-learnin' things he oughtn't to."

"Well, it's too bad, I do declare," rejoined Mahaly Bray. "How did it happen, anyhow? Has thee any notion about it, Debby?"

Then mother, with a quaver in her voice, began kindly to explain: "He always had a great likin' for books. I think he

must have got it from his father, and it was born in him; for Stephen is a good deal that way too, only not so bad."

"Laws a me!" cried maiden Mahaly. "Could the leetle feller read as soon as he was bornded?"

"Not exactly," answered mother; "but he could read pretty well before he was done cuttin' his teeth. For a long while he was a great bother to all of us; for, whenever he seen a new word he would p'int to it and say, 'What's this? what's this? what's this?' And when he was told, he never forgot. But we don't know exactly how he learnt to read; it just sort of come nateral to him, like learnin' to eat comes to the rest of us."

"My sakes alive!" said Mahaly. "I'd be afeard to have a child like that. I'd be always a-lookin' for somethin' to happen."

"And it will happen, too," added her friend. "Sich wayward children don't never live very long. They ain't made for this world." And a great sigh escaped from her capacious bosom.

But it was Friend Margot Duberry who caused mother the greatest disquietude. Margot had been quite frequently moved to "speak in meetin'," and she was therefore looked up to as an oracle and a mother in Israel. She came to our house one afternoon and announced that she had been drawn, in the spirit of meekness and love, to have a season of quiet waiting with father and mother and myself. She failed to notice our dear old Aunt Rachel who was sitting in the chimney corner and seemingly oblivious to her presence—oblivious to everything save the soothing joy that she was inhaling through the long stem of her clay pipe. Father was promptly called in from the field, and the "season" began. It lasted for about an hour, during which time we four sat beside the clean-swept hearth, as silent as the door-jamb and as motionless as the gate-post, waiting for the spirit to make itself manifest. Then Margot, shaking hands with us all,

declared that she "felt free," but that a concern still weighed upon her mind to have a private "opportunity" with mother.

Father accordingly withdrew, and Aunt Rachel began nodding over her pipe. I shrank into the farthest corner of the room, curious to see the outcome of the opportunity, and Margot, riveting her steel-gray eyes on me, delivered her message.

"My dear friend," she began, holding mother's hand in her own and speaking very softly as if every word was oiled—"my dear friend, my heart goes out to thee in pity. But I have long been burdened with a concern for thee and thy offspring and am charged with a message which I must deliver. For if I deliver it not, the woe is already pronounced against me." Here her voice rose from mezzo to soprano, and then ascended the scale by leaps and bounds until it resembled the screeching of an unlubricated wagon wheel. "Rumors upon rumors are afloat," she continued, "yea, many and diverse rumors. It is said that this offspring of thine, tender of age though he be, is given to the study of many books, and it is written that much study is a weariness to the flesh. To read the Good Book is well, but to read any other is to fall into the snares of Satan, that Old Feller who goeth about like a roaring lion. And as I look upon thy offspring and take note of the baneful things in his hands, I am moved to cry out, Lo, he is already the prey of the Evil One, he is possessed, he is possessed! The Old Feller has entrapped him; he is possessed. So I exhort thee, Deborah Dudley, to pray without ceasing; for this kind goeth out only by prayer and fasting. And I exhort thy erring offspring to repent, repent, while the offers of mercy hold out. Yea, repent, repent!"

She might have continued her senseless ranting indefinitely, but at this point old Aunt Rachel rose suddenly from her cozy armchair and came to the rescue. Knocking the ashes from her pipe, while her eyes flashed the indignation of her heart, she spoke sharply and with undisguised wrath.

"Margot Duberry, thee is younger than I am, and thee thinks thee is a saint from Heaven, but I tell thee thee's mistaken. I ain't good enough to speak in meetin', but I know that the Old Feller hain't got no possession of our Robby, and he never will have. Just because Robby likes to read, and thy big boy is so dumb that he don't know A from Izzard, thee has come here with all thy drivel about rumors and the Old Feller and repentin' and the like, as if somebody had been doin' somethin' wicked. I tell thee, Margot Duberry, the Old Feller has got *thee;* and he's got thee so tight that even prayer and fastin' won't make him let loose! *Thee* is the one to repent."

And having thus spoken her mind and effectually closed the mouth of a saintly nuisance, the good woman returned to her favorite corner. She took up her knitting, which had been laid aside for her afternoon nap; she refilled her pipe, dropping a red-hot coal upon the fragrant tobacco; and then in a delectable cloud of smoke, she relapsed into the silence that was far dearer to her than speech.

I had never been taught to say, "I thank thee"; but a strange indefinable feeling welled up within me, tears filled my eyes, and going softly across the room, I stood beside my aunt and laid my hand gently in hers. I knew no other way to express my gratitude.

Nevertheless, that foolish "message" of foolish Margot Duberry made a deeper impression, a sadder wound, than even she could have imagined. I was at that time not more than six years of age, but so strangely did her remarks take hold of me, that for six times six years the word "possessed" had to me a sinister meaning. Whenever it was spoken in my presence it called up visions of Margot Duberry crying, "Repent, repent!" and of the enemy of souls holding a helpless white-haired lad in his clutches and urging him to do a most wicked deed. Sometimes, on dark windy nights, I could plainly hear the Old Feller tramping about on the roof of the cabin, rattling the clapboards and scraping his cloven feet

against the chimney. When driving the cows home in the evening twilight I was always on the alert, lest this same evil one should leap suddenly out from behind some thorn bush and claim me for his own. And very often, even after I had outgrown the belief in devils and hobgoblins, my dreams at night were varied by visions of the Old Feller chasing me, catching me, sitting upon me and dragging me bodily to the verge of a smoking pit, while Margot Duberry fluttered above us on the wings of a bat, shouting, "That's right! He's possessed. He's thine! Scorch him!"

Nor did my mother's perplexities end here. To her increased dismay, I early began to manifest other peculiar twists which were as unaccountable as the book-madness and even more to be deplored. Being the only child in the house, and neighbors being remote, the ordinary joys of companionship were almost wholly unknown to me. I therefore loved solitude, and was never so happy as when I was alone. An abnormal shyness, partly hereditary, but largely due to environment, began its restraining influence upon my life. I trembled in the presence of strangers. I shunned all intimacy with persons outside of our little home circle. Friends said that I was bashful, backward, timid; and they rubbed salt into my wounds by lightly apologizing for my weakness. Through lack of similar experiences, they were incapable of comprehending that subtle ailment which clouded my boyhood and was destined to beshrew my later existence. Nevertheless, there came moments of supreme courage when I rose superior to this besetting frailty; and there was never a day when my heart did not hunger for comradeship and the delights of friendly intercourse.

In this dilemma I found consolation not only in books but in a sort of mystic friendship with the wild creatures of the fields and woods. With the latter I grew to be on terms of peculiar intimacy, for in our common shyness there was ground for mutual sympathy. I had the habit, when alone, of

talking to these little brothers, and I fancied that they often replied to me in language which I, but no one else, could understand. This habit, of course, soon became known to the rest of our household, and while some ridiculed, others pitied me as a dunce and grieved because of this additional evidence that I was "not right"—perhaps really possessed.

Despite both jeers and fears, however, there was another source of comfort which I prized more highly than the friendship of singing birds or timid small beasts. This was the occasional companionship of one who was all my own, and whose existence no one else suspected. When I was in my loneliest, shyest moods, anxious to escape notice and yet eager for sympathy, an invisible playmate would come suddenly into my presence, bounding joyously from some secret place, putting his arm around me, whispering in my ear, romping with me in the sunlight. And what glorious times we had together! Sometimes, on summer days, we would lie side by side on the grass watching the procession of white clouds floating so silently in the infinite depths above us. Sometimes, in rougher weather, we would sit together on our hearth before the great wood fire, his hand in mine, his cheek against my own, while we watched the curling flames and rare moving pictures of magic in the glowing coals. And oftentimes, when duty or pleasure led me into dark places in the woods where the slightest unusual sound would send the shivers coursing along my spine, this invisible friend would make his presence known by giving courage to my heart and strength to my trembling knees.

There were occasions, also, when my loneliness was relieved by the dreaming of dreams. Then all familiar things took on new aspects, and visions of indescribable beauty unfolded themselves before my eyes. These were frequently so vivid, so thrilling, that I was forced unconsciously to give expression to my feelings, at times shouting joyously, at times bursting into tears. Upon such occasions the hindering things

of time and sense were for the moment forgotten, and:

"The earth and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream."

Gladly would I have described my ecstatic experiences, shared my joys with others of our household; but at the slightest mention of them I was ridiculed as a dunce or reproved as a liar. Thus my mouth was closed, and I turned to my invisible playmate for sympathy; for he alone could understand.

One day when I was unusually happy, I began to describe something I had seen, and was checked with the usual reproof.

"Robert, thee mustn't tell fibs," was mother's sharp caution. "It's wicked, very wicked, and thee'll have to be punished for it."

And Cousin Mandy Jane, who stood in place of sister to me, hastened to give emphasis to the remark. "Yes," she added, "the Old Feller will git thee, sure. I reckon he is watchin' round for thee now. He's peepin' in through some crack and listenin' to everything thee says."

Then father, in his stern dignified way, rebuked us every one. "I don't think that we understand Robert very well," he said. "To my mind, his story is quite as likely as Mandy Jane's; but I wish to advise him to be careful of his words, and to speak neither foolishly nor falsely, lest the habit becomes fixed and he falls into disgrace."

I looked up into his strong sun-browned face, and inwardly promised that I would follow his guidance in everything. I resolved that I would keep all my precious experiences to myself; and, as far as I was able, I would speak the plain unvarnished truth at all times.

Nevertheless, to my parents' grief and my own frequent discomfiture, I failed to live up to the latter part of this resolution, and I became known, even among the neighbors, as an inveterate "fibber." I fell into the habit of exaggeration, not because I wished to tell falser-hoods, but because the plain truth seemed so plain indeed that I wished to garnish it with some sort of decoration. For example, if I saw three wild geese silently winging their way northward, my imagination straightway pictured a hundred waterfowl following their leader in mid-air and crying, "Honk! honk! honk!" in unison with the flapping of their wings. If Cousin Mandy Jane reported the finding of a single johnny-jump-up by the roadside, it was easy for me to describe the discovery of a hundred wild roses in the meadows. My imagination was forever turning prose into verse, making mountains of mole-hills, and tinting every cloud with rainbow hues. It was in vain that my fibs and hyperboles were exposed and condemned; in vain that I was solemnly warned of the Old Feller's persistent efforts to capture bad boys; in vain that my legs were vigorously tickled with the hickory switch which mother kept always in readiness—the habit of exaggeration grew upon me, and I could no more overcome it than the proverbial Ethiopian can change his skin.

At length, however, there came to our house, for a day, a beautiful old man. His face glowed with goodness and good nature, his voice was as rhythmical and sweet as the song of a wood bird, and his long snow-white hair was significant of the purity that dwelt in his heart. My parents called him William, everybody called him William, and to this day I am uncertain what other name he bore. I understood that he had come from his home in some distant land to bring a message of love and truth to Friends in Injanner, and specially to those who were dwelling in that most central and most favored portion of the earth, the New Settlement. My parents, having unlimited confidence in his wisdom, told him much concerning

their griefs and hopes, their disappointments and their trials. He was supposed to speak as the spirit gave him utterance, and therefore his advice was thought to be infallible, and his words were regarded as the words of an oracle.

"William," said mother, "what does thee think we had better do with our son, Robert? We are very much concerned about him."

And then she began telling him of all the twists in my mental composition, of my book-madness, of my queer goings-on when alone, and of my inveterate shyness. Friend William listened patiently, smiled benignly, patted his knee gently with his open palm, but said nothing. After some hesitation, as though fearing to approach the subject, mother went on to describe my wicked habit of telling little lies and of seeing things double—yes, much more than double; and she ended by expressing her fears that perhaps the Old Feller had indeed marked me for his own.

The saintly man remained silent for several minutes, his hands folded, his eyes half closed, as if communing with the Inner Light which I had been told was the possession of every sincere soul. At length, without answering mother's questions, he beckoned to me. I came out of the corner where I had been shrinking, and with an awesome feeling in my heart, went across the room and stood by his side. He laid his big warm palm upon my submissive head, and spoke to me very gravely:

"Robert, I hear that thee loves books and reading. Is this so?"

I nodded my head, for I was too full to speak.

He went on: "I hear that thee has sometimes spoken of seeing things which other people have never seen, and that thee is given to meditation and sometimes talks to thyself when alone. Are these things so?"

I nodded and felt a little braver.

"I hear that thee sometimes says four when a stricter

adherence to bare facts would require thee to say one. In other words, it is said of thee that thee enlarges the truth. Does thee acknowledge this?"

Again I nodded, and began to feel as a penitent at the confessional; and Friend William continued:

"The love of reading is a great gift, for books will not only add to thy knowledge but will make thee acquainted with good and noble thoughts. Hold fast to them, Robert. And as to seeing wonders where others see only commonplace things, I lay all that to thy gift of imagination, which may be a blessing or a curse according to thy way of using it. Let me say to thee therefore: Be guided by the Light that is in thee. Love thy mother, love the truth, cultivate thy gifts, and all will be well with thee."

Then, turning to mother, he said, "Deborah, thee asked my advice and I will give it to thee. Don't worry about the boy. Let him see visions and dream dreams and love books; and if he sometimes enlarges the truth, thee may also pass that over as a gift of the imagination. If I remember rightly, I was a good deal the same way when I was his age. And as for Satan, or the Old Feller as thee calls him—well, I don't believe he has any claims worth speaking of on any of us."

He lifted his hand from my head, and at the same moment a great load was lifted from my mother's heart.

CHAPTER III
"This Is My Library"

If there was one thing of which my father was justly and openly proud, that was his library. There was nothing like it in the New Settlement, and I fondly believed that there were few collections of books in the whole world that could rival it in variety and completeness. Some of our neighbors possessed an almanac or two, and in every Friend's house there was a family Bible, to say nothing of an occasional tract on slavery. In homes where there were children, one might find a few dilapidated school-books, hidden away in old hair trunks or among the cobwebs and dust of the cabin loft. But nowhere was there such a collection of printed works as that which gave honor and distinction to the cabin wherein I was born.

Our bookcase, as we called it, consisted of two shelves, made by laying short boards upon some wooden pegs that had been driven into the wall, midway between the fireplace and the corner cupboard. It was so high that in order to reach the lowest books I was obliged to stand upon a chair. The shelves were placed one directly above the other, and they were scarcely half as long as the five-foot shelf recently made popular and glorified by an ex-president of our oldest university.

The books were arranged with some care, the larger volumes on the upper shelf, the lesser on the lower. The collection made such an unusual appearance, that the neighbors who sometimes visited us seemed awed when they came near it, as though uncertain how to behave in the presence of so much preserved wisdom.

"This is my library," father would say, standing up very straight and tall, and running his fingers lovingly across the backs of the books. And our visitors would stand with open mouths, gazing and wondering—some admiring, but more condemning and all questioning the propriety of a thing which seemed so like a worldly diversion.

Now, what were the contents of that wonderful library?

In the upper shelf were six portly quarto volumes, in sheep binding, very appropriately entitled *Friends' Library*, and comprising a series of memoirs and journals of eminent members of Our Society from the date of its organization down to the first years of the nineteenth century. Flanking these volumes on the right was a very old copy of the Bible, in leather covers, thumb-worn and greasy. It had belonged to my great-grand-father, eminent in the ministry, and it was so sacred that the mere touching of it sent an electric thrill of goodness to the heart. It was never taken from the shelf or opened, save now and then by good Aunt Rachel for the concealment between its leaves of a faded precious love-letter, preserved, I verily believed, since the days of the flood. There was room on this shelf for only one other book, and that was a thin gray-backed volume, written by William Penn and entitled, *No Cross, No Crown.* It was the dullest, dryest, most unsatisfactory book in the library, for I could get no sense out of it, no matter how persistently I wrestled with its big words and complicated phrases.

On this upper shelf there was but little to tempt the voracity of so young a bookworm as myself. Nevertheless, I more than once attacked one or another of those musty volumes, and with a determination worthy of success pored long over their pages. I took no little pleasure in turning the leaves of the *Friends' Library,* picking out the easy passages, and studying the chapter headings and the tables of contents; and I soon came to know the books so well that if any particular biography were mentioned I could immediately tell

where to find it.

It was the lower shelf, however, which contained the treasures best suited to the enrichment of youthful minds. Here was John Woolman's *Journal*, that record of a gentle life, which Charles Lamb advises everybody to get by heart. What a picture John Woolman made upon my imagination as I thought of him clad in his undyed garments of exceeding plainness and refusing to ride in carriages because they were painted! I got none of his writings by heart, but the story of his remorse for killing a mother robin I read and reread many times with never-failing sympathy and admiration.

The next volume was a well-thumbed copy of George Fox's *Journal*—why were there so many journals? With dogged perseverance, I read every word of this book from its title-page to the end; but it was a reading of words only, for I failed to understand the meaning of the stiff unadorned sentences, and the greater part of the book was as unintelligible as Greek or Arabic. Nevertheless, there lingers in my memory a vivid picture of that doughty old champion of non-resistance, wearing leather breeches, preaching from the tops of haystacks, and refusing to doff his hat even to kings. I admired the heroism of the man who shrank from no danger and boldly spoke what was in his mind, regardless of scourgings and imprisonments and the revilings of the ungodly; but somehow I hated his egotism and thought of him as a crusty, opinionated and unlovable man whom I hoped I should never meet in this world or in the world to come. My notions of time and place were confused and indefinite, and I thought of George Fox and William Penn and Oliver Cromwell as still being much alive and only waiting for a convenient opportunity to visit the New Settlement. I had no realization of the fact that two hundred years and a broad ocean lay between me and those valiant heroes of another civilization.

Next in order upon the lower shelf were three or four school-books to which I had not yet attained. My father, in

the process of educating himself, had mastered these books with a great sense of pleasure and profit, and he assured me that they would be very handy when I became old enough to be sent to school. Among these, I remember Pike's *Arithmetic,* a stiff little volume from which with father's help I early learned the tables of multiplication and dry measure. Its nearest neighbor was Lindley Murray's *English Reader,* a book of classical selections with which I frequently wrestled, sometimes to my edification, but often to my serious discouragement.

Reposing conveniently near these was a thin cloth-bound volume familiarly known to us as *The Discipline,* wherein were printed the principles of faith and the guiding rules of Our Society, together with the forms to be observed on all occasions of worship, of business, of marriage and of death. It was an ugly book, repugnant to my sight, and I seldom disturbed its solemn repose.

Then there was that old blue-backed spelling-book with the name of Noah Webster on the title-page—a dog's-eared, dilapilated, ill-smelling little work which was the common property of our two "big boys" and marked the limit of their literary attainments. Its general contents consisted of meaningless rows of words, words, words, and task lessons in which I could discover neither rhythm nor rhyme nor common sense; and for these I conceived an intense dislike, which even to this day is revived at the mere mention of a spelling-book. But there were occasional lines of reading at the bottom of the page—short proverbs, pithy sayings, bits of information—which I frequently perused with interest. And toward the end I found a collection of four or five fables which afforded enjoyment for many an idle hour. The story of the "Milkmaid and Her Pail" was so nearly in the line of my own experiences that I committed it to memory and recited it one day to Cousin Mandy Jane, greatly to her amusement and disgust.

Fit companion for the spelling-book was a belabored little volume, with broken leather backs, entitled *Walker's Dictionary.* Its use was not well understood, and therefore it was but seldom referred to; yet the memory of its first important service to me still lingers in my mind. It happened one day after we had all been to meetin' and had heard there an eloquent discourse from a traveling Friend upon the wonders of the invisible world. Our womenfolk were busy putting the dinner on the table, the big boys, David and Jonathan, were loitering impatiently by the hearth, and father was looking at his library. Very naturally everybody was thinking about the strange minister and his unusual sermon.

"Well, he can preach right smart, anyhow," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane, as she laid the dishes in their places. "I could jist set and listen to him all day, he speaks his words so plain and so purty."

"But did thee understand all of his purty words?" queried Aunt Rachel, adjusting her cap strings. "Sometimes thee can be pleased with the sound of things without knowin' much about their sense."

"Well, it seems to me his words was nearly all Scripter," answered Mandy Jane; "leastwise he spoke 'em so plain that a body couldn't help but understand. But, come to think of it, there was one word that I never heerd before. He kept sayin' it over and over, over and over, and it sounded so uncommon that I thought I'd ax what it meant. He must have spoke it twenty times, and he spoke it in a mighty purty way, too."

"Does thee remember what partickler word it was?" inquired mother, as she stooped over to remove the smoking-hot corn dodgers from the covered skillet in which they had been baking.

"Well, no," answered Cousin Mandy Jane; "but it was a mighty queer-soundin' word and it had somethin' to do with the world. I do wish I could recklect it. I think it begun with *in,* or *un,* or some sich thing."

"Maybe it was 'invisible,'" said David, whose memory of words was sometimes superior to his power of using them.

"Laws' sakes, yes! That's the very word. It's queer, ain't it?" And Cousin Mandy Jane ran to bring a pitcher of milk.

"It's a good-soundin' word," placidly remarked Aunt Rachel. "I noticed how beautiful he rolled it off his tongue—'in-vis-i-bul-l-l wor-r-rld!' It was better nor a pipe of tobacker to hear him roll them words along like rollin' punkins over the barn floor."

"But what does it mean? *I'd* like to know," said mother.

"I think it means somethin' that's clean gone out of sight," answered Aunt Rachel. "What does thee think, Stephen?"

Father, being thus appealed to, made reply in his usual quiet way: "Suppose we look and see what the dictionary says."

He took the leather-covered volume down from its place and turned the leaves with much deliberation. Finding a word in the dictionary was no common process with him, and he progressed slowly. At length, however, he announced the result: "Here it is. 'I-n, in—v-i-s, viz, inviz—i, invizi—b-l-e, bul, invisible, something that cannot be seen.' The minister spoke of an invisible world meaning a world that we cannot see."

"Well, I don't keer, what the meanin' of it is," said Aunt Rachel, "it's a mighty purty-soundin' word, least-wise as the preacher spoke it."

And we all sat down to dinner.

In truth, the minister had given to the word a peculiar musical inflection which it is impossible to indicate on paper. There was a singsong melody connected with it that had pleased my imagination mightily—it was the nearest approach to real singing that I had ever heard. As I sat at the table I repeated it softly to myself with varying intonations and inflections. Immediately it was echoed back to my mental tympanum in tones exactly like those of the minister. My

unseen playmate was certainly near; I felt his soft breath upon my cheek.

"I cannot see thee," I said.

"No, for I am *invisible,*" he answered.

"Well, that's a good name for thee," I returned. "I think I will always call thee Invisible—yes, I will name thee Inviz, Inviz."

"I shall like that name," he whispered. And we were both happy.

But, to the library again.

At the extreme right-hand end of the lower shelf, you might have seen my treasure of treasures—the three precious little volumes that were all my own. They were Emerson's *Primer,* McGuffey's *First Reader,* and the "*Child's Instructor,* by a teacher of Philadelphia." In presenting these books to me, father had said, "Robert, these are thine. They are the beginning of thy own library. Take good care of them, and as thee grows older, perhaps thee may have others given to thee."

Oh, the delightful memories that are awakened by the mention of those books! In Emerson's *Primer* were my first lessons in reading—little stories of the most absorbing interest, of which the following is a sample:

"Is he in? He is in.
"Do we go up? We do go up.
"Go in. Do go in.
"We go in. We go up.
"Up we go. We do so."

This was a great romance, a charming fairy tale related in words of two letters, and leading up to a delightful climax. And when the action proceeded to words of three letters, how thrilling was the result.

"You are wet.
"Can you get dry?!
"See him run.
"The sly fox met him."

The yellow covers of the *Primer* were faded and torn, the leaves were thumb-worn, every page was grimy and soiled from much handling, but to me it was a garden of perpetual delight through which I was never weary of strolling.

McGuffey's *First Reader* was not inferior to it in interest, and it was a grade higher in language and thought. In it I reveled over the stories of "The Poor Old Man" and "The Broken Window." Good moral tales these were, my dear Leonidas, and they were calculated to help in the building of good moral men—which cannot be said of the slush and rot that are too often found in the so-called "method" readers of today. And there were a few delightful poems, too—poems of the kind that children understand and enjoy. Chief among these was that little masterpiece which never grows old:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky."

And scarcely inferior to it was another poetical gem which I memorized and spoke as my first "piece" at school.

"I like to see a little dog
    And pat him on his head;
So prettily he wags his tail
    Whenever he is fed."

The brightest and best, however, of my trio of literary treasures was the little volume entitled *The Child's Instructor.*

This was a veritable storehouse of knowledge, a collection of all sorts of good things, an array of thought gems adapted to the understanding of children of every age. What could be more musical to the ear or more suggestive to the imagination than this little lesson?

"Ab eb ib ob ub; ac ec ic oc uc.
"Ad ed id od ud; af ef if of uf.
"Ag eg ig og ug; ak ek ik ok uk.
"Ba be bi bo bu; ca ce ci co cu.
"Da de di do du; fa fe fi fo fu.
"Ha he hi ho hu; ja je ji jo ju."

There was a peculiar fascination in such exercises as this, and I think they were fully as sensible and useful as much of the present-day babble under the head of phonograms and blends, families and stock words. When weary of real study or of wrestling with George Fox and his followers, I often took great pleasure in humming these over and over to my invisible playmate, varying the order of the syllables and forming new ones as he would from time to time suggest.

Many things in this odd little volume fixed themselves indelibly upon my memory, and they, no doubt, have had a subtle influence upon my thoughts and actions at times when I least suspected it. Among such was the following couplet on the first page, which pleased me so much that I adopted it as my motto, wrote it down and never forgot it:

"Let this be your plan,
Learn all that you can."

Here also were occasional touches of humor tempered with a droll philosophy which at times set me to thinking and furnished me with food for speculation. One passage, which I remember, appealed to my imagination with such force that I

learned it by heart, and afterward went out into the pasture and declaimed it to the sheep:

> "History informs us that Tom Thumb grew up to be a greater man than his mother; but before we attempt to prove this, we must inquire what makes a great man. Is it a big head? No. Is it a strong arm? No. Is it a fat body? No. Is it a long leg? No—But I will tell you what it is. It is a wise head and a good heart."

The sheep were probably not much edified by this brief discourse; but there was one barefooted boy who went to his bed that night fully resolved that he would someday become a greater man than Tom Thumb. He thought of his three, thin little volumes on the lower shelf, and pictured to himself the great library which he hoped to possess by the time he had grown to manhood. And Inviz whispered to him that perhaps, if he were very good, he might acquire a collection of books equal if not superior to that of his father.

CHAPTER IV
Evenings at Home

Directly beneath our bookcase there stood a little candle-stand with three carved legs and a round top of wild cherry wood. Small as it was, it was the finest piece of furniture in the house, and upon it reposed the book that was best known and oftenest read, the Bible. I do not remember the time when my acquaintance with this volume began, but I have been told that it was often my companion in the cradle. Even before I could read I had acquired some notions about the Creation and the Flood, for these were the subjects which mother liked; and not "feeling free" to sing even to her child, she often found relief in crooning to herself and me certain favorite psalms and the first chapter of Genesis.

It was the rule and custom of our family to listen to a "Scripter readin'" every night, just before retiring to rest. When the labors of the day and evening were completed, we would assemble in a semicircle around the great clay hearth, each in his favorite place. Aunt Rachel sat as usual in her chimney corner, her pipe in her mouth, her knitting in her lap, her wrinkled face enwreathed by the frills of her snow-white cap. Although only an aunt of my mother's, she had been given a permanent home with us, and she seemed to me as necessary to the completeness of the family as did either of my parents. She was old, very old, and I sometimes looked at her with awe, wondering if the angel of death had not somehow passed by and forgotten her.

Next to her on the hearth sat her granddaughter, an angular awkward maiden of uncertain age whom everybody

called Cousin Mandy Jane. She had been adopted into our household at about the same time with myself, but in a different way, and had proved to be my mother's most efficient helper, being esteemed the best butter-maker, the best spinner, the best all-round housekeeper in the New Settlement. She had not much beauty, but she had a willing hand and a kind heart, and these go a great deal farther than a well-chiseled nose or a good-featured face.

A little back from the hearth, on a short bench against the wall, sat the two "big boys," David and Jonathan. They were twins, several years my seniors—burly husky fellows, the orphaned sons of a distant relative, whom father had undertaken to raise as his own. They had been in our family a shorter time than I, and yet I had always thought of them as my elder brothers. They were farmers and pioneers by nature; they liked to talk of horses and cattle and crops, but in book-learning they had never gone further than the rudiments. While they were father's willing helpers in the fields and clearings, they were his despair in matters pertaining to mental culture. The down on their lips and cheeks was fast taking on color and stiffness, and soon they would be big boys no longer, except in their artless simplicity.

Directly fronting the center of the fireplace was the easy rocking chair which my mother occupied—a seat of honor, as it were, where she might overlook not only the rest of the family but the usual objects of her industry, the pots and pans, the spinning-wheels and the corner cupboard. Near her feet, so near that I might lay my head upon her lap when I was tired, was the three-legged stool which served me as a seat. It was low and narrow, but large enough for Inviz to come quite often and sit beside me; and he sat so quietly that no one but myself knew of his presence.

Lastly, in the place of dignity near the extreme right-hand corner of the hearth, sat father, thoughtful, solemn, with a heavy sense of life's duties and responsibilities resting upon

him. When all were assembled in order and in becoming silence, he would say in the commanding tones of a patriarch:

"David, thee may fetch me the Book."

And David would rise from the bench, and going proudly round to the other side of the room, would pick up the little candlestand, with the Bible, a pair of snuffers and a lighted candle upon it, and carrying it across the hearth, would deposit it in the right position between the patriarchal knees. Then he would resume his place, and silence would again fall on the household.

Father would snuff the candle, put on his spectacles and open the book—I suspect with a little inarticulate prayer as he did so. Very deliberately he would turn the leaves until he came to a chapter or a passage which harmonized best with his feelings, or which in his judgment was best adapted to our instruction and edification. Sometimes he would read a penitential psalm, sometimes a narrative passage from Genesis or Ruth or Esther, and sometimes a selection from the Proverbs which seemed to strike home at certain of our own shortcomings and backslidings. He was better pleased, however, when reading a chapter from one of the old prophets proclaiming vengeance upon a wicked and idolatrous people; and he was at his very best when he opened the book at one of the gospels and read there of the doings and sayings of Him "who taught as never man taught."

My dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, it was worth being born in a log cabin to be privileged to sit upon that little three-legged stool and listen to those wonderful readings. Very rich and full was father's voice, and at times exceedingly melodious. He began softly, in tones somewhat deliberate and slow; then soon he seemed to forget everything else and to throw his whole soul into the semi-musical rendition of the text before him. To me it was much like going to the opera will be to you, Leona, but I suspect that the impressions were somewhat different. I had never heard anyone really sing, I

had never seen a musical instrument; and if it had been suggested to father that there was aught of music in his readings he would have been overwhelmed with shame and a sense of wrong-doing. The hosts of Heaven might sing around the Throne, the psalmist might play upon the psaltery and the harp, but such diversions were not for Friends and common folks in the New Settlement; in these degenerate times the tendency of all music was to worldliness, and worldliness only.

When at length the reading was finished, father closed the Book, snuffed the candle again and pushed the candlestand a few inches away. A brief moment of silence followed, and then each member of the family began to prepare for retiring. Aunt Rachel covered the fire, father wound the clock, mother filled the teakettle, the boys brought in an armload of kindlings, Cousin Mandy Jane set the chairs in their places, and I—well, I pulled my little trundle-bed out from behind the green curtains in the corner, crept into it, with Inviz beside me, and was soon oblivious to all the world.

My dear Leonidas, does this remind you of anything? Perhaps not; but there was once a Scottish poet, much loved and admired, who wrote a description of a similar scene in his own home almost a century earlier—a description which puts my own efforts to shame. I trust that you will find that poem and read it, and that you will especially give thought to a particular stanza which I committed to memory at an age when you will scarcely have heard of the name of Robert Burns:

> "From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
> That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
> Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
> An honest man's the noblest work of God."

One day, when I was a very small boy, father said to me, "Robert, how many pages are in the Bible?"

I looked at the figures on the last page, and answered, "Eight hundred and twenty."

"Well," said he, "if thee will begin at the first chapter and read three pages every day, thee can read it through in less than a year. Do this, and I promise to give thee a new book for thy library."

I was overjoyed. To win so valuable a prize by performing a task that appeared to be in itself so pleasant—who could have desired anything better? I began at once with "In the beginning," and persevered, day after day, until I had read every chapter, every word, to the "Amen" at the end of the Apocalypse. There was, of course, a great deal that I could not comprehend—in fact, the major portion of it consisted of words and phrases that conveyed no distinct meaning to my mind; but I knew that there were pages and pages in that book which father himself could not comprehend, just as I now know that there are chapters and chapters which have so little relation to our present-day needs that they are scarcely worth reading. I found many passages, however, which seemed full of meaning even to my childish mind, and there were some narratives that were so full of the spirit of adventure that I read and reread them with ever increasing relish.

I found, also, episodes and stories which, if printed separately in modern English, would now be banned from good society and from the United States mails—very improper reading for young boys and pretty maidens, people would say; but I stumbled through all these things with the utmost innocence, reverently believing that they were entirely good and proper "because they were in the Bible." In fact, in those early years, the Bible was a fetish which I worshiped blindly and without reason, just as a good many older people do to this day. I believed that whatever was contained between the lids of our family volume was absolutely and undeniably true. If someone had written on the margin of one of the pages that "White is black," or that

"Robert Dudley is a hundred years old today," I should have regarded it a sin to deny those statements; for I believed that it was utterly impossible to write or print an untruth anywhere inside of that holy volume.

You smile at my simplicity; but let me say to you that there are millions of grown-up people living today who pin their hopes of salvation on beliefs equally as childish and opposed to reason and good sense. The race has so long been fed upon articles of faith, that credulity has become an instinct; and it often happens that those doctrines which are most directly opposed to the evidence of the senses secure the adherence of the largest number of converts.

It was a great accomplishment—that reading of the entire Book from beginning to end—and I should have faltered more than once had it not been for the promised reward. But at length it was finished, the "Amen" pronounced, and the Book returned to its place on the candlestand.

"Robert," said father, "thee has been very faithful, and thee has persevered wonderfully for a boy of thy age. If thee feels inclined to read the Book a second time, I shall not discourage thee."

Then from the small box under the bed, wherein he kept his treasures, he drew forth a brand-new book, a beautiful little volume bound in green paper boards with gilt lettering on its back.

"Here is thy reward, Robert," he said. "I bought it for thee when I was in Nopplis last week."

He put it in my hands, and I opened it. It was a *Boy's Book of Animals,* containing many interesting pictures and chock-full of wonderful stories. I had never seen anything like it. My cup of joy was full to overflowing.

CHAPTER V
Borrowing Fire

One afternoon in haying time, a dreadful thing happened at our house. The fire went out.

It had been our custom to depend upon Aunt Rachel for the conservation of that useful article of household economy. She it was who covered the fire at night. She it was who always saw that there were glowing embers somewhere in the ashes, ready to be fanned quickly into flames. To her an occasional red-hot coal to drop into her pipe was a necessity scarcely second to the satisfying weed itself. So long, therefore, as she was sitting daily in her favorite corner we knew that the fire was being properly cared for. But now she had gone to Wayne on a summer's visit among relatives, and the guardianship of the hearth had devolved upon Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Be sure that thee don't let the fire go out," was Aunt Rachel's parting injunction.

But Cousin Mandy Jane did let it go out.

It happened, as I have said, one day in haying time. Mother was busy in the weavin'-room, finishing a piece of linsey-woolsey upon which she had been engaged, at odd times, now many weeks. All the rest of us were in the meadow, raking and pitching the newly-mown hay, and getting it ready for the stacking that must be done on the morrow. At the dinner table all the talk had been about the heaviness of the grass, the difficulty of cutting it and the admirable manner in which it had been cured without a drop of rain falling on it. Then the boys began to tell of Cousin

Mandy Jane's great skill in pitching and raking.

"I tell thee what," said David, waxing warm in his praises, "she can do 'most half as much as a man when it comes to puttin' up windrows. And that's purty good for a gal."

"Well, it's my 'pinion," said Jonathan, "that if she didn't have to be clogged with that there long dress of her'n, a-floppin' about her knees, she could e'en-a-most git ahead of *thee*—and thee thinks thee can do all of a man's work, don't thee?"

"Thee'd better keep thy 'pinions to thyself," responded David half angrily. "Mandy Jane can do right smart when she tries, but I can put up two windrows to her one, every time."

"I'd like to see thee do it," said Jonathan.

Cousin Mandy Jane smiled in that queer little, thin-lipped way of hers which always indicated that her mind was made up. And when the boys had finished their meal and left the house, she whispered to me: "Jist thee watch. I'll show that there lazy David what a gal can raally do when she buckles herself to it. Thee'll see a right smart lot of fun, I reckon."

She hurriedly washed the dishes, tidied the room, put on her blue sunbonnet, and rake in hand followed the boys down to the meadow. In her great haste and preoccupation of mind, the fire, which was burning low on the hearth, was forgotten.

"Now, David, I guess thee'll have to hump thyself," said father, his face glowing with anticipation.

And truly it was a "humping" time that followed.

While father mowed around the stumps and I followed him, to spread the newly-cut grass, the big boys competed with Cousin Mandy Jane in the making of windrows of the cured hay. The pitchforks and rakes moved with astonishing celerity, the windrows grew rapidly, and ere the sun had sunk to the level of the western tree-tops, the whole meadow was striped with long piles of hay extending from the northern fence to the southern. But never once had either David or Jonathan been able to "git ahead" of Cousin Mandy Jane; her

windrow was not only always the biggest, but it was invariably the first one finished.

At length the race was ended, for there was no more hay to be raked, and all sat down in the shade of some willows to rest.

"I reckon thee thinks thee's quite some," muttered David, as he wiped his steaming face upon his shirtsleeve; "but thee ain't nothin' but a gal, anyway."

"Well, I'd rather be a gal every day in the year than a big hunk of a clodhopper like thee," retorted Cousin Mandy Jane, fanning herself with her sunbonnet.

"And where's thy two windrows to her'n one?" queried Jonathan who had greatly enjoyed the sport.

"Thee needn't to say nothin'," answered David, waxing angry. "While thee was a-lickin' to it with all thy might, I wasn't more'n half tryin'."

"Well't seems to me thee was strainin' right smart, not to be a-tryin'," said Mandy Jane. "I s'pose thee was afeard to let thyself out for fear thee'd bust somethin'."

Nobody knows what further words of homely compliment and suggestion might have been uttered had not father quietly put an end to the discussion.

"I am afraid, boys, that we may have rain before morning," he said. "So, after you've rested a little while, we three will set to work and pile up these windrows into haycocks that will turn the water. It's always best to be on the safe side, when it comes to saving hay; and it still lacks two good hours to sundown."

"And what shall I do?" queried Cousin Mandy Jane.

"I think thee had better go home, now, and get the supper ready, and do the milking. And Robert, he can go along with thee, to help with the cows and carry in the wood. For it will be quite late when we finish here."

And so, to my inward joy, we two wended our way homeward.

"Didn't I make them two boys hump it?" queried she; but I was too busy thinking of other things to venture any reply.

We reached the head of the lane and entered the yard, passing under the cherry trees which were now laden with crimson fruit. We heard something—thump! thump! thump! It was the old loom, pounding away as usual in the weavin'-room. Mother was busy at her task. She had not left the weaver's bench a moment during the whole of that summer afternoon. The sound seemed suddenly to remind Cousin Mandy Jane of something in the cabin. She ran quickly to the door, looked in and then uttered a screech which brought mother out of the weavin'-room in a high state of alarm.

"What in the world is the matter?" she cried. "Does thee want to skeer me to death?"

"Lands' sake!" answered Cousin Mandy Jane. "I jist believe the fire's gone out. I was in sich a hurry when I went to the medder that I clean forgot to kiwer it."

"Look in the ashes," said mother rather soothingly; "maybe thee'll find a little live coal or two that hain't gone with the rest, and thee can fan it to a blaze."

Mandy Jane took the fire shovel and tossed the ashes this way, that way, every way, but no glowing cinder could she find. The hearth itself was cold.

"There ain't a drap of fire in the whole fireplace," she cried. "Every spark and splither of it's clean gone out."

"Well, I must say that thee was rather careless not to tend to it before goin' to the medder," said mother in tones of mild reproof. Then she took the shovel in her own hands and made diligent search among the ashes, but all to no purpose.

"Maybe thee might find a little fire in one of the old log heaps down in the deadenin'," she suggested.

"Oh, no!" answered Mandy Jane. "The boys hain't had no fire in the deadenin' not since the big rains put 'em out jist after corn-plantin'."

"Well, then, thee'll jist have to wait till father comes, and

he'll kindle a new fire with his steel and tinder; and that will make supper purty late," said mother.

"Yes; and the boys, they'll have it back at me, too;" and Cousin Mandy Jane began to cry. "I beat 'em at the rakin'; but they'll crow when they hear about the fire. And David, he'll be throwin' up to me about bein' a gal, wussun ever."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't mind that," said mother soothingly. "It's a purty good thing to be a gal sometimes; specially when it ain't convenient to be a boy."

"I wish we had some of them things they use down in the 'Hio Country to make a fire," sobbed Cousin Mandy Jane. "They are little wooden splinters with a drap of brimstun on one end; and when the brimstun is rubbed hard acrosst a stone or something it blazes right up and makes a fire. Mahaly Bray, she was tellin' me of 'em; and I wish I could remember what the folks down there calls 'em—some kind of a Lucy thing or other."

"They call 'em Lucifer matches," said mother. "Sich things is good enough for quality folks, but they're too expensive for pore people to use. Now, I've jist thought of a plan that I think will set things right, and the boys needn't never know a word about the fire goin' out. The sun's two hours high, and there'll be plenty of time; and thee can have supper ready when the men-folks come up from the medder."

"But how can I cook the supper without any fire?" asked Mandy Jane.

"Thee cain't," said mother; "but we'll get some fire. There's Robert at the door. He can run over to Enoch's and borrow some. It won't take him more'n an hour, and then thee'll have plenty of time. Thee can get everything ready while he's gone—slice the meat and put it in the skillet, scrape the taters, skim the milk, mix the dough for the dodgers, and set the table. And if I was thee, I would have the wood and the kindlin's all ready jist to drap the live coals in among 'em. Then thee can go right ahead and do the cookin'

before the men-folks know anything about it."

"It's a good plan, if Robert will only go for the fire," said Cousin Mandy Jane, much pleased; and she looked at me with an expression like that of a candidate on the day before election.

"Oh, he'll go," said mother, with a smile which I thoroughly understood. "Here, Robert, take this little iron kittle and run over to Enoch's as fast as thee can, and ask 'em to lend us a little fire, and we'll pay it back when their'n goes out. Come, now, hurry!"

If she had asked me to walk into a nest of bumblebees, I would have been much better pleased. Enoch Fox was our nearest neighbor; but he was a very old and very hard man of whom I had always felt great fear. Moreover, there were six grown-up young women at his house, and a scapegrace son, called Little Enick, the mere thought of whom was wont to make my heart sink within me. Nevertheless I dared not refuse to obey my mother; I had not even the courage to tell her of the feelings of undefined dread which almost overpowered me. I took the little iron kettle in my hand, turned quickly away to hide the tears that were starting in my eyes and ran out of the yard.

"That's a good boy," mother called after me. "Now, don't let the grass grow under thy feet."

The distance to Enoch Fox's house was not much more than half a mile; but the way thither was through the densest of dense woods, and the only road was a narrow winding foot-path so seldom traveled that in places one had to look closely in order to follow it. In no courageous mood, I ran across our sheep pasture, climbed the dividing fence and the next minute was threading my way along the tortuous path. As soon as I was well hidden from sight among the trees and underbrush, I slackened my speed, and Inviz came out of the bushes and walked by my side.

"I wouldn't hurry, if I was thee," he said.

"No, I don't think I shall," I replied. "There's plenty of time, and Cousin Mandy Jane can wait for her fire."

"It was all her fault, anyhow," said Inviz. "If she had covered the coals with ashes before going to the meadow, this wouldn't have happened."

Presently we heard a squirrel chirping among the trees at some distance from the path, and we made a long detour in order to see him. We satisfied ourselves that he was a fox squirrel and not a gray squirrel, and then with some difficulty regained our bearings and returned to the path. Everything was so pleasant, there in the woods; the air was cool and fresh, and there were robins and jay birds and woodpeckers in great numbers among the trees. We stopped often to examine some unusual object or to listen to some strange sound; and I was never once afraid, for Inviz had his arm around me, and I could feel his sweet breath on my cheek.

"Everything is very, very beautiful," he said. And for the moment I forgot all about my errand and the dreadful Enoch, and gave myself up to the intensest enjoyment of the scene and the occasion.

"See those pretty things over there, close by the papaw bushes," I said.

"Oh, yes, I think they are moccasin flowers," answered Inviz; and we raced thither to see and admire the somewhat rare and beautiful although gaudy flowers of the wild. I was about to pick one of them from its stalk, it was so enticing, but Inviz held my arm.

"Let it alone," he said. "It is happy here, where God has put it, and if thee breaks its stalk it will grow sick and die."

So I contented myself with looking at the flowers, and counting them, and noting the variations in color and form—and by and by I reluctantly bade them all farewell and strolled slowly onward toward Old Enoch's.

And now the path skirted the edge of a small buttonwood swamp, where frogs were croaking, and strange shadows were

moving among the tangled bushes, and everything seemed to speak of loneliness and terror. There was a splashing in the dark water near an old rotten log, and the shivers ran down my back as I thought what a good place this was for the Old Feller to lie in wait for bad boys.

"It was only some turtles sliding off the log," said Inviz; and I distinctly saw one of them floundering along through the black ooze.

"Yes, but I'm afraid," I said. "Let's hurry."

"I shouldn't like to be here after night," said Inviz. And then we ran as fast as we could away from the dreadful place.

The woods became rapidly thinner, and then a small clearing appeared, and a high rail fence, and beyond it Old Enoch's orchard. I was quite out of breath with running, and as I climbed over the fence I noticed with dismay that the sun was almost down. There must be no more loitering for me; I must boldly beard the lion in his den and then hasten home.

The orchard was not a large one, and on the farther side of it, at the end of a lane, stood the house, a long, low log cabin with two doors. Everything was very quiet, and but for the smoke that was curling from the chimney I would have thought that nobody was at home. I crossed the lane and crouched trembling beside the gate. I heard the rattle of pots and tin pans inside the house, and soon saw someone walking about the hearth.

"It's Becky Fox," said Inviz. "It's Old Enoch's wife, and she's getting the supper ready. She's all alone."

"Good! good!" I answered. "How lucky! I'm not afraid of her."

I straightened myself up, tightened my grasp on the bail of the little kettle, and reached up to lift the latch of the gate—and then, oh, horrors! I heard a rushing of feet and a strange clattering, and the next moment saw Old Enoch coming up the lane behind me with a pitchfork and two rakes on his shoulder. He was walking very fast, as was his habit; and

behind him in goose-march line followed the six young women, some carrying scythes, some rakes, and the last one an earthen jug. As he came striding toward me, I shrank into the shadow of the gate-post, and wished—oh, how I wished—that I could be like Inviz, unseen, unrecognized, my presence unsuspected.

But there was no escaping the sharp eyes of Enoch Fox. In spite of all my shrinking, which must have been considerable, he saw me and quickened his steps. I stood speechless, helpless, feeling that my doom had come. He threw the rakes over the fence, and with the pitchfork in his left hand, came forward to greet me with his right.

"Howdy, Robert! howdy!" he said, extending his great rough palm.

I tried to make some sort of reply, but my tongue stood still. The old man's words were gentle, he looked at me kindly, he surely meant me no harm.

"How's thee and thy folks?" he asked.

My tongue was loosened. "Oh, we're purty well," I said. "How's thee and thine?" This was the formula which I had heard thousands of times from others, and which I believed to be the correct thing on such occasions as this.

"I'm toll'ble," answered Enoch in a peculiar, long-drawn-out, saintly tone; "and all the rest is toll'ble."

He lifted the latch and opened the gate, saying, "Come into the house a spell."

He led the way to the cabin door, and I followed him, somewhat reassured, but wondering what would happen next.

Just as I put my foot upon the doorstep there was a sudden rushing behind me and a fearful barking and snarling that sent my heart clear up into my throat. I leaped forward with a scream and landed on my hands and knees in the middle of the room. There was a great sound of laughter just outside the door, and more snarling and savage barking; and a kind motherly woman who I knew was Becky Fox, lifted me gently

to my feet and bade me not be afraid. I looked and saw Little Enick standing by the door and holding a huge yellow dog by the collar. He was laughing uproariously, and encouraging the dog by saying, "Sick 'im, Bull! sick 'im, Bull! Ketch the little Towhead."

"Don't thee be afeard," said Old Enoch, quietly lighting his pipe. "Old Bull, he won't hurt nobody; and Little Enick, he's jist in for havin' some fun. Take a cheer, and set down."

I seated myself on a stool as far from the dog as possible, holding the precious little kettle between my knees. Notwithstanding Old Enoch's words of assurance, I expected to be devoured at any moment, and I mentally wondered how many mouthfuls I would make.

"How's thee, Towhead!" shouted Little Enick from the door. "How does it feel to git skeered?"

Then the kind mother interposed and closed the door, leaving the rude fellow and his dog on the outside.

"I hope thee won't mind Little Enick," she said. "He's jist so full of mischief that he don't never think of nothing else, and he likes to see folks git skeered."

Then, for politeness' sake, I ventured upon a falsehood. "Oh, I ain't skeered at all," I said.

The flames were leaping high in the big fireplace, and the hearth was glowing with heaps of red-hot coals. The table was set. Becky Fox was frying fat pork for supper; and with a sinking heart I thought of our own deferred evening meal at home. But I sat silent in my place, and was afraid to mention my errand.

"So they call thee Towhead, do they?" said Old Enoch, puffing clouds of smoke from his pipe.

"Yes, some of 'em do," I answered.

"I hear 'em say that thee can read right smart," he remarked. "Is that so?"

I nodded my head in the affirmative, and Becky smiled assuringly.

"Well, it seems to me thee is a leetle bit young to be fussin' with books, as I hear 'em say thee does," Old Enoch continued, now half hidden in smoke. "I don't much believe in larnin', noway. The Bible says that it's a weariness to the flesh, and I'm one that always goes 'cordin' to the Bible. Don't thee think that's right?"

Not knowing what else to do, I nodded again.

"Now, thy father," said he, "he's all the time talkin' about schools and larnin', and all them things, but me and him don't agree. He says that everybody ought to be eddicated, but I say that all the larnin' anybody needs is to know how to read in the Bible; and all other books, 'cept maybe the spellin'-book, is a trap that's been set by the Old Feller. Don't thee think I'm right?"

What could I do but nod my head for the third time?

And the old man continued: "Now, there's my Little Enick. He's an uncommonly bright boy, and he's goin' on sixteen the first of next Tenth month—well, he hain't got through his spellin'-book yit. But he's powerful brisk and smart—don't thee think so?"

At that moment there was a scraping noise at the door, and so sure was I that this brisk and smart young man was about to enter with Old Bull at his heels that I sprang quickly to my feet. In my alarm, the little iron kettle slipped from my grasp and rolled rattling upon the hearth.

"Look there, Becky," cried Old Enoch, as though seeing the kettle for the first time. "The leetle feller has fetched a bucket with him. Maybe his folks is out of meal, or m'lasses, or sumpin or 'nother. Thee'd better see."

Then, with a mighty effort, I summoned all my courage and said: "Mother wanted to know if thee would lend us a little fire, and we'll pay it back when thine goes out."

"Oh, your fire's went out, has it?" said Becky very kindly. "Well, that comes of Aunt Rachel bein' away, I'm sure. And did thee fetch that little kittle for me to put the coals in?"

I nodded my head, and she took the vessel from my hands. First, she put a thin layer of cold ashes in the bottom of it, and on this she sprinkled some hot ashes. Then she selected some large glowing coals which she placed on top of the ashes; and on these she laid three dry hickory chips, "to keep 'em from burnin' out," as she said. Finally, she covered the whole with cold ashes, firmly packing them down.

"There!" she said, as she handed the filled kettle to me. "Be keerful and don't spill the ashes, and them coals will keep alive for a week."

I took the bail in my left hand, and offering my right to the good woman, said, "Well, I guess I must go now. Farewell!"

She smiled, and kindly answered, "Farewell, Robert. I hope thee'll git home safe."

Then I walked to the other side of the hearth where the old man was smoking. "Farewell, Enoch," I said, trembling.

"Farewell, leetle Towhead," he returned, shaking my hand. "But thee must stay and eat supper with us—mush and milk and fried side-meat." Then, turning to his wife, he said, "Becky, put on an extry spoon for Robert. He can dip in the same bowl with M'rier and M'lindy."

I stood irresolute, trying to mutter an excuse; and then suddenly a new source of alarm appeared. The door opened, and the six young women of the household came in, some with armloads of wood, some with bundles of wool for carding, and the last with a heavy bag of unshelled corn. I knew them all by name. The first four were M'rier, M'lindy, Betsy and Beulah—tall, strongly-built, raw-boned, with dull patient faces like the faces of oxen. The fifth was a niece, Ruth Hazel, whom Old Enoch had undertaken to bring up in consideration of the work she could do. She was a slender fair-haired maiden, as much out of place amid her surroundings as a solitary white lily lifting its head in a rank patch of jimson weeds. And then, following a little after the others, came

Esther Lamb, the grand-daughter of Becky Fox, a robust, cardiacal young woman, with snappy brown eyes and a countenance like that of the moon. Everybody said that she was our Jonathan's favorite, and when I saw her and heard her speak, I greatly admired his wisdom.

The older girls sadly deposited their burdens—the wood in the chimney corner, the wool on the floor beside the two big spinning-wheels. They gazed at me curiously, and said not a word. But buxom Esther, having thrown her bag of corn under the table, came toward me with outstretched hand and welcoming voice.

"Howdy, Robert," she said. "How's thee?"

"I'm pretty well," I answered in quavers. "How's thee and thine?"

I fancied that somebody was giggling, and I wondered what I had said that was amiss.

"Come, gals!" commanded Old Enoch, in the tones of a master; and immediately the giggling ceased and they began to take their places around the long bare table. "Come, Robert," he said, pushing me with his hand. "Set down, set down! Thee may set between M'rier and M'lindy and dip into their bowl."

I trembled and hesitated. There was nothing on the table save a big wooden trencher filled with hot mush, five large bowls of milk, and ten iron tablespoons—one of these last for each member of the family, and one for me. With a desperate effort, I stammered, "I don't believe I want any supper tonight."

"Come, and set down!" commanded Old Enoch.

And then that blessed woman interposed again to save me. "I think, Enick, that we had better let him go home," she said. "They can't get supper at Stephen's till he comes with the fire, and thee knows it's gittin' late."

"Well, then, I s'pose thee must go, Robert," he said in softening tones. "I will tell thee farewell," and he shook my

hand a second time. "Tell thy father that if his sheep ever gits over into my clearin' ag'in, I'll set Old Bull on 'em. Farewell!"

Like a bird set free, I made my way quickly toward the door; but, suddenly remembering that good manners should never be neglected, I paused to shake, hands with Becky and again bid her farewell. "We'll pay thee back when thy fire goes out," I said.

Then up spoke Esther pleadingly, "Mother, don't thee think I'd better go as far as the dividin' line with him? It'll be gittin' dark in the woods, and the path ain't very plain."

But before the good mother could reply, Old Enoch blurted out, "Hush thy slather, and tend to thy supper. Thee needn't think thee can play another trick on me. If that Jonathan's a-waitin' for thee at the dividin' line, he'll have to wait a right smart spell, I'm thinkin', afore he gits a sight of thee tonight."

I stood in the doorway and looked out. The sun was down. The way was clear. With a bound, I was out and running to the gate. I lifted the latch very softly, lest it should click and by the sound betray me to my enemies. I dodged quickly through into the lane, but not too quickly, slamming the gate behind me. At the same moment, out rushed Old Bull, barking, snarling, snapping as though he would devour me; and out rushed Little Enick, from his hiding-place in the bushes, laughing, clapping his hands, and shouting to the dog. "Sick 'im, Bull! Sick 'im! Eat 'im up! Sick 'im!"

With a fleetness born of great fear, I fled down the lane, casting not a single glance behind me.

CHAPTER VI
In the Big Woods

My terror was indescribable. As I leaped forward along the uneven roadway, I fancied that the savage beast was close behind me, his open mouth frothing, his sharp fangs just ready to bury themselves in my back. In my agony I would have shrieked, but my tongue seemed paralyzed; I could not utter a sound. But all this time I clung instinctively and desperately to the little kettle which contained the precious fire, resolved that, come what might, I would never surrender that for which all these perils had been encountered.

I ran on, following the wagon tracks, until I came to an open gap in the fence. I went through the gap and found myself in Old Enoch's hay-field. Everything was very quiet there, and I mustered courage to look behind me. No dog or other living thing was in sight. I was all alone, and safe. Now I must hasten homeward by the nearest way.

It required but a few moments for me to recover my bearings. Then crossing the hay-field, I soon came to the little clearing and the high dividing fence which I had climbed a short time before. I was not quite sure where to find the path, however, and so, getting over into the wild woods, I began to look around for it.

Then, to my great joy, Inviz came out from among the bushes and put his arm around me.

"O Inviz, I'm so glad thee has come," I said. "I have had an awful time of it."

"Yes, I know it," he replied. "Little Enick was very wicked to put thee in such a fright. But it's all over now, and thee is

quite safe."

"That's true," I said, "but I wish I could find the right path. Then we could run straight home through the woods and get there before it's dark."

"I think the path is right at the foot of this hill," said Inviz. "Let's go down there and see."

So, hand in hand, we ran down the wooded slope until we came to a little cleared place at the bottom, where there was a brook; and there, surely enough, was a path, but whether it was the right one or some other, we both doubted.

"We might try it, and see where it goes to," said Inviz.

Darkness was falling very rapidly in the woods, and presently as we came to a place where the trees stood quite close together, I had to feel my way with feet and hands. More than once my heart began to throb, and I could feel the shivers beginning to pulsate in the small of my back; and then Inviz would put his warm cheek against my own, and pat my shoulder gently, and say, "Courage! Courage! We'll soon be out of this."

But it seemed as though we should never get through that fearful place. Twice I lost the path and found it again only by carefully moving to the right and then to left and feeling every inch of the ground with my bare feet. At length, however, a broad opening appeared among the trees, and above it the moon was shining.

"I think that is our clearing," said Inviz.

"But it looks strange," I answered.

Full of hope, we pushed straight forward, neglectful of the path, and quite sure that we were through the woods and almost home. Then suddenly I heard in front of us a sound which I had not previously noticed.

"What's that? What's that?"

"It's frogs, Robert!" answered Inviz. "It's frogs, and this ain't our clearing at all, but it's the big swamp."

At the same moment I saw the reflection of the moon

upon the surface of the dark water, and I knew that I was only a few steps from the edge of the horrible pool. I started back with an involuntary cry, and as I did so, there was a sudden rustling in the bushes near by which made my hair stand on end. It was probably some harmless night animal disturbed in its haunts and frightened by so unusual a presence; but my imagination at once pictured a far more dreadful being.

"It's the Old Feller, and he's after me!" I cried to Inviz; but my little playmate had deserted me, and I was alone.

Then, with all the strength that remained in my body, I ran back into the dense woods, away from the black water and the miry shores of the swamp and the fearful lair of the Evil One. I tripped over a log, and as I fell, the little kettle with its precious contents was hurled from my grasp and went bowling along between the trees. The next moment the red coals were scattered upon the bare ground and I heard them sizzling in the dampness.

With the desperation that gives courage, I was up again, alternately running and creeping, falling and rising, feeling my way through thickets of underbrush, and pausing occasionally in fear as some slight unusual sound was heard in the gloom. Several times I fancied that I saw the Old Feller dodging among the shadows and ready to catch hold of me at any moment. Twice I distinctly heard him, at no great distance, calling my name. His voice sounded much like David's—coarse and husky—and I felt sure that the old deceiver was trying to get me into his power by making me believe that it really was David. Once I saw a light moving among the trees, and the certainty that this was carried by some uncanny being made me hasten in the opposite direction as fast as possible. It never occurred to me that father and the big boys might be in these very woods, searching for me with a lantern and occasionally calling my name.

How long I wandered aimlessly and in fear through the great forest, I cannot tell—it seemed to me ages and ages. The

moon, shining through the tree-tops, shed just enough light to enable me to distinguish nearby objects, while it gave to everything a weird and ghostly appearance which added greatly to my terror. Often I stumbled over logs and brush-wood, I became entangled in briers, I ran unwittingly into dark places, from which I escaped with difficulty. Gradually, however, my fears seemed to wear themselves out, and little by little I became indifferent to danger. The woods seemed full of dreadful creatures; they ran before me, they followed after me, they grinned at me from behind trees and bushes, they reached down from the overhanging branches as though trying to catch me by the hair. Although I was not a whit more courageous than before, yet my sense of fear was so benumbed that I shrank from none of those things. My only thought was that I must keep going, going, going.

At length, to my surprise, I came suddenly into a road—a good broad road running straight through the woods. The moon shone so brightly that I could plainly see the tracks of wagon wheels and the hoof-prints of horses; and how very soothing and grateful was the warm soft earth to my tired and wounded feet! And then the thought came pressing upon me that I must follow this road, that I must keep going, going, and that I must never give up until I had left the great woods behind me.

As I turned to the right, following the wagon tracks, I heard my name called—oh, so softly!—and the next moment my invisible playmate was at my side. What a sense of comfort and companionship came over me, as I again felt his hand in mine, his arm around me, his warm breath upon my cheek!

"Oh, Inviz, it was so dark and so scary in the woods!"

"Yes, Robert, but we are safe now. This road is the big road that goes right past our farm, and all we have to do is to keep going ahead."

"I am so glad thee is with me, Inviz."

"Yes, and I mean to stay with thee. So be brave, be brave."

With a stout heart, but with feet that were very, very tender, I pressed forward. After a long time the woods became less dense, the moon shone brighter, it was easier to follow the windings of the wagon tracks. Then we came to an old deadening, and beyond it to a fine large farm with fields of hay and corn on both sides of the road.

"Cheer up! We shall soon be home," said Inviz.

And then, right before me in the road, I saw the shadowy form of a huge beast, standing motionless but no doubt waiting to seize me as I approached it. At the same moment I heard a rushing of heavy feet behind me, as of great animals suddenly roused from their lurking places.

"Run! run!" shouted Inviz; and his words awakened new terror in my heart. I turned instinctively about and made for the nearby fence, which I climbed without once glancing behind me; then, leaping over into the field, I fell sprawling into a great heap of new-mown hay. At the same moment the tinkle of a cow bell told me what sort of beasts those were that had given me this last alarm.

"It's only three or four harmless old cows," laughed Inviz. "No use to be afraid!"

Oh, what a comfortable feeling it was, to lie there half buried in the soft sweet-smelling hay! I made no effort to rise, and presently Inviz came and cuddled down beside me.

"I like this," I said, nestling deeper into the hay.

"So do I," he answered. "It is so nice and safe here, and the cows are such good company!"

And then I forgot everything.

CHAPTER VII
At Cousin Sally's

It must have been the cow bell, that woke me. I rubbed my eyes, sat up, and in a dazed bewildered way, looked around. It was broad daylight—yes, the sun was at least an hour high. Some robins were singing in the trees by the roadside; a quail was whistling his bob-white from the top-most rail of the fence; and, at no great distance, hens were cackling, roosters crowing, ducks quacking. The air was filled with the merry sounds of the morning.

There was something familiar in the appearance of the landscape; it seemed as if I had been on that very spot at some previous time; and yet there was a strangeness about everything which perplexed me not a little. At the farther end of the field there was a branch and a little "spring-house," and just beyond these there was an orchard which I felt sure I had seen before. Then, at the end of the orchard, I discerned a house—yes, two log cabins, a large one and a small one standing end to end—a so-called double house of a kind that was not uncommon in the New Settlement. The smoke was curling up from the chimney of the little cabin, and I guessed that the people inside were getting breakfast. It seemed to me that I had always known those people, and yet I could not remember their names.

"What does it matter?" said Inviz, gently pulling me back into our cozy nest of hay. "Let us rest here a little longer."

Very faint and weak, I cuddled down again and was just closing my eyes for another nap when the cow bell began to rattle more loudly than before, and I heard a shrill but not

unmusical voice calling out in commanding tones:

"Hi there, Bossy! Git up, Billy. It's milkin' time. Hi! hi! hi!"

I was sure that I knew that voice, for there was not another like it in the whole world. So I raised myself up again, and looking over the low fence, I saw its owner—a red-cheeked, round-faced young woman with a little pink sun-bonnet on her head and a long stick in her hand. She was barefooted, as young women generally were in that distant age, and her short linsey-woolsey dress was not cut according to any modern fashion. But I recognized her immediately as one of the neatest, busiest, kindest, happiest creatures that God had ever made.

"O Cousin Sally! Cousin Sally!" I called, waving my arms but utterly unable to rise from my resting-place.

The maiden looked around, perplexed, alarmed, unable to locate the voice she had heard; and then I called again: "Here I am, Cousin Sally—here in the hay."

She saw me and for one moment stood still in dumb surprise, her hands uplifted, her mouth open, her eyes wildly gazing. The next moment she had scaled the fence and was bending over me.

"Goodness, gracious me! Is it thee, Robbie? How in the world did thee git here?"

I had barely strength enough to stammer something about going to Old Enoch's and getting lost in the woods and lying down here to rest.

"Goodness, gracious me!" she repeated. "So thee got lost in the big woods, did thee? And how lucky thee was to git out again!"

And then, although she must have kept on talking, I heard not another word, but was dimly conscious that she was taking me gently in her arms, that she was lifting me up, that she was carrying me and running as fast as she could to the double log house at the end of the orchard. How safe, how

happy I felt, with her strong chubby arms around me, and my head pillowed softly against her ample bosom!

"Mother! mother!" I heard her cry, as she finally reached the door of the smaller cabin. "See who's here! See what I found in the medder! See who's come to visit us, so early in the morning!"

Ah! I knew now whose house this was; for, from her dishwashing by the hearth, came the dearest, the best of all my numerous aunts—good old Aunt Nancy Evans, blessed be her memory!

"Oh, is it Robert?" she cried. "Is it our little Robert? How did it happen, Sally? How did it happen?"

And she took me from her daughter's arms, and carried me inside, and sat down in her big rocking chair, holding me lovingly in her lap. I heard them talking in half-whispers while Cousin Sally bustled around in the most wonderful way that could be imagined. She brought warm water and clean towels, and washed my dust-covered face and bathed my bleeding arms and legs and my bruised and wounded feet.

"And just see how his shirt's teared clean off of him," she remarked.

"He shall have another one," said Aunt Nancy. "Thee look in the bottom bureau drawer, Sally. Thee knows what's there. Thy little brother William was jist about Robert's age when he was took away from us, and that was more than thirty years ago. Ah, me! What a big man he would have been if he had lived till now!"

"Yes, mother," answered Cousin Sally. "Little William's clothes is all in the bottom drawer where thee's kept 'em—all ironed smooth, and lapped up, and sprinkled with camfire, as thee knows. Thee's been very keerful of 'em these thirty years, mother."

"Indeed I have," returned her mother, "and now the time has come for 'em to do some good. Little William never wore 'em but once, and they're as nice and clean and sweet as if

they was new only yisterday. Thee go and git 'em, Sally, and we'll put the little shirt and the little britches on Robbie, and after a while he may have the little robin on, too."

And so, in a short time, I was divested of my own wrecked and ruined wardrobe and was clad in the beautiful, soft, brand-new shirt and breeches of Little William Evans who had been in his grave so many, many years. Then Cousin Sally carried me into the "big-house," a nice, cool, airy place, and laid me on a beautiful trundle-bed which had also been Little William's.

"Now, thee take a good little snooze," she said soothingly; "and when thee wakes up, thee may have something good to eat."

Oh, the joy of lying there between the whitest of white sheets and listening to the "tick, tock" of the old wall clock and knowing that two good women were close at hand, doing all in their power to make me comfortable and happy! I lay there very quietly, not suffering any pain and still not feeling strong enough to sit up; and soon Inviz, that rogue who always deserted me at the critical moment, came silently from nowhere and cuddled down beside me.

"I wonder what they will do at home without any fire," he said.

"Father will strike a fire with his flint and tinder," I answered. "Yes, he must have struck a fire last night—else how could they get any supper?"

"Oh, but they'll give thee a good trouncin' when thee gets home," said Inviz. "They'll all be mad 'cause thee's made so much trouble for everybody. And they'll scold 'cause thee didn't bring the fire."

"Well, Aunt Nancy and Cousin Sally, they will never scold me, I know;" and thus comforting myself, I fell asleep.

It was past noon when I awoke. Someone was moving softly near the trundle-bed, and when I opened my eyes, I saw the ruddy face of Cousin Sally bending over me like the full

moon.

"Well, I guess thee's had a good nap," she said. "Thee needn't git up. I'll jist prop some pillers under thee, and then thee may have a little somethin' to eat."

She ran into the "little-house," which was the kitchen, and soon returned with the most savory dish that she knew how to prepare—the leg and breast of a fried spring chicken, with creamed gravy and a bit of buttered toast. What a breakfast that was! The very thought of it makes my mouth water to this very day. And Aunt Nancy, with her knitting in her hand, came in to see me eat it and to remark how well I looked, all dressed up in Little William's shirt and breeches. I was so hungry that I could have eaten two chickens and twice as much toast; but Cousin Sally said I must save myself for dinner, and when I had drunk a glass of new milk she persuaded me to lie down and take another nap.

The nap proved to be a short one, however, for soon I was aroused by hearing a chorus of voices outside the door. Cousin Sally was talking very fast, as was her custom when she had something to say; and several other persons seemed to be asking questions and making brief remarks and ejaculating various sorts of wonder phrases in the most excited manner. I sat up in the bed and listened. I heard a husky voice that sounded like David's, then a treble like Jonathan's, and then I distinctly recognized the shrill twang of Cousin Mandy Jane's falsetto as she uttered her favorite "Sakes alive!"

There was a slight pause in the general hubbub, and a kind voice said, "Let's keep very quiet and let him sleep as long as he will."

"Mother!" I screamed; and with one bound I was out of bed and running to the door. And there, in the yard, I saw our whole family, while just outside the gate stood the big farm wagon with the plow horses hitched to it.

"Mother!" I cried again, as I leaped down the steps; and

the next moment I was surrounded by the entire company.

Everybody was smiling in a most unaccountable way, and even David seemed glad to see me. Mother patted me gently on the head and looked very tenderly into my eyes. You think, of course, that she kissed me; but she didn't. Kissing was not a habit in our family; it was considered a foolish and worldly performance, an act which, if not positively wicked, was exceedingly unbecoming and improper at all times. Never in my life was it mine to experience the bliss of having my mother's lips pressed to my own.

But the gentle pat on the head was as good as a kiss; and my joy was complete when she drew me close to her and said, "O Robert, how glad I am to see thee alive again!"

Then father reached down his great hand and took hold of mine—very softly, for it was scarred and swollen—and in strange tremulous tones he said, "Thee seems to have had a narrow escape, Robert. Let us be thankful to Him that preserved and guided thee through the perils of the night."

"Yes," said David gruffly, but eager to touch the hem of my garment, "thee's put the rest of us to a right smart sight of trouble, Towhead. The next time thee gits lost in the woods, thee needn't 'spect me to go out a-huntin' for thee."

Cousin Mandy Jane had hard work to restrain herself, and I verily believe that if no one had been looking, she would have kissed me. She threw her arms around me, much to my shame, and squeezed me most unmercifully. "Sakes alive, Bobbie," she exclaimed, "how I did worry about thee! I've wished a thousand thousand times that I'd gone after that pesky fire myself."

"Tell us all about it, Robert," said Jonathan, throwing himself down on the grass beside me.

And then in answer to numerous questions I told them the whole story of my first fright and my wild wandering through the forest. But I said nothing about the fearful creatures that had kept me in a continuous state of alarm, nor

of the Old Feller lying in wait for me in dreadful places, nor yet indeed of the cheerful companionship of Inviz, without which I should indeed have been hopelessly lost. I knew that they could not understand, so why excite their ridicule?

We sat together on the long bench beside the big-house door, mother on one side of me and Cousin Mandy Jane on the other; and my heart grew big with pride when it occurred to me that I—the youngest and smallest of the household—was the cause of all this talk and all these doings. There had been an adventure, and I, Robert Dudley, was the hero. I had had a hard time of it, but now I was having my reward.

Father reckoned that I must have traveled at least ten miles in the big forest and along the lonely road before reaching Aunt Nancy's hay-field. And he told how they had gone early into the woods with lanterns and torches; how they had alarmed the neighbors, and how even the two Enochs had joined them and sought unweariedly through all the dark hours of the night. Just how they had finally learned of my whereabouts, I did not hear, but Cousin Sally told me afterward that it was she herself who carried them the news. As soon as she had seen me cozily ensconced in Little William's trundle-bed, she had mounted the gray colt, barebacked, and ridden post-haste by the nearest pathways to our place, five miles distant. Then, having delivered her message, she had flown home again like the wind, arriving in time to prepare the marvelous breakfast.

Oh, what a glorious thing it is to be a hero and have everybody talking about you! Thus my vanity was being fed at an early age.

Cousin Sally's dinner was late that day, but its quality made ample amends for its lack of timeliness. The table was spread in the little-house. The cloth was of homemade linen, snowy white. The dishes were of choice "chany ware," intermingled with pieces of yellow pottery, shining pewter plates, and necessary articles of tin. And the viands—O my

dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, if you live to be as old as the megatherium you will never see anything that can be compared with the array of fried chicken and creamed gravy, of snow-white biscuits right out of the big baking skillet, of pies and cakes, of preserves and jams, of hot roasting-ears, of sassafras tea, of pitchers of new milk, of patties of yellow butter. The table fairly groaned under the weight of all these good things, and the mouths of the guests watered in anticipation.

Being the hero of the day, I was given the place of honor at the right hand of the rosy-faced hostess. I sat in a special high-chair that had been made for Little William so many long years before; I ate from Little William's pewter plate which was polished to a silvery brightness and had the letters of the alphabet stamped in relief all round its edge; and I drank from Little William's chany mug which had a picture of the foolish milk-maid on one side, and the words "Be a good boy" on the other.

When all were seated, Cousin Sally and her mother began to put things in motion.

"Now, all of you, jist help yourselves," said Aunt Nancy. "Pore folks like us can't offer you much, but you're welcome to what you see."

"Uncle Stephen, try some of the punkin pie," said Cousin Sally; "and here's some apple pie, and some custard. Take a piece of each kind."

"Help thyself to the plum jelly," said Aunt Nancy.

"It's good with fried chicken—most as good as the cranberries we used to git in the 'Hio Country. Have some blackberry jam, too."

And then the requests to help one's self to this and that and the other multiplied and were continued until every plate was heaped to its utmost capacity. Oh, but that was a dinner to be remembered through the longest lifetime! And yet it was only a sample of what Cousin Sally was in the habit of

setting before her visitors.

The guests ate and ate till they could eat no longer, and still they were pressed by their solicitous hostess.

"Thee ain't eatin' anything, David. I'm afraid thee don't like pore folks's cookin'. Have another leg of fried chicken. Hand thy mug for another helpin' of milk. Try a little more of the grape jam, Mandy Jane. Come, have a little more of the stewed punkin! Why, if thee don't eat more, thee'll faint before thee has a chance to git another meal."

At length the famous dinner was over. The guests arose. Father and the boys went out to get the horses ready for the return trip home. The womenfolks, in gossipy mood, set themselves to clearing the table and washing the dishes—and where four such renowned experts were engaged, this labor was performed with miraculous swiftness. Within less than an hour the interior of the little-house had resumed its usual aspect of cleanliness and quiet. The pots and skillets were again in their places, the chany cups and saucers and plates were upon their favored shelf in the corner cupboard, the great table had mysteriously disappeared, the chairs were arranged in a stiff orderly row against the wall, the broad hearth had been swept and garnished.

"The sun is getting low," cried father from the open gate; "we must be going at once, or else the night will overtake us."

There was a short consultation with Cousin Sally, supplemented by a few urgent words from Aunt Nancy, and then it was announced that mother and I would not go home with the rest—that we would have a little visit with our relatives until the end of the week.

"Robert is purty puny with all the traipsin' he done through the woods," said Cousin Sally. "It will do him a right smart lot of good to stay here and rest three or four days."

Father gave his assent—somewhat reluctantly, I thought; and the wagon went rattling down the road, carrying only Cousin Mandy Jane and the men-folks back to the dear old

home at the center of the world. Mother and Aunt Nancy, with their yarn and their knitting, sat down on the long bench by the door, to enjoy the balmy evening air and recall sweet memories of former days in their old girlhood home in Carliny; and Cousin Sally, with a shining milk pail on her arm, cried cheerily to me, "Come, Robert, don't thee want to go down the lane with me to see the new calf?"

My feet were still sore, my back was stiff, my hands were swollen from the bruises and scratches they had received, and my head was heavy. I had no interest in new calves, and I felt much more like going to bed than walking down the dusty lane. But how could anyone refuse so hearty an invitation?

"Come, Robbie, it ain't fur," she said; and so, somewhat merrily, somewhat wearily, we went together to the milking place; and while she sat on a stool and filled the pail with foaming milk from old Bossie's udder, she entertained me with varied remarks on many interesting themes.

"And only think, Bobbie," she said, "this is Fourth-day evening and thee is to stay with me till Seventh-day evening—three whole days! Oh, won't we have fun?"

But instead of three whole days, it proved to be three whole weeks. For, all through that night, mother heard me talking aloud to Inviz; and the next morning I had a raging fever, and when Cousin Sally came to look at me I fancied that it was Old Enoch grinning from the chimney corner, and then that it was the Old Feller going to carry me away to the bad place. After that, for I cannot tell how many days, I had no consciousness of anything. Mother sat by me constantly; and father came every day with saddened face and shook his head despairingly; and the doctor came and felt my pulse and gave me bitter medicine; and David came and peeped in at the door and then went away, muttering "Poor Tow-head"; and Cousin Sally and her mother went about the house on tiptoe, talking in whispers; and I, although my body lay helpless and suffering in Little William's trundle-bed, was far

away in a strange land where I neither heard nor saw any of them.

At length, however, the crisis was passed, the fever left me, and I woke up—my mind alert and clear, although I had hardly strength enough to raise my hand. Then came days and days of convalescence—every morning a little better, every evening a little stronger. It was a great event when I could sit up in Little William's chair and look out of the door. It was a momentous event when I grew strong enough to walk, with mother's help, from the big-house to the little-house. And after that, things moved along rapidly.

Sometimes, on fine days, I walked with Cousin Sally as far as the spring-house. Sometimes we went a little farther, to a shallow pool where there were blue flags and cattails and yellow water-lilies. But we found our greatest pleasure under the apple trees and on the bench by the big-house door. There, while she carded wool, or shelled peas, or sewed upon some new garment, Cousin Sally would entertain me with her always vivacious chatter; and sometimes we read stories from the Bible—she listening and I reading—or we amused ourselves with conning over the bright squibs in the *Farmer's Almanac*.

"There's another book in the loft somewhere," she said one day. "It's full of funny pieces about animals and boys and kings and all sorts of things. Thee'd be tickled to death to read some of 'em, I know."

"I wish thee'd find it for me," I said eagerly. "What's the name of it?"

"I don't exactly know its name," she answered, "but it's some kind of reader. I'll go right now, and see if I can lay hold of it."

So she dropped her sewing upon the bench and climbed the ladder into the loft of the big-house. It was very dark up there, and I could hear her moving carefully about, lifting boards and boxes, and turning things over in quite a general

way. By and by, she came down—a ludicrous object covered with dust and cobwebs, her dress torn, her hair in tangled masses down her back.

"I reckon I got it, anyhow," she said triumphantly; and she showed me a chubby little volume so thickly coated with grime that neither its title nor the color of its binding could be distinguished. "Don't tetch it. Jist wait a minute."

She ran into the little-house where I soon heard her brushing and rubbing, and talking excitedly to herself, or to another Inviz of her own acquaintance. Presently she returned, very much improved in appearance, and put the book in my hands. She had brushed it quite clean, and its bright blue cover, but slightly discolored with age, gave it an attractive appearance. I read the title: "*The Little Reader or The Child's First Book,* by J. Olney, A.M."

I opened it and began to read. As I turned page after page my pleasure grew. Here were stories of a kind I had never seen before, delightful little pieces, some very amusing, some instructive and all very easy for a lad who had already wrestled with George Fox's *Journal.* Cousin Sally listened with rapt attention and now and then she exclaimed with emphasis:

"Goodness, gracious me! I never knowed any book was as funny as that!"

Somewhere near the middle of the book I came to a poem which amused us both so much that I read it over and over with increasing relish until we knew it by heart. It was entitled, if I remember rightly, *The Great Black Crow*; and for days afterward, whenever we saw one of those sable birds, we found intense delight in calling to him and repeating in concert this verse:

"The crow, the crow, the great black crow!
He never gets drunk on rain or snow—
He never gets drunk, but he never says, No!
If you ask him to tipple ever so,—

So, so, you great black crow,
It's an honor to drink like a great black crow!"

"I wish I could borrow this book when I go home," I said.

"Borry it!" exclaimed Cousin Sally. "No, I reckon thee cain't, for I won't lend it to nobody. But I'll give it to thee for thy very own, to keep and to hold till thee is grown!"

And thus the fifth volume was added to my little library.

At length I progressed so well and grew so strong that mother said it was foolish for us to stay longer at Aunt Nancy's. And so, when father came over in the big wagon, it was decided that we should return home with him; the long rough journey would not harm me, they said, and mother was anxious to be at her weaving and her housekeeping again. There was a great hurrying and bustling, especially on the part of Cousin Sally; and many tears of downright sorrow were shed. But in the midst of the grieving I felt a secret joy that I should soon be home again among my books and my little friends of the fields and woods.

And now, my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, if you have any doubts of the truth of this narrative, open the bottom drawer of my bureau and look in the pasteboard box which you will find in the left-hand corner. There you will see, all wrapped in tissue-paper, a funny little vest of figured calico, worn threadbare in places, and yellow with age. That was once Little William's vest, and it belonged to the suit in which I was arrayed on that eventful day.

"Thee may have Little William's clothes for thy own," said dear Aunt Nancy. "It's no use for me to keep 'em, for he won't need 'em any more, and they'll be so nice for thee. Thee must take good care of 'em, and save 'em to wear to meetin'—and they'll last thee a long, long time."

It was, indeed, a wonderful suit, and I swelled with vanity as I contemplated myself, transformed, as many others have been through theirs, by my clothing; and when Cousin Sally

whispered in my ear, "Thee looks tur'ble fine," I was ready to burst with self-importance. The breeches were of blue "flannen," homemade and home-dyed, and they were cut large and long; the robin, or short jacket, was of the same material with a row of horn buttons down the front; the shirt was of linen, made from flax grown by Little William's father and spun and woven by his mother; and the little figured vest of precious calico was the climax, the ne plus ultra, the crown of excellence which gave dignity and completeness to the whole.

"I declare! thee looks just like Little William did, the first and only time that he ever wore 'em," said Aunt Nancy; and mother tremblingly expressed the same opinion.

And then came the time for farewells.

"Farewell, Robert! Thee must come soon and see they pore kin again," said the aunt.

And Cousin Sally put her fat arms around me with such fervency that I blushed for shame. "Farewell, Robbie! I'll be over to see thee at quart'ly meetin' time."

Then I climbed into the wagon and cuddled down in the bed of soft straw that had been prepared for me. Father and mother took their places on the driver's seat; there were more farewells and more tears and more invitations to come and see our pore kin; and then the commanding word was given, and we were off. Looking back, I could see a fat arm and a chubby red hand waving a pink sunbonnet, in much the same frantic manner that genteeler hands, nowadays, flaunt their costly lace handkerchiefs in the breeze at the outgoing of every Atlantic steamer. And far down the road, I fancied I heard the echoing cry: "Farewell, Robert! Be a good boy…Farewell, Robert…Robert—bert—bert!"

My invisible playmate had not been with me once since my illness; but now as we were driving through the woods, he leaped suddenly into the wagon and lay down on the straw beside me.

"I'm glad thee is going home," he said; "for now we shall have great fun in the fields and clearings, just as we did before the fire went out."

"But it was very nice at Aunt Nancy's," I answered.

"I mean that it would have been nice if I had not been sick. And aunt and cousin were both so good!"

"Just think of the books—how long thee has been away from them," said Inviz. "They'll be glad to see thee."

"Yes, and I have another one to put with them. He is a funny fellow, and I think that even George Fox will laugh at him;" and I put my hand in my pocket to make sure that the *Little Reader* was still there.

And thus, lying side by side in the comforting straw, we talked and made plans for the future and consoled each other until I fell asleep. And when I awoke we were at home.

No sentiment was wasted because of my happy return. There was a tacit rule in our household that no one should ever make a show of his emotions; and so, when I resumed my place and occupation it was as though I had been absent only an hour or two. There were no words of greeting, no expressions of pleasure, no glad welcomes at the door. And yet, before the end of the evening, each member of the family had contrived in some way to manifest the kindly love that had been stirred by my adventures and long absence.

As I was standing on a chair and putting my new book on the shelf with the older ones, Cousin Mandy Jane came shyly to my side and dropped a hot doughnut into my pocket.

"It's thine, Robbie," she said. "I cooked it a-purpose for thee. Don't let anybody see thee eat it."

And presently Jonathan, coming to the door, beckoned me to follow him to the small outbuilding which we called "the shop," and in which father worked often at night, making chairs and tables and the like. I went, wondering what he wished to show me.

He closed the door behind us and then from a shelf above

the work bench he took something that looked like a small wooden cross, except that all the four parts were of the same length.

"Towhead, does thee see this?" he said. "It's a windmill. I whittled it out with my knife, and father showed me how to put it together. Jist look how it runs when I blow on it." Then he puffed against it with all the breath he could summon, and it actually began to turn on its axis.

"And thee ought to see how it whizzes round in the wind when thee holds it right," he continued. "Tomorrow thee can see."

I looked at it admiringly. It was not more than five inches in diameter, and it was clumsily made; but I had never seen anything like it, and it pleased me greatly.

"What is thee goin' to do with it, Jonathan?" I asked.

"Why, it's thine," he said. "I made it for thee. Put it in thy pocket, and tomorrow thee can play with it."

When, at length, the evening's work was finished, we all gathered around the hearth, as usual, to listen to the chapter. Mother lighted a new candle and set it upon the candlestand; Cousin Mandy Jane looked at me with an odd wink, as though she would caution me about that doughnut; and there was a grin on David's fuzzy face which I was puzzled to understand.

Then, all being seated, father in his gentlest tones said: "Robert, thee is big enough now to take David's place. Thee may fetch me the Book."

Oh, what an honor I felt that to be! In the short space of a minute, my stature was visibly increased. I rose, trembling with excitement, tripped lightly across the floor, and placed the candlestand, with its candle and the precious volume, in its usual position between father's knees. Then, abashed but triumphant, I sat down at mother's feet.

Father opened the Book, and I noticed that his hand trembled a little as he turned the leaves. When he found the desired chapter, he cleared his throat, paused, and then began

to read in that wonderful way of which I have told you. And he read—not of an angry and vengeful Jehovah, nor of intriguing priests or wailing prophets, nor yet of Egypt or Babylon—but of a certain man who had a hundred sheep, one of which went astray; and behold, after he had sought far and wide and found the lost one, there was great rejoicing over it—yes, much more rejoicing than over the ninety and nine which went not astray.

He closed the Book, there was an interval of silence, and I returned the candlestand to its place.

"Say, Towhead," spoke up David somewhat harshly, "it's been a right smart spell since thee done any work. Come out, now, and help me git the kindlin's for mornin'."

I was so happy that I was ready to help at anything. So, after he had lighted the old tin lantern I followed him to the wood-pile. The kindlings had already been prepared, and needed only to be carried in; but David did not stop there.

"Come down to the cowshed, and I'll show thee somethin' that will make thee jump out of thy skin," he said.

"What is it, David?"

"Oh, I'll show thee."

He went inside the cowshed, and after a little fumbling around, brought out a wooden box, some ten inches square, with a netting of wire across one end.

"Jist thee look in there, Towhead," he said.

I thought of rats, and imagined that David was trying to play a trick on me. Moreover, the light from the lantern was so dim that when I tried to look through the netting, nothing was visible.

"I'll show thee," said David. And opening the other end of the box, he reached in and brought out two beautiful, half-grown squirrels. They were quite tame, and at once leaped upon his shoulder and sat there, waiting for the tidbits which they knew he would give them.

"O David! David!" I cried.

"Squeerels, Towhead, squeerels!" he said in delighted tones. "I ketched 'em the next day after thee got lost. And they're thine, Towhead. I've give 'em to thee."

"For my very own, David?"

"Yes; for thy very own. This one, his name's Esau, 'cause he's hairy an' red, like the feller in the Bible. An' this grayer one, his name's Jacob, 'cause he's sharp an' graspin', an' always gittin' more'n his shear."

"Who named them, David?"

"Well, I guess father did. He kinder give me some hints, but he said I mustn't tell nobody."

"Oh, I'm so glad, David!" and I put my hand in his great rough palm.

"Well, I reckon thee ain't the onliest one," he said.

CHAPTER VIII
Going To Meetin'

Again it was the spring-time of the year—the time for plowing and planting, and for going barefoot every day in the week. On a bright First-day morning I sat under one of our cherry trees, listening and looking, and enjoying to the full the beauty and the glory of the day. Esau and Jacob, now grown to the full stature of squirrelhood, were whisking and leaping among the white-blossomed branches overhead. On an apple tree nearby, a robin was singing; under our eaves some swallows were twittering; from the meadow came the sound of croaking frogs; the humming of insects was heard on every hand. The air was full of sweet sounds; and I was in one of my visionary moods.

Suddenly my invisible playmate came out of the nowhere and put his arms very softly around my neck.

"Isn't it nice to be alive on such a day as this?" he said.

"Yes," I answered. "Let's have a good romp here under the trees."

And at once we began rolling and scuffling in the grass, running races from one tree to another, and turning somersaults on the soft ground.

Cousin Mandy Jane, looking out from the cabin door, exclaimed, "For the land's sake! That boy acts like he was gone clean cracked."

But she didn't see the other boy, nor would she have believed that he was with me, even had I told her. It was beyond her power to imagine the intense enjoyment that was ours.

At length, puffing and blowing with excitement, we threw ourselves down in the shade to rest. I had been reading of angels, and as I looked up through the white cherry blooms at the measureless silent sky so far above, the old story of Jacob's ladder came suddenly into my mind. The thought was probably induced by seeing the grayer of the two squirrels run fearlessly to the top of the topmost branch, as though he would leap straightway into Heaven; and forthwith I began to see visions. Suddenly, each tiny blossom above me became an angel robed in white, and the twigs and branches of the tree were transformed into myriads of delicate ladders, each leading up into the celestial kingdom. I shouted aloud, from pure enjoyment of the scene, and was proceeding to conjure up some other picture of the imagination when a shrill voice brought me to the dull earth again and wakened me rudely from my dreams:

"Robert, thee come and git ready for meetin'! Be quick!" It was Cousin Mandy Jane, calling from the doorstep.

I lay quite still and made no answer; and Inviz put his cheek against my own.

"Don't thee hate it?" he whispered.

"Yes, I wish we didn't have to go to meetin'," I answered. "I don't see any use in it."

"But all good people do go to meetin'," said Inviz. "They go because the Bible says they must."

"Well, I never read it in the Bible," I said dreamily but aloud. "I think it's lots nicer to go into the woods and see the birds and the flowers than it is to go and sit in that stuffy old meetin'-house."

"Robert! Robert!" It was not the voice of Inviz but that of Cousin Mandy Jane, who was now standing over me. "Robert, I'm ashamed to hear thee talk so. Why, thee won't never go to the good place, if thee don't go to meetin'. Come, it's most time to start, and thee hain't begun to dress."

I rose unwillingly and followed her slowly into the house.

It was one of the unwritten laws of our family that everybody should go to meetin' twice a week—on First-day morning and on Fifth-day morning—and from this rule there must be no deviation or excuse, except in cases of illness or absolute necessity. Thus, ever since I was three weeks old I had been going to meetin', going to meetin', without much idea of the reasons for doing so. Every man, woman, or child that I knew was a meetin' goer; and I had a dim idea, amounting to conviction, that all good people since the days of Adam had been accustomed to the same practise.

How would people ever get to Heaven if they didn't go to meetin' and learn to be good? So regularly, so faithfully did our family assemble themselves with other Friends at Dry Forks, that I had come to regard this act as a very natural and necessary thing—as natural and necessary as the rotation of the seasons or the alternation of day and night. Nevertheless, on this particular First-day morning, rebellion was in my heart; I hated the very thought of meetin', and I wished that God had appointed some other way by which we might learn how to be good and fit ourselves for the hereafter.

But mother met me at the door and in her pleasant persuasive manner said: "Come, Robert, make haste. Thee may wear Little William's suit today."

"O mother, may I?" And instantly the whole aspect of things was changed.

Now, the fact is that only twice since they were presented to me had I been permitted to array myself in the precious clothes that had formerly belonged to Little William—once I had worn them to "quart'ly meetin'" and once to Aunt Nancy's on a brief visit with mother.

"They're too nice for thee to wear jist any time and every time," said mother; and Aunt Rachel and Cousin Mandy Jane concurred in the opinion. "We'll lap 'em up nice and clean, and keep 'em in the bureau drawer; and Aunt Nancy, when she comes, she can see that they're jist as nice as when she

had 'em and took so much care of 'em for Little William's sake."

And so there they had lain, admired but useless, through all the long months of fall and winter. Now, however, a new leaf was to be turned, and I was to be permitted to wear the precious suit to a common First-day meetin'. My joy cannot be described. With alacrity, I set about getting ready, and while doing so I repented of all the rebellious feelings, that had so recently entered my heart. I was willing to go to meetin' not only twice a week, but seven times, if it should be required of me; and I admired God's wisdom in making this the means through which we could outwit the Old Feller, learn how to go to the good place and incidentally show our fine clothes.

Oh, my dear Leona! Do you remember that last new Easter hat, and how thankful you felt that there was a church wherein you could display its feathered magnitude to an admiring throng of worshipers? Your vanity and mine were of the same sort, arising from the same primitive instincts. Through such we trace our kinship to savage ancestors who proudly decked themselves with plumes and scalps to do hideous reverence to their gods.

At the end of half an hour I emerged from the cabin door as sleek and self-satisfied as a butterfly just transformed from its chrysalis state. The blue breeches and blue robin seemed less roomy than before, doubtless because I had grown appreciably bigger. The vest of figured calico was a perfect fit, and its flowers of blue and pink were marvels of beauty. The collarless shirt of homemade linen was all that could be desired. My hair was well oiled with goose grease, and plastered smoothly over my brows—not parted, for that would have indicated a foolish vanity. My face and hands and feet—thanks to Cousin Mandy Jane—had been scoured and scrubbed until they fairly glowed with cleanliness.

"Well, thee looks like a prince," whispered Inviz, tapping

me on the cheek.

But mother, who must have overheard him, was quick to rebuke my folly: "Robert, thee mustn't feel proud. It ain't the clothes that makes the man."

And then I drew on my last article of apparel, a brown toboggan cap of indescribable shape which old Aunt Rachel had knitted for me while she was visiting in Wayne.

Promptly, as the shadow of the door-jamb reached the ten o'clock mark on the cabin floor, Jonathan drove the farm wagon round to the "uppin' block" just inside the big gate. Then David came with an armload of clean wheat straw which he threw into the wagon-box to serve as a seat for the womenfolks and me. As I walked out toward the gate, the young men nudged each other, looked at me and smiled—but whether in approbation or derision I could not tell.

"Well, Towhead," said David, "thee looks like thee might cut a right smart shine at meetin' today."

"I reckon all the little gals will be a-cryin' for thee when they see how slick thee looks," said Jonathan.

My anger was for the moment superior to my vanity, and before I had time to curb it, David was dodging a piece of kindling wood that flew suddenly at his head. And at that moment father came out of the house, his solemn face somewhat softened by a struggling smile.

"What's the matter, boys?" he asked.

No one answered. The big boys betook themselves to the barn, while I leaned up against the gate-post and waited.

Father was dressed in his "go-to-meetin'" suit of drab homespun—a soft but coarse cloth made from the wool of his own sheep and woven with his own hands in his own loom. The cut of his coat was scrupulously plain—no collar, no cuffs, no needless buttons. His shoes also were of his own making, heavy, serviceable, not polished, but lavishly treated with tallow. On his head he wore a very large gray beaver hat, which had been his wedding hat, years and years before. His

whole appearance was that of a dignified, sober-minded, self-possessed man—a strong man who would be a leader of other men, no matter where his lot might be cast. As I looked at him, I forgot my own imagined importance, and lost myself in admiration; and Inviz whispered to me from around the gate-post, "Ain't it fine to have such a father as that? But it was very wicked to throw that stick of kindling."

A moment later, David and Jonathan came riding up from the barnyard, each astride of his own frisky young filly. Their faces were very sober, as was becoming to young men on a First-day morning, and they scarcely deigned to notice me as they passed through the gate.

"We're goin' around the long way," said David to father, "but we'll git to the meetin'-house before thee does."

Good boys they were—always ready to go to meetin', always glad to perform what they believed was a solemn duty; but they felt themselves too big and manly to ride in the wagon with the rest of the family. I watched them as they cantered briskly down the lane and out into the main road, their white shirt-sleeves flapping funnily in the wind, and their burly awkward forms rising and falling with the motion of their steeds. Just as they disappeared in the first strip of greenwoods, father stooped suddenly, picked me up in his strong arms and threw me bodily into the wagon upon the heap of straw.

I was speechless, amazed, frightened. I knew not whether I should laugh or cry, and hence did neither. Had father treated me thus because he was in a jolly good humor, or had he not done so to reprove me for my fault? I was perplexed; and then I fancied that there was a twinkle in his eye, and something like a smile about the corners of his mouth, and I felt easier. I settled myself on the straw with my feet over the tailboard of the wagon, and wondered what would happen next:

"I think he was playing," said Inviz, nestling down beside

me; "but wasn't thee a bad boy to throw that stick of kindling?"

Had I felt sure that father meant to play with me, I would have been the happiest boy in the world. But I had grave doubts. Never in my life had I known him to play with anyone; and, besides, he was too old, too wise, too great a man to indulge in frivolities of any sort. No; he had seen me give way to a fit of temper, and this was his way of punishing me for it.

"Thee deserves more than that," said Inviz; "for thee was very wicked."

Father climbed into the wagon and took his place on the driver's seat. He looked at me, for a moment, not unpleasantly, and then, without saying a word, turned toward the horses and took the long lines in his hands. He sat up, straight and stiff and thoughtful, and silently waited for the womenfolks to appear.

And soon they came—mother and Cousin Mandy Jane, and old Aunt Rachel with her tobacco satchel in her hand. They closed the door behind them, and latched it to keep out the chickens. They came demurely out to the gate, and ascending the "uppin' block" to its topmost level, they stepped, one after the other, into the wagon and were soon settled comfortably down on the heap of straw. The faces of mother and aunt were pretty well hidden within their stiff plain bonnets of dove-colored silk, and yet I could see that they bore a tranquil expression of resignation and faith which spoke of holiness and the Inward Light. Their looks, their actions, their words, all reflected the day and the occasion. Cousin Mandy Jane was resplendent in a pasteboard pink sunbonnet and new linsey-woolsey gown; and as she sat down beside me, her shining countenance betokened the pleasure which she anticipated from this brief respite from household cares.

And now, at last, we were off, on our way to meetin'!

The day, as I have said, was a glorious one—a day in

which to see visions and dream dreams. Father sat erect and silent, guiding our ancient horses in the way they should go, while in his large mind he pondered upon subjects of a nature both vast and perplexing. The women gave themselves up to the solemn joy of the hour, talking but little, and seeing nothing but the rough road and the jogging horses and now and then a plowed field or a new deadening in the woods. As for myself, I sat high up on the straw in the rear of the wagon, my bare feet dangling out behind, while with eyes and ears alert, I took notice of every new sight or unusual sound.

Thus we rode onward between various clearings and through strips of greenwoods, now jolting over causeways and projecting roots and stones, now splashing through miry bogs and mud-holes, anon dashing down a breakneck hill to cross a sluggish stream at the bottom, and then creeping laboriously up a rough and winding ascent to a smoother and more traveled highway on the hilltop whence we could see the Dry Forks meetin'-house at no great distance.

To me although my joy was tempered by frequent qualms of conscience and a dreadful sinking of spirits, the journey was a triumphal one. My imagination conjured up a thousand wonderful happenings, as enjoyable and profitable as though they had actually occurred. I fancied that the birds stopped singing, and the little wood beasts paused in their play, to look at the small white-haired lad so beautifully arrayed in vest of rainbow colors and in robin and breeches of blue.

At one place, a squirrel peeped round the trunk of a walnut tree and called to his mate across the road:

"See that little fellow on the straw? He is going to meetin' to learn how to be good."

And his mate replied, "Surely, he needs to learn. It was very wicked in him to throw that stick."

Then an old crow that was perched on the topmost dead branch of a nearby oak, looked down and nodded knowingly as we passed beneath him. I thought of the verses which I had

laughed over and repeated with Cousin Sally—

"The crow, the great black crow,"

and suddenly I fancied that the wise sleek bird was talking to me.

"Caw! caw!" he hoarsely croaked. "Howdy, Robert, howdy-*do?* If thee'll love me, I'll love thee, too. Caw! caw! It's nice to be a good little boy, ain't it?"

And Inviz, who had been sitting by me all the time, pinched my arm and responded, "Yes, it's nice to be good, but it's mighty wicked to throw sticks of kindling at folks."

Thus, in a state of mind alternating between exultation and self-condemnation, I rode onward to the house of worship.

CHAPTER IX
The Angel of the Facin' Bench

The meetin'-house at Dry Forks was a long, low, frame structure in the midst of a grove of sugar-maple trees. My father, Stephen Dudley, had been its chief architect, master builder and promoter, and there was no other house in the New Settlement—or in the whole world, for that matter—that stood more firmly upon its corner-stones or had a finer roof of shaved shingles above it. It was of that type of ecclesiastical architecture which prevailed extensively in the Friendly settlements of the West during the Middle Ages. The plainness of its exterior was indicative of the extreme plainness in person and soul of the worshipers for whose benefit it had been erected. On the side fronting the road there were two small windows and two broad doors; on each end there were one broad window and one small door; and in the whole arrangement and construction of the building there had been an eye for use, but certainly not for beauty.

The interior was divided into two rooms of exactly the same size, between which there was a movable partition (called "the shetters") that was always thrown wide open on First-days. The room on the right-hand side of the shetters was for the men and boys; that on the left was for the women and girls and babies. At the farther end of each room, three or four tiers of seats were raised, one above the other, as in a theater. These were called the "gallery benches," and were occupied by the "fathers in Israel," the ministers and elders of the meetin', who sat there overlooking the rest of the congregation. It was from this gallery also that the ministers—when

moved by the promptings of the spirit—delivered their messages to the meetin' or addressed their supplications to the Throne.

The first, or lowermost, of the gallery seats was called the "facin' bench," probably because those who sat upon it were brought face to face with the occupants of the first bench for the unofficial members. It was upon this bench that marriage couples always sat during the tedious but simple ceremony which bound them in the bonds of wedlock. Here also sat the three overseers, the petit officers, who looked after the morals and general behavior of the members whether young or old. The facin' bench, in short, was the business bench—whether it was on the men's side or the women's side—and for that reason it was usually the most interesting seat in the house. The boys and girls, the young men and young women, occupied, as a rule, the long benches that were nearest to the front entrances and at some distance from the gallery, while the newly married and the sedate middle-aged men and women sat on the benches nearer the middle of the room. Even when the shetters were thrown open, the two sexes were still separated by a strong wooden railing; and it would have been an act of the greatest impropriety for a man to set foot in the woman's apartment or a woman to wander by accident or design into the precincts reserved for her stronger partner in life. The rooms, although bare and comfortless, seemed sacred to plainness and silence, and the unpainted walls and long stiff-backed benches spoke audibly of self-denial and a holy disdain for things of the world, worldly.

Upon arriving at the meetin'-house, father drove the wagon to a favorite spot in the sugar-tree grove that had long been reserved for his exclusive use. With becoming dignity he leaped to the ground, and then, without looking round, proceeded to tie the horses to the swinging branch of a tree. The womenfolks rose from their seats on the straw and climbed out over the wheels as best they could. Once safely

on the ground, they straightened their bonnets, brushed the straws from their clothing, and made ready to enter the house of worship.

"Come, Robert!" said father stiffly but not unkindly; and I leaped over the tail-board of the wagon and submissively stood beside him. "Robert," he continued, "I think thee is now quite big enough to take care of thyself in meetin', as other boys do. So thee may sit on one of the middle benches, not far from David and Jonathan; and I shall expect thee to conduct thyself properly and not fall asleep or make a noise."

I did not know what to say; but I grew half an inch taller in a moment. During the first two years of my life, I had sat with mother in the women's gallery; and during the remainder of my brief span, I had clung timidly to father's coat tail, shrinking unnoticed beside him, and feeling myself a mere atom among the ministers and elders on the top bench of the gallery. Now, I was at last to take care of myself—oh, what an honor! I had been long hoping and looking forward to this time. To sit by one's self in meetin'! why, it was a mark of approaching big-boyhood, a recognition of merit, a promotion to a higher grade. I was so proud of it that I forgot all about Little William's clothes.

Everything being in readiness, we entered the meetin'-house—father at the men's door, mother and Aunt Rachel at the women's door, Cousin Mandy Jane at the left-hand front door, and I at the right-hand front door. Noiselessly and with trembling limbs, I glided down the narrow aisle between the rows of long benches. I feared to raise my eyes, for I felt that everybody was looking at me. I fancied that even the ministers and elders were passing judgment upon me, and that all the boys and girls were admiring my figured vest. At about the middle of the room there was a vacant seat, and I climbed hastily into it. I knew that David and Jonathan were a little way in front of me, and I fancied that they were nudging each other and smiling; but it was a long time before I had the

courage to look at anybody or anything.

How still the big room was! Why, I could almost hear my heart thump underneath that wonderful little vest. I knew that there were more than fifty persons seated around me, and yet the silence was so profound that I could easily imagine myself alone. Then, at length, Inviz came down the aisle and climbed up beside me.

"It's nice to be a good boy and sit very still in meetin', ain't it?" he said.

"Yes, I want to be good, and still I would rather be at home," I confessed.

"Well, it was very wicked for thee to throw that stick of kindling —"

Oh, that my invisible playmate, my dearest friend, should thus become my accusing angel!

Presently I distinguished a slight noise, like that of a gnawing mouse, somewhere on the other side of the aisle. I looked timidly in that direction, and saw that it was made by Little Enick, who was cutting his initials in the back of the bench before him. He was not looking at me, and the thought gave me courage. I raised my head and glanced toward the men's gallery. There sat my father, and Old Joel Sparker the minister, and Levi T. Jay and all the other pillars of Our Society, just as I had seen them sitting scores and scores of times before. Their hats were on their heads, their hands were folded on their knees, their eyes were directed downward or fixed on vacancy, their minds were occupied with heavenly things. My eyes fell a little, and I saw the three overseers on the facin' bench—saintly, self-conceited, bigoted creatures, who in other times and at other places would have been holy inquisitors or perhaps only second-rate modern detectives. And, then, just above these men of importance, I saw Old Enoch Fox, his piercing yellow eyes directed full upon me as though they would look me through and through. The shivers ran down my back, and had the Old Feller himself suddenly

appeared in the midst of the meetin', I could not have been more disconcerted. I shuffled half-way round in my seat and directed my attention to the near-by floor and my ten bare toes.

"It was very wicked to throw that stick of kindling," said Inviz; "and now let us try to think of good things, so that we may grow to be good also and be prepared to go to the good place."

But try as I might, I could not center my mind on any particular subject. I thought of Little William's clothes, and wondered why they had not attracted more attention from the young people around me. I thought of my own growing self-importance, and wondered that no one else had discovered my peculiar greatness. I thought of my books, which I had read through and through until I could repeat whole pages from memory; and I wished—oh, how I wished!—that some good angel would now bring me a new one with pictures in it. I would have prayed for it, but I was not used to praying.

At length, the silence continuing and my courage reviving, I raised my eyes again and looked over into the women's end of the meetin'. Yes, there was mother, sitting on the top bench of the gallery, in the place that was best suited to one so good, so long-suffering and so kind. Her eyes were downcast, her face seemed care-worn and sad, and I wondered if she were really seeing visions and communing with the invisible angels. Next to her—yes, too close by half—sat Margot Duberry, that saintly woman who had once given me over to the Old Feller and thereby won my lasting antipathy. Coarse-featured, ignorant, claiming to be inspired from on high, the sight of her filled me with a feeling of disgust—but now she was looking at me, and I turned my eyes to another part of the room.

Far over, near the women's door, alone, sat good old Aunt Rachel, her sharp gray eyes funnily encircled by the big brass rims of her spectacles, and her thin lips seeming thinner than

ever, being now deprived of the familiar pipe stem. No doubt she was thinking of good and holy things, just as every person ought to do in meetin'—

"Yes," whispered Inviz suddenly, "that's what every person ought to do, and so why don't thee do it? Why don't thee turn thy thoughts inward instead of allowing them to wander all about the meetin'-house?"

"Thee's right, Inviz," I answered; and I closed my eyes, and for a full minute tried with all my might to get some glimpse, however faint it might be, of the Inner Light that lighteneth every man.

Out-of-doors, everything was beautiful and cheering—the earth, the sky, the woods and farms, all were filled with life and joy. In the meetin'-house everything was dull and coarse and uncomfortable. I fancied that if I were free and alone in the open air, with the voices of nature singing in my ears, I should certainly be much nearer to the good place than was possible within these bare ugly walls. The spirit of rebellion was again rising hot within me, and my invisible playmate sympathized with me and stirred up evil thoughts in my mind.

"Don't thee hate this dry silent meetin'?" he asked.

"It's awful, awful tiresome," I answered; "and yet I like this silence better than the noise of some people trying to preach."

"Well, the hour is nearly gone," said Inviz, "and I guess nobody will try it today. But it was very wicked of thee to throw that stick of kindling wood."

Suddenly I was roused from my rambling thoughts by hearing a rustling of garments in the women's gallery closely followed by a shuffling of feet in all parts of the house. I looked up. Yes, there was Margot Duberry on her knees, her eyes tightly closed, her hands clasped and raised toward Heaven. I knew at once that she had been moved to offer supplication. The men and women and young people had all risen to their feet, as was their custom, and were turning their faces away

from the place where the supplicatress was kneeling.

I slipped quickly down from my high seat, and reverently followed the example of my elders. Why was it that we must always stand when someone prayed? Why must we refrain from even looking toward the person who was addressing the Throne of Grace? My infantile mind had long ago solved these perplexing questions. We stood up in order to show our reverence to the great Unseen Power who was being invoked; and we turned our faces away lest, seeing the angel who had come down to receive the petition, we might be committing an unpardonable sin.

With bowed head and humble heart, I stood and listened while Margot Duberry, in singsong falsetto tones, offered much information and advice to the Almighty. All my dislike of the woman was for the moment forgotten. Then, as she proceeded, I began to wonder why it was a sin to look at the angel. Did Margot herself see him? Or was she simply conscious of his presence, just as I was often conscious of the presence of Inviz? In the Bible I had read many stories of angels making themselves visible, and many persons had looked into their faces without suffering any disastrous results. Why, therefore, might not these heavenly messengers show themselves also to us of the Dry Forks meetin' in the New Settlement? I wondered if I might turn my head just a little—just enough to see the tip of one white wing as it hovered over the women's gallery. Would I be stricken with blindness?

"I think thee might risk it," whispered Inviz. "It won't be very wicked."

It was a fearful moment. I felt that I was being tempted to commit a sin, and yet the desire to see an angel was overpowering. But just as I had made up my mind to take a sly peep, no matter what the consequences, the voice of the supplicatress suddenly dropped, and she uttered the concluding formula, assuring the Almighty that if He would only grant

what we asked, He would be rewarded by receiving "the glory, the honor, and the praise forever, amen." The prayer was ended, there was another shuffling of feet, another rustling of homespun garments and all the meetin' sat down again. The angel had flown to Heaven with the message. I had been too late by half a second, and the delay had probably saved my soul!

I climbed up and readjusted myself on the comfortless bench. I looked at father; he was wrapped in deepest meditation. I looked at mother; she seemed not in the least affected, although the angel must have been very close to her. Then something at the foot of the women's gallery attracted my notice, and as I turned my eyes I was so astounded that I almost fell from my seat.

There, on the women's facin' bench, in plain sight of everybody, sat the angel!

At any rate, if it was not an angel it was something very much like one. The face was that of a little girl, only a thousand times prettier and sweeter than anybody could tell or even so much as think about. And around that face there was a framework of brownish golden curls that reminded me of the sunlight when it streams through the smoke-filled air of an Indian summer day. Above these curls, resting lightly on the angelic head, was something in the shape of a hat—a white straw hat of wonderful workmanship and most delicate texture. It was partly covered with ribbons, gaily colored; and on one side of it were two great feathers, larger by half than the biggest turkey feather I had ever seen.

I gazed and wondered. In all my short and circumscribed life, I had never known a girl or woman to wear a hat. It seemed impossible. Every girl in my little world wore a calico sunbonnet, made very plain, and sometimes pink, sometimes blue, or sometimes brown, as her mother might choose. Did angels wear hats? Certainly no person but an angel could possess a head-dress so perfectly magnificent as that which

was now claiming my admiration.

I was fascinated, entranced, enraptured. My gaze dwelt upon the shoulders, the arms, the hands of the mysterious creature. How white were those hands, how delicate, how small! And surely the sunlight was beaming from one of the fingers.

I looked at her dress. It was a marvel of beauty, surpassing the finest linsey-woolsey that had ever been woven on mother's loom. It was of many rare colors, and I fancied that I could hear it rustle like the silken strings on mother's First-day bonnet. But, ah me! the goods must have been very, very costly; for the dress was cut scandalously short. All the girls in the New Settlement, little or big, wore dresses which came to their ankles; and I blushed when I observed that this angel's dress reached only a little way below her knees.

This was not so bad, however, as it might have been; for the creature wore the whitest and stiffest pantalettes that you ever saw, and she had on shoes and stockings—yes, real shoes and stockings, although the weather was so warm. The shoes were laced high up, and they shone as if newly greased; and the stockings were of a beautiful color, harmonizing with the angel's dress.

And then my gaze wandered back to that heavenly face, and I thought that I should never see enough of it.

Although my mind was inclined to accept everything, believe everything, yet my better judgment told me that this wonderful creature was really not an angel, but a child, a little girl from some remote part of the world—perhaps from ungodly Nopplis or the distant 'Hio Country—where people dressed differently from the plain folks in our settlement. Perhaps she was a princess, the daughter of a king; or maybe she was the child of some very worldly person who had been miraculously directed to our meetin', to the salvation of her soul. I had read of such things.

Timidly, but persistently, I gazed at her angel-like

features, and then reluctantly turned my eyes away only to glance at her again and again and again, to make sure that she had not flown away. I forgot the hardness of the bench upon which I was sitting, I forgot Little William's gorgeous clothes, I forgot everything save that beatific vision and the wonder and delight that filled my boyish heart.

How long I sat there, entranced, motionless, I cannot tell; but it seemed only a few minutes until I was brought to my senses by a general movement of the boys and young men in my immediate vicinity. I looked up. Father, in his seat at the head of the meetin', was shaking hands with Levi T. Jay, who sat next to him on the top bench of the men's gallery. Others of the ministers and elders were also shaking hands. It was thus that "the meetin' was broke"—that is, the hour of silent waiting was brought to an end and the congregation was dismissed.

The men and women rose silently and with one accord, and began to pass out through their respective doors of exit, greeting one another with nods and handshakes on the way. The boys clattered noisily along the aisle to the front door, grinning at me as they passed—some in a friendly manner, some derisively. Certain of the older people also gazed curiously in my direction, attracted no doubt by the clothes which I wore. Then Jonathan, seeing me linger, held out his hand as he passed, and whispered, "Come, Towhead, the meetin's broke! It's time to go home."

As I climbed off the seat, I cast a last lingering glance toward the women's facin' bench. Ah! I was right, and the angel was only a little girl, after all. All the young women and several of the older ones were gazing at some object that was just passing out through the western door. It was my angel, and she was being led by an elderly woman Friend whom I had seen many times before. The next moment she had disappeared, and the world seemed suddenly empty. With downcast eyes, lest someone should speak to me, I glided out

of the house and through the throng of men and boys, and hastened to the place where our wagon was standing.

I climbed up and sat in my place on the straw, anxiously waiting for father and the womenfolks. They were a long time coming, for they must needs linger about the doors to exchange friendly greetings with all their acquaintances. This after-meetin' hour was the time of times for pleasant social intercourse, and there were few who did not avail themselves of the opportunities which it offered.

The middle-aged men talked about their corn-planting and the miserable state of the weather, the price of pigs and of seed potatoes, and the general wickedness and shiftlessness of their neighbors. The elders had weightier matters upon their minds. They talked of the slavery troubles, of the means whereby to maintain a "monthly-meetin' school," and of the dangerous tendencies of the times; and they specially deplored the increasing influx into the Settlement of worldly people and persons not in unity with Our Society.

The women, likewise, had many interesting things to discuss in their own brief and simple way. With many warm greetings and handshakings, they gathered in small groups and gave themselves up to gossip of a sort that would now seem very strange to their great-great-grand-daughters. They talked about their spinning and weaving and sewing, their success in raising chickens and in making butter and soft soap, and the prospects for a sickly summer and a fat graveyard. They admired severally and individually the many babies that were present, and discussed the various ailments to which childhood is so unfortunately prone. They exchanged recipes for cough syrup, extolled the efficacy of goose grease in cases of croup, and slyly whispered in one another's ears the latest savory bit of neighborhood scandal. Such was the dessert which followed the substantial meal of an hour's silent waiting in meetin'—and everybody enjoyed it.

The young men, among whom were our David and

Jonathan, assembled in a small group on the shady side of a log heap, and discussed the last general coon hunt and the probable depth of the water in the old swimmin' hole. Most of the smaller boys hung close to their fathers' coat tails, looking sheepishly at one another and saying not a word. A few of the bolder ones, however—gawky, shoeless, unmannerly fellows of my own age—came together under one of the trees, where they chewed slippery elm, and swapped knives, and talked about their sisters' fellers.

And these sisters, where were they? They were circulating among the older women, joining in the gossip, and modestly repeating the latest rumors of marriage and giving in marriage. (My dear Leona, 'twas ever thus since the days of Eve; 'twill continue thus till the last trumpet shall announce the futility of maidenly hopes, the end of earth's desires.)

The little girls, of whom there were several, stood in close proximity to their respective mothers, silently admiring one another, and ready at the slightest provocation to hang their heads in bashfulness and fear. How I hated the sight of them with their long coarse gowns, their ugly little sunbonnets, their fat red hands, and their bare and brier-scratched feet!

But just as Inviz and I were whispering our feelings of disgust, lo! my Angel of the Facin' Bench flitted for one brief moment within the sphere of my vision. She was seated in a brightly-colored wagon with her elderly companion and a strange man whom I had not seen before; and so swiftly was the wagon being driven away from the place, that I had scarcely time to notice its occupants ere it had disappeared among the trees at the forks of the road.

I thought of Elijah's "chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof," and I fancied that my angel was riding back to Heaven in a cloud of glory. But while I was in the midst of my dreaming, our womenfolks arrived and climbed into the wagon beside me; and father also coming quite soon, the ride homeward was begun.

That evening as I was helping Cousin Mandy Jane with the milking, I felt that I could not live another hour without unburdening my mind and taking someone into my confidence. So I boldly broached the matter, and said:

"Cousin Mandy Jane, did thee ever see an angel?"

"Shucks, no! what a silly question!" she answered.

"Thee knows that nobody don't see angels, nowadays. 'Twas only in the Bible that they showed theirselves."

"Well, I don't care," I said; "but I seen an angel today—a real live angel. I seen it at meetin'!"

"Sakes alive, Robert! Thee's up to thy fibbin' ag'in. I'll tell mother, and she'll give thee another trouncin'."

"I'm tellin' the truth, Cousin Mandy Jane. I seen an angel just as plain as I'm seeing thee now; and I wasn't in a dream, either."

"Robert, I tell thee what, thee cain't stuff me with sich truck as that. But if thee raally thinks that way, tell me what the angel looked like."

I fancied that she was beginning to understand, and I answered bravely but briefly:

"Well, she was kind of smallish; and there was something on her head that looked like a hat; and she wore a streaked and striped dress; and she had shoes and stockings on her feet; and her hair was so long that it hung clean down her back, all fluffy like."

"Where was she when thee seen her?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane, milking very fast.

"On the women's facin' bench!"

Cousin Mandy Jane laughed till the tears stood in her eyes.

"And so thee thought that was a angel, did thee?" she cried. "Oh, what a ninny thee is! Why, that was Esther Wilson's little granddaughter. An angel?—Sakes alive, no!"

"What's her name? Does thee know?"

"Oh, it's a queer-soundin' name that I never heerd afore.

'Tain't no Scripter name. Sounds like the garden that Adam was in—Eden; but it ain't 'zactly that."

I hazarded a guess: "Edith?"

"Yes, that's it. Edith—Edith Meredith. Ain't that a funny name?"

"'Tis kind of funny," I answered. "Edith Meredith! It ought to be Edith Merry Edith. I wonder where she came from?"

"Well, now, they do say that her father is rich, and that they've jist come from some big town, way off, and he's goin' to start a store over to Dashville. Oh, everybody was talkin' about it at meetin'."

"I wonder if she belongs to meetin'," I said; a great fear taking hold of my heart.

"Well, I don't reckon so," answered Mandy Jane. "She wouldn't belong to our meetin' very long with all them there feathers and furbelows and silks and satins stuck on to her. It's my 'pinion that her father's a mighty worldly man and her mother ain't much better."

I kept on with my milking, and the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER X
Ikey Bright

One morning after driving the cows to the pasture, I took a long leisurely ramble through the old deadenin' on the eastern border of our place. That great waste of dying trees, rotting logs and tangled underbrush was the home and abiding-place of many of my little friends, and I fancied that they greeted me, each in its own small, hearty, natural way. Some crows that were playing tag in the tree-tops were the first to see me, and they expressed their pleasure by a vociferous cawing which I answered by repeating the rhyme:

> "The crow, the crow, the great black crow,
> He never gets drunk on rain or snow!"

A quail, whose mate must have had a nest close by, sat eying me from the top rail of the fence and occasionally whistling his shrill "Bob-white." Some chipmunks, sitting upright near the entrance to their home in a hollow log, chattered merrily, and were not at all afraid. A rabbit leaped suddenly out of a brush heap where he had been hiding, and was about to flee to some safer covert, but seeing it was no enemy that had frightened him, he squatted on his haunches and waited for me to pass.

Thus, my ramble was by no means a solitary one. I strolled slowly along, meeting friends at every turn, and lingering here and there to listen to the song of some familiar bird or to admire the beauty of some freshly blown wild flower. The sun was hot, the air was sultry, and I was in a meditative mood.

At length, in a shady place near the boundary fence, I sat down on a log and gave myself up to dreams.

I must have actually fallen asleep, for I was suddenly startled by hearing a voice.

"Hello, there, Towhead!"

The voice came from above, and the speaker was on the fence. I looked up and saw, astride of the topmost rail, a boy some five years my senior, whom I had heard called Ikey Bright. His mother, "the Widder Bright," had but lately come into the New Settlement. She had bought the farm adjoining our own, and with her four grown-up sons was carrying on business in a way that was surprising to the older settlers. Everybody would have thought well of her had it not been for the appalling fact that she belonged to the Anti-Slavery Friends and was, therefore, "not in unity with Our Society."

"Hello, there, Towhead!" was repeated from the fence, kindly but very pompously.

I was tempted to respond in like phrase, but dared not utter the newly coined word of greeting which would have been a very bad word without the at the end of it. (Indeed, Joel Sparker had said that it was a swear word, pure and simple, and a cunning invention of the Old Feller to entice boys into profanity.) Therefore, the only reply that I could make was a half-hearted, "Howdy-do! How's thee and thine?"

"What's thy right name, little friend?" inquired Ikey in condescending tones.

"Robert Dudley."

"I'll call thee Bobby. How many acres of land is in that farm of your'n?"

I straightened myself up and answered, "One hundred; and half of it is cleared." I thought surely the big boy would recognize and respect the wealth and importance implied by the ownership of so large a tract of field and woodland. But I was mistaken.

"Oh, pshaw!" he answered in a tone that made me shrink

into perceptibly smaller dimensions. "That ain't nothin'. We've got two hundred and forty in our'n. How many cows do you milk?"

"Five; and when the heifer comes in there'll be six."

"Phe-ew! That's a right smart lot, ain't it? But when our heifer comes in we'll have twelve. How many rooms is in your house?"

I felt sure that I had him at disadvantage this time, and I answered proudly, "Well, we have one room and the loft and the weavin'-room now, and when the new house is done we'll have three more. That'll make six."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Ikey. "We have seven rooms in our house, all under the same roof. But that ain't nothin' to what we had in Sin Snatty. There we had eight rooms and a pantry."

"What's a pantry?"

"It's a little room where they hang the pans and things. Come here, Towhead, and I'll show thee something."

I slipped off my log and went over to the fence where he was sitting. He took from his pocket seven brand-new marbles, all striped in beautiful colors, and held them out to my admiring gaze.

"I'll bet thee hain't got any marbles like these," he said.

I made no answer, but counted them silently, one by one.

"My uncle Levi sent 'em to me," said Ikey. "He lives in Sin Snatty. He's a great man, he is. He's rich and sends me lots of things."

I looked eagerly at the marbles as they lay in his hand, and timidly turned some of them over with the tip of my fore-finger. I had heard David and Jonathan talk about the game of "marvels," and once I had seen two small brown things of the same shape as these, which they called "commies"; but I had never before felt the happiness of actually touching a plaything of this kind.

"I never had one in all my life," I muttered, gulping down

a big lump in my throat.

"Well, well, that is bad," said Ikey, slipping the pretty things back into his pocket. "But I s'pose thee has a nice ball to play with?"

"I had one once," I answered. "Cousin Mandy Jane made it all out of red stockin' yarn. But I lost it in the brier patch, and she wouldn't spare the yarn for another."

"Well, I have a fine big one, all covered with strong leather. Uncle Levi, he sent it to me at Christmas. What did thee get at Christmas?"

"I didn't get anything."

"Not any playthings or toys? Why, what do you folks do at Christmas?"

"We don't do anything particular," I answered. "When we get up in the morning, we all say 'Christmas gift!' and maybe mother gives us some hot cookies to eat. Once she gave me a pair of warm mittens."

"Well, well!" said Ikey, tapping his foot against one of the lower rails. "If thee hain't got any marbles or balls, what kind of playthings does thee have?"

"Oh, I only have one," I said. "It's a little windmill that Jonathan made for me. When I hold it up toward the wind it goes whizzin' around."

"A windmill!" cried Ikey. "I wish I could see it. Run over to the house and fetch it, won't thee?"

"N-no, I—don't think I can," I stammered. "Mother wouldn't let me fetch it."

"Who does thee play with when thee's at home?" asked my inquisitor.

I was on the point of telling him about Inviz, but knowing that he could not understand, I answered, "I used to play with Esau and Jacob; but now they've grown up and gone to live in the woods, and I don't have much of anybody to play with any more."

"Esau and Jacob! Who are they?" he asked; and then I

had to give him a full history of my pets and tell him all about their cunning tricks and why I would never consent to keep them in a cage.

Ikey was much interested, and plied me with question after question. Finally he said, "I tell thee what, Bobby! Thee run home and ask thy mother to let thee go over to my house and play with me for an hour. Tell her that I'm going to give thee a marble. I'll wait here for thee till thee comes back."

The temptation was strong. I thought what a treasure that marble would be, and how much enjoyment I should derive from its possession. Then I thought of the great trial of having to meet Ikey's mother and perhaps his sisters and brothers, and my shyness conquered. "Thee may keep the marble," I said. "I don't like to ask my mother, for I know she won't let me go."

Then I climbed back over the log and resolutely turned my footsteps homeward.

Ikey began to whistle. He watched me until I had gone perhaps a hundred yards, and then he called out sharply:

"Say, Towhead! Wait a minute."

I paused. "What does thee want?"

"I've got a pretty book with pictures in it, at home. Wouldn't thee like to see it?"

"Yes," I answered eagerly.

"Well, if thy mother will let thee go home with me for an hour, I'll show it to thee. It's a book that Uncle Levi sent to me from Sin Snatty."

The bait was irresistible. I yielded to the tempter without even a show of resistance.

"Will thee wait here till I ask her?"

"Certainly. Run along, and when thee comes back, fetch that little windmill with thee. I want to see it."

Ten minutes later I had laid the case before mother and had got her somewhat hesitating consent to go home with Ikey and look at his picture-book. But on no account was I to

stay at the Widder's longer than the specified hour, and if Ikey, in the meanwhile, should say or do anything improper, I must return immediately.

It was a new and most delightful experience; for I had never before known what it was to have a real boy playmate, and all my former little ventures abroad had been hampered by the presence of other members of our family.

Ikey was a jovial companion, boastful and self-important, very patronizing to little me, and determined to make my visit a pleasant occasion for both of us. He took me to the barn and showed me the horses, the pigs and the calves, each one of which, he declared, had cost his mother an enormous sum because it had not its equal anywhere in the world. Then he led me into the house and, to my great dismay, into the very presence of his mother and sisters.

"This is little Bobby Dudley," he said in a lordly manner. "He has come to make friends with us."

They greeted me very cordially and tried to make me feel comfortable and unafraid; but I shrank bashfully away from them and was unable to speak a word. Big lumps swelled up in my throat, my eyes grew watery, I wished that I was safe home beside the old hearth that I knew so well.

"I think, girls," said the Widder, perceiving my great shyness, "I think that we might as well go into the kitchen and leave these boys together. They'll feel better without our company than with it." And, there-upon, they retired quietly through the back way, thus kindly relieving my timid heart of a tremendous weight.

Then, to restore my courage, Ikey redoubled his efforts to amuse me.

With pompous pride, as a well-meaning host, he showed me the two small bedrooms and the spacious living-room which also contained two beds, not forgetting to comment upon the enormous price and unusual quality of each article of furniture.

"Father makes all of our things," I said. "I wonder how thy mother can buy so many chairs and candle-stands."

"Oh, Uncle Levi, he helps her," answered Ikey. "I tell thee he's awful rich. He runs the underground railroad."

"Underground railroad! What's that?"

"Well, it's something that ain't a railroad and it ain't under the ground; but it's a way they have of helpin' the poor slaves to run away from their cruel masters. Queer they'd call it that, ain't it?"

"It's a pretty good thing if it helps the slaves," I said; for I had lately been hearing at home a good deal of talk about slavery and a fugitive slave law which father most hotly condemned.

"Do your folks use slave labor?" inquired Ikey.

"Slave labor? What's that?" I asked.

"Why, things that's made by slaves, such as sugar and molasses and cotton things and coffee and such stuff," said Ikey. "We don't use it. The first question mother asks when she goes to buy anything is whether it's slave labor or free labor. If it's slave labor, then she won't have it."

"Well," said I, "we make most of our things ourselves, and so I guess they're free labor. We don't have to ask about it."

"Does thy father read the *Era?* It's anti-slavery."

"The *Era!* What kind of thing is it?"

"It's a paper—a newspaper that's made in Washington. Uncle Levi, he sends it to us from Sin Snatty. I'll show thee one."

"I don't know," said I hesitatingly. "I've heard father say that he has doubts about newspapers; but I'd like to see one."

Without further comment, Ikey opened the drawer of an old bureau and brought out three or four broad printed sheets—the first newspapers I had ever seen. He spread one of them out on the floor before us. I read the name that was printed in big letters at the top of the first page, The National Era, and my eyes glanced at the headings of some of the

leading articles.

It was all very strange and mysterious—this sheet of four huge pages, the head-lines, the various sizes of type, the date of issue, the advertisements. A column on the first page seemed especially wonderful, so wonderful that I felt a thrill of excitement as I read its heading:

"Latest Intelligence by Magnetic Telegraph."

Father had told us something about the magnetic telegraph. He had seen one when he was at Nopplis some time before—a long wire stretched from a number of poles and reaching from one town to another. Men in whom he had entire confidence had informed him that a letter could be carried on this wire at the rate of more than a hundred miles a minute, which was certainly as wonderful as any miracle. He had been told by the same truthful persons that news of any kind could be transmitted from Sin Snatty to Nopplis like a flash of lightning, and that in this way newspapers obtained intelligence from all parts of the world. And here, in this wonderful sheet that lay before me, was intelligence that had been so obtained—"intelligence by magnetic telegraph!" Well, I would have something to tell mother when I got home, wouldn't I?

Ikey did not permit me to linger long over the marvelous newspaper. "Mother thinks lots of these *Eras,*" he said; "and she don't allow everybody to handle 'em;" and he carefully refolded each copy and returned it to its place in the bureau drawer.

"But thee hain't showed me that book," I said, feeling that my hour's leave of absence was nearly exhausted.

"Oh, no!" said Ikey. "I 'most forgot about it;" and opening another drawer in the same bureau, he brought forth a thin square volume which he handed to me with the air of a prince. "Here it is, Bobby. Does thee think thee can read in it?"

I opened the book with eagerness, and glanced at the

title-page. *"Parleys Geography"!* Well, here was something wonderful. I turned the leaves, and saw that there were pictures at frequent intervals, and strange colored diagrams, which I afterward learned were called maps. I saw at once that here was a treasure of great value, and, forgetting myself, I whispered, "Oh, how I wish it was mine!"

"What will thee give me for it?" asked Ikey.

"I hain't got anything to give," I answered. "I would give thee a good deal if I had it."

"What's that in thy pocket?" he asked, pointing to a bulging portion of my ample tow breeches.

"Oh!" I answered, "that's the little windmill that Jonathan gave me;" and I drew it forth. "Thee told me to fetch it, but I forgot to show it to thee."

Ikey took the crude little mechanism to the door and held it out against the wind. It turned slowly; but I assured him that if the wind were stronger it would fairly whiz. He seemed delighted, and in his lordly way said, "I tell thee what, Robert. This thing ain't worth much, but I'll give thee the geography book for it."

What a bargain! In less time than I can write about it the exchange was made, and I immediately began to feel that it was time to go home.

"I guess I've been here an hour," I said; and tucking the book under my arm, I started to the door.

"Don't go yet," said Ikey. "Thee hain't seen our kitchen."

"Yes, it's time to go and I don't care about the kitchen. Farewell!"

But Ikey refused to let me go. He took me by the shoulders and forcibly guided me to the kitchen door. "Mother is in there, and she wants to tell thee farewell," he said.

I glanced fearfully in, and saw the Widder sitting near the door and shelling peas. My timid eyes took rapid notice of a table and a corner cupboard and a spinning-wheel, and of strings of dried apples hanging from the ceiling. Then, I

glanced at the clean-swept hearth, and the blazing fire, and the dinner pot upon the coals. These things were not very different from what I saw every day at home—but what was that dark shadow in the chimney corner?

I took a step forward, and horror chilled my veins—for right there, in a big armchair beside the hearth, sat the Old Feller himself! Black as night he was—or indigo-blue, it seemed to me. His big white eyes gleamed and glared in the imperfect light, and his great teeth grinned horribly between his monstrous lips as though he were ready to devour the first bad boy that came within his reach.

Without stopping to take a second glance at the fearful apparition, I uttered a yell of dismay and fled from the house. With the geography book firmly grasped in my right hand, I ran by the shortest cut across the garden, climbed quickly over the fence into the lane and hurried homeward. Soon I heard footsteps behind me as though I were pursued, and with the energy of despair I put all my strength into my legs. On and on I ran, but the Old Feller was evidently gaining on me. I could hear him panting, I could almost feel his hot breath upon the back of my neck, I expected every moment that his long fingers would grasp my hair. Then, at length, he called out:

"Say, Bobby, hold up! What's thee afraid of?"

Ah! it was only Ikey; and with a great sigh of relief I paused for him to come up.

"What in the world's the matter with thee?" he asked half angrily. "Nobody is goin' to hurt thee. What's thee scared at?"

"Who was that—that blue man—in the rockin' chair—by the fire?" I asked, between breaths.

"Blue man! *blue* man!" shouted Ikey, and he fell into convulsions of laughter. "He ain't blue; he's black! He's a black man that we're helpin' through on the underground. But thee mustn't tell anybody. He's a fugitive slave."

"A slave!" I exclaimed. "Is that the way they look?"

"Certainly," answered Ikey. "Didn't thee ever see a Colored man before?"

"Not a real one. I've read about people of color, and I've seen pictures of some; but I never thought they looked like that," I said as we walked on together.

"Some of 'em don't look quite so ugly," said Ikey; "and some are 'most white. There's lots of 'em in Sin Snatty. Uncle Levi, he has some of 'em round the house 'most all the time. When a slave runs away from his master in Kentucky, Uncle Levi, he puts him on the underground and hustles him off to freedom and Canada so fast that his owner never gets sight of him again."

"That's good," I said. "I hope he'll hustle all of 'em to freedom and Canada. Father says that slavery is a bad thing for the country."

"That's a fact," said Ikey very positively. "Thee just ought to hear Uncle Levi tell what he knows about it."

Thus talking, we came in a few minutes to the foot of the lane, and as we approached the boundary fence Ikey declared that he must return home.

"Farewell, Bobby!" he said very patronizingly. He shook my hand, and turning upon his heel, swiftly retraced his steps.

With a proud heart and triumphant feet, I climbed the fence and ran across the clearing. How lucky it was that Ikey had not changed his mind and asked me to "swap back"! I still held the precious geography with a firm grasp, almost dreading to look at it lest something should happen. As I was hugging it to my bosom and thinking what a fine bargain I had made, my invisible playmate came like a puff of wind behind me and almost tripped me off my feet.

"Does thee call it a fine bargain when thee gets something for nothing?" he asked.

"I didn't get something for nothing," I answered. "I gave Ikey the windmill, and he gave me the book."

"Thee knows very well that the book is worth ten times as

much as the windmill," said my accuser. "Is it right to take anything without giving full value for it?"

"Well, it was Ikey's fault, not mine. He offered to trade that way," I argued; "and he never gave me the marble that he promised."

But Inviz would give me no peace. "Ikey was certainly very kind," he said, "and perhaps he meant to give thee the book. Don't thee think thee might manage to do him a favor some time, so as to pay him the debt thee owes him?"

"I'll think about it," I answered impatiently.

"Thee'd better do so," said Inviz, rather harshly I thought; and slapping me on the cheek, he was off and away.

I ran into the house to show my treasure to mother. She looked at it with admiration; but when I told her how I had swapped the windmill for it, she shook her head doubtingly and said that Ikey surely did not expect me to keep the book.

"Sakes alive!" said Cousin Mandy Jane. "If it was me, I'd a good deal rather have the windmill; and I s'pose Ikey thinks the same way."

Oh! what a red-letter day I had had, and how many new things I had seen and heard! I had seen a real black man, a slave, who was on his way to freedom; I had seen a newspaper that had come all the way from Sin Snatty, and maybe much farther; I had been inside of a house that was bigger and roomier that our own; and, best of all, I had secured another book—a wonderful book—to add to my little library.

At the very first opportunity I began to read the geography from the beginning; and soon it became plain that all my previous notions of the world upon which we lived were erroneous. I learned what the maps meant, and took great pleasure in noting the location of various countries, oceans and rivers, especially those whose names I had encountered in my reading. But there was one omission which I could not understand: the New Settlement, which I supposed was the most important portion of the earth's surface, was not so

much as mentioned. Nopplis and Sin Snatty (called respectively Indianapolis and Cincinnati) were each represented on one of the maps by a fly speck; and I looked in vain for Dry Forks, Dashville, Wayne and other places with whose names I was most familiar. That each country or state was pictured in a particular color, was an interesting feature which I was slow to understand. A small oblong, green space was marked *Indiana*, while adjoining it on the right was a yellow region, somewhat larger, labeled *Ohio*. Why was this?

"The trees and grass in Injanner are green," I remarked to Cousin Mandy Jane. "I wonder if they are all yaller in the 'Hio Country."

"Shucks, no!" was her disdainful answer. "Why, I used to live in the 'Hio, and everything's the same color there as here."

And then father, having overheard our conversation, very carefully explained to me the uses of color in maps and other diagrams.

The pictures in the Parley Book, as we came to call it, were never-failing sources of delight, and I spent hour after hour in studying them and weaving fanciful stories about them. Here were such perennial favorites in illustration as the "Landing of Columbus," an Eskimo house, a Chinaman in native costume, and a view of St. Peter's at Rome. But the picture that was engraved most indelibly upon my mind was a half-page cut entitled "A Scene in Russia." I remember it yet with a distinctness undimmed by the lapse of more than threescore years. The time is winter, the place is in the midst of a dreary forest, the actors are a bear and a man. The bear stands calmly erect, its forepaws resting firmly upon the shoulders of its adversary. The man faces the bear with becoming solemnity, his right hand is holding a knife, the long blade of which is sheathed in the fierce beast's heart. The blood is gushing forth in a stream as large as the man's body, and man and bear are gazing vacantly at the snow-laden trees

around them. It was this picture that gave me my first impressions of Russia; and to this day it always presents itself at the merest mention of the Russian Bear.

CHAPTER XI
The Big-House

At length the harvest was gathered. The barn was filled with hay and oats, and in the high-fenced lot behind it there were three or four huge stacks of wheat waiting for the time of thrashing. The corn had been "laid by"—that is, it had received its last plowing—and the pumpkins were growing yellow in the field. There were peaches in the orchard, and a great surplus of early apples. On every hand there was plenty of everything—even plenty of work for every member of the family.

"Now we must finish the new house," said father; "the frame has been standing unenclosed so long that I am ashamed. If all of us do what we can, we may get everything finished before the next quarterly meeting; and what a satisfaction it will be to be able to entertain friends in a suitable manner."

All hands, therefore, were put to the work. From daylight till dark, six days in the week, we could hear nothing but the sound of hammers and saws and planes and augers. Father was a skillful carpenter. He had built more houses and barns than any other man in the New Settlement, if not in the whole world. The big boys, David and Jonathan, were willing and strong, and quick to do whatever task was set for them. And I, small as I was, had my own part to perform, running errands, carrying shingles and nails and bricks, and helping my seniors in a thousand ways.

There was little time for reading in those busy days; but I kept my Parley Book on the unused end of father's work

bench, and whenever I could catch a moment's leisure, I turned to its pages for solace and delight. Sometimes I would ask father the meaning of an unusual word or expression, and sometimes he would pause in the midst of his work, and explain whole passages that were perplexing to me. And thus, my dear Leonidas, in one month's time, I learned more geography than you, with all your "opportunity" and modern methods, will have learned in two years of schooling.

It was another red-letter day when the finishing touches were put upon the "big-house," as we thereafter called it, and it was pronounced ready for occupancy. You may smile at the idea of calling it a big house, for it was only twenty feet long and not quite so broad; but to me it seemed a very spacious dwelling, as commodious as a meetin'-house and as elegant as a king's palace.

Two-thirds of the floor space was given up to the "settin'-room," and the remainder was divided equally into two very small bedrooms. At one end of the settin'-room there was a diminutive fireplace, and a chimney built of home-burned bricks, neatly laid and painted red; for father in addition to his other pursuits, was a brick-maker, a mason and a painter. On each side of the house there was a door with a window close by, and at the farther end there were two tiny windows, one for each of the bedrooms. The entire arrangement was so perfect that none of us could imagine any way to improve upon it.

And now the work of furnishing the big-house was begun with great zest and delight on the part of all. Six brand new "Windsor" chairs which father had made in the winter months, were brought from their place of storage in the shop and ranged in a stiff prim row along the back wall of the settin'-room. A big rocking chair was set facing them on the opposite side to keep them in order when they were left to themselves. A three-legged candlestand, which Jonathan claimed as his own handiwork, was set beside the south

window; and a little looking-glass, with a red frame and the picture of a tiny white house at the top, was hung on the opposite wall. A Seth Thomas clock with wooden wheels (which mother had for years kept safely stored in the big "chist" in the loft, waiting for a suitable place and occasion like the present) was brought out and burnished and set to going; and then, to our great admiration, it was put exactly in the middle of the mantelpiece above the little fireplace. A last year's almanac also was laid on the mantel-shelf, and a many-colored hussif (housewife), full of thread and needles and buttons, was hung by the chimney corner. This completed the furnishing of the settin'-room.

The two bedrooms were fitted out each exactly alike, each with a bed and a chair; and it was here that the artistic skill of Cousin Mandy Jane and Cousin Sally were exhibited to the full. For the latter, as an expert in all matters of household economy, had been invited to come over and help "fix up." The bedsteads were very high with elaborately turned posts, the tops of which touched the ceiling. Father took great interest in seeing them set up, for he, with Jonathan, had spent many a long winter evening in shaping and framing them. Instead of bed springs there was a network of ropes upon which the bed was "made up." And the making-up was in the following order; first, the straw "tick," a sort of mattress filled with clean wheat straw; second, the "feather tick," a huge bag stuffed with feathers from our own ducks and geese; third, a pair of snow-white linen sheets, made of flax grown in our own field, spun, woven, bleached and hemmed by our own womenfolk; fourth, another feather tick (called the "kivver tick"), not so heavy as the first, and wonderfully soft and soothing. Over this last was spread a white blanket, made of wool from our own lambs; and then, capping the whole, there was a patchwork quilt composed of hundreds of bits and samples of calico and gingham and linsey-woolsey—the gatherings of years from every imaginable and available source.

When the bed was completely "made up," it was so high that Cousin Sally had to stand on her tiptoes to reach to the top of it. Finally, two huge feather "pillers" were laid at the head, on top of this mountain of repose; and a valance of "figured" pink calico was stretched from post to post between the straw tick and the floor.

"Now jist come and look at it," said Cousin Sally. "It's jist fine enough for a queen to lay on."

The whole family assembled to admire this triumph in the bed-making art, and every voice was loud in its praises.

"Now," said father in tones of deepest satisfaction, "we are in a condition to accommodate traveling Friends decently and becomingly."

"It would be nice if we only had a little lookin'-glass to hang in each bedroom," suggested Cousin Mandy Jane. "Then the women could see how to fix their hair when they git up in the mornin'."

"No such thing is necessary," remarked father. "If they want to see themselves they can go out and use the glass that hangs in the settin'-room. We won't pander to anybody's vanity."

"I've heerd tell," said Cousin Sally, "that in some of the fine houses in Wayne, they put a tin of water and a wash-pan in each bedroom, so that the women can wash their faces and hands when they git up. I think that's purty nice."

"It's nice enough for quality folks," said mother, "but common folks don't need any sich conveniences. The Friends that lodge with us can go out to the kitchen bucket or down to the spring branch to wash theirselves. It won't hurt 'em to do like we do."

"That's right, mother," said David. "If they're too good to do like common folks, let 'em go without washin', I say."

The beds were patted and smoothed, and patted and smoothed; the chairs were rearranged against the wall; the floor was swept and garnished; the walls were dusted; and the

hearth was mopped and polished. Then Cousin Sally brought in two cracked "chany" cups, each containing a posy of marigolds and sweet-williams.

"I'll set one of these on the winder-sill in each bedroom," she said. "They'll kinder match the quilts and make things cheerful and sweet-smellin'."

Finally, Cousin Mandy Jane brought in an armload of green sprigs of "sparrow grass" which she arranged with great skill and taste in the little brick fireplace.

"Well, now!" she said, standing back and admiring her work. "I jist think it's as purty as a picter and right smart more useful."

"Yes," added Cousin Sally, "it cain't be beat nowhere in the New Settlement."

Every excuse was made for prolonging the work of furnishing and decorating; but at length it was pronounced completed—the skill of womankind could do no more. Then all of us went out, and although the doors and windows were left open to admit the sunshine and the soft breezes, it was distinctly understood that, except in cases of real necessity, none of us should again venture to set foot within the hallowed precincts. The big-house was altogether too fine for everyday use; it was to remain sacredly unoccupied until the advent of honored company, or of Friends from abroad, should make its reopening desirable and proper.

CHAPTER XII
A Memorable Occasion

For a whole week, yes, for two sunny weeks in early autumn, the entire feminine portion of our household was busy making preparations for the approaching "quart'ly meetin'," which was to be held for three days in the Dry Forks meetin'-house. Scarcely anything else was talked about, and the air seemed full of prognostications of the coming event. For, our big-house being completed, we were prepared to accommodate a goodly number of visiting Friends; and the people of the Settlement were expecting a great inpouring of strangers and of traveling ministers from "foreign parts." Indeed, it had been officially announced that, besides the usual contingents from Wayne and White Lick, we were to be favored with the presence of distinguished visitors from Carliny and even from far-away, fabulous England. At the time of which I am writing, these quarterly gatherings were the four great festivals of the year. Not only the members of Our Society, but all the worldly people in the New Settlement looked forward to their recurrence with the keenest interest. Although of a strictly religious character, they brought with them a species of holiday recreation which everybody relished. The quart'ly meetin' served the same purposes as some of our more modern assemblies for combined improvement and enjoyment; it antedated the county fair and the baseball game, neither of which had yet been dreamed of; and it attracted curiosity-seekers and pleasure-goers from the four corners of the earth.

My father's well-known hospitality, no less than the fact

of his being a leader in the New Settlement, always insured for us a goodly number of distinguished and undistinguished guests. And in anticipation of this influx of Friends and strangers, making necessary the feeding and lodging of many people without money and without price, we began our preparation early and on a scale of considerable magnitude.

Three days before the opening of the meeting, the bustle at our house had reached fever heat. Early in the morning, Aunt Nancy and Cousin Sally arrived—it being their custom to come over on all such occasions to lend their help in providing for, and taking care of, the guests. Blithe, buxom Cousin Sally, with her red cheeks and bouncing figure, sized up the situation at once, put on her pink apron, rolled up her sleeves, and attacked everything in the shape of work that came within the range of her vision. But her mother, grown old and feeble, found her field of usefulness in the chimney corner opposite our Aunt Rachel; and it was a rare good picture to see the two ancient dames, each with her long-stemmed pipe, sitting hour after hour in their cozy places and smoking and knitting and gossiping to their old hearts' content, while everybody else was so busy and so worried with many cares.

David and Jonathan now became butchers and purveyors. They slew the fatted calf and the milk-fed pig, and beheaded half a score of long-legged chickens. They skinned the calf and cut it up into charming roasts and chops and cutlets. They scalded the pig, and then falling upon it with long-bladed knives, converted it into spare-ribs and hams and pigs' feet and headcheese and links of sausage. The slain chickens, as being too small for grown-up young men to bother with, were turned over to the tender mercies of Cousin Sally, who was particularly expert in preparing fowls of whatever kind for the dinner table.

"Thee may come and help me, Robert," she said, as with a pail of boiling water in one hand, she gathered up the ten

limp, lifeless little bodies and threw them in a heap by the wood-pile.

At first, I was inclined to excuse myself on the ground of having other duties to perform; but then, reflecting that Cousin Sally was always the best of company, I sat down beside her and held the pail while she dipped the chickens into the scalding fluid and deftly deprived them of their feathers. And all the while, there was a honey-flow of words from her mouth which held me entranced and charmed me in a way that I can never describe.

It was not the matter, but the manner, of her conversation that made it so exquisite—for, like you, my dear Leona, she seldom said anything that was worth treasuring away in one's memory. And then, to see those nimble fingers as they quickly reduced each feathery fowl to a state of shameless nakedness—to see ten headless chickens neatly dressed in twice ten minutes—it was a pleasure like that of witnessing some rare feat of magic, some trick of legerdemain.

When at length the task was finished and the nude, clammy, pitiable little bodies were laid side by side in a row at our feet, I ventured humbly to contribute my share to the morning's entertainment.

"Cousin Sally," I said, "does thee know that them chickens ain't dressed?"

"Ain't dressed?" she answered with some indignation. "What's thee talkin' about? Of course they're dressed, and dressed good, too."

"But I say they ain't dressed, and I can prove it," I retorted. "What'll thee bet on it?"

"I won't bet nothin'. It's wicked to bet, 'cause the Bible says so. But I tell thee what I will do. If thee can prove that them chickens ain't dressed, I'll give thee three hot doughnuts out of the skillet; and if thee cain't prove it, thee must carry in all the wood for the cookin', today and tomorrow."

"That's fair—I'll do it," I said eagerly. "Thee'd better get

the doughnuts ready."

"But thee hain't proved it, and thee cain't," she whined.

"I'll prove it right now. Listen! When thee is stripped of all thy clothes, does thee say thee is dressed?"

"Oh, shame on thee, Robert! How does thee dare to talk that way?" And her red cheeks blushed to the deepest crimson.

"But really, Cousin Sally, would thee be dressed?"

"Well, no, I reckon I *couldn't* be," and she turned to look the other way and hide the quivering smile that was broadening her ample mouth.

"Then why does thee say them chickens is dressed when they hain't got a stitch of clothes on, nor even so much as a feather? Does thee give it up?"

Cousin Sally made no reply, but quickly gathering up all the fowls—five slender legs in each hand—she ran trippingly into the house.

With feelings akin to those of a presidential candidate who has stampeded a convention, or of a young rooster who has crowed louder than his rival, I climbed up on top of the gate-post, and sat there to watch for the coming of our earliest guests. In a little while I heard soft footsteps near me, and looking down, I was not at all surprised to see Cousin Sally. She tittered nervously as she handed me a neat little package done up in a plantain leaf.

"Here they are, Smarty," she said. "Eat 'em while they're hot; and then thee may go with me to the truck patch to git a nice yaller punkin for the punkin pies."

Thus the pleasurable excitement of preparation went on, with scarcely an interruption, until the eve of the day for the assembling of the quart'ly meetin'; and then, after due investigation, mother proudly announced that nothing remained undone—the work had been so carefully planned and executed that everything was in readiness for the entertainment of as many Friends as might present themselves.

And surely they waited for no urgent invitation. Immediately after the close of the first session of the meeting they began to arrive—indeed a few were on hand before. They came on foot, on horseback, in wagons—singly, by twos, by families—and everyone, no matter what his name or condition, was heartily welcomed and provided for. A long table, extemporized from some freshly-hewn puncheons, had been erected under the cherry trees, and a smaller one was spread in the settin'-room of the big-house. To the former were invited the rag-tag and bobtail, the humbler guests, the boys and girls and other individuals who were of no special consequence. The latter was the table of honor, the board around which the ministers and elders and the visitors from abroad assembled to partake of the feast.

And, oh! what a feast it was! No modern Thanksgiving dinner could compete with it in the variety and quantity of the viands that were freely offered to as many as came; and the poor people under the cherry trees were fed as liberally and with the same kind of food as the well-to-do quality folks in the big-house.

It was expected that the young women who came would kindly assist in waiting on the table and washing the dishes, and that the married women would attend to the making-up of the beds and the general care of the house. But further than this, the entertainment was as free as the air and as generous as old Mother Earth herself. My parents would have scorned the suggestion of compensation for their hospitality. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers" was their motto; and they were conscious of more than one occasion when they believed they had entertained angels unawares.

Among the earlier arrivals were two or three ministers and distinguished persons from distant parts. As these drove up to our gate, father was there to welcome them, each with the same hearty handshake and the same kindly-spoken words.

"How's thee, Senith Hunt? I'm right glad to see thee.

Walk in," he said to a stately woman Friend in a drab silk dress and black silk bonnet. She was a minister of renown who had come all the way from Carliny to preach love and duty to the erring ones in the New Settlement.

"How's thee, Barnabas? I'm right glad to see thee. Walk in!" The person addressed was a middle-aged man with a square face, and a small tuft of whiskers in front of each ear. He held his head up with a conscious air of superiority and was very precise and methodical in all his movements. I understood that he was the master of a "boardin' school in Wayne," and my heart swelled with pride at the thought of being in the presence of such a fountain of knowledge and storehouse of wisdom.

And then there came, slouching along on foot, a poor old reprobate from the remoter backwoods, ragged, unkempt—an offshoot of the white trash of the South, as worthless here as in his native hills. As he shambled through the gate, doubtful of his right to appear among respectable people, father, with outstretched hand, advanced to meet him. "How's thee, Joshua? I'm right glad to see thee. Walk in!"

Everybody knew that his words came straight from his heart. He welcomed even the dogs that came to eat the crumbs which fell from the table.

As I remember, it was late in the evening when the last and most honored of our guests—the Friend from England—made his tardy appearance. The name of this man had been on our tongues for many days, and we were all agog to see what manner of person he could be who had traveled so vast a distance to bring a message of peace and love to our favored community.

Father was standing at the gate, benign, dignified, self-possessed, as good a man as any Englishman that ever lived. He met the stranger as he alighted from his horse.

"How's thee, Benjamin Seafoam? I'm right glad to see thee. Walk in! Thee is too late to eat dinner with the rest of

us; but come, and set down at the table, and thee shall be served."

Before he had been with us ten minutes, our hearts went out completely to the well-dressed, pleasant-spoken stranger from over the sea. There was something charming in his every action, his every word. His manners were wonderfully different from those of our own people, and yet they were not offensive, as they would have been if exploited by a person less natural and sincere. Nevertheless, to their own shame, there were some among the young men present who were disposed to ridicule him.

"Ain't he a queer old codger?" said David, after carrying the stranger's saddle-bags into the cabin. "Don't he comb his hair slick? I wonder where he gits the bear's grease to smear on it?"

"But did thee notice them fine clothes—all made outen broadcloth?" whispered Jonathan. "They must ha' cost a right smart sight of money."

"Did thee notice his boots, how shiny they are?" queried one of the younger guests.

"Anyway, he's mighty good-lookin', and I like him," said Cousin Sally, holding her breath. "He's jist as good as a picter to look at."

"Well, I declare, if he don't beat the juice!" exclaimed Cousin Mandy Jane as she ran into the cabin for a second cup of coffee for the stranger. "He's the most politest man I ever seen, and yit he does it all so pleasant like. I jist cain't wait till tomorrow, I want to hear him preach so bad."

"I've an idee he's an uncommon smart person," said Aunt Nancy from her corner of the chimney.

And Aunt Rachel, sitting opposite, nodded her head in acquiescence, and remarked, "That's nateral, for he was borned in England."

CHAPTER XIII
The Friend from England

All this while, the Friend from England, unconscious of the interest he had aroused, was sitting at the table in the big-house, partaking of the cold chicken and corn bread and pumpkin pie and multitudinous sweetmeats that were set before him. He had ridden far that day, and his appetite was excellent. He ate in an astonishingly deliberate manner while at the same time conversing most charmingly with father and Senith Hunt and Barnabas the schoolmaster. And I, anxious to hear the words of the wonderful man, made myself as small as possible, and by slow degrees crept up to a point of vantage just inside the door. I listened entranced, and wondered how it was possible that the world could hold two men so wise and good as my father and this Benjamin from over the sea.

The repast was in due time ended, but not so the conversation. The girls, entering the room on tiptoe, deftly removed the dinner things from the table, but our honored visiting Friends remained seated in their places; and between them and father, the feast of reason and the flow of soul continued uninterruptedly until long past our accustomed bedtime.

The humbler guests stood silently around the room, or sat on the doorsteps, or hung about the windows—the masculine portion keeping religiously aloof from the feminine. Sometimes they listened languidly to the conversation, and sometimes they indulged in irreverent whispered remarks concerning things which they should have regarded as sacred and above reproach. The younger women snickered as one of their number called attention to the love lock that hung so

cunningly over Friend Benjamin's ear; and the query went round whether he was a bachelor or whether he had left a wife in England. Then the younger men nudged one another shyly and directed attention to the woman Friend from Carliny, who had the strange habit of constantly moving her jaws as though chewing her food a second time like a cow. And the men in the outer circle, out-of-doors, began to yawn and wonder where so many people were going to sleep. Not one in the entire company seemed able to understand, much less appreciate, any portion of the animated discussion that was going on within their hearing.

At length, however, as though wakened from a dream, father rose suddenly, looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, and lighted a fresh candle.

"If Friends feel inclined to retire to their rest," he said, speaking very loudly, "we are now prepared to show them to their places."

This was the signal for a general dispersal of the company. The humbler people quickly vacated the settin'-room and retired into the moonlit yard to await further instructions, while the ministers and elders and Barnabas the schoolmaster rose and signified their willingness to seek their respective couches. Then father, candle in hand, opened the door of one of the tiny bedrooms, and said, "If Benjamin and Barnabas have a mind to do so, they may occupy the bed in this room." And mother likewise opening the other little room, made a similar announcement: "Senith Hunt and Huldy Estey and Becky Hobbs, if you think you can sleep three in a bed, you may take this room." Thus were the guests of honor disposed of in summary fashion.

As Friend Benjamin entered his chamber and cast a glance at the wonderful bed of two feather ticks and a straw mattress towering upward to a level with his head, I fancied that I saw a look of amusement—perhaps it was consternation—pass over his face; but with a kind word to father,

which sounded strangely like "Good night," he closed the door gently behind him; and I felt queerly, as though the sun had suddenly set and the landscape was no longer visible.

Your grandmother, my dear Leona, would have been sorely puzzled, had she in her lifetime been required to find sleeping places for forty people in two small houses like ours. But your grandmother's grandmother, who was my mother, was accustomed to such emergencies, and it required only a few minutes for every one of our guests to be assigned to his appropriate place of repose. Some of the young women and girls were sent up the ladder into the cabin loft, which David and Jonathan had vacated for their use. The married women, with their babies, were told to make themselves comfortable in Cousin Mandy Jane's curtained corner and in my trundle-bed. As for our own two girls, they contented themselves very jollily on a pile of shavings in the weavin'-room.

The men-folks, whether old or young, were sent to the barn to bunk on the hay, or in the mangers, or anywhere they chose—and I, being a man in the making, was proud and at the same time very much abashed to be one of the masculine company. As I lay in a snug secluded corner of the hayloft, with sweet-smelling new hay beneath and around me, I could look through the cracks in the roof and see the stars twinkling joyously in the invisible sky; and I, too, felt a joyous sensation as though I were living in an atmosphere of perfect peace. Then my dear, long neglected Inviz, whom I had almost forgotten, came very softly and cuddled down beside me, just as he had done once before when I was in extremest trouble. He put his cheek against my own and whispered:

"Don't thee wish thee had been raised in England?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I am afraid that even if I should be raised there twice I could never be such a man as Benjamin Seafoam."

And then, with Inviz lying lightly on my arm, I fell asleep.

It is not my purpose, dear Leonidas, dear Leona, to weary

you with any further account of that memorable quart'ly meetin', for I fancy that you have already had as much of that sort of thing as your decadent natures can absorb and appreciate. It is sufficient to say that those who ought to know described it afterward as "a season of great refreshing wherein the walls of Zion were marvelously strengthened." At the end of the third day's session, all our guests, excepting only the Friend from England, bade us farewell and departed. Benjamin Seafoam still tarried with us. His itinerary was such that he was not obliged to hurry on to his next appointment, and so at father's urgent invitation he consented to protract his stay with us for at least five days.

And those five days! they were like a revelation to us. Our eyes were opened and we saw things of which we had not previously dreamed. For Friend Benjamin was a missionary of a very uncommon type. He preached no dogmas. You might believe in Jesus, or in Buddha, or in Mohammed—it mattered not if only your life was pure and lovely and all your actions guided by that Inner Light which glows brightly or dimly in the heart of every thinking being. All his labors, therefore, were for the enlightenment of the ignorant, and for the upbuilding of character, of culture and of good manners; and his teachings related not to a future life and unfathomable mysteries and old-world traditions, but to the duties, the amenities and the possibilities of the life that now is.

The greater part of that which he said in his pleasant but convincing way was entirely beyond my comprehension—for I was only a child. But later on, when the fruits of his teachings began to appear, I understood more and more, and my memory, which was seldom at fault, recalled many a word and many a wholesome truth.

"Stephen Dudley," he said, "I wonder that a broad-minded man like thee should know so little about what is going on in the great world. Why don't thee subscribe for a newspaper, and keep in touch with the march of humanity?"

"Newspapers, so far as I can learn, have an evil influence," said father. "They tell of wars and murders and thefts and all sorts of debasing things and conditions from which we should keep our minds free. When I and other Friends came here to found this New Settlement, we came with the fixed determination to keep ourselves and our homes unspotted from the world. How then can I consent to bring into my house a vile newspaper to contaminate and poison the minds of those who read it?"

I did not hear the answer nor any portion of the long conversation that followed it; but the result was, as I shall explain in a future chapter, that father, ere many months, became a regular subscriber to The National Era, and an ardent admirer of good newspapers in general.

At another time the Friend from England remarked: "Doesn't it seem rather a selfish thing for a person or company of persons to try to withdraw from the rest of the world and live apart from their fellow men? Wouldn't it be better to mingle with others and try to lift them up to higher and nobler planes of living and thinking? Wouldn't it be better, instead of trying to keep out of the way of evil, to rise up valiantly and fight it with the weapons of truth? What does thee think, Stephen?"

"It was our hope when we came here," said father, rather dodging the question—"it was our hope when we came here that we might bring up our children in surroundings far removed from the besetting sins and temptations of the world."

And then there was another long and earnest discussion in which father was again worsted. Thus one citadel of narrowness after another was attacked with weapons of gentle argument, and utterly overthrown. One-sided opinions and life-long errors of judgment and belief were one by one subjected to the light of reason. And all this was done so quietly and in a manner so matter-of-fact and convincing,

that there was no room for suspicion, nor indeed for serious opposition. Thus, through the five days' influence of a wise and true man, father gained a broader outlook upon life and the world than all his twoscore and ten years of rigid adherence to dogma had been able to give him.

As for our womenfolks, they were influenced in quite a different way; for their sphere was the household, and although the Friend from England neither advised nor argued nor showed any desire to change their ways of doing, yet his slightest acts set them to thinking and wondering.

"Ain't it funny how he always spreads a clean handkerchief in his lap when he's eatin' at the table?" remarked Cousin Mandy Jane.

"I axed him why he done it," said Cousin Sally, "and he told me that in England they always put one by each plate—a napkin, he said they call it. They use it to wipe their lips on afore they drink from a cup."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Aunt Rachel. "It's quite somethin' to be borned in England."

"And another funny thing," said Cousin Mandy Jane, "I notice that, no matter how hot the room is, he never comes to the table in his shirt-sleeves."

"Oh, well, I think it's kinder nice for him to sorter dress up that way," said Cousin Sally. "But did thee notice that he never pours his coffee into the sasser to drink it? He waits till it cools and then sips it from the cup. He says that everybody does that way in England."

"Well, it's a good thing that everybody ain't borned in England," muttered Aunt Nancy; "for if they was, there wouldn't be no use for sassers."

"The funniest thing of all," said Cousin Mandy Jane, "is the way he eats pie. He never cuts it with his knife, nor holds it in his fingers, but uses his fork to cut it and stick it into his mouth."

"I've noticed that, too," said Cousin Sally. "One day I

thought maybe he didn't see his knife, and so I says, 'Here's thy knife to eat thy pie with. The fork's sorter dull,' I says. And he looked at me and says, 'I thank thee, Sally; I prefer to use the fork.' After that, we got to talkin' about knives and forks, and I told him that I noticed he never took the victuals on his knife. 'Oh, no!' he says, kinder funny like. 'In our country the young ladies would faint if they seen a person put a knife to his mouth.'"

"Laws a me!" ejaculated Aunt Rachel from the midst of a cloud of smoke. "Well, I'm glad we hain't got none of them young ladies here in the New Settlement. We can git along without 'em. But after all, it's kinder nice to be borned in England."

Then mother, who had thus far been a silent listener, ventured to offer her kindly comments: "What gits me more than anything else, is his compliments. If he passes betwixt me and the fire, he says, 'Please excuse me.' If I hand him the bread and he don't want any, he don't just answer with a plain 'No,' but he says, 'I thank thee.' Now, how is anybody goin' to know what he means by all them unnecessary compliments?"

"Well, I've always heerd it said that compliments was like an empty bag," remarked Aunt Nancy. "There ain't never anything in 'em. For my part, I b'lieve in the plain yes-and-no language."

"Yes," muttered old Aunt Rachel. "Compliments is good for them that's borned in England; but as for me, give me the plain yea, yea and nay, nay."

"That's right, Aunt Rachel, for it's in the Bible," piously ejaculated Cousin Sally. "It's my 'pinion that all them Englishers are cram-jam full of queer ideas. Why! don't thee know? Benjamin Seafoam, he hain't slept on a feather tick nary night since he's been here. Every morning when I go in to make up the bed, what does thee s'pose? There's the two feather ticks packed up in the corner, and nothin' on the

bedstid but the straw tick with the sheets pulled over it."

"And he shaves hisself every day," cried Cousin Mandy Jane, anxious to have the last word in this delectable conversation. "Then he has a kind of shiny stuff that he puts on his boots instid of taller; and he always takes off his hat when he comes in the house; and he never eats pie for breakfast; and when he wants another hot cake he don't jist reach over and git it, but he says, 'Mandy Jane, I'll thank thee for another one of those fine biscuits.'"

"Oh, well, he's queer—he's queer," softly murmured old Aunt Rachel.

"Yes, he was borned in England," kindly responded Aunt Nancy.

And thus, seated around the great cabin hearth, they went on, wondering, finding fault, admiring, pitying—carding wool, spinning flax, knitting, baking corn dodgers. All were busy.

You may smile, my dear Leona; but do you, yourself, talk more sensibly, act more wisely? The times, the manners, all change; dynasties flourish and decay, empires rise and perish, kings play their brief games and turn to dust—but the tongues of women wag on in the same way forever.

As for myself, it was my settled policy to keep at a distance from our honored visitor lest he speak to me and I be overcome with bashfulness. I especially feared that, being a preacher, he might ask me about the state of my soul, and in that case I could have no alternative but to tell a sneaking lie. So, I hung around the door, or concealed myself in a corner, or peeped through a crack in the wall—always burning to see and to hear, and yet so shy that I was always in fear of being seen. The great man kindly pretended not to notice me, for he understood my shyness and respected it. Sometimes, when he detected me in a stratagem to escape him, he would nod his head and smile pleasantly, allowing me to go my way. Sometimes he would utterly ignore my presence as though I

were no better than a dog; and this, while it relieved my timid soul, wounded my pride most dreadfully.

One morning, however—it was the next to the last day of his stay—he fairly captured me. I was sitting under a cherry tree reading a lesson in my Parley Book, and very much absorbed in the brief account therein given of the heathenish Chinese and the great wall that was built around their country. I felt quite secure from any untoward interruption, for I supposed that Benjamin Seafoam was in the deadenin', helping David and Jonathan with the log heaps; but just as I was in the midst of a most interesting passage, a shadow fell on my book. I looked up. The Friend from England was standing over me; he was so close that escape was impossible. I trembled and shut the volume, bidding farewell to hope.

"Well, Robert," said the pleasant voice, "I'm told that thee is a lover of books and that thee has started quite a little library. What book is thee reading now?"

My tongue, for the moment, was paralyzed, and I could not speak; but my sense of propriety made me show him the title-page of the geography. And then I shrank into myself and thought that I would give the world and all if mother would only call me to do some wearisome task—to carry water, to split wood, yes even to do the churning. But my hour of doom had arrived.

I never could understand how it came about, but within ten minutes we two were sitting side by side, our heads close together and our hearts beating as one, while we looked at that wonderful geography. Benjamin turned the leaves and made running comments on the various illustrations, and I volunteered many brief remarks on things which had appealed most strongly to my fancy. When we came to the map of England, we paused quite a while, and Benjamin with the point of a pin showed me the exact spot where his home was located. It seemed to me a very small place to hold so great a man, and I told him so. He laughed merrily, and then

began to tell me about other things.

He told me of the vastness of the city of London, but I, having never seen so much as a village, could not comprehend his simplest description. He told me of Queen Victoria, whom everybody loved, and of her little son, who was exactly my own age and who would probably at some future day be the king of England.

"We all hope that he will grow up to be a wise and good man, in every way worthy to wear the crown," said Benjamin.

Then we turned back and looked at the picture of Queen Elizabeth, and laughed at the strange immense collar that stood up from her shoulders and encircled her neck. And Benjamin told me briefly of some of the famous men of Elizabeth's reign—of Drake and Raleigh the heroes of the sea, of Bacon the philosopher, of Spenser the poets' poet, and of William Shakespeare who wrote playing pieces wonderful in language and conception, but in their purpose rather beneath what would be expected from a gentleman and a scholar. He told me also of my great namesake, that other Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, a lordly villain who had aspired to become the queen's husband.

"I trust that when thee becomes a man," said Friend Benjamin, "thee will add honor to the name which the unworthy earl so shamelessly dishonored."

At length, having come to the end of the volume, he suggested that I show him the rest of my library; and with happy feet I ran and brought out all my treasures, not forgetting even the humble Emerson's *Primer*.

Oh, what a red-letter morning that was! The horn for dinner sounded while yet we were in the midst of our intellectual feast; and my mother's call to run down to the spring and fetch up a pail of clear cool water was by no means so welcome as it might have been had it occurred a few hours earlier.

That afternoon my new-found friend and I took a long

stroll through the deadenings and the greenwoods. I pointed out the trees upon which Esau and Jacob had built their summer homes, and on one of these trees we espied the two ungrateful ex-pets themselves, now grown quite wild and disdainful of their former master. Then, walking on, I showed him the spot where a quail had but lately hatched seventeen little ones, and the deserted nest of some robins in an old thorn tree, and the burrow of a ground squirrel which always came out, chipping, to greet me as I passed. Then, to my intense delight and Benjamin's also, we saw a humming-bird flitting in and out among some blossoming shrubs, and we paused for some minutes watching its strange erratic movements from flower to flower. It was the first one of these tiny creatures that our Friend from England had ever seen, and he appeared to be more overjoyed than if he had stumbled upon a bag of gold.

As we strolled homeward, he told me of some English birds that are unknown in our country—of the cuckoo and her cunning habit of avoiding the anxieties and trials of motherhood; of the true robin redbreast that stays in his favorite haunts all winter, shivering and starving and yet hoping; and of the skylark and its marvelous song flight to the blue gate of Heaven.

Talk about fairy tales, my dear Leonidas! I am quite sure that you will never hear any that are half so entrancing as were the true stories of birds and beasts that my new-found playmate related to me on that memorable afternoon. Then, as we passed through a grove of giant trees, he told me of the beautiful belief among certain peoples, ages and ages ago, that every tree and bush and shrub was inhabited by a gentle spirit, a wood nymph or dryad, who was invisible to mortal eyes.

I listened enraptured, and then forgetting my customary caution, I cried out, "Oh, yes! I've seen them often in these very woods. They're all around us now."

Friend Benjamin smiled gently and then by degrees

changed the subject. Perhaps, like our home-folks, he thought I was telling a foolish fib; but as I looked upward I could see on every ash and oak and elm a fairy-like creature swinging back and forth in the evening breeze and looking benignly down upon us. The vision was as real to me as the presence of the trees or of my companion himself; yet I kept silent, fearing to be still further misunderstood.

It was very late when we reached the house, and mother was losing her temper because the supper was getting cold. Friend Benjamin apologized for our tardiness, washed his hands and face at the spring, put on his coat, and took his accustomed place at the table. There was no supper for me, and I hurried out to the barnyard where Cousin Mandy Jane was milking. She was fussing and fuming because I had not arrived earlier to help her.

"I tell thee what, Towhead!" she said, "that Friend from England ain't worth shucks. Jist to think of a grown-up male man like him a-traipsin' through the woods a whole afternoon with a little shaver like thee! Why, he ain't right in his noggin'! Now, thee hump it, and git the fodder for the cows while I finish the milkin'."

I made no reply, for I was content. I had found a kindred spirit; I had for the time being forgotten my baleful shyness; I had had a happy day.

CHAPTER XIV
Something from the Saddle-Bags

The next morning we were all in a bustle of excitement, for our Friend from England was about to take his departure. Two brother ministers had ridden over from the White Lick Settlement and, together with Barnabas the schoolmaster, would accompany him on his journey. It was his intention to visit the settlements on the Wabash and to carry a message of love and fellowship to the Friends in Vermillion (wherever that might be). His horse was brought, saddled and bridled, from the stable—a borrowed horse which was to be returned next month in care of Barnabas and the White Lick ministers.

The great man himself was so busy that he had scarcely time to notice the barefooted awkward urchin who had been his companion of the day before. But, at length, after the other men had gone out and were waiting at the gate, he called softly to me and said:

"Robert Dudley, I think I have something in my saddle-bags for thee. Come and get it."

I followed him into the settin'-room of the big-house. He opened one end of the leather bags that had already been packed for the journey, and drew forth a thin, paper-covered, large-paged book, which he put into my hands.

"I think thee will enjoy this," he said; "and thee may add it to thy library. It is the latest work of one of our most charming writers, and thee will learn much from it concerning the history of our country. And now, farewell, Robert. I shall not likely see thee again, but I have great hopes that I may live to hear much about thee. Make good use of thy gifts, and above

all, be sure to keep the light burning. Farewell, and may the Lord bless thee!"

He shook my hand heartily, lovingly, picked up his saddle-bags and hurried out. On his way past the cabin door, where the rest of the family were waiting to bid him farewell, he met father, and I overheard him say:

"Give the little lad a chance, Stephen. Don't quench the light."

Then there were handshakings and kind words and earnest farewells all round; and the three ministers and the schoolmaster mounted their steeds and rode away on their long journey of love. And we watched them until they disappeared among the trees.

"That there Benjamin Seafoam, he's jist bully!" exclaimed David, slapping his thigh to give vent to his emotions. "Why, he ain't a bit like a preacher; he's more like one of us big boys."

"That's so," said Jonathan. "He never said a word to us about religion; but somehow it always made me feel better jist to see him. He ain't always a-preachin' to a feller, like Old Joel Sparker."

"It's my 'pinion," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane, "that Benjamin Seafoam has got more sense in his little finger than that there Old Joel Sparker ever had in his hull dried-up body."

"Well, 'tain't everybody that can be borned in England," sighed good old Aunt Rachel, as she tottered back to her easy chair.

As soon as I could safely do so, I sought the seclusion of the backyard to examine my new book. Sitting in my favorite place under the biggest cherry tree, I opened the volume and read the title-page: "*A Child's History of England*, by Charles Dickens." As I afterward learned, it was probably only an advance copy of the first of the three volumes, or parts, in which that masterpiece of its kind was originally issued. It is doubtful if at that time the remaining two parts had been

printed; but this made little difference to me, since the book seemed complete in itself.

I turned to the first page and began the delightful task of reading it through. Imagine, if you can, the pleasures that were mine during the remainder of that day! I threw myself flat on the grass, my elbows upon the ground, my head resting upon my hands, the wonderful book before me. And soon all other things of time and sense were forgotten in the absorbing story of England's origin. The impressions that were then made upon my imagination have not yet been effaced although the mental accumulations of threescore years have been superimposed upon them. To this day, at the mere mention of the book, familiar visions present themselves of the white-cliffed island with the stormy sea roaring round it and the bleak winds blowing over its forests; of good King Alfred, the bravest, the humblest, the noblest of all the monarchs that have ruled over the English people; of the Conqueror, master of two realms and wielder of the world's destiny, deserted by his own children and denied a grave wherein to hide his loathsome remains; of the lion-hearted Richard, minstrel, poet, beast, who, if he had not been born a prince, might have been a worthy leader of honest men; and of John, the vilest of all those useless creatures, signing the Magna Charta, and then cursing and swearing, gnawing his finger-nails, and drinking hard cider till he died like a fool.

And there the book ended.

But why need I dwell upon these early literary impressions, O my Leonidas, my Leona? They have little in common with any experiences that you can ever have. At ten years of age you will have passed through the primary grades of a great modern school, receiving your instruction from a teacher trained in all the mysteries of scientific pedagogy. Your reading will have consisted mainly of nursery tales, of barbarous folk stories and of various classical productions mutilated and adapted so as not to overburden your infant understandings.

You can have no sympathy with my random excursions into the field of literature—unguided, unaided, groping as it were in the darkness. And when you have reached (as I have) the last stage of slippered caducity, what sort of reminiscences will remain to you of childish literary joys? Your bookish memories will not hark back to white-cliffed islands and real live kings and world-shaping events, but they will recall certain dim impressions concerning the house that Jack built and the pig that wouldn't go over the stile, with other "literary legacies" equally improving and civilizing.

Forgive me this digression.

CHAPTER XV
The Departure of the Caravan

"Say, Towhead, how would thee like to go to the 'Hio next week?" It was David that was speaking, and his lips were screwed up in a way which meant that he was vastly pleased about something.

I was busy reading the story of Richard the Lionhearted for the fourth time, and being half angry that he should bother me with such a question, I answered gruffly, "Who's goin' to the 'Hio?"

"I am," he answered; "but *thee* hain't. Father said that I might go."

This aroused my curiosity, and closing the book, I proceeded to get more of the information which I knew David was burning to give.

"Father and all the rest has made it up to go to Larnceburg ag'in," he said, "and I'm goin' along to help with the wagon. They say that wheat's ten cents a bushel higher down there than 'tis at Nopplis, and we can git salt a whole lot cheaper. So they're all goin' to try it ag'in, and I'm goin' along."

"When, David?"

"We're goin' to start a week from to-morrer, at sunup. Don't thee wish thee was goin', too?"

"Yes; but I know I can't. So what's the use of talking about it?"

Now, of all the regions of myth and mystery which I had heard of, but never read about, there was none that stirred my imagination more strongly than that of the 'Hio. I thought of it as a dim distant country, lying close under the southern

horizon and productive of many things, useful and beautiful, that were neither made nor grown in our New Settlement. The people who lived in that favored region were always ready to trade. They had many things to sell—in fact, everything that you could think about—and they were always accommodatingly ready to buy any commodity that might be offered to them. There was a great river there which gave name to the whole country; and boats sailed on it to a far-away mysterious place called Orleans, where they sold slaves and made molasses. All my life, I had heard a great deal of talk about Larnceburg and the 'Hio and Sin Snatty, which was not much farther away; but in spite of the knowledge I had gained from my reading—especially in the Parley Book—all my notions of location and distance were indistinct, confused, misleading. I had never seen a stream larger than our "crick," or a village larger than Dry Forks with its three buildings; and so, how could my imagination conceive of mighty rivers and busy cities?

Until the completion of the first railroad to Nopplis, three or four years previous, there were no markets for produce nearer to us than the Ohio River. For more than ten years after the founding of our New Settlement, it had been the custom of our people to make an annual journey, for purposes of trade, to Larnceburg, at that time the rival of Sin Snatty, and the most convenient of the river ports. They usually went in a single company of ten to twenty men and boys, with as many as a dozen wagons of all sizes and descriptions; and the time chosen for this pilgrimage was in the fall, after the harvest had been gathered, and while the roads were passable.

During the first few years there had not been much for any one of the settlers to haul to Larnceburg—no wheat, no corn, nor other grain—but perhaps the hide of a dead cow, a few pounds of maple-sugar, a little ginseng, and some skins of coons or muskrats. Nevertheless, as the clearings increased and the fields were made larger, a time of plenty arrived. Each

year that passed saw more grain and more wool produced, and finally a single farmer was sometimes known to take to the market as much as ten bushels of wheat and the fleeces of half a dozen sheep, besides the usual number of other things. Such farmers were on the highroad to wealth.

Great expectations had been aroused by the building of the first railroad in the Injanner Country—that from Madison to Nopplis, as we always persisted in calling the state capital. It was a death-blow to Larnceburg and a disappointment to Sin Snatty, but it held out golden promises to the two terminal cities. Madison at once became a business mart of the first importance; and father expressed his opinion that Nopplis would very soon develop into a great center of trade, thus bringing the markets of the world to our very doors. What a change that would mean for our Settlement! For the state capital was so near to it that one might go thither and return in two days—only think of it!—whereas the journey to Larnceburg and back had never been accomplished in less than seven.

But, alas! the hopes engendered by the railroad were not yet realized. True, it was always possible to sell farm produce in Nopplis, but not for anything approaching the prices that were paid on the 'Hio. And when it came to buying such necessary things as salt and pins and dove-colored ribbons, the cost was proportionately higher. The dealers claimed that the expense of freightage between Nopplis and the 'Hio was so great that all this was unavoidable; but their explanation was of no value to the settlers. After trying the "markets at our very doors" for a year or two, father declared that the railroad was a cheat, and that we were no better off than before. Finally, the neighbors had put their heads together and resolved to try one more pilgrimage to their old accustomed market on the 'Hio.

"Yes," said David, slapping his thigh, "we're goin' to the 'Hio with everything we've got to trade; and maybe when

them there Nopplis fellers finds out that they're losin' business, they'll knock under a bit. Father says that me and Jonathan may have half of all the money he gits for the wool; and so if thee'll be a good boy, maybe I'll buy thee a nice marvel or two."

I knew that there was something behind all this kindness and condescension on his part; and so I answered, "Yes, I'll be a good boy. What is it thee wants me to do?"

"Why, it's jist this way," said he: "Father says that there's too much for Jonathan to tend to, all by hisself, and him threatened with the fever'n'agur every other day. So he says that I ought to stay home and help him and not think of goin' to the 'Hio. But I says, 'There's Robert, he's gittin' quite big, and maybe he'll help Jonathan and take care of my filly while I'm gone!' And father, he says, 'Well, if Robert is willin' to take thy place and do thy work, then thee may go along and help take care of the wagon.' So now, Towhead, what does thee say? Will thee lick in and help Jonathan if I'll bring thee a couple of striped marvels?"

It required but a minute for us to reach an agreement, and then David proudly announced to father that I had agreed to take his place during his absence on the trip to the 'Hio. And so the matter was settled.

Very early on the morning that had been set for the departure, I was roused from sleep by hearing an unusual bustle and commotion in the cabin. I tumbled out of my trundle-bed and dressed myself—which was quickly done, since I had only to slip into my tow-cloth breeches and pull the galluses up over my shoulders. There was a bright blaze in the fireplace, and Cousin Mandy Jane was very busy putting the breakfast things on the table. Mother was filling a wooden pail with cold victuals—bread, pickled meat, fried chicken, dried apple pie and the like.

"They'll be hungry more'n once while they're on the road," I heard her remark.

I opened the door and went out. Save for a feeble light low down on the eastern horizon, it was still quite dark. The air was pungent with the odor of smoke, and the heavy dew that lay on the grass was like ice-water to my feet. I hastened to the spring to scrub my face and dampen my hair, as I was always required to do before breakfast. In the orchard a whippoorwill was calling, and among the sycamores in the "bottom" a great horned owl was hooting. Looking over toward the deadenin', I saw the fires glowing in a score of log-heaps, and I knew that Jonathan must have been there, even before this early hour, doing his customary morning's task of "righting them up." Then I heard father and David moving about the barn, and by the light of the little old tin lantern which one of them carried, I could see that they had already hitched the horses to the wagon and that everything was in readiness for the start.

"Breakfast's ready!" shouted the shrill voice of Cousin Mandy Jane.

And soon we were all seated around the table, partaking of the ample supply of hot corn dodgers, fried pork and pumpkin pie, with foaming new milk for the younger people and roasted-wheat coffee for the older. It was a breakfast fit for a king, as David expressed it, and far too good for most kings, as I fervently believed. It still lacked a full half-hour till daybreak, and since every preparation for the journey had been completed, there was no need for haste. So father and the boys sat leisurely and long at the table, and their talk was naturally of markets and roads and railroads.

"Well, I wish I was goin' along with you, and I'll tell you why," said Jonathan, who had just come in from the deadenin'. "I'd like to see that there tarnal railroad. Of course you'll be a-crossin' it somewhere down toward the 'Hio, won't you?"

"I reckon hardly," responded David in rather pompous tones. "We ain't likely to see it nowhere; and so thee ain't

missin' much. A railroad ain't no sight nohow. I seen it when I was down to Nopplis, and I wouldn't give a pin to see it again. It hain't nothin' but two rows of long beams with two narrer strips of flat iron nailed along the top of 'em."

"I don't keer so much about seein' jist the railroad," explained Jonathan; "but I'm mighty cur'ous to see them there cars, as they call 'em, a-runnin' along on them there strips of iron."

"Oh, I seen a dozen cars when I was at Nopplis," said David; "and any one of 'em was as big as twenty of our wagons. But the eenjine, *that's* what thee ought to see! Thee ought to see it, a-puffin' and roarin' along, and pullin' four or five of them there big cars ahind it. It's a sight, I tell thee."

"I've heerd say that some of 'em can run mighty fast," said Jonathan.

"Yes, some of 'em run as fast as a horse can gallop," said David. "Them's the kind they call passenger cars. People rides in 'em."

"Laws' sakes! but they must jolt turble," ejaculated Cousin Mandy Jane.

"It's a very rapid way of traveling," said father. "When Barnabas C. Hobbs was here, he told me it is now a common thing for a train of cars to run all the way from Nopplis to Madison in a day. Only think of it!—eighty miles between sunup and sundown! Five years ago, people didn't believe it possible. It's my opinion that David Wallace would have been our governor today if he hadn't tried to make folks believe such things."

"How was that, father?" inquired Jonathan.

"Well, at the last election for governor, David Wallace thought he would be one of the candidates. People liked him and he was doing right well till he made two or three speeches that spoiled all his chances. In them speeches he declared that the railroad would be the making of Nopplis and of the whole country. He said that there were young men then in the

hearing of his voice who would live to see the time when they could eat their breakfast in Nopplis and their supper the same day on the 'Hio. A good many people hooted at the idea, and they said that if William had no more sense than to tell 'em such stuff as that, he wasn't fit to be governor; and so they turned him down. The fact is that there are so many wonders, nowadays, we never know what to expect next. But the Madison railroad has now been built for some years, and it don't seem to be doing much good. I don't understand why those Nopplis men should want more railroads built to their place."

"Are they wantin' to do that?" asked Jonathan.

"Some of 'em are very anxious about it," answered father. "When I was down there last spring, I had a talk with Calvin Fletcher, and he told me that plans are now on foot to build railroads in every direction—east to Wayne, north to Lay Fate, and west to Terry Hut—and he declared his belief that Nopplis will soon become the greatest railroad center in the world."

"And what good would that do?" asked Jonathan.

"I'm sure I don't know," was the answer. "Some say it would bring the markets right to our doors; but it ain't likely. We've heard that kind of talk 'most too often."

"I do believe it's gittin' daylight," said Cousin Mandy Jane, peeping out at the window. "If you set there at the table much longer, you surely won't git to the Four Corners at sunup."

"Yes, boys, come!" said father. "It's getting light in the east. We'll start now, as soon as possible."

Then came the bustle of departure. I ran out to the wagon and climbed up over the tail-board to see the various marketable things that had been put into it. The wagon itself was not unlike the farm wagons still in use throughout the West and perhaps everywhere—of medium size, firmly built and strong. Above the wagon-bed, and attached to its sides, were a series of semicircular wagon bows upon which was stretched a heavy

rain-proof "wagon sheet," covering and enclosing the whole like the top of a coach. It was very comfortable inside, underneath this cover. There I counted five large bags of wheat; and beside them, on some clean straw, were two huge bundles of wool, and a bag of white beans. Besides these, there were two bundles of coonskins and another of muskrat hides, which Jonathan was sending with the hope of getting a good price for them.

Under the driver's seat there was a large green willow basket packed with the mercantile ventures of the rest of the household: a roll of blue jeans, some eggs, and six small cheeses from mother; a jar of pickles, and some glasses of jelly from Cousin Mandy Jane; five pairs of warm stockings from Aunt Rachel; and lastly, a bundle of ginseng roots which I myself had gathered in the woods.

As I was making a mental inventory of this valuable cargo, David came out, all ready for the journey. He looked very dapper and neat, attired in his new jeans trousers and striped vest, with the collar of his home-spun shirt standing up stiff oil both sides of his chin. He threw his coat and boots into the wagon, declaring that he didn't want to be bothered with such truck on the road, but that maybe when he got to the 'Hio he would feel like fixin' up a bit.

"Git out of the way, thee tarnal little Towhead!" he cried. "Thee needn't think that anything in that there wagon belongs to thee—'cause it don't."

There was a funny twinkle in his eye, and I knew that he was not only happy but that his feelings toward me were very tender and kind and he was ashamed to let anyone know it.

"Thee won't forget the marbles, will thee?" I ventured to say.

"Who said anything about marvels?" he growled. "If thee ain't good while we're gone, thee'll git a cowhidin'—that's what thee'll git, and I won't forgit to give it to thee."

While he was scolding me and untying the horses, father

appeared at the door. The eyes of the whole family were directed toward him. Although he was, about to start upon a journey of great importance, and would be absent for at least a week, perhaps much longer, yet he spoke no farewells to anyone—bade no one good-by. It was not the custom in our household to waste time and breath in needless formalities of this sort. He was dressed in his best suit of clothes; his big beaver hat was on his head; his boots had just received a fresh dressing of tallow; he stood erect and tall, and moved with a dignity befitting a king. He walked briskly out to the barnyard, and climbed into the waiting wagon.

"All the 'Hio folks will know that he's somebody, jist from the looks of him," whispered Cousin Mandy Jane, unable to conceal her admiration; and my own pride swelled high as I observed his dignified bearing, his strong handsome face and his general air of true manliness.

He seated himself in the driver's place, with David by his side. He took the long lines in his hands, and then, as if being suddenly reminded of something, he turned and spoke to me.

"Robert, thee must be a good boy while I'm gone." That was his way of saying good-by. "What does thee want me to buy with thy ginseng?"

He gave me no time to reply but chirruped to the horses.

"Git ep!" shouted David.

And they were off.

Just as they turned into the lane, however, father looked back and called to me: "Robert, if thee has a mind to walk over to the Four Corners to see all the wagons get started, I have no objection, provided Mandy Jane will come along with thee."

Oh, what happiness was mine! Of course, Cousin Mandy Jane would come along; and so, side by side—she with her blue sunbonnet hiding her face, and I without hat, coat or shoes—we trudged joyously behind the slowly moving wagon; and Aurora with her yellow tresses rose in the east, heralding

the approach of the god of day. I felt as if I had been suddenly boosted into the seventh heaven, so perfect was the hour, so satisfied were all my desires.

"Don't go to hangin' on ahind!" shouted David, swinging his whip around over the wheels. "You'll stall the horses, right off, in this rough road."

But the road was not bad. The ground was dry and firm, and the wagon wheels bowled along easily in the well-packed ruts. The poor beasts might have trotted briskly all the way to the Four Corners if their driver had so willed it. But, no! their strength must be held in reserve for the miles and miles of hard travel to be performed before reaching the 'Hio; and so they were encouraged to jog along at their favorite slow-poke walk.

Presently, where the road made a sharp turn to the south, and the wheels began to ascend a long but gentle slope, David vaulted suddenly out of the wagon and stood waiting by the roadside until Cousin Mandy Jane and I came up.

"I kinder thought I'd walk a spell," he explained. "'Tain't much fun to set scrunched up in the wagon 'mongst all them bags and things, and I guess I'll git enough of it afore we git to the 'Hio."

And so we three trudged onward together.

By and by, David said to me, "Towhead, does thee know how fur it is from our house to the Four Corners?"

"Two miles," I answered.

"And does thee know how fur it is back, from the Four Corners to our house?"

"Why, two miles, of course."

"Well, that's a purty long walk fur a little codger like thee;" and he tried to speak gruffly. "Thee'll be right smart tired when thee gits home. So, come along, and let me boost thee over the tail-board into the wagon. Thee mustn't let father see thee."

With one hand he gripped me by the collar, and with the

other he seized the ample seat of my breeches—and next moment I was sprawling inside the wagon, among the wool and the coonskins and the bags of wheat.

"Don't tell father!" he shouted.

Father looked back at me and smiled. Then he bade me come and sit beside him. "Robert, thee may drive the team a little while, if thee would like," he said; and he placed the lines in my hands.

"Oh, father! may I?" I cried, my heart overflowing with gratitude.

"Yes, all the way to the Four Corners, if thee so desires."

If I had been in the seventh heaven before, I was now surely ascending into the empyrean. I wished very much to shout aloud, but the presence of father restrained me.

It seemed but a very little while until we have in sight the Four Corners, the appointed place of rendezvous for all the settlers who were that day starting on the pilgrimage to the 'Hio; and just as we rounded the summit of a little hill overlooking the spot, the sun rose above the eastern horizon, red as blood in the smoky sky.

"I verily believe that we are the last ones on the ground," said father, anxiously peering forward as our wagon rattled down the hill. And then we saw, drawn up in line by the side of the road, nine white-topped wagons very much like our own; and a little nearer to us, at the junction of the two highways which formed the "four corners," a dozen men were standing as though eagerly awaiting our arrival.

"Well, there's Old Enick and Joel Sparker," said David, hurrying up alongside of us. "I think, maybe, we might have managed to git along without ary one of *them*."

Who can describe my pride as I urged our old plow horses to an unwilling trot and guided them steadily to the spot where our neighbors were standing? And then there were greetings all around, and kind inquiries, and awkward homely jests which for the moment made me forget both my vanity

and my shyness.

"How's thee Levi T? How's thee today?" said father, addressing a middle-aged Friend whom I knew—for it was he who always sat next to us in meetin'.

And then Old Enoch, with that indescribable smile of his, came forward and offered his hand.

"Howdy, Robert! Is thee well today?"

I looked and saw his dingy gray wagon close by, on my left, with Old Bull chained to the hind axle and Little Enick sitting on the tail-board and making faces at me.

"Oh, I'm pretty well. How's thee and thine?" I answered mechanically.

And then Old Joel Sparker came solemnly forward and offered the customary greetings. He was thin and small, both physically and mentally, with a hatchet face, a hooked nose and small eyes which always reminded me of auger-holes. He was dressed in a brown jeans suit of the plainest imaginable cut, and on his head he wore a broad-brimmed hat of the genuine George Fox pattern.

After speaking to father he looked at me rather disdainfully, sniffed the air through his nostrils two or three times, and then inquired, "Is this thy little son, Stephen? And does thee propose to take him with thee to the 'Hio?"

"Yes, this is Robert," said father, "but he will not go to the 'Hio this time. I allowed him to come to the Four Corners to see the wagons start—that's all."

Then David spoke up, rashly, foolishly: "Yes, little Towhead's goin' to take my place at home while I'm away. He's goin' to take keer of my filly, and I've promised to fetch him a couple of striped marvels."

"Marvels! marvels!" cried Friend Sparker, lifting his hands in holy horror. "Does thee propose to corrupt the mind and soul of that young boy by putting marvels into his hands? And, Stephen Dudley, I'm surprised that thee will permit such a thing—and thee a leader and a light in Our Society!"

"Is thee sure, Joel, that it's wrong for boys to play a quiet game with marbles?" asked father.

"Wrong! wrong!" answered the preacher. "Why, it's against the Scripters! It's forbidden in holy writ. Open thy Bible, Stephen. Turn to first John, three-thirteen, and read it for thyself: *'Marvel not, brethren!'* What is plainer than that?"

"But there is a difference between 'marvel' and 'marble,'" said father, scarcely repressing a smile. And Levi T. Jay, who was always quick to appreciate the ludicrous, laughed outright.

"Joel, if thee would read thy dictionary along with thy Bible," said he, "thee might be somewhat better informed."

This reply, together with the laughter, exasperated the saintly minister, and he addressed himself sharply to his critic. "Does thee dare to stand there and laugh at the word of God?" he asked. "If this was thy last day on earth, would thee indulge in so much hilarity? Does thee think thee will laugh when thee stands before the bar of judgment?"

"I've not thought anything about that," answered Levi T.; "but the Bible says, 'Fill thy mouth with laughing and thy lips with rejoicing'; and I think it's a purty good thing to laugh once in a while."

"Th' ain't no such thing in the Bible," interposed Old Enoch. "Thee cain't name the chapter and verse. The Bible, it's set square ag'inst all sich worldly diversions."

"That's so," said the saint; "and George Fox, he was set square ag'inst it, too. He never laughed but once, and then he was sorry for it." Then, turning to the rest of the company, he called out in shrill grating tones: "Friends, we are about to start on a long and dangerous journey, and it behooves us to have our lamps trimmed and burning. For who knows when the great and terrible day shall come? Verily, it is written, 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat'; and if you will but lift your eyes, you may behold, even now, the smoke of the Lord ascending from the earth."

"Oh, no," said Levi T., "that's nothing but the smoke of the deadenin' ascending from the log heaps."

At this there was another hearty laugh, and the good man, burning with ill-concealed anger, returned to his own wagon.

"Too much levity! too much levity!" muttered Old Enoch.

"But not too much Levi T.," remarked father in his quiet decisive way.

In the meanwhile, I had leaped out of our wagon and rejoined Cousin Mandy Jane who was standing by the roadside. David, after testing the wagon wheels and looking at the harness, had climbed back to his place on the driver's seat, and was idly flicking with his whip the tops of some mullein stalks that stood near by. Some of the other men were readjusting their wagon covers, giving their horses water from the nearby branch and putting things to rights generally, before resuming the long and arduous journey.

"Friends," cried Joel Sparker, turning his team halfway round in the road, "if it is your mind to go forward on this journey in a laughing and reckless spirit, I will not be one of you. I will wash my hands of the whole business and will return to my own home,"

"Oh, come! come!" said Levi T. in the tones of a commander. "Let's have no more foolishness, but acquit ourselves like men. Drive forward to the front, Stephen Dudley. We always expect thee to lead. Be ready to fall into your places, every one of you!"

A gentle touch of the whip from David's judicious hands, and our sturdy old horses were again on the move. As the wagon rolled on, past the place where I was standing, father leaned over the dashboard and repeated the injunction, "Be a good boy while I'm gone, Robert!"

"Yes, Towhead!" said David. "Take good keer of the filly, and I'll fetch them there marvels to thee, sure."

One by one, the wagons fell into line, each taking the place assigned to it by Levi T., who appeared to be the captain of the company. Then, as he brought his own team into the road and closed up the rear, he shouted, "Forward, everyone! "And the long procession began its slow but steady progress toward the distant mysterious 'Hio. What a source of pride it was to see our own brave wagon in the lead, setting the pace as it were for all the rest!

The first half-mile of the road was over a level "crossway" built through the middle of a treeless swamp or wet prairie. From the vantage-ground where I was standing with Cousin Mandy Jane, we could see from one end of the straight rough way to the other; and we silently watched the line of white-topped wagons until the last one had climbed the hill at the farther side of the swamp and was lost to sight among the trees.

"It looked like that picture of a caravan in the Parley Book," I said; "but there are wagons in this caravan, and not any camels. Did thee ever see a camel, Cousin Mandy Jane?"

"Not as I know of," she answered, turning to go home.

"Well, they're like big horses with humps on their backs. They are called the ships of the desert," I said, greedy to display my superior knowledge.

"What's a desert?"

"Oh, it's a big sandy place like that around the old swimmin' hole in the crick; but it's a hundred times bigger."

"Shucks! What do I keer for that? Come on! It's time to go home."

And so we began our weary return along the lonely road which we had lately traversed in much better spirits. Something seemed suddenly to have dropped out of our lives, leaving an emptiness which I could neither describe nor understand.

CHAPTER XVI
Fever'n'Agur

The caravan had scarcely got well started on its journey when our Jonathan was taken abed with a long-threatened "spell of fever'n'agur." A pallet was spread for him on the floor of the settin'-room in the big-house, that being a more suitable place for a sick person than the dark cabin loft where the boys usually slept. When Cousin Mandy Jane and I returned from our walk to the Four Corners, we found him there with the "agur fit" already upon him.

It was pitiful to see him wrestling in a most helpless way with the grim, invisible, miasmatic fiend that had come up out of the swamps, and bottoms to torment him. His face was wonderfully pale and pinched; his eyes were dull and lifeless, with dark semicircular lines underneath; his finger-nails were blue; his lips were compressed and drawn tightly together over his closed mouth. Then came the chill. His lower jaw relaxed and his teeth chattered like the rattling of pebbles in a "chany" cup. His body shook with a vehemence which, according to his own statement, fairly made the roof shingles of the big-house "stand up on end." For nearly an hour he groaned and tossed, helpless with the agur fit upon him, aching in every joint, shivering from head to foot.

A short respite followed, and then the fever came—a raging burning fever that took away his senses and caused his mind to wander and his white-coated tongue to babble foolishly. In his delirium he kept calling, calling, not for mother nor for Cousin Mandy Jane, but—would you believe it?—for Old Enoch's grand-daughter, buxom handsome

Esther Lamb.

It was amusing to hear him, and Cousin Mandy Jane actually te-heed right in his presence, notwithstanding his woeful condition. But mother, soon coming in with a cold-water bandage for his aching head, reproved her with a look that sent her out of the room.

"Is that thee, Esther, dear?" muttered the poor fellow, not recognizing his best friend. "I knowed thee would come."

"It's me, Jonathan," said mother, gently smoothing his hair and tying the cold-water bandage about his temples.

"Yes, I know it's thee, Esther," he answered, staring into her face. "Thee's a Lamb; thee ain't no Fox. Thee don't take after Old Enick a bit. I have my doubts if thee's related to him at all."

He took mother's hand in his big burning palm and held it very tightly. "Jist thee wait till I sell them there steers," he said.

"And then what will thee do?" queried mother.

"Why, I'll buy that forty-acre piece down by the Corners, and build a little house on it for thee and me," and then he wandered off into incoherency.

Presently, as he tossed about, the cold-water bandage became loosened and I went cautiously to the bedside to replace it. He glared at me wildly, and I sprang back in fear as he shouted, "Git out of here, thee Old Enick, thee! I'll have Esther in spite of thee. She ain't no Fox. Git out I say! If thee wasn't so tarnal old, I'd give thee the best lickin' thee ever had!"

He made as if he would spring out of bed to strike me; but mother motioned to me and I retired from the room, greatly awed by reason of the young man's madness.

"What did he say to thee?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane, an unfeeling smile still lurking about her mouth.

"He thought I was Old Enick," I answered.

"Well, wasn't that funny?" and she te-heed again in a very

foolish manner. "Him and Old Enick don't git along together very well sence they had that fallin' out."

"What did they fall out about?" I asked.

"Well, I'll tell thee," she answered eagerly—she was always eager to tell secrets—"I'll tell thee. Jonathan, he put on his meetin' clothes two weeks ago last First-day evenin' and went over to see Esther. He's been doin' that, on and off, for a year, as thee knows. But this time he meant business. He went right into the house, and he axed Old Enick to let him have Esther;" and here she te-heed again, and looked around to see if mother or Aunt Rachel was in hearing distance. Then she added in a half whisper. "And what does thee reckon Old Enick done?"

"What did he do?"

"Why, he *kicked* Jonathan—leastwise, he pushed him. He pushed him right out of the house. Only think of it! And he told him, if he ever come there ag'in he'd set Old Bull on him. Ain't that a nice way for a elder in the meetin' to do?"

"Who told thee about it, Mandy Jane?"

"Why, Jonathan of course; and he said I mustn't never, never whisper a word of it to a livin' soul—and I won't."

"I don't see why the Old Feller don't come and carry that Old Enick to the bad place," I said, remembering my own experiences with the aged reprobate. "That's where he ought to be."

"Oh, he's too mean for the Old Feller to have anything to do with him," answered Cousin Mandy Jane. "He's jist too mean even to go to the bad place. And it's my 'pinion that it was his doin's that made our Jonathan have this spell of fever'n'agur."

Toward the middle of the afternoon mother came in with a pleased expression on her face and reported that the fever had subsided, and that the patient was sleeping soundly and "sweatin' like a plow horse."

"He'll be purty well again tomorrow," she remarked; "but

the fever'n'agur will come on him again the next day, I'm afraid. He'll have to keep quiet and take his medicine reg'lar all the rest of the week."

"And Robert, there, he'll have to be the man of the farm," croaked Aunt Rachel from her seat in the chimney corner.

"Lands' sake! only think of it," cried Cousin Mandy Jane. "There's father and David gone to the 'Hio, and here's our Jonathan down with the fever'n'agur, and there hain't nary other male man about the place 'cept little Robert. But I reckon that him and me can keep things a-goin' along about as well as anybody. Don't thee think so, Robert?"

There was a touch of the rankest flattery in all this, but in my innocence I did not perceive it. The fact that I was the only able-bodied "male man" on the farm tickled my vanity more than you might suppose, and I immediately began to imagine myself a lord of creation. Circumstances had made me—yes, little me—the temporary head of the family. Grave responsibilities seemed resting upon my shoulders, and I resolved to perform my duty cheerfully and courageously to the extent of my ability.

The next morning Jonathan rose early and seemed but little the worse for his combat with the fever'n'agur fiend. But he was silent and morose and went about his daily duties in a half-hearted, acidulous manner that made all the rest of us very uncomfortable. Soon after breakfast he ensconced himself in mother's old rocking chair, opposite Aunt Rachel's chimney corner, and declared that he felt "right smart tired" and thought he would rest a while "before goin' out to the clearin'." And there he sat hour after hour, yawning, dozing, groaning, drinking great drafts of bitter herb tea, and keeping himself in a flood of perspiration beside the smoldering summer fire.

"Cousin Mandy Jane," he muttered whiningly, "I reckon thee and Robert will have to tend to things for a right smart while till I git over this spell of fever'n'agur. It's tuck hold of

me tarnal hard, and I reckon I'll most likely have another shake of it tomorrow."

We had already begun "to tend to things," and therefore his remarks were entirely superfluous. Together we had spent the larger part of the forenoon in the new clearing, "rightin'" the numerous log heaps and rekindling the fires that had burned out since Jonathan's early morning visit to them the day before. With long handspikes of green ironwood, we rolled the half-consumed logs closer together; we piled the smaller charred "chunks" upon them, and stirred the red-hot embers until the flames leaped up and clouds of blue-black smoke ascended toward the sky. In all this labor, Cousin Mandy Jane proved herself to be a very present help in time of trouble, but I took care that she should never forget that I was the man of the farm and she nothing but an insignificant female too old to be a girl and too young to be a woman. This "rightin'" of the log heaps, however interesting it might appear to a looker-on, was a man's task which neither of us had ever attempted before. It required both skill and strength; but we undertook it with a will, and although a hand was blistered and an ankle strained and a petticoat scorched in its performance, we finally left the clearing with hearts beating like those of conquerors at the close of a hard-fought battle.

This, however, was only one of the score of daily tasks which we performed, singly or together, with an unvarying regularity, during the whole period of my short reign as the only man of the farm. From the earliest peep of dawn to the last glimmer of the gloaming I was as busy as the proverbial bee. I drove the cows to and from their distant pasture. I helped with the milking and the churning and the cheese-making. I groomed the young horses in the stable and gave them their daily exercise in the stubble-field behind the barn. I chopped the wood and prepared the kindlings for the "cookin' fire." I weeded the garden and gathered corn for the fattening hogs in the lane—and I gave a great deal of very

necessary advice to mother and Cousin Mandy Jane which they utterly failed to appreciate or observe.

Often when I was in the midst of the storm and stress of varying and exacting duties, it seemed to me that our Jonathan—especially on his well days—might have offered to lend a hand. But he availed himself of the sick man's privilege to its utmost limits, and during the entire period of father's absence he was about as useful in our household as the average drone in an overstocked beehive. Whether this was entirely the result of his illness or whether it was partly due to an intense hankering for a few days' rest, no one knew better than himself. On his well days, which alternated regularly with his chill days, he spent the greater part of his time in the chimney corner, drinking his tea and easing himself by groaning and grunting. But the strangest thing was this: At about two o'clock each afternoon, he rose from his chair, put on his heaviest coat, and went out for a walk, from which he did not return until sundown. One day, as he was starting out, I had the hardihood to call after him:

"Where's thee goin', Jonathan?"

He turned upon me with anger flashing from his "agury" eyes. "'Tain't none o' thy tarnal business, thee little Towhead, thee," was his indignant reply. And with head inclined as though in deep meditation, he strode away and was soon lost to view in the woods behind the orchard.

Cousin Mandy Jane had heard him, and such was her amusement that she te-heed quite audibly.

"Thee'd better look out, Robert," she said. "'Tain't very safe to meddle with a feller that's got the fever'n'agur—I tell thee that, right now."

"I only asked him where he was going," I said.

"Well, I can tell thee where he's goin'. He's goin' over to see that there gal of his'n—takin' a mean advantage of Old Enick while he's away to the 'Hio. But I don't know as I blame him. Esther, she ain't no common sort of gal—she's a Lamb,

she ain't no Fox!" Then she te-heed again, and resumed her churning.

On his chill days, however, Jonathan had the sincere sympathy of us all. The agur fit came upon him regularly a little before noon, and it was not until near sundown that his fever subsided and his pitiful delirium was succeeded by a peaceful sleep. Nevertheless—thanks to the herb tea and the sweating process, and perhaps also to his complete abandonment of every form of labor—each fit was less violent than its predecessor, and at the end of a week Jonathan had ceased to wander in his mind and therefore did not get out of his head. This I secretly regretted, for after I had learned that his temporary madness foreboded no serious disaster,

I had come to enjoy his rapturous appeals to an imaginary Esther, and I had possessed myself, as I supposed, of at least one important secret.

Soon, also, I grew thoroughly tired of being the man of the farm. I found that it was an honor which entailed no end of laborious duties; and before the week had passed, I was secretly writhing under the intolerable burdens which had been shifted to my shoulders. There were so many things to be done that I had no time for recreation or for reading. My books reposed undisturbed upon their shelf, and my invisible playmate was almost forgotten. My legs ached, my back was stiff, my head was tired. Could it be that the fever'n'agur fiend was lying in wait for me also? And my chiefest wish was that father and our David would hasten their return from the 'Hio, so that I might resign my commission and return to private life.

And my wish was duly and rather unexpectedly granted; for on the afternoon of the eighth day, as I was toiling at the wood-pile, I saw a covered wagon coming slowly up the lane from the highroad. The horses seemed very tired, the wagon was bespattered with mud, the driver looked grisly enough with unkempt hair and unshaven face, and the elderly man

who was walking behind was only partially visible—yet I recognized them at the very first glance. With a shout, "They've come! they've come!" I dropped my ax and hurried out to the gate to open it.

CHAPTER XVII
What They Brought from the 'Hio

I held the gate wide open, and David, without casting a glance at me or recognizing my existence, drove the tired team into the barnyard. But father, coming close behind, took my hand in his, and with a smile that went straight to my heart, said, "Well, Robert, has thee been a good boy while I was away?"

I made no answer, for I knew that none was expected; and side by side, we walked around to the cabin door.

Mother was on the hearth, heaping some hot coals on the oven wherein a corn pone was baking, and she knew father's step as he entered. Trying hard to suppress any unseemly show of emotion, she looked up and quietly remarked, "Well, Stephen, we didn't expect thee home till tomorrow." But Cousin Mandy Jane, rushing in, breathless, with a pail of water from the spring, was less able to restrain herself.

"Sakes alive!" she cried, panting and making as if she would shamelessly throw her arms right round father's stalwart form, "Gracious' sake! Has thee been all the way to Larnceburg and back so quick as this?"

Father answered her with becoming dignity and reserve: "It is quite natural for all of you to be surprised, for we told you not to look for us till tomorrow. But circumstances alter cases."

"I hope thee didn't have no bad luck," said Aunt Rachel, knocking the ashes from her pipe.

"Luck had nothing to do with it," replied father; "but circumstances made it necessary for us to hurry home a day

or two sooner than the rest of the men; and so here we are. That's all."

"Well, I'd like to know!" said mother, her curiosity getting the better of her sense of propriety. "Thee certainly hain't been gettin' into trouble with any of them circumstances?"

Father made no reply, but began to brush the dust from his big beaver hat, thus plainly indicating that no further information need be expected until he chose to give it.

Curious to see what they had brought from the 'Hio, no less than to learn why they had come home so hurriedly, I ran out to the barn where I found both David and Jonathan busy putting away the horses. The wagon was standing just outside the barn door, and I peeped over the tail-board to see what was in it. To my great satisfaction I saw there a huge sugar kettle reposing upside down on a large pile of straw which seemed recently to have been much disarranged. The kettle was so big that it filled all the space between the straw and the wagon cover, completely shutting out the view toward the front. In fact, from my view-point on the tail-board, there seemed to be but little room in the vehicle for anything else.

As I was looking, and wondering whether I might not go round and peep under the driver's seat, I was suddenly startled by hearing David's gruff voice crying out, "Git away from there, thee Towhead, thee! If thee wants to see the marvels I fetched thee, climb up in the mow and throw down some hay for the horses."

He had not forgotten his promise of the marbles, then! So, although I didn't relish the manner of his speaking, I jumped down and ran into the barn to do his bidding; but, as I was entering the door, he called after me again more gruffly than before, "Don't thee look in the grainery when thee goes past it!"

What did he mean by that?

Filled with a new curiosity, I made no reply, but went somewhat sulkily across the barn floor to the ladder which led

up into the haymow. As I passed by the little room or bin which we called the "grainery," how could I help turning my eyes in that direction? To my great surprise, I saw the door of the bin softly turning upon its hinges and closing, as though moved by some unseen hand. A shiver of cold fright ran through me, I bounded quickly past it, and in another moment was safely up the ladder and in the haymow. Trembling with excitement, I threw some hay down to the horses, as I had been bidden, and then bethought me of returning to the wagon. But there was that granary door and the mysterious thing, whatever it was, that had caused it to move on its hinges. Could I dare to pass near it again? And yet there was no other way by which I could escape from the barn.

For several minutes I tarried at the top of the ladder trying to screw my courage up to the sticking point. Then, with a great lump in my throat, and the shivers running up my back, I boldly scampered down and out of the barn as though the Old Feller was really after me; and not one glance did I dare to cast toward the mysterious granary door.

Once again in the open air, my courage revived, and I resolved not to say a word to anyone about my adventure. The boys had already removed the canvas cover and the wagon bows, and were now lifting out the ponderous sugar kettle.

"It's a mighty roomy pot," remarked Jonathan.

"Yes," answered David. "It's the biggest one ever seen in the 'Hio Country. I reckon it won't hold nary pint less'n three barrel."

"It's just what we'll need at sugar makin' time to bile the sap in," said Jonathan; "and mother, she'll like it when it comes to makin' soap."

As they were setting it down on the ground I looked at the place it had occupied in the wagon and saw to my surprise that it had not been resting on the hay, as appearances indicated, but upon two cross pieces of wood which extended

between the sides of the wagon bed; and in the straw immediately beneath it, there was a cavity, shaped like a hen's nest, which was fully large enough to accommodate the body of a man.

"I wonder what was in that hole," I said innocently, half speaking to myself; but David heard me.

"Thee jist mind thy own business, thee little Towhead, thee!" he cried out with warmth. "If thee knows when thee's well off, thee won't be a-stickin' thy nose where it don't belong."

Fearing to anger him and thus postpone the gift of marbles, I held my peace and stood silently by while the unloading of the wagon was continued. A barrel of salt was lifted out and rolled across the yard to be stored in the weavin'-room. Then from under the driver's seat, Jonathan abstracted a variety of useful articles—an ox chain, a heavy ax, an iron wedge and a plowshare. Last of all, he lifted out the big green willow basket full of packages of all shapes and sizes, each wrapped with brown paper and tied with home-twisted twine.

"Let's tote this thing to the house jist as it is," said David. "Then father, he can undo the bundles like he always does and tell us whose is whose."

"All right!" answered Jonathan: "but I'd e'enamost like to undo two or three of 'em myself."

And so, each taking hold of a side, they carried the heavy basket into the cabin; and I, my curiosity whetted to the edge, followed them silently and saw it deposited in the corner by the cupboard. I wondered whether among all those packages there was not something for me, and my mind dwelt particularly upon the ginseng roots that I had sent to the 'Hio and the fabulous returns that I had taught myself to expect from them.

The table was spread for the evening meal. From the steaming pots and kettles in front of the fireplace savory odors

rose that tickled the palate and roused the dormant appetite.

"Is supper ready?" queried David. "I'm e'enamost hungry enough to eat the tater pot, lid and all."

"Thee'll have to chaw thy thumb a little bit," said bustling Mandy Jane. "The sweet taters ain't quite biled enough yit; but 'twon't be long."

Father, having exchanged his meetin' clothes for the more serviceable garb of everyday wear, was sitting under the bookcase and engaged in earnest talk with mother. I wondered what it was about, and dismissing all further thought of the packages and of supper, I edged my way very quietly toward that part of the room and stood listening.

"It happened this way," I heard him say. "We had sold the wheat and the wool and were driving along the street toward the store, when I heard somebody call me by name. I looked around, and who does thee think it was if it wasn't Levi Coffin? He told me that he had just come down from Sin Snatty, and that there was a black man hiding in one of the stores near by who needed help. He told me that the man was a runaway from Kentucky and that his master had terribly whipped and abused him. 'We must send him on to Canada as quick as we can,' Levi said. 'If his master finds him and takes him back, I've no doubt but what he'll flog him to death!'

I told Levi that I hoped he would be able to get the slave into some safe place before his master crossed the river. And then he said that to do this he must have my help and have it right away. Wouldn't I take him in our wagon and start north with him that very night? Wouldn't I see that he got as far as to Hezekiah Jones's in the Wild Cat Settlement, just as quick as he could be carried? I told him that we were not aiming to start back for at least a couple of days, and I wanted to buy a number of things to take home with me; and besides, I told him that there was a good deal of risk and danger when it comes to helping a slave to escape from his master."

"And I should think that that would have convinced him," said mother.

"Yes, but it didn't," said father. "He only insisted all the more, and he wouldn't listen to any excuses. 'Thee'll be doing the Lord a service,' he said; and he pressed me harder and harder, and quoted Scripture to me. And at last he said that he would go around to the stores with me, right away, and help me buy the things that I needed to take home. What should I have done?"

"Thee should have done as thy conscience told thee to do," answered mother decisively.

"And that is what I did do," said father. "I could not feel free to turn a deaf ear to Levi's entreaties; nor could I bear the thought of allowing the poor black man to be seized and dragged back into slavery. So we hurried with all the speed that we could and were ready to start home before daylight the next morning."

"And what did Joel Sparker and Enoch and the rest of 'em say about it?"

"We came off quietly without telling them anything at all. For it is safest not to have too much help when it comes to keeping a secret. We didn't tell any of them but Levi T.; and he promised that he would make excuses for us when the right time came."

"And what about that there black man?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane, busily fishing the steaming potatoes from the pot.

"Oh, we had him along with us. We hid him in the straw under the big sugar kettle and hardly let him stir till we were safe out of the 'Hio Country; and every time we met anybody on the road we made the poor fellow dodge back into his hole. He's a pitiable, suffering creature, with gashes all over him where the whip cut him and the dogs tore him."

"Sakes alive!" cried Cousin Mandy Jane.

"But what did thee do with him?" inquired mother.

"Where is he now?"

Father turned sharply to David, "Did thee do as I directed thee?"

"Yes, father, I put the tarnal critter in the grainery, and I told him not to peek his nose out of it till after dark."

"And we made him a bed of oats straw," added Jonathan. "He's about the miserablest-lookin' gob of a two-legged human that I ever set my eyes on."

"Pore fellow!" said mother; "and he must be hungry, too."

"Why not fetch him up to the house and let him set down to supper with the rest of us?" suggested Cousin Mandy Jane.

"I don't think he would feel free to mingle with white people in that way," said father. "There might also be some danger to him in doing so; for the slave hunters may be closer to us than we are aware."

"It will be better to carry him something," said mother; "and we'll do that right now. He shall have his supper before the rest of us taste a bite."

She had already begun to fill a large wooden platter with food from the various sources at hand; boiled bacon and beans, sweet potatoes, stewed pumpkin, hot corn dodgers, and sweet roas'n'-ears; and to these she added a generous slice of white wheaten bread covered thick with fresh apple butter of her own making.

"That's more'n I've eat in a week," said Jonathan, and his pinched pale features, confirmed the truth of his words.

"But that there tarnal black feller, he'll lick it all up at one settin' and then grunt for more," said David, who had already some knowledge of the gustatory powers of the fugitive.

"Supper's ready!" announced Cousin Mandy Jane.

"We must not sit down until we've given the black man his share," said father. "Our own food will taste the better if we know that his wants have been satisfied." Then, taking the well-filled platter in his hands, he turned to me and said softly, "Come, Robert, thee may fetch that pitcher of milk with thee,

for him to drink."

And so, with the food and the pitcher of milk, we sallied forth to the barn to feed our humble guest; and close behind us came mother and Mandy Jane and half reluctant Jonathan. But Aunt Rachel composedly remained in the chimney corner, manifesting no curiosity. "I've seen a many of them fellers down South," she muttered, "and they don't have no attractions." And David, unable to control his appetite longer, sat himself down alone at the table and began to devour whatever food was nearest at hand.

Father pushed open the door of the granary and called out, "Samuel, is thee there? Here is a bite of something for thee to eat. Don't be afraid, for thee's among friends."

There was a rustling lumbering sound within, and presently the fugitive, covered with cobwebs, emerged from the darkness. If the black man whom I had seen at Widder Bright's was ugly, this one was truly hideous. He was a small man, hunchbacked, misshapen, cowering like a much mistreated dog. The Old Feller himself could not have presented a more forbidding appearance; and yet the sight of him was pitiful, a great scar on his forehead, his left arm hanging useless, his clothes in tatters. Sympathy for his misfortunes immediately overcame the fear which his beastly appearance had engendered. We could not withhold from him the generous pity that would have been accorded to any brute in a similar state of helplessness and distress.

Mother went quickly and boldly forward and, in that gentle tone of which she was so accomplished a mistress, said, "How's thee, Samuel? I'm right glad to see thee."

The fellow looked dumbly at her and made no motion to touch the hand which she proffered. Then ducking his head—but whether for politeness or for the lack of it, I know not—he grunted, "Ugh!" and turned toward the rest of our company.

"We have brought thy supper to thee," said father.

Samuel grunted again, and snatching the platter from father's hands, he began immediately to devour the tempting food. "Good! good!" he grunted, and then paid no further heed to our presence. With strange conflicting emotions, I went timidly forward and set the pitcher of milk within his reach. I had expected to see a hero, and had found a brute.

"We hope thee will enjoy it," said mother.

"Ugh! ugh!" he answered; and, his great mouth distended with food, he shuffled back into the dark privacy of his lodging-place.

"We won't disturb him any longer," said father; and with feelings of mingled disappointment, resentment and pity, we returned silently to the house and our waiting supper table.

"My sakes alive!" said Cousin Mandy Jane in a half whisper; "ain't he an ugly critter?"

"God made him," answered mother piously.

And David, having gorged himself during our absence, looked up from his empty plate and wickedly added, "And it's my 'pinion He done a mighty pore job of it."

The remark was so unusual, and withal so irreverent and unnecessary, that it temporarily dispelled our enjoyment and threw me into a state of apprehension that disturbed me not a little. I felt that if the lightning should suddenly destroy our dwelling, or a flood overwhelm the entire Settlement, we should only be experiencing the just vengeance of an angry Jehovah.

"David, I am sorry that thee should be so frivolous as to speak in that manner," was father's mild reproof.

And the supper was eaten in silence.

Nevertheless, when the table was cleared, the dishes were washed, and all the family assembled by the hearth, our spirits revived and we were ourselves again. Night had fallen; but out-of-doors the moon was beaming, and indoors the fire blazed brightly, being judiciously fed with pieces of oily hickory bark that had been stored up for such occasions. The

green willow basket was dragged out into the middle of the floor, and all of us, save David—impulsive David—stood round it, expectant, curious, anxious to witness the unpacking.

Father, trying very hard to be patriarchal and dignified, and illy concealing the pride and joy that would well up from his heart, sat down beside the basket and unwrapped the various packages, one by one. Of course, most of the articles were for the womenfolks; a pair of store shoes and a roll of pink calico to be made into a First-day meetin' dress for Cousin Mandy Jane; a yard of gingham for Aunt Rachel; some narrow dove-colored ribbons for mother's new bonnet (which she was making at odd spells); a paper of needles and three spools of thread; a brass thimble; a tin coffee-pot to replace our old one that was clean rusted through at the bottom. After these, came a variety of articles for table consumption and general household use. Among them were two pounds of real coffee in the grain; a bag of rice; little packages of allspice and black pepper for seasonings—and a small quantity of saleratus, all bought with the eggs and cheeses that mother had sent to the market. As each package was given out, it was duly inspected by all the family, its price was noted, and comments were made in anticipation of the pleasure that it would give us; and then it was put away in its place—be that the cupboard, the table drawer, the hair trunk under Aunt Rachel's bed, or the mantel-shelf in the big-house. My vanity found encouragement in contemplating the vast amount of money that must have been required to purchase such things.

"Father, is thee sure that these are all free-labor goods?" asked mother while yet the basket was by no means empty.

"Well, I bought nothing until I had made careful inquiries," he answered cautiously. "But there are some things that are raised only in the South and are therefore produced by slave labor. While we are called upon to bear a testimony against the use of slave-labor goods, I don't think that we

should deny ourselves of such necessary articles as rice and coffee just because colored men have labored to make them grow."

"Specially not the rice," interjected Aunt Rachel.

"It's so nice, when company comes, to have a dishful of it, all softened with butter and cream!"

"That's so," said mother. "Rice is comfortin' to the well and healin' to the sick; and I feel free in my mind to use it without askin' who made it. But I have some doubts about the coffee."

"Yes," muttered Aunt Rachel, "I could never take a drap of it without thinkin' of the pore slaves that toiled so hard to raise it."

"Well, if thee has scruples against it, it's best for thee not to drink it," said father.

"I guess we can git along pretty well with spicewood tea and a little sassafras," said mother; and turning to Cousin Mandy Jane she bade her put the package of coffee "clean out of sight at the back of the top shelf. If we don't see it, we won't be tempted to want it."

"Thee may be right, Deborah," said father in a tone of regret, "but thee knows that we ain't so strict in this matter as our anti-slavery friends are."

"Anti friends or no anti friends," retorted mother somewhat bruskly, "it's our bounden duty to bear a testimony ag'inst slavery."

Father made no reply, but turned again to the willow basket and the few packages that still remained unopened.

"Here, Aunt Rachel, here's thy goods," and he handed her a long twist of green smoking tobacco, a new clay pipe, a set of knitting needles and a spool of thread. "I think the tobacco is slave labor, for it was grown in Kentucky; but if thee feels free to use it, I have nothing to say."

"If it's good tobacker I don't keer what labor it is," she replied, taking the weed eagerly from his hands and beginning

to fill the new pipe. "But I thought maybe there might be something a-comin' to me."

"There is," said father. "I sold thy stockings for five levies in cash. The tobacco cost two levies; the pipe cost a fip, and the thread and needles a levy. How much change is coming to thee?"

I knew that Aunt Rachel was not quick at figures, nor indeed very accurate, and so I prompted her by whispering, "Eighteen cents and three-quarters."

"That's right," said father, overhearing us; "and here it is," and he handed her three much-battered silver fips, each valued at six and a quarter cents.

"I'd like to know when my turn's goin' to come," remarked Jonathan, whiningly because of the fever'n'agur, and unable to control his impatience.

"Thee may have thy turn right now," answered father. "Thy share of the wool amounted to a dollar and a half; and here it is. And since thee was so good as to stay at home and take care of things, I have brought thee a present of a Barlow knife which I know thee sometimes needs."

Jonathan's face beamed with intense satisfaction as the money was laid in his open palm. "That's so much more toward the forty-acre piece," he whispered to Cousin Mandy Jane. "And the knife will come in handy in more ways than one."

"And I have something else for thee," said father. "I happened to meet a doctor in Larnceburg—his name was Doctor Bunsen—and he was asking very particularly about this Settlement, for he has some mind to come and locate in these parts. He asked if there was much sickness up this way, and I told him that about the only trouble we ever had was with the fever'n'agur. 'Oh,' he said, 'that's what we call the Wabash shakes.' And he asked if any of our family was troubled with it. I told him that we had all been down with it more or less, and that I supposed likely thee was shaking with

it at that moment. 'Well,' he said, 'I have some powders here that will cure the worst case of Wabash shakes in no time. Take 'em home and give the boy one of 'em every two hours till he's took six, and I'll warrant the fever'n'agur won't touch him again for the next six months!' So here they are, Jonathan. Go and take one of them right now and then, in a couple of hours, swallow another one."

He opened a very small paper box and in it were twenty-four tiny bits of folded paper each containing about as much of the healing powder as might lie on the blade of a penknife. We looked at it curiously. It was white and glistening, reminding us of the drifted snow when the weather is at its coldest.

"The doctor called it quinine," said father. "It is to be taken in half a cup of cold water."

Cousin Mandy Jane ran for the water, and when she had brought it shook the contents of one of the packages into it. "Here, Jonathan, swaller it down," she commanded.

The unsuspecting young man obeyed, and then began a series of gyrations and contortions and expectorations which cannot be described and which moved even father to irrespressible laughter.

"You needn't laugh, goll darn it!" cried Jonathan, angry and half-choking. "I'd rather have the fever'n'agur every day than swoller that tarnation stuff."

Father hastened to relieve the tension by turning again to the willow basket. There were now not more than half a dozen parcels remaining unopened, and surely one must be mine. My impatience had risen almost to the boiling point—and yet I knew that father would not be hurried, and that whatever he did would surely be the best for everybody. And so with a trembling heart and firmly closed mouth, I waited and said nothing.

Father, understanding my disquietude, made a tantalizing motion toward a small parcel that was most certainly mine,

and then pulled out a ball-like package that was beneath it.

"I have a surprise for every one of you," he said. "All the other things were necessities, but this that I am going to give you is a luxury. It ain't often that we indulge in luxuries; but this was not very costly, and I venture to say it will not do us any harm."

There was a twinkle in his eye—a twinkle of enjoyment which I had never seen but once or twice before in all my life. He held the paper-wrapped parcel in his hand and added: "Now the one that can guess what this is may unwrap it."

"I guess it's a bottle of bear's grease," said Jonathan, forgetting his late discomfiture.

"It looks like it might be a big ingern, or maybe a ball of cotton yarn," hazarded Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Thee just now said it was a luxury," said mother. "So I guess that's what it is."

"Thee's right, Deborah; and thee may undo it," answered father, trying hard to repress a smile.

Mother skillfully removed the paper wrappings and revealed to our astonished gaze a big ripe orange, the first that I had ever seen. What a wonderful specimen of fruit it was! It was passed from hand to hand in order that each might examine it, smell of it and remark upon its beauty.

"When I was a growin' gal we used to see 'em down in Carliny," said mother.

"Yes, and they worn't no rarity, nother," added Aunt Rachel.

Finally father removed the peeling from the fruit and carefully divided it into six equal portions, giving one portion to each of us.

"Where's thy sheer, father?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Oh, my share is the paying for it," he answered.

"Thee must have half of mine," said mother; and she actually thrust it into his mouth—a bold unheard-of act, savoring of unbecoming levity and unwomanly behavior. But

father seemed to enjoy it all.

I ate my portion, having some difficulty in saving all the juice. How delicious it was, and how different from anything else that I had ever tasted! Ah! if I live to the age of Noah's grandfather, I shall never see such another orange. I looked up and saw Aunt Rachel beckoning to me from the chimney corner. She was puffing valiantly through her new pipe, and the wreaths of smoke that encircled her gray head were like haloes of glory and clouds of incense. I went to her softly on tiptoe.

"Shet thy peepers and open thy teethers," she whispered.

I obeyed, and she thrust her portion of the wonderful fruit into my already pampered mouth.

"O Aunt Rachel!" I protested, half choking.

"Eat it, Robbie!" she gurgled. "I don't want it; it spiles the taste of my tobacker."

What could I do?

And now the next parcel was taken from the basket—a small parcel, cubical in shape and wrapped in blue paper.

"Here are some more luxuries, but of a different sort," said father. "They ain't to eat and they ain't to wear, but they'll be mighty handy to have around once in a while."

He removed the wrappings and displayed to our wondering gaze two bunches of very small pine sticks fastened together at one end and yellow with sulphur at the other.

"Sakes alive! Lucifer matches!" cried Cousin Mandy Jane. "Now we won't have to borry fire every time our'n goes out."

Mother was visibly pleased although she tried hard to appear otherwise. "Stephen," she said, "I'm afraid thee's inclined to be extravagant. We certainly could have got along without such expensive things."

"Well, they didn't cost much," answered father. "I paid a fip for the two bunches, and there's a hundred matches in each bunch. With proper economy, and using them only when the fire goes out, they ought to last for years."

Then he gave a single match to each of us, just so we might try it and see how it acted.

"It's Robert's turn first," said mother.

With great caution and many quakings of the heart, I knelt on the hearth and repeatedly scratched my match on the flat stone. At last, to the admiration of all and the momentary alarm of myself, it suddenly burst into a yellowish flame, emitting a fizzling sound, a spirt of grayish smoke and a stifling odor.

"There! Didn't I tell thee?" cried Cousin Mandy Jane. "No more borryin' of fire!"

Then, one by one, the others tried the pleasing experiment with varying success. When it came Jonathan's turn he stood up by the chimney and tried to scratch the match on the keystone of the fireplace. He struck so hard that the match was broken in two in the middle and the sulphured end fell, unignited, into the ashes.

"The tarnal thing wasn't no good, nohow," he growled angrily; for the fever'n'agur, together with the quinine, had ruffled his good nature wonderfully.

"I'm afraid thee's no good hand at matches," said Aunt Rachel. "Thee must be keerful when thee goes to make a match with Esther."

"And now," said father, returning to the basket, "we will see what is in this last package. If I'm not mistaken it is something for Robert."

He held up the package so that all might see. Yes, it was what I had been hoping for; it was a book! I knew that from the shape of it, although it was still wrapped in two or three folds of brown paper.

"Thy ginseng roots sold well, Robert," he continued. "The first man I offered 'em to said he would give four bits for the bunch, and being in a hurry I went no farther but made a bargain at once. Then I went into a store where they sold books, and bought this one for the same money. Thee may

unwrap it and see what it looks like."

With unmannerly haste I took the little parcel from his hands, untied the cord around it and removed the coverings. A pretty little book bound in blue boards looked up and smiled at me. I opened it at the title-page and read the name of it aloud: *The Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe;* and then my eyes jumped quickly to the frontispiece, which proved to be the only picture in the volume. And what a wonderful picture it was—a picture of a strangely dressed man walking upon a sandy seashore and holding over his head the queerest-looking umbrella imaginable. The sea was calm, the wavelets were rippling on the beach, an air of mystery and loneliness pervaded the entire scene. The man was looking at some strange marks in the sand, and the expression of his face was that of surprise and alarm.

My curiosity was aroused to fever heat. I was anxious to begin the reading of a book that promised to prove so very interesting and so full of novelty. But mother quietly took it from my hands.

"Stephen," she asked, "is thee right sure that this is a good book for Robert to read?"

"Oh, yes," answered father. "I made sure of that before I bought it. The storekeeper told me that it is the best book in the world for boys. But I didn't take his word for it. I read several pages, and found Robinson's account of his adventures very instructive and truthful."

"What makes thee think it's truthful?"

"Why, the man tells what he himself saw and did; and he tells it in such a plain straightforward way that thee can't help but believe it."

"What was the man's name?"

"Robinson."

"Robinson what?"

"Robinson Crusoe."

"That's an uncommon name. There's a plenty of

Robinsons in Wayne, and I knowed two or three families of that name in old Carliny. But I never heard of anybody of the name of Crusoe."

"Was Robinson a Friend?" asked Aunt Rachel.

"No, I think not," answered father; "for I noticed that he never used the plain language, even at times when he must have feared that his end was at hand. But there have been many worldly men who have written books of great worth, and I feel sure that Robinson Crusoe has done just that thing."

"Well," remarked mother resignedly, "if thee believes that this is really a good and safe book, I am glad thee bought it; for thee knows Robert's queer way. But I do hope he will never get to readin' silly story books that have no truth nor sense in 'em. It would be a waste of time, besides fillin' his head with foolishness."

"Thee is right," said father. "And, after all, what is a story book or a novel but the vain imaginings of some untruthful person?"

The conversation was ended, and mother handed the precious volume back to me with the admonition that I must not spend so much time in reading it that my other duties would be neglected.

I hastened to throw some fresh bits of hickory bark on the smoldering fire, and the flames soon springing up, the light was so bright as to enable me to read the small print in the volume quite easily. I threw myself down on the floor beside the hearth and immediately became absorbed in Robinson's account of his wayward boyhood and his first experiences as a sailor. And as I read, dear Inviz came up stealthily and put his arms around my neck and looked over my shoulder and became as deeply absorbed in the story as I myself.

"Don't thee wish thee could be a sailor?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "I should like to sail on the great sea and visit the strange lands on the other side of the world."

"Well, just wait till thee is grown, and then maybe thee can run away and do as Robinson did," whispered the tempter.

Suddenly I was aroused from my reverie by a command from father: "Robert, thee's read enough for tonight. Put thy *Robinson Crusoe* away in the bookcase, and fetch me the Book of books. Does thee hear?"

Startled by his stern way of speaking, I hastened to obey, and as I did so I observed that the family had assembled and were already seated in their respective places to listen to the reading of the chapter. And there, too, sitting between David and Jonathan, was the fugitive Samuel! He had come, at father's urgent invitation, to join us in this last and most impressive duty of the day. He seemed scarcely the same being that I had seen a few hours before, crouching like a beast of prey, munching and crunching his food, and grunting out his satisfaction like a senseless brute. He had washed himself at the spring, brushed the cobwebs and dust from his ragged clothing, and put on a cheerier appearance every way. And my heart went out to him in pity.

"He ain't nigh as ugly as he was when we seen him in the barn," whispered Cousin Mandy Jane.

"And he's very nice behavin', too, for one of his color," remarked her grandmother.

I remember that father was a long time in finding the place in the Book that night; and the only portion of the reading that attracted my attention was this meaningful declaration: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

At the close of the reading, the black man withdrew with an awkward bow, and shuffled down the pathway toward his lodging-place in the barn. As he was opening the barnyard gate, father called to him: "Samuel, I hope thee will rest well. Thee must keep quite close all day tomorrow, and in the evening we will see that thee is carried farther on thy way."

"All right, sah," was the response. "Good night, sah! I's 'bleeged."

And he disappeared in the shadows.

It would have been a great comfort had I been permitted to resume the reading of my new book and the fascinating story that I had scarcely begun. But all the rules and traditions of our household forbade it; the "chapter" had been read, the day's labors and recreations were finished, and nothing more was allowable, save to cover the fire, wind the clock and retire to rest.

With lagging feet, therefore, I went back into the shadows, drew my trundle-bed out to its place, and began to disrobe for the night. As I leapt into bed, I was surprised to find several little round, hard objects lying in my way between the straw tick and the covering blanket. I was about to cry out to mother when I heard a suppressed whisper in the darkness above me which sent a thrill of satisfaction through my tingling veins. I knew by the sound that it was David lying flat on the floor of the loft with his mouth at a familiar knot-hole.

"Did thee find the marvels, Towhead? Count 'em. I fetched thee nine instid of two. 'Nuff to play pardners!"

Nine brand-new marbles! Oh, happiness! I huddled them all together in a little heap under my two hands, and as I was counting them over and over with my fingers, Inviz crept softly into the bed beside me and shared my joy.

"Well, thee has some real boughten playthings, now," he whispered. "Thee is a lucky boy."

And I dropped to sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII
News from the County Seat

The next evening just as the full moon was rising above the tree-tops, our farm wagon with the two young horses attached was driven quietly out through the front gateway. On the driver's seat was David with his coat and boots on, for the air was frosty; and by his side sat 'Lihu Bright, the Widder's eldest son, a man well skilled in the operation of the "underground." There were a number of large pumpkins in the wagon, and in the midst of them, peeping out from a loose heap of straw, was a round, woolly, black head, which I recognized as that of the fugitive.

We stood by the gate to see them off.

"Well, Elihu," said father, "we are trusting this whole business to thee. Thee has been over the road and thee knows the way, and thee understands what to do in case there is any trouble."

"I don't think there's much danger of getting into trouble," answered 'Lihu. "We shall drive around through the Wild Cat Settlement instead of by way of Dashville, although it is three or four miles farther. We'll cross the river at the North Ford, and then foller the state road straight to Hezekiah Jones's. There ain't many houses along that way, and I doubt if we shall meet a single person. I've driv over that road many and many a time, and I know every foot of it even in the night."

"And when does thee suppose you will get to Hezekiah's?"

"Some time about midnight, I hope. Then we'll leave the passenger in Hezekiah's charge; and after we've let the horses

rest a spell, we'll drive down to Dashville and then back home. You may look for us about this time tomorrow."

"I see thee understands thyself, and I hope you will get along all right," said father. Then reaching his hand over toward the little woolly head in the midst of the pumpkins, he added, "Farewell, Samuel. It is my fervent wish that thee may get to the end of thy journey in safety."

A long black arm emerged from the straw and the semi-darkness, and there was a friendly shaking of hands.

"Goo'-by, massah! I's 'bleeged."

"Git ep!" cried David, slapping the horses with the lines.

And they were away.

"Farewell, Samuel!" It was the voice of Cousin Mandy Jane, calling from the doorstep; but the annex to the underground, together with its passengers, had already disappeared in the murky shadows of the lane.

We stood and listened until long after they had turned into the big road and were speeding straight toward Dry Forks and the lonely country beyond. Occasionally we could hear the crunching of the wheels in some gravelly portion of the highway, or the clatter of the horses' hoofs as they cantered down some smooth incline, or the slambang of the wagon as it jolted over rocks and projecting roots and into treacherous chuck-holes. Little by little, these sounds became fainter and less frequent, and finally, listen as intently as we might, no sounds came to our ears save the chirping of belated katydids and the melancholy hootings of a pair of owls down in the new clearing.

"I reckon we had better go in out of the night air," said father.

And this I was glad to do; for the fire was blazing brightly, and my new book was waiting for me on the bookshelf, and Inviz was impatient to come and sit by my side while I read the charming story of Robinson.

The next day the weather had changed. Gray clouds

obscured the sky, and a chilling mist hung in the air, filling the trees with moisture and the whole world with melancholy. All our thoughts were with David and 'Lihu and the fugitive black man; and all our conversation consisted of speculations concerning their whereabouts and their safety and the probability of slave-hunters having captured them and carried them away to distant ungodly Kentucky.

Toward evening the mist changed into a drizzling rain, and our anxiety and downheartedness were correspondingly increased. But these feelings were of short duration; for when all of us were again assembled in our great living-room, and the fire was leaping up the chimney, and the supper things were cleared away, and each of us was busy after his own fashion, cheerfulness gradually returned and we almost forgot the two heroes who must now be somewhere out in the cold and rain.

Father drew his shoemaker's bench from its place under Aunt Rachel's bed, and setting it near the center of the room began the task of putting new half-soles on Cousin Mandy Jane's everyday shoes, of which, the weather now growing colder, she would soon be in need.

In order that he might see distinctly, a candle was lighted and placed on the candlestand quite near his elbow. Mother, with her sewing, sat down on the farther side of the candlestand, while I with my book in hand, doubled myself up on the floor near her feet.

"The candle is lots better for Robert to read by than the firelight," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane, busily wiping the dishes. "It's safer like, and ain't so tryin' on the eyes."

"It's better for sewin', too," said mother.

"It ain't no better for knittin'," muttered Aunt Rachel.

"I can knit jist as well in one light as in t'other."

Father had fitted a last in one of the shoes and had cut the half-soles to the proper size. He turned quietly to me and said, "I think, Robert, that we would all enjoy hearing thee

read some of Robinson Crusoe's surprising adventures."

I had already perused more than half of the volume, but I was so proud of the honor of reading aloud to the rest of the family that I now turned back to the beginning in order that everyone might have a true understanding of the narrative. All were busy at work, and yet I knew that I would have at least three attentive listeners—father, mother and Mandy Jane. As for Aunt Rachel, what cared she for hearing about Robinson's adventures so long as she could have recourse to her new pipe, her knitting and happy memories of old Carliny? And, as for Jonathan, he was a hater of books and never a good listener; and as he sat on the farther side of the hearth, shelling corn for the mill, he had no room in his mind for any thoughts save dreams of pretty Esther Lamb and the forty-acre piece down by the Corners.

I cleared my throat several times and then began: "I was born in the year 1632 in the City of York." Scarcely had I pronounced this first sentence, when father started in with his pegging. A rare concert followed. Whether father timed his tapping with my somewhat rapid delivery of words, or whether I unconsciously tuned my voice to harmonize with the regular thump-thumping of his hammer, I cannot say; but certainly we had a most joyous time of it.

"Thump! rap-tap! Thump! rap-tap!" sounded the little round-headed shoemaker's hammer, alternately pounding the awl into the leather and then driving home the little pegs; and the syllables fell from my lips with almost equal regularity and precision. Paragraph after paragraph was read, and leaf after leaf was turned; and at length the "half-solin'" was nearing completion. Once I paused to snuff the candle, and Cousin Mandy Jane availed herself of the opportunity to remark: "Sakes alive! It's as good as a quiltin'. It's a sight more interestin' than George Fox's *Journal.*"

And mother was of the same mind save with reference to a single point. "It would have been right smart better," she

said, "if Robinson had used the plain language instead of the language of the world's people."

I was now just in the midst of the account of the great storm, "when the wind still blowing very hard, the ship struck upon a sand, and in a moment the sea broke over her." I can never forget that passage. The situation was so perilous, the suspense was so great, that as I pronounced the words the shoe hammer in father's uplifted hand paused before descending, the "rap-tap-tap" was omitted for the full space of three seconds, and every one of my hearers waited breathless to hear what happened next. With a quaver in my voice I proceeded, and the tension was relaxed. (O my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona! You know not the delights of poverty. Surfeited with "advantages" and overgorged with "blessings," you are incapable of such joys as were mine on that well-remembered evening. A book to you is only a book—an inanimate thing; to the poor only is it "the precious life blood of a master spirit.")

The last shoe peg was driven home. The new half-soles were neatly trimmed and smoothed. Father was preparing the lampblack with which to blacken their raw edges; and my reading had progressed to the culmination of the next great crisis when "a mountain-like wave took us with such fury that it overset the boat at once, giving us not time hardly to say, *O God!* for we were swallowed up in a moment."

And there I stopped; for we heard the sound of wheels and the creaking of the barnyard gate and David's rasping voice calling to his brother to "come out here and take keer of these 'yer tarnal critters." Instantly a change came over the spirit of our dreams. Jonathan, waking with a start from his pleasant meditations, rushed out to obey the summons; mother rose to stir the fire; and Cousin Mandy Jane began hurriedly to assemble some half-cold victuals for the returned hero's supper. I ran to the window, and looking toward the barn, could dimly see in the tempered darkness the outline of

the old wagon with the light of our little tin lantern flickering faintly at the foot of the dashboard. Father, with some little compromise of dignity, quickly put the finishing touches to the new half-soles, and rising, pushed the shoe-bench back to its place beneath the bed. He was turning toward the door when David suddenly entered, chilled, wet, and disgruntled with his long ride through the drizzling rain. He stumbled toward the fireplace, removing his water-soaked coat and hat and stamping his big boots upon the hearthstones.

"Where's Elihu?" asked father, somewhat anxiously.

"He went on home by the short cut," answered David crustily. "If thee only knowed how tarnal chilly I am, thee wouldn't be so much concerned about 'Lihu."

He stood in close proximity to the fire, turning first one side toward the generous heat, and then the other; and all the while he continued to give vent to a series of bearish grunts and growls and lamentations as incoherent as they were unnecessary.

"Say, Robert, thee little Towhead, thee!" he blurted; "go and fetch me the bootjack."

I obeyed silently and sulkily, for I didn't like his rude way of talking.

"Thee's as slow as m'lasses in cold weather," he growled, as he snatched the useful jack from my hands and proceeded, with its assistance, to pull off his boots. It was a hard job accompanied with much straining and complaining; and when it was finally accomplished he sat down by the hearth and stretched his steaming bare feet toward the cheery fire.

We bore with him gently, well knowing that as soon as he was made comfortable, his good spirits would begin to return and he would be anxious to tell us all about his adventures in the service of freedom. So we asked no questions, but patiently looked on and bided our time. And, in order that he might enjoy his supper in the full warmth of the fire, mother motioned to me to set the candlestand close beside him on

the hearth.

"That's right, Towhead," he said in tones conciliatory and much mollified; "and if somebody'd only hustle with them there victuals I'd be glad all round. I'm so tarnal hungry I do b'lieve I could swaller a yoke of steers without half chawin' 'em."

And the victuals were not long delayed; Cousin Mandy Jane, with astonishing alacrity, loaded the candlestand with a variety of homely eatables in quantities sufficient to satisfy the appetite of the hungriest man. Nor did David delay his onslaught upon them, but began with ruthless zeal to devour whatever came first to his hand—a squash pie, a glass of preserves, roas'n'-ears, pickles, corn dodgers, and vast supplies of fat pork and string beans—until the wonder was that one capacious stomach could contain so much. Then, pausing between mouthfuls of boiled cabbage and currant jam, he called out, "Cousin Mandy Jane, if thee'll only fetch me three or four cups of that there coffee, sizzlin' hot, I reckon it'll drive some of these tarnal shivers out of my marrer bones."

"Th'ain't no coffee," said Cousin Mandy Jane. "It's all slave labor and we daresn't use it."

"What does thee think I keer for the labor of it?" he answered. "When a feller's plumb gone flabbergasted by ridin' all day in the cold, it ain't no time to be pertickler about sich things as slave labor and free labor."

"But the coffee hain't been browned yet," mother explained in her peacefulest, purring tones. "It would have to be roasted and ground and b'iled, and that would take a longer time than thee wants to wait. 'T would take anyhow a half-hour."

"Well, then, give me somethin' else that's hot. I don't keer what it is, jist so it'll wrastle with the tarnal shivers that's in my marrer bones."

"How will some pennyrile tea do?" asked mother.

"It'll do all right if thee'll make it hot enough and strong enough," he answered. "I don't keer if it's strong enough to bear up an iron wedge eendwise; it'll be all the more soothin' and warmin'."

And so, under the wholesome influence of the fire, the food and the stimulating drink, the effects of the dampness and night air were overcome and there was a glow in David's cheeks that told of returned comfort and good nature. He glanced around at our inquiring faces, and fidgeted uneasily in his chair; and still no one ventured to ask a question. The fire was now making him altogether too warm, drops of sweat were oozing from his forehead, the chills had finally been driven ingloriously from his marrer bones, the hero was ready to talk; and still we waited in silence.

"I reckon nobody don't keer to hear nothin' about our trip to Uncle Hezekiah's," he finally muttered, sliding his chair backward till he was well away from the now oppressive heat.

The psychological moment had arrived for which we had been waiting; and father therefore gently responded, "I s'pose thee and 'Lihu got through safe, or else thee wouldn't be here now."

"Safe! Well, I should reckon! We didn't lose the road nary time, and we didn't meet nary a livin' soul 'twixt here and the Wild Cat Settlement. I tell thee, 'Lihu Bright knowed the way, else we'd never got along them tarnal roads by moonlight. And what does thee think? That good-for-nothin' black feller that was puttin' us to all that trouble, he jist laid among the punkins and slept like a darnick till we driv up to Uncle Hezekiah's door; and then we had to 'most shake the gizzard out of him 'fore he'd stir himself and git up and go into the house."

His tongue being thus once started, the hero continued to rattle out his somewhat rambling narrative, interjecting his speech with many repetitions and homely metaphors, and giving none of us room to say a word or ask a question. In the

end we gathered that the expedition had been eminently successful. After a rapid drive of five hours the fugitive had been safely landed at Hezekiah Jones's just as the clock was striking midnight. Uncle Hezekiah, having been mysteriously apprised of their coming, was prepared to receive them. The fugitive was hidden in the loft to remain there until the way was clear to convey him to the next station. The weary horses were stabled and fed; and Elihu and David retired to rest in Uncle Hezekiah's best room, where they slept the sleep of the righteous in Aunt Jane's best feather-bed. Then at seven in the morning they breakfasted, presented the pumpkins to Uncle Hezekiah and prepared for the return trip by way of Dashville, the county seat.

"We driv down along the river," continued David, "and I reckon it was about ten o'clock when we 'riv' in the town. And thee jist ought to see!" And here he slapped his thigh. "Thee wouldn't know the place. Why, I counted ten new houses, strung along both sides of the road, and there's as many more jist beginnin' to go up. It made me think of Larnceburg—sich a tarnal noise of hammerin' and sawin', and sich crowds of people walkin' along the paths by the side of the road…. And then, what does thee think? The Methodisters, they've jist put up a bran-new meetin'-house, with a steeple on to it. And right down ag'inst the court-house the county's built a new jail with iron bars 'crosst the winders. Me an' 'Lihu, we went down to see it, and I tell thee it made me think of Larnceburg."

He paused for breath, and father quietly remarked, "I suppose that people are flocking to Dashville on account of the railroad that's about to connect it with Nopplis. Calvin Fletcher told me last spring that they had already begun work on it."

"Begun!" exclaimed David. "I should reckon 'tis begun; it's most finished. And what does thee think? I met old Isaac Wilson over there. Thee knows old Isaac Wilson?"

"Certainly, we used to be playmates, when we were boys. What's he doing in Dashville?"

"He's keepin' a store; and he took me into it, and showed me all the things he's got to sell. He says that it's his 'pinion that Dashville will soon be the biggest town in Injanner. He says that that railroad is bound to make the place grow and he wouldn't be s'prised if it got clean ahead of Nopplis inside of the next five years. Oh, I tell thee, things is a-hummin' over there!"

"Well, I'm truly glad to hear about Isaac Wilson," said father. "I hope he will do well with his store."

"If thee could jist see what he's got in it!" exclaimed David. "Why! th' ain't nothin' he hain't got; and he gives trade for all the butter 'n' aigs the folks'll fetch in. He said that when the railroad gits started to runnin', he's goin' to buy wheat and wool and everything jist like they do at Larnceburg. He said for me to tell thee that we won't have to go to the 'Hio no more, nor even to Nopplis, 'cause we can do jist as well at the county seat."

"That is surely bringing the markets to our very door," said father. "I never expected that such a thing would happen in *my* lifetime."

"Thee's right!" and David slapped his thigh most vigorously. "And Isaac said that he reckons the railroad will begin runnin' cars to Dashville afore spring. And, what does thee think? While the horses was restin' and eatin' by the courthouse fence, 'Lihu and me went down toward the river to look at where they're diggin' for the road. Well, thee never seen so big a ditch in thy life; it's more'n twice as wide as our crick at the swimmin' hole, and it's deep enough to swaller a house; but there ain't no water in it. It's jist a cut, as they call it, right through the bluffs, so as to make the road kinder level like. We watched the men that was diggin' it a while and then we went round by the post-office; and I reckon it must have been nigh on to two o'clock when we hitched up and started

home—and we hadn't come a mile afore this tarnal drizzlin' rain begun."

"Did thee git any mail at the post-office?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Nary a thing 'ceptin' two *Erays* for the Widder's folks and a letter for Joel Sparker that we mustn't forgit to take to meetin' for him tomorrow. But what does thee think? Isaac Wilson, he told us that the president was goin' to set up a new post-office right over here at the Dry Forks. It's to be in Seth Dawson's smith shop, and Seth he's been 'pinted postmaster."

"Well, I'm not so much surprised as gratified to hear that," said father. "We've been working two or three years to get a post-office established somewhere in the Settlement. But, certainly, things are moving rapidly nowadays."

"Thee's right! And thee'd 'a' thought so if thee'd seen how rapidly the post-boy moves. We met him jist as we were drivin' out of town. He was on a sorrel pony and had the mail-bag strapped tight on to the saddle under him; and he was ridin', lickity cut, toward the post-office and was goin' so fast that he didn't nod his head nor holler 'Howdy' as he passed us. They do say that he rides all the way from Nopplis to Terry Hut every week, a-carryin' letters and things to the different places. And his mail-bag was stuffed so full with letters 'n' things that he couldn't hardly set on it."

"I suppose we'll see him quite often down this way when the post-office gets started at the Forks," remarked father. "But has thee got Joel Sparker's letter with thee?"

"Yes, father! It's in my coat pocket, and that ain't all, nother! "he answered, speaking excitedly as though he had been suddenly reminded of something. He lumbered across the room and picked up his water-soaked coat which mother had hung on a chair to dry, and from its capacious pockets brought forth the letter, wet, discolored and badly crumpled.

"Here's the tarnal thing," he said contemptuously.

"There was five cents postage on it, and don't thee give it

to old Joel till he pays it, nother. And here's somethin' else I brung;" and he partially unfolded a printed sheet which appeared to have pictures printed on it. "What does thee reckon it is, Towhead?"

The smile which broadened his grisly visage was truly wonderful to see, and our curiosity was excited to the highest pitch. "Open it, so we can see what's on to it, David," said Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Aw! thee shet up!" growled the big fellow. "I reckon if anybody gits to see it, it's Towhead. It was give to me in Dashville by a man with slicked-up boots on his feet and a white collar round his neck. He axed me if we had any children to our house; and I said, 'One leetle tow-headed shaver;' and he said, 'Kin he read?' I laughed right out, and said, 'Well, he don't do nothin' else, so fur as I ever knowed.' Then the man, he laughed, and stuck this paper in my hand, and says he, 'Take this home and tell the leetle tow-headed shaver to read it out loud to the rest of you.' So I guess Towhead will be the one to git the first squint at it."

Then, with a look of mingled triumph and condescension, he slowly unfolded the mysterious sheet and spread it out right before my eyes. It was larger by half than a sheet of the *National Era,* and was printed on only one side. Some of the head-lines, which were in very large type, were red while others were blue; and all around the border there was a row of pictures too wonderful to be described. The illustrations of birds and beasts in my "Animal Book," or in *Parley's Geography* were plain and insignificant when compared with them. Here were vivid representations of lions and tigers, of elephants and zebras, of monkeys and galloping horses, and of indescribable two-legged creatures in the act of jumping through a series of barrel hoops.

I read the bold head-line at the top:

"Van Bamburg's Great Moral Exhibition"

— and underneath it the exhortation,

"Be sure to come and bring the children."

I continued reading, and with some difficulty made out the statement that this gigantic aggregation of zoological and ornithological wonders was now on its way to the Wabash Country and would, at an early date, be on exhibition at the town of Dashville—"for one day only."

"Read it out loud, Towhead," commanded David, his countenance beaming with pride at the thought that he had been the carrier and custodian of so wonderful a document.

"Yes, read it so the rest of us can hear all about it," cried Cousin Mandy Jane.

How proud I felt as I complied with this request! I began at the first line and read tremblingly, while the whole family stood near, listening intently, looking at the pictures and inwardly wondering. There were many big words that I had never seen before, and of whose meaning I had not the slightest idea, but we gathered the information that this was the finest menagerie of wild beasts ever seen in Indiana, and that besides its many other features it was truly the most astounding moral exhibition ever presented for the instruction and edification of the human race.

Finally, after pausing many times to explain some difficult passage, I reached in triumph the bottom line where the prices of admission were given and the injunction was repeated to "be sure to come and bring the little ones."

"Jist think!" ejaculated Cousin Mandy Jane; "only twenty-five cents to git in and see all them wonderful and prepos-terous animiles! And children half price!"

"Yes, jist think of it! And all them things is goin' to be at Dashville for folks to look at, next Fourth-day!" exclaimed David, slapping his thigh most viciously.

"Yes," said Jonathan, examining the pictures, "they've got

a elephant, and a tiger, and a lion, and a snake, and a fox, and four queer-lookin' monkeys, and every other kind of animile thee can think of."

"And they've got a moral, too!" cried Cousin Mandy Jane. "'The greatest moral show on earth,' the paper says. I'd jist like to see that there moral—I'd like to see what kind of a animile it's like!"

Thereupon father smiled and gently corrected her ignorance. "The dictionary," he said, in closing, "defines moral to mean upright, honest. So I take it for granted that a moral show is one that shows people certain things that are upright and improving."

"I'd like mighty well to see all them animiles," remarked Jonathan; "but I'll be dog-goned if I wouldn't look at the money a right smart while afore I'd pay it out to go to any sich a show. Two levies ain't much, but every little helps; and what good would it do to look at them there tarnal beastesses, anyhow?"

"The paper says it's a moral show," I ventured to observe; "and so, maybe it will do a good deal of good. And then it says, 'Children half price. Come, and don't forget to bring the little ones.' I wish I could go."

Then Aunt Rachel roused herself and spoke from her corner: "When I was a gal down to Carliny, I used to go to sich shows. They was mighty divertin'; but I never seen nobody git religion by goin' to 'em. There was one man that had three bears in a little tent, and I paid a penny to see 'em; but I'd never do it ag'in."

"Well, I wish I could go to this show," I repeated, feeling quite desperate.

"Yes, it'd do thee some good, I'm a-thinkin'," said Aunt Rachel; "and if father will let thee go, I'll give thee a levy to git in with."

"Oh, if I only could go!" I cried.

"Indeed, Robert, I should like for thee to see the animals,

and I must confess that I have some desire to see them myself," said father. "But I am not quite clear in my mind whether it would be right for us to attend this show. If it is only a worldly diversion, intended to amuse the frivolous, we ought to bear a testimony against it; but if it is really instructive and improving to the mind, we ought to encourage it."

"Well, it is instructive, for this paper says so," and I pointed to the very words, all painted in bold red letters. "And it says the show is upright and honest, too! 'Undoubtedly the most entertaining and most instructive moral exhibition now in existence.'"

"Them's mighty convincin' words," muttered Aunt Rachel.

"And that's a mighty purty paper with the picters of animiles all round the edges," said Cousin Mandy Jane." Wouldn't it look nice tacked up over the mantel in the big-house where all the folks that come visitin' can see it?"

"Thee's right!" exclaimed David. "It'd set things off right smart. I'll git a couple of shingle nails and stick it up there this very night, if father says I may."

"Wait till tomorrow," said father; and then turning to me, he added, "Robert, thee may fetch me the Book."

I obeyed; and he read how Noah gathered all creation into his three-hundred-foot ark, "every beast after his kind and every bird of every sort—two and two of all flesh."

CHAPTER XIX
"The Slavers"

About the middle of the following afternoon an incident occurred which put our whole household into a fever of the most unusual excitement and threw me into a state of fright which might have turned my hair gray had it not been already tow-colored. Every member of the family was busy at work—a not uncommon circumstance, as you have already learned. Father and the boys were in the lower deadening, chopping down some old trees and splitting rails for the new partition fence. Although they were so far from the house, we could plainly hear the ringing of their axes and, at intervals, the thudding crash which announced the downfall of some former monarch of the forest. The womenfolks were at their usual avocations—mother was hackling flax; Cousin Mandy Jane was at the spring-house taking the milk crocks from the running water and getting ready for the day's churning; and Aunt Rachel was in the woods pasture gathering fresh pennyroyal and camomile to be hung up for the winter's drying. And I—I was in the potato patch near the big front gate, digging up an occasional potato, peeping often into a book that lay half concealed among the weeds, and wishing that I was in a desert island where I might work as little as I pleased and be monarch of all I surveyed.

Inviz was with me, and his comments upon labor, and especially the labor of digging potatoes, added not a little to my discontentment.

"Robinson Crusoe didn't have to dig taters," he said. "He worked when he felt like it, and when he didn't feel like it he

took a walk or played with his pets or read a chapter from the Bible."

"Thee's right!" I responded. "And he didn't have to go to meetin' to learn how to be good, neither."

Then I knelt down among the weeds and read another page from the precious book; and the labor of digging potatoes seemed harder than ever.

"Never mind," said Inviz. "When thee gets bigger thee can run away to sea and be a sailor, and not have to pick up taters for other people to eat."

Suddenly a loud rough voice roused me from my day-dreaming and gave me such a start that I felt as if I had really jumped out of my breeches.

"Hello, Bub! Say, there!"

I looked up quickly and my heart gave another tremendous leap at the sight of three fierce-looking men who had ridden unperceived up the lane and were now sitting on their horses just outside of the gate.

"The slave hunters!" whispered Inviz. "They've come to take father and David to jail."

My feet seemed rooted to the ground. My tongue was useless. My lips grew suddenly hot and feverish. I could do nothing but stand and gaze. The men were unlike any others I had ever seen. They were tall and swarthy, and they wore beards on their upper lips—a thing unheard of in the New Settlement and unknown save in certain pictures of pirates and other outlandish men. They wore broad-brimmed straw hats and high-topped boots, the largest I had ever seen. Their saddles were of a strange pattern, and around the horn of each was coiled the lash of a long and slender hog whip.

"Hello, Bub!" repeated their leader. "Does Mr. Dudley live here?"

I knew that I ought to answer him, but a great trembling came over me and a lump rose up in my throat, and I could not utter a sound. Oh, that I had the wings of a bird; I would

fly away from these monsters of men! Then, to my intense relief, I saw mother coming down the path from the house, anxiety enthroned in her face and courageous resignation giving strength to her heart. Every one of the horsemen pulled off his hat, very unnecessarily and awkwardly, and their leader said:

"Good afternoon, ma'am! Is this where Mr. Dudley lives?"

"Mister Dudley?" answered mother with distinct emphasis upon the title. "No, there ain't any *Mister* Dudley lives here, nor nowhere else that I know of."

"Indeed?" said the man. "That is very strange; for we've been told by several persons that this is Stephen Dudley's farm."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed mother. "If thee means *Stephen* Dudley, then I must tell thee that this is where he lives. But his name is jist plain Stephen, without any Mister stuck on to it."

"Well, then, madam," said the man, "is Stephen Dudley at home?"

"I must tell thee the truth," she answered tremblingly, "but I wish I might tell thee otherwise. Yes, Stephen is at home. Thee'll find him and the two boys in the lower deadenin' over there, jist across the crick. If thee'll listen thee can hear their axes now, where they are choppin' down some rail timber. Maybe thee'll like for me to blow the horn and call 'em to the house?"

"That is hardly necessary," said the man. "But isn't there some way by which we can ride to the place where they are working? We are very anxious to see Stephen about some business matters."

"I don't think Stephen has any business matters, and I know the boys hain't. But if you men *must* see Stephen, I don't want to put anything in your way; and you can ride down to the deadenin' a good deal quicker'n you can walk."

Then, turning to me, she said, "Robert, does thee hear?

Open the big gate so that the men can ride into the barn lot. Then run across the barn lot and lay down the bars, so they can ride into the stubble-field; and don't forgit to put the bars up again when they git through."

With much unwillingness and many fearful apprehensions, I went, submissively but slowly, to do her bidding. In our house, obedience was the first commandment, and disobedience was not often known. But, after I had opened the gate and laid down the bars, Inviz came alongside of me and whispered in my ears: "Wouldn't it have been better to disobey mother rather than betray father into the hands of these wicked men?"

And I answered, "I think so."

As the men rode into the barn lot, mother said, "After you git through the bars, foller the plain wagon tracks across the field and through the woods; cross the crick at the ford above the foot log, not below it. Then keep straight on to the deadenin'. You cain't help but find it."

The three men thanked her and lifted their hats again as if they wanted to show her the nice linings inside. Then, passing through the bars, they cantered briskly across the field and were soon lost to view among the trees and underwoods in the bottom. I watched them as long as they remained visible, and prayed earnestly that a tree might fall and crush them, or that fire might come out of Heaven and destroy them.

As I went back toward the house, the instinct of courage and self-preservation, which I had inherited from a remote and savage ancestry, grew up within me. Friend though I was by accident of birth, noncombatant though I was by reason of having nothing to combat, nevertheless I felt strongly inclined to take our old squirrel gun from its pegs on the cabin wall, load it with buckshot and sally forth to the defense of my poor persecuted father and the innocent boys. With each step my courage gained in size and momentum, and by the

time I had crossed the barn lot I felt myself fully able to attack and overcome all three of those villainous emissaries of the slave power—nay, if only opportunity should offer, I would go forth single-handed to destroy the whole system of human servitude.

Mother was waiting for me at the gate.

"What made thee tell 'em that father was at home?" I asked explosively and with a feeling of great superiority over womenfolks in general.

Between tears and a stolid determination to repress them, she answered me: "Does thee want me to tell a wicked story? Hain't I always told thee to speak the truth, no matter what may come of it? I've lived nigh on to fifty years, and I've never seen anything gained by tellin' a lie. Them men wanted to know if father was at home, and it was my duty to tell 'em."

"But they'll take father off to jail with 'em for helping that good-for-nothing black Samuel," I retorted; "and maybe they'll whip him with them long lashes, and tie him up to a tree, and—and—kill him!"

"Robert, thy father is a good man, and I know he would never try to save hisself by tellin' a lie. He is a great man, and I reckon he will always do what is right, come what may."

She spoke with an earnestness that awed me into silence and made me hang my head in shame. My heroism had dwindled down to a point, and I was about bursting into tears when Cousin Mandy Jane came up, breathless with the excitement of running all the way from the spring-house.

"Who was them there fellers that rid down to the bottom jist now?" she inquired.

"They're slavers from Kentuck," I answered quickly, assuming to know what I did not. "I guess they're lookin' for that black Samuel; and maybe they'll take father and David to jail."

"Sakes alive! I hope not," she ejaculated fervently. "I jist got a glimpse of their backs as they went trottin' across the

clearin', t'other side of the crick. What kind of lookin' fellers were they?"

"Oh, thee ought to have seen 'em," said mother. "They ain't the least bit pleasant-lookin', and they was mighty queer in their actions. But I hope they mean well."

"And they wore beards on their upper lips," I added; "and they carried long slave whips kwiled up on their saddles. I shouldn't wonder if they would whip father and David for bringing that Samuel up from the 'Hio."

"But how do you know that they're slavers?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane.

"They looked wicked enough to be anything," said I.

And thus we three stood under the biggest of the cherry trees and, with our eyes turned toward the lower deadenin', speculated upon what might be the result of this afternoon's business between the three mysterious strangers and our three helpless, unoffending men-folks. And as we talked and speculated, we listened. No sound of ringing ax or of falling tree came to our ears. There was an ominous silence like that which is fabled to precede the bursting of a storm. Could it be possible that the slave hunters had carried our folks off to jail by way of the back road, denying them the privilege of one last look at the dear old cabin and all that it contained? Or, what if they had murdered them, there in the lonely woods, and then ridden away to Kentucky to boast of their bloody deed! The longer we speculated, the more dreadful were our imaginings, the more dismal our forebodings. How lucky that Aunt Rachel had gone off in the opposite direction to gather her pennyrile and camomile! She at least was spared from sharing our anxiety.

At length, after long watching and vain listening, mother retired into the weavin'-room, to wipe her eyes and make believe that she was putting in the "chain for the new piece of flannen' she was planning to weave. With trembling steps and a sinking heart, I strolled cautiously down, by the nearest

way, to the "bottom," intending, when my courage would let me, to cross boldly over into the lower deadenin' and learn the dreadful truth. But before I had gone half the distance all my courage vanished, and turning in my tracks, I skulked, like, a coward, back to the safe shelter of the house and the protecting presence of the womenfolks.

I found Aunt Rachel on the doorstep busily assorting her new stock of "yerbs"; and I knew from her quiet manner that nobody had yet told her about our strange visitors. Cousin Mandy Jane was preparing supper, bravely concealing her emotions and reserving her strength and her ejaculations until the time when the worst should become known. She mixed the dough for the usual number of corn dodgers; and having patted each dodger into shape with her big lusty fingers, she laid them all in the baking skillet, put on the lid and covered the whole with a thick layer of glowing coals. Then she ran to the spring-house and brought up the usual supply of milk and butter. She set the dishes on the table, just as though nothing had happened.

"I feel plumb sure that we won't never see father and the boys ag'in," she whispered to me; "but I ain't goin' to let on till I have to."

Nevertheless, as she silently busied herself about the cooking things, her hands trembled and her eyes filled with tears and her apron was lifted to her face. We stood side by side as, with a long wooden fork, she tested the doneness of the "b'iled taters" in the dinner pot; and with her lips close to my ear confessed the fault that was bearing most heavily upon her guilty conscience.

"I've jist give up all hope," she said. "I wouldn't 'a' minded it half as much if I hadn't talked so ugly to the boys sometimes, specially David. I've made up my mind if it does happen that they ever do come back, I'll do right smart better by 'em than I've ever done afore."

And then she burst into such a fit of weeping that Aunt

Rachel heard her, and leaving her basket of "yerbs" on the doorstep, came hobbling into the cabin, to inquire what was the matter.

"Oh, th' ain't nothin' the matter," the girl answered peevishly. "I'm jist a havin' one of my spells of tantrums and I burnt my finger—that's all."

The afternoon was fast merging into evening. The sun had dipped below the tops of the trees in the west pasture. It was supper time, and still there was no sign of the men-folks. It was unusual for them to stay in the deadening till this late hour, and I began to fear that our worst forebodings would soon be realized.

But Cousin Mandy Jane maintained an attitude of courage which set a pattern for both mother and myself. She took down from its peg the long tin horn that was used to call the men-folks home from the fields, and carefully wiped the mouthpiece.

"I know that somethin' has tuk place jist as we thought maybe it would," she said; "but no matter what's happened, I'm bound not to give up till I'm jist downright 'bleeged to."

She went out to the wood-pile, where she usually stood when blowing the horn for supper. She raised the tapering tube to her lips; she inflated her lungs for a good strong blast; she puckered her mouth preparatory to the supreme effort, and then—instead of blowing, she suddenly let the old horn slip from her grasp and cried out, "Goodness, gracious, me! If that ain't them, now!"

There, indeed, were the men-folks, right before our eyes! Jonathan was coming straight to the house from the calf pasture and father and David were making a detour to the spring-house, as was their custom, to perform their evening ablutions in the clear running stream. They had approached from a direction exactly opposite the lower deadenin', and our first thought was that they had eluded the "slavers" by dodging around through the corn-field and the big woods. But

all seemed to be in a fine good humor and not in the least afraid of slavers or anything else.

"Don't thee mind about tootin' for us, Mandy!" shouted David, his great mouth expanding into a fearsome grin. And Jonathan, his thin face beaming with joy wrinkles, added, "Yes, Mandy Jane, save thy wind till the cows come home."

What mystery was this that caused our men-folks to be so uncommonly elated, even hilarious and overflowing with animation? Even at the distance which separated the spring-house from our point of observation, we could discern a strange telltale twinkle in father's eyes which betrayed a feeling of satisfaction too overpowering to be concealed. Surely, something wonderful had happened.

While father and David were scrubbing their faces in the spring-house, Jonathan came through the orchard gate and joined us at the wood-pile.

"Sakes alive! What in the world?" cried Mandy Jane, trying vainly to control her quaking voice.

The joy wrinkles in Jonathan's face deepened into the broadest of smiles, but he made no reply.

"We was afraid them slavers had done somethin' awful to you," she quavered.

"What slavers?" said Jonathan contemptuously. "*We* hain't seen no slavers."

"Didn't you see them there queer-lookin' fellers that rid down to the lower deadenin' to find you?" she asked.

"They had beards on their upper lips and long hog whips on their saddle horns," I explained, quite gratuitously.

"Oh! *them* fellers?" said Jonathan. "Them warn't no slavers. They was hog buyers from way down on the 'Hio." Then he sat down on the wood-pile and indulged in a good laugh—not a loud, unbecoming, thigh-slapping laugh, such as David would have delivered, but a genteel, satisfied, chuckling laugh that made you long to share his good fortune and his joy.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Cousin Mandy Jane. "And what kind of business was it that they wanted with father?"

"Why, they're buyin' up all the hogs and cows they can git hold of; and they're goin' to drive a big drove of cattle to Nopplis next week; and then they'll put 'em on the cars there and send 'em down to the 'Hio on the railroad."

"And where have they gone to now?"

"Oh! they rid on out by the back way; but I tell thee we had right smart of business, a-traipsin' all over the pasturs and a-lookin' at the live critters!"

"Sakes alive!"

"Yes, and what does thee think? They bought father's dry cow and David's two ye'rlin's and the red bull; and they paid half the money, cash down."

"Well, I declare!"

"Yes, and that ain't all. They bought all the fattenin' hogs—sixteen head of father's and ten head of David's and eight head of mine; and they're goin' to let us feed 'em till the ground frizzes up so they can drive 'em to Nopplis and butcher 'em standin'."

"I guess that'll bring thee a right smart lot of money, won't it?"

"Thee guesses right, Mandy Jane. But what does thee think? I sold 'em my yoke of steers, and they're goin' to pay me thirty dollars, cash down, when they come to git 'em next week."

"Laws a me, Jonathan! What will thee do with so much money?"

"Thee knows," he answered, twisting the corners of his mouth and trying to wink one eye. "Hain't I told thee that when I sold them there steers I was goin' to buy that forty-acre piece over by the Corners?"

"It will take more than thirty dollars to do that," I ventured to remark.

"And hain't I got it?" the young man exclaimed somewhat

savagely. "I've been a-savin' up for a right smart spell; and father he's goin' to lend me enough to make up the difference—and then, and then —"

"And then I reckon thee and Esther will be a-givin' in at meetin'," suggested Cousin Mandy Jane in a voice that was soothing and sweet.

"Thee's right!" and Jonathan jerked savagely at his galluses and looked both sheepish and triumphant.

"S'posin' Old Enick won't let thee have her. What'll thee do then?"

"I'll have her anyhow. 'Tain't none of Old Enick's business. She's of age. She's a Lamb, she ain't no Fox."

"But he'll git up in meetin' and say thee cain't have her."

"Well, jist let him git up. Who keers for what Old Enick says? If he won't let us git spliced in meetin', we'll take the short cut and git spliced out of meetin'."

"Oh, Jonathan! Would thee do sich a wicked thing as that?"

"Well, I might if I was driv to it; but don't thee tell nobody;" and he rose to go into the cabin.

Father and David were coming up the path from the spring-house, and mother, her eyes swollen and red, was issuing with undignified haste from the weavin'-room.

"Well! I guess the supper's been waitin' for you men-folks a right smart spell," she remarked by way of greeting. It was not in her nature to betray the feelings of her heart.

But father was somewhat less guarded. "Mother," he said, "the markets have surely and truly come to our very doors."

And as we sat at the table, he told her of the good fortune that had come to us that afternoon through the medium of the supposed "slavers."

CHAPTER XX
The Great Moral Exhibition

Father could not conceal his interest in the Great Moral Exhibition that was soon to appear for the first and only time in the growing city of Dashville. He did not say much about it, but his actions betrayed most unmistakably the thoughts that were uppermost in his heart. He liked to linger over the small poster sheet which David had brought home, to admire the row of animal pictures around the border, and to reread the flamboyant description of the various attractions which gave to this exhibition its unique and never-to-be-excelled character as an educator of youth. The "purty paper," instead of being tacked up in the big-house as at first suggested, was nailed upon the wall of the cabin, directly under my library shelf, and in that convenient location it was the subject of daily study and admiration on the part of every member of the family.

"I think that Robert would be greatly benefited by seeing those wonderful animals," said father; "but very likely the show is to some extent a place of idle diversion, and I don't feel quite free to take him there."

"What does the Bible say about such things?" asked mother.

"I cannot recall any passage that refers to animal shows," he answered; "but thee will remember that animals are often mentioned. There was the great fish that swallowed Jonah, and the bears that devoured the bad children when they laughed at the prophet's bald head, and the jackass that talked to Balaam. All these teach good moral lessons, but so

far as my memory serves me, nothing is said about menageries or great moral exhibitions."

Then, to satisfy his mind and dispel his doubts, he re-examined the Bible from beginning to end to make sure whether there were any denunciations against animal shows or against the people who attended them; but he found not one. Next, he looked in the "*Discipline*" of which he had always been an earnest student; he turned over the leaves of George Fox's *Journal* and of Penn's *No Cross no Crown* and of John Woolman's writings. In all these he found many testimonies against vain amusements and worldly diversions, but not a word in depreciation of moral exhibitions or in opposition to the wholesome instruction of young people by means of well conducted menageries of wild animals. The result of his investigations was the removal of a great weight from his mind.

At the supper table on Third-day evening, after a prolonged study of the poster sheet, he said to me suddenly:

"Well, Robert, how would thee like to go to the Great Moral Exhibition tomorrow?"

"Oh, father! May I go?" I cried, scarcely daring to imagine that such a treat could be possible.

"Yes, I feel free to say that thee has my consent; and I will take thee to Dashville in the wagon and will see that no harm comes to thee."

"But, Stephen," said mother, with a note of warning in her voice, "is thee right sure that thy mind is clear; to do this thing?"

"Yes, it is very clear," he answered. "I have been wrestling with this matter ever since David brought us that paper, and I am free to say that it is all right. Does thee remember what Benjamin Seafoam said when he was here? He said, 'Give that boy every opportunity for improvement that comes in his way. He will profit by it to his own well-being and the glory of God.' Now, I've studied this question, pro and con, as the lawyers

say, and I have reached the conclusion that it is right for me to take Robert to see those wild animals."

"Well, I don't know anything about them pros and cons," returned mother; "but thee knows what skinners them lawyers is, and thee'd better not take their word for it."

"I am not taking anybody's word," said father. "I am obeying the Inner Light, and I feel that my mind is clear. Robert must go to this instructive exhibition, and if any of the rest of the family wish to go, I shan't object to taking them also."

"Well, Stephen, what thee says about things is 'most always right," said mother resignedly; "but animal shows and menageries ain't for sich folks as me. Mandy Jane and the boys may go; but my mind is clear to stay at home and tend to things."

"Same way with me!" croaked Aunt Rachel, amid the shadows. "I'd rother set by the warm fire with some good tobacker than see all the bears and monkeys that ever was."

"That's right!" said Jonathan, his mouth full of hot mush. "I'd rother save my money than spend it to see any amount of tarnal animiles. What good would it do? I'm goin' to finish sowin' that patch of wheat tomorrow, show or no show."

But David slapped his thigh and declared that he "didn't keer if it rained pitchforks he was bound to go along with father and help take keer of Towhead while he looks at them there animiles. And," he added, "we'll drive the two young fillies to the wagon and let the folks at Dashville see what sort of horses grows over here in the New Settlement."

As for Cousin Mandy Jane, she of course was delighted with the prospect of a day's release from the endless routine of housekeeping and other domestic duties. "I hain't been furder than the Four Corners in goodness knows when," she said; "and I think it'll do me as much good as Robert to see all them things at the moral show."

And so the preliminaries being settled, the rest of the

evening was devoted by the entire family to the making of preparations for the eventful journey on the morrow.

Until very late in the night I lay awake in my trundle-bed, and with Inviz close beside me, enjoyed in anticipation the wonderful experiences which, I felt sure, were to be realized on the morrow. And Inviz whispered beautiful tales in my ear, and told me that I would see much more of the world than was visible from the top of our oak tree; I would see a mighty river and a busy city, things hitherto known to me only through books; and I would also see strange people—perhaps some very wicked people who had never been to meetin'; and more than all, I would see a great many real live animals, and the sight of them would somehow make me much wiser and more moral. O my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, if you should chance during the period of your frivolous lives to make a dozen trips to Europe or Cathay, your pre-enjoyment of them all will never be equal to that which was mine on that ever memorable night that heralded my first broader outlook upon the world!

We started quite early in the morning. The air was sharp and bracing, although not cold; and the wagon, with the pair of frisky young horses attached and David at the lines, went rattling along the road at a speed that put all our meetin'-going records to shame. Father sat on the driver's board with David, erect and silent, but less dignified and more human than he usually appeared when journeying abroad. Cousin Mandy Jane, with the long strings of her blue sunbonnet fluttering in the wind, was seated on the straw at the bottom of the wagon bed, mute for very happiness, and lost in silent contemplation of the pink figures on her new calico dress so lately brought from the 'Hio. As for myself, I chose to squat on the bag of horse feed at the rear of the wagon, where I could be alone and enjoy without interruption the sights and sounds along the road.

I was dressed, not in Little William's clothes—for I had

outgrown them—but in a new suit which mother, with great labor and half-concealed pride, had just completed for me. My legs were encased in a pair of brown jeans breeches which reached to my ankles. My shirt, which was my special pride, was of scarlet "flannen," and was cut large to give me plenty of room to grow. And instead of a coat I wore a short blue robin of fine linsey-woolsey, the collar of which, although exceeding plain, was stiff, and very uncomfortable as it rubbed against my ears. My great shock of towy hair was surmounted by that same old nondescript cap which Aunt Rachel had knitted from lamb's wool and dyed brown in the juice of black walnuts. Of course, my feet were bare—for what boy was ever known to wear shoes before the first snowfall came!—but they had been scrubbed to perfect cleanness and were nothing to be ashamed of.

The ride as far as the Four Corners was devoid of interest, for every part of the road was familiar to me. But when at length the long causeway through the marsh was safely crossed, and we had surmounted the hill beyond it, we entered into a region which to me was a veritable *terra incognita*.

The rest of the journey was therefore a voyage of discovery. The road led us by straight and narrow ways through a remnant of the big woods, where the ax of the settler had as yet scarcely been heard. We passed a few small cabins, squatted conveniently near the roadside and surrounded by half-clad children, weed-choked garden patches and lonely deadenin's. Farther on, the country became more civilized, and long before we reached Dashville my eyes were gladdened by the sight of broad fields and green meadows and yellowing orchards much like those in our own New Settlement. Everywhere there were evidences of the great autumn rains that had recently fallen throughout that section of the country. The numerous mudholes were full of water; in the woods, the low places were naught but shallow pools; the brooks—but

no, there were no brooks in those days—the branches, I should have said, were full to the brink and running over.

"I reckon we won't ford the river today," remarked father.

"I kinder think not," said David. "It's my 'pinion we'll find her a-b'ilin' like blazes."

Soon after leaving the big woods behind us, we came into a broader and better road which showed signs of much travel, and David remarked that it was the main highway between Dashville and the wild prairie country of Terry Hut. Here we soon became aware that other people besides ourselves were that day seeking to improve their minds and cultivate their moral perceptions. One wagon after another, filled with gaily-dressed and evidently very worldly people, overtook and passed us. Plain farmers with their wives and children, some on horseback and some on foot, were plodding along in the same direction, all headed toward the place where the Great Moral Exhibition was about to hold forth.

Presently we overtook a very tired and mud-bedraggled Friend whom I recognized as one of the overseers of our meetin'. His name was Abner Jones, and he was noted for his zeal in looking after such of the members as were prone to fall into ungodly ways. He stood by the roadside and looked up at us so shamefacedly that I am sure father was inwardly shaking with laughter although outwardly he appeared as solemn as a meetin'-house on First-day mornin'.

"How's thee, Abner?" he said pleasantly to the wayfarer.

"Howdy, Stephen," was the response.

"If thee's going to town, thee might as well get in and ride with us," said father.

"Well, I s'pose it's just as cheap ridin' as walkin'," returned Abner; and without another word he climbed into the wagon, shook hands with us all, and sat down on the straw beside Cousin Mandy Jane.

"I see thee's like the rest of us," said father; "thee's on thy way to the Great Moral Exhibition."

"What!" answered Abner indignantly. "If thee means the big show that I've heerd somethin' about, thee's mightily mistaken. I want thee to understand that I'm not so worldly-minded as to be a-traipsin' all the way to Dashville jist to see that abomination of desolation."

"Well, but, Abner," returned father, "thee knows that a man is judged by the company he keeps; and thee seems to be going in the same direction with the rest of us."

"Yes, I'm goin' to Dashville," said the good man; "but I'm not after seein' no worldly diversions. Thee knows that the county court is goin' to set there tomorrow, and I thought I'd walk over there today to see if I couldn't git put on the jury. Fifty cents a day ain't no bad wages in wet weather like this when I cain't be a-plowin'."

"Then I understand that thee has no desire to see the wild animals?" said father.

"Desire! Why, that's the very furdest from my thoughts. I'd scorn to look at them animiles even if they went right before my eyes. This show business is all a delusion and a snare, and them that indulges in goin' to see it is openly violatin' the discipline of Our Society."

"Well, my mind is clear," answered father composedly; and squaring himself around on the driver's seat, he plainly intimated that the discussion was ended.

For some time we rode onward in silence, each one of us wrapped in his own contemplations. The road was very muddy and our progress was slow. Friend Abner fidgeted uneasily in his seat on the straw; but aside from an occasional brief remark to Cousin Mandy Jane, he held his tongue. He would have been delighted to engage in some doctrinal controversy, but he knew that father was in no humor to listen to him and that the better part of valor at the present time was silence.

And thus we proceeded for a mile, for two miles and perhaps more, without a single incident occurring to break

the monotony of the tedious journey. But there was something on Abner's mind; he was possessed of an interesting bit of news, and the farther we proceeded the more anxious he became to impart it to us and thus exhibit his superior knowledge. Finally, human nature could be repressed no longer. Pointing to some peculiar indentations in the roadway, he suddenly exclaimed:

"Stephen, does thee see them there holes in the mud? Thee cain't guess what they air."

"So far as I can judge," answered father, "they appear to be holes in the mud."

"They look like the tracks of some big animile," said Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Thee's right, Mandy," remarked Abner. "That's what they air. Them biggest ones is elephant tracks and them queer-lookin' ones is camel tracks. They do say that two cages of wild animiles and a elephant and a camel went along this road last evenin', a-goin' to Dashville—and them's the tracks of 'em."

"Gee whiz, alive!" shouted David. "Does thee say them's elephant tracks? Why, they look like holes that some feller's made by jammin' a bee-gum into the mud eendwise. Thee'd never believe that any animile could make sich tracks as them."

"Well, Abner, I'm astonished," said father. "I'm not astonished at those tracks, but I'm astonished that thee is so worldly-minded as to look at such things. Surely, if thy eyes are so holy as to scorn the sight of a few harmless beasts, it is not at all safe for thee to look at their tracks."

The tension was relaxed, and even Abner smiled at the good-natured sally. All of us began to look eagerly for more of the wonderful tracks, and each one ventured to make remarks upon their varied shapes and the great strides which the strange beasts had made while marching along the muddy highway. And thus in gayer mood we proceeded on our

journey.

It was about noon when we reached the brink of the great stream which I had never known by any other name than "the river." The approach to it was over a long causeway, or corduroy road, which wound through a labyrinth of bayous all full to the brim with muddy water. The river itself was on a rampage, in places overflowing the banks and flooding the bottom lands on both sides of the stream. It looked to me much like our crick at home, only it was ten times wider and nobody knew how deep.

With much chuckling and whooping to the fillies, David drove our wagon up on a broad dry portion of the river bank, and stopped. With wondering eyes I looked across the vast lake-like stream, and a feeling of awe crept into my heart as I thought of its tremendous depth. Its width was not more than a hundred yards—a good strong stone's-throw for David—yet to my unpractised vision the expanse seemed ocean-like. On the farther side there was a range of bluffs rising at least ten feet above the water's level—a tremendous height—and some distance beyond, on still loftier ground, I could see a collection of houses which I rightly conjectured was the metropolis of Dashville.

And now my eyes were attracted by a strange object floating upon the surface of the water and evidently moving toward the opposite shore. A moment's observation convinced me that it was a boat—but how different from the boats I had read about or seen in pictures! It was a flat-bottomed craft and looked not unlike the big thrashing floor in our barn, except that it was larger and was surrounded by a strong wooden railing and chains to keep people from falling overboard. I looked in vain for masts, or sails, or oars—there was none; but I observed that, to the up-stream side of the floating platform, a pair of strong ropes were attached, and these were fastened by means of pulleys to a much larger rope which extended entirely across the river, each end being

firmly lashed to the trunk of a giant tree. Two men with long slender poles, which they thrust to the bottom of the stream, were pushing the boat slowly along, while in it stood a dozen men, women, and children, three or four dogs, as many saddle-horses, and a large wagon with a team of horses attached. It was quite clear to me that the object of the ropes was to prevent the sluggish current from carrying the vessel down-stream, while at the same time they guided the boat straight across from one landing-place to the other.

"It's the ferryboat," said Cousin Mandy Jane, anxious to give me some useful information. "Folks has to cross on it, when the river's up like it is now, 'cause the water's too deep to be forded. When the river's down, folks can drive right over through the riffle 'cause then the water don't come above the wagon hubs."

"And must we cross on the ferryboat?" I asked.

"Oh, certainly," she answered; "but thee needn't be skeered. I've crossed on it twice, and it's jist as safe as settin' here in the wagon. There ain't a speck of danger."

I watched the great ugly craft as it was slowly poled to the opposite shore. With much plodding care, as though the fate of empires depended on it, the captain and crew (there being one of each) succeeded in mooring it securely to the little landing-place at the foot of the "bluffs"; the guard chains were let down, and the load of passengers and freight was disgorged. Then after a long and most unreasonable delay, the mooring ropes were thrown off and the empty boat was poled back to the landing where we were waiting.

Of what occurred during the next half-hour I have but a confused recollection, for the excitement of the occasion almost unnerved me. I realized the fact that David had driven our wagon upon the ferryboat, that a great crowd of people had followed it on foot, that there was much talking and shouting and shoving, that the captain and crew were pushing their poles down in the water and making the awkward vessel

glide strangely out into the stream while the waves rolled threateningly around us. But everything was so new to me, so fearful, so confusing, that I had no distinct conception of what was being done. I crouched on the straw near Cousin Mandy Jane, and with the energy of despair, clutched the corner of her apron and waited for the dire confusion to subside. The scraping of the poles, the babel of voices, the roaring of the waves increased; and my courage so utterly forsook me that I dared not raise my head above the level of the dashboard or turn my eyes toward the furious depths over which we were floating. I thought then of poor Robinson Crusoe and his dreadful plight when his boat was swallowed up by the waves, and like him I was ready to cry out, "O God!" Never, never again would I plan to be a sailor and run away to sea.

By and by, to my inexpressible relief, I heard the cheerful grating of the ferryboat against the landing-place on the farther shore; I heard the captain shouting; there was a trampling of many feet; and then our wagon began to move forward, and in another moment the wheels were crunching the pebbles in the solid road at the foot of the great bluffs. I raised myself up and peeped over the edge of the wagon bed. The mighty river was being left behind us; the young fillies were trotting briskly along the highway; we had already entered the outskirts of the metropolis of Dashville.

Yes, this was Dashville—our county seat, the growing city that was soon to outstrip Nopplis in population and even put to shame those boastful centers of trade on the 'Hio, Larnceburg and Madison! My great first fright having left me, I now boldly stood up behind father and looked eagerly around in order that no sight or sound might escape me. But alas! the newness, the multiplicity of strange things, brought still further bewilderment. It was like hearing a dozen different but most exquisite melodies all at the same time; you are charmed by their variety and beauty, but in the end you have no distinct recollection of any one of them—you retain

simply the consciousness that the whole performance was very, very wonderful.

I remember that for some little distance we drove between two rows of most beautiful houses, some of which were painted as white as snow; and there were great crowds of men and women and children rushing this way and that, as if they did not know what they were about; and at the place where we finally left the horses and wagon, good Abner Jones bade us a hearty farewell and departed to look after his job as juryman. And now there was such a multiplicity of strange sounds and rude people, and so much jostling and crowding, that I would gladly have given up my dearest possessions if only I could have been suddenly transported back to our peaceful, quiet cabin home. I clung to father's coat tail, lest I should be lost in the dreadful crowd; and I scarcely dared raise my eyes lest some evil-minded person should see me and do me harm.

The tent of the Great Moral Exhibition was standing in a field at the farther end of the town, and thither we directed our steps. A flag of red and white stripes, with a cluster of stars on a blue ground in one corner, I was floating from a pole at the center of the tent. It was the first flag that I had ever seen; but I knew what it was and what it represented, having read about it in my geography, and my heart swelled with patriotism and pride as I saw it floating in the wind. The crowd in the show grounds was even greater than that in the street, and there were a thousand things to excite my wonder and fill my mind with bewilderment. The many strange sounds, the shouting of the lemonade man, the hoarse cries of the barker at the door of the fat woman's tent, the occasional roar of an invisible lion, the neighing of horses—all these, being mingled in one messy jumble, completely deprived me of every feeling of enjoyment.

We stopped at a covered wagon, near the entrance to the big tent, in order, as I supposed, to admire a man who was

holding a number of bank bills between his fingers and talking very loud about the numerous attractions to be seen inside. On the rough table beside him there were two stacks of beautifully printed cards, some red and some blue. Presently father stepped up to him and asked:

"What is the price of tickets to thy show?"

"Thirty-one and a quarter cents—children half price," was the lordly answer.

"I thought thee advertised the price to be only twenty-five cents," said father, in a tone that was both firm and dignified.

"A twenty-five cent ticket admits you only to see the animals," answered the man; "but if you pay the extra fip you will be permitted to remain and see the circus which begins at two o'clock."

"I care nothing for thy circus," said father; "but we should like to see thy animals and be profited by the Great Moral Exhibition which thee has so freely advertised. So I will take three twenty-five-cent tickets for me and David and Mandy Jane, and one half-price ticket for the little boy;—that will be eighty-seven-and a-half cents;" and he began to count out the money.

"But you had better stay for the circus," said the man, looking at me very kindly as if he saw the buddings of genius sprouting from my eyebrows. "The circus is the principal part of our Great Moral Exhibition; and I see that you have a little boy with you. What is his name?"

"Robert Dudley," answered father.

"Well, now, it would be a pity to deprive Robert Dudley of the pleasure and wholesome moral instruction afforded by our world-famous, chaste, magnanimous and soul-stirring circus performance which is free to all for the very modest sum of one fip. Let me advise you, for that boy's sake if for nothing else, stay and see the circus. The tickets for your whole party will cost you only a dollar and ten cents."

"Well," said father in a strangely hesitating tone, "my

mind is not quite clear. Yet, since thee recommends it so highly, here is the price."

The man took the money and gave him the tickets. I was utterly ignorant of the uses of such things, and I hoped that father, having no particular admiration for the pretty cards, would give them to me to lay on my library shelf with my other literary treasures. But alas! I was doomed to disappointment; for as we passed through the narrow entrance into the tent, a villainous-looking fellow with a long black beard, reached out his hand and took every one of the costly bits of paper. I expected that father would kindly remonstrate; but no! he did not appear to be at all disturbed, but walked onward, as dignified and self-possessed as though he were entering the meetin'-house at Dry Forks. Ah! if the bearded villain had only known what sort of man it was he had robbed, he would have returned the tickets promptly and vowed to live an honest life forever after!

And now, the noise and confusion seemed to be redoubled, and had not Cousin Mandy Jane taken my trembling hand in hers, I verily believe I should have collapsed into unconsciousness. For what were those indescribable sounds that were issuing continuously from a sort of platform at the farther side of the tent? It seemed to me that all the beasts and birds in that "magnanimous" and instructive moral show were groaning, growling, yelling, screeching, in one united chorus; and to add volume to the discordant uproar, some strong-lunged person seemed to be blowing a dinner horn while another with a club was beating lustily upon an empty salt barrel.

Shivers of something that was not exactly fear ran down my backbone, my knees grew weak, and my lips quivered almost to the point of blubbering. Then, suddenly, the remembrance came to me of the long line of noble ancestors that had lived in former days and borne the name of Dudley—and not a single coward among them; and the thought added

courage to my heart and dispelled every lingering fear.

The sounds grew louder and shriller as we advanced, and I was more and more puzzled to make out their origin and cause. Could it be that all the beasts of the show were huddled together in that one spot beside the platform, and that their yowling and screeching were a part of the regular program of the great show? Strange to say, but few of the people in the tent seemed to notice the sounds at all, and none was the least bit frightened.

Presently the crowd around us separated, and we had a very distinct view of the platform whence the sounds most certainly issued. There were no wild beasts near it or upon it; but it was occupied by a dozen red-faced men with caps on their heads and big brass buttons on their coats. Some of these men were blowing into funnily-shaped horns, and some were playing on what David said were fiddles, and a boy, with a hammer in each hand, was beating upon the two ends of a short barrel as though his life depended upon it. So, here was the cause of all those strange sounds! It was certainly nothing to be afraid of.

"That's the brass band!" whispered Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Where?" I asked. "What?"

"Why, them there men, with the horns and other things. They're makin' music."

"Is that great noise music?"

"Certainly! Ain't it purty?"

Then suddenly my conscience smote me. Music, indeed! What business had we to be listening to it? Had I not been taught from infancy that music, and especially instrumental music, was an idle diversion, a profitless amusement and therefore a thing religiously to be avoided? And this was music! I was familiar with the music of nature, the singing of the birds, the whistling of the winds, the indescribable melodies that were rife in the fields and woods throughout every summer day—but this was the first man-made music I

had ever heard. Was I doing right to listen to it? I looked up at father. Deep solemnity was in his face, and he appeared puzzled and ill at ease. I knew he was not clear in his mind.

"We will go over to the cages and look at the wild beasts," he said.

As I remember, there were not more than a dozen cages, all told; and having once arrived in their vicinity, I gave myself up wholly to the observation of the strange creatures that were confined in them. The tooting and banging of the brass band were forgotten, the surging and confusion of the crowds ceased to give me concern. With David on one side of me, and Cousin Mandy Jane on the other, while father took the lead, I successfully made the rounds of the most resplendent menagerie on earth. We looked at the half-dozen ridiculous monkeys, the two grizzly bears, the young lion (which I now think was only a huge dog), the horned horse, the wonderful ostrich, the porcupine, the zebra; and at each cage we lingered long, making such comments as came into our minds, and comparing the real animal with its picture in my animal book at home.

"Jist look at that there big animile with his tail a stickin' out atween his eyes," David remarked.

"Oh, that is the elephant," I said, quickly recognizing the mighty beast; "and that long thing is not his tail, but his trunk."

"Laws' sakes!" cried Cousin Mandy Jane. "Ain't he a whopper though? I wonder what he carries in that there trunk of his'n."

And thus each beast received its due amount of admiration and wonder.

The hour passed rapidly. We had made two full rounds of the cages, not neglecting to pay due honor to the one lone camel and the pair of Shetland ponies which seemed to me worth more than all the rest of the menagerie. We had viewed with becoming awe the bushy-haired lady who had kindly

come all the way from Circassia, that breeding place of beauty, to exhibit herself to the wondering eyes of Hoosier back-woodsers. We were about to start on our third round, when the blare of the brass band and the stentorian voice of the master showman announced that the circus performance was about to begin.

We stood still in a convenient place of vantage, and watched closely in order that we might not miss any of the great moral lessons that were about to be presented. A pair of clowns who excited our sincerest pity because of their evident lack of intelligence, were the first to appear in the sawdust ring. Their jokes were no doubt original and extremely funny, savoring of the ancient wit with which Noah's sons amused themselves during their voyage over the mountains; but, so far as our little party was concerned, all their efforts fell upon barren ground, provoking not a smile. Then, amid a renewed blaring from the brass band, a wonderful and indescribable creature came floating out into the center of the arena. Its gauzy wings, attenuated waist and semi-transparent skirt reminded me of nothing so much as a huge butterfly; but it was not a butterfly, for it had only two legs and its head bore some remote resemblance to that of a human being. It pirouetted for a moment around the center pole of the big tent, and then, standing tiptoe on one foot, raised the other leg to an angle of twenty degrees above the horizon, and—I saw no more, for father at that juncture suddenly seized my arm, and turning toward the door, said commandingly to David and Cousin Mandy Jane:

"Come! It's time for us to go home!"

With long strides and dignified mien he led the way through the crowd of gaping spectators, scarcely glancing to the right or the left, but firmly holding my hand as though he feared I would look backward and thus meet the fate of Lot's wife. We had advanced almost to the open door and were beginning to smell the air of the blessed fields, when suddenly

we came squarely upon Abner Jones, standing with his mouth open and gazing enraptured at the performance in the ring. Father could not pass him in silence; with his free hand he suddenly twitched the saintly man's coat tail, at the same time calling sharply, "Abner!"

Abner was so startled that he fell over against the canvas wall of the tent and recovered his feet with difficulty.

"Abner, I'm surprised to see thee here," said father very deliberately.

"Oh, I—I—I ain't here to—to—to—to look at them there animiles," he stuttered. "I j-jist come in to look for Judge Davis and try to g-g-g-git him to put me on that jury. Has thee seen him?"

"No," answered father in his severest tones: "but I've seen a hypocrite;" and he proceeded calmly on his way, while we three followed him, not daring to glance behind, not venturing to utter a word.

We walked straightway across the fields and soon came to the public hitching-posts where we had left the wagon and the team of fillies; and while father and David were putting things in readiness for the homeward journey, Cousin Mandy Jane and I climbed silently over the tail-board of the wagon and sat down on the straw. There was a strange expression in father's face—an expression which sometimes came to him in his kindliest and most thoughtful moods, and I fancied that he was inwardly striving to overcome all the ugly feelings which the events of the afternoon had aroused. As he climbed up to his place on the driver's board he looked back at me very tenderly and said:

"Well, Robert, which of all the animals did thee like best?"

"The ponies," I answered. "I would rather have them than anything else in the world."

"And thee, Mandy Jane?"

"I kinder think I liked the elephant best," she answered; "he was so big and solemn like, and so queer all over."

"And thee, David?"

"Well, if I had the choosin', I think I'd take that there tarnal moral, every time. It's my 'pinion that it's the beatin'est animile in the whole maginerie. Git ep!"

The last two words were addressed to the fillies; and they, being chilled by standing blanketless in the frosty October air and moreover impatient to return to their far-distant stalls, sprang forward quickly and were away. It was as much as David could do, with his strong arms, to restrain them and keep them in the roadway. Down the main street toward the river the wagon went bumping and clattering at so unusual a rate that all the folks in the houses ran to their doors and looked out expecting to see a real runaway.

"I think I wouldn't drive quite so fast," said father. "There is a law against making a horse trot along the streets of a town, and moreover it's dangerous."

David, throwing his whole weight upon the lines and exerting all his strength, succeeded in bringing the restive creatures down to a walk, just as the sheriff of the county (as we afterward learned) was trying to conceal himself in the court-house in order to evade his duty, as a magistrate, to arrest us for violating the law.

And now for the space of perhaps two minutes all went well.

"I guess we'll git home about ten o'clock," said David.

"Or a little earlier," said father.

We were rounding the turn at the end of the street where the road began to slope downward to the ferry landing; and there, in the very narrowest place, we suddenly encountered a big log-wagon drawn by two yoke of sturdy oxen. At the same moment, the wind set some dead leaves to blowing across the street, and this caused the frisky fillies to spring forward and shy toward the left side of the road. The whole thing occurred so suddenly and so unexpectedly that David lost control of his team. There was a sharp crash against the

rear of the log-wagon; our own vehicle was thrown over upon its side and one wheel went bowling along by itself until it was halted in the midst of a friendly thorn bush. As for the occupants of our wagon, we were all pitched headlong into the mud; but David, clinging with heroic energy to the lines, turned the "critters" sharply round against a strong rail fence, and then brought them to an immediate standstill.

"Anybody hurt?" asked father, as he sprang up and ran to the fillies' heads.

Cousin Mandy Jane and I were on our feet in a moment and looking each other over. We were covered with mud, but in nowise injured, not even scratched by the sudden tumble. The only damage done by the accident was the breaking of the hind axle of the wagon close to the hub of the left-hand wheel. Was not that enough? Here we were, five hours' journey from home, and our only means of travel rendered useless. What was to be done?

The ox-driver kindly came to our assistance and recovered the broken wheel. "It's no use talkin'," he said; "that there wagon won't travel nary a mile till a new axletree is put into it; and th' ain't no wagon maker anywhere nigh to Dashville, s'fur as I know."

"But we've got to go home tonight," wailed Cousin Mandy Jane. "We've jist got to."

"I don't see how it's goin' to be did," muttered David.

"Listen to me," said father, not at all frustrated or alarmed. "I have a plan that will set all things right. David, thee and Mandy Jane will have to get on the fillies and ride home bareback; and that will be no hardship to anyone. I and Robert will stay with the wagon, and tomorrow I will make a new axletree for it and put it in traveling order. On the day after tomorrow, either thee or Jonathan must fetch the fillies over for us again, and we will ride home in the mended wagon. Under the circumstances, I don't see that any better plan can be devised than that."

"Thee's right, father!" said David. "Mandy Jane, thee may ride my filly, 'cause it's the gentlest, and I'll git a-straddle of Jonathan's tarnal critter."

It required but a short time to transform the fillies from driving horses to saddle horses minus the saddles; and David and Cousin Mandy Jane were soon mounted on the spirited little steeds and ready for their long ride homeward.

"But where will thee sleep, father, and what will thee do with little Robert?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane, hesitating to leave us.

"Thee may put thy mind to rest on that score," answered father. "I'll find a shelter somewhere for the wagon; and then Robert and me will sleep in it on the straw. And I have no doubt that we can buy something to eat at the store, and a cup of milk at almost any of the houses. So thee may tell mother that we are well provided for, and that we'll be at home on Sixth-day afternoon without fail."

"I'll tell her as thee says," she returned; "but we'll be mighty uneasy till we see you again."

"No need of that," said father. And the next minute the fillies and their riders disappeared around the turn of the road and we two were left alone, strangers in a strange land and night coming on.

CHAPTER XXI
A Friend Indeed

Strangers, did I say? Let me correct that statement. Father was not a stranger in Dashville, otherwise he would not have hazarded the plan of sending the fillies home while he and I remained with the disabled wagon. He was intimately acquainted with all the older inhabitants of the county seat and was on friendly terms with the two lawyers and the doctor and all the county officers. There was not the slightest danger, therefore, that when once our plight became known we should be permitted to spend the night in the way which he had proposed. But he was proud, and so independent of spirit that, rather than ask his dearest friend for shelter and lodging, he would willingly have slept in the open field with naught but the stars above him.

"I think there is a blacksmith's shop just at the edge of the town. We will see what we can do there," he said.

Weary and footsore, I followed him along the pathway that skirted the muddy highroad. We met a number of farm wagons full of plain country people who were on their way homeward, and we rightly concluded that the circus had "let out," and that the Great Moral Exhibition was adjourned until "early candle-light" in the evening. In the direction of the big tent we could hear a drum beating and the occasional tooting of a horn, admonishing the people not to disperse until they had paid another fip to see that wonder of wonders, the Fat Woman of Kankakee. I listened to these sounds with a feeling of disgust and weariness, and as I looked at the fast declining sun I would have given all my marbles could I have

been safe at home on the warm hearth with *Robinson Crusoe* in my hand and dear Inviz cuddling down beside me.

The blacksmith was a newcomer in Dashville, but he had heard of father—as who in the world had not?—and was very eager to befriend him. He made no pretense of being a worker in wood, but to his skill in all sorts of iron craft there was no limit, and in the noble art of horseshoeing he held the championship of all the Wabash Country. His big, round, smutty face melted with pity when he learned of our woeful accident, and soon a satisfactory arrangement was made with reference to the disabled wagon. The smith would furnish a piece of timber suitable for a new axletree, he would permit father to use his tools while shaping it into the desired form, and he would put on the necessary irons and attach the new part to the wagon—all for the modest sum of twenty-five cents.

"I wouldn't do it for nobody else," he said in his bluff hearty way; "but, seein' that it's you, I'm only too glad to obleege you; and I hope that you'll remember that I'm runnin' for constable at the next 'lection."

At this father could hardly hold his temper in check.

"What does thee take me for? If thee thinks I'll vote for a man because he works for me at half-price, thee's mightily mistaken." He spoke up sharply and with becoming indignation, and yet he betrayed no feeling of anger.

The man was profuse in his apologies. He was not thinking of the vote; he was thinking of the pleasure he would derive from serving a man so universally esteemed as Stephen Dudley; he was sorry, indeed, if he had been misunderstood.

"Let us lay all that aside," said father, "and consider this a purely business transaction. What thee offers to do for me is worth fully half a dollar. If I were situated as thee is, I would do it for that price, no more, no less. Now, if thee is willing to take fifty cents, and consider that I may vote against thee at the election, we will call it a bargain."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, Mr. Dudley," stammered the smith, "and we'll go now and fetch the wagon right up to the shop."

And so, with much hard labor on account of one wheel being useless, the wagon with its disabled axletree was dragged up to the shop and safely deposited on the broad earthen floor-space in front of the forge. "It will be handy there," said the smith, "and when you come to your work in the morning, you will find all my tools right here before you where you may help yourself."

"But how would it be," said father, "if I and this little fellow should choose to sleep here in the wagon all night?"

"I hain't no objections, at all," was the answer; "but I hope you will find a much better place than that. I would take you to my house, but we hain't got only one bed, and my wife she's right smart ailin' and not able to wait on company."

"Thee is very kind," said father, "but we shall fare quite well on the straw. And now we will take a little walk down to the store and get us a bite of something to eat."

By this time the sun had gone down and darkness was at hand. There were but few persons on the street; for the country people had returned to their homes and most of the townfolks were in attendance upon the evening session of the show. As we walked slowly along in the middle of the road, I observed with curious attention the houses on each side of the way. The light was so dim that I could discern but little more than their outlines, and yet I could see that they were of various sizes and shapes and that the smallest among them seemed larger than our big-house at home. In a few of the dwellings, the people had already lighted their candles, and these shining through the windows helped to give me a somewhat distinct idea of their roominess and general appearance.

Presently we passed a large square building with two rows of windows in front—one row above the other. Its

massiveness impressed me greatly, and I was struck with its resemblance to the pictures of certain palaces, that adorned the pages of my *Parley Book.* I immediately fancied myself in London, in Rome, in St. Petersburg, and I paused for a few moments to gaze and wonder! There were candles lighted inside, and I could see that there were shutters in front of some of the windows—yes, shutters which appeared to be composed of slender iron bars just far enough apart to permit the feeble rays of the candles to struggle through between them. A strange creepy feeling came over me, for I remembered all that I had ever read concerning fortresses and prisons and common jails, and I fancied that this was one of those terrible buildings. I ran, panting, to overtake father who was now some distance in advance.

"Father," I cried, "didn't David say there was a jail here in Dashville?"

"Yes," he answered, deeply absorbed in thought.

"He did say something about it."

"Well, does thee know that the jail house is right back there where all them bars are across the windows?"

He made no reply; for just then a young man with a cane in his hand and a very sleek hat on his head came tripping across the street to accost him.

"Why, Stephen Dudley, is this thee? And is this thy little son? Well, I'm pleased to see thee both! And how is all of thee in the New Settlement?"

"I'm glad to say that we are all tolerable," said father dryly. "How's thee and thine?"

"Quite well, I thank thee," answered the stranger, and he shook hands warmly with both of us. "I suppose thee have both been taking in the great show today? Am I right?"

"I can't say as to that; but in truth, the great show has taken us in," returned father. "However, experience is the best teacher."

"Thee art right, Stephen. But I'm so glad to see thee. Of

course thee'll be in town tomorrow? Come up to my office in the morning and we'll have a good long talk about things that are of interest to both of us. I always like to see my friends and specially such worthy friends as thee art. But I must hurry along now; my wife, she started ahead and is waiting for me down by the courthouse."

Then he again shook hands with us in a manner so cordial that I began to think him the best friend we should ever have in this world or the world to come. "Farewell, Stephen! Farewell, my little man!"

He turned and started briskly on his way; but at the distance of a dozen yards he paused and looked back. Then he returned and shook hands with father for the third time. "Stephen," he said, in words that were double-greased, "Stephen, thee wilt remember that I'm a candidate for county clerk on the Whig ticket. I hope thee wilt use thy influence —"

"Oh, yes! don't thee be uneasy," interrupted father. "I'll use my influence when the time comes. Farewell!"

We walked onward while our friend again darted off toward the court-house and was soon lost to sight in the darkening twilight.

"Father, who was that good man?" I asked.

"His name is Thomas Marcellus Cottingham," was the answer. "He is a politician, and he thinks he will win the votes of Friends by trying to use the plain language and slobbering all over our clothes. He's mightily mistaken."

"But thee said thee would vote for him."

"Oh, no! I said I would use my influence, meaning I would use it against him. When I meet a man who looks upon me as an idiot, I think it no harm for me to look upon him as a fool."

It was quite dark when we reached the store. We went in quietly. The interior was lighted by four tallow candles, two on the front counter and two at the rear, while the rays from a tin lantern glimmered feebly above a small desk near the

center of the room. This, to my mind, was a very lavish display of light, for at home we had always considered one candle sufficient to illuminate the largest room. I had never before been inside of any sort of store, and as I looked around at the varied assortment of merchandise my mind was filled with astonishment. Here was every kind of goods that you could think of, including some articles of whose names and uses I had no knowledge. Here were "store goods" of all colors and qualities, ginghams and calicoes and "flannens"; boots and shoes; log chains and iron wedges; coffee and salt; hats and caps and ribbons; candy and store tea; rakes, hoes and grindstones. I was amazed to observe so many useful and necessary things all collected together in one room.

The storekeeper was busy waiting upon a customer at the farther counter, and we waited near the door until he should be at leisure. In a few minutes, however, the customer took his departure and father went forward and quietly asked for a half-pound of crackers and a fip's worth of cheese. Scarcely had he uttered the words when a portly white-haired man who had all this time been seated at the desk, suddenly rose and rushed forward with outstretched hand, exclaiming:

"Why! Stephen Dudley, how pleased I am to see you! How do you do? I would know that voice of yours among a thousand, but in the dim light of these candles, I failed to recognize your face. How are you, anyhow? I tell you I am surprised to see you."

"Well, well, Isaac Wilson!" returned father, his face beaming with delight. "I'm glad to meet thee. I heard that thee had started a store in Dashville; but I saw another name over the door and so concluded that thy place must be in some other part of the town."

"Oh, no, this is the only store," answered Isaac. "The name is that of my son-in-law, who is really the owner of the place, for he has a controlling interest in it." Then, turning to the man behind the counter, he said, "Henry, let me

introduce my old friend, Stephen Dudley, whom I knew as a boy in the old North state. Stephen, this is my son-in-law, Henry Meredith, late from Philadelphia and at present the leading merchant in Dashville." And with this the dear old gentleman burst into a clear ringing laugh that was a thousand times more musical than the blare of the brass band which I heard at that same moment harshly echoing across the fields.

"I am very glad, indeed, to meet you, Mr. Dudley," said the storekeeper, reaching over the counter to shake hands. "I have heard your name mentioned very often."

I liked his voice, it was so kind and clear; but I resented his calling father a "mister."

"Now, tell me, Stephen," said the elder of the two merchants, "why do you come in here to buy a fip's worth of cheese and a half-pound of crackers?"

Father very briefly and modestly related the story of the mishap that had befallen us, and explained that we had taken lodgings in the blacksmith's shop and expected to board ourselves there until Sixth-day morning "without being beholden to anybody."

"Well, now," said jolly Isaac Wilson, "you'll not lodge in any blacksmith's shop while I am in the same town with you; and as for cheese and crackers, we don't sell 'em by the fip's worth to such as you. You'll go home with me this minute, and you'll be our guests as long as you stay in Dashville. We all live together—Henry's family and mine—and you're welcome to the best we have. Come! don't say a word."

And with that the dear old white-haired gentleman picked up the lighted tin lantern and seized hold of father's arm. "Come!" he repeated. "I won't listen to any excuses. Cheese and crackers, indeed!" Then seeing me shrinking timidly in the shadows, he took my arm also. "Come, my brave laddie," he said. "I guess you're pretty well tuckered out, but you'll feel better after a while. A warm supper and a soft bed—

and you won't know yourself tomorrow!"

He led us out of the door and down the street in the direction from whence we had so lately come; and he kept up such a stream of talk and laughter that father could scarcely find the space in which to wedge a single small word. But the two men seemed very happy in each other's company, and I was so deeply interested in listening that I wholly forgot my weary limbs and my empty stomach.

And who was this Isaac Wilson? I had heard his name often, but had never seen him before. David had spoken of meeting him during his recent visit to Dashville, and I remembered that others had mentioned him in a half-hearted way as a backslider and a worldly man who had lost his birthright in Our Society. But father had never pronounced his name without paying some sort of tribute to his sterling character; and I had gathered in various ways the idea that Stephen Dudley and Isaac Wilson had been the best of chums in their boyhood days, long ago in the mystical country of old Carliny.

But how was this? My heart fluttered and I had a queer sensation of doubt as our guide turned suddenly and led us up the narrow walk to the strong-built house with the barred windows. Was he really taking us into the jail? Well, we were having an adventure, and I resolved that, come what would, I would make the best of it and be very brave.

Isaac Wilson was in a jolly mood. He had just finished the telling of a merry story which seemed very amusing to both him and father, and laughing loudly he opened the front door of the supposed jail and pushed us in. I observed that there was a lock on the door, and this increased my suspicions—for of what earthly use could a lock be on a door where honest people lived? But father did not appear to notice anything unusual, and therefore I soon forgot my fears.

The room into which we were ushered was very large; and by the light of the single candle that was burning on a square

candlestand in the corner, I could see that it contained many wonderful things. Strangest of all, the floor was covered with what I at first thought was a beautiful cloth in which were woven pretty flowers and vines of many shapes and colors. It was impossible to go anywhere in the room without stepping upon it, and it felt wonderfully soft and soothing to my poor chilled feet. When I sat down upon the fine cushioned chair which Isaac Wilson offered me, I lifted my toes very high lest they might soil the delicate flowers or otherwise injure the beautiful fabric.

"Now, just wait a few moments and we'll see if we can't offer you a substitute for that fip's worth of cheese," said our host.

He left us, sitting very awkwardly in our places, and went out into another room. I could hear him giving directions to someone, and presently the rattling of dishes intimated quite plainly that someone was setting a table. We waited in silence for what seemed a very long time. Father appeared to be absorbed in the contemptation of a picture on the wall, and I was afraid to move the least bit lest I should break something or soil the carpet or commit some other unpardonable folly. Finally, the door at the back of the room was opened, revealing another apartment scarcely less beautiful than the first. In the center of it was a table on which was an abundance of food, smoking hot, and an array of chany dishes that would have set the heart of Cousin Sally wild with admiration.

"Now, my good friends," announced our host, "please walk into the dining-room and have a bit of supper. The ladies, I am sorry to say, have already eaten and gone to the circus, but the cook has saved something for us—perhaps as much as three hungry fellows will care for, with a little left over for the storekeeper."

Ah! what a supper that was! Never since the memorable dinner at Aunt Nancy's after I had been lost in the woods,

had I sat down to a more bountiful meal. True, there were not so many kinds of preserves, and there was neither fried chicken nor pie. Neither did the little red-haired woman with the white apron—whom I rightly guessed to be the cook—press the good victuals upon me as Cousin Sally would have done. Nevertheless, the meal was one which I enjoyed and shall never forget. I ate until I grew sleepy, and the fork dropped from my nerveless hand.

"My poor little laddie, you are tired," said Isaac Wilson; "you are worn out by the unusual excitement of this great day in your life. Come with me, and I will show you to your bed—for I guess you need that worse than anything else."

He took a candle from the table and motioned to me to follow him. He led me first into a very long and narrow room which seemed to have no other use than to contain a long ladder—no, not a ladder, but a series of steps, "stairs" I soon learned to call them—which ran right up to the loft above. These stairs—the first I had ever seen—were wonderful. Each step was so broad that I could stand erect with both my bare feet upon it; and had I been so minded, I could have run to the very top without reaching out my hands to hold to anything.

And the loft—how different it was from our cabin loft at home! First, we passed into another long and very narrow room, with several doors on each side of it. Through one of these doors I was finally shown into a small beautiful chamber in which there was a bed.

"Now, my brave laddie," said Isaac Wilson, "do you see this bed? I want you to undress and get into it as quickly as you can; and don't you dare to get out of it till the sun shines on you in the morning. You needn't blow the candle out, for your father will come up in a little while and sleep with you."

He set the candle down on a little bureau which had a looking-glass above it, he looked into a pitcher of water that was on a square stand in the corner, and he drew a light

curtain down across the window, probably to make the room look cozier.

"Good night, laddie," he said, going out and closing the door behind him.

"Yes, it's a pretty good night," I muttered timidly; but he did not hear me.

I looked at the bed. How white and restful it looked. It was not so tall as the beds that Cousin Mandy Jane made up at home—but I felt that it was much better adapted to the needs of a sleepy person like me. I undressed quickly, as was my habit; and then my eyes beheld my mud-bespattered feet and legs. Ah! how could I ever look Isaac Wilson in the face again if I laid such untidy, unwashed members as these between the white, white sheets that were beckoning to me? I would a thousand times rather sleep on the bare floor than do such a thing.

The problem was soon solved. The pitcher of water was brought into requisition; and there was a towel hanging up beside it, which was no doubt provided for just such an emergency. Then Inviz, my dear old unseen playmate, suddenly popped into the room and whispered:

"That's right, Robert. Isaac Wilson put that pitcher of water there on purpose for thee to wash thy feet in it."

Soon, with a clear conscience and clean legs, I leaped into bed and drew the immaculate bedcovers over me. And Inviz, creeping softly in beside me, laid his cheek against my own as was his old-time custom; and another memorable day was ended.

CHAPTER XXII
My Day in Paradise

It was very late in the morning when I awoke. The sun was shining into the room between the green slats of the "Venetian shutters," which I had mistaken for iron bars. I rubbed my eyes and lay still for some time, being not a little puzzled to remember where I was and how I had gotten into this strange mysterious place. Little by little, however, I succeeded in calling to memory the adventures of the preceding day and evening; and I realized that I was now the guest of the great good man, Isaac Wilson, and therefore must be very circumspect and well-behaved.

I looked for father, but he was not in the room. There were unmistakable signs, however, that some large person had been reposing on the bed beside me, and I was sure that it was none but he. No doubt he had risen early, according to his invariable custom, and was now waiting for me in the room below. I slipped out of bed, and hastily donned my few little articles of clothing. Then I completed my toilet by running my fingers through my hair, resolving that I would wash my face and hands as soon as I could discover the whereabouts of some well or spring-house where such ablutions were permitted.

There was a soft knock at the half-open door, and the red-haired woman with the white apron peeped in and said that whenever "the little laddie, was ready he might go down into the dining-room." She informed me that father had breakfasted more than an hour ago, and had gone out to the blacksmith's shop, leaving word that I was to remain in the house

until his return at noon. Would the brave laddie go down with her now, or wait a little while longer?

I hesitated, abashed and hardly knowing what to say. But reflecting that probably I should never be able to find my way down alone, I finally muttered feebly that I would go with her at once. She led me down the wonderful stairs and into the room where we had eaten our suppers the night before. Another woman was there now—a tall and stately woman, very prettily dressed and very kind and well-mannered as I was soon to know. She greeted me with a smile, and said, "Good morning, Robert Dudley!"

I looked at her and trembled visibly, for I had never been in such a presence before, and my natural shyness overpowered me and made me appear very ridiculous. I contrived, however, to slide into the chair which she offered me by the table, and to dispose of my naked feet where their extreme size would not be so noticeable. Then the good woman poured out for me a cupful of delicious coffee; and my conscience smote me because I had not the courage to ask whether it was slave labor or free labor. She gave me a hot biscuit with butter, and placed before me a most beautiful chany plate, on which was a bit of fried ham and an egg cooked exactly as I liked it best. If she had been Cousin Sally in disguise, she could not have served me better. And all the time, she kept talking to me and asking me sly little questions and laughing softly at my answers, until I wholly forgot the strangeness of things, and my shyness fled away, and I felt as though I were really at home and talking to mother.

At length, after I had eaten more than was good for me, my hostess led me into another and smaller room which I had not seen before, and where the carpet was so soft and beautiful that I was afraid to touch it even when walking on my bare tiptoes.

"I have heard that you are a great lover of books," she said; "and so I am going to leave you here for a while to enjoy

yourself. Don't be afraid, but take down any book that you choose; and look at the pictures, or read, just as pleases you best."

Then she went out, softly closing the door and leaving me in that beautiful place alone. I looked around. The chairs were so handsome and the cushions were so soft that I feared to sit down on even the poorest of them. I felt ill at ease, as though I had gotten into a place for which I was not fitted. But there were the books of which the woman had spoken—two long shelves full of them, and as many as a dozen others on the table. I had never seen so many volumes in a single collection, and I fancied that every one of them was looking at me in a very friendly, inviting way, and dumbly asking me to court its acquaintance.

I sidled noiselessly up to the table, being very careful of the carpet, and then, half-standing, half-reclining, I opened the first book that came to my hand. It was a strange kind of book. It was neither a journal nor a history, nor a geography, nor yet anything like a reader; for it seemed to be composed entirely of conversations between two or more persons. I had read several little dialogues in the Child's Instructor and others of my books at home, and so I soon grasped the idea of various players speaking their parts and performing the acts ascribed to them in the explanatory lines that were interlarded with the text. After I had read four or five pages, I turned back to the beginning and read them a second time, more carefully and with a much better understanding. I seemed then to have the hang of the whole situation, and I immediately became absorbed in the entrancing story of Antonio, Shylock, Portia, the caskets, and the pound of flesh. A new world was opened to my bookish vision, and I read and reread one scene after another, fancying myself in Venice, on the Rial to, in the duke's palace—an actual spectator of all the acts in that most absorbing drama.

How long I remained there, my elbows on the table, my

hands supporting my head, my mind oblivious to everything save that wonderful book, I am unable to say—but it must have been for the greater part of the morning. My early training in the hardest kind of reading—George Fox's rhapsodies and William Penn's dry-as-dust essays, for example—had made it easy for me to master at sight all sorts of words and phrases; therefore, after I had once gotten a start, my progress was rapid. I was in the middle of the familiar and ever famous trial scene and was reading Portia's inspired address to Shylock—"*The quality of mercy is not strained*"—when a slight sound, as though someone were softly opening the door and entering the room, frightened me out of the duke's palace and brought me momentarily back to a sense of my surroundings. I listened, not daring to look around. My eyes were riveted upon the printed page, but my ears as well as my thoughts were directed backward to the supposed cause of the disturbance. No further sound however was heard, and I easily persuaded myself that perhaps my kind hostess had merely peeped in, very slyly, to see what I was doing. So I again leaned over the table, with my eyes a little closer to the book, and was soon back in Venice again.

Some minutes passed, and I had reached the beginning of the last act:

"*The moon shines bright. On such a night as this,*"—and just then I distinctly heard a rustling sound in the room; and immediately afterward a very little voice, if voice it might be called, gave utterance to an unmistakable but almost inaudible "Ahem!" I raised my head quickly, and as quickly closed the book.

O my Leonidas, my Leona, have patience with me! Had the gates of pearl been suddenly opened, inviting my poor bare feet to enter and traverse the gold-paved streets of the New Jerusalem, I could not have been more astonished, terrified, enraptured. For there by the window, sitting in one of those too-good-to-be-used chairs, was the creature of my

dreams, the Angel of the Facin' Bench! She was gazing out into the street, and was seemingly oblivious of my presence.

I recognized her at once; for the world could hold no other person with countenance so angelic, with brownish golden curls so entrancingly lovely. And then the recollection flashed upon me that this was the home, not only of Isaac Wilson, but also of Henry Meredith his son-in-law, who, as Cousin Mandy Jane had once told me, was the father of my angel. How wonderful that a mere accident on the road should have thus brought me into her very home!

My ecstasy, however, was but momentary, and all these thoughts concerning her identity were as the lightning's flash. My shyness overwhelmed me, and I dropped my eyes toward the closed book, not daring to venture a second glance lest it should meet her own and I should be undone. My heart thumped loudly, and I wished, oh! I wished—no, I didn't wish—that I was safe at home with mother.

Moments of dreadful suspense followed, and then there was another sly little "Ahem!"—a little louder than before. Without moving my head, I glanced side-wise through the corners of my eyes. Yes, she was still in the same place, and if you will believe it, she was really looking toward me with those wonderfully expressive brown eyes. Oh, how uncomfortable I was! And then I began to feel very foolish, remembering what mother had taught me about being mannerly in the presence of strangers. Was it mannerly to sit there and say nothing? I couldn't think so. Being the only gentleman present, it was plainly my duty to speak first and thus open the way for some friendly conversation. But what ought I to say? I pondered and hesitated, resolved and faltered, feeling quite sure that her eyes were upon me and that she was impatiently waiting for me to make an advance. Finally, mustering all my fluctuating courage, I suddenly raised my head, turned my eyes full toward the ineffable creature, and with the energy of desperation muttered:

"Howdy!"

"Good morning, sir!" was the pretty answer.

Then there was another long silence, during which I was trying to make up a second proper speech. At length, after several efforts, I contrived to stammer:

"Yes, I think it is a pretty good morning. How's thee and thine?"

The angel actually giggled, and the hot blushes overspread my face as I realized that I had made some sort of awkward blunder.

"I'm very well, I thank you," she answered between the giggles.

Then there was another long and most excruciating silence. I felt that I could never, never say another word in her presence, for if I attempted it I should be sure to make a mess of it and be laughed at, and lose her favor forever. Anything that I might try to do would only widen the gulf between us and make me more miserable. So I resolutely gazed at the bookshelves and wished that something might happen to ease my embarrassment.

Finally, the angel herself relieved the painful tension.

"My name is Edith Meredith," she said. "What is yours?"

"Robert Dudley," I answered, trembling. I would have given the world to possess the coolness and courage which she displayed, and still another world to have had her good manners.

"Mother told me to come in and see if you were enjoying yourself," she said, turning her face and looking squarely into my eyes. "Do you like books?"

"Yes," I answered, still exceedingly sheepish.

"I like them, too," she said. "I suppose you have a fine library at home."

She spoke so pleasantly that I began to feel more at ease, and my courage slowly revived. "Yes, I have a dozen books of my own, and father has a very large library," I said.

The maiden slipped down from the great chair she was in, and tripping across the room, came and stood on the opposite side of the table.

"I see you have been reading Shakespeare," she said, pointing to the book that was lying under my hand. "Father says that I am not old enough to understand such books yet."

"No, no," I stammered. "This ain't Shakespeare; it's *The Merchant of Venice*. I've never read any of the Shakespeare books, and I don't think I want to."

She smiled, and kindly refrained from setting me right lest she should seem to be vaunting her superior knowledge; but she asked:

"Why don't you want to read them?"

"Well, I've heard that some of them are not true; and a man named Benjamin Seafoam once told me that they are nothing but plays for the idle diversion of worldly people."

This remark was greeted with another little giggle; but my courage had now so far revived that I was not seriously cast down by it.

"Well, I hope you liked *The Merchant of Venice,*" she said. "How much of it did you read?"

"Nearly all of it," I answered, "and I like it almost as well as *Robinson Crusoe.* Did thee ever read *Robinson Crusoe?"*

"I began to read it once; but I didn't care much for it. It's a boy's story you know. *The Merchant of Venice* is different. I've never read it, but I've seen it played."

"Played!" I exclaimed, failing to understand her meaning.

"Yes," she answered. "Last winter, just before we came from Philadelphia, father took me to the theater to see it played; and we liked it so much that he bought the book for me, so that I may read it when I grow older."

If, at that moment, the Old Feller himself had stepped into the room, my righteous indignation would not have boiled more hotly. "Theater!" I cried sharply. "Does thee mean to say that thee went to such a place as that?"

"Yes, I went with father. Why shouldn't I?" She spoke so calmly that I cooled off very rapidly and my self-assurance well-nigh deserted me. And so I answered very mildly:

"If thy father took thee, I reckon it's all right; but I wish thee hadn't gone. Our Society don't believe in theaters and places of idle diversion. Mother says that the Old Feller is after people that go to them."

"Did you ever see a theater?" she asked.

"No; and I hope I never shall," I said fervently. "They're very bad places; and I think thee ought to keep away from 'em."

There was another funny giggle in which I fancied I detected a tone of scorn, as though she really meant, "Mind your own business." Then there was a long, long silence while Edith turned her back toward me to adjust the books on the shelves, and I stood still, like a dunce, and toyed idly with the leaves of *The Merchant of Venice.* The little maid was evidently annoyed by my goody-goody, half-baked ideas; and I was so overcome with shame that I wished I might kick myself very hard for making so many foolish remarks—remarks which could only bring deserved ridicule upon my head. Oh, that I might hide my face, escape to some desert island, obliterate myself!

It seemed ages until the spell of awkwardness and silence was again broken. At length the little maid, as though seeking an excuse to turn our thoughts into other channels, took down a great heavy volume and laid it on the table before my eyes. It was gorgeously bound in blue and gold, and my first thought was of the fabulous price that must have been paid for so rare a book.

"Wouldn't you like to look at some beautiful pictures?" she asked very sweetly.

"Um-huh!" I grunted in the Hoosier dialect, scarcely raising my eyes. To this day I am overwhelmed with shame whenever I recall my unmannerliness, my unmitigated

greenness at that particular moment.

But Edith didn't seem to notice it.

"Well, this book is chock-full of them," she said, "and if you don't mind, we'll look at them till dinner's ready."

I hesitated, feeling that I was sure to make a fool of myself, no matter what I might do or say.

"Sit down in that chair," said the maiden, "and I will turn the leaves."

I obeyed her, being very uncomfortable with the thought that my poor clothing might do damage to the elegant cushion which was certainly never designed to be pressed by a common person like myself. Then, to my increased trepidation, Edith came and stood beside me and opened the great book. It was, if I remember rightly, a volume of the *London Art Journal*, very rich in copperplate impressions and fine woodcuts, with now and then an elegant engraving on steel. We do not make such pictures nowadays, Leonidas. The Sunday "funny paper" is the art journal that appeals most strongly to the masses and to the young people of our advanced civilization. Ours is an age of caricatures and "movies" and machine-made pictures. I hope that yours will be different.

And so she stood beside me and turned the leaves, while both of us looked, read the titles, and made comments not so much upon the quality of each picture as upon the subject which it illustrated. In an amazingly short time I was myself again, at home in the contemplation of bookish things, and entirely at my ease in the presence of a superior being. Before ten minutes had elapsed, I began to think of merry Edith Meredith as a playmate and companion whom I had known ages and ages ago—as a friend tried and true who had now come back to me after a long, long absence.

With our heads not very far apart, we leaned over the big volume and lost ourselves in admiration of its rare pictorial treasures. It was as if Inviz were beside me, only it was a

thousand times better; for here was a companion whom I could see, a flesh-and-blood playmate whose goings and comings were, like my own, regulated by natural law. Occasionally, when she became very deeply interested in explaining something to me, a golden-brown curl would dangle over and tickle my cheek, and a thrill of joy, unexplainable, indescribable, would course through my being. These sensations were not because she was a girl and I a boy—as you might think, dear Leona—for, concerning all thoughts or knowledge of the distinctions of sex, we were both as innocent as are the angels in Heaven. It was that sort of ecstasy which comes to you, perhaps once in a lifetime—perhaps less often—upon meeting and recognizing and touching a kindred spirit, a soul divine whose destiny is mysteriously linked with your own.

The pictures, as you will understand, were of a varied character. There were landscapes, imaginary scenes, historical representations, copies of famous works of art, portraits, and decorative pieces. Concerning the most of these, Edith had a much broader knowledge than I; for her father, whose tastes were artistic, had told her much about them. But the most of our comments and criticisms were, as you might expect, crude and childish. I remember that toward the middle of the volume we came upon a group of pictures which recalled our earlier unhappy discussion of matters theatrical. Here was a view of Stratford-on-Avon, the home of Shakespeare; and it was followed by portraits of the immortal dramatist, done by different hands and representing him perhaps at different periods of life. Last of all was the picture of a famous bust of Shakespeare which had lately been set up in Westminster Abbey, or somewhere else.

"Ha!" I cried out. "This is the last picture of him, and they have punched out his eyes. I suppose the good people did that to punish him for writing untrue stories and wicked plays for the theaters. The bad people used to do the same way to the

martyrs because the martyrs —"

"I don't think anybody ever put his eyes out," she interrupted. "This is the picture of a bust, and a bust is made of stone, and how could eyes be properly made in stone?"

Such talk was very puerile—as you will certainly agree—but you must not expect the conversation of two children to be either scholarly or philosophical, especially when one is a greenhorn of the deepest dye who has seen absolutely nothing of the world.

We turned presently to the portrait of a beautiful girl—I think it was a copy of one of Joshua Reynolds's famous paintings—and I gazed at it enraptured.

"Oh, it looks just like *thee!*" I cried, glancing first at the picture and then at the living face so near to my own. "It looks like thee!"

"Thee! *thee!*" she exclaimed with emphasis, and there was bitter sarcasm in her tones. "Why do you always say *thee?* Why don't you talk like other people, and say *you?*"

"Don't thy grandmother say *thee?*" I asked.

"Yes; but she is a Friend and wears a plain bonnet and a cap with a frill—and it sounds all right to hear her say it. But you are only a boy."

"Yes, but I'm a Friend, too," I answered. "I've always said *thee* when talking to one person—that's the way I was taught—and all our folks and nearly all the people in the New Settlement talk the same way. It's what we call the plain language."

"Well," said Edith very decidedly, "I prefer the *un-plain* language, myself."

"That's because thee was brought up that way," I answered. "I like the plain language because it sounds kinder. It's all right to say *you* to a horse or a cow, but when I'm talking to mother or Cousin Mandy Jane or thee, it seems a lot more genteel to say *thee.*"

"Well, I don't like it. It sounds queer for a boy."

"Maybe it does sound that way to thee, for thee ain't used to it. And so if thee would rather have me speak the unplain language to thee, I'll try to learn how."

"Oh, do!" she cried earnestly. "It will be so nice to hear you talk like other people."

"Then I'll begin right away," I said. "See that picture, Edith. It looks just like—you, *you, you!*"

At this, my first yielding to the sin of worldly ways of speaking, we both laughed; and I resolved in my heart that if the Old Feller wanted to scorch me in his fire for so small a transgression as that, he was welcome to do it. I would then, there and forever afterward when talking to Edith Meredith, use the unplain language, simply because she liked it.

"Oh, here is a picture of Adam and Eve in the Garden!" she said, turning a leaf.

"Did they look like that?" I queried. "Well, all I can say is that I wish I was Adam and that thee—no, *you, you*—was—Eve!"

And then there was another laugh.

"We can make believe that we are in the Garden, anyway," she said.

"Thee's right—no, I mean *you* are right," I answered.

We still lacked a hundred pages of being through the volume when we were interrupted by the sudden entrance of Edith's mother, my tall stately hostess, who bade us come out at once to dinner. She told me that father had sent word to her not to expect him till evening; for he had already completed the new axletree and with the blacksmith's aid, had put the wagon into good shape; and having been invited to dine with Judge Davis, he would spend the afternoon with friends at the courthouse.

"And what did he say for me to do?" I asked, wondering.

"You must remain right here with me," she answered.

After dinner we finished our examination of the picture book, and then Edith's mother proposed that the little maiden

should go down to the store to carry a message to her father. "And perhaps Robert would like to go with you and see the town," she added.

At first thought, this suggestion was very pleasing—yes, I should indeed like to go. Then I began to reflect that never in all my life had I walked out with a girl—except Cousin Sally and Cousin Mandy Jane, and they were young women old enough to be my mothers. And here, I was to be the escort of a very stylish maiden no bigger than myself, but a thousand times wiser! How should I behave? And what would people say?

"Would you like to go, Robert?" she asked very kindly.

"Well—I—yes, I—I—will go with thee—with *you*, I mean—if you don't mind," I stammered; but in truth, I felt like praying for the ground to open and swallow me up.

And now for the first time in my life I was conscious of my odd appearance and my awkward manners, and was well-nigh overcome with shame. As we went out into the street, I looked at my course, ill-fitting garments, so strangely contrasting with her elegant attire; and at my great, sprawling bare feet, while hers were daintily encased in store shoes and long black stockings to match—and I fancied that all Dashville, yes, all the world was gazing and smiling derisively. But merry Edith didn't observe these things at all; she didn't even notice my great shock of towy hair or my nondescript knitted cap which looked certainly very poor and ridiculous by the side of her indescribable little head-gear with the big feathers overtopping it. And as we walked side by side along the street, she talked so prettily and told so many interesting little stories that I soon forgot all about myself, I forgot even that I was walking with a girl, and thought only of what she was saying. The few people whom we met did not seem at all amused at my appearance; they spoke to us kindly and passed on, as if they were accustomed to seeing shock heads and bare feet and awkward country boys every day of their lives. And

this, indeed, was true.

Presently Edith directed my attention to a pretty little white building which stood at some distance from the main street. Its roof was surmounted by a slender spire that pointed heavenward, and as I had seen pictures of similar edifices I was at no loss to guess that it was a house of worship.

"That's the Methodist church," said Edith.

"Our folks would call it a meetin'-house," I answered.

"It's prettier than the one at Dry Forks."

"Yes, it is, indeed," said Edith. "I remember your old meeting-house and your funny meeting. I was there with Grandmother Wilson one day last summer."

"Oh, yes, I saw thee—I mean *you*," I returned; "and you can't guess what I thought thee—*you*—was."

"What did you think?"

"I thought you were an angel right out of the good place; and I—I—I—still think it."

"O Robert, how foolish!" was the woman-like response; and then she changed the subject by saying: "There is a beautiful bell in the steeple, and when they ring it for the people to come to church it sounds like real music."

"Well, we don't have any such things in our meetin'-house," I answered. "Our folks don't approve of bells or music or steeples. George Fox preached against steeple-houses, as he called them; and he said that they were the Old Feller's delight. I hope thee—I mean *you*—ain't a Methodist."

"Why do you hope so?" and there was a little ripple of laughter.

"Because—because," I answered in some confusion—"because I should like for thee —"

"You! *you!*"

"Yes, because I should like for you to belong to our meetin'."

"And what good would that do?"

"Well, I—I think that if—that if you were in our meetin'

instead of the Methodist church, as they call it—you—you would stand a better chance of going to the good place."

She laughed again. "If I belonged to your meetin', as you call it, I would have to speak the plain language, wouldn't I?" she asked.

"Yes, I am afraid thee—*you* would," I answered, much downcast.

"Well, then let's both of us be Methodisters—for they get converted and go to the good place without making half so much worry about it as your folks do."

But why prolong this chapter by relating more of these infantile remarks and experiences? Let us suppose that this, my day in Paradise, has ended amid clouds of sunset glory; that Sixth-day morning, with fog and drizzle and David and the fillies, has arrived; and that the time for taking our homeward departure is at hand.

In accordance with the custom of our people, I went to each member of the family, beginning with Isaac Wilson as the eldest, and holding out my hand, said, "Farewell!" And each one, in return, bade me a kind "Good-by!" adding thereto some pertinent remark as to the great pleasure I had given them during my somewhat extended visit. Finally, I came to the little maiden, standing beside her mother and holding her mother's hand. A great trembling came over me, the blood rushed into my cheeks, and an unaccountable mist floated before my eyes as I stammered, "Farewell, Edith!"

And she, shrinking coyly behind her mother's embracing arm, failed to see my proffered hand, but with eyes downcast answered sweetly, "Good-by, Mr. Robert!" In confusion, I turned to follow father from the room, stumbling ingloriously over the rug by the door and no doubt appearing very ridiculous as I made my exit. But I had gone scarcely six paces from the doorstep when I heard her voice calling:

"Mr. Robert!"

I paused and in a very unmannerly manner answered

curtly, "What?"

She ran down the steps and placed a little package in my hand.

"Take this," she said. "Mother says you may have it to add to your library. I know you will like it."

I glanced at it. It was a book; it was *The Merchant of Venice,* which I had been reading with such indescribable pleasure. My heart filled with gratitude. I gave vent to my feelings in an expression that I had never been taught to use, had never dared to use before: "Thank thee—thank *you,* Edith."

"Good-by, Mr. Robert!" a second time—and she was back in the house and out of sight.

It was past noon when we arrived at home. What had happened to the old place since I had last seen it? How poor and crude was everything! The homely log cabin, formerly so dear, had lost its charms. Even the big-house, with its fine homemade Windsor chairs and its lofty white beds, seemed very inferior and unattractive. For the first time in life, discontentment and sad unrest found lodgment in my heart. Never, never again was I to experience the joy, the pride, "the glory and the dream" of living very, very near to the center of the world. The age of innocence was drawing to an end, the "shades of the prison house were beginning to close upon the growing lad."

Very kind were the greetings that I received when I opened the cabin door and made my way silently to the old, familiar, cheer-giving hearth. Mother did not say that she was glad to see me; but she made me sit down in the warmest corner by the side of good Aunt Rachel, and gave me a cup of delicious pennyroyal tea to break up the bad cold that would otherwise be sure to result from my long ride in the chilly drizzle. Cousin Mandy Jane brought me a hot doughnut, still sizzling in its grease, and informed me while I ate it that she had fried it specially for me, and nobody else. And Aunt

Rachel, after fumbling very unnecessarily in her work-bag, brought forth a wonderful pair of soft warm mittens and laid them on my knee with the information that she had knitted them to keep my hands warm when the time came for me to go to school.

These attentions and gifts somewhat mollified my churlish feelings. The blood, warming up in my veins, sent a cheerful glow to my heart, and I began to feel that, after all, the ugly, smoke-begrimed old cabin was not so bad a place as it might have been. Nevertheless, I remained for some time in a sulky mood, seldom speaking except to answer a question, morose, moody, and discontented.

"I don't think it done Robert any good to go to that there moral show," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Well, I had my doubts of it all the time," said mother.

And thereupon she prepared another cupful of tea and made me bathe my feet and legs in hot water seasoned with mustard.

CHAPTER XXIII
Old Aunt Sary

There has never been a time when I was absolutely sure whether David was born before Jonathan, or Jonathan before David; but for the practical purposes of history or autobiography this is not at all essential. So, with reference to the incidents to be related in the present chapter; I am not quite certain whether they happened before or after some of the events which I have already narrated; but for the purposes of these memoirs, it makes no difference. I was never good at remembering dates, and for that reason I have refrained in this narrative, from so much as even thinking about them.

One spring day, after the corn planting had been finished, we were surprised by the arrival of an unexpected, although not unwelcome visitor. Her advent at our house was so sudden, so entirely unheralded, that for a brief time the household arrangements were somewhat thrown into confusion. I remember this the more distinctly because our guest insisted that she could sleep nowhere except in my trundle-bed, and therefore I was obliged to take my chances with David and Jonathan among the cobwebs and the mice in the cabin loft. I rather enjoyed the change, however, for it seemed like a promotion from the state of childhood—a step upward toward the state of manhood; but oh! how I missed the sweet comfort of mother's nightly visits to tuck the bedclothes snugly round me!

The memory of my introduction to our uninvited guest still lingers as one of the pleasant way-marks in life's morning journey. It was late in the afternoon and I had just brought

the cows up from the bottom pasture. Having driven them into the barn lot for the milking, I was sauntering toward the house when some unusual appearances about the cabin door caused me to halt and reconnoiter. Through the window I could see mother and Cousin Mandy Jane bustling around among the dishes and the cooking things in a way that was not common on plain working-days.

"Something's going on," whispered Inviz, who had been hanging on my arm for the last hour or two.

"Yes! I wonder what it is."

"Let's wait and see."

So we crouched down behind the laylock bushes and watched for developments.

Presently Cousin Mandy Jane came lightly tripping from the doorway. Her hair was plastered smoothly over her forehead, and she wore the stiffly-starched calico apron which she always kept in prim order for use when company was expected.

"Somebody's going to come," I said.

"Somebody has already come," whispered Inviz. "I saw her through the window."

I observed that Cousin Mandy Jane was carrying the best milk pitcher and also the biggest butter plate in her hands, and I knew that she was going down to the spring-house to fill them in preparation for supper. So I darted out of my hiding-place and ran ahead of her.

She overtook me, as I intended, at the spring-house door; and before I could speak she said, very confidentially but excitedly:

"Robert, thee cain't guess who's come."

"I don't want to guess," I answered. "Who is it?"

"Why, it's Aunt Sary Evans, and she's jist come from Carliny in a wagon along with some movers that's goin' to settle over by the Wabash. They was a whole month on the road. The movers is some kin to Joel Sparker's folks, and

they've driv over to his house to rest a few days."

"I didn't know we had any Aunt Sary Evans," I said.

"Yes, but we have, though. Hain't thee oftentimes heerd mother tell about Aunt Sary, way back at New Garden?"

"I didn't know her name was Evans," I answered. "I thought it was the same that mother's used to be."

"Thee's right, Robbie," she agreed, "but Evans is her middle name, and so she wants everybody to call her Aunt Sary Evans—and she don't keer whether they put t'other one to it or not. Her great great great great grandfather was a Evans, and she'll tell thee all about him."

"What is she going to do at our house?" I asked.

"Not much of anything, 'cept to smoke. And ain't it funny?—she says she's goin' to live with us a spell; and we never knowed anything about it till she popped right in on us."

"What does she look like?" I asked.

"Oh, thee'll see when thee comes in," she answered, with a funny twinkle in her eye. "But I'll tell thee, she ain't thy raal aunt nor mine, nother; she's thy mother's great-aunt and my grandmother's own aunt. Ain't that funny?"

"Well, I s'pose I'll have to call her my aunt, anyhow, seeing that I have so few of 'em," I returned, hardly knowing whether to be pleased or displeased.

"Yes, thee must call her Aunt Sary Evans and be mighty good to her," said Cousin Mandy Jane. "And if I was thee I would wash my face in the branch and slick up my hair, and then go in and tell her howdy."

Ten minutes later, with a feeling of great trepidation, I crept softly up to the cabin door and peeped in. Then, my curiosity conquering my timidity, I slipped quietly inside.

Our guest was sitting in the place of honor in the chimney corner, while poor Aunt Rachel, in patient resignation, had retired to the opposite corner among the pots and pans. Shyly, and forgetful of good manners, I stood and gazed at her. She looked so exceedingly small in mother's big armchair that I

wondered how she could ever have become the great-aunt of anybody. Her diminutive head was surmounted by a white muslin cap with frills that encircled her face and gave the impression of a halo. A brown gingham kerchief was neatly pinned over her shoulders and bosom. An apron of figured calico, and a plain linsey-woolsey dress, some inches too short, completed her costume.

In my brief life, I had seen many old people—in fact, almost every person that I knew seemed very old; but never had I beheld such an impersonation of age as that which was now before me. Aunt Rachel was aged, but this Aunt Sary was truly a relic of antiquity. My first glance at her persuaded me that she must have been living at least a thousand years; but when she looked up, and I saw her sharp gray eyes, still bright with youth and vigor, I modified my opinion and began to doubt whether she were not, after all, some young woman dressed up in an old woman's body.

Very quietly I endeavored to glide across the room to a safe haven behind the table without attracting anybody's attention. But, no! those bright eyes allowed nothing to escape them. The slender withered figure in the big armchair turned slightly toward me, and a cracked but not unpleasant voice said:

"Come here, little boy, and shake hands with thy pore old aunty."

With great reluctance I shambled forward and allowed the thin, shaky little fingers of the ancient dame to grasp my limp and nerveless hand.

"Is this Debby's little boy?" she asked.

"Yes, it's our Robert," answered Aunt Rachel. And then, to my confusion, she added, "He is the baby of the house—mighty bashful and shy, but a great hand for books."

"That was just the way with my little boy." Then looking straight into my eyes, our visitor added, "And thee puts me in mind of him. Thee has the same eyes and the same chin; but

he warn't never as puny-lookin' as thee seems to me." She held my hand for a moment, and then released it suddenly as though to indicate that the interview was ended.

I turned sheepishly away, glad that the ordeal was past, and retired to my favorite seat beneath the bookshelves. Aunt Sary sank back into her chair and had recourse to her pipe, which had entirely burned out and was cold and empty.

"Thee knowed my little boy, didn't thee?" she asked, addressing anyone that might hear her.

"Does thee mean Morris?" asked mother.

"Yes, Morris. That's what most people call him; but I call him my Little Morry. They do say as how he is a great man now; but he's my Morry—he's my little boy jist the same. Now there was my great grandfather, Evan Evans, his wife was Elizabeth Ann Thomas, and their datter Elizabeth married Thomas Clayton —"

"Yes, I know," said mother, kindly interrupting her; "but come now and set up to the table and eat a bite of supper. We hain't got much variety for company, but it's what our folks eat every day."

If I had before wondered at the smallness and the withered appearance of our relative, my astonishment grew as she rose and made her way to the table. She was as crooked as the figure 5, and to support herself she carried a hickory staff that was taller by a span than she herself. Her short dress revealed the fact that she wore no stockings, and on her feet she had only low-cut moccasins of untanned sheepskin. Nevertheless, her clothing was very neat and clean, and there was a briskness and snappiness in her movements which not even Cousin Mandy Jane could surpass. But oh, how frail she looked! I thought of an autumn leaf, shriveled and dry and at the mercy of the slightest breath of air, clinging pitifully to its native branch after all its fellows had deserted it.

Thus, this quaintest and queerest of all my female relatives came, uninvited but welcome, to make her home

indefinitely with us.

"I've come to live with you a spell," she said. "Maybe I'll live with you till I die, and maybe I won't."

She seldom left her chair in the chimney corner; and, as with our other aunt, her pipe was her constant solace during her waking hours. She was not talkative, and unless her favorite topic was suggested or broached, she would frequently sit silent all day long, not uttering a word except when spoken to.

But once let her get started on genealogy, and she would entertain you as long as you cared to listen. She would narrate the history and describe the blood relationship of all the Evans family since the world began; and, in particular, she would never fail to tell you about her great grandfather, Evan Evans, who had left his native Wales for conscience' sake and had emigrated with a numerous progeny to the new colony of Carolina; and if you were a good listener, she would sometimes entertain you with many personal reminiscences. She remembered the Revolutionary War, and she had seen both General Greene and Lord Cornwallis! and her wonderful gray eyes snapped and sparkled and her little face became strangely animated whenever any allusion was made to the battle of Guilford Court House. For, being at that time a young snip of a girl, living with her mother at New Guilford, she had distinctly heard the guns at the beginning of that memorable fight, and later in the day she had had the fortune to give a cup of water and a bite of food to a fleeing patriot soldier.

All these interesting stories she related not consecutively, but by piecemeal; for no matter what she might be talking about, she could never pursue the subject far, but would break suddenly off and begin with her genealogy: "My great grandfather, Evan Evans, his wife was Elizabeth Ann Thomas, and their datter Elizabeth married Thomas Clayton"—and, in this strain she would wander until her eyes closed, her pipe

fell from her mouth and sleep would overcome her.

She had been with us perhaps three months when, one morning, I noticed a great improvement in her appearance. She had exchanged her muslin cap for one of fine lace, with narrow pink ribbons intertwined among the frills and tied in a bow knot at the throat; a snow-white kerchief of the softest material was pinned over her bosom; and most wonderful of all, she had put on a handsome blue petticoat with silk stockings to match, and the prettiest little shiny-leather shoes I had ever seen. How her little face glowed in spite of the wrinkles! And how those wonderful eyes sparkled with the fire of undying youth!

"What's the matter with Aunt Sary?" I asked Cousin Mandy Jane. "She must think this is First-day morning."

"Why, don't thee know?" she answered. "She's lookin' for Uncle Marse. He's comin' today to see her."

"Uncle Marse! Who's Uncle Marse?"

"Why, hain't thee been told about Uncle Marse? He's Aunt Sary's little boy—anyhow, that's what she calls him. But I reckon he ain't very little, nor he ain't much of a boy, nother, by this time. He's forty or fifty years old, I guess, and folks do say he's the greatest doctor anywhere in the whole Wabash Country. It beats all, how Aunt Sary goes on about him—and him no kin to her nother."

I lost no time in going down to the branch to wash my face and slick my hair in anticipation of Uncle Morris's visit. It was not until some time after noon, however, that he arrived, riding up the lane astride a splendid horse, with his pill bags on the saddle-bow before him. I was securely hidden behind the laylock bushes, but I had a good view of him as father met him and conducted him into the house. What a splendid-looking man he was—so strong and well-built and handsome! And what elegant clothes he wore—all of black store cloth that must have cost a heap of money!

"Well, this is Doctor Morris, is it?" I heard father say. "I

am right glad to see thee, Morris. Walk in."

They disappeared into the cabin, and I sought the seclusion of the wood-pile, longing to make myself known to the doctor, and yet shrinking into nothingness because of the unreasoning fear that was in my heart.

An hour elapsed, and then father and the doctor came out and seated themselves, for some private conversation, on the doorstep of the big-house. I was about to retreat from the wood-pile to a safer place of observation, when Uncle Morris caught sight of me.

"Hello there, my little man!" he exclaimed; "come here, and give an account of yourself."

He held out his hand with a gesture which seemed a command, and I had no choice but to obey. With downcast eyes and hesitating feet I approached him, and he, reaching out, took me by the arm and placed me gently between his knees. Oh, how proud I felt, and yet how very humble, thus to be brought face to face with so great a man!

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Robert Dudley."

"Well, that's a good name. How old are you?"

I told him, naming the date of my next birthday.

"Indeed! indeed! You're just about the age of my littlest boy, only his birthday comes quite a little earlier."

By this time I had begun to feel somewhat braver, and thinking it my duty to contribute something to the conversation, I stammered, "Has thee got a little boy at home?"

"Three of 'em," answered the doctor.

"Three?"

"Yes, there's Elisha, he's a big fellow, 'most as tall as his father; and he thinks he's a man already. Then the one next to him is Thomas Elwood—ain't that a name, though? His mother would call him that—after a very famous English Friend—and she hopes he'll take after his namesake and turn out to be a fine preacher when he grows up—but I'm afraid

it's doubtful. Then the littlest one, his name is John Woolman—after the man that settled Pennsylvania, you know. He is right smart chunkier than you are, and he's the whitest boy you ever saw."

All this was very interesting to me, but for a little while I could not think of anything to say in reply. The doctor stroked my hair softly, and made some remark about its towy appearance, which I failed clearly to understand; and presently he released me gently, as though intimating that his business with me was ended. Then, with a last desperate effort, I contrived to stammer the hope that he would let John Woolman come over and play with me some day.

"Yes, yes! He is coming quite soon," he answered. "His mother is coming over to the next quarterly meeting, and I think she will bring all the boys with her."

And so the interview was ended. Feeling very happy and self-important, I went out to the potato patch where David and Jonathan were working, and told them that I had just had a long conversation with Uncle Morris and that he had invited me to go to his house and play with his five little boys.

Jonathan laughed and winked at David; and David threw a gourdful of water at me, barely missing my head.

"That's what I'll give thee for bein' sich a tarnal story teller," he said. "Uncle Marse hain't got no five boys; an' even if he had, he wouldn't ax thee to go 'way over to the Sweet Crick Settlement to play with 'em."

"Maybe not," I answered, crestfallen and hurt; "but, anyhow, he has three boys, and they think of coming to quart'ly meetin' with their mother."

When I returned to the house I found the doctor in the act of taking his departure. Aunt Sary was in tears, and she held his arm with a grip that was hard for him to escape. I heard him gently soothing her.

"I will come and see thee often, mother," he said; "and as soon as we are well settled in our new home, we will find a

place for thee —"

"Thee's my only little boy; thee's my only little boy," murmured the old woman. "Thee's always been good to me, Morry, and thee must do whatever thee thinks is best."

What a picture that was!—the doctor in the prime of manhood, active and strong, looking down with kindly eyes at the bent and shriveled form of her whom he called mother; and the old, old woman—her soul pent up in a decaying prison house—clinging lovingly, beseechingly, to the arm of her "only little boy." I saw them thus but for a single moment; then the strong man turned, pulled his hat down over his brows and strode hastily from the house.

At father's command, I ran ahead of him to open the gate. As he was about to mount his horse, he paused to tell me good-by.

"Do you love your Aunt Sary?" he asked.

"I—I think I do," I stammered.

"Well, the next time I come I will bring you a nice present. What would you like to have?"

I hung my head and looked foolish, not having the courage to answer.

"Your father says that you are a great fellow for books," he continued, "so if you are a good boy and will be very kind to Aunt Sary, I'll bring you a brand-new McGuffey's Third Reader, with green backs and the picture of an eagle on it—same as John Woolman reads in at school."

The next moment he was on his horse and cantering rapidly down the lane.

When I went back to the cabin, Aunt Sary was sitting in her chair and smoking with all the energy that was left in her frail little body.

"Robert, did thee see my Little Morry?" she asked, as I passed into the field of her vision.

I nodded my head in the affirmative.

"Come here, and I'll tell thee about him," she said.

I hesitated, curious to hear, and yet doubtful of the propriety of listening.

"Come here, Bobby," she repeated, "I'll tell thee all about how I come to find my Little Morry."

I went and stood by her chair, and she began her story:

"Maybe thee won't believe me, Bobby, but I was a young girl once, a long time ago. Some folks said I was good-lookin', too; and I reckon I must 'a' been, for I had a lot of beaux, off and on. But I was giddy and foolish, as girls is apt to be, and I didn't keer much for none of 'em; and none of 'em keered enough for me to want me to marry 'em. By'm by, father died and then mother, she died too, and I was left to take keer of myself; and I lived all alone in our little house that grandfather built at New Guilford when he was a young man. For there was my great grandfather, Evan Evans, his wife was Elizabeth Ann Thomas, and their datter Elizabeth married Thomas Clayton, and—"

Ah, me! She had wandered off into her genealogical strain again—and not a word had she said about Little Morry. I looked around, and seeing the coast clear, slipped noiselessly from the room while she continued mumbling the family history of all the Evanses and their kin.

Half an hour later, I returned with some wood to replenish the fire. She was in her right mind again, but she had evidently been weeping bitterly; and her gaunt little hand trembled violently as she motioned to me to come to her chair again.

"I was tellin' thee how I come by Little Morry, wasn't I?" she began. "Don't thee want to hear the rest of it? That was a mighty pretty little house that I lived in at New Guilford—rosebushes and hollyhocks in the front yard, and a right smart garden at the back where I raised all sorts of green truck for my own eatin'. But it was lonesome without nobody to talk to but the cat; and I thought how comfortin' it would be if there was only a little child a-toddlin' round and makin' a noise. It

was mighty foolish in me a-thinkin' that way, and me not married nor no likelihood of it; but then I jist couldn't help it. For my—"

And here she put her handkerchief to her eyes and began to sob, and I was sure that she was going back to her great grandfather, Evan Evans, again. But she rallied bravely and soon resumed her story.

"One mornin' as I was layin' in bed and not wantin' to git up, I heerd a queer noise at the door. It sounded a good deal like a cat, and I didn't take much count of it at first. But when it kept on, a-gittin' worse and worse, I thought, 'For the lands' sake! What's the matter with that critter anyway?' And I got out of bed and took the cat switch with me that I always kept handy, and crept to the door, a-thinkin' I'd give old Tom a s'prise. I opened the door suddenlike and sprung out—and, sure enough, somebody was s'prised, but it warn't the tomcat. For there was my great grandfather, Evan Evans; his wife was Elizabeth Ann Thomas, and their datter—"

Oh, how annoying that she should break down again just at the most interesting point of her story! I waited while she enumerated the various branches of the family tree with all their affiliations and ramifications both in Wales and in Carolina. Her head dropped lower and lower until her pink cap strings were hidden beneath her chin; and when she ceased speaking she was asleep. There would be nothing more said about Little Morry at this time.

The next morning I made it a point to be very attentive to Aunt Sary. I found her spectacles, which she was in the constant habit of mislaying; I helped her light her pipe; I brought her a cup of cold water fresh from the spring.

"Thee's almost as handy as my Little Morry used to be," she remarked finally.

"Tell me who it was that was surprised when thee opened the door that morning," I said.

"What morning?"

"The morning when thee heard the tomcat a-yowling."

"Oh, was I a-tellin' thee about that? Well, it was me that was s'prised. I was so s'prised that I fell right back ag'in' the door-jamb, and for a minute I couldn't budge. For, what does thee think I seen? I seen a basket right there on the step, and in the basket was a teeny baby boy not more'n a month old, and he was a-kickin' and a-squallin' as hard as ever he could. I took him out of the basket, and I hugged him up to my buzzum, and I carried him right into the house; and I reckon there never was a gladder gal than I was then. I kep' a-sayin' to myself, 'Now I've got a little one in the house, to make a noise and keep me from gittin' lonesome.' And that's the way I come to git my Little Morry."

She paused, and began to fumble tremblingly with her pipe, which being turned wrong-side-up in her mouth, was empty and cold. I found a fresh hot coal for her to drop into it, being all the time fearful lest her mind would revert again to her great grandfather and his descendants. Presently, when the fragrant smoke began to issue in puffs from between her thin lips, she resumed her story:

"Thee wouldn't believe how fast Little Morry growed, and he was a mighty noisy feller, too. Nobody could git lonesome in my little house when he was round. Thee seen him yisterday, didn't thee? Ain't he a fine-lookin' boy, though? Well, he was always jist that way. I was glad when he wanted to go to school and study and be a doctor. And then he tuck up with little Juliana, and they was married, and after that, New Guilford wa'n't big enough for him anymore, and he was bound to come to the Wabash Country, 'cause, he said, his boys would have a better chance. For there was my great grand-father, Evan Evans, his wife was Elizabeth Ann Thomas, and their datter Elizabeth married Thomas Clayton, who was my grandfather —"

And so the story ended, and although she afterward repeated portions of it, she never carried its recital further.

The time for the quart'ly meetin' approached, and the usual preparations for that event were nearing completion. Our expectation of a visit from Uncle Morris's family had aroused many pleasurable anticipations, and these were greatly increased when we received word one morning that our prospective visitors were on the road and would surely arrive before the close of the day. Aunt Sary proceeded at once to array herself in her finery, not forgetting to display a brand-new silk kerchief which her "only little boy" had presented to her on the occasion of his late brief visit.

"I reckon my Little Morry will come along with his folks," she murmured. "He shorely won't stay away from his mammy if he can help it."

As the afternoon wore on, expectation was on tiptoe, and there was scarcely a moment that someone was not on the lookout. And at length, Cousin Mandy Jane's shrill voice was heard announcing, "There they come, now!"

All eyes were directed toward the lane and the big front gate. Even Aunt Sary toddled out into the yard, and shading her eyes with her hand, stood gazing and waiting. A three-seated spring wagon was briskly approaching the gate, and soon we could plainly see that it contained five persons, and that one of these was a woman.

"It's Juliany, I'm sure," said mother, "but I'm not quite so certain that Morris is with them."

"Ain't that him on the middle bench with Juliany?" queried Aunt Sary.

"No, no," said Aunt Rachel, whose eyesight was remarkably good. "That ain't Uncle Morris. It's Juliany's brother Cyrus, that I used to know in Carliny. Thee can see that he looks jist like her, spite of him bein' a man, and her a woman."

The wagon was now much nearer the gate; all its occupants were plainly visible.

"Ain't my Morry there?" repeated Aunt Sary, querulously, anxiously.

"No," answered mother; "it's only Juliany and her three boys and Uncle Cyrus. Morris didn't come."

"Humph!" grunted the aged woman, striking the end of her staff forcibly upon the ground. "If Morry ain't there the rest of 'em can jist mozy back, for all I keer."

Having thus given emphatic expression to her disappointment, she turned herself about and hobbled into the cabin; and seeking the darker recesses of the room, she hastily exchanged her holiday attire for the plain gear of every day. "'Tain't no use to dress up for sich as them," she muttered to herself, but quite loudly enough to be heard through the open door.

In the meanwhile, two of the boys had leaped from the wagon and were holding the horses' heads, while Uncle Cyrus assisted their mother to alight. Father was at his usual place to welcome them.

"How's thee, Cyrus? How's thee, Juliana? I'm right glad to see you both. Walk in."

"And this is Uncle Morris's wife!" cried Cousin Mandy Jane, bounding forward and grasping her hand. "Come right in and take off thy things."

And mother, more quietly but none the less sincerely, greeted her old acquaintance (for they had grown up together in Carliny) with a hearty handshake and, "How's thee, Julie? Come right into the house."

As the good woman was going toward the door, she caught sight of me, shrinking behind the laylocks, and with a sunny smile she offered me her hand. How soft and delicate it was, and how very pleasant was that friendly face encircled by the rim of her pretty, dove-colored, plain bonnet! Presently, when Uncle Cyrus came along with father, I looked at his friendly face also and was struck with its remarkable likeness to that of his sister; and Inviz whispered:

"Maybe God used only one pattern for both faces when He made them; leastwise, I think they must be twins."

I was so unused to companions of my own age, and besides, was by nature so cowardly in the absence of danger, that I did not get acquainted with Uncle Morris's boys very quickly. Elisha, the eldest, was a strapping young fellow who thought himself a young man, and was not far from right. He was somewhat reserved and dignified, scornful of little boys, and yet of too callow an age to be ranked with such overgrown specimens as David and Jonathan. During his entire visit at our house, he never spoke to me except in a most perfunctory and condescending manner.

Thomas Elwood, a wide-awake young fellow of perhaps fourteen years of age, was of a different build. It required but a short time to discover that, of the three brothers, he was much the strongest. He was fond of lording it over them; and even his mother paid a sort of deference to his opinions and wishes, as though she regarded him as some sort of superior genius. It would have required, however, a greater prophet than Benjamin Seafoam to foretell that this strong-minded lad would early win his way to a foremost place in the councils of the nation, and that for more than a decade he would wield a power scarcely inferior to that of the Geckwar of Baroda himself. I remember with pleasure that during our short acquaintance, Thomas Elwood was patronizingly kind to me and on one occasion condescended to look at my library and talk about books. But he occupied a pedestal so much higher than my own that familiarity was out of the question.

It was to John Woolman that my heart warmed the most—no doubt, because he was nearer my own age and was inclined to be very friendly. As his father had already told me, he was the whitest boy I ever saw. His hair was not towy, like mine, but was as silvery as that of a very old man. His skin was exceedingly fair and delicate. His eyes were very light—in fact inclining to be pinkish—and incapable of seeing things

at a distance; and to assist his vision, he wore a pair of spectacles, the lenses of which were truly wonderful in thickness.

Like myself, John Woolman was his mother's baby, and this fact no doubt hastened our acquaintance and helped to cement our friendship. He was no taller than I, but much "chunkier," as his father had said, and far less robust. He was short of breath, and weak of limb, and the rambles which I led him through the woods and deadenings invariably sent him to bed with the headache as soon as we returned to the house. During the five or six days which measured the extent of their visit, John Woolman and I were constant companions, and no doubt each of us learned from the other a good deal about certain things of which we had before been blissfully ignorant.

One day as we were rambling together through the new deadenin', he suddenly exclaimed:

"Hold on a minute, Bob! I'm going to make me a see-gar."

"What's a see-gar?" I asked.

"Something good to smoke," he answered.

I stopped and watched him with eager interest. Directly in front of us a dead grapevine was hanging from a girdled tree. It was a small vine, not larger than one's thumb in diameter, but of indefinite length; and it had been dead so long and exposed to sun and wind, that it was very dry and the sap pores were empty and free from obstruction. J. W. cut off a section of the vine some eight inches in length, and going to a burning log heap near by, set fire to one end of it. It burned slowly without flame, and he began immediately to suck at the other end, as I have since seen certain gentlemen suck at cigars.

"Is that a see-gar?" I asked.

"Yes; Thomas Elwood showed me how to make 'em."

"Is it good?"

"It's bully! Make one, and try it for yourself. Here's my knife; go and cut one."

I obeyed his direction, and soon we were both puffing

manfully away as though we really enjoyed it. In the New Settlement smoking was a very common habit with all classes of men and also with the older women; but pipes were invariably used, and the refinement of sucking a cigar had not yet been added to the list of influences that were lifting us out of the middle ages. Hence, these impromptu "see-gars" of wild grapevine had to me all the charm of a newly discovered novelty. I didn't like the taste of the thing, and the smoke getting into my throat set me to coughing and made me feel dizzy—but the experience was glorious; I began to feel like a man.

"We mustn't let mother see 'em," said J.W. as we approached the house. "She says such things will get us into bad habits; and she don't allow us to smoke even a straw."

So we threw the half-consumed pieces of grapevine into a mudhole and made sure of their concealment by casting a flat stone on top of them.

"Mother's mighty strict about such things, and she licks me like blazes every time she catches me smoking one of 'em," said John Woolman.

With three such boys, to bring up and start on the road to rectitude and fame, Friend Juliana had no ordinary task to perform; but she impressed me as being a woman of rare sweetness of temper and of great good judgment, and therefore eminently capable of doing whatever lay within the province of her duty. It was a peculiar pleasure to see her sitting by the side of Aunt Sary in the chimney corner and discussing sweet reminiscences of the old home in Carliny; and she seemed never to grow tired of listening to the older woman's frequent recital of the Evans genealogy. She was a beautiful talker and, although not recognized as a leading minister, she was frequently moved to "speak in meetin'"; and her speaking, far from being of the Margot Duberry kind, had the ring of genuineness and went straight to the heart.

On the last day of their visit, Doctor Morris, to the great

joy of everybody and especially Aunt Sary, came to accompany them home. My own chief interest in seeing him was based upon the hope that he had brought the book which he had promised—the Third Reader with the green backs and the eagle on it. But although I insinuated myself into his presence, and even tried to give some very broad hints concerning it, he never alluded to the matter, nor did he appear to retain any interest in me whatever. Perhaps all this was because he had so many weightier affairs upon his mind. I could only hang around and wonder at his changed attitude.

Early on Fifth-day morning, all our visitors departed for their home in the Sweet Creek Settlement, and for a while a real sense of loneliness was felt, I think, by every member of our household.

"My dear Morry! My only little boy!" moaned Aunt Sary from the depths of her great chair. "I shall never see him again—never again, never again;" and from that day she seemed to grow weaker and crookeder, and the light in her eyes began to fade.

Not very long afterward we heard sad news, heart-rending news. Uncle Morris was drowned. There had been heavy rains in the Wabash Country, and all the streams were floods of rushing water. Uncle Morris was riding at night, as we heard, attending to professional calls; and it was supposed that, in the semi-darkness, he attempted to ford one of these streams, not knowing how the rains had augmented its depth and the force of its current. He was overwhelmed in the dreadful onrush. His horse succeeded in reaching the shore and ran wildly home, but the body of the good physician was carried far down the stream.

How this terrible news was broached to old Aunt Sary—or whether, indeed, she was informed of it at all—I never knew; and my memory of those days of sorrow is sadly confused and bedimmed. But it was scarcely a fortnight later when a somber little procession of wagons and horseback

riders made its way—oh, so slowly!—down our lane and along the familiar big road to the Dry Forks graveyard; and in the foremost wagon there was a long box of black walnut which father himself had joined together while his eyes were swimming in tears.

The next morning, Aunt Rachel resumed her old accustomed seat in the left-hand corner of the chimney.

CHAPTER XXIV
"Going to School?"

One morning, at the breakfast table, not long after our return from the Great Moral Exhibition, father abruptly said to me:

"Robert, how would thee like to go to school this winter?"

I hesitated a moment, and then answered, half-heartedly, "I dunno."

"Well," said he, "I saw Benjamin Barnacle yesterday, and signed his article for half a scholar. So I expect thee to go for at least five weeks, and longer if everything seems satisfactory."

Although this announcement was not unexpected, the suddenness of it brought dismay to my shrinking soul. I had long known that, sooner or later, the time would come when, like all other proper boys, I must go to school and "get an education"; but now I was astounded at the nearness of that time, so inevitable and so dreadful. I dared not say a word by way of escaping my doom; I could only hang my head and cherish the feelings of dismay that were crowding into my heart.

True, I had escaped the bondage of school much longer than it will be possible for you to do, my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona. I had grown to the stature of a puny half-grown lad, and had never yet been anybody's scholar. Every winter since I could remember—and, I had no doubt, every winter since Noah's flood—somebody had kept school for a few brief weeks in the old schoolhouse at Dry Forks. But mother had heretofore steadily objected to my attending it, saying that I

was too little and peaked to walk so far in wintry weather, just for the little good it would do me. Cousin Mandy Jane, in sympathy for my crowning weakness, had declared that I was "such a fraidy-cat and so skeery-like," it would be right down cruel to send me where I would surely be "bully-ragged around" by the rough boys of the Settlement. And father had reluctantly excused me by saying that I was getting more knowledge from the reading of books at home than the best teacher in all the Wabash Country could impart to me through the usual processes at school; and, moreover, he himself had undertaken to be my mentor in ciphering and spelling, two branches that could not be learned by mere reading.

And so the winters had come and gone, and the pleasures of being a schoolboy had never yet been mine.

"Who is Benjamin Barnacle?" asked mother.

"He is a young Friend from Duck Creek," answered father. "He showed me his certificate that he brought from the place where he taught last winter, and it spoke very highly of his character. I judge that he is a fine scholar and a good teacher, and Robert will do well with him."

"How many scholars has he got on his article?" queried Cousin Mandy Jane.

"He had nine and three-quarters when he came to me," was the answer; "and I set down a half for Robert, which made it ten and a quarter. He told me that he felt sure of getting signers for at least eighteen before the end of the week. He agrees, in his article, to teach spelling, reading, writing and jography, and also ciphering through the Rule of Three. For twenty-five cents extra, he will teach grammar to any of the young women that may wish to learn it."

"How much will he charge for Robert?" asked mother, always looking ahead and counting the cost.

"He charges a dollar per scholar," was the answer; "and since I signed for half a scholar I shall have to pay him fifty

cents whether Robert goes to his school or not—but of course he will go."

"Oh, yes, I think it will do him good to go," said mother; "for he is right smart stronger than he was last year, and the roads is better. He's gettin' to be a big chunk of a boy now, and he ought to be learnin' the ways of school."

And then Cousin Mandy Jane, perceiving how my spirits were downcast by the prospect of it, turned to me kindly, and said, "Thee'll have a mighty lot of fun, too, Robby. I went to school one winter myself, when I was a leetle thing in Carliny, and I liked it the best kind; and thee'll like it too, when thee gits begun at it."

"Yes," added father, "Robert will be much improved by going to school and getting acquainted with other children; and I hope it will be the means of curing him of his timid ways."

And so, without asking my opinion or consent, the matter was settled and a new era in my life was about to have its beginning.

All too soon the eventful day arrived, the day when the "monthly meetin' school" at Dry Forks, under the mastership of Benjamin Barnacle, was to "take up," or, in other words, was to begin its sessions. In the meanwhile, by the exercise of all the will power I could muster, I had become in a measure reconciled to my fate. With Inviz as my prompter, I argued that unless I was manly and went to school as was desired, it would be impossible for me to get an education or grow up to be useful in the world. Therefore, why shouldn't I be very brave and make the very best of things as they came to hand? Accordingly, I had prodded my courage daily until I had got it to the sticking point and was ready, if need be, to face the Old Feller himself, rather than shirk my duties as a growing boy. And when the time arrived I rose cheerily at break of day and got myself ready for the three-mile journey to Dry Forks and martyrdom.

The weather was too cold for bare feet and thin robins, and I accordingly put on my new shoes, which squeaked delightfully, and invested the upper part of my body in a jeans "wawmus" that was wonderfully warm and comforting. Then, breakfast having been hastily eaten, I started out with my little dinner bucket in one hand and the three or four books that I thought most needful under my arm.

"Don't thee be a fraidy-cat, now," was Cousin Mandy Jane's parting caution.

"Try to be a good boy and learn all thee can," said mother, with a sympathetic—yes, anxious—look in her eyes.

And father, stern and dignified, merely remarked, "I expect to hear good reports of thee the next time I see Benjamin."

I had so persistently fortified myself for this undertaking that, as I sallied out into the lane, I had not the slightest feeling of hesitation or dread. My mind was filled with courage and overflowing with vanity. I stepped lightly and with the feelings of a conqueror, and already I saw myself the head scholar at the school, favored by the master, and envied by all the pupils.

At the gate, Inviz came running to be my companion.

"Going to school?" he queried, having all he could do to keep up with me.

"I certainly am," I answered. "I'm not going to be a stay-at-home baby any longer. I'm going to get an education."

"Well, you must remember your motto," said Inviz (strange to say, he had fallen into the habit of using the unplain language)—"You must remember your motto:

> 'Let this be your plan,
> Learn all that you can.'"

"Yes, I remember it;" and, fortified with renewed courage, I stepped higher than ever before.

But at the foot of the lane, whom should I encounter but David, who was repairing a break in the fence. He looked at me curiously, and I thought disdainfully, and then whistled softly to himself.

"Thee needn't hold thy head so tarnal high," he remarked. "Thee'll be a-laughin' on t'other side of thy face afore thee gits back."

I made no answer, but went on; and yet that unkind speech went straight to the spot; my ardor was dampened, my pride was cast down, and my enforced courage began to ooze away through the tips of my fingers. And now each forward step brought me nearer to my doom. Instead of advancing vigorously as before, I slouched along unwillingly, picturing in my mind all sorts of dreadful things that would probably happen when I should at length stand in the presence of the mighty schoolmaster.

All too soon, the long and lonely road was traversed, and the meetin'-house, with the schoolhouse just beyond it, was close at hand. Then, my courage all gone, I glided into a friendly fence corner and stood there irresolute, despondent, rebellious. How much better it would be to die and have done with it than to face the terrors that were before me! And then my mind reverted to Robinson Crusoe. He didn't like to go to school; he never went to meetin'; he cared nothing about being a scholar; and so he ran away to sea and had a glorious time of it on a desert island. Why couldn't I do likewise? But the sea was far, far away, and I didn't know how I could ever find it; and I thought of mother, how she would miss me, and of father's stern face when he should have learned of my folly; and I sat down on the ground with my face against a fence rail, and began to cry.

Suddenly, a cheery voice behind me cried out, "Hello there, Bobby! What's the matter? Feet cold?"

I looked up. It was big jolly Ikey Bright with a book and a slate under his arm.

"What makes you cry, Bobby? Going to school?" he asked, as I rose and wiped my eyes. "Don't you want to go?"

It was a full minute before I could answer him; and he in his pompous way picked up my dinner bucket and patted me on the shoulder and said, "There! there! Don't feel so bad about it, Bobby."

"I've never been to school before," I stammered between the sobs that would come in spite of me.

"Oh! Is that all?" he answered in the cheeriest manner you ever heard. "Well, then, you come right along with me, and don't be afraid even of the master. I'll take care of you."

He slipped my arm into his, and together we went bravely onward, he talking all the time about the adventures he had had at various schools in Sin Snatty, and how he had always been able to make the schoolmaster behave himself properly, and how his Uncle Levi had once given him a prize for knowing more than any other boy in his class. Oh, my Leonidas, what a wonderful sense of comfort and safety came over me as I walked along under the protecting care of this heroic friend!

How very full of talk he was that morning! "Do you notice," he said, "that I don't use the plain language anymore? I think the unplain is a good deal more dignified, don't you?"

"Yes," I answered; "but what does thy—what does *your* mother think of it?"

"Oh, I always say *thee* and *thy* when I'm around her—'cause she likes it, you know; but I say you to everybody else. Why don't you learn to talk that way, Robert?" And he patted me very kindly, all with the intention of keeping my thoughts away from that dreaded school.

"I did try it once," I said; "and now I think I will try it again."

As we approached the schoolhouse we saw two or three boys and a little girl loitering outside the door as though afraid to enter, and we rightly surmised that we were among the first

arrivals.

"Old Benny hain't opened the door yet," said Ikey. "Let's wait out here till it's time for books to take up."

So we sat down on a log and waited. Presently other children began to come, some by one road and some by another. They came singly and by twos or threes, carrying their few books and their dinner buckets, and appearing to be very happy because it was the first day of school. They were of all ages from five to twenty, and of all sizes from little Dotty Darlington, who seemed no more than a baby, to big lubberly Tommy Bray, whose upper lip was in sad need of a razor. The boys, as a rule, seemed rude and unmannerly; but the girls were modest and well-behaved, and some of them appeared really handsome as they peeped out from behind their plain sunbonnets. They looked at me smilingly, and some of them spoke to me by way of pleasant welcome:

"Howdy, Robert; is thee comin' to school?" or, "Hello, Bob! What's thee a-doin' here?"

Then the girls went on and entered the schoolhouse, the door having been opened; but the boys loitered about the playground, talking in subdued tones; for the master was new and they were uncertain what kind of behavior he might be expecting of them. And all this time, Ikey sat close beside me on the log and, as though to prevent my courage from flagging, kept up a running commentary on each successive arrival.

"There comes Mary Price. Look your best, Bobby, for she has a great shine after you—everybody says she has."

Now, I had seen Mary Price at meetin' every First-day since my memory began, and I hated her. I hated her because David and Jonathan and Cousin Mandy Jane had repeatedly teased me about her; more than this, she had a habit of gazing at me in meetin' and looking sweetly at me on all occasions, and this had caused unnecessary remarks. And now, to hear Ikey say that she had "a shine" for me! it filled me with shame

and rekindled the flames of hatred in my heart.

But Mary, all unconscious of my feelings, smiled very pleasantly as she passed, and said, "Howdy, Robert! I'm glad thee's goin' to come to school." If I had been a pious lad I would have prayed for the earth to open and swallow her up; but being unused to making such appeals, I contented myself with fervently wishing that the Old Feller would get her and carry her away. Yet Mary was a good-looking child, although plain; and if other people had held their tongues, I might have acquired a great liking for her, and then—who knows what would have happened? Perhaps, Leonidas, you would never have been my presumptive great great grandson.

"There comes the master's sweetheart," whispered Ikey, nudging me with his elbow.

I looked. Three grown-up young women were coming up the hill and approaching the schoolhouse. They seemed too old to be scholars coming to school, but the books which they carried in their hands told me otherwise. I knew them, every one; for they, also, were regular attendants at meetin'.

"Which is his sweetheart?" I whispered.

"The middle one—the one with the yeller hair—Lena Bouncer. Everybody says that's what made him come here to teach the school. Maybe he'll marry her if he can."

The young women passed us without so much as glancing our way, and went directly into the schoolhouse.

"There comes Jake Dobson," said Ikey. "He'll be wanting you to swap something, but don't you do it,"

Yes, I knew Jake Dobson. He was one of the bad boys that whittled the benches in the meetin'-house and sometimes made a noise when everybody ought to be very solemn and still. He was a slender lad, a little taller than myself, with a freckled face, a big nose, and eyes like a pig. He came swaggering up to us and greeted me very kindly:

"Hello, Towhead! What's thee doin' here? Comin' to school?"

"Yes," I answered. There was something so patronizing in his manner that I felt drawn toward him in spite of myself.

"That's good," he said. "Thee'll have lots of fun. How many marbles has thee got?"

"Nine."

"Let's see 'em. Maybe thee'd like to swap some of 'em for my big taw!"

I was about to put my hand in my pocket when Ikey nudged me hard, and saved me from further confusion by telling a very pretty little lie:

"Bobby hain't got his marbles with him," he said. "His mother won't let him fetch 'em to school."

"Huh!" granted Jake. "Well, maybe he might lose 'em. But how would thee like to swap knives, onsight and onseen, Bobby? I've got a mighty good Barlow."

"Be still!" said Ikey in a whisper. "There's Old Benny now."

I looked up. The master was standing in the doorway. He was a short, pudgy, middle-aged man, round-faced and very bald. I felt a kind of awe at the sight of him, not because I was afraid, but because he was the school-master and therefore a very great man who was to be regarded with reverence. He stood in the door with the conscious air of a monarch surveying his trembling subjects; then raising a heavy ruler that he held in his hand he smote the door-jamb thrice, at the same time crying out:

"Books! books! books!"

"Come!" said Ikey to me. "School has took up. Let's go in!"

All the boys, of whom there were probably a dozen, crowded into the house and, after hanging their dinner buckets on some pegs provided for that purpose, took their seats behind two or three long rough desks at the right-hand side of the room. The girls were already sitting demurely in their places on the opposite side. The master stood behind a

small table upon a little low platform at the opposite end of the room. He rapped upon the table and repeated the call:

"Books! books! books!"

There was a great deal of noise and confusion as each scholar sought to secure the place of his choice, and among the boys there was not a little unnecessary pushing and shoving; but Benjamin Barnacle was patient, and presently order was evolved from chaos and the turmoil began to subside. Then the master, with a tremendous rap of his ferule, commanded:

"Silence!"

Immediately, the room was so still that I could easily have imagined myself the only person in it.

"Scholars," said Benjamin Barnacle, speaking very loudly and with great deliberation, "you have come to school to learn, and I shall expect you every one to behave and obey the rules. You may all keep the seats that you now have till I think it best to put you somewhere else. We will now read a chapter from the New Testament."

The scholars sat very quietly while he read, for this was the first day and every child enjoyed the novelty of it. When he had finished the chapter, the master sat down by his table and began to arrange his writing materials. The hum of voices was resumed. Some of the older scholars opened their books and made a pretense of studying; some of the younger ones, who like myself were at school for the first time, waited and wondered in silence; still others, who were more experienced in the methods of getting an education, proceeded to amuse themselves in ways which I do not care to describe. Every act in the little drama was very interesting to me, and, sitting silent and expectant, I began to think that school was, after all, the most delightful place in the world.

The schoolroom was long and low, with a door at one end and the vestiges of a great fireplace, long disused, at the other. In the center was a huge box stove, in which on cold days a

great fire was kept roaring from morning till night. On the girls' side of the room there were two narrow windows, long horizontally; and on the boys' side there were also two such windows and between them a small wooden blackboard on which the ciphering scholars "worked their sums." All this I observed while Benjamin Barnacle was sharpening a goose-quill pen behind his little table and getting himself ready for the day's multifarious duties. Presently he sat down and proceeded to call the children, one by one, to come forward and report their names and the necessary information about their parents, their books, and the studies which they desired to pursue. Soon my turn came. I rose and went forward, not so timidly as you might suppose, for the presence and example of the other children had buoyed up my courage most wonderfully.

"What is thy name?"

"Robert Dudley."

"Thy father's name?"

"Stephen Dudley."

"How much did thy father sign for thee?"

"Half a scholar."

"Can thee read?"

"Yes." (At this, I heard Ikey and some of the other scholars snicker quite noisily.)

"Let me see thy book."

I showed him the mutilated copy of the English Reader which I had brought, at father's suggestion, as being better suited for school recitation than any other of my numerous volumes. The master examined it for a moment, and then said, "I think this is too hard reading for a boy of thy age. If there is a First Reader at thy home thee had better fetch it tomorrow."

I told him that I had McGuffey's First Reader.

"Very well," he answered. "Be sure to fetch it, for it will be much better adapted to thy comprehension. And of course

thee has a spelling-book?"

"No, I never had one of my own; but there is one in father's library."

"Well, thee needs to study that very diligently, and so I shall expect thee to fetch it tomorrow. For spelling is the foundation of all knowledge."

He was about to dismiss me when I showed him the copy of Pike's *Arithmetic* that I had brought, also at father's suggestion.

"I hardly think thee is capable of that," he said.

"But I've ciphered all the way through short division," I protested, "and father says he wishes me to go on with it."

"Very well, then. Thee may begin with the rule for long division, and work the first five sums on the next page. That is all."

"I—I think I would like to study geography," I said, feeling unusually brave, and not willing to be dismissed without making my wishes known.

"Geography! Why, that's a branch for advanced scholars. I'm afraid thee's almost too small to understand it."

"Well, I've got a book here that I've read through four or five times, and I think I understand it;" and with that, I showed him my cherished *Parley Book*.

He took it in his hands, opened it and examined it from beginning to end with much interest. Finally, returning it to me, he said, "And so thee thinks thee wants to study this work?"

"Yes," I replied; "and father says that I may."

"Well, then, if that is the case, thee may begin with the first lesson, page five, and take to the bottom of the next page for tomorrow. That is all; thee may take thy seat."

But I still persisted. "Father says he would like for me to study writing," I said, producing a sheet of fools-cap and a brand new quill pen.

"Yes, that is a very useful study," returned the master. "I

will set thee a copy at the dinner intermission, and if thee has some black ink thee may write a line when the time comes, in the afternoon. Now thee may take thy seat."

This time I obeyed him, and as I walked across the floor I felt conscious that I was the lion of the school; for no other lad, not even Ikey Bright, could undertake to pursue a course of study so varied and comprehensive. Reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and geography!—surely, all these implied a vast store of knowledge besides a mental capacity of unusual dimensions. I felt that all the eyes in the schoolroom were directed toward me in admiration.

"He's the best scholar thee has," I overheard Lena Bouncer whisper to the master as she came forward to have her pen sharpened.

And Mary Price, from her humble seat by the water bucket—for there was no room for her at any desk—looked proudly at me and smiled!

At about the middle of the forenoon, the master, having finished his preliminary examination of all the scholars, rapped loudly upon his desk and announced:

"Time for recess!"

Immediately the boys, as if moved by a single impulse, sprang up and rushed out-of-doors, whooping and screaming like so many savages turned suddenly loose. The girls, being by nature less demonstrative, gathered in groups around the water bucket or by the great stove; and two or three ventured to the door to watch the boys at their play. As for myself, although I had been very brave when facing the master, the thought of mingling with so many boys—and incidentally being observed by the girls—completely unnerved me, and I remained in my seat, cowering behind the long desk. Even the friendly beckonings of Ikey and of Jake Dobson failed to lure me from my place of refuge.

"Don't thee want to go out and play with the other boys?" queried Lena Bouncer, very patronizingly.

I hung my head very low over my open *Parley Book.*

Then the master spoke up: "Yes, Robert Dudley, I think it would do thee good to go out and take a little exercise."

But I was resolved not to go; and so I shrank into as small dimensions as were possible, and sulked—yes, actually sulked—until Old Benny again rapped upon the door-jamb and shouted, "Books! books! books!"

After recess the real work of the school began. There were as many grades and as many classes as there were scholars—no fewer than twenty-five on that opening day. The master, with his dreaded ferule in his hand and a goose-quill pen stuck over each ear, sat by the side of his small desk and from that elevated station ruled and served his subjects. There was no program to be followed, no order of exercises, no system. When a scholar felt that he had studied his lesson well and was prepared to recite, he would take his book in hand and go forward to the master's desk. The master would open the book and listen to the scholar read or spell or answer whatever questions might be printed on the page that had been studied.

If the scholar did well in this recitation, Benjamin would say approvingly, "That will do. Take the next lesson." But if he stumbled in his reading, or mis-spelled an easy word, or failed to answer the questions before him—then, let him face his doom!

"Take that lesson again," the master would say sharply; and the admonition was usually accompanied by a thump on the cheek, or a twitch of the ear, or in extreme cases by a thoroughgoing, old-fashioned spanking. A second failure would sometimes bring a hickory switch into requisition, and the culprit would be sentenced to stand in a corner until he had read or spelled the lesson over and over again a stated number of times. If a scholar delayed too long to report himself ready to recite, he was reminded of it by seeing the master's ferule flying across the room at no great distance

from his head.

The ABC scholars and others who were too young to comprehend the meaning of study, were dealt with in a different manner. They sat together on the low backless benches assigned to them and tried very hard to keep their eyes fixed upon the ragged primers or spelling-books that had been provided for their torture. In the intervals between other duties the master would call one of them by name. The startled youngster would grasp his primer, stumble across the room, climb upon the platform and with fear and trembling stand by the master's side.

"Open thy book," the master commanded.

It was opened.

"Now what letter is this?"

The child hesitated.

"It's A," said the master, "A, A, A! Look at it. Now tell me what it is."

The child timidly answered, "A."

"That's right. Remember it's A. Now what's this next letter?"

Again the child hesitated.

"I tell thee it's B. Look at it. It's B, B, B! Now tell me what it is."

The child, a little encouraged, answered, "B."

"Yes, that's right. Now don't forget. This is *A* and this is *B*. Now go to thy seat, and study these two letters till thee knows them by heart."

Thus, the master on his pedestal was the busiest of men. Recitation followed recitation, briefly and in rapid succession. Not more than three scholars at a time were permitted to approach the throne, and they must take their turns in orderly succession. Although the most usual business was "to say my lesson," there were many excuses, some necessary and others unnecessary, for keeping the master occupied.

"May I go out?" This was the favorite petition; and if it

was granted, the pupil was required to leave his book on a shelf by the door until his return, pending which no one else need apply.

"Won't thee sharpen my pen?"

"May I set by the stove and warm my feet?"

"Mayn't I move my seat further away from Jake Dobson? He sticks pins in me?"

"May I go to the blackboard and do my sums?"

"May me and Mary Price go after a bucket of water?"

All these petitions and many more did Benjamin Barnacle listen to on that opening day; and to each he rendered a judicious and well-considered reply. Moreover, in addition to giving audience to these and also listening to each scholar "say his lesson" individually, he found time to give special instruction to a class of ten whom he called upon to read, verse by verse, a chapter in the New Testament. Besides all this, he maintained order in the school and attended to more than one case of infraction of discipline. Was he not a busy man, my dear Leonidas? Compare him with your modern scientific school-teacher (no longer master), busy with fads and frills, and experimenting with the children's minds in order to invent some new method and write a book about it!

At length, the middle of the day arrived, as was attested by a score of hungry stomachs. The shadow of the doorjamb was beginning to obscure the noon mark on the floor. The master, with due deliberation, drew his big silver watch from his waistcoat pocket and compared it with the sun. Then, with a crash of his ferule, he cried:

"Silence! Silence!"

Instantly every scholar was as quiet as the proverbial rodent in the meal chest.

"The young women who wished to study English grammar," announced the master, "will recite to me during the noon intermission. Those of you who remain in the room at that time will be required to keep very still while the

recitation is going on. You may now proceed to eat your dinners."

The boys and most of the girls were on their feet in a moment. There was a mad rush for the dinner buckets (the word "pail" was unknown in the New Settlement); then the children assembled in various groups about the room, according to family relationships or personal preferences, and the eating began. It was a quick lunch with most of us; for we had grown very tired of the narrow hard benches and the restraints of the schoolroom, and were impatient to enjoy the noon intermission in the free air of outdoors. At the end of fifteen minutes the master again consulted his watch, and then announced:

"Intermission!"

Oh, the tumbling and rushing and crowding to escape that prison house, and then the yelling and jumping and rolling that signalized the beginning of our brief spell of liberty! I had never before witnessed anything of the kind, and I shrank timidly away from the turbulent mob, and stood leaning against a friendly tree, a silent and lonely looker-on. Not even the entreaties of Ikey Bright or the soft blandishments of Jake Dobson could induce me to join in any of the merry games that were soon in progress.

At the end of half an hour, the master came again to the schoolroom door, the ferule crashed three times against the jamb, and the air again resounded with the vociferous summons:

"Books! books! books!"

And so my first day at school passed, minute by minute, and hour by hour, without any serious set-back to my courage or my personal enjoyment. It was all so new to me, so novel, so different from any former experience, that I really liked it notwithstanding the occasional slight shocks that I received. The master treated me with condescension, the children were kind, and the bookish atmosphere of the place was very

agreeable. I said my lessons in reading and spelling and geography in a manner that won the approbation of the master and the generous envy of the older scholars; and, ere long, my shyness began to be swallowed up in vanity, and an unusual sense of my own self-importance increased my courage. At last the sun was sinking in the western horizon, and again we heard the stentorian cry of the master:

"Silence! Silence! Put up your books," he said. "Be here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. Books is now let out."

If there had been a great rush at noon, there was now a wild stampede. Within thirty seconds the schoolroom was cleared of human beings except the master and the three young women scholars; and in less than a minute every child had disappeared from the neighborhood as if by magic.

And I, with big self-important Ikey Bright as my companion and protector, wended my way home in the gloaming.

"How did thee like it, Robert?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Pretty well," I answered, curtly.

Thus, my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, another milestone of existence is passed. How shall I number it? How shall I designate it in my inventory of experiences? The sheet of paper, once so pure and spotless, is fast becoming soiled, disfigured with blots and marred with unseemly scrawls.

CHAPTER XXV
"Shades of the Prison House"

Going to school was to me in some respects like reading a new book of surpassing interest—it was a tale of which I never grew tired. Each day brought some new experiences, opened up a new vista of life however narrow, added a little to my scant stock of learning, and alas! led me, step by step, out of and away from the garden of innocence.

My progress in book study was not retarded by any so-called system of gradation. I was my own class, and I shared it with none. I studied what I liked, I recited as often as I was ready, and my advancement was in proportion to my diligence. Within five weeks I had completed the study of geography so far as it was laid down in my *Parley Book*, and the master announced that I was ready for an advanced work on that subject. I had also ciphered to the Rule of Three, which was as far as Benjamin Barnacle had agreed in his "article" to pilot me. The great ocean of knowledge was spread out before me, and I eagerly availed myself of every opportunity to pick up a pebble or two along the shore.

It was hard for me to join with the other children in the games and plays with which they amused themselves at the recesses and the noon intermissions. Having always been so much alone, I shrank from intimacy with those of my kind, and my inherent shyness caused me to shun companionship. Besides all this, not being used to the rudeness which prevailed on the playground, I felt that the better part of valor was to keep myself aloof from it. And so, while the other boys and girls were romping with all the energy of young savages,

and boiling over with the joy which they derived from it, I—poor, foolish fellow—stood alone on the outskirts of the playground and watched them, sometimes enjoying the sight of their pleasure, sometimes betraying myself because I was by nature so unlike them in tastes and inclinations.

The games most favored by the boys were ball games, the very names of which are now generally forgotten. The best of all was called "town ball." It was played by the larger boys, and was the exact prototype of your baseball, lacking only those features which give it its scientific precision. Then there was "three old cat," a very simple game with three batters and three catchers, the catchers serving also as pitchers. But the most barbaric of all was "bull pen," a game which required but little skill, save quickness, and appealed to the savagest instincts of the players. The boys stand in a ring around one of their number who has volunteered to be the first "bull." A ball, large and very hard, is tossed from one to another, the bull keeping constantly on the alert. Presently, however, something occurs to throw him off his guard, and the ball is hurled at him with all the strength which his antagonist can muster. If he escapes being hit, his antagonist takes his place as bull. If the ball strikes him he must get hold of it as, soon as possible and hit some other boy who forthwith takes his place; or, failing in this, he must continue in the ring and take the chances of being hit again. And that is the entire game, a relic no doubt of primitive barbarism.

The girls also had their own innocent little games, such as "ring around a rosy" and "I spy" and "pizen" and "blindman's buff." These I shall not attempt to describe, for doubtless they will have survived to your day, my dear Leona, and you will know more about them than I can tell you.

As the days went by, the boys and girls gradually became less shy of one another, and soon games were inaugurated in which both could engage with equal enjoyment. These games, having none of the elements of rudeness or danger that

characterized the ball plays, were much better adapted to my timid ways, and, little by little, I was induced to take part in them. The one known as "black man" was particularly interesting. It was no doubt as ancient as civilization, and was simply a drama without words wherein one of the children assumed the part of the Old Feller and proceeded to harry and capture the other players who must run from one "base" to the next to escape him. Those whom he caught became his allies and were obliged to assist him in his nefarious warfare. Another game, somewhat similar, was called "prison base." It also was a dramatization, representing a state of warfare between savage tribes, the capture of prisoners and their attempted rescue. The game was ended when one tribe was totally destroyed by the other. It was of course great fun for the boys to make prisoners of the girls; and no doubt the girls enjoyed the chase and the capture—as they do even to this day.

At the very time, however, when my pleasure might have been the greatest—because I was gradually learning to be like other children—it was spoiled by the folly of poor Mary Price. If I took the part of the Old Feller in the game of "black man," she would immediately throw herself in my way and insist upon being caught. If I ignored her, the other scholars would jeer at me; if I made her my easy captive they would laugh and hint at shameful things. It was the same way in the game of "base"—Mary Price was always either my willing prisoner or my most zealous lieutenant. Her eyes were on me always; I felt that we were both fast becoming the laughing-stock of the school.

One cold day, when there were but few scholars in attendance and the weather made it impossible to play out-of-doors, we were all gathered around the stove during recess, to keep warm. Some were talking, some were quietly playing, and others—myself among them—were improving the time by studying the next lesson in spelling. Suddenly I was

surprised and shocked beyond measure by feeling a pair of fat arms thrown around my neck. Oh, the confusion, the awful embarrassment, the flood of sudden anger that overwhelmed me! I knew whose arms they were. I reached up quickly with both my hands and dug my sharp fingernails into them with a ferocity that would have done credit to a catamount. There was a suppressed little shriek, a sob, and the arms, dripping blood, were quickly withdrawn.

I glanced sullenly and savagely around. O my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, would you believe that your venerable ancestor was capable of such a thing? A million years of regret can never obliterate from my mental vision the look that was in poor Mary's eyes. It indicated neither anger nor pain—it was the look, I fancied, of a broken heart. Did I repent of my thoughtless act? Yea, verily, and in sackcloth and ashes. It was the meanest act of my life, a beastly act, and the memory of it rankles in my heart even now. But Mary Price never again threw herself in my way, never again smiled at me nor manifested any admiration for me. She grew up and married early and became the mother of many children and the grandmother of a host. It is probable that in her matronly years she forgot her childish flame and her cruel disappointment.

If the miserable affair had ended with the commission of the deed, I too might have forgotten it, just as I have forgotten many another momentary lapse into a state of savagery. But there were witnesses of it, and many days elapsed ere they suffered me to hear the last word about it. I was quite sure that Benjamin Barnacle saw the transaction, and I expected to receive from his hands the trouncing which I so richly deserved. But when I ventured to look shamefacedly toward his desk, he was bending over and giving some private instruction to his class in English grammar—a class that was now composed of only one scholar, Lena Bouncer, the two other young women having found the study too difficult for

their comprehension. I was at that moment in a thoroughly fighting mood, all the evil passions within me having been awakened, and had he undertaken to "correct" me, there would have been a scene; but, with all his weaknesses, Benjamin Barnacle was a prudent master. He knew when to be blind.

Not so with some of the older scholars. They had little sympathy with foolish Mary, but they had less sympathy with bearish me. The girls contented themselves with pointing their fingers at me and hissing, "For shame! for shame!" And some of the boys, with whom I had never been very friendly, were much less considerate of my feelings. They nicknamed me the Cat, and whenever I appeared on the playground they greeted me with a series of mewings and caterwaulings that made my blood boil and stirred up my savage instincts until if murder was not in my heart it was certainly close by. At such times the friendly protecting arm and voice of big, jovial Ikey Bright proved most welcome and most effectual.

But one day Ikey was absent, and at the noon intermission my tormentors began to make life particularly disagreeable to me. There were only three or four of them, all the other boys being neutral or my silent partisans; but these rude fellows gave their entire energies to the task of annoying me.

"Meow! meow! meow!" they cried in concert.

"Hiss, cat! hiss, cat! hiss-s-s-s!" gibed their leader, a rude boy of my own size, whose name was Timothy Bray.

"Trim the tomcat's claws!" shouted another. "Trim his claws!" And they all laughed.

O my Leonidas! do you think I was not fighting mad? Well, if you had seen the sticks and stones that were presently flying through the air, you would not have the least doubt of it. But what did that avail? Timothy and his crowd were good dodgers, having had practice in the bull-pen ring, and not a single missile reached its mark; and the more furious I became, the more exasperating were my adversaries.

Then Jake Dobson, past master in all sorts of underhand tricks, cried out, "If you fellers want to fight Bob Dudley, why don't you come at him, one at a time? You're afeard. You're cowards."

They paused with their jeering, and came nearer; and I, with my back against a tree, stood at bay and glared at them.

"'Tain't fair for four to pick on one," continued Jake; "but you do it 'cause you're afeard of him."

Timothy began to chuckle, and when one of his fellows ventured to cry out "Hiss, cat!" I thrust at him fiercely with my fist.

"Take keer! He's a goin' to scratch!" shouted the biggest boy in the school.

By this time I was foaming with rage. All the fighting instincts of the Dudleys—instincts that had lain pent up and repressed through five generations of non-combatants for conscience' sake—were aroused and coursing through my veins.

"Has any of you got a chip?" asked Jake Dobson.

"Here's one," said a small boy, stooping to pick it up from the ground.

"Gimme it," commanded Jake. He took the chip in his hand, turned it over, spat on one side of it, and then laid it on my shoulder.

"Now, Tim," he said, "I'll bet thee don't dare to knock that chip off'n Bob's forequarter."

Timothy advanced sidewise toward me, and when within a convenient distance, swept his hand around and sent the chip flying to the ground. In a moment I was upon him. I didn't know anything about fighting, being a non-combatant by birth and having never seen a performance of that sort; but all my energies were directed to the one effort to disable my enemy. For perhaps two brief seconds the air around us was luminous with the exhalations of wrath. I smote Timothy on the cheek; he tripped me up; we were rolling on the ground—

and then suddenly a silence as of the grave pervaded the place of combat, and a hand that was not Timothy's grasped the collar of my wawmus, and lifted me to my feet. At the same time, a voice that was neither loud nor angry, but nevertheless terrible as an army with banners, spoke up and said:

"Come, boys! We will go into the house a while and try to cool ourselves off."

The master led us both into the schoolhouse and directed us to take our accustomed seats and remain there until he should see fit to have a season with us. Then he closed the door with a decisive warning to the other scholars not to approach the house until books was called.

In a state of deep contrition I sat down and bowed my head forward upon the desk. My heart was very bitter, and the world seemed indeed a cheerless place without one ray of comfort to illume its dreary wastes. During the first few moments the schoolroom was so still that I could hear the despondent breathings of my fallen adversary a dozen feet away. Then I heard the master's footsteps returning to his platform; and a slight rustling, as of the leaves of a book, reminded me that the class in English grammar was probably waiting to say its lesson. I raised my head a little and looked. Yes, there was the class, sitting by the master's desk; and the master was in the act of leaning over to look into Goold Brown's *Institutes of English Grammar* which the class was holding in its hands. Then in my misery I again dropped my head upon the desk and gave way to desperate musings.

I was no longer angry. I had given Timothy a bloody cheek and was ready to make up with him. But what was the use? I was disgraced. Never again, so long as life endured, would I find pleasure in books or play, in school or home. My brief race had been run; henceforth there was nothing in store for me but labor and sorrow.

Then I heard a voice. It was that of the class in English

grammar, otherwise called Lena Bouncer; but she was not saying her lesson.

"I don't think the boys will give any more trouble," I heard her say. "Why not make 'em promise to be good and then let 'em go out? They need the fresh pure air."

"But they were fighting," I heard the master softly reply. "They were bad, extremely bad, and they must be punished."

"They are both usually so good! I'm sure they didn't mean it," said the other voice. "Why not have a little season with 'em right now, and then let 'em go? I cain't recite my lesson with their sad faces before me."

"Thee is a pretty good counselor," returned the master; "and I think I will follow thy advice." Then raising his voice, he said in quite other tones, "Timothy! Robert! Both of you come forward."

We rose sulkily, reluctantly; and Timothy, seeing the long hickory on the wall, and in imagination feeling it on his tender rear parts, began to whimper.

"Don't cry, boys," said tender-hearted Lena. "Come up here and see what the master will say to you."

"Yes, come forward!" said Benjamin, not unkindly.

We shambled up to his desk, hanging our heads and feeling very penitent.

"Now, boys," said the master in a jolly mood, "I'm going to let you off easy this time; but if it happens again, I'll give it to you double. Robert, look at Timothy. Timothy, look at Robert. Now, shake hands like two good little Friends."

We obeyed him, and immediately felt better.

"Robert, does thee forgive Timothy?"

I nodded my head.

"Timothy, does thee forgive Robert?"

He assented in like manner.

"Now, boys, do you both promise that you will never again say an unkind word the one to the other, or do an unkind act the one to the other?"

We raised our heads and each bravely, but faintly, answered "Yes!"

Then Lena came with her handkerchief and would have wiped our eyes had we not resented the indignity.

"The poor dears," she said, "I knowed that they didn't mean to be naughty."

"Now, boys," said the master, "you may go out and play, remembering your promise. But be sure not to make any unnecessary noise, and don't linger around the door; for the class in English grammar is going to recite."

Timothy, with an air of mingled humility, thankfulness and joy, strode quickly to the door, opened it and was soon regaling the other boys with a dreadful tale of the master's wrath. But I hesitated and hung back. The prospect of another half-hour on the playground that day was not in the least alluring. I felt sure that my appearance there would be immediately greeted with cat-calls from all the other boys, and that I would again be goaded to anger, and perhaps be forced to engage in another miserable fight. There was no longer an ounce of courage in my body. Having already disgraced myself twice through being mastered by my hot temper, I had no heart to risk another fall. So, instead of availing myself of the master's permission to go out and play, I went stiffly back to my seat, opened the Parley Book at the next lesson, bent over it with my elbows on the desk and made a brave show of studying.

"Robert!" It was the master's voice, but I pretended not to hear.

"Robert, ain't thee going out to play?"

I made a faint negative motion of the head, but without raising my eyes.

"Robert, I want thee to go out and play."

The voice was sharper and more decisive; but it served only to increase my determination not to obey the master's wishes. There was a sound of footsteps—Old Benny was

coming to enforce obedience—but I did not look up. I was resolved that, if he chose, he might tear my limbs from my body and throw me piecemeal out of doors to be reviled by my tormentors, but never would I voluntarily place myself in their power. The steps came nearer, and again the master's hand sought the collar of my wawmus.

What might have happened had there been no interference, it is useless to surmise. But at that decisive moment, the class in English grammar with pleading voice cried out:

"Oh, Benjamin, the little feller is afraid. Please let him stay. He will be very still, and I'm sure he won't interrupt us."

The master made no reply, and I heard him return to his table. I looked up, but the high desk in front of me hid both him and his class from view. I sat very still, listening to the shouts and the merry laughter of the children on the playground. Boys and girls were playing "black man" together, and I was forgotten.

Then I was aware that the class in English grammar had begun to recite, speaking low and softly as if desirous not to disturb my meditations. I peeped around the projecting corner of my desk and saw the master, this time sitting beside the class and holding the grammar book in his hand. The recitation proceeded. It consisted of the repetition of something which the class had memorized verbatim from Goold Brown's immortal work. It was interesting and musical, and I listened.

Like a love-lorn whippoorwill on a midsummer's night, the class never once stopped to take breath as it recited the world-old paradigm: "First person, I love; second person, thou lovest; third person, he loves—"

"The potential," interrupted the master.

The class proceeded: "First person, I may love; second person, thou mayst love—"

Master: "Yes! yes! The emphatic form?"

Class: "First person—first person—"

Master: "I do love."

Class: "Yes! Second person, thou dost love; third—"

Master: "Never mind the third person. Give the progressive, interrogative. First person—"

Class: "Art thou loving?"

Master: "Next, the progressive, positive, first person—"

Class: "I am loving; second person, thou art loving."

Master: "That's right; let's keep on. Future, interrogative, second person—"

Class: "Wilt thou love? First person—"

Master: "Yes, yes! I will love! I do love! Plural—Shall—"

Class: "Shall we love!"

Master: "Certainly. That's right. We do love!"

And then—O my dear Leonidas, my dear Leona, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon—there was a sound like that of a cork twisted quickly from the neck of a peppermint bottle, after which the master rose and took two or three steps forward to ascertain if I were really asleep as I pretended to be.

"Poor little fellow!" said the class in English grammar. "He ain't used to fightin', and he's all worn out with the excitement."

"How fast the minutes fly!" exclaimed the master, looking at his great watch. "I declare, it's time to take up books again."

And ferule in hand, he strode to the door, rapped lustily in his usual manner, and repeated the old familiar cry:

"Books! books! books!"

Contrary to my fears, the scholars seemed no longer to remember my unseemly exhibitions of bad temper. They looked at me kindly, spoke to me in the old familiar manner, and refrained from any allusions to the unfortunate incidents of the day. Even Timothy Bray and his backers manifested their compunction by being more friendly than at any former time; and not one voice was raised to call me a "tomcat" or to hiss me into a state of unreasoning fury.

Nevertheless, there was still one scholar who kept me in

a state of disquietude and was my bete noir every day of my life. That scholar was Jake Dobson. He overwhelmed me with attentions; he was profuse in his expressions of admiration; he was never tired of slobbering over me. But all his services, all his praises, all his flattery were, as I soon learned, mere preludes to induce me to swap something of mine for something of his.

In his absence, I hated him, I resolved to shun him, I made all sorts of plans to circumvent and out-trick him, I hoped against hope that something dreadful might happen to him. In his presence, I found him so humble, so devoted to my interests, so persuasive in his manners, that I was irresistibly drawn into whatsoever net he chose to spread for me. And so, I was never done swapping with him. It was in vain that Ikey Bright warned me, in vain that I resolved and re-resolved to resist his blandishments; I was his helpless and not unwilling victim. I swapped six of my beautiful striped marbles for an old white taw with holes in it. The remaining three marbles I swapped for a sling-shot, which I broke and threw away the next day. I swapped the old white taw back to Jake for three brass buttons with a fox's head on them in relief. Then he offered to swap me a peck of walnuts for the brass buttons, and after the trade was consummated I discovered that every walnut was rotten. Thus, at the end of the fourth week, I found myself utterly bankrupt, all of my possessions, except my books, having been transferred to Jake Dobson, the millionaire in embryo. Even the horn buttons on my wawmus and the brass buckles on my "galluses" were sacrificed to the greed of this young Shylock.

One evening as Ikey Bright and I were wending our way homeward in the gathering twilight we saw a small animal dragging itself across the open road at a little distance ahead of us.

"Be careful!" said Ikey. "I think it is a polecat and it's making believe hurt, so as to play a trick on us."

I ran forward, however, and soon discovered that it was a large squirrel which had been wounded in such a way as to render his hind legs useless. He struggled painfully forward through the dust and the roadside weeds, evidently trying to reach a tree that was near by; but how did the poor creature hope to climb any tree with only his two front paws to cling by?

"Don't touch him, he'll bite!" shouted Ikey, seeing that I was bent on picking him up.

But I was on familiar terms with the timid beasts of the woods; and feeling that they understood me, I had little fear of any of them. The crippled fellow struggled valiantly to escape, and then faced about and feebly offered fight. I reached down to seize him, but was not quick enough. He leaped suddenly upward and fastened his four long incisors in the fleshy part of my hand. The pain was intense; but I knew how to disengage him, which I did without unnecessary roughness.

"Why don't you choke him to death?" cried Ikey, seeing the blood dripping from my hand.

"Oh, he didn't mean to hurt me," I answered. "See how gentle he is." And, indeed, he had ceased all resistance and was cuddling softly in my arms as though conscious he had met a friend.

"Look at him, Ikey," I said. "I do believe he is our old Esau."

"He knows how to bite, anyhow," said Ikey.

We examined the little creature as he snuggled, panting and trembling, in the folds of my wawmus sleeve.

Yes, he was red and hairy like his Scriptural namesake; and there were the two brown streaks over his eyes, and the white spot on the tip of his tail, and the little notch in his ear that his brother Jacob had made when they were both very little.

"It is Esau!" I cried. "There's no mistake about it. He's

come home again to be with his friends."

"But look at your hand, how it's bleeding," said Ikey. "Here, let me wrap my handkerchief round it."

I submitted to his kind surgery, and then with Esau in my bosom, hastened homeward.

It was almost a year since I had last seen my old pets and playmates romping about in the freedom of the big woods, and I was overjoyed to recover one of them if only for a little while. Esau manifested no disposition to escape. We made a warm nest for him in the loft, close by the boys' bed, where he could sit and look out if he chose through the crack between two clapboards. Mother, after she had poulticed and bandaged my wounded hand, tried to bind up his poor broken legs—broken by a shot from some cruel rifle—but he would have none of it. He would be his own surgeon, as all wild animals are; and if we would only give him rest and quiet and plenty of food, he would heal himself. So we fed him well, and every morning I carried him out into the yard and to the cherry trees where he used to gambol; and he appeared to understand it all and to be content. His wounds healed rapidly, and he was soon able to make little excursions about the house all alone.

Then, one day, very thoughtlessly, I happened to fell Jake Dobson about him. From that moment I had no peace, but was constantly beset with propositions to swap Esau for some marbles, for a top, for a knife without blades, for anything that Jake happened to possess. To all these propositions, however, I turned a deaf ear, Esau remained safe in his snug warm quarters in the loft, and I felt very proud that I was his protector.

Soon Jake came with a new proposition; for he understood my ruling passion, and in his small way he was as skilled in temptation as Mephistopheles or Satan.

"Say, Bob," he whispered in school one morning; "I've got a new book at home. Aunt Mahaly, she fetched it to me from Sin Snatty for my birthday present."

"What kind of book is it?" I asked.

"Oh, it's a big book full of verses and pieces about animals and trees and kings and good little boys, and such things. And there's lots of picters in it. But I don't keer for it. It's too hard readin' for me."

"What's the name of it?"

"The *Book of Jims.*"

"What a funny name! I wish I could see it."

"Well, I'll give thee a chance to see it and to own it if thee wants to. I'll fetch it over to school tomorrow, if thee would like to swap for it."

I suspected his plan and resolved to thwart it. But the thought of a new book was overpowering.

"Fetch it anyhow," I said; "but I hain't got anything to swap for it."

"How about that there squeerel?"

"I wouldn't swap Esau for anything in the world."

"All right, Bob; thee needn't. But I'll tell thee what. Thee would like to see the book and I would like to see the squeerel. So, if thee'll fetch the little critter to school tomorrow, I'll fetch the *Book of Jims,* and we'll both be tickled."

"But it's against the rules, and Old Benny won't allow it," I protested.

"Old Benny won't know nothin' about it," he answered. "We'll fetch 'em and hide 'em out till recess; and then we'll sneak off from the other boys, and look at 'em. I dare thee to fetch the squeerel, Bob."

Was there ever a boy who would back down on a dare? Besides, I was burning with the desire to see what that *Book of Jims* was like. So, I said, "All right, Jake! I'll do it."

The next morning, therefore, I secretly enticed poor Esau to come and sit on my shoulder in expectation of a nut. Then I treacherously seized him and thrust him into the little old box cage which David had made for him and his brother when he captured them for me in their infancy. He could scarcely turn himself around in his cramped quarters, but I had grown

so hardened that I felt no pity for him; and when he put one little paw out through the wires and turned his large dark eyes up toward me, as though asking the reason for my rough behavior, I was moved to no compunctions but rather to feelings of anger toward the helpless dumb creature.

I looked, guiltily, toward the cabin door. No one had seen me. Like a cowardly thief, I quickly tucked the cage under my arm, picked up my dinner bucket, and started sneakingly to school. As I was opening the gate, I heard mother calling me from the door of the weavin'-room:

"What's thee going to school so early for?"

"I have to," I answered without turning round. "Benjamin told me I must come early and do my sums on the blackboard!"

Oh, my dear Leonidas! that was not the kind of lie that good Friend William had in mind when he counseled my mother not to worry if I sometimes enlarged the truth. And was it a vivid imagination, or was it a guilty conscience that enabled me to see the Old Feller, that morning, grinning at me from behind every tree as I strode doggedly along the lonely road?

That evening when I returned home, I did not go directly into the house as was my custom, but sneaked around to the weavin'-room. It was late, and so dark that even the loom was invisible. I groped my way across to the farther end of the little enclosure, and there, after making sure that no person could see me, I knelt and lifted a loose puncheon from the floor. Then I unbuttoned my wawmus and from beneath its folds drew a book—the *Book of Jims*—which I inserted into the open space and effectually concealed by returning the loose puncheon to its place.

When I entered the cabin a few moments later, the family were at supper.

"Robert, does thee know what's become of Esau?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane. "We hain't seen nothin' of the

pore critter all day long."

"How do I know where he is?" I whined, feeling very sulky and cross. Then I thought of something that I had read in an old book: "Am I my brother's keeper?" And I felt like Cain.

Mother, being always quick to discern every species of trouble, looked at me with sympathetic eyes. "I guess Robert ain't very well tonight," she remarked. "It's too hard for him to traipse all the way to the Dry Forks and back every day; he ain't strong enough."

And just before the chapter reading began, she poulticed my hand anew and obliged me to bathe my feet in hot water and drink a cupful of hot pennyroyal tea.

CHAPTER XXVI
My First Merry Christmas

That night I tossed on my little trundle-bed and could not sleep. Inviz came, but instead of being the jolly companion and comforter that he had hitherto been, he was my tormentor and accuser. He twitched my ear until it tingled; he slapped me in the face and said:

"Robert Dudley, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" (Strange that he had fallen into the habit of using the unplain language!)

"Well, I am ashamed," I answered; "but what can I do?"

"Take your medicine and be glad that the Old Feller hain't carried you off;" and then he began to remind me of some of the bad boys of the Bible. In vivid colors he painted the fate of the forty-and-two wretched urchins who were torn in pieces by she-bears for no greater sin than making sport of a prophet's bald head. And he called to memory the instructive story of little King Jehoiachin, who, although but eight years old, was so wicked in the sight of the Lord that he was permitted to reign only three months and ten days.

"And you," said my unpitying accuser, "you are just as bad as little King Jehoiachin—and you are older and ought to know better."

"What did he do that was so bad?" I asked.

"I don't know exactly what—nobody knows; but he done evil. And then you know, Robert Dudley, that you have said naughty things about Old Benny's bald head; and you are no better than the forty-and-two boys that got eat up!"

"Oh, Inviz! I'm mighty glad there ain't any she-bears in

the New Settlement;" and with that, I pulled the bedquilt over my head and tried to push him out of bed.

I closed my eyes and finally dropped to sleep—to sleep, but only to dream of poor Esau, maimed and struggling to escape from the pitiless grasp of Jake Dobson. Then I thought that Benjamin Barnacle was standing over me, holding me by the ear, and flourishing his terrible hickory above my head and threatening the direst vengeance because I had spoken slightingly of his hairless noggin. And just as the hickory was about to descend upon my bare back, I awoke with a suppressed scream, only to see the shadows from the flickering blaze on the hearth playing among the dried "yerbs" and hunks of jerked beef that were suspended from the joists above the bed.

And so the night passed, oh, so miserably! and when day at last dawned, I rose and dressed myself and sat disconsolately in the chimney corner until breakfast time.

"Bobby looks kinder peaked this morning," remarked Aunt Rachel.

"Oh, he's jist got a spell of the sulks," said Cousin Mandy Jane. "He'll feel all right when he gits somethin' on his stummick."

But I could not eat anything. My head ached, the hand which poor Esau had bitten throbbed terribly, my back felt as though it were broken. Without touching a morsel, I returned to my place by the fire; the shivers were trickling down my spine, I was cold and felt a great disinclination to move.

"Robert, what ails thee?" inquired mother with some solicitude. "It's time thee was gittin' ready for meetin'."

And then it occurred to me for the first time that today was meetin' day, and that there would be no school; but I sat still and paid no attention to mother's suggestive remark.

Time passed and I was successively aware that father was shaving in front of the bit of looking-glass by the door, that the boys had driven the wagon around to the uppin'-block,

and that our womenfolks were putting on their bonnets and shawls preparatory to the morning's journey.

"Come, Robert, git thy shoes on. It's 'most time to start," said Cousin Mandy Jane sharply.

Then mother came with pity in her eyes. She passed her hand over my forehead, she held the tip of my nose between her two middle fingers, she laid one of her thumbs on my wrist.

"I'm afraid thee's got a chill," she said. "Thee needn't go to meetin' today if thee don't feel like it. Thee may set by the fire and keep the dinner pot a b'ilin'."

I was dimly conscious of her great kindness; and I felt an unwonted sense of relief at the thought that I was, for once, excused from going to that hated meetin'. By and by, it came into my mind that everybody had gone away and that I was alone in the house, to do as I pleased. I sprawled myself at full length on the floor beside the hearth, and lay there, looking at the red coals in the fireplace and at the steaming dinner pot suspended from the crane above the forelog. How hot the room seemed, and how grateful to my fevered cheeks was the little current of cold air that came blowing in through the crack at the bottom of the door!

My head felt very large and my hand seemed bursting from its bandages; and as I looked up, I fancied that I saw Esau creeping in through the gimlet hole where the latch-string was hung. Yes, it was, indeed, poor Esau, and he suddenly grew very large and sat up on his hind legs and made ugly faces at me. I lay quite still, not caring what happened; and soon the room was chock-full of Esaus, dancing on the floor and hanging from the joists and climbing up the walls, and shaking their little fists at me, and—

Well, the next thing that I knew, I was lying in mother's bed and mother was bending over me, and somebody was sitting very quietly near by. The fire was burning low and father was standing before it, his arms folded on his breast, his head

inclined forward as though in deepest meditation. Cousin Mandy Jane and somebody else were walking about the room in their bare feet, putting things to rights, and talking in whispers. Then I saw mother beckon suddenly to father; and he in a queer excited manner, came softly and stood by the bed and looked into my eyes.

"Robert," he said, speaking low and huskily, "does thee know me?"

It was a strange question, wasn't it? I tried to answer, but my tongue refused to frame a single word, and I could only nod my head a very little and try to smile. Father's face lighted up wonderfully, and I heard him say something to mother about thanks and about a crisis being past—and then I dropped to sleep. They afterward told me that it had been four days since I had lain down on the floor in front of the fire while all the rest were at meetin'; and during all that time I had been unconscious of everything that was going on, raving occasionally in wild delirium, and talking incoherently about Esau and the Dobson boy and a book of some kind. And this had continued so long that the family had despaired of my ever finding my mind again, or indeed of my living till another day.

When I woke again, I felt stronger; and turning my face a very little I was rejoiced to see that the person who was sitting beside the bed was none other than dear Aunt Nancy—reputed to be the best nurse in all the Wabash Country. As soon as she had heard of my illness she hastened to come and take care of me; and I learned that for twice twenty-four hours she had scarcely closed her eyes or left my bedside for a moment.

Yes, and that other person who was helping about the house, who was she? I was not long in doubt, for from among the pots and pans came Cousin Sally, with her shining morning face, tiptoeing to the bedside just to get a glimpse of my eyes, and assure herself that I was "gittin' purty peart." She

was clad in her newest pink flannen gown, and with her crimson cheeks and ruddy bare arms, she seemed to shed a kind of homemade sunshine on everything she approached.

Then, as I turned my head a little farther, I was conscious of the presence of another person. It was a soft-handed, kind-faced, dark-haired man, not quite so old as father; and he was holding my wrist and looking at his watch while he smiled as though he had found a great treasure.

Presently he let go of my wrist and returned the great watch to his waistcoat pocket. "Everything is favorable," he said. "Good care and proper food will bring him round nicely. Give him one of these powders every two hours; but don't disturb him if he is asleep."

I wondered, vaguely, who this very pleasant man could be; and it was not until several days had passed that Aunt Nancy volunteered to inform me that he was Doctor Bunsen who had lately come from the 'Hio Country and was boarding at the blacksmith's until he could build a house of his own at the Dry Forks.

Oh, how restful it was to lie there very quietly and doze the time away, to have nothing to do but to take my powders and eat soft toast and chicken soup, and to feel that Aunt Nancy was always close by to attend to my every want! By the end of the week I had improved so much that all restrictions about quietness were removed, and everyone who wished was permitted to sit by my bedside and talk to me about such little things as would interest but not worry me. David and Jonathan alone seemed shy of me, and I seldom caught sight of either. But I could hear them every day as they came into the room, walking on tiptoe to the fireplace and inquiring in whispers if "Bobbie was as peart as ever." Then, having received a satisfactory reply, they would tiptoe out again, being careful not to let the door-latch rattle or the hinges creak and disturb my rest.

Late one afternoon, it happened that everybody had gone

out except old Aunt Rachel who was dozing over her pipe in the chimney corner. I was lying on the bed, only half-awake, looking up at the smoky joists and counting the bunches of dried pennyroyal and peppermint, and half inclined to fret because my nurse had gone home that very day. All at once I heard the door-latch click softly, and then the restrained footsteps of someone coming toward the bed. My eyes were half-closed, and I did not feel like opening them—it was so delicious to lie with them so. The footsteps drew nearer, and I heard a whisper:

"Towhead, is thee awake? Don't be skeered; it's jist me."

I looked lazily upward; the burly form of David was bending over me, his grisly face was close to mine.

"I've fetched thee something Towhead," he whispered. "Hold out thy hands and shet thy peepers."

I obeyed with some eagerness, and the next moment a furry little animal was placed between my hands. I looked, and my heart gave a great throb.

"O David! Is it Esau?"

"Well, I reckon it is," he whispered. "Don't be afeared; he won't bite."

"Where did thee get him, David?"

"Wheer does thee s'pose? I bought him of that there tarnal Dobson boy. I give four bits in silver for him."

"And did thee buy him for me, David?"

"Naw! of course not. I hain't got so silly as that. But when I heerd that that there Dobson boy had him, I thought how nice it would be to see the tarnal critter a-skimmin' round the loft ag'in, like he useter do. So I made a dicker with that there Dobson feller, and brung him home yisterday. He's my sqeerel, remember; but thee may call him thine."

The poor, abused little creature cuddled down on the pillow beside my neck and seemed contented and pleased; and I, too, was happy.

"Oh, David, I'm so glad!" I murmured, a great sorrow, the

sorrow of remorse, being lifted from my heart. "I'm so glad to see him again!"

"Don't thee tell nobody that I brung him in here," said David huskily; and then he tiptoed back to the door and was gone.

My illness was so strange and unusual that the neighbors had been much interested from the beginning; and, more through curiosity than sympathy, the friendly women were prompt to call at our house and offer their condolements to mother.

"It's all come to him on account of his readin' so much," said Mahaly Bray. "I always said I'd be afeared to have a child like him."

And Friend Mother Dobson responded, "Well, didn't I say that he wasn't long for this world? 'Tain't natteral for children to be always a-hankerin' after books; and I knowed somethin' would happen."

"The Old Feller will have his own," said Margot Duberry with becoming brevity.

But there were kinder words from others, and messages of genuine sympathy. Benjamin Barnacle came personally to express his sympathy, and he brought a nosegay of "everlastin'" flowers "with love" from his class in English grammar. And pretty Esther Lamb sent me, "by kindness of Jonathan," a narrow bit of blue ribbon for a book-mark.

In a short time I grew well enough to sit up in mother's chair and look out at the landscape, now all white with snow; and after that there was no rising of the sun that did not find me a little stronger. But my legs utterly refused to support the weight of my body, and for many weeks it was necessary to carry me back and forth from the bed to the fireplace or the window.

During the period of my greatest weakness I had been content to let books alone; but one day a great hungering came upon me, and father said that it would certainly do me

no harm to read a little, provided it didn't make my head ache. Accordingly, my chair was drawn up by the fireplace, and Cousin Mandy Jane brought my whole library and put it on the hearth at my feet. Oh, how friendly all those little books appeared, lying there in an orderly row and looking up into my face! As I was gazing lovingly at them and proudly counting them, the memory of something half forgotten came suddenly into my mind.

"Cousin Mandy Jane, I wish thee would do something," I said.

"Well, I mought do something if thee will be real good. What is it?" she answered primly.

"I wish thee would go round to the weavin'-room for me."

"What for?"

"Because I want thee to get something. Thee remembers the loose puncheon where thee used to put the papaws to ripen, don't thee?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want thee to lift it up and get something that's under it, and fetch it to me to look at."

She waited to ask no question, but went promptly around to the weavin'-room to comply with my wish. Presently she returned with the book in her hand.

"It's jist as I reckoned," she said, somewhat acridly. "This is the book that that there Dobson boy swapped to thee for pore Esau, ain't it?"

"Yes! Sit down and look at it with me."

It was a larger volume than any other that I owned. I opened it and read the title-page: *"The Book of Gems. With One Hundred Engravings."*

Well, there wasn't any "Jim" about it, after all—that was certain, and I had told Jake Dobson so when I first saw it. There was a beautiful picture fronting the title-page—a steel engraving entitled *Brother and Sister*—which I examined so closely that its outlines were forever transferred to my mental

canvas. Even to this day, I can see with my eyes shut the slender, well dressed, manly brother, amusing his sister by writing or drawing something upon a small paper tablet. Ah, how I wished that I could be such a little brother standing in the garden beside a little sister so gentle, so modest, so beautiful! And then the thought of Edith Meredith, my Angel of the Facin' Bench, came strangely into my mind. Oh, what a grand good sister she would be!

Finally, I began to turn the leaves of the book, looking at the "engravings"—which were only cheap woodcuts—and getting a general idea of its character. It was simply a bound volume of a little magazine called *The Youth's Cabinet,* one of the first periodicals of its kind in this country. It was edited by Francis C. Woodworth, a writer of some repute at that time, but now almost forgotten. Its contents presented a wonderful miscellany of prose and verse—history, anecdotes, moral essays, riddles—wholesome food for juvenile minds. (Look on the top shelf of my bookcase, Leonidas, and you will find this *Book of Gems,* carefully preserved through all the years that have intervened. But you won't care for it.) Oh, the hours and hours that I spent, poring over those delightful pages, trying to solve the puzzles, memorizing the little poems! One of these last is still popular in the school readers: It begins with the lines:—

> "The ground was all covered with snow one day,
> And two little sisters were busy at play;"

and each stanza ends with the refrain,

> "Chickadee-dee, chickadee-dee!"

Early, one very wintry morning, there was a sharp knocking at our door, and before anyone could say "Come in!" the latch was lifted, and Doctor Bunsen entered. His tall form was

wrapped in a long fur coat, and a coonskin cap was drawn tightly down over his ears. He didn't wait for any invitation, but stamping the snow from his big boots, he came right up to the fireplace where we were sitting, and in the joiliest mood you ever saw, he shouted:

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to all! Merry Christmas to you, Master Robert!" And he went round the room, shaking hands, first with Aunt Rachel, and then with Cousin Mandy Jane, and then with each of the rest of us. And all the time, he kept talking so fast that it was difficult for anyone else to edge in a single word:

"Aunt Rachel, you're looking as spry as a chipping sparrow. How was that quid of tobacco that I gave you to try? … Oh, no! I haven't time to sit down—can't stop a minute! Lots of sick folks in the Settlement now—mostly fever'n'agur… How cheerful you look, Miss Mandy Jane! and how young! … I just came in to see how the lad is getting along, and to wish you all a merry Christmas... Merry Christmas, Master Robert! How nice it is to see you sitting up with that book in your hand. Can't walk yet? Well, have patience; your, legs will get stronger after a bit. Don't study too hard… How are you, Mrs. Dudley? Oh! pardon me—How are you, Deborah? That's good! Don't sit at that loom too much, but give yourself more fresh air. A merry Christmas to you, Stephen. I hear some good things about you over at Dashville…. Oh, nothing, only they say they're going to send you to the legislature; and you can count on me helping 'em…. Merry Christmas, David! How's that new yoke of steers? … And Jonathan, how's that forty-acre piece doing, this snowy weather? … Now, Robert, hold still while I feel of your pulse. All right! Keep on taking your powders, and don't worry. I was over at Dashville yesterday, and they were asking about you. And, by the way, I've got something in my overcoat pocket that somebody sent to you…. Here it is. And here's a little knife for you…a Christmas present from Doctor Bunsen… Good-by! good-by!

Farewell! Merry Christmas to you all!"

And before we could think twice, he was out of the door, and out of the gate, and climbing into his little jumper sled that was to carry him to many troubled homes that day, bringing sunshine and cheer into many weary hearts.

"They say he's an infidel," I overheard father whisper to mother; "but somehow he always makes me feel better after I've seen him."

I looked at the little knife that he had given me—the first real knife that I had ever owned. Oh, the delight of it!—"White handle, brass cheeks, and four blades as sure as thee lives!" I was the richest boy in all the Wabash Country. Why, the queen's little son couldn't possibly own a prettier knife!

"Mother, is today Christmas?" I asked.

"Some folks call it that," she answered. "It is the twenty-fifth day of the Twelfth-month, by our count."

"I wonder what the doctor meant by saying, 'Merry Christmas,'" I murmured. "I don't see that it's much merrier than any other day—at least it wasn't till the doctor came."

"It's just like every other day," said mother. "The good Book tells us we mustn't esteem one day above another."

Then father spoke up. "I think we can make an exception of this Christmas. For we have been greatly blessed, and we have reason to rejoice."

"Yes," cried Cousin Mandy Jane, "let's see what a merry Christmas is like! If I could only be as merry as the doctor, I think I could work right smart better."

"Anyhow," said David, "I'm goin' to have all the tarnal fun that I can skeer up, Christmas or no Christmas;" and with an unearthly whoop he leaped out of the door and ran to the barn to feed his yoke of oxen.

"Let's see what the doctor give thee besides the knife," said Cousin Mandy Jane, picking up the package that I had allowed to fall on the floor; for in my pride at possessing the knife I had almost forgotten the larger present.

"He didn't give it; he said that some folks at Dashville sent it to me;" and taking it in my hands I examined it very carefully before removing the strong cord that was around it.

"Let me help thee, Robby," said good Aunt Rachel; and with her skillful assistance the outside wrappings of heavy paper were soon removed. The first thing that was revealed to sight was a large card with the Words *Merry Christmas* printed upon it. Under this there was a smaller card that smelled like roses in mid-summer.

"There's some writin' on that there little pasteboard, Robert," said Cousin Mandy Jane.

Sure enough! I turned it over, and there was a line—yes, two lines—of the prettiest writing you ever saw. The ink was rather pale, having frozen perhaps—but, by holding the card up to the bright light, I was able to make out the words: *"To Master Robert Dudley, with sympathy for him in his illness. From E. M. and her mother. Merry Christmas!"*

Who was *E. M.?* Cousin Mandy Jane, being a good guesser, solved the riddle at once. "*E* stands for Edith, and *M* stands for Meredith," she said.

"Yes," I answered; "merry Edith Meredith! And so this *must* be a merry Christmas."

It required but a moment to remove the next wrapper and lay bare the contents of the bundle. Books! and such books!

First, there was a small volume entitled *The Shepherd-Boy Philosopher*, by Henry Mayhew. Next there was a thin square volume, the title of which I have forgotten; but it was full of information about the stellar universe and contained half-a-dozen maps of the heavens as they appear at various seasons of the year. Lastly, there was a folded copy of a recent issue of the *National Era.* Oh, the delight of being the possessor of such treasures!

I felt that I ought to thank E. M. and her mother for these wonderful presents; but how could I? I could only gaze and enjoy, and say to Inviz, "Ain't thee glad that they were so

thoughtful and kind? Some time I will do as much for them."

Then, as I was examining my treasures, mother came and bent over me; and I saw that her eyes were swimming with tears. I knew that they were tears of joy, not of sorrow; and she had hard work to keep them back.

"I never in my life seen all our folks so teamin' glad," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane. "Seems as if they was all ready jist to git up and tee-hee."

"That's because it's merry Christmas," I answered, with all my presents spread out before me.

"Yes," said father very sweetly, "I think we may all be merry; for only think how we have been blessed in basket and in store!"

"And only think that we still have our Robert," added mother.

Presently, we heard Jonathan, in the boys' sleeping loft above us, fumbling in the wooden chest where his First-day clothes and his treasures were stored. We supposed that maybe he was dressing up, in order to go out and meet Esther Lamb somewhere; but no one said anything, lest the day's merry-making should be spoiled. He came down, after some minutes, still wearing his work-day clothes and with a telltale grin on his face that plainly said he was "up to somethin'." One of his coat pockets was swollen to five times its normal dimensions, and he had also something in his hand that he was trying to conceal. "Merry Christmas to all!" he shouted as he rushed out of the door and strode down to the barn lot where David was waiting for him. "Has thee got it?" we heard David ask.

"Yes, a hull pound of the tarnal stuff," was the answer.

Then the two burly fellows, with axes on their shoulders, strolled off together toward the new deadenin'; and as they went tramping through the snow-drifts we could hear them shouting and laughing as no one had ever heard them before.

"Say, mother!" called Cousin Mandy Jane from the snow-

covered wood-pile. "Don't thee think I might as well kill the fat gobbler and roast him for dinner? Thee knows he's young and tender, and he'll never git any better than he is now. He's jist the kind to make people feel merry. What does thee say?"

"Well," answered mother, "if thee's made up thy mind to roast him, I guess thee'll have to roast him. And we'll have some nice sweet taters with him and some hot 'east biscuits."

"And sweet cider," added Aunt Rachel.

"I think I'll put on my good clothes and not work any today," remarked father. "I'll look at Robert's new books."

"Do jist as thy conscience tells thee," assented mother. "As for me, I'm goin' to keep busy."

What a glorious forenoon that was, with father to sit by me while we both examined the treasures that had come from E. M. and her mother. And the women-folks, how busy they were! As they bustled about the fireplace, preparing the Christmas dinner, mother so far forgot herself as to purr a little song of joy—very, very softly, you must know, and Cousin Mandy Jane relieved her pent-up emotions by whistling—yes, actually whistling—as she ran to the spring-house for a bucket of water.

Dinner was late, but what of it? It takes time to roast a fat gobbler and prepare all the concomitants of a feast. At length, however, the fowl was lifted from the big reflector, dripping with boiling-hot grease and done to a turn. Cousin Mandy Jane blew the dinner horn with uncommon vigor to summon the big boys from the deadenin'. The table was spread—all of mother's finest "chany" dishes were arranged upon it. The first real Christmas dinner that our family had ever known was ready to be eaten.

"There's the boys, now!" cried mother; and I looked out of the window to see them.

They had climbed upon the fence by the barn-lot bars, and were looking eagerly back toward the deadenin' from which they had come. They appeared to be in no hurry for

their dinner.

"Boys! boys!" called Cousin Mandy Jane impatiently. "Why don't you come? The victuals is a gittin' all cold, and the gravy will spile if —"

She didn't finish the sentence, for at that moment there burst upon the air the most dreadful, deafening sound that had ever been heard in the New Settlement. It was like a tremendous clap of thunder, and yet unlike it in its suddenness and intensity. It shook the very earth and seemed to make the house rock on its foundations; it made the door rattle and the windowpanes tinkle, and caused chunks of dry mortar to fall out from the chinks between the logs. Cousin Mandy Jane shrieked, and all of us wondered if the cabin wasn't going to tumble down on us. Our astonishment and fright, however, were of but short duration; for looking out through the window, we saw David and Jonathan coming up through the barn lot, their faces distended with the broadest grins imaginable, and their whole demeanor showing that they were wonderfully delighted with what had taken place.

"I guess it ain't nothin' to be skeered at," remarked Aunt Rachel, and she calmly refilled her pipe.

Presently the door opened, and the boys entered with a hilariousness that not long ago would have been sharply repressed.

"Did you hear that there leetle cracklin' sound a while ago?" asked David. "That was for merry Christmas."

"What was it, anyhow?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane. "It sounded bigger'n a crack of thunder. I never heerd sich a racket before in all my born days."

"It was that there tarnal old knotty red-oak log in the clearin'—that we've been tryin' to split all summer," said David. "Everybody said we couldn't never split it, and so we thought we'd make a Christmas job of it and maybe it would help to make things kinder merry like."

"How did you do it, David?"

"Why, we bored a two-inch auger hole clean down to the middle of the tarnal thing, and then we put a hull pound of powder into the hole and plugged it up. We laid a long train of twisted tow from it and tetched the end of the train with one of them there Lucy matches thet we brung up from the 'Hio. As soon as it begun to burn we cut and run like the Old Feller hisself—but we needn't to 'a' done it, 'cause the train was so tarnal slow that we got clean up to the barn lot afore she went off."

"Didn't she make a racket though?" cried Jonathan, anxious to put in a word.

"Racket!" exclaimed David derisively. "Thee don't call that a racket, I hope. It was a reg'lar bombilation. And oh! what a dust it raised! We seen it from the barn lot. It sent the chips and the bark a-flyin' e'enamost to the sky; and, what was the funniest, we seen it afore we heerd it."

"Come, boys! the victuals will all spile if you don't begin to wrastle with 'em," said Cousin Mandy Jane impatiently.

"Oh, we'll do the wrastlin' all right," said David. "But hain't this been a mighty merry Christmas? Seems to me I'd like to have one every once in a while."

And thus, my Leonidas, my Leona, the memorable day drew to its close—a Christmas day never to be forgotten. We had celebrated it in our own way and enjoyed it accordingly. Not one of us had ever heard of Santa Claus, not one of us had ever seen a Christmas tree; but we got along very well without either.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Awakening

Of all the presents received on that ever memorable Christmas day, none was more highly esteemed than the copy of the *National Era* which was included in the small bundle of good literature from E. M. and her mother. Father seemed a little shy of it at first; he had so long cherished the belief that newspapers were dangerous things to be admitted into a well-ordered household that he hesitated before permitting me to read it. He proceeded, therefore, to examine it himself in order to see whether there was anything of a demoralizing tendency in its columns.

His eyes fell first upon the column headed *"Latest Intelligence by Magnetic Telegraph"* and his attention was at once riveted. Sitting beside me on that Christmas afternoon, with the big printed sheet spread out before him, he read each item of news aloud while I looked on and listened with rapt attention. The date at the head of the first column showed that the paper was several weeks old, but that did not in the least distract from its interest.

"It's wonderful," said father, as he finished the telegraphic column. "Why, here we may sit beside our own fireplace, safe at home, and know all about what is going on a thousand miles away! It was not so in my boyhood."

Then he examined other portions of the paper—reading the market reports, the editorials, the comments on slavery, the advertisements—and his face glowed with interest and satisfaction. He glanced critically at some of the more lengthy

articles, to make sure that no poisonous matter was lurking there under disguise, and finally, refolding the sheet, he handed it to me.

"What does thee think of it, father?" queried mother. "Does thee think it is safe to let him read it?"

"I find nothing in it that is not instructive and true," he answered. "I have long thought that perhaps Benjamin Seafoam was right when he said that it is every man's duty to keep himself informed about what is going on in the world. Thee may remember that he urged me to become a subscriber to the National Era, and I have been considering the matter quite seriously for some time."

"And what is thee goin' to do about it?"

"I must say that I am very much inclined to take his advice. The Widder Bright showed me several numbers of the paper one day, and they were all as free from fault as this one. And Levi Coffin, when I met him at Larnceburg, assured me that one of the greatest powers for good in this country is the *National Era.* Barnabas Hobbs, when he was here, also advised me to subscribe for it, because of the bold stand which it takes against slavery."

"Well, Stephen, if thy mind is clear, thee is at liberty to do as thee thinks best," said mother resignedly.

In the meanwhile, I had again unfolded the paper and was looking at the headings of the various editorial items and contributed articles. One of these contributions seemed so different from anything else that I gave it a careful examination. I read a few paragraphs. It was an account of "life among the lowly"—a story of slaves and slavery. The beginning of it must have been printed in an earlier issue of the paper, for here the reader was introduced into the midst of things and the chapters were numbered as high as "Six" or "Seven." I soon got the hang of the narrative, however, and I read on until I reached the end of the instalment.

"Here's something you'll all want to listen to," I said.

"What is it?" asked father.

"It's about a slave, named Tom, who read his Bible and was sold to a wicked trader, and about some other slaves that were running away to Canada. But the account stops before it gets to the end."

"What's the name of the piece, Robert?" asked Cousin Mandy Jane, looking over my shoulder.

I answered by pointing to the story itself. "There it is: *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly.* Uncle Tom was sold away from his cabin."

"I wonder if it's a true account," said mother, always a little suspicious of the genuineness of things. "Mebbe it's one of them there stories that people sometimes jist make up out of their imaginations."

"It reads like a true account," I answered. "It tells of things that happened not long ago in Kentucky. If we only had the beginning and the end of it, I think I would like it almost as well as *Robinson Crusoe.*"

The next evening, when we were all sitting very close together before the fire to keep warm—for the weather was exceeding cold—father spoke up suddenly and said:

"Robert, suppose thee reads that piece in the *Era* about Uncle Thomas's log cabin. I think we'd all like to hear it."

I needed no further invitation, for the thought of thus furnishing entertainment for the rest of the family appealed strongly to my vanity. With a little quiver of pleasurable excitement in my voice I began. I read of the slave woman's visit to Uncle Tom's cottage, of her flight across the country with her child in her arms, of her escape from the blood-hounds, and of her fearful crossing of the 'Hio River on cakes of floating ice. As I read, my hearers grew more and more attentive, anxious, impatient to learn the fate of Eliza, eager to know more about Uncle Tom—and then, just as the tension was strongest, came the abrupt ending with the words, "To be continued."

"Well, I'll be dog-goned!" exclaimed David. "Is that the end of it?"

"That's all there is in this paper," I answered; "but it says it's to be continued, and that means that the rest of it will be in the next number."

"I'd like to know if that there Lizy acshully got away," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane.

"So'd I," said Jonathan; "and I'd like to know what become of good old Uncle Thomas who had that there cabin. I'll bet he licked that there master of his'n afore he got through with him."

"No doubt all that will be told in the next number," said father; "and I confess that I have some curiosity about it myself."

"Seems to me," remarked Aunt Rachel, "seems to me that if we knowed how it all begun, we'd know more'n we do. This hearin' the middle of a thing and leavin' both ends off, unsight, unseen, is aggravatin'."

"That's what I think," said mother. "We don't know who Lizy was, we don't know why she run off, we don't know much of anything 'cept that she did run off."

"And 'scaped 'cross the 'Hio," added Cousin Mandy Jane.

"Well, father, what's thee goin' to do about it?" queried mother. "Thee spoke something about subscribin'; but if thee don't feel free, maybe we can borry the next number from the Widder Bright."

"I will take the matter under advisement," answered father, in his old-time dignified manner. Then, having taken the paper and refolded it very carefully, he pushed his chair backward a little and put an end to the conversation by saying, "David, thee may fetch me the Book."

The very next day father carried a dollar to the Widder Bright, with the request that it be forwarded to Levi Coffin and by him sent to the proper person, in payment for a new subscription to the *National Era;* and moreover, he borrowed

from her the precious earlier numbers of that paper which contained the opening chapters of the story. "We'll do as much for thee, some time," he told her by way of thanks.

In the evening, when we were again assembled, there was much more reading to be done and we solved the mystery of "Who was Lizy?" and "What made her run away?" And when, a little later on, our own paper began to arrive with some regularity through the new Dry Forks post-office, we devoted one evening in each week—generally Seventh-day evening—to following the varied fortunes of good old Uncle Tom and his friends and masters.

"I do wonder if all that really did happen," remarked mother with some degree of frequency.

And father would invariably answer, "It could have happened, and it probably did. In any case, the narrative is founded on facts, and we are at liberty to believe that it is true."

But our reading—that is, mine and father's—did not stop with this wonderful serial story. We read every article in each successive number of the *Era;* and besides keeping ourselves well informed with reference to current events, we gradually became deeply interested in politics, especially on all points in which the subject of slavery was touched upon. As for myself, it was not long until I had developed into a partisan of the most radical type, and I wished that I was a man so that I could make myself heard in the councils of the nation. It seemed to me that all the good people were ranged together on one side of the political fence, and all the villains on the other—and to this day, my dear Leonidas, you will find a number of grown-up men who cherish the same idea.

My lameness continuing throughout the winter, I was unable to do anything but sit in the easy chair which father had made specially for me, and read, read, read. The floor beside me was usually littered with several of my favorite volumes, and whenever I grew tired of perusing one, it was

easy enough to reach down and select another.

The little story of *The Shepherd-Boy Philosopher,* which E. M.'s mother had so thoughtfully sent me, was the source of much inspiration; and if I were to make a list of "the books that have helped me," I think that I should include it among the very best. In the first place, the book was written in a most attractive style—a style worthy of its author, the originator and founder of *Punch,* which to this day is the *ne plus ultra* of first-class humorous journalism. In the second place, what could be more uplifting than the story, the true story, of how a little shepherd lad had educated himself—how, in spite of poverty and hard knocks and the lack of opportunities, he had made himself famous among the astronomers and inventors of Great Britain? For a time, therefore, Jamie Ferguson was my pattern saint, the model of industry and perseverance whom I resolved to emulate and imitate. I, too, would be an astronomer, I would be an inventor, I would educate myself.

The book on "The Stellar Universe" (also from E. M. and her mother) was a great help toward forwarding my astronomical ambitions. It was a thin, stiff-backed little volume, hard to read and still harder to understand; but the maps were excellent, and I soon learned how to use them. On many clear winter nights, mother would wheel my trundle-bed to a convenient place underneath the window, whence I could have a good view of the northern sky. Then, with the right map fresh in my memory, I would lie there and imagine myself Jamie Ferguson, watching sheep on the Scottish hills and studying the starry heavens. Inviz, now grown quite steady and thoughtful, would creep under the bedcovers beside me; and with both our heads on the same little pillow, we would watch the Great Bear circle around the pole-star while other constellations marched in orderly procession across our field of vision.

"Ain't it wonderful?" my playmate would exclaim.

"Yes; and to think that they are all so very large and so

far, far away! And when Jamie Ferguson lay on the cold ground among his sheep, and looked up at them, he saw them just as we see them now."

"Well, you ought to be thankful that you have so many more opportunities than Jamie had. Only think of it! Instead of shivering on the bleak hills as he did, with all those sheep to take care of, you' have nothing to do but to lie here in this warm trundle-bed while the stars march past the window. Just see! There is Ursa Major, and there is Ursa Minor, and there is Arcturus—"

And so we kept it up until we both fell asleep. I learned more of astronomy in that one winter, so long ago, than I have ever learned since.

With the earliest approach of spring, the tide of progress in the New Settlement began to make itself apparent as never before. Father said that it was all on account of the opening of the railroad through Dashville, thus bringing the markets to our doors; but there were, no doubt, other reasons for the great awakening that was at hand. New settlers were daily coming our way. All the government lands had been sold, and now the larger holdings were being divided and subdivided into farms of eighty or often of forty acres. New houses were being built, new clearings were opened, the big woods were fast disappearing. With the establishing of the post-office at Dry Forks, the little crossroads had begun to develop into a village. Strangers who did not speak the plain language were coming in and building houses; and the monopoly which Our Society had long held on matters religious was in danger of serious in-roads from the "Methodisters" and other worldly people.

The spirit of progress, if I may call it so, was in the air; it seemed to be getting in the rear of all those sober, staid, slow-moving people who had been resting so long in the same notch—getting in their rear and pushing them along, whether they wished to go or not. Scarcely a day passed now that we

did not see from one to a score of white-covered movers' wagons plodding northward or westward along the main highways. Some of these would stop in our own neighborhood, some were on their way to the more thinly settled sections of the state, and many were bound for what was then the distant West—the Illinois Country, the Missouri, and the new state of Iowa on the very verge of the world. These movers had come from many different localities in the older states—from Ohio and Pennsylvania and Virginia, but the most of those that tarried near us were from classic old Carolina or from Tennessee.

Surely, things were waking up; and father when he observed it, was moved to the frequent repetition of Bishop Berkeley's famous line:

"Westward the course of empire takes its way." The state of Indiana, which for the life of a generation had rested almost dormant, was experiencing the new birth. Hitherto she had been known chiefly as a region of mighty forests, of dismal swamps, of miasmatic streams—a country of backwoodsmen and "hushers" (hoosiers), of isolated settlements, of social experiments and of native simplicity and rustic barbarity. Now she had arrived at the parting of the ways. A new constitution was going into effect, a system of free public schools had been provided for and would soon be established, canal routes were being improved, railroads were being built, people everywhere were beginning to have some idea of the vastness of the natural resources that were waiting to be developed in this, until now, backward commonwealth. The middle ages in the Middle West were fast drawing to an end; the era of modern progress was beginning. And the changes that were taking place in the state at large were reflected or reproduced in scores of communities or settlements, and in thousands of humble homes.

CHAPTER XXVIII
Nopplis

Scarcely a day passed now without something being done to push the horizon farther and farther away from the spot which I still regarded as the center of the world. The habit which I had of omnivorous reading, the diligent study of current news as set forth weekly in the columns of the *Era,* the occasional contact with movers passing through the Settlement, or with newcomers who had lately made their homes in our neighborhood—all these were educative influences that were daily enlarging my vision and strengthening my mental faculties. The universe was expanding, and the tree of knowledge was fast overshadowing and smothering the tender flower of innocence.

One evening father said to me quite abruptly: "Robert, I am going to Nopplis tomorrow, to take some wheat and do a little trading. How would thee like to go along with me and see the big city?"

"Oh, father! May I?" This was spoken with an explosive earnestness, which however was inadequate to express a tithe of the pleasure I felt.

"Yes, if thee thinks thee can stand the journey," he answered. "But thee must be up with the birds, for we shall have to start bright and early."

Stand the journey? Well, I could stand a good deal more than that. The very thought of it made my heart thump and my fingers tingle; and it seemed an age until morning came, and the twittering of the swallows heralded the first appearance of dawn.

It was a day long to be remembered—that day when with the rising of the sun we set out for the world-famous capital of the only state worth living in. Father was seated in the front part of the wagon, guiding the horses and wearing upon his face that expression of dignity and distinction which was so peculiarly becoming to him. I sat a little way behind, on one of the ten bags of wheat that we were taking to market, silent and self-satisfied. My eyes were wide open, my ears were pricked forward, every sense was alert, as of a discoverer just entering into regions hitherto unknown and unexplored.

We traveled slowly; for twelve hundred pounds of wheat, to say nothing of two passengers and various other articles of freight, made no small load for a pair of old horses on roads where mudholes were a hundred times more numerous than mile posts. But the slower our progress, the better chance there was for observation; and a snail's pace was therefore fast enough for me.

At about noon we arrived on the bank of the historic White River, so famed in the poetry and song of the Hoosier Country. Here, beneath the spreading branches of a white sycamore tree, we ate our luncheon, not forgetting to provide also for the patient beasts that had brought us thither. Then we drove boldly into the stream, which at this particular point was very wide and very shallow. The water, which scarcely reached the horses' knees even in the deepest places, rippled gently over smooth pebbles of various sizes, the largest not larger than goose eggs; and looking down into the crystal-clear stream, I could see great numbers of fishes disporting themselves—a sight which to me was most novel and interesting.

Once across the river, we noticed that the houses along the road were much closer together, and soon many unmistakable signs told us we were approaching the city. Indeed, it seemed but a very little while until we were right in the thick of it, there being houses on both sides of us, some of them

quite pretentious buildings of two stories set far back among shade trees and well-cultivated truck patches.

Late in the afternoon, we drove into a very wide road, where there were stores and other buildings—small and large, but mostly small—standing quite close together on both sides, just as in some of the cities that were pictured in my *Parley Book*.

"This is Washington Street," said father. "It is a part of the great National Road that is to run from Baltimore in Maryland to St. Louis in Missouri. When this road is finished it will be the longest and finest highway in all the world."

I looked at it with awe and admiration, for here, I thought to myself, was something so long that one end of it dipped into Chesapeake Bay and the other into the Mississippi River. The street, which formed so honorable a part of the great highway and bore the revered name of the father of his country, was of indefinite length, the houses continuing along it for perhaps half a mile. The roadway itself had been "graded" by digging a shallow ditch on each side and scraping the loose earth up toward the middle. Our wagon wound its way irregularly from one side to the other, while the numerous mudholes and chuck-holes and ruts gave variety to the scene and made overspeeding impossible. Pigs and geese wandered at will along the street, and the number of vehicles and horses that we met filled my mind with astonishment.

Father knew exactly where to dispose of his cargo—at a long low house, as I remember, on the banks of a straight and narrow stream which I learned was the famous Central Canal that had bankrupted the state. And there, to my great wonder and satisfaction, I saw three or four canal-boats of enormous size lying close to the banks and apparently empty and deserted.

Having obtained a good price for his wheat and put the money safely in his pocket, father's next care was to find a lodging place for the night. We drove out upon Washington

Street again, and soon, where the stores were most numerous and the houses stood closest together, we came opposite a large, ramshackle, rusty-looking frame building at the front of which was suspended a huge signboard bearing the words:

RAYS TAVERN

The signboard was old and in need of paint, and a general air of decay and happy neglect rested upon the entire place. A fat ruddy-faced man in his shirt-sleeves was standing by the door, and father drew up and accosted him.

"How's thee, James? Has thee plenty of room in thy tavern for us tonight?"

The tavern-keeper, for so I understood him to be, came leisurely out to the wagon and shook hands with us both.

"How many do you have with you, Stephen?"

"Just myself and the boy and the two horses," answered father. "We would like to get supper and breakfast and lodging and a place for the team to stand under shelter."

"Well, we'll accommodate you," said the man. "Drive right in."

Near the middle of the tavern building there was a broad passageway for wagons, and through this we drove into a kind of courtyard in the rear. This yard was surrounded by a variety of stables and sheds, and was cluttered up with old wagons and store boxes and manure heaps in great profusion; and in the very center was a big wooden pump and a watering trough for the horses. The tavern-keeper came through the passageway after us, and very kindly assisted father in taking the horses from the wagon and putting them in an open stall at the rear of the yard.

The day was near its close, and I was very tired. Everything was so strange and new to my experience that I felt bewildered and oppressed with that sort of unreasoning timidity that so often took hold of me. I hung close to father's

coat tail and trembled lest someone should notice me and speak to me. Very naturally, therefore, my recollection of what occurred during our stay at the hostelry is somewhat confused and indistinct, like that of a dream.

I remember, however, of sitting down to eat at a long table where there were a number of bearded men talking and laughing and rattling the dishes; and, later on, I observed these same men standing with others at a high counter and drinking what I supposed to be sweet cider, as though they actually thought it was good for them; and two or three of the fellows were noisy and ill-behaved and scarcely able to stand on their feet—a fact that gave me great concern until father attempted to direct my attention to something else.

"What's the matter with them?" I asked.

"They are drunk," said father, leading me from the room.

"I should think they would be ashamed of themselves," I said. "Won't they be put in jail for it?"

I had read about drunkenness and the drink habit, and I had heard a great deal of talk about temperance; but this was the first time that I had ever seen an intoxicated person, and I was frightened, disgusted, angry.

Father led me out into the open air. It was already quite dark, and he directed my attention to the lights by which the great street of Washington was illuminated. On the tops of wooden posts, at intervals of a "square" or two, there were a number of lard-oil lamps—perhaps a score or more—flickering feebly in the darkness. Not one of them glowed with more brilliancy than a good dip candle, but the sight of so many lights in a long row on each side of the street was well worth seeing. Few other cities, in those middle ages, were better illuminated; for the era of kerosene had not yet begun, and gas and electricity had scarcely been dreamed of.

These public lamps, however, were not all that contributed to the illumination of the great highway. In the windows of nearly every store a candle was glimmering, and in

some of the larger establishments four or five such lights might be seen, attesting the great prosperity of the proprietors. Thus it was possible for people to walk with safety up and down the street even on the darkest nights. But pedestrians from the outlying districts, where there were no such lights, were obliged to carry little lanterns, like our own at home, consisting of a short tallow candle set in the center of a hollow cylinder of perforated tin. Oh! it was a wonderful experience to be in a city where people moved about at night as well as in the daytime.

Upon returning into the tavern, father selected a candle from a number that were ranged on the barroom counter, lighted it, and the landlord's boy showed us to our room. It was a large dingy apartment containing three beds besides our own; and as I was disrobing, I noticed that nearly every bed was already occupied. There was a good deal of talking among our roommates—some of it unfit for the ears of a growing boy—and while father was firmly remonstrating with the rude fellows, I fell asleep.

My slumbers, however, were neither profound nor of long duration. I awoke with an itching sensation and a feeling as though a thousand "granddaddy long-legs" were creeping over me. Father was also awake and I could hear him in the darkness bravely combating his numerous foes. But, judging from the various intonations of music that issued from the other beds, it was apparent that all the rest of the lodgers were sleeping the sleep of the brave, indifferent to the onslaughts of bloodthirsty legions.

"Father, I think there's a million of 'em," I said. "I can't sleep a wink."

"Lie still and try to go to sleep, and then thee won't notice them," he answered; but he was unable to follow his own advice.

So with much discomfort, I contrived to pass the night, dozing a little now and then, and in the between-whiles

valiantly contending with the voracious creatures that gave no quarter nor sought any. At last, with the first faint peeping of the dawn, both father and I leaped up, and hastily clothing ourselves, sought relief in the open air and at the public pump in the courtyard.

A little later in the morning, as we were about to take our departure from the tavern, father remarked to the landlord, "James, I have no serious objection to lodging in the same room with half a dozen other guests, provided they are well-behaved; but I seriously protest against furnishing entertainment to the numerous little beasts that thee harbors between thy bedcovers."

Leaving the horses and wagon in the tavern sheds, we strolled down Washington Street to see the sights and make some purchases. In front of most of the buildings there were narrow sidewalks, some of planks, some of flat stones, and some of loose gravel; but father was at first not right clear whether we ought to use these public conveniences.

"The city people have built them for their own purposes," he said, "and perhaps we had better not trespass upon them." And accordingly we went trudging along in the middle of the road.

Presently, coming to a hardware store, we went inside, and father laid out the greater part of his money for a wonderful new cookstove, with utensils to match and five joints of pipe. He had a long conversation with the storekeeper during which the subject of sidewalks was mentioned; and I noticed that, afterward, we took our chances with the city people, and no longer strolled in the roadway.

A little farther down the street my eye was attracted by a sign bearing the talismanic words:

BOOK STORE

Father tried in vain to direct my attention to a pair of

goats that were browsing on the opposite side of the street; but what were these ragged animals in comparison with a whole store full of books?

"Let's go in and look at them," I said pleadingly.

And at that very moment a pleasant-looking man came to the door, and seeing father, greeted him with:—

"Good morning, Stephen Dudley!"

"How's thee, Samuel Merrill?" returned father; and they shook hands very cordially. "I couldn't get my little boy past thy door. There's nothing he loves so much as a book."

"Well, come in a little while, and let him look at what I have," said the storekeeper. "I have just received a lot of new books that are very attractive."

We accepted his invitation, and thereupon followed one of the happiest hours of my boyhood. Father sat down beside the storekeeper's desk and the two had a long talk about the crops and the markets and politics, while I browsed to my heart's content among the bookshelves. The time passed all too quickly, and finally, when father insisted upon going, Mr. Merrill showed him a chunky little volume that he himself had been reading, and said:

"Here is a book that will interest the boy. It's all about Indians and Daniel Boone and pioneer times in this country."

I took it in my hand. It was entitled, "*Sketches of Western Adventure,* Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Incidents Connected with the Settlement of the West, by John A. McClung." It contained only two pictures, but both of these were of a character to thrill the heart of any live boy; and the table of contents revealed a bill of fare that was tempting to the sober literary appetite of even so unimpressionable a man as Stephen Dudley.

"Oh, father, I wish thee would buy it!" And the storekeeper helped my cause by an insinuating smile and a motion toward the corner where his wrapping paper and twine reposed.

What man with his pocket full of money could resist such pleading, such temptation? When we left the store, the book was under my arm.

"I think that the train is advertised to arrive from Madison at about this time," said father. "We will go down to the depot and see it come in."

The depot, if I remember rightly, stood not very far from the site of the present magnificent Union Station, but it was then quite on the outer edge of the town. It was a little one-roomed building, with a high platform all round it and a freight shed at one end. On one side were the railroad tracks; and at no great distance flowed the waters of the classic stream known in western history as Pogue's Run. At one end of the waiting-room (I think it was called "settin'-room" in those days) there was a counter where tickets were sold to those who wished to buy them. But the ticket system had not at that time been perfected; and, simple though it may seem to you, my Leonidas, the mind of man had not yet grasped completely the intricate process of "punching in the presence of the passenger." As a consequence, most of the people who traveled (and there were not very many) preferred to pay their fares on the train, dimly hoping, no doubt, that the conductor would make a mistake in their favor, and they would save money thereby. Since none of the railroad officials wore uniforms or badges, it sometimes happened that certain zealous individuals went hastily through the cars and collected the fares before the tardy conductor made his appearance; and in such cases the passengers were obliged to pay double. Some of these facts we learned from a talkative citizen of Nopplis, as we stood with him on the platform waiting for the train.

The "depot man," having plenty of leisure time between the arrival of trains, notwithstanding the occasional selling of a ticket or two, was permitted to carry on a little business of his own behind the counter in the waiting-room. There, on

shelves and in other convenient places, he displayed his merchandise consisting of stick candy of various flavors, a few boxes of cigars, twists of chewing tobacco, and a small variety of fruits.

The train being late, as was the invariable custom, and time dragging heavily while we waited, I amused myself by strolling alone about the depot while father continued his conversation with the talkative citizen above mentioned. I had in my pocket a little silver fip which Aunt Rachel had bestowed upon me for my very own, and now an intense desire to spend it began to take hold of my mind. I sauntered frequently to the counter in the waiting-room and gazed, with a longing that was beyond my control, at the candies and fruits that were there offered for sale; and particularly was I tempted by some very pretty things which I thought were oranges.

Finally, by a supreme effort, I mustered sufficient courage to lean over the counter and in confidential tones inquire, "What is the price of them awringes?"

"I hain't got no awringes," the man in charge answered. "Them's lemmings; they're two for a fip."

"Oh!" And I walked away.

Now, I had read about lemons, and I knew that they grew in tropical regions just as oranges do, but this was the first time that I had ever seen any of those ellipsoid berries so necessary to the manufacture of lemonade. I remembered the delicious orange which father had brought to us from the 'Hio, and I fancied that a lemon must be none the less sweet and palatable; and the more I thought about it the more seriously I was tempted. I argued that with my money I could buy two lemons, eat one of them without anybody knowing it, and generously carry the other one home to be divided among the various members of our family. The idea grew, and at length I went sheepishly back to the counter, and laying the fip down upon it, I said to the man in charge, "I will take

two of thy—of *your* lemons."

He slipped the money into his box and handed me the fruit. I put one of the lemons in my pocket, and, with the other in my hand, went out on the back platform to eat it. I found a secluded spot among some salt barrels by the freight shed, and there I sat down to enjoy my treat. Impatiently, I bit a great hunk out of the lemon as though it were an apple. Oh, the sourness of it! I would have spit it out at once, but I thought that doubtless this was the way with lemons and it would grow sweeter in a moment, and so I retained it in my mouth. Disappointment and anger soon began to well up in my heart. The man at the counter had cheated me; I had heard of the wickedness and cunning of city sharpers, and here was an example of it. The man had taken my money and given me no equivalent for it. I would tell him what I thought about it. I accordingly ejected the sour thing from my mouth, and strode back in high dudgeon to the counter where I had bought it.

"Them lemons are sour," I said with all the firmness that I could command. "They ain't fit to eat."

"Well, how did you 'spect 'em to be?" the man retorted, laughing uproariously. "Most lemmings is sour. That's what they're made for."

My courage was exhausted. In great dejection I turned away, and going outside threw the remaining lemon with all my might into the sluggish, muddy waters of Pogue's Run. And then—would you believe it?—my dear playmate, Inviz, jumped out from behind the salt barrels and laughingly shouted in my ear:

"A fool and his money are soon parted! Ha! ha!"

The next moment I heard the whistle of the approaching train, far away toward Franklin or Shelbyville. I hurried around to the place where father was waiting, and stood by his side in anxious expectation. It was long before we could see the train, although we heard its puffing and roaring quite

distinctly; and when at last it hove in sight we had plenty of time to gaze at the locomotive with its huge smoke pipe, and wonder whether it was coming toward us or merely standing still. At last it actually arrived, creeping at a snail's pace, rattling over the thin little bars of iron called rails, and making as much noise as a hundred wagons. The train consisted of only the engine and tender, a baggage car, and a single, small coach—but it was a sight never to be forgotten. At each end of the coach and also of the baggage car, a brakeman was straining at the brake wheel with all his might in order to bring the train to a stop somewhere within a reasonable nearness to the depot. There was a dreadful screeching of wheels, a jerking and a bumping, a going forward and a backing—and at last the deed was accomplished and the dozen passengers strolled leisurely out upon the platform.

To me the whole operation was most wonderful; for this was my first view of a railroad train or of a steam locomotive. Yet I need not weary you, my Leonidas, with a description of that primitive little engine or of the cushionless, comfortless, jolting little cats which it dragged behind it; for of those things you may learn in the histories of that medieval period.

"It is almost noon," said father, as the excitement on the depot platform began to subside. "We must make haste and get started for home."

Thereupon, with as much despatch as possible, we proceeded to get our team out from the tavern sheds, put the cookstove and other purchases into the wagon, and regretfully bid good-by to the stirring scenes on Washington Street.

"We will go a little out of our way," said father, "for I want to show thee one of the wonders of the city."

So, starting out by way of a somewhat narrower road, called Meridian Street, we came almost immediately to a small circular plot of ground with a wide avenue running round it and as many as six or eight other highways branching off from it, just as the spokes of a wheel branch off from the

hub. Here father pulled up on the lines, and we stopped a short while to look, admire, and inwardly contemplate.

"Does thee see all these streets coming to a point right here?" he said. "Well, this little round place is the Governor's Circle, and the big square house thee sees in the middle of it is where the governor of the state lives. People say that it is at the exact center of the state; but I have some doubts about that."

Well! well! This was the governor's house, was it? Here was the place where he sat, looking out along all these straight, divergent highways, and keeping the people of the state in subjection!

Now, Inviz and I had two altogether different ideas concerning the personality of a governor. Inviz insisted that he was a very wise, well-informed, schoolmasterly gentleman who devoted all his time to the duties of his office, enforcing the laws and providing for the general welfare of the people. But my own idea was different—it was based upon something I had read long before in one of the volumes of the *Friends' Library*—perhaps it was in the journal of George Fox, or that of Thomas Shillito, or of John Woolman—I cannot remember. It was merely a dream story; but it told of a supposititious governor who had cloven feet and a forked tail and nostrils that emitted fire and brimstone. I must have been very young when I first read that impressive story, but it took such fast hold upon my imagination that, even to this day, when the word "governor" is mentioned, I involuntarily think of the Old Feller. And so, as we sat there, silently contemplating the Governor's Circle, a strange picture was elaborated in my mind, the picture of a fat spider with cloven feet sitting in the center of his web and looking composedly out upon the little kingdom that was his own. It was all very foolish, and I knew it was so, yet I could not help it. I have passed the same spot hundreds of times since, and always the same vision is recalled.

As we were about to proceed on our way, two well-dressed gentlemen came out through the gateway before the governor's house, and father, seeing them, nodded his head in friendly recognition. The younger of the two returned his salutation, and calling to father, said:

"Good morning, Mr. Dudley! How are all the good people in the New Settlement?"

Father again drew up on the lines, and brought our wagon to a standstill right by the street crossing.

"How's thee, George?" he responded, reaching out his hand. "I am right glad to see thee."

The gentleman shook hands with both of us very cordially, and then turning to his companion, said:

"Governor, this is Stephen Dudley, the leading Free Soiler in the New Settlement, over in the Wabash district. Stephen, have you ever met Governor Wright?"

"How's thee, Joseph?" said father. "I am right glad to see thee." And there was a hearty handshake and a further interchange of compliments and inquiries. As the governor took my limp and yielding hand in his own (for his democracy knew no distinctions of age) I looked down, weakly and sheepishly, half expecting to see the forked tail and the cloven feet. I confess this to my shame, for the next moment Inviz whispered to me, "You ought to feel very much honored; for you have shaken hands with a wise and noble person, the greatest man in Indiana."

Of course, not one of the three men present guessed what was passing in my mind, nor would they have cared in the least. They continued their conversation without any further notice of my presence.

"I do not agree with thy politics," said father to the governor, "but when it comes to questions of temperance and free schools and public improvements, I think we shall not stand very far apart."

And thus, for perhaps ten minutes, they exchanged polite

remarks on a variety of subjects of general interest; then the two gentlemen walked on across the street, and we resumed our humble journey.

We had gone but a short distance when I began more fully to realize the magnitude of the honor that had been mine—the honor of having touched the hand of the ruler of our state. I drew a little closer to father and, in a subdued tone of voice, asked:

"Was that really the governor?"

"Yes, that was Governor Joseph A. Wright, and if his politics were only right he would be a right good man. He was the last governor under the old constitution, and now he is the first under the new."

I didn't know much about constitutions, and so I merely remarked, "He looks just like a common man, don't he? I somehow thought a governor would look different."

Father smiled at my simplicity.

"Joseph A. Wright," said he, "was once a poor farmer boy—as poor as thee is; but by diligent study and hard work he won his way to the highest place in the government of the state. He knows what it is to be just a common man."

"Who was the other fellow, father—the one thee called George?"

"His name is George W. Julian. He is our representative in Congress and a very strong Free Soiler. There is some talk of making him our next vice president."

My heart swelled up big as I mused upon the events of the morning. Surely I had seen wonders; surely I had brushed up against no small amount of greatness. Indeed, I began to feel as if I myself were almost famous. And then I thought of the precious book that father had bought for me in Merrill's bookstore, and leaving off all further conversation, I began nervously to remove its wrappings. Father noticed what I was doing, and slipping off the driver's seat, he came and reclined on the straw beside me. It was a very undignified procedure,

of which under other circumstances he would have been ashamed; but what did it matter, here in this strange roadway where none of his acquaintances would see him?

"Suppose thee reads one of those western adventures out loud," he suggested.

Nothing could have pleased me better. I opened the volume and began with the first chapter, the thrilling story of the adventures of James Smith. For at least half an hour we were both so deeply absorbed in the story—I reading, he listening—that we were only dimly conscious that our well-trained team was keeping in the right road and carrying us slowly homeward. Then, my throat becoming somewhat tired, we exchanged places, and father became the reader and I the listener—and he read the always entrancing story of Daniel Boone and the first settlement of Kentucky.

Thus the small remnant of the morning and the whole of the warm summer afternoon were whiled away in the pleasantest manner imaginable—we two reclining side by side upon the heap of straw, and each taking his turn at reading from the book or guiding the dumb horses.

Oh, those first Indian stories! The surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe seemed commonplace and dull in comparison with them. How vividly the memory remains of Colonel Crawford's martyrdom, of Simon Kenton's thrilling experiences, of Adam Poe's life-and-death struggles in the savage wilderness! My blood began to boil with the desire for adventure, and I fancied myself with a gun on my shoulder and a scalping knife in my belt, going West to fight the Indians. If father had known what thoughts were in my mind he would have tossed the book into the first ditch.

What a truly delightful afternoon that was! Everything else was forgotten save the joyousness of existence and the overpowering interest of the book. It was not until the sun went down and the approach of darkness made reading impossible, that we reluctantly closed the volume and

deferred its further enjoyment to another time. It was very late and I was almost exhausted when we reached the New Settlement and home, but oh, what a red-letter day I had had!

The next day the fire in the old fireplace was allowed to go out, and we set up the new cookstove in its place, with the five joints of stovepipe extending up to the very top of the chimney.

"Ring out the old, ring in the new," whispered Inviz as the mighty change was effected; and thus was typified the passing of the regime of the middle ages and the dawning of another order, more modern, more civilized if you will have it so, but whether more conducive to happiness, who shall say?

Mother's eyes filled with tears as the transformation was going on. She was told that the cookstove was to relieve her of a great deal of hard labor; there would be no more backaches from much bending over skillets and frying pans on the hearth; no more lifting of heavy kettles from the crane; no more fussing over hot coals or a superabundance of ashes. But the thing was not of her own choosing, and she looked upon it with suspicion and grave doubts.

"I can never learn how to cook with all them new contraptions," she sighed, and her lips quivered as she spoke. "I'm afraid we won't have any more hoe cakes, or corn pones, or peach cobblers; and when it comes to bakin' white bread, I know we'll never have anything fit to eat."

And it happened much as she anticipated. From that day forward, even to the present moment, all sorts of food have tasted differently, have lacked the flavor, the zest, the old-fashioned perfection that characterized the open-fire cookery on the great log-cabin hearth.

Cousin Mandy Jane, anxious to float along with the current of progress, protested that the stove was "right smart handier" than the fireplace in every way; and father, gazing upon it with admiration, remarked that he did not see how we had ever lived so long without it. As for myself, I felt that

we had made a great stride in the direction of progress, and I was puffed up with vanity when I thought of our unfortunate neighbors who were too poor to buy a stove; but, oh, how I missed the bright blaze and the genial warmth of the open fire, and how dull the evenings seemed with no light in the room save that of the flickering candle! And poor Aunt Rachel! She still sat in her chimney corner, but it was cold and dark and cheerless; and when her pipe went out, as it often did, how hard it was to relight it from the newfangled stove! Every day the lines on the good woman's face deepened, her stint of knitting grew smaller and smaller, her hold upon life became feebler.

The serpent was in the garden at last. Contentment, that one essential of happiness, was about to take its departure. Without the cheer of the great hearth-fire, the cabin seemed dark, comfortless, crowded, inadequate to our needs. We were fast becoming ashamed of it. Father was the first to voice the thoughts of perhaps all the rest of the family, save one.

"We must have more room," he said. "The cabin is no longer large enough for a family of seven."

And so he immediately began to make plans for a spacious new house of the modern kind—a two-story house with four rooms above and three below and a cellar underneath.

"We will then tear down the cabin and utilize the present big-house as a kitchen. And when Friends come to visit us, we shall have no lack of room for their entertainment."

Mother protested feebly. The increase of room would entail an increase of labor; it would add various forms of anxiety and worry hitherto unknown; every new thing obtained would create a want for something else. But father's lately awakened ambition would listen to no objections. He was anxious to have the largest and finest house in the New Settlement. His rapidly increasing acquaintance with men of note had filled his mind with a desire to appear well-to-do in the community. Moreover, the spirit of progress that was

hovering over the land, would not permit him longer to live the simple life of contentment which had hitherto given him so much joy and peace.

Hence, active work on the new house was soon begun, and the doom of the old cabin was sealed.

CHAPTER XXIX
Charity and Patience

One afternoon, upon returning from the lower deadening with a pair of young oxen which father had given me, I overtook Cousin Mandy Jane in the act of creeping through the barnyard bars. She had a basket of freshly dug potatoes on her arm, and I noticed that her hair was liberally greased and smoothly plastered over her forehead, and that she wore her newest gingham apron—sure signs of visitors.

"Well, who's come now?" I inquired, holding the nigh steer by his stumpy little horn.

"Oh, Robert, thee cain't never guess," was the excited reply. "Hurry and unyoke the steers, and then I'll tell thee who they are and all about 'em."

I drove my little oxen into the barnyard, and in another minute, had loosened the yoke from their patient necks and turned them into the lane to graze the short grass in the fence corners.

"Now tell me," I demanded, growing impatient.

"Thee cain't never guess who it is," responded the palpitating young woman, her eyes twinkling and her front teeth showing broad between her thin lips.

"I don't want to guess," I answered tartly. "Thee promised to tell me, and thee must."

"Well then, it's Charity and Patience, if thee must know;" and she gave way to one of those rare, inimitable tee-hees which she usually held in reserve for occasions of great importance.

"Charity and Patience! Who's Charity and Patience?"

"Why, hain't thee heerd? They're them two twin school-

teachers that Isaac Wilson brung with him all the way from Filly Deify when he was down there last month. They've come over to see if they cain't git a chance to teach a school somewhere round here; and they're settin' in the house right now. Isaac Wilson, he brung 'em over from Dashville in his spring wagon, and then he driv away ag'in, goin' round toward Duck Creek. But them there twins, I reckon they'll stay at our house a right smart spell—leastwise till they find out about them schools they want to git."

She rattled this speech off in breathless haste, glancing uneasily around as though fearful of being overheard.

"What do they look like, Cousin Mandy Jane?" I asked, apprehensive and in a mood that was nowise friendly to the strangers who had thus intruded themselves into our household.

"Oh, thee'll see," and her tone was somewhat reassuring. "Thee might take ary one of 'em for t'other, 'cause they're jist as nigh alike as two beans in the shell. Thee cain't never tell which to call Charity and which to call Patience."

"Well, I'm sure I'll never want to call 'em at all," I answered despondently. I was beginning to wonder how I could manage to endure the ordeal of meeting with strangers who, having come so vast a distance, must be so very strange indeed.

"If I was thee, Robert," advised Cousin Mandy Jane, "I'd go and slick up a bit, and try to look nice and clean afore thee shows thyself to sich quality folks." And with that, she hastened down to the spring branch, to wash her potatoes in the flowing stream.

Feeling that her counsel was altogether proper and sensible, I followed her, keeping myself well concealed behind the currant bushes and the fence, lest spying eyes from the house might see me in my unpresentable state. The slicking-up process consisted of a thorough washing of face, hands, and feet in the pellucid waters of the branch, and a careful

dampening of my shock of towy hair, which somehow would never stay smooth or respectable. This being accomplished, I looked at the reflection of myself in nature's mirror, and felt ashamed. And Inviz, who now seldom came except to upbraid me, whispered over my shoulder:

"You're a pretty looking sight for quality folks to look at—shirt collar without a button—only one gallus to hold your britches up—both knees with patches on them—and a big patch on your behind. Why, you look just like a scarecrow in a corn-field, and —"

And just then, my dear Leonidas, a great terror seized hold of me and my heart stood still; for I heard footsteps and low voices behind me, and felt sure that I was in the dread presence of the twin teachers. Doubtless they had caught sight of me from the cabin door, and had come down to the spring branch to surprise me. Escape there was none, and so, with trembling limbs I turned about and faced my doom.

The twins advanced trippingly, their faces beaming with good nature, their hands extended to grasp my own. They seemed not at all like my fancy had painted them.

Half my terror vanished instantly, and before a word had been spoken I felt as though we were already on fast and friendly terms with each other.

"And so this is Robert Dudley, isn't it?" said one.

"Isn't it?" echoed the other.

"How does thee do?" inquired the first.

"How does thee do?" repeated the second.

And to my renewed confusion, two pairs of hands seized upon me at the same moment, and two faces were bent so near to my own that I was filled with direst terror lest their owners should be moved to kiss me.

"My name is Charity," said one.

"My name is Patience," said the other.

"We saw thee coming down the pathway, and we thought we would follow thee and get acquainted," remarked Charity.

"Get acquainted," echoed Patience, and she squeezed my fingers till they ached.

Then before I had time to recover myself or to think once about being a scarecrow or any other inferior creature, the sisters began asking questions regarding dozens of things which were very commonplace and foolish, but which must have seemed to them truly interesting. They asked about the tall cattails that grew so rank near the other side of the branch and were then at their best; and they talked of the beauty of various other plants that I had always regarded as ugly weeds; and nothing would do but they must tuck up their dresses and run a race with me to pick a bunch of blue flowers which they had espied half-way across the orchard.

Returning to the spring-house, they must needs ask me all about the milk in the crocks, and the cream that we skimmed off the top of it, and how we churned butter, and what we did with the buttermilk, and how the cheese press was operated; and they did all this inquiring so innocently and with such a show of ignorance that I began to think they were not school-teachers at all, but a pair of guileless creatures who knew nothing about common things, and were themselves very much in need of being taught. True, they looked intelligent; and they were dressed in store clothes and wore white collars with ribbon bows in front, and they talked very "proper," and spoke of books as though they knew somewhat about them. Moreover, they were not in the least stuck up, but seemed just like common folks, very plain and very well-behaved in all respects. What a pity that their lives had hitherto been cast in the crowded pent-up city!

After we had exhausted the spring-house and the spring branch and everything else that was in sight, we walked across the orchard, past the peach trees now laden with ripening fruit, and past the old ash hopper and the soap kettles—and there I had to pause for a while and explain all the mysteries of making lye and boiling soft soap; and finally we came to a

halt at the barnyard bars, where the sisters were content to remain a while to gaze at the world of animated nature just beyond.

First, they admired the long rows of martins' nests under the eaves of the barn; and I had to explain the difference between a martin and a swallow, and describe the habits peculiar to each. Then they looked at the ducks and geese that were waddling and cackling around the barnyard; and the ignorance which they displayed concerning these most necessary fowls was truly astounding. Next, the hens and the lordly rooster became the subjects of comment and rapturous admiration, and the fattening pigs in their narrow enclosure evoked many an exclamation of urban delight. Finally, one of the twins caught sight of my pair of steers strolling in the lane, and her curiosity immediately became manifest.

"See there, Charity!" she exclaimed. "See those beautiful cows just over there in that narrow street!"

"Those beautiful cows!" responded the sister.

"Yes, those beautiful cows! Of all the wonderful animals that were created for man's benefit and delight, I think that the cow is the most lovely, the most useful, and the most necessary."

"Most useful and most necessary," interrupted the other.

"Now just look at those two meek-eyed creatures nipping the luscious grass by the roadside. Think, sister, how that grass will be converted into wholesome, nourishing, foaming milk—perhaps for our breakfast tomorrow morning, or perhaps to be churned into butter for our bread when we are hungry. Did thee ever see anything so worthy of admiration?"

"Worthy of admiration?"

"Now, these two cows seem very small, and their horns are short, thus indicating that they are quite young."

"Quite young."

"But, Robert, am I not right in supposing that they already give a goodly quantity of milk?"

"A goodly quantity of milk?" echoed Charity; and both looked at me as though expecting a reply.

I explained, as delicately as I could, that the two meek-eyed creatures were not cows but young oxen, and that I had been breaking them to draw loads and do light work in the clearing. I informed them, moreover, that milk was not usually obtained from young oxen but from their mothers.

"Their mothers, sister Charity!"

"Yes, the young oxen have mothers, sister Patience. Only think of it."

"Only think of it! We've often read about oxen, but these are the first we have ever seen. I suppose the dear creatures know thy voice when thee speaks to them?"

"Yes," I replied, and to demonstrate the fact, I cried out, "Whoa haw, Dan! Git ep!" and instantly the red steer left off his grazing and turned into the road.

"Well, isn't that wonderful!" exclaimed both the sisters at once. "What was the name thee called her by?"

"I called him Dan; but his full name is Daniel Webster, 'cause we never know on which side of the fence we'll find him."

The sisters laughed, but whether in derision or approbation I was by no means sure.

"What is the other one's name?" asked Patience.

"We call him Hen for short," I answered. "His full name is Henry Clay, 'cause he don't ever want to be president."

There was another ripple of laughter, and I turned my face away, feeling certain that I had said something very foolish and improper; but there was some relief in the thought that I had learned it all from father.

"What funny names thee has for thy pets!" said Charity.

"Yes, what funny names!" echoed Patience.

And then, to my unbounded relief, Cousin Mandy Jane came running to inform the twins that supper was on the table and the victuals were impatiently waiting for their

attendance. "The biscuits will all git cold if you don't hurry in and eat 'em," she urged. And so, the two strangers tripping away at her behest, I was released from further services as their guide.

I waited at the gate until they had disappeared in the cabin, and then I sauntered down the lane, communing sweetly with Inviz.

"Charity and Patience! What funny names, and what funny women! I like them, don't thee? They are so common and so kind, and more than that they are so ready to learn things."

"Yes," answered my playmate, "they are simply great. They are as funny as Cousin Sally, and not a bit more stuck up. But oh, how green they are, not to know a duck from a goose, or a steer from a cow!"

"Well, they will soon learn about such things," I said apologetically. "City folks can't be expected to know everything."

"No, nor school-teachers, neither."

"But only think of it, Inviz. These two women have come all the way from the place where William Penn treated the Indians, just to teach us Hoosiers our A B C's and the multiplication table."

"Yes. We'll learn book things from them, and they'll learn real things from us, and we will all be better off."

And thus there came into our lives another influence—yes, two of them if you please—to help in broadening our outlook upon the world and placing our feet firmly upon the solid highway of progress.

Through father's growing influence in politics, no less than through his diplomatic way of managing neighborhood affairs, the twin teachers were not long in being provided for. In accordance with the revised law of the state, a school meeting was held in the new school-house in "Deestrict Number Five" for the purpose of selecting a teacher for the

ensuing school term, soon to begin.

There were but two candidates for the position; and of the sixteen votes cast, Benjamin Barnacle received four, and Patience the remaining twelve. If "Old Benny" had been chosen, he, as a lord of creation, would have been paid the princely salary of five dollars a week; but Patience, being only a female, was rated at twenty-five per cent, discount, and when her contract was finally closed with the trustees, she was obliged to be content with the promise of forty-five dollars for the full term of twelve weeks.

"It's too much to pay to any woman," remarked Abner Jones, who had ten children and was taxed eighteen cents for the support of public schools. "A man teacher for me, allers!"

"But there are compensations," said 'Lihu Bright, always inclined to philosophize. "We have a total amount of forty-five dollars, neither more nor less, to devote to the education of the poor children in this deestrict. If we hire a man at five dollars a week, these children can have only nine weeks' schooling. If we hire a woman at three-seventy-five, they will have twelve weeks. So you see there is a direct advantage in employing a female."

At about the same time, through father's continued good efforts, the other twin teacher, Charity, obtained permission to teach the "Monthly Meetin' School," provided she could secure a sufficient number of signers to her article, each signer agreeing to pay her one dollar "per each scholar signed," for a term of ten weeks' instruction.

The article was beautifully written on a sheet of blue foolscap, and the number of branches which she therein agreed to teach was truly remarkable:—"spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic through the Rule of Three, modern geography, English grammar to the rules of syntax, history, and botany."

"What sort of stuff is that there botany?" inquired one of the Monthly Meetin' committee men.

Not one of his colleagues could tell. It was doubtless some newfangled branch of learning, good enough for the quality folks down in Philadelphia, but of no use to the plain common people of our Settlement. Charity was called upon to explain, and she did this so satisfactorily that the committee at once approved of her article and gave her authority to go ahead and secure as many signers as she could. She accordingly proceeded to visit each and every family of Friends in the Settlement, "just to get acquainted, thee knows," as she smilingly informed them.

At the end of a week she returned to our house triumphant, having obtained the signatures of nineteen parents and the promise of thirty-seven and a half scholars.

"Only think of it, sister," she exclaimed, "I will be making three dollars and seventy-five cents a week—just the same that thee will be making in thy school."

"Yes, only think of it," responded Patience.

And they were both content.

As I have elsewhere intimated, my Leonidas, the public schools in our state had, up to this time, been but slightly esteemed. The well-to-do people were suspicious of them, believing that they were merely a kind of charitable institution designed to benefit only the children of the needy. The poorer folk, scorning to be recipients of alms, and having little use for book-learning, were in nowise anxious to patronize them. The churches regarded them with disfavor, for the law forbade the teaching of any religious creed. The very name of "hoosier" had become synonymous with backwoods illiteracy, and there were not a few, even in our Settlement, who looked upon learning as a dangerous thing. While, therefore, private institutions and "meetin' schools" flourished in a certain limited sense, the "deestrict schools" went begging, with wretched schoolhouses, inefficient teachers, and a scanty attendance of pupils. But now, at length, as we were beginning to emerge from the Middle Ages, a new era in education

was dawning: new school laws were coming into force, and with a wise and energetic state superintendent at the head of affairs, the cause of public instruction was beginning to receive an impetus from which it has not yet recovered.

Since Deestrict School Number Five and the Dry Forks Monthly Meetin' School were about equally distant from our house, although in opposite directions, it was arranged that the twins should board with us, they paying mother the sum of twenty-five cents a week besides making their own bed and helping with the housework. They were robust and fearless, and no matter what the condition of the weather or the roads, they seemed thoroughly to enjoy the walk of three miles, morning and evening, to and from their respective institutions of learning.

As I have just said, the public schools were looked upon with suspicion; and for that reason, Charity's subscription school was crowded with pupils at a dollar a scholar, while her sister's deestrict school, which was free to all, was very slimly attended. Father, although he was practically at the head of educational affairs in the Settlement, shared in the general prejudice and openly encouraged it.

"I hope," he said, addressing a meeting of our neighbors for the discussion of the general welfare—"I hope that not one of you who can spare a dollar for the purpose of educating his children will ever think of making use of the free district school. That school is for the benefit of our poorer neighbors who have not been blessed in basket and store as you have been. You should pay your taxes cheerfully and do all that you can to promote and encourage such schools, for they are founded in charity; but we should not deny to our own children the benefits of the meeting school, where they may be safeguarded from evil influences and properly instructed in religion and morals, which are the foundations of prosperity."

When, therefore, the time arrived for the schools to open, it was tacitly understood that I should become Charity's pupil

but not a pupil of charity; and father's name, with the promise of one scholar, headed the list of signers to her article.

"Robert," said Patience, as we were about to start out on the first morning, "does thee know what I wish more than anything else?"

"No. Thee will have to tell me."

"Well, then, I wish thee was twins, like me and Charity."

"Why so?" I inquired, wondering how such a thing might be.

"Because then there would be two of thee, and one twin could be Charity's scholar and t'other one could be mine. Does thee see?"

I laughed at her queer conceit, and as I did so, a vision appeared of two tow-headed, barefooted boys, exactly alike, going in opposite directions, each with his books under his arm and his dinner pail in his hand. "Yes," I answered, "that would be very nice, and I have a mind that I would like it right smart."

"But since thee ain't twins and can't never be twins," said Patience, "I think maybe we might fix it up another way."

"How?"

"Well, what if thee could go to Charity's school one day and to mine the next? Wouldn't that be fine?"

"I think it would, if father would let me."

"I'll ask him now," and she went immediately and laid the matter before him.

He smiled, then frowned and hesitated, and finally in his stiffest manner refused to consider her proposition.

"I have due respect for thy skill as a teacher," he said, "but I cannot say that I admire thy judgment as a woman. Such a splitting up of interests as thee suggests would lead only to confusion and the subversion of all good discipline. It would spoil the boy. It must not be."

And thus the matter was settled. For the space of ten fleeting weeks I became Charity's willing scholar at school,

but Patience's devoted friend and comrade during many an hour out of school.

Do you ask what branches I studied?

Being permitted to have my own way in the matter of selection, I chose everything that was mentioned in Charity's "article," not even omitting the botany. "I think I might as well get our money's worth," I remarked to Cousin Mandy Jane, knowing that I would have her judicious approval; and Patience, overhearing me, sweetly smiled and rejoined, "That's right, Robert. Just thee keep sister Charity busy." And so I did, but in more ways than one.

With a tutor so wide-awake and efficient, I certainly ought to have received a training that was worth a hundred times the paltry dollar that father paid for my tuition. The school, the discipline, the manner of instruction—how different was everything from that which had characterized the administration of my former teacher, Benjamin Barnacle! Each day was a day of progress, and many were the refreshings that were mine during those few brief weeks of instruction. But, for reasons which I shall explain later on, I fell deplorably short of the standard which I might have attained.

And then, there were my almost daily rambles in the fields or woods with my out-door mentor, Patience. She was to me a sort of visible Inviz, grown up and become surprisingly human. Together we drove the cows home from the pasture, and on Seventh-day mornings when there was no school, we gathered hazelnuts in the thickets or went botanizing in the deadenings. I found that she knew next to nothing about the commonest things, not being able to distinguish wheat from oats or a robin from a quail, but she was delightfully appreciative and always brimming with enthusiasm. Her tomboyish ways—known only to our family—were a great trial to mother, who declared that nature had made a mistake in her borning; but good Aunt Rachel came to the rescue by affirming that, in such a case, nature only was to be blamed;

and so all was forgiven.

How I missed the dear, old, cavernous fireplace with its cheer of flame, and the great warm hearth with its glowing coals inspiring visions and awakening dreams of the glory that was past! Never again would I experience the joy of lying prone in the ruddy light, my elbows on the hearth, my head propped in my hands, a book before my eyes, and the soft breath of Inviz upon my cheek as he peeped over my shoulder and shared my ecstasy. The rayless cookstove with its lids and dampers was no doubt a household convenience, and it was modern—but it was as uninspiring as a barn door and as unsympathetic as a roofless hut on a rainy day.

"The old fireplace was good company in itself," said Inviz on one of his rare brief visits. "It was poetry with many pictures interspersed, but this ugly black thing with its cooking odors and its treacherous heat, is nothing but dull dry prose as uninteresting as a spelling-book."

"Yes," I agreed, "it is as dry as the writings of George Fox or the book of *Discipline.* But it is all that we have now, and I suppose that we must try to get along with it and make believe that we like it."

"That will be your best plan," he answered, "for you are a growing boy and you will become used to it. But as for me, I cannot live in a place where there is no firelight and everything is so gloomy and matter-of-fact; and, besides, you have become so big and so worldly-wise that it is hard for me to get along with you anymore. So I am going away to find a cheerier place and more congenial company elsewhere. Farewell."

A tight hug, a warm kiss, and he was gone.

"I will come to see you once in a while—once in a long while," he said tremulously as he flitted away.

My cheeks were wet with tears—my tears and his intermingled—as I pulled open the sliding hearth of the iron abomination and raked out two or three coals in the vain endeavor to extract a little inspiration and comfort therefrom.

I set myself to the study of the next day's lesson in history—a dry-as-dust account of soldiers slain and cities bombarded—but it was a dreary task, and at the end of half an hour I was conscious chiefly of strained eyes and a feeling of overwhelming loneliness. Presently I felt a hand upon my shoulder—a hand heavier and more material than that of Inviz—and the friendly voice of Patience aroused me from my despondency.

"Promise me something, Robert," she said.

"Promise thee what?" I answered in a tone of irritation.

"Promise me that thee will never neglect thy lessons in order to read it, and I will show thee a book that I brought with me from Philadelphia."

"What is it?" I inquired, my interest languidly growing.

"It is a book. Does thee promise?"

"Yes; I promise."

"Come, then," and she led the way to the curtained corner where all her possessions were stored. She opened the little old hair trunk which she had brought from the East, and displayed to my view a largish brand-new volume which immediately excited the reading hunger within me to an overpowering degree.

"I wish thee to read this book with great care," she said; "and if thee will try to model thy life upon its instructions, I am sure that thee will be much improved by it."

I took it from her hands. It smelled as though it had just fallen from the press. I looked greedily at the title-page: "*The Child at Home,* by John S. C. Abbott." What promises of companionship and instruction were there!

"I will make thee a present of that book if thee will be perfect in all thy lessons every day until Christmas."

I held it tight in my hands and thought what a beautiful addition it would make to my rapidly growing library.

"O Patience, thee is so good. I will try my best to do as thee says."

"Thee may begin to read it now, and we will settle its ownership later on," she said. "I had a mind to give it to Isaac Wilson's little granddaughter in Dashville. Maybe thee's heard of her;—her name is Edith—Edith Meredith—And if thee don't make good at Christmas time, I promise thee it shall yet be hers."

I made no reply, but I felt the hot blood rushing to my cheeks, and my hand trembled. How did Patience know? Had she heard me talking in my dreams? I fingered the leaves uneasily, and stammered something that was unintelligible.

"I wish thee to read the book, anyway," continued Patience, seeming not to notice my confusion; "and thee may begin it right now."

She closed the lid of the trunk with a slam, and locked it, and our interview was ended. I sat down by the candlestand with Uncle Abbott's inspiring volume wide open before me, and there I remained, reading without intermission, until literally driven to bed. I call the book an inspiring volume, and to me at that particular stage in my life, it was truly uplifting and very helpful. It was extremely didactic and fatherly, and much of it was what children, nowadays, would call "goody-goody," turning up their noses, meanwhile. But, to the docile and domestic children of threescore years ago, the maxims and precepts and godly examples therein presented were incentives to noble living and many worthy ambitions. All hail to thee, Uncle John S. C.! The world may never know nor justly appreciate the good that was done through the influence of thy preachy, old-fashioned, long-forgotten *Child at Home;* nevertheless I know that some of the good seeds which it scattered took root and grew up and flourished to the betterment of many souls.

But, my dear Leonidas, let me whisper to you that that book was never added to my library. From the day that it was lent me until the day following Christmas, the number of my failures at school was so great that I was more than once in

disgrace and threatened with the hickory.

"Robert is very low in his recitations today," reported Charity. "He might do much better if he would."

"And I offered him a prize if he would be perfect," said Patience. "I can't understand why he does so poorly."

Nevertheless, after Christmas, when it became definitely known that on account of my failures the *Child at Home* had been presented to the little lady in Dashville, it was observed that my recitations and deportment were greatly improved—indeed, were beyond reproach.

CHAPTER XXX

Lochinvar

Do you remember that filly of our Jonathan's? No? Well, I must have forgotten to tell you, but, no matter. Jonathan had obtained her from one of those Kentucky cattle dealers, having taken her in trade for another and quite inferior animal. Indeed, he got her at a great bargain because of what was supposed to be a sprained knee that would probably disable her permanently from all useful service. Everybody laughed at him and said that he had made a very, very bad bargain; but he kept his own counsel, and quietly remarked that the time might come when people would laugh on the other side of their faces. He knew a thing or two about horses—more, in fact, than anyone else except father—and under his wise care not only was the "sprain" entirely healed, but the young creature speedily developed into the handsomest and most spirited bit of horse-flesh ever seen in the New Settlement. Jonathan loved her with an ardor which was scarcely second to his admiration for buxom Esther Lamb; and the attention which he devoted to her called forth many remarks that were not very complimentary to his intelligence.

"I have sympathy for thy wife, if thee ever gets her," remarked father very solemnly; "for I have a feeling that thee'll be giving the greater portion of thy time to that filly instead of to her."

And Cousin Mandy Jane, in one of her pious moods, mildly expostulated against his apparent idolatry: "Thee's jist a worshipin' that there critter of thine, that's what thee's

doin'. Thee might jist as well bow down to a golden calf, like them there Israelites done in the wilderness."

To which David sagely added: "The tarnal animile ain't wo'th shucks, nohow. Why, there's Towhead's two leetle yearlin' steers—they can beat her all to flinders when it comes to haulin' or plowin'. That there filly ain't good for nothin' but ridin',—and what's the good of jist ridin'?"

It was little that Jonathan cared for all this palaver. By nature he was a fine horseman, and when he mounted the filly and went galloping down the lane at breakneck speed, he was so transformed that you would not have known him. He was no longer the lean, lank, awkward fellow that he appeared when on foot; but, conscious of his skill and proud of his accomplishment, he was a model of equestrian manliness and grace, a veritable backwoods Apollo on horseback.

The first time that the twin teachers saw him astride of his spirited and beautiful "critter" they were unable to find words with which to give expression to their admiration.

"Does thee know what that puts me in mind of?" finally asked Patience, as they watched him riding back and forth within the narrow limits of the barn lot.

"What that puts thee in mind of? No, sister. Tell me," answered Charity eagerly.

"It puts me in mind of that beautiful ballad of Walter Scott's that I used to recite at school. Thee remembers it:

> "Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the West,
> Through all the wide Border his steed is the best."

"Oh, sister, thee's right!" and Charity clapped her hands with delight. "It's young Lochinvar, sure as thee lives, and he's just getting ready to come out of the West. Suppose thee recites the whole ballad while the young man and his steed are right here before our eyes."

Accordingly, as the rider approached, Patience began:

"Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the West —"

"Listen, Jonathan," cried Charity. "Sister is going to recite something about thee."

And so, while the filly pirouetted through the gate and pranced around the uppin'-block, Patience, in a most wonderful manner, such as I have never heard surpassed, repeated the whole of the immortal ballad, while the rest of us stood with open mouths, listening and enjoying. Scarcely had she finished when Jonathan, with conscious pride, gave the word of command to his impatient steed. She sprang forward, leaped the high bars—a feat we had never seen performed before—and in another minute was at the foot of the lane, was skimming like a swallow along the dusty big road, and was quickly lost to sight behind the grove of trees this side of the bend.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" cried both the twins.

Half an hour later, rider and horse returned, apparently much sobered but none the worse for the exciting race. The filly was carefully stabled and groomed, and then Jonathan shambled awkwardly to the house and sought out the twins. He stood with hands in pockets, looking sheepishly at one, then at the other—for he was unable to tell which was which—and then addressed them both in the singular:—

"Which one of thee was it that was speakin' that there piece a bit ago?"

"Perhaps it was I," answered Patience. "What piece does thee mean?"

"Why, the one that thee was a-speakin'. It was about some tarnal feller that was locked in the bars."

"Locked in the bars?"

"Yes! That's what thee said; and he rid away, with his gal a-hangin' on ahind."

"Oh, thee means Lochinvar, don't thee?"

"Well, it was somethin' that sounded that way. I thought

I'd like to hear thee say it ag'in."

"'Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the West,' is that what thee means?"

"Yes, and I'd like to hear the whole tarnal thing over ag'in. I'm afeard I didn't quite ketch all of it, while ago;" and Jonathan straightened himself up behind the cookstove to listen.

With a merry zest and a quaver of amusement in her voice, Patience repeated the entire ballad, placing a peculiar and meaningful emphasis upon the closing lines:—

> "So daring in love, and so dauntless in war—
> Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?"

Jonathan's face was all aglow. He rubbed his palms together and remarked, "Well, I reckon there was right smart punkins about that there young feller. Jist think of him a-ridin' away with that there gal of his'n a-hangln' on ahind, and all the rest of them fellers a-chasin' him. What did thee say his name was?"

"Lochinvar."

"I knowed there was a lock about it somewhere. Now, if 'tain't too much bother to thee, I wish thee would say it all over ag'in. I'd kinder like to git it by heart."

Patience obligingly repeated it the second time, not forgetting a single accent, nor omitting a single gesture. When she had finished, Jonathan turned abruptly about and left the room. As he was closing the door, Charity called to him:

"We've got a new name for thee, Jonathan. How would thee like to be called Lochinvar?"

"I wouldn't keer."

And he disappeared around the corner of the cabin.

At length the day approached for the demolition of the dear old log cabin and the erection upon its site of the grand new house which we had long been desiring and anticipating.

The cookstove and cooking utensils, together with much of the furniture, were removed into the "big-house"—thereafter to be called the "kitchen"—and temporary sleeping apartments were arranged in one end of the barn.

How strange was the appearance of that humble mansion, my birthplace, when at length all the objects to sight and memory dear were carried out and nothing remained but the bare rough walls, the unswept hearth and the yawning cavern which was formerly the cheer-giving fireplace. Mother hid her face in her apron, and despite her inherited stoicism, wept most bitterly. Father busied himself with the moving, dissembling his feelings, as was his habit; but I noticed that he trembled somewhat as he took part in the last sweeping and garnishing of the home wherein so many hopes and ambitions had had their upspringing. But neither David nor Cousin Mandy Jane betrayed any feelings of regret; to them, it was only the discarding of a worn-out shoe for a better one and they quietly accepted the change as another step upward. As for Jonathan, however, he was really jubilant. He whistled softly in a self-satisfied way as he walked around the desolate room, examining the stained old walls and the smoke-begrimed rafters; and now and then he was heard to chuckle as if contemplating a treasure trove.

"Well, Lochinvar," said Patience, just returned from school, "it looks pretty bare in here, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does look kinder so," answered Jonathan. "I never knowed the old place was so tarnal ugly. But it won't look that way very long."

"No, not longer than till it's torn down," responded Patience. "I suppose you will chop the old logs up and make fire-wood of them. They must be pretty well seasoned, and they'll burn finely in the cookstove."

"Not much they won't," and Jonathan's face was full of decision. "Them there logs ain't a-goin' into no cookstove jist yit a while. They're goin' into a new house."

"Into a new house? Why, how's that?"

"Hain't thee heerd about it? I'm goin' to haul 'em over to my forty-acre piece, down by the Four Corners, and put 'em up ag'in. They'll make a good enough house for me till I can build a better one. Only I'm goin' to put another log on top to make it a leetle higher."

"Oh, Lochinvar! How thee surprises me!" cried Patience with innocent dissimulation. "Does thee really mean it? And is thee going to make thee a home of thy own?"

Jonathan nodded his head emphatically, and grinned.

"Well, then, I s'pose it's all settled," she continued. "I s'pose thee and Esther Lamb will be giving in at meeting pretty soon; for of course if thee has a house, thee'll have to have a housekeeper."

Jonathan smiled broadly, and pulled nervously at his galluses. He was not used to talking, especially about his own private affairs; but today he felt so jubilant that his tongue was ready to wag upon the least encouragement.

"Yes," he presently answered, speaking in a lower and more confidential tone, "I kinder guess that maybe Esther will be the housekeeper; but I'm afeard that me and her won't do no givin' in—leastwise, it don't look that way jist now."

"Indeed! How is that?" queried Patience, appearing to be mystified, although she had heard the whole secret from Cousin Mandy Jane, weeks before. "How can Esther be thy housekeeper if she ain't thy wife? And how can she become thy wife if thee and her don't give in meeting together?"

"I reckon they's more'n one way to git spliced," and the young man gave another hitch to his galluses. "They's a long way and they's a short way—a long cut and a short cut."

"But there's only one right way," briskly returned the twin teacher; "and that is to get married in meeting according to the *Discipline*."

"But s'posin' thee cain't do that without a tarnal fuss!" ejaculated Jonathan. "What's thee goin' to do then?"

"I tell thee, Lochinvar, there ain't any such word in the dictionary as cain't, specially when it comes to getting married. Thee may think it's a pretty big word with some old maids like me and Charity, but jist wait till we git a chance. What if that other Lochinvar had said, 'I cain't'? Does thee s'pose his girl would have ridden away with him? Not a bit of it!"

"That's jist what I've been thinkin', and I hain't never said I cain't. I've allers said I can, and I will."

"But thee says that thee and Esther cain't get married in meeting, and I say that you can. So there!"

"Well, I'll tell thee, Patience—or Charity, I don't know which thee is,"—and the young man spoke very confidentially, "we cain't never git Old Enick to say he is willin', and thee knows what the *Discipline* says about gittin' the parents' consent."

"Is Enick the parent of Esther?"

"No, but he's her guardeen. She's a Lamb, she hain't no Fox! But rother'n fuss any longer with Old Enick, me and her, we've made up our minds to take the short cut. There's Judge Davis, over to Dashville, he'll do the whole business for a Mexican dollar and have it over with in a jiffy. Henry Meredith, he's fixed it all up with him; and the county clerk, he'll have the license ready. But thee mustn't tell nobody."

"Oh, Lochinvar!" and her tones were filled with reproach, "does thee realize how awful it will be to go and get married in that way? Thee will be turned out of meeting—disowned by Our Society, as the *Discipline* directs—and then what will become of thee? Thee'll be like a sheep without any shepherd."

"Well, I hain't a-hankerin' after no shepherd. I'm a-hankerin' after a Lamb, and I reckon I'm a-goin' to git her in spite of Old Enick and the *Discipline,* to boot."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Charity, who had approached just in time to hear this remark. "That's right, Lochinvar."

And Patience, her face beaming and her eyes aglow, began to repeat the now familiar lines:

> "So daring in love, and so dauntless in war—Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?"

"Don't thee fool thyself about that there tarnal young feller," blurted Jonathan in tones of irritation. "I reckon some folks'll laugh on t'other side of their heads some of these days"; and with that, he shambled away.

It appeared to me that he was extremely angry with the twins, and yet, for some time afterward, I observed that he and Patience had many secret conferences together; and these were carried on with such energy that I finally began to fear that the young man had transferred his affections to the lively twin teacher who had no "guardeen" to restrain her.

CHAPTER XXXI
The Raisin' and the Quiltin'

The day for the house-raising was at hand. All the men in the Settlement had been invited to come—at least all that belonged to meetin', besides several Methodisters and a few reputed unbelievers. And to make the occasion as enjoyable as possible, mother and Cousin Mandy Jane had arranged for a "quiltin' and comfort tackin'" at the same time, and had asked all the wives and old maids to come with their menfolks, assist in the labors of the day and partake of the raisin' dinner.

According to their custom on such occasions, Cousin Sally and her mother came over two or three days beforehand to render their valuable aid in matters pertaining to the culinary arrangements. Chickens and ducks were beheaded, the fatted calf was slain; the choice treasures of the pantry, the varied products of orchard and field, were all brought into requisition to celebrate the rare occurrence and make glad the hearts and stomachs of our neighbors and friends.

"I hain't counted 'em up," remarked Cousin Mandy Jane, "but I calc'late they won't be no less'n a hundred folks here to dinner, not countin' the children and them that comes without bein' axed."

"It'll be a good deal like the company that comes to a big quart'ly meetin'," suggested Cousin Sally.

"Gee whiz! Naw!" growled David, coming in with the hind quarters of the calf upon his shoulder. "The biggest crowd we ever had to the biggest quart'ly meetin' wa'n't no patchin' to what this'll be."

Oh, my Leonidas, the memory of that time is still like the roll of a drum beat in the early morning! You may at some time in your life behold the hurry and hustle on lower Broadway, but if you live to outnumber the years of your great grandfather, you will never see so busy a time as that was on the day and morning preceding our ever-memorable house-raisin' and quiltin'.

Long tables for the diners were extemporized on the lawn at the farther end of the yard. The quiltin' frames were set up underneath the historic cherry trees. Innumerable blocks of wood and a few rough backless benches were provided for seats for the multitude. A camp-fire, to supplement the work of the inefficient cookstove, was built in close proximity to the kitchen door; kettles were swung over it, the old skillet oven was placed on the coals beside it, and the long disused tin "reflector" was set up in the full glare of the flames, with half a dozen monstrous broilers inside of it, roasting and sizzling in the glowing heat.

"It seems right smart like old times when we used to have the fireplace," said mother as she thrust some sweet potatoes into a heap of hot ashes to be roasted.

And poor old Aunt Rachel, sitting on a block as close to the fire as safety would permit, puffed contentedly at her pipe and concurred in the opinion.

"It is raaly cheerin'," she quavered; "but after all, there ain't nothin' quite so bracin' as the chimly corner with plenty of red coals in the ashes."

The timbers for the great two-story frame house had all been hewn and "framed," and were lying at convenient places, each marked and numbered with red keel for easy identification. Here, in separate piles, were the beams and corner posts, the sleepers, the sills, the studs, the joists, the braces, the plates, the girders, the rafters, the sheathing boards, even the wooden pegs for fastening the timbers together. All the mortices had been made, the auger holes

had been bored, the tenons had been shaped—nothing remained to be done save to put each piece in its proper place, raise into position the various parts of the frame, drive home the pegs—and there you are, as complete and strong a structure as it is possible for the ingenuity of a common carpenter to devise.

People don't build in that way now, my Leonidas. All the timber that is put into a modern two-story building would scarcely make a small bedroom in a house like that of ours; and how slender and frail are all the frames now!—"balloon frames" we used to call even the heaviest of them. They tremble if you but lean against them, they seem ready to collapse in the first brisk gale, and yet a kind providence holds them up. But father built for eternity, and he was opposed to the tempting of providence. He therefore made his frames so strong that, to this very day, the Western cyclones steer shy of the neighborhood where some of his barns and houses still stand, the silent but expressive memorials of an honest man.

And now, everything being in readiness, all of us who were in the habit of praying (and some, alas! who were not) began to send up secret petitions to the Arbiter of Sun and Storm to grant us fair weather and good appetites until the close of the long-looked-for day. Whether these brief mental ejaculations were heard or not, we never knew; but we speedily forgot about them when the appointed morning broke, clear as a crystal sea and perfect as mornings are ever made; and we were immediately so busy that we also forgot to be thankful to Him who sends such days.

The neighbors began to arrive soon after sunrise, some of them in expectation, no doubt, of a supplementary breakfast and a cup of mother's rare sassafras tea—an expectation in which they were not disappointed. By eight o'clock, all the able-bodied adults in the Settlement, with numerous babies and quite a sprinkling of growing boys and girls, were assembled in knots and groups and various other combinations in

our yard and garden, barn lot and lane. Among the last contingents to arrive was Old Enoch Fox, who came winding his way along the woodland pathway, followed by his entire family of seven womenfolks and Little Enick.

"Yes, there she is!" I heard Patience whisper to Jonathan. "I knew he wouldn't leave her at home. He's afraid thee might steal her."

"'Twouldn't make much difference one way nor t'other," he answered stolidly; but his face lit up like the full moon in its glory when the cheery voice of Esther Lamb was heard returning the greetings of her friends and neighbors in the yard.

"How's thee, Mandy Jane? How's thee, Aunt Margot? How's thee, Levi? And I declare, here's Little Hanner Ann! Howdy, Hanner Ann, howdy, howdy!" And thus the salutations continued, seemingly without end.

But soon Patience rushed forth from the kitchen and, meeting the Foxes as they were strolling bewildered among the groups, gave them the heartiest welcome of all.

"Howdy, Becky! Howdy, M'rier, and M'lindy!" shaking hands with each of the seven. "I'm so glad to see you all. Come down to the barn with me, and take off your things. We have to use this end of the barn for sleeping-rooms till the new house is ready. Just lay your bonnets right there on the beds."

And Charity was likewise busy with the other women friends, cheerily greeting each and all, showing them where to put their "things," making every one instantly feel at her ease and at home. Cousin Sally, in her newest, reddest apron, was busy superintending the dinner; Cousin Mandy Jane was occupied in marshaling the forces for the quiltin' and tackin'; and mother, overwhelmed with the social functions devolving upon her, was dividing her attentions between the elderly women and the infants.

It was amusing to listen to her. "How's thee, Aunt Mary?

Take a cheer. Thee looks mighty spry for thy age. I reckon thee won't want to go out to the quiltin' jist yet a while. Set down and try a little of my elderberry wine for thy stummick." And then espying a young mother with a three-weeks-old infant in her arms, she would leave Aunt Mary to take care of herself, and hasten to greet this latest arrival. "And is this the baby? How pretty it is? Boy, or girl? I'm glad it's a boy. What's his name? Hezekiah? Well, that's a mighty pretty name and it's Scripter, too." And thus she went on, to the great comfort and edification of everybody.

Meanwhile the men-folks had begun active operations at the other end of the yard. Amid clouds of dust and the crash of falling timbers, a contingent of a dozen sturdy fellows under the direction of Levi T. was not long in demolishing the old cabin and carrying the logs to a suitable spot in the lane, whence Jonathan would some day drag them away to his forty-acre piece by the Four Corners. Two other companies under the command respectively of father and 'Lihu Bright, were putting together the timbers of the new house, preparatory to raising them into position. As the work proceeded the excitement increased. The old house was cleared away, the foundations of the new were laid. On every side might be heard the sound of axes and hammers pounding, of old and new logs tumbling, of sturdy men's voices shouting, of dogs and boys forever putting themselves in the way; and above all, rang the clear commanding cry of the foreman:—

"Now, boys, all together! Hee-oh-heave! Right along with her, there! Up with that end! Now, easy! Whoa!"

And so the merry work proceeded.

Under the cherry trees, around the quilting frames, the womenfolks were more quietly but none the less busily occupied; and, as the quilts were being quilted and the comforts were being tacked, the flow of genial conversation and neighborhood news never lagged nor was for a moment impeded. Here were gathered the younger married women

and the older maidens who wished to be married; and the jokes and repartees and sly bits of information that were handed round were not of a kind to be repeated. Nevertheless, the fingers that manipulated the swiftly passing needles or tied the intricate "comfort knots," were known to be the skillfullest and most diligent in all the New Settlement, if not in all the Wabash Country.

On the lawn near by, or grouped conveniently about the open-air fire, were the mothers in Israel—ancient women like my chimney-corner aunts—each with her pipe in her mouth, her knitting in her hands, and a sweet reminiscence of bygone days in her heart. The long rough tables were being rapidly loaded with toothsome viands, and Cousin Sally and her young women helpers were as busy as nut-gathering squirrels, flitting ceaselessly, untiringly, back and forth from the kitchen stove and the improvised camp-fire.

But why dwell upon these scenes of homely industry—these incidents of the simple life, so insignificant, so old-fashioned, so foolish to the minds of an enlightened generation?

The Seth Thomas clock on the mantel-shelf of the kitchen struck the hour of twelve; the frame of the new house was "all riz" and nothing remained to be done save the placing of the rafters; the Joseph's-coat quilt—Cousin Mandy Jane's special property and pride—had been finished and hemmed, and was being handed round for the general admiration of mothers and daughters; and, more than all, the dinner was ready—the time of times, for which this particular day was made, had arrived.

"Everybody git ready for dinner!" proclaimed Cousin Sally at the top of her stentorian voice. And the word was passed from mouth to mouth until it reached the ears of the master of ceremonies and house-raisings.

"Now, friends," he announced, standing on one of the topmost girders where all could see him, "I am informed that

our dinner is ready. We will attempt nothing more until after we have eaten and rested. Let all pass around to the tables, and take your places wherever the women-folks may direct."

Very orderly and with a good-mannered appearance of hesitation, the men strolled across to the farther side of the lawn, where they gathered in groups and waited for further instructions. There was not much done in the way of slicking up for dinner. Some of the men wiped their hands and faces on their cotton bandannas, a few made some attempt to smooth their hair, and some of the younger ones whose girls were present ran down to the spring branch to make their toilets beside the flowing stream.

One long table was assigned to the "raisers" and the other, not quite so long, to the quilters and old women. It required the genius of a general to accomplish the satisfactory seating of the multitude, but Cousin Sally was quite equal to the occasion.

"Them that's been a-workin' may set down at the first table," she announced, "and them that's been a-playin' must wait till the second table."

This of course meant that we children and all loafers and hangers-on must be content with the leavings of those who were more favored at the feast because they had proved themselves more useful to the host.

Joel Sparker and Enoch Fox, as the eldest and most venerable of the company, were given the seats of honor at the head of the men's table; the others were arranged promiscuously without reference to rank—for there was none. At the women's table, the grandmothers and ancient aunts took precedence, the young mothers came next, and the old maids together with the little girls were crowded out to wait for the "second table."

The feast was progressing with great satisfaction to all concerned. The head-waitress's injunction to "help yourselves and don't be bashful" was being literally obeyed. The

long table was being rapidly denuded of its most valuable assets. Suddenly, in the neighborhood of the barnyard fence, where many of the boys had congregated, there were signs of unwonted excitement, and some of the young men whose curiosity was stronger than their half-satisfied appetites, rose from the table and ran to see what was going on. What they saw was not calculated to allay their interest.

Jonathan, wearing his "meetin' breeches and a biled shirt," his boots newly greased and his hair newly combed, was leading his filly from the barn. The latter was equipped with bridle and saddle as if for a ride, and behind the saddle was the small square blanket commonly used when the rider was to have a companion.

"Heigh, there, Jont, wheer's thee goin' to?" queried Little Enick, climbing upon the gate-post.

"Seems to me thee's slicked up right smart for a house-raisin' day," shouted Jake Dobson's big brother, Nate. "Is thee goin' to see thy gal?"

"Hello, Jonty! What's up?" asked Tim Bray's father, his mouth distended with the fried chicken he had snatched from the table.

"'Tain't none of thy tarnal business," answered Jonathan huskily; "but if thee must know, I'll tell thee: I'm jist goin' to give the mare a leetle stirrin' up, like she gits every day—and I thought maybe some gal or other might kinder like to ride ahind me, pervided I was slicked up a bit." And, with that, he leaped into the saddle.

I ran and threw open the big gate, and he rode briskly out and down the lane. He went no farther than the bend in the big road where a grove of sugar trees shut off our view of him, and there he turned and came back, the filly fairly flying before the wind.

As he approached the house, Patience ran out and, standing in the gateway, began to repeat with great animation her favorite ballad:—

"Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the West,
Through all the broad Border his steed is the best."

The impatient animal pranced around the yard, eager for another swift canter, and Jonathan was never in prouder mood.

"Let her out ag'in, Jont," cried the small boys; and the young men looked on admiringly and allowed that "that there mare is some punkins, sure as shootin'."

"Lochinvar," cried Patience, "will thy steed carry double?"

"Jist thee git on to her and see," he answered curtly, but with a half-repressed smile.

Immediately Patience ran out to the uppin'-block, and as the rider brought his steed within reach, she leaped skillfully up behind him, threw her arms around his waist—and they were off! Oh, but that was a rare sight, my Leonidas—a sight not so rare in those medieval times as now, but a sight sufficient to make any horse lover's heart beat hot and fast beneath his jacket. They were down to the foot of the lane, they were out on the big road and half a mile away in less time than it has taken me to tell you about it. And then, with merely a touch of the bridle, the filly stopped and turned and came walking back, as slowly and demurely as any broken-down plow horse at the close of a day of hard work. When they reached the barn lot again, and Patience leaped laughing to the ground, the boys broke out into a shout that startled all the feasters at the tables and was very shocking to the pious nerves of good Joel Sparker.

"Stephen," said he, between great mouthfuls of roast veal and stewed punkin, "it seems to me that there is altogether too much levity among thy young folks. If thee would admonish them to think upon their latter ends before they come to thy table, perhaps thee might prosper better with the new house thee is puttin' up."

"What's all that noise about, anyhow?" queried Old

Enoch with some difficulty.

"Oh, it's only Cousin Jonathan and his filly," answered Mandy Jane, helping him to a third plate of chicken and whole hominy. "He's jist givin' the critter a leetle exercise like he does every day, so as to keep her limbered up and in good condition."

"Does thee know wheer my Esther is?" growled Enoch, beginning to appear somewhat ill at ease.

"She's in the kitchen, helpin' the girls git the dishes ready for the second table."

"Huh!" and the ancient man bent over his plate and renewed his gustatory labors.

Meanwhile the excitement at the barnyard continued, and several of the more temperate men rose from the table, leaving their plates half emptied, and hurried across the yard to see what was going on. The filly was prancing uneasily back and forth between the uppin'-block and the barn. She had just returned from another wild canter down the road.

"I wonder if there ain't no other young woman that would like to ride ahind me," said Jonathan exultantly.

"Yes, I'd like it. Take me!" cried Cousin Sally, rushing from the kitchen door, her cheeks aflame with red blood, her apron tucked up in a double fold about her waist.

"Well, I wasn't a-keerin' about thee," blurted young Lochinvar, petulantly but good-naturedly; "yit, even so, if thee ain't afeard of thy neck, come and git on."

She ran through the gate, and without making use of the uppin'-block, leaped upon the filly's crupper and dexterously seated herself on the scant blanket behind the saddle. She was known throughout the Settlement as the most daring rider among women, and her performance occasioned a shout of applause that caused Old Enoch to rise from the table before he had finished his third piece of pie. But the venerable friend at his right hand restrained and hindered him.

"Set still, Enoch," commanded Joel. "I know thee has still

enough room under thy jacket for one of Debby Dudley's doughnuts. Folks say they ain't nobody can bake 'em as good as she does. Have one."

And so he was fain to remain a little longer.

In the meanwhile Jonathan and Cousin Sally had returned, and as the latter ran laughingly back to her kitchen duties, the former sat carelessly, side-saddle fashion, on his filly and called for another recruit.

"Who'll be the next?" he shouted, in a tone the queerest I had ever heard issue from between his incapacious lips.

"Charity! Where's Charity?" inquired Patience, making her way through the crowd of children and men. "Charity would like that sort of sport I know."

"There she comes!" cried Ikey Bright from his perch on the barnyard fence; and all eyes were turned toward the kitchen door.

She came briskly across the narrow yard space, looking neither to the right nor to the left, her movements reminding me strangely of a timid hunted animal, seeking some way of escape. What could ail our Charity, usually so bold? She wore a "split pasteboard" sunbonnet which was drawn so far forward as to conceal her features; and she had on a long linen riding skirt of the kind which some women of quality were in the habit of wearing when they went to meetin' on horseback. As she passed me at the gate, I saw that underneath the riding skirt there was a dress of richer material, and underneath the sunbonnet there was a face that was not Charity's. There were others who saw the same, but before anyone could recover from his astonishment, she was on the uppin'-block, she had vaulted upon the filly's back, her right arm was about young Lochinvar's waist—and the filly was speeding away.

"Father! O father!" cried Little Enick, leaping off the gate-post and running toward the dining tables. "Our Esther, she's gone and rid away with Dudley's Jont! They're a clippin' it down the lane to the big road right now!"

The anger and dismay of Old Enoch were plainly visible on his wrinkled countenance as with long quick strides he hurried over the lawn and joined the company of lookers-on. But he restrained his emotion as, shading his eyes with his hands, he saw the young couple just disappearing around the bend in the big road. They were riding rather slowly now, the filly gliding easily along, and not in the swift reckless manner of the two former occasions.

"Jont, he's right smart more keerful of Esther than he was of the t'other gals," remarked one of Abner Jones's boys. "Jist see how 'mazin' slow he goes."

"But jist thee wait," returned Jake Dobson; "he'll make it up on the home stretch."

And 'Lihu Bright, observing Old Enoch's anxiety, kindly explained, "They'll be back in a few minutes. Jonathan is only exercising his filly, and he's been taking some of the young women with him, just for diversion. He takes 'em as far as the big mudhole around the bend, and then he turns and comes back."

"Wale! Thee says so," grimly returned the older man. "Maybe thee knows."

But they didn't come back. The diners at the first table had finished eating and were dispersed about the premises. The second table was called, and the younger contingency, including the boys, big and little, the cooks, the waitresses and other helpers, were busily engaged in devouring the leavings. And Enoch, with a few of the middle-aged men, still lingered about the gate and waited.

"It's my 'pinion it's a ruse," finally remarked Abner Jones.

"That's been my 'pinion all along," said Enoch, going to the camp-fire and raking out a coal with which to light his pipe. "That there Esther of mine, she's up to most every sort of deceivin' trick. She's good at a ruse."

"It wouldn't s'prise me if they was to ride all the way over to Dashville and git married by the short cut," said John

Dobson. "I've heerd that Jont's been a-threatenin' sich a thing."

"He's been a-threatenin', has he?" and Enoch's face, as he spoke, was strangely puckered with contending emotions. "Well, if I know anything about it, I guess him and my Esther won't find no short cut yit a while, threatenin' or no threatenin'."

He turned squarely away from the group of men about the gate and strode back to the long tables, where his wife and daughters were variously occupied.

"Becky," he said with a quaver in his voice, "I ain't feelin' very well, and I reckon I'll be goin' home. As soon as thee's done thy duty a-helpin' Debby, maybe thee'd better come too, and fetch the gals along with thee."

"Yes, Enoch, I'll come right soon," answered Becky with kindly solicitude. "Thee'd better take a leetle drap of cordial when thee gits home, and, this evening, thee must bathe thy feet in warm water and mustard."

But before the half of the last sentence was out of her mouth, Enoch had turned around, and without saying farewell to anybody, was soon over the fence and striding homeward. We watched him as he threaded his way along the tortuous path, now in the calf pasture and now in the strip of new clearing; we saw him climb the fence and disappear among the low bushes in the outskirts of the big woods. A cloud seemed to cast its shadow over all our merriment. The word quickly passed from one group of friendly neighbors to another that Jont Dudley had "rid away" with Esther Fox, and that Old Enoch had gone home "firin' mad about it"; and from the group of dishwashers down by the spring branch, we shortly afterward heard the strong clear voice of Patience declaiming:—

> "So faithful in love and so dauntless in war—
> Have ye e'er seen gallant like young Lochinvar?"

CHAPTER XXXII
The Ruse

It was very late in the night when Jonathan returned home—and he was alone. We heard him as he led the filly into the ham and with extreme quietness to her stall. Father rose, and lighting the old tin lantern, went out to have an opportunity with him. My own temporary sleeping quarters being in the haymow, I could not help being an involuntary although very interested listener to all that was said.

"Is that thee, Jonathan?" and father's voice trembled with emotion.

"I reckon 'tain't nobody else," was the petulant reply.

"Well, thee has occasioned me a great deal of anxiety, and I venture to say that thy name is on the tongue of every man and woman in the New Settlement."

"I don't keer if it is."

"But is thee aware that thy riding away with Esther Fox and not coming back till this late hour will cause a vast amount of scandal?"

"I didn't ride away with no Fox, I rid away with a Lamb—and we hain't nary one of us none the wuss for it, nother."

"But what has thee done with Esther—with the Lamb as thee insists upon calling her?"

"Well, I hain't done nothin' wrong with her, I tell thee that," answered Jonathan in a tone half-exultant, half-defiant. "I s'pose thee'd like to know all about it, wouldn't thee?"

"Yes, I want a full account of thy transactions," and father spoke huskily and with grim decision. "If thee ever expects to

be received again into our family as an adopted son, thee must clear thy skirts of all blame in this matter."

"Well, I kinder reckon I can do that," returned Jonathan, straightening himself up and pulling at his galluses. "My coat tails hain't been draggled the least mite and if thee'll only listen to reason I'll prove it to thee."

"My mind is free to consider whatever thee has to say," answered father.

And so the two sat down upon the edge of the feed box, with the faint glimmer of the tin lantern playing upon their features, and the young man in his characteristic homely manner, related his story.

"Well, it was Patience, she put me up to it. When I heerd her sayin' her piece about that there tarnal young feller lockin' the bars, it set me to thinkin' whether I mightn't ride off with Esther, jist like that feller done with his gal; for thee knows Old Enick, he's always been dead set ag'inst me havin' her. So I told Patience about it and she says, 'Go ahead'; and her and Charity and Esther, they put their heads together and made up the whole thing, how we'd fool Old Enick and ride double over to Dashville and take the short cut in spite of the tarnal *Discipline* and everything else. And Patience she even seen Henry Meredith, and Henry he seen Judge Davis about it and made it up with him how he was to splice us in a hurry, as quick as we got to his offist. And Charity she fixed it with Isaac Wilson and his wife how we was to stay at their house a day or two till we found out how Old Enick was a-takin' it. For thee knows Isaac's wife, she's Esther's mother's own aunt, and she's named after her, and she's always kinder had a likin' for her."

"Yes, I know," said father dryly. "Go on with thy narrative."

"Well, it was Patience, she put me up to it," continued Jonathan. "She's purty slick, I tell thee, when it comes to cunnin'. I seen all the time that she wasn't quite clear in her

mind about us takin' the short cut. 'It's a mighty pore way of gittin' spliced,' she said, 'and it's sure to land you both outside of Our Society; for you'll be turned out of meetin' without mercy,' she said. And then Esther, she would begin to cry; cause she didn't know what to do; for it's a turble thing to be turned out of meetin'."

"I know all that, too," said father, growing impatient. "Go on with thy narrative."

"Well, it was Patience, she put us up to it; and she said, 'If you can only skeer Old Enick right bad, maybe he'll give his consent at the last minute, and then you can git spliced right, after all.' And she said to me, 'Lochinvar, if I was thee, I would try it.' And I told her I would. So, when we rid away on the filly, Esther and me, we went kinder slow; for we wanted to give Old Enick another chance. We was sure he'd foller us, and we didn't keer if he did; for everything was fixed up, and we knowed that he couldn't help hisself, no matter how ugly he wanted to be."

He paused a few minutes to give the filly some grain, and then resumed his story.

"It was Patience, she put us up to it. When we rid away, we didn't go in no hurry, for we wanted him to foller us. But after a while we got to the river, and we seen Dashville in plain sight on t'other side, and there wa'n't no sign of him nowhere. Then I said to Esther, 'I guess, maybe, we'll have to be spliced by the short cut, after all. Thy grandfather, he don't seem to be a follerin' us very brisk.' And jist then we come to the ferry, and she begun to cry.

"The ferryboat was on t'other side, and the feller that runs it, he was settin' at the end of it, a-fishin'. Me and Esther, we lighted from the filly, and I hollered to him to come and take us acrost. But he was e'en-a-most ketchin' a big black bass that was teasin' his hook, and he hollered back to us to wait a bit till he yanked the fish in. I hollered to him that we was in right smart of a hurry; but he jist kep' on fishin' for that

there black bass as if it was the onliest thing under the sun. I hollered ag'in, and let on as if I was hoppin' mad about it, but he jist kep' on. Seems to me we stood on the bank, waitin' for the tarnal feller, fully a half an hour. By'm-by, the black bass it swum away without takin' the hook, and the feller poled his boat acrost to where we was standin'. I was so tarnal mad that I felt like lickin' him, and I think I would 'a' done it, too, if it hadn't been for Esther. I kinder hated for her to see me a-fightin'."

"Thee would have disgraced thyself and thy relations, and I am glad thee restrained thy temper," said father; "but go on with thy narrative."

"Well, we went on to the boat, me and the filly and Esther, and the feller was jist pushin' off into the water, when we heerd a great clatterin' of horse's hufs, and we looked up, and there come Old Enick on his gray mare, a-gallopin' right down to the river. He hollered to the feller on the boat, and told him to wait, but the feller jist kep' on and didn't so much as look around. He said to me that he was in a hurry to git acrost to see if there wa'n't a fish on the line he had set there; and he said he wouldn't turn back for nobody.

"Old Enick, he come a-poundin' down to the river, and jist as the boat bumped ag'inst t'other side, he rid up and stopped at the landin' on this side. He was all out of breath, and so was the gray mare, but he didn't seem a bit mad. As soon as he could git his breath a leetle, he hollered out to Esther and axed her wheer she was goin' to. She hollered back and told him that we was goin' to Dashville to be spliced, and the jedge was 'spectin' us and the papers was all writ up ready to be signed. And Enick, he hollers ag'in and says he won't allow no sich thing, and tells her she must go right back home with him on the gray mare.

"Then I hollers back to him, and I says, 'Esther ain't a-goin' to do no sich thing. She ain't no Fox, she's a Lamb, and she's promised to b'long to me. If thee won't give her leave to

be spliced the right way, then her and me, we'll take the short cut, and thee cain't help thy-self.'

"Then Enick, he hollered to me that he wouldn't never allow any sich thing to be did; and I guess we stood and hollered back and forth acrost the river longer'n it takes to break up a settin' hen. Then I led the filly out of the boat and up to a stump by the road, and me and Esther we let on as if we was a-goin' to ride right off into the town. Old Enick, he hollered to the feller in the boat to come and git him, but the feller was in great hopes of that there black bass ag'in, and he let on not to hear him. I seen that Esther's grandfather was beginnin' to melt, and so I tetched on a corn-promise that I'd been thinkin' of all along.

"'Enick Fox,' I hollered, 'thee sees that Esther and me, we're bound to git spliced and thee cain't help it. We'd like to git spliced the right way, but if thee won't let us, then it will be thy fault if we go ag'inst the *Discipline*. I know thee don't like me, but I'm bound and set on havin' Esther; and if thee will only sign a little paper that I have already writ out, we'll go right back home with thee and be good friends with thee as long as we live!'

"Then he hollered out and axed me what it was that was writ on that piece of paper, and I took it out of my hat linin' and read it to him so loud that the ferryboat feller, he laughed and skeered his black bass clean away.

"It was Patience, she put me up to it, and it was her that writ it with her own quill pen on a leaf of her copy-book. Here it is, father; thee may read it."

He took from his hat a carefully folded bit of bluish foolscap, and father bending low over the feeble flickering lantern, read aloud the writing that was on it:

"To the Dry Forks Monthly Meeting—

"Dear Friends:

"I hereby give my consent to the marriage of my granddaughter, Esther Lamb, with my young friend Jonathan Dudley, provided they get married in accordance with the rules of our *Discipline*.

"E. Fox."

"That's it," exclaimed Jonathan. "It was all writ jist so, 'ceptin' the name, and I read it to him as loud as I could. Then Enick, he hummed and hawed and kicked the sand a little bit, and at last he hollered back and said he reckoned that when young folks made up their minds to git spliced, the Old Feller hisself couldn't stop 'em with all his fire and brimstun. And he said he'd rather see one of his datters in her grave than to let her be spliced to anybody ag'inst the Discipline, and as to his granddatter, he reckoned if she could stand it to live with a Dudley he could maybe stand it to let her have one of 'em, but he vowed and declared that he never could begin to stand it if she got spliced to me ag'inst the Discipline.

"Then I hollered back to him, and I says, 'What's thee goin' to do about this here little writin' I've jist read to thee?'

"And he hollers and says, 'I reckon I'll sign it. Thee come back to this side with Esther and thy filly, and I'll sign it, and then we'll all ride home together. 'Tain't no use for us to be a-hagglin' over this matter forever.'

"I seen from the way he spoke that he was clean beat; and Esther she was so glad that she begun to cry ag'in. Jist then the ferryboat feller, he ketched his fishin'-line on to a snag and lost his hook, and us and the filly we went back on to the boat. He wanted me to pay him another levy for ferryin' us over; but I told him we had changed our minds and that, seein' we had rued the bargain, it was for him to give me back the levy I had paid him when we first went on to his boat. The feller, he got mad, and I had e'en a great mind to fling him into the river; but Esther, she kinder pacified me.

"When we got back to this side, there was Enick, a-holdin'

his gray mare by the bridle. He shuck hands with us both, and I never dreamt that he could be so friendly and nice to anybody. And then I laid the piece of paper up ag'inst the smooth part of his saddle and give him my piece of keel to write with, and he signed his name, jist as thee sees it there. Then he shuck hands with us ag'in, and called us his children and said he reckoned we might as well ride back home together. So he got on the gray mare, and I got on the filly, and Esther she up behind me, and we left the ferryboat feller on the landin' a-sayin' bad words about us.

"When we got to Enick's big gate, Esther, she slipped off of the filly's back and run to the house. But we'd made it up to give in at the monthly meetin' in next Third-month, and Enick, he agreed to it. And so thee sees I hain't done no bad thing today a-tryin' to be like that there young Lockin'-the-bars, have I?"

"I am glad that thee has done so well," said father, taking his hand; "and I am glad that thy troubles have been so happily adjusted. We shall all rejoice to have so capable a young woman as Esther Lamb become a member of our family, and it is very pleasing to know that Friend Enoch has consented to it."

The candle in the old lantern had burned down to the socket. It's little light flickered desperately for a moment, and then vanished. The barn was in total darkness. And as father groped his way back to his couch, I heard the Seth Thomas clock strike twelve.

Thus ended a most eventful day.

CHAPTER XXXIII
The Long Way About It

I. "The Givin' In"

Getting married in meetin', my dear Leonidas and Leona, was a serious and long-protracted affair, requiring much deliberation and courage on the part of the two persons most interested therein. It was an ordeal through which very few young people were likely to venture without due consideration of the consequences and a heroic determination to endure unflinchingly the bonds of wedlock which they were thus voluntarily assuming.

The first step in the process was the "givin' in," and our Jonathan performed it with becoming dignity and grace. It was on a Fifth-day morning in the latter part of that month which worldly people vulgarly call March, in honor of a heathenish god of war as unlovely as he was unchristian. In the woods where snow-drifts had lately been heaped up, the grass was already growing green. The johnny-jump-ups were beginning to bloom in sunny places, robins and bluebirds were mating in the orchard, the spring lambs were frisking in the woods pasture. The smell of the soil was in one's nostrils, the music of nature thrilled the senses.

It was such a morning as sends the red blood joyously coursing through your veins, filling your heart with gladness and your whole body with strength. It was just the kind of morning to be thinking of pilgrimages, of marriage, of nest-building and of the infinitude of love.

But within the somber walls of the meetin'-house at Dry

Forks, there was little of spring-time, and even the sunshine which struggled through the dust-covered windows was tempered with solemnity. The monthly meeting was in session, and the "hetters were shet," effectually separating the sexes. In one of the compartments the men were deliberating upon various weighty matters of church and state; in the other the women were giving their mites to charity and vigorously denouncing the fashions and the flippant tendencies of the times. The solemn faces of the men, shaded by the brims of their ample hats, seemed surcharged with a sense of the tremendous seriousness of life. The weary but kindly countenances of the women, half-concealed in the depths of their dove-colored bonnets, gave evidence of saintly resignation and faith too deep for words. Very few of all that were assembled there on that well-remembered Fifth-day morning had seen the johnny-jump-ups, or the frisking lambs, or the birds in the tree-tops; fewer still, having seen them, could have derived aught of inspiration or joy therefrom. The vain things of this world were put far away, and the thoughts of the faithful were centered upon the grim realities of life and the grimmer possibilities of immortality.

Suddenly, there was a perceptible stir of expectancy in the men's end of the meetin'. At a well-understood signal from one of the overseers, our Jonathan rose from his place on one of the middle benches and with no uncertain steps went up the aisle and handed a folded slip of paper to the clerk, who, as both moderator and secretary of the meeting, was sitting behind a little desk at the top of the gallery.

"Say, Bobby!" whispered Ikey Bright, leaning over from the seat behind me and punching me sharply in the ribs. "Say, Bobby, it's goin' to be a splicin' at your house, ain't it? It'll be lots of fun to see Jont and the Lamb girl a-standin' up in meetin' together. Jist wait and see."

I dared not make any response, for father's eyes were upon me. The young man who was committing the act of "givin'

in" was returning with downcast eyes and measured tread to his accustomed place. A profound silence filled the room, as though every person was duly impressed with the awfulness of the undertaking upon which he was about to embark; and then the solemnity was rudely disturbed by an accident without parallel in the annals of this meetin'. For, in his great perturbation of mind miscalculating the place and the distance, our Jonathan missed his bench and sat forcibly down on the floor. Despite most vivid visions of mother's hickory and father's dire displeasure, I gave way to a fit of suppressed laughter that no effort of the will could restrain; Jake Dobson actually snickered in an audible and most disgraceful fashion; and I was led to suspect that he and Little Enick Fox, who sat near by, had perpetrated a miserable and most sinful joke by tipping the bench just at the psychological moment when Jonathan was off his balance. The ministers and elders moved uneasily in their seats, and the overseers glanced sharply about the room and thereby silently quelled any further exhibition of hilarity.

The clerk himself seemed somewhat perturbed by the unusual occurrence. He unfolded the bit of paper very deliberately, turned it over and viewed it from every angle, coughed nervously, and then rose to a standing position beside his little desk.

"I have here a communication from two of our young friends which I will now proceed to read," he announced.

The silence was audible, as he paused before beginning, and I glanced once more at our poor Jonathan, cowering on his bench and making himself as small as possible.

"The communication is as follows," continued the clerk:

"To Dry Forks Monthly Meeting, to be held at Dry Forks, Indiana, on the twenty-fifth day of the Third-month.

"Dear Friends:

"This is to certify that we the undersigned intend marriage with each other.

"Jonathan Dudley,

"Esther Lamb."

There was a perceptible hum of satisfaction among the younger men and boys as he finished the brief reading, but the ministers and elders, in deep meditation, sat immovable as marble statues. The clerk slowly refolded the paper, returned it to his desk, and then in formal tones inquired—

"What is the feeling of the meeting with reference to this communication from our young friends?"

After a short pause, as if for consultation with the spirit, Levi T. Jay rose from his top-gallery seat and gave expression to his thoughts:

"My mind is free to suggest the appointment of a committee to unite with a like committee of women friends in examining into the relations and conduct of the young couple, and if no obstacles appear, to report the same to our next monthly meeting."

"My mind is free also," said Abner Jones, the first overseer.

"Mine is also," sang out old Joel Sparker.

"Mine, also!" echoed a chorus of voices from all parts of the room.

The committee was accordingly appointed, with Levi T. as its chairman.

Then, at the clerk's suggestion, the communication was sent by a special messenger to the women's meeting on the other side of the "shetters." There it was read with all due solemnity, and the requisite committee was named to act, jointly or independently as the case might require, with the men's committee already appointed.

Thus the "givin' in" was accomplished.

When the meeting "broke," and even before the elders in the top gallery had finished shaking hands, our Jonathan fled incontinently out by the nearest door, and with unseemly speed betook himself to the spot where his filly was tethered.

He paused not to hear the congratulations of his friends or to reply to the jibes of unmannerly boys who pursued him. He cast not even a glance backward toward the women's end of the meetin'-house where he might have seen Esther Lamb, in blue sunbonnet and white apron, shaking hands with our Cousin Sally and other well-wishing friends. But, in evident agitation, he mounted his steed, cantered out into the big road and hurried homeward.

"Well, Jonathan, how does thee like 'givin' in'?" inquired Cousin Mandy Jane.

"It's the tarnalest thing I ever tackled. I wouldn't never do it ag'in for the purtiest gal on airth!"

II. "The Passin'"

It was the last Fifth-day morning in the Fourth-month, otherwise called the month of April. The fields had been plowed for corn, the oats had already been sown and were springing up thick and green in the sun-warmed soil, the birds had finished their love-making and were keeping house. Our dear old log cabin had been erected anew on Jonathan's forty-acre piece, and was ready for occupancy. It looked very snug and comfortable under its brand-new roof of shaved shingles; and it seemed very grand with its painted door and the shining "chany" door-knob which had taken the place of the ancient latch-string.

As I have said, it was Fifth-day morning, and at Dry Forks the monthly meeting was again in session, with the "shetters shet" and the men and women gravely deliberating in their respective "ends." There was a large attendance of the curious and irreverent, for the ceremony of "passin' meetin'" was to be performed, and next to a real wedding, it would afford the rarest entertainment known to the people of the New Settlement.

The clerk opened the meeting with the usual formal

reading of a "minute" announcing that event. A few minor items of business were disposed of, and a season of silent waiting ensued which seemed greatly to refresh the impatient souls of the seekers for diversion. Then the clerk, standing up beside his desk, inquired if it was the mind of the meeting to consider the case of the young friends who at the preceding meeting had given in their intentions of marriage.

In answer thereto, Levi T. Jay arose and announced that "The committees appointed to have this matter under advisement are ready to make their report."

"If that is the case and there are no objections on the part of friends," said father, "I think that we might proceed with the matter in the usual way."

As he resumed his seat, the door nearest to the facin' bench was thrown open and the two persons who were the center of interest entered. There was a bustle of excitement among the irreverent, and some of the ruder small boys tittered audibly as the pair of intenders, holding each other's right hands, advanced and stood up in front of the facin' bench which had been vacated for their accommodation. Scarcely had this unseemly interruption subsided when an unexpected stir was observed in the gallery, with a general rising among the elders and a removing of hats. Good old Joel Sparker had dropped upon his knees, being suddenly moved to offer supplication in behalf of the adventurous couple who were seeking to embark on the uncertain sea of matrimony.

Of course, we were all obliged to rise and turn our backs toward the supplicator lest we might see his attendant angel (as in my former days of innocence I had supposed). But I had now grown hardened with respect to the ways of angels—having had no little experience in that direction—and skepticism had already taken deep root in my heart. Therefore, while Joel was valiantly wrestling with the Lord and earnestly pleading for blessings on the heads of our dear young friends, I turned half-way about and busied myself with taking

a mental photograph of them.

Our Jonathan was to me the central figure in the whole assemblage, and I felt that by his present action he was bringing great distinction to our household. He was fixed up in a style which must have made him feel uncomfortable. He wore a starched shirt with a stand-up collar which sawed the bottoms of his ears. His trousers of homemade brown stuff were much too large for him, having been made by our Aunt Rachel, who believed in always giving good measure. He wore no coat, for the day was warm; but his shirt-sleeves were spotlessly clean, and his galluses, which had been bought in Nopplis, were beautiful to see. His face was smoothly shaven, and his hair, oozing with bear's grease, was smoothly plastered down on his forehead. His eyes were directed straight before him, and he seemed scarcely conscious of the presence of buxom Esther who stood, trembling and blushing, by his side.

And she—she had never appeared so charming. She had exchanged her usual coarse garb of homespun for a handsome gray gown of store-goods material; and instead of her much-worn pasteboard sunbonnet, she wore the daintiest little turtle-shell of brown silk that had ever been seen in the Dry Forks meetin'-house. Furthermore—but here my furtive observations were suddenly terminated by hearing the "forever and ever amen" with which Friend Joel always ended his supplications. With much unnecessary shuffling of feet, the men and boys resumed their places, and the business of the meeting proceeded in the usual established order.

"The meeting will now listen to the reports of the committees to which I alluded a few moments ago," announced the clerk; and taking up a half-sheet of foolscap he read the following:

"To the Dry Forks Monthly Meeting, to be held on Fifth-day, the twenty-ninth of the Fourth-month.

"We the undersigned appointed to inquire concerning the conduct and outward relations of Jonathan Dudley and

Esther Lamb, do hereby report that we find no obstacles to prevent them from proceeding with their intentions of marriage, their parents and guardians being favorably disposed toward the same.

"Signed by the Committee."

"Is it the mind of the meeting to accept this report?" inquired the clerk.

"I unite with the report," answered 'Lihu Bright.

"I do also," reponded various voices in the gallery.

The clerk accordingly declared that the meeting was in entire agreement with the committee; and the report was ordered to be copied in the "minutes." Then father, as the official head of the meeting, arose in his place and made announcement:

"I think that if the mind of the meeting is clear and no obstruction appears in the way, our young friends might now reaffirm their intentions and pass into the women's meeting to repeat the same."

A deep and solemn silence followed. Then the crucial point in the proceedings arrived as the bustling little clerk arose behind his little desk and addressed himself to the "intenders":

"Jonathan and Esther, do you still continue your intentions of marriage with one another?"

"We do," bravely asserted Jonathan.

"We do," sweetly echoed Esther.

"Your answers will be recorded in the minutes of the monthly meeting," said the clerk. "You may now pass into the women's meeting and there make the same avowals."

The door between the two compartments was silently opened, and the passing was promptly and creditably performed. The intending couple disappeared, the door was closed by an unseen hand, and we could only guess what was occurring on the other side of the shetters.

Nothing more remained to be done by the men's meeting,

save to appoint a committee of three to attend the marriage ceremony and wedding festivities, to see that everything was performed in accordance with our Discipline, decently and in an orderly manner, and to report thereon at the next monthly meeting.

Such was the ceremony of "passin' meetin'," as I remember seeing it once, and only once, in my lifetime. (But, O Leona, what tricks your memory will play you at the end of sixty years!) The custom was perhaps a vestigial relic handed down to our fathers from the God-fearing days and saintly practices of George Fox and his disciples. It was designed to be one of several safeguards against hasty and ill-advised marriages, and in those remote times of non-haste and simple living, it no doubt served a good purpose. But when the hydra of progress began to lift its hundred heads, our people soon caught the fever of impatience (and in matters of marriage that fever is sometimes intense) and this awkward old practice of stopping, looking, and listening before taking the irretrievable step was voted foolish and unnecessary; and, at about the time of which I am writing, it was abandoned and the rule was expunged from the Discipline.

"Well, Jonathan, how does thee like passin' meetin'?" inquired Cousin Sally.

"I like it right smart," he answered; "and I wouldn't mind doin' it ag'in if I had to."

III. "The Splicin'"

Again it is a Fifth-day morning—it is the first Fifth-day in the Fifth-month, commonly called May. Again, in the solemn old meetin'-house the people are gathered. A meeting is in progress—not the monthly nor the quart'ly, but the usual week-day meeting for worship. The shetters are opened, and men and women are worshiping together, each sex in its own part of the great dingy room.

There is a much larger attendance than usual, and every bench is filled. Many worldly people and many strangers from distant parts have assembled with us, some drawn by feelings of friendship and good will, but more, it is feared, by motives of idle curiosity. For today there is to be a marryin' in meetin'. Yes, the anxious young people, who have been dallying with intentions for lo! these six weeks, are finally about to accomplish those intentions and be duly "spliced" in the good old-fashioned way of the Discipline.

And there you may see them, sitting on the women's facin' bench, erect and motionless as dead statues, their eyes fixed on vacancy, their thoughts centered upon the ceremony that is so soon to take place. They are the center of attraction to a vast multitude, and they know it; and this fact gives them much additional concern, for they are by no means used to notoriety.

By the side of the bride sits her "waiter," her dearest and most trusted young woman friend, even our Cousin Sally, blushing all over like a rose in summer. The groom also is flanked by his "waiter" in the person of—would you believe it?—his brother David!

"I don't keer to go out of the family for any help," he said, when twitted on account of his choice of best man. "Th' ain't no man livin' that knows how to wait on me better'n our David; and th' ain't no other man livin' that I'd resk to stand up with me when I'm sure to be so tarnal skeered and likely to forgit what I ought to say."

And David had long demurred chiefly on account of his great bashfulness in the presence of women. "I'll do it for thee, Jonathan," he said, finally consenting, "'cause I don't so awfully mind it to walk alongside of Cousin Sally, anyhow. Everybody knows that her and me's kinder half-way kin, and I guess they won't be a thinkin' that we are gettin' sweet on one another. Yes, I'll stand up with thee, Jonathan, if it skeers all my toenails clean out'n my boots."

How very stiff and uncomfortable they are, sitting there on the facin' bench and waiting for the hour of doom! Jonathan is resplendent in a broad-brimmed beaver hat, of the natural color, and David looks scarcely less becoming under his last year's homemade straw, now newly pressed and bleached for the occasion. The hands of both are sadly in the way, and their feet, so large and cumbersome, give them much additional concern. The day being warm, they have worn their coats under protest; and their red cotton bandannas are frequently drawn from their hat crowns in order to mop the sweat from their troubled brows. What a fearful experience it must be, and how abashed they must feel, sitting there in the women's end of the meetin', with Esther Lamb and Cousin Sally so close beside them, and women all around!

And Esther and Sally are as unconcerned as though nothing were going to happen. How handsome are their neatly fitting gowns, innocent of all flounces and furbelows; and how becoming are their new little bonnets of light brown silk half concealing their blushful cheeks! From my accustomed seat I can gaze at them undisturbed. If I were older by twenty years and should I be choosing a wife, I don't know which one of the two I would take—Ah! I wouldn't give a snap for either; for there, just beyond the partition, I see a third face which makes my heart thump loudly and my whole being quiver with joy. It is the face of my Angel, grown a little older, a little more sedate, but none the less beautiful.

A half-hour passes in awful silence. I try my best to be good and to meditate on the good place and the best method of getting there—as mother has often told me to do. Nevertheless, in spite of all my efforts, my eyes and my thoughts will wander to the women's end of the meetin'—to the occupants of the facin' bench, but most often to the angelic creature who is but partially visible by reason of the plainly dressed maids and matrons who block the women's aisle and obscure the view. The spirit is quiescent today, for it moves no one to

speak—no, not even Joel Sparker or Margot Duberry. The elders, male and female, sit in their respective galleries, absorbed in contemplation, oblivious of the things of time and sense, waiting for the divine fire. But among the undevout, on the back benches of the two apartments, symptoms of impatience are beginning to be manifested. The silence is being interrupted by the shuffling of feet, the rustle of garments; even the whispering of ill-mannered boys and the giggling of scatter-pated girls. And yet the elders heed none of these tokens of unrest.

The minutes drag by on leaden wings. The suspense becomes unbearable, the silence becomes a mockery. Even I, Robert Dudley, am becoming infected with the general nervousness, the growing feeling of impatience and hilarity. I look to see if my Angel is among the undevout disturbers of the peace, and she has disappeared. I fidget in my seat. Is it possible that we must remain quiet through the whole of another half-hour?

I see father slyly nudging Levi T. with his elbow. The sun has reached the noon mark on the window-jamb just before their eyes. The period of silent waiting is at last ended. Levi T., in his capacity as assistant head of the meeting, rises, slowly and with becoming dignity. From his lofty place in the top gallery he surveys the impatient assemblage before him; then, as a profound silence ensues, he makes his official announcement:

"I think that, if the minds of all seem clear, the time has about arrived for the marriage of our young friends to be duly and properly performed."

As he resumes his seat there is a hum of mingled satisfaction and anticipation. The elders, awakened from their meditations, raise their heads and look beneficently happy. There is a general craning forward of necks, a manifestation of the intensest interest. Some of the boys stand up on the benches, thus obstructing the view of the more mannerly

people behind them. The young mothers on the other side of the partition lift their babies very high in their arms, perhaps to enable them to see the marryin', perhaps to encourage the faltering souls who are about to embark on the perilous voyage of matrimony.

Another minute elapses. The bustling little clerk of the men's meetin' hurries down the aisle with a roll of parchment in his hand. He takes a position in full view of the occupants of the facin' bench; he raises the hand with the parchment roll a very little—a very little, but the signal is seen and understood by those for whom it is intended. Our Jonathan and his Esther join hands and, with their respective waiters, rise solemnly in the presence of the meetin'. There is an awesome hush as the four stand up in a stiff row with the facin' bench behind them. The eyes of groom and bride are directed vacantly forward, their faces flush quickly and then turn pale, their hearts are in a tumult. The supreme moment has arrived;

The clerk raises the parchment roll again—a very little, but how tremendous the event that it signals! Our Jonathan, holding the plump little hand of Esther in his long lank palm, speaks up in strong but tremulous tones, repeating the formula prescribed by the Discipline:

"Friends, in the presence of the Lord and here before you all, I take this my friend, Esther Lamb, to be my wife, promising with divine assistance to be unto her a loving and faithful husband until death shall separate us."

It is observed by those who sit nearest that he gives Esther's hand an assuring squeeze, perhaps as a mere signal that her time has come, perhaps to emphasize the meaning of his words in a special manner. She raises her expressive eyes and looks squarely at the audience and at her grim old grandfather who sits facing her on this side of the partition. Then, in a low clear voice, which not half the people can hear, she repeats the similar formula:

"Friends, in the presence of the Lord and here before you all, I take this my friend, Jonathan Dudley, to be my husband, promising with divine assistance to be unto him a loving and faithful wife until death shall separate us."

This is all. The two have proclaimed their vows and they are now man and wife. No priest has mumbled his meaningless prayers in their presence; no magistrate has read to them the questions prescribed by the state; there has been no formal presentation of the wedding ring; the bride, poor thing, has not been given away by her nearest relative—and yet they henceforth, "until death shall separate them," belong irrevocably to each other. They, with their waiters, resume their seats on the facin' bench, and the ceremony of declaring and attesting follows.

The clerk of the men's meeting is having the greatest day of his life. He comes forward briskly, carrying his little official desk, which he places in the aisle quite near the newly married. Then standing up behind it, he unrolls the precious parchment, which he has all along held in his hand. It is the marriage certificate of Jonathan Dudley and Esther Dudley, his wife. He proceeds to read it aloud to the assembled audience, and his tones are so clear and distinct that the loafers who are whittling around the door of the post-office, a hundred yards away, hear every word of it. It is a long and wonderful document, bristling with "saids" and "aforesaids" and "wherefores" and "therefores," and giving a full history of the marriage from the "givin' in" to its culmination at the conclusion of today's meeting for worship. As the little man finishes the reading and lays the unrolled, unfolded certificate down flat on his desk (with the inkstand upon it to keep it in place), he looks around at his audience with an air of triumph and superiority. It is hard to say which of the two men is to be most envied, the self-important little clerk or the trembling bridegroom upon the facin' bench.

But hark! The little man raises his hand, he is about to

speak. Let everybody listen.

"Friends," he says, "this certificate of marriage is now ready for the signatures of witnesses. Members of the two families and special friends of the two young people, who may desire to subscribe their names to the document, may come forward and do so."

He pushes his little desk a trifle nearer to the vacant end of the facin' bench, he dips his best goose-quill pen into the ink, and with a genteel flourish of his left hand, stands waiting to serve the signing witnesses as they come. Custom and good manners have decreed that the waiters shall have the precedence in this last act of the little drama, and therefore Cousin Sally is the first to affix her name to the immortal document. Her signature is as round and plump as herself, but she would have written it a little better if the ink had been pokeberry juice instead of the plain black liquid that it is. Then David with supreme awkwardness attempts to wield the stubborn pen. He has been practising on his name for the last two weeks, but when at length the difficult feat is accomplished he leaves at the bottom of the certificate only an indistinguishable scrawl that looks like the trail of a thousand-legged worm through a sea of darkness.

Other friends and relatives now come forward, and the signing proceeds briskly and without interruption. Meanwhile, there is a general movement and more or less disorder among the spectators on the back benches. Many of them, realizing that the entertainment is at an end, are withdrawing from the house, before the meeting is formally "broke" by the shaking of hands. Others have left their seats and are crowding forward in the aisles to get a closer view of the newly married. The minutes glide by with accelerated speed; the excitement is at high tide. Then the little clerk, with dripping pen in hand, makes his final announcement:

"There is still room for three more names as witnesses to this certificate. If there are any other near friends or relatives

who would like to sign, now is the time for them to come forward."

There is a slight stir on the other side of the partition near the spot where I saw my Angel a little while ago. A well-dressed woman has risen and is going forward to sign her name. I recognize her as the stately lady who was so kind to me that day when I was in Dashville and in Paradise. And Edith is with her! She is going down the aisle toward the facin' bench; she is actually taking her seat beside the clerk's desk! She is truly writing her blessed name at the bottom of that parchment roll—writing it with those of the other witnesses to the marriage. She has surely grown taller since that day in her father's library, she looks more womanly but every bit as angelic, she is the same merry Edith—but with additions and improvements.

She rises from the desk after writing her signature, she turns her face for one moment toward the spot where I am sitting. I fancy that there is a look of recognition in her eyes; but the next moment she has turned away and is lost to sight among the women who are now crowding down into the aisle.

A sudden impulse comes upon me to write my name underneath hers on that certificate of Jonathan's. I slip off my bench and make a brief movement toward the aisle; but my timidity restrains and prevents me. Every eye in that vast company seems to be looking directly at me; and I shrink back, trembling and abashed.

"It's too late now, Bobby," whispers Ikey Bright, gently punching me with his big fist. "Meetin's broke."

I look up at the top gallery, and see father and the elders shaking hands. The married couple with their waiters have risen and are pushing their way down the women's aisle, briefly responding to congratulations as they pass. The little clerk has folded the marriage certificate very accurately and neatly, and is tying a bit of red tape around the parchment, preparatory to delivering it to the proper authorities for

record. Yes, "meetin' is broke," and nothing remains to be done but to glide bashfully out-of-doors and prepare to ride with father and mother to the weddin' dinner at Old Enoch's.

The marryin' in meetin' is at last accomplished.

IV. The Infare

And what of the wedding dinner? I have father's word for it that it surpassed his expectations; but beyond that, the less said of it the better.

"Well, Lochinvar," inquired the twin teachers, "how does thee like getting spliced according to Discipline?"

"I like it right smart," he answered. "I like it so well that I don't never aim to git spliced ag'in as long as I live."

And Esther remarked that she felt much the same way.

"It was turble tryin' to have the business a-hangin' fire so long," added Jonathan; "but I reckon the long cut was right smart better nor the short one might 'a' been, after all."

"That's so," she smilingly agreed.

Jonathan's infare, which occurred the following day, was an event long to be remembered; for it celebrated not only his home-coming after the wedding but also the completion and full occupancy of our grand new house. It marked also, in a certain sense, the end of the era of innocence in our Settlement and the inevitable triumph of social progress and worldly ambitions.

The dinner on that occasion was an affair worthy to be talked about by generations yet unborn. It had been prepared under the supervision of our Cousin Sally, and while it was no better than might have been expected, it evened up the festal matters most wonderfully, leaving a large balance on our side of the account.

There were many guests present from near and far, and among them were our friends, the Wilsons and the Merediths, from Dashville. That it was possible for so celestial a being as

merry Edith Meredith to become a visitor in our own home surpassed all my wildest flights of fancy. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw her alight from her grandmother's carriage and, under mother's pilotage, enter our respectable but unworthy dwelling. And when, in response to my timid, awkward greeting, she held out her hand and, smiling sweetly, said "Good morning, Robert!" my soul was lifted into Paradise. From that hour and moment, our front door was a hallowed place at which I always paused to repeat a little prayer; and never afterward, so long as that home was ours, did I cross the threshold (which her dear feet had pressed) without first pronouncing her name.

The day was glorious and all nature seemed rejoicing. The cherry trees were white with blossoms, the…

[Note.—These are believed to be the last words ever penned by the hand of Robert Dudley. The sheet on which they were written, with the ink not yet dry, was found on his desk beneath his nerveless arm, when the housekeeper, coming in and, thinking him asleep, attempted gently to rouse him. What were his intentions regarding the continuation of his narrative, it is impossible to say; but there are reasons for believing that he did not contemplate carrying it beyond the story of his boyhood. Among his miscellaneous writings, however, a number of random sketches and brief notes, throwing light on different periods of his life, have been discovered—some scribbled on little scraps of paper and some jotted down in a vest-pocket memorandum. Among these are the three little fragments included in the following chapter, which, if properly interpreted, will go far toward bridging the chasm between childhood and age, and completing the story of a long and not uneventful life.

— Editor.]

CHAPTER XXXIV
Fragments

I. Anniversaries

The day being near its close and the lamps not yet lighted, I had wheeled her into the library. She lay quietly back in her invalid's chair, looking up alternately at the rows of books which we both loved so much and at the face of the one who was bending over her.

"My merry Edith, do you know what day tomorrow will be?" I asked.

She was silent a little while, trying to recall her scattered memories; then she answered:

"I don't remember, Robert. It is hard to keep the days in mind, but I think it will be Thursday? Won't it?"

I saw that she did not understand, and I explained that tomorrow would be an anniversary of something. Did she know what it was?

She shook her head and sighed. She could not quite remember.

"It was just sixty years ago," I said, thinking to help her by suggestion.

"Just sixty years ago? And what was it that happened then?" And in those once glorious brown eyes—now none the less glorious to me—there was a faraway look that told me her mind was traveling slowly back to that distant time which I wished to recall.

"Dear, merry Edith, do you remember the day that you surprised a bashful, barefooted, little boy in your father's

library?"

"And we stood by the table and looked at pictures together?" Thank God! she was remembering. "The little boy was you, Robert; and I taught you to use the unplain language, didn't I? Oh, but you were so timid and so awkward. And how careful you were with your bare feet!" And she laughed that same little rippling, merry laugh that had overjoyed my heart so long ago, so long ago.

Her face brightened as I toyed with the thin gray locks, as dear to me now as were the golden brown curls that so thrillingly brushed my cheeks on that eventful morning, so long ago.

I saw that the mists were lifting and that the memories of the past were again making blessed sunshine in her heart, and I said, "Yes, merry Edith, I was shy and green; but that was my first day in paradise, and tomorrow it will be just sixty years—so long ago!"

Her mind was clear and strong now, for a brief space, and together we recalled the childish prattle and the innocent joys that were ours on that never-to-be-forgotten day. "I think it was only yesterday," she said, "and yet you and I have spent many, many days in paradise together since that first October morning—so long ago."

"True," I answered, "there have indeed been many such days; and I now have in mind the one that was the grandest and the loveliest of them all. It was an old-fashioned Sunday in the country, and we two went walking together through the orchard and underneath the apple trees where the autumn leaves rustled about our feet. The air was mild and calm, and the haze of Indian summer obscured the sun. The world seemed so peaceful and so good a place to live in; and we were so young and hopeful. Do you remember that day, my Edith—so long ago?"

"How can I ever forget it? It was the day—the day of our betrothal. It was not long ago."

"And yet just half a century has gone by since then, and tomorrow will be a double anniversary."

The youthful look of my Angel of the Facin' Bench came back into her eyes, and her countenance glowed with sweetness as she exclaimed, "What is half a century? What is half a century to us, Robert—to us who have known each other so long, and have had so many anniversaries? It is as but a single day: The morning dawns, the noonday heightens, the evening falls, the night brings darkness and rest—but it is neither the beginning nor the end. And so I think it was only this morning—this blessed morning—that we walked together beneath the orchard trees."

She was not used to speaking so much, and she lay back in her chair silent for a while, exhausted by the unwonted effort. Then she added: "But now the night is near, and darkness."

I held one poor, helpless little hand in my own, while with the other she lovingly stroked my cheek. "Dear, merry Edith," I said, "let us take courage and be comforted. For, when the clouds pass that are now obscuring our sky, and when the darkness and the silence give way to another morning, we shall again in innocence bend our faces over the same picture books, and we shall again walk, arm in arm, under the blessed fruitful trees, our youth renewed and glorified."

The light of day was fading fast. The night was close at hand. We spoke not another audible word, but we knew each other's thoughts—our souls were as one.

The light continued to fade; darkness fell and silence ensued; and still we sat there, sorrowing, believing, trusting, rejoicing.

Tomorrow comes, a new day will dawn.

II. An Old Friend

I had a visitor yesterday.

The afternoon was warm, the air was bracing and I was strolling along a woodland pathway, far from the resorts of men. I walked slowly, enjoying for the first time in many years a full and sweet communion with nature. On my right, a wood thrush was calling; on my left, a gray squirrel (descendant perhaps of my Esau) was noisily scolding; young rabbits and chipmunks raced in the path before me. I fancied that, as in the days of my childhood, I could see the dryads and the wood nymphs peeping out from their secret bowers and smiling sweet recognition as I passed.

Suddenly, as I was entering a more open space among the trees, I felt a soft arm clasped around my neck, while a little hand was laid gently over my eyes.

"Guess who it is," said a sweet voice which I could not mistake.

"O Inviz! It is you!" I cried, submitting myself to his loving embrace. More than fifty years had passed since I last heard that voice, and yet I recognized it at once and it was music to my sorrowing soul.

"Yes, it is I, and I have come to walk with you, just as I used to do," he answered.

His touch was as tender, his step was as light, his breath on my cheek was as soft as in those days of yore which now exist only as pleasant memories.

"O Inviz, I am so glad!" and I was again the barefoot little Towhead driving home the cows, while he was my welcome companion.

"And I am glad, too," he chirped joyously, as he tripped along beside me. "This seems just like old times; doesn't it?"

"Indeed, indeed it does," and tears of happiness filled my eyes. "But tell me, Inviz, where have you been through all these many, many years?"

"Oh, I have been in various places and I have had numerous playmates since I bade you good-by that day just before they pulled the old log cabin down. A certain small boy

is waiting for me now, over there on the other side of this woodland, and I must go to him soon."

"And do you lie down on the big hearth beside him, and look into the blazing fire, and dream dreams, just as you used to do with me?" I asked.

His arm trembled a little, and I fancied that I felt a tear fall upon my hand as he answered, "No, Robert, people don't live beside big hearths and blazing wood fires nowadays—except in a kind of make-believe senseless fashion; and when children are brought up on penny banks and toy automobiles, what can you expect? With most of them 'the hour of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower' is of short duration, and that being ended, what further use can they have for me?"

We walked on silently for a little while, and then, coming to a shady place where the grass was green and soft, we lay down, side by side, and, as in other days, amused ourselves by watching the summer clouds float lazily across the infinite sky. And there we remained through the greater part of that summer afternoon, recalling sweet memories of the days of innocence in the New Settlement and of the loved ones long departed.

"Robert, do you remember how we used to romp and wrestle under the old cherry trees?" at length asked Inviz.

"Oh, yes! and it was grand fun," I answered.

"Suppose we have a little tussle of the same sort right now," he said, rising and bantering me just as he used to do. "Come! I can beat you in a fair race to that old oak over there. Come, I dare you to run!"

I was on my feet in a moment, though not so quickly as I wished, and we were off like a flash. I strained every muscle, my breath came hard and quick, my heart thumped wildly—but in spite of all my efforts, Inviz outran me, two to one, and while I was yet toiling midway in the course, he reached the goal, and looking back laughed joyously but not tauntingly at

my discomfiture.

"My legs are not what they used to be," I said, sitting down in despair. "I am afraid I am getting old."

"No, not you, Robert!" exclaimed my jolly companion, coming up and again putting his arm around me. "You, yourself, can never grow old—you are not made that way. But your legs, being only temporary affairs, may sometimes become wabbly through lack of nutrition. Your body, being a kind of machine and also chemical laboratory, will necessarily wear out, by and by, and become useless."

"And then, what?" I asked.

"Then, when the right time comes, you shall be given another," he whispered very softly.

I lay quite still, thinking he would say more. Presently, I felt his arm withdrawn, and I missed the cheer of his warm breath upon my cheek.

"O Inviz, Inviz!" I cried. "Don't leave me. Stay with me till the end."

"It cannot be," he answered, with not a touch of sadness. "The end is not yet, nor shall it ever be. In the new life that shall ere long be yours, I will again be your friend and playmate; we shall ramble side by side in sunny places, and we shall read the same books and dream the same dreams. But until then, farewell!"

I felt his kiss on my brow, but when I reached out to touch him, he was gone.

I lay there quietly in the grass, my face upturned, my arms folded helplessly across my breast. I knew nothing more until, the sun having set and night drawing near, I was roused by someone rudely shaking me and a rough voice shouting in my ear:

"Hello, there, old codger! Wake up! It's time you was gittin' toward home."

Old codger, indeed!

III. A Vision

Last summer, in my loneliness I made a brief flying visit to that part of the Wabash Country once known as the New Settlement, but now called by quite another and more high-sounding name. Oh, my heart! how changed was everything! I looked in vain for the old familiar landmarks, for the face of someone whom I might remember as friend and neighbor. All had disappeared, and most had been forgotten.

That blessed spot which, in my innocence, I had fondly believed to be the center of the world, was scarcely recognizable. The roads and lanes were not in their former places but had been straightened and improved. The hills, where were they? The worm fences of ponderous rails had been removed or replaced by lines of barbed—yes, barbarous—wire. The buildings—even that grand new house, the triumph of father's architectural skill—had been obliterated. In their places I beheld a stately farmhouse of brick and stone, a modern barn of vast extent, a silo and a garage (things unknown and undreamed of in my day), and outhouses of many shapes and for many uses.

The spring-house was no more, and not a trace remained of the spring branch with its pellucid water and its forests of waving cattails. I looked for the cherry trees under which I had so often romped with Inviz or spent the summer hours in conning the pages of some loved book, and I found only a smooth grassless quadrangle with a net stretched through the middle, which they told me was a tennis-court. I gazed southward where once were deadenings and the big woods and the bottom, dotted with white-trunked sycamores; all were gone, and in their stead was nothing but one vast field of growing corn. Following a strange pathway, I went down through this field to see the "crick" where I had so often waded and fished for tiny shiners; and what do you suppose I found? Only a straight, muddy, ill-smelling ditch, with hardly

a pretense of water at the bottom. Even the old swimmin' hole had been filled in and its place was known no more. Ah! how wonderful is progress!

The great man, the possessor of the old home place and of ten times as much land as my father ever dreamed of owning, was very kind to me—very condescending in his evident pity of my ignorance and great antiquity. His name was Dobson, and I learned that his grand-father had been Jacob Dobson—the same Jake with whom I had done some disastrous swapping sixty years before. He carried me in his automobile to the spot which I had once known as Dry Forks. It was Dry Forks no longer, but a young and growing city known by a very different name, and its chief asset was natural gas.

"We have now a population of five thousand and we confidently expect it to reach fifty thousand within the next decade," said the pompous postmaster.

But where was the meetin'-house once the center of social activities and of religious culture?

In its place I was shown a fine modern structure with stained-glass windows and a little steeple pointing toward the sky.

"We don't call it a meetin'-house any more," said my friend the landholder. "We call it a church, and there ain't any building of the kind anywhere in this part of the state that can come up to it in genuine comfort and style."

It was Sunday morning. The door was open, and I was told that "services" were going on inside. We paused within the little vestibule, and I looked in. The single large assembly-room was handsomely decorated. There were no "shetters" to separate the sexes, no backless benches (not even a facin' bench), no galleries for the ministers and elders. But there were soft-cushioned pews, all facing the same way, wherein men and women sat together and were not at all ashamed; and beyond these there was an elegant little pulpit with a gilt-edged Bible reposing on it. Behind this pulpit, there was a

pretty little sofa on which a sleek-haired minister was reposing his weary limbs; and on the right-hand side of it (oh, ye shades of John Woolman and Joel Sparker!) stood a modest cabinet organ on which a young lady in fashionable attire was attuning a hymn.

"Do you have music in your meetings?" I whispered to my friend.

"Oh, certainly! We have the best that's goin'. That organ cost five hundred and forty dollars, and it's a good one. Sometimes we have a cornetist to come and play at the evening services—and that's just bully to draw a crowd."

"But I suppose that you occasionally have silent meetings, to wait for the moving of the spirit, and to meditate concerning the good place, just as we used to have when I was a boy?"

"Well, not gener'lly. We have a reg'lar progrum, and go through it without stopping. The minister, he conducts the service, and there ain't much time for silence."

"Do your young people ever get married in meeting?"

"They used to, but they've mostly quit it nowadays. They say it's a leetle mite too slow; and so the minister, he does the business privately at his home or at the bride's residence."

I looked at the congregation. Some of the men wore cutaway coats, but I sought in vain for a single plain garment of the collarless, shadbelly variety such as father and all good members of Our Society used to wear. The only broad-brimmed hats that I saw were those worn by the ladies. Far over in one of the free pews, however, I recognized a single plain bonnet of dove-colored silk—modest and neat, a relic of ancient times. I felt strongly moved to go forward and shake hands with its wearer and say, "Howdy, mother. How is thee and thine?"

"I see that you have done away with plain clothes, the ancient and honorable insignia of Our Society," I said to my friend Dobson; "but certainly there are some who still adhere to the use of the plain language?"

"Plain language! Well, I don't know. What is it?"

"The use of the pronoun 'thee' instead of the singular pronoun 'you,' and generally the avoidance of all unnecessary expletives and compliments."

"Well, I recollect that my grandfather and some of the other old ones did used to say 'thee' and 'thy' and 'First-day,' and that sort of thing. But most everybody's got out of the way of talking so now. They don't see no use in sich language."

"It was the language of George Fox," I ventured.

"Well, maybe it was. Grandfather used to talk right smart about an old Enick Fox that owned part of my farm, a long while ago. He went out to Kansas, way back in war times—and I never seen him. Maybe it's him you are thinking of."

"Very likely," I answered.

The hymn was ended, the organ was hushed, and the minister rose to announce the next number of the "program." Leaving my friend and guide at the door, I went forward and sat down in a vacant pew which a kindly usher showed me. The minister was addressing his congregation, but I did not hear him. My mind was far away, busied with thoughts of other days, and I was soon oblivious to all that was going on around me.

Presently, however, I ventured to raise my head and look up. What do you suppose I saw?

There, directly in front of me, was the old comfortless gallery, with my father sitting at the head of the meeting, and the elders, including Joel Sparker and Levi T., ranged in order beside him. Very solemn and saintly they appeared, with their broad-brimmed beaver hats on their heads and their toil-worn hands crossed resignedly upon their knees. And there also was the women's gallery, with mother in her plain silk bonnet, sitting meekly and not altogether comfortably by the side of holy Margot Duberry. And just a little way below them was the women's facin' bench, and oh, joy! there was my Angel

just as I had seen her on that ever-blessed First-day morning, more than threescore years before. Her golden-brown curls were surmounted by that same wonderful hat with the big feather in it, and her dainty little feet, with real shoes and stockings on them, were dangling midway between the bench and the floor…. And then…as I looked…she turned her glorious eyes toward me…and beckoned…and smiled.

O my Leonidas, my Leona! There is nothing more to be said.

THE END