

THE NEW GRAFT.
By Pansy.



“What in the world are you going to do with all those tides.”—P. 7.

A NEW GRAFT ON THE
FAMILY TREE.

BY

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A NEW GRAFT ON THE FAMILY TREE:

CHAPTER I.

WILL IT BLOOM, OR WITHER?



WHAT in the world are you ever going to do with all those tidies?"

The speaker was a girl of sixteen; a fair, bright creature, with dancing eyes, and that alert expression which we find on the faces of those to whom the future is an interesting and exciting puzzle which they long to solve.

She was watching with curious interest the absorption of her sister, who knelt before a half-packed trunk, studying the disposal of packages, so as to solve that old problem, "How to get

twice as much into a trunk as it will reasonably hold."

She made no answer to the young questioner, having just taken up a closely written sheet of paper, the contents of which absorbed her attention. The question was repeated.

"Louise, what do you expect to do with all those tidies?"

Put them on chairs and sofas," with a far-away expression and dreamy tone, and eyes only for the paper before her.

The young girl laughed slightly, then her face grew sober.

"Louise," she said, hesitating as one who might be on doubtful ground, "has Lewis told you anything about his home and its surroundings?"

"Somewhat, dear." Still only half attending to the speaker.

"Well, Addie Dunlap says they live very plainly indeed. She visits the Wheelers, you know, in that vicinity, and she was at their house on two different occasions. She says it is quite isolated from neighbors, and is a regular country farm-house."

This brought a laugh.

“What would you have a country farm-house but a *country farm-house*?”

“Oh, well, Louise, you know what I mean.”

If she did she kept the knowledge in silence, and her young sister, after regarding her with a curious look for a moment, drew a heavy sigh.

“It doesn’t seem to me that *you* belong to country farm-houses,” she said, boldly, “with your education and talents. What will you do with them buried among commonplace — hills?” She had nearly said *people*, but checked herself. “Why should Lewis hide himself in that out-of-the-way place?”

“Well, dear, you know it is a question of health with him. Nearly all his plans in life had to be changed to meet the demands of a failing body. Farm life agrees with him.”

“I don’t believe it will with *you*. I don’t like to think of you away off there, miles away from anything to which you are accustomed. Louise, honestly, aren’t you afraid you will be home-sick?”

Thus solemnly questioned, Louise dropped her engrossing paper, and, turning from the trunk,

gave the questioner the full benefit of her laughing eyes.

“ My dear little grandmother, have you gone and gotten yourself into a fever of anxiety over your young and giddy sister? I’m not a bit afraid of a farm-house. As for homesickness, of course I shall have that disease. What sort of a heart would it be that could leave such a home as mine without longing for it, and the dear faces that belong to it, sometimes many times a day? But, having looked at the matter fairly, it seems to be the right thing to do. And my troubled little sister, you want to fully realize this. I am not going ‘away off there’ alone, but with Lewis Morgan; and if I did not love him enough to be absolutely certain that I could go to the ends of the earth with him as well as not, if it should seem best to do so, I assuredly ought not to marry him.”

“ And leave papa and mamma ! ”

It was impossible not to laugh at the startled, tragic tone in which these words were spoken, as the elder sister repeated them.

“ And leave papa and mamma! And also, which is a very important matter, leave my dear

little troubled sister Estelle. Positively, dear, though it has its sad side, of course, it does not seem too much of a sacrifice for me to make in order to be with Lewis. If it did, I should think myself unworthy of him."

"How strange!" said the younger sister, though she was wise enough this time to say it to herself. "I'm sure I don't see how she can do it. Besides papa and mamma, there is our beautiful home, and all the girls, and the lectures, and the circles, and — oh, well, *everything*. According to Addie Dunlap she will just be buried alive, surrounded by snow in winter and haying and harvesting in summer. What is there in Lewis Morgan that should make her want to go? I wouldn't like to go anywhere with him. He is nice enough; he is very nice indeed, for that matter. I like him as well, if not better, than any of the young men who call on us. But liking a man and enjoying a half hour's talk with him, and going to a lecture or concert with him, is one thing, and going away from one's father and mother to spend a lifetime with him, is another."

The conclusion of her soliloquy was that she

said aloud, in tones more dismayed than before :

“ I don't understand it at all ! I *never* could go away with Lewis Morgan, and leave papa and mamma and everybody ! ”

Whereupon the bride-elect leaned over her open trunk and laughed immoderately. Her young sister's perplexity seemed *so* funny to her.

“ Of course you couldn't, you dear child,” she said, when she could speak. “ You are not expected to want to go away from papa and mamma and live with Lewis Morgan, though I am sure I hope you will come and live with us half the time. Farm-houses are very nice places in which to spend summer, Estelle. But you mustn't wear a woe-begone face over me, and think of me as making a sacrifice. If you ever give your heart to a good, true man, you will be entirely willing to go away with him, and until you are you must never think of taking marriage vows. Meantime, dear, of course you don't understand it ; you are much too young. I hope it will be many a year before the thing will seem possible to you.”

“ It will *never* seem possible,” Estelle said

stoutly. "If I have got to love any man enough to be willing to go away from papa and mamma before I can be married, I shall have to be an old maid; for that is all nonsense. I know no man on earth could tempt me to do it."

"Very well," said the bride in much composure, "I am glad you think so; it is the best way to feel; to be sure people change their minds sometimes; but at your age it is much the nicest thing to think. Meantime, dear, don't you worry about those tidies. I shall find places for them, where they will set the nice old-fashioned rooms aglow with their beauty. I am glad I have so many. Now, do you suppose that ebony box would fit in this niche? I would like to have it here, because we shall keep this trunk with us all the time."

"She hasn't the least idea how farm-houses look, especially that one. I wonder if she has the slightest notion how her future brother-in-law looks? Lewis Morgan indeed! I wish he had *staid* in Australia!" And with another long-drawn sigh the troubled young sister went in search of the ebony box.

This was not the first time that Louise Barrows, the bride-elect, had been called upon to vindicate the comforts of her future home. Her father had demurred and hesitated, and argued the question with his prospective son-in-law, and the mother had shed some tears in secret over the thought that the daughter of whom she was so proud had chosen so obscure and prosaic a future.

“Think of her getting up at four o’clock in the morning to look after the butter and milk, and get breakfast for the workmen!” she had said to her husband in their confidential talks, and he had answered:

“There are worse lots in life than that, I suppose.”

But he had sighed as heavily as the young daughter always did when she thought about it, and he had wished from his inmost heart that things had shaped differently. Still he essayed to comfort his wife.

“He is Louise’s own choice, and he is a good Christian man, with strong, solid principles. It might have been much worse.”

“Oh, yes,” the mother assented; “he is a

Christian man," and the tone in which she said it might almost have justified you in expecting her to add: "But *that* doesn't amount to much." What she did say was: "But what can Louise do for herself or others, buried alive out there? She is eminently calculated for usefulness. You know as well as I that she would grace any circle, and that she is a leader among her set; she leads in the right direction, too, which is more than can be said of most girls; but what chance will she have to develop her talents?"

"That is true," the father said, and then he sighed again. Yet these Christian parents had prayed for their daughter every day since she was born, and professed assured confidence in the belief that God guides his children, and answers prayer. Still their faith did not reach high enough to get away from a lurking belief that the Guide of their daughter's life had made a mistake in setting her future among such surroundings. Not that they put the thought into such words — that would have been irreverent; but what did their sighings and regrettings mean?

It was rather hard on the prospective bride,

even though her parents were wise enough to say almost nothing about their regrets, now that the question was settled. But she felt it in the atmosphere. Besides, she had to encounter a like anxiety from another source. It was only the evening before Estelle's cross-questioning occurred that Lewis Morgan himself, getting up from one of the luxurious easy-chairs which repeated in varying patterns, abounded in Mr. Barrow's parlors, crossed over to the mantel, and, resting his elbow on its edge and his forehead on his hand, looked down from his fine height on Louise as she nestled in a brown-tinted plush chair that harmonized perfectly with her soft, rich dress, and contrasted perfectly with her delicate skin, and made to the gazer a lovely picture, which seemed but to heighten his perplexity.

"After all, Louise," he said, "I don't know but we made a mistake in planning as we did. Someway, out in Australia, where *my* planning was done, the contrast between your present home and our future one was not so sharply defined before me as it is here."

"Shut your eyes, then," said Louise, "and

imagine yourself back in Australia, when you have any planning to do. That is quite as near as I want you to get to that barbarous country again."

Lewis Morgan laughed, and then, immediately, his brow clouded.

"But, Louise, there is a fitness in things, and you fit right in here. Everything matches with you." And his eyes gave a swift journey up and down the room, taking in its soft and harmonizing furnishings, the richness and glow of the carpet, the delicacy and grace of the lace curtains, the air of ease and elegance in the disposal of the elegant furniture, the rare paintings looking down on him from the walls, glowing in the gas-light, then back to the small, graceful figure in the brown chair.

"Louise, you are entirely unfamiliar, you know, with country life, and I don't believe I can give you the least idea of the sharp and trying contrasts."

"Then, don't try. Wait, and let me see them for myself."

"Yes, but — what if we wait until it is too late to rectify mistakes? Though, for that mat

ter, we *can* change, of course, should the thing prove unbearable. But I am really afraid it is a mistake. I seem to feel it more to-night than ever before."

"Lewis," said the little brown figure, "do you really think I am a bird of bright plumage, that must have a gilded cage and downy nest, and nothing else?"

He looked down on her with unutterable admiration in his eyes.

"Oh, you know very well," he said, half smiling, "that I think you are everything that any mortal woman can be - possibly, a little more. But—well, it is not only the house and surroundings, though they are rude and plain enough. I am afraid that you and my mother will not understand each other. She is old-fashioned and peculiar; she is a good mother, and I love and respect her; but, Louise, she is not in the least like yours, and I am not sure that she will have an idea in common with you."

"Yes she will. We shall both bestow an undue amount of admiration on, and take an absurd degree of comfort in your tall self."

He laughed again, and then shook his head.

“I doubt whether, even there, you will not be disappointed. My mother has a strong, warm love for her family ; but she does not show it in the way to which you have been accustomed. She is reserved, pent up. She will sit up with my little sister Neelie six nights in succession ; but she never caresses and kisses her as your mother does Lora.”

“Never mind,” said Louise ; “it is not natural for some people to kiss and caress. The sitting up is the most important matter after all, especially when one is sick ; though I will own that I am sorry for poor Neelie, without the kisses. Perhaps we can work together ; your mother will do the patient caring for, and I will do the kissing. How will that work ?”

“I see you are bent on making everything shine with the brightness of your own spirit. But, really and truly, I am afraid I have been dreaming a wild dream in supposing that I could transplant you to such a rough atmosphere. It was ridiculous in my father to put in the proviso that we must live at home. I ought to have resisted it. Because I must spend my days out of doors, travelling over a farm, is no reason why

we shouldn't have a home of our own. I think my father is abundantly able to give me a separate start, if he only saw the matter in that light."

"But since he doesn't, we must, like dutiful children, try to see it in his light, until such time as we can win him over to our notions, or become full converts to his. I know all about it, Lewis. I don't expect to walk in a garden of roses all the time. I know, too, that to go into farm life is a trial to you. All your plans were in another channel. Yet I am more than glad to give up all those rose-colored plans for the sake of seeing you look at this moment as strong and well as your summer on a farm has made you. I fully intend to be happy on that farm. I shall have to make a confession to you. Papa talked seriously to me about trying to rent a farm and stock it for us, and do you know I controverted it?"

"I should think so," said Lewis Morgan, hastily. "He ought not to spare the money from his business. And, besides, it would be unjust, as he is situated."

"Well, I didn't enter into that part of it. I

simply said that I thought duty to your father obliged you to yield to his very decided wishes in this matter, and that you and I were both resolved on a thorough trial of it. And, really, I don't apprehend any dreadful consequences. I want to try the experiment of living with my mother-in-law and having a thoroughly good time in doing it. And, Lewis, there is one subject on which we surely can agree. You forget the most important one of all."

He shook his head, and his voice was low and sad.

"No, I don't, Louise. You are mistaken; not one of the family, save myself, is a Christian."

The first shadow that he had seen on his bride's face, when this subject was being discussed, flitted across it now. At last he had startled her.

CHAPTER II.

THE TREE.



SPEAKING to your Father in heaven to witness your sincerity, you, Lewis, do now take this woman whose hand you hold, choosing her alone from all the world, to be your lawfully wedded wife? You trust her as your best earthly friend; you promise to love cherish and protect her; to be considerate of her happiness in your plans of life; to cultivate for her sake all manly virtues, and in all things to seek her welfare as you seek your own? You pledge yourself thus honorably to be her husband in good faith, so long as God in his providence shall spare you to each other?"

"In like manner, looking to your heavenly Father for his blessing, you, Louise, do now re-

ceive this man, whose hand you hold, to be your lawfully wedded husband? You choose him from all the world, as he has chosen you; you pledge your trust to him as your best earthly friend; you promise to love, to comfort and to honor him; to cultivate for his sake all womanly graces; to guard his reputation and to assist him in his life-work, and in all things to esteem his happiness as your own? You give yourself thus trustfully to him to be his wife in good faith so long as the providence of God shall spare you to each other?"

The old story, repeated so many hundred times since the world was new, and yet so new a story to each one who becomes an actor in it that it quickens the pulses and pales the cheek.

Estelle Barrows, alert, eager, keen-eared, listened with flushing cheeks and quickened breathing to the interchange of solemn vows, and shivered over the closeness of the promises, and marvelled at the clear steadiness of her sister's voice as she answered, "*I do.*" The same skeptical spirit was in Estelle that had governed her during her talk with her sister. She could not yet see how such things were possible. It

was all very well for Lewis to promise to trust Louise as his "best earthly friend—" of course she was; to promise to love, cherish and protect her; it was the least he could do after she had given up so much for him. "To be considerate for her in his plans for life." Estelle almost thought that he ought to have hesitated over that promise. *Had* he been considerate? Did he think that home in the far-away farm-house would be conducive to her happiness? Still he doubtless meant his best, and it was right enough for him to ring out his "I do" in a strong manly voice. But for Louise, how *could* she say *he* was her best earthly friend, with papa looking down on her from his manly height and mamma struggling to hold back the tears? How could she promise to assist him in his life work? Suppose his entire life had to be spent on that hateful farm, must Louise bury herself there and assist him? How would she do it? Would he expect her, sometime, to even milk the cows! She had heard that farmers' wives did these things. Or could she be expected to churn the butter, or work it, or mold it ready for market, and then to drive into town on a market-wagon

and barter her rolls of butter for woolen yarn to knit him some socks? She had stood with a sort of terrified fascination at one of the busy corners of the city, only the day before, and watched a market-woman clamber down from her height and take a pail of butter on one arm and a basket of eggs on the other, and tramp into the store. She had told it to Louise afterward, and *she* had laughed merrily over the discomforted face, and had asked if the woman did not look rosy-cheeked and happy.

All these and a hundred other commingling and disturbing thoughts floated through Estelle's brain as she watched the quiet face of her sister during the ordeal of marriage. Even after the hopelessly binding words, "I pronounce you husband and wife," had been spoken, she still stood, gazing and wondering. She could never, never do it. Marriage was nice enough in the abstract, and she liked to go to weddings, at least she had always liked to before this one. But to single out one man and make him the center of all these solemn and unalterable vows! And that man to be Lewis Morgan!

Louise seemed entirely unconscious of the

necessity for any such turmoil of brain on her account. She looked as serenely sweet and satisfied in her white silk robes as she had in the simple gold-brown that had been one of her favorite home dresses. Oh, yes; she was in white silk and bridal veil, and orange blossoms, and the blinds were closed, and the heavy curtains dropped (although it was mid-day), and the blaze of the gas lighted up the scene; and there was a retinue of bridesmaids, in their white robes and their ten-buttoned kids, and there were all the *et ceteras* of the modern fashionable wedding!

All these things fitted as naturally into the every-day life of the Barrows family as hard work and scanty fare fit into the lives of so many. They had not discussed the question at all, but had merely accepted all these minor details as among the inevitables, and made them ready. Mrs. Barrows came from an aristocratic and wealthy family; so also did the father, and all the surroundings and associations of the family had been connected with wealth and worldliness to such a degree that, although they were reckoned among their set as remarkably plain

and conscientiously economical people, viewed from Lewis Morgan's standpoint they were lavish of their expenditures to a degree that he knew his father would have denounced as unpardonable.

Isn't it a pity that in this carping world we can not oftener put ourselves in other people's places, mentally, at least, and try to discover how we should probably feel and talk and act were we surrounded by their circumstances and biased by their educations? Something of this, Lewis Morgan had done. He might almost be said to occupy half-way ground between the rigid plainness of his country home life and the luxurious ease of his wife's city home life. He had been out into the world; had seen both sides, and his nature was broad enough and deep enough to distinguish between *people* and their surroundings. Therefore, while he admired and respected Mr. Barrows, he respected and loved his father, who was the very antipodes of his city brother.

Hundreds of miles away from the gas-lights and glamour of orange blossoms, and bridal veils, and wedding favors, on a bleak hillside, was a plain two-story frame house, surrounded by

ample barns, which showed in their architecture and design a more comfortable finish for the purposes for which they were intended than the plain unpainted house had ever shown. There was even a sense of beauty, or at least of careful neatness, in the choosing of the paints and the general air of the buildings, that the house lacked. Whatever Jacob Morgan thought of his family, it was quite apparent that he had a high opinion of his stock.

Within this square, plain, solemn-looking house, on a certain dull and solemn fall evening, sat the Morgan family, gathered apparently for a special occasion; for though every one of them, down to the gray old cat purring behind the great wood stove, tried to act as usual, a general air of expectancy, indescribable and yet distinctly felt, pervaded the room.

The room, by the way, deserves a passing description. It was at once the sitting-room, dining-room and kitchen of the Morgans. It was large and square, and scrupulously clean. There was a large old-fashioned table, with its great leaves turned down, and itself pushed up against the north side of the house; and it had

a dark, flowered, shiny oil-cloth spread all over its surface, reaching down nearly to the floor. On the oiled surface a large-sized, old-fashioned candle-stick held a substantial tallow candle which served to show Mother Morgan where to put the point of the great darning needle as she solemnly wove it in and out of the gray sock drawn on her large, labor-roughened hand. The old-fashioned tray and snuffers stood beside the candle-stick, and a dreary-faced girl, in a dark calico dress, closely buttoned at the throat and guiltless of a collar, occupied herself in applying the snuffers at regular intervals to the black wick that rapidly formed.

Occasionally the mother hinted that it was a very shiftless way to spend her time, and that she would do better to get out her mending or her knitting. But the girl, with a restless sort of half sigh, replied that she "couldn't mend or knit to-night."

"And why not to-night, as well as any time?" questioned Mrs. Morgan, in a half-vexed tone, as one who was fully prepared to combat sentiment, or folly of any sort, that might have arisen in her daughter's mind. But the daughter only

answered, "Oh, I don't know!" and snuffed the candle again; and the darning-needle gleamed back and forth in the candle-glow, and no sound broke the stillness for the next ten minutes.

The other furnishings of the room can be briefly given. A square stand, in the corner held the *Farmer's Companion*, a weekly paper highly prized; a small copy of "Webster," very much abridged, and with one cover gone. A tack in the wall, over the stand, held the "Farmer's Almanac," and near it a pasteboard case, somewhat gayly decorated with fancy pictures, held the family hair-brush and comb. The great cook-stove, capable of taking in "chunks" of wood at a time, was aglow, both with fire-light and with polish, and was really the only bright and pleasant thing in the room. The floor was painted a good, clear yellow, and was guiltless of even a rug to relieve its bareness. Behind the stove, with his feet on the hearth, and his slouched hat pushed on the back of his head, and his pants tucked carefully into his barn-yard boots, sat the younger son of the family, John Morgan; his hands in his pockets, and

his eyes fixed somewhat gloomily on the fire. Just across from him, occupying the other corner of the fireplace, was the father of the family, a prematurely old, bent man. His gray hair stood in disorder on his head — “stood” being the exact word to apply to it, as even vigorous brushing never coaxed it into quietness for any length of time. He was tilted slightly back in his straight-backed wooden arm-chair, which boasted of a patch-work cushion, and was the only bit of luxury that the room contained. A few chairs, yellow-painted like the floor, wooden-bottomed, keeping themselves in orderly condition in the three unoccupied corners of the room completed its furnishings — unless a shelf back of the stove, and in somewhat alarming proximity to the aforesaid barn-yard boots, where a row of milk-pans were stationed waiting for the cream to “set,” and a line on which hung certain towels used in cleansing and drying the pans, and a hook at a little distance holding the family hand-towel, can be called furnishings. .

Sundry other hooks were empty ; the sixteen-year-old daughter having taken counsel with herself for a little, and then quietly removed two

coats and a pair of overalls to the back kitchen closet.

A door leading into the small, square, bare-floored bed-room of Jacob Morgan and his wife stood open, and revealed the six-year-old baby of the family, fair-haired, soft-eyed Neelie Morgan, her eyes at this time being wide open and aglow with an excitement which she could not control. But for the solemn rule that seven o'clock must find her in bed, whether the town three miles away was on fire, or whatever was happening, she would have begged to stay out of that trundle-bed, on this particular evening, just one hour more.

John Morgan winked and blinked, and nodded assent to his dream-thoughts with his mouth wide open, then came down on the four legs of his chair with a sudden thud, that made him wide awake and rather cross. He looked at the tall, loud-voiced old clock in the corner — which was certainly part of the furniture, and the most important part; it is strange I should have forgotten it. At this moment it was making up its mind to announce the advent of the next hour.

“It seems a pity that Lewis couldn't have got

around at a little more seasonable hour," farmer Morgan said at last, rubbing his eyes and yawning heavily, and gazing at the solemn-faced clock. "I can't see why he couldn't just as well have taken an earlier train, and got here this afternoon. It will be getting-up time before we fairly go to bed."

"I don't see any occasion for being very late to bed," Mrs. Morgan said; and she drove the gleaming needle through the sock as though she were vexed at the yawning hole. "We needn't sit up till morning to talk; there will be time enough for that; and so long as Lewis went to the expense of getting supper at the village we won't have to be hindered on that account."

"I'm most awful glad he did," interposed the candle-snuffer. "I couldn't bear to think of getting supper and washing dishes right before her."

"I wonder why not? She most likely has been used to dishes, and she knows they have to be washed. It isn't worth while to go to putting on airs before her, so long as you can't keep them on. The dishes will probably have to be washed three times a day, just as they always

have been. Because Lewis has got married the world isn't going to stop turning around."

How fast the darning-needle slipped through the hole, shrinking it at every turn, and stabbing its sides with great gray threads!

"I most wonder why you didn't put a fire in the front room, being it was the first night; it would have been less — well, less embarrassing like," the farmer said, hunting in his brain for the right word, and apparently not finding it.

"I don't know as there is any call to be embarrassed," Mrs. Morgan said, and the furrows in her face seemed to grow deeper. "I thought it was best to begin as we would have to hold out; and I didn't s'pose we would be likely to have fires in the front room of evenings now any more than we have had. This room has always been large enough and good enough for Lewis, and I suppose we can make a place for one more."

But she looked that moment as though the "one more" were a sore trial to her, which she endured simply because she must, and out of which she saw no gleam of comfort.

During this family discussion, John Morgan

kept his feet in their elevated position on the upper hearth, and continued his steady, gloomy gaze into the fire. He was a young man, not yet twenty, but already his face looked not only gloomy, but spiritless. It was not in every sense a good face; there were lines of sullenness upon it, and there were lines which, even thus early, might have been born of dissipation. Mrs. Morgan had been heard to say many a time that Lewis was a good boy, had always been a good boy, but who John took after was more than she could imagine; he wasn't a mite like the Morgans, and she was sure he didn't favor her side of the house.

But, truth to tell, Lewis Morgan had at last disappointed his mother. Of course, he would get married some time; it was the way with young men; but he was still quite a young man, and she had hoped that he would wait a few years. And then she had hoped that, when the fatal day did come, he would choose one of the good, sensible, hard-working farmer's girls with which the country abounded, any one of whom would have esteemed it an honor to be connected with the Morgan family.

But to go to New York for a wife, and then to plunge right into the midst of aristocracy, and actually bring away a daughter of Lyman Barrows, whose brother was a Congressman, and whose father was high in power once at Washington? Mrs. Morgan felt aggrieved. Farmers and farmers' wives and daughters had always been good enough for her; why were they not for her son?

This matter of family pride is a very queer thing to deal with. I doubt if you will not find it as strongly developed among the thrifty and intelligent classes of farmers as anywhere in this country. To be sure, there are different manifestations of pride. Assuredly Mrs. Morgan knew how to manifest hers.

"There they come!" declared the candle-snuffer; and her face grew red, and she dropped the snuffers into the tray with a bang. It was just as the old clock had made up its mind to speak, and it solemnly tolled out eight strokes.

"Dorothy!" said she of the darning-needle, severely, "I am ashamed of you. There is no occasion for you going into hysterics, if they *have* come."

The feet on the upper hearth came down on the brick hearth with a louder bang than the snuffers had made. "I'm going to the barn," said their owner promptly. "Lewis will want to have his horse took care of; and I don't want to see none of 'em to-night. You needn't call me in, for I ain't coming."

And he dodged out at the back door, just as the front one opened, and a shoving of trunks sounded on the oil-cloth floor of the great old-fashioned hall, and Lewis Morgan's voice said cheerily, "Where are you all?" and the mother rolled up the stocking, and stabbed it with the darning-needle, and shook out her check apron and stood up to give them greeting; and Louise Morgan had reached her home.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCED.



OW Louise, despite all her previous knowledge of the Morgan family, had done just as people are always doing: planned their reception at the old homestead quite after the manner of life to which *she* had been accustomed, instead of arranging things from the Morgan standpoint. In imagination, she had seen her husband folded in his mother's arms, his bearded face covered with motherly kisses. "It is not reasonable to suppose that she will care to kiss *me*," she had said to herself, "but I will give her one little, quiet kiss, to show her how dear Lewis' mother is to me, and then I will keep myself in the background for the first evening. They will be so glad to get Lewis

back, that they will not have room for much notice of me."

Kisses! hardly anything could be more foreign to Mother Morgan's life than those. It was actually years since she had kissed her grown-up son. She held out her hard, old hand to him, and her heart beat quickly, and she felt a curious tremble all over her, that she would have been ashamed to own, but with a mighty effort she controlled her voice, and said:

"Well, so you have got back safe, with all your rampaging around the world; I should think you had had enough of it. And this is your wife?"

And then Louise had felt the quick grasp and release of her hand, and had not realized the heart-beats; and Lewis had shaken hands with his father and his sister Dorothy, and had said:

"Father, this is my wife."

And the premature old man, with the premature gray hairs standing up over his head, had nodded to her, without even a hand-clasp, and said:

"I'm glad you are safe at home. You must be tuckered out; travelling is worse than plow-

ing all day. I never could see why folks who hadn't *got* to do it, should take journeys."

And this was the home-coming! Two nights before, they had spent in the old home in New York, stopping there over night, after a two weeks' absence in another direction. How the mother had clasped her to her heart, and cried over her! How the father had called her his "precious daughter," and wondered, with a quiver in his lips and a tremble in his voice, how they *could* let her go again! How Estelle — bright, beautiful, foolish Estelle — had hugged and caressed, and rejoiced over her darling sister! What a contrast it was! It all came over her just then, standing alone in the center of that yellow-painted floor — the tremendous, the far-reaching, the ever-developing contrast between the home that had vanished from her sight, and the new home to which she had come. She felt a strange, choking sensation as if a hand were grasping at her throat; the dim light in the tallow candle gleamed and divided itself into many sparks, and seemed swinging in space, and but for a strong and resolute determination to do no such thing, the bride would have made

her advent into the Morgan household a thing of vivid memory, by fainting away!

“Lewis!” called a soft, timid voice from somewhere in the darkness. Looking out at them from that bed-room door, poor little Neelie, with her shining eyes and her beating heart, could endure it no longer; and, although frightened at her boldness, and dipping her yellow head under the sheet, the minute the word was out, yet had spoken that one low, eager word.

“Oh, Neelie!” Lewis had exclaimed; “are you awake? Louise, come and see Neelie.”

Indeed she would; nothing in life looked as inviting to his young wife at that moment as the darkness and comparative solitude of that inner room. But Lewis had seized the tallow candle as he went — Dorothy, meantime, having roused sufficiently to produce another one; and, as Louise followed him, she caught a glimpse of the shining eyes and the yellow curls. A whole torrent of pent-up longing for home, and love, and tenderness flowed out in the kisses which were suddenly lavished on astonished little

Neelie, as Louise nestled her head in the bed clothes, and gathered the child to her arms.

"She looks like you, Lewis," was the only comment she made; and Lewis laughed and flushed like a girl, and told his wife she was growing alarmingly complimentary; and Neelie looked from one to the other of them, with great, earnest, soulful eyes, and whispered to Lewis that she "loved her *almost* as much as she did him!" with a long-drawn breath on the word "almost" that showed the magnitude of the offering at the shrine of his new wife. On the whole, it was Neelie that sweetened the memory of the home-coming, and stayed the tears that might have wet Louise Morgan's pillow that night.

As for John, he stayed in the barn, as he had planned, until the new-comers were fairly out of sight above stairs.

"He is a queer fellow," explained Lewis to his wife, as they went about their own room. "I hardly know how to take him. I don't think I have ever understood his character; I doubt if anybody does. He is pent up; there is no getting at his likes or dislikes, and yet he has

strong feelings. He has given my father a good many anxious hours already ; and sometimes I fear there are many more in store for him from the same source."

And Lewis sighed. Already the burden of home-life was dropping on him.

Louise was by this time so divided between the sense of loneliness that possessed her and the sense of curiosity over every article in and about her room, that she could not give to John the interest which the subject demanded. It was utterly unlike any room that she had ever seen before. A brilliant carpet, aglow with alternate stripes of red and green, covered the floor. Louise looked at it with mingled feelings of curiosity and wonder. How had it been made, and where? How did it happen that she had never seen a like pattern before? It did not occur to her that it was home-made ; and, if it had, she would not have understood the term. The two windows to the room were shaded with blue paper, partly rolled, and tied with red cord. There was a wood fire burning in a Franklin stove, which snapped, and glowed, and lighted up the strange colors and fantastic figures of the

wall-paper ; there were two or three old-fashioned chairs, comfortable, as all old-fashioned chairs are ; and there was a high-post bedstead, curtained at its base by what Louise learned to know was a "valance," though what its name or use, on this evening she could not have told. The bed itself was a marvel of height ; it looked to the bewildered eyes of the bride as though they might need the services of a step-ladder to mount it ; and it was covered with a tulip bed-quilt ! This also was knowledge acquired at a later date. What the strangely-shaped masses of color were intended to represent she had not the slightest idea. There was a very simple toilet-table, neatly covered with a towel, and the appointments of it were the simplest and commonest. A high, wide, deep-drawered bureau, and a pine-framed mirror, perhaps a foot wide and less than two feet long, completed the furnishings, save a couple of patchwork footstools under the windows.

Lewis set down the candle-stick, which he had been holding aloft, on the little toilet-table, and surveyed his wife with a curious, half-laughing

air, behind which was hidden an anxious, questioning gaze.

“My mother has an intense horror of the new invention known as kerosene,” was his first explanatory sentence, with a comical side glance toward the blinking candle.

“Kerosene !” said Louise, absently ; her thoughts in such confusion that she could not pick them out and answer clearly ; “ doesn’t she like gas ? ” And then the very absurdity of her question brought her back to the present, and she looked up, quickly, in her husband’s face, and, struggling with the pent-up tears, burst instead, into a low, sweet, ringing laugh, which laugh he joined in and swelled until the low ceilings might almost have shaken over their mirth.

“ Upon my word, I don’t know what we are laughing at,” he said at last ; “ but she is a brave little woman to laugh, and I’m thankful to be able to join her ; ” and he pushed one of the patchwork footstools over to where she had sunken on the other, and sat down beside her.

“ It is all as different as candle-light from sunlight, isn’t it ? That blinking little wretch over there on the stand furnished me with a simile.

I haven't done a thing to this room ; mainly because I didn't know what to do. I realized the absurdity of trying to put New York into it and I didn't know how to put anything into it ; I thought you would. In fact, I don't know but it fits country life. It has always seemed to me to be a nice, pleasant home room, but — well — well, the simple truth is, Louise, there is something the matter with it all, now that you are in it ; it doesn't fit you ; but you will know how to repair it, will you not ?" An anxious look in his eyes, almost a tremble in his voice, the laughter gone out of them so soon. It nerved Louise to bravery.

"We will not rearrange anything to-night," she said, brightly ; "we are too tired for planning ; that great bed is the most comfortable thing I can think of ; if we can only manage to get into it. What *makes* it so high, Lewis ?"

Whereupon he laughed again, and she joined, laughing in that immoderate, nervous way in which people indicate that the laughter, hilarious as it appears, is but one remove from tears. And it was thus that the first evening under the new home-roof was spent.

John, coming from his hiding place and going in stocking feet up the stairs, heard the outburst, and, curling his sour-looking lip, muttered: "They feel very fine over it; I hope it will last."

And the poor fellow had not the remotest idea that it would. Boy that he was, John Morgan was at war with life; he believed that it had ill-treated him; that to his fortunate elder brother had fallen all the joy, and to him all the bitterness. He was jealous because of the joy. He was not sure but he almost hated his brother's wife. Her low, clear laugh, as it rang out to him, sounded like mockery; he could almost make his warped nature believe that she was laughing at him, though she had never seen, perhaps never heard of him. If she had seen his face at that moment, doubtless her thoughts would have been of him; as it was, they revolved around the Morgan family.

"What about your sister Dorothy?" she asked her husband, diving into the bewilderments of the large trunk, in search of her toilet case.

"Dorothy is a good, warm-hearted girl, who has no — well" — and then he stopped; he did

not know how to finish his sentence ; it would not do to say she had no education, for she had been the best scholar in their country school, and, during her last winter, was reported to have learned all that the master could teach her.

She had been disappointed, it is true, that he had not known more, and Lewis had been disappointed, because he wanted her to go on, or go elsewhere, and get — what ? He did not know how to name it. Something that his wife had to her very finger tips, and something that Dorothy had not a trace of ; what was the name of it ? Was it to be learned from books ? At least, he had wanted her to try, and she had been willing enough, but Farmer Morgan had not.

“She has book learning enough for a farmer’s daughter,” he had said, sturdily. “She knows more about books now than her mother ever did ; and, if she makes one-half as capable a woman, she will be ahead of all the women there are now-days.”

So Dorothy had packed away her books, and settled down at her churning and baking and dish-washing ; she took it quietly, patiently. Lewis did not know whether the disappointment

was very great or not ; in truth, he knew very little about her. Of late, he had known almost nothing of home, until within the last year failing health, and the necessity for out-door life had changed all his plans, and nearly all his hopes in life.

Louise waited for a completion of the unfinished sentence, but her husband seemed unable to add to it. He bent over the valise and gave himself to the business of unpacking, with a puzzled air, as though he were trying to solve a problem that eluded him. His wife tried again.

“ Lewis, why is she not a Christian ? ”

Now, indeed, he dropped the coat that he was unrolling, and, rising up, gave the questioner the full benefit of his troubled eyes. He was under the impression that he was pretty well acquainted with his wife ; yet she certainly had the fashion of asking the most strange-sounding questions, perplexing to answer, and yet simple and straightforward enough in their tone.

“ Why is it ? ” he repeated. “ I do not know ; my dear Louise, how *could* I know ? ”

“ Well, doesn't it seem strange that a young

lady, in this age of the world, surrounded by Christian influences, should go on, year after year, without settling that question?"

Her husband's answer was very thoughtfully given. "It seems exceedingly strange, when I hear you speak of it, but I do not know that I ever thought of it in that sense before."

Then the unpacking went on in silence for a few minutes, until Louise interrupted it with another question.

"Lewis, what does she say when you talk with her about these matters? What line of reasoning does she use?"

It was so long before she received an answer that she turned from her work in surprise, to look at him; then he spoke.

"Louise, I never said a word to her on this subject in my life. And that seems stranger to you than anything else?" he added, at last, his voice low, and with an anxious touch in it.

She smiled on him gently. "It seems a little strange to me, Lewis, I shall have to own; but I suppose it is different with brothers and sisters from what it is when two are thrown together

constantly as companions. I have no brother, you know."

Do you know what Lewis thought of then?
His brother John.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM DAWN TO DAYLIGHT.



IT was by the light of the blinking tallow candle that they made their toilets next morning. Louise roused suddenly, not a little startled at what she supposed were unusual sounds, issuing from all portions of the house, in the middle of the night.

“Do you suppose any one is sick?” she asked her husband. “There has been a banging of doors and a good deal of hurrying around for some minutes.”

“Oh, no,” he said, re-assuringly. “It is getting-up time. John is a noisy fellow, and Dorothy can make considerable noise when she undertakes. I suspect they are trying to rouse us.”

“Getting-up time! Why, it must be in the middle of the night!”

“That depends on whether one lives in New York or the country. I shouldn’t be greatly surprised if breakfast were waiting for us.”

“Then let us hurry,” said Louise, making a motion to do so, but her husband remanded her back to her pillow, while he made vigorous efforts to conquer the old-fashioned Franklin stove, and secure some warmth.

“But we ought not to keep them waiting breakfast,” Louise said in dismay. “That is very disagreeable, when everything is ready to serve. We have been annoyed in that way ourselves. Lewis, why didn’t you waken me before? Haven’t you heard the sounds of life for a good while?”

“Yes,” said Lewis, “longer than I wanted to hear them. If they don’t want breakfast to wait they shouldn’t get it ready at such an unearthly hour. There is no sense in rousing up the household in the night. During the busy season it is a sort of necessity, and I always succumb to it meekly. But at this date it is just the outgrowth of a notion, and I have waged a sort of

silent war on it for some time. I suppose I have eaten cold breakfasts about half the time this fall."

"Cold breakfasts ! Didn't your mother keep something warm for you ?"

"Not by any manner of means did she. My mother would not consider that she was doing her duty to her son by winking at his indolent habits in any such fashion ; she believes that it is his sacred duty to eat his breakfast by early candle-light, and if he sins in that direction it is not for her to smooth the punishment of the transgressor."

Louise laughed over the serio-comic tone in which this was said, albeit there was a little feeling of dismay in her heart ; these things sounded so new, and strange, and unmotherly !

"Louise, dear, I don't want to dictate the least in the world, and I don't want to pretend to know more than I do, but isn't that dress just a trifle too stylish for the country — in the morning, you know ?"

This hesitating, doubtful sort of question was put to Mrs. Morgan somewhat later, after a rapid and apparently unpremeditated toilet.

She gave the speaker the benefit of a flash from a pair of roguish eyes, as she said:

“Part of that sentence is very opportune, Lewis. You are evidently ‘pretending to know more than you do.’ This dress was prepared especially for a morning toilet in the country, and cost just ten cents a yard.”

“Is it possible!” he answered, surveying her from head to foot with a comic air of bewilderment. “Then, Louise, what is it that you do to your dresses?”

“Wear them,” she answered demurely. “And I shall surely wear this, this morning; it fits precisely.”

Did it? Her husband was in great doubt. He would not have liked to own it; he did not own it even to himself; but, the truth was, he lived in a sort of terror of his mother’s opinions. She was easily shocked, easily disgusted; the whole subject of dress shocked her, perhaps, more than any other. She was almost eloquent over the extravagance, the lavish display, the waste of time as well as money exhibited in these degenerate days, in the decorations of the body. She even sternly hinted that occasionally

Dorothy "prinked" altogether too much for a girl with brains. What would she think of Mrs. Lewis Morgan? The dress which troubled him was one of those soft neutral-tinted cottons, so common in these days, so entirely unfashionable in the fashionable world, that Louise had already horrified her mother, and vexed Estelle, by persisting in her determination to have several of them. Once purchased she had exercised her taste in the making, and her selections of patterns and trimming "fitted the material perfectly," so Estelle had told her, meaning anything but a compliment thereby.

It was simplicity itself in its finishings; yet the pattern was graceful in its folds and draperies, and fitted her form to perfection. The suit was finished at the throat with a rolling collar, inside of which Louise had basted a very narrow frill of soft, yellowish lace. The close-fitting sleeves were finished in the same way. A very tiny scarlet knot of narrow ribbon at the throat completed the costume, and the whole effect was such that her husband, surveying her, believed he had never seen her better dressed, and was sure his mother would be shocked. The bewil

derment on his face seemed to strike his wife as ludicrous.

“Why, Lewis,” she said, gayly, “what would you have me wear?”

“I don’t know, I am sure,” he answered, joining her laugh, “only, why should ten cent goods look like a tea-party dress on *you*?” Then they went down to breakfast.

Almost the first thought that the young wife had, as she surveyed the strange scene, was embodied in a wonderment as to what Estelle would say could she look in on them now!

That great, clean kitchen; the kettle steaming on the cook-stove, and the black “spider” still sizzling about the ham gravy that was left in it; the large-leaved table, spread; queer-shaped, old-fashioned, blue earthenware dishes arranged on it, without regard to grace, certainly, whatever might be said of convenience. In the middle of the table sat the inevitable tallow candle, and another one blinked on the high mantelpiece, bringing out the shadows in a strange, weird way.

Seated at the foot of the table was John, in his shirt-sleeves, the mild winter morning having proved too trying for his coat. His father was

still engaged in putting the finishing touches to his toilet, by brushing his few spears of gray hair, before the little glass in the further end of the room. Dorothy leaned against the window and waited, looking both distressed and cross.

"Come! come! come!" said the mother of this home, directly the stair door had closed after the arrival of her new daughter. "Do let us get down to breakfast; it will be noon before we get the dishes out of the way. Now, father, have we got to wait for *you*? I thought you were ready an hour ago. Come, Lewis, you must be hungry by this time.

The rich blood mounted to Lewis' cheeks. This was a trying greeting for his wife; he felt exactly as though he wanted to say that he thought so; but she brushed past him at that moment, laying a cool, little hand for an instant on his. Was it a warning touch? Then she went over to the young man in the shirt-sleeves.

"Nobody introduces us," she said, in a tone of quiet brightness. "I suppose they think that brother and sister do not need introduction. I am Louise, and I am sure you must be John; let's shake hands on it." And the small, white

hand was out-stretched and waiting. What was to be done?

John, who was prepared to hate her — so well prepared that he already half did so; John (who never shook hands with any body, least of all a woman; never came in contact with one if he could possibly help it) felt the flush in his face deepen, until he knew he was the color of a peony; but, nevertheless, slowly held forth his hard, red hand, and touched the small white one, which instantly seized it in a cordial grasp. Then they sat down to breakfast.

Louise waited, with bowed head, and was thrilled with a startled sense of unlikeness to home, as she waited in vain. No voice expressed its thankfulness for many mercies; instead, the clatter of dishes immediately commenced. "Not one in the family save myself is a Christian;" she remembered well, that Lewis had told her so; but was he of so little moment in his father's house that the simple word of blessing would not have been received among them from his lips? It had not occurred to her that, because her husband was the only Christian in the household, therefore he sat at a prayerless table.

Other experiences connected with that first meal in her new home, were, to say the least, novel. Curiously enough, her imaginings concerning them all connected themselves with Estelle. What would Estelle think of a young lady who came collarless to the breakfast table? Nay, more than that, who sat down to eat, in her father's and mother's presence, with uncombed hair, gathered into a frowzly knot in the back of her neck? What would Estelle have thought of Mrs. Morgan's fashion of dipping her own spoon into the bowl of sugar and then back again into her coffee? How would she have liked to help herself with her own knife to butter, having seen the others of the family do the same with theirs? How would she manage in the absence of napkins, and would the steel forks spoil her breakfast; and how would she like fried ham, and potatoes boiled in the skin, for breakfast anyway?

The new-comer remembered that she had but three weeks ago assured Estelle that farm-houses were delightful places in which to spend summers! Was she so sure of that, even with this little inch of experience. To learn to appreciate

the force of contrasts, one would only need a picture of the two breakfast tables which presented themselves to the mind of this young wife.

Aside from all these minor contrasts, there were others which troubled her more. She had resolved to be very social and informal with each member of this family: but the formidable question arose: What was she to be social about? Conversation there was none; unless Farmer Morgan's directions to John, concerning details of farm-work, and his answers to Lewis' questions as to what had transpired on the farm during his absence, could be called conversation. Mrs. Morgan, it is true, contributed by assuring Dorothy that if she did not clean out the back kitchen, *this day*, she would do it herself; and that the shelves in the cellar needed washing off this very morning. Whatever it was that had occurred to put Dorothy in ill-humor, or whether it was ill-humor, or only habitual sullenness, Louise didn't know; certainly her brows were black. Would it be possible to converse with her? As the question put itself to her mind, it called up the merry by-play of talk with which Estelle was wont to enliven the home breakfast table; so sparkling

and attractive in its flow that her father had accused her of setting a special snare for him, that he might miss his car. If Estelle were at this table what would she talk about? It was entirely a new and strange experience to Louise to be at a loss what to talk about. Books? What had Dorothy read? She did not look as though she had read anything, or wanted to. Sewing? Well, the new sister was skilled with her needle. Suppose she said, "I know how to make my own dresses, and I can cut and fit my common ones; can you?" How abrupt it would sound; and what strange table talk for the pleasure of the assembled family! She caught herself on the verge of a laugh over the absurdity of the thing, and was as far from a topic for conversation as ever.

Meantime, Lewis had finished his questionings, and turned to her. "Louise, did you ever see any one milk? I suppose not; if it were not so cold you would like to go out and see Dorothy with her pet cow; she is a queer-acting creature — quite a study."

Did he mean Dorothy, or the pet cow? It was clear to his wife that he was himself embar-

rassed by something incongruous in the breakfast scene; but she caught at his suggestion of a subject, even while his mother's metallic voice was saying:

"Cold! If you call this a cold morning Lewis, you must be getting very tender since you have been in the city; it is almost as mild as spring."

"Can you milk?" Louise was saying, meantime, eagerly to Dorothy. The eagerness was not assumed; she was jubilant, not so much over the idea of seeing the process of milking, as over the fact that she had finally discovered a direct question to address to Dorothy, which must be answered in some form.

But, behold! Dorothy, flushing to her temples, looked down at her plate and answered, "Yes, ma'am," and directly choked herself with a swallow of coffee, and the avenue for conversation suddenly closed.

What *was* she to do? How queer it was to call such distorted attempts at talk by the pleasant word conversation! What "familiar interchange of sentiment" could she hope to get up with Dorothy about milking cows? What did

people say about cows, anyway? She wished she had some knowledge, even the slightest, of the domestic habits of these animals; but she was honestly afraid to venture in any direction, lest she should display an ignorance that would either be considered affected, or sink her lower in the family estimation. Suppose she tried some other subject with Dorothy, would she be likely to choke again?

Mrs. Morgan tried to help: "Dorothy milked two cows when she was not yet twelve years old!"

Whether it was the words, or the tone, or the intention, Louise could not tell; but she immediately had a feeling that not to milk two cows before one was twelve years old, argued a serious and irreparable blunder in one's bringing up. She was meek and quiet-toned in her reply:

"I never had the opportunity of even seeing the country when I was a little girl, only as we went to the sea-side, summers, and that is not exactly like the country, you know. All mamma's and papa's relatives happened to live in town."

“It must be a great trial to a woman to have to bring up her children in a city. Ten chances to one if they don't get spoiled.”

Mrs. Morgan did not say it crossly, nor with any intention of personality, but again Louise felt it to be almost a certainty that *she* was thought not to belong to that fortunate “one chance” which was not spoiled.

There were other trials connected with this ordeal. She found it almost impossible for her to make a show of eating. She was one of those unfortunate victims to whom *pork*, in all of its numerous forms, was always and utterly repulsive; therefore she made not the slightest attempt with the generous piece on her plate; and, while potatoes are good in their way and place, to a delicate appetite, in the early morning, a large potato, still in its brown coating, is not specially inviting. There were eggs, but they were fried, and tasted of the offensive ham-gravy; and the bread was in that condition known to housekeepers as “doughy,” and reminded Louise of the wicked episodes of her school-days, when, at the badly-managed boarding-school, one of their pastimes used to be

making little "wads" of the "doughy" bread, and surreptitiously throwing them at each other. What if she *should* send a tiny ball of dough directly in the red and frowning face of that Dorothy! Then she would *surely choke*. Or she might hit Mother Morgan right on her wrinkled cheek! Her own mother would laugh even at such undignified folly, but would Mother Morgan? She laughed involuntarily over the astonishment into which she might throw this solemn household by such improprieties, and then she drooped her head over her coffee-cup to hide the laugh. The coffee was hot and strong, too strong, but there was no hot-water urn on the table; she might take her cup to that puffing tea-kettle and weaken the coffee; perhaps, that would be in keeping with the table proprieties of the household, but what would Estelle think of it! What a difference there was in *people*, and in homes! She glanced at her husband; he was listening respectfully to his father's opinion of the south meadow lot, and the "short-horned critter," whoever that was, who inhabited it. He seemed miles away from her. She wondered vaguely whether, when

they got up-stairs to their own room again. she would have any subject for conversation with him.

Mother Morgan startled her out of her wondering, by addressing her directly :

“I hope you will be able to make out a breakfast. I suppose our living is not what you have been used to.”

What could Louise say? It certainly was not, and she certainly could not affirm that she liked it better.

Her husband turned a certain troubled look on her. “Can’t you eat a little?” he asked in undertone.

Did she imagine it, or was he more anxious that his mother should not be annoyed, than he was that her appetite should not suffer? Altogether, the young bride was heartily glad when that uncomfortable meal was concluded, and she was back in that upper room. She went alone, her husband having excused himself from his father long enough to go with her to the foot of the stairs and explain that father wanted him a moment.

Do you think she fell into a passion of weeping

directly the door of her own room shut her in, and wished that she had never left the elegancies of her city home, or the sheltering love of her mother? Then you have mistaken her character. She walked to the window a moment and looked out on the stubby, partly-frozen meadows that stretched away in the distance; she even brushed a tender tear, born of love for the old home and the dear faces there; but it was chased away by a smile, as she bowed to her husband, who looked back to get a glimpse of her; and she knew then, as she had known before, that it was not hard to "forsake all others and cleave to him." Moreover, she remembered that marriage vows had brought her more than a wife's responsibilities. She was, by them, made a daughter and a sister to those whom she had not known before. They were not idle words to her — these two relationships. She remembered them, each one; Father Morgan, with his old, worn face, and his heart among the fields and barns; Mother Morgan, with her cold eyes, and cold hand, and cold voice; Dorothy and John, and the fair, yellow-haired Neelie,

whom a special touch of motherliness had left still sleeping that morning; and, remembering them each, this young wife turned from the window, and, kneeling, presented them each by name and desire to her "Elder Brother."

CHAPTER V.

BEDS AND BUTTON-HOLES.



OW to fit in with the family life lived at the Morgan farm-house was one of the puzzles of the new-comer. For the first time, Louise was in doubt how to pass her time ; what to do with herself. Not that she had not enough to do ; she was a young woman having infinite resources ; she could have locked the door on the world down-stairs, and during her husband's absence in field or barn, have lived a happy life in her own world of reading, writing, sewing, planning. But the question was, would that be fulfilling the duties which the marriage covenant laid upon her ? How, in that way, could she contribute to the general good of the family into which she had been incorporated, and which she

had pledged herself before God to help sustain? But, on the other hand, how should she set about contributing to the general good? Every avenue seemed closed.

After spending one day in comparative solitude, save the visits that her husband managed to pay, from time to time, to the front room upstairs, she, revolving the problem, lingered in the large kitchen the next morning, and, with pleasant face and kindly voice, said to Dorothy, "Let me help!" and essayed to assist in the work of clearing the family table; with what dire results!

Dorothy, thus addressed, seemed as affrighted as though an angel from heaven had suddenly descended before her and offered to wash the dishes, and she let slip, in her amaze, one end of the large platter, containing the remains of the ham, and a plentiful supply of ham gravy; which perverse stuff trickled and dripped, in zig-zag lines, over the clean, coarse linen which covered the table. Dorothy's exclamation of dismay brought the mother quickly from the bedroom; and, then and there, she gave a short sharp lecture on carelessness.

“What need had you to jump like an idiot because you were spoken to?” she said, in severe sarcasm, to the blazing-cheeked Dorothy. “I saw you ; one would think you had never seen anybody before, nor had a remark made to you. I would try to act a little more as though I had common sense, if I were you. This makes the second clean table-cloth in a week! Now, go right away and wash the grease out, and scald yourself with boiling water to finish up the morning.”

Then, to Louise: “She doesn’t need your help ; a girl who couldn’t clear off a breakfast table alone, and wash up the dishes, would be a very shiftless sort of creature, in my opinion. Dorothy has done it alone ever since she was twelve years old. She isn’t shiftless, if she does act like a dunce before strangers. I’m sure I don’t know what has happened to her, to jump and blush in that way, when she is spoken to ; she never used to do it.”

It was discouraging, but Louise, bent on “belonging” to this household, tried again.

“Well, mother, what *can* I do to help ? Since I am one of the family I want to take my share

of the duties. What shall be my work after breakfast? Come, now, give me a place in the home army, and let me look after my corner. If you don't, I shall go out to the barn and help father and Lewis!"

But Mrs. Morgan's strong, stern face did not relax; no smile softened the wrinkles or brightened the eyes.

"We have always got along without any help," she said — and her voice reminded Louise of the icicles hanging at that moment from the sloping roof above her window — "Dorothy and I manage to do pretty near all the work, even in summer time, and it would be queer if we couldn't now, when there is next to nothing to do. Your hands don't look as though you were used to work."

"Well, that depends," said Louise, looking down on the hands that were offending at this moment by their shapely whiteness and delicacy; "there are different kinds of work, you know. I have managed to live a pretty busy life. I don't doubt your and Dorothy's ability to do it all, but that isn't the point; I want to help; then we shall all get through the sooner, and

have a chance for other kinds of work." She had nearly said, "for enjoyment," but a glance at the face looking down on her changed the words.

Then they waited ; the younger woman looking up at her mother-in-law with confident, resolute eyes, full of brightness, but also full of meaning ; and the older face, taking on a shade of perplexity, as if this were a phase of life which she had not expected, and was hardly prepared to meet.

"There's nothing in life, that I know of, that you could do," she said, at last, in a slow, perplexed tone. "There's always enough things to be done ; but Dorothy knows how, and I know how, and —"

"And I don't," interrupted Louise, lightly. "Well, then, isn't it your bounden duty to teach me ? You had to teach Dorothy, and I dare say she made many a blunder before she learned. I'll promise to be as apt as I can. Where shall we commence ? Can't I go and dry those dishes for Dorothy ?"

Mrs. Morgan shook her head promptly :

"She would break every one of 'em before

you were through," she said, grimly; "such a notion as she has taken of jumping, and choking, and spilling things! I don't know what she'll do next."

"Well, then, I'll tell you what I can do. Let me take care of John's room. Isn't that it, just back of ours? I saw him coming from that door this morning. While you are at work down here, I can attend to that, as well as not. May I?"

"Why, there's nothing to do to it," was Mrs. Morgan's prompt answer, "except to spread up the bed, and that takes Dorothy about three minutes; besides, it is cold in there; you folks who are used to coddling over a fire mornings, would freeze to death. I never brought up my children to humor themselves in that way."

Louise, not wishing to enter into an argument concerning the advantages and disadvantages of warm dressing-rooms, resolved upon cutting this interview short, and with a quiet nod of her head, and a steady-toned:

"Very well, I shall spread up the bed, then, if there is nothing else that I can do. Dorothy,

remember that is my work after this. Don't you dare to take it away from me."

Lightly spoken, indeed, and yet with an undertone of decision in it that made Mrs. Morgan, senior, exclaim wrathfully, as the door closed after her daughter-in law :

"I do wish she would mind her own business! I don't want her poking around the house, peeking into places, under the name of 'helping!' As if we needed her help! We have got along without her for thirty years, and I guess we can do it now."

But Dorothy was still smarting under the sharpness of the rebuke administered to her in the presence of this elegant stranger, and did not in any way indicate that she heard her mother's comments, unless an extra bang of the large plate she was drying expressed her disapproval.

As for Louise, who will blame her that she drew a little troubled sigh, as she ascended the steep staircase? And who will fail to see the connection between her thoughts and the action which followed. She went directly to an ebony box resting on her old-fashioned bureau, and

drew from it a small velvet case, which, when opened, revealed the face of a middle-aged woman, with soft, silky hair, combed smooth, and wound in a knot underneath the becoming little breakfast cap, with soft lace lying in rich folds about a shapely throat, with soft eyes that looked out lovingly upon the gazer, with lips so tender and suggestive, that even from the picture they seemed ready to speak comforting words.

“Dear mother!” said Louise, and she pressed the tender lips again and again to hers. “‘As one whom his mother comforteth.’ Oh, I *wonder* if John could understand anything of the tenderness in that verse?” Then she held back the pictured face and gazed at it, and something in the earnest eyes and quiet expression recalled to her words of help and strength, and suggestions of opportunity; so that she closed the case, humming gently the old, strong-souled hymn, “A charge to keep I have,” and went in search of broom, and duster, and sweeping-cap, and then penetrated to the depths of John’s room; the development of Christian character in this young wife, actually leading her to see a

connection between that low-roofed back corner known as "John's room," and the call to duty which she had just sung —

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify."

What, through the medium of *John's room*. Yes, indeed. That seemed entirely possible to her. More than that, a glad smile and a look of eager desire shone in her face as she added the lines :

"A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

What if — oh, what *if* the Lord of the vineyard had sent her to that isolated farm-house of his, to be the link in the chain of events which he designed to have end in the saving and fitting for glory of John Morgan's never-dying soul !

Possibly you would have thought it was a sudden descent into the prosaic, if you could have stepped with her into the low-roofed room. *Can* I describe to you its desolation, as it appeared to the eyes of the cultured lady ? She stopped on the threshold, stopped her song, and gazed with a face of dismay ! Bare-floored ; the roof on the eastern side sloping down to within

three feet of the floor; one western window, small-paned, curtainless; one wooden-seated chair, on which stood the inevitable candlestick, and the way in which the wick of the candle had been permitted to grow long and gutter down into the grease told a tale of dissipation of some sort indulged in the night before that would not fail to call out the stern disapproval of the watchful mother. There was not the slightest attempt at anything like appointments, unless an old-fashioned, twisted-legged stand that, despite its name, *would not* "stand" without being propped, having a ten-inch square glass hung over it, might be called an attempt. The bundle of very-much twisted and tumbled bed-clothes in the corner, resting on the four-post bedstead, completed every suggestion of furniture which that long, low, dark room contained!

"Poor fellow!" said Louise, speaking her thoughts aloud, as the scene grew upon her, "why shouldn't he 'give his father some troubled hours?' What else could they expect? How absolutely pitiful it is, that this room and that down-stairs kitchen are really the only

places where the young man can spend a leisure hour. How has Lewis submitted to it?"

Yet, even as she spoke that last sentences, she felt the cold eyes, and remembered the stern mouth, of his mother, and realized that Lewis was powerless.

At the same moment I shall have to confess to you that the little new-comer into the home set her lips in a quiet, curious fashion that she had, which read to those well acquainted with her this sentence: "I shall not be powerless; see if I will." And, somehow, you couldn't help believing that she would not. She had a very curious time restoring order to that confused bed. It must be borne in mind that she had never before made up a husk bed. The best quality of hair mattress had to do with all her experience of bed-making. This being the case the initiated will not be surprised to hear that she tugged off the red and brown patchwork comfortable, which did duty as a spread, three times before she reduced that bed to the state of levelness which comported with her ideas. Then the pillows came in for their share of anxiety. They were so distressingly small!

How did John manage with such inane, characterless affairs? She puffed them, and tossed them, and patted them, with all the skilled touches which a good bed-maker knows how to bestow, but to very little purpose. They were shrinking, shame-faced pillows still. The coarse factory sheet, not yet "bleached," was laid first in a smooth flat, and then artistically rolled under the red and brown comfortable; and, while it looked direfully unlike what Louise would have desired, yet, when the whole was finished, even with such materials, the bed presented a very different appearance from what it did, after undergoing Dorothy's "spreading up." Then, when the sweeping was concluded, Louise stood and thought. What was to be done with that room? How much would she dare to do? She had determined to make no sort of change in her own room at present; she would not even change the position of the great old bedstead, though this was a sacrifice on her part only to be appreciated by those who are able, on their first entrance into a room, to see, by a sort of intuition, the exact spot where every article of furniture should be in order to secure the best

effects, and to whom the ill-arrangement is a positive pain. Louise had seen, even at that first entrance into her room, that the most awkward possible spot for the bedstead had been chosen ; nevertheless, she heroically left it there. But she looked with longing eyes on that twisted table in John's room. How she would have enjoyed selecting one of those strong, white, serviceable tidies, and overspreading the marred top with it, and placing a book or two, and a perfume bottle, or some delicate knick-knack, to give the room a habitable air. For fully five minutes she stood shivering in the cold, trying to determine the important question. Then she resolutely shook her head, and said aloud : "No, it won't do ; I must wait," and went down-stairs with her dust-pan.

During her short absence the dishes had been whisked into their places, the kitchen made clean and both mother and daughter were seated at their sewing. Mrs. Morgan eyed the trim figure in sweeping-cap and gloves, a broom and dust-pan in hand, with no approval in her glance.

"I should think you were a little too much

dressed up for such work," she said, producing at last the thought which had been wrangling for two days. This was Louise's opportunity.

"Oh, no," she said, pleasantly. "I am dressed just right for ordinary work. Why, mother, my dress cost less than Dorothy's; her's is part woolen, and mine is nothing but cotton."

This remark brought Dorothy's eyes from their work, and fixed them in admiring amaze on the well-dressed lady before her. Being utterly unacquainted with materials and grades of quality, and judging of dress only by its effects, it was like a bewildering revelation that the dress which to her looked elegant, cost less than her own. There flashed just then into her heart the possibility that some day she, too, might have something pretty.

Louise did not wait for her revelation to be commented upon, but drew nearer to the workers. Mrs. Morgan was sewing rapidly on a dingy calico for herself.

"Oh, let me make the button-holes," said, or rather, exclaimed, the new daughter, as though it were to be counted a privilege. "I can make

beautiful ones, and I always made mother's and Estelle's."

Now, it so happened that Mrs. Morgan, with all her deftness with the needle, and she had considerable, was not skilled in that difficult branch of needle work, the making of button-holes. Moreover, though she considered it an element of weakness, and would by no means have acknowledged it, she hated the work, with an absolute hatred born of a feeling, strong in such natures as hers, or aversion toward anything which they can not do as well, if not better, than others. The thought of securing well-made button-holes, over which she had not to struggle, came with a sense of rest to her soul, and she answered, more kindly than Louise had heard her speak before :

"Oh, I don't want you to bother with my button-holes."

"I shall not," said Louise, brightly. "Button-holes never bother me ; I like to work them as well as some people like to do embroidery."

Then she went to the sink, in the kitchen and washed her hands in the bright tin basin, and dried them on the coarse, clean family towel.

Presently she came, thimble and needle-case in hand, and established herself on one of the yellow wooden chairs to make button-holes in the dingy calico ; and, with the delicate stitches in those button-holes, she worked an entrance-way into her mother-in-law's heart.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW SERVICE FOR THE SABBATH.



T what hour do you have to start for church?"

This was the question which Louise asked of her husband on Saturday evening, as she moved about their room, making preparations for the next morning's toilet.

"Well," he said, "it is three miles, you know. We make an effort to get started by about half past nine, though sometimes we are late. It makes hurrying work on Sunday morning, Louise. I don't know how you will like that."

"I shouldn't think there would be room in one carriage for all the family. Is there?"

"Room for all who go," Lewis said, gravely.

“All who go! why, they all go to church, don't they?”

“Why, no; in fact they *never* all go at one time; they can not leave the house, you know.”

Louise's bewildered look proved that she did not know.”

“Why not?” she asked, with wonderment in tone and eyes. What will happen to the house?”

Despite a desire not to do so, her husband was obliged to laugh.

“Well,” he said hesitatingly, “you know they never leave a farm-house alone and go to church.”

“I didn't know it, I am sure. Why don't they?”

“I declare I don't know,” and he laughed again. “Possibly it is a notion; there are ugly-looking fellows prowling around, sometimes, and — well, it's the custom, anyway.”

“Don't they *ever* close the house and all go away?”

Then was Lewis Morgan nonplussed. Distinct memories rose before his eyes of Thanksgiving days, and Christmas days, and Fair days, and gala days of several sorts, when the house had

been closed and darkened, and left to itself from early morning late into the afternoon. How was he to explain why a thing that was feasible for holidays became impracticable on the Sabbath?

“I’m not sure but that is one of the things that ‘no f-f-fellow can f-f-find out,’” he said, with a burst of laughter. “Do you know ‘Lord Dundreary?’” Then: “Seriously, Louise, our family has fallen into the custom that obtains of not closing a farm-house save on special occasions. I suspect the custom sometimes grows out of indifference for church. You remember that none of the family have a real love for the service. It is a source of sorrow to me, as you may suppose. I hope for better things.”

Then the talk drifted away into other channels; but, in Louise’s heart, there lingered a minor tone of music over the thought that the next day would be the Sabbath. Shut away, for the first time in her life, from the prayer-meeting, from the hour of family worship, from constant and pleasant interchange of thought on religious themes, she felt a hunger for it all, such as she had never realized before, and closed her eyes

that night with this refrain in her heart: "Tomorrow I shall go to church."

The first conscious sound the next morning was the dripping of the rain-drops from the eaves.

"Oh, dear!" Lewis said, dismay in his voice, "we are going to have a rainy day!"

A careful, critical look at the prospect from the eastern window confirmed this opinion, and he repeated it with a gloomy face, adding:

"I don't know when the weather has succeeded in disappointing me so much before."

"Never mind," Louise said, cheerily. "It will not make much difference. I don't mind the rain. I have a rainy-day suit, that mamma used to call my coat of mail. It is impervious to all sorts of weather; and, with your rubber coat, and a good sized umbrella, we shall do almost as well as though the sun shone."

But her husband's face did not brighten.

"It is not personal inconvenience that I fear for you," he said gravely, "but disappointment. The truth is, Louise, I am afraid we can't go to church. This looks like a persistent storm, and my father has such a love for his horses, and such

a dread of their exposure to these winter storms, that he never thinks of getting them out in the rain, unless it is absolutely necessary; and you know he doesn't consider church-going an absolutely necessary thing. Could you bear to be disappointed, and stay at home with me all day?"

"Why, yes," said Louise slowly, trying to smile over those two words, "with me." "That is, if it is right. But, Lewis, it seems so strange a thing to do, to stay at home from church *all day* on account of a little rain that would hardly keep us from a shopping excursion."

"I know, looking at it from your stand-point it must seem very strange; but all the education of my home has been so different that I do not suppose it even seems as strange to me as to you. Still I by no means approve; and, as soon as I can make arrangements for a horse of my own, we will not be tried in this way. Indeed, Louise, I can manage it now. Of course, if I insist on it, my father will yield the point, but he will offer very serious objection. What do you think, would it be right to press the question against his will?"

"Certainly not," his wife said hastily. "At

least," she added, with a bright smile, "I don't suppose the command to obey one's parents is exactly annulled by the marriage service. Anyway, the 'honor thy father and thy mother' never is."

And she put aside her church toilet, and made her preparations to do that which was to her an unprecedented thing — stay at home from church in full health and strength.

The question once settled that, under the circumstances, it was the proper thing to do, it was by no means a disagreeable way of spending Sabbath morning. Her husband had been so constantly occupied since their home-coming, in carrying out his father's plans for improvements on the farm, that Louise had seen but little of him; and, when, after breakfast, they returned to their own room, and he, in dressing-gown and slippers, replenished the crackling wood-fire, and opened the entire front of the old-fashioned stove, letting the glow from it brighten the room, Louise admitted that the prospect was most inviting.

She drew her own little rocker, which had travelled with her from her room at home, and

settled beside him, book in hand, for a delightful two hours of social communion, such as they had not enjoyed in weeks before.

The reading and the talking that went on in that room, on that rainy Sabbath morning, were looked back to afterward as pleasant hours to be remembered. Occasionally the fact that it was Sunday, and she not at church, and a picture of the dear church at home, and the dear faces in the family pew, and the seat left vacant in the Sunday-school room, would shadow Louise's face for an instant; but it brightened again. She had chosen her lot, guided, as she believed, by the hand of her Lord. It was not for a face realizing this, to be in shadow.

It was not until the Sunday dinner had been eaten, and they were back again, those two, in the brightness of their enjoyed solitude, that the grave, preoccupied look on Louise's face told that her thoughts were busy with something outside of their surroundings; something that troubled her.

"Lewis, what shall we do this afternoon?" she asked him, interrupting a sentence in which

he was declaring that a rainy Sunday was, after all, a blessing.

“Do!” he repeated. “Why, we will have a delightful Sunday afternoon talk, and with a little reading, and a good deal of—well, I don’t know just what name to give it; *heart-rest*, perhaps, would be a good one. Aren’t you enjoying the day, dear?”

She turned toward him a smiling face.

“Yes, with a thoroughly selfish enjoyment, I am afraid. I was thinking of the family downstairs; what can we do to help them, Lewis?”

“Oh!” said her husband, and his face clouded; he seemed to have no other suggestion to offer.

“They did not look as though they were enjoying the day. I think it must be dreary for Dorothy and John. I wish we could contribute something to make the time seem less lonely to them. Suppose we go down, Lewis, and try what we can do.”

Her husband looked as though that was the thing, of all others, which he had the least desire to do.

“My dear Louise,” he began slowly, then stopped, and, finding that she waited, began

again. "The trouble is, wife, I don't know how we can help any of them. They are not good at talking, and the sort of talk in which John and Dorothy indulge wouldn't strike you as being suited to the Sabbath day; in fact, I don't believe you would join in it. They are used to being at home on the Sabbath; we are always home from church by this time, and the afternoon is the same to them it always is. I don't believe we can do anything, dear."

Mrs. Morgan did not look in the least convinced.

"The afternoon ought not to be the same to them it always has been, should it, Lewis? *We* have come home, a new element in the family. We ought, surely, to have some influence. Can't we find something to say that will do for the Sabbath? What have you talked about, with the family, before I came? How did you spend Sunday afternoons?"

"Up here, in my room, when it wasn't too cold; and sometimes, when it was, I went to bed, and did my reading and thinking there. I rarely go down-stairs on Sunday until milking time. You see, Louise, I really don't know my

own family very well. The early age at which I left home, being only back for a few weeks at a time during vacations; then my exile, with Uncle John, to Australia — all this has contributed to making me a sort of stranger among them. I doubt whether John and Dorothy feel much better acquainted with me than they do with you; they were both little things when I went away; and, during this last year, I hardly know what is the matter. Perhaps I haven't gone about it in the right way; but I haven't seemed to make any advances in their direction.

“To be very frank with you, Louise, John is always sullen toward me; and Dorothy acts as though she were half afraid of me, and her foolish jumpings and blushings seem so out of place, when one remembers that she is my own sister, that, I will confess to you, I sometimes feel utterly out of patience with her. As for my mother and father, while I honor them as true unselfish, faithful parents, there are many subjects upon which we do not think alike; and I am often at a loss to know how to get along without hurting their feelings. The result is, that I shirk the social a good deal, and devote

myself to myself, or did. Now that I have you to devote myself to, I am willing to be as social as you please."

The sentence begun in seriousness he had purposely allowed to assume a lighter tone; but Louise held with sweet gravity to her former topic.

"Even Christ pleased not himself," she quoted gently; then added; "You may imagine how pleasant it is to me to sit here with you for a whole quiet day. Nevertheless, Lewis, let us go down-stairs to the family, and see if we can not, as a family, honor the day together."

She had risen as she spoke, and drawn her little rocker away from the stove, preparatory to leaving the room. Very slowly her husband followed her example, reluctance on every line of his face.

"I will go down with you, if you say so; but, honestly, I never dreaded to do anything more in my life! I can imagine that it seems a very strange thing to you; but I, really and truly, don't in the least know what to say when we get down there; I mean that will be in keeping with our ideas of the Sabbath, and will help anybody."

“Neither do I,” said Louise, quietly. “Since we both feel our unfitness, let us kneel down, before we go, and ask for the Spirit’s guidance. Don’t you know he promises: ‘Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it?’ I can not help thinking that he points us down to that family room; why should not we ask him to fill our mouths?”

Without another word, and with a strange sense of solemnity about him the young husband turned and dropped upon his knees, beside his wife.

A few minutes thereafter they of the kitchen were startled by the unexpected entrance of the young couple into their midst. Almost any movement would have startled the quiet that reigned therein.

The kitchen, on a dull day, with its scarcity of windows, was a dark and dingy spot, the clean and shining stove being the only speck of brightness. The family group was complete; yet Louise, as she glanced around her, taking in their occupations, or *want* of occupations, could not forbear feeling the sense of dullness which their positions suggested. Farmer Morgan, with his

steel-bowed spectacles mounted on his forehead, winked and blinked over the columns of the weekly paper. Mrs. Morgan sat bolt upright in her favorite, straight-backed chair, and held in her hands an old-fashioned family Bible in which Neelie had dutifully been spelling out the words until her restlessness had gotten the better of her mother's patience, and she had been sent to the straight-backed chair in the corner, to sit "until she could learn to stand still, and not twist around on one foot, and hop up and down when she was reading!" How long will poor Neelie have to "sit" before she learns that lesson?

Dorothy, without the hopping, was not one whit less restless, and lounged from one chair to another in an exasperatingly aimless way, calling forth from her mother, several times, a sharp, "Dorothy, why *can't* you sit still when you get a chance? If you worked as hard as I do, all the week, you would be glad enough for a day of rest." But poor Dorothy was not glad; she hated the stillness and inaction of the Sabbath; she breathed a sigh of relief when the solemn-voiced clock clanged out another hour, and looked forward with a sort of satisfaction even

to the bustle of the coming wash-day morning. John was there, as silent and immovable as a statue : sitting in his favorite corner, behind the stove ; in his favorite attitude, boots raised high to the stove-hearth ; slouched hat on, drawn partly over his eyes ; hands in his pockets, and a deeper shade of sullenness in his face. So it seemed to Louise. "Poor fellow !" she said, in compassionate thought. "It is a surprise to me that he doesn't do something awfully wicked. He will do it, too ; I can see it in his face ; unless —"

But she didn't finish her thought, even to herself. These various persons glanced up, on the entrance of the two, and looked their surprise. Then Farmer Morgan, seeing that they proposed to take seats, moved his chair a little and motioned Lewis nearer the stove, with the words :

"A nasty day ; fire feels good."

"Yet it hasn't rained much," Lewis said, watching Louise, and, finding that she went over to the unoccupied chair nearest Neelie, took the proffered seat.

“Rained enough to make mean going for tomorrow ; and we’ve got to go to town in the morning, rain or shine. I never did see the beat of this winter for rain and mud ; I don’t believe it will freeze up before Christmas.”

“You can’t get started very early for town,” remarked Mrs. Morgan. “There was so much to do yesterday, that I didn’t get around to fixing the butter, and it will take quite a little spell in the morning ; and Dorothy didn’t count over the eggs, and pack ’em, either. Dorothy’s fingers were all thumbs, by the way she worked yesterday ; we didn’t get near as much done as common.”

“She and John was about a match, I guess,” Farmer Morgan said, glancing at the sullen-browed young man behind the stove. “Yesterday was his unlucky day. About everything you touched broke, didn’t it, John ?”

“That’s nothing new.”

John growled out this contribution to the conversation between lips that seemed firmly closed. Lewis glanced toward his wife. How would she think they were getting on ? What would she

think of butter, and eggs, and accidents as topics for Sabbath conversation?

But Louise had put an arm around little Neelie, and was holding a whispered conversation with her, and at this moment broke into the talk.

“Mother, may this little maiden come and sit on my lap, if she will be very good and quiet? My arms ache for the little girlie who used to climb into them at about this hour on Sunday.”

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW SABBATH CLASS.



NEELIE is too big to sit on people's laps," her mother said ; " but she can get up, if she wants to, and can keep from squirming about like a wild animal, instead of acting like a well-behaved little girl."

" Too big " though she was considered, Neelie, poor baby, gladly availed herself of the permission, and curled in a happy little heap in her new sister's arms ; when commenced a low-toned conversation. Lewis watched her, and struggled with his brain, striving to think of some way of helping.

" Have you got acquainted with Mr. Butler, father ? "

Now, Mr. Butler was the new minister, and

Louise, who had heard his name mentioned, was interested in the answer. Farmer Morgan laid down his newspaper, crossed one leg over the other, tilted his chair back a trifle, and was ready to talk.

“Acquainted with him? No, I can’t say that I am; he knows my name, and I know his; and he says, ‘How do you do?’ to me when he meets me on the street, if he isn’t in too brown a study to notice me at all. I reckon that is about as near as I shall get to an acquaintance. I ain’t used to any great attention from ministers, you know.”

“I thought, possibly, he had called during my absence.”

“No, he hasn’t. When it comes to making a friendly call, we live a good ways out, and the road is bad, and the weather is bad, and it is tremendously inconvenient.”

“We always live a good ways out of town, except when there is to be a fair or festival, or doings of some kind, when they want cream, and butter, and eggs, and chickens; then we are as handy to get at as anybody in the congregation.” This from his mother.

Lewis could not avoid a slight laugh; the social qualities of the little church in the village, or at least its degree of social intercourse with its country neighbors, was so clearly stated by that last sentence.

"Oh, well," he said, "it *is* a good ways out for those who have no horses to depend on, and many of the church people are in that condition; as for Mr. Butler, he has been here but a short time; of course, he hasn't gotten around the parish yet."

"No," said his father, significantly. "It takes a dreadful long time to get around a small field, especially when there's no special motive for going. But, land! *we* don't care; a body would think, to hear us talk, that we were dreadful anxious for a call. I don't know what he would call for; 'pears to me it would be a waste of time."

"You like his preaching, don't you, father?"

The farmer tore little strips from the edge of his paper, and rolled them thoughtfully between his thumb and finger for a little before he answered.

"Why, his preaching is all well enough, I

suppose; I never heard any *preaching* that wouldn't do pretty well, considering; it's the *practicing* that I find fault with. I can't find anybody that seems to be doing what the preachers advise. What is the use in preaching all the time, if nobody goes and does it?"

This was Farmer Morgan's favorite topic, as indeed, it seems to be a favorite with a great many people — the inconsistencies of the Christian world. A fruitful topic, certainly; and it is bitterly to be regretted that there is a chance for such unending sarcasm on that subject. Lewis had heard the same sentiment often before, and being met — as, unfortunately, so many of us are — by an instant realization of his own inconsistencies, his mouth had been stopped at once. To-day he rallied his waning courage, and resolved upon a point-blank question.

"Well, father, why don't you, who understand so well how a Christian ought to live, set us an example, and, perhaps, we will succeed better when we try to copy you?"

This question astounded Farmer Morgan. Coming from a minister, he would have considered it pretty sharp; would have laughed at it

good-naturedly, and turned it aside. But from his own son, and spoken in such a tone of gravity and earnestness as left no room for trifling it startled him. Lewis had never spoken to him in that direct fashion before. In truth, Lewis had been, during all his Christian life at home, comforting his heart and excusing his conscience with the belief that, in order not to prejudice his father against religion, he would do well to make no personal appeals of any sort. To-day, in the light of the brief conversation which he had held with his wife, and, more than that, in the light of the brief prayer, in which they had asked the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he began to conclude that he had been a coward.

“Well,” his father said, after a moment of astonished silence, “that is a fair question, may be; but then, after all, it is easily answered. There’s folks enough trying at it, and making failures, without me to swell their number. Till I see somebody who is succeeding a little better than any one I know, I haven’t got the courage to begin.”

“Leaving us an example, that ye should follow *His* steps,” quoted Lewis Morgan, solemnly,

“After all, father, the true pattern is certainly perfect; why not follow that? Who ever asks the school-boy to imitate the scrawl of some fellow pupil, so long as the perfect copy is just before his eyes, at the top of the page?”

His father regarded him meditatively; was he touched at last—impressed by the thought of the wonderful life waiting for him to follow? Lewis Morgan’s breath came quickly, and he waited, in trembling eagerness, for the reply. It was the first time that he had attempted anything like a personal conversation on this subject with his father.

Slowly, and with apparently great seriousness the answer came at last:

“It is most a pity that your health didn’t hold out; I ain’t sure, after all, but you would have made as good a minister as the rest of them. Sometimes I’m a trifle afraid that you have got a little too much learning to make a downright good farmer.”

The quick bounds of hope that the son’s blood was making receded in dull, heavy throbs, and he counted his first attempt a failure. He looked over to Louise. Wasn’t she ready to give up

this hopeless attempt at spiritualizing the tone of the conversation down-stairs? He thought he would give almost anything to hide his sore heart, just then, in the quiet of their own room with the sympathy of her presence to sooth him.

But Louise was telling Neelie a story; and, as he listened, and watched her, it became evident to him that both Dorothy and John were listening. Dorothy had ceased her restless fidgetings, and settled into absolute quiet; her arm resting on the broad, low window-seat, and her eyes fixed on Louise. John had drawn his hat lower, so that his eyes were hidden entirely; but something in the setting of his lips told Lewis that he heard. Very quietly Louise's voice told the story; very simply chosen were the words.

"Yes, there He was in the great, gloomy woods, for forty days, without anything to eat, and no where to rest, and all the time Satan tempting him to do what was wrong. 'Come,' he said to him, 'if you are the Son of God why do you stay here hungry; what good will that do anybody? Why don't you make bread out of these stones? You can do it; you could make

a stone into a loaf of bread in an instant ; why don't you ? ”

“ And could he ? ” Neelie asked, her eyes large and wondering.

“ Oh, yes, indeed ! Why not ? Do you suppose it would be any harder to turn a stone into bread than it would be to make a strawberry, or a potato, or an apple ? ”

“ Strawberries and apples and potatoes grow, ” said this advanced little skeptic.

“ Yes, but what makes them grow ? And why does a strawberry plant *always* give us strawberries, and never plums or grapes ? It never makes a mistake. Somebody, very wise, is taking care of the little plant. It is this same person whom Satan was trying to coax to make bread out of stones. ”

“ Well, why didn't he do it ? I don't think it would have been naughty. ”

“ I'll tell you. It is very hard to be hungry ; it was a great temptation ; but Jesus had promised his Father that he would come here and bear everything that any man could have to, that he would just be a man. Now, a *man* couldn't make bread out of stones, you know,

so Jesus wouldn't be keeping his promise if he did it; and then, another thing, if he had used his great power and gotten himself out of this trouble, all the poor hungry boys and girls, who are tempted to steal, would have said: Oh, yes, Jesus don't know anything about how it feels to be hungry; he could turn stones into bread; if we could do that we wouldn't steal, either.' Don't you see?"

"Yes," said Neelie, "I see. Go on, please; he didn't make any bread, did he?"

"Not at that time; he told Satan it was more important that he should show his trust in God, than to show his power by making stones into bread. Then Satan coaxed him to throw himself down from a great, high steeple, so that the people below would see him, and see that he wasn't hurt at all. He reminded him of a promise that God made; about the angels taking care of him."

"I wish he *had* done that!" Neelie said, with shining eyes; "then the people would all have believed that he was God."

"No, they wouldn't; for, afterward, he did just as wonderful things as that. He cured deaf

people, and blind people, and raised dead people to life, and they didn't believe in him; instead, some of them were angry with him about these very things. He told Satan that to put himself in danger, when there was nothing to be gained by it, was just tempting God. Dear me! how many boys and girls do that! Then Satan told him that he would give up the whole world to him if he would just fall down and worship him. I suppose Jesus thought then, all about the weary way that he would have to travel — all the things he would have to bear."

"Did the world belong to Satan?" Neelie asked; at which question John was betrayed into a laugh.

"Well yes, in a sense it did. Don't you see how much power Satan has over people in this world? they seem to like to work for him. Some of them are doing all they can to please him, and he is always at work coaxing them to give themselves entirely to him, promising them such great things if they only will. I suppose if he had kept that promise to Jesus, and given up leading the world in the wrong road, it would have been much easier for Jesus."

“ But Jesus didn’t do it.”

“ No, indeed! Jesus never would do any thing *wrong* to save himself from trouble or sorrow. He said, ‘ Get thee behind me, Satan.’ What a pity that little boys and girls don’t refuse, in that way, to listen to Satan, when he coaxes them, and offers them rewards! Think of believing *Satan!* Why, the first we ever hear of him he was telling a lie to Eve, in that garden, you know; and he has gone on cheating people ever since.”

“ He never cheated me,” said Neelie, positively.

“ Didn’t he? Are you sure? Did he never make you think that it would be *so* nice to do something that you knew mother wouldn’t like? Hasn’t he made you believe that you could have a real happy time if you could only do as you wanted to: and have you never tried it, and found out what an untrue thing it was?”

“ Yes,” said Neelie, drooping her head; “ one time I ran away from school and went to the woods; I thought it would be splendid, and I got my feet wet, and was sick, and it wasn’t nice, a single bit.”

“Of course not; and that is just the way Satan keeps treating people. Shouldn't you think, after he had deceived them a great many times, as they grew older they would decide that he was only trying to ruin them, and would have nothing more to do with him?”

“Yes,” said Neelie, nodding her wise little head, “I should. But, then, maybe they can't get away from him.”

“Oh, yes, they can; don't you see how Jesus got away from him? And what do you think he suffered those temptations for, and then had the story written down for us, just so we could see that he knew all about temptations, and about Satan, and was stronger than he, and was able to help all tempted people? He says he will not let people be tempted more than they can bear, but will show them how to escape.”

“Then, why doesn't he?”

“He does, dear, every single time; he has never failed anybody yet, and it is hundreds and hundreds of years since he made that promise.”

“But, then, I should think that everybody would be good, and never do wrong.”

“Ah, but you see, little Neelie, the trouble is,

people *won't let him help them*. I mean he takes care of all who trust in him to do so. But, if you think you are strong enough to take care of yourself, and won't stay by him, nor obey his directions, nor ask his help, how can you expect to be kept out of trouble? When I was a little bit of a girlie I went to walk with my papa. He said: 'Now, Louise, if you will keep right in this path I will see that nothing hurts you.' We were going through the woods. For a little while I kept beside him, taking hold of his hand. Then I said: 'Oh, papa, I'm not afraid; nothing will hurt *me*.' And away I ran into the thickest trees, and I got lost, and was in that woods nearly all night! Do you think that was my papa's fault?"

"No," said Neelie, gravely. "But—I wish there wasn't any Satan. Does he ever bother you?"

Louise's head dropped lower; the talk was becoming very personal.

"Not often, now," she said, speaking low. "He comes to me and whispers thoughts that I don't like, and I say—"

“Oh!” said Neelie, loud-voiced and eager, “I know—you say, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan.’”

“No,” said Louise, firmly, “not that. I heard a lady say once that she was as much afraid of having Satan behind her as she was of having him anywhere else. So am I. Instead, I ask Jesus to send him away. I just say, ‘Jesus keep me,’ and at the name of Jesus Satan goes away. He *knows* he can not coax Jesus to do any wrong. But, oh dear! how hard he fights for those people who will not have Jesus to help them. He keeps whispering plans in their ears, and coaxing them, they thinking all the time that the plans are their own, and they follow them, expecting to have good times, and never having them; and all the while Satan laughs over their folly. Isn’t it strange that they will not take the help that Jesus offers?”

“Yes,” said Neelie, slowly, gravely, intense earnestness in voice and manner. “I mean to.”

Louise drew her closer, rested her head against the golden one, and began to sing in low, sweet notes :

“ Take the name of Jesus, ever,
As a shield for every snare ;
When temptations round you gather,
Breathe that holy name in prayer.”

All conversation, or attempts at conversation, had ceased in the room long before the singing. Some spell about the old, simply-told story of temptation and struggle and victory had seemed to hold all the group as listeners. John's face, as much of it as could be seen under his hat and shading hand, worked strangely. Was the blessed Holy Spirit, whose presence and aid had been invoked, using the story told the child to flash before this young man a revelation of the name of the leader he had been so faithfully following, so steadily serving, all the years of his young life? Did he begin to have a dim realization of the fact that his unsatisfying plans, his shattered hopes, were but the mockery of his false-hearted guide? Whatever he thought he kept it to himself, and rose abruptly in the midst of the singing and went out.

“ Come,” said Farmer Morgan, breaking the hush following the last line, “ it is milking time,

and time for a bit of supper, too, I guess. The afternoon has been uncommon short."

He tried to speak as usual, but his voice was a trifle husky. He could argue, but the story told his child had, somehow, subdued him. Who shall say that the Spirit did not knock loudly, that Sabbath afternoon, at the door of each heart in that room? Who shall say that he did not use Louise Morgan's simple efforts to honor the day in stirring the rust that had gathered about the hinges of those long-bolted doors?

CHAPTER VIII.

NEW LIGHT.



HE little, old-fashioned square "stand" was drawn up in front of the Franklin stove, which last was opened to let a glow of brightness reach across the room, and beside it were Lewis and Louise Morgan, seated for an evening of good cheer. She had a bit of needlework, in which she was taking careful stitches, and her husband held in his hand, open to a previously set mark, a handsomely bound copy of Shakespeare. He was one of those rare persons, a good reader of Shakespeare, and, in the old days at home, Louise had delighted to sit, work in hand, and listen to the music of his voice in the rendering.

He had not commenced the regular reading,

but was dipping into bits here and there, while he waited for her to "settle," as he called the bringing of her small work-basket, and the searching out her work. Now, although she was "settled," and looking apparently thoughtful enough for the saddest scenes from the great writer, he still continued his glancings from page to page; breaking out presently with:

" Louise, do you remember this ?

‘ I never did repent for doing good,
Nor shall not now ; for in companions
That do converse and waste the time together,
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
There must be needs a like proportion
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit.’

Do you remember what a suggestive shrug of her shoulders Estelle gave, over the line :

‘ That do converse and waste the time together ? ’

I suspect she thought it fitted us precisely."

" Yes," Louise said, smiling in a most pre-occupied way. That her thoughts were not all on Shakespeare, nor even on that fairer object, Estelle, she presently evinced by a question :

“Lewis, how far did Dorothy get in her studies?”

“Dorothy?” repeated her husband, looking up in surprise, and with difficulty coming back from Shakespeare; “I don’t know, I am sure. As far, I remember hearing, as the teachers in our district school could take them. That is not saying much, to be sure; though, by the way, I hear they have an exceptionally good one this winter. Poor Dorothy didn’t have half a chance; I tried to manage it, but I couldn’t. Hear this, Louise:

‘How he glistens through my rust!
And how his piety does my deeds make the blacker!’

Isn’t that a simile for you?”

“Very,” said Louise; and her husband glanced at her curiously. What was she thinking of, and how did that brief “very” fit in with Leontes’ wonderful simile?

“Well,” he said, “are your thimbles and pins and things all ready, wife? shall I commence?”

“Not just yet, dear; I want to talk. What do you think about it; was she disappointed at not having better opportunities?”

“Who? Oh, Dorothy! I thought you were talking about Hermione; she fainted, you know. Yes, Dorothy was disappointed. She wanted to go to the academy in town, and she ought to have had the opportunity, but we couldn't bring it to pass. I was at home but a few weeks, or I might have accomplished more. What is the trouble, Louise, dear? How does it happen that you find poor Dorothy more interesting than Shakespeare to-night?”

“Well, said Louise, laughing, “it is true; I can not get away from her; her life seems so forlorn, someway. I can't help being sorry for her. She is losing her girlhood almost before it is time for it to bloom. I have been wondering and wondering all day what there was that we could do for her; and I find the real life being worked out before our eyes, so engrossing that it is hard to come back to the dead lives of Shakespeare.”

Her husband closed the book, putting his finger between the leaves to mark the place.

“I have studied that problem somewhat, Louise,” he said, earnestly, “in the days gone by. I didn't succeed in making much of it. It

is true, as you say, that she is slipping away from girlhood, almost without knowing that she has been a girl; sometimes I think that she will have only two experiences of life: childhood and old womanhood. Mother can not realize that she is yet any more than a child, to be governed, and to obey; and one of these mornings it will be discovered that she is no longer a child, but has passed middle life. Her future looks somewhat dreary to me, I confess."

"We must not let it grow dreary," Louise said, with a determined tone, and a positive setting of her small foot. A curious habit that she had, when very much in earnest. "What sense is there in it? She is young, and in good health and has a sound brain; why should she not make her life what it ought to be? Why shouldn't we help her in a hundred ways?"

"Yes; but come down to actual, practical truth; what is there that she can do for herself, or that we can do for her? You see, Louise our family is peculiar; there is no use in shutting one's eyes to that fact. It is not because father is a farmer that we find ourselves situated just as we are; other farmers have very different

experiences. We are surrounded on all sides with men who get their living by cultivating the fields ; whose sons and daughters are in college, or seminary, and in society, and who, in every way, take as good a position, and have as many advantages, as town-bred people—at the expense, it is true, of some inconvenience and special labor. Of course, it is also true that some of the sons and daughters do not choose to accept all the advantages for cultivation ; and equally, of course, there are some who are unable to furnish the means for what they would like their children to enjoy ; but no greater proportion of that class in the country than in town, I think. My father does not belong to any of these classes ; he is as I said, peculiar.”

At this point both husband and wife stopped to laugh over the associations connected with that word “peculiar ;” it bringing to the minds of both, reminders of Gough and Dickens, as well as many more common characters which those two geniuses have caricatured.

“It is true, nevertheless,” Lewis said, the laugh over. “Let me see if I can explain. In the first place, both father and mother had, in

their youth, lives of grinding toil and poverty. Both were shrewd, clear-headed people, with, I think, much more than the average share of brains. The result is that, despite drawbacks and privations, they made their way, acquiring, not thorough educations, it is true, but a very fair degree of knowledge on all practical subjects. The amount of information which my mother, for instance, possesses about matters concerning which she would be supposed to know nothing, would surprise you. Perhaps the result of all this is natural; anyway, it is evident. They believe that the rubbing process is decidedly the best way to secure education or anything else needed in this world. If one makes his way in spite of obstacles, they believe it is because the grit is in him, and must find its end. Had Dorothy, for instance, pushed her determination to attend school in town, and get a thorough education; pushed it persistently — what you would call doggedly — against argument and opposition, and everything but absolute command — she would have won the prize, and both father and mother would have in a certain sense, respected her more than they

do now. But Dorothy was not of that mold, she wanted to go on with her studies. Had everything been smooth before her, she would, doubtless, have gone on, and made a fair scholar ; but to stem a current, with so much against her, required more effort of a certain kind than she knew how to make."

"I conclude," said his wife, smiling brightly on him, "that you were one of those who can push persistently."

He answered her smile, partly with a laugh, and partly with a shrug of his handsome shoulders :

"I did push ! most vehemently some of the time ; worked my way part of the time besides, as you know ; but in the end I gained. Both father and mother have a degree of pride in my persistence ; it reminds them of their own rugged natures."

"I wonder that Dorothy, crossed in her natural ambitions, did not run into the extremes, on the question of dress and society, and, well — and aimless *going*, generally, without regard to quality or consequence. That is the rock on which so many girls shipwreck."

“I think she would have done just that thing had she been given opportunity. I think it is what both my father and mother were afraid of. It has made them draw the reins of family government very tightly. They simply commanded that singing-schools, and country-school debating societies, and social gatherings, in the shape of apple-parings, corn-huskings, quilting-bees — any and everything of that nature, or those with new names that, in more modern days, have sprung from their roots — should be ignored. We were all under that command; so that the consequence is, we are almost as isolated from our neighbors as though we had none. My mother did not feel the need of society. She could not understand why anyone should feel that need; consequently, she has no society. There are good and pleasant people around us, people whom it would be a pleasure to you to meet; but they never come near us, because we have, as a family, given them to understand that we have nothing to do with common humanity.”

“What a strange idea! Do you know, I have wondered why it was that your neighbors

didn't call on me? I thought it must be that they had a preconceived dislike for me, some-way."

"They have a preconceived belief that you will not care to see them. You would be amused to see how this withdrawal from all friendships has been translated. If father were a poor man, having a struggle to get along, it would be set down as queerness, perhaps, or a dislike to mingling with those who were better off in this world's goods than ourselves; but, with his farm stretching before their eyes in so many smiling acres, and with his barns, the finest and best stocked in the neighborhood, we are looked upon as a family too aristocratic to mingle with country people; which is simply funny, when you take into consideration the fact that we have never been other than country people ourselves, and that we live much more plainly than any of our neighbors. But you can readily see the effect on Dorothy; she has, in a degree, dropped out of life. The occasional going to church on a pleasant Sunday, and going to market with mother when both can, on rare occasions, be spared from home, being her two excitements.

She has hardly a speaking acquaintance with the neighbors about us, and no associates whatever."

"Poor girl!" said Louise, and there was more than compassion in her voice; there was a curious undertone of determination, which made her husband smile, and wonder what this little woman, in whose capabilities he thoroughly believed, would do.

"Haven't I established the validity of our claim to being 'peculiar?'" he asked her, gayly.

"I should think you had! What has been the effect of the 'peculiarities' on John?"

Her husband's face instantly sobered, and there was a note of pain in his voice.

"John has broken loose from the restraints in a degree — in a painful degree. He has made his own associates; and they are of a kind that he wouldn't care to bring home, if he had an opportunity. He is away very frequently of evenings; it is difficult to tell where; but the daily decrease of anything like manliness attests the unfortunate result. I am more than suspicious that he is learning to drink something stronger than cider; and I am sure that he oc-

asionally, at least, smokes — two vices that are my father's horror. *He* looks on with apparently mingled feelings of anger and dismay. His pet theories of family government have failed; he honestly desired to shield his children from evil influences; he is comparatively satisfied with the result, both in Dorothy's case and mine; he doesn't know what to think of John; he has spells of great harshness and severity connected with him, thwarting everything that he undertakes in what must seem to John an utterly unreasonable way; and yet I believe it is done with a sore heart, and with an anxious desire for his good. And when my mother's face is most immovable, I have learned to know that she is trying to quiet the frightened beatings of her heart over the wrong-doings of her youngest boy."

"Lewis," his wife said, interrupting the next word, and with intense earnestness and solemnity in her voice, "we must *save* John for Christ, and his father and mother."

"Amen. But how, dear; *how?*"

"Lewis, let's go right down-stairs. They are

all at home ; I noticed it as I came through the room ; and they look so gloomy. Why shouldn't we all have a pleasant evening together ? Did you ever read anything to them ? I thought not. Now, don't you know they *can't help* enjoying your reading ? I mean to try it right away."

"Read Shakespeare?" her husband asked, dryly, albeit there was also dismay in his voice. To talk earnestly over a state of things, to wish that all was different, was one thing ; and to plunge right into the midst of existing things, and try to make them differ, was quite another. His wife answered his question with a bright little laugh.

"No, I don't believe they would enjoy Shakespeare yet, though I am by no means sure that we can't have some good readings from him, sometime. But let me see ; I have a book that I am certain they will all like. You never read it, and you ought to ; it is worth any one's while to read it." And she let fall spool and scissors, and went in eagerness to the old-fashioned swinging shelves, where she had arranged some of her

favorite books, selecting from among them "The New Timothy," by Rev. Wm. M. Baker. "Here it is," she said; "Estelle and I enjoyed this book wonderfully; so did papa. We read it while mamma was away, one winter, when we were dreary without her. John will certainly be interested in the bear hunt; being a boy he can't help it; and I know mother will like to hear about that poor mother down behind the butter-beans."

"Behind the butter-beans! What an extraordinary place for a mother to be! What was she doing there?"

"Wait until you read it, my dear. You will like the book; people of good sense always do."

"Thank you. But Louise, dear, do you think it a wise thing to try? Remember what a disastrous failure I made on Sabbath; I don't believe I am fitted for aggressive movements."

"I don't believe anybody but Christ knows, yet, whether your Sabbath effort was all a failure, Lewis; and I don't believe that you and I have any right with the results, if we did what

we could. Besides, this is different, anyway. I *know* you can read. Come."

"I can't see to read from the light of a tallow candle; I always despised them."

"We will take the lamp," she said, with a defiant little nod of her head toward the pretty bronze figure that held a shapely kerosene lamp of newest pattern, and improved burner, Lewis having searched the Boston lamp stores over for just the right sort of offering for his bride; "we will set it right beside mother, where it will throw just the right angle of light on her work, and yet be shaded from her eyes; and we will not hint, by word or glance, that she may *possibly* see better than she does by her candle. Come, Lewis, carry it; it is too heavy for me; I will bring the book and my work-basket."

"Mother despises dressing-gowns," her husband said, rising slowly, and casting regretful looks at Shakespeare, the open fire, and his lounging-chair; though it was neither the chair, nor yet the book, that held him, but a horrible shrinking from this attempt at innovation, and an almost certainty of disastrous failure.

“No, she doesn’t ; she only thinks so, because she isn’t used to them, and doesn’t realize how much they save coats. I’m going to make John one for Christmas, and a pair of slippers like those Estelle gave you last year, and she will like them very much ; you see if she doesn’t. Now we’re ready.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW CHAMPION.



IF the Sunday callers to the kitchen had astonished the family group, this descent upon them with work-basket, book, and, above all, *lamp*, fairly took from them the power of utterance — at least after Dorothy's first startled "Good land!" when she retired into flushed silence.

"Lewis was going to read to me," explained Louise, in a tone intended to convey the idea that their proceeding was the most natural and ordinary one imaginable, "and I thought it was a pity to waste a new book on one person so we come down for you all to hear. May I sit by you, mother?"

Without waiting for answer, the artful daughter-in-law took her pretty bronze lamp from her husband's hand, and, setting it in "just the right angle," drew one of the wooden-seated chairs and settled herself near it, before the audience had time to recover from its surprise.

"Now, Lewis, we're ready," she added, in complacent tone. She had resolved not to venture on the doubtful question as to whether they desired to hear any reading. If their consent was taken for granted, what could they do but listen?

Nevertheless John seemed resolved not to be taken by guile; he drew himself up, with a shuffling noise, and was evidently making ready for flight. Her husband telegraphed a significant glance at Louise, which said, as plainly as words could, that encouraging sentence: "I told you so; John *won't* stay." But she saw the whole, and, while her heart beat for the success of her scheme, her voice was prompt and assured:

"Oh, John! have you got to go to the barn so soon? Well, never mind, we'll wait for you; I selected this book on purpose, because I was

so sure you would like it; it is a special favorite of mine."

Thus addressed, John, who had had no intention of going to the barn, but simply of escaping, sat down again, for very astonishment; and Lewis, who was both amazed and amused at his wife's boldness, promptly seized the opportunity to commence his book, without further introduction.

All who have had the pleasure of reading that inimitable work of fiction, "The New Timothy," know the treat that was in store. A book so written that, while the refined and cultured reader thoroughly enjoys, the untutored and undisciplined mind also grasps enough of the train of thought to be deeply interested, held indeed by the power of description, and the vividness of detail. It was nearly eight o'clock when the reading commenced, the usual hour for the family to separate, but for an unbroken hour Lewis Morgan's voice went steadily on. The shade of embarrassment, which he felt at first, speedily lost itself in his genuine interest in the book, new to him; and, perhaps, he never showed his reading powers to better advantage.

Louise, to whom the story was an old one, had leisure to watch its effect on the group, and was more than satisfied with the hushed way in which Mother Morgan laid down her great shears, on the uncovered stand, and finally transferred them to her lap, that their clatter might not make her lose a word; at the knitting which dropped from Dorothy's fingers, and lay unheeded, while she, unchid by mother, fixed what were certainly great hungry eyes on the reader, and took in every sentence; at the unwinking eyes of Father Morgan, who did not interrupt the hour by a single yawn, but, above all, at the gleam of intense satisfaction in John's face, when the young minister came off victor. Besides, did she, or did she not, hear a quick, suddenly suppressed sigh, coming from the mother's heart, as she listened to the story of that other mother's wrestlings in prayer, in her closet, "down behind the butter-beans." The loud spoken clock, as it clanged out the hour of nine, was the first interruption to the reading since it struck eight; and, Louise, mindful of the un-wisdom of carrying her experiment too far, hastened to change the programme.

“Why Lewis, it is nine o'clock! It won't do to read any more.”

And Lewis, who had many an evening, read until ten, and occasionally until eleven, to that other family group in the old home, looked up with obtuseness exactly like a man, and was about to ask, “Why not?” but the warning look in her eyes brought him back to the level of present experiences; and, despite Dorothy's hungry eyes and John's utter stillness indicating that he was entirely willing to hear more, the book was promptly closed.

“Well,” said Farmer Morgan, drawing a long breath, “that minister in the book was a most likely chap as ever I heard of; if more of 'em acted like that, I should have a higher opinion of them than I do. It's a very well told story; now that's a fact.”

“A pack of lies, the whole of it.” This from Mother Morgan; not said severely, but in a deprecatory tone, as though she felt herself obliged to say it, as a sort of punishment for having allowed herself to become interested.

“Well now,” said Farmer Morgan, dropping his head to one side, with a thoughtful air, “I

don't know about that; there is nothing so dreadfully unlikely about it. And that smart chap had a streak of good luck and a streak of common sense; and I've known, myself, exactly such a family as that set of boys, father and all, hard as they were. Whether it is *lies* or not, it is told exactly as though it all might have happened. I don't object to hearing it, anyhow; it takes up the time, though: I had no idea it was nine o'clock."

"Nine o'clock isn't late," ventured Dorothy; "Stuart's folks sit up till ten, every evening, most; I always see a light in their front room when I go to bed."

"Yes, and they don't get up till long after daylight, and don't have breakfast until it's most time for dinner. I never brought my children up to habits of that kind, thank fortune."

There was a good deal of sharpness in the mother's tone by this time. The reaction was coming over her; she was growing vexed to think she had allowed her heart to throb in sympathy with the trials of a mother whose experience was only a "pack of lies," forgetting, for the moment, that touches of the bitterness

of that mother's experience over her youngest born had already come to her. If only she would make the experience of prayer her own!

Louise arose promptly; she was satisfied with her experiment, and judged it wise to beat an immediate retreat.

"Come, Lewis," she said, her hand on the pretty lamp; "if I am late to breakfast tomorrow morning, father will think it is a bad book. Isn't that a dainty design for a lamp-handle, mother?"

"It's a dangerous thing to carry around," the mother said grimly, meaning the lamp, and not the handle; "I never take up the paper that I don't read about an accident of some sort with kerosene lamps. If I could have had my way, there should never one of them have come into this house."

"Oh, but this is a new patent; if Lewis should stumble and drop it, the light would go instantly out. Look! just a little motion, such as, of course, the lamp would get if it fell, and the light is gone." Suiting the action to the word, the flame was instantly extinguished.

“There!” Lewis said, “now we are in darkness.”

“I didn’t mean to have it go *quite* out,” Louise answered laughing; “I was only going to move it a little, to show mother. Never mind, John will get us a candle; won’t you John?”

Thus appealed to, John arose slowly from his corner, went slowly to the high mantel, where shone several beautifully polished candlesticks, took from the paper holder a paper match, applied it to his mother’s candle, solemnly lighted the other candle, and as solemnly handed it to Louise; really performing the first act of simple courtesy, for a lady, that he had ever done in his life.

“Thank you,” she said, quite as a matter of course; yet it was actually the first “thank you” of his grown-up life!

There were certainly two sides to John’s gruffness. Louise would have been amazed to know how that simple “thank you” thrilled him! He looked after the bright vision on which the stair-door closed, and had strange stirrings in his heart, the name of which he did not know.

“If I had dared,” began Louise, as soon as they were in the privacy of their own room, “I would have substituted that big, old Bible for this book, during the last ten minutes, and asked you to read a chapter, and pray with us all. I believe your father would have liked it. I don’t believe he is as indifferent to these things as he seems.”

“It is well you don’t dare,” her husband said gravely; “I am afraid I should have disappointed you. Louise, I don’t believe I *could* have done that; it looks to me like an almost impossible thing.”

“Why, Lewis, you led at family worship at home right before papa and mamma and Estelle; and, sometimes, when the house was full of company!”

“That was a very different thing,” he answered, earnestly. “I felt then that the head of the house was in sympathy with me, and joined in the reading and the praying. It was like a company of brothers and sisters, talking together with their father; but here it is different. My father’s tendency would be to make light of the whole thing.”

“I don’t believe it,” she said, positively, “I can’t believe that he would make light of an earnest, simple prayer, such as you would offer. It is the profession of godliness, and an absence of the fruit, that he naturally expects to see in lives, which inclines him to ridicule. That sounds harsh, Lewis, but I don’t mean harshness. What I mean is, that he evidently expects great things of Christians, and their lives, naturally enough, disappoint him. How do you know, dear, but that your very silence, or reserve, toward him on these subjects leads him to question the degree of anxiety you have for his conversion. .

Whatever Lewis Morgan thought of this direct question he made no definite answer, and the subject dropped.

All things considered, Louise was well pleased with the result of one evening’s sacrifice; for to give up the delightful privacy of their own room, and their own plans, and listen to a book that she had heard before, was of course somewhat of a sacrifice. Its result elated her; she felt that her position in the family was on a more assured footing, and looked forward to the ac-

complishment of other little plans with a greater degree of certainty of success than she had felt heretofore. What a pity that her complacent feelings should have been put to rout through the intervention of a boiled dinner!

A victim to old-fashioned Eastern dinners of that type, once explained to a novice the method of making them, after this fashion: "You take a few of everything that grows in the garden, and dump them all together, with some slab-sided beef and a little pork and let them boil for hours and hours!—sending a remarkable odor through the house, which penetrates through every tightly-closed door and window; and then serve with quarts of *slush!*" Whether this recipe would be acknowledged by the lovers of such dinners or not, it exactly describes the state of nerves with which a few people sit down to them. Now, I beg you will not fall into the mistake of supposing my friend Louise to be an epicure, or of being unreasonably dainty as to the food which she ate. On the contrary, if her friends had but known it, she had the comfortable natural appetite which a healthy condition of stomach and brain are likely to produce.

She was not one of those unhappy beings to whom the sight and smell of food, which they do not happen to like, is positive torture; on the contrary, Mother Morgan might have had a boiled dinner three days out of every week, had she chosen; and so long as the bread-tray was piled high with generous slices of good, sweet, home-made bread, and the butter-dish held its roll of hard, yellow, glistening butter, and the generous-sized pitcher brimmed with creamy milk, Louise would have made a dinner fit for a queen, in her own estimation. For when was a healthy city maiden other than rejoiced over real country butter and cream?

The trouble lay in the fact that poor Mother Morgan herself had nerves. Albeit she despised the name, and considered all such matters as modern inventions of fashionable society, it was just as surely an over-wrought and undisciplined state of nerves, which caused her to visit hard-voiced displeasure on certain innocent tastes differing from her own, as though she had expressed it with a burst of tears. Did you ever have for a hostess one who accepted it as a personal insult if you declined any dish of her

preparing? If not, you are fortunate. But just such an one was Mother Morgan. Her family had, for years and years, partaken, with a fair degree of relish, of cabbage and turnip and potato and beets and beef and parsnips and pork, all dwelling in friendly nearness in the same large pot. Nay they had appreciated that sometimes in addition, little round, yellow balls, known to the initiated to be corn-meal balls, but tasting to the ignorant like nothing so much as sawdust wetted up with a little pork gravy.

With a feeling nearly akin to dismay did Louise watch the lading of the plate which she knew was intended for her! How was she ever to dispose of that mass, which, from the unmashed turnip down to the yellow cannon balls, she disliked? If she might only say: "No, thank you," and betake herself to the inviting-looking bread and butter and milk! Why need people have nerves leading straight to their palates, and, in this world of infinite variety, take the trouble to be aggrieved because tastes differed? Meekly she received the well-laden plate, meekly she sliced bits of potato and minced at the turnip, even taking delicate nib-

bles of the stump of cabbage, which she detested. All to no purpose. Mrs. Morgan was watching her with jealous eyes. What right had she to presume to dislike so savory a dinner? Presently her indignation found vent in words.

“I don’t see but we shall have to set a separate table for you ; it seems you can’t stand the dishes we are used to. I don’t want you to starve on our hands, I’m sure.”

Despite the fact that Louise had just received a letter, full of tenderness, from the dear mother at home — a tenderness which made this mother a sharp contrast — she was enabled to laugh, as she answered, pleasantly :

“Oh, mother, I’m in no danger of starving. It seems to me that I like your bread and butte, better than any I ever tasted. I suppose I am somewhat peculiar in my tastes ; but I always find plenty to eat.”

If people could see into each other’s hearts, or if people could keep still when they ought, it might yet have been well. But it chanced that life had gone awry with the young husband that morning. A discussion had arisen between his father and himself concerning certain farming

plans, and a decided difference of opinion had developed, during which the son expressed himself warmly and positively; and the father, waxing indignant, had sharply informed him that going to college and Australia, and marrying a fine lady for a wife, didn't make a farmer. Had Lewis found a moment's leisure and privacy with his wife, and he had spoken his thoughts, they would have been somewhat after this fashion:

"I am discouraged with the whole thing; we never can assimilate. If it were not for you, I should be miserable; you are the joy of my heart, and my rest." Then Louise would have comforted and encouraged him.

As it was, believing in her wholly, and being just then desirous that she should appear perfect in the eyes of his father, he addressed her in a disturbed, not to say almost vexed tone, albeit it was a low one:

"Do, Louise, pretend to eat something, whether you accomplish it or not?"

Louise could never understand how it was; she had not supposed herself one of the nervous sort; but just then and there arose such a lump

in her throat, that to have taken another mouthful would have been impossible; and, to her dismay and chagrin, there rushed into her eyes actual tears!

Then up rose John to the emergencies of the situation.

“Why, in the name of common sense, can’t you all let folks eat what they like, without nagging at them all the time? I never touch cabbage and won’t no more than I will touch a frog, and you let me alone; why can’t you her.”

Whereupon Dorothy was so amazed, that she continued pouring milk into the bowl long after it had brimmed, her eyes fixed, meantime, on her younger brother’s face. As for Lewis, he seemed stricken with remorse for his words, apparently realizing at this moment how they sounded. But Louise was so pleased with John’s evident desire to champion her, and so amused that it should seem to be necessary to shield her on a question of cabbage or not cabbage, that the ludicrous side of the matter came uppermost, and, as she laughed, the lump in her throat vanished.

“Thank you,” she said, gayly, to John ; “don’t you like cabbage, either? I’m glad of it. We’ll form a compact to stand by each other for freedom without cabbage.”

Something approaching to a smile hovered over John’s face, and Dorothy giggled outright.

CHAPTER X.

FISHING.



SUNDAY morning dawned at last, with as bright a sunshine as ever May produced. The air was crisp and clear, and the level road was frozen hard. Look which way he would, Farmer Morgan would have found it hard to produce an excuse why the family should not appear in church. To be sure, he often said that he didn't "feel like going," and, as John wouldn't go, that had heretofore settled the matter for the mother and Dorothy, whether they would or not; but, on this morning, Louise and Lewis came from their room evidently dressed for the day; and Louise, with confident air, remarked :

“What a nice morning for a ride; if one didn’t care for church-going, it would be pleasant to get out to-day.”

In Lewis’ mind were some doubts as to who of the family could go, as the small spring-wagon would not accommodate more than four; but Farmer Morgan settled it by saying in positive voice:

“You’ll have to go to-day, John, and drive. I’ve got a stiff neck, and I don’t feel like going out.”

“I guess Lewis hasn’t forgot how to drive,” John began, sullenly; “I ain’t going to church.”

“You can go to church or not, just as you like, when you get down there, I s’pose; but you will have to drive the horses, for the colt has got to go, and she isn’t used to Lewis, and I won’t have him drive her. It would look more decent to go to church, I think; but you’ve got so you don’t care much about decency, and I s’pose you’ll do as you please. You going, mother?”

“No!” said Mrs. Morgan, promptly; “I’ll get the dinner; Dorothy can go, if she likes.”

And the instant glow on Dorothy’s cheek faded

that she "liked." Only John was sullen; he did not recover during the entire ride; spoke only to the horses, save when Dorothy gave little frightened jumps when the colt seemed to her not to be moving with propriety; then the driver snappishly directed her to "sit still and not act like a simpleton."

Arrived at the church door, he sat still, allowing Lewis to alight and wait on the ladies.

"Let us wait for John," Louise said, as her husband turned from the wagon; "it is nicer to all go in together."

John opened his lips, and if ever lips were going to say, "John isn't coming," his were, but he hesitated, looked down at the young, earnest face turned with a confident air toward him, then turned away, snapped his whip, and said nothing.

"You'll be here in a minute, won't you, John?"

"Yes," he said, or rather snapped, as though he was disgusted with himself for the answer, then giving the colt a smart touch with the whip, she curveted around the corner in a style which

would surely have made Dorothy scream, had she been behind her.

“That is only a little short of a miracle,” Lewis said, in surprise. “I never knew John to compromise his dignity by going to church, after he had announced that he wasn’t going, and that announcement is the rule rather than the exception.”

“I felt as though he *must* come to church this morning, somehow,” Louise made answer, in a low tone; “I couldn’t give it up; it has been the burden of my prayer all the morning.”

To which remark Lewis Morgan had no reply to make; he remembered, with a sudden sting of conscience, that he had not so much as thought of his brother’s name in prayer that morning. Reasoning upon common-sense principles, how much could he have desired his presence in the church?

It was a quiet, little village church; looking natural enough to the eyes of the usual worshippers, but what a strange feeling it gave Louise! She was accustomed to broad, soft-carpeted aisles; richly carved and upholstered seats; costly pulpit furnishing; massive organ, with

solemn tones filling the church. Here her feet trod on bare floors, and the old-fashioned pew, to which she was ushered, had neither footstool nor cushion, though it was high enough to demand the one, and hard enough to suggest the other. The queer red and yellow tassels, which depended from the pulpit cushion, were frayed and faded; the sun streamed in unpleasantly from windows that boasted of neither shades nor blinds; and there was a general air of dilapidation about everything. She looked around with curious eyes on the congregation; their appearance was not in keeping with the surroundings; they looked well-dressed and well-bred, as if the most of them might have come out from comfortable homes, to spend this hour together. To all such, what a painful contrast between the comforts and the luxuries of their own homes must the house of God have presented; while to those who came from desolate homes, if there were any such, what attractions did the place offer? "It isn't even *clean*," the new-comer said to herself, her lip almost curling as she saw the stray bits of paper and card scattered over the floor, and the dust lying loosely everywhere.

“If they care for the church at all, why don't they keep it in order?”

When the service commenced, the feeling of discomfort was not removed. The little choir, perched high in air away at the back of the church, would not at that distance and height have been able to “lead the congregation,” had they been so disposed. Their voices were clear, and in fair tone, and the little parlor organ was originally sweet-voiced, but the whole was so marred by a high-keyed, distressing squeak, that Louise found it difficult to keep back the frowns. She bowed her head during the prayer, and succeeded in getting into the spirit of communion; then waited eagerly for the sermon. The words of the text rang with a suggestive thought: “The life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment.” But, alas, for the sermon! What was the matter with it? It was true; it was well written and well read; it was carefully logical; it sought to impress upon the minds of his hearers what a wonderful and glorious and endless thing was life! And John and Dorothy, those two for whom Louise had most anxious desire, listened — or appeared to listen — to the

wonderful possibilities of this life, and the wonderful certainties of the future, and were as indifferent to the one as the other, neither serving to lift the bored look from their faces. As Louise watched, and saw how little they were getting, Satan appeared to her, suggesting to her heart that perplexing and harrassing question with which he delights to weary those who have tried: "What good," said he, "will it do to have those two young people come to this church, and listen to this sermon? Do you believe they have gotten a single new idea, or aspiration? Don't you feel nearly certain that they will go home less impressible than they came? Because you must remember that every presentation of the truth either helps or hardens; of what use were all your plans and prayers? What availed your little thrill of thanksgiving over the success of your scheme? Don't you see it will amount to less than nothing?" Isn't it strange that the followers of Christ will go on, year after year, bending a listening ear to Satan, while he rings the changes of that old, long-ago vanquished falsehood: "If thou be the Son of God?" "If the Lord had cared

anything about your efforts to serve him," said the tempter on this Sunday morning, "wouldn't he have planned this whole service differently? You believe that he could have done it; why didn't he? You know very well that there hasn't been a thing said that would be in the least likely to help these two persons." What should Louise do? Here she was, in the house of God, and here was this tempting demon at her elbow! Who was it that said: "Whoever else stays away from church, Satan never does?" Whoever said it, the thought flashed over this tried soul suddenly, and she bowed her head to speak a word to that triumphant conqueror, who passed through the conflict centuries ago, and is "able to succor them that are tempted." Did he speak again the word of command: "Get thee hence, Satan?" Assuredly he came himself and stood beside her, and she was enabled to remember that her part was to plant and water, as she could, the fruit thereof being God's part, and his unchangeable "doubtless," was added to the promise of success. In the hymn and prayer that followed, heart and spirit joined, and, as Louise Morgan

raised her head after the benediction, she felt that this was indeed the house of God, and the gate of heaven. He had verified his promise yet again, and met her in his temple.

Nevertheless, her first spoken words after the service would not have seemed to many to be in keeping with the hour:

“John, what on earth is the matter with that organ?”

Despite the habitual frown on John’s face, he was betrayed into a laugh, there was so much intensity in the questioner’s voice.

“Why, it needs a drop or two of oil,” he said, promptly; “and *has* needed it ever since I can remember. Anybody would think they considered the squeak an addition to the music, by the way they hang on to it.”

“Is it possible that a little oil is all that is needed to stop that horrible sound? Why don’t you fix it?”

“*I?*” said John, turning full, astonished eyes on her, surprised out of his reserve and his frowns.

“Why, certainly; how can you endure it for so long? Do, John, fix it before next Sunday;

it spoils the music. I could hardly enjoy even the *words*, because of that dreadful sound. How many things there are that ought to be done here! Why do they leave the church in this shape? Isn't there a sexton?"

"Why, yes," said John, "I suppose so. Of course, there must be; he rings the bell, and makes the fires."

"But never sweeps," added Louise, smiling, "nor dusts. John, if you can prevail on him to do some sweeping, this week, I'll come down with you, when you come to oil that organ, and do the dusting. Wouldn't that be an improvement?"

"When you come to oil that organ!" The sentence had so strange a sound that John repeated it to himself. Was it possible that he was coming to oil the church organ? She spoke very confidently; quite as though it were a settled matter. And yet he would almost as soon have expected to see himself coming to preach the sermon! What would the people think of his going into the church on a week day? No one remembered better than he, that of late his presence on the Sabbath had been a rarity. He

had been on the verge of telling her that he hadn't been hired to keep the church in order, but neither had she been hired to dust it; and he was quick-witted enough to see that, after the dusting scheme was proposed, his subterfuge wouldn't do.

"Oh, well," he said to himself, "she'll forget it. Catch me oiling the church organ! If it groaned loud enough to be heard ten miles off I wouldn't touch it!" And he honestly thought he wouldn't; he had a vindictive feeling for that old organ.

This conversation had consumed much less time than it has taken me to give it. They were passing down the aisle, John withheld from his usual habit of rushing out, the instant the Amen was spoken, by the sudden question that had been put to him. Now Louise turned his thoughts into another channel. Her husband had been waylaid by a gentleman who seemed anxious to have his opinion on some church matter; therefore she was at leisure to fish for John.

"I don't want to go home without being introduced to the minister," she said. "There he

comes now. Will you introduce me, John?"

"I don't know him," answered John, shortly. The tone, added, "And I don't want to."

"Don't you? Oh, he's a new-comer. Well, then, let's introduce ourselves."

He was just beside them now, and aided her plans, holding out his hand with a genial "Mrs. Morgan, I believe." He was a young, bright-faced man, cheery of voice and manner, and more winning, apparently, anywhere else than he was in the pulpit. Louise returned his hand-clasp cordially, and hastened to say :

"My brother, Mr. Morgan; my sister, Miss Morgan. We are all strangers together, I believe. You have been here but a short time, I understand?"

"Why, yes," the minister said, flushing slightly, "he was comparatively a new-comer:" remembering, meantime, the embarrassing fact that he had been there quite long enough to get acquainted with that portion of his flock which seemed to him worth cultivating. "I have not gotten out to Mr. Morgan's yet, but I hope to do so this week. What day will you be most at leisure, Mrs. Morgan?"

“Oh,” said Louise, brightly, “we shall be glad to see you at any time; suppose you come on Tuesday.” Thinking, meantime, of one or two little pet schemes of her own. “Shall we expect you to tea? John, we would like to have him take tea with us, wouldn’t we? You haven’t an engagement for Tuesday, have you?”

Thus appealed to, what was there for John but to stammer out an answer, over which he ruminated half the way home. Was it possible that he had engaged to be at home on Tuesday, to meet the minister, and had actually seconded his invitation to tea? How came he to do it? What were the words he said? How happened he to say them? He felt very much bewildered, somewhat vexed, and just a very trifle interested. There was certainly nothing in the minister to like, and he didn’t like him: moreover, he didn’t *mean* to like him. What was it, then, that interested him? He didn’t quite know. He wondered what loop-hole of escape he could find for Tuesday; also he wondered whether he really and truly was determined to escape. Altogether, John didn’t understand his own state of mind.

“Oh, Lewis,” said Mrs. Morgan, just as they were nearing home, “do you suppose anybody would object if you were to cut those dreadful looking yellow tassels from the pulpit and tack a neat little braid, such as upholsterers use, around it? John and I are going down there, some day this week, to fix up things, and you may go along and upholster the pulpit if you want to.”

“John and you!”

The astonishment in her husband’s voice made Louise’s eyes laugh; but her tones were steady.

“Yes; he is going to stop that dreadful squeak in the organ; isn’t that terrible? It just spoiled the music, and it would have been good, but for that. I’ve promised to dust, if there can be some sweeping done. Oh, John, did you speak to the sexton? No? Well, I am not sure that it is very Sunday work; but when can you see him?”

Then Dorothy roused to the occasion.

“The sexton comes, every morning, to get a can of milk for some of his customers at the village.”

“Oh, *does* he? Then you can see him. John, you will attend to it to-morrow morning, won't you? And have it done before Wednesday, because then the church will be warmed for prayer-meeting, and we can get it ready more comfortably. I wonder if those lamps don't smoke? They look as if they might.”

“They used to smoke fiercely enough when I knew them last,” her husband said. “I haven't been down in the evening, since I came home from Australia.”

Here was certainly a revelation to Louise. Her husband had not been to the church prayer-meeting since he came from Australia, eight months before! But she made no comment. Dorothy having once determined to speak, had more to say :

“They look as though they hadn't been washed in forty years! I never saw such black things in my life!”

“Suppose you enlist with us, Dorothy? Go down on Wednesday, and let's put the lamps in order. We'll let Lewis buy some wicks and chimneys for his share. I saw that two of the

chimneys were broken; *those two* lamps will smoke, of course."

John laughed outright.

"I believe you saw every crack and corner of the church," he said, speaking almost good-naturedly.

And Dorothy spoke her troubled thought.

"I don't know anything about kerosene lamps. I don't suppose I could fix one to save my life."

"I know all about them; papa used to have one in his office that I took care of, and mamma used one for sewing; I can show you all about them in five minutes. Will you go?"

"Well," said Dorothy, veiling her eagerness as well as she could, "*I'd* be willing, but I don't believe mother will."

"Yes, she will; I'll look out for that."

It was neither Lewis nor Louise that made this startling promise, but John himself!

"Was it quite according to Sunday observance to make all those plans?" Louise asked her husband, smiling, but a shade of trouble, nevertheless, in her voice. "Sometimes those things trouble me. I had Sunday plans at

heart, but I'm afraid they didn't show very plainly."

"Well, I don't know; to brighten the church, so that it shall be a more tolerable spot, is important, certainly. It is a very desirable thing to accomplish, Louise. But I don't see how you coaxed John into it."

"I want the church to look better, it is true," Louise said thoughtfully; "but, after all, that is secondary. Lewis, I want John and Dorothy."

CHAPTER XI.

GRACE SUFFICIENT.



MS. Morgan, senior, with her long check apron, reaching to within an inch of the hem of her dress, her sleeves rolled to her elbow, her arms akimbo, stood in the kitchen door, and regarded Dorothy with an air of mute astonishment for about two minutes then her thoughts found vent in words:

“And did she invite him to tea her ownself?”

“Yes,” said Dorothy, a curious mixture of satisfaction and glumness in her tones; “she *did*, with her own lips. I didn’t say a word, and Lewis wasn’t there, he was talking with Deacon Spaulding, just behind us, and John didn’t speak, of course, till he spoke to him.”

“Well, I never!” said Mrs. Morgan; then, after a somewhat lengthy pause: “Seems to me she is taking things into her own hands most amazing fast; nothing but a stranger herself, and gone to inviting company! Without even waiting to see if it would be convenient, either. There’s extra work, too; I suppose, though, she thinks she can sit in the front room and entertain him, and we can do the work.”

“I s’pose she is so used to company that she don’t think anything about it, and doesn’t know that other folks do. It isn’t a dreadful thing to have the minister come to tea; for my part, I’m glad he is coming.”

After this sudden marvellous outburst from Dorothy, her mother turned and surveyed her again, in bewildered fashion. Who had ever before heard Dorothy express an outright opinion contrary to her mother’s? While she was meditating how to treat this strange development, the hall-door opened, and Louise, broom and dust-pan in hand, a quaint little sweeping cap set on her head, appeared on the scene. She dashed into the subject in mind at once:

“Mother, has Dorothy mentioned that Mr.

Butler is coming to tea? We didn't think about the extra ironing or we might have chosen some other night; why didn't you remind me, Dorrie? You must let me do all the extra work, to pay for my carelessness. I have come down now to put the front room in order; or shall I help in the kitchen first?"

What was a woman to do who had managed her own household with a high hand for more than thirty years, thus unceremoniously taken by storm? She turned her gaze from Dorothy to Louise, and stood regarding her for a second, as if in no doubt what to say; then, with a bitterness of tone that Louise did not in the least understand, said:

"Do just *exactly* what you please; which I guess is what you are in the habit of doing, without asking permission."

Then she dashed into the outer kitchen, and set up such a clatter with the pots and kettles there, that she surely could not have overheard a word, had many been said.

Louise, with honest heart, desiring to do what was right, was by no means infallible, and yet was quick-witted; she discovered that she had

blundered. It flashed before her that Mother Morgau thought she was trying to rule the household and reorganize the home society; trying, indeed, to put her, the mother aside. Nothing had been further from her thoughts. She stood transfixed for a moment, the rich blood rolling in waves over her fair face at thought of this rude repulse of her cheery effort to play that she was at home and act accordingly. It was as Dorothy said: she was so accustomed to the familiar sentence, "Come in and take tea," that it fell from her lips as a matter of course; especially had she been one of those trained to a cordial heartiness as regarded her pastor. Her invitation to Mr. Butler had been unpremeditated, and, she now believed unwise. Yet how strange a sense of loneliness and actual homesickness swept over her, as she realized this. How difficult it was to step at all. How she must guard her words and her ways; how sure she might be of giving offense, when nothing in her past experience could foreshadow such an idea to her! Was it possible that in her husband's home she was not to feel free to extend hospitalities when and

where she chose? Could she ever hope to grow accustomed to such a trameled life? She stood still, in the spot where her mother-in-law had transfixed her; the dust-pan balanced nicely, that none of its contents escape; the broom being swayed back and forth slowly, by a hand that trembled a little; the fair pink-trimmed, cambric sweeping-cap, that was so becoming to her, and so useful in shielding her hair from dust, heightening now the flush on her face. If she had but known it, that sweeping-cap was one of her many sins, in the new mother's eyes.

"The idea of prinking up in a frilled cap to sweep!" had that lady exclaimed, the first time she saw it, and she drove the coarse comb through her thin gray hair, as she spoke, regardless of the fact that much dust had settled in it from that very morning's sweeping.

"It keeps her hair clean, I'm sure," had Dorothy interposed; "and you are always for keeping things most dreadfully clean."

"*Clean!*" had the mother exclaimed, vexed again, at she hardly knew what; "so will a good washing in soap and water, and look less ridicu-

lous besides. What do you catch me up in that way for whenever I say anything ; attend to the dishes, and don't waste your time talking about hair ; and if you ever stick such a prinked-up thing on your head as that, I'll box your ears."

What could there have been in the little pink cap to have driven the mother into such a state ? She rarely indulged in loud-voiced sentences. It was unfortunate for Louise that this episode had occurred but a short time before ; and it was fortunate for her that she did not, and could not guess, what the innocent cap, made by Estelle's deft fingers, had to do with Mrs. Morgan's state of mind. Had she known that such a very trifle had power over the new mother's nerves, it might have appalled her. We grieve sometimes that we can not know other people's hearts, and foresee what would please, and what would irritate. Sometimes in our blindness, we feel as if that certainly would have been the wiser way ; yet I doubt if Louise's courage would not have utterly forsaken her, could she have seen the heart of her husband's mother as she rattled the pots and kettles in the outer kitchen. Hearts calm down, wonderfully, sometimes ; what need

then to know of their depths while at boiling point? But what sights must the all-seeing God look down upon, sights, in tenderness, shut away from the gaze of his weak children.

Poor Louise! It was such a little thing, and she felt so ashamed for allowing herself to be ruffled. Several states of feeling seemed knocking for admittance. She almost wished that she could go to that outer kitchen, and slam the door after her, and set the dust-pan down *hard* before the cross lady, and say to her:

“There! Take your broom and your dust-pan, and do your own sweeping up in John’s room after this, and let Lewis and me go home to mother; *you* are not a mother at all: the name does not fit you; I know what the word means, I have had a mother all my life, and I begin to think Lewis has never had.”

What if she *should* say something like that! What a commotion she could make! It was not that she had the least idea of saying it; it was simply that she felt — “what if I should?” Satan’s earliest, and most specious form, oftentimes, of presenting a temptation. Also, there was that unaccountable tendency to a burst of

tears; she felt as though she could hardly keep them back, even with Dorothy's gray eyes looking keenly at her. Just a little minute served for all these states of feeling to surge by; then Dorothy broke the stillness, roused out of her timidity by a struggling sense of injustice:

"You mustn't mind what mother says; she speaks out, sometimes, sharp; anybody who didn't know her would think she was angry, but she isn't; it is just her way. She isn't used to company either, and it kind of flurries her; but she will be real glad to have had Mr. Butler here, after it is all over."

Such a sudden rush of feeling as came to Louise, borne on the current of these words; words which she knew cost Dorothy an effort for she had been with her long enough, and watched her closely enough, to realize what a painful hold timidity had gotten on her. But these eager, swiftly-spoken words, so unlike her usual hesitation, evinced a kindly tenderness of feeling for Louise herself, that the lonely young wife reached after and treasured gratefully. The tears rolled down her cheeks, it is true; they had gotten too near the surface to

control, and were determined, for once, to have their way ; but she looked through them with a smile at Dorothy ; nay, she sat down her dust-pan suddenly and dropped her broom, and went over to the astonished girl, and kissed her heartily.

“ Thank you,” she said, brightly, “ You good sister Dorrie ; you have helped me ever so much. Of course mother doesn't mean to scold me ; and if she did, mothers are privileged, and should be loved so much that little scoldings can be taken gratefully — especially when they are deserved, as mine is. I ought to have asked her whether it would be convenient to have company. But never mind ; we'll make the best of it, and have a good time all around ; and Dorothy, let's you and I be real, true sisters, and help each other, and *love* each other. I miss my sister Estelle.”

It was the last word she dared trust herself to speak ; those treacherous tears desired again to choke her. She turned abruptly from Dorothy and ran up-stairs, leaving the dust-pan a central ornament of the kitchen floor. Hidden in the privacy of her own room, the door locked on the

world below, Louise sat down in the little home-rocker, and did what would have thoroughly alarmed her own mother, because of its unusualness — buried her head in her hands, and let the tears have their way.

She had managed to control herself before Dorothy, to smile brightly on her, and to feel a thrill of joy over the thought that she had touched that young person's heart. But all this did not keep her from being thoroughly roused and indignant toward her mother-in-law. What right had she to treat her as though she were an interloper? Was not she the wife of the eldest son, who toiled early and late, bearing burdens at least equal to, if not greater than, his father? "What that woman needs," said a strong, decided voice in her ear, "is to realize that there are other people in this world beside herself. She has been a tyrant all her life. She manages everybody; she thinks she can manage you. It is for her good, as well as your own, that you undeceive her. You owe it to your self-respect to go directly down to that outer kitchen, where she is banging the kettles around, and say to her that you must have an understanding. Are you

one of the family, with rights, as a married daughter, to invite and receive guests as suits your pleasure, or are you a boarder, simply? In which case you are entirely willing to pay for the trouble which your guests may make."

Every nerve in Louise's body seemed to be throbbing with the desire to help her carry out this advice. It was not merely the sting of the morning, but an accumulation of stings which she felt had been gathering ever since she came into the house. But who was the bold adviser? It startled this young woman not a little to realize that her heart was wonderfully in accord with his suggestions. As usual there was war between him and another unseen force. Said that other:

"It is a trying position, to be sure. You have many little things to bear, and it is quite probable — your life having been so shielded heretofore — that they seem to you *great* trials. But, you will remember, I never promised you should not be tried; I only pledged myself that your strength should be equal to your day. And, really, there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to men; and I am

faithful. I will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

Surely she knew *this* voice, and recognized this message sent to her so long ago, and proved true to her experience so many times.

"But," said that other one, "you really are not called upon to endure, insults. It is a perfectly absurd position. If you had gone out West as a Home Missionary, or were among uncouth people who had had no advantages, and to whom you were not in any sense related, it would do to talk of bearing trials; but, in this case, what right have your husband's family to put trials of this sort upon you? You have a perfect right to please yourself, and they ought to know it."

"Yes," said that other voice, "there are undoubtedly some things that they ought to know; but then, 'even Christ pleased not himself.'"

"But it is so absurd! She is evidently vexed because you have invited her own pastor to take tea with her! The most natural and reasonable thing in the world. She ought to want him to

come. The idea of having trouble over such a trifle as that!"

"Yes; but after all, are there not two sides to even that! How did you know but it would be extremely inconvenient for your new mother to see her pastor just at the time you set!"

"I never thought of such a thing. In our house it was always convenient to see people."

"Why not tell her that you didn't think of it, omitting the reference to the different conditions of your own home? because you know you never like to have people suggest uncomplimentary comparisons to you; therefore, by the rule which you profess to have accepted, you must not hint them to others."

"But," said that other one, "it is an unnecessary humiliation for you to go to her and apologize, as though you had done something wrong! The idea! You should certainly have some regard to your position. Because you came here, full of schemes for usefulness, eager to do her good, is no reason why you should tamely submit to such treatment as this — least of all, offer an apology for what you had no idea

would be disagreeable; besides, you almost apologized, and how did she receive it?"

Then that other voice:

"Remember the word that I said unto you. 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.'"

And straightway there surged over Louise Morgan's soul such a sense of "remembrance" of that other's patience and meekness and forgiveness and humiliation, such a remembrance of his thirty years of sorrowful cross-bearing for *her*, that there surely was verified to her another of the promises: "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." Moreover her eyes being opened by the searching Spirit, she saw who that counselor was, with his suggestions of self-respect and wounded dignity and position. Always at variance with that other one, always directly contradicting, always eagerly putting "self" between Christ and his work. The tears came down in showers, but they were shed in a lowly attitude, for this troubled young soul sank on her knees.

"Oh, Christ," she said, "thou didst conquer him years ago; he desires to have me, but, thou mighty One, bid him leave me, for thou art

pledged that thou wilt, with the temptation, provide a way of escape. And now, dear Christ, help me to show such a spirit of meekness and unfaltering cheerfulness of spirit before Lewis' mother, that she shall be led, not to me, but to thyself."

It was a very peaceful face which presented itself in the kitchen not many moments thereafter, and the voice that spoke, seemed to Dorothy, who looked on and listened, the very essence of the morning sunshine.

"Mother, it was certainly very careless in me to invite anybody to tea without first learning whether it would be convenient for you. If you will forgive me this time, I won't do it a 'bit more.' That is what my little sister says when she gets into trouble. Now, I want to know if you will let me hang some of my pictures in the parlor; I've been unpacking them, and I don't know what to do with half of them."

"Of course," said Mother Morgan. "Fix the parlor as you want it; it never was called a parlor before in its life; but I dare say that is as good a name as any. The extra ironing

is no consequence, anyhow; we always have enough to eat. He might as well come to-day as any time, for all I know."

Then she dashed out at that end door again, and set the outer kitchen door open, and stood in it, looking off toward the snowy hills. Nobody ever apologized to her before; it gave her a queer feeling.

"Well!" said Dorothy, addressing the dust-pan, after Louise had vanished again. "I never could have said that in the world! After what mother said to her, too. I don't care; I like her first rate. There, now!"

CHAPTER XII.

DIFFERENT SHADES.



HAT front room was square and bare ; at least that last word expresses the impression which it made upon Louise, as she stood surveying it. There were several things that she felt sure she could do to brighten it, but the question turned on expediency. How much would it be wise to undertake ?

It is a curious fact that the people who, from choice or necessity, have contented themselves with paper window-shades, have also been the people fated to choose for these ungainly creations colors that would fight with the shades of carpet and wall-paper. Those in the Morgan household were the ugliest of their kind ; and

the initiated know that is saying a great deal. The ground-work was blue. Whoever saw a tint of blue that would harmonize with a cheap ingrain carpet? They were embellished by corner pieces, done in dingy brown, with streaks of red here and there; the design looking like nothing with sufficient distinctness to be named; the whole being grotesque. While in the center was a bouquet of flowers so ugly that it was a positive relief to remember that nature never produced anything in the least like them. An old-fashioned piece of furniture known as a settle, suggested possibilities of comfort, if it had not been pushed into the coldest corner of the room, and been disfigured by a frayed binding and a broken spring. The chairs, of course, were straight-backed and stiff, and set in solemn rows. But the table with its curious, clawed legs and antique shape, filled Louise's heart with delight.* "What a pity!" she said, aloud, "that they couldn't have put some of the grace into the old-fashioned chairs which they lavished on those delightful old tables. How that bit of artistic twisting would delight Estelle's heart!"

This deliberate survey of her present field of operations was being taken after the sweeping and dusting were over, and she was trying to settle the momentous question of "What next?"

The door leading into the kitchen was swung open, and Mother Morgan presented herself in the doorway, her arms still in their favorite, reflective attitude, holding to her sides.

"The curtains do look *scandalous*?" she said, her eyes lighting on them at once. "I've been going, for I don't know how long, to get new ones, but I never seem to get at such things. I declare I didn't know they *was* so cracked."

Instantly Louise's wits sprang to grasp this opportunity. Who could have expected such an opening, in accord with her present thoughts:

"Oh, I hope you won't get new ones! I have a set of curtains that my mother gave me for my room, so I might have a reminder of home, and they are altogether too long for my windows; but I think they will just fit here. I should so like to see them in use. May I put them up?"

What was the mother to say? She possessed

that unfortunate sort of pride which is always hurt with the suggestion of using other people's things. Yet she had herself opened the door to this very suggestion; how was she to close it?

"Oh, it isn't necessary to bring your curtains down here; I mean to get new ones, of course; I've just neglected it, that's all; there's been no need for it."

"I'm so glad then that you have neglected it," Louise said quickly. "It has made me feel sort of lonely to see those curtains lying idle in my trunk. I wanted to put them somewhere. How fortunate it is that they are just the right color to match nicely with the carpet. You are real good to let me have them up here."

Whereupon Mrs. Morgan, with a vague feeling that she had been "good" without in the least intending it, kept silence.

Louise gave her little chance for reflection.

"You can't think how much I like that sofa. Wouldn't it be nice if they made such shaped ones nowadays, so long and wide? It suggests rest, to me, right away. I can't think of any thing more comfortable than this corner. when

the fire is made, with that nice, hospitable sofa wheeled into it."

This sentence brought Dorothy from the kitchen, to gaze, with wide-eyed wonder, first at the lounge and then at the speaker. The object of her intensified hatred, for many a day, had been that old, queer-looking wide-spread, craw-footed settle. Not being accustomed to seeing such an article of furniture anywhere else, and being keenly alive to the difference between her home and that of the few other homes into which she had occasionally penetrated, she had unconsciously to herself, singled out the old lounge, and the old table, and concentrated her aversion to the whole, upon them.

There was something about Louise that gave to all she said the stamp of sincerity. Dorothy found herself believing implicitly just what had been said; therefore this surprising eulogy of the old settle was the more bewildering. Louise's next sentence completed the mystification.

"But the prettiest thing in this room is that table. I never saw anything like that before ;

it must be very old, isn't it? And it looks like solid mahogany."

There was no resisting the impulse. Mother Morgan's heart swelled with a sense of gratified pride (if it were not a nobler feeling than pride).

"It is solid," she said, quickly, "every inch of it; it belonged to my mother; it was one of her wedding presents from my grandfather. There isn't another table in the country as old as this."

"Isn't that delightful!" said Louise, genuine eagerness in tone and manner. "To think of your having one of your own mother's wedding presents! My sister Estelle would like to see that; she has such a wonderful feeling of reverence for old things; especially when she can hear about the hands that have touched them, long ago. Did your mother die a good many years ago?"

"She died when I was a girl like Dorothy, there," said Mrs. Morgan, her voice subdued, and she gathered a corner of her large apron and carried it to her eyes.

"I always set great store by that table. I've

seen my mother rub it with an old silk handkerchief by the half hour, to make it shine. She thought a great deal of it on grandfather's account, let alone its value, and it was thought to be a very valuable table in those days. I have always thought I would keep it for Dorothy. But land! she don't care for it; she thinks it is a horrid, old-fashioned thing. She would have it put into the barn-loft, along with the spinning-wheel, if she could. Your sister must be different from other girls, if she can stand anything *old*."

Poor Dorothy, her cheeks aflame, stood with downcast eyes; too honest was she to deny that she had hated the claw-footed table, as one of the evidences of the life to which she was shut up, different from others. Louise turned toward her, with a kindly smile.

"I think Estelle is different from most girls," she said gently. "Our grandmother lived until a short time ago, and we loved her very dearly, and that made Estelle like every old-fashioned thing, more than she would. Mother says that most girls have to get old and gray-haired before

they prize their girlhood or know what is valuable."

"That is true enough," said Mother Morgan, emphatically.

Then Louise.

"I wonder if I can find John anywhere? I want him to help me hang pictures and curtains. Do you suppose father can spare him a little while?"

"John!" said the wondering mother. "Do you want *his* help? Why, yes, father will spare him, I dare say, if he will do anything; but I don't suppose he will."

"Oh, yes," said Louise, gayly, "he promised to help me; and besides he invited the minister here himself, or at least seconded the invitation heartily; so, of course, he will have to help get ready for him."

"Well, there he is now, in the shed. You get him to help if you can; I'll risk his father. And move things about where you would like to have them; I give this room into your hands. If you can make it look as pleasant as the kitchen, I'll wonder at it. It was always a dreadful dull-looking room, somehow."

And the mollified mother went her way. An apology was a soothing sort of thing. It was very nice to have the long-despised old settle and table (dear to her by a hundred associations, so dear that she would have felt it a weakness to own it) not only tolerated but actually admired with bright eyes and eager voice; but to engage, in any enterprise whatever, her youngest son, so that there might be hope of his staying at home with the family the whole of Tuesday evening — an evening when, by reason of the meeting of a certain club in the village, he was more than at any other time exposed to temptation and danger — was a thought to take deep root in this mother-heart. She didn't choose to let anybody know of her anxiety concerning this boy; but, really and truly, it was the sore-ache in her heart, and the thinking of the brightness of Louise's care-free face in contrast with her own heavy-heartedness, that developed the miseries of the morning. After all, to our limited sight, it *would* seem well, once in a while, to have peeps into each other's hearts.

Greatly to his mother's surprise, and somewhat to his own, John strode at first call into the



"John could not only drive nails but could measure distances with his eye almost as accurately as with a rule."—Page 193.

front room, albeit he muttered, as he went: "I don't know anything about her gim-cracks; why don't she call Lewis?"

"Are you good at driving nails?" Louise greeted him with; "because Lewis isn't. He nearly always drives one crooked."

"Humph!" said John, disdainfully. "Yes, I can drive a nail as straight as any of 'em; and I haven't been to college, either."

"Neither have I," said Louise, accepting his sentence in the spirit of banter; "and I can drive nails, too; if I were only a little taller I'd show you. But how are we going to reach away up to the ceiling? Is there a step-ladder anywhere?"

"Yes, make one out of the kitchen table and the wood-box."

And he went for them. Then the work went on steadily. John could not only drive nails, but could measure distances with his eye almost as accurately as with a rule; and could tell to the fraction of an inch whether the picture hung "plum" or not. Louise, watching, noted these things, and freely commented upon them, until

despite himself, John's habitual gruffness toned down.

"Who is this?" he asked, and he, perched on his table and wood-box, stopped to look at the life-size photograph of a beautiful girl."

"That," said Louise, pride and pleasure in her voice, "is my sister Estelle; isn't she pretty? With the first breath of spring I want her to come out here; and I want you to get ready to be real good to her, and show her all the interesting things in field and wood."

"I!"

"Yes, *you*. I look forward to your being excellent friends. There are a hundred delightful things about nature and animal life of which she knows nothing, and she is eager to see and hear, and learn. I look to you for help."

At this astounding appeal for "help" John turned and hung the picture without a word. What was there to say to one who actually expected help from him for that radiant creature!

Louise, apparently busy in untangling cord and arranging tassels, watched him furtively. He studied the picture after it was in place; he

had difficulty in getting it to just the right height, and tied and untied the crimson cord more than once in his precision. The bright beautiful, girlish figure, full of a nameless witchery and grace that shone out at you from every curve! She hardly knew how much she wished for the influence of the one over the other. If Estelle could help, would help, him in a hundred ways, as she could; and if he would help her! Yes, Louise was honest; she saw ways in which this solemn-faced boy could help her gay young sister, if he only would.

“Oh!” she said to herself, with great intensity of feeling, “if people only *would* influence each other just as much as they could, and just as *high* as they could, what a wonderful thing this living would be!”

It was for this reason among others, that she had selected from her family-group, hanging in her room, this beautiful young sister, and sacrificed her to hang between the windows in the front room. There were other pictures, many of them selected with studied care, with an eye to their influence. Among others, there was a brilliant illuminated text worked in blues and

browns, and the words were such as are rarely found in mottoes. In the center a great, gilt-edged Bible, and circling over it: "These are written that ye might believe on the Son of God." Then underneath, in smaller letters; "And that believing, ye might have life through his name."

"That is Estelle's work," his companion said; "isn't it pretty?"

"I suppose so. I don't know anything about pretty things."

"Oh, yes, you do; you know perfectly well what you think is pretty. I venture to say that you know what you like, and what you dislike, as well as any person in this world."

He laughed, not ill-pleased at this; and Louise, with no apparent connection, branched into another subject.

"By the way, where is that church sociable that was announced for Friday night? Far away?"

"No; just on the other hill from us, about a mile, or a trifle more."

"Then we can walk, can't we? I'm a good

walker, and, if the evening is moonlight, I should think it would be the most pleasant way of going."

And now John nearly lost his balance on the wood-box, because of the suddenness with which he turned to bestow his astonished *gaze* on her.

"We never go," he said, at last.

"Why not?"

"Well," with a short laugh, "that question might be hard to answer. I don't, I suppose, because I don't want to."

"Why don't you want to? Aren't they pleasant gatherings?"

"Never went to see. I grew away from them before I was old enough to go. Mother and father don't believe in them, among other things."

There was a suspicion of a sneer in his voice now. Louise was a persistent questioner.

"Why don't they believe in them?"

"Various reasons. They dress, and mother doesn't believe in dressing. She believes women ought to wear linsey-woolsey uniform the year

round. And they dance, and neither mother nor father believe in that; they think it is the unpardonable sin mentioned in the Bible."

"Do they dance at the church sociables?"

"Yes," an unmistakable sneer in his tones now "I believe they do; we hear so anyway. You will look upon the institution with holy horror after this, I suppose?"

"Does Mr. Butler dance?"

"Well, reports are contradictory. Some say he hops around with the little girls before the older ones get there, and some have it that he only looks on and admires. I don't know which list of sinners he is in, I'm sure. Do you think dancing is wicked?"

"I think that picture is crooked," said Louise, promptly; "isn't it? Doesn't it want to be moved a trifle to the right? That is a special favorite of mine. Don't you know the face? Longfellow's 'Evangeline.' Lewis don't like the picture nor the poem; but I can't get away from my girlhood liking for both. Don't you know the poem? I'll read it to you, sometime and see if you don't agree with me. Now, about

that social; let's go, next Friday, and see if we can't have a good time. You and Lewis, and Dorothy and I. It is quite time you introduced me to some of your people, I think."

"You don't answer my question."

"What about? Oh, the dancing? Well, the truth is, though a short question, it takes a very long answer, and it is so involved with other questions and answers, that I'm afraid if we should dip into it, we shouldn't get the curtains hung by tea-time. Let me just take a Yankee's privilege and ask you a question. Do you expect me to believe in it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because — well — because you religionists are not apt to."

"Don't you know any religionists who seem to?"

"Yes but they are the counterfeit sort."

"Then you think real, honest Christians ought not to believe in dancing?"

"I didn't say any such thing," returned John, hotly; then, being quick-witted, he realized his

position, and, despite his attempt not to, laughed.

“I think we would better go after those curtains, now,” he said, significantly. **And they went.**

CHAPTER XIII.

BUDS OF PROMISE.



ELL," said Dorothy, and she folded her arms and looked up and down the large room, a sense of great astonishment struggling with one of keen satisfaction on her face. "Who ever thought that she could make this look like *this!*"

Which mixed and doubtful sentence indicates the bewilderment in Dorothy's mind. Yet there had been no wonderful thing done. But Dorothy belonged to that class of people who do not see what effects little changes might produce. Still, she belonged — let us be thankful — to that class of people who can *see* effects when the changes have been produced. There are not

• few in this world who are as blind as bats about this latter matter.

The place in question was the large, square front room of the Morgan family. The heavy crimson curtains, of rare pattern and graceful finish, hung in rich waves about the old-fashioned windows, falling to the very floor, and hiding many a defect in their ample folds. The walls were hung with pictures and brackets and text-cards. The brackets were furnished, one with a pretty antique vase, hiding within itself a small bottle of prepared earth, which nourished a thrifty ivy. One held a quaint old picture of Dorothy's mother's mother, for which Louise's deft fingers had that morning fashioned a frame of pressed leaves and ferns. The old-fashioned settee was drawn into exactly the right angle between the fire and the windows. The torn braid had been mended, and John, of his own will, had repaired the broken spring. The heavy mahogany table rejoiced in a wealth of beautiful-bound and most attractive looking books; while a little stand, brought from Louise's own room, held a pot of budding and blossoming pinks, whose old-fashioned, spicy

breath pervaded the room. Perhaps no one little thing contributed to the holiday air which the room had taken on more than did the tidies of bright wools and clear white, over which Estelle had wondered when they were being packed. Louise thought of her and smiled, and wished she could have had a glimpse of them as they adorned the two rounding pillow-like ends of the sofa, hung in graceful folds from the small table that held the blossoming pinks, adorned the back and cushioned seat and arms of the wooden rocking-chair in the fireplace corner, and even lay smooth and white over the back of Father Morgan's old chair, which Louise had begged for the other chimney-corner, and which Mrs. Morgan, with a mixture of indifference and dimly-veiled pride, had allowed to be taken thither. Little things were these, every one, yet what a transformation they made to Dorothy's eyes! The crowning beauty to the scene to Louise was the great old-fashioned, artistic-looking pile of hickory logs which John built up scientifically in the chimney-corner, the blaze of which, when set on fire, glowed and sparkled and danced, and burnished with a

weird flame every picture and book, and played at light and shade among the heavy window drapery in a way that was absolutely bewitching to the eyes of the new-comer.

“What a delightful room this is!” she said, standing with clasped hands and radiant face, gazing with genuine satisfaction upon it when the fire was lighted. “How I wish my mother could see that fire! She likes wood fires so much, and she has had to depend on ‘black holes in the floor’ for so long a time! I do think I never was in a more homelike spot.”

It was fortunate for Louise that her education had been of that genuine kind which discovers beauty in the rare blending of lights and shades, and the tasteful assimilation of furnishings, rather than in the richness of the carpet or the cost in dollars and cents of the furniture. It was genuine admiration which lighted her face. The room had taken on a touch of home and home cheer. Mrs. Morgan, senior, eyeing her closely, on the alert for shams, felt instinctively that none were veiled behind those satisfied eyes, and thought more highly of her daughter-in-law than she had before.

As for Dorothy, she was so sure that the fairies had been there and bewitched the great, dreary room, that she yielded to the spell, nothing doubting.

It seemed almost strange to Louise herself, that she was so deeply interested in this prospective visit from the minister. She found herself planning eagerly for the evening, wondering whether she could draw John into the conversation, whether Dorothy would rally from her shyness sufficiently to make a remark; wondering whether the bright-eyed young minister would second her efforts for these two. During a bit of confidential chat which she had with her husband at noon, she said:

“I can’t help feeling that there are serious interests at stake. Mr. Butler *must* get hold of the hearts of these young people; there must be outside influences to help us or we can not accomplish much. I wonder if he has his young people very much at heart?”

“I may misjudge the man,” Lewis said, leisurely buttoning his collar, and speaking in an indifferent tone; “but I fancy he hasn’t a very

deep interest in anything, outside of having a real good, comfortable time."

"Oh, Lewis!" and his wife's note of dismay caused Lewis to turn from the mirror and look at her inquiringly; "how can you think that of your pastor? How can you pray for him when you are composedly saying such things?"

"Why!" Lewis said, smiling a little; "I didn't say anything very dreadful, did I, dear? He really doesn't impress me as being thoroughly in earnest; I didn't mean, of course, that he is a hypocrite. I think him a good, honest-hearted young man, but he hasn't that degree of earnestness that one expects in a minister."

"What degree of earnestness should a minister have, Lewis?"

"More than he has," said her husband, positively. "My dear wife, really you have a mistaken sort of idea, that because a man is a minister, therefore he is perfect. Don't you think they are men of like passions with ourselves?"

"Yes, I do; but from your remark, I thought you were not of that opinion. No, really, I think I am on the other side of the argument;

I am trying to discover how much more earnest a minister should be, than you and I are, for instance."

"Rather more is expected of him by the church," her husband answered, moving cautiously, and becoming suddenly aware that he was on slippery ground.

"By the church, possibly; but is more really expected of him by the Lord? Sometimes I have heard persons talk as though they really thought there was a different code of rules for a minister's life, than for the ordinary Christian's. But, after all, he has to be guided by the same Bible, led by the same Spirit."

"There's a bit of sophistry in that remark," her husband said, laughing; "but I shall not stay to hunt it up, just now; I suspect father is waiting for me to help about matters that he considers more important."

"But Lewis, wait a moment; I don't want to argue; I just want this: Will you this afternoon pray a good deal about this visit? I *do* feel that it ought to be a means of grace to our home, and to the pastor; for there should certainly be a reflex influence in visits between pastor and people

I have been for the last two hours impressed to almost constant prayer for this, and I feel as though I wanted to have a union of prayer."

Her husband lingered, regarding her with a half-troubled, half curious expression.

"Sometimes," he said, slowly, "I am disposed to think that you have gone away beyond me in these matters, so that I can not understand you. Now, about this visit. I can see nothing but an ordinary, social cup of tea with the minister. He will eat bread and butter, and the regulation number of sauces and cakes and pickles, and we will keep up a flow of talk, about something; it will not matter much *what*, to any of us, so we succeed in appearing social; then he will go away, and the evening will be gone, and, so far as I can see, everything will be precisely as it was before."

"No," she said, with a positive setting of her head; "you are ignoring entirely the influence which one soul must have over another. Don't you believe that all of our family, by this visit, will have been drawn either to respect religion more, to feel its power more plainly, or else will have been repelled from the subject? They may

none of them be aware that such is the case, yet when they come in contact with one so closely allied to the church and the prayer-meeting, I think that either one influence or the other must have its way."

"New thought to me, put on that broad ground. But, if it is true, it proves, I think, that the minister has more influence over the community than private Christians have; because, certainly, it is possible for you and me to go out to tea, and have a pleasant, social time, and not change any person's opinion of religion one-half inch."

She shook her head. "It proves to me that the outward position helps the minister by the law of association, to make a more distinctly realized impression; but, dear Lewis, the question is, is it right for any servant of the King to mingle familiarly for an afternoon with others who either are, or should be, loyal subjects, and not make a definite impression for the King?"

"I don't know," he said, slowly, gravely; "I don't believe I have thought of social gatherings in that light."

And Louise, as he went away, realized, with a throb of pain, that she wanted the minister to make a definite impression for good; not only on Dorothy and John, but on her husband. Perhaps she never prayed more constantly for the success of any apparently small matter, than she did for this tea-drinking. Her interest even extended to the dress that Dorothy wore. She knew well it would be a somewhat rusty black one; but the door of that young ladies' room being ajar, and she being visible, in the act of adding to her toilet an ugly red necktie, that set her face aflame, Louise ventured a suggestion.

"Oh, Dorrie, if you would wear some soft laces with that dress, how pretty it would be!"

"I know it," said Dorothy, snatching off the red tie as she spoke. "But I haven't any. I hate this neck-tie; I don't know why, but I *just hate* it. Mother bought it because it was *cheap!*" — immense disgust expressed in tone and manner — "that is surely the only recommendation it has."

"I have some soft laces that will be just the

thing for you," Louise said, in eagerness, and she ran back to her room for them.

"These are cheap" — returning with a box of fluffy ruchings — "they cost less than ribbon in the first place, and will do up as well as linen collars."

New items these to Dorothy. The idea that anything so white and soft and beautiful could also be cheap! A mistaken notion had this young woman, that **everything** beautiful was costly.

"Let me arrange them," Louise said, in a flutter of satisfaction, lifting her heart in prayer as she worked.

Praying about a lace ruffle! Oh, yes, indeed: why not? If they are proper to wear, why not proper to speak of to the Father who clothes the lilies, and numbers the very hairs of our head? Actually *praying* that the delicate laces might aid in lifting Dorothy into a reasonable degree of self-appreciation, and so relieve, somewhat, the excessive timidity which Satan was successfully using against her. I wonder, has it ever occurred to young people that Satan can make use of timidity, as well as boldness?

“There,” said Louise, as she arranged the puffy knots, giving those curious little touches which the tasteful woman understands so well, and finds so impossible to teach.

“Aren’t they pretty.” And she stood back to view the effect.

The pink glow on Dorothy’s cheeks showed that she thought they were.

With the details of the supper Louise did not in the least concern herself; she knew that food would be abundant, and well prepared, and the linen would be snowy, and the dishes shining; what more need mortal want?

As for the minister, truth to tell, he spent his leisure moments during the day in dreading his visit. He had heard so much of the Morgans — of their coldness and indifference, of their holding themselves aloof from every influence, either social or spiritual. The few sentences that had ever passed between himself and Farmer Morgan had been so tinged with sarcasm, on the latter’s part, and had served to make him feel so thoroughly uncomfortable, that he shrank from all contact with the entire family; always excepting the fair-faced, sweet-voiced stranger;

not her husband, for something about the grave, rather cold face of Lewis Morgan, made his young pastor pick him out as a merciless, intellectual critic. However, it transpired that most of his forebodings were unrealized.

It suited Mrs. Morgan, senior, to array herself in a fresh calico, neatly made, relieved from severe plainness by a very shining linen collar; and, though her manner was nearly as cold as the collar, yet there was a certain air of New England hospitality about it that made the minister feel not unwelcome. Dorothy under the influence of her becoming laces, or some other influence, was certainly less awkward than usual. And fair curly-haired, sweet-faced Neelie caught the young man's heart at once, and was enthroned upon his knee when Farmer Morgan came to shake hands, before proceeding to supper. If there was one thing on earth more than another that Farmer Morgan did admire it was his own, beautiful, little Neelie. If the minister saw that she was an uncommon child why in his heart he believed it to be a proof positive that the minister was an uncommon man. Altogether, Mr. Butler's opinion of the

Morgan family was very different by six o'clock from what it had been at four. Just a word alone with him Louise had, when Farmer Morgan suddenly remembered an unforgotten duty, and went away, while Mrs. Morgan and Dorothy were putting the finishing touches to the supper table. Lewis was detained with a business caller at one of the large barns, and John had not presented himself at all. This was one of her present sources of anxiety. She turned to the minister the moment they were alone.

"We need your help so much," she began eagerly. "My husband and I are the only Christians in this family; I am specially and almost painfully interested in both John and Dorothy; they need Christ so much, and apparently are so far from him. Is the Christian influence of the young people decided in this society?"

"I hardly know how to answer you," he said, hesitatingly. "If I were to tell you the simple truth, I seem better able to influence the young in almost any other direction, than I do in anything that pertains to religion." And, if the

poor young man had but known it, he was more natural and winning in regard to any other topic than he was with that one. "I have hardly a young man in my congregation on whom I can depend in the least," he continued sadly, "and I do not see any gain in this respect."

"He is in earnest," said Louise, mentally, in answer to this. "He wants to help them; he doesn't quite see how. But if he is willing to be enough in *earnest*, his Master can teach him." Then, before there was opportunity for the half-dozen other things that she wanted to say, they were summoned to the tea-table.

John *was* there, in his Sunday coat, and his hair brushed carefully; it was more than could have been expected. Moreover, almost immediately by one of those chance remarks that seem of no importance, an item of political news was started for discussion, and behold the father and Lewis were staunchly on one side, and the minister and John on the other. John, roused by a nettlesome speech of his brother, gave bold utterance to opposing views, and was strongly approved and supported by Mr. Butler; the

interest deepened and the arguers waxed earnest, but all the while there was in Farmer Morgan's face, veiled to any but a close observer such as Louise was that day, a sense of surprised satisfaction over the fact that his boy John had such clear views of things, and could talk as well as the minister; and the minister, whether he was to win souls or not, surely knew one step of the way—he was winning hearts. They went, all of them together, to the bright parlor again, and when, presently, the discussion calmed, and the subject changed to the delights of corn-popping and apples roasted in the ashes, Mr. Butler said with zest:

“John, let's try some; suppose you get the apples and superintend the roasting; and Miss Dorothy, can't you and I pop some corn?”

Dorothy's cheeks were aflame, but the corn was brought, and the evening waned before even Neelie knew it was late.

“He's a good deal likelier chap than I thought, from his sermons,” was Farmer Morgan heard to remark to his wife when the minister had finally bade them good-evening and departed.

“Oh, Lewis?” said Louise, when they were alone again, “if he had only asked to read a few verses in the Bible, and offered prayer before he went. I surely thought he would do it; isn’t it strange that he did not?”

“Why, yes,” said Lewis. “As a minister, it would have been entirely in keeping; I wonder that he did not suggest it.”

“Why didn’t you suggest it, Lewis? I was hoping you would; that was what I meant by all those telegraphic communications I was trying to make.”

“My dear Louise,” said her husband, “that was my father’s place, not mine.”

CHAPTER XIV.

DUST AND DOUBT.



HE scheme to visit the dingy church on Wednesday afternoon, and contribute somewhat to its cheer, was carried out to the very letter. Mrs. Morgan, senior, made sundry dry remarks about not being aware that any of her family had been hired to put the church in order ; but Farmer Morgan declared that it certainly needed it as much as any place he ever saw ; that he would be ashamed to have a barn look as that did ; and John declared that he had promised to stop the squeak in that old organ, and he meant to do it, hired or not hired.

Louise, who had not heard him promise, and

who had felt much anxiety lest he would refuse to perform, was so elated over this declaration that, with her husband's help, she parried her mother-in-law's thrusts with the utmost good humor; helped by the fact that, whatever she might say, that strange woman actually *felt* glad over the thought of her young people going off together like other folks.

The efforts of Mrs. Morgan's life had been spent in keeping her children from being "like other folks," and yet, with strange inconsistency, she liked to see these approaches to other people's ways of doing things.

If she could have explained what her sore and disappointed heart had meant, it would have revealed the fact that she intended her children to be superior to, not isolated from, the society around them.

Wednesday afternoon proved a real gala time to Dorothy. She entered with zest into the lamp-cleaning, and, after a few lessons from Louise, developed a remarkable talent for making the chimneys glitter in the sunlight. The surprised and smiling sexton had done his share, and the dust from the long unswept room lay

thick on pulpit and seat-rail. The room was comparatively warm, too, which, if Louise had but known it, was a rare thing on Wednesday evening. John swung the old organ around in a business-like manner, and applied a drop of oil here, and another there, then gave himself to the mending of one of the stops, while Lewis tacked away on the new binding for the desk, and whistled softly an old tune. Altogether, Louise's plans were working royally. She had managed a difficult bit of business in the shape of a lunch, which had been smuggled into the buggy with them.

"What on *earth* do you want of that!" had Mrs. Morgan exclaimed, in astonishment, when she had been appealed to; "you don't expect to work so hard that you will get hungry before supper, do you?"

"Why, we want it for our supper," exclaimed Louise; "you know we shall not have time to come back before prayer-meeting, and that will make us late for supper."

"Prayer-meeting!" No words on paper can express to you the surprise in the questioner's

voice. "Are you going to stay to prayer-meeting?"

"Why, certainly; we want to see whether the lamps are improved. If Dorrie leaves lint on the glass it will show splendidly when they are lighted. Besides, I want to hear how that organ will sound when it doesn't squeak."

"And what is going to become of John while you are staying to meeting?"

Mrs. Morgan's face had taken on a deeper cloud of disapprobation, and her voice was glumness intensified.

"Why, John will stay to meeting with us, of course."

This from Louise, in positive tone, albeit she was painfully uncertain about that very thing; certain only of this, that if John wouldn't stay, rest wouldn't. It was no part of her plan to carry him down to the village, simply to be tempted of Satan, as he always was, at the street corners.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Morgan, senior, and she went her way, giving no sign of relief or approval, save that the lunch she prepared and

packed, for their united suppers, was bountiful and inviting.

So Louise dusted, and advised as to lamps and pulpit, and prayed heartily meanwhile. How was she to prevail on John to stay to prayer-meeting? Was it a foolish scheme? Would it be better to abandon it and go home? What if, at the last moment, he should rebel, and go away and spend the evening in that horrid corner grocery! Recent though her introduction into the family was, she had already learned how they dreaded the influence of that corner grocery. She lingered near her husband and consulted.

“Lewis, how can we prevail on John to be willing to stay to-night until after the meeting?”

“Oh, he’ll be willing enough; no danger of him; he hasn’t had an opportunity to visit his friends at the corner for some time; he will catch at the chance.”

“Oh, but we musn’t have that kind of staying; I mean, how can we coax him to stay here at the prayer-meeting?”

Her husband regarded her curiously. “I don’t believe even *you* can accomplish such a

result as that," he said at last; "and I am willing to admit that you do accomplish some very extraordinary things."

"Lewis, why do you speak in that way, as though I were trying to do anything wonderful? Can any work be simpler than to seek to get one interested in prayer-meeting, who has no natural interest in such things? I want you to ask him to stay. You said yesterday that you had never invited him to attend; tell him we have a nice lunch, and want him to stay with us and enjoy the meeting. Perhaps all he is waiting for is an invitation."

"Louise, dear, you don't know John; he would have no enjoyment from this meeting even if he stayed, which he will not do; and now, in all sincerity, I believe he would be much less likely to stay if I were to ask him, than he would under almost any other circumstances. It is a humiliating fact that he doesn't care to do *anything* to please me."

Louise turned away with a sigh; her work was growing complicated. Meantime the dusting and cleansing went steadily on; and when

all was accomplished, the church was certainly improved.

A somewhat weary but gay little company gather under one of the renovated lamps just at nightfall, and having made their toilets by folding away large aprons and sweeping-caps, and donning hats and shawls again, sat down to eat the generous lunch.

“Queer way of having a picnic,” said John; “I’ve always supposed the woods was the place for such gatherings. We might as well go home, for all I can see; our work is about done.”

Lewis glanced significantly at his wife; her face expressed doubt and anxiety; certainly it would be better for them all to go home at once rather than that John should spend his evening at the corners. Just what should she say at this juncture? She hesitated but a moment, then said quickly:

“Why, we are going to stay to prayer-meeting; don’t you suppose we want to see the effect of these improvements on the people?”

“To prayer-meeting!” echoed John; then, beyond a low, suddenly suppressed whistle, he said no more.

Their departure for the church had been delayed, and the work there had taken more time than was planned, so that, as the short winter day drew rapidly to its close, the lunch had finally to be disposed of in haste, in order that two or three unfinished matters might be accomplished before the hour for prayer-meeting. With very little idea as to what she should say, or whether it would be wise to say anything, Louise followed John to the organ corner, while he struggled to make the organist's broken seat less objectionable.

"The idea of allowing a church to run into shabbiness in this fashion!" he said, with energy, a sneer in his voice; "shows how interested the people are in it."

"Why doesn't the sexton light the lamps on the other side?" questioned Louise, unwilling to enter into a discussion concerning the inconsistencies of the church, and really curious to understand the movements of that worthy, the sexton.

"More than I know. They are all filled and trimmed, I am sure; perhaps he doesn't know that. He probably economizes by using the

lamps on one side until they are empty, and then taking the other row."

"No," said Louise; "I see what it is done for; so people will sit close together, and not spread over the entire church. It is a good idea, too."

"Yes, said John; "shows how many they expect!"

What strange power John had to throw meaning into a few words. This simple sentence startled Louise; she glanced over the large church. What a very small corner of it was lighted and made habitable. Yet she felt her own faith was equal to even less than that amount of room; she struggled for some satisfying explanation.

"But John, you know this room has to be large enough for the entire congregation; and a great many of them are in the country and could hardly be expected, I suppose, to attend prayer-meeting."

"I know it," said John; "twice as far down to the village on Wednesday evening as it is Saturday. On Saturday evenings the stores have to be kept open until eleven o'clock, so

many country people are in town; but none of them are affected in that way on Wednesday."

"Well," said Louise, trying to speak lightly, "our party will count four more than are usually here; that is one comfort."

John regarded her furtively from under lowering eyebrows.

"Have you any kind of a notion that I intend to stay to this meeting?" he asked, at last, a curious mixture of sarcasm and sneer in his tones. There was something in John's voice that was constantly reminding one of sneers.

A sudden reaction of feeling swept over Louise, or, rather, the feeling that she had held in check, rose to the surface. A vision of John at the corner, playing cards, smoking, drinking beer—of the mother at home, sick at heart, when she saw him and smelled his breath—of the father's anger and Lewis's gravity—appeared before her, and her voice faltered, and her eyes were full of tears as she answered, from a full heart:

"No; I am afraid you are *not* going to; and I am so disappointed about it, that I feel as though I could hardly—"

Here the words stopped, and the tears actually dropped — one of them on John's hand, that was outstretched just at the moment to grasp the hammer lying beside her. He withdrew it suddenly, a strange expression crossing his face; he looked at his hand doubtfully, gravely, then looked back at Louise.

“Why in the name of common sense do you care whether I stay to prayer-meeting, or where I go?”

“I care,” said Louise, brushing away the treacherous tears and raising earnest eyes to his face, “a great deal more than I can explain to you. I never had a brother; I have always wanted one, and I looked forward to having pleasant times together with my brother John. But you won't do anything to please me.”

“How do you know I won't?” His voice was gruff now, gruffer than it had been during the day, and he seized the hammer and pounded so vigorously that she could neither speak nor hear. She turned from him in doubt and anxiety still, and immediately joined her husband who had come to say that the pounding must cease — the people were beginning to come to

prayer-meeting. Nevertheless, the pounding did not cease until two more nails were in place. Then did John, without any effort at quiet, stalk down the uncarpeted aisle and seat himself in the Morgan pew, Dorothy edging along for the purpose, and looking her undisguised astonishment.

Louise tried to feel triumphant; but as the hour dragged its slow length along her heart was very heavy. What a strange meeting it was—strange, at least, to her who had been used to better things. In the first place, the number, all told, counting the four who filled the Morgan pew, amounted to twenty-three. Now, when twenty-three people are placed in a room designed for the accommodation of three hundred, the effect to say the least is not social. Then these twenty-three seemed to have made a study of seating themselves in as widespread a manner as the conditions of light and darkness would admit. Dorothy saw this, and lost herself in trying to plan where the congregation would have been likely to sit had the other lamps been lighted. That condition of inability to sing, which seems to be the chronic state of many

prayer-meetings, was in full force here. Mr Butler announced a hymn, read it, and earnestly invited a leader; but none responded. Louise felt her cheeks flushing in sympathy with the minister's embarrassment, and never, more earnestly wished that she could sing. Even Dorothy, conscious that *she* could sing, was so far roused by sympathy that she felt the bumpings of her frightened heart, caused by the courageous question, "What if I should?" Not that she had the least idea of doing so; but the bare thought made her blood race through her veins at lightning speed. At last a quavering voice took up the cross, and made a cross for every one who tried to join in the unknown and uninviting melody. This prayer-meeting does not need a lengthy description. There are alas! too many like it. Two long prayers, called for by the pastor, between two silences, which waited for some one to "occupy the time." A few dreary sentences from Deacon Jones, who is always in every meeting, detailing his weary story of how things used to be when Mr. Somebody Else was our pastor. Another attempt at a song of praise, which made John's lip curl

more emphatically than the first one had; and then the pastor arose to make some remarks. How interesting he could be at the supper table; how bright and pleasant he could be when roasting apples and popping corn! These things the Morgans knew; so did nearly every one of the other nineteen. Why was he so uninteresting, in the prayer-meeting? Louise tried to analyze it. What he said was true and good; why did it fall like empty bubbles on her heart or vanish away! His theme was prayer. Did he mean the words he was repeating, "If ye ask anything in my name, ye shall have it?" Did he understand what those words meant? If so, why didn't he explain them to others? Dorothy wondered at this; she had not gotten so far as to doubt them — that is, she knew they were Bible words; she saw Mr. Butler open his Bible and read them from it; but, of course, it didn't mean what it said. "If it *did*," said poor Dorothy to herself, "I would ask — oh, I would ask for ever so many things." And then her mind went off in a dream of what it would ask for, if only those words *meant what they said!* And Mr. Butler talked, generalized, told

wonderful and blessed, aye, and *solemn* truths, much as a boy might tell over the words of his spelling lesson. Did the pastor feel those words? Did he realize their meaning? Had he been asking? If so, for what? Had he received it? If he had not received, and still believed the words he read, why did not he set himself to find the reason for the delay? Poor Louise! her mind roved almost as badly as Dorothy's, only over more solemn ground. As for John, his face told, to a close observer, just what he thought; he didn't believe a word, not a *word*, of what had been read, nor of what was being said. More than that, he *did not believe that the minister believed it*. Was there any good in getting John to stay to prayer-meeting?

CHAPTER XV.

OPPORTUNITIES.



CHURCH sociable had been one of the places against which the senior Morgans had set their faces like flints. Not that there had been much occasion for peremptory decisions. John, when he arrived at the proper age for attending had grown away from the church into a lower circle, and Dorothy was frightened at the mere thought of going anywhere alone. So, occasional sharp criticisms as to the proceedings — reports of which floated to them from time to time — was the extent of their interference. But Louise had weighed the matter carefully, and was determined upon an attendance at the church sociable. Had she taken time to

notice it, she might have been amused over the various forms of objection that met her plans.

"I'm afraid they will think the Morgan family have turned out *en masse*," had her husband said, when he listened to the scheme. "I'm in favor of *our* going, because I think the people will like to meet you, and you will like some of them very well; but wouldn't it be better to get acquainted with them ourselves before getting Dorothy into society? She will be frightened and awkward, and will be very far from enjoying it. John won't go, of course."

"Lewis," his wife said, impressively, "I believe John *will* go; I am very anxious to have him, and I feel impressed with the belief that God will put it into his heart." The curious look on her husband's face, emboldened her to ask a question which had been troubling her. "Lewis, you sometimes act almost as though you didn't believe such matters were subjects of prayer at all. Are these things too small for His notice, when he himself refers us to the fading wild flowers for lessons?"

Lewis studied his answer carefully, he admitted that, of course, we had a right to pray about

everything, but then — well, the truth was, she certainly had a way of attaching importance to matters which seemed to him trivial, for instance, that tea; he had not understood then, did not now, why she should have been so anxious about it, and, as for this matter, what particular good was it going to do to take John to the church sociable?

“Don’t you see,” his wife asked, earnestly, “that we must get John into a different circle, if we would draw him away from the one that he has fallen into?”

Yes, he admitted that; in fact, he admitted everything that she could possibly desire, and yet she knew he went away feeling that it was, after all, of exceeding little consequence whether John went or stayed.

Nevertheless her desire for the accomplishment of this matter remained firm. She studied many ways for winning John’s consent to the plan, seeking counsel on her knees, and wondering much that no way opened to her, until she discovered, on the day in question, that there was no need for an opening. John, for reasons best known to himself, had settled the matter,

and himself broached the subject by inquiring whether she still believed that the pleasantest thing she could do was to walk.

“Walk where?” questioned the mother, and the subject was before them.

“Why, to the social this evening,” explained Louise, quickly. “I propose a walk; the evenings are perfect now, and I’m a first-class walker; I feel anxious to show my skill in that line.”

“To the church fiddlestick!” said Father Morgan, with more asperity than he generally spoke; and Mother Morgan added:

“I wonder if you and Lewis are going to countenance those gatherings?”

“Why,” said innocent Louise, “of course we must sustain the social gatherings of our church; I think them very important aids.”

“Aids to what, I’d like to know? They are just dancing parties, and nothing else. I’m not a church-member, to be sure, but I know what church-members ought to be; and to see them standing up for the world in that way, and helping it along, is sickening, to say the least.” This from Farmer Morgan.

Then Mrs. Morgan, senior:

“They stay until most morning, and dress and gossip, and giggle, and dance; if that is sustaining the church, the less it is sustained the better, according to my notion.”

Then Louise:

“May not part of the trouble be that those who do not approve of such management stand aloof and let Satan manage it his own way, and lead the young people whither he will?”

“Humph!” said Farmer Morgan (and there is hardly in our language one syllable more expressive than that, in the mouths of some people), “the minister goes.”

“I know, but he can not do much alone.”

“In my opinion,” said Mrs. Morgan, firmly, “he enjoys it all too well to want to do any thing.” Her firm lips and eyes said as plainly as words could have done: “You will do as you like, no doubt, but you won’t get my Dorothy to help sustain any such thing.”

“Well, mother, we are going to-night, to see what we can do toward sustaining, or something else; I hardly know what we *are* going for I’m sure; but I know this much, we are *going*.”

Perhaps of all the group, none were more sur-

prised than Louise at this statement from John's lips.

She hesitated, and her heart beat high with anxiety and doubt. John meant to go, then; but ought he to speak so to his mother? And ought she to seem to approve of such speaking? Only a second of thought, then she said:

"Oh, John, we wouldn't go if mother disapproved, would we? Lewis says he always minds his mother, and I'm sure I always minded mine."

This sentence, half laughing, yet inwardly wholly earnest, was sent forth in much anxiety, the speaker remembering the fifth commandment, even though she wished most earnestly, just then, that it were not made so difficult a duty, by the mother in question.

But a change had suddenly come over that mother. To have the boy John even at a church social, disreputable as she believed those places to be, was much better than to have him at the corner grocery, or in any of his favorite haunts. The moment there dawned upon her the idea that *he* really meant to go, her objections softened.



“The large, modern farm-house where the gathering was held was a surprise to Louise.”—Page 241.

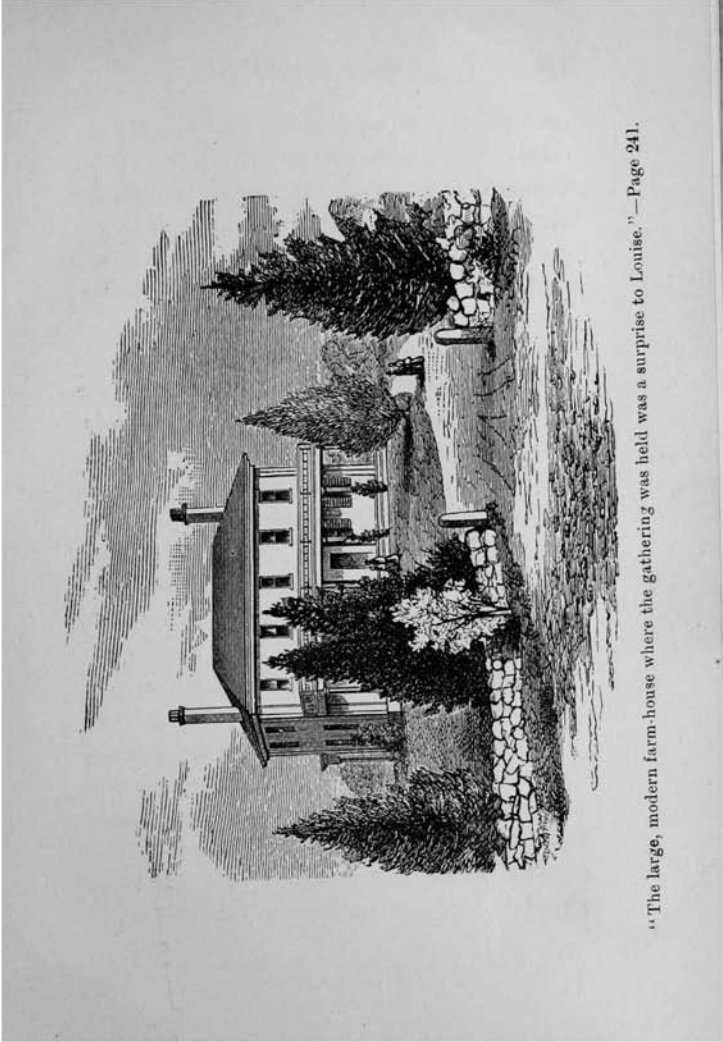
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“Oh, I don't want to keep any of you from going, I'm sure; go if you want to, of course; a church gathering ought to be a nice place, and if it isn't what it ought to be, it isn't your fault, I suppose; I shan't make any objections.”

Which was a remarkable concession, when one considered the woman who made it. So they went to the social; also they walked; Lewis and Louise stepping briskly along together over the moon-lighted earth, and enjoying every step of the way; as only those can who have little opportunity for long, quiet walks together, even though they are bound by the closest ties.

The large, modern farm-house where the gathering was held was a surprise to Louise; unconsciously she had gauged all farm-houses by her father-in-law's. But here she was introduced to one of those fair country homes with which New England abounds; bright and tasteful, and in its free and easy, home-like way, beautiful. The large rooms were carefully arranged, and little works of art and souvenirs of celebrated spots and scenes were freely scattered, and the books, displayed lavishly, spoke of cultured

tastes and leisure for their indulgence. A large company was gathered, and the scene was social in the extreme. The new-comers were very heartily greeted, it being evident to all but herself that Mrs. Lewis Morgan was looked upon as an acquisition to the society, much to be desired. As for that lady, she was so engrossed in making Dorothy feel at home and have a good time, and so anxious that John should not slip away in disgust before the evening was over, that she forgot her position as a stranger and, with an end in view, made acquaintances eagerly and searchingly, looking everywhere for the helpers that she hoped to find in these young people.

Meantime, she studied the actual scene, trying to fit it to the reports which had come to her. The company was very merry. They talked a good deal of nonsense, no doubt, and it was possible that a sort of giggly, good-natured gossip came in for its share; and they were, at least the younger portion, too much dressed for a church social; but, though the evening was advancing, she had as yet seen no indications of

the amusement which Father and Mother Morgan found so objectionable.

During a moment's leisure Mr. Butler came over to her. He had been among the young people all the evening, the favorite center of the merriest circles. It was evident that these young people enjoyed their pastor at a church social, whatever opinion they might have of him elsewhere.

"I am so glad you came out to our gathering," he said to her, cordially. "It was very kind in you to overlook our lack of courtesy in the matter of calls, and come at once. Our ladies will call on you promptly enough, now. Some of them had the impression that you might not care to make new acquaintances."

"I wonder why?" said Louise, in surprise. "My old friends are too far away to be made available. Mr. Butler, what a great company of young people! Do these all belong to your congregation? Where were they on Wednesday night?"

"Well," said Mr. Butler, "the plain and painful truth is, that wherever they are on Wednesday evenings, at one place they are *not*, and that

is the prayer-meeting. Some of them are church-members, but it never seems to be convenient for country people to come to town on Wednesdays, nor to be out so late as it is necessary in order to attend prayer-meeting."

"Yet they come to the church socials?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. That is another matter; they have no objection to being social."

"Then, what a pity it is that we couldn't have our prayer-meeting social, isn't it?"

Mr. Butler laughed, then grew grave.

"Well, but, Mrs. Morgan, you do not suppose it is possible to make prayer-meetings into places where those who have no love for Christ will like to come?"

"Perhaps not; though more might be done for even that class, I suspect, than is; but some of these young people belong to Christ, do they not?"

He shook his head.

"Very few. I never knew a church with such a large class of indifferent young people in it. Oh, some of them are members, to be sure; but the large majority of those here to-night,

the young ones, have no sympathy with the church, except in its socials."

"Then, what a doubly important opportunity this church social is," said Louise, with kindling eyes. "This is really almost your only chance with the young people, then, save in calls; how do you manage the work, or is that too close a question to answer?"

The bright eyes of the young minister dropped before her. He felt, in truth, that the question was too close though not in the sense that she meant it. He wished, in his truthful heart, that he could just leave her to think that his ways of working were too intermingled to be explained; but, whatever faults he may have had, deception was not one of them. He hesitated and flushed, then met her gaze squarely, as he said:

"The simple truth is, Mrs. Morgan, I am doing just nothing with these young people, and I don't know what to do."

"I know," she said, quickly, "the work is immense, and little, patient efforts sometimes seem like 'just nothing.' But, after all, how can you tell? The earnest words dropped here and there, even in such soil as this, may spring up

and bear fruit; so long as you meet your people in this way, once a week, and can gather them about you as you do, I shouldn't allow myself to get discouraged."

Evidently she did not understand him. He was leaving her to suppose that he was moving quietly around among them, dropping seed, when, in reality, he had been chatting with them gayly about the skating and the sleighing, and the coming festival and the recent party, and had dropped no earnest, honest seed of any sort. His honest heart shrank from bearing unmerited approval.

"I am literal in my statement," he said, earnestly, "though you are kind enough to translate it figuratively. I do not feel that I am saying anything to help these young people, save as I am helping them to have a gay and pleasant evening. I don't know how that is going to tell for the future, and I don't know what I can do to tell toward *that*. I can not get one into a corner and preach a sermon to him at such a time as this; now, can I?"

"I shouldn't think it would be a good place

in which to read sermons," said Louise, with smiling eyes and grave mouth. "But, then, we who never preach at all, will not allow you to profess that the sermon is the only way of seed-sowing."

"I did not mean literal preaching, of course," he said, a trifle annoyed; "but what I mean is, there is no opportunity here for personal effort of any sort. I am always afraid to attempt anything of the kind, lest I may prejudice people against the whole subject. Don't you think there is danger of that?"

"Well, I don't know," Louise said, thoughtfully. "If I were to talk with one of my friends who is not acquainted with you, and tell her how kind you were, and how interested in all young people, and how pleasant and helpful you were, it doesn't seem to me that I should prejudice that friend against you. Why should I feel afraid of prejudicing them against my Saviour?"

He looked at her, doubtfully.

"Don't you think that young people look upon this question with different eyes from that which they give to any other? Aren't they more afraid of hearing it talked about?"

“Aren't they more unaccustomed to hearing it talked about?” was Louise's earnest answer. “Have we, as Christians, tried the experiment, fully, of talking freely, brightly, socially about this matter, about our joys and hopes and prospects? What do you suppose the effect would be? Suppose, for instance, Mr. Butler, you and I were in the midst of that circle across from us where there is just now a lull in the conversation, and you should say to me: ‘Mrs. Morgan, what have you found, to-day, that affects our plans?’ and I should answer: ‘Why, I found that our Father loves us even better than I had supposed. I found, to-day, that he says he blots out our transgressions for his own sake!’ I did find that, to-day, Mr. Butler, and it is as news to me. He really loves us so much that, *for his own sake*, he forgives us. What if I should say that to you, in the presence of these others?”


“They would consider us a couple of fanatics,” said Mr. Butler, quickly.

“Well,” said Louise, with bright eyes and smiling mouth, “that, certainly, wouldn't hurt

us. But why should we be called fanatics? I heard you telling what Prof. Proctor says he has recently decided in regard to a scientific matter, and the young men about you listened and questioned, and didn't act as though you were a fanatic at all."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE REASON OF THINGS.

OHN came over to her, speaking abruptly—ignoring the presence of the pastor, other than by a nod :

“They want to know whether you dance.”

The minister flushed over the question, as though it had been personal; but Louise laughed.

“Can't you tell them, John?”

“How should I know?” given in his gruffest tones.

“Now, John! didn't you tell me only a few days ago, what you expected of me in that regard? Do you think I want to disappoint your expectations?”

“Well, then, what is the reason that you don’t?”

“Mr. Butler, think of my being called upon to answer such an immense question as that, at a church sociable! John, you will have to be my champion, and explain, if you are hard pressed, that the reasons are too numerous to be given now and here. Meantime, you may vouch for me that I have excellent ones.”

John turned away, a grim smile on his face. Louise, looking after him, feeling much less bright and undisturbed than she appeared, saw that he was not displeased with her answers, but wondered, uneasily, what he might be enduring, in the way of banter, for her sake. She had grown to have that degree of confidence in him; she believed that he would endure something for her sake. She need not have been disturbed; there had been no bantering; Mrs. Lewis Morgan was at present held in too great respect for that. Still, John had been surprised into some abrupt admissions, which he had felt obliged to have corroborated by her.

“Does your sister dance?” had been asked him, abruptly, by one of the pretty visions in

curls, whom his eyes had been following half the evening. He had given a confused little start, and glanced instinctively at the corner where Dorothy sat, being kindly talked to by a nice old lady.

“Dorothy?” he exclaimed, a surprise note in his voice. How absurd it seemed to suppose such a thing! “No; she never dances.”

“Oh, I don’t mean Dorothy,” and the pretty vision echoed his surprise in her voice; “I mean your brother’s wife.”

Then did John turn and look at *her*, as she stood a little at one side, conversing, animatedly, with the minister. How pretty she was; how unlike any one that he knew. What a strange sound it had to him, that sentence, “your sister,” when he applied it to this fair young woman! She was his acknowledged sister, then, in the eyes of all his people. He had not realized it before; to be sure she had called him her brother, and it had pleased him: but, at the same time, the idea that other people so spoke, had not before occurred to him. It certainly was by no means an unpleasant idea. He was in danger of wandering off over the

strangeness of this relation and its possible pleasantnesses, unmindful of the small questioner, who waited.

“Well,” she said, inquiringly, a little laugh closing the word, “are you trying to decide the momentous question?”

“No,” he said, with emphasis, “she doesn’t dance.”

“Never?”

“Of course not.”

“Dear me! Why, ‘of course?’ You speak as if it were the unpardonable sin!” The very words that John had used in speaking of this very subject, yet he disliked this speaker for these words which slipped so smoothly from her pretty lips. All unconscious of this, however, she continued: “I shall be greatly surprised if you are not mistaken. She is from the city, and in cities all the young people dance; the old foggy, country ideas on that subject are thought to be absurd. I believe she would like a little refreshment from this dullness, and really I think she looks too sensible to have any such silly notions as some of our deacons indulge. I

don't suppose you ever asked her point blank, did you?"

John did not choose to tell how nearly he had done just this, did not choose to be catechised longer, so he turned from her with this parting sentence:

"If you are anxious about the matter, it is easy enough to ask her; she can speak for herself." And his mental addition was, with a curling lip:

"She, is one of their Christians!"

Though why John Morgan should have any right to pass judgment upon her for disgracing a profession, in which he did not believe, is more than I can understand. This much, however, I know: they nearly all do it.

No sooner was he left to himself than it occurred to him that he had been very emphatic; after all, what ground had he for his positive statements? He recalled the brief conversation which he had held with Louise on the subject; what had she said? Not much, besides asking him a question or two. He did not believe that she ever joined in that amusement; he felt positive about it; at the same time he could not

have told why he felt so. Suppose he should be mistaken? Suppose they should get up a dance here and now, and she should join them? He grew hot over the thought. "She needn't try to cajole me into her prayer-meetings or organ mendings after that," he told himself in indignation. But then, John Morgan, why not? You believe in dancing; you know you have sneered at your mother for her views on this subject.

Never mind, whatever he believed, he assuredly did not believe in having this new sister of his, take such a position before this public. A desire to have the proof of her own words, added to his feelings, sent him across the room to interrupt that conversation between her and the minister. And, though she certainly did not say much, he had turned from her satisfied that, "city lady though she was, that pert little yellow-curled girl would find herself mistaken."

Meantime, Mr. Butler regarded the lady with a curious blending of amusement and anxiety on his face.

"Your brother has evidently assumed your defence," he said, lightly; and then, as if with

a sudden resolution to be earnest, he added; "I could find it in my heart to repeat and press the question that has just been asked you, if I thought you were willing to enter into the discussion with me. Not," he added, with a slightly flushing face, as she turned surprised eyes on him, "not as to why *you* do not dance, for, of course, your position and mine are answer enough to this question, but as to what reasons you give to others for taking such views of the question. I confess to you, frankly, that it puzzles me beyond almost any other that I meet. How to explain to those bright young girls and pleasant-faced boys, who gather in this congregational capacity every two weeks, and who are well acquainted with each other, that there is any harm in having a promenade together, for really that is all that the sort of dancing in which they indulge amounts to. Positively when they say to me, 'What is the harm?' I am nonplussed. I feel the inconsistency, but am at an utter loss how to explain it. Now, may I ask you what you do with such questions, when they are asked you?"

"Well," said Louise, thoughtfully, "it de-

pends upon the standpoint from which I am to talk; by which I mean there are various presentations of the subject; you do not expect to influence one who has no love for Christ with the same motives that you do an earnest Christian, you know."

"Certainly not; but it is from a Christian standpoint that I want you to speak now; I have some young Christians here, who say to me, 'Now Mr. Butler, what harm can there be in our dancing together occasionally, we boys and girls, who know each other so well? We don't go to balls or large parties, but when we meet in this way, please tell us the harm?' And while it may be a very humiliating confession, I have never been able to answer them satisfactorily to myself. Suppose that a young girl, who professed to belong to Christ, should ask you the question, what would you say?"

"I should say, 'Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' And then I should ask her to tell me how dancing could be made subservient to his glory."

“But Mrs. Morgan, isn't that very high ground?”

“Certainly it is; is it higher than a follower of Christ ought to take?”

“Well — but the difficulty with such reasoning is, that it condemns so many things which we consider innocent; for instance, that corn which Miss Dorothy and I popped, the other evening, would it be possible to fit that to God's glory?”

“I find it by no means difficult,” Louise said, giving him a bright smile; “I am not sure but that, while the corn popped, avenues were opened in the family, which will lead to hearts, and make a road for you to lead them to your Master. I assure you that I believe even such trivialities as kernels of corn may tend to his glory. But then, if we became, as a family, infatuated with corn-popping, so that we spent our evenings away into the midnight, if not away beyond it, in popping corn, and unfitted ourselves for the next day's duties, and if some people, or occasionally one person, had been led by the popping of corn into temptation and danger and death, I should feel that you ought to

use your influence against our amusement in that direction ; and this world is in such a cranky state of mind, that in order to use your influence against my *excesses*, you would have to refrain from ever popping one single kernel ; now, wouldn't you ? ”

“ I might say,” he answered, laughing, “ that if you were so extremely foolish as to be led astray by such an innocent amusement as that, it was your own fault, and I was not responsible.”

“ And I should ask, ‘ Shall the weak sister perish for whom Christ died ? ’ ”

“ But Mrs. Morgan, seriously, many of our young people, or at least some of them, have so slight a knowledge of the world that they really can not realize the possibility of persons being led astray by such causes ; and where they have not wise mothers and tender fathers to influence them, in whose superior wisdom they can trust, how can I reach such ? ”

“ There is one line of argument that ought to reach all such, I think ; take, for instance, my brother John ; isn't it evident, Mr. Butler, that he doesn't consider dancing consistent with a Christian profession ? ”

“Oh, of course,” said Mr. Butler, promptly; “hardly an unconverted man or woman in the world who does. We are sure to find sneerers among that class, but I had always supposed that was rather because they had caught the impression from some advanced Christians, and, being always ready to sneer, were glad to have this to sneer about.”

“Now, we might go off on a side issue, and try to discover where these advanced Christians got their views; but suppose we do not; suppose we grant that such is the case, what then? Have I, as a Christian, any right to indulge in that which is not in itself a duty, and which may cause me to be a stumbling-block in the way of another? Why, the argument is very old; ‘By meat destroy not the work of God.’ If I may not do it for meat, can I possibly see a right to do it for amusement?”

“Well,” said Mr. Butler, after a long pause, “I see the line of argument; it is capable of covering very broad ground. What do you say to an unconverted person on this subject?”

“Various things,” said Louise, smiling; “among others I try to persuade them to love



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the Lord Jesus, and then when he makes it plain to them that there are greater pleasures in store than these things can give, they will be enabled even to give up *dancing* for his sake! If the Christian world were a unit on this question, do you really think it would give us much trouble Mr. Butler?"

"No," said Mr. Butler, gravely; "the trouble grows out of a divided host. Yet there are arguments against dancing, on the side of morals and propriety, but it is exceedingly difficult to make pure-hearted young girls understand this."

"I know, and herein lies so much of the mischief; because, Mr. Butler, young men like my brother John know only too well the arguments which might be advanced in that direction. Now, tell me, please, who is that young man who seems to stand aloof? I have noticed him several times this evening; he appears like a stranger; he is standing now, near the sitting room door, quite alone."

"I don't know who he is," said Mr. Butler; "I have noticed him at the socials once or twice

before, but I don't know his name, and can't imagine where he belongs."

"Won't you please find out for me, if you can, and introduce us?"

Thus commissioned, the minister turned away with heightened color. Not a word had Mrs. Morgan said as to the strangeness of having a young man appear in his church socials two or three times without discovering who he was, but, nevertheless, an uncomfortable sense of having appeared indifferent to his flock haunted the minister, as he looked about for ways and means of making the acquaintance of the stranger.

"That?" said Deacon Shiriey's son, to whom he appealed. "Oh, that is young Martyn; he is a farm hand in summer, and a — well, anything he can find to be in winter. He is doing odd jobs for Mr. Capron now, on the farm, working for his board, I believe, and attending the school in the village. I don't know him. Queer chap, I guess; keeps himself to himself."

"Hasn't he been to our socials before?"

"Oh, yes; twice, I think. Jennie Capron has to depend on him for an escort; and so he

comes, in the line of his work, just as he does everything else; he doesn't seem to enjoy them much."

"Suppose you introduce me?" said the minister; and young Shirley, much amazed, complied.

Meantime, while they were making their way to his side, little Minnie Capron, who had been standing near them, sped away to the young man, who was a friend of hers, and whispered:

"Callie! oh, Callie! Mr. Butler has been asking Ben Shirley all about you, and he wants to be introduced to you, and they are coming now."

"All right, little one," said the young man, cheerily; "only don't tell them we know it," and he received the promised introduction with a broad smile on his face.

Nobody knew better than Mr. Butler how to be, genial, when he chose, or, more properly speaking, when he thought of it; so young Carey Martyn, who had felt somewhat sore over the thought that even the minister had overlooked him, thawed under the bright and cordial greeting, and was presently willing to cross the

room to Louise and receive another introduction.

"Mrs. Morgan wants to meet you," said the minister, as they went toward her. "She specially desired an introduction."

And the young fellow's heart warmed at the idea — he was not to be quite left out in the cold, then, if he did drive Mr. Capron's horses, and work for his board. That is the way in which he had interpreted the thoughtlessness of the young people. He was *proud*, this young man — a good many young men are, intensely and sensitively proud, about a hundred little things of which no one save themselves is thinking: and thus they make hard places in their lives which might just as well be smooth.

Mr. Butler, having performed his duty, immediately left the two to make each other's acquaintance, and went himself to hunt out a new face that he had seen in the crowd. He was beginning to feel that there were ways of making church socials helpful.

A little touch of pride, mingled with a frank desire not to sail into society under false colors made young Martyn say, in answer to Louise's kindly cross-questioning:

“Oh, no, I don't live here ; my home is a hundred miles away ; I am, really, only a servant.”

“To be a servant, under some masters, is a very high position,” Louise answered, quickly. “May I hope that you are a servant of the great King ?”

Then you should have seen Carey Martyn's gray eyes flash.

“I believe I am,” he said, proudly. “I wear his uniform, and I try to serve him.”

“Then we are brother and sister,” said Louise. “Let us shake hands in honor of the relationship,” and she held out her fair hand and grasped the roughened one, and the young man's heart warmed, and his face brightened as it hardly had since he left his mother.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIRST FRUITS.



LEWIS," said his wife, as she came to him in the hall, robed for walking, "I have a little plan; I want you to walk home with Dorothy to-night, and let me go with John, I would like to have a talk with him; but more than that, I want you to have a talk with Dorothy, and you never get opportunity to see her alone."

"Oh, Louise!" said her husband, undisguised dismay in voice and manner; yet he tried to disguise it—he did not want her to know how entirely he shrank from such a plan.

"I don't think, dear, that it will be wise; Dorothy is at all times afraid of me, and a long

walk alone with me would be a terrible undertaking in her eyes; and, besides, Louise dear, I am not like *you*; I can not talk familiarly with people on these topics as you can."

"Don't talk any more than you think wise; get acquainted with Dorrie, and drop one little seed that may spring up and bear fruit. I want you to try it, Lewis."

There was something in her face and voice when she said such things that had often moved Lewis, before, to go contrary to his own wishes. It worked the same spell over him now; without another word of objection he turned away — though the walk home in the starlight had been a delightful prospect — and went to do what was a real cross to him. What had he and Dorothy in common? What could they say to each other?

"What is all this?" John questioned, sharply, as Lewis strode out of the gate with the frightened Dorothy tucked under his arm. He suspected a trap, and he had all a young man's horror of being caught with cunningly-devised plans. He was quick-witted; if this were one of Louise's schemes to lecture him

under pretense of enjoying a walk, she would find him very hard to reach.

Fortunately for her, Louise was also quick-witted. He was not one to be caught with guile; at least, not guile of this sort. She answered his question promptly and frankly.

"It is a plan of mine, John: I wanted to talk with you, and it seemed to me this would be a good opportunity. You do not mind walking with me, do you?"

Thus squarely met, what was John to say? He *said* nothing, but he reasoned in his heart that this was a straight-forward way of doing things, anyhow; no "sneaking" about it.

"Well," he said, as, after offering his arm they walked over the frozen earth for a little in silence, "what have you got to say to me? Why don't you begin your lecture?"

"Oh, John! it isn't in the least like a lecture; it is a simple thing, very easily said; I wish you were a Christian man; that comprises the whole story."

What a simple story it was! What was there in it that made John's heart beat quicker?

"What do *you* care?" he asked her.

“Why, isn’t that a singular question? If I love my King, don’t I want all the world to be loyal to him? Besides, if I love my friends, don’t I desire for them that which will alone give them happiness?”

“What do you mean by ‘being a Christian’?”

“I mean following Christ.”

“What does that mean? I don’t understand those cant phrases, and I don’t believe anybody else does.”

“Never mind ‘anybody else;’ what is there in that phrase which *you* don’t understand?”

“I don’t understand anything about it, and never saw anything in any one’s religion to make me want to; I believe less in religion than I do in anything else in life. It is a great humbug. Half your Christians are making believe to their neighbors, and the other half are making believe, not only to their neighbors, but to themselves. Now you have my opinion in plain English.”

And John drew himself up, proudly, after the manner of a young man who thinks he has advanced some unanswerable arguments.

“Never mind ‘other people’s religion’ just now, John; I don’t want you to be like a single

person whom you ever saw. I am not anxious just now to know whether you believe in religion or not. Do you believe there is such a person as Jesus Christ?"

Then there was utter silence. John, who had a hundred ways of twisting this subject, and was ready with his lancet to probe the outer covering of all professions, and who believed that he could meet all arguments with sneers, was silenced by a name. He did not believe in religion, nor in churches, nor in ministers, nor in the Bible; at least he had sharply told himself that he didn't. But was he prepared to say plainly, here in the stillness of the winter night, under the gaze of the solemn stars, that he did not believe there was such a person as Jesus Christ?

Foolish disciple of that foolish Ingersoll though he thought he was, something, he did not know what, some unseen, unrealized power, kept him from speaking those blasphemous and false words; yes, for he knew in his heart that to deny his belief in the existence of such a person would be as false as it was foolish.

He would have been glad to have had Louise advance her arguments, press the subject, be as

personal as she pleased — *anything*, rather than this solemn silence; it made him strangely uneasy.

But Louise only waited; then, presently, repeated her question.

“Why, of course, I suppose so,” was at last John’s unwilling admission.

“Are you very familiar with his history?”

Another trying question. Why couldn’t she *argue*, if she wanted to, like a sensible person. He was willing to meet her half-way; but these short, simple, straightforward questions were very trying.

“Not remarkably, I guess,” he answered at last, with a half laugh.

What an admission for a man to have to make who was expected to prove why he didn’t believe in *anything!*

But Louise, apparently had no intention of making him prove anything.

“Well,” she said, simply, “then we have reached our starting-point. I wished that you were a follower of Christ; in order to follow him, of course you will have to know him intimately.”

“Who follows him?”

The question was asked almost fiercely. Oh, if Louise could only have reminded him of his mother! . Could have brought her forth as an unanswerable argument against this foolish attempt at skepticism! She knew mothers who could have been so brought forward, but, alas for him! John Morgan's mother was not one of them. The minister? She thought of him quickly, and as quickly laid his name aside. He was a “good fellow,” a genial man; John already half fancied him; but it would not do to bring him forward as a model of one who was following Christ. Alas, again, for John, that his pastor could not have been a satisfactory pattern! She thought of her husband, and with a throb of wifely pain, realized that she must not produce *his* name. Not, indeed, because he was not a follower, but because this unreasonable boy could so readily detect flaws, and was fiercely claiming a perfect pattern. She must answer something.

“Oh, John!” she said, and her voice was full of feeling, “very many are, in weakness and with stumblings, but what has that to do with

the subject? Suppose there is not a single honest follower on earth, does that destroy you and Christ? To point out *my* follies to Jesus Christ will not excuse *you*, for he does not ask you to follow me. John don't let us argue these questions that are as plain as sunlight. You believe in Jesus Christ; will you study him, and take him for your model?"

"Not until I see somebody accomplish something in the world who pretends to have done so."

He said it with his accustomed sneer; he knew it was weak, was foolish; was in a sense unanswerable because of its utter puerility; yet, all the same, he repeated it in varied forms during that walk, harping continually on the old key: the inconsistencies of others. In part he believed his own statements; in fact, he was at work at what he had accused Christians of doing: "making believe," to himself, that the fault lay all outside of himself.

Louise said very little more; she had not the least desire to argue. She believed that John, like many other young men in his position, knew altogether too little about the matter to be capa-

ble of honest argument. She believed he was, like many another, very far from being sincerely anxious to reach the truth, else he would not have had to make that humiliating admission that he was unacquainted with the character of Jesus Christ.

He talked a good deal, during the rest of the way ; waxed fierce over the real, or fancied, sins of his neighbors ; instanced numerous examples, and seemed surprised and provoked that she made not the slightest attempt to controvert his statements.

“Upon my word !” he said at last, “you are easily vanquished. You have never lived in such an interesting community of Christians as this, I fancy. So you haven’t a word to say for them ?”

“I didn’t know we were talking about *them*,” she answered, quietly ; “I thought we were talking about Jesus Christ. I am not acquainted with them, and, in one sense, they are really of no consequence ; but I do know Jesus, and can say a word for *him*, if you will present anything against him. Still, as you seem very anxious to talk of these others, I want to ask one question :

“Do you believe these traits of character which you have mentioned, were *developed by religion?*”

“Of course not; at least I should hope not; it is the absurdity of their professions, in view of such lives, to which I was trying to call your attention.”

“Well, suppose we grant that their professions are absurd, what have you and I gained? what has that to do with the personal question which rests between us and Christ?”

“Oh, well,” he said, sneering, “that is begging the question. Of course if the life is such an important one, the fruit ought to be worth noticing. Anyhow, I don’t intend to swell the army of pretenders until they can make a better showing than they do now.”

It was precisely in this way that he swung around the subject, always glancing away from a personal issue. You have doubtless heard them, these arguers, going over the same ground, again and again, exactly as though it had never been touched before. Louise was sore-hearted; she began to question, miserably, as to whether she had made a mistake. Was not this talk

worse than profitless? Was he not even being strengthened in his own follies? She had so wanted to help him, and he really seemed farther away from her reach than when they had started on this walk. She was glad when they neared their own gate. John had relapsed into silence, whether sullen or otherwise she had no means of knowing. They had walked rapidly, at last, and gained upon Dorothy and Lewis, who were coming now, up the walk.

“Good-night,” said Louise, gently.

“Good-night,” he answered. Then, hesitatingly: “I’m rather sorry, on your account, that I am such a good-for-nothing. Perhaps, if I had had a specimen of your sort about me earlier, it might have made a difference; but I’m soured now, beyond even your reach. I’d advise you to let me go to decay as fast as possible.” And he pushed past her into the hall, up the stairs, leaving her standing in the door-way, waiting for her husband.

Meantime, in silence and embarrassment, Lewis and Dorothy had trudged along. At least he was embarrassed; he had no means of knowing what she was feeling, save that the

hand which rested on his arm trembled. This very fact disturbed him ; why had she need to be afraid of him ? Was he a monster, that she should shrink and tremble whenever he spoke to her ? Still, conscience told him plainly that he had never exerted himself greatly to make her feel at ease with him. Then he fell to thinking over her emotionless weariness of a life. What was there for her anywhere, in the future more than in the present ? She would, probably, stagnate early, if the process were not already completed, and settle down into hopeless listlessness. Much he knew about life ! especially the life of a girl not yet nearly out of her teens.

Still his view of it gave him a feeling of unutterable pity for the sister of whom he had hitherto thought but little connectedly, except to admit a general disappointment in her. Now he began to say to himself : “ What if she should awaken to a new life in Christ ? What a restful, hopeful life it might give her ! She will never be able to do much for him, but what wonderful things he could do for *her* ! ” This was a new standpoint from which to look at it. Heretofore he had thought of her as one who would be

nothing but a passive traveller to heaven, even if she were converted, and therefore not of much consequence! Was that it? Oh, no; he shrank from that way of putting it. He had really not been so indifferent as he had been hopeless. If he had put the thought into words, he would have had to admit that there had not seemed to him enough of Dorothy for Christ to save! Something very like that, at least. Still he had honestly meant to try to say a word to her. Not so much for her sake, nor even for the Master's sake, but because of his wife's eager face and earnest voice. He had determined to talk pleasantly to her, to tell her some bright and interesting thing connected with his long absences from home, and then, when he got her self-forgetful and interested, drop just a word for Christ in a very faint and faithless sort of hope that it might, *possibly some time*, bear fruit.

He did nothing of the sort. Some feeling, new and masterful, took possession of him, made him have a desire for fruit; made him anxious, for the sake of this desolate outlook in

her life, to brighten it with Christ. So the first words he spoke, and they were spoken very soon after the walk commenced, were:

“Do you know, Dorothy, I can’t help wishing with all my heart that you belonged to Christ?”

Then the hand on his arm trembled violently, and, while he was thinking how he should quiet her tremor, and chiding himself for having been so abrupt, Dorothy made answer with a burst of tears:

“Oh, Lewis, I never wished anything so much in my life! Will you show me how?”

“Did you know how Dorothy felt?” Lewis said, beginning the moment the door of their room closed on himself and wife. There was a new look on his face, an eager, almost an exalted look, and a ring to his voice that made Louise turn and regard him half curiously as she said:

“Nothing beyond the fact that she has seemed to me very impressible for a day or two, and that I have had strong faith in praying for her. Why?”

“Why, Louise, she melted right down at the first word. She is very deeply impressed, and


wonderfully in earnest, and I half believe she is a Christian at this moment. I found her in bewilderment as to just what conversion meant, but she grasped at my explanation like one who saw with the eyes of her soul. I was so surprised and humiliated and grateful ! ”

At these phases of emotion showed in his prayer. Louise, who had believed him much in earnest for years, had never heard him pray as he did that evening for his sister Dorothy. As she listened, and joined in the petitions, her faith, too, grew strong to grasp the thought that there was a new name written in heaven that night and rejoiced over among the angels. And yet her heart was sad. In vain she chid it for ungratefulness, and dimly suspected selfish motives at the bottom. But it did seem so strange to her that John, for whom she had felt such a constantly increasing anxiety, for whom she had prayed as she could not pray even for Dorothy, held aloof, and was even farther away to-night than she had felt him to be before — and Dorothy, at a word from the brother who had hardly given her two connected thoughts in years, had come joyfully into the kingdom !

Was Louise jealous? She would have been shocked at the thought; and yet, in what strange and subtle ways the tempter can lead us, unawares, even when we believe ourselves to be almost in a line with Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIRDS OF PROMISE.

NE moment, Mr. Butler," said Louise, detaining the minister, as, having giving her cordial greeting in the church-aisle and bowed to Dorothy, and shaken hands with Father Morgan, he was turning away ; " we have something to tell you ; something that will make you glad ; our sister Dorrie has decided for Christ."

Simple words enough ; I suppose even Dorothy, though her cheeks glowed, and her eyes were bright with joy, did not recognize the tremendous import of their meaning ; and Louise was surprised at their effect on Mr. Butler. He was a young minister, you will remember, and

while he had not been doing all that he could, he had scarcely realized that he could do more — at least, not until very lately. This was really his first experience in greeting a new-born soul among his flock. It came to him with all the joy of a glad, an almost overwhelming, surprise. True, he had prayed that he might have “souls for his hire.” Yet he had prayed, as many another does, without realizing that possibly his prayer would be answered, and actually souls would come into the kingdom, whom he could welcome to his Father’s table!

There was an instant flush over his handsome face, an eager flash in his eyes, and he turned to Dorothy again, and held out his hand.

“Welcome,” he said.

Not a word more, but the quiver in his voice told that words were beyond him just then, and Dorothy turned from him with the belief that it certainly meant a great deal to the minister to have a person “decide for Christ.” She was very much surprised, and not a little confused. It had not occurred to her that others, outside of Lewis and Louise, would ever know about her new hopes and intentions. I am not sure

that it had before occurred to her that any one would care! She had seen very little demonstration of this sort in her life. So it was another surprise to her when Deacon Belknap shook her hand heartily, as he said:

“So you have experienced religion, have you? Well, now, that’s good! that’s good!”

And his face shone, and he shook the hand until it ached.

Poor Dorothy did not really know whether to laugh or cry. She had always been a good deal afraid of Deacon Belknap; he was a solemn-faced, slow-toned man, and she had not known that his face could shine, or that he believed anything anywhere was good. Moreover, she was not sure that she had “experienced religion;” indeed, she was by no means sure what those words meant. It was true that she had decided for Christ, or — no, *was* that it? It almost seemed to Dorothy that, instead, it should be said that Christ had decided for her! How wonderfully he had called her! How *almost* she had heard his voice! How tenderly he had waited! How he loved her! And how sure was she that she loved him! But to “*experi-*

ence religion " was some wise and solemn thing that it did not seem to her she understood. But Deacon Belknap had something further to say:

" You are very happy now, I suppose? Yes. Well, young converts always are. But I want to warn you: you mustn't expect to have that feeling last. It is like 'the morning cloud and the early dew.' You must expect trials and crosses and disappointments and unhappiness. It is a hard world. Some people expect to be 'carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease.' But I tell you it is a 'straight and thorny road and mortal spirits tire and faint.'"

And Deacon Belknap either forgot, or had never learned, the very next line in that grand old hymn; but with an assurance that the sooner she realized that this world was full of troubles and conflicts the easier it would be for her, went away to his waiting class.

Then Dorothy's brow clouded; she was troubled. She felt so innocently glad and happy, so sure of a Friend, so certain that he loved her and that she loved him. Was it possible that she must lose this feeling, and be lonely and dreary and unsatisfied, as she had

been ever since she could remember? Was that what was the trouble with Christians that the feeling *didn't last*? Almost Dorothy felt as though, some way, she had been deceived! Her face was not nearly so bright as before, when Carey Martyn came toward her. He had been introduced at the church sociable, and had not seen her since, but he grasped her hand as eagerly as Deacon Belknap had.

"I hear good news of you," he said, simply, with a glad look on his face. Something in his tones made Dorothy understand what he meant.

"Is it good news?" she asked him, doubtfully.

"Is it? The very best in the world. You don't doubt it, I hope. Are you going to stay to Sunday-school? Come over and join our class; we are getting up a new class, and we are going to ask Mr. Butler to take it. I never thought I should care to have him, but it seems to me now just as though he would be a good teacher. Do you believe he will take a class?"

Then Dorothy, remembering his hand-clasp, and the light in his eyes, said:

"Yes; I should think he would. But I can't

stay, I suppose. Oh, how I should like to!"

"Like to what?" Louise questioned, just at her side. "Oh, you are talking about Sunday-school. I think we can manage it. Lewis has been asked to take a class, and I am wanted to supply a vacancy, and father said stay if we wanted to — he was in no hurry."

Then Dorothy went over to the new class that was forming, and the minister came presently and shook hands with them all, and said he felt honored by being chosen as their teacher, and wondered that none of them had ever thought of it before. And to Dorothy it seemed as though the millenium were coming, or it *would* have so seemed had she known anything about that word or its meaning. It was a matter of surprise to many where that new class suddenly came from, or who started it; but the simple truth was, that what had been lingering in a sort of homesick way in Carey Martyn's heart for weeks took shape and form along with the hand-clasp of his pastor at that church sociable. He was used to Sabbath-school, and his old class had been taught by his old pastor.

Taken all in all, it was a white day to Dor

othy Morgan. Her first Sunday in a new world; a Sunday in which she had received greetings from the brethren and sisters of the kingdom, and been counted in; a Sunday in which she had actually *joined* in the hymns and the prayers and the readings, and attempted to follow the sermon, though, truth to tell, Dorothy had gotten very little from the sermon; try as she would to become interested, her thoughts would wander; but they wandered constantly to the hymn that had just been sung, the words of which she *felt*, and to the prayer of the pastor, the spirit of which she understood.

“Why can't ministers preach just as they pray?” wondered Dorothy.

The ride home in the brightness of the winter day was not unpleasant. Father Morgan, whether subdued by his long waiting, or by the white world glistening in the sunlight, certainly had nothing to say that was jarring, and seemed not dissatisfied with the condition of things. Dorothy stole little glances at him from under her wrappings, and wondered whether he would ever know that everything was different to her from what it had been last Sunday, and what

he would say if he ever *did* know, and then suddenly, like the leap of a new emotion into her heart, that he knew for himself what it all meant, so he would understand it. *Oh*, how she wished that father was a Christian! Where did the sudden, intense desire come from? She had never felt anything like it before. Sometimes, indeed, she had drearily wished that they were more like other people — went to church regularly, even went occasionally of an evening as the Stuarts did, who lived no farther away and had the sociable appointed at their house. But it had been a dreamy, far-away sort of wish, little *desire* about it, nothing in the least like this sudden longing. Then there rolled over Dorothy the sweetness of the thought that she could actually pray for her father, and that maybe — oh, *maybe!* — because of her prayer, the father would, some day, when she had prayed for him a great many years, come to know of this experience by personal knowledge. Will there ever be more happiness put into Dorothy's life than surged over her with the possibilities involved in that thought? Still, Deacon Belknap troubled her. When was she

to expect all this brightness to go away? And, also, why must it go? Why had not Lewis said something to her about it — warned her, when she frankly admitted to him this morning that she had never been happy before in her life? And oh, how long had the feeling staid with him? He knew about it, for he had told her that he understood just how she felt; he remembered well his own experience. Then a sudden, bewildering doubt of Deacon Belknap's theories came over Dorothy, for she was confronted with the thought that she did not believe the feeling *ever* left Louise; it was this which made her different from others. Still, Deacon Belknap ought to know. And, besides, what might not Louise have had to go through before the joy came to stay? Dorothy's brain was in a whirl. Well for her that Louise, standing at one side, had heard every word of Deacon Belknap's well-meant and honest caution. She saw the instant clouding of Dorothy's face, and watched for her chance to remove the thorn. It came to her just after dinner, when Dorothy was up-stairs hunting for her apron. Louise meeting her in the hall, said:

“So Deacon Belknap thought he ought to caution you against being happy in Christ?”

“What did he mean?” Dorothy asked, her cheeks glowing. “Does the happy feeling all go away? Must it?”

“What does it spring from, Dorrie, dear?”

“Why, I think,” said Dorothy, hesitating and blushing violently, “it seems to me that it comes because I love Jesus and because he loves me.”

“Yes. Well, if Deacon Belknap had told me that I must not expect to be as happy with my husband in the future as I am now, because there would be trials and difficulties of one sort and another to encounter, and that therefore his love and mine would not burn as brightly, I think I should have considered myself insulted.”

“I should think so! Do you mean—oh, Louise, I mean do you think they are a little alike?”

“He calls the Church his bride, dear; it is his own figure; but of course it falls far below the real, vital union that there may be between us and Christ.”

“ Then what *did* Deacon Belknap mean ? ”

“ Why, if I should treat Lewis very coldly and indifferently, forget to notice him some of the time, go for days without talking with him, neglect his suggestions, disregard his advice, and all that sort of thing, I imagine that we should not be very happy together.”

“ Well,” said Dorothy, in bewilderment.

“ Well, don't you know, dear, that that is just the way in which many Christians actually treat Christ? And then Satan blinds their hearts into thinking that it is not their own fault that their joy in him is gone, but a necessity, because of this troublesome world. If I were you I would not tolerate any such insinuations; it is an insult to Jesus Christ, who deliberately says he will keep you in 'perfect peace' if your 'mind is staid on him.' ”

“ Then all that isn't necessary ! ”

“ No more necessary than that I should have days of gloom and disappointment over my husband. Oh, it is lowering the power and love of Christ to make that comparison, because, Dorrie his love is infinite, and he says everlasting.”

Dorothy went through the hall below, singing :

“Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above ;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.”

She had found that hymn in the morning, while Mr. Butler was preaching, and had rejoiced in it for a little until Deacon Belknap had banished it from her heart. Now it came back in strength, and it will take more than Deacon Belknap to shake it, for it has taken root.

That Sabbath day had one more experience to be remembered. If Louise's little plan for the walk home from the sociable had been made with a view to rousing Lewis, she could not more successfully have accomplished it.

He had walked ever since in a new atmosphere ; he had risen to the glory of the possibilities of his life ; he had heard Dorothy say — she had said it that very morning, when he met her early, out in the back kitchen woodshed, where the kindlings were kept — that he had shown her the way to Jesus, and now she had found rest in *him*. Was a man ever to forget the sweetness of words like that? — a Christian,

honored of God in showing another soul the entrance way! Shall he sink to the level of common things after that, and forget that he has a right to work *with* God, on work that will last to all eternity? Lewis Morgan, Christian man though he had been for years, had never heard those words before; but do you think that something of the honor which he had lost, and something of the shame of having tamely lost such honors, did not sweep over him? Surely it should not be the last time that he should hear such words — at least it should be through no fault of his if it were.

Low motive do you say? I am not sure of that. There is a higher one, it is true; and every Christian who can feel the lower, will sooner or later, grasp the higher; but since God has called us to honorable positions, even to be "co-laborers," shall we not rejoice in the honor?

Well, Lewis Morgan had worked all day in the light of this new experience. He thirsted for more of it; he felt roused to his very finger tips; he longed to be *doing*; he had taught that class of girls put into his care, as he had

not supposed that *he* could teach. Now he walked up and down their room, while the Sabbath twilight gathered, thinking.

Louise, who had been reading to him, kept silence, and wondered what was the question which he was evidently deciding. She knew his face so well, that she felt sure there was being made a decision. At last he came to her side.

“ Louise, I believe in my soul that we ought to go down-stairs and try to have prayers with the family. Father might object to it; he thinks all these things are a species of cant, and I have been especially anxious to avoid any thing that looked in the least like it. I have been too much afraid of what he would think. I believe I ought to try. What do you say ? ”

Of course he knew just what she would say and she said it. Soon after that they went down-stairs. Lewis possessed one trait worthy of imitation; when he had fairly determined on a course, he went straight toward it with as little delay as possible. So, directly, they were seated in the clean and orderly kitchen, Neelie cuddled in Louise's lap—a spot which was growing to be her refuge. Lewis commenced:

“Father, we have been thinking that, perhaps you would have no objection to our having family worship together down-stairs. We would like it very much, if it would not be unpleasant.”

Mrs. Morgan seemed suddenly seized with the spirit of uncontrollable restlessness. She hopped from her chair, drew down the paper shade with a jerk, then, finding that she had made it disagreeably dark, drew it up again, set back two chairs, opened and shut the outer kitchen door, and took down the crash towel and hung it on another nail; then she came back to her seat. As for Father Morgan, he sat, tongs in hand, just as he had been when Lewis addressed him, and gazed unwinkingly into the glowing fire for the space of what seemed to Lewis five minutes, but, in reality, was not more than one; then he said, slowly and impressively:

“I’m sure I have no manner of objections, if it will do you any good.”

It was Dorothy who rushed into the other room, before her father’s sentence was concluded, and brought therefrom Grandmother Hunt’s old family Bible; and, in the Morgau

household, after forty years of life together, father and mother met for the first time at the family altar. Howbeit, neither father nor mother bowed the knee, but sat bolt upright in their chairs. But Dorothy knelt and prayed, and dropped some happy tears on her wooden seated chair the while.

As for John, he would not go to church; would not come to dinner with the family, but took what he called a "bite" by himself when he chose to come for it; would not stay in the room during the reading and the prayer, but strode off toward the barn the moment the subject was suggested by Lewis.

Yet, despite these drawbacks, the voice of prayer went up from the Morgan kitchen from full and grateful hearts.

CHAPTER XIX.

“WHATSOEVER.”



I AM not sure that I can explain to you the state of mind in which Dorothy opened her eyes to the world on Monday morning. Unless you have had a like experience you will not understand it. She had always been a repressed, rather than an indifferent girl. Under the apparently apathetic exterior there had boiled a perfect volcano of unsettled longing. She had not known what she wanted; she had not felt the least hope of ever discovering how her thoughts had taken new shape; she was in another world; she was another person; old things had passed away; all things had become new. She stood before her bit of mir-

ror and tried to arrange her heavy braids of hair as Louise wore hers, and was meantime in a very eager, very unsettled state of mind. What was she to do? Where commence? The bare walls of her uninviting little room had always seemed to shut her in, and she had always hated them. Now it seemed to her that she had a right to get away from them—get outside, somewhere, and do something. How was it all to be accomplished? She looked with disdain upon her life; she felt her years, thus far, to have been wasted ones. Now she was ready to make a fresh start, only she could not imagine which step to take first. You see her danger. Many a young life has shipwrecked its usefulness on just such rocks.

She threw down the covering of her bed opened the window to let in the crisp winter morning, smelled of the frosty, sunlighted air, and looked abroad over her little world, shut in by hills and far-stretching meadows and home-like farms, and wondered just what she should do; and the sense of longing to get away from all this, where there seemed nothing to do, was the strongest feeling that possessed her, unless

the determination to *accomplish* it was a shade stronger.

She stepped out into the narrow little hall and came face to face with Louise, who was fresh and smiling in a fresh calico and ruffles.

"Louise," said Dorothy, a whole world of repressed eagerness in her voice, "what am I going to do?"

"Ever so many things I hope, dear," was Louise's prompt and cheery reply, and she emphasized it with a kiss.

"Yes," said Dorothy, with shining eyes, "I mean to, oh, I *mean* to; but — I don't know where to commence. What is there to do? — I mean for a beginning — and how shall I get to the first thing?"

"I think," said Louise, with smiling mouth and eyes, and sweet, decided voice, "I think, my dear, if I were you, I would begin with that black kettle."

Then you should have seen the sudden changing of Dorothy's face. Surprise, disappointment, intense mortification, all struggling with a sense of being misunderstood, being wronged, spoke in her eyes and the quiver of her lips.

“You think I am teasing you, Dorrie,” and her new sister’s voice was very tender. “Nothing is further from my intention. I honestly mean what I say. That very kettle which gives you Monday morning trouble can help you to a first victory; and it is a symbol of all the other things, small in themselves, but amounting to much, counted together, that can be made to serve you to-day.”

“I did mean to try to do right; but I wanted to do something for Christ.”

Dorothy’s voice was subdued.

“And you think that Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the black kettle, or the boiler, or the sink, or a dozen other things with which you will come in contact to-day? That is such a mistake. Don’t you begin your Christian life by supposing that all these duties which fall upon us in such numbers consume just so much time that must be counted out, and with the piece that is left we are to serve Him. Remember it is He who said, ‘Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or *whatsoever* ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ Doesn’t that ‘*whatsoever*’ cover the pudding-kettle, too, Dorrie?”

New light was struggling on Dorrie's face — just a glimmer, though, shadowed by bewilderment.

“It sounds as though it ought to,” she said, slowly. “And yet I can not see how. What *can* my dish-washing have to do with serving Jesus? It seems almost irreverent.”

“It can't be irreverent, dear, because he said it himself. ‘Diligent in business, serving the Lord.’ There is no period dividing these. I long ago discovered that I could make a bed and sweep a room for his sake, as surely as I could speak a word for him. It is my joy, Dorrie, that he has not separated any moment of my life from him, saying, ‘Here, so much drudgery each day, from which I must be entirely separated, then, when that is done, you may serve me.’ Work so divided would be drudgery indeed. I bless him that I may constantly serve, whether I am wiping the dust from my table or whether I am on my knees.”

“Well, how?” said Dorothy. She had a habit of occasionally flashing a question at one, a direct, firm way, that meant business. The tone of this one said, “This is all new to me,

but I mean to get at it — I intend to understand it and do it.”

“Louise, how could I be doing one thing for Jesus while I was washing the pudding-kettle?”

“Did you ever hear of the young servant-girl who was converted and presented herself to the pastor desiring to be received into the Church? He asked her what proof she had that she was a Christian, and she answered, ‘I sweeps the corners clean *now.*’ I always thought that the poor girl gave good evidence of a changed purpose. I don’t know whether she knew that verse, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them,’ but it is true, Dorrie, with pudding-kettles as well as with everything else.”

I suppose that that simple little talk in that upper hall, on that Monday morning, actually changed the whole current of Dorothy Morgan’s future life. Hitherto religion had had nothing whatever to do with pudding-kettles, or Monday mornings in the kitchen, or with the thousand little cares of every-day life. She had regarded them as so many nuisances to be pushed aside as much as possible for actual work. I may as well frankly own to you that this young girl

hated the neatly-painted kitchen in which most of her life was spent. She hated the dish-pan and the sink and the dish-towels with a perfect hatred. She hated brooms and dusters and scrub-brushes, and all the paraphernalia of household drudgery; it was literally *drudgery* to her. Her new sister's wise eyes had singled out the thing which she perhaps hated most with which to illustrate this germ of truth that she had dropped into the soil of Dorothy's heart. An old-fashioned, heavy, black kettle, which had been handed down as an heirloom in the Morgan family for generations, and in which the favorite Sunday evening dish, hasty pudding, was invariably cooked. Simmering slowly over the fire all Sunday afternoon, the pudding eaten at supper-time, the kettle filled with water and left to soak over night, and appearing on the scene with relentless regularity every Monday morning, to be scraped and scrubbed by Dorothy's disgusted fingers. Dorothy hated hasty pudding. Dorothy almost never washed that kettle with the degree of nicety that Mother Morgan demanded. She almost invariably left little creases of scorched pudding clinging to the sides, and a

general greasiness of appearance about it that was fruitful of many sharp words on the mother's part and sullen defiance on Dorothy's. The idea that her religion actually had to do with this pudding-kettle came to Dorothy like a revelation. She went down-stairs thinking it over. She realized that the thought gave new interest to life. If the fruits of Christian living were actually to be looked for in pudding-dishes then what place was there where they could not show? There was a dignity in living, after all. It was not simple drudgery, and nothing else. She thought of it when the foaming milk was brought in, John setting down the pail with a thud, and saying :

“Tend to that, and give us the pail; and don't be all day about it, either.”

I shall have to admit that Dorothy was more or less accustomed to this form of address, and yet that it always irritated her, and she was apt to reply, “I shall be just as long as I please; if you want it done quicker, do it yourself.” Then would follow other cross or sullen words, neither person meaning to the full the words used, yet both feeling crosser when they parted. A sad

state of living, truly, yet it had actually become a habit with these two, so much so that John looked at his sister in surprise when she lifted the pail silently, and presently returned it to him, with no other remark than the statement that Brownie was giving more milk than before. He made no answer to this, and went away actually surprised at the quietness of the kitchen. It is not my purpose to let you follow Dorothy closely through that day in the kitchen.

Monday morning is a time, you will remember, that tries the souls of many women. Mrs. Morgan was no exception. For some reason, best known to herself, she was particularly tried this morning. Nothing went right, and nothing could be made to go right. The fire at first would not burn enough, and then it burned too much, and sent the suds from the boiler sputtering over on the bright tins that Dorothy had arranged on the hearth to dry; and Mrs. Morgan was betrayed into saying that a child ten years old would have known better than to have put tins in such a place. And despite Dorothy's earnest care, the starch presently lumped; and, worse than that, certain cloudy-looking streaks

coming from no one knew where, mixed with its clearness, and the mother affirmed that Dorothy ought to have her ears boxed for being so careless. Try as the daughter would, the mother was not to be pleased that morning. And Dorothy did struggle bravely. She made the smooth, black sides of the hated pudding-kettle shine as they had not before on any Monday morning on record. She scoured every knife, not forgetting the miserable little one with a niche in the end, and a rough place in the handle, a knife that she had longed to throw away, and to which the mother pertinaciously clung; she rubbed at the hated sink until it shone like burnished steel; she rubbed at the dish-cloth, for which she had a special and separate feeling of disgust, until it hung white and dry on its line; she neglected no cup, or spoon, or shelf-corner, and she moved with brisk step and swift fingers, only to hear the metallic voice say, as it made its entrance from the outer kitchen where the rubbing and rinsing were going on:

“I wonder if you are going to be all day washing that handful of dishes! I could have had them all put away and the kitchen swept an

hour ago. I can't see how I came to have such a dawdler as you !”

Dear me ! Have you been so fortunate as never to have heard mothers speak in this way ? Good, honest mothers, too. Mothers who would have sat with unwinking eyes and patient hands, night after night, caring for the wants, real and imaginary, of their sick daughters, who yet will stab them with unthinking words, all day long ! Words not true ; for Mrs. Morgan knew perfectly well that she could not have finished all this work an hour before ; yet be just to her ; she actually believed, energetic woman as she was, that she could have accomplished it all in much less time. For the matter of that, I suppose she could. Certainly Dorothy had not her mother's skill ; the wonder was that the mother should have expected young hands to be as deft as her own.

So the day wore on. A trying one at every turn to poor, young Dorothy, who had just enlisted and was trying to buckle her armor on and who kept up a brave struggle, and went steadily from one duty to another, doing not one of them as well as her mother could have done,

out doing each one of them as well as she could. Could an angel do more? A hard day, both over the dishes, and the dust, and at the wash-tub. Yet not by any means so hard as it might have been, but for that bit of talk in the upper hall in the morning. A new idea that made a song in her heart, despite all the trials. So much of a song that occasionally it flowed into words, and Dorothy's untrained voice was sweet and clear. She rarely used it over her work, but on this Monday twice she sang, clear and loud :

“Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above.”

Mrs. Morgan heard it ; heard the tune, caught no words, wanted to hear none ; the spirit of song was not in her heart that morning ; all she said was :

“Don't for pity's sake, go to singing over the dish-pan. I always thought that was a miserable, shiftless habit. There is a time for all things.”

And Dorothy, wondering much when was her time to sing, hushed her voice, and finished the melody in her heart. So it seemed to her, when

the day was done, that really it had been an unusually hard one. Many steps added to the usual routine. A dish broken; a leaking pail sending water all over the clean floor; John's muddy feet tracking through the kitchen just after the mopping was done; John's hands, traces of them on the clean towel, and then, by reason of trying to do two things at once, at the mother's bidding, she actually allowed the starch to scorch! So that, in truth, when she sat down, in the wooden-seated chair of her own room, for a moment's breathing space, before it was time to set the table for tea, she looked back over the day with a little wondering sigh. What had she done this day for the glory of God? How could he possibly get any glory out of her honest efforts to do her whole duty that day? True, she had resisted the temptation to slam the door hard, to set down the tea-kettle with a bang, to say, in an undertone: "I don't care whether it is clean or dirty," when her attention was called to some undone task. Yet what had been the result? Mother certainly had never been so hard to please.

"She has found more to blame to-day than she

ever did in the days when I only half tried,” said poor Dorothy to herself.

So where was there any glory for the Master to be found in the day? Even then came the mother’s voice, calling :

“ Well, are we to have any supper to-night? or must I get it, with all the rest? ”

Then Dorothy went down, and I am afraid that she set the cups and saucers on the table with more force than was needed. Life looked full of pin pricks that hurt, for the time being, as much, or at least she thought they did, as though they had been made with lancets.

What was the trouble with Mother Morgan?

I do want you to understand her. She did not understand herself, to be sure, but that is no reason why you should not show more discrimination. It had been an unusually trying day to her. Aside from the pressure of domestic cares, which she, in common with many other housekeepers, made always twice as heavy as they should be, her nerves, or her heart, or her conscience, or all of these forces, had been stirred within her by the words of prayer in the twilight of the Sabbath. Memory took her back

to an old hillside farm-house, surrounded by fields less rich and fruitful than these near which she dwelt ; to an old arm-chair, in which an old man sat night and morning, by his side another chair, in which an old woman sat, night and morning ; and together they read out of the same Bible, together they knelt and prayed, and this cold-faced mother had heard herself prayed for many a time, not only by that old man, but by the gray-haired woman. And they were her father and her mother, both sleeping now, side by side, under the snow ; and, being dead, yet speaking, speaking loudly to her, on that very Monday. As she looked at Dorothy she felt as though she were wronging her of a birthright. Dorothy had never heard her mother pray, as she had heard *her* old mother, many a time. Dorothy's mother had never said to her :

“ Dorothy, I want you to be a servant of God, more than I want anything else.”

That was what *her* mother had said to her, when she was Dorothy's age, and many a time afterward ; and she was not a servant of God yet, and her conscience reproach^d her ; and her child had never heard such word^s, and her heart

reproached her ; as truly as I write it, she pitied Dorothy ! Yet, can you understand that this very feeling actually made her voice sharper and her words more impatient, when she spoke to her ? The human heart, unchanged, is a very strange and contradictory thing.


But I want to tell you what Dorothy Morgan does not know.

Her mother did discover the immaculate condition of the pudding-kettle, and said, aloud :

“ I declare, for once this is clean ! ”

CHAPTER XX.

CLOUDS.

 I HAVE been tempted to linger over these first weeks connected with Luise Morgan's home-coming, in order that you might get a clear view of the surroundings, and a true idea of the family life. Now, however, I shall have to take you away into the spring. The long, cold, busy winter, with its cares and opportunities, passed forever from their grasp, and the buds and blossoms, foretelling of the coming summer, alert on every hand.

Many changes, subtle and sweet and strong, had been going on in the Morgan household. Dorothy had held steadily on her course; the first lesson in her Christian experience being

ever present with her, that in the very smallest matters of life her light might shine for Christ. She was learning the important lesson to be "faithful over a few things." Little realized she the importance of this faithfulness. Not an idea had she of the number of times in which the mother had regarded her curiously, as she looked in vain for careless ways, or forgotten duties, and admitted to herself that "something had come over Dorothy, and she only hoped it would last." Oh, yes, it would last. Dorothy believed that. She had anchored her soul, after the first hours of unrest on the sure promise of his "sufficient grace," and had no idea of doubting him. Not much outside work had she been able to take up. Yet, little by little, came changes. Carey Martyn was full of schemes.

"See here, let us do thus and so," was a favorite phrase of his, and he was growing more and more fond of saying it to Dorothy.

The bright curtains in the parlor had not been taken down again; the old-fashioned sofa still held its place in the coziest corner, and, now that the sun was getting around the corner, peeping in at the pleasantest window, the room

took a still more cheery look, and Dorothy had fallen into the habit of touching a match to the carefully laid fire almost every evening, just after tea, and one by one the different members of the family dropped in.

The long-neglected, old-fashioned brass knocker often sounded during these days. People who had never called on the Morgans, chiefly because of the fear that they would be coldly received, began to discover that Mrs. Lewis Morgan was a very pleasant woman, very glad to see her friends; and the mother was not so disagreeable as they had supposed; and, "really, that shy, silent Dorothy had improved wonderfully."

Thus it was when the spring opened, only a few months since the new-comer's first entrance; and nothing very remarkable, so far as outward eyes could see, had transpired, and yet, in a hundred little ways, things were different.

But on this particular May morning, when I bring you into the family circle, the prevailing atmosphere was gloom.

In the first place it rained; a soft, sweet spring rain, when the buds swell, and leaves

almost seem to increase in size while you watch and the spring flowers nod at one another, and the world, though in tears, seems to the happy heart to be putting on holiday. Yet as Louise Morgan stood at her window and watched the dripping eaves, and listened to the patter on the roof, and saw the low, gray clouds sail by, a rainy day seemed to her a dreary thing.

The truth was, the Morgan family were in trouble. During these passing months Louise and her husband, reinforced by Dorothy, and afterward by Carey Martyn, had carried John Morgan about on their hearts a special subject of constant prayer. Louise had been often eager, persistent, steadfast for a soul before; yet it seemed to her that the desire had never been so intense as in this instance; and, as she looked over the past, it seemed to her that she had never had so little encouragement. From the time when she took that walk home with him in the moonlight, and tried to speak earnest words John Morgan had seemed to withdraw more utterly into himself. He carefully avoided Louise; he refused, positively, all invitations to attend church on the Sabbath. He plainly in-

formed Lewis that he was wasting words in trying to talk religion at him, and might consider himself honorably excused from any such attempts; and to Dorothy, who with tearful eyes and trembling lips, said simply to him one night in the darkness: "Oh, John, *won't* you give yourself to Jesus?" he unceremoniously and roughly answered: "Shut up!"

In every respect John had seemed, during the last few months, to travel rapidly backward. The corner grocery now saw him more frequently than ever before; indeed, almost every evening, late into the night, was passed there. The smell of tobacco and of liquor lingered more constantly now about his clothing, and pervaded the atmosphere of his room. In vain did Louise struggle to keep that room pure. Gradually it had changed its outward appearance. Christmas and New-year, and then John's birthday, had been helpful anniversaries to her plans. The bed was spread in spotless white; the twisted-legged stand had its scratched and paintless top concealed under a white and delicately crocheted tidy; a little rocker occupied the corner by the window, with a bright-colored

tidy fastened securely to its back. The space between the hall-door and the clothes-press was occupied by a neat toilet-stand, with all the convenient accessories of the toilet carefully disposed on it; the walls were hung with two or three choice engravings and an illuminated text, and on the white-covered stand there daily blossomed, in a small, pure vase, a rose, or a bunch of lilies of the valley, or a spray of delicate wild flower — some sweet-breathed treasure from the woods or garden, which struggled with the tobacco-scented air — placed there by Louise's tasteful fingers.

Once she ventured on a gift in the shape of a nicely bound Bible, containing John's name and her own on the fly-leaf, and she made a place for it on the white-covered stand, but found that the very next morning it had been placed on the highest shelf in the clothes-press, along with a pile of old agricultural papers that reposed there from one house-cleaning to another. All of these patient little efforts had been greeted hitherto with nothing but frowns or sneers or total indifference.

John Morgan seemed to have deliberately determined to ruin his prospects for this life and the next, and to forbid any one to hold him back. Yet they did not give him up, these four; the more hopeless the case seemed to grow, the more steadily did they try to hold their grasp on the arm of power.

But on this rainy morning of which I write, not one of the four but were plunged into more or less anxiety and gloom. Apparently, not only had all their efforts failed, but the subject of them had resolved to remove himself from all further influence or molestation from them. The threat that he had often and often made to leave his home and go where he pleased, he had now determined to put into execution. A week before, he had suddenly and fiercely announced his decision, and no amount of persuasion had effected the least change. He was indifferent alike to his father's advice or threats.

"You needn't give me a red cent if you aren't a mind to," he had said, sullenly, during one of the stormy talks; "I'll risk but that I can take care of myself; I can beg, or I can

steal, or I can *drown* myself, if I feel like it anyhow I'm going, and there's no kind of use in talking."

"But where are you going?" pleaded the mother.

And one less indifferent than John could not have failed to notice that her face was pale and her voice husky with pent-up feeling.

"Just exactly where I like, and nowhere else. If I knew where that was I might tell you, but I don't. I never did as I pleased an hour since I was born, and I mean to do it now, or kill myself, maybe both; I've often thought I'd like well enough to do that."

What was the use of talking to one in such a mood? Yet they talked and argued and threatened, and used sharp words and bitter words, and words that were calculated to leave life-long scars on hearts; and the talks were frequently renewed, and lasted away into the midnight; and at last John had declared that he wouldn't stand this sort of thing another hour, and he wouldn't take any money, not a cent of it, even if it was offered; and he would not take his clothes along, not a rag.

“You can sell them to the first rag-man that comes along, and build another barn with their value, for all I care,” he said to his father, in a pitiful attempt at sarcasm.

And then, without another word, or a glance at his mother, or a pretense at good-by, he strode out of the room, closing the door after him with a bang. That was the evening before, just at supper-time, and though his mother did that night what she had never done before in her life, put some of the supper down, carefully covered to keep warm for John, he came not. The next morning's milking was done without him, and, as the long, rainy day waned, it became evident to each heart that John was gone.

Now, I have not told you the worst of this. For the past week the mother's heart had been wrung with such anxiety that she had humbled herself in a manner that she, a few days before, would not have imagined possible. She had followed Louise, one morning, up to her room, coming with slow and doubtful tread, closing the door after her, and looking behind her in a half frightened way, as if to be sure that there were no other listeners to her humiliation than

this one, and had said to Louise, catching her breath while she spoke :

“ You know how I feel about John ; I have heard you talk about praying over everything ; if you believe that it does any good, why don't you pray to have him kept at home ? ”

“ Mother,” said Louise, coming close to her taking the hard, old hand in hers, “ I do pray for him, every hour in the day, almost every minute it seems to me, and I believe it will do good ; I believe He will hear our prayer ; but there is no one who could pray for John as his mother could. I do so desire to have his mother's prayers enfold him like a garment. Won't you pray for him ? ”

“ I'm not a praying woman,” said Mrs. Morgan, trying to keep her voice steady. “ Still, if I believed in it as you do, I would pray now if I never did again.”

Then she turned and went swiftly away. She had actually humbled her proud heart to ask her daughter-in-law to pray for John ! She could not get away from the feeling that Louise's prayers would be likely to avail, if any would. More than that, but this at the time was known

only to her own heart, and the One who reads the heart.

In the silence and darkness of her own room, after Neelie was asleep, and before Farmer Morgan had drawn the last bolt preparatory to coming to his bed, she had got down on her knees and had offered what, in her ignorance, she thought was prayer. "O God," she said, "if thou hearest human beings in their need, hear me, and keep John from going away." There was no submission in her heart to the divine will, no reference to the name which is the only name by which we can approach God, no realization of anything save John's peril and a blind reaching out after some hand that had power. Yet it was a nearer approach to prayer than that mother had made for fifty years!

Neither could she help a feeling, which she told herself was probably superstition, that something somehow would prevent John from carrying out his designs. Yet the days went by, and no unseen arm stretched out its hand of power and arrested John. Instead, the rainy day wore on with the feeling settling down hopelessly on the mother's heart that her son had gone from

her with hard words on his lips, and with the echo of hard words from her, sounding in his heart. For, so strange a thing is this human heart, that actually Mrs. Morgan had never seemed more hard or cold to her son than she did during the week that her heart was torn with anxiety for him.

But I have not told you the worst of this. The days moved on, and it became evident to all that John had carried out his threat and was gone. Then the mother's grief and dismay found vent in hard and cruel words. She turned in bitterness from Louise, yes and from Dorothy, indeed from every one. To Louise she said plainly, it was not strange that John had wanted to get away ; she had given him no peace since she had been there ; always tormenting him to go to church or to prayer-meeting, or to do something that he didn't want to do. For her part, she didn't see but he was quite as good as those who were always running off to meet ing. He couldn't even have any peace in his own room ; it must be cluttered up with rubbish that any man hated ; vases to tip over, and tidies to torment him !

And she flung the tidies on a chair in Louise's room, and folded and packed away the spread which she said she had been "fooled into buying," and restored every corner of that little hall chamber to its original dreariness. And, worse than all, declared that she hoped and trusted she would hear no more cant about prayers in that house. She had not been able to see for many a year that the kind of praying that was being done in these days accomplished any good.

To Dorothy she declared that if she had had the spirit of a mouse she might have exerted herself, as other girls did, to make a pleasant spot for her brother; that she had never tried to please him in anything, not even the mending of his mittens when he wanted them; she would rather dawdle over the fire roasting apples with Carey Martyn than to give any thought to her own brother.

Now, all this was bitterness itself to poor Dorothy, whose own heart reproached her for having been so many years indifferent to her brother's welfare, but who had honestly tried with all the force of her heart to be pleasant and

helpful to John ever since she had been doing anything from a right motive.

Neither did Mrs. Morgan spare her husband. She wouldn't have let a boy like that go off without a cent in his pocket, she said — no, not if she had to sell all the stock to get him ready money. He had as good a right to money as Lewis ever had, and he had been tied down to the five barns all his life. No wonder he ran away. He showed some spirit, and she was glad he had.

Do you suppose Farmer Morgan endured this in silence? Not he! And sharp words grew sharper, and bitter feelings ran high, until the once quiet kitchen was transformed into a Babel of angry words, and poor Louise could only flee away and weep.

But I have not told you the worst of this — actually the worst was in this Christian woman's own sore heart. The awful question, *why?* had crept in and was tormenting her soul. She had been sincere in her prayers; she had been honest in her desires; she had been unwavering in her petitions. Why had God permitted this disastrous thing to come? Had she not tried —

oh! had she not tried with sincere desire ever since she came into this home to live Christ in it? Why, then, had she been allowed to so utterly fail? Would it not be to God's glory to save John Morgan's soul? Was it not evident that through him the mother might possibly be reached? Was it not perfectly evident that John, at home, under her influence, and Lewis' and Dorothy's, would be in less danger than away among strangers, wandering whither he would? Was it not perfectly evident that this conclusion to their prayers had caused Mrs. Morgan to lose faith in prayer — to grow harder and harder in her feelings toward God and toward Christians? Why was all this allowed?

She had prayed in faith — or, at least, she had supposed she had; she had felt almost sure that God would answer her prayer. She had said to Dorothy, only the night before John went away — said it with steady voice and a smile in her eye — “I don't believe John will go away; I don't think God will let him go.”

And Dorothy, half startled, had answered: “Oh, Louise, I don't mean to be irreverent, but

I don't understand. How can God keep him from going, if he *will* go?"


And Louise, smiling outright now, so sure was she of her trust, had answered: "I don't know, dear; he has infinite resources; I only know that I believe he will do it."

Now, what had become of her faith? It grieves my heart to have to confess to you that this young servant of Christ, who had felt his "sufficient grace" in her own experience again and again, allowed Satan to stand at her elbow, and push before her that persistent and faithless "*why?*"

It was that word in all its changes which was crowding into her heart, on that May morning, as she looked out at the dripping eaves and the leaden clouds.

CHAPTER XXI.

“HEDGED IN.”

S for John, perhaps he was quite as much astonished at the turn of events as were any of the family. It is true he had been threatening for many weeks to turn his back on the old homestead, but it is doubtful if he had really, during that time, a well-defined intention of doing any such thing.

No plans as to where he should go, or what he should do, had taken shape; only a vague unrest, and a more or less settled determination to some time get away from it all.

Therefore, as he turned his back on the familiar barns and long-stretching fields, and went out from them in the darkness of that May

evening, not one of the family were more in fog as to what he would do next than was John himself. Instinctively he turned his steps to the village, spending the evening in his old haunt, showing only by a more reckless manner than usual that there had been any change in his life. In fact, he realized no change; he never turned toward the family road leading homeward, as he came out from that corner grocery at a later hour than usual; but he stopped abruptly before he reached the top of the hill, considered a moment, then turned and retraced his steps, and presently struck out boldly on the road leading cityward. The great city, only sixty miles away, was of course the first objective point of an enterprising young man about to start out in life for himself. About midnight he reached the station where the express train stopped. By the depot lamps he discovered that the eastern-bound train would be due in five minutes. He drew from his pocket the handful of silver and copper that constituted his available means, slowly counted them, lounged into the depot, and inquired the price of a ticket to the city, smiled grimly to himself to discover that, after

purchasing one, he should have just ten cents left. "I guess I can live on that for a week or so," he muttered; "father could; if I can't I can starve; I'm going to the city anyhow." And the ticket was bought. Presently came the train, and our reckless young traveller sauntered into it, selected the best seat he could find, settled himself comfortably and went to sleep, apparently indifferent to the fact that his mother was at that moment shedding bitter tears for him. No, he was not indifferent; would not have been, at least, had he known the fact. Nothing in all his young life's experience would have amazed him more. He did not understand his mother; which is not strange, perhaps when one considers that she had spent years in learning how to hide her heart away from the sight of those she loved best. John Morgan actually did not believe that he had ever caused his mother to shed one tear; he did not believe that she loved him!

What did he know about mother love, save as *she* revealed it to him?

It is not my purpose to take you wandering with John Morgan. Even if we had time for it,

the experience would be anything but pleasant. He went into many places where you would not like to follow; he did many things that were better left undone, and are much better left untold. Yet I will be just to poor, silly, wicked John. He held back, or rather was held back by a force which he did not in the least understand, from many a place that otherwise he would have entered. There were depths of sin and folly into which he had abundant chance to sink, and from which nothing in his own depraved heart kept him from sinking, and yet into which he *did not* sink. He would have smiled, in superior scorn, over the thought that the incense of prayer which had been rising day and night concerning him, during the passing weeks, had anything to do with the unseen force that held him, when he would have plunged headlong. Still he was held. He is not the first one who has been saved from self-shipwreck by a power outside of himself, unrecognized and unthanked.

Still it must be confessed that John Morgan took long enough strides in the road to shipwreck, and did what he could for his own

overthrow, goaded meantime by an exasperating and ever-increasing sense of failure. Here was he, at last, his own master, able to work, if he could find anything to do, or to let it alone, as he pleased; no one to direct, or as he had always phrased it, to "order." No one to complain, no one to question; a life of freedom at last. Was it not for this he had pined? It was humiliating to discover that it did not satisfy him. He could not, even for an hour, cheat himself into believing that he was happy in the life that he had chosen. A very vagabond of a life he led. He tried working and lounging and starving, and *the time hung heavily*. It was more than humiliating, it was exasperating; but the fact remained that he could no more get away from the memory of that clean, sweet-smelling, sweetly kept room, in which he had lately passed his nights, than he could get away from his own miserable self. Nay the very smell of the wild-wood violets which had nodded on him from the tiny vase that last morning at home, and which he had affected to despise, seemed to follow and haunt him. How perfectly absurd it was in him here, in the very center of this great

center of life, to actually long for a whiff of those wild violets! He sneered at himself, and swore at himself, and longed for them all the same. So passed the days, each one bearing him steadily downward, and yet each one holding him back from the downward depths into which he might have plunged. And the summer heats came in all their fierceness and wilted him with their city polluted breath; he had been used all his life to the free, pure air of the country. At times it was hard for him to believe that this crowded, ill-smelling city could belong to the same earth on which the wide stretching harvest-fields lay and smiled. And the summer waned, and the rich, rare October days, so beautiful in the country, so barren of all interest to the homeless in a great city, came to him, and John Morgan had become actually a tramp! The work which he had at first despised and hated, now he could not find; and, if he would not carry his early threat into execution and literally starve, he must tramp and beg. Now, starving had lost its charms somewhere among the parchings of those summer months; he had so nearly tried that way as to shudder

over it; to ask for a bite at the back door of country-looking houses was more to his mind. One never-to-be-forgotten October day he shook himself out from the shelter of a wrecked car, near which he had passed the night, and resolved upon a breakfast of some sort. I wish I could give you a picture of him. His own mother would not have recognized him. His clothing in the old days had been none of the finest, but whatever passed through Mother Morgan's hands was clean, and carefully mended. Now, this bundle of rags and dirt would have been in danger of being spurned from her door without a second glance. "There is no excuse for filth!" she was wont to say, grimly. Her son John had heard her say it many a time. He thought of it this morning as he shook himself; yet how could he help the filth? He had no clothes; he had no place in which to wash; he had nothing with which to brush, and very little left to brush! True, he had brought himself into this very position; but of that he did not choose to think; and besides, everybody knows it is easier to get into certain positions than to get out of them. I wish I could tell you how

he felt! He did not understand his own mood. He was not repentant; not in the least; if anything, he was more bitter and defiant than ever. But he was disappointed; Bohemianism was not what he had supposed it to be. Assuming control of one's own actions was by no means so comfortable or desirable a lot as he had imagined. There were days in which he believed that to have milked the gentle cows, and cared for the fine horses, would have been a positive relief. It was not work that John had shirked. Yet he had no idea of going home; his proud spirit and defiant nature would not let him even suggest that thought to himself.

On this particular morning he had resolved to try again for work. He managed to get on the last car of an outgoing freight train, and was thus whirled a few miles into the country. At the first station he jumped off, and began his search for work. He found a farmer who was compassionate, and gave him wood to carry into the already well-stocked shed by way of earning his breakfast. Presently the farmer came to the door and called:

"We are about ready for breakfast now."

You can come in while we have prayers and then to breakfast.”

“I don’t want prayers,” said John, stopping short midway between the door and the wood-pile, his arms full. “I asked for something to eat, not for praying.”

“I know that, and you shall have the something to eat; but a little praying won’t hurt you. Why, man, you can afford to be thankful that you have found a chance to eat again!”

“No, I can’t,” said John fiercely. “If I can’t have the breakfast without the praying I’ll go without the breakfast.”

“Very well,” said the sturdy farmer, “I’m bound you shall, then. I declare, if a fellow has got so far that he can’t even listen to a word of prayer he doesn’t deserve to eat.”

“Then I’ll starve,” said John, in anger, and he threw the wood on the floor and strode away.

“Oh, I don’t know about that, father,” said a motherly voice, and a motherly face looking out after angry John. “Seems to me I’d have given him some breakfast if he *didn’t* want to come to prayers. May be he was ashamed to, he looks so much like a rag-bag.”

“Why didn’t he say so, then?” said the disturbed farmer. Who expected him to fly off in a passion at the mention of a prayer? He’s a hard case I’m afraid.”

That was true enough; and yet the incident was not so much against John as it sounds. Poor John, he was angry at his own heart for remembering with a certain lingering touch of tenderness that prayer in the kitchen at home in the Sabbath evening twilight; he wanted no experience that would call it up more plainly. Breakfastless, and supperless last night, John Morgan! There had always been plenty to eat in his father’s house. What a bitterness it was to think that, now he was independent, he was actually a *dependent* on the chance charities of the world!

He tramped on; he was growing hungrier; he felt that he really could not work now until he had a chance to eat; it was actual pauperism this time. A neat looking house, a neat kitchen door; he knocked at it and asked for a bit of bread. A trim old lady answered it:

“Yes, to be sure; come in. And so you’re

hungry? Poor fellow! It must be hard to be hungry. No home, I suppose?"

John shook his head.

"Poor fellow! You look young, too. Is your mother dead, did you say?"

All the while she bustled about, getting a savory breakfast ready for him — a cup of steaming coffee and a bit of meat, and generous slices of bread and butter — bread that looked and butter that smelled like his mother's. And this was a farm-house, and a neat, clean kitchen, and a yellow painted floor.

At that last question a strange feeling came over John Morgan. *Was* his mother dead? "No," he almost said. He wouldn't have liked to nod his head to that. And yet, here he was among the October days, and it had been early May when he left her. How many funeral processions he had passed on the streets since, and he had had no word from his mother! Down in the pasture lot one day his father had said to him: "Don't plow that bit up, I've never made up my mind to it; in spite of me it looks as if it was meant for a kind of family burying-ground." There was a great tree there

and a grassy hillside, and a small, clear stream purred along very near. How did he know but a grave had been dug on that hillside since he went away? His heart gave a few sudden thuds, and then for a minute almost seemed to stop beating! Could it be possible that John Morgan really loved his mother! He was eating his breakfast now — a good breakfast it was, and the trim old lady talked on.

“Well, there are a good many homeless people in the world. It must be hard; but then you know, the Master himself gave up his home, and had not where to lay his head. Did it for our sakes, too. Wasn’t that strange! Seems to me I couldn’t give up my *home*. But he made a home by it for every one of us. I hope you’ve looked after the title to yours, young man.”

No answer from John. The old lady sighed, and said to herself, as she trotted away for a doughnut for him —

“He doesn’t understand, poor fellow! I suppose he never has had any good thoughts put into his mind. Dear me! I wish I could do something for him besides feeding his poor, perishing body!”

But John did understand, perfectly. **What** was the matter with all the people this morning? **Why** were they so persistently forcing that subject at him? He had been wandering almost six months, and had never met so many straight-forward words concerning it in all the months as he had that morning. Isn't it possible, John Morgan, that God's watching Spirit knows when to reach even *your* heart? The little old lady trotted back, a plate of doughnuts in one hand, and a little card in the other.

"Put these doughnuts in your pocket; maybe they'll come good when you are hungry again. And here is a little card; you can read I suppose?"

The faintest suspicion of a smile gleamed in John Morgan's eyes as he nodded assent.

"Well, then, you read it once in a while, just to please me. Those are true words on it; and Jesus is here yet trying to save, just the same as he always was. He wants to save you, young man, and you better let him do it now. If I were you I wouldn't wait another day."

As he tramped down the street, his inner man so wonderfully refreshed by the good coffee and

bread and butter, he could not help looking at the card, which, also, after that breakfast, he could not help taking, although he wanted to put it in the cheery fire. It was a simple enough card, printed on it in plain letters these words: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Then, underneath: "I am the bread of life. He that believeth on me shall never hunger." Still lower on the card, in ornamented letters, the words: "The Master has come and calleth for thee." Then a hand pointing to an italicized line: "I that speak unto thee am he."

"Queer mess, that," said John, and he thrust the card into his pocket and strode toward the village depot. He meant to board the next train and get a little farther into the country, and continue his search for work. It was another freight train, and he succeeded in slipping on it. But it was hardly fairly under way when he discovered that he had miscalculated, and was being borne back toward the great city instead of farther into the country.

"I don't care," he said. "I don't know what

I want of the country. On the whole, I may as well try my chances in the city. I'll go up Greenwich street and try my luck in the warehouses. I can roll boxes about now, since I've had another breakfast."


But the freight train presently switched off, ran off into another depot, into another part of the city, wherein John was as total a stranger as though he had just dropped from the clouds.

"Where on earth am I?" he said, bewildered, swinging himself down from the top of the car and looking around. "Just my luck! I'm nowhere. East, west, north, south, which way shall I go? I'll go north. Which is north? Or — no, I won't; it's coming winter. I guess I'll go south, and walk as long as it looks interesting, and see where I'll bring up. What difference does it make which way I go?"

All the difference in the world, John Morgan. It is a link in the chain which is narrowing around you. It is one of the apparently trivial movements which will have its silent, unnoticed, unthought of part in helping you to decide which way you will go during all your future, and at what station you will finally land.

CHAPTER XXII.

CORDS UNSEEN.

HE morning service was just over in the great church on Lexington Avenue. A large company of men and women lingered in the broad aisles, shaking hands with each other, saying a word here and there, in subdued, happy tones. A looker-on, who was familiar with religious meetings, and who yet had not been present at this one, would have known by the atmosphere lingering in the church, that the worshippers had been having a happy time. They were loath to leave; they gathered in little knots, at convenient standing-places, and discussed the events of the hour, and the prospects of the evening. Large numbers of the ladies

had packages of white cards in their hands — not unlike calling-cards, in size and texture ; and quite as carefully written on as ever calling-cards were. The hand-writing was peculiar ; delicate, gracefully rounded letters, skillful flourishes ; somebody had considered the work important, and had bestowed time and skill.

“ Estelle, dear, won’t you go forward and get some of the cards ? I see very few here who will go up Fairmount street, and you may be able to reach some who will be otherwise neglected.”

So spoke one of the lingerers, a fair-faced woman, with silver-tinted hair, to a very graceful bit of flesh and blood, who was evidently her daughter, and who evidently lingered, not so much from personal interest in the scene, as because her mother did. She turned full, wondering, and yet deprecating eyes on her mother, at the question.

“ Oh, mamma ! I can not offer those cards to people. I am not one of the workers, you know ; it isn’t expected of me. You have some, and that will be sufficient for our family.”

“ I am not going up Fairmount street,” the

mother answered, quietly ; “ I have only enough cards to meet my own opportunities, daughter. If Louise were here, dear, can't you think how she would scatter those little white messengers ? ”

“ Louise is good, mamma, and I am not, you know ; you mustn't expect *me* to be Louise ; I can no more take her place in that way than I can in a hundred others.”

“ Oh, yes, you *can*, my child ; it doesn't require any special skill to hand a card of invitation to a passer-by, or even to speak a word of encouragement to the half persuaded.”

“ But, mamma, how would it look for me to invite people to the meetings ? I am not one of the church-members. It wouldn't be very consistent, I think.”

The mother's eyes were sorrowful and questioning, as they rested on the face of her fair young daughter. She seemed not to know just what would be well to answer to this ; at last she said :

“ Estelle, dear, even though you refuse Christ yourself, don't you wish that many others might come to him ? Poor, sad hearts, who have not your opportunities, nor know the way as you

do ; shouldn't they have their chance to choose, and aren't you willing to extend the invitation ?”

The young girl's cheeks flushed a deeper pink, and her eyes drooped, but she answered steadily :

“ Certainly I am, mamma.”

Then she went forward and received from the pastor a package of the beautiful cards, turning them over curiously in her hand, wondering much how it would seem to pass them out to people, and whether the cards would be accepted or refused.

Simple little cards they were ; nothing pretentious or formidable about them ; just an announcement of daily religious services, giving the hours of meetings and the name of the preacher ; then, on the reverse side, in the most exquisite penmanship, this simple quotation : “ *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*” Estelle read it, and the glow on her cheeks did not lessen. There was certainly something very solemn in the suggestion. Estelle could hardly help giving a moment's attention to the inquiry whether the Master really were calling for *her*. Could she have brought her heart to

the point of believing that such was the case, it would have been well with Estelle, for she could not have said the Master nay. The sin in her case was that she *would not* study the subject long enough to be able to believe that she was *personally* included in the call. Nevertheless, she went her way up Fairmount street, on her unusual errand, a little touch of vexation in her face over the thought that Louise would have done all this so well, and would so have delighted in it, while she must bunglingly try to supply her place. It was about this time that John Morgan turned into Fairmount street, much wondering where he was, and what he could be expected to do next.

“Will you have a card, please?” And a vision of loveliness fell on his astonished gaze, and a delicately gloved hand was stretched forth with the fair bit of pasteboard. “It is just an invitation to the meetings; we hope you will come.” And still the card was outstretched, and still John stood and stared. What was there about that face and voice that seemed familiar to him as one whom he had met in a dream, or in the far-away unreality of some

other existence? It bewildered him to the extent that he forgot either to decline or accept the card, but stood looking, and wondering. Estelle felt the importance of saying something further to this silent starrer. "They have very good singing, and great crowds come every evening; I think you will like it. Will you take the card?"

Thus petitioned, John roused from his bewilderment, put forth his hand for the proffered card, because for the moment he couldn't decide what else to do.

Then Estelle, her mission accomplished and her embarrassment great, flitted away from him around the corner. "What a strange acting fellow!" was her comment. "How he did stare! One would suppose he had never seen a lady before. Dear me! he looks as though he needed a friend. Someway, I can't help feeling sorry for him; I really hope he will go to the meeting; but of course he won't." And Estelle Barrows actually realized that for such a dreary, friendless-looking person as he, the love of Christ would be a great transformation. She did not mean that she, Estelle Barrows in her

beauty and purity, surrounded by the safeguards of her high position, had no need of Christ, neither did she realize that this was the logical conclusion of her reasoning.

“What in the name of common sense has got into all the people to-day? They are running wild on cards!” This was John Morgan’s comment. He was ashamed and vexed to think he had so far forgotten his sullenness and indifference as to stare at the fair young face. He read the card carefully; more to get away from his present thoughts than from any interest in it, but the verse on the reverse side held his attention for a few minutes, from the fact that the words were the very same as those on the card given him by the old lady who had supplied his breakfast. It struck him as a strange coincidence. Presently he thrust the bit of pasteboard into his pocket, and dismissed the incident from his mind. Not again did it recur to him until he was passing, during that same evening, a brightly lighted building, from whence there issued sounds of music. Something in the strains recalled, he knew not how or why, the incident of the morning, and the

card of invitation. "I wonder if this is the place?" he queried. "It would be rather queer if I had blundered on the very building, without the least notion of doing any such thing." He paused before the door, listening to the roll of the organ as it sounded on the quiet air. "That organ doesn't squeak, anyhow," he said, grimly, recalling the organ scene in the old church at home, and Louise's pleasure in its improved condition, after his hands took hold of it. Thoughts of her suggested the card again, and he brought it forth from his pocket, and, by the light of a friendly lamp, compared the name on the card with the name on the building before him. Yes, they agreed; chance or Providence, according as you are accustomed to view these matters, had led him to the very spot. Still, he had no intention of going in. "Pretty looking object I am to go to church!" he said, surveying himself critically, something between a smile and a sneer on his face. "I would create a sensation, I fancy; I wonder if the bit of silk and lace that gave me the card is in there? And I wonder if she expects to see me? And

I wonder where I have seen her before, and why her face haunts me ? ”

The organ had been silent for some minutes ; now it rolled forth its notes again, and voices, that to John seemed of unearthly sweetness, rang out on the quiet :

“ Come home ! come home ! you are weary at heart,
And the way has been long,
And so lonely and wild !
Oh, prodigal child, come home ! oh, come home ! ”

Was John Morgan homesick ? He would have scorned the thought. Yet, at the sound of these tender words, a strange, choking sensation came over him, and something very like a mist filled his eyes. He felt, rather than realized, how long and lonely and wild the way had been ; still, he had no intention of going in. He would step nearer and listen to that music ; those voices were unlike anything that he had heard before. He drew nearer, under the light of the hall lamp ; he could see into the church ; the doors stood invitingly open ; the aisles even were full ; some were standing ; not well-dressed people, all of them, by any means, but some so roughly clad that even *he* would not attract at-

tion by the contrast. A young man, well-dressed, with an open hymn-book in his hand, stood by the door, almost in the hall. He turned suddenly, and his eyes rested on John; he beckoned him forward; then stepped toward him.

"Come right in, my friend; we can find standing-room for you, and the sermon is just about to commence."

"I'm not dressed for such places," said John, imagining that he spoke firmly.

"Oh, never mind the dress; that is not of the least consequence; there are plenty of men in here in their rough working-clothes. Come right in."

"Come home, come home," sang out the wonderful voices. And John Morgan, still with no intention of going in, yet impelled by a force which he no more understood than he understood his own soul, stepped forward and followed the young man into the crowded church. The singing ceased, and the minister arose and immediately announced his text:

"Friend how camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?"

The sentence was spoken so like a personal question that John looked about him, startled. Could it be possible that the man was addressing him — actually referring to his uncouth dress! This only for an instant; then he discovered that no one was paying the least attention to him, and that his dress, rough enough, was not worse than some by whom he was surrounded. But the preacher's manner was so new and strange — so unlike anything that John Morgan had ever met before — that, despite his own half-formed determination to get out of this, he staid, and looked and listened.

If I could I would tell you about that sermon; but sermons on paper, reported by a second party, are so very different from the words that come burning hot from the heart of the preacher, that, on second thought, it is well not to make the attempt.

To John Morgan the entire service was like a revelation of mysteries; that which had seemed to him bewildering and contradictory, and finally actually exasperating in the plan of salvation, was made as clear as the sunlight, and one by one his own daring subterfuges were swept from

him, so that before the sermon closed he felt that he indeed stood unclothed and speechless before the King. What next? Where should he go now? Whither flee? Was he not sufficiently wretched before? Had he need to feel these truths in order to make his condition less endurable?

The sermon closed, the few words of solemn prayer followed, and the choir took up the service. Strangely clear, at least to John's ears, were the voices that spoke the tenderly solemn words:

“Oh, do not let the word depart,
And close thine eyes against the light;
Poor sinner, harden not thine heart;
Thou wouldst be saved, why not to-night?”

Among the singers he had no difficulty in singling out one face and voice. It was a voice of unusual sweetness and power, and it was a face that haunted him. He could not yet tell why. There she was, the fair young beauty who had given him his card. How strange it was that he had accepted her invitation after all! After the song, instead of the benediction which John expected, came another invitation.

“Now I know,” said the preacher, “there are some in this room to-night who feel that they are without the wedding garment, and who believe that if the King should ask them why, would be speechless. Do not all such wish to settle the question? You mean to settle it sometime. You do not mean to go up to that guest-chamber unclothed. Why not settle it to-night? Why not come up here, all of you who think the question unsettled, and who believe that it is important enough to be attended to? Come, and let us ask the Holy Spirit to help you settle it to-night.”

Did John Morgan intend ever to settle the question? He looked the thought, for almost the first time, squarely in the face. He believed that the man who had been speaking was in earnest. He believed that he knew what he was talking about. Someway the net-work of unbelief in which this foolish young wanderer had entrenched himself so long would not bear the piercing light of one solemn Bible question, one gospel sermon; it slipped away from him and left him refugeless.

“Come,” said the preacher. “Be men now

and be women. Be worthy of your position as reasonable beings. Take steps toward the better understanding of this important matter. Do what you can. Rest assured that the King will see to it that the rest is done for you. Come now."

Had John Morgan the least idea of going? He told himself that he had not. He told himself that he didn't believe in these things; that they were not for him, and even while he said so his heart said back to him, "That is not true." How came he to leave his station away back by the door, and to follow the throng who were moving up the aisle, and to kneel down there before that gray-haired man? Neither then, nor afterward, did John Morgan understand it. He had not intended to go — at least he supposed he had not; and yet he went. He did not believe that he had any feeling on the subject; he believed that he hated religion and all religionists. No, not all; there was Louise; he had tried to hate her, and failed. There was that fair girl who gave him the card, and that wrinkled old woman who had given him the card. What was the use in hating them? He

did not believe that he did. Then this gray haired, earnest, clear-brained preacher. No, he found nothing like hatred in his heart for him. But what was the use of going up there? He didn't want to be prayed for. Yes, he did; or, at least he was not sure but he did. He wanted something; he could not be certain what it was; and before it was reasoned out, or before he understood what motive impelled him, or quite what he meant, he had been slowly impelled — he could almost have said “pushed forward” — by a something, or a someone, stronger than himself, to whom he felt impelled to yield.

It was just as the city clocks were striking the hour of nine. He didn't know that at that hour four people, in three separate rooms, were kneeling and presenting his name before the King, begging for him the wedding garment — Louise and Lewis in the quiet of their own room, Dorothy in John's own hall-chamber, Carey Martyn in his own room over the kitchen, each, according to the covenant into which they had entered, breathing the same name, united in the same desire. “While they are yet speaking, I will hear.” Did the King say that of them

that night? Did a message go from the palace that night, "Clothe John Morgan in the wedding garment, and write his name among the guests who have accepted the invitation?" There are those, even in the so-called Christian world, who would fail to see the connecting link between this conference held nightly with the King, and these strange leadings which John Morgan had called chance.

Yet is it not blessed, after all, to remember that the witnesses are daily increasing who can testify to just such chains as these — chains reaching even to the Infinite Arm, and moving that Arm to reach down and pluck some stranded, sin-surrounded soul, lifting its feet from the mire and setting them firmly on the Rock, even the Rock of Ages?

CHAPTER XXIII.

“FORBID THEM NOT.”



TO the Morgan family, the long, golden summer months moved slowly. The first actual break in the household had come to them ; none of the family had realized how hard it would be until it was met. I suppose it is a fact, many times proved by experience, that trial either softens or hardens the human heart. Certainly Mrs. Morgan's heart was not undergoing the softening process ; she brooded over her first great anxiety until at times it seemed to her that no sorrow was like unto her sorrow ; and she chafed under it as a cruel thing.

Farmer Morgan, though saying little, had aged under the trouble, and seemed at times like

a broken-down man ; yet he steadily resisted any effort at comfort, and sternly forbade any attempts to make search for the missing boy. "He has chosen to cut himself off from us," he would say, coldly ; "let him get the full benefit of it." Yet there were times when he hinted, in the presence of the mother, that had the home atmosphere been less hard and cold, John might have been kept ; and she more than hinted, in the coldest of voices, that if his father had not treated John like a little boy, and made him work like a slave, there need have been no trouble ; so of course those two could not help each other, and only grew further apart in their common sorrow. Taken all together, the summer was one full of bitterness to the new bud that had been grafted on to the gnarled old tree.

There were times when Louise's brave heart sunk within her, and she cried in tears to the Lord for relief. It was not that she was not willing to bear the heat and burden of the day, but the poor heart so longed for fruitage. *Was* her Christian effort in vain ? she questioned. Then her thoughts went away from

the old farm-house, back to her own lovely home, and her lovely sister Estelle ; how long she had prayed for her ; how earnestly she had striven to bring her as a trophy to the Master ! Yet the bright, winsome girl was fast blushing into womanhood, her life still uncrowned by this consecration. Thinking of her and of John, and of the steadily aging father and the hard mother, in this new home, could Louise be other than sad sometimes ? “ If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed.” Yes, I know ; it was true, her faith was weak. But whose is strong ?

There were bright spots. It was strange that with the illustration ever before her, she should so often forget it.

Dorothy moved steadily on her upward way. She had given herself entirely to the Master’s service, and he was daily showing her that he accepted the gift. Occasionally, Louise found heart for admiration over the rapid strides that Dorothy had taken, and the avenues for work opening on every hand. There had been, during the summer months, a Sabbath-school organized in the little brown school.

house, just above them. No one quite remembered how it started into growth, only Louise, who knew it was born of Dorothy's sudden, startled: "What a pity that those children are not being taught anything!" as she watched half a dozen playing together in an uproarious manner, one Sunday afternoon. Now the school had been in progress three months, and was flourishing. Lewis was superintendent, much to his own astonishment; and Louise, and Dorothy, and Carey Martyn, and the young lady whose father employed him, were the teachers. Louise had organized a Bible class composed of some of the mothers, and was working faithfully among them, yet not seeing the fruit that she longed for. Mr. Butler had of late fallen into the habit of walking out on Sabbath afternoon, and talking a few minutes to the children. Once he overheard a remark of Dorothy's not by any means intended for his ears:

"Mr. Butler's talk to the children was real good, wasn't it?" Carey Martyn said to her; and she had answered heartily:

"Yes, it was; when he *talks*, without having

it put on paper, it sounds as though he meant it. I wonder why it makes such a difference to *read* things off.”

And the minister, just at their elbow, intending to join them for a little talk, turned away with heightened color, and went home to ponder the question. Perhaps that had somewhat to do with the fact that two Sundays thereafter he *talked* to the people who gathered in the dreary little church. I do not know that they discussed the sermon much during the week, but I know that one and another said to himself: “I must try to get to prayer-meeting, Wednesday evening; I declare it is a shame to have so small an attendance. We ought to go, if for nothing else than to sustain the minister; he seems really in earnest.” Yet he had not preached about the prayer-meeting. Still, its evident growth, the next Wednesday evening, encouraged his heart, and had to do with certain earnest thoughts that he worked up in his next morning’s sermon, which was simply “talked” again, not read. Perhaps he would have been discouraged had he known that this wise people, not used to the work of making sermons, did

not call these efforts of his, over which he had toiled as he never had over written work, *sermons* at all. They imagined him to have been belated in his preparations, and simply to have opened his mouth and let the words flow out.

“We haven’t had a sermon in two weeks, now,” said one wise head to another.

And surely the minister who had sat late nearly every night, thinking out, and trying to get accustomed to what he meant to try and say would have been discouraged had he heard it; especially, if he had not heard the answer :

“No ; but the fact is, I like these talks better than the real sermons ; I get better hold of them ; and they seem, somehow, to do me more good. I don’t care how many times he leaves out the sermon, I’m sure !”

Now, this was one of the most thoughtful minds belonging to the little company which gathered once a week in the old church. On the whole, might not the minister have felt somewhat encouraged, had he known it all ?

But I commenced this chapter with the special intention of telling you about little Neelie Morgan. She has been kept very much in the

background of the story ; and she was a quiet, old-fashioned sort of a child, who kept herself much out of hearing, at least, though she listened well.

On this particular autumn afternoon, of which I write, the world was in gloom. The glory which had had possession of the country for the few weeks past seemed to have departed in a night, leaving in its place clouds and wind, and dull, withered leaves flying about, and, presently, a chill, depressing rain. The Morgan household felt the depression. Mrs. Morgan, senior, knew, when first she opened her eyes on the dreariness, that it was one of her black days — John’s birthday. She was sorry that she thought of it ; she struggled all day with the memories of the past. She saw John’s curly head nestled in her arms ; she saw him trotting, a beautiful two-year-old bit of mischief, always at her side ; she saw his little shoes — though they were laid away in the bottom of her old trunk in the attic, yet they seemed to stare at her all day, haunting her with the dreams that she had had, and that had faded. Every hour in the day her heart grew heavier, and her outward de-

meanor grew harder. Why could not those about her have realized that she bitterly suffered? Whether the knowledge had helped her or not, it would have made the day easier to them. Neelie, soon after the early dinner, took refuge in her new sister's room; and, drawing the small rocker close to the cheery fire, turned over, for the hundredth time, a volume brightened with many pictures, and maintained silence, leaving Louise to the sadness of her thoughts. They *were* sad; the atmosphere of the house was growing at times almost too much for her. She did not seem to be gaining on her mother-in-law. Yet she felt that, on Dorothy's account, she would not be elsewhere. Presently Neelie's soft voice broke the silence:

"Sister Louise, what do you think He said to them, when He took them in his arms?"

She was bending her fair head over a familiar picture, which she seemed to love to study: Jesus, with a fair, sweet-faced child in his arms and many others clustering around him.

Louise tried to call in her thoughts enough to answer:

"Why, you know, dear, he blessed them."

“Yes, I know ; but just what do you think he said ? the *exactly* words. I wish I could have heard him.”

There was intense pathos in the voice, but Louise’s preoccupied heart did not notice.

“I don’t know, Neelie, just the words ; only I suppose he prayed for them, that his Father would take care of them, and make them his own children.”

Silence again in the room, and Louise went on with her broken thread of thought ; and the child’s eyes were still riveted on the picture. Suddenly she spoke again, and this time the voice was so eager, so intense, that it called her sister back keenly, and entirely from all wandering :

“If I could *only* have been there.”

It was the echo of more than a passing fancy of a child ; and Louise, looking at her, saw that her fair blue eyes were brimming with tears, and the large drops were staining the page before her.

“Why, my darling little sister, what is the trouble ?” Her voice was full of sympathy now, and she dropped the work she had been

listlessly sewing, and, drawing the little rocker toward her, put loving arms around Neelie. "What makes the tears come, little darling sister?"

"Oh, Louise, I don't know, quite; but I think and I *think* about it, and wish I could see him and hear him speak. If he would only say, 'Neelie, come here,' I would run so fast; and I can't make it seem as though he cared now for me. My teacher in the Sunday-school says I must give my heart to him; but I don't know how. If I could see him and ask him about it, as they had a chance to do, I think it would be so nice; and then I can't help crying."

"Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me. But his disciples rebuked them."

"Is it possible," thought Louise, "that I have been one of those faithless disciples, rebuking, or at least ignoring, the presence of one of his little ones, while I reached out after fruit that I dared to think was of more importance!"

I can not explain to you with what a chill her heart took in this thought, and she gathered

Neelie to her, and her voice was tenderness itself.

"You poor little lonely lammie! Would no one show you the way to the Shepherd? It is *just* as easy, darling, as it was when he was on earth; and he calls you just as surely. You don't know how to give your heart to him? I shouldn't wonder if you had done it without knowing how. Do you think you love the dear Saviour, Neelie, and want to try to please him?"

"I'm sure I do," said Neelie, brushing back the tears and looking with earnest eyes into her questioner's face. "I *do want* to, but I keep forgetting, and doing naughty things, and then am sorry, and I think I won't ever again, and then I do; and, oh dear! I don't know what to do."

The old sad cry of the awakened human heart: "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I *not*, but what I hate, that do I." And the sad little heart had not learned the triumphant chorus, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ!*"

“Poor darling!” said Louise, and she held her close. “I know all about it. But see here, if you love him, then you have given him your heart; whoever you love has a piece of your heart; and if you love him *very much*, so that you are determined to please him just as well as you can, then you belong to him, and he has blessed you. Neelie, dear, I know what you have been thinking about; you would have liked it if you had been there so that he could pray for you.”

“Yes, I would!” said Neelie, the emphasis of a strong desire in her voice.

“Well, now, let me tell you. I felt just so when I was a little girl, and a lady found for me a verse in the Bible which showed me that he prayed for me while he was here on the earth. Then I was glad. Listen: Once when Jesus was praying, and had asked his Father to take care of his disciples, and keep them from sin, he said: ‘And, Father, I do not pray *only* for these; I pray for every one who shall ever believe on me, because my disciples have told them about me.’”

“That means me!” said Neelie, with a flash

of intelligence in her bright eyes. “Oh, Louise, that *does* mean me !”

“Of course it does, my darling little sister. Now, let me tell you, what I said when I was a little girl, not much older than you. I determined that I would belong to Jesus all my life, and that I would try in everything to please him, and my papa taught me a little prayer to speak to him, telling him what I meant to do. This was the prayer, ‘Here, Lord, I give myself away, ’tis all that I *can* do.’ Do you want to give yourself to Jesus, Neelie, to belong to him forever ?”

“Yes,” said the child, with grave face and earnest eyes, from which the tears had passed, leaving only solemn resolve, “I do.”

And they two knelt down beside the little rocker, and the rain pattered from the eaves outside, and the fire crackled in the stove inside ; and aside from these sounds, and the low murmured words of prayer from young lips, a solemn silence filled the room, and the deed of another human soul was “signed, sealed and delivered” to its rightful owner.

It was a radiant face that was raised to Louise

a few moments thereafter, and the child's voice had a note of triumph in it.

"He took me," she said, simply. "I belong to him now ; I did not understand it before ; but it is very easy. He took me."

Could any elaboration make the story of the mysterious change simpler ?

How do you think that older disciple felt about the matter of fruitage ? Here had she been looking right and left of her for sheaves to take to the Master, and behold, just at her feet, a bud had grown and swelled and burst into bloom before she had even discovered signs of life ! It taught her a lesson that she put often into practice among the lambs thereafter. It led her to remember that possibly his disciples of to-day often occupy unwittingly the position of rebukers, even while the Master's voice is calling, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not."

Two hours thereafter they were down in the kitchen, Louise and Neelie ; Louise had been called down by a message from a neighbor, and Neelie had followed. The errand dispatched,

the daughter-in-law lingered in the kitchen, her hungry heart looking for a bit of cheer.

Changes in the kitchen arrangements had involved the clearing out and reordering of a certain corner cupboard that day, and Dorothy, perched on a chair, was settling the upper shelves. Her mother, with a face that every hour in the day had grown harder, because of the conflict within which she was determined nobody should suspect, was sorting over boxes of spices, bags of dried seeds, papers of treasures. Dorothy found a niche which she believed would just receive one of the treasures, a large, old-fashioned, covered dish of china, dating back in its pattern for nearly a hundred years, and valued in the household, as such pieces generally are, for a dozen times their worth. She glanced about her. Louise had moved to the distant window, and was looking out upon the dull sky and earth. Her mother was absorbed and forbidding-looking. Little Neelie was standing very near the treasured dish, and her quick eye saw what was wanted, and her quick and eager fingers grasped the treasure:

“I’ll hand it to you, Dorrie; you need’nt get down.”


“Oh, no!” said Dorothy, aghast, but not quickly enough. The small hands that were so anxious to help had seized it, and was safely bearing it forward, when the metallic voice of the mother came startlingly upon her.

“Cornelia Morgan, put that dish down on the table this instant!”

Poor, startled Neelie, eager to obey, anxious to show her mother and Dorothy, and, above all, Louise, that she *meant* to do right, turned to obey; but, alas! her nervous little hand measured falsely the height of the table, and she hit the rare blue dish against its edge, the treacherous cover toppled over, and — well, how did it happen? Who ever knows just *how* dire accidents happen? Such a second of time in which they do it all! What Neelie and the rest of the startled spectators knew was that the family heirloom lay in a dozen pieces on the yellow kitchen floor!

CHAPTER XXIV.

STORM.

OR the space of about one minute there was silence in the kitchen; then Mrs. Morgan, senior, advanced with swift steps and stern face, and caught the trembling Neelie by the arm and whirled her into the little bedroom near at hand, and closed the door with an ominous bang. Then, presently, there followed those sounds so absolutely unendurable to refined and sensitive nerves, rapid blows, mingled with pitiful pleadings for mercy.

I have often wondered whether, if those given to the administration of that sort of punishment could be lookers-on, or listeners, while another dealt the blows, it would not materially change

their views of the entire question. Is it possible under those circumstances, to avoid feeling a loss of respect for the administrator? To escape from the notion that he or she is submitting to a *self-degradation*?

The two sisters looked at each other in dire dismay!

"Poor little Neelie!" gasped Dorothy, at length. "She hadn't the least idea that she was doing anything wrong. How *can* mother punish her?"

Louise made no answer, because there seemed to her nothing that it was safe to say.

"Oh, mamma, don't; please don't!" wailed Neelie; "I didn't mean to do anything wrong."

Then did Dorothy's courage rise to the point of action. She went swiftly over to that closed door, pushed it open, and spoke with eager, tremulous voice:

"Oh, mother, don't whip Neelie; I know she didn't mean to do anything wrong."

"Dorothy Morgan!" said the firm, stern voice of her mother, never colder or firmer than at that moment, "leave this room and close the door immediately."

And Dorothy immediately obeyed. She always obeyed her mother ; but is it probable that just at that moment, she respected her ?

Louise leaned her head against the rain-bespattered window-pane, and looked out into the dreariness and waited ; and Dorothy got back on her perch and leaned her head against the cupboard door, and wiped a distressed tear from her face with the back of her hand, and waited. It was not that either of those misery-stricken waiters feared injury to Neelie ; at least not to the physical part of her. Mrs. Morgan was not in that sense, cruel. They were well aware that the punishment would not be unduly severe ; but, nevertheless, there was that miserable sense of degradation. Was it possible to avoid the conclusion that the mother was angry, and was venting the pent-up irritations of the day on her defenseless child ? Each wail of Neelie's sank the mother lower in the estimation of daughter and daughter-in-law. The latter, realizing and struggling with the feeling, trying to reason herself into the belief that Mrs. Morgan must know what was best for her child, and with strange inconsistency trying to determine

whether she could ever respect her again; Dorothy, not conscious of the name of the miserable feelings that held her in possession, but knowing that life seemed very horrid just then. All these phases of misery occupied little room in time—one's *heart* works rapidly. Quiet came to the little bedroom, broken only by an occasional sob, and presently the administrator of justice (?) came out, closing the door after her.

"Pick up those pieces and throw them away," was her first command to Dorothy. "One would have supposed you could have done that without waiting to be told; and don't climb up there again; I will finish the work myself; if I had done it in the first place, instead of setting you at it, I would have saved myself a great deal of trouble."

"Can't they be mended?" Dorothy asked, aghast at the idea of throwing away the bits of treasured blue china.

"No, they can't. I don't want my mother's china patched up—a continual eyesore; I would rather put it out of sight."

"Poor Neelie!" said Dorothy stooping to

gather the fragments, and astonished at her own courage; "she was so eager to help."

"It was not for trying to help that she was punished," explained the mother, coldly — the very tones of her voice betraying the fact that she felt the need of self-justification — "she knows very well that she has been forbidden to touch any dishes, without special permission, and the fact that she forgot it only proves that she pays very little attention to commands. And you, Dorothy, are trying to help her pay *less* attention. I was astonished at your interference! Don't let me ever see anything of that kind again."

And then Dorothy hated the blue china pieces, and would rather throw them away than not. Still Louise lingered in the kitchen; not because the atmosphere was pleasant, but because she pitied Dorothy, who was evidently much tried still; she could not go away and leave her, perhaps to be vanquished by the tempter.

It presently transpired that Dorothy had a new and fruitful source of anxiety. The early autumn night was closing in; the rain was

increasing, so were the wind and the dampness. In the kitchen, Mother Morgan herself poked the fire and added another stick, and the glow and warmth that followed were agreeable; but the bedroom door was closed, and Dorothy was almost sure that the bedroom window was open, and occasionally there came a dry little cough from the little girl shut in there, that deepened the look of anxiety on the sister's face. Her mother grew more gloomy looking as the moments passed, but Dorothy ventured yet again:

“Mother, shall I shut the bedroom window?”

No; let the bedroom window alone.”

Presently the mother descended to the cellar, and Dorothy seized the opportunity to express her anxieties.

“Neelie will catch her death in there; she must be real chilly; it is growing damper every minute, and she has a cold now; what *can* mother be thinking off!”

Then Louise began to give attention to the dry little cough, and to grow anxious also. Debating the question for a while as to whether she would help or hinder by speaking, she finally

determined to try, so she said, in as indifferent a tone as she could assume :

“Shall I open the bedroom door, mother? Neelie seems to be coughing.”

The mother faced around on her, from the cupboard where she was still working, and these were the words she said :

“Mrs. Lewis Morgan, can I be allowed to manage my own family, or must I give it up to you?”

Then Louise went up-stairs, and shut her door and locked it, and sat down in the little rocker so lately vacated by Neelie, and gave herself up to the luxury of tears! It was not merely this event it was a good many little events that had been piling up during many trying days; and the night was chill, and the world outside was in gloom, and Lewis was away, to be gone all night, and for two nights to come, and it seemed to the young wife as though two nights represented years, and it seemed a long time since she had seen her mother, and she was sorry for poor, little banished Neelie, and so she cried. She had some vindictive thoughts also: she told herself that

this struggle to belong to the family, and be one of them, was perfect nonsense ; and she had borne it quite as long as any human being could be expected to ; Lewis would insist on a separate home whenever she gave the hint ; what was the use in trying to endure this sort of thing longer ? Mrs. Morgan had insulted her ; why should she bear it ? She would not go down to supper ; she would not go down again to-night ; she would send word that, at least so long as her husband was absent, she would remain in her room, and not irritate the mistress of the house by her presence. She would write to her mother, and tell her just what a hateful world this was, and how disagreeable a person named "mother" could be. She would go home ; would start to-morrow morning, and telegraph Lewis to take the westward-bound train instead of the eastern and meet her there, and they would stay until Father Morgan was willing to give them, what was her husband's right, a spot for himself. To be sure, she meant to do none of these dire things ; but it was a sort of luxury to go over them in her heart, and imagine what she *could* do, the sensation that she could create, if she

chose. This is one of the miserable snares with which Satan trips the feet of unwary saints, leading them to feel that to luxuriate in bitter thoughts, that they really do not intend to carry out, is no harm ; letting them forget that by just so much is their spirituality weakened, and their communion with Christ cut off. It was in this case but a partial victory, for Louise, presently feeling the gloom of heart too much for her to struggle under, looked about for relief, and being used to seeking it but in one place, dropped on her knees and carried the whole dreary scene to Him who bears our sorrows and carries our griefs ; and when, almost an hour afterward, she answered Dorothy's summons to tea, her face was serene and her heart at rest.

Neelie was at the table, a trifle more quiet than usual, albeit she was always a meek and quiet little mouse, her face a shade paler than usual, and her eyes disposed to seek Louise's with a questioning gaze, as if she would determine whether she had been considered naughty ; but when Louise answered the question by a tender, reassuring smile, the little face became radiant.

I want you to do Mother Morgan justice. She was by no means cruel intentionally; she would not have kept Neelie in the cold five minutes had her nature realized the situation; her own blood was fairly boiling in her veins; she could not have conceived of the possibility of anybody being chilled that day. She honestly believed Dorothy to be a simpleton, and Louise to be trying to interfere with her duties as the mistress of the family. Therefore she had no self-accusing spirit with which to meet her family at the tea-table; so she was self-poised and dignified. But Louise, in her half hour of communion in the chamber of peace, had found strength enough to bear any amount of dignity and carried herself sweetly and helpfully through the hour.

Into the gloom of that rainy night came a guest that dispelled all the dignity, and made each member of the unfortunately constructed household feel of kin. Louise was the first to hear it, even before Dorothy, that strange, hoarse cough, which has fallen in so many a household almost like the sound of earth-clods on a coffin, and which, too often, has been but the

forerunner of that very sound. Louise had heard it from the little sister at home, often enough, and understood the signal so well that it brought her to her feet with a bound, so that when Dorothy, a few moments later, knocked, hesitatingly, at her door, she answered with a quick "Yes, dear," and threw it wide open, herself nearly dressed.

"Oh, Louise! Do you hear Neelie? Isn't she very sick?"

"She has the croup, Dorrie; I am going right down." And Louise searched rapidly, yet with the air of one who knew what she wanted, and where it was, in her trunk for a package. Dorothy shivered.

"Oh, Louise! what if mother doesn't think there is much the matter with her, and will not do things?"

"I wouldn't borrow trouble, dear. Your poor mother is more likely to be overwhelmed with anxiety. Come down; we can find something to do." And she sped swiftly downstairs.

Whereupon Dorothy's courage returned. She followed suit, and immediately attacked the

stove, and arranged kindlings with skilled fingers, and applied her match, and lifted on the large kettle and filled it with water, while Louise pushed boldly into the bedroom, none too soon, for the white-faced mother sorely needed help.

It was a rapid and very severe form of that terrible disease, and there were no young men to hasten for a doctor, though anxiety lent haste to the old father's fingers, and he was even then saddling a horse with what speed he could.

"Have you tried hot water?" was Louise's first question, as she hastened to raise the head of the struggling, suffering child.

"No," said Mrs. Morgan, her voice expressing an anxiety that she could not conceal. "There *is* no hot water; and there *isn't* anything; and the doctor will never get here. There is no fire."

"Yes, there is," said Louise, who already caught its brisk snapping. "Dorrie is there; we will have hot water in five minutes," and she hurried to the kitchen.

"That's right Dorrie; just a little water, so we can have it at once; then set the other kettle

on, and fill it half full, and as soon as it heats fill up. And Dorrie, get a tub; I'll run for blankets. But, first, where's a spoon?"

"Have you the medicine that you use?" This to the mother, for she was back again beside her.

"No," said Mrs. Morgan again in that same distressed tone; "I haven't *anything*."

Then Louise produced her package, and untied it with rapid fingers.

"This is what my mother uses for my little sister."

Mrs. Morgan, senior, seized the bottle, gave one glance at the label, returned it, with a brief, decisive sentence, "Give her some."

And the already secured spoon was promptly produced and the medicine dropped, none too soon, for it was growing momentarily harder for Neelie to swallow anything.

Don't you know just how they worked, those three women, for the next hour, over that child? If I write for those who have had no experience in such suffering, where there is such dire need of haste, and where all remedies at times are utter failures, blessed are they, although Louise

blessed the past hours of experience that had given her knowledge and skill for this night. Both were needed, for Mrs. Morgan's usually cold nerves were trembling, and a terrible fear of what might be coming blanched her face, and made her limbs tremble beneath her. She gave herself unresistingly to the lead of Louise and Dorothy; for Dorothy, the moment she found something to do, sprung into action and energy, and the hot-water bath was ready almost before it had seemed possible.

Neelie, in the midst of her sufferings, had strength to greet Louise's coming with a smile; and although it was hard work to speak at all murmured, as the face of her sister recalled the earlier events of the afternoon, "He took me."

"What does she say?" asked the mother her voice sharpened with pain; Louise hesitated a moment; then struggling to keep back the tears answered steadily, smiling on Neelie:

"She is referring to a little conversation which she and I had this afternoon. She gave herself away to Jesus, and she is telling me that he took her. Yes, darling; I know he did."

A sharp cry, almost as from a wounded

animal, escaped the drawn lips of the mother, then she gave herself with renewed energy to the work of fighting disease.

And the clock was watched eagerly, and the drops administered at just such moments; and the bath was replenished, and the rubbing of feet and hands went on, and the compresses were changed constantly; and, just as Dorothy, with a little gasp of relief, said "There's the doctor!" as the sound of voices was heard in the hall, Louise and her mother-in-law said, in the same breath, "She breathes easier!"

"Well said the doctor, after the patient had been examined, and the drops from Louise's bottle looked into, and the questions had been answered, "you have really done all there was to be done, and the little woman is past the crisis for to-night, but it was a tough case, I guess. That medicine works like a charm, sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't. It helps, though, where there is hot water, and speed and good judgment to supplement it."

The Morgan family were not likely to forget the experience of that night. To each member of it they had been peculiar. No one knows,

or at least can describe, the emotions which tugged at the heart of the father, as he galloped through the gloom of that night, not knowing but that the death angel, who evidently hovered near, would have gone away with his youngest born before he could get back to her. No one, perhaps but the Searcher of hearts will ever know what the mother felt as she strained every nerve to hold back the destroyer, and yet thought she saw his grim steps approaching. Through all the swift working and swift thinking, the strongest feeling of Louise's heart had been pity for that mother. All the events of the dreary afternoon photographed themselves before her with startling distinctness. What *must* they be to the mother? Swiftly as she worked, and entirely as she seemed to give her mind to the needs of the hour, with every motion there went up a prayer that the great Physician would, for the mother's sake, speak the word of healing, and presently there went up the prayer of grateful acknowledgment. Fair little Neelie, as she lay back at last, white and exhausted with her hard hours of suffering, seemed possessed with something like the same

feeling of pity for the mother, but she gave it expression in a way that almost broke that mother's heart. Putting up her weak little hand as the mother bent over her, she patted tenderly the white, wrinkled cheek, and said, in the most loving and penitent of tones :

“ Dear mamma, I didn't *mean* to be naughty.”

Then, indeed, the strain that had been upon the mother's heart, not only for that afternoon, but for days and weeks, gave way suddenly and with the bitter cry, “ Oh, Neelie, *don't!*” she burst into a passion of tears.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.



SECOND time in her life did Mrs. Morgan, senior, seek her daughter-in-law's room. Not unsolicited, however. Louise, all unknowingly, planned the way for an easier approach.

"Mother," she said, toward the evening of the day that followed that night of watching, "won't you just slip up to my room and lie down for an hour or two? You look so tired, and you know you had no rest at all last night. Dorrie and I will take the best possible care of Neelie; and, indeed, she looks so bright as to hardly need care."

This invitation had been repeated at intervals

during the day; but Mrs. Morgan, though not repellent in her manner, had steadily resisted every suggestion, and yet had seemed not ungrateful for the thoughtfulness.

"Perhaps I will by and by," she had said to Louise's last suggestion; but it was an hour afterward, when Louise had despaired of her success and had sought her room, that Mrs. Morgan tapped at her door.

"That is good," the daughter said, briskly. "Let me bring a spread and arrange the pillows comfortably, and you will get a nice rest before Neelie misses you."

"Wait," said Mrs. Morgan, arresting Louise's quick steps; don't fix the bed; I have not come to lie down; I don't feel like resting; I want to talk with you. Sit down here by the fire. I suppose I need your help. I need something — I don't really know what. I have been having a very hard time."

"I know it," said Louise, quick sympathy in her voice. "Last night was a heavy strain, but you can safely rest now, she is so much better. I never saw any one rally so rapidly."

"I don't mean that. My hard time did not

begin last night. I don't feel sure that I can tell you when it began; away back. I have *made* some of my hard times, I can see that. I have been disappointed in my children. John disappointed me, long ago; I had ambitions for him, I had *plans*, and everything happened to thwart them. I felt hard at Lewis, some of the time, because he seemed to come in the way; and I felt hard — well, at everything. I have thought that his father did not treat him just as I would have done if I had been a father. So I have just gone through life, being out of sorts at everything.

“For a while after you came here I had hopes that John would take to you, and that he would come out all right; and when I saw how much stress you laid on prayer, I began to feel glad that you were praying for John, and to sort of expect that good would come of it. Then you know how *awfully* I was disappointed, and how things went from bad to worse. Then after he went away, it seemed to me as though my heart turned to stone. I didn't feel as though I cared much for the other children, and I didn't want to. Dorothy provoked me, and

Lewis provoked me, and you provoked me worst of all. I have grown harder and bitterer every day; I was rebellious at God; I thought he had treated me badly. I got down on my knees once and prayed for John; and I said to myself that He ought to have heard me, and he didn't, and I couldn't forgive him.

“Then came last night. I was hard on my poor little girl. I didn't *punish* her hard, I don't mean that. I just gave her three or four slaps, that, if they had been given in sport, she wouldn't have minded. It was her *heart* that I hurt, and I knew it. I knew at the time that I was punishing her unjustly. The child didn't mean to be disobedient — didn't know that she was — but I had been having a dreadful day and it seemed an actual relief to have some escape for my bitterness. So I whipped her. But I have been punished for it. Last night was an *awful* night! If she had died I believe I should have lost my reason; and I thought she would die. I believed that God had sent for her in retribution. Yet I cried to him. I told him I had been bitter and severe and rebellious, and was yet, but that if he would spare my baby

I would try to serve him ; I would do anything that he told me. Now he has taken me at my word, when I didn't expect it, and I am a woman who has always been noted for keeping a promise. I mean to keep this one, but I don't know how. I don't even know what he wants of me. It seemed to me that you ought to know, and to be able to tell me, so I have come to you for help."

Throughout the telling of this story Louise had not interrupted by word or movement; but long before it was concluded, the sympathetic tears were dropping on her mother's hand. Directly the steady, unnaturally quiet voice ceased, this servant of Christ was ready with his message :

"Oh, mother! what he wants of you is to lean your head upon his bosom, and tell him all your fears and cares and disappointments, and let him whisper to you, ' Daughter, be of good courage.' He loves you, mother, and he loves John and Neelie, and all your flock. He wants to save you all in his everlasting arms, and bring you, an unbroken family, to his Father's house. I believe he will do it. And in return

he asks your love; and you know, mother, when we stop to think of it, it would be simply impossible to help loving one who waits to do all this for us and ours."

Mrs. Morgan looked at her daughter with grave, earnest eyes, and slowly shook her head.

"It may not be possible for you to help loving him, but I don't feel a bit of love in my heart. It feels as hard as flint. I believe that he is willing to do a great deal for me, and yet I don't seem to care."

"Mother, tell him so." Louise's voice trembled with the earnestness of her desire. "He is unlike any other friend. To a human friend we could not go, saying simply: 'I know I *ought* to love you, but I don't. Show me how.' But to the tender Saviour we can come with even this story. Mother, do not wait to feel as you think you ought. You have promised to serve him. You say you mean to keep the promise; then just give yourself to him. Be sure he will accept the gift, and fill your heart with joy in return."

"But, Louise, that would be simply mockery.

He asks for love, and I can not love him. I feel as though I had no love for anybody."

Louise shook her head. "No, if you are sincere you can not mock him. He made the heart. *You* can not make your heart love him, but you can resolve to give yourself to him, to obey his directions, to follow his voice, and I do assure you he will see to all the rest. Will you keep your promise?"

Then there was silence. Mrs. Morgan was evidently puzzled, as well as painfully embarrassed. The way was darker to her than it had been to Neelie. She had not the faith of a little child to rest upon.

"How much does the promise mean?" she asked at last. "What would I have to do?"

"It means everything," said Louise, solemnly: "you would have to do just exactly as God directs. He has promised to guide you, and you are to promise to *be guided* every step of the way; to have no will of your own, to lose your will in his. Will you do it?"

"But if he directs what I can not do?"

"There is no possibility of such an 'if,' mother; he will be sure to give the power to do,

with the command. ~~Unless~~ you mean 'will not' by 'can not,' there is nothing in the way. The world is full of people who say, 'I can't,' when in their hearts they know they mean 'I won't.' But you are an honest woman ; you will not say *I can not* to God, knowing that you could, if you *would*. Mother will you redeem your promise? See here ; your little Neelie sat in that chair where you are only yesterday, and she knelt beside me and prayed this prayer :

'Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I *can* do.'

When she arose from her knees she said, 'He took me.' Will you use Neelie's prayer, mother? If you will I am sure you will receive her answer. Will you kneel down with me, now and here?"

I can not assure you that the daughter's faith was strong ; she was startled at her heart's own beating, and a great deal of the emotion was the result of anxiety ; it was evidently the turning point in Mrs. Morgan's life ; but how would she decide it? Would she kneel down and deliberately give herself away to Christ,

even in this darkness, declaring that she had no love in her heart for him? Louise was afraid. And the silence lasted. She did not know what else to say; she was afraid to speak again, so she kept silent. But, oh, how her heart sped to the throne with its errand. How she blessed the King that at this crisis hour she had not to wait to petition for an audience, and then await his leisure. Instead, without introduction or explanation, she pressed her petition: "On, Jesus, save her *now*." Again and again, and yet again, were these desires presented; and thinking of it afterward, it seemed to her that almost she felt the presence of the angel of the covenant, and whispered yet again in his waiting ear, "I will not let thee go." And so strong grew the feeling, that when suddenly, in the quiet and the darkness, the little rocker was pushed back with a resolute hand, and her mother-in-law went down on her knees before it, Louise, not surprised now, slipped down beside her, and immediately changing the tone of her prayer, said aloud:

"Dear Jesus, here is this soul, come to redeem her promise; she is going to give herself

to thee now, to be thine forever ; she is going to follow wherever thy hand points the way. Now, Jesus, accept the covenant, and write her thine, even as thou hast promised."

And then again from that room, only a trifle over twenty-four hours away from its yesterday's baptism, went up the solemn words, Neelie's little prayer,

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

The tones were firm, broken by no emotion : strong, they might almost be said to be stern. In truth, it was an iron will that was bending now ; but there was fixed purpose in the act ; if the will was hard to bend it never *seemed to bend*, when there was no reality. When a strong oak bows low before unseen power, it is evident that there is *power*. Only those words were spoken, then silence. Louise waited, praying softly. Then again she broke the silence, sealing the offering with a solemn, tender prayer of petition that the Lord might now reveal his smiling face to the waiting soul. Then, almost alarmed at the stillness, lest the tide of feeling

might be too much for the wearied body of this iron-willed woman, she arose. Mrs. Morgan quietly followed her example, and sat down again in the little chair. To Louise's heart it seemed unwise to speak more words. Presently she said:

"Mother, you will rest here now, awhile, won't you? I will go down to Neelie, and when she awakens and wants you we will call immediately. I have made the bed comfortable, and perhaps you will have a chance to get a nice rest. Will you have a light? No?" as Mrs. Morgan shook her head. "You like the fire light best; then I will make it just a little brighter."

And she stirred the embers and added another stick; and then with softly step she went back to the little chair and touched her lips for just one second to the mother's cheek, then slipped out and left her.

Only a few moments Mrs. Morgan sat, as if spell-bound, gazing into the glow that sprang up on the hearth. Then she roused suddenly, and went over to the door and turned the key in the lock, but instead of going toward the bed she

went back to the little chair and bowed before it on her knees.

Already had this woman, with her first words of actual self-surrender, felt a touch of the mighty Hand that leaves its impress on the heart. She could not say now, what she had fifteen minutes before, "I can not love him; I feel as though I had no love for anybody." She did not understand what to name the strange new feelings that were surging through it. Thus much she could say, what she never in her life had been able to say before, "I want to pray." And so she dropped on her knees, and the old, and ever new, and continually repeated miracle of transformation went on. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Why do not the honest unbelievers apply the test of the Lord's own promising?

"What is the matter?" Dorothy asked in tones half startled and wholly wondering, as Louise came once more to the little bed-room.

"Nothing; why?" Louise asked, smiling, as she took her station beside the pale little face on the pillow.

"I don't know; you look — I hardly know how — a little as though you had seen an angel."

"Perhaps I have." This with a glad light in her eyes and a bright, reassuring smile.

Then came the father to look in on his sleeping baby, and to ask of Dorothy, in a half whisper:

"Where is your mother?"

"I don't know," said Dorothy, turning inquiring eyes on Louise, who answered:

"She is up in my room, father, resting."

"Resting!" Father Morgan repeated the word, wonder and almost terror in his voice. *Rest* was something that Mother Morgan never took. The word seemed foreign to her nature. Even when she slept you hardly thought of her as actually resting. "She must be sick!"

"Oh, no, she isn't; I think she feels better than usual. She will have a nice rest and be down presently."

And then the farmer turned and looked wonderingly at his daughter-in-law. He detected the minor tone of music in her voice, and he noticed the brightness in her face. It was

always a bright face, but here was positive joy. What was there to be joyful about? Farmer Morgan did not define this questioning feeling, neither did he think of angels. He had not been reading about the shining of Moses' face, after his communion with God, as Dorothy had; but he told himself, for perhaps the thousandth time, that "Lewis had an unusual kind of a wife, somehow."

It was verging toward midnight, and Farmer Morgan was asleep on the old settee in the parlor, when Mrs. Morgan opened the door quietly and came in.

"Did you get any rest, mother?"

It was Dorothy who questioned, while Louise looked up quickly.

Her voice was in its usual calm, but was it imagination that made it seem to Louise as though the peculiar, hard ring had gone out of it?

"Yes," she said; "a good rest, better than any that I ever had in my life. You girls may both go to bed, now. I would just as soon sit up all night as not." And then she looked at Louise and smiled.

“What were those words Neelie said to you, last night?”

This to Louise, a little later, as Dorothy moved about, doing last things for her mother's comfort.

“She told me that ‘*He took her.*’”

“It is a strange thing, but I believe he has taken her mother, too. Good-night, and God bless you.”

And then Mother Morgan deliberately folded her arms about Louise and deliberately kissed her, twice, before the astonished eyes of Dorothy. She had just come in from the kitchen to petition :

“Mother, couldn't you lie down beside Neelie and sleep, and let me stay awake to watch her?”

“No, Dorothy ; I don't need it ; I am rested ; I have found such rest as I knew nothing about. Louise will tell you.”

It is very strange that between a mother and a daughter kisses should have been so rare a thing that for Dorothy to feel one on her cheek made the rich blood roll into it in waves, and

she was utterly bewildered still, until she heard Louise repeating :

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*.”

“Mother has just been to Him with his promise, and received its fulfilment, Dorrie,” she said. And as they went up the stairs together, she added :

“Dorrie, dear, I believe you and I could sing the long-meter doxology with good effect to-night. Meantime, dear, don't let us for one moment let go of John.”

Ah! but stronger arms than theirs had hold of John.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DORRIE'S AMBITION.



DOU think that the progress in the Morgan family has been unusual? That the fruit has been more than the earnest Christian has a right to expect? Have you ever tried it? Ever given one year of patient endeavor and constant prayer to the work which lay all around you? If not, how can you possibly know what the results of such a year might be?

I do not say that Louise Morgan had faith equal even to a grain of mustard-seed; if she had, she would have seen greater mountains than these removed. I have told you frequently of her discouraged questioning, "Why?" but such faith as she had the Lord honored, and as

much real prayer as she was able to send up into the golden vials, he kept before him.

I desire you to distinctly understand that from the hour when Mrs. Morgan kneeled before the little rocker in Louise's room, and gave herself unconditionally to God, she was a different woman. I am not in sympathy with those who say that conversion makes no radical change in character; that a person who is selfish or passionate or penurious before conversion, is selfish or passionate or penurious *after* conversion in the same degree. Conversion is *change of heart*, and a heart given up to the reign of Christ, the supreme desire being to please him, will, at the outset, be a very different heart from one that was given up to the reign of self. Mrs. Morgan's changed heart showed in her life; showed promptly and decisively. On that very next evening, after tea, with Neelie among the pillows in the rocking-chair that had been brought from Louise's room, for her use, the mother said: "Now, Lewis, I have made up my mind that I want family prayers in this house after this, and on Neelie's account we will have

them right after tea, if it is just as well for you. Dorothy, get mother's Bible. Sing a hymn if you like, before reading; I like singing, if I can't help; and your father used to be a good singer when he was young." Farmer Morgan made no remark upon this change in the family arrangements; if he was surprised he gave no sign; it is probable that she had been talking with him about it — his wife was a straightforward woman — but Lewis's voice was very unsteady as he commenced the solemn hymn:

"Now I resolve with all my heart,
With all my powers, to serve the Lord."

It seemed to him almost too wonderfully and blessed a thing to be true, that those words should actually embody the resolve of his *mother's* heart! Besides, he had another reason for unsteadiness of voice; in his heart was an absorbing desire to have his father understand and adopt that language. I have not had a chance to say much about Lewis Morgan during these latter days, but I can give you the history of his life in brief. He had reached that point where the history of each day was, in the morning,

“Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” and in the evening, a note of triumph :

“ How sweet the work has been !
Tis joy, not duty,
To speak this beauty :
My soul mounts on the wing ! ”

and then the consecration :

“ Lord, if I may,
I'll serve another day.”

And when a Christian reaches such a plane as that, it is what a blessed saint of God describes as “the graded road.”

How I would like to linger over those autumn days, to tell how rich they were ; what a spirit pervaded the home that had never been there before ; how mother and daughters drew together ; how they established one afternoon, a little female prayer-meeting, where mother, and Louise, and Dorothy, and little Neelie prayed in turn for John, such prayer as reached after him, and drew him steadily though he knew it not. How in that meeting they prayed constantly, persistently, with a measure of faith, for the

head of the household, and watched eagerly for sign of life in his still soul, but as yet saw none. How they enjoyed the rides to church, and to prayer-meeting on Wednesday evening; how Mother Morgan, who had never been used to going anywhere of an evening, astonished them all by making ready as a matter of course, answering Dorothy's wondering look by the sentence: "Of course I am going, child; I need all the help I can get." All these, and so many more experiences, I would like to give you in detail, but time will not wait for me; the days fly by.

They bring us to a certain Thanksgiving evening, cold without, but very pleasant upstairs in Louise's room, where Dorothy was lingering with her brother and sister, having a confidential chat as she was now so fond of doing. They had grown to be wonderfully in sympathy, these three.

"Dorrie," Lewis said, what do you think about a neighborhood prayer-meeting this winter? Don't you believe we could sustain one?"

Dorrie flashed a pair of glad eyes on her brother.

"Of course we could; there are enough in our family to sustain it, with Carey Martyn's help. Isn't Carey splendid, Lewis?" Dorothy sometimes said this, or something equivalent several times in a day. "Where could we have one? at the school-house? How could we warm it? Could *we* furnish wood, do you think? Of course we could, if father would think so, and I guess he would."

Lewis laughed. "You take my breath away," he said pleasantly, and then the three laughed into eager talk about the neighborhood prayer-meeting. From that to individual effort and individual cases.

"What about the Graham girls?" Lewis asked.

"Well, the Graham girls are progressing steadily. I'm wonderfully interested in Delia. Have you talked with Delia, Louise? Don't you think she is an unusual girl?"

Then Lewis laughed again.

"You think each one of those girls is unusual, don't you Dorrie? I think I have heard you make a similar remark of half a dozen of them."

"Well, they *are* remarkable, every one of

them, to me. I didn't know they were such girls. They are getting on nicely with their grammar, those Graham girls are, and are *so* interested in it. Mr. Butler thinks they would have been fair scholars if they had had a chance."

"You would make a good teacher, Dorrie," Lewis said, his mind evidently more on Dorrie than on the girls of whom she was talking.

Cheeks, as well as eyes, glowed now.

"Do you think so, Lewis — do you honestly think so? I would like it so much; since I commenced studying this last time I have thought about it a good deal. At first I thought I could not prepare myself without going away from home, but that was before I knew what a wonderful teacher I had at home." This last sentence with a loving glance toward Louise, and a caressing movement of her hand over the fair hair. At that moment the clang of the old-fashioned knocker sounded through the house. Dorrie arose promptly.

"I suppose that is Mr. Butler," she said, stopping a moment before the glass to arrange her hair. He was to come in this evening to see

about the German class. Shall I speak to him about the neighborhood prayer-meeting? Or, you will come down presently, will you not?"

To this they assented, looking after her as she went from the room with quick, eager tread.

"Speaking of changes," Lewis said, "how wonderfully that girl has changed! I don't think I ever saw anything like it before. Don't you think she develops very rapidly?"

"It is steady growth," Louise said. "But I am not sure that there is so much actual change in her as there is development. She evidently had plenty of energy, always, but it was slumbering—she did not know what to do with it. I think she was in the apathy of disappointment when we first came home."

"She is certainly a remarkable girl," Lewis said; "and I never knew it. I believed her to be more than ordinarily commonplace. Now, it seems to me that the influence she has gained over the young people in a short time is really wonderful. I'm glad she has an ambition to become a teacher. I believe she will be a good one. Louise, don't you think Mr. Butler will be

helpful to her in the matter of perfecting her education?"

"I think he has been helpful in many ways, and will be," Louise said, with smiling eyes.

Down-stairs in the kitchen, Mrs. Morgan sat before the table, certain unused implements before her; namely, pen and ink and paper. She had resolved to spend this Thanksgiving evening in writing to John — not that she knew where John was, only as she imagined that the great city, such a little distance away, held him. She knew no address — she had simply decided to send the message out, addressed to John Morgan, in the forlorn hope that the chances of life might put it in his way. True, it was extremely doubtful, but then, what if it *should happen!* And the mother's heart within her thrilled at the thought, and she bent over the paper, and carefully commenced her letter — she had wonderful things to tell John!

Farmer Morgan dozed in his chair behind the stove. He opened his eyes when the knockèr clanged, and kept awake long enough to discover that Dorothy appeared to answer it, then dozed off again.

"It is Mr. Butler," Dorothy said, appearing again to exchange the candle for the lamp which now belonged to the front room. "Louise and Lewis will be down pretty soon; will you come in, mother?"

"Not to-night; I am very busy."

Then the writing and the sleeping went on; Dorothy returning to the brightness of the front room. Writing was slow and laborious work to Mrs. Morgan; besides, this was an unusual letter, upon a subject new to her; she wanted to choose her words with special care. Farmer Morgan, enjoying his many naps in the cozy corner, was unmindful of the flight of time. Lewis and Louise in their room, enjoying the delights of a quiet hour together, roused presently to the fact that they were expected downstairs.

"That couldn't have been Mr. Butler," Lewis said, glancing up at the clock; "Dorrie would have been after us before this time, if it had."

"Perhaps they are busy over their German," Louise made answer; "but we ought to go down, Lewis; father must be tired of waiting."

Mr. Butler is probably gone before this; I did not know it was so late."

But in the kitchen the writing and the dozing were still going on. Mother Morgan, flushed with her unusual exercise, looked up as the husband and wife entered.

"Where is Dorrie?" Lewis asked, speaking low, so as not to disturb his father.

"She is in the front room with Mr. Butler," the mother said. "Mr. Butler came in a few minutes ago: Dorothy said you were coming down to see him."

"A few minutes ago!"

Lewis and Louise exchanged glances of puzzled surprise. It was an hour and a half by the clock since they had been expected in the parlor, and it was an hour past the usual bedtime! But the slow-moving pen moved on, and so Lewis turned the knob of the parlor door. The two occupants of the room were standing near the large, old-fashioned fireplace, engaged in earnest conversation; the glow of lights and shadows in the room revealing, on Dorothy's part, a flushed face and shining eyes, and on the minister's an attitude that arrested Lewis'

steps, and caused an exclamation to escape his lips even before he was aware; for he held in his two hands Dorothy's own, and the light in his eyes and the flush on Dorothy's cheeks were not caused by the play of the firelight.

"Come in," he said, turning suddenly at the sound of the opening door, but in no other way altering his position; "Dorothy and I were just speaking of you, wishing for you; we want to ask your advice. I want Mr. and Mrs. Morgan to give me a Thanksgiving present. I incline to the opinion that I would better ask for it to-night; but Dorothy counsels waiting until to-morrow; what say you?"

"Dorothy!" said her brother; and he couldn't himself tell whether his tone meant surprise, or doubt, or what: "I don't understand."

And the red glow that instantly overspread Dorothy's face told that her old feelings of embarrassment were taking rapid possession of her; *she* could not explain.

"It is a simple matter." The minister's voice was unembarrassed and dignified. "I have asked Dorothy to be my wife, and she has said

‘yes.’ There remains now the asking for her of the father and mother. I had hoped that you would not be displeased at the news.”

Then did Lewis Morgan recover the use of his wits. Amazed he was, but plain English, as briefly and plainly put as that, was not to be misunderstood. He waited to close the door after Louise, then went forward, in hearty fashion, holding out a hand to each :

“I was very much astonished,” he said ; “I am sure I may be excused for that. Who had imagined such a thing ! But to say that it is not a glad astonishment, would not be true.”

As for Louise — women, at least some women, know what to do, even when they are very much astonished, and Louise was not that — she went forward and put both arms around Dorrie, and gave her tender, sisterly kisses, on the flushed cheeks and glowing lips.

“I thought,” said Lewis, suddenly, a few minutes thereafter, the first feelings of bewilderment having subsided, “I thought, Dorrie, that you had an ambition to be a teacher.”

“She has,” said Mr. Butler, answering for her, promptly and laughingly; “I have engaged her, but the school is a private one, number of pupils limited to one.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

HEART-TROBS AND COMMONPLACES.



IT is not my purpose to detail to you what was said in the Morgan family when the astounding revelations connected with that evening in the parlor were made known to them. That the revelations *were* astounding you can hardly doubt—at least to certain members of the family. The father and mother would hardly have been more amazed had an angel from heaven descended and claimed their daughter Dorothy for a friend. Not that they regarded the young minister in an angelic light; but they had, although they did not admit it even to themselves, much of that staunch loyalty of heart to the profession, which seems to be

born of New England soil. A minister was a person to respect; not so much on account of himself, as because of his profession. Farmer Morgan felt this. Sneer as he might, in a sort of good-natured, tolerant way, at the inconsistencies of Christians, ministers included, he never went beyond certain general phrases, and he disliked to hear others go even so far as that. Besides, Mr. Butler had grown into the genuine affections of this family. They did not know it. Farmer Morgan would have been amazed had anybody told him that he liked Mr. Butler very much; he would have been likely to think the person mistaken; yet it was true.

As for the mother, along with her respect for the minister, and a certain sense of satisfied pride in the fact that he had actually sought her daughter for a wife, came a feeling of utter astonishment that *anybody* wanted Dorothy! Why Dorothy was nothing but a child! The idea of *her* being married! She looked at her in a kind of maze; for several days she studied over it and tried to understand it. It had never seemed to occur to her to look upon this daughter as one growing into a woman; she had

seemed to stay somewhere in the region of twelve, or, at best, fourteen; a girl to be directed and managed; to be told peremptorily what to wear, and where to go, and where *not* to go—in short, a *child*, to obey unquestioningly; an older child than Neelie, of course, but, after all, a *child*. Now, in the space of one night—so it seemed to the mother—she had sprung into young ladyhood; nay, sprung over it entirely, and stood on the very verge of womanhood! Engaged to be married! What an unaccountable state of things! Dorothy actually planning to go away from home; to be gone over night—many nights—*every* night! Dorothy to have a home of her own; to be a house-keeper, a planner, a manager! To be a minister's wife! The story grew in bewilderment. The mother turned on her pillow, overwhelmed with it. She arose in the morning with a strange sense of bewilderment; she looked doubtfully at Dorothy, in her brown calico; the same brown calico that she had worn every morning that week, looking much the same in every respect, and yet by a certain light in her eye, and a certain spring in her step,

and a certain throbbing of her mother's heart, known to be *not* the same again forever.

Look at the matter from whatever stand-point you may ; let the circumstances be as favorable as they will ; let the congratulations be as sincere and as hearty as possible, there is always a sad side to this story of life. It speaks of great and ever-increasing change ! It always has its heavy corner in the mother's heart. Still, the new order of things worked well for Dorothy. If the mother was sad, she was also glad. As I said, there was a sense of satisfied pride about it. Also there was that feeling of added dignity in being the mother of Dorothy ; albeit at first the sense of respect for her that came with it was nearly overpowering. Almost it seemed to her that it was hardly the thing to send the prospective wife of her minister down cellar after the bread and the butter, and to skim the cream ! Gradually this absurd part of the feeling wore away ; but the fact that Dorothy was a young woman, and not a child, was to be consulted and conferred with, and, in a measure, deferred to, remained, and was helpful, to Dorothy not only, but to the mother. The year

that followed would be one that mother and daughter would like in future years to look back upon and remember.

Lewis was unaffectedly glad and thankful. Mr. Butler had grown rapidly in his regard; all the more rapidly since he had awakened to the fact that he was not merely a critic, but a fellow-worker, bound by solemn vows to work with and sustain his pastor. That his sister Dorothy should be the chosen one filled him with astonishment; but, since she *was* chosen, he was glad; and every day he grew more fully of the opinion that Mr. Butler was a sensible man, and had made a wise choice. He had underrated his sister nearly all her life; he was almost in danger of overrating her now; but that is such a pleasant and easily forgiven failing, and withal such a rare one between brothers and sisters, that I find myself liking Lewis the better for possessing it.

As for Louise, she was a woman, a young one, with wide-open eyes and sympathetic heart; she was not surprised at all. Matters had progressed more rapidly than she had expected. She was even a trifle sorry that Dorothy had not

gotten just a little further on with her German before her teacher turned into her lover; because she much feared that there would be little German taught or studied now; but then she reflected that possibly the lessons he had to teach were more important than German. At least the matter was in no sense of her planning; and the studies in which she was teacher, and in which Dorothy had made such rapid progress during the year, should still continue; and so, all things considered, Louise was glad.

I find myself lingering longer over this explanation than is needed. I designed to tell you of something else — of a winter evening, near to Christmas time, when, the farm work for the day being all done, the early evening had closed in upon the Morgan family, and found them in the bright, clean kitchen, at their substantial supper-table. A cheery group: someway this family was learning to have social suppers and cheery times together. The account that Lewis was giving of a matter of interest that had occurred in the village was interrupted by a decisive rap at the outside door.

“Another tramp?” said Lewis, inquiringly,

as Neelie slipped from her corner and went to answer the knock. "This is the third one to-day, isn't it? Those fellows are growing plentier."

"Strange that they straggle away out here," the mother said; "I should think they would stay in large towns."

And then Neelie gave a startled little exclamation, possibly of terror, or perhaps only of surprise; but it caused each member of the household to turn suddenly in the direction of the door; and then *they* exclaimed — not in terror, certainly, for there was nothing in the young man to awaken terror, but they were too much excited to analyze the tone of the exclamations. The mother was on her feet and at the door, and while the others stared and waited, and knew not what they said, nor how they felt, the mother had both arms around the intruder, and her lips for the first time in years and years, to his cheek, and her heart cried out:

"Oh, my boy! my boy!"

Now I am sure you don't expect me to tell you what the Morgan family said to each other, and to John, for the next ten minutes. They

do not know themselves; they could not recall afterward how they acted, nor what were the first words spoken, nor who, after the mother, spoke first. And if I should tell the tale, the probabilities are that it would sound strange and unnatural; the words, trivial in the extreme, unsuited to the occasion. It is even a chance if the speakers thereof would not declare: "I don't believe I said any such thing; it doesn't sound like me." Such scenes are better left untold. The heart-throbs, and the quivers of lip and chin, and the glances exchanged from wet eyes, can not be described, and have much more to do with the matter than mere words can.

Thus much Dorothy remembered; that after the first surprise was subsiding, before even it had time to subside, she made haste to the pantry, and, coming thence with knife and plate, motioned Louise, who had taken the hint, further to the left, and arranged for John his old seat near his father, and set his chair, and said, "Come, John," and then all settled into their places again. And Farmer Morgan remembers it now with a curious, half-ashamed smile, how he filled John's plate full, to overflow-

ing, with the cold beans that he remembered he used to like, and then, unmindful of what he did, reached forward and added another spoonful after the plate had been passed! Well, what mattered it, whether expressed in beans or some other way, so that the heart made known the fact that it wanted to give even to overflowing to the son who was lost and is alive again! The familiar sentence hovered through Louise's mind, "*was* he alive?" She looked at him stealthily, tremblingly, while Lewis talked. His face looked older, much older; worn and grave, not hard; the eyes were clear and steady, and his dress was that of a cleanly, respectable working man. But how much hope was there that he would bring gladness with him to the old home! A gladness that would stay?

"Well," John said, pushing his chair forward so that his face was more in shadow, and the tone of the simple little word sent that thrill of expectancy through the family group, which comes in unison with a feeling that something important is coming. This was after the tea-things had been cleared away, and the room had assumed order and quiet. Not that there had

been much bustle about the work that evening. Mrs. Morgan had done what was for her a surprising thing ; she pushed her chair back from the table and sat still, during all the moving to and fro, from pantry to cellar ; unmindful, for the first time in her life, as to whether the milk went down in the right pitcher, or the bread went down at all. Louise and Dorothy had moved softly ; had set back chairs noiselessly, and dried cups and plates without a sound, so as to lose no syllable of the conversation. But it was not until *they* were seated that John spoke that little preparatory word.

“ I have a long story to tell — a *very* long one ; I don't know where to begin, or how to begin ; only this, I have made up my mind to strike into the middle of it first, and say to you, father, and to you, mother, that I want you to forgive me for everything that is past in my life that has hurt you ; and I know that is a great deal. I want to tell you that I have begun life again ; begun at the beginning. In short, I feel I can honestly say that ‘ this your son was dead and is alive again ; was lost and is found.’ ”

And he turned to his mother with a smile that evidently she understood.

“Did you really get my letter?” she asked him, her voice so full of eagerness and so unlike herself that Louise could not avoid a wondering look.

“Yes,” John said, he did; and he launched at once into the details of the series of apparent accidents which brought him his mother’s letter.

“I was signing an acknowledgment of a package received for Mr. Stuart, and I had to sign my own name, so that in case of loss, you know, it could be traced to me. As I wrote my name the carrier, who stood by, said: ‘There has been a letter lying in the office up here at Station D for a person of that name. I remember it because it has neither street nor number — just the name and the city. We thought it was intended for John Y. Morgan, the mason, but he brought it back to the station; said it was none of his; said it commenced, “My dear son,” and the two people who used to commence letters that way for him had been in heaven for a dozen years.’ I don’t know what made me go after that letter,” said John, after a moment’s

silence, his voice broken with feeling. "I am sure I had no reason, and no right to expect that it was for me; but it seemed to me that I *must* have it, and I went for it. And, mother, that letter brought me home. There were certain things that I meant to wait to do before I came — money that I meant to earn. I had an idea of waiting until I could feel that my coming would not disgrace you. But after I read that letter I knew I ought to come right away, and after I decided it I could hardly wait for morning. Now, mother, father, will you take me back? Will you let me try to be to you the son I ought to have been, and never was? I don't know that I should dare to say that to you, only that I have been to my heavenly Father and found out how he can forgive, and I have found that he says: 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' and 'as one whom his mother comforteth.' And that has given me a notion of what father and mother love are. And then, mother, that letter of yours — I went down on my knees before God with it and blessed him for it."

They were crying now, every one of them,

save Farmer Morgan, and what he felt no one knew. He drew out his red silk handkerchief and blew his nose twice, then he leaned forward and snuffed the candle. When he presently found voice it was a husky one; but all he *said* was:

“We won’t talk about them days that are gone; I guess the most of us are willing to bid good-by to them and begin again. There’s a chance for improvement in us all; like as not we better try for it.”

The Morgan family actually sat up that night until nearly eleven o’clock! It was an unprecedented thing for them to do. I can not tell you what they said; I even doubt much whether I would if I could. Don’t you hate to see some things attempted on paper? A little of the commonplace mixed in with it? In fact, I doubt whether there could be a true home scene without touches of what we call commonplace coming in between. For instance, in the course of the evening Louise bethought herself of the little dismantled hall chamber, and slipped away and brought comforts, and quilts, and spread, and pure linen, and towels.

and wrought with rapid hand until the room took on a sense of home and occupancy again. She even went for the tidies and the vases, to make it all seem as he had left it. Then she climbed to the upper shelf and got down that Bible, and I am unable to tell you what a rush of glad emotions swelled in her heart as she thought of the tender way in which John had quoted those two Bible verses, and remembered that that Bible would be to him now something besides a cumberer.

Down in the kitchen, the mother, her heart filled with the most precious thoughts that ever throbbed in a mother's heart, remembered suddenly that John had been very fond of a certain kind of griddle-cakes, and while he and Lewis talked, and the father, with his elbows leaning on the arms of his chair and head bent forward, listened as though ten o'clock had not been two hours after his bed-time for more than half a century, the mother gave undertone directions to Dorothy to sift flour, and "bring a yeast-cake, and a little warm water, and the big yellow bowl, and the batter-spoon, and a little salt," and with skillful fingers, and such a light in her

eyes as the yellow bowl had never seen before, prepared to make the breakfast-table abound with good cheer. These commonplace reachings-out after to-morrows that make good cheer for the home are certainly productive of results that dignify them.

I find myself liking to linger over that evening in the Morgan household. It was such a wonderful hour to them; something which settled down into their lives as a history; a time from which they dated. Years afterward they said, "The moonlight to-night reminds me of that evening when John came home, you know," and then silence—such sentences never used save to that innermost circle, and those who in after years grew into the circle and had a right to the family histories. Yet, there is little to tell about it. How very often that is the case where there is much, so *very* much, to feel! One train of thought intimately connected with it ought to be told. There was that in the evening's history which silenced Mr. Morgan—which bewildered him. Hitherto he had professed to be, and in fact I think believed himself to be, a skeptic as regarded the fact of a super-

natural change in human hearts. Conversion he believed meant simply firm resolves, decision of character, *will* power. Louise was, by natural temperament and by education, different from most others; so, in his way, was Lewis. Thus Mr. Morgan had reasoned. Dorothy needed waking up, and Louise and Lewis and Mr. Butler between them had waked her up. The change, sudden and great in his own wife, had bewildered him not a little. She certainly had always possessed will enough. But he told himself, "After all, what had she done but determine to be interested in the Bible and in the church, and all that? All it needed was determination." Now, here came his strong-willed son — so strong, indeed, that his will had been his one great source of trouble even from babyhood. As a wee boy he had hated to give up one inch. He had been unable to say, "I am sorry," or, "I won't do so again," or, "forgive me," or any of the penitent phrases which fall so readily from baby lips. A scowl and a dogged perseverance in his own way had been characteristics of John's babyhood. Now, what power had brought him home, to say, not only,

“I was wrong,” but “forgive me ; I want to begin again ?” *John* saying, “Father, mother, forgive me” — saying it without being ordered, or compelled by the force of circumstances ! His father was staggered. Here, at last, was something — some strange change that could not be explained by any force of will whatever, save by admitting that something — somebody — had changed the current of the will-power.

“I believe,” said Father Morgan to himself, as late that night he sat down on the edge of his bed, and slowly and thoughtfully removed his boots, while Mother Morgan went to see if John didn’t need another comfortable, “I believe in my soul that somehow — I don’t know how, but *somehow* — God has got hold of John !”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ I DON'T KNOW.”



LOUISE brought the roses and Estelle — herself the fairest rose among them all. There had been much planning in the Morgan household preparatory to her coming; many things had changed in the farm-house since Louise first came home to it; subtle changes, many of them were — too slowly brought about to be recognized as changes; new ways, slipped into gradually, insensibly — little refinements — touches here and there; trifles, every one of them, and perhaps the only method of proving to the family what a difference they made in the home, would have been to have dropped suddenly back into the old ways for a week. 'That

experiment no one seemed inclined to try. Louise took great pleasure in making the large, old-fashioned room, with its quaint furniture, into a very bower of beauty for the sweet rose that was to bloom there; and smiled joyfully when she thought of what blissful surprises the wealth of June flowers and the smell of June clover would be to the city maiden. Many a plan she had for Estelle, many a hope having to do with this two months' sojourn in the farmhouse; hopes, however, that were not indulged without anxious little sighs being woven in among them.

She had hoped so long, and waited so eagerly, and in vain. She told John about it one evening, as they sat on the vine-covered porch together, waiting for Lewis and Dorothy to have done with the problem in algebra that was vexing the latter.

"John, I have such a strong hope that you will be able to help Estelle this summer; it has a great deal to do with my joy in her coming."

John bestowed anxious eyes on her for a moment, and was silent. Presently he said:

"Once I should have thought that you were

saying that for effect, but I have learned to know that you *never* say things simply for effect; having said it, you must mean it; so it makes me anxious. I can not see how it would be possible for me to influence your sister in any way, to say nothing of the folly of hoping to help her; I don't understand what you can mean."

"She isn't a Christian, you know, John."

"I know, and I understand that it is about such help that you speak. But what puzzles me is, how could you possibly expect that anything which I might do or say could influence her, when she has had you all her life."

"That is easily explained," Louise said, smiling. "In the first place, you are in the mood just now to overrate my influence over people. I have some with Estelle, but that it is not great is plainly shown in the fact that, in this most important of all matters, she has chosen her way and I have chosen mine, and we have walked separately for a good many years. Don't you know, John, that sometimes the people whom we meet but once, with whom we really have very little to do, are given a word to say, or an

act to perform, that shall influence all our future lives?"

"Yes," John said, with sudden energy and emphasis; he certainly knew that, as well as any person could. And his thoughts went immediately back to the fair young girl who had held out her hand, and whose winning voice had said: "Won't you have a card?"

"Well," Louise said, "I can not help hoping that the Holy Spirit will give you a word or look that will influence Estelle. It doesn't seem to me that I *can* have her wait any longer."

There were tears in her eyes. Then John felt savage toward Estelle; he said to himself that he didn't believe he should be able to endure her; she must be a little simpleton. To have grown up under the influence of such a sister, and yet to have deliberately chosen a course that would grieve her, argued ill for her heart, or her sense, or something. Altogether, though he desired to help, Louise was not awakening very hopeful sentiments toward helpfulness. There was a good understanding established between this brother and sister. For that matter, the reconstructed household understood each

other well during these days — had begun to realize something of what the family relation meant. John was certainly "a new creature in Christ Jesus." It is not always that the new life has so plain a chance of showing itself as his former life had given. No Christian doubted the presence of the unseen guest who had come to abide with him. As for the father, while keeping absolute silence in regard to the matter, he kept also keen eyes, and told himself, a dozen times a day, that "whatever had come over John, he was another person." By slow degrees the Morgan family had settled into definite plans for the future; plans that were not matured without some soreness of heart, and even, on Louise's part, a touch of tears. The giving up of future prospects for usefulness in the church had been a trial to Lewis, and the giving up had been done by inches. At last, however, it had been made plain that, if he would keep what health and strength he had, he must be content with an active, outdoor life. This settled beyond probability of a change, the father was found entirely willing to loose his hold on John, and give him, what had been the desire of his heart,

a medical education. At least, he said that for this reason he was willing — those of the family who watched him closely, strongly suspected that there was very little that the father would not have been willing to give John during these days. The father, in himself, was somewhat changed. There were other things that he was willing to do. For instance, he invited Lewis, one bright winter day, when they came together across lots to the home, to take Louise out and pick out the spot where he would like to build a house, and they would see what kind of a one could be built, one of these days. Now, strange to say, the desire to have a home of their own was less intense than it had been. They talked it up; they said it would be “nice,” in fact, delightful; and then, in the same breath, Lewis wondered what mother would do when Dorothy went away; and Louise wondered whether Dorothy wouldn’t need her help right there, at home, for the next year or two; and finally, though they made no objection to picking out the lot, and even planned the house — built it, indeed, on paper a good many times — still they unanimously agreed that nothing definite could be

done about it until spring. The truth was, the necessity for a home by themselves was not so apparent to this young couple as it had been. Now that spring, yes, even summer, was fairly upon them, the question of house came up again, brought forward by Farmer Morgan himself.

"Not that I am in a hurry," he said, with a little embarrassed laugh, "in fact I hope it will be about five years in getting built, and you five more or so getting moved; I've no notion of what this house would be without you; but what I'm after is, I've made up my mind it is your right to have your *own* house, and I mean you shall have it."

So the house was a settled fact; and Lewis and his wife were undeniably pleased, yet nobody hurried. The necessity for haste in the matter was past.

So as I say, they had journeyed into June, when Estelle was to make her first visit at the farm-house. She was to have come the summer before, but home matters had detained her, and Louise, as she arranged roses in the white vases of her room, rejoiced that it had been so, and smiled over the different dress the home and

family wore from that which they would have worn to Estelle, only a year before. These were the closing touches to the adornments, for Lewis had already gone to the train to meet his sister, accompanied by Dorothy and little Neelie; Louise, under plea of escaping from the afternoon sun, declined the ride; in reality, feeling not sure of herself, lest when she got that bright young sister in her arms again she might not disgrace the welcome by crying outright. Who would have supposed that the months of separation would have stretched themselves out so! Louise was to have gone home certainly in a year from the date of her departure, and yet she didn't. It often happens in this world that, with all our planning, our lives move in exactly different lines from what *we* have prepared. So Louise had really never looked upon the face of her beautiful young sister since that morning when she became a bride. It is surely not much wonder that her heart beat hard at the sound of carriage-wheels, and it seemed to her, for a moment, that she could not get down the stairs.

It was not until just as daylight was fading that John came to be introduced to the new-

comer; he had planned differently, but unexpected business had detained him at the village until a late hour, then he had taken his supper alone, and came to the piazza to meet Estelle, just as they were about adjourning to the house.

"Come," Louise said; "these bugs must be shut out, and you must be shut in; oh, here comes John."

And that moment Dorothy brought the large lamp, and the glow of it fell full on Estelle's face. John had decidedly dreaded this ordeal. His life had been spent so much in shadow that there were certain creations before whom he was unreasonably timid — among these were young ladies; and to meet one too whom he was expected to help, was formidable. Still, John's strong point was decision of character; what had to be done was to be done promptly, and, with as little appearance of shrinkage as possible. So he advanced boldly and raised his eyes to Estelle's fair, bright face. But instead of the greeting, in every way cordial, which he had planned, he gave Estelle the benefit of a prolonged, astonished stare; and at last, the words

uttered in an explosive tone, as one from which they were forced by astonishment, were :

“ You are the very one ! ”

“ Of course,” said Estelle, mischief shining in every line of her beautiful face, and, nothing daunted by this strange greeting, she held out her hand cordially, while Louise looked on amazed. “ Did you think I was somebody else ? Shake hands, won’t you ? ”

“ Is it possible that you remember me ? ”

John said at last, slowly, as one awakening from a dream, and looking from her to Louise, then back again to her, studying the two faces, like one who had been puzzled, but who had just found the answer to his riddle.

“ Not in the least,” Estelle said, promptly ; “ I don’t think I ever saw you before in my life, but, since you seem to be acquainted with me, I thought I would be friendly.”

“ You *have* seen me before,” John said, recovering his natural manner, and giving the small white hand a cordial grasp ; “ and it is your resemblance to Louise which gave me such a vivid impression of your face, and so strange a feeling of having seen *you* before, somewhere.”

Then Estelle laughed. "What an idea!" she said, gayly; "I don't look the least in the world like Louise, and never did; and, what is more trying I am not in the least like her, as you will find to your sorrow. Where did you see the being whom you think I am? I'd like to have a glimpse of her."

Nothing but bright, thoughtless mischief in voice or manner; but John was still earnest and eager.

"Louise," he said, turning to her for sympathy, "isn't it strange that it should happen so? She is the very young lady who gave me that card on that miserable and memorable night, and invited me to the meeting."

A vivid blush overspread Estelle's face; she had given some curious thoughts to the forlorn specimen of humanity whom she invited to meeting; it was the only attempt she had ever made at evangelistic effort, and it stood out in her memory. She had commented upon his appearance to her mother; she had given a laughing description of him to her young friends. Now it seemed a most improbable thing that this well-dressed, nice appearing young man and

her forlorn tramp were one and the same!

“Are you an adept at masquerades?” she asked at last. “You certainly played the character of a woe-begone street wanderer to perfection; or else you are doing the well-dressed young man very well. Which is the assumed character, anyway?”

Viewing it from John’s standpoint, there was no comical side to this episode in his life. He answered her with intense gravity:

“The street wanderer was a real, and certainly a sufficiently dreary, wanderer; he thought himself a hopeless case; but he will never cease to thank God for sending you to put out a rescuing hand that night.”

The flush that had been fading from Estelle’s face became vivid again; how was she going to jest with one who took matters so solemnly? She did not know what to say to him, and turned away embarrassed. Now, indeed, was John roused. Intensity was a part of his nature; what he did at all, he did with all his might. Louise, looking on, anxious as to what this revelation would effect, was presently satisfied that it had roused his interest in her as

nothing else could have done. The fact that the one who had been the direct means of bringing him into the light of Christ, was herself walking in darkness, filled him with pain.

From that hour he fixed upon her as the subject for his constant prayer; he brought her before his Master only as one can who has learned the sweetness of being a servant of Christ, and who longs to call in others. Now and then a word with her, as opportunity offered, but the most of his strength spent on his knees.

It chanced that on the way to that neighborhood prayer-meeting, which, by the way, had been started, and which had flourished, John was Estelle's companion. It was really the first time he had seen her alone. He had not to waste time in trying to make up his mind to speak to her on the subject; he was eager to speak.

"I was so surprised," he said. "I had been so accustomed to pray for the one who gave me that card, as one would for a saint almost. I had not thought of the possibility of your not being a Christian."

"And now all those prayers have been lost!

So much wasted strength, what a pity! Estelle did not really mean to be wicked, although her tone was mischief itself; she had accustomed herself to parrying personalities on this subject in some such jesting way; the usual effect was to shock into silence the person addressing her, and so give her freedom for the time being. She did not even mean irreverence; she meant simply fun, and to be let alone. John, however, was not used to sparkling nonsense in conversation. Since he began to converse at all, he had talked nearly always with earnest people, and been tremendously in earnest himself. So he answered her as if the remark had been made in all gravity.

“No, I don’t think that; for of course God knew just where you were, and he accepted the spirit of the prayer: but isn’t it strange that with Louise for a sister you have lived so many years without Christ?”

Louise was a person about whom Estelle did not jest; she could be flippant *to* her, but not *about* her, so to this sentence she had no answer, at first, but silence; then she rallied:

“Come now, isn’t it strange that with Lewis

for a brother, and Mrs. Morgan for a mother, you lived so many years without paying any attention to these things? Didn't you ever hear that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?”

“ Ah, but,” said John eagerly. “ I didn't *believe* in it; I didn't think there was any such thing as conversion, nor any reality in religion; I was a fool, to be sure, but I was an honest one; I really didn't believe in these things; but you had a different bringing up; my mother is a *young* Christian you know. *You* had no such doubts to trammel you, had you?”

“ No,” said Estelle, slow spoken, reluctantly obliged to be truthful before this truthful young man; thinking of her mother, of her father, of her sister Louise, she must say, “ No.”

“ Then, why haven't you been a Christian these many years?”

“ I don't know.”

“ Then, why don't you be one, now?”

“ I don't know.”

John was betrayed into an exclamation not unlike the half sneer with which he used to express his entire disapproval of an act, and his

tones were very significant as he said: "Seems to me if I were you, I'd find out."

Estelle was silent; this to her was an entirely new way of approaching the subject. This grave young man gave her some thinking to do. She had had her bit of skepticism to struggle with, albeit she did not know it by that name. In her heart she had believed that some persons were by nature religious in their youth; mamma was, and Louise was like her; mamma said that Louise, when just a baby, would lie quiet by the hour to be read to from the Bible, while she, Estelle, never lay quiet at any time for anything but sleep. She was not by nature religious, she argued; sometime, when she was old, and gray-haired, it would become natural to her to think about these things. Some people were called in their youth, and some in later life; it must be she was designed for a middle-aged Christian. Into the face of this theory came John; young, keen, intense, fierce by nature, as irreligious by nature as a man could be, as far away from even outward respect for the cause as a scoffer could be. Louise, whose intuition had shown her somewhat of this reasoning, had taken pains to

explain in detail John's past life, and John's intense nature. Here was a problem that Estelle must work out for herself; that she had begun to work at it, was evidenced by her grave, sincere answer "I don't know."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.



T is not because there is not much concerning the Morgan family, which would be pleasant to me to tell, that I pass in silence a stretch of years. It is simply that the lengthening chapters remind me it is high time to have done with them; and yet there are certain things that I must tell. Therefore it is that I drop you into the midst of June roses again, after a lapse of five busy, earnest years. Back at the old farm-house, which really was not the *old* farm-house at all; and yet it was — that is, it was in a new dress; a corner had been put on here, a bay-window there, a piazza at the south side, and a wide, old-fashioned porch at the east,

until really, the house would not have recognized itself. Within, not a single room, from the yellow-painted kitchen onward, remained the same. Was this the new house, planned years before? Well, not exactly; the new house was built, and built with the bricks and mortar, just as it had been planned on paper, and a gem of a house it proved to be; but don't you think its location was next to the church, in the village, and Dorothy and the minister were the occupants?

"It isn't exactly a parsonage," Father Morgan said, "and yet it is; at least the minister lives in it, and is welcome to, of course, for it belongs to his wife; but, if another minister should come in his place, why then I suppose it couldn't be called a parsonage."

At present there is no prospect that another minister will come in Mr. Butler's place. The people like both him and his wife. That is a strange statement, I am aware — almost an unnatural story — and yet every one knows that there *are* a few parishes left in which the people continue to stand by a faithful pastor, even after a lapse of years. Dorothy had certain advan-

tages. To be sure, Mr. Butler had done what is supposed to be that unwise thing — married the daughter of one of his parishoners; but it will be remembered that in her early girlhood she had almost no acquaintances with the people of the village. She had not mingled with them in any capacity. They knew no more of her character, and almost as little of her life, as they would have done had she lived a thousand miles away; and some way, the one whom they used, on rare occasions, to speak of as “that Morgan girl” seemed to the people an entirely different person from their minister’s wife; as in truth she was. So, as if to verify the promise about “all things working together for good,” the very obscurity in which Dorothy had spent her girlhood worked well for her in her present sphere. So Dorothy reigned in the new house, and ruled it well, and her mother had grown used to looking upon her as a married woman and a housekeeper, aye, and a mother.

Lewis Morgan had not a little to do with the successful ministrations of his brother-in-law. When he, after his period of mental depression and discouragement, rallied, at the time of Dor-

othy's conversion, and tasted anew the joy of working for Christ, he took, what perhaps I may reverently term a new lease of spiritual life, and gave himself up to joyful service. Since which time he had been eagerly busy for the Master; the refrain of his song still being, "How sweet the work has been!" Imagine what such a wide-awake, prudent, faithful Christian could be to a pastor. Imagine the alert eyes he could have to the needs, and the wishes, and the whims of the people. Imagine the kind suggestions he could offer to a pastor younger than himself, who thoroughly respected not only, but loved him as a brother. Certainly Lewis Morgan, heavy though the cross had been to give up what is called active work for Christ, was yet as active in his way, and perhaps fully as successful as though he were from the pulpit preaching the gospel. I make that distinction because Lewis Morgan, in his class, in the prayer-meeting, in his daily life, was assuredly preaching the gospel.

The renovated farm-house was still large enough for the two families. Yet the new house — the other new house — was in process

of building. Louise's plan again. One of the prettiest of houses; but that, too, was in the village, and it was planned with special reference to the needs of Dr. John Morgan. Yes, he was going to settle down in the little village! No, I forget; the word "little" really does not apply to it very well; it had, during these years in which I remember I have said almost nothing about it, sprung into life and growth, aided by the junction of another railroad, and a large machine shop, and Dr. John had accepted a partnership with the gray-haired physician who had held the practice in village and on hillside for miles around, during the space of forty years. Just as soon as the new house was finished and furnished (and it was nearly done), he was going to house-keeping.

Every cheery, sweet-smelling room in the Morgan farm-house had a sort of gala look on this afternoon of which I write. They were such pretty rooms! I wish I could describe them to you — simple, quiet-toned, in keeping with the wide-stretching green fields, and the glowing flowers; and *so* pretty! Bright, clear carpets, in tasteful hues and graceful patterns;

sheer muslin curtains, looped with ribbons to match the carpets; easy chairs, nearly every one of them of a pattern peculiar to itself; wide, low couches, with luxurious pillows, inviting you to lounge among them; books and papers and pictures in profusion; Louise's piano and Louise's guitar in convenient positions, and Louise's tasteful finger-touches everywhere. Who can describe a simple, pretty room? It is easy to tell the color of the carpet, and the position of the furniture, but where is the language in which to describe that nameless grace, speaking of comfort and ease and *home*, that hover over some rooms, and is utterly lacking in others? Up-stairs, in the room that was once Louise's, and which she had vacated now for the more sunny side of the house, special care had been exercised; it was a fair, pink and white abode; the carpet was a sprinkling of pink moss-rose buds, on a mossy ground; the white curtains were looped with pink ribbons; the cool, gray furniture, of that peculiar tint of gray that suggests white, was adorned with delicate touches of Louise's skill, in the shape of moss-rose buds, that matched the carpet;

the toilet-stand was a mass of delicate white drapery, through whose thinness a suspicion of pink glowed; and the very china had been deftly painted in the same pattern; easy chairs and large, old-fashioned rockers occupied cosy nooks, and Louise, a face aglow with merry satisfaction, had adorned them each, some with the veritable tidies which she had brought from home, as a bride, and others, made after a like pattern, to look like the identical ones. She was arranging real roses with unsparing hand in the mantel vases, on the little toilet-table, wherever she could find a spot for a vase to stand. Then came Neelie and stood in the door — herself a vision of beauty — in flowing curls, and spotless white garments, made after the latest and most approved fashion for young misses of thirteen, and with a flutter of blue ribbons about her, from the knot fastened in some deft way among the curls to the dainty bows perched on her slippers. She made a little exclamation, indicative of her happy satisfaction in the appearance of all about her, and Louise turned.

“Will this do for a bride?” she asked, her

smiling eyes taking in Neelie as a very satisfactory part of the picture.

"It is too lovely for anything," Neelie said in genuine girl parlance; "and it looks just exactly like Estelle."

Louise laughed; she had been thinking something very like that herself. Don't imagine that I think I have startled you now with a bit of news; I have given you credit for penetration enough to have surmised, long ago, that the gala day was in honor of a coming bride, and the bride none other than Estelle herself. I did not propose to say much about that; such things are so constantly occurring in all well-regulated families that you would have been stupid, indeed, not to have foreseen it.

Louise did not, however; she had been as blind as a bat about it, though the old story was lived right before her very eyes. Glad eyes they were, however, when they took in the facts. Louise loved her brother John. Was he not the one whom God used at last to bring her darling Estelle to a knowledge of *his* love?

"Louise," said Neelie, coming back to **common**places, as soon as the eyes had taken in all

the beauty, "mother wants you; she wants you to see if you think the table looks overloaded, and whether you think the turkey platters haven't too much dark meat on them, and half a dozen other things that I have forgotten; won't you come right away?"

"In three minutes," said Louise; but she had hardly time to attend in person to all these important matters when Neelie's voice shouted through the house:

"There they come! There's the carriage; it has just driven through the archway; oh, I wonder what John thought of the archway?"

When I tell you that it was wound with evergreen, on which there glowed, in roses arranged by Neelie's own fair hands, the words, "Welcome Home," you will be sure that John liked it. Then the family gathered on that south piazza to greet the bride and groom. The aroma of coffee was stealing through the house, and the spacious dining-table, spread its entire length in the large dining-room, did almost look burdened with its weight of dishes for the wedding feast. Mother Morgan tarried to cover a cake-basket before she hurried to the piazza.

Give one moment's time to her. Her face had grown younger; it was smooth and fair, and set in calmness. Her dress was a holiday one of soft, neutral tinted silk, and her white lace cap, which Louise's fingers had fashioned, was wonderfully becoming to her pleasant face. Dorothy had seated herself, matronly fashion, in one of the large easy chairs, with which the piazza abounded, for the fair bundle of muslin and lace, bobbing around in her lap, was too restless to admit of a standing position, although admonished thus: "Do, little Miss Louise, sit still, and receive your new auntie with becoming dignity."

Little Miss Louise's papa had just dumped her ladyship out of his arms, and gone forward to open the gate for the family carriage, which, with Lewis for driver, was just emerging from the shade of the evergreens. At this moment came Father Morgau from the small room at the right of the piazza, with a pompous specimen of three-year-old boyhood perched serenely on his shoulder. *He* was John Morgan, Jr., and liked no place so well as his grandfather's shoulder. The carriage wound around the lawn, and drew

up before the piazza door, and they all, father, mother, sisters and baby went down to meet it. And as Estelle's bright and beautiful face, a little matured since we first knew her, but rarely beautiful still, appeared in view, and her eager arms were thrown around Mother Morgan's neck, that lady, as she gave back heartily loving kisses, and, in a voice which I am not sure you would recognize, so little have you known of her in these latter days :

“ Welcome home, my daughter.”

I wonder if I have told you that the carriage contained others beside the bride and groom? Louise had not forgotten it, for her own father and mother were actually come to pay the long-promised visit. It had been arranged with great joy, the point at which they should meet the young couple returning from their wedding trip and travel with them homeward. Louise had been home several times in the last five years, but father and mother were just fulfilling a long-made promise to visit her ; and here at last were they all gathered under the Morgan roof, the two families unbroken.

They went to the spacious dining-room and

sat them down to the bountiful wedding feast, and among them all only two had vivid recollections just then of the contrast between that home-coming and the greeting that was given Louise and Lewis on that winter night. Mrs. Dorothy Butler remembered it, it is true; but such important matters had filled Mrs. Dorothy's mind in the intervening years, and everything was so utterly changed to her that she much doubted sometimes whether she really had not dreamed all those strange earlier experiences, and only *lived* through these latter years. To Estelle the house was new, of course, and real handsome, and everything was delightfully improved. But Estelle did not know that hearts and faces had greatly improved. She could not imagine Mother Morgan in her straight calico, without a collar; she could not see John in his shirt-sleeves, his pants tucked within his boots, as Louise saw him in imagination at that moment.

Ah! there were sweeter contrasts than those. When the bright evening drew to its close Neelie wheeled the little center-table close to her father's chair and set the student lamp on

it, and Farmer Morgan opened the large old Bible which always had its place of honor on that center-table, and read: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And then Farmer Morgan said, with reverent voice, "Let us pray," and the two families, brought together by ties that reach into eternity, bowed together, and Father Morgan commended them all to the care of the God whom at last he and his house served.

They talked about old times just a little, the next morning, both up-stairs and down. Louise lingering in Estelle's room, listening well pleased to her lavish praise of all its adornings, said, suddenly:

"Do you remember this, Estelle?"

"Yes; indeed I do! The very tidy that Fannie Brooks made for your wedding present; and there is that white one I made. Oh, Louise! isn't it funny? Do you remember my

asking you what you *were* going to do with all those tidies?"

"Yes, dear. I told you I would find use for them, and you see I have. Do you remember, also, that you assured me that morning how impossible it would be for you ever to leave papa and mamma and go away with a stranger, as I was doing?"

"Well," said Estelle, with an amused, half-ashamed little laugh, "I didn't go away with a stranger; I came with John. You see I didn't know *him* then."

And again Louise wondered what she would have said of him if she had.

Down-stairs, an hour or so afterward, she lingered in the sitting-room to say a few loving words to her own dear mother, and while there Mother Morgan passed the piazza windows, young John by the hand, he loudly discoursing to her as to the beauties of a certain bug which she was being dragged by his eager hand to see.

"Mother spoils him," Louise said, with a complacent laugh, as the boy's shrill voice floated back to them. "She will go anywhere and do anything that he coaxes her to."

"The idea of *mother* SPOILING anybody!" said Dr. John, with incredulous voice and laughing eyes.

"Well, she certainly does. I suppose all grandmothers do."

Then she went about the pretty task of straightening the books and papers, and restoring the sitting-room to its yesterday's freshness.

"I am glad mothers don't spoil their children," her mother said, satisfaction in her voice, as she watched Louise moving among the disordered elements, bringing order out of confusion.

"I didn't spoil *her*, did I, Lewis? What a lovely home you have had here all these years! I am glad you have demonstrated the folly of the saying that no house is large enough for two families. How could anything be better than the arrangement which you have here? Mrs. Morgan was telling me this morning that when you talked for a time of going to housekeeping it almost made her sick. I'm very glad you didn't. Little John gives Louise care enough without the responsibilities of housekeeping; though your mother says, Lewis, that she takes a great deal of care from her; I guess she has

rather an exaggerated opinion of you, Louise; perhaps she is trying to spoil you."

"She is a remarkable little woman you will have to admit," Lewis, said, in a half-laughing tone, but regarding his wife with eyes in which she saw earnestness and tender feeling. "I am glad you brought her up so well, mother; there are not many who would have succeeded with the problem of two families in one house as she has done."

"Yes," said the mother, emphatically; "and then there is another thing to be taken into consideration. She had unusual surroundings. Anybody can see that your mother is an unusual woman! Probably Louise's experience has been exceptional. I really believe, at heart, that there are not many houses large enough for two families. I trembled for Louise. I used to watch every letter critically for signs of failure. You see I did not know your father and mother. I did not feel so anxious about the father; they always get along well with daughters-in-law if the mothers do. But I worried a good deal, unnecessarily now, I can see. Still it is, after all, an exceptional case. Don't you think so?"

Lewis turned slowly around from the mantel against which he had been leaning and regarded his wife with a curious look — eyes that were brimming with a mischievous light, and yet had behind the light a suggestion even of tears. His voice when he spoke had also that curious hint of pent up feeling.

“Yes, it *is* an exceptional case. Very few daughters-in-law have such experiences. I do consider my mother an *unusual woman* and my wife an unusual wife! And I tell you in all honesty, mother, that we of the Morgan family thank God every day of our lives for the *vine* from your branch that was grafted into ours.”

THE END.

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