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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE INGLISES; OR, HOW THE WAY OPENED \*\*\*

Margaret Murray Robertson

"The Inglises"

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## Chapter One.

In the large and irregular township of Gourlay, there are two villages, Gourlay Centre and Gourlay Corner. The Reverend Mr Inglis lived in the largest and prettiest of the two, but he preached in both. He preached also in another part of the town, called the North Gore. A good many of the Gore people used to attend church in one or other of the two villages; but some of them would never have heard the Gospel preached from one year's end to the other, if the minister had not gone to them. So, though the way was long and the roads rough at the best of seasons, Mr Inglis went often to hold service in the little red school-house there. It was not far on in November, but the night was as hard a night to be out in as though it were the depth of winter, Mrs Inglis thought, as the wind dashed the rain and sleet against the window out of which she and her son David were trying to look. They could see nothing, however, for the night was very dark. Even the village lights were but dimly visible through the storm, which grew thicker every moment; with less of rain and more of snow, and the moaning of the wind among the trees made it impossible for them to hear any other sound.

"I ought to have gone with him, mamma," said the boy, at last.

"Perhaps so, dear. But papa thought it not best, as this is Frank's last night here."

"It is quite time he were at home, mamma, even though the roads are bad."

"Yes; he must have been detained. We will not wait any longer. We will have prayers, and let the children go to bed; he will be very tired when he gets home."

"How the wind blows! We could not hear the wagon even if he were quite near. Shall I go to the gate and wait?"

"No, dear, better not. Only be ready with the lantern when he comes."

They stood waiting a little longer, and then David opened the door and looked out.

"It will be awful on Hardscrabble to-night, mamma," said he, as he came back to her side.

"Yes," said his mother, with a sigh, and then they were for a long time silent. She was thinking how the wind would find its way through the long-worn great coat of her husband, and how unfit he was to bear the bitter cold. David was thinking how the rain, that had been falling so heavily all the afternoon, must have gullied out the road down the north side of Hardscrabble hill, and hoping that old Don would prove himself sure-footed in the darkness.

"I wish I had gone with him," said he, again.

"Let us go to the children," said his mother.

The room in which the children were gathered was bright with fire-light—a picture of comfort in contrast with the dark and stormy night out upon which these two had been looking. The mother shivered a little as she drew near the fire.

"Sit here, mamma."

"No, sit here; this is the best place." The eagerness was like to grow to clamour.

"Hush! children," said the mother; "it is time for prayers. We will not wait for papa, because he will be very tired and cold. No, Letty, you need not get the books, there has been enough reading for the little ones to-night. We will sing 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' and then David will read the chapter."

"Oh! yes, mamma, 'Jesus, lover;' I like that best," said little Mary, laying her head down on her mother's shoulder, and her little shrill voice joined with the others all through, though she could hardly speak the words plainly.

"That's for papa," said she, when they reached the end of the last line, "While the tempest still is high."

The children laughed, but the mother kissed her fondly, saying softly:

“Yes, love; but let us sing on to the end.”

It was very sweet singing, and very earnest. Even their cousin, Francis Oswald, whose singing in general was of a very different kind, joined in it, to its great improvement, and to the delight of the rest. Then David read the chapter, and then they all knelt down and the mother prayed.

“Not just with her lips, but with all her heart, as if she really believed in the good of it,” thought Francis Oswald to himself. “Of course we all believe in it in a general way,” he went on thinking, as he rose from his knees and sat down, not on a chair, but on the rug before the fire; “of course, we all believe in it, but not just as Aunt Mary does. She seems to be seeing the hand that holds the thing she is asking for, and she asks as if she was sure she was going to get it, too. She hasn’t a great deal of what people generally are most anxious to have,” he went on, letting his eyes wander round the fire-lighted room, “but then she is content with what she has, and that makes all the difference. ‘A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses,’ she told me the other day, and I suppose she believes *that*, too, and not just in the general way in which we all believe the things that are in the Bible. Fancy Aunt Ellen and my sister Louisa being contented in a room like this!”

It was a very pleasant room, too, the lad thought, though they might not like it, and though there was not an article in it which was in itself beautiful. It was a large, square room, with an alcove in which stood a bed. Before the bed was a piece of carpet, which did not extend very far over the grey painted floor, and in the corner was a child’s cot. The furniture was all of the plainest, not matching either in style or in material, but looking very much as if it had been purchased piece by piece, at different times and places, as the means of the owners had permitted. The whole was as unlike as possible to the beautifully furnished room in which the greater part of the boy’s evenings had been passed, but it was a great deal pleasanter in his eyes at the moment.

“I have had jolly times here, better than I shall have at home, unless they let me read again—which I don’t believe they will, though I am so much better. I am very glad I came. I like Uncle and Aunt Inglis. There is no ‘make believe’ about them; and the youngsters are not a bad lot, take them all together.”

He sat upon the rug with his hands clasped behind his head, letting his thoughts run upon many things. David had gone to the window, and was gazing out into the stormy night again, and his brother Jem sat with his face bent close over his book, reading by the fire-light. Not a word was spoken for a long time. Violet laid the sleeping little Mary in her cot, and when her mother came in, she said:

“Don’t you think, mamma, that perhaps papa may stay all night at the Gore? It is so stormy.”

“No, dear; he said he would be home. Something must have detained him longer than usual. What are you thinking about so earnestly Francis?”

“Since you went up-stairs? Oh! about lots of things. About the chapter David was reading, for one thing.”

The chapter David had read was the tenth of Numbers—one not very likely to interest young readers, except the last few verses. It was the way with the Inglises, at morning and evening worship, to read straight on through the Bible, not passing over any chapter because it might not seem very interesting or instructive. At other times they might pick and choose the chapters they read and talked about, but at worship time they read straight on, and in so doing fell on many a word of wonderful beauty, which the pickers and choosers might easily overlook. The last few verses of the chapter read that night were one of these, and quite new to one of the listeners, at least. It was Moses’ invitation to Hobab to go with the Lord’s people to the promised land.

“I wonder whether the old chap went,” said Frank, after a pause. “What are you laughing at, Jem?”

“He thinks that is not a respectful way to speak of a Bible person, I suppose,” said Violet.

“About the chapter David was reading,” said Jem, mimicking his cousin’s tone and manner. “That is for mamma. You don’t expect me to swallow that. Give mamma the result of your meditations, like a good boy.”

“I said I was thinking of the chapter, for one thing,” said Frank, not at all angry, though he reddened a little. “I was thinking, besides, whether that was a proper book for you to be reading to-night, ‘The Swiss Family,’ is it not?”

“Sold,” cried Jem, triumphantly; “it is the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress.’”

“You have read that before,” said Violet.

“Lots of times. It will bear it. But what about Hobab, Frank? Much you care about the old chap, don’t you? Davie, come here and listen to Frank.”

“If you would only give Frank a chance to speak,” said his mother, smiling.

“Did Hobab go, do you think, aunt?” asked Frank.

“He refused to go,” said Jem. “Don’t you remember he said, ‘I will not go, but I will depart into my own land, and to my kindred?’”

“Yes; but that was before Moses said, ‘Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes, forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in this wilderness.’ You see, he had a chance of some adventures; that might tempt him. Do you think he went, aunt?”

“I cannot tell; afterwards we hear of Heber the Kenite, who was of the children of Hobab; and his wife took the part of the Israelites, when she slew Sisera. But whether he went with the people at that time, we do not hear. Very likely he did. I can understand how the people’s need of him as a guide, or a guard, might have seemed to him a better reason for casting in his lot with the people, than even the promise that Moses gave him, ‘Come with us and we will do thee good.’”

"That is to say, mamma, he would rather have a chance to help others, than the prospect of a good time for himself. That is not the way with people generally," said Jem, shaking his head gravely.

"It is not said that it was the way with Hobab," said his mother; "but I am inclined to think, with Francis, that perhaps it might have been so."

"He must have been a brave man and a good man, or Moses would not have wanted him," said David.

"And if he went for the sake of a home in the promised land, he must have been disappointed. He did not get there for forty years, if he got there at all," said Jem.

"But if he went for the fighting he may have had a good time in the wilderness, for there must have been many alarms, and a battle now and then," said Frank.

"But, mamma," said Violet, earnestly, "they had the pillar of cloud, and the pillar of fire, and the Angel of the Covenant going before. Why should we suppose they needed the help of Hobab?"

"God helps them that help themselves, Letty, dear," said Jem.

"Gently, Jem," said his mother; "speak reverently, my boy. Yes, Letty, they were miraculously guarded and guided; but we do not see that they were allowed to fold their hands and do nothing. God fought for them, and they fought for themselves. And as for Hobab, he must have been a good and brave man, as David says, and so the chances are he went with the people, thinking less of what he could get for himself than of what he could do for others, as is the way with good and brave men."

"Like the people we read about in books," said Jem.

"Yes; and like some of the people we meet in real life," said his mother, smiling. "The men who even in the eyes of the world are the best and bravest, are the men who have forgotten themselves and their own transitory interests to live or die for the sake of others."

"Like Moses, when he pleaded that the people might not be destroyed, even though the Lord said He would make him the father of a great nation," said David.

"Like Paul," said Violet, "who 'counted not his life dear to him,' and who was willing 'to spend and be spent,' though the more abundantly he loved the people, the less he was loved."

"Like Leonidas with his three hundred heroes."

"Like Curtius, who leapt into the gulf."

"Like William Tell and John Howard."

"Like a great many missionaries," said Violet. And a great many more were mentioned.

"But, aunt," said Frank, "you said like a great many people we meet in real life. I don't believe I know a single man like that—one who forgets himself, and lives for others. Tell me one."

"Papa," said David, softly. His mother smiled.

"It seems to me that all true Christians ought to be like that—men who do not live to please themselves—who desire most of all to do God's work among their fellow-men," said she, gravely.

Frank drew a long breath.

"Then I am afraid I don't know many Christians, Aunt Inglis."

"My boy, perhaps you are not a good judge, and I daresay you have never thought much about the matter."

"No, I have not. But now that I do think of it, I cannot call to mind any one—scarcely any one who would answer to that description. It seems to me that most men seem to mind their own interests pretty well. There is Uncle Inglis, to be sure—But then he is a minister, and doing good is his business, you know."

"Frank," said Jem, as his mother did not answer immediately, "do you know that papa might have been a banker, and a rich man now, like your father? His uncle offered him the chance first, but he had made up his mind to be a minister. His uncle was very angry, wasn't he, mamma?"

But his mother had no wish that the conversation should be pursued in that direction, so she said, "Yes, Frank, it is his business to do God's work in the world, but no more than it is yours and mine, in one sense."

"Mine!" echoed Frank, with a whistle of astonishment, which Jem echoed.

"Yours, surely, my dear boy, and yours, Jem; and your responsibility is not lessened by the fact that you may be conscious that you are refusing that personal consecration which alone can fit you for God's service, or make such service acceptable."

There was nothing answered to this, and Mrs Inglis added, "And being consecrated to God's service, we do His work well, when we do well the duty he has appointed us, however humble it may be."

"But to come back to Hobab, mamma," said Jem, in a little while. "After all, do you really think it was a desire to do God's work in helping the people that made him go with them, if he did go? Perhaps he thought of the fighting and the possible adventures, as Frank says."

"We have no means of knowing, except that it does not seem to have been so much with the thought of his being a protector, that Moses asked him, as of his being a guide. 'Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes,' said he."

"Yes," said Jem, hesitatingly, "I suppose so; but it must have been something to him to think of leading such a host."

"But he would not have led the host," said David. "Yet it must have been a grand thing to follow such a leader as Moses."

"Aunt Mary," said Frank, "if there is something for us all to do in the world, as you say, I, for one, would much rather think of it as a place to fight in than to work in."

"The same here," said Jem.

"Well, so it is," said Mrs Inglis.

"'In the world's broad field of battle.' Don't you remember, Davie?"

"Yes, I remember, 'Be a hero in the strife,'" said David. "And Paul bids Timothy, 'Fight the good fight of faith;' and in another place he says, 'That thou mayest war a good warfare;' which is better authority than your poet, Violet."

"Yes, and when he was an old man—Paul, I mean—he said, 'I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.'"

"And is there not something about armour?" asked Frank, who was not very sure of his Bible knowledge.

"Yes. 'Put ye on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.' That is Paul, too."

"Yes," said Jem, slowly. "That was to be put on against the wiles of the devil. 'Ye wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places.'"

Frank uttered an exclamation.

"They needed armour, I think."

"Not more than we do now, my boy. We have the same enemies," said his aunt.

It was her way at such times to let the conversation flow on according to the pleasure of the young people, only she put in a word now and then as it was needed for counsel or restraint.

"It sounds awful, don't it?" said Jem, who was always amused when his cousin received as a new thought something that the rest of them had been familiar with all their lives. "And that isn't all. What is that about 'the law in our members warring against the law in our minds?' What with one thing and what with another, you stand a chance to get fighting enough."

His mother put her hand on his arm.

"But, mamma, this thought of life's being a battle-field, makes one afraid," said Violet.

"It need not, dear, one who takes 'the whole armour.'"

"But what is the armour?" said Frank. "I don't understand."

Violet opened the Bible and read that part of the sixth chapter of Ephesians where the armour is spoken of; and the boys discussed it piece by piece. David, who had scarcely spoken before, had most to say now, telling the others about the weapons and the armour used by the ancients, and about their mode of carrying on war. For David had been reading Latin and Greek with his father for a good while, and the rest listened with interest. They wandered away from the subject sometimes, or rather in the interest with which they discussed the deeds of ancient warriors, they were in danger of forgetting "the whole armour," and the weapons which are "not carnal but spiritual," and the warfare they were to wage by means of these, till a word from the mother brought them back again.

"'And having done all to stand,'" said Frank, in a pause that came in a little while. "That does not seem much to do."

"It is a great deal," said his aunt. "The army that encamps on the battle-field after the battle, is the conquering army. To stand is victory."

"Yes, I see," said Frank.

"It means victory to stand firm when an assault is made, but they who would be 'good soldiers of Jesus Christ' have more to do than that. His banner must be carried to wave over all the nations. The world must be subdued to Him. And when it is said, 'Be strong,' it means be strong for conquest as well as for defence."

And then, seeing that the boys were moved to eager listening, Mrs Inglis put aside her anxious thoughts about her husband, and went on to speak of the honour and glory of being permitted to fight under Him who was promised as a "Leader and Commander to the people"—and in such a cause—that the powers of darkness might be overthrown, the slaves of sin set free, and His throne set up who is to "reign in righteousness." Though the conflict might be fierce and long, how certain the victory! how high the reward at last! Yes, and before the last. One had not to wait till the last. How wonderful it was, she said, and how sweet to believe, that not one in all the numberless host, who were "enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," but was known to Him, and beloved by Him; known even by name; watched over and cared for; guided and strengthened; never forgotten, never overlooked. "Safe through life, victorious in death, through Him that loved them, and gave Himself for them," added the mother, and then she paused, partly because these wonderful thoughts, and the eager eyes fastened on hers, made it not easy to continue, and, partly, because she would

fain put into as few words as might be, her hopes and desires for the lad who was going so soon to leave them.

“Francis,” said she, softly, “would it not be something grand to be one of such an army, fighting under such a leader?”

“Yes, Aunt Mary, if one only knew the way.”

“One can always offer one’s self as His soldier.”

“Yes, if one is fit.”

“But one can never make one’s self fit. *He* undertakes all that. Offer yourself to be His. Give yourself to Him. He will appoint you your place in the host, and make you strong to stand, patient to endure, valiant to fight, and He will ensure the victory, and give you the triumph at the end. Think of all this, Francis, dear boy! It is a grand thing to be a soldier of the Lord.”

“Yes, Aunt Mary,” said Frank, gravely. Then they were all silent for a long time. Indeed, there was not a word spoken till Mr Inglis’ voice was heard at the door. Jem ran out to hold old Don till David brought the lantern, and both boys spent a good while in making the horse comfortable after his long pull over the hills. Mrs Inglis went to the other room to attend to her husband, and Violet followed her, and Frank was left alone to think over the words that he had heard. He did think of them seriously, then and afterwards.—He never quite forgot them, though he did not act upon them and offer himself for a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” for a long time after that.

In a little while Mr Inglis came in and sat down beside him, but after the first minute or two he was quite silent, busy with his own thoughts it seemed, and Frank said nothing either, but wondered what his uncle’s thoughts might be. The discomfort of cold and wind and of the long drive through sleet and rain, had nothing to do with them, the boy said to himself, as, with his hand screening his weak eyes from the light and heat of the fire, he watched his changing face. It was a very good face to watch. It was thin and pale, and the hair had worn away a little from the temples, making the prominent forehead almost too high and broad for the cheeks beneath. Its expression was usually grave and thoughtful, but to-night there was a brightness on it which fixed the boy’s gaze; and the eyes, too often sunken and heavy after a day of labour, shone to-night with a light at once so peaceful and so triumphant, that Frank could not but wonder. In a little while Violet came in, and she saw it too.

“Has anything happened, papa?” asked she, softly.

He turned his eyes to her, but did not speak. He had heard her voice but not her question, and she did not repeat it, but came and sat down on a low stool at his feet.

“Are you very tired, papa?” she asked at last.

“Not more so than usual. Indeed, I have hardly thought of it to-night, or of the cold and the sleet and the long drive, that have moved my little girl’s compassion. But it is pleasant to be safe home again, and to find all well.”

“But what kept you so long, papa?” said Jem, coming in with the lantern in his hand. “Was it Don’s fault? Didn’t he do his duty, poor old Don?”

“No. I was sent for to see Timothy Bent. That was what detained me so long.”

“Poor old Tim!” said Violet, softly.

““Poor old Tim’ no longer, Violet, my child. It is well with Timothy Bent now, beyond all fear.”

“Has he gone, papa?”

“Yes, he is safe home at last. The long struggle is over, and he has gotten the victory.”

The boys looked at one another, thinking of the words that had been spoken to them a little while ago.

“It is Timothy Bent, mamma,” said Violet, as her mother came in. “He is dead.”

“Is he gone?” said her mother, sitting down. “Did he suffer much? Were you with him at the last?”

“Yes, he suffered,” said Mr Inglis, a momentary look of pain passing over his face. “But that is all past now forever.”

“Did he know you?”

“Yes, he knew me. He spoke of the time when I took him up at the corner, and brought him home to you. He said that was the beginning.”

There was a pause.

“The beginning of what?” whispered Frank to Violet.

“The beginning of a new life to poor Tim,” said Violet.

“The beginning of the glory revealed to him to-day,” said Mr Inglis. “It is wonderful! I cannot tell you how wonderful it seemed to me to-night to see him as he looked on the face of death. We speak about needing faith in walking through dark places, but we need it more to help us to bear the light that shines on the death-bed of a saved and sanctified sinner. How glorious! How wonderful! For a moment it seemed to me beyond belief. Now with us in that poor room, sick and suffering, and sometimes afraid, even; then, in the twinkling of an eye, in the very presence of his Lord—and like him—with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Does it not seem almost past belief? ‘Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!’”

There was silence for a good while after that, and then David first, and afterwards the others, answered the mother's look by rising and saying softly, "Good-night," and then they went away.

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## Chapter Two.

"Papa does not feel it to-night," said Jem, as they went up-stairs; "but he'll be tired enough to-morrow, when he has time to think about it. And so poor old Tim has gone!"

"'Poor old Tim, no longer,' as your father said," said Frank, gravely. "It does seem almost beyond belief, doesn't it?"

"What?" asked Jem.

But Frank did not answer him directly.

"I wonder what battles old Tim had to fight," said he. "Your father said he had gotten the victory."

"Oh! just the battles that other people have to fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and a hard time he has had, too, poor old chap," said Jem.

"Jem," said David, "I think old Tim Bent was the very happiest old man we knew."

"Well, perhaps he was, after a fashion; but I am sure he had trouble, of one kind or another—sickness, poverty, and his people not very kind to him—tired of him, at any rate. However, that don't matter to him now."

"He has gotten the victory," repeated Frank. The words seemed to have a charm for him. "It is wonderful, isn't it?"

All this was said as the boys were undressing to go to bed. There were two beds in the room they occupied, the brothers had one, and Frank had the other. After the lamp was blown out, David reminded the others that they must be up early in the morning, and that the sooner they were asleep, the readier they would be to rise when the right time came; so there was nothing said for a good while. Then Frank spoke:

"What was all that you said about your father's being a banker and a rich man? Are you asleep already, Jem?"

Jem had been very near it.

"Who? Papa? Oh! yes, he might have been; but you see he chose 'the better part.' I sometimes wonder whether he's ever sorry."

"Jem," said David, "it's not right—to speak in that way, I mean. And as for papa's being sorry—not to-night, at any rate," added David, with a sound that was like a sob in his voice.

"And why not to-night? Ah! I understand. It was through him that old Tim got the victory;" and both the boys were surprised to see him suddenly sit up in bed in the dark; and after a long silence he repeated, as if to himself, "I should think not to-night, indeed!" and then he lay down again.

"Papa has never been sorry—never for a single moment," said David. "He has helped a great many besides old Tim to win the victory. And besides, I dare say, he has had as much real enjoyment in his life as if he had been a rich man like your father. He is not sorry, at any rate, nor mamma."

"Oh! that is all very well to say," interposed Jem; "I dare say he is not sorry that he is a minister, but I say it is a shame that ministers should always be poor men—as they always are!"

"Oh! well. People can't have everything," said David.

"You've got to be very contented, all at once," said Jem, laughing. "You have said as much about it as ever I have, and more, too. Don't you remember when the Hunters went away to M—, to school, and you and Violet couldn't go? You wanted to go, didn't you?"

"Nonsense, Jem. I never thought of such a thing seriously. Why, it would have taken more than the whole of papa's salary to send us both!"

"But that is just what I said. Why should not papa be able to send you, as well as Ned Hunter's father to send him?"

"It comes to the same thing," said David, loftily. "I know more Latin and Greek, too, than Ned Hunter, though he has been at M—; and as for Violet—people can't have everything."

"And you have grown humble as well as contented, it seems," said Jem; "just as if you didn't care! You'll care when mamma has to send Debby away, and keep Violet at home from school, because she can't get papa a new great coat, and pay Debby's wages, too. You may say what you like, but I wish I were rich; and I mean to be, one of these days."

"But it is all nonsense about Debby, Jem. However, mamma would not wish us to discuss it now, and we had better go to sleep."

But, though there was nothing more said, none of them went to sleep very soon, and they all had a great many serious thoughts as they lay in silence in the dark. The brothers had often had serious thoughts before; but to Francis they came almost for the first time—or rather, for the first time he found it difficult to put them away. He had been brought up very differently from David and Jem. He was the son of a rich man, and the claims of business had left their father little time to devote to the instruction of his children. The claims of society had left as little to his mother—she was dead now—and, except at church on Sundays, he had rarely heard a word to remind him that there was anything in the world of more importance than the getting of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure, till he came to visit the Inglishes.

He had been ill before that, and threatened with serious trouble in his eyes, and the doctor had said that he must have change of air, and that he must not be allowed to look at a book for a long time. Mr Inglis had been at his father's house about that time, and had asked him to let the boy go home with him, to make the acquaintance of his young people, and he had been very glad to let him go. Mr Inglis was not Frank's uncle, though he called him so; he was only his father's cousin, and there had never been any intimacy between the families, so Francis had been a stranger to them all before he came to Gourlay. But he soon made friends with them all. The simple, natural way of life in the minister's house suited him well, and his visit had been lengthened out to four months, instead of four weeks, as was at first intended; and now, as he lay thinking, he was saying to himself that he was very sorry to go.

This last night he seemed to see more clearly than ever he had seen before what made the difference between their manner of life here in his uncle's house, and the life they lived at home. It was a difference altogether in favour of their life here, though here they were poor, and at home they were rich. The difference went deeper than outward circumstances, and must reach beyond them—beyond all the chances and changes time might bring.

And then he thought about all his aunt had said about "the good fight" and "the whole armour," the great Leader, and the sure victory at last. But strangely enough, and foolishly enough it seemed to him, his very last thought was about Debby's going away; and before he had satisfactorily computed the number of weeks' wages it would take to make the sum which would probably be enough to purchase an overcoat, he fell asleep, and carried on the computation in his dreams.

The next morning was not a very pleasant one to travel in. It was cloudy and cold, and the ground was covered with snow. Mr Inglis had intended to take Frank on the first stage of his journey—that was to the railway station in D—, a town eleven miles away. But, as Jem had foretold, the weariness which he had scarcely felt when he first came home, was all the worse now because of that, and he had taken cold besides; so David and Jem were to take his place in conveying their cousin on the journey.

The good-byes were all said, and the boys set off. They did not mind the cold, or the snow, or the threatening rain, but were well pleased with the prospect of a few more hours together. The roads were bad, and their progress was slow; but that mattered little, as they had the day before them, and plenty to say to one another to pass the time. They discussed trees and fruits, and things in general, after the fashion of boys, and then the last stories of hunters and trappers they had read; and in some way which it would not be easy to trace, they came round to Hobab and the battles he might have fought, and then to "the whole armour" and the warfare in which it was intended to aid them who wore it.

"I wish I understood it all better," said Frank. "I suppose the Bible means something when it speaks about the warfare, and the armour, and all that; but then one would not think so, just to see the way people live, and good people too."

"One can't tell by just seeing the outside of people's lives," said David.

"The outside of people's lives!" repeated Frank. "Why, what else can we see?"

"I mean you are thinking of something quite different from mamma's idea of battles, and warfare, and all that. She was not speaking about anything that all the world, or people generally, would admire, or even see."

"But you spoke of your father, David, and I can understand how he in a certain way may be said to be fighting the battles of the Lord. He preaches against sin, and bad people oppose him, and he stands up for his Master; and when he does good to people, wins them over to God's side, he may be said to make a conquest—to gain a victory, as he did when he rescued poor Tim. I can understand why he should be called a soldier, and how his way of doing things may be called fighting; and that may be the way with ministers generally, I suppose; but as for other people, they ought to be the same, as the Bible says so; but I don't see that they are, for all that. Do you, Jem?"

"It depends on what you mean by fighting," said Jem.

"But whatever it is, it is something that can be seen," said Frank impatiently, "and what I mean is that I don't see it."

"But then the people you know most about mayn't be among the fighting men, even if you were a good judge of fighting," said Jem. "Your eyes mayn't be the best, you know."

"Well, lend me your eyes, then, and don't mind the people I know. Take the people *you* know, your father's right hand men, who ought to be among the soldiers, if there are any. There is Mr Strong and old Penn, and the man who draws the mill logs. And all the people, women as well as men, ought to be wearing the armour and using the weapons. There is your friend, Miss Bethia, Davie; is she a warrior, too?"

"Aunt Bethia certainly is," said Jem decidedly. "She is not afraid of—well, of principalities and powers, I tell *you*. Don't she fight great—eh, Davie?"

"Aunt Bethia is a very good woman, and it depends on what you call fighting," said David, dubiously.

"Yes, Miss Bethia is a soldier. And as for old Mr Penn, I've seen him fight very hard to keep awake in meeting," said Jem, laughing.

"It is easy enough to make fun of it, but Aunt Mary was in earnest. Don't you know about it, Davie?"

"About these people fighting, do you mean? Well, I once heard papa say that Mr Strong's life was for many years a constant fight. And he said, too, that he was using the right weapons, and that he would doubtless win the victory. So you see there is one of them a soldier," said David.

"It must be a different kind of warfare from your father's," said Frank. "I wonder what Mr Strong fights for?"

"But I think he is fighting the very same battle, only in a different way."

"Well," said Frank, "what about it?"

"Oh! I don't know that I can tell much about it. It used to be a very bad neighbourhood where old Strong lives, and the neighbours used to bother him awfully. And that wasn't the worst. He has a very bad temper naturally, and he got into trouble all round when he first lived there. And one day he heard some of them laughing at him and his religion, saying there was no difference between Christians and other people. And they didn't stop there, but scoffed at the name of our Lord, and at the Bible. It all happened down at Hunt's Mills, and they didn't know that Mr Strong was there; and when he rose up from the corner where he had been sitting all the time, and came forward among them, they were astonished, and thought they were going to have great fun. But they didn't that time. Mr Hunt told papa all about it. He just looked at them and said: 'God forgive you for speaking lightly that blessed name, and God forgive me for giving you the occasion.' And then he just turned and walked away.

"After that it didn't matter what they said or did to him, he wouldn't take his own part. They say that for more than a year he didn't speak a word to a man in the neighbourhood where he lives; he couldn't trust himself. But he got a chance to do a good turn once in a while, that told better than words. Once he turned some stray cattle out of John Jarvis's grain, and built up the fences when there was no one at Jarvis's house to do it. That wouldn't have been much—any good neighbour would have done as much as that, you know. But it had happened the day before that the Jarvis's boys had left down the bars of his back pasture, and all his young cattle had passed most of the night in his own wheat. It was not a place that the boys needed to go to, and it looked very much as if they had done it on purpose. They must have felt mean when they came home and saw old Strong building up their fence."

Then Jem took up the word.

"And once, some of those fellows took off the nut from his wagon, as it was standing at the store door, and the wheel came off just as he was going down the hill by the bridge; and if it hadn't been that his old Jerry is as steady as a rock the old man would have been pitched into the river."

"The village people took that up, and wanted him to prosecute them. But he wouldn't," said David. "It was a regular case of 'turning the other cheek.' Everybody wondered, knowing old Strong's temper."

"And once they sheared old Jerry's mane and tail," said Jem. "And they say old Strong cried like a baby when he saw him. He wouldn't have anything done about it; but he said he'd be even with them some time. And he was even with one of them. One day when he was in the hayfield, Job Steele came running over to tell him that his little girl had fallen in the barn and broken her arm and hurt her head, and he begged him to let him have Jerry to ride, for the doctor. Then Mr Strong looked him right in the face, and said he, 'No, I can't let you have him. You don't know how to treat dumb beasts. I'll go myself for the doctor.' And sure enough, he unyoked his oxen from the cart, though it was Saturday and looked like rain, and his hay was all ready to be taken in, and went to the pasture for Jerry, and rode to the village himself, and let the doctor have his horse, and walked home."

"And did he know that it was Job Steele who had ill-treated his horse," asked Frank.

"He never said so to anybody; and Job never acknowledged it. But other people said so, and Job once told papa that Mr Strong's way of doing 'good for evil,' was the first thing that made him think that there must be something in religion; and Mr Steele is a changed character now."

"And how did it all end with Mr Strong?" asked Frank, much interested.

"Oh, it isn't ended yet," said David. "Mr Strong is fighting against his bad temper as hard as ever. It has ended as far as his trouble with his neighbours is concerned. He made them see there is something in religion more than they thought, as Job Steele said, and there is no more trouble among them. But the old man must have had some pretty hard battles with himself, before it came to that."

"And so old Mr Strong is a soldier, anyway," said Frank.

"Yes, and a conqueror," said Jem. "Don't you remember, 'He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.'"

"Yes," said David, thoughtfully. "Mr Strong is a soldier, and, Frank, he is fighting the very same battle that papa is fighting—for the honour of Christ. It is that they are all fighting for in one way or other. It is that that makes it warring a good warfare, you know."

"No," said Frank, "I am afraid I don't know much about it. Tell me, Davie."

"Oh, I don't pretend to know much about it, either," said David, with a look at Jem. But Jem shrugged his shoulders.

"You should have asked papa," said he.

"Go ahead, Davie," said Frank.

"Well," said David, with some hesitation, "it is supposed that all Christians are like their masters—more or less. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;' and that is not an easy thing for any man or boy to be, and so all have to fight with themselves, and the world—"

"And with the devil," said Jem. "The principalities and powers, you know."

"I suppose so, but we don't know much about that, only the end of it all is that they may become like Christ—so that they may make Him known to the world."

"I've heard papa speak about it," said Jem.

"Yes, it is one of papa's favourite themes. I have often heard him," said David.

And then they went back to the discussion of old Mr Strong again, and then of others; and there was scarcely one of their acquaintances but they discussed in the new character of a soldier. Sometimes they went quite away from the subject, and sometimes they said very foolish things. It is not to be supposed that boys like them would judge very justly,

or discuss very charitably the character of people with the outside of whose lives they were alone acquainted, and besides, as David at last gravely acknowledged they could not understand all that was implied in "warring a good warfare," not being soldiers themselves.

There was silence for a good while after this, and then they went on again, saying a good many things that could hardly be called wise; but the conclusion to which they came was right and true in the main. It was against 'the world, the flesh, and the devil' that Christians were to fight, and victory meant to become like Christ, and to win over others to be like him, too. That was victory here, and afterwards there would be glory, and the crown of righteousness that Paul spoke about, in Heaven. They were all very grave by the time they got thus far.

"Nothing else in the world seems worth while in comparison, when one really thinks about it," said David.

"The only wonder is that there are not more soldiers, and that they are not more in earnest," said Frank.

"All may be soldiers of Christ Jesus," said David, softly.

"Even boys?" said Frank.

"Papa says so. Boys like you and me and Jem. Papa was a soldier in the army of the Lord, long before he was my age. He told me all about it one day," said David, with a break in his voice. "And he said the sooner we enlist the better 'soldiers' we would be, and the more we would accomplish for Him."

"Yes," said Frank, "if one only knew the way."

"It is all in the Bible, Frank," said David.

"Yes, I suppose so. It is a wonder you have not become a 'soldier' long ago, David. How glad your mother would be. It is the *only* thing, she thinks."

All this last was said while Jem had gone to ask at a farm-house door whether they had not taken the wrong turning up above, and nothing more was said when he came back. Indeed, there was not time. The next turn brought the station in sight, and they saw the train and heard the whistle, and had only time for hurried good-byes before Frank took his place. Jem and Davie stood for a little while looking after the train that bore their friend away so rapidly, and then they turned rather disconsolately to retrace their steps over the muddy roads in the direction of home.

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### Chapter Three.

If any one had suddenly asked David Inglis to tell him what had been the very happiest moments during all the fourteen happy years of his life, he would probably have gone back in thought to the day, when on the banks of a clear stream among the hills, his very first success as a fisherman had come to him. Or the remembrance of certain signal triumphs on the cricket ground, or at base-ball, might have come to his mind. But that would only have been in answer to a sudden question. If he had had time to think, he would have said, and truly too, that the very happiest hours of all his life had been passed in their old wagon at his father's side.

So when he found, next day, that instead of sitting down to his lessons in a corner of the study, he was to drive his father over to the Bass Neighbourhood, to attend old Mr Bent's funeral, you may be sure he was well pleased. Not that he objected to books as a general thing, or that any part of his pleasure rose out of a good chance to shirk his daily lessons. Quite the contrary. Books and lessons were by no means ignored between him and his father at such times. Almost oftener than anything else, books and lessons came into their discussions. But a lesson from a printed page, not very well understood, and learned on compulsion, is one thing, and seldom a pleasant thing to any one concerned. But lessons explained and illustrated by his father as they went slowly through fields and woods together, were very pleasant matters to David. Even the Latin Grammar, over whose tedious pages so many boys have yawned and trifled from generation to generation, even declensions and conjugations, and rules of Syntax, and other matters which, as a general thing, are such hopeless mysteries to boys of nine or ten, were made matters of interest to David when his father took them in hand.

And when it came to other subjects—subjects to be examined and illustrated by means of the natural objects around them—the rocks and stones, the grass and flowers and trees—the worms that creep, and the birds that fly—the treasures of the earth beneath, and the wonders of the heavens above, there was no thought of lesson or labour then. It was pure pleasure to David, and to his father, too. Yes, David was a very happy boy at such times, and knew it—a circumstance which does not always accompany to a boy, the possession of such opportunities and advantages. For David firmly believed in his father as one of the best and wisest of living men. This may have been a mistake on his part, but, if so, his father being, what he was—a good man and true—it was a mistake which did him no harm but good, and it was a mistake which has never been set right to David.

So that day was a day to be marked with a white stone. Don got a more energetic rubbing down, and an additional measure of oats, on the strength of the pleasant prospect, for David was groom, and gardener, and errand boy, and whatever else his mother needed him to be when his younger brothers were at school, and all the arrangements about his father's going away might be safely trusted to him.

It was a beautiful day. The only traces that remained of the premature winter that had threatened them on Sunday night, were the long stretches of snow that lingered under the shadows of the wayside trees and fences, and lay in patches in the hollows of the broken pastures. The leafless landscape, so dreary under falling rain or leaden skies, shone and sparkled under sunshine so warm and bright, that David thought the day as fine as a day could be, and gave no regrets to the faded glories of summer. They set out early, for though the day was fine, the roads were not, and even with the best of roads, old Don took his frequent journeys in a leisurely and dignified manner, which neither the minister nor David cared to interfere with unless they were pressed for time.

They were not to go to the house where old Tim had died, for that was on another road, and farther away than the red school-house where the funeral services were to be held, but the school-house was full seven miles from home, and they would need nearly two full hours for the journey.

David soon found that these hours must be passed in silence. His father was occupied with his own thoughts, and by

many signs which his son had learned to interpret, it was evident that he was thinking over what he was going to say to the people that day, and not a word was spoken till they came in sight of the school-house. On both sides of the road along the fences, many horses and wagons were fastened, and a great many people were standing in groups about the door.

"There will be a great crowd to hear you to-day, papa," said David, as they drew near.

"Yes," said his father. "God give me a word to speak to some poor soul to-day."

He went in and the people flocked in after him, and when David, having tied old Don to his place by the fence, went in also, it was all that he could do to find standing-room for a while, there were so many there. The plain coffin, without pall or covering, was placed before the desk upon a table, and seated near to it were the few relatives of the dead. Next to them were a number of very old people some of whom could look back over all old Tim's life, then the friends and neighbours generally, all very grave and attentive as Mr Inglis rose to speak. There were some there who probably had not heard the Gospel preached for years, some who, except on such an occasion, had not for all that time, heard the Bible read or a prayer offered.

"No wonder that papa wishes to have just the right word to say to them," thought David, as he looked round on them all.

And he had just the right word for them, and for David, too, and for all the world. For he set before them "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God." He said little of the dead, only that he was a sinner saved by grace; and then he set forth the glory of that wondrous grace to the living. "Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" was his theme—victory over sin, the world, death. The Gospel of Christ full, free, sufficient, was clearly set before the people that day.

David listened, as he was rather apt to listen to his father's sermons, not for himself but for others. He heard all that was said, and laid it up in his mind, that he might be able to tell it to his mother at home, as she generally expected him to do; but, at the same time, he was thinking how all that his father was saying would seem to this or the other man or woman in the congregation who did not often hear his voice. There was less wonder that he should do that to-day because there were a great many strangers there, and for the most part they were listening attentively. In the little pauses that came now and then, "you might have heard a pin fall," David said afterwards to his mother, and the boy felt proud that his father should speak so well, and that all the people should be compelled, as it were, to listen so earnestly. This was only for a minute, however. He was ashamed of the thought almost immediately. For what did it matter whether the people thought well of his father or not? And then he tried to make himself believe that he was only glad for their sakes, that, listening so attentively to truths so important, they might get good. And then he thought what a grand thing it would be, and how happy it would make his father, if from this very day some of these careless people should begin a new life, and if the old school-house should be crowded every Sunday to hear his words. But it never came into his mind until the very end, that all that his father was saying was just as much for him as for any one there.

All through the sermon ran the idea of the Christian life being a warfare, and the Christian a soldier, fighting under a Divine Leader; and when, at the close, he spoke of the victory, how certain it was, how complete, how satisfying beyond all that heart of man could conceive, David forgot to wonder what all the people might be thinking, so grand and wonderful it seemed. So when a word or two was added about the utter loss and ruin that must overtake all who were not on the side of the Divine Leader, in the great army which He led, it touched him, too. It was like a nail fastened in a sure place. It could not be pushed aside, or shaken off, as had happened so many times when fitting words had been spoken in his hearing before. They were for him, too, as well as for the rest—more than for the rest, he said to himself, and they would not be put away.

As was the custom in these country places at that time, there was a long pause after the sermon was over. The coffin was opened, and one after another went up and looked on the face of the dead, and it seemed to David that they would never be done with it, and he rose at last and went out of doors to wait for his father there. It was but a few steps to the grave-yard, and the people stood only a minute or two round the open grave. Then there was a prayer offered, and poor old Tim was left to his rest.

"'Poor old Tim,' no longer," said David to himself, when they were fairly started on their homeward way again. "Happy Tim, I ought to say. I wonder what he is doing now! He is one of 'the spirits of just men made perfect' by this time. I wonder how it seems to him up there," said David, looking far up into the blue above him. "It does seem past belief. I can't think of him but as a lame old man with a crutch, and there he is, up among the best of them, singing with a will, as he used to sing here, only with no drawbacks. It *is* wonderful. Think of old Tim singing with John, and Paul, and with King David himself. It is queer to think of it!"

He had a good while to think of it, for his father was silent and preoccupied still. It had often happened before, that his father being busy with his own thoughts, David had to be content with silence, and with such amusement as he could get from the sights and sounds about him, and he had never found that very hard. But he had not been so much with him of late because of Frank's visit, and he had so looked forward to the enjoyment he was to have to-day, that he could not help feeling a little aggrieved when half their way home had been accomplished without a word.

"Papa," said he, at last, "I wish Frank had been here to-day—to hear your sermon, I mean."

"I did not know that Frank had an especial taste for sermons," said his father, smiling.

"Well, no, I don't think he has; but he would have liked that one—about the Christian warfare, because we have been speaking about it lately."

And then he went on to tell about the reading on Sunday night, and about Hobab and all that had been said about the "good warfare" and "the whole armour," and how interested Frank had been. He told a little, too, about their conversation on the way to the station, and Mr Inglis could not but smile at their making "soldiers" of all the neighbours, and at their way of illustrating the idea to themselves. By and by David added:

"I wish Frank had heard what you said to-day about victory. It would have come in so well after the talk about the 'soldiers' and fighting. He would have liked to hear about the victory."

"Yes," said his father, gravely; "it is pleasanter to hear of the victory than the conflict, but the conflict must come first, Davie, my boy."

"Yes, papa, I know."

"And, my boy, the first step to becoming a 'soldier' is the enrolling of the name. And you know who said 'He that is not for me is against me.' Think what it would be to be found on the other side on the day when even Death itself 'shall be swallowed up in victory.'"

David made no answer. It was not Mr Inglis's way to speak often in this manner to his children. He did not make every solemn circumstance in life the occasion for a personal lesson or warning to them, till they "had got used to it," as children say, and so heard it without heeding. So David could not just listen to his father's words, and let them slip out of his mind again as words of course. He could not put them aside, nor could he say, as some boys might have said at such a time, that he wished to be a soldier of Christ and that he meant to try. For in his heart he was not sure that he wished to be a soldier of Christ in the sense his father meant, and though he had sometimes said to himself that he meant to be one, it was sometime in the future—a good while in the future, and he would have been mocking himself and his father, too, if he had told him that he longed to enrol his name. So he sat beside him without a word.

They had come by this time to the highest point of the road leading to Gourlay Centre, at least the highest point where the valley through which the Gourlay river flowed could be seen; and of his own accord old Don stood still to rest. He always did so at this point, and not altogether for his own pleasure, for Mr Inglis and David were hardly ever so pressed for time but that they were willing to linger a minute or two to look down on the valley and the hills beyond. The two villages could be seen, and the bridge, and a great many fine fields lying round the scattered farm-houses, and, beyond these, miles and miles of unbroken forest. David might travel through many lands and see no fairer landscape, but it did not please him to-night. There was no sunshine on it to-night, and he said to himself that it always needed sunshine. The grey clouds had gathered again, and lay in piled-up masses veiling the west, and the November wind came sweeping over the hills cold and keen. Mr Inglis shivered, and wrapped his coat closely about him, and David touched Don impatiently. The drive had been rather a failure, he thought, and they might as well be getting home. But he had time for a good many troubled thoughts before they reached the bridge over the Gourlay.

"To enrol one's name." He had not done that, and that was the very first step towards becoming a soldier. "He that is not for me is against me." He did not like that at all. He would have liked to explain that so as to make it mean something else. He would have liked to make himself believe that there was some middle ground. "He that is not against me is for me." In one place it said that, and he liked it much better. He tried to persuade himself that he was not against Christ. No, certainly he was not against Him. But was he for Him in the sense his father meant—in the sense that his father was for Him, and his mother, and a good many others that came into his mind? Had he deliberately enrolled his name as one of the great army whom Christ would lead to victory?

But then how could he do this? He could not do it, he said to himself. It was God's work to convert the soul, and had not his father said within the hour, "It is God that giveth the victory?" Had he not said that salvation was all of grace from beginning to end—that it was a gift—"God's gift." What more could be said?

But David knew in his heart that a great deal more could be said. He knew great as this gift was—full and free as it was, he had never asked for it—never really desired it. He desired to be saved from the consequences of sin, as who does not? but he did not long to be saved from sin itself and its power in the heart, as they must be whom God saves. He did not feel that he needed this. If he was not "for Christ" in the sense his father and mother were for Him, still the thought came back—surely he was *not* against Him; even though it might not be pleasant for him to think of giving up all for Christ—to "take up his cross and follow Him," still he was not "against Him."

Oh! if there only were some other way! If people could enlist in a real army, and march away to fight real battles, as men used to do in the times when they fought for the Cross and the possession of the holy Sepulchre! "Or, rather, as they seemed to be fighting for them," said David, with a sigh, for he knew that pride and envy and the lust for power, too often reigned in the hearts of them who in those days had Christ's name and honour on their lips; and that the cause of the Cross was made the means to the winning of unworthy ends. Still, if one could only engage sincerely in some great cause with all their hearts, and labour and strive for it for Christ's sake, it would be an easier way, he thought.

Or if he could have lived in the times of persecution, or in the times when Christian men fought at once for civil and religious freedom! Oh! that would have been grand! He would have sought no middle course then. He would have fought, and suffered, and conquered like a hero in such days as those. Of course such days could never come back again, but if they could!

And then he let his mind wander away in dreams, as to how if such times ever were to come back again, he would be strong and wise, and courageous for the right—how he would stand by his father, and shield his mother, and be a defence and protection to all who were weak or afraid. Bad men should fear him, good men should honour—his name should be a watchword to those who were on the Lord's side.

It would never do to write down all the foolish thoughts that David had on his way home that afternoon. He knew that they were foolish, and worse than foolish, when he came out of them with a start as old Don made his accustomed little demonstration of energy and speed as they came to the little hill by the bridge, not far from home. He knew that they were foolish, and he could not help glancing up into his father's face with a little confusion, as if he had known his thoughts all the time.

"Are you tired, papa?—and cold?" asked he.

"I am a little cold. But here we are at home. It is always good to get home again."

"Yes," said David, springing down. "I am glad to get home."

He had a feeling of relief which he was not willing to acknowledge even to himself. He could put away troubled thoughts now. Indeed they went away of themselves without an effort, the moment Jem hailed him from the house. They came again, however, when the children being all in bed, and his father not come down from the study, his mother asked him about old Tim's funeral, and the people who were there, and what his father had said to them. He told her about it, and surprised her and himself too, by the clearness and accuracy with which he went over the whole address. He grew quite eager about it, and told her how the people listened, and how "you might have heard a pin fall" in the little pauses that came now and then. And when he had done, he said to her as he had said to his father:

"I wish Frank had been there to hear all that papa said about victory," and then, remembering how his father had answered him, his troubled thoughts came back again, and his face grew grave.

"But it was good for you to hear it, Davie," said his mother.

"Yes," said David, uneasily, thinking she was going to say more. But she did not, and he did not linger much longer down-stairs. He said he was tired and sleepy with his long drive in the cold, and he would go to bed. So carrying them with him, he went up-stairs, where Jem was sleeping quite too soundly to be wakened for a talk, and they stayed with him till he went to sleep, which was not for a long time. They were all gone in the morning, however. A night's sleep and a morning brilliant with sunshine are quite enough to put painful thoughts out of the mind of a boy of fourteen—for the time, at least, and David had no more trouble with his, till Miss Bethia Barnes, coming to visit them one afternoon, asked him about Mr Bent's funeral and the bearers and mourners, and about his father's text and sermon, and then they came back to him again.

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## Chapter Four.

Miss Bethia Barnes was a plain and rather peculiar single woman, a good deal past middle age, who lived by herself in a little house about half way between the two village's. She was generally called Aunt Bethia by the neighbours, but she had not gained the title as some old ladies do, because of the general loving-kindness of their nature. She was a good woman and very useful, but she was not always very agreeable. To do just exactly right at all times, and in all circumstances, was the first wish of her heart; the second wish of her heart was, that everybody else should do so likewise, and she had fallen into the belief, that she was not only responsible for her own well-being and well-doing, but for that of all with whom she came in contact.

Of course it is right that each individual in a community should do what may be done to help all the rest to be good and happy. But people cannot be made good and happy against their own will, and Miss Bethia's advances in that direction were too often made in a way which first of all excited the opposition of the person she intended to benefit. This was almost always the case where the young people of the village were concerned. Those who had known her long and well, did not heed her plain and sharp speaking, because of her kindly intentions, and it was known besides that her sharpest words were generally forerunners of her kindest deeds. But the young people did not so readily take these things into consideration, and she was by no means a favourite with them.

So it is not surprising, that when she made her appearance one afternoon at the minister's house, David, who was there alone with little Mary, was not very well pleased to see her. Little Mary was pleased. Even Aunt Bethia had only sweet words for the pet and baby; and happily the child's pretty welcome, and then her delight over the little cake of maple sugar that Miss Bethia had brought her, occupied that lady's attention till David had time to smooth his face again. It helped him a little to think that his father and mother being away from home, their visitor might not stay long. He was mistaken, however.

"I heard your father and mother had gone over to Mrs Spry's; but I had made my calculations for a visit here just now, and I thought I'd come. They'll be coming home to-night, I expect?" added she, as she untied her bonnet, and prepared herself to enjoy her visit.

"Yes," said David, hesitating. "They are coming home to-night—I think."

He spoke rather doubtfully. He knew they had intended to come home, but it seemed to him just as if something would certainly happen to detain them if Miss Bethia were to stay. And besides it came into his mind that if she doubted about the time of their return, she would go and visit somewhere else in the village, and come back another time. That would be a much better plan, he thought, with a rueful glance at the book he had intended to enjoy all the afternoon. But Miss Bethia had quite other thoughts.

"Well, it can't be helped. They'll be home to-morrow if they don't come to-night; and I can have a visit with you and Violet. I shall admire to!" said Miss Bethia, reassuringly, as a doubtful look passed over David's face.

"Violet is at school," said he, "and all the rest."

"Best place for them," said Miss Bethia. "Where is Debby?"

"She has gone home for a day or two. Her sister is sick."

"She is coming back, is she? I heard your mother was going to try and get along without her this winter. That won't pay. 'Penny wise and pound foolish' that would be," said Miss Bethia.

David said nothing to this.

"Better pay Debby Stone, and board her, too, than pay the doctor. Ambition ain't strength. Home-work, and sewing-machine, and parish visiting—that's burning the candle at both ends. That don't *ever* pay."

"Mamma knows best what to do," said David, with some offence in his voice.

"She knows better than you, I presume," said the visitor. "Ah! yes. She knows well enough what is best. But the trouble is, folks can't always do what they know is best. We've got to do the best we can in *this* world—and there's none of us too wise to make mistakes, at that. She got the washing done and the clothes sprinkled before she went, did she? Pretty well for Debby, so early in the week. Letty ought to calculate to do this ironing for her mother. Hadn't you better put on the flats and have them ready by the time she gets home from school?"

"Mamma said nothing about it," said David.

"No, it ain't likely. But that makes no difference. Letty ought to know without being told. Put the flats on to heat, and I'll make a beginning. We'll have just as good a visit."

David laughed. He could not help it. "A good visit," said he to himself. Aloud he said something about its being too much trouble for Miss Bethia.

"Trouble for a friend is the best kind of pleasure," said she. "And don't you worry. Your mother's clothes will bear to

be looked at. Patches ain't a sin these days, but the contrary. Step a little spryer, can't you! We can visit all the same."

It was Miss Bethia's way to take the reins in her own hand wherever she was, and David could not have prevented her if he had tried, which he did not. He could only do as he was bidden. In a much shorter time than Debby would have taken, David thought, all preliminary arrangements were made, and Miss Bethia was busy at work. Little Mary stood on a stool at the end of the table, and gravely imitated her movements with a little iron of her own.

"Now this is what I call a kind of pleasant," said Miss Bethia. "Now let's have a good visit before the children come home."

"Shall I read to you?" said David, a little at a loss as to what might be expected from him in the way of entertainment.

"Well—no. I can read to myself at home, and I would rather talk if you had just as lief."

And she did talk on every imaginable subject, with very little pause, till she came round at last to old Mr Bent's death.

"I'd have given considerable to have gone to the funeral," said she. "I've known Timothy Bent for over forty years, and I'd have liked to see the last of him. I thought of coming up to ask your papa if he wouldn't take me over when he went, but I thought perhaps your mamma would want to go. Did she?"

No, David said; he had driven his father over.

"Your papa preached, did he?" and then followed a great many questions about the funeral, and the mourners, and the bearers, and then about the text and the sermon. And then she added a hope that he "realised" the value of the privileges he enjoyed above others in having so many opportunities to hear his father preach. And when she said this, David knew that she was going to give him the "serious talking to" which she always felt it her duty to give faithfully to the young people of the families where she visited.

They always expected it. Davie and Jem used to compare notes about these "talks," and used to boast to one another about the methods they took to prevent, or interrupt, or answer them, as the case might be. But when Miss Bethia spoke about Mr Bent and the funeral, it brought back the sermon and what his father had said to him on his way home, and all the troubled thoughts that had come to him afterwards. So instead of shrugging his shoulders, and making believe very busy with something else, as he had often done under Miss Bethia's threatening lectures, he sat looking out of the window with so grave a face, that she in her turn, made a little pause, of surprise, and watched him as she went on with her work.

"Yes," she went on in a little, "it is a great privilege you have, and that was a solemn occasion, a very solemn occasion—but you did not tell me the text."

David told her the text and a good part of the sermon, too. He told it so well, and grew so interested and animated as he went on, that in a little Miss Bethia set down the flat-iron, and seated herself to listen. Jem came in before he was through.

"Well! well! I feel just as if I had been to meeting," said Miss Bethia.

"Well done, Davie!" said Jem. "Isn't our Davie a smart boy, Aunt Bethia? I wish Frank could have heard that."

"Yes, so I told papa," said David, gravely.

"It is a great responsibility to have such privileges as you have, boys—" began Miss Bethia.

"As Davie has, you mean, Miss Bethia," said Jem. "He goes with papa almost always—"

"And as you have, too. Take care that you don't neglect them, so that they may not rise up in judgment against you some day—"

But Miss Bethia was obliged to interrupt herself to shake hands with Violet, who came in with her little brother and sister. Jem laughed at the blank look in his sister's face.

"Miss Bethia has commenced your ironing for you," said he.

"Yes—I see. You shouldn't have troubled yourself about it, Miss Bethia."

"I guess I know pretty well by this time what I should do, and what I should let alone," said Miss Bethia, sharply, not pleased with the look on Violet's face, or the heartiness of her greeting. "It was your mother I was thinking of. I expect the heft of Debby's work will fall on her."

"Debby will be back to-morrow or next day, I hope," said Violet. "But it was very kind of you to do it, Miss Bethia, and I will begin in a minute."

"You had better go to work and get supper ready, and get that out of the way; and by that time the starched clothes will be done, and you can do the rest. I expect the children want their supper by this time," said Miss Bethia.

"Yes, I dare say it would be better."

Violet was very good-tempered, and did not feel inclined to resent Miss Bethia's tone of command. And besides, she knew it would do no good to resent it, so she went away to put aside her books, and her out-of-door's dress, and Miss Bethia turned her attention to the boys again.

"Yes, that was a solemn sermon, boys, and, David, I am glad to see that you must have paid good attention to remember it so well. I hope it may do you good, and all who heard it."

"Our Davie won't make a bad preacher himself, will he, Miss Bethia?" said Jem. "He has about made up his mind to it now."

"His making up his mind don't amount to much, one way or the other," said Miss Bethia. "Boys' minds are soon made up, but they ain't apt to stay made up—not to anything but foolishness. That's my belief, and I've seen a good many boys at one time and another."

"But that's not the way with our Davie," said Jem. "You wouldn't find many boys that would remember a sermon so well, and repeat it so well as he does. Now would you, Aunt Bethia?"

"Nonsense, Jem, that's enough," said Davie. "He's chaffing, Aunt Bethia."

"He's entirely welcome," said Miss Bethia, smiling grimly. "Though I don't see anything funny in the idea of David's being a minister, or you either, for that matter."

"Funny! No. Anything but funny! A very serious matter that would be," said Jem. "We couldn't afford to have so many ministers in the family, Miss Bethia. I am not going to be a minister. I am going to make a lot of money and be a rich man, and then I'll buy a house for papa, and send Davie's boys to college."

They all laughed.

"You may laugh, but you'll see," said Jem. "I am not going to be a minister. Hard work and poor pay. I have seen too much of that, Miss Bethia."

He was "chaffing" her. Miss Bethia knew it quite well, and though she had said he was entirely welcome, it made her angry because she could not see the joke, and because she thought it was not respectful nor polite on Jem's part to joke with her, as indeed it was not. And besides this was a sore subject with Miss Bethia—the poverty of ministers. She had at one time or another spent a great many of her valuable words on those who were supposed to be influential in the guidance of parish affairs, with a design to prove that their affairs were not managed as they ought to be. There was no reason in the world, but shiftlessness and sinful indifference, to prevent all being made and kept straight between the minister and people as regarded salary and support, she declared, and it was a shame that a man like their minister should find himself pressed or hampered, in providing the comforts—sometimes the necessaries of life—for his family.

That was putting it strong, the authorities thought and said, but Miss Bethia never would allow that it was too strong, and she never tired of putting it.

"The labourer is worthy of his hire."

"They that serve the temple must live by the temple." And with a house to keep up and his children to clothe and feed, no wonder that Mr Inglis might be troubled many a time when he thought of how they were to be educated, and of what was to become of them in case he should be taken away.

There was no theme on which Miss Bethia was so eloquent as this, and she was eloquent on most themes. She never tired of this one, and answered all excuses and expostulations with a force and sharpness that, as a general thing, silenced, if they did not convince. Whether she helped her cause by this assertion of its claims, is a question. She took great credit for her faithfulness in the matter, at any rate, and as she had not in the past, so she had made up her mind that she should not in the future be found wanting in this respect.

But it was one thing to tell her neighbours their duty with regard to their minister, and it was quite another thing to listen to a lad like Jem making disparaging remarks as to a minister's possessions and prospects. "Hard work and poor pay," said Jem, and she felt very much like resenting his words, as a reflection on the people of whom she was one. Jem needed putting down.

"Your pa wouldn't say so. He ain't one to wish to serve two masters. He ain't a mammon worshipper," said Miss Bethia, solemnly.

"No!" said Jem, opening his eyes very wide. "And I don't intend to be one either. I intend to make a good living, and perhaps become a rich man."

"Don't, Jem," said Violet, softly. She meant "Don't vex Miss Bethia," as Jem very well knew, but he only laughed and said:

"Don't do what? Become a rich man? or a worshipper of mammon? Don't be silly, Letty."

"Jem's going to be a blacksmith," said Edward. "You needn't laugh. He put a shoe on Mr Strong's old Jerry the other day. I saw him do it."

"Pooh," said Jem. "That's nothing. Anybody could do that. I am going to make a steam-engine some day."

"You're a smart boy, if we are to believe you," said Miss Bethia. "Did Mr Strong know that the blacksmith let you meddle with his horse's shoes? I should like to have seen his face when he heard it."

"One must begin with somebody's horse, you know. And Peter Munro said he couldn't have done it better himself," said Jem, triumphantly.

"Peter Munro knows about horseshoes, and that's about all he does know. He ought to know that you might be about better business than hanging about his shop, learning no good."

"Horseshoes no good!" said Jem, laughing.

"Jem, dear!" pleaded Violet.

"But it's dreadful to hear Miss Bethia speak disrespectfully of horseshoes," said Jem.

"I think there's something more to be expected from your father's son than horseshoes," said Miss Bethia.

"But horseshoes may do for a beginning," said David. "And by and by, perhaps, it may be engines, and railways; who knows?"

"And good horseshoes are better than bad sermons, and they pay better than good ones," said Jem. "And I'm bound to be a rich man. You'll see, Miss Bethia."

Then he went on to tell of the wonderful things that were to happen when he became a rich man. Old Don was to be superannuated, and his father was to have a new horse, and a new fur coat to wear when the weather was cold. His mother and Violet were to have untold splendours in the way of dress, and the children as well. Davie was to go to college, and there should be a new bell to the church, and a new fence to the grave-yard, and Miss Bethia was to have a silk gown of any colour she liked, and a knocker to her front door. There was a great deal of fun and laughter, in which even Miss Bethia joined, and when Violet called them to tea, Jem whispered to David that they had escaped her serious lecture for that time.

After tea, they all went again to the kitchen, which, indeed, was as pleasant as many parlours, and while Violet washed the tea-dishes, Miss Bethia went on with the ironing, and the boys went on with their lessons. Just as they were all beginning to wonder what could be delaying the return home of their father and mother, there came a messenger to say that they had been obliged to go much farther than Mr Spry's, to see a sick person, and that as they might not be home that night, the children were not to wait for them past their usual time of going to bed.

There were exclamations of disappointment from the younger ones, and little Mary, who was getting sleepy and a little cross, began to cry.

"I had a presentiment that we should not see them to-night," said David, taking his little sister on his lap to comfort her. "Never mind, Polly. Mamma will be home in the morning, and we must be able to tell her that we have all been good, and that nobody has cried or been cross, but quite the contrary."

"I wish your mother knew that I had happened along. It would have set her mind at rest about you all," said Miss Bethia.

The young people were not so sure of that, but there would have been no use in saying so.

"Oh! mamma knows we can get on nicely for one night. But she will be sorry to miss your visit, Miss Bethia," said Violet.

"She won't miss it. I shall have a visit with her when she gets home. And now hadn't you better put the children to bed before you set down?"

But the children, except little Mary, were in the habit of putting themselves to bed, and were not expected to do so till eight o'clock, as they declared with sufficient decision. So nothing more was said about it. If it had been any other child but little Mary. Miss Bethia would have counselled summary measures with her, and she would have been sent to bed at once. As it was the little lady had her own way for a while, and kept her eyes wide open, while David comforted her for the absence of mamma. He played with her and told her stories, and by and by undressed her gently, kissing her hands and her little bare feet, and murmuring such tender words, that baby grew good and sweet, and forgot that there was any one in the world she loved better than Davie.

As for Miss Bethia, as she watched them she was wondering whether it could be the rough, thoughtless schoolboy, to whom she had so often considered it her duty to administer both instruction and reproof. She was not, as a general thing, very tolerant of boys. She intended to do her duty by the boys of her acquaintance in the matter of rebuke and correction, and in the matter of patience and forbearance as well, and these things covered the whole ground, as far as her relations with boys were concerned. And so when she saw David kissing his little sister's hands and feet, and heard him softly prompting her in her "good words" as the eyelids fell over the sleepy little eyes, she experienced quite a new sensation. She looked upon a boy with entire approval. He had pleased her in the afternoon, when he had told her so much about his father's sermon. But she had hardly been conscious of her pleasure then, because of the earnestness of her desire to impress him and his brother with a sense of their responsibility as to the use they made of their privileges and opportunities. It came back to her mind, however, as she sat watching him and his little sister, and she acknowledged to herself that she was pleased, and that David was not a common boy. David would never have guessed her thoughts by the first words she spoke.

"Put her to bed," said she. "She'll take cold."

"Yes, I will," said David, but he did not move to do it. "Miss Bethia," said he in a little, "if wee Polly were to die to-night and go to Heaven, do you suppose she would always stay a little child as she is now?"

Miss Bethia set down her flat-irons and looked at him in surprise.

"What on earth put that into your head?" said she, hastily.

"Look at her," said David. "It doesn't seem as though she could be any sweeter even in Heaven, does it?"

Violet came and knelt down beside her brother.

"Is she not a precious darling?" said she, kissing her softly.

"It isn't much we know about how folks will look in heaven," said Miss Bethia, gravely.

"No," said David. "Only that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"If we ever get there," said Miss Bethia.

"Yes, if we ever get there," said David. "But if our little Polly were to die to-night, she would be sure to get there, and

what I would like to know is, whether she would always be little Polly there, so that when the rest of us get there, too, we should know her at once without being told."

"She would have a new name given her," said Violet.

"Yes, and a crown and a harp, and a white robe, and wings, perhaps. But she might have all that and be our little Polly still. I wonder how it will be. What do you think, Miss Bethia?"

"I haven't thought about it. I don't seem to remember that there is anything said about it in the Bible. And there is no other way of knowing anything about it—as I see."

"No. Still one cannot but think of these things. Don't you remember, Violet?"

"Not as child shall we again behold her,  
But when with rapture wild.  
In our embraces we again enfold her,  
She will not be a child."

"Yes." Violet remembered the words, and added:

"But a fair maiden in our Father's mansion."

"I don't like to think that may be the way."

"But that ain't in the Bible," said Miss Bethia.

"No," said David. "And I like best the idea of there being little children there. Of course there are children now, because they are going there every day. But if they grow up there—afterwards, when the end comes, there will be no little children."

"How you talk!" said Aunt Bethia. "I don't more than half believe that it's right for you to follow out such notions. If the Bible don't say any thing about it, it is a sign it's something we needn't worry about, for we don't need to know it."

"No, we don't need to worry about it," said David. "But one cannot help having such thoughts in their minds sometimes."

There was nothing more said for some time. Violet still knelt by her brother's side, and the eyes of both were resting on the baby's lovely face. It was Miss Bethia who spoke first.

"I was a twin. My sister died when she was three years old. I remember how she looked as well as I remember my mother's face, and she didn't die till I was over forty. I should know her in a minute if I were to see her. It would seem queer to see us together—twins so—wouldn't it?—she a child and me an old woman," said Miss Bethia, with something like a sob in her voice. "It will be all in her favour—the difference, I mean."

"Whom the gods love die young," said David. "But that is a Pagan sentiment. Papa said, the other day, that victory must mean more to the man who has gone through the war, than to him who has hardly had time to strike a blow. Even before the victory it must be grand, he said, to be able to say like Paul, 'I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith.' And, perhaps, Miss Bethia, your crown may be brighter than your little sister's, after all."

"It will owe none of its brightness to me," said Miss Bethia, with sudden humility. "And I don't suppose I shall begrudge the brightness of other folks' crowns when I get there, if I ever do."

In the pause that followed, David went and laid the baby in her cot, and when he returned the children came with him, and the talk went on. They all had something to say about what they should see and do, and the people they should meet with when they got there. But it would not bear repeating, all that they said, and they fell in a little while into talk of other things, and Jem, as his way was, made the little ones laugh at his funny sayings, and even Violet smiled sometimes. But David was very grave and quiet, and Miss Bethia, for a good while, did not seem to hear a word, or to notice what was going on.

But by and by something was said about the lessons of the next day, and she roused herself up enough to drop her accustomed words about "privileges and responsibilities," and then went on to tell how different every thing had been in her young days, and before she knew it she was giving them her own history. There was not much to tell. That is, there had been few incidents in her life, but a great deal of hard work, many trials and disappointments—and many blessings as well.

"And," said Aunt Bethia, "if I were to undertake, I couldn't always tell you which was which. For sometimes the things I wished most for, and worked hardest to get, didn't amount to but very little when I got them. And the things I was most afraid of went clear out of sight, or turned right round into blessings, as soon as I came near enough to touch them. And I tell you, children, there is nothing in the world that it's worth while being afraid of but sin. You can't be too much afraid of that. It is a solemn thing to live in the world, especially such times as these. But there's no good talking. Each one must learn for himself; and it seems as though folks would need to live one life, just to teach them how to live. I don't suppose there's any thing I could say to you that would make much difference. Talk don't seem to amount to much, any way."

"I am sure you must have seen a great deal in your life, Miss Bethia, and might tell us a great many things to do us good," said Violet, but she did not speak very enthusiastically, for she was not very fond of Miss Bethia's good advice any more than her brothers; and little Jessie got them happily out of the difficulty, by asking:

"What did you use to do when you were a little girl, Aunt Bethia?"

"Pretty much what other little girls did. We lived down in New Hampshire, then, and what ever made father come away up here for, is more than I can tell. I had a hard time after we came up here. I helped father and the boys to clear up our farm. I used to burn brush, and make sugar, and plant potatoes and corn, and spin and knit. I kept school twenty-one seasons, off and on. I didn't know much, but a little went a great way in those days. I used to teach six days in the week, and make out a full week's spinning or weaving, as well. I was strong and smart then, and ambitious to make a

living and more. After a while, my brothers moved out West, and I had to stay at home with father and mother, and pretty soon mother died. I have been on the old place ever since. It is ten years since father died. I've stayed there alone most of the time since, and I suppose I shall till my time comes. And children, I've found out that life don't amount to much, except as it is spent as a time of preparation—and for the chance it gives you to do good to your neighbours; and it ain't a great while since I knew that, only as I heard folks say it. It ain't much I've done of it."

There was nothing said for a minute or two, and then Ned made them all laugh by asking, gravely:

"Miss Bethia, are you very rich?"

Miss Bethia laughed, too.

"Why, yes; I suppose I may say I am rich. I've got all I shall ever want to spend, and more, too. I've got all I want, and that's more than most folks who are called rich can say. And I have earned all I've got. But it ain't what one has got, so much as what one has done, that makes life pleasant to look back upon."

"It is pleasant to have plenty of money, too, however," said Jem.

"And people can do good with their money," said Violet.

"Yes, that is true; but money don't stand for everything, even to do good with. Money won't stand instead of a life spent in God's service. Money, even to do good with, is a poor thing compared with that. Money won't go a great ways in the making of happiness, without something else."

"Would you like to live your life over again, Miss Bethia?" asked Violet.

"No—I shouldn't. Not unless I could live it a great deal better. And I know myself too well by this time to suppose I should do that. It wouldn't pay, I don't believe. But oh! children, it is a grand thing to be young, to have your whole life before you to give to the Lord. You can't begin too young. Boys, and you, too, Violet—you have great privileges and responsibilities."

This was Miss Bethia's favourite way of putting their duty before them. She had said this about "privilege and responsibility" two or three times to-night already, as the boys knew she would. It had come to be a by-word among them. But even Jem did not smile this time, she was so much in earnest, and Violet and David looked very grave.

"'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.' That's what you've got to do. 'Take the whole armour of God,' and fight His battles."

The boys looked at each other, remembering all that had been said about this of late.

"Your father said right. It is a grand thing to come to the end of life and be able to say, 'I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith.'"

"Like Mr Great Heart in the Pilgrim's Progress," said Ned.

"Yes. Sometimes it's lions, and sometimes it's giants, but it's fighting all the way through, and God gives the victory. Yes," continued Miss Bethia, after a pause, "it's fighting all the way through, and it don't so much matter how it looks to other folks. Horseshoes or sermons, it don't matter, so that it is done to the Lord. Your father, he is a standard-bearer; and your mother, she helps the Lord's cause by helping him, and so she fights the good fight, too. There's enough for all to do, and the sooner you begin, the more you can do, and the better it will be—And I'm sure it's time these children were in bed now."

Yes, it was more than time, as all acknowledged, but they did not go very willingly for all that.

"Obedience is the first duty of a soldier, Ned, boy," said Jem.

"If we could only know that we were soldiers," said David, gravely; and then he added to himself, "The very first thing is to enrol one's name."

"I wonder all the girls don't like Aunt Bethia more," said Jessie, when Violet came up to take her candle in a little. "I'm sure she's nice—sometimes."

"Yes, she is always very good, and to-night she is pleasant," said Violet. "And I'm not at all sorry that she came, though mamma is away. Good-night, dear, and pleasant dreams."

Upon the whole, Miss Bethia's visit was a success. Mr and Mrs Inglis came home next day to find her and little Mary in possession of the house. David was waiting to receive them at the gate, and all the others had gone to school. Violet had proposed to stay at home to entertain their guest, but this Miss Bethia would not hear of. The baby and she were quite equal to the entertainment of one another, to say nothing of David, upon whom Miss Bethia was evidently beginning to look with eyes of favour. They had not got tired of one another when mamma came to the rescue, and nothing mattered much either to David or his little sister when mamma was at hand.

Mr Inglis was almost ill with a cold; too ill to care to go to his study and his books that day, but not too ill to lie on the sofa and talk with—or rather listen to, Miss Bethia. This was a great pleasure to her, for she had a deep respect for the minister, and indeed, the respect was mutual. So they discussed parish matters a little; and all the wonderful things that were happening in the world, they discussed a good deal. There was a new book, too, which Miss Bethia had got—a very interesting book to read, but of whose orthodoxy she could not be quite sure till she had discussed it with the minister. There were new thoughts in it, and old thoughts clothed in unfamiliar language, and she wanted his help in Comparing it with the only standard of truth in the opinion of both.

So the first day was successful, and so were all the other days of her visit, though in a different way. There were no signs of Debby's return, but Mrs Inglis had, in the course of her married life, been too often left to her own resources to make this a matter of much consequence for a few days. The house was as orderly, and the meals were as regular; and

though some things in the usual routine were left undone because of Debby's absence and Miss Bethia's presence in the house, still everything went smoothly, and all the more so that Miss Bethia, who had had a varied experience in the way of long visits, knew just when to sit still and seem to see nothing, and when to put forth a helping hand. Her visits, as a general thing, were not without some drawbacks, and if Mrs Inglis had had her choice, she would have preferred that this one should have taken place when Debby's presence in the kitchen would have left her free to attend to her guest. But this was a visit altogether pleasant. There was not even the little jarring and uncomfortableness, rather apt to arise out of her interest in the children, and her efforts in their behalf. Not that she neglected them or their affairs. David, of whom she saw most, had a feeling that her eye was upon him whenever he was in the house, but her observation was more silent than usual, and even when she took him to task, as she did more than once, he did not for some reason or other, feel inclined to resent her sharp little speeches as he had sometimes done. She did not overlook him by any means, but asked a great many questions about his books, and lessons, and amusements, and about when he was going to college, and about what he was to be afterwards, and behind his back praised him to his mother as a sensible, well-behaved boy, which, of course, pleased his mother, and made David himself laugh heartily when he heard of it.

Still, though her visit had been most agreeable, it was pleasant to be alone again, when it came to an end, and little Jessie expressed what the others only thought when she said:

"It's nice to have Miss Bethia come once in a while, and it's nice to have her go away, too."

Debby did not come back, but everything went on as nearly as possible as usual in her absence. They hoped to have her again, by and by, so no effort was made to supply her place. If she could not come back, Violet would possibly have to stay at home after the Christmas holidays to help in the house, and in the meantime, David did what "a sensible, well-behaved boy" might be expected to do, to supply her place. And that was a great deal. David was a manly boy, and he was none the less manly that he did a great many things for his mother, that boys are not generally supposed to like to do. What those things were, need not be told, lest boys not so sensible, should call his manliness in question, and so lose their interest in him.

Indeed, it must be confessed that, sensible boy as he was, David himself had some doubts as to the manliness of some of the work that fell to him to do about this time, and did not care that his morning's occupations should be alluded to often, before Jem and Ned. But he had no doubt as to the help and comfort he was to his mother during these days, when she needed both even more than he knew. It is a manly thing in a boy to be his mother's "right hand," and David was that, and more than that, during these happy days, when they were so much alone together.

For they were happy days to them all. In spite of work and weariness, and anxiety, and a sudden sharp dread of something else harder to bear than these, that came now and then to one at least of the household, they were very happy days to them all.

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## Chapter Five.

Winter came early this year. Even before November was out, the sleigh-bells were merrily ringing through all the country, and during December more snow fell than had fallen during that month at any time within the memory of "the oldest inhabitant." And after the snow came the wind, tossing it hither and thither, and piling up mountainous drifts in the hollows through which the North Gore road passed, before it crossed Hardscrabble hill. It piled it up on Hardscrabble, too, and on all the hills, so that even if Mr Inglis had been quite well, he could hardly have made it the busiest season of the year in the way of visiting his parishioners, as it was his custom to do.

For usually, at this time, the farmers may enjoy something besides work, the busy season being over; and usually, too, the new farms and back settlements are easy of access, when the ground is frozen and just enough of snow has fallen to cover the roughness of the way. But this year, too much snow had fallen, so that for weeks, there were in some places, no roads at all; and over others, what with the drifts, and what with the difficulty in the sleighs passing one another where the roads were narrow, it would not have been pleasant, or even safe, to go. Mr Inglis would have tried it, doubtless, if he had been quite well, but the cold he had taken on the stormy night when old Mr Bent died, had never quite left him. He did not call himself ill, though his nights were restless, and his days languid, and if the weather had been fine, he would have gone out as usual; but the snow that had fallen, and was still falling, and the wind that roared and whistled, as it piled it up in the hollows and on the hill-sides, helped to make him content to stay at home and rest.

It was rest he needed. He was not ill—only tired, so tired that he did not care during this time of leisure, to pursue the studies that he loved so well, and, for the most part, David read to him. These were happy days to David. Generally in the quiet afternoons, when the children were at school, they were down-stairs in mamma's room, and mamma listened to the reading, too, with little Mary playing out and in of the room beside them. But on the long evenings they usually sat upstairs in the study, with mamma coming up to see them only now and then. Sometimes there was no reading, and David went on with his lessons as usual, while his father lay on the sofa with closed eyes, thinking over the wonderful truths he wished to speak to the people when the Sabbath came round again.

Sometimes when the children, and even the mother, weary with the day's cares and labours, had gone to rest, David sat with his father far into the night. A prey to the restless wakefulness which, for the time, seems worse to bear than positive illness, Mr Inglis dreaded his bed, and David was only too glad to be allowed to sit with him. Sometimes he read to him, but oftener they talked, and David heard a great many things about his father's life, that he never would have heard but for this time. His father told him about his early home, and his brothers and sisters, and their youthful joys and sorrows—how dearly they had loved one another, and how he had mourned their loss. He told him about his mamma in her girlhood, as she was when he first knew her, how they had loved one another, and how she had blessed all his life till now, and nothing that his father told him filled David's heart with such wonder and pleasure, as did this. And when he added, one night, that to him—her first-born son—his mother must always trust, as her strength and "right hand," he could only find voice to say "Of course, papa," for the joyful throbbing of his heart. David used to tell Violet and Jem some things that his father spoke about, at such times, but this he never told. He mused over it often in the dark, with smiles and happy tears upon his face, and told himself that his mother's strength and "right hand," he would ever be, but it never came into his mind that the time might be drawing near which was to give significance to his father's words.

And so the last weeks of the year passed slowly away. Mr Inglis preached on Sunday as usual, every Sunday at the village, and every alternate Sunday at the Mills and at North Gore. He was quite able to do it, he thought, and though he had restless nights and languid days still, he called himself much better at the beginning of the year, and everything went on as usual in the house. In the village there began to be whispers that it was time for the annual "Donation Visit" to the minister's family, and certain worthy and wise people, upon whom much of the prosperity of the town was supposed to depend, laid their heads together to consult as to how this visit might be made successful in every respect—

a visit to be remembered beyond all other visits, for the pleasure and profit it was to bring. But before this—before the old year had come to an end, something else had happened—something that was considered a great event in the Inglis family. They had had several letters from Frank Oswald since his going home, but one day there came a parcel as well, and this, when opened, was found to contain a good many things which were to be accepted by the young Inglises as Christmas gifts. These were very nice, and very satisfactory, as a general thing, but they need not be specified. That which gave more satisfaction to each than all the other things put together, was marked, "With Frank's love to Aunt Mary." And if he had searched through all the city for a gift, he could have found nothing that would have pleased her half so well. For added to her pleasure in receiving was the better pleasure of giving. The present was what she had been wishing for two or three winters past—a fur coat for her husband. It was not a very handsome coat. That is, it was not one of those costly garments, which sometimes rich men purchase and wear, quite as much for appearance as for comfort. It was the best of its kind, however; well made and impervious to the cold, if a coat could be made so; and when papa put it on and buttoned it round him, there were many exclamations of admiration and delight.

"We need not be afraid of Hardscrabble winds any more, papa," said David.

"I should think not. 'Blow winds and crack your cheeks,'" said Jem, laughing.

Little Mary was more than half inclined to be afraid of her papa in his unaccustomed garb, but Ned laughed at her, and made her look at Violet, who was passing her hand over the soft fur, caressing it as if she loved it; and Jessie made them all laugh by telling them that when she became a rich woman, she meant to send a fur coat to all the ministers.

It is possible that some young people, and even some people not young, may smile, and be a little contemptuous over the idea of so much interest and delight in so small a matter. It can only be said of them, that there are some things happening every day in the world, that such people don't know of, and cannot be supposed to understand. That a good woman should have to plan and wait one season, and then another, for the garment much desired—absolutely necessary for the health and comfort of her husband, need not surprise any one. It has happened to other than ministers' wives many a time, I suppose. I know it has happened to some of *them*. It happened once, certainly, in the experience of Mrs Inglis, and her delight in Frank's present was as real, though not so freely expressed, as was that of her children. It came with less of drawback than usually comes with the receiving of such a present. It came from one whom they believed quite able to give it, and from one whom they knew to be speaking the thought of his heart, when he said that the pleasure of his son Frank—whose present he wished it to be considered—was greater in giving it than theirs could possibly be in receiving it. Then there were thanks for their kindness to his boy, and hopes expressed that the two families would come to know more of each other in the future than had seemed possible in the past, and, altogether, it was a nice letter to send and to receive in the circumstances.

But few pleasures are quite unmixed in this world. Even while Mrs Inglis was rejoicing over her husband's future comfort, and the removal of her own anxiety with regard to it, she could not but say to herself, as she watched his flushed face and languid movements, "If it had only come a little sooner!" But she did not spoil the enjoyment of the rest by uttering her thoughts. Indeed, she was displeased with herself, calling herself unthankful and unduly anxious, and sought with earnestness to put them out of her mind.

There was something else in the letter sent by Mr Oswald, which, for the present, the father and mother did not think it necessary to discuss with the children. This was the offer made to them for David, of the situation as junior clerk in the bank of which Mr Oswald was managing director. There was no immediate necessity of deciding about the matter, as the place would not be vacant till spring, and the father and mother determined to take time to look at the matter in all its lights, before they said anything about it to David. He was already nearly fitted to enter the university, and they hoped that some time or other, means would be found to send him there; but he was too young to enter at once, and, also, he was too young and boyish-looking, to hope for a long time yet to be able to earn means to help himself, as so many students are able to do, by teaching in the public schools. So it seemed likely that this situation might be the very thing they could wish for him for the next few years. However, there were many things to be considered with regard to it. It might unsettle him from his eager pursuit of his studies, and from the cheerful doing of his other duties, were anything to be said about his leaving home just now. So they were silent, and the old year went out, and the new year came in, and everything went on as usual, till the time for the donation visit drew near.

Donation visits ought to be pleasant occasions to all concerned, for we have the very highest authority as to the blessedness of giving, and only mean and churlish natures will refuse to accept graciously what is graciously bestowed. That they often fail to be so, arises less frequently from the lack of "graciousness" on the part of either pastor or people, than from the fact that the principle on which they are often undertaken is a mistaken one—the design to thus supplement some acknowledged deficiency in the matter of the minister's salary. It often happens that the people regard as a gift, what their pastor and his family accept as their right, and thus both parties are defrauded of the mutual benefits which are the result of obligations cheerfully conferred and gratefully received.

The parish of Gourlay was very much like other parishes, in regard to these matters. They were not a rich people. The salary of their minister was moderately liberal, considering their means, but it was scant enough considering the requirements of the minister's family. It was not very regularly, nor very promptly paid; still, in one form or other, the stipulated amount generally found its way to the minister's house in the course of the year. So that the donation visit was not made for the purpose of making up a deficiency in the salary agreed on, but rather as an acknowledgment on the part of some of the people that the salary agreed upon was not sufficient, and as a token of good-will on the part of all.

If it had occurred to the people to put their expression of good-will in the form of increased salary, it would doubtless have been more agreeable to Mr Inglis. Still, he knew that more could be done on an occasion of this kind, with less inconvenience to that part of the people who were most liberal, than could be done in the legitimate way of annual subscriptions, and he had, on the whole, sufficient confidence in their kindly feeling to prevent any very painful sense of obligation in receiving their gifts, and no expression of any such feeling was ever permitted to mar the enjoyment of the occasion, as far as the people were concerned. In short, the minister and his wife had come to consider the annual donation visit, as one of those circumstances in life out of which pain or pleasure may be gotten, according as they are made the worst or the best of by those most concerned; and as they had been making the best of them for a good many years now, they were justified in looking forward to a reasonable amount of enjoyment from this one.

As for the children, they did not think of anything but enjoyment in connection with it. To them the overturning of all things in the house, up-stairs and down, which was considered a necessary part of the preparations, was great fun. Some overturning was absolutely necessary for the entertainment of about a third more people than the house could conveniently hold. So there was the putting aside all brittle articles, the shoving of tables and bureaus into corners, the taking down of beds, and the arranging of seats over all the house. For all the house must be thrown open, and the result was confusion, certainly not so delightful to the mother as to the children. The prospect of the crowd was delightful to them, too, and so were the possibilities in the way of presents. Besides the staples, butter, cheese, flannel, oats, and

Indian meal, there was a possibility of something particular and personal to every one of them—chickens, or mittens, or even a book. Once Jem had got a jack-knife, and David a year of "The Youth's Companion." Last year Violet had got a new dress from Mrs Smith, and Jem a pair of boots. Very good boots they had been—they were not bad yet, but the thought of them was not altogether agreeable to Jem. However nice the boots, the being reminded of the gift by Master Smith, and that before all the boys at school, and more than once, was not at all nice; and Jem had to look back with mingled shame and triumph on a slight passage of arms that had been intended to put an end to that sort of thing on Master Smith's part. There was no danger, he thought, of getting any more boots from Mrs Smith, and all the people were not like her and her son.

Out of this trouble about the boots had arisen in Jem's mind some serious misgivings as to the entire desirableness of donation visits. David and Violet had had them before, but they were not so ready to speak of these things as Jem was; or rather as Jem would have been if his conscience had been quite clear as regarded the matter of Master Smith.

"There would be no good in troubling mamma with it," said Jem, and so there had been no exciting of one another by foolish talking; and, indeed, their misgivings had neither been of a depth nor of a nature to spoil the prospect of the visit to them. Great fun was anticipated as usual. Debby, though her sister was by no means well yet, came back to assist in the general confusion.

"There shall be no talk of 'allowances' this time," said Debby; and cellar and garret, pantry, cupboard, and closet, were all put through such a process of purifying and arranging, that not the neatest house-keeper in Gourlay could have the least chance or excuse for hinting that any "allowances" were needed. Debby's honour as a house-keeper was at stake, to say nothing of the honour of Mrs Inglis.

"It seems as natural as possible to get back to the old spot," said Debby; "and I wish to goodness sister Serepta would get well, or do something else. I mean, I wish she would go and stay to Uncle Jason's, or have Aunt Myra come and stay with her. I'm thankful your ma's got along so far, without any of those shiftless Simmses or Martins in to help her. But she's looking a kind of used up, ain't she? And it beats all how your pa's cold hangs on, don't it?"

"Oh! papa is much better," said David, eagerly, "and mamma is quite well. She is tired, but now you are here, she just lets things go, and rests. She knows it will be all right."

"That's so," said Debby, "and she can't do better."

And, indeed, she could not. Her affairs were in good hands. Debby was "as smart as a trap," and capable of anything in the way of house-keeping duties. And though not blessed with the mildest temper—people "as smart as traps" seldom are—she had the faculty of adapting herself to circumstances, and of identifying herself with the family in which she lived, in a way that stood in stead of a good deal. She was quite too smart for the patient endurance of the whims of a nervous invalid, and found positive refreshment in the present bustle and hurry, and was inclined not only to be agreeable, but confidential on the occasion.

"It's to be hoped it will amount to something this time," said she. "All this fuss and worry ought not to go for nothing, that's a fact. It would suit better all round, if they'd pay your pa at first, and have done with it. I don't believe in presents myself—not till folks' debts are paid at any rate," said Debby, looking at the subject from the minister's family's point of view. "But I ain't going to begin on that. Miss Bethia—she's been letting in the light on some folks' mind, but as this visit has got to be, I only hope we'll get enough to pay us for our trouble; and I wish it were well over."

The eventful evening came at last. It would be quite impossible to give here a full and clear account of all that was said and done, and given and received that night. It was a very successful visit, whether considered socially, or with reference to the results in the way of donations. Afterwards—a good while afterwards—they all used to think and speak of it as a delightful visit indeed. It was not without its little drawbacks, but on the whole, it was a delightful visit even at the time, and afterwards all drawbacks were forgotten. Jem had a little encounter with Mrs Smith, which he did not enjoy much at the moment, but which did not spoil the remembrance of it to him. She did not seem to resent his conduct about the boots. On the contrary, she placed him under still further obligations to her by presenting him with the "makings" of a jacket, which Jem accepted shamefacedly, but still gratefully enough, quite forgetting the dignified resolution he had confided to David, to decline all further favours from her with thanks.

David enjoyed the evening for the same reasons that all the rest enjoyed it, and so did Violet, and for another reason besides. For the very first time, she was spoken to, and treated as if she were a grown-up young lady, and a little girl no longer. This was delightful to Violet, who, though she was nearly sixteen, was small of her age, and had always been one of the children like all the rest. It was old Mrs Kerr, from the Gore Corner, who spoke to her about it first.

"A great help you must be to your mother with the house-keeping, and with the children and all," said that nice old lady. "It's a fine thing to have a grown-up daughter in the house. Only the chances are you'll just go and leave her, as mine have done."

Violet smiled, and blushed, and was conscience-stricken, not at the thought of going away to leave her mother one day, as Mrs Kerr's daughters had done, but because she knew she had never really been much help to her mother either at the sewing or the house-keeping—not half so much as Davie had been since Debby went away. For Letty was very fond of her books, and, indeed, her duty as well as her inclination had encouraged her devotion to them, at least until lately; but she was inclined to confess her faults to the old lady, lest she should think of her what was not true.

"Never mind. It will come in good time. And there's small blame to you for liking the books best, since you're your father's child, as well as your mother's," said Mrs Kerr, kindly. "And, indeed, they say folk can make hard work at the books, as well as at other things, and there's no fear of you, with your mother to teach you the other things, and you growing so womanly and big withal."

It was a very successful visit in every way. There never had been so many people present on such an occasion before; there never had been so many nice things brought and eaten. The coffee was good, and so was the tea, and the singing. The young people had a good time together, and so had the old people. The donations were of greater value than usual, and when he presented the money part of it to Mr Inglis, Mr Spry made a speech, which would have been very good "if he had known when he had done, and stopped," Debby said, and the rest thought it was not bad as it was. And the minister certainly made a good speech when he received it.

He did not use many words in thanking the people for their gifts, but they were just the right words, and "touched the spot," Debby said to Miss Bethia, who agreed. And then he went on to say what proved to these two, and to them all, that

there was something for which he cared more than he cared for what they had to give. And they all remembered afterwards, though no one missed them at the time, that the few playful words that he was wont to address to the young men and maidens of the congregation on such occasions, were not spoken, but the words he did speak to them were such as some of them will never forget while they live.

It was all over at last, and the tired household was left to rest, and they awoke to a comfortless house next day. The boys helped to take out the boards and benches that had been used as seats, and to move back to their places the furniture that had been removed, and then the children went to school. Violet offered to stay at home and help to arrange the house, but Debby declared herself equal to the clearing up, and was not complimentary in her remarks as to her skill and ability in such matters, so Letty, nothing loth, went away with the rest. It was an uncomfortable day. Mr Inglis had taken more cold, at least his cough was worse, and he stayed up-stairs in his study, and David was glad when the time came that he could stay there too. However, there came order out of the confusion at last. It was a good job well over, Debby declared, and all agreed with her.

"I hate to go as bad as you hate to have me," said she, in answer to Letty's lamentations over her departure. "I don't know but your mother had better have one of those shiftless Simmses than nobody at all. There's considerable many steps to be taken in this house, as nobody knows better than me; and I hadn't the responsibility of mother's meetings, and worrying over your pa, as she has. If I were you, I'd take right hold and help, and never mind about going to school, and examination, and such, for your ma's got more than she ought to do. I must try and doctor Serepta up, so as to get back again, or there'll be something to pay. Well, good-bye! I'll be down next week, if I can fix it so, to see how you're getting along."

Letty stood looking after her disconsolately. To stay at home from school, and give up all thoughts of prizes at the coming examination, were among the last things she would like to do, to say nothing of the distasteful housework. Still, if her mother needed her, she ought to do it, and she made up her mind to do it cheerfully if it must be. But she did not need to do it. It was of more importance that she should get on with her studies, so as to be ready to do her duty as a teacher by and by, than that she should help at home just now, her mother thought, and so for a few weeks longer, everything went on as before.

David helped his mother still, doing with skill and success a great many things which at first he had not liked to do at all. He did not get on with his studies as he would have wished, partly because he had less time than usual, and partly because his father was less able to interest himself in what he was doing. David sometimes grumbled a little to Jem about it, because he feared he should not find himself so far before Ned Hunter at the end of the year, as he wished to be; and once he said something of the kind to his mother. But that was a very small matter, in her opinion.

"For after all, Davie, my boy, the Greek, and Latin, and mathematics you are so eager for, are chiefly valuable to you as a means of discipline—as a means of preparing you for the work that is before you in the world. And I am not sure but that the discipline of little cares and uncongenial work that has come upon you this winter, may answer the purpose quite as well. At any rate, the wish to get on with your studies for the sake of excelling Ned Hunter, is not very creditable."

"No, mamma. But still I think it is worth something to be able to keep up with one who has had so much money spent on him, at the best schools, and I here at home all the time. Don't you think so, mamma?"

"Well!—perhaps so. But the advantages are not all on Ned's side. Your father's help and interest in all you have been doing, has been worth more to you than any school could have been."

"That's true, mamma," said Davie, heartily. "And it is not like having lessons—tasks, I mean—to study with papa. It is pure pleasure. And that is more than Ned can say, I am afraid," added he, laughing.

"And, besides, I don't think these things would have troubled you much under any circumstances; and, as I said before, the self-denial you have had to exercise, may be better for you than even success in your studies would be."

"Self-denial, mamma! Why, I think we have had a very happy winter, so far!"

"Indeed, we have! even with some things that we might have wished different. And, Davie, you must not think you have been losing time. A boy cannot be losing time, who is being a comfort to his father and mother. And self-denial is a better thing to learn even than Greek. If you live long, you will have more use for the one than for the other, I have no doubt."

David laughed, and blushed with pleasure at his mother's words.

"I am glad that you think so—I mean that I have been a comfort. But as for the self-denial, I don't believe any of the boys have had a better time than I have had this winter. If papa were only well! But he is better now, mamma?"

"Yes; I hope so. If it were May instead of January, I should not be afraid."

"Have you been afraid, mamma? Are you afraid?" asked David, startled.

"No—not really afraid, only anxious, and, indeed, I am becoming less so every day."

And there seemed less cause. Wrapped in his wonderful coat of fur and driven by David, the minister went here and there among his people, just as usual, and had a great deal of satisfaction in it, and was not more tired at such times than he had often been before. He preached on Sunday always at the village, and generally at his other stations as well, and David might well say these were happy days.

Yes, they were happy days, and long to be remembered, because of the sorrowful days that came after them. Not but that the sorrowful days were happy days, too, in one sense; at least, they were days which neither David nor his mother would be willing ever to forget.

Young people do not like to hear of sorrowful days, and sometimes think and say, that at least all such should be left out of books. I should say so, too, if they could also be kept out of one's life, but sorrowful days will not be kept away by trying to forget them. And besides, life itself would not be better by their being left out, for out of such have come, to many a one, the best and most enduring of blessings. It does not need any words of mine to prove that God does not send them in anger to his people, but in love. We have His own word for that, repeated again and again. And if we did but

know it, there are many days to which we look forward—which we hail with joyful welcome, of which we have more cause to be afraid, than of the days of trouble that are sent us by God.

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## Chapter Six.

February came in with wind and rain—a sudden thaw, levelling the great drifts, and sending down through all the hollows swift rushes of snow-water to cover the ice on the river—to break it up in some places, to fill the channel full till all the meadows above the millpond were quite overflowed. It did not last long. It cleared the third night, and so sudden and sharp was the coming of the cold, that not a murmur of water was to be heard where it had rushed in torrents the day before, and the millpond, and the meadows above, lay in the sunshine like a sheet of molten silver.

In this sudden change, Mr Inglis took cold. It had been like that all winter. His illness had been very severe, but just as he seemed ready to throw it off and be himself again, he always seemed to take more cold, and went back again. It was very trying—very discouraging. This was what David and Jem were saying to one another one afternoon, as they took their way down to the mill-dam where many of their companions had gone before them. It quite spoiled David's pleasure to think about it, and even Jem looked grave as they went on together.

However, there are few troubles that a pair of skates, and a mile, more or less, of shining ice, have not power to banish, for a time, at least, from the minds of boys of twelve and fourteen; and so when they came home, and their mother met them at the door, telling Jem that he was to go and ask Dr Gore to come up again, it gave them both a new shock of pain, and David asked, "Is papa worse, mamma?" with such a sinking of the heart, as he had never felt before.

"Not seriously worse, I hope," said his mother. "Still the doctor may as well come up. It will be safest."

Just a little fresh cold, the doctor said, and Mr Inglis must take care of himself for a few days. The remedies which he prescribed had the desired effect. In a day or two he was as well as usual; but on Sunday, when he was nearly through with the morning service, his voice failed so utterly that his last words were lost to all.

Of course there was no possibility of his going to the Gore in the afternoon. He could only rest at home, hoping and believing that he would be well in a little while. Indeed, the thought of the disappointment to the congregation who would assemble in the afternoon, was more in his thoughts than any future danger to himself. There need be no disappointment—at least, the people need not be made to wait; and David and Jem were sent to tell them that their father was not able to come, and that they were to read a sermon, and Mr Spry was to conduct the service as he had sometimes done before.

They took with them a sermon chosen by their father; but Mr Spry was not there, nor Mr Fiske, nor any one who thought himself capable of reading it as it ought to be read.

"Suppose you give them Miss Bethia's sermon, Davie," said Jem, laughing.

"Don't, Jem," said David, huskily. Something rising in his throat would hardly let him say it, for the remembrance of old Tim, and that fair day, and of his father's face, and voice, and words, came back upon him with a rush, and the tears must have come if he had spoken another word.

"Is there no one here that can read? Papa will be disappointed," said he, in a little.

No. There seemed to be no one. One old gentleman had not brought his glasses; another could not read distinctly, because of the loss of his front teeth; no one there was in the habit of reading aloud.

"Suppose you read it, David? You will do it first-rate," said old Mr Wood. "We'll manage the rest."

David looked grave. "Go ahead, Davie," said Jem.

"What would papa say?" said David.

"He would be pleased, of course. Why not?" said Jem, promptly.

So when the singing and prayers were over, some one spoke to him again, and he rose and opened the book with a feeling that he was dreaming, and that he would wake up by and by, and laugh at it all. It was like a dream all through. He read very well, or the people thought he did; he read slowly and earnestly, without looking up, and happily forgot that Jem was there, or he might have found it difficult to keep from wondering how he was taking it, and from looking up to see.

But Jem had the same dreamy feeling on him, too. It seemed so strange to be there without his father, and to be listening to Davie's voice; and nothing was farther from his mind than that there was anything amusing in it all. For sitting there, with his head leaning on his hands, a very terrible thought came to Jem. What if he were never to hear his father's voice in this place again? What if he were never to be well?—what if he were going to die!

He was angry with himself in a minute. It was a very foolish thought, he said; wrong even, it seemed to him. Nothing was going to happen to his father. He was not very ill. He would be all right again in a day or two. Jem was indignant with himself because of his thoughts; and roused himself, and by and by began to take notice how attentively all the people were listening, and thought how he would tell them all about it at home, and how pleased his father and mother would be. He did not try to listen, himself, but mused on from one thing to another, till he quite forgot his painful thoughts, and in a little the book was closed and David sat down.

They hurried away as quickly as they could, but not before they had to repeat over and over again to the many who crowded round them to inquire, that their father was not ill, at least not worse than he had been, only he had taken cold and was hoarse and not able to speak—that was all.

But the thought that perhaps it might not be all, lay heavy on their hearts all the way home, and made their drive a silent one. It never came into Jem's mind to banter Davie about the new dignity of his office as reader, as at first he had intended to do, or, indeed, to say anything at all, till they were nearly home. As for David, he was going over and over the

very same things that had filled his mind when he drove his father from old Tim's funeral—"A good soldier of Jesus Christ," and all that was implied in the name, and his father's words about "the enrolling of one's name;" and he said to himself that he would give a great deal to be sure that his name was enrolled, forgetting that the whole world could not be enough to buy what God had promised to him freely—a name and a place among His people.

"I hope we shall find papa better," said Jem, as old Don took his usual energetic start on the hill near the bridge.

"Oh! he is sure to be better," said David. But he did not feel at all sure of it, and he could not force himself to do anything for old Don's comfort till he should see what was going on in the house. The glimpse he got when he went in was re-assuring. Violet was laying the table for tea, and singing softly to herself as she went through the house. His father and mother were in the sitting-room with the rest of the children, and they were both smiling at one of little Polly's wise speeches as he went in.

"Well, Davie, you are home again safely," said his mother.

"All right, mamma. I will tell you all about it in a minute," said David. "All right," he repeated, as he went out again to Jem, lifting a load from his heart, and from his own, too, with the word.

But was it really "all right?" Their father's face said it plainly, they thought, when they went in, and their mother's face said it, too, with a difference. A weight was lifted from Jem's heart, and his spirits rose to such a happy pitch that, Sunday as it was, and in his father's presence, he could hardly keep himself within quiet bounds, as he told them about the afternoon, and how David had read so well, and what all the people had said. David's heart was lightened, too, but he watched the look on his mother's face, and noticed that she hardly spoke a word—not even to check Jem, when the laughter of the children and Letty grew too frequent, and a little noisy, as they sat together before the lamp was lighted.

"It is all right, I hope," said he, a little doubtfully. "It would be all right for papa, whichever way it were to end—and for mamma, too,—in one sense—and for all of us," added he, with a vague idea of the propriety of submission to God's will under any circumstances. "But papa is not worse—I think he is not worse, and it will be all right by and by when summer comes again." But he still watched his mother's face, and waited anxiously for her word to confirm his hope.

It *was* all right, because nothing which is God's will can be otherwise to those who put their trust in Him. But it was not all right in the sense that David was determined to hope. Though he found them sitting so calmly there when he came home that night, and though the evening passed so peacefully away, with the children singing and reading as usual, and the father and mother taking interest in it all, they had experienced a great shock while the boys were away.

Gradually, but very plainly, the doctor had for the first time spoken of danger. Absolute rest for the next three months could alone avert it. The evidence of disease was not very decided, but the utter prostration of the whole system, was, in a sense, worse than positive disease. To be attacked with serious illness now, or even to be over-fatigued might be fatal to him.

It was not Dr Gore who spoke in this way, but a friend of his who was visiting him, and whom he had brought to see his patient. He was a friend of the minister, too, and deeply interested in his case, and so spoke plainly. Though Dr Gore regretted the abruptness of his friend's communication, and would fain have softened it for their sakes, he could not dissent from it. But both spoke of ultimate recovery provided three months of rest—absolute rest, as far as public duty was concerned, were secured. Or it would be better still, if, for the three trying months that were before him, he could go away to a milder climate, or even if he could get any decided change, provided he could have rest with it.

The husband and wife listened in silence, at the first moment not without a feeling of dismay. To go away for a change was utterly impossible, they put that thought from them at once. To stay at home in perfect rest, seemed almost impossible, too. They looked at one another in silence. What could be said?

"We will put it all out of our thoughts for to-day, love," said Mr Inglis, in his painful whisper, when they were left alone. "At least we will not speak of it to one another. We must not distrust His loving care of us, dear, even now."

They did not speak of it to one another, but each apart spoke of it to Him who hears no sorrowful cry of his children unmoved. He did not lift the cloud that gloomed so darkly over them. He did not by a sudden light from Heaven show them a way by which they were to be led out of the darkness, but in it He made them to feel His presence. "Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God!" and lo! "the darkness was light about them!"

So when the boys came home the father's face said plainly what both heart and lip could also say, "It is all right." And the mother's said it, too, with a difference.

Of course, all that the doctors had said was not told to the children. Indeed the father and mother did not speak much about it to each other for a good many days. Mr Inglis rested, and in a few days called himself nearly well again, and but for the doctor's absolute prohibition, would have betaken himself to his parish work as usual. It was not easy for him to submit to inactivity, for many reasons that need not be told, and when the first Sabbath of enforced silence came round, it found him in sore trouble, *knowing*, indeed, where to betake himself, but *feeling* the refuge very far away.

That night he first spoke to David of the danger that threatened him. They were sitting together in the twilight. The mother and the rest were down-stairs at the usual Sunday reading and singing, which the father had not felt quite able to bear, and now and then the sound of their voices came up to break the stillness that had fallen on these two. David had been reading, but the light had failed him, and he sat very quiet, thinking that his father had fallen asleep. But he had not.

"Davie," said he, at last, "what do you think is the very hardest duty that a soldier may be called to do?"

David was silent a minute, partly from surprise at the question, and partly because he had been thinking of all that his father had been suffering on that sorrowful silent day, and he was not quite sure whether he could find a voice to say anything. For at morning worship, the father had quite broken down, and the children had been awed and startled by the sight of his sudden tears. All day long David had thought about it, and sitting there beside him his heart had filled full of love and reverent sympathy, which he never could have spoken, even if it had come into his mind to try. But when his father asked him that question, he answered, after a little pause:

"Not the fighting, papa, and not the marching. I think perhaps the very hardest thing would be to stand aside and

wait, while the battle is going on.”

“Ay, lad! you are right there,” said his father, with a sigh. “Though why you should look on it in that way, I do not quite see.”

“I was thinking of you, papa,” said David, very softly; and in a little he added: “This has been a very sad day to you, papa.”

“And I have not been giving you a lesson of trust and cheerful obedience, I am afraid. Yes, this has been a sad, silent day, Davie, lad. But the worst is over. I trust the worst is over now.”

David answered nothing to this, but came closer, and leaned over the arm of the sofa on which his father lay, and by and by his father said:

“My boy, it is a grand thing to be a soldier of Jesus Christ, willing and obedient. And whether it is marching or fighting, or only waiting, our Commander cannot make a mistake. It ought to content us to know that, Davie, lad.”

“Yes, papa,” said David.

“Yes,” added his father, in a little. “It is a wonderful thing to belong to the great army of the Lord. There is nothing else worth a thought in comparison with that. It is to fight for Right against Wrong, for Christ and the souls of men, against the Devil—with the world for a battle ground, with weapons ‘mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds’—under a Leader Divine, invincible, and with victory sure. What is there beyond this? What is there besides?”

He was silent, but David said nothing, and in a little while he went on again:

“But we are poor creatures, Davie, for all that. We grow weary with our marching; turned aside from our chosen paths, we stumble and are dismayed, as though defeat had overtaken us; we sit athirst beside our broken cisterns, and sicken in prisons of our own making, believing ourselves forgotten. And all the time, our Leader, looking on, has patience with us—loves us even, holds us up, and leads us safe through all, and gives us the victory at the end. ‘Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory!’” said Mr Inglis, and in a minute he repeated the words again.

Then he lay still for a long time, so long that it grew dark, except for the light of the new moon, and David, kneeling at the head of the sofa, never moved, thinking that his father slumbered now, or had forgotten him. But by and by he spoke again:

“When I was young, just beginning the conflict, I remember saying to myself, if God will give me twenty years in which to fight His battles, I will be content. The twenty years are almost over now. Ah! how little I have gained for Him from the enemy! Yet I may have to lay down my armour now, just as you are ready to put it on, Davie, my son.”

“Papa! I am not worthy—” said David, with a sob.

“Worthy? No. It is a gift He will give you—as the crown and the palm of the worthiest will be His free gift at last. Not worthy, lad, but willing, I trust.”

“Papa—I cannot tell. I am afraid—”

He drew nearer, kneeling still, and laid his face upon his father’s shoulder.

“Of what are you afraid, Davie? There is nothing you need fear, except delay. You cannot come to Him too soon. David, when you were the child of an hour only, I gave you up to God to be His always. I asked Him to make you a special messenger of His to sinful men. His minister. That may be if He wills. I cannot tell. But I do know that He will that you should be one of His ‘good soldiers.’”

There was a long silence, for it tired him to speak, and David said nothing. By and by his father said:

“How can I leave your mother to your care, unless I know you safe among those whom God guides? But you must give yourself to Him. Your mother will need you, my boy, but you may fight well the battles of the Lord, even while working with your hands for daily bread. And for the rest, the way will open before you. I am not afraid.”

“Papa,” said David, raising himself up to look into his father’s face, “why are you saying all this to me to-night?”

“I am saying it to you because you are your mother’s first-born son, and must be her staff and stay always. And to-night is a good time to say it.”

“But, papa,” said the boy with difficulty, “it is not because you think you are going to die? Does mamma know?”

“I do not know, my son. Death has seemed very near to me to-day. And it has been often in your mother’s thoughts of late, I do not doubt. My boy! it is a solemn thing to feel that death may be drawing near. But I am not afraid. I think I have no cause to be afraid.”

He raised himself up and looked into the boy’s face with a smile, as he repeated:

“David—I have no cause to fear—since Jesus died.”

“No, papa,” said David, faintly. “But mamma—and—all of us.”

“Yes, it will be sad to leave you, and it will be sad for you to be left. But I am not afraid. ‘Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive, and let thy widow trust in me.’ He has said it, and He will bring it to pass. The promise is more to me, to-night, than untold wealth could be. And Davie, I leave them to your care. You must take my place with them, and comfort your mother, and care for your brothers and sisters. And David you must be a better soldier than I have ever been.”

David threw himself forward with a cry.

“Oh papa! how can I? how can I? I am afraid, and I do not even know that my name is enrolled, and that is the very first—”

“My boy! But you may know. Have you ever given yourself to our great leader? Have you asked him to enrol your name? Ask Him now. Do not I love you? His love is greater far than mine!”

There had been moments during that day when the Lord had seemed very far away from His servant, but he felt Him to be very near Him now, as he poured out his heart in prayer for his son. He did not use many words, and they were faintly and feebly uttered, but who shall doubt but they reached the ear of the Lord waiting to hear and answer. But they brought no comfort to David that night. Indeed he hardly heard them. There was only room in his heart for one thought. “Death may be drawing near!” his father had said, and beyond that he could not look. It was too terrible to believe. He would not believe it. He would not have it so.

By and by when there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs, he slipped unseen out of the room, and then out of the house, and seeking some place where he might be alone, he went up into the loft above old Don’s crib, and lay down upon the hay, and wept and sobbed his heart out there. He prayed, too, asking again for the blessing which his father had asked for him; and for his father’s life. He prayed earnestly, with strong crying and tears; but in his heart he knew that he cared more for his father’s life and health than for the better blessing, and though he wept all his tears out, he arose un comforted. The house was still and dark when he went in. His mother had thought that he had gone to bed, and Jem that he was sitting in the study as he often did, and he was fast asleep when David lay down beside him, and no one knew the pain and dread that was in his heart that night.

But when he rose in the morning, and went down-stairs, and heard the cheerful noise of the children, and saw his mother going about her work as she always did, all that had happened last night seemed to him like a dream. By and by his father came among them, no graver than in other days, and quite as well as he had been for a long time, and everything went on as usual all day, and for a good many days. Nobody seemed afraid. His mother was watchful, and perhaps a little more silent than usual, but that was all. As for his father, the worst must have been past that night, as he had said, for there was no cloud over him now. He was cheerful always—even merry, sometimes, when he amused himself with little Polly and the rest. He was very gentle with them all, more so than usual, perhaps, and David noticed that he had Violet and Jem alone with him in the study now and then. Once when this happened with Jem, David did not see him again all day, and afterwards—a long time afterwards—Jem told him that he had spent that afternoon in the hay-loft above old Don’s crib.

At such times he used to wonder whether their father spoke to them as he had spoken to him that night, when he told him how “Death might be drawing near.” But they never spoke to one another about it. And, indeed, it was not difficult during those cheerful quiet days, to put such thoughts out of their minds. The people came and went, looking grave sometimes, but not as though they had any particular cause for fear. The minister went out almost every fine day with David or his mother, or with Jem if it was Saturday, for the children were growing almost jealous of one another, as to opportunities for doing things for papa, and Jem must have his turn, too.

How kind all the people were! Surely there never was anything like it before, the children thought. Some among them whom they had not much liked, and some whom they had hardly known, came out in a wonderful way with kind words and kinder deeds, and if kindness and thoughtfulness, and love that was almost reverence, would have made him well, he would soon have been in his old place among them again. His place on Sunday was supplied as often as possible from abroad, and when it could not be, the people managed as well as they could, and that was better than usual, for all hearts were softened and touched by the sorrow that had come on them as a people, and nothing was allowed to trouble or annoy the minister that could be prevented by them. They would have liked him to go away as the doctor had advised, and the means would have been provided to accomplish it, but the minister would not hear of being sent away. He felt, he said, that he would have a better chance for recovery at home. Not that there was any chance in that, according to his thought. It was all ordered, and it would all be well, whichever way it was to end, and he was best and happiest at home.

And so the time passed on, and then, and afterwards, no one ever thought or spoke of these days but as happy days. And yet, in the secret heart of every one of them, of the mother and the children, and of the kind people that came and went, there was a half-conscious waiting for something that was drawing near. It was a hope, sometimes, and sometimes it was a dread. The neighbours put it into words, and the hopeful spoke of returning health and strength, and of the lessons of faith and love they should learn by and by, through the experience of the minister in the sick room; and those who were not hopeful, spoke of other lessons they might have to learn through other means. But in the house they only waited, speaking no word of what the end might be.

At last there came a day, when no words were needed, to tell what messenger of the King was on his way. The hushed voices of the children, the silence in the house, told it too plainly. The laboured breathing of the sick man, the feverish hand, the wandering eye, were visible tokens that death was drawing near. The change came suddenly. They were not prepared for it, they said. But there are some things for which we cannot make ourselves ready, till we feel ourselves shuddering under the blow.

Ah! well. He was ready, and the rest mattered little. Even the mother said that to herself and to him, with the sobbing of their children in her ears. She did not sob nor cry out in her pain, but kept her face calm and smiling for him till the very last. And because, with his laboured breathing, and the pain which held him fast, he could not say to her that which was in his heart, she said it all to him—how they had loved one another, and how God had cared for them always, and how happy they had been, and how, even in the parting that was before them, God’s time was best, and she was not afraid.

And she was *not* afraid! Looking into those triumphant eyes, glad with the brightness of something that she could not see, how could she be afraid? “For neither life nor death, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” she murmured, comforting him with her words. He was dying! He was leaving her and their children alone, with God’s promise between them and poverty, and nothing else. Nothing else! Is not that enough? Think of it! God’s promise!

“I am not afraid!” She said the words over and over again. “Why should I be afraid? There are things far worse than poverty to bear. ‘Our bread shall be given us, and our water sure.’ I might be afraid for our children without you, had they the temptations of wealth to struggle with. Their father’s memory will be better to them than lands or gold. Put it all out of your thoughts, dear love. I am not afraid.”

Afterwards the doubt might come—the care, the anxiety, the painful reckoning of ways and means, to her who knew that the roof that covered them and the daily bread of her children, depended on the dear life now ebbing so fast away. But now, seeing—not Heaven's light, indeed, but the reflection of its glory on his face, she no more feared life than he feared death, now drawing so near. The children came in, at times, and looked with sad, appealing eyes from one face to the other to find comfort, and seeing her so sweet and calm and strong, went out to whisper to one another that mamma was not afraid. All through these last days of suffering the dying father never heard the voice of weeping, or saw a token of fear or pain. Just once, at the very first, seeing the sign of the coming change on his father's face, David's heart failed him, and he leaned, for a moment, faint and sick upon his mother's shoulder. But it never happened again till the end was near. Seeing his mother, he grew calm and strong, trying to stand firm in this time of trouble that she might have him to lean on when the time of weakness should come. The others came and went, but David never left his mother's side. And she watched and waited, and took needful rest that she might keep calm and strong to the very end; and the dying eyes never rested on her face but they read there, "God is good, and I am not afraid."

And so the time wore on till the last night came. They did not know it was the last night; and the mother lay down within call, for an hour or two, and David watched alone. Will he ever forget those hours, so awful yet so sweet?

"It is 'the last evening,' Davie, lad!" said his father, in gasps, between his hard-drawn breaths. "Strong, but not invincible! Say something to me, dear."

"He, also, Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that hath the power of death—." David paused.

"Go on, dear," said his father.

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

"I am not—afraid! Tell me more."

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing."

"His gift, dear boy, His gift! Say something more."

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us—" went on David, but he had no power to add another word, and his father murmured on:

"Loved us! Wonderful!—wonderful! And gave—Himself—for us."

And then he seemed to slumber for awhile, and when he awoke David was not sure that he knew him, for his mind seemed wandering, and he spoke as if he were addressing many people, lifting his hand now and then as if to give emphasis to his words. But his utterance was laboured and difficult, and David only caught a word here and there. "A good fight"—"the whole armour"—"more than conquerors." Once he said, suddenly:

"Are you one of them, Davie? And are you to stand in my place and take up the weapons that I must lay down?"

David felt that he knew Him then, and he answered:

"Papa, with God's help, I will."

And then there came over his father's face a smile, oh! so radiant and so sweet, and he said:

"Kiss me, Davie!" And then he murmured a word or two—"Thanks!" and "Victory!" and these were the very last words that David heard his father utter; for, when he raised himself up again, his mother was beside him, and the look on her face, made bright to meet the dying eyes, was more than he could bear.

"Lie down a little, Davie. You are quite worn out," said she, softly, soothing him with hand and voice.

But he could not go away. He sat down on the floor, and laid his face on the pillow of little Mary's deserted cot, and by and by his mother came and covered him with a shawl, and he must have fallen asleep, for when he looked up again there were others in the room, and his mother's hand was laid on his father's closed eyes.

Of the awe and stillness that filled the house for the next three days of waiting, few words need be spoken.

"I must have three days for my husband, and then all my life shall be for my children," said their mother. "Davie, you and Letty must help one another and comfort the little ones."

So for the most part she was left alone, and David and Letty did what they could to comfort the rest, through that sorrowful time. The neighbours were very kind. They would have taken the little ones away for awhile, but they did not want to go, and David and Violet said to one another it was right that even the little ones should have these days to remember afterwards.

How long the days of waiting seemed! Sudden bursts of crying from the little ones broke now and then the stillness too heavy to be borne, and even Violet sometimes gave way to bitter weeping. But they thought of their mother, and comforted one another as well as they could; and David stood between her closed door and all that could disturb her in her sorrow, with a patient quiet at which they all wondered. Just once it failed him. Some one came, with a trailing mass of black garments, which it was thought necessary for her to see, and Violet said so to her brother, very gently, and with many tears. But David threw up his hands with a cry.

"What does it matter, Letty? What can mamma care for all that now? She shall not be troubled."

And she was not. Even Miss Bethia could not bring herself to put aside the words of the boy who lay sobbing in the dark, outside his mother's door.

"He's right," said she. "It don't matter the least in the world. There don't anything seem to matter much. She sha'n't be worried. Let it go," said Miss Bethia, with a break in her sharp voice. "It'll fit, I dare say, well enough—and if it don't, you can fix it afterwards. Let it go now."

But David came down, humble and sorry, in a little while.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bethia," said he. "I don't suppose mamma would have cared, and you might have gone in. Only—" His voice failed him.

"Don't worry a mite about it," said Miss Bethia, with unwonted gentleness. "It don't matter—and it is to you your mother must look now."

But this was more than David could bear. Shaking himself free from her detaining hand, he rushed away out of sight—out of the house—to the hay-loft, the only place where he could hope to be alone. And he was not alone there; for the first thing he heard when the sound of his own sobbing would let him hear anything, was the voice of some one crying by his side.

"Is it you, Jem?" asked he, softly.

"Yes, Davie."

And though they lay there a long time in the darkness, they did not speak another word till they went into the house again.

But there is no use dwelling on all these sorrowful days. The last one came, and they all went to the church together, and then to the grave. Standing on the withered grass, from which the spring sunshine was beginning to melt the winter snow, they listened to the saddest sound that can fall on children's ears, the fall of the clods on their father's coffin-lid, and then they went back to the empty house to begin life all over again without their father's care.

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## Chapter Seven.

Mr Oswald, Frank's father, came home with them. He had been written to when Mr Inglis died, and had reached Gourlay the day before the funeral, but he had not stayed at their house, and they had hardly seen him till now. They were not likely to see much of him yet, for he was a man with much business and many cares, and almost the first words he said when he came into the house, were, that he must leave for home that night, or at the latest the next morning.

"And that means whatever you want to say to me, must be said at once, and the sooner the better," said Miss Bethia, as she took Mrs Inglis's heavy crape bonnet and laid it carefully in one of the deep drawers of the bureau in her room. "I haven't the least doubt but I know what he ought to say, and what she ought to say, better than they know themselves. But that's nothing. It ain't the right one that's put in the right spot, not more than once in ten times—at least it don't look like it," added she, with an uncomfortable feeling that if any one were to know her thoughts he might accuse her of casting some reflections on the Providential arrangement of affairs. "They don't realise that I could help them any, and it will suit better if I leave them. So I'll see if I can't help Debby about getting tea."

There was not much said for a time, however. Mrs Inglis evidently made a great effort to say something, and asked about Frank and the family generally, and then said something about his journey, and then about the sudden breaking-up of the winter roads. Mr Oswald felt it to be cruel to make her speak at all, and turned to the children.

"Which is Davie?" asked he, in a little.

David rose and came forward.

"I thought you had been older. Frank seemed to speak as if you were almost a man," said he, holding out his hand.

"I am past fourteen," said David.

"And are you ready for the university, as Frank thought, or is that a mistake of his, too?"

"Yes," said David. "I am almost ready."

"Oh! he was ready long ago," said Jem, coming to the rescue. "Frank said he was reading the same books that his brother read in the second year."

"Indeed!" said Mr Oswald, smiling at his eagerness. "And you are Jem? You are neither of you such giants as I gathered from Frank, but perhaps the mistake was mine. But when one hears of horse-shoeing and Homer—you know one thinks of young men."

"And this is Violet, only we call her Letty; and this is Ned, and I am Jessie, and this is wee Polly," said Jessie, a sturdy little maiden of eight, looking with her honest grey eyes straight into Mr Oswald's face. He acknowledged her introduction by shaking hands with each as she named them.

"I find I have made another mistake," said he. "I thought Letty was a little girl who always stood at the head of her class, and who could run races with her brothers, and gather nuts, and be as nice as a boy. That was Frank's idea."

"And so she can," said Ned.

"And so she is," said Jem.

"That was so long ago," said Violet, in confusion.

It seemed ages ago to all the children.

"And Violet has grown a great deal since then," said Jem. "And are Frank's eyes better?"

"They are no worse. We hope they are better, but he cannot use them with pleasure, poor fellow."

And so they went on talking together, till they were called to tea. Miss Bethia was quite right. He did not in the least know how to begin to say what he knew must be said before he went away.

After tea, the younger children went to bed, and Miss Bethia betook herself to the kitchen and Debby, thinking, to herself, it would be well for all concerned if it should fall to her to straighten out things after all; for Mr Oswald had been walking up and down the room in silence for the last half-hour, "looking as black as thunder," Miss Bethia said, in confidence, to Debby, and no one else had spoken a word. It was a very painful half-hour to Mr Oswald. He had only begun his walk when it seemed to him impossible that he could sit and look at the pale, patient face and drooping figure of the widow a single moment more. For he was in a great strait. He was in almost the saddest position that a man not guilty of positive wrong can occupy. He was a poor man, supposed to be rich. For years, his income had scarcely sufficed for the expenses of his family; for the last year it had not sufficed. It was necessary for the success of his business, or, he supposed, it was necessary that he should be considered a rich man; and he had harassed himself and strained every nerve to keep up appearances, and now he was saying to himself that this new claim upon him could not possibly be met. He was not a hard man, though he had sometimes been called so. At this moment, his heart was very tender over the widow and her children; and it was the thought that, in strict justice, he had no right to do for them as he wished to do, that gave him so much pain. Waiting would not make it better, however, and in a little while he came and sat down by Mrs Inglis, and said:

"It seems cruel that I should expect you to speak about—anything to-night. But, indeed, it is quite necessary that I should return home to-morrow, and I might be able to advise you, if you would tell me your plans."

But, as yet, Mrs Inglis had no plans.

"It came so suddenly," said she, speaking with difficulty; "and—you are very kind."

"Will you tell me just how your affairs stand? Unless there is some one else who can do it better, I will gladly help you in your arrangements for the future."

There was no one else, and it was not at all difficult to tell him the state of their affairs. They were not at all involved. There were no debts. The rent of the house was paid till the next autumn; there were some arrears of salary, and Mrs Inglis had a claim on a minister's widow's fund in connection with the branch of the church to which her husband had belonged, but the sum mentioned as the possible annual amount she would receive was so small, that, in Mr Oswald's mind, it counted for nothing. And that was all! Mr Oswald was amazed.

"Was there not something done at one time—about insuring your husband's life?" asked he, gently.

"Yes; a good many years ago. He could not manage it then—nor since. Our income has never been large." And she named the sum.

Mr Oswald rose suddenly, and began his walk about the room again. It was incredible! A scholar and a gentleman like his cousin to rest contented all these years with such a pittance! He knew that he had been earnest and full of zeal in the cause to which he had devoted his life—more than content. Valuing money for the sake of what it could do, he had yet envied no man who had more than fell to his lot. He must have known that his children must be left penniless! How could he have borne it?

"And how should I leave mine, if I were to die to-night?" said Mr Oswald to himself, with a groan. "I who have lived a life so different."

He came and sat down again. But what could he say? Mrs Inglis spoke first.

"I have made no plans as yet. There has been no time. But I am not afraid. The way will open before us."

"Yes, you must have good courage. And you will tell me in what way I can be of use to you."

"You are very kind," said Mrs Inglis, speaking quickly. "You may be sure I shall gladly avail myself of your advice. I am not afraid. My boys are strong and willing to work. We love one another, and there are worse things than poverty."

"And, for the present, you will remain here at any rate. In a few weeks I shall see you again; and, in the meantime, you must permit me to supply anything you may require."

"You are very kind. You may be quite sure we shall apply to you if it be necessary. Just now it is not; and when we have had time to consider our plans, we shall write to you—if you cannot come."

Mrs Inglis paused; and, perhaps, becoming conscious that she had spoken with unnecessary decision, she added, gently:

"You are very kind. I believe you are a true friend, and that you will do what you can to enable us to help ourselves. That will be the best—the only way to aid us effectually. With my two brave boys and God's blessing, I don't think I need fear."

She spoke, looking, with a smile, at her sons, who were leaning over her chair. Somehow her smile moved Mr Oswald more than her tears could have done, and he said nothing for a minute or two. There was nothing clearer than that she did not intend to lay the burden of her cares on him or anyone. But what could a delicate woman, unused to battle with the world, do to keep the wolf from the door, let her courage be ever so high?

"Will you promise me one thing?" said he, rising to prepare to go. "Will you promise me to let me know how I can help you—when your plans are made—either by advice or by money? I have a right. Your husband was my relative as well as my friend."

"I promise faithfully you shall be the first person to whom I shall apply in any strait," said Mrs Inglis, rising also, and offering her hand.

"And what did your husband think of my proposal to take his son into my office?"

"He thought well of it, as he wrote to you. But nothing has been said about it yet. Can you give us a little time still? and I will write. Believe me, I am very grateful for your kindness."

"If you will only give me an opportunity to be kind. Certainly, I can wait. A month hence will be time enough to decide."

And then, when he had bidden them all good-bye, he went away.

"What did he mean by a situation, mamma?" asked Jem. "Is it for Davie? Did papa know?"

But Mrs Inglis could enter into no particulars that night. She had kept up to the end of her strength.

"I am very tired. I will tell you all about it another day. We must have patience, and do nothing rashly. The way will open before us. I am not afraid."

All the sadness of the next few weeks need not be told. They who have suffered the same loss, and lived through the first sorrowful days of bereavement, will know how it was with the mother and her children, and they who have not could never be made to understand. Anxieties as to the future could not but press on the heart of the mother, but they could scarcely be said to deepen her sadness. She was not really afraid. She knew they would not be forsaken—that their father's God would have them in His keeping. But the thought of parting from them—of sending any of them away—was very hard to bear.

If she could have seen it possible to stay in Gourlay, she would have had fewer misgivings; but there was nothing in Gourlay she could do to help to keep her children together. There was no room in so small a place for any but the public schools, long established, and, at present, prosperous; and teaching seemed the only thing in which she could engage with even moderate hopes of success.

If "a multitude of counsellors" could have helped her, she would have been helped. Every one had something to say, which proved that the earnest desire of all was that she should stay in Gourlay; but no one was so happy as to suggest a way in which she could do so without involving some measure of dependence on the kindness of friends; and though this might do for a little while, it could not do long, and they would have to go at last. Still she was in no haste to go, or very eager to make plans for the future.

"The way will open before us! I am not afraid!" was the end of many an anxious discussion during these days; and thought of sending David away from her, gave her more real pain through them all than did the consideration of what might befall them in the future; for David was going away to be junior clerk in the bank of Singleton, at a salary which seemed very large to him. It was more than a third of what his father's salary had been when it was at the best. There would not be much left for his mother and the rest by the time he had clothed and kept himself; but it was a beginning, and David was glad to begin, Jem would fain have done something, too, but his mother justly felt that the next six months at school would be of greater value to him than all he would be likely to earn, and he was to stay at home for the present.

But the mother did not have to send David away alone. The way, for which she had so patiently and confidently waited, opened to them sooner than she had dared to hope. It did not open very brightly. An opportunity to let their house to one of the new railway people made her think first of the possibility of getting away at once; and various circumstances, which need not be told, induced her to look to the town of Singleton as their future place of residence. David was to be there for a year, at least, and they could all be together, and his salary would do something toward keeping the house, and, in a place like Singleton, there might be more chance for getting for herself and Violet such employment as might suit them than they could have in Gourlay.

It was not without some doubts and fears that this arrangement was decided upon; but there seemed nothing better to do, and delay would make departure none the easier. But the doubts and fears came only now and then—the faith in God was abiding; and if she was sorrowful in those days, it was with a sorrow which rose from no distrust of Him who had been her confidence all her life-long. She knew that help would come when it was needed, and that He would be her confidence to the end.

Towards the end of April, they had a visit from a gentleman, who announced himself as Mr Caldwell, senior clerk in the bank where David was to be junior. He had come to transact business at the quarries, several miles beyond Gourlay, and had called at the request of Mr Oswald, and also because he wished to make the acquaintance of the Inglis family, especially of David, whom he expected soon to have under his immediate care. He had known Mr Inglis when he was a boy, having been then in the employment of his uncle. The children had heard of him often, and their mother had seen him more than once in the earlier years of her married life, and they were not long in becoming friendly. He was a small, dark man, slow of speech, and with some amusing peculiarities of manner, but, evidently, kindly-disposed toward them all.

His first intention had been to go on to the quarries that night, but he changed his mind before he had been long in the house, and accepted Mrs Inglis's invitation to stay to tea; and soon, to her own surprise, the mother found herself telling their plans to a very attentive listener. He looked grave, when he heard of their determination to leave Gourlay, and go and live in Singleton.

It was a warm, bright afternoon, and they were sitting on the gallery in front of the house. The snow was nearly all gone; a soft green was just beginning to make itself visible over the fields and along the roadsides, and buds, purple and green and brown, were showing themselves on the door-yard trees. The boys were amusing themselves by putting in order the walks and flower-borders in the garden, where there were already many budding things, and the whole scene was a very pleasant one to look on.

"Singleton is very different from this place," said he. "You will never like to live there."

But there are many things that people must endure when they cannot like them; and there seemed to be no better way, as he acknowledged, when he had heard all. He entered with kindly interest into all their plans, and it was arranged

that, when David went to Singleton, he should go directly to his house, and, between them, no doubt, a suitable house for the family would be found. And Mrs Inglis thanked God for the new friend He had raised up for them, and took courage.

The next day, Mr Caldwell went to the quarries, and David and Jem went with him, or rather, it should be said, Mr Caldwell went with the boys, for they had old Don and the wagon, and made a very pleasant day of it, going one way and coming home the other, for the sake of showing the stranger as much of the beautiful country as possible in so short a time. They all enjoyed the drive and the view of the country, and Mr Caldwell enjoyed something besides. He was a quiet man, saying very little, and what he did say came out so deliberately that any one else would have said it in half the time. But he was a good listener, and had the faculty of making other people talk, and the boys had a great deal to say to him and to one another. Unconsciously they yielded to the influence of the sweet spring air and the sunshine, and the new sights that were around them, and the sadness that had lain so heavily on them since their father's death lightened, they grew eager and communicative, and, in boyish fashion, did the honours of the country to their new friend with interest and delight. Not that they grew thoughtless or seemed to forget. Their father's name was often on their lips,—on Jem's, at least,—David did not seem to find it so easy to utter. They had both been at the quarries before with their father, and Jem had a great deal to say about what he had heard then, and at other times, about the stones and rocks, the formations and strata; and he always ended with "That was what papa said, eh, Davie?" as though that was final, and there could be no dissent; and David said, "Yes, Jem," or, perhaps, only nodded his head gravely. He never enlarged or went into particulars as Jem did; and when once they were fairly on their way home, Jem had it all to do, for they came home by the North Gore road, over which David had gone so many, many times; and even Jem grew grave as he pointed out this farm and that, as belonging to "one of our people;" and the grave-yard on the hill, and the red school-house "where papa used to preach." And when they came to the top of the hill that looks down on the river, and the meadows, and the two villages, they were both silent, for old Don stood still of his own accord, and David, muttering something about "a buckle and a strap," sprang out to put them right, and was a long time about it, Mr Caldwell thought.

"We will let the poor old fellow rest a minute," said Jem, softly; and David stood with his face turned away, and his arm thrown over old Don's neck.

There was not much said after that, but they all agreed that they had had a very pleasant day; and Mr Caldwell said to Mrs Inglis, in his slow way, that he had enjoyed the drive, and the sight of the fine country, and the quarries, but he had enjoyed the company of her two boys a great deal more than all. And you may be sure it was a pleasure to her to hear him say it.

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## Chapter Eight.

The breaking-up of what has been a happy home, is not an easy or pleasant thing under any circumstances. It involves confusion and fatigue, and a certain amount of pain, even when there is an immediate prospect of a better one. And when there is no such prospect, it is very sad, indeed. The happy remembrances that come with the gathering together, and looking over of the numberless things, useless and precious, that will, in the course of years, accumulate in a house, change to regrets and forebodings, and the future seems all the more gloomy because of the brightness of the past.

There were few things in Mrs Inglis's house of great value; but everything was precious to her, because of some association it had with her husband and their past life; and how sad all this was to her, could never be told.

The children were excited at the prospect of change. Singleton was a large place to them, which none of them, except David and Violet, had ever seen. So they amused one another, fancying what they would see and do, and what sort of a life they should live there, and made a holiday of the overturning that was taking place. But there was to the mother no pleasing uncertainty with regard to the kind of life they were to live in the new home to which they were going. There might be care, and labour, and loneliness, and, it was possible, things harder to bear; and, knowing all this, no wonder the thought of the safe and happy days they were leaving behind them was sometimes more than she could bear.

But, happily, there was not much time for the indulgence of regretful thoughts. There were too many things to be decided and done for that. There were not many valuable things in the house, but there were a great many things of one kind and another. What was to be taken? What to be left? Where were they all to be bestowed? These questions, and the perplexities arising out of them, were never for a long time together suffered to be out of the mother's thoughts; and busy tongues suggesting plans, and busy hands helping or hindering to carry them out, filled every pause.

The very worst day of all, was the day when, having trusted Jem to drive the little ones a few miles down the river to pay a farewell visit, Mrs Inglis, with David and Violet, went into the study to take down her husband's books. And yet that day had such an ending, as to teach the widow still another lesson of grateful trust.

It was a long time before they came to the books. Papers, magazines, pamphlets—all such things as will, in the course of years, find a place on the shelves or in the drawers of one who interests himself in all that is going on in the world—had accumulated in the study; and all these had to be moved and assorted, for keeping, or destroying, or giving away. Sermons and manuscripts, hitherto never touched but by the hand that had written them, had to be disturbed; old letters—some from the living and some from the dead—were taken from the secret places where they had lain for years, and over every one of these Mrs Inglis lingered with love and pain unspeakable.

"Never mind, Davie! Take no notice, Violet, love!" she said, once or twice, when a sudden cry or a gush of tears startled them; and so very few words were spoken all day. The two children sat near her, folding, arranging and putting aside the papers as she bade them, when they had passed through her hands.

"Wouldn't it have been better to put them together and pack them up without trying to arrange them, mamma?" said David, at last, as his mother paused to press her hands on her aching temples.

"Perhaps it would have been better. But it must have been done some time; and it is nearly over now."

"And the books? Must we wait for another day? We have not many days now, mamma!"

"Not many! Still, I think, we must wait. I have done all I am able to do to-day. Yes, I know you and Violet could do it; but I would like to help, and we will wait till to-morrow."

"And, besides, mamma," said Letty, from the window, "here is Miss Bethia coming up the street. And, mamma, dear, shouldn't you go and lie down now, and I could tell her that you have a headache, and that you ought not to be disturbed?"

But Mrs Inglis could hardly have accomplished that, even if she had tried at once, for almost before Violet had done speaking, Miss Bethia was upon them. Her greetings were brief and abrupt, as usual; and then she said:

"Well! There! I *was* in hopes to see this place once more before everything was pulled to pieces!" and she surveyed the disordered room with discontented eyes. "Been looking them over to see what you can leave behind or burn up, haven't you? And you can't make up your mind to part with one of them. I know pretty well how *that* is. The books ain't disturbed yet, thank goodness! Are you going to take Parson Grantly's offer, and let him have some of them?"

Mrs Inglis shook her head.

"Perhaps I ought," said she. "And yet I cannot make up my mind to do it."

"No! of course, not! Not to him, anyhow! Do you suppose he'd ever read them? No! He only wants them to set up on his shelf to look at. If they've got to go, let them go to some one that'll get the good of them, for goodness sake! Well! There! I believe I'm getting profane about it!" said Miss Bethia catching the look of astonishment on David's face. "But what I want to say is, What in all the world should you want to go and break it up for? There ain't many libraries like that in this part of the world."

And, indeed, there was not. The only point at which Mr Inglis had painfully felt his poverty, was his library. He was a lover of books, and had the desire, which is like a fire in the bones of the earnest student, to get possession of the best books of the time as they came from the press. All his economy in other things had reference to this. Any overplus at the year's end, any unexpected addition to their means, sooner or later found its way into the booksellers' hands. But neither overplus nor unexpected addition were of frequent occurrence in the family history of the Inglishes; and from among the best of the booksellers' treasures only the very best found their way to the minister's study except as transitory visitors. Still, in the course of years, a good many of these had been gathered, and he had, besides, inherited a valuable library, as far as it went, both in theology and in general literature; and once or twice, in the course of his life, it had been his happy fortune to have to thank some good rich man for a gift of books better than gold. So Miss Bethia was right in saying that there were in the country few libraries like the one on which she stood gazing with regretful admiration.

"I can't make it seem right to do it," continued she gravely. "Just think of the book he thought so much of lying round on common folks' shelves and tables? Why! he used to touch the very outsides of them as if they felt good to his hands."

"I remember. I have seen him," said David.

"And so have I," said Violet.

"If you were going to sell them all together, so as not to break it up, it would be different," said Miss Bethia.

"But I could not do that, even if I wished. Mr Grantly only wants a small number of them, a list of which he left when he was here."

"The best-looking ones on the outside, I suppose. He could tell something about them, it's likely, by looking at the names on the title-page," said Miss Bethia, scornfully.

"But, Miss Bethia, why should you think he would not care for the books for themselves, and read them, too?" asked Violet, smiling. "Mr Grantly is a great scholar, they say."

"Oh, well, child, I dare say! There are books enough. He needn't want your pa's. But, Mrs Inglis," said Miss Bethia, impressively, "I wonder you haven't thought of keeping them for David. It won't be a great while before he'll want just such a library. They won't eat anything."

"It will be a long time, I am afraid," said David's mother. "And I am not sure that it would not be best to dispose of them,—some of them, at least,—for we are very poor, and I scarcely know whether we shall have a place to put them. They may have to be packed up in boxes, and of that I cannot bear to think."

"No. It ain't pleasant," said Miss Bethia, meditatively. "It ain't pleasant to think about." Then rising, she added, speaking rapidly and eagerly, "Sell them to *me*, Mrs Inglis. I'll take good care of them, and keep them together."

Mrs Inglis looked at her in astonishment. The children laughed, and David said:

"Do you want them to read, Miss Bethia? Or is it only for the outside, or the names on the first page, like Mr Grantly?"

"Never you mind. I want to keep them together; and I expect I shall read some in them. Mrs Inglis, I'll give you five hundred dollars down for that book-case, just as it stands. I know it's worth more than that, a great deal; but the chances are not in favour of your getting more here. Come, what do you say?"

If Miss Bethia had proposed to buy the church, or the grave-yard, or the village common, or all of them together, it would not have surprised her listeners more.

"Miss Bethia," said Mrs Inglis, gently, "I thank you. You are thinking of the good the money would do to my children."

"No, Mrs Inglis, I ain't—not that alone. And that wasn't my *first* thought either. I want the books for a reason I have."

"But what could you do with them, Miss Bethia?" asked Violet.

"Do with them? I could have the book-case put up in my square room, or I could send them to the new theological school I've heard tell they're starting, if I wanted to. There's a good many things I could do with them, I guess, if it comes to that."

"But, Aunt Bethia, five hundred dollars is a large sum," said David.

"It ain't all they're worth. If your ma thinks so, she can take less," said Miss Bethia, prudently. "O, I've got it—if that's what you mean—and enough more where that came from! Some, at any rate."

David looked at her, smiling and puzzled.

"I've got it—and I want the books," said Miss Bethia. "What do you say, Mrs Inglis?"

"Miss Bethia, I cannot thank you enough for your kind thoughts toward me and my children. But it would not be right to take your money, even if I could bear to part with my husband's books. It would be a gift from you to us."

"No, it wouldn't. It would cost me something to part with my money, I don't deny; but not more—not so much as it would cost you to part with your books. And we would be about even there. And I would take first-rate care of them—and be glad to."

Mrs Inglis sat thinking in silence for a minute or two.

"Miss Bethia, you are very kind. Will you let me leave the books awhile in your care? It is quite possible we may have no place in which to keep them safely. Children, if Miss Bethia is willing, shall we leave papa's precious books a little while with her?"

"I shouldn't feel willing to get the good of your books for nothing."

Mrs Inglis smiled.

"You would take care of them."

Miss Bethia hesitated, meditating deeply.

"There would be a risk. What if my house were to take fire and burn down? What should I have to show for your books, then?"

"But the risk would not be greater with you than with me, nor so great. Still, of course, I would not wish to urge you."

"I should like to have them, first-rate, if I could have them just in the way I want to—risk or no risk."

Violet and David laughed; even Mrs Inglis smiled. That was so exactly what was generally asserted with regard to Miss Bethia. She must have things in just the way she wanted them, or she would not have them at all.

"We could fix it as easy as not, all round, if you would only take my way," said she, with a little vexation.

They all sat thinking in silence for a little.

"See here! I've just thought of a plan," said she, suddenly. "Let me take the books to take care of, and you needn't take the five hundred dollars unless you want to. Let it be in Mr Slight's hands, and while I have the books you will have the interest. I don't suppose you know it, but he had that much of me when he built his new tannery, eight years ago, and he has paid me regular ten per cent, ever since. It looks like usury, don't it? But he says it's worth that to him; and I'm sure, if it is, he's welcome to it. Now, if you'll take that while I have the books, I'll call it even—risk or no risk; and you can give it up and have the books when you want them. I call that fair. Don't you?"

Did ever so extraordinary a proposal come from so unexpected a quarter? The mother and children looked at one another in astonishment.

"Miss Bethia," said Mrs Inglis, gravely, "that is a large sum of money."

"Well—that's according as folks look at it. But don't let us worry any more about it. There is no better way to fix it than I know of than that."

Mrs Inglis did not know how to answer her.

"Mrs Inglis," said Miss Bethia, solemnly, "I never thought you was a difficult woman to get along with before."

"But, Miss Bethia," said Violet, "mamma knows that you wish to do this for our sakes and not at all for your own."

"No she doesn't, neither! And what about it, any way? It's my own, every cent."

"Miss Bethia," said David, "are you very rich?"

Miss Bethia gave a laugh, which sounded like a sob.

"Yes; I'm rich, if it comes to that! I've got more than ever I'll spend, and nobody has got any claim on me—no blood relation except cousin Ira Barnes's folks—and they're all better off than I be, or they think so. Bless you! I can let your ma have it as well as not, even if I wasn't going to have the books, which I am, I hope."

"Miss Bethia, I don't know what to say to you," said Mrs Inglis.

"Well, don't say anything, then. It seems to me you owe it to your husband's memory to keep the books together. For my part, I don't see how you can think of refusing my offer, as you can't take them with you."

"To care for the books—yes—"

"See here, David!" said Miss Bethia, "what do you say about it? You are a boy of sense. Tell your ma there's no good being so contrary—I mean—I don't know what I mean, exactly," added she. "I shall have to think it over a spell."

David turned his eyes toward his mother in wonder—in utter perplexity, but said nothing.

"There! I'll have to tell it after all; and I hope it won't just spoil my pleasure in it; but I shouldn't wonder. The money ain't mine—hasn't been for quite a spell. I set it apart to pay David's expenses at college; so it's his, or yours till he's of age, if you're a mind to claim it. Your husband knew all about it."

"My husband!" repeated Mrs Inglis.

"Yes; and now I shouldn't wonder if I had spoiled it to you, too. I told him I was going to give it for that. As like as not he didn't believe me," said Miss Bethia, with a sob. "I've had my feelings considerably hurt, one way and another, this afternoon. There wouldn't any of you have been so surprised if any one else had wanted to do you a kindness—if you will have that it's a kindness. I know some folks have got to think I'm stingy and mean, because—"

"Aunt Bethia," said David, taking her hand in both his, "that is not what we think here."

"No, indeed! We have never thought that," said Violet, kissing her.

Then David kissed her, too, reddening a little, as boys will who only kiss their mothers when they go to bed, or their very little sisters.

"Miss Bethia," said Mrs Inglis, "my husband always looked upon you as a true friend. I do not doubt but that your kindness in this matter comforted him at the last."

"Well, then, it's settled—no more need be said. If I were to die to-night, it would be found in my will all straight. And you wouldn't refuse to take it if I were dead, would you? Why should you now? unless you grudge me the pleasure of seeing it. Oh! I've got enough more to keep me—if that's what you mean—if I should live for forty years, which ain't likely."

So what could Mrs Inglis do but press her hand, murmuring thanks in the name of her children and her husband.

Miss Bethia's spirits rose.

"And you'll have to be a good boy, David, and adorn the doctrine of your Saviour, so as to fill your father's place."

"Miss Bethia, I can never do that. I am not good at all."

"Well, I don't suppose you are. But grace abounds, and you can have it for the asking."

"But, Miss Bethia, if you mean this because—you expect me to be a minister, like papa, I am not sure, and you may be disappointed—and then—"

"There ain't much one *can* be sure of in this world," said Miss Bethia, with a sigh. "But I can wait. You are young—there's time enough. If the Lord wants you for His service, He'll have you, and no mistake. There's the money, at any rate. Your mother will want you for the next five years, and you'll see your way clearer by that time, I expect."

"And do you mean that the money is to be mine—for the university—whether I am to be a minister or not? I want to understand, Miss Bethia."

"Well, it was with the view of your being a minister, like your father, that I first thought of it, I don't deny," said Miss Bethia, gravely. "But it's yours any way, as soon as your mother thinks best to let you have it. If the Lord don't want you for his minister, I'm very sure / don't. If He wants you, He'll have you; and that's as good a way to leave it as any."

There was nothing more to be said, and Miss Bethia had her way after all. And a very good way it was.

"And we'll just tell the neighbours that I am to take care of the books till you know where you are to put them—folks take notice of everything so. That'll be enough to say. And, David, you must make out a list of them,—two, indeed,—one to leave with me and one to take, and I'll see to all the rest."

And so it was settled. The book-case and the books were never moved. They stand in the study still, and are likely to do so for a good while to come.

This is as good a place as any to tell of Miss Bethia's good fortune. She was disposed, at first, to think her fortune anything but good; for it took out of her hands the house that had been her home for the last thirty years of her life—where she had watched by the death-bed of father, mother, sister. It destroyed the little twenty-acre farm, which, in old times, she had sowed and planted and reaped with her own hands, bringing to nothing the improvements which had been the chief interest of her life in later years; for, in spite of her determined resistance, the great Railway Company had its way, as great companies usually do, and laid their plans, and carried them out, for making the Gourlay Station there.

So the hills were levelled, and the hollows filled up; the fences and farming implements, and the house itself, carried out of the way, and all the ancient landmarks utterly removed.

"Just as if there wasn't enough waste land in the country, but they must take the home of a solitary old woman to put their depots, and their engines, and their great wood-piles on," said Miss Bethia, making a martyr of herself.

But, of course, she was well paid for it all, and, to her neighbours, was an object of envy rather than of pity; for it could not easily be understood by people generally, how the breaking-up of her house seemed to Miss Bethia like the breaking-up of all things, and that she felt like a person lost, and friendless, and helpless for a little while. But there, was a bright side to the matter, she was, by and by, willing to acknowledge. She knew too well the value of money—had worked too hard for all she had, not to feel some come complacency in the handsome sum lodged in the bank in her name by the obnoxious company.

It is a great thing to have money, most people think, and Miss Bethia might have had a home in any house in Gourlay that summer if she chose. But she knew that would not suit anybody concerned long; so, when it was suggested to her that she should purchase the house which the departure of Mrs Inglis and her children left vacant, she considered the matter first, and then accomplished it. It was too large for her, of course, but she let part of it to Debby Stone, who brought her invalid sister there, and earned the living of both by working as a tailoress. Miss Bethia did something at that, too, and lived as sparingly as she had always done, and showed such shrewdness in investing her money, and such firmness in exacting all that was her due, that some people, who would have liked to have a voice in the management of her affairs, called her hard, and a screw, and wondered that an old woman like her should care so much for what she took so little good of.

But Miss Bethia took a great deal of good out of her money, or out of the use she made of it, and meant to make of it; and a great many people in Gourlay, and out of it, knew that she was neither hard nor a screw.

And the book-case still stood up-stairs, and Miss Bethia took excellent care of the books, keeping the curtains drawn and the room dark, except when she had visitors. Then the light was let in, and she grew eloquent over the books and the minister, and the good he had done her in past days; but no one ever heard from her lips how the books came to be left in her care, or what was to become of them at last.

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## Chapter Nine.

May has come again, and the Inglises had been living a whole year in Singleton; or, rather, they had been living in a queer little house just out of Singleton. The house itself was well enough, and the place had been a pretty place once; but Miss Bethia's enemies—the great Railway Company—had been at work on it, and about it, and they had changed a pretty field of meadow-land, a garden and an orchard, into a desolate-looking place, indeed. There was no depot or engine-house in the immediate neighbourhood, but the railway itself came so close to it, and rose so high above it, that the engine-driver might almost have looked down the cottage chimney as he passed.

Just beyond the town of Singleton, the highway was crossed by the railway, and, in one of the acute angles which the intersection made, the little house stood. On the side of the house, most distant from the crossing, were two bridges (one on the railway and the other on the high road), both so high and so strong as to seem quite out of place over the tiny stream that, for the greater part of the year, ran beneath them. It was a large stream at some seasons, however, and so was the Single River into which it fell; and the water from the Single sometimes set back under the bridges and over the low land till the house seemed to stand on an island. The Single River could not be seen from the house, although it was so near, because the railway hid it, and all else in that direction, except the summit of a distant mountain, behind which, at midsummer-time, the sun went down. From the other side, the road was seen, and a broken field, over which a new street or two had been laid out, and a few dull-looking houses built; and to the right of these streets lay the town.

It was not a pretty place, but it had its advantages. It was a far better home to which to bring country-bred children than any which could have been found within their means in the town. They could not hesitate between it and the others which they went to see; and, as Mr Oswald had something to do with the Railway Company, into whose hands it had fallen, it was easily secured. There were no neighbours very near, and there was a bit of garden-ground—the three-cornered piece between the house and the crossing, and a strip of grass, and a hedge of willows and alders on the other side, on the edge of the little stream between the two bridges, and there was no comparison between the house and any of the high and narrow brick tenements with doors opening right upon the dusty street.

And so the mother and the children came to make a new home there, and they succeeded. It was a happy home. Not in quite the same way that their home in Gourlay had been happy. No place could ever be quite like that again; but when the first year came to an end, and the mother looked back over all the way by which they had been led, she felt that she had much cause for gratitude and some cause for joy. The children had, in the main, been good and happy; they had had all the necessaries and some of the comforts of life; they had had no severe illness among them, and they had been able to keep out of debt.

To some young people, all this may not seem very much in the way of happiness, but, to Mrs Inglis, it seemed much, and to the children too. Mrs Inglis had not opened a school. The house was too small for that, and it was not situated in a part of the town where there were likely to be many pupils. She had taught three or four little girls along with her own children, but the number had not increased.

During the first six months of their stay in Singleton, Violet had been house-keeper. The change had not been altogether pleasant for her, but she had submitted to it cheerfully, and it had done her good. She had become helpful and womanly in a way that would have delighted old Mrs Kerr's heart to see. To her mother and her brothers she was "one of the children" still, but strangers were beginning to look upon her as a grown-up young lady, a good many years older than David or Jem.

To Jem, for whom his mother had feared most, the change had been altogether advantageous. He had come to Singleton with the avowed intention of going regularly to school, as his mother wished, for six months, and then he was going to seek his fortune. But six months passed, and the year came to an end, and Jem was still a pupil in the school of Mr Anstruther—a man among a thousand, Jem thought. He was a great mathematician, at any rate, and had a kind heart, and took interest and pleasure in the progress of one who, like himself, went to his work with a will, as Jem certainly did in these days.

Jem's wish to please his mother brought him this reward, that he came to take great pleasure in his work, and all the more that he knew he was laying a good foundation for success in the profession which he had chosen, and in which he meant to excel. For Jem was going to be an engineer, and work with his hands and his head too; and though he had no more chances of shoeing horses now, he had, through a friend of his, many a good chance of handling iron, both hot and cold, in the great engine-house at the other side of the town. So Jem had made great advance toward manliness since they had come to Singleton.

Greater than David had made, some of the Gourlay people thought, who saw both the lads about this time. Even his mother thought so for a while. At least she thought that Jem had changed more than Davie, and more for the better. To be sure, there had been more need, for Davie had always been a sensible, well-behaved lad, and even the most charitable and kindly-disposed among the neighbours could not always say that of Jem. Davie was sensible and well-behaved still, but there was none of the children about whom the mother had at first so many anxious thoughts as about David.

To none of them had the father's death changed everything so much as to him. Not that he had loved his father more than the others, but for the last year or two he had been more with him. Both his work and his recreation had been enjoyed with him, and all the good seemed gone from everything to him since his father died. His new work in Singleton was well done, and cheerfully, and the knowledge that he was for the time the chief bread-winner of the family, would have made him do any work cheerfully. But it was not congenial or satisfying work. For a time he had no well defined duty, but did what was to be done at the bidding of any one in the office, and often he was left irritable and exhausted after a day, over which he could look back with no pleasure because of anything that he had accomplished.

He could not fall back for recreation on his books, as his mother suggested. He tried it oftener than she knew, but the very sight of the familiar pages, over which he used to ponder with such interest, brought back the "study," and the old happy days, and his father's face and voice, and made him sick with longing for them all. There was no comfort to be got from his books at this time. Nor from anything else. The interest in which the little ones took in their new home and their new companions, Jem's enthusiasm over his new master and his school work, Violet's triumphs in her little house-keeping successes, filled him with wonder which was not always free from anger and contempt. Even his mother's gentle cheerfulness was all read wrong by Davie. He said to himself that his father had been more to him than to the other children, and that he missed him more than they, but he could not say this of his mother; and daily seeing her patient sweetness, her constant care to turn the bright side of their changed life to her children, it seemed to him almost like indifference—like a willingness to forget. He hated himself for the thought, and shrunk from his mother's eye, lest she should see it and hate him too.

But all this did not last very long. It must have come to an end soon, in one way or other, for youth grows impatient of sorrow, and lays it down at last, and thanks to his mother's watchful care, it ended well for David.

He had no hay-loft to which he could betake himself in these days when he wished to be alone; but when he felt irritable and impatient, and could not help showing it among his brothers and sisters, he used to go out through the strip of grass and the willows into the dry bed of the shrunken stream that flowed beneath the two bridges, and sitting down on the large stones of which the abutment of the railroad bridge was made, have it out with himself by the bank of the river alone. And here his mother found him sitting one night, dull and moody, throwing sticks and stones into the water at his feet. She came upon him before he was aware.

"Mamma! you here? How did you come? On the track?"

"No; I followed you round by the willows and below the bridge. How quiet it is here!"

The high embankment of the railway on one side, and the river on the other, shut in the spot where David sat, and made it solitary enough to suit him in his moodiest moments, and his mother saw that he did not look half glad at her coming. But she took no notice. The great stones that made the edge of the abutment were arranged like steps of stairs, and she sat down a step or two above him.

"Did the sun set clear? Or were there clouds enough about to make a picture to-night?" asked she, after a little.

"Yes, it was clear, I think. At least not very cloudy. I hardly noticed," said Davie, confusedly.

"I wish we could see the sun set from the house."

"Yes, it is very pretty sometimes. When the days were at the longest, the sun set behind the highest part of the mountain just in a line with that tall elm on the other side of the river. It sets far to the left now."

"Yes, the summer is wearing on," said his mother. And so they went on talking of different things for a little while, and then there was silence.

"Mamma," said David, by and by, "are you not afraid of taking cold? It is almost dark."

"No. I have my thick shawl." And moving down a step, she so arranged it that it fell over David too.

"Ah! never mind me. I am not so delicate as all that, mamma," said David, laughing, but he did not throw the shawl off, but rather drew a little nearer, and leaned on her lap.

"See the evening star, mamma. I always think—"

David stopped suddenly.

"Of papa," said his mother, softly.

"Yes, and of the many, many times we have seen it together. We always used to look for it coming home. Sometimes he saw it first, and sometimes I did; and oh! mamma, there don't seem to be any good in anything now," said he, with a breaking voice.

Instead of speaking, his mother passed her hand gently over his hair.

"Will it ever seem the same, mamma?"

"Never the same, Davie! never the same! We shall never see his face, nor hear his voice, nor clasp his hand again. We shall never wait for his coming home in all the years that are before us. It will never, never be the same."

"Mamma! how can you bear it?"

"It was God's will, and it is well with him, and I shall see him again," said his mother, brokenly. But when she spoke in a minute her voice was clear and firm as ever.

"It will never be the same to any of us again. But you are wrong in one thing. All the good has not gone out of life because of our loss."

"It seems so to me, mamma."

"But it is not so. We have our work in the world just as before, and you have your preparation for it."

"But I cannot make myself care for anything as I used to do."

"There must be something wrong then, Davie, my boy."

"Everything is wrong, I think, mamma."

"If *one* thing is wrong, nothing can be right, David," said his mother, stooping down and kissing him softly. "What did your father wish first for his son?"

"That I should be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I know that, mamma."

"And you have been forgetting this? That hast not changed, Davie."

"No, mamma—but—I am so good for nothing. You don't know—"

"Yes, I know. But then it is not one's worth that is to be considered, dear. The more worthless and helpless we are, the more we need to be made His who is worthy. And Davie, what do we owe to 'Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us?'"

"Ourselves, mamma, our life, our love—"

"And have you given Him these?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"And are you content not to know?"

"I am not content—but how am I to know, mamma," said David, rising and kneeling down on the broad stone beside her. "May I tell you something? It was that night—at the very last—papa asked me if I was ready to put on the armour he was laying down; and I said yes; and, mamma, I meant it. I wished to do so, oh, so much!—but everything has been so miserable since then—"

"And don't you wish it still, my son?"

"Mamma, I know there is nothing else that, is any good, but I cannot make myself care for it as I did then."

"David," said his mother, "do you love Jesus?"

"Yes, mamma, indeed I love Him. I know Him to be worthy of my love."

"And you desire to be His servant to honour Him, and do His will?"

"Yes, mamma, if I only knew the way."

"David, it was His will that papa should be taken from us; but you are angry at our loss."

"Angry! oh, mamma!"

"You are not submissive under His will. You fail to have confidence in His love, or His wisdom, or in His care for you. You think that in taking him He has made a mistake or been unkind."

"I know I am all wrong, mamma."

"David, my boy, perhaps it is this which is standing between you and a full consecration to His service."

And then she spoke to him of his father, and of his work, and how blessed he had been in it, and of the rest and reward to which he had gone.

"A little sooner than we would have chosen for our own sakes, Davie, but not too soon for him, or for his Master."

A great deal more she said to him of the life that lay before him, and how he might help her and his brothers and sisters. Then she spoke of his work for Christ, and of his preparation for it, and how hopeful—nay, how sure she was, that happy and useful days were before him—all the more happy and useful because of the sorrow he had been passing through. "As one whom his mother comforteth," came into David's mind as he listened.

"And it is I who ought to be comforting you, mamma. I know I am all wrong—" said he, with tears.

"We will comfort one another. And indeed, it is my best comfort to comfort you. And, Davie, my love, we will begin anew."

There was more said after that—of the work that lay ready at his hand, of how he was to take out his books again, lest he should fall back on his studies, and do discredit to his father's teaching, and of how he was to help his brothers and sisters, especially Violet and Jem.

"Only, mamma, I think they have been getting on very well without me all this time," said Davie, ruefully.

"Not so well as they will with you, however," said his mother. "Everything will go better now."

Everything did go better after that with David. His troubles were not over. His books gave him pain rather than pleasure, for a while, and it needed a struggle for him to interest himself in the plans and pursuits of Jem, and even of Violet. But he did not grow moody over his failures, and by and by there came to be some good in life to him again, and his mother's heart was set at rest about him, for she began to hope that it was well with David in the best sense now.

During the first summer they saw very little of the Oswalds. They lived quite at the other end of the town, in a house very different from the "bridge house," as their cottage was called, and for the greater part of the summer, the young people of the family had been away from home. But in the autumn it was so arranged that Violet at least, was to see a great deal of some of them. Mr Oswald had six children, four daughters and two sons. His eldest daughter Ame had been mistress of the house since her return from school, at the time of her mother's death. This had happened several years ago. She was twenty-four years of age, very clever and fond of society. She was engaged to be married, but she did not intend to leave home immediately, from which indeed she could not easily have been spared. They had much company always, and she had a great deal to do in entertaining them, and led a very busy and, as she thought, a very useful life in her father's house.

The next in age was Philip, but he was not at home. He was in his last year at M— University, and was to be home in the Spring. Selina came next. She was one year younger than Violet, and would fain have considered herself a grown-up young lady, and her education finished, if her father and sister had agreed. Then came Frank, who was not very strong, and whose eyes were still weak, and then Charlotte and Sarah, girls of ten and twelve. It was to teach these two that Violet was to go to Mr Oswald's house.

Mrs Inglis felt that the proposal had been made by Mr Oswald quite as much with the thought of helping them as of benefiting his children, who had before this time gone to a day-school in the neighbourhood. But she did not refuse to let Violet go on that account. She believed her to be fitted for the work. She knew her to be gentle and affectionate, yet firm and conscientious, that she would be faithful in the performance of her duties towards the little girls, and that they would be the gainers in the end by the arrangement. And so it proved.

The first intention was that Violet should return home every night, but as the season advanced and the weather broke, the distance was found to be too great, and besides, Violet's slumbering ambition was awakened by the proposal that she should share in the German and French lessons which Selina received from Professor Olendorf, and so she stayed in the house with her pupils, only going home on Friday night to spend the Sunday there.

She had very little share in the gay doings for which Miss Oswald was ambitious that her father's house should be distinguished. For Miss Oswald had strong opinions as to the propriety of young girls like Violet and Selina keeping themselves to their lessons and their practising, and leading a quiet life, and so had her father. Even if he had not, it is likely that Miss Oswald's opinion would have decided the matter. As it was, Selina became content to stay at home in Violet's company when her sister went out, and Violet was more than content. She enjoyed her work both of teaching and learning, and the winter passed happily and profitably away.

Of course she was missed at home, but not painfully so. There were no pupils for her mother to teach in the winter. Ned went to school, and there was only Jessie to teach, and a good many of the lessons she received was in the way of household work, and she soon began to take pride and pleasure in it as Violet had done before.

And so the winter passed quietly and happily to them all. There was need for constant carefulness, for rigid economy even, but want never came near them. How to make the most of their small means, was a subject at this time much in Mrs Inglis's thoughts. How to obtain the necessary amount of the simplest and most wholesome food, at the smallest cost, was a problem solved over and over again, with greater or less satisfaction, according to the circumstances at the moment. There was a certain amount of care and anxiety involved, but there was pleasure too, and all the more that they knew the exact amount of their means, and what they had "to come and go" upon.

They had some pleasant surprises in the shape of kind gifts of remembrance from Gourlay friends, gladly given and gladly received, less because of present necessities than because of old friendship. Want! no, it never came near them—never even threatened to come near them. When the winter was over, they could look back to what Jem called "a tight spot" or two in the matter of boots and firewood, but on nothing very serious after all.

The boots and the firewood were the worst things. No one can tell till she has really tried, how much beyond the natural turn of existence almost any garment may be made to last and wear to preserve an appearance of respectability by a judicious and persevering use of needle and thread. But boots, especially boys' boots, are unmanageable in a woman's hands, and, indeed, in any hands beyond a certain stage of dilapidation; and every one knows, that whatever else may be old, and patched, and shabby, good boots are absolutely indispensable to the keeping up of an appearance of respectability, and, indeed, one may say, with some difference, to the keeping of a lad's self-respect. The boots were matters of serious consideration.

As to the firewood, there is a great difference as to the comfort to be got out of the same quantity of firewood, depending on the manner in which it is used, but even with the utmost care and economy, it will consume away, and in a country where during seven months of the year fires are needed, a great deal must consume away. Even more than the consideration given to the boots, the wood had to be considered, and it was all the more a matter of difficulty, as economy in that direction was a new necessity. Boots had always been a serious matter to the Inglises, but wood had been plentiful at Gourlay. However, there were boots enough, and wood enough, and to spare, and things that were vexing to endure, were only amusing to look back upon, and when Spring came, none of the Inglises looked back on the winter with regret, or forward to the summer with dread, and so their first year in Singleton came happily to an end.

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## Chapter Ten.

It was Saturday afternoon and a holiday with the schoolboys, of course. It was a holiday to them all, for Mrs Inglis and Violet were out of doors too, sitting on the gallery in the sunshine, and Davie was coming home. He was at the moment crossing the bridge at a great pace, and so eager to be among them, that instead of going soberly round by the gate, as he was accustomed to do, he took Jem's fashion and swung himself first over the side of the bridge, and then over the fence into the garden. They might well look surprised, and all the more so that it was high water, and he had to scramble along the unsteady fence and through the willows before he could get to the grass dry shod.

"Well done, Davie! you are growing young again," said Jem.

David sat down on the steps at his mother's feet laughing and breathless.

"Is it a half holiday?" asked his mother.

"Yes; Frank came to the bank and begged Mr Caldwell to let me go out in the boat with him and his brother this afternoon."

"And he was willing to let you go, I suppose?"

"Yes; he was not quite sure about the boat, and he said I must come first and ask you, mamma."

"A long walk and a short sail. It won't pay, Davie," said Jem. "You would not have cared, would you, mamma?"

"But I must have come at any rate to change my clothes. We shall very likely get wet."

"How very prudent!" said Jem.

"Very proper," said his mother.

"Well, be quick, or you'll keep them waiting. It is well to be you," said Jem. "I wish the high and mighty Phil Oswald would ask me to sail with him."

"Perhaps he may; he is bringing the boat here. Mamma, I have some good news."

The children gathered round to listen.

"That is why you came jumping over the fence, instead of coming round by the gate," said Ned.

"Violet knows it!" said Jessie; "look at her face."

"No, I don't know it. I might, perhaps, guess it."

It was no very wonderful news. Only that Mr Caldwell had reminded David that he had that day been a year in the office, and that next year his salary was to be raised. Not much. It did not seem a great sum even to Ned and Jessie. But it was worth a great deal more than the mere money value, because it implied that David was getting to understand his work, and that his employer knew it, and had confidence in him. The mother said something like this to him and to them all, and she was very much pleased.

"Our Davie will be a rich man some day!" said Jem. "I thought I was to be the rich man of the family, but it don't look like it now."

"It will be a while first," said David.

"You will be a banker," said Ned.

"I am afraid I ought to be gardener this afternoon," said David, looking round on the garden.

"No use. The water is rising. We shall be flooded yet," said Jem.

"There is no time lost yet," said his mother.

"It is better that we should be a little late, than that the water should cover the earth after the seeds are sown."

The broad, shallow channel at the end of the garden was full, and the willows that fringed the bit of green grass were far out into the water. The water almost touched the bridge across the road, and filled the hollow along the embankment.

"And, besides, you are going to sail," said Jem.

"I think it would be quite as pleasant to stay here."

They were all sitting on the little gallery before the house. It must have been a charming place once, when the river could be seen from it, and the pretty view beyond. At present, nothing could be seen on that side but the high embankment, and the few rods of garden-ground. On the other side were the willows, already green and beautiful, and some early-budding shrubs and the grass. Then there was the water, flowing down between the two bridges, and, over all, the blue sky and the sweet spring air. It was a charming place still, or it seemed so to David and them all.

The garden-beds had already been made, and a great many green things were springing here and there, and, on a rugged old apple-tree and on some plum and cherry trees, the buds were beginning to show themselves. The children were eager to be at work, but, for the present, that was not to be thought of. However, there was much to be said about the garden, and about the seeds which were to be sown, and Jessie was eager about a plan for covering the high embankment with squash-vines and scarlet-runners. Fred wanted to keep bees, and ducks if they could have them, but bees certainly; and amid the happy clamour which their voices made there came a shout, and, from under the railway bridge from the river, a boat was seen advancing.

"Here we are at last!" called out Frank Oswald; "and it looks very much as if here we must stay. We cannot get any further, Phil."

The Inglis children were soon as near the boat as the willows and the water would permit. There seemed to be no way of getting the boat to the bank, for the willows were far out into the water, and through them it could not be forced.

"You'll have to land on the other side and go round by the bridge," said Jem.

They were not using oars. That would have been impossible in a channel so narrow. They were pushing the boat through the water by means of a long pole, but it was not very easily managed, because of the shallowness of the water

and the bushes that grew on the margin.

"Jem is right; we must go to the other side," said Frank.

"Not I," said his brother, as he planted his pole firmly on the bank, measuring the distance with his eye. Then throwing himself forward with a sudden spring, he was over the willows and over the water beyond, landing safely on the nicely-prepared onion-bed.

"Well done!" cried Jem.

"Not at all well done," said Frank, who had only saved himself from being overturned into the water by grasping a branch near him.

Philip only laughed, as he shook hands with Mrs Inglis and Violet.

"Take my place in the boat and have a row on the river," said he, as he sat down on the steps near them. "I have had enough of it for awhile."

Jem was nothing loth, but he looked at his mother for permission.

"Is it quite safe, do you think?" asked she hesitating.

"Oh! quite safe. Frank understands all about it; and so does Jem, I dare say."

"Mamma!" entreated Ned.

"And mamma!" entreated Jessie.

On the Gourlay river the boys had paddled about at their own pleasure, and their mother was not inclined to be unreasonably anxious about them. She knew it would be a great delight to them all to be permitted to go.

"But there is not room for all; and Mr Oswald will not care to be troubled with so many children."

"Let them go with the boys—there is no danger, and I will wait here," said Philip. "Only you must promise to come back within a reasonable time, Jem."

"All right!" said Jem. "I promise. Come along Violet. There is room for you, and Polly too."

But Mr Philip thought there was not room for all, and Mrs Inglis would not trust little Mary with them, so they went without them.

This was Mr Philip's first visit to the bridge house. Mrs Inglis had seen him at church, and David had seen him a good many times at the bank. He had been at home a week or two, and Violet had, of course, seen him every day. David had acknowledged that he did not like him very much, and Jem called him "a swell," and spoke contemptuously of his fine clothes and fine manners. Violet had taken his part, and said he was just like other people. He was very kind to his little sisters, she said. There had been a good deal said about him in one way or another, and Mrs Inglis regarded him with curiosity and interest. He was a good-looking lad, with a pleasant face and manner. "Just like other people," did not quite do him justice. Mrs Inglis could not help thinking Jem's idea of "a swell" did not suit him certainly. He was not "fine," on the present occasion, either in dress or manners. David had said very little about about him, but he had not approved of him, and, seeing the young man now so frank and friendly, she could not but wonder why.

They did not go into the house, and by and by they all crossed the garden and went up on the railway track to watch the boat; and, being a little behind the others, leading little Mary between them, his mother asked David what was the reason of his dislike.

"Dislike! mamma," said David, in surprise. "I don't dislike him. I don't know him very well. He has had very little to say to me. Why should you think that I dislike him?"

"Perhaps dislike is too strong a word. But I fancied that you did not quite approve of him, David."

"Approve of him! Well—he is not one of us—of our kind of people, I mean. He does not look at things as we do. I don't dislike him, mamma, but I don't care about him."

"Which means he doesn't care about you?" said his mother, smiling.

David laughed.

"He certainly does not. He is much too great a man to have anything to say to me. But I don't think that is the reason that I don't 'approve' of him, as you say. He is not in earnest about anything. He is extravagant—he spends a great deal of money foolishly. But I ought not to speak of that. Mr Caldwell told me, and he seemed quite as well pleased that we should have little to say to one another. He said Frank was the better companion for Jem and me."

"I dare say that is true," said his mother.

But all this did not prevent the young people from having a very pleasant afternoon together. The boat came back after "a reasonable time," and then the others went for a sail, and David acknowledged that Mr Philip was in earnest about his rowing, at any rate, and permitted himself to admire his activity and skill. When the boat was brought in among the willows again, it was almost dark.

"Suppose we leave it here?" said Frank. "It will be quite safe, and we can send for it on Monday."

"It would not be a bad place to leave it here altogether," said his brother.

Jem was delighted with the idea, and said so; but David gave his mother a doubtful look.

"Come in to tea," said she, "and you can decide about it afterwards."

The Oswalds had not dined, but they did not refuse the invitation, as, for a single minute, Violet hoped they might. The simple arrangements of her mother's table were not at all like those which Miss Oswald considered necessary in her father's house, but they were faultless in their way, and Violet was ashamed of her shame almost as soon as she was conscious of it.

"Aunt Mary," said Frank, after they were seated at the table, "won't you ask me to spend the afternoon here to-morrow? I like your Sundays."

Mrs Inglis did not answer for a moment, but Jem answered for her.

"All right, Frank! Come straight from church. Your father will let you, won't he?"

"If Aunt Mary were to ask me, he would. I am not sure, otherwise," said Frank. "What do you say, Aunt Mary?"

Philip looked at him in astonishment.

"Never mind, Phil," said Frank. "Aunt Mary and I understand."

"We are old friends," said Mrs Inglis, smiling.

"I think he is very bold," said his brother. "What if I were to insist on being invited in that persistent way?"

"That would be quite different," said Frank. "You are a stranger. I was often here last winter. I am one of the children when I am here. Aunt Mary does not make a stranger of me."

"But, Frank," said Jessie, "David is away now on Sunday afternoon, and Violet and Jem. And, perhaps, mamma will let us all go, and go herself, if there are any more children."

"Where?" asked Frank.

"At Sunday-school—down on Muddy Lane. Mr Caldwell's Sunday-school."

"Old Caldwell!" said Frank. "That's the way, is it? How do you like it, Davie?"

"Sunday-school is not a new thing to us, you know," said David.

"But it is a new thing for you to be a teacher," said Jem. "Oh! he likes it. Davie's a great man on Sunday, down in Muddy Lane."

"Nonsense, Jem!"

"I went once," said Jessie, "and it is very nice. Letty sings, and the children sing too. And one of the girls broke Letty's parasol—" And Mrs Inglis's attention being occupied for the moment, Jessie gave other particulars of the school, quite unmindful of her sister's attempts to stop her.

Ned had something to tell, too, and entered into minute particulars about a wager between two of the boys, as to whether Mr Caldwell wore a wig or not, and the means they took to ascertain the truth about it.

"They must be rather stupid not to know that," said Frank.

"Do you like it?" asked Philip of Violet.

"Yes, indeed! I like it very much. But I don't like Ned's telling tales out of school, nor Jessie, either."

"But mine are not bad tales. I like it too," said Jessie.

"But I should think it would be very unpleasant. And what is the good of it? Muddy Lane of all places!" said Philip, making an astonished face.

"That shows that you don't know Aunt Mary and her children," said Frank, laughing. "You would never ask what is the good, if you did."

"I know, of course, there must be good to the children, but I should think it would be decidedly unpleasant for you. Muddy Lane cannot be a nice place at any time, and now that the warm weather is coming—"

"You don't suppose Violet is one of the people who is afraid of a little dust, or bad odours, and all that, do you?" asked Frank.

"She rather likes it—self-denial and all that," said Jem. "And as for Davie—"

"Nonsense, Jem! Self-denial indeed! There is very little of that," said David. "You know better than that, if Frank does not."

"And old Caldwell, of all people in the world," said Philip, laughing; "I did not suppose he could speak to any one younger than fifty—except Davie. What can he have to say to children, I wonder?"

"Oh, he has enough to say. You ought to hear him," said Jem.

"Thank you. I'll come and hear him—to-morrow, perhaps."

"Mr Caldwell did not like the new hymn-book at first," said Jessie. "But the children like them, and Letty teaches them to sing, and it is very nice. I hope we can go to-morrow."

"I hope so," said Mr Philip.

"But you don't care about such things, do you?" asked Jessie.

"I ought to care, ought I not?"

"Yes; but you ought not just to make believe care."

Mr Philip laughed a little.

"There is no make believe about it. I shall like to go to-morrow very much."

They were all away from the table by this time, and Frank sat down with David on the window seat. He put his arm round his shoulder, boyish fashion, and laid his head down upon it.

"Is it military duty you are doing, Davie, down in Muddy Lane?" said he, softly.

All the talk that had been going on had put David out a good deal, and he did not answer for a minute. It seemed to him that a great deal had been made of a little matter, and he was not well pleased.

"Don't you remember about the 'armour,'" said Frank.

"Don't Frank?" said David. It hurt him to think that Frank should make a jest of that.

"Indeed I am not jesting, Davie. That is one way of fighting the good fight—is it not? And I want to have a good long talk about it again."

"With mamma, you mean."

"Yes, and with you. Don't you remember Hobab and old Tim?"

David did not answer in words, and both the boys sat silent, while the others grew eager in discussing quite other things. It was growing dark, and Philip decided that it would be better to leave the boat and walk home. Then something was said about future sails, and then Philip told them of a friend of his who was going to be one of a party who were to explore the country far west. He was going to try and persuade his father to let him join it. It was an exploring company, but a good many were to join it for the sake of the hunting and fishing, and the adventures that might fall in their way. They were to be away for months, perhaps for the whole summer, and a great deal of enjoyment was anticipated. Jem listened intently.

"That would just suit me, mamma," said he, with a sigh.

"I dare say it would be pleasant for a while," said she, smiling.

"It would hardly suit you to lose a summer out of your life, Jem," said David, sharply.

Jem whistled.

"You are there! are you, David? No, that wouldn't suit me, exactly."

"Lose a year out of his life! What can you mean?" said Mr Philip, in astonishment.

"What would come out of such a summer, except just the pleasure of it?" said David.

"Well! there would be a great deal of pleasure. What else would you have?"

David made no answer.

"Davie means that there is something besides one's pleasure to be considered in this world," said Frank.

"David means that Jem can find pleasure and profit without going so far for them," said Mrs Inglis.

"David is a young prig," said Mr Philip to himself, and as they were going home he said it to his brother in decided terms.

"That's your idea of it, is it?" said Frank. "You know just about as much of Davie and Aunt Mary, and that sort of people, as I know about the Emperor of China. I know there *is* such a person, and that is all I do know."

Philip laughed.

"It is never too late to learn, and if they have no objection, I mean to know them better."

"They are not your kind of people," said Frank, decidedly.

"You mean they are very good and religious and all. I am not a heathen or a Turk, Frank, my boy."

"I could never make you understand the difference," said Frank, gravely.

"Never make you understand!" said Philip, mimicking his voice and manner. "I think I can understand them pretty well without your help. Don't trouble yourself. They are just like other people. It is true that Mrs Inglis looks just as much of a lady in her plain gown and in that shabby room as she could in any of the fine drawing-rooms, and that is more than could be said of some of the ladies I know. She is a good woman, too, I am sure. As for Davie, he is a young prig—though he is good, too, I dare say. Violet is a little modest flower. They are very nice, all of them, but they are not beyond my powers of comprehension, I fancy, Frank, lad."

"All right, if you think so," said Frank.

Philip was amused and a little vexed at his brother's persistency.

"Do you know them, Frank,—'understand' them, as you call it?"

"I know they are very different from us, and from all the people we know most about, and I think I know what makes the difference, though I don't quite understand it. You would know what I mean if you had seen Mr Inglis and knew the kind of life he lived."

"I have seen, and I know what his character was. He was an unworldly sort of man, I believe."

"He did not live for his own pleasure," said Frank, gravely. "He wasn't his own. He lived to serve his Master. I can't tell you. You should speak to Davie or Violet about him, or to Aunt Mary."

"Well, so I will, some day," said Philip.

Frank made no reply.

In the meantime Mr Philip was being just as freely discussed by the young people they had left. Jem was delighted with their new friend. He was a fine fellow, not at all "swell," as he had supposed. Jem grew enthusiastic over his friendliness, his boat, his rowing, and hoped he might come often. So did the little ones.

"David does not like him," said Violet.

"I liked him this afternoon well enough," said David.

"Yes, he was nice this afternoon; but he is not always nice with his sisters. He is good to the little ones," said Violet.

"I dare say his sisters are not very good to him. I can easily believe it," said Jem.

"He is not like the people we have been taught to admire," said David.

"He always thinks of himself first," said Violet. "And he is not really in earnest about anything."

"Mamma, listen to Davie and Letty speaking evil of their neighbours," said Jem.

"Not speaking evil, I hope," said Mrs Inglis, "but still not speaking with charity, I am afraid."

"I was not speaking evil of him, mamma," said Violet. "I only meant that he does not care for anything very much, except to amuse himself. I think he is rather foolish, but I would not speak evil of him."

"See that you don't, then," said Jem.

"He made himself very agreeable this afternoon, that is all we need say," said Mrs Inglis. "We are not likely to see very much of him in future."

Nothing more was said at that time. They saw a good deal of both brothers during the next few weeks. But they saw nothing for a good while that inclined either Violet or Davie to change their opinion of the elder one.

The next day Frank came home with them from church. He was the only one of the family at church that day, for it had rained in the morning, and they were not very regular churchgoers at the best of times.

"Papa said I might go home with you, if Aunt Mary asked me," said Frank, as he joined them at the door.

"Come on, then," said Jem. "Mamma doesn't approve of Sunday visiting, as a general thing, but you are one of ourselves by this time. Mamma, ask Frank to come."

Mrs Inglis smiled.

"Come and read with the children, Frank," said she.

Frank was only too happy to go. He did not go to the Sunday-school with the others, but chose to stay at home with Mrs Inglis and little Mary. But the first person the others saw when they came to Muddy Lane was Mr Philip, waiting for them at the corner, as though it were the most natural and proper thing in the world for him to be there.

"I came to hear what your friend Mr Caldwell has to say to-day, Jem," said he.

"All right!" said Jem. "He will have something appropriate to say about Sabbath-breaking, I dare say."

"I am sure I don't know why," said Philip, laughing.

"He'll tell you why," said Jem.

David did not say it was all right, nor think it. Indeed, it proved to his mind to be all wrong, for Mr Caldwell did not make his appearance at all.

"To think of his failing to-day, of all days," said David.

They waited for him a long time, till the children became restless and impatient.

"We ought to begin, Davie," said Violet.

"Yes. I wouldn't mind if we were by ourselves."

"Why should you mind now? Go ahead, Davie. If he laughs, I'll knock him down," said Jem.

It was very foolish in Violet to laugh, and very wrong, too, she knew; but she could not help it. Jem's idea of the way to keep order was so absurd. David did not laugh. He looked anxious, and at a loss, and a little indignant at his sister's amusement.

"I beg your pardon, Davie. Let us just go on as usual," she entreated. "Why should you mind?"

And so they did go on. They sung a hymn very well; at least, they sung with a great deal of spirit. There were some clear, sweet voices among the children, and they all seemed to enjoy singing so much it could not be otherwise than agreeable to those who were listening, and Violet did her best. Then David, very reverently, but not very firmly, took Mr Caldwell's duty upon himself, and offered a few words of prayer; and then the children repeated together the Lord's Prayer, and after that everything went well enough. David and Violet took their usual places, with their classes round them, and Jem suggested to Mr Philip that he should take Mr Caldwell's rough-looking boys in hand "and give them a talk."

"Hear them repeat their verses, and tell them a story. You can do it as well as Mr C. Shall I tell them that you are the new minister?"

"Thank you. I will introduce myself. I ought to be able to say something to these young rascals. I hope they won't find me out."

He seemed to get on very well. Jem would have liked to get rid of the three little fellows for whom he was responsible, so as to hear what he was saying. The boys liked it, evidently; at least they listened with great interest; and one would have thought that Mr Philip was quite accustomed to the work, he did it so easily. The boys laughed more than once, and grew eager and a little noisy; but their teacher was perfectly grave and proper, and did not give Jem the shadow of an excuse for wishing to "knock him down." He congratulated him when it was all over.

"Yes; I flatter myself it was the right man in the right place this time," said Mr Philip. "You didn't think I could do as well as old Caldwell, did you?"

Jem shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, you could do it, once in a way, after a fashion, at any rate."

But though Jem spoke so coldly to Philip himself, he was enthusiastic in his praises of him when they were giving their mother the history of the afternoon after Frank had gone home.

"He can do anything, I think," said he. "He was not at a loss for a moment. I believe, if he had been put to it, he could have done the whole business as well as Davie did, and he did it very well."

David said nothing, but Violet repeated her opinion as to their new friend's want of earnestness.

"If it had been the most foolish thing in the world, he would have done it just as well, and just as willingly, if he had thought it was expected of him to do it."

"Are you not a little severe on him?" said her mother.

"No, mamma; I don't mean to be severe. He would think it a great compliment paid to him, though you don't think it nice. He does not look seriously at life. He amuses himself with everything. Just compare him with our Davie."

David had gone out before she said this.

"Nonsense! Letty. Our Davie is a boy still, and Mr Philip is a man. He has completed the course at the university, you know quite well."

"Our Davie is far more manly than he, for all that. And so are you, Jem. Davie is worth two of him."

"A great deal more than two of him to us, Letty," said her mother, laughing. "Still, I am inclined to think with Jem, that you are a little hard on him."

"Yes, she does not like him," said Jem. "And it is odd, too, for he likes her, and you, mamma, and all of us."

"Oh! yes; I dare say he does. We amuse him for the moment. I know him better than you do, Jem. I have seen him every day for a fortnight, you know. I like him very well, but I don't think he is reliable. He is not in earnest," repeated Violet, solemnly. "And Sunday-school teaching is not a proper thing to amuse one's self with. It would spoil all the pleasure of it to have him come there always. However, there is no danger. He will find something else to amuse him."

Violet was right, as far as Philip's coming to Muddy Lane was concerned. He did not make his appearance there again for a very long time after that Sunday. But, having nothing better to do, he seemed quite inclined to cultivate the acquaintance of the young Inglishes, and came to the bridge house a good deal. Once or twice he brought his little sisters

and Violet down in the boat to tea, and several times he came there after having been down the river fishing. Once or twice David, coming home earlier than the others, found him sitting quietly with his mother and little Mary, to all appearance perfectly satisfied with the entertainment he was receiving; and his entertainers seemed satisfied too. David began to consider these frequent visits as an infliction to be borne patiently, and Violet adhered to her first opinion; but, with Jem and the children, he was a great favourite. Even the mother was inclined to make excuses for his faults, and was very kind to him when he came. The mother knew more about him than the rest did, for he told her a great deal about himself and his past life during the quiet afternoons he passed with her and little Mary. And having seen more, and suffered more, she was inclined to have more patience with his weaknesses than they.

It had been understood all along, that, as soon as Philip's course at the university was over, he was to take his place in his father's office, and to give all his time and thoughts to his father's business. He had never been quite pleased with the idea, and had all along hoped that something might happen to render unnecessary a step so distasteful to him. Nothing had happened, and he was inclined to fancy that he was making a sacrifice to his father's business and his father's desire for wealth, and to claim sympathy because of this.

"And would you be a great help to your father?" asked Mrs Inglis, one day, when he had got thus far.

"I don't know. I am sure I don't think so, hating business as I do. But he must think so, or he would not be so bent on my coming to the office and tying myself down. It will come to that, I dare say," said he, with a sigh.

Mrs Inglis smiled.

"Is it not possible that he may wish it for your sake rather than his own? And how do you know that you hate business? You have never given it a fair trial, have you?"

"No, I have not tried it steadily," said he, answering her last question first. "But then one can tell what one does not like without trying it very long. I dare say my father thinks it would be a good thing for me to fix myself at the bank. But a man must judge for himself before he submits to be tied down for life."

"But is it not possible that it is the tying down which is distasteful? And every man must submit to be tied down to something. What would you like to do better?"

"Oh! almost anything. I should like the profession of the law better." And then he added, after a little, "I should like it better for one thing. I need not enter an office till the autumn."

"I am afraid it is the tying down that is the trouble, after all," said she.

"No, I assure you—not altogether—though, I acknowledge, it would be a fine thing to let business slide—to have nothing at all to do."

"I do not agree with you. I think it would be the very worst thing that could happen to you to have nothing to do," said Mrs Inglis, gravely.

"To me, especially, do you mean? Well, I don't quite mean that; but I think Mr Caldwell was right when he told my father that, if he had meant me for business, he should have put me to it long ago."

"Do you mean that you regret having been sent to the university?"

"I mean that I should have been fit for my work by this time, and, probably, content with it. A university is not needed there."

"You must not be angry with me if I say you are talking foolishly," said Mrs Inglis, "and, indeed, ungratefully, when you say that. Do you mean that your education will be a disadvantage to you?"

"No; except by making business distasteful to me. I mean, it has given me other interests and other tastes—something beyond the desire to make money."

"Doubtless, that was your father's intention—to make you an intelligent man as well as a banker—not a mere money-maker. And his wish ought to decide you to give the business of his office a fair trial, since you do not seem to have a preference for any other."

"I have a very decided preference for a trip across the country. Don't look grave, Aunt Mary. These are my holidays. By and by will be time to settle down to work."

"I thought you were no longer a schoolboy?"

"No, I am not; but I should like to go—to the Red River, perhaps. It would be a fine trip for Davie in his vacation, too, and its cost would be little—comparatively."

"Davie does not expect a vacation—or only a week or two."

"Davie is quite a steady old gentleman," said Philip.

Mrs Inglis smiled.

"I don't suppose you mean that quite as a compliment to my boy. I am very glad it is true, nevertheless."

"You don't suppose I would venture to say anything not complimentary to your boy to you, do you? Or that I would wish to say it to any one? But he *does* take life so seriously. He is so dreadfully in earnest. One would think that Davie was years and years older than I am."

"Yes, in some things."

"But, Aunt Mary, such precocious sobriety and wisdom are unnatural and unwholesome. Davie is too wise and grave for his years."

"He is not too wise to do very foolish things sometimes; and he is the merriest among the children at home, though we don't hear his voice quite so often as Jem's. And you must remember that Davie's experience has been very different from yours."

"Yes, Aunt Mary, I know. Frank has told me how happy you all were, and how Davie was always so much with his father. It must have been very terrible for you all."

"And, Philip, Davie has tried to take his father's place among us. Davie is our bread-winner, in a measure. We have had many cares and anxieties together. No wonder that he seems to you to be grave and older than his years."

"Aunt Mary, what an idle, good-for-nothing fellow you must think me," said Philip, putting down little Mary, who had been sitting on his knee, and standing before his aunt.

"Not good-for-nothing, certainly. Perhaps, a little idle and thoughtless. There is time for improvement and—room. Let us hope you will know your own mind soon, which you certainly do not now."

"Let us hope so," said Philip, with a sigh. "Here comes Davie! Now, observe him! He will not look in the least glad to see me."

"Where are all the rest?" said Davie, coming in.

"Davie, do you know, I have been persuading your mother to let you go with me to the Red River," said Philip. "Wouldn't you like it?"

"It is very good of you. Yes, I dare say I would like it. What does mamma say?"

"She thinks you are too useful a man to be spared so long. What would Mr Caldwell do without you?"

"When are you coming to help him?" said David.

"After I come home in the autumn. I cannot bring myself to Davie's standard of steadiness all at once, Aunt Mary. I must have a little time."

"There is none to lose," said Mrs Inglis gravely.

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## Chapter Eleven.

About this time it was announced to the world in general, that Miss Oswald's marriage was to take place immediately. Her friends thought she had been very kind and considerate to stay with her father and her brothers and sisters so long. Miss Oswald was a discreet young lady, and knew how to manage her own affairs to her own satisfaction. Perhaps the knowledge that her own establishment must be in a different style from that of her father's, helped her considerateness a little, and made her more willing to continue at home. However that might be, when her father set before her certain reasons for economy in household matters, for decided retrenchment indeed, she very considerably suggested that her Aunt Livy would be a very suitable person to see her father's wishes in this direction carried out, and advised that she should be sent for, and then she set about her own preparations. With these, of course, no one at the bridge house had anything to do, except Violet. But for the glimpses that she had behind the scenes, she might have been a little dazzled and unsettled by the gaiety and splendour in the midst of which she found herself. For Miss Oswald's arrangements were on the grandest scale. Everything that she considered "proper" on the occasion, she exacted to the uttermost, with no thoughts of necessary economy. There were fine clothes, fine presents, a fine wedding breakfast, and the proper number of fine brides-maids, of whom Violet was one.

Even the wise and sensible Letty was not above a feeling of girlish delight in being prettily dressed and admired as one of the gay company; but the knowledge that she was only chosen at the last minute to supply the place of a young lady whose illness had disarranged Miss Oswald's plans, and a few other drawbacks, kept her from being unduly elated with the honour and pleasure, and she was very glad when it was all over, and so was everybody concerned. So Miss Oswald went away. Mrs Mavor and Miss Livy came to the big house to reign in her stead, and all in it were beginning to settle down to a quiet and happy summer again.

But trouble came first. Scarlet fever had broken out in the neighbourhood of the bridge house, and in other parts of the town, and first little Polly took it, and then Jessie and Ned, and Violet came home to help her mother to nurse them. They were not very ill—that is, the fever did not run very high, and at no time did the doctor suppose them to be in danger, but there was much anxiety and fatigue in taking care of them. The weather was very hot, too, and the bridge house stood too low to catch the infrequent breeze, and though they were soon able to be up and even to be out of doors, the children did not get strong.

In the meantime both Charlotte and Sarah Oswald had taken the disease, and Mr Oswald himself came to the bridge house to entreat that Violet might be permitted to come to them. Their sister Selina had gone away after the wedding to visit in a distant city, and as she had never had the disease, her father did not like to send for her to come home. The children did not take to their aunt. It had been possible to get on when they were very ill, but when they began to be better they were peevish and fretful, and Aunt Livy could not please them, and nothing would do but Violet must come to them again. It did not seem possible that she could leave home, but David was to be spared as much as possible to help with the little ones, and so she went.

But between her anxiety for the children at home, and her weariness with the little Oswalds, she had rather a hard time of it. Frank helped her for a while, but he was not very well, and was threatened with the old trouble in his eyes, so that he was not a very cheerful companion, either for her or the children. Mr Philip had commenced an irregular sort of attendance at the bank, but he had a good deal of time still at his disposal, and kindly bestowed a share of it on his little sisters. "Philip could be very nice when he liked," they agreed, and he very often "liked" about this time.

He went sometimes to the bridge house, too, and was as popular as ever among the little people there. They were not getting well very fast. Charlotte and Sarah were up and out in the garden, and able to amuse themselves with their dolls and their games, when Violet, going home one day, found Jessie and Ned languid and fretful, and poor wee Polly lying limp and white in her cot. Her mother looked worn and anxious, David came home with a headache, and Jem was the only one among them whose health and spirits were in a satisfactory condition.

"I cannot stay to-night, mamma, because they expect me back," said Violet. "But I shall come home to-morrow. They don't need me half as much as you do, and I must come. You are sick yourself, mamma."

"No, I am tired, that is all; and the weather is so warm. Don't come till the children are well. It is your proper place there, and even you cannot help us here while the weather is so warm."

It was very hot and close, and Violet fancied that from the low fields beyond, where there was water still standing, a sickly odour came.

"No wonder they don't get strong," said she.

Mr Oswald had spoken in the morning about sending his little girls to the country, or to the seaside. The doctor had suggested this as the best thing that could be done for them. Violet thought of their large house, with its many rooms, and of the garden in which it stood, and looked at her little sisters and brothers growing so pale and languid in the close air, which there was no hope of changing, with a feeling very like envy or discontent rising in her heart.

"Mamma," said she, "it is a dreadful thing to be poor;" and then she told of the plan for sending the Oswalds away for change of air, and how they were already well and strong in comparison to their own poor darlings, and then she said, again, "It is a dreadful thing to be so poor."

"We are not so poor as we might be?" said her mother, gravely. "Think how it would have been if we had lost one of them, dear. God has been very good to us, and we must not be so ungrateful as to murmur because we have not all that others have, or all that we might wish for."

"I know it, mamma. But look at these pale cheeks. Poor wee Polly! she is only a shadow of our baby. If we could only send her to Gourlay for a little while."

"Do you think her looking so poorly? I think it is the heat that is keeping them all so languid. Don't look so miserable. If it is necessary for them to go to the country, we shall manage to send them in some way. But we are quite in the country here, and when we have had rain the air will be changed, and the heat may be less, and then they will all be better."

"Have you made any plan about going to the country?" asked Violet, eagerly.

"No, my dear. I trust it will not be necessary. It could not be easily managed," said Mrs Inglis, with a sigh.

"If we were only not quite so poor," said Violet.

"I say, Letty, don't you think mamma has trouble enough without your bother?" said Jem, sharply, as his mother went out of the room. Violet looked at him in astonishment.

"If we were only not quite so poor!" repeated Jem, in the doleful tone she had used. "You have said that three times within half an hour. You had better stay up at the big house, if that is all the good you can do by coming home."

"That will do, Jem! Don't spoil your sermon by making it too long," said David, laughing.

"Sermon! No, I leave that to you, Davie. But what is the use of being so dismal? And it isn't a bit like Letty."

"But, Jem, it is true. The children look so ill, and if they could only get a change of air—"

"And don't you suppose mamma knows all that better than you can tell her? What is the good of telling her? She has been looking all day for you to come and cheer us up and brighten us a little, and now that you have come you are as dismal as—I don't know what. You have been having too easy times lately, and can't bear hardness," said Jem, severely.

"Have I?" said Violet, with an uncertain little laugh.

"Softly, Jem, lad!" said his mother, who had come in again. "I think she has been having a rather hard time, only it will not do her much good to tell her so."

"I dare say Jem is right, mamma, and I am cross."

"Not cross, Letty, only dismal, which is a great deal worse, I think," said Jem.

"Well, I won't be dismal any more to-night, if I can help it. Davie, take Polly, and, mamma, lie down on the sofa and rest while I make the tea. Jem, you shall help me by making up the fire. We will all have tea to-night, because I am a visitor."

"All right!" said Jem. "Anything to please all round; and the hot tea will cool us nicely, won't it?"

"It will refresh us at any rate."

And so the little cloud passed away, and Violet's cheerfulness lasted through the rest of the visit, and up to the moment that she bade Jem good-bye at Mr Oswald's gate. It did not last much longer, however. It was nearly dark, and Mr Oswald and his sister and Frank were sitting on the lawn to catch the faint breeze that was stirring among the chestnut trees.

"I thought you were not coming home to-night," said Miss Livy, in an aggrieved tone.

"I was detained," said Violet. "How are the children?"

"They are in bed at last. You should not have told them that you would be home before their bed-time, unless you had intended to come. However, they are in bed now. Pray don't go and disturb them again. Philip had to go to them at last. He is up-stairs now. They are dreadfully spoiled."

Violet dropped down in the nearest chair.

"How are the children at home?" asked Mr Oswald, kindly.

"They are—not better."

"I hope they are not spoiled," said Frank, laughing. "Did they cry when you came away, Violet?"

"They were rather fretful. They are not strong."

"You are not very well yourself, to-night," said Mr Oswald. "The change will do you as much good as any of them."

"I am quite well," said Violet.

"We have been speaking about sending the girls to the country for a change of air," went on Mr Oswald. "Will you go with them? Betsey will go too, of course, but they will scarcely be happy without you, and the change will do you good."

"Thank you. You are very kind. But the children need me at home. I could not think of leaving mamma while they are so poorly to go away for pleasure."

"It would not be quite all pleasure, I fancy," said Mr Philip. "They are asleep at last. It cannot be a very easy thing to keep them amused all day, as they are just now."

"They are quite spoiled," said Aunt Livy.

"Oh! no. Not quite. They are good little things in general, as children go. You can't judge now, aunt," said Philip. "Miss Inglis, are you not a little dismal to-night?"

"So Jem told me. I am tired. I think I shall say good-night and go up-stairs."

"It should be settled at once about the children, where they are to go, and who is to go with them," said Aunt Livy.

"There is no haste," said Mr Oswald. "Perhaps the children at home may be better able to spare you in a day or two, Miss Violet."

"Thank you. It would be very pleasant, but—"

"Why not send all together?" said Philip. "Ned and Jessie and wee Polly, with Charlotte and Sarah? I dare say they would all be better of a change, poor little souls!"

"I dare say they can do without it, thank you," said Violet, stiffly.

"For what? My suggestion? They would like it, I am sure."

"People cannot get all they like in this world."

"Violet," said Frank, solemnly, "I believe you are cross."

"I am almost afraid I am," said Violet, laughing uneasily.

"For the first time in your life. Something dreadful must have happened at the bridge house to-day!"

"No; nothing happened."

"The children are not better, that is what is the matter," said Philip; "though it ought not to make you cross, only sorry. Depend on it, it is change they want," said Philip, with the air of a doctor.

"It is worth thinking about; and it would be very nice if they could all go together, with you to take care of them," said Mr Oswald. "Very nice for our little girls, I mean. Think of it, and speak to your mother."

"Thank you; I will," said Violet.

"Much they know about it," said she to herself, as she went up-stairs in the dark. "An extra orange or a cup of strawberries for the little darlings has to be considered in our house, and they speak of change as coolly as possible. And I didn't know better than to trouble mamma with just such foolish talk. We must try and have mamma and Polly go to Gourlay for a week or two. June not half over, and how shall we ever get through the two not months! Oh, dear! I am so tired!"

Violet was so tired in the morning that she slept late, and a good many things had happened next morning before she came down-stairs. When she opened the dining-room door she thought, for a minute, she must be sleeping still and dreaming; for, instead of the usual decorous breakfast-table, Aunt Livy seemed to be presiding at a large children's party. Everybody laughed at her astonished face, and little Mary held out her arms to be taken.

"My precious wee Polly! Have you got a pair of wings?" said she, clasping and kissing her little sister.

"We are to stay all day, if we are good. You are to tell mamma how we behave," said Jessie. "We came in a carriage, with Mr Philip and Jem."

Violet looked a little anxiously from Aunt Livy to Mr Oswald, and saw nothing to make her doubt the children's welcome. Mr Oswald smiled; Miss Livy nodded.

"They seem very well-behaved children," said she. "Not at all spoiled."

"We haven't been here long," said Jessie, gravely. "But we are going to be good, Letty. We promised mamma."

And they were very good, considering all things. Still, it was a fatiguing day to Violet. She followed them out and she followed them in; and when they grew tired, and their little legs and their tempers failed, she beguiled them into the wide gallery, shaded by vines, and told them stories, and comforted them with toys and picture-books and something nice to eat. It would have been a better day, as far as the visitors were concerned, if there had been less to see and to admire. But the great house and garden were beautiful and wonderful to their unaccustomed eyes, and they had tired themselves so utterly that they grew fretful and out of sorts, and were glad when it came night and time to go home; and so was Violet.

The next day they came they were stronger and better, but they needed constant attention, lest mischief should happen among them; and, on the third morning, Violet was not sorry to hear the rain pattering on the window. Not that she would have minded ten times the trouble for herself, so that the children were the better for it, but it was as well not to try Miss Livy's forbearance too far. Miss Livy had had very little to do with children since she was a child herself, and that little led her decidedly to agree with the generally-received opinion that the children of the present day are not so well brought up as children used to be. This opinion did not make her more patient with them, but rather less so; and so Violet was not sorry for the rain that kept her little sisters at home.

At breakfast, the subject of sending the little girls, Charlotte and Sarah, to the country for awhile was again brought up by their aunt, and, in the afternoon, Violet, at Mr Oswald's request, went home to speak to her mother about it; but she had fully determined beforehand how the matter was to be decided, as far as she was concerned.

However, everything was put out of her mind by the surprise that awaited her; for, at the bridge house, they were entertaining an angel unawares, in the person of Miss Bethia Barnes. And was not Violet glad to see her? So glad that she put her arms round her neck and kissed her, and then laughed and then cried a little, not quite knowing what she did.

"It is good to see you, Aunt Bethia," said she.

"You are the only one of the family who looks better for Singleton," said Miss Bethia, regarding her with pleased wonder.

Miss Bethia had considered Violet a little girl when she left Singleton; but she was a little girl no longer, but a young woman, and a very pretty young woman, too, Miss Bethia acknowledged. If Violet had not been so glad to see her, and shown it so plainly as to disarm her, she must, even at the first moment, have uttered some word of counsel or warning, for to be pretty, and not aware of it, or vain of it, was a state of things that she could not believe in. However, she reserved her advice for a future occasion, and, in the meantime, drew her own conclusions from the brightening of the mother's face at the coming of her eldest daughter, and from the eager way in which little Mary clung to her, and the others claimed her attention.

"You must stay at home to-night, Letty," said Jem.

"May I, mamma? I am to be sent for later; but may I not send a message that Miss Bethia has come, and that you cannot spare me?"

"But I can spare you all the better that Miss Bethia is here," said her mother, smiling.

"Yes, I know mamma; but I want to stay so much."

"You would not think it polite in her to go away to-night? Now, would you? Aunt Bethia," said Jem.

"Politeness ain't the only thing to think of," said Miss Bethia.

"Violet is not quite at our disposal just now," said Mrs Inglis; "and I am afraid you will be missed up there, dear, by the children. They have had the fever, too, poor little things, and their sister is away, and they hardly know this aunt yet, and Violet has charge of them. They are fond of Violet."

"Oh, yes! they are all fond of Violet up there; but so are we," said Jem. "Let her stay, mamma."

"And how do you like earning your living?" asked Miss Bethia.

Violet laughed.

"Oh, I like it. When did you come, Miss Bethia? You are not looking very well."

"I haven't been well—had a sharp turn of rheumatism. I had some business, and I came yesterday."

"And how are all the Gourlay people? And you live in our house now. How strange it must seem! And what a shame that your old place is spoiled!"

"I thought so at the time, but it might have been worse."

And then Violet had a great many questions to ask, and listened with many exclamations of wonder and pleasure to all that she heard; and Miss Bethia, pleased with the interest she displayed, made no pause till Ned called out that young

Mr Oswald was driving Davie over the bridge, and that now Violet would have to go.

"Mamma," said Violet, "I have not told you why I came yet. Mr Oswald sent me, and I cannot tell it all at once. Let me stay till after tea, and Jem can take me home."

"All right," said Jem. "I have no objections, if nobody else has none."

There was a little pleasant confusion after Mr Philip and David came in, two or three speaking at once, and all eager to be heard, and then Mr Philip was introduced to the visitor. There was no mistaking the look she bent upon him. It was searching and critical, admiring, but not altogether approving.

"You have never been out Gourlay way?" said she.

"No, I never have, as yet."

"He did not know what nice people the Gourlay people are, or he would have been," said Jem.

"I expect so," said Miss Bethia. "It ain't too late to go yet."

"Thank you, Miss Barnes. I shall be happy to accept your kind invitation," said Philip.

In the meantime, Violet had been telling her mother of Mr Oswald's proposal. It was a matter of too great importance to be dismissed with a single word of refusal, as Violet would have liked, and time must be taken to consider it.

"Violet is not going with you, Mr Philip," said Jessie. "She is going to stay and take tea with Miss Bethia."

"I am sorry you should have had the trouble of coming round this way for nothing, Mr Philip," said Mrs Inglis. "We want Violet a little while to-night. Miss Barnes does not know how soon she may go, and Violet thinks she can be spared to-night, perhaps."

"Of course, she can be spared. And it was no trouble, but a pleasure, to come round. Shall I come back again?"

"Pray, do not. Jem will go with me. I shall like the walk."

"All right!" said Jem. "I consider myself responsible for her. She will be up there at the proper time."

"All right!" said Philip cheerfully. "Aunt Mary, you might ask me to have tea too."

"You haven't had your dinner yet," said Jessie.

"And you could not keep your horse standing so long," said Ned.

"And, besides, I am not to be invited," said Philip, laughing.

They all watched him and his fine horse as they went over the bridge and along the street. Then Violet said:

"Now, mamma, you are to sit down and I am to get tea. I can do all quite well."

And, so tying on an apron over her dress, she made herself very busy for the next half-hour, passing in and out, pausing to listen or put in her word now and then, sometimes claiming help from Jem or Davie in some household matter to which she put her hand. At last, with an air of pride and pleasure that Miss Bethia thought pretty to see, she called them to tea.

"You have got to be quite a house-keeper," said Miss Bethia, as they sat down to the table.

"Hasn't she?" said Jem and Davie in a breath.

"I mean to be, at any rate," said Violet, nodding and laughing gaily. "I like it a great deal better than teaching children, only, you know, it doesn't pay quite so well."

"I guess it will, in the long run," said Miss Barnes.

"I am going to be house-keeper for the next two months. Sarah and Charlotte are to have no lessons for that time, and Betsey can take care of them in the country quite as well as I—better, indeed. Mamma needs me at home. Don't you think so, Davie? I can find enough to do at home; can't I?"

"But, as you say, it wouldn't pay so well."

"In one way, perhaps, it wouldn't, but in another way it would. But mamma doesn't say anything," added Violet, disconsolately.

"We must sleep upon it, mamma thinks," said Jem.

"We need not be in haste to decide upon it for a day or two," said Mrs Inglis.

"I am afraid we must, mamma. The sooner the better, Mr Oswald says; and that is why I came to-day."

"I wish you would come and keep house for me. I am getting tired of it," said Miss Bethia.

"I should like it well—with mamma and the children."

"Of course, that is understood," said Miss Bethia. "And you could take these others with you, couldn't you? And what their father would pay for them would help your house-keeping."

"Miss Bethia spoke as coolly as if she had been speaking about the stirring up of a Johnny cake," Jem said. Violet looked eagerly from her to her mother. There was a little stir and murmur of excitement went round the table, but all awaited for their mother to speak. But she said nothing, and Miss Bethia went on, not at all as if she were saying anything to surprise anybody, but just as she would have told any piece of news.

"I've thought of it considerable. Serepta Stone has concluded to go away to a water-cure place in the States. If Debby should conclude to go to another place, I shouldn't care about staying in that big house alone. I can let it next fall, I expect. But this summer, Mrs Inglis, if you say so, you can have the house as well as not. It won't cost you a cent, and it won't be a cent's loss to me. And I don't see why that won't suit pretty well all round."

A chorus of "ohs," and "ahs," and "dear mammas," went round the table.

"It wouldn't cost more than living here," said David.

"Not so much," said Miss Bethia.

"And I am sure Mr Oswald would be delighted to have Charlotte and Sarah go, mamma," said Violet.

"He would pay you the same as he'd pay to them at the other place, and he might be sure he would get the worth of his money," said Miss Bethia.

"And I would keep house, and save you the trouble, mamma," said Violet.

"You and Debby Stone," said Miss Bethia, who seemed to consider that it was as much her affair as theirs, and so put in her word between the others.

"Davie, you'll have to lend me your fishing rod, to take to Gourlay with me," said Ned.

"Bless the child! there's fishing rods enough," said Miss Bethia.

"It's mamma's turn to speak now," said Jessie. And "yes, mamma!" and "oh! dear mamma!" were repeated again, eagerly.

There would be no use in telling all that Mrs Inglis said, or all that Miss Bethia and the rest said. It was not quite decided that night that they were to pass a part of the summer in Gourlay, but it looked so much like it that Violet held a little private jubilation with little Polly, as she undressed her for bed, before she went away, promising her, with many kisses and sweet words, that she would be rosy and strong, and as brown as a berry before she should see the bridge house again. Before she was done with it, Jem called out.

"It is time to be going, Letty, if I am to be responsible for you at the big house."

"Perhaps if you wait, Mr Philip will come for you. He said he would," said Jessie.

"And, just at the minute, he meant it, but we won't put him to the trouble, even if he remembers, which is doubtful," said Violet. "Come, Jem, I am ready."

"He seems a pretty likely young man, don't he?—young Mr Oswald, I mean," said Miss Bethia.

The question was not addressed to any one in particular. Jem looked at Letty, and Letty looked at Davie, and they all laughed merrily. "Likely," in Miss Bethia's vocabulary, meant well-intentioned, agreeable, promising, all in a moderate degree, and the description fell so far short of Mr Philip's idea of himself and his merits, and indeed of their idea of him that they could not help it.

"He seems to be a pleasant-spoken youth, and good-natured," said Miss Bethia.

"Oh, yes! he is very good-natured," said Violet.

Everybody had something to say in his praise. The little ones were quite enthusiastic. Jem said he was "smart" as well as good-natured, and David, though he said less, acknowledged that he was very clever, and added Mr Caldwell's opinion, that Mr Philip had all his father's talent for business, and would do well if he were really in earnest about it, and would settle down to it. Several instances of his kindness to the children and to his own little sisters were repeated, and Mrs Inglis spoke warmly in his praise.

"Only, mamma," said Violet, with some hesitation, "all these things are agreeable to himself. He does such things because he likes to do them."

"And ain't that to be put to his credit," said Miss Bethia. "It is well when one does right things and likes to do them, ain't it?"

"Yes; but people ought to do right things because they are right, and not just because they are pleasant. If very different things were agreeable to him, he would do them all the same."

"Stuff, Letty! with your buts and your ifs. Mr Phil, is just like other people. It is only you and Davie that have such high-flown notions about right and wrong, and duty, and all that."

"Our ideas of 'duty and all that' are just like other people's, Jem, I think," said David. "They are just like Miss Bethia's, at any rate, and mamma's."

"And like Jem's own ideas, though not like Mr Philip's" said Violet.

"Violet means that if he had to choose between what is right and what is pleasant, the chances are he would choose to do what is pleasant," said Davie.

"He would not wait to choose," said Violet, gravely. "He would just do what was pleasant without at all thinking about the other."

"Mamma, do you call that charitable?" said Jem.

"I think Violet means—and Davie—that his actions are, as a general thing, guided and governed by impulse rather than by principle," said Mrs Inglis; "and you know, Jem, the same reliance cannot be placed on such a person as on—"

"On a steady old rock, like Mr Caldwell or our Davie," said Jem. "Yes, I know; still I like Phil."

"So we all like him," said Violet. "But, as mamma says, we do not rely on him. He likes us and our ways, and our admiration of him, and he likes to come here and talk with mamma, and get good advice, and all that. But he likes to go to other places, and to talk with other people, who are as different from mamma as darkness is from daylight. He is so careless and good-tempered that anything pleases him for the moment. He has no stability. One cannot help liking him, but one cannot respect him."

Everybody looked surprised. Jem whistled.

"Why don't you tell him so? It might do him good."

"It wouldn't change his nature," said Violet, loftily. And then she bade them all good-night, and she and Jem went away, and Miss Bethia improved the occasion.

"I expect that his nature has got to be changed before he amounts to much that is good. I hope, David, you will not let this frivolous young man lead you away from the right path."

Mrs Inglis had gone out of the room, and David prepared himself for what he knew would come sooner or later, Miss Bethia's never-failing good advice.

"You are none too wise to be drawn away by a pleasant-spoken, careless youth like that. His company might easily become a snare to you, and to Jem too."

"Oh! he has very little to say to me, Miss Bethia. He is older than Jem or I. He likes to talk to mamma, and you mustn't think ill of him from what was said to-night."

"I suppose the trouble is in his bringing up," said Miss Bethia. "From all I hear, I should fear that his father hasn't a realising sense of the importance of religion for himself or his family, and what can be expected of his son?"

David did not like the turn the conversation had taken, and he did not like the next better.

"There is a great responsibility resting on you, David, with regard to the people among whom your lot is cast. It is to be hoped they'll be led to think more, and not less, of the Master you serve from your walk and conversation."

David made no answer.

"David," said Miss Bethia, "have you been living a Christian life since you came here? Such a life as would have given comfort to your father, if he had been here to see it? Have you been keeping your armour bright, David?"

"I have been trying, Miss Bethia," said David.

"Well, it is something to have been trying. It is something not to be led away. But have you been content with that? You have a battle to fight—a work to do in just the spot you stand in, and if you are faithful, you may help that unstable youth to stand on firmer ground than his feet have found yet."

David shook his head.

"You don't know me, Miss Bethia, nor him, or you would not say that."

"Your father would have made it his business to do him good."

"But I am not like my father, very far from that."

"Well, your father was nothing by himself. You are bound to do the same work, and you can have the same help. And it will pay in the long run. Oh, yes! it will pay!"

"I have been telling David that he may do that pleasant-spoken youth much good, if he is faithful to him and to himself," added she, as Mrs Inglis came into the room.

"And I have been telling Miss Bethia that she does not know me, or him, or she wouldn't say that, mamma," said David.

"She must know you by this time, I think, Davie," said his mother, smiling.

"I used to know him pretty well, and he seems to be getting along pretty much so. I don't know as I see any change for the worse in him. He has had great privileges, and he has great responsibility."

"Yes," said his mother, gravely; "and I quite agree with you, Miss Bethia, he may do Mr Philip good by a diligent and faithful performance of his daily duties, if in no other way. He has done so already."

"Oh, mamma!" said David, "Miss Bethia will think you are growing vain."

"No, I sha'n't. But he must be faithful in word as well as in deed. Oh! I guess he'll get along pretty well—David, I mean, not young Mr Oswald."

Jem came home while they were still talking.

"Mamma," said he, as he followed his mother out of the room, "we saw Philip going into Dick's saloon as we were going up the street and Violet said he'd be just as pleased and just as popular there as in our own home among the children, and she said he was as weak as water. That is all she knows! Violet is hard on Phil."

"She cannot think it right for him to spend his evenings in such a place," said his mother.

"But he sees no harm in it, and I don't suppose there is much."

"I should think it great harm for one of my boys," said his mother, gravely.

"All right, mamma!" said Jem. "But, then, as Miss Barnes says, our bringing up has been different."

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## Chapter Twelve.

When it was fairly decided that Miss Bethia's pleasant plan for the summer was possible, there was little time lost in preparation. Miss Bethia went away at once, to have all things ready for their coming, and in a few days Mrs Inglis and Violet and the children followed. The little Oswalds went with them, and Jem and possibly Frank Oswald were to follow when their holidays commenced. Whether David was to go or not, was to be decided later, but he did not let the uncertainty with regard to his own prospects of pleasure interfere with his in all that the others were to enjoy. He helped cheerfully in all the arrangements for their departure, and made light of his mother's anxiety and doubts as to the comfort of those who were to be left behind.

But when they were gone, and Jem and David left in the deserted house alone, they were neither of them very cheerful for a while. They were quite alone, for Mrs Lacy, the neighbour whom Mrs Inglis had engaged to care for their comfort, had a home of her own and little children to care for, and could only be there a part of the day. The unwonted silence of the house pressed heavily upon their spirits.

"It's queer, too," said Jem, who had been promising himself great enjoyment of the quiet time so that he might the better prepare for the school examinations that were coming on. "I used to think the children bothered with their noise and their chatter, but the stillness is ten, times more distracting, I think."

David nodded assent.

"They will be in Gourlay long ago," said he. "I wonder how it will seem to mamma to go back again."

Jem looked grave.

"It won't be all pleasure to her, I am afraid."

"No; she will have many things to remember; but I think she would rather have gone to Gourlay than anywhere else. I wish I could have gone with her."

"Yes; but she has Violet and the children; and mamma is not one to fret or be unhappy."

"She will not be unhappy; but all the same it will be a sorrowful thing for her to go there now."

"Yes; but I am glad she is there; and I hope I may be there, too, before the summer is over."

Jem's examinations passed off with great credit to himself; but he did not have the pleasure of telling his triumph, or showing his prizes to his mother and the children till after their return to Singleton; for Jem did not go to Gourlay, but in quite another direction.

When an offer was made to him, through one of his friends at the great engine-house, to accompany a skillful machinist to a distant part of the country where he was to superintend the setting up of some valuable machinery in a manufacturing establishment, he gave a few regretful thoughts to his mother and Gourlay, and the long anticipated delights of boating and fishing; but it did not take him long to decide to go. Indeed, by the time his mother's consent reached him, his preparations were far advanced, and he was as eager to be gone as though the sole object of the trip had been pleasure, and not the hard work which had been offered him. But, besides the work, there was the wages, which, to Jem seemed magnificent, and there was the prospect of seeing new sights far from home; so he went away in great spirits, and David was left alone.

He was not in great spirits. Jem had left him no earlier than he must have done had it been to join his mother and the children in Gourlay. But, somehow, when he thought of his brother out in the wonderful, strange world, about which they had so often spoken and dreamed, David had to struggle against a feeling which, indulged, might very easily have changed to discontent or envy of his brother's happier fortune.

Happier fortune, indeed! How foolish his thoughts were! David laughed at himself when he called up the figure of Jem, with bared arms and blackened face, busy amidst the smoke and dust of some great work-shop, going here and there—doing this and that at the bidding of his master. A very hard working world Jem would no doubt find it; and, as he thought about him, David made believe content, and congratulated himself on the quiet and leisure which the summer evenings were bringing, and made plans for doing great things in the way of reading and study while they lasted. But they were very dull days and evenings. The silence in the house grew more oppressive to him than even Jem had found it. The long summer evenings often found him listless and dull over the books that had been so precious to him when he had only stolen moments to bestow on them.

There had been something said at first about his going to the Oswald's to stay, when the time came when he should be alone in the house. Mr Philip had proposed it at the time when they were making arrangements for the going away of his little sisters. But the invitation had not been repeated. Mr Philip had gone away long before Jem. He had, at the last moment, joined an exploring party who were going—not, indeed, to Red River, but far away into the woods. Mr Oswald had forgotten the invitation, or had never known of it, perhaps, and David went home to the deserted house not very willingly sometimes, and, with a vague impatience of the monotony of the days, wished for something to happen to break it. Before Jem had been gone a week, something did happen. Indeed, it had happened a good while before, but it only came to David's knowledge at that time.

Mr Caldwell had just returned from one of his frequent business journeys, and one night David lingered beyond the usual hour that he might see him and walk down the street with him as far as their way lay in the same direction; and it was while they were going towards home together that Mr Caldwell told him of something very unpleasant that had occurred in the office. A small sum of money had been missed, and the circumstances connected with its loss led Mr Caldwell to believe that it had been taken by some one belonging to the office. Mr Caldwell could not give his reasons for this opinion, nor did he say much about it, but he questioned David closely about those who had been coming and going, and seemed troubled and annoyed about the affair. David was troubled, too, and tried to recall anything that might throw light upon the painful matter. But he did not succeed.

The circumstances, as David learned them then and afterwards, were these: Mr Oswald, as treasurer for one of the benevolent societies of the town, had, on a certain day of the preceding month, received a sum of money, part of which could not be found or accounted for. The rest of the sum paid into his hands was found in that compartment of his private safe allotted to the papers of the society. A receipt for the whole sum was in the hands of the person who had paid the money, and an entry in the society's books corresponded to the sum named in this receipt. Mr Oswald was certain that he had not made use of any part of it, because such was never his custom. The accounts of the society were kept quite distinct from all others, and all arrangements with regard to them were made by Mr Oswald himself. It did not make the loss a matter of less importance that the sum missed was small. Nor did it make Mr Oswald and Mr Caldwell less anxious to discover what had become of it.

The loss had not been discovered until some time after it had taken place, when the quarterly making up of the society's accounts had been taken in hand, and Mr Oswald could not remember much about the circumstances. The date of the receipt showed the time. The person who paid the money remembered that part of it had been in small silver coins, made up in packets, and this was the part that had disappeared.

All this was not told by Mr Caldwell that first afternoon. It came to David's knowledge, little by little, as it was found out. The matter was not, at first, discussed by the clerks in the office. Mr Caldwell had asked David not to speak of it to them, or to any one.

When Mr Caldwell told him that nothing had been said to them of the loss, he thought it was strange; but it never came into his mind that the reason was that Mr Oswald feared that he was the person guilty, and wished to keep it from the knowledge of the rest. But, as time went on, he began to notice a change in Mr Oswald's manner toward him. He had never said many words to him in the course of the day. It was not his way with those in his employment, except with Mr Caldwell. He said less than ever to him now, but David fancied that he was more watchful of him, that he took more note of his comings and goings, and that his manner was more peremptory and less friendly when he gave him directions as to his work for the day.

Mr Caldwell did not remain long in Singleton at this time, and having no one to speak to about the mysterious affair of the missing money, David, after a day or two, began to think less about it than he might otherwise have done. Once he ventured to speak to Mr Oswald about it.

"Have you heard anything about the lost money, sir?" said he, one night, when there were only they two in the office.

Mr Oswald answered him so briefly and sharply that David was startled, changing colour and looking at him in astonishment.

"No, I have not. Have *you* anything to tell me about it? The sooner the better," said Mr Oswald.

"I know only what Mr Caldwell has told me," said David.

"You may go," said Mr Oswald.

And David went away, very much surprised both at his words and his manner. He did not think long about it, but every day he became more certain that all was not right between them. He had no one to speak to, which made it worse. He could not write to his mother or even to Violet, because there was nothing to tell. Mr Oswald was sharp and short in his manner of speaking to him, that was all, and he had never said much to him at any time. No; there was nothing to tell.

But he could not help being unhappy. The time seemed very long. The weather became very warm. All that he had to do out of the office was done languidly, and he began to wish for the time of his mother's return. He received little pleasure from his books, but he faithfully gave the allotted time to them, and got, it is to be hoped, some profit.

He made himself busy in the garden, too, and gave little Dick Lacy his accustomed lesson in writing and book-keeping as regularly as usual. But, through all his work and all his amusements, he carried with him a sense of discomfort. He never could forget that all was not right between him and his master, though he could not guess the reason. He seemed to see him oftener than usual these days. He sometimes overtook him on his way home; and, once or twice, when he was working in the garden, he saw him cross the bridge and pass the house. Once he came at night to the house about some business, which, he said, had been forgotten. David was mortified and vexed, because he had not heard him knock, and because, when he entered, he found him lying asleep with his head on his Greek dictionary, and he answered the questions put to him stupidly enough; but he saw that business was only a pretence.

Next day, kind, but foolish Mrs Lacy told him that Mr Oswald had been at her house asking all manner of questions about him; what he did, and where he went, and how he passed his time; and though David was surprised, and not very well pleased to hear it, it was not because he thought Mr Oswald had begun to doubt him. Indeed, it came into his mind, that, perhaps, he was going to be asked at last to pass a few days at the big house with Frank, who had returned home not at all well. He was, for a moment, quite certain of this, when he carried in the letters in the morning, for Mr Oswald's manner was much kinder, and he spoke to him just as he used to do. But he did not ask him, and Frank did not come

down to see him at the bank, as David hoped he might.

That night, Mr Caldwell returned to Singleton. He did not arrive till after the bank was closed, but he came down to see David before he went home. The first words he spoke to him were concerning the lost money; and, how it came about, David could never very well remember. Whether the accusation was made in words, or whether he caught the idea of suspicion in his friend's hesitating words and anxious looks, he did not know, nor did he know in what words he answered him. It was as if some one had struck him a heavy blow, and then he heard Mr Caldwell's voice, saying:

"Have patience, David. You are not the first one that has been falsely accused. Anger never helped any one through trouble yet. What would your mother say?"

His mother! David uttered a cry in which there was both anger and pain. Was his mother to hear her son accused as a thief?

"David," said his friend solemnly, "it is at a time like this that our trust in God stands us in stead. There is nothing to be dismayed at, if you are innocent."

"If!" said David, with a gasp.

"Ay! 'if!' Your mother herself might say as much as that. And you have not said that the charge is a false one yet."

"I did not think I should need to say so to you!"

"But you see, my lad, I am not speaking for myself. I was bidden ask you the question point blank, and I must give your answer to him that sent me. My word is another matter. You must answer to him."

"To Mr Oswald, I suppose? Why should he suspect me? Has he been suspecting me all these weeks? Was that the reason he wished nothing said about it in the office?"

"That was kindly meant, at any rate; and you needna' let your eyes flash on me," said Mr Caldwell, severely. "Don't you think it has caused him much unhappiness to be obliged to suspect you?"

"But why should he suspect *me*?"

"There seemed to be no one else. But he must speak for himself. I have nothing to say for him. I have only to carry him your answer."

"I will answer him myself," said David, rising, as though he were going at once to do it. But he only walked to the window and stood looking out.

"David," said Mr Caldwell, "put away your books, and come home with me."

"No, I cannot do that," said David, shortly.

He did not turn round to answer, and there was not another word spoken for a while. By and by Mr Caldwell rose, and said, in his slow way:

"David, my lad, the only thing that you have to do in this matter is to see that you bear it well. The accusation will give but small concern to your mother, in comparison with the knowledge that her son has been indulging in an angry and unchristian spirit." And then he went away.

He did not go very far, however. It was getting late, and, in the gathering darkness, and the unaccustomed silence of the place, the house seemed very dreary and forsaken to him, and he turned back before he reached the gate.

"David," said he kindly, opening the door, "come away home with me."

But David only answered as he had done before.

"No, I cannot do that."

He said it in a gentler tone, however, and added:

"No, I thank you, Mr Caldwell, I would rather not."

"It will be dreary work staying here with your sore and angry heart. You need not be alone, however. You don't need me to tell you where you are to take all this trouble to. You may honour *Him* by bearing it well," said his friend.

"Bear it well!" No, he did not do that; at least, he did not at first.

When Mr Caldwell had gone, and David had shut the doors and windows to keep out the rain that was beginning to fall, the tears, which he had kept back with difficulty when his friend was there, gushed out in a flood. And they were not the kind of tears that relieve and refresh. There was anger in them, and a sense of shame made them hot and bitter as they fell. He had wild thoughts of going that very night to Mr Oswald to answer his terrible question, and to tell him that he would never enter his office again; for, even to be questioned and suspected, seemed, to him, to bring dishonour, and his sense of justice made him eager to defend himself at whatever cost. But night brought wiser counsels; and David knew, as Mr Caldwell had said, where to betake himself with his trouble; and the morning found him in quite another mind.

As for Mr Caldwell, he did not wait till morning to carry his answer to Mr Oswald. He did not even go home first to his own house, though he had not been there for a fortnight.

"For who knows," said he to himself, "what that foolish lad may go and say in his anger, and Mr Oswald must hear

what I have to say first, or it may end badly for all concerned.”

He found Mr Oswald sitting in the dining-room alone, and, after a few words concerning the business which had called him away during the last few weeks, he told him of his visit to David, and spoke with decision as to the impossibility of the lad's having any knowledge of the lost money.

“It seems impossible, certainly,” said Mr Oswald; “and yet how can its disappearance be accounted for? It must have been taken from the table or from the safe on the very day it was brought to me, or I must have seen it at night. There can be no doubt it was brought to me on that day, and there can be no doubt it was after all the others, except young Inglis and yourself were gone. I was out, I remember, when it was time to go home. When I came in, there was no one in the outer office. You had sent David out, you said. He came in before I left—” And he went over the whole affair again, saying it was not the loss of the money that vexed him. Though the loss had been ten times as great, it would have been nothing in comparison with the vexation caused by the loss of confidence in those whom he employed.

“For some one must have taken the money, even if David Inglis be not guilty.”

Here they were both startled by a voice from the other end of the room.

“David Inglis, papa! What can you mean?” and Frank came hurriedly forward, stumbling against the furniture as he shaded his eyes from the light.

“My boy! are you here? What would the doctor say? You should have been in bed long ago.”

“But, papa, what is it that is lost? You never could blame Davie, papa. You could not think Davie could take money, Mr Caldwell?”

“No, I know David Inglis better,” said Mr Caldwell, quietly.

“And, papa, you don't think ill of Davie? You would not if you knew him. Papa! you have not accused him? Oh! what will Aunt Mary think?” cried the boy in great distress. “Papa, how could you do it?”

Mr Oswald was asking himself the same question. The only thing he could say was that there was no one else, which seemed a foolish thing to say in the face of such perfect confidence as these two had in David. But he could not go over the whole matter again, and so he told Frank it was something in which he was not at all to meddle, and in his discomfort and annoyance he spoke sharply to the boy, and sent him away.

“But I shall go to Davie the first thing in the morning, papa. I would not believe such a thing of Davie, though a hundred men declared it. I would sooner believe it of—of Mr Caldwell,” said Frank, excitedly.

“Be quiet, Frank,” said his father; but Mr Caldwell laughed a little and patted the boy on the shoulder as he passed, and then he, too, said good-night and went away. And Mr Oswald was not left in a very pleasant frame of mind, that is certain.

True to his determination to see David, Frank reached the bank next morning before his father. He reached it before David, too, and he would have gone on to meet him, had it not been that the bright sunshine which had followed the rain had dazzled his poor eyes and made him dizzy, and he was glad to cover his face and to lie down on the sofa in his father's office for a while. He lay still after his father came in, and only moved when he heard David's voice saying—

“Mr Caldwell told me you wished to see me, sir.”

Then Frank started up and came feeling his way towards his friend.

“He does not mean it, Davie!” he cried. “Papa knows you never could have done such a thing. Don't be angry, old fellow.”

And then he put out his hand to clasp David's, and missed it partly because of their natural dimness and partly because of the tears that rushed to them. David regarded him in dismay.

“Are they so bad as that, Frank? Are they worse again?” said David, forgetting his own trouble in the heavier trouble of his friend. They were bad enough, and there was more wrong with the boy besides his eyes. He was ill and weak, and he burst out crying, with his head on David's shoulder, but his tears were not for himself.

“You were wrong to come out to-day, Frank,” said his father, surprised and perplexed at his sudden break-down; “you must go home immediately.”

“Papa, tell Davie that you do not believe he took the money,” cried the boy. “He *could* not do it, papa.”

“Indeed, I did not, sir,” said David. “I know nothing about the matter except what Mr Caldwell has told me. You may believe me, sir.”

“I do not know what to believe,” said Mr Oswald. “It seems unlikely that you should be tempted to do so foolish and wrong a thing. But I have been deceived many a time. Who could have taken it?”

“It was not I,” said David, quietly, and while he said it he was conscious of a feeling of thankfulness that he had not seen Mr Oswald in the first angry moment after he had known of his suspicion. An angry denial, he felt now, would have availed little.

“Papa, begin at the beginning and tell Davie all about it. Perhaps he will think of something you have forgotten—something that may help you to find out where the money has gone,” said Frank, earnestly.

But Mr Oswald would do nothing of the sort. He was tired and perplexed with the matter, and he had come to the determination to pay the lost money, and wait till time should throw light on the circumstances of its loss, or until the guilty person should betray himself.

"You must go, Frank. You are not fit to be here," said he.

"I want to hear you tell Davie that you don't believe he is a thief."

A thief! That is a very ugly word, and David winced as it was spoken. Mr Oswald winced too.

"Money has been taken from this room, and until the manner of its disappearance be discovered, all who had access to the place must, in a sense, be open to suspicion. Let us hope that the guilty person will be found out, and in the meantime, let nothing more be said about it."

"But why did you not tell me at once that you suspected me?" said David, in some excitement.

"It was not a pleasant thing to tell."

"No, but it is not pleasanter to hear it now. There is less chance that the guilty person may be traced now, than if the loss had been declared at once. And must I lie under the suspicion always? I do not think you have been just to me."

"That will do. The less said the better," said Mr Oswald. "Frank, you must go home."

"You will not go away, Davie?" said Frank.

"Not if I may stay. Where could I go?" said David.

"You will stay, of course. Let us hope the truth about this unpleasant business may come out at last. We must all be uncomfortable until it does."

"If you had only spoken to David about it sooner," said Frank, again.

But Mr Oswald would neither say nor hear more. Entreated by Frank, however, he asked David to go and stay at his house, till his mother returned home. But David refused to go even for a day, and no entreaties of Frank could move him.

"I don't wonder that you will not come," said Frank. "I don't blame you for refusing. And oh! what will Aunt Mary think of us all?"

"She will know that *you* are all right, Frank," said David, trying to look cheerful as he bade his friend good-bye at the door. He did not succeed very well, nor did Frank; and David, thinking of it afterwards, was by no means sure that he had been right in refusing to go to stay with him for a while, and thinking of his friend's troubles did him some good, in that it gave him less time to think of his own. But he could not make up his mind to go to Mr Oswald's house, and he did not see Frank again for a good while after that.

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## Chapter Thirteen.

David had rather a hard time for the next few days. A great trouble had fallen on him. He could have borne anything else better he sometimes thought. His good name was in danger, for even a false accusation must leave a stain on it, he thought. Every day that passed made it less likely that the mysterious matter of the lost money could be cleared up, and until this happened, Mr Oswald would never perfectly trust him again; and David said to himself, sometimes sadly and sometimes angrily, that he could not stay where he was not trusted. Nor was it likely that Mr Oswald would wish him to stay. They might have to leave the bridge house and Singleton, and where could they go?

Of course a constant indulgence in such thoughts and fears was very foolish on David's part, and almost always he knew it to be foolish. He knew that all this trouble had not fallen on him by chance, and that out of it some good must come. He said to himself that he had been growing proud of his good name, of being his mother's right hand, and of having the confidence of Mr Oswald, and perhaps this had been permitted to happen to him to remind him that he must be watchful and humble, and that he could do nothing good of himself. Gradually David came to see how right Mr Caldwell had been when he said that it was a very great matter how he bore his trial, and he grew ashamed of his anger and impatience and distrust.

Just as if the Lord who loved him, and whom he loved, were not caring for him all this time! Just as though this were a matter that could not be committed to His care—trusted altogether to Him! Yes, he acknowledged himself very foolish and wrong. A great many times every day he asked that his good name might be cleared from the stain that seemed to rest on it; but as often he asked, that whether it was to be so or not, he might have grace and strength given to bear his trouble well.

He did bear it pretty well, Mr Caldwell thought, and he watched him closely through these days. Mr Oswald thought so, too, and wondered a little. He could not really believe David Inglis to be guilty of theft, but it seemed strange to him that he should be so cheerful and patient under a false accusation. The only way in which he showed that he resented his suspicion, was by being firm in continuing to refuse the invitation to his house, which he again renewed. Frank told his father that he did not wonder at the refusal; he tried all the same to shake David's resolution, but he did not succeed.

David did not think he bore his trial well. In his heart, he was angry and desponding often. And, oh! how he wanted his mother! It would not have been half so bad if she had been at home, he thought, and yet he could not bring himself to write to her about it. When it should be made clear where the lost money had gone—so clear that even Mr Oswald would not have a doubtful thought, then he would tell his mother, and get the sympathy which would be so ready and so sweet. It would spoil her happy summer to know that he was in trouble, he thought, and, besides, he could not bear that she should know that any one had dared to speak of him as dishonest. This was foolish, too, but he could not tell her till afterwards.

His mother was not quite at ease about him. She knew he was in trouble. She had gathered that from the changed tone of his weekly letter, and an inadvertent word, now and then, led her to believe that there was something more the matter than the loneliness to which he confessed after Jem went away. So, when an opportunity occurred for Violet to go to Singleton for a day or two, she was very glad that she should go, to see how Davie was getting on, and to give him an account of their manner of life in Gourlay.

And when David came home one night, to find Violet making tea instead of Mrs Lacy, was he not glad to see her! He was more glad to see her than he would have been to see his mother. He knew he never could have talked half an hour with his mother without telling her all that was in his heart, and he could keep it from Violet. At least, so he said to himself. But when tea was over, and Violet had told him all they were doing at Gourlay, and all they were enjoying there, she began to ask him questions in return, and, before he knew it, he was telling all the sad story of the last few weeks, and was looking with wonder at his sister's astonished and indignant face. For astonishment was Violet's first feeling—astonishment that such a thing could have happened to Davie, and for a little, it was stronger even than her indignation.

"And haven't you the least idea what may have become of the money, Davie? Don't you have any suspicion of any one?" asked she, after she had said a good many angry words that need not be repeated. "Have they not been trying to discover something?"

"They have been trying, I suppose."

"And what do *you* think, Davie? There must be some clue, surely."

But David was silent.

"You do suspect some one?" said Violet, eagerly.

"No," said he, slowly; "I have no sufficient reason for suspecting any one."

"Tell *me*, Davie."

"No; I have no right to tell my suspicions, or to suspect any one. It came into my head one night; but I know it is foolish and wrong, and I have nothing to tell."

"When did it happen?" asked Violet, after a little.

David could not tell her the exact time. He had never been told the date of the receipt which Mr Oswald had given; but he thought it could not have been very long after his mother went away, though he had not heard of the loss till after Jem had gone.

Violet went here and there putting things to rights in the room, and said nothing for a good while. By and by she came and leaned over the chair in which David was sitting, and asked:

"David, when did Philip Oswald go away?"

David turned round and looked at her uneasily.

"A good while ago. Soon after you all went away to Gourlay. No, Violet—don't say it," said he, eagerly, as he met her look. "He could not do it. Why should he? He has all the money he wants. And, besides, he *could* not do such a thing."

"David," said Violet, gravely, "was it Philip that you were thinking about?"

"Don't, Violet! It came into my mind—I couldn't help that, but it is wrong to speak of it. It could not have been he."

"I don't know. It does not seem possible. He is foolish and frivolous—and not to be relied on; but I do not think he would do such a thing as—take money—unless—"

"Violet! Don't speak of it. A false accusation is a terrible thing."

"I am not accusing him. There does not seem to be a sufficient motive for such an act. The sum was so small—and then—"

"Dear Violet!" said David, in great distress, "don't speak of it any more."

"Well, I will not—but Mr Oswald accused you. You are a great deal better than I am, Davie," said his sister, softly.

David laughed an uncertain laugh.

"That is all you know about it," said he.

When Violet went up next day to speak to Miss Oswald about the little girls, the first word that Frank said to her was:

"Has Davie told you? Oh! Violet, what will Aunt Mary think of papa?"

But Violet could not trust herself to speak of Davie's trouble to him. She was too angry with his father; and, besides, she was too startled by Frank's pale looks to be able to think, for the moment, of any one but him.

"Are you ill, Frank? Are your eyes worse? What have you been doing to them?"

For Frank had dropped his head down on his hands again.

"Yes, they are worse. I was out in the rain, and caught cold. I was not strong enough to go, I suppose. Phil, sent me back with some people who were coming down. He would have come himself, but, of course, I couldn't let him."

"You would have done better to come to Gourlay with us," said Violet.

"Yes, even without Jem or Davie. I wish I had gone."

"Come with me to-morrow," said Violet, earnestly. "Mamma will be very glad to see you."

But Frank shook his head sadly.

"I cannot, Violet. I should be ashamed to look Aunt Mary in the face—after—"

"You need not, Frank. Mamma will know. And you don't suppose that anything they say can really hurt our Davie?"

"No; not in the end. But—there's no use in talking."

"I am not afraid!" said Violet. "And mamma will not fret about it; I am sure of that?"

There was nothing more said for some time, and then Violet asked:

"Where is your brother now?"

"He must be far across the country by this time. He was enjoying the trip very much when I left him."

"And when will he be home?"

"I don't know. Not for a good while yet. Why are you asking?"

Frank raised himself up, and peered with his dim eyes into Violet's face.

"Why are you asking?" he repeated.

But Violet did not answer him. As she looked at his poor, pale face, the tears started in her eyes.

"Frank, dear boy, you must come home with me. You want mamma again. She will do you more good than the doctor."

"Violet, tell me one thing! Does Davie blame Phil—about the missing money, I mean. Tell me!"

"Davie blame your brother! Why should you say so? Davie would be shocked at such a question from you. What reason could he have to blame Philip?"

But Violet was very glad that he did not pursue the subject, for she was afraid to let him know all her thoughts about Davie's trouble. She did not give him an opportunity to return to the subject. She wished very much for Frank's sake that he should return to Gourlay with her, and she hastened to propose the plan to his aunt. Miss Oswald was, by no means, disposed to hinder him, though she doubted if his father would let him go. She was not very much accustomed to the society of young people, and she had been at a loss what to do with the boy, who, though not very ill, was disinclined, and, indeed, unable to amuse himself, or to enter into any of the plans which were made for his pleasure, so she promised to speak to his father, and to have his things ready should he be permitted to go. Violet took care to avoid being alone with Frank while she stayed in the house, and nothing more was said about Philip.

It was all arranged as Violet desired it might be. Mr Oswald made no serious objections to his son's going to Gourlay. Frank himself objected, but the prospect of going with Violet was too pleasant to make his refusal very firm, and the thought of the loneliness of his own home decided him to go.

"Violet," said David, when the time came to say good-bye, "you must not tell mamma about all this vexation. It would only make her unhappy, and do no good."

But Violet would not promise.

"I cannot, Davie. I cannot keep anything from mamma when she wishes to know it; and she will be sure to ask everything about you. But you need not be afraid. Mamma will not fret. She will know that it will all be right in the end."

And the "end" of David's trouble, as far as the missing money was concerned, was nearer than either of them thought when they bade each other good-bye. He had a few days more of anxiety and discomfort, in the midst of which came a letter from his mother, which made it seem to him a very small trouble indeed. He read it over and over again, and laughed at himself for supposing that he was acting wisely in keeping the knowledge of all that was making him so unhappy from his mother.

"Mamma always knows just what to say and how to say it," said he to himself; "and, of course, she is not going to fret about a matter which is sure to come right in the end."

And so the days that followed were better days, though the hot weather, and the close confinement in the office through the day, and the loneliness of the deserted house at home, were beginning to tell on him, and he was by no means well. He did his best to do well all that was given him to do, but the days were long and dull and the evenings lonely, and he began to count the days that must pass before they should all come home.

There was something going on in the town one afternoon, a cricket match or a match at football, and all the clerks had left the bank at the earliest possible moment, intent on seeing all that was to be seen of it. David would have gone with, the rest, but Mr Caldwell, who was at the moment engaged with Mr Oswald in his private room, had asked him to remain till he came out to him again. David waited, not caring that he lost the amusement that the others sought, not caring very much for anything just at that moment, for he was tired and getting a little unhappy again, and very much ashamed of himself because of it.

For when he had read his mother's letter only the other day, he had taken all the comfort of her cheerful, trustful words, and acknowledged how foolish and wrong it had been for him to let Mr Oswald's doubts and suspicions dismay him. He had said then that it was all past now, and that he could wait God's time for the clearing of his name, without being unhappy or afraid again. And now here he was wondering anxiously whether Mr Oswald and Mr Caldwell were speaking about the lost money, and whether any thing more was known that he had not heard. He was tired waiting, and

wanted to go home, and yet the thought of the empty house and the long dull evening was not pleasant, and he was saying to himself that it did not matter whether he stayed or went, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a familiar voice said—

“Well, Davie, my boy, have you been standing here ever since I went away?”

David turned and saw Philip Oswald. In his surprise, and because of the many thoughts that came upon him at the sight of him, he did not utter a word. He forgot to take the hand which Philip held out to him.

“Have you, Davie? I declare you look as if you had not seen the light of the sun for a month! What is the matter with you, Davie?”

He might well ask it, for David had grown very pale, and his heart was beating fast. In spite of his judgment, he had, since his talk with Violet, associated Philip with the thought of the lost money, and now as he looked at his frank, handsome face, he said how impossible it was that he should have taken it, or that he should know anything about it. No, Philip Oswald could not help him out of his trouble.

“When did you come, Philip?” said he. “I should scarcely have known you, if you hadn’t spoken.”

Philip had changed more than seemed possible in two months’ time. He was brown with the sun and much more manly-looking. He even seemed to David to have grown taller in these two months.

“I have improved, haven’t I? I can’t say as much for you. What is the trouble, Davie?”

Philip laid his hand on his shoulder again, and brought his laughing brown face close to David’s. But David drew himself away. He hated himself for the feeling of anger and envy that rose in his heart as he looked at Philip. Why should life be so easy to him? Why should the summer have passed so differently to them? At the moment he was very miserable, tired of his trouble and of his laborious life, faithless and afraid. So he withdrew from the young man’s touch, and turned away saying nothing.

“Is it as bad as that? Can’t I help you? Frank seemed to think I might, though I could not make out from his letter what was the trouble or how I could help you out of it. Is it about money, Davie? Have you got into a scrape at last?”

“A scrape!” repeated David. “No you cannot help me, I am afraid. I should be sorry to trouble you.”

“Trouble! Nonsense! I have come a fortnight sooner than I wanted to come, because of Frank’s letter. He seemed to think I could put you through. What has my father to do with it? Hallo! Here is old Caldwell. Must it be kept dark, Davie?”

David made him no answer. Unconsciously he had been looking forward to the time of Philip’s coming home, with hope that in some way or other light might be thrown on the matter that had darkened all the summer to him, but Philip evidently knew nothing of it, and all must be as before. If he could have got away without being questioned, he would have gone, for he was by no means sure that he might not disgrace himself by breaking into angry words, or even into tears. He certainly must have done one or other if he had tried to speak, but he did not need to answer.

“So you have come home!” said Mr Caldwell, as he came forward. “You have not been in haste.”

“I beg your pardon. I *have* been in haste. I did not intend to come home for ten days yet, if I had been allowed to have my own way about it.”

“And what hindered you? Matters of importance, doubtless.”

“You may be sure of that. Has my father gone home? I will just see him a minute, and then I’ll go home with you, Davie,” said Philip, turning towards his father’s door. “David has important business with me,” added he, looking over his shoulder with his hand on the door-handle.

David shook his head.

“Your father will tell you all about it,” said he, hoarsely.

Philip whistled and came back again.

“That is the way, is it?”

“Or I will tell you,” said Mr Caldwell, gravely. “Young man, what did your brother Frank say to you in the letter he wrote to you a while ago?”

Philip looked at him in surprise.

“What is that to you, sir? He said—I don’t very well know what he said. It was a mysterious epistle altogether, and so blurred and blotted that I could hardly read it. But I made out that Davie was in trouble, and that I was expected home to bring him through.”

Searching through his many pockets, he at last found his brother’s letter and held it out to David. “Perhaps you can make it out,” said he.

Blurred and blotted it was, and the lines were crooked, and in some places they ran into each other, and David did not wonder that Philip could not read it very well. He saw his own name in it and Violet’s, and he knew of course that what Frank had to say was about the lost money, but he could see also that the story was only hinted at, and the letter was altogether so vague and indefinite, that it might well seem mysterious to Philip.

“Can you make it out?” Philip asked.

"I know what he means, though perhaps I should not have found it out from this. Your father will tell you, or Mr Caldwell."

"All right! Fire away, and the sooner the better, for I am tired. If I can help you out of the scrape, I will."

"That is to be seen yet," said Mr Caldwell.

Then he told the story of the lost money, using as few words as possible, as was his way. He only told the facts of the case, how the money had been brought to Mr Oswald and its receipt acknowledged by him, and how a part of it had never been found or accounted for, and how Mr Oswald had first suspected, and then openly accused David Inglis of having taken it. He did not express any opinion as to whether Mr Oswald was right or wrong, nor offer any suggestion as to what might have become of the missing money, and one might not have thought from his way of telling it, that he was particularly interested in the matter. But he never removed his eyes from Mr Philip's face, and his last words were—

"And it seems your brother thought you might have some knowledge of the matter. Is that what he says in his letter?"

Philip's face was well worth looking at as the story went on. At first he whistled and looked amused, but his amusement changed to surprise, and then to consternation, as Mr Caldwell proceeded. When he ceased speaking he exclaimed without heeding his question—

"What could my father mean? To blame Davie, of all people!"

"There was no one else, he thought," said David.

"No one else!" repeated Philip. "Nonsense! There was Mr Caldwell and all the rest of them in the office, and there was *me*. I took the money."

"If you had acknowledged it a little sooner, it would have been a wiser thing for yourself, and it would have saved your father much vexation, and a deal of unhappiness to David Inglis and the rest of them," said Mr Caldwell, severely. "You had best tell your father about it now," added he, as Mr Oswald came out of his room.

"Acknowledge it! Of course, I acknowledge it. Papa, did you not get the note I left on your table for you the day I went away?"

"The note!" repeated his father. "I got no note from you."

"David, my man," whispered Mr Caldwell, "do you mind the word that says, 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday?' The Lord doesna forget."

The story as they gathered it from Philip's explanations and exclamations was this: He had come to the office to see his father directly from the train that had brought him home from C—. He had not found him in, but he had written a note to explain that through some change of plan the company of explorers were to set out immediately, and that he must return to C— without a moment's delay, in order that all arrangements might be completed by the time that the boat sailed. He was almost sure he had acknowledged taking the small rolls of silver that were on the table; he was quite sure that he had left the full value in paper money in exchange. There could be no mistake about it, and he had never doubted but his father had received it.

"And, papa! the absurdity of suspecting Davie," said Philip, not very respectfully, when his story was done.

"And now the matter lies between him and you," said his father. "For the money is not forthcoming. You may have neglected to leave it after all."

But Philip was certain as to that point. He had enclosed it with his note and closed the envelope, leaving it on an open ledger that was lying on the table. There could be no mistake about that.

"And we are just where we were before," said Mr Caldwell. "But don't be cast down, David. There must be a way out of this."

"But nothing astonishes me so much as that my father should have doubted Davie. That was too absurd, you know. If I had been you, Davie, I would have cut the whole concern," said Philip.

"There would have been much wisdom in that," said Mr Caldwell dryly. "There is no fear of David Inglis."

David said nothing. He stood folding and unfolding the letter that Philip had given him, struck dumb by the thought that nothing had really been discovered of the missing money, and that the suspicion of Mr Oswald might still rest on him. "I wonder you did not think of me, father," went on Philip. "Frank did, I dare say, though I could not make out what he meant. But the money must be somewhere. Let us have a look."

He went into his father's room, and the others followed. Philip looked about as though he expected everything might be as he left it two months ago. There were loose papers on the table, and some letters and account-books. The morning paper was there, and Mr Oswald's hat and cane, and that was all.

"The big book lay just here," said Philip. "I laid my note on it, so that it need not be overlooked."

"There are more big books in the office than one," said Mr Caldwell, crossing the room to a large safe, of which the doors were still standing open. One by one he lifted the large account-books that were not often disturbed, and turned over the leaves slowly, to see whether any paper might have been shut in them. As soon as Philip understood what he was doing, he gave himself to the same work with a great deal more energy and interest than Mr Caldwell displayed. But it was Mr Caldwell who came upon that for which they were looking—Philip's note to his father—safe between the pages of a great ledger, which looked as though it might not have been opened for years.

"I mind well; I was referring back to Moses Cramp's account of past years on the very day that brought us all our

trouble. And now, David Inglis, your trial is over for this time," and he handed the note to Mr Oswald.

"Provided Mr Philip has made no mistake," added he, cautiously, as the note was opened.

The interest with which David looked on may be imagined. It took Mr Oswald a good while to read the note; at least, it was a good while before he laid it down, and Mr Caldwell, claiming Mr Philip's help, set about putting the big books in their places again. David never thought of offering to help.

"It has been a very unfortunate mistake," said Mr Oswald, at last.

"All's well that ends well," said his son lightly.

"I am very sorry that you should have been made unhappy about it, David. I might have known that *you* were not to blame, but there seemed to be no one else. I beg your pardon sincerely," said Mr Oswald.

"I am very glad it is all right, sir," said David, quietly.

"I should like to know one thing," said Philip. "How came Frank to write to me? He must have thought I was the thief—the young rascal. Did you think so, Davie?"

"No," said David, "I never thought you took it. I don't know what Frank thought. I never spoke to him about it, nor to any one," added David, after a moment's hesitation.

"Well! never mind. I'll sift that matter by and by. Come up to the house with me, Davie. I am very sorry for all the pain you have had about this business. Come home with me to-night."

"No; I am going home by myself. I have a headache. You were not to blame."

"Yes, he was to blame," said Mr Oswald. "It was a very unbusiness-like way of doing things, and it might have ended badly for all concerned."

"It has been bad enough all through for David Inglis. Mr Philip, if you wish to make amends to him, you should offer to take his place and let him go to the country to amuse himself with the rest for a few days."

Philip opened his eyes.

"I am afraid I could not fill David's place in the office," said he.

"I am afraid of that, too. But you would be better than nobody, and we would have patience with you. And David must go for awhile, whether you take his place or no."

"Yes," assented Mr Oswald, rather absently. "He might as well have a holiday now as any time. And, Philip, I expect you to take your own place in the office after this regularly."

Philip shrugged his shoulders, when his father was not looking to see.

"I'll give it a trial," said he.

"And can I go to-morrow, Mr Caldwell?" said David. "I have no preparations to make, and I should like to take them by surprise."

"By all means. I should like to go with you and see it," said Philip. "But, I suppose, that would hardly do—just at present."

David bade them good-night, and went down the street with Mr Caldwell.

"I am much obliged to you, sir. I am very glad to get away from the office for awhile, to say nothing of going to Gourlay and seeing them all."

David's eyes sparkled at the thought.

"Well! You have borne your trouble not so ill," said Mr Caldwell; "and you may tell your mother I said so."

David laughed; but he looked grave in a moment.

"I don't think you would say I bore it well, if you knew all the angry thoughts I had. But I am very glad and thankful now, and I am sure mamma will thank you for all your kindness. I know now you never thought me capable of doing so wrong a thing."

"We are all poor creatures, David, my man. There is no saying what we mightna' do if we were left to ourselves. Be thankful and humble, and pray for grace to keep in the right way; and mind that yon young man's eyes are upon you, and that you are, in a measure, responsible for his well-doing or his ill-doing, for awhile, at least; and may the Lord guide you," said Mr Caldwell, solemnly, and then he went away.

David stood gazing after him with astonished eyes.

"I responsible for him! That can hardly be. I am nothing to him. I wonder what mamma would say? I shall have nothing to do with him for awhile, at least. I like Frank much the best. Oh! isn't it good to be going home!"

David had one thing to do with Philip Oswald before he went away. He came to the station with a parcel which he wished him to take to his little sisters, and to see him off. He was merry and good-humoured, though he pretended to be dreadfully afraid of not being able to fill David's place in the office to the satisfaction of Mr Caldwell.

"If Aunt Mary will ask me, I will come to Gourlay and spend some Sunday with you," said he. "I have a settlement to make with Master Frank. I did not think that he and Violet would have called me a dishonest person, even to clear you. I am very angry with them both."

He did not look very angry, for he said it with laughing lips. But David was shocked.

"Violet never thought that of you. She only said that—that—"

"Well! What did she say?" demanded Philip.

"She said it was quite impossible," went on David. "She said there was no motive—I mean—She said you were foolish, and frivolous, and thought first of your own pleasure—but—"

There was not time for another word, if David would not lose the train. He was indignant with himself. Why could he not have kept silence for two minutes longer? And yet, as he caught a glimpse of Philip's astonished face as the train swept past him on the platform, he could not help laughing a little, and hoping that the truth might do him good. For it was true, and Philip did not hear unpleasant truths too often for his welfare.

"At any rate, I am not going to vex myself about it now," said David. And he was quite right.

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## Chapter Fourteen.

And were they not glad to see David in Gourlay? Almost always something happens to mar, a little, the pleasure of a surprise that has been planned beforehand; but nothing happened to mar David's. He travelled to Gourlay in a late train; and as he went up the familiar road, and saw the lights gleaming through the trees, as he had seen them so often in the old days, a great many thoughts crowded upon him, and, if the truth must be told, there were tears in his eyes and on his cheeks, too, when he opened the door and went in among them.

They were all there. Even little Polly, by some happy chance, was up at the unusual hour. Was there ever music so sweet, as the glad cry that greeted him? There were tears on more cheeks than David's; but his mother did not ask if his trouble was over; she knew by his face,—though it was wet,—that he was at peace with himself, and troubles from without, do not hurt much, when the heart's peace is undisturbed. The words that rose to Violet's lips were kept back, as she looked from her mother's face to David's. But Frank could see nobody's face, and his own was very pale and anxious, as he listened to the happy tumult of voices around him.

"Has Philip come home?" asked he, after a little. "Did he get my letter? Is it all right, Davie?"

David laughed.

"Oh, yes! it's all right. He got your letter, but I am afraid he couldn't read it very well. It brought him home a fortnight sooner than he meant to come, however."

"And is it all right?" asked Frank, anxiously.

"All right! Only I am afraid he will be sorry he came, for he has taken my place in the office for ten days at least, and he will be very sick of it before that time is over. Oh, yes! it is all right as right can be. Mamma, you were right. I need never have fretted, about it at all. But Philip has something to say to you, Frank, and to Violet," added David, laughing a little at the remembrance of his last glimpse of Philip's astonished face.

But there was no more said then. Of course, the story of David's troubled summer was all told afterwards, to his mother first, and then to Frank and Violet. It was told to his mother before he slept, when she went to say "good-night" and take his lamp, as she used to do, long ago, in that very room. If David had had to tell the story of Mr Oswald's suspicions, before Philip's return had proved their injustice, he might have grown angry as he went on with it, and indulged in bitter words, as he had sometimes indulged in bitter thoughts. He had no temptation now to do this, and he did not seek to conceal from her how angry he had been at first, and how faithless and unhappy afterwards. He ended by giving Mr Caldwell's message to her, "that he had borne his trouble not so ill," and his mother agreed with Mr Caldwell, though she said less than she felt with regard to the whole matter.

"You should have written to me, Davie," said she.

"I wished you were there a thousand times, mamma, but I thought it would only make you unhappy to know about my trouble, since you couldn't help it. And for a long time there was nothing to tell. When I got your letter, after Violet came, I was sorry I hadn't told you before."

There was a good deal more said before Mrs Inglis went down-stairs, but not much more about this matter. Sitting in the dark, with now and then a quiver in her voice, and tears on her cheeks, the mother told her son how it had been with her since they parted. The coming back to the old home and to her husband's grave had not been altogether sorrowful. Indeed, after the very first, it had been more joyful than sorrowful. "The memory of the just is blessed."

"They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." How clear this had been made to her during these days! The results of her husband's teaching and influence and example were visible now, as they had not been in former days. That which then had been as the hidden seed, or the shooting germ, had in some lives sprung up to blossom, or bear fruit an hundred fold. She told David of one and another who had spoken to her of his father, blessing his memory, because of what he had done for them and theirs, in the service of his Master, and then she said—

"It is the only true and worthy life, Davie—a life of work for the Master. Is it to be yours, my boy?"

"Yes, mamma. In one way or another, it is to be mine. Whether it is to be as papa's was, I cannot tell."

"That may come, dear. It is so blessed to feel that our times are in His hands. It would be great happiness to know that my son might give himself to the work of preaching the Gospel as his father did. But that must be as God wills. You may be his soldier and servant, whatever may be your calling; but we gave you to His work as soon as He gave you to us,

and I pray God you may yet stand in your father's place."

"A soldier of Christ—to gird on the armour that my father has laid down," said David, softly. "I *do* wish it, mamma, if only it might be. But it must be a long time first."

"Who knows? And it does not matter whether the time may be long or short, if it is God's time. And all your life till it comes may be made a preparation."

It was not often that Mrs Inglis spoke on this subject to her son. She had not done so more than once or twice since his father died. But it was, as she told him, the cherished wish of her heart, and the burden of her prayers for him that he should live and die in the work that had been his father's. The fulfillment of her hope did not seem very near, or possible, but David was young and she could wait, and, in the meantime, it was her pleasure and her duty to encourage him.

Afterwards, when David looked back on this time, it was of his mother and these quiet talks with her that he always thought. Not that these two had much of these pleasant weeks to themselves or many opportunities to indulge in conversation which all could not share. Once they went to the North Gore together, and oh, how vividly came back to David the many times which during the last year of his father's life he had gone there with him! The memories awakened were sad, but they were sweet, for all the bitterness had gone out of his grief for his father, and he told his mother many things about those drives, and of all his father had said, and of the thoughts and feelings his words had stirred in his heart. And she had some things to tell as well.

Once they lingered behind the others on their way home from church, and turned aside into the grave-yard for a little while. The moonlight was brightening in the east, and the evening star shone clear in the west, and in the soft uncertain light, the white grave-stones, and the waving trees, and the whole place looked strangely beautiful and peaceful to the boy's eyes. There were not many words spoken. There was no need of many words between these two. In the heart of the widow, as she sat there in the spot dearest to her on earth, because of the precious dust it held, was no forgetfulness of past sorrow, but there was that perfect submission to God's will, which is the highest and most enduring happiness. There was trust for the future, such as left no room for doubt or for discouragement; and so there was peace for the present, which is better than happiness. She did not speak of all this to David, but he knew by many tokens what was passing in her heart, and he shared both the sadness and the gladness of the peaceful hour.

There was a great deal of enjoyment of another kind crowded into the time of David's stay in Gourlay. There was only one thing to regret, and that was the absence of Jem. There were few familiar faces or places that he did not see. Sometimes Frank went with him, and sometimes Violet, and sometimes they all went together, but neither Frank nor Violet quite filled Jem's place to his brother. Though David had generally been regarded as much wiser and steadier than his brother, when they lived in Gourlay, they had had enough interests and amusements and tastes in common to make David miss him and regret him at every turn. And he missed him and wished for him all the more that he himself was regarded and treated by the people now as a man of business and a person of consideration. Of course, he could not object to the respect and deference shown to him in this character, but they were sometimes embarrassing, and sometimes they interfered with his plans for passing his much prized holiday. Jem would have made all things right, David thought, and it would have been far more agreeable to follow his leadership in the way of seeking amusement, as he used to do, than to have to sustain his reputation for gravity and steadiness among his elders. Still they all enjoyed these weeks thoroughly, though not in the way they would have done in Jem's company.

Miss Bethia was paying a visit to a friend in a neighbouring town when David first came to Gourlay, which was upon the whole a circumstance not to be regretted, he thought, as they had a few days to themselves just at first. He was very glad to see her, when she came, however, and she was as glad to see him. Of course, she manifested her interest in him in the old way, by giving him good advice, and reminding him of his privileges, but to his mother she very decidedly signified her approval of him, and her satisfaction in regard to his walk and conversation generally, and spoke of his future profession—of his entering upon his father's work, as if it were a settled matter accepted by them all. But David was shy of responding to her expressions of interest on this subject. It was one thing to speak to his mother of his hopes, and quite another to listen to Miss Bethia's plans and suggestions, especially as she did not confine the discussion to themselves, but claimed the sympathy and congratulations of friends and neighbours, in view of his future work and usefulness.

They did not fall out about it, however, and there was one matter of interest and discussion which they enjoyed entirely. This was the minister's much valued library. It was to be David's at some future time. That was quite settled, and in the meantime it had to be looked over and dusted and re-arranged, or rather arranged exactly as it had been left, and David handled the books "just as his father used to do," Miss Bethia said, "just as if he liked the feel of them in his hands," which he doubtless did. He liked them altogether, and no day of that happy month passed without at least one hour passed in the quiet of his father's study.

David's coming home was especially good for Frank. He had been more anxious and unhappy about David's affairs than he had confessed, and about Philip's possible share in them—more anxious than he was able to believe possible, after he had talked it all over with David and Violet. That he had been really afraid that Philip had done any wrong, he would not allow to himself. To the others he never spoke of what his fears had been. But it was a great relief and satisfaction that it was all past, and no one worse for it, and as far as Frank was concerned, there was nothing to interfere with the enjoyment of the days as they passed.

There had been one thing very terrible to him before he came to Gourlay to tell it to Aunt Mary—the fear of blindness. It had been all the worse for him at home, because he never spoke of his fears there—no one could bear to think of anything so sad, and fears brooded over in silence increase in power. But he could speak of it to Mrs Inglis, and the mere telling his fears had done something to allay them. Mrs Inglis's judicious words did more. It was foolish and wrong, she said, to go half way to meet so great a trouble. And since the physicians all declared that only time and an improved state of health were needed to restore perfectly his sight, to wait patiently and hopefully was his duty.

It was easier for him to do so than it had been at home, and something better than patient waiting, better even than the hope of fully restored sight, came to Frank as the summer days went on. He and David enjoyed much, after the manner of lads of their age, in the agreeable circumstances in which they were placed; but their chief enjoyment was of a kind which lads of their age do not usually prize very much.

David was boyish in many ways still, but the discipline of the last two years had wrought well with him, and Frank saw a great difference in him in one respect, at least. He had always been thoughtful, and he had always been earnest in the grave discussions into which they had sometimes fallen during his first visit, but there was this difference in him now, Frank saw. He spoke now, not doubtfully and wistfully as they all used to do, about "the whole armour" and the Christian's "weapons" and "warfare," but with firmness and assurance, as of something with which he had to do; and,

though he said little about himself at such times, it gradually became clear to Frank that David was no longer his own—that his name had been enrolled among the names of those whose honour and glory it is that they are the soldiers of the Lord Jesus.

It sometimes happens that young persons who have been carelessly brought up, or whose religious teaching has been merely formal, have less hesitation in speaking about personal religion than others who have had their consciences, if not their hearts, touched by the earnest and loving appeals of those who watch for their souls as they who must give account. And so, when David, sometimes unconsciously, and sometimes with intention, made it clear to him how the aim and purpose of his life were changed, and how he longed and meant to live in future as the servant and soldier of Christ, Frank listened and questioned with interest. And when David went further, and ventured on a gentle word or two of entreaty or counsel to him personally, he not only listened patiently, but responded frankly to all. And it was not always David who was first to turn the conversation to serious subjects. Frank had never forgotten the lessons learned during his first visit. He had often, in his own mind, compared the life his father was living with the life Mr Inglis had lived, and he did not think his father's life was the wisest or the happiest. "Labour for that which satisfieth not," told best the story of his father's life to him. He had thought that often during the last year, for he knew a little of his sister's exacting demands, of his brother's careless expenditure, and of the anxieties which troubled his father's days and nights because of them, and because of other things. And now, when in Gourlay he heard of the fruit already gathered and still to gather from the good seed sown in past years by the minister, he thought it still the more. Even for this life, the minister had had the best portion. True, he had lived and died a poor man; but, to Frank, it seemed that more was to be enjoyed in such poverty than ever his father had enjoyed from his wealth.

Frank had many unhappy thoughts about his father and the rest, and some about himself. For himself and for them he desired nothing so much as that they might all learn the secret of perfect contentment which Mr Inglis had known, which made Mrs Inglis cheerful and not afraid, though there was little between her and utter poverty—the secret which David knew and Violet. And so, when David, in his not very assured way, spoke to him of the true riches, and of how they were to be obtained, he was more than willing to listen, and pleased and surprised his friend by his eagerness to learn.

It was with no design or expectation of teaching on David's part, but it happened because they both cared about those things, that whenever they were alone together—on their way to or from any of their many visiting-places, or in the fields or woods, or while sailing on the river, the conversation almost always turned on graver matters than young lads usually care to discuss. It was often the same when Violet was with them or the mother, and Frank had reason to remember this time; for out of all these earnest talks and happy influences, there sprang up in his heart a strong desire to be, as they were, a follower of Christ—a wish to give himself to Him and to His service—to be His in life and His in death. And by and by the desire was granted. He who never refuses to receive those who come to Him in sincerity, received him, and henceforth he and David were more than friends—they were brothers, by a bond stronger than that of blood, being joined in heart to Him, of whom it is said, "He is not ashamed to call" His people "brethren."

Philip did not come to Gourlay, though an invitation was sent him by Mrs Inglis, and accepted by him. He was very busy in the office in David's absence, he wrote, but he would avail himself of the first leisure to come to them. He did not come, however, and they could only suppose that he was too useful in the office to be spared. They were very sorry, of course, for his sake and theirs, but the days passed happily with them. The time to leave came only too soon. Mrs Inglis decided that it would be better for them all to return to Singleton together, as the autumn days were becoming short, and it was time to be thinking of winter arrangements in many things.

The last night came. It was not a night like the last one of Frank's former visit; but Frank was reminded of that night all the same. Instead of the rain, and wind, and sleet, that had made that night so dismal without, and the lights and the fire so pleasant within, there was a cloudless sky, flooded with the light of the harvest moon, and the air was so still that it did not stir the leaves of the trees beneath which they lingered. And yet Frank was in some way reminded of the night when they read about Hobab, and waited so long for Mr Inglis to come home. David must have been reminded of it, too, for, by and by, they heard him speaking to Miss Bethia of old Tim, and about his going with his father when he preached his funeral sermon at the North Gore.

"And an excellent sermon it was," said Miss Bethia. "Don't you remember telling me about it that night when I was helping Letty to do the week's ironing when Debby was away?"

"Yes," said David, laughing a little, "I remember it quite well." But, he added, gravely in a minute, "I think that must have been the very last time my father preached when he was quite well."

"I am afraid he was not quite well then," said Miss Bethia, "though the sermon was good enough to have been his last. The night you repeated it to me was the first time I thought you had better be a minister. You might tell it over now, if you haven't forgotten it."

David said to himself that he would be past remembering most things when he should forget what his father had said that day, and all that grew out of it. But he did not tell Miss Bethia so. He would not speak of the sermon, however—he would not go over it as a mere trial of memory; and, besides, it was not to be supposed that the children would listen patiently on this last night, when there was so much to be said. So, after that, the talk was mostly left to the little ones, and wandered away in various directions. Sometimes it was guided past week-day subjects by the mother, and sometimes it was gently checked, but, for the most part, this was not needed. The feeling that it was the last night was on them, and they were very quiet and a little sad.

Miss Bethia was sad, too, and said little. She did not so far forget her duty as to omit her usual words of caution and counsel to each and all; but she did not mete it with her usual decision, and very nearly broke down in the middle of it.

"Aunt Bethia, why don't you come home with us?" said Polly. "Mamma, why don't you ask Aunt Bethia to come home and stay with us till next summer?"

"Where should we put her? There is no room in our house," said the practical Jessie, before her mother could answer.

"That's so," said Miss Bethia. "Old as I have got to be, there ain't room for me in anybody's house but my own. I guess Debby and I will have to get along the best way we can till next summer, and then you must all come back again."

"We don't know what may happen before next year," said Jessie.

"And it is no good making plans so far ahead," said Ned.

"And we shall hope to see Miss Bethia before summer, and then we can make our plans. Our house is not very large, Aunt Bethia, but there will always be room enough in it for such a friend as you have been to us all."

"And you have promised to come, Aunt Bethia," said Violet.

"If all is well," said Miss Bethia, gravely.

"But we are poor creatures, at the best, as I don't need to tell you; and I don't feel as if I could count on much time or strength for my part. But it ain't best to worry."

"We have had a good time here this summer, whether we come again or not," said Sarah Oswald. "I would like to stay here all winter, if Violet would stay too. It would be a great deal pleasanter than going back to Aunt Livy."

"Only it is not quite the right thing to say so, Sally," said Frank.

"It would be pleasant to stay for some things," said Violet. "But I am glad we are going home now. We shall come again in the summer, if Aunt Bethia will have us."

"You are glad you came, mamma?" said David.

"Very glad. It has been a happy summer to us all. The leaving you alone was the only thing to be regretted; but I don't think you are really the worse for being left."

"No," said David, with a long breath. "But I am very glad we are all going home together. I only wish Aunt Bethia was not going to be left behind."

In her heart Miss Bethia knew that it was quite as well for all concerned that she was to be left behind, still it pleased her to hear David's wish. She had had a pleasant summer as well as the rest; but she was not so strong as she used to be, and needed quiet.

"Debby and I will tough it out together through the winter," said she; "and, like as not, those of us who are spared will have to make all their plans all over again. It will be all right, whichever way it is."

Violet and David looked at Miss Bethia and at each other in surprise, not so much at her words, as at her manner of saying them. She looked as though it needed an effort to speak calmly, and she was very pale; and when she put up her hands to gather her shawl closer about her, they both noticed that they were trembling and uncertain.

"Miss Bethia is growing old," whispered David.

"And there is something more the matter with her than she will acknowledge, I am afraid," said Violet.

"It is time to go into the house. The dew is beginning to fall. Come, children," said the mother, rising.

David and Violet came last with Miss Bethia. She smiled, well pleased, when, with boyish gallantry, David offered her his arm.

"I've gone alone all my life," said she, "and now I am most at the end of it. I've taken a great many steps, too, at one time and another, but they don't seem to amount to much to look back upon."

"And you have a good many more to take, I hope," said Violet, hardly knowing how to answer her.

But Miss Bethia shook her head.

"It ain't likely. But the next six months seem longer to look forward to than a great many years do to look back upon. It is all right, anyhow. And, children, if I should never see you again—I want you to remember to consider your mother always. You must never forget her."

"No," said David, wondering a little at her earnestness.

"And, David, and you too, Violet, don't you get to thinking too much about property. It is a good thing to have, I'll allow, but it ain't the best thing by considerable. Some get to love it, by having too much, and some by having too little; but it ain't a satisfying portion any way that it can be fixed, and the love of it makes one forget everything else. And be sure and be good children to your mother, if I shouldn't ever see you again. I don't suppose I need to tell you so; but it's about as good a thing to say for a last word as any, except this—Follow the Lord always, and keep your armour bright."

They answered her gravely and earnestly, as she seemed to expect, but it was with no thought that they were listening to her last words. They would see her, doubtless, many a time again; and they said so to her, as she repeated them in the morning when it was time to go. But Violet never saw her again; David saw her, when she was almost past words, and then she could only, with labouring breath, repeat the very same to him.

It would have been a very sorrowful leave-taking if the children could have known that it was their last "Good-bye" to Miss Bethia. But it never came into the minds of any of them that the next time they saw the pleasant house in Gourlay, she would be sleeping by their father's side in the grave-yard over the hill.

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## Chapter Fifteen.

The next winter passed at the bridge house very much as former winters had done. Violet was in her old place at Mr Oswald's. It was much quieter there than it had ever been before, for Selina was spending the winter with her sister, and Mr Philip had gone to a situation in the city of M—, his father hoping that the stricter and more constant attention to his duties, that would be required from him there, would tell better in his business education than irregular work in the office at home could be supposed to do. Frank's eyes were better, but he was not permitted to use them much yet. It was part

of Violet's duty to read to him, and a judicious selection of a course of historical reading made the winter pleasant and profitable to both. Jem was at school no longer. There is no royal road to the attainment of knowledge and skill in the profession he had chosen, even when the means and appliances of wealth are at one's disposal; and, having no money, there was nothing for Jem but to work with his hands as well as his head, and so he was adding his quota to the clamour made all day in the great engine-house at the other side of the town. Indeed, he worked a good deal more with his hands than his head for a time, and it needed some persuasion on his mother's part, and the exercise of some authority to keep him, during a reasonable time, every evening at his books.

For Jem was a little unsettled by the new circumstances in which he found himself. His friendly ways and bright good temper made him popular among his fellow-workmen, and his popularity and his love of fun, together, the more exposed him to the power of temptations inseparable from the place, and but for his mother's kindness and firmness, judiciously mingled, it might have gone ill with Jem that winter. But he settled down after a little, and, with Mr Anstruther's help, devoted himself as zealously as ever to those branches of study absolutely necessary to advancement in the profession of an engineer. It was rather an anxious winter to Mrs Inglis on Jem's account, but it was, on the whole, a satisfactory winter to look back on, as far as he was concerned.

Affairs were not going on so smoothly in the bank as they used to do. There were changes there. One clerk was removed to another branch of the concern, and the services of another were dispensed with altogether. David gained a step or two in consequence, and worked hard in acquiring the knowledge necessary for a right performance of his higher duties.

Mr Oswald was away often, and did not seem to be in good health or spirits when he was at home. In spring, he resigned his office of acting director of the bank, and another was appointed in his place. Mr Caldwell, who had come into the bank with him, left with him—not because his services were no longer required there, but because Mr Oswald needed him, and he chose to give his services to him.

For there were signs of coming trouble to the Oswalds. It began to be whispered in the town that the affairs of Mr Oswald were not in a prosperous condition, and that the resignation of his position in the bank had not been voluntary on his part, but demanded of him by those who were responsible for the successful carrying on of its affairs. Not that anything had gone wrong as yet, but he was extensively engaged in other business, and had other interests. He had to do with the quarries, and with lumbering affairs, and he had had something to do with the building of a railway, and had not prospered in all these things; and it could not be doubted that trouble was before him.

There had been some anxiety lest David's place in the bank might not be permanent in the midst of so many changes, but no change was made in his case, and except that his work was somewhat different, and that more responsibility rested on him with regard to some matters, all went on as before. He missed Mr Oswald's face in the inner office, and he greatly missed the comings and goings of Mr Caldwell; but all went on in the bank with the same system and order as it had ever done.

But troubles were thickening around the Oswalds. Mrs Mavor was ill and Selina was sent for to be with her. Mr Philip lost his situation in M—, and came home. Rumours had reached David, before this time, that his manner of life had not been satisfactory to his employers or to his friends, and Jem had heard more than David about him. Except to their mother, neither of them had spoken of this, but no one seemed surprised at his return.

Before his return, Mr Oswald had been taken very ill, and his inability to attend to his business involved it in difficulties, which threatened to hasten the unhappy crisis, which even Mr Caldwell acknowledged must have come sooner or later on him. There was trouble in the house, it may well be supposed. Violet had many cares, for Miss Oswald was entirely occupied with her brother in his illness, and Frank devoted himself to his father in a way that was a help and a comfort to them all.

As for Mr Philip, it was very difficult to believe that it could have come to this pass with his father. It seemed impossible to him that, after so many years of successful business-life, his father should be in danger of being left penniless; and he insisted to Frank and David, and even to Mr Caldwell, that there must have been mismanagement—probably dishonesty—on the part of some of those with whom he held business relations; and that this unhappy illness had been taken advantage of to bring matters to the painful crisis they had reached. So fully was he convinced of this, that it was, with difficulty, he could be prevented from applying to his father to obtain information with regard to certain affairs. But the doctor was imperative as to his not being disturbed by allusions to business now, or for some time to come.

"It might cost his life or his reason, Dr Ward says," repeated Frank. "And even if he could be spoken to, it would do no good while he is unable to leave his room or even his bed. We must wait patiently. I don't suppose it will make any real difference in the end."

Even Frank knew more about his father's affairs than Philip did.

"If I had only staid in the office, instead of going to M— last year," said he.

"I don't suppose it would have made much difference. You would have known something about the books, perhaps, and papa might not have had to pay out so much money for you. I don't know, though. It is easy enough to spend money anywhere."

Philip walked about impatiently.

"What I have spent is not a drop in the bucket," said he.

But the thought of the money he had spent and the money he owed made him very miserable.

"You know best about that," said Frank. "Here is something that Mr Caldwell left to-day. It is addressed to papa, so he opened it, but he found that it is meant for you. I am very glad papa did not see it."

Philip glanced at the paper his brother put in his hand.

"Have you examined it?" asked he, sharply.

"I looked at the sum total, not at the items."

"Well! a gentleman must spend something on such things, if he is in society."

"If he have it of his own to spend, you mean. I don't see the necessity. I'll venture to say that some of these items did not make you more like a gentleman, but less," said Frank.

"That is for me to decide," said Philip, angrily.

"I don't know that. However, you'll have to consult Mr Caldwell about it—the paying of it, I mean. Though the chances are, he will neither be able nor inclined to help you."

"It is no great affair, anyway."

"The helping you? or the sum total? It is more than half of David Inglis's yearly salary, and Aunt Mary has only that to keep house for them all—at least, she can't have much besides. It depends on how you look at a sum of money, whether it seems large or small."

Philip had no answer ready. He walked about the room angry and miserable. Frank went on:

"If you had not lost your situation, you might have paid it yourself, in time, I suppose. As it is you will have to fail too, or your creditor must make up his mind to wait. Are there more of them?"

Frank asked the question coolly, as though it were a trifling matter they were discussing, and his manner throughout the whole discussion seemed intended, Philip thought, to exasperate him.

"And it is not like Frank, the least in the world," said he to himself, as he uttered an exclamation at his words.

"However," repeated Frank, "it is only a drop in the bucket, as you say."

Philip stood still and looked at him, vexation and astonishment struggling with some other feeling, showing in his face.

"Frank," said he, "it isn't like you to hit a fellow when he is down."

"You need not be so very far down. I would not be down, if I were like you and could do anything," said Frank, with something like a sob in his voice.

"It is precious little I can do, even if I knew what were needed."

"Talk with Mr Caldwell."

"Mr Caldwell! The thought of him gives me a chill; and I don't suppose he would talk with me. He hasn't a very high opinion of me,—in the way of business, or in any way."

"He'd talk with you fast enough, if you would talk reasonably. Try him. He wants some one to go to Q— about the timber that has been lying there some weeks now. Papa spoke about it too. It would have paid well, if he had been able to attend to the sale of it himself. But he has not perfect confidence in Donnelly the agent, and the time is passing. It must be sold soon, and Mr Caldwell can't be everywhere. I told him to send Davie Inglis, but he must not take him from the bank he thinks; and, besides he is so young and so boyish-looking. You would do quite as well, I dare say. At any rate, you would be better than no one."

Philip looked as though he thought he was being "hit" again, but he said nothing.

"One thing is certain," continued Frank, "if you are going to do any good in our present fix, you can only do it by knuckling down to old Caldwell. Nobody knows so much about papa's affairs as he does."

Whether Philip "knuckled down" to Mr Caldwell or not, he never told Frank, but he did tell him that he was going in a day or two to Q—, to make arrangements for the sale of timber accumulated there for ship-building purposes, or for exportation. He did not know much about the matter and did not speak very hopefully. The sting of it was that he might have known if he had done as his father had had a right to expect him to do. However, Mr Caldwell sent him away none the less willingly because of his low spirits.

"You will do better than nobody," said he, as Frank had said before. "You can have an eye on the books and on all the papers. Don't let Donnelly be too much for you."

It would not do to enter into all the particulars of Philip's first business venture. It is enough to say, he was successful in circumstances where failure would not have been surprising; and the very first time he saw his father after he was a little better, he had the satisfaction of hearing Mr Caldwell telling him of the successful termination of the sale of the timber. He had the greater satisfaction of prompting that slow-spoken gentleman where his memory or his information failed, and of giving all details to his father, who was both relieved and pleased with the turn this affair had taken.

But success in this his first independent attempt at doing business could not avert the troubles that had been long hanging over his father. If Mr Oswald had been in perfect health, it might have been different. With time granted to continue his business relations, or even to settle up his own affairs, he might have been able to give every man his own. But his health came very slowly back, and affairs in the meantime wrought to a crisis. Philip strove hard to obtain time, and pledged himself to the full payment of all his father's liabilities within a limited period. Even Mr Caldwell was influenced by his earnestness and hopefulness, and by the good sense and business ability manifested by him in several transactions with which he had had to do, and joined with him in representing Mr Oswald's affairs to be in such a condition that care and time, and close attention alone were needed to set them right, and to satisfy all just claims at last. But Philip was young and inexperienced, and those of his father's creditors who knew him best, knew nothing in his past life to give them confidence either in his principles or his judgment, and they could not be induced to yield to him in this matter.

So it only remained for Mr Oswald to give up all that he possessed, to satisfy as far as possible all just demands. It was a very bitter experience for him to pass through, but he was in a state of health too weak and broken fully to realise all that it involved. For the time it was worse for his sons than for him. Frank devoted himself all the more earnestly to his father's care and comfort, and his doing so made this time of trouble more endurable for both. Philip saw little of his father. His place was to act for him wherever he could do so, so as to spare him as much as possible the details of the painful business.

It was a very miserable time to him. He made up his mind to get away as soon as possible to California or British Columbia, or anywhere else, so that it was far enough away. But he did not go. He did far better than that would have been. He staid at home, not very willingly, still he staid, and tried to do his duty as he had never tried before, and there were times when it was not easy to do.

Mr Caldwell, as one in whom the creditors had perfect confidence, both as to his conscientiousness and his knowledge of affairs, was appointed by them to settle up Mr Oswald's business, and with their permission Philip Oswald was requested to act as his assistant for the time. It was not the thing he would have chosen for himself, but if he had gone away now, it must have been without his father's consent, and if he staid at home it was absolutely necessary that he should earn money for the payment of his own debts. There was nothing better offered for his acceptance, and Mr Caldwell's terms were such as even Philip considered liberal.

"Though I know quite well he would much rather have had Davie Inglis," said he to Frank, when it was quite settled that he was to stay. "I don't believe he thinks I shall be much good. However, I must take it and make the best of it."

"You are quite wrong. Davie wouldn't suit him half so well as you in this business, though of course he has perfect confidence in Davie, and you have to be tried yet. But he knows you will make it a point of honour to do your best in the circumstances."

"If these people in M— had not been such fools as to force matters on, there might have been some inducement to do one's best in straightening out things. And it would have been better for them and for us too. I wish I were a thousand miles away from it all."

"No, you don't, unless you could take the rest, of us out of it too. For my part, I think you have a grand opportunity to exercise courage and patience, and to win honour and glory as a true hero. Just you go down and speak to Aunt Mary and Violet about it."

"I think I see myself doing it!" said Philip, as though it were a thing utterly impossible and not to be considered for a moment.

However, before many days were over, he found himself at the bridge house, enjoying Mrs Inglis's kindly sympathy, and the delighted welcome of the children, more than he would have imagined possible. He had seen very little of any of them for a long time, and was ashamed of his defection, conscious as he was of the cause. It was not comfortable for him to talk with Mrs Inglis, or to share in the pursuits and amusements of her young people, with the consciousness of wrongdoing upon him. Wrong-doing according to *their* standard of right and wrong, he meant, of course. According to *his* standard, there were many things he could do, and many things he could leave undone, quite innocently, of which they would not approve. Several of such questionable incidents had occurred in his manner of life about the time of their return from Gourlay last year, and he had kept away from them. He had been too busy since his coming back from M— to see much of any of his friends, and this was his first visit to the bridge house for a long time.

"Why did you not come before?" said little Mary.

"I have been very busy. Are you glad to see me now?"

"Yes, very glad, and so is mamma and all of us. I want to show you something." And the child went on to make confidences about her own personal affairs, into which Mr Philip entered with sufficient interest, as his manner was. He had only time for a word or two with the mother before Jem and David came in.

"Your father is really improving, I am glad to hear," said Mrs Inglis when the children left them.

Philip's face clouded.

"Is he better? It hardly seems to me that he gains at all. He is very much discouraged about himself."

"Frank thinks him better. It is a great relief to him, he says, that you are here."

"I ought never to have gone away," said Philip, sighing.

"But your father wished it, did he not? Perhaps it would have been better had you been here. However, you are here now. Frank says he begun to improve the very day you consented to assist Mr Caldwell in the settlement of his affairs."

Philip hung his head.

"Don't be hard on me, Aunt Mary."

"Am I hard on you? I am sure I don't know how. That is Frank's idea of the matter."

"Aunt Mary! if you only knew what a good-for-nothing fellow I have been! I am sure I cannot see why my father should have confidence in me."

"In whom should he have confidence, if not in you?" said Mrs Inglis, smiling.

Philip had nothing to answer. A feeling of shame, painful but wholesome, kept him silent. Even according to his own idea of right, he had been undutiful in his conduct to his father. He had accepted all from him, he had exacted much, and he had given little in return, except the careless respect to his wishes in little things, which he could not have refused to any one in whose house he was a guest. They had been on friendly terms enough, as a general thing, but there had been

some passages between them which he did not like to remember. That his father should have had any satisfaction in him or his doings, except indeed in the case of the transaction of the timber at Q—, was not a very likely thing. The very supposition went deeper than any reproaches could have gone and filled him with pain and regret.

“Frank is a good fellow, but he does not know everything,” said he, dolefully.

“I think he must know about your father, however, he is with him so constantly, and he says he is better. It will be some time before he is able for business again, I am afraid. In the meantime he has perfect confidence in Mr Caldwell and in you, which must be a comfort to him.”

Philip shook his head.

“Aunt Mary, the business is no longer his, and what we are doing is for the benefit of others. He has lost everything.”

“He has not lost everything, I think,” said Mrs Inglis, smiling, “while he has you and Frank and your sisters. He would not say so.”

Philip rose and came and stood before her.

“Mrs Inglis, I cannot bear that you should think of me as you do. It makes me feel like a deceiver. I have not been a good son to my father. I am not like your Davie.”

Mrs Inglis smiled as though she would have said, “There are not many like my Davie.” But she looked grave in a minute and said—

“There is one thing in which you differ. Davie is an avowed servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He professes to desire to live no longer to himself, but to Him.”

“And you think that is everything, Aunt Mary?”

“I think it is the chief thing.”

“Well, I am not like that. I am very far from that.”

“But this ought to be the chief thing for you as well as for David, ought it not?”

“I have not thought about it, Aunt Mary.”

“You have not taken time. You have fallen on easy days hitherto. It would have been difficult to convince you that, to be a servant of God, a follower of the Lord Jesus is the chief thing—the only thing, while each day brought with it enough to satisfy you. This trouble, which has come upon you all, may have been needed—to make you think about it.”

Philip answered nothing, but sat gazing at the clouds, or at the leaves which rustled at the window, with his cheek upon his hand. There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak, and Mrs Inglis could not be sure on which of these she had fallen. She longed to say just the right word to him, but hitherto her words had fallen like water on the rock, which, in the first gleam of sunshine, disappears. He always listened, grave or smiling, as the occasion seemed to demand. He listened with eagerness, pleased at her interest in him, pleased to be treated like one of the children, to be praised or chidden, and, for all that she could see, as well pleased with the one as with the other. As she sat watching him in silence, Mrs Inglis thought of Violet’s complaint against him. “He is not in earnest. He cares only for his own pleasure.”

“Ah! well! The Master knows how to deal with him, though I do not,” she said to herself. Aloud, she said, “You must not suppose that I mean that religion is for a time of trouble, more than for a time of prosperity. It is the chief thing always—the only thing. But, in a time of trouble, our need of something beyond what is in ourselves, or in the world, is brought home to us. Philip, dear lad, it is a wonderful thing to be a soldier and servant of the Lord Jesus. It is a service which satisfies—which ennobles. All else may fail us, or fetter us, or lead us astray. But, belonging to Christ—being one with Him—nothing can harm us truly. Are you to lose all this, Philip? Letting it pass by you—not *thinking* about it?”

She had no time to add more, nor had he time to answer her, even if he could have found the words. For first David came in, and then Jem, all black and dirty from the forge, and, proud of it, evidently. His greeting was rather noisy, after the free-and-easy manner which Jem affected about this time. David’s greeting was quiet enough, but a great deal more frank and friendly, than his greetings of Philip had usually been, his mother was pleased to see. Jem made a pretence of astonishment at the sight of him, meaning that he might very well have come to see his mother sooner; but David fell into eager discussion of some matter interesting to both, and then Jem went away to beautify himself, as he called the washing off the marks of his day’s work. When tea-time came, Philip hesitated about accepting Mrs Inglis’s invitation to remain.

“You may as well,” said Ned; “for I saw Violet up-town and I told her you were here, so they will be sure not to wait.”

So he staid, and made good his place among them after his long absence.

Something had been said in the early spring about Mrs Inglis and the children going to spend the summer in Gourlay again. But there was not the same necessity for a change that there had been last year, and the matter was not at once decided. While Mrs Inglis hesitated, there came tidings that decided it for her. There came, from Miss Bethia, a letter, written evidently with labour and difficulty. She had been poorly, “off and on by spells,” she said, all winter; and now, what she had long feared, had become evident to all her friends. A terrible and painful disease had fastened upon her, which must sooner or later prove fatal. “Later,” she feared it might be; for, through long months, which grew into years before they were over, she had nursed her mother in the same disease, praying daily that the end might come.

“I am not afraid of the end,” she wrote; “but remembering my poor mother’s sufferings, I *am* afraid of what must come before the end. It would help pass the time to have you and the children here this summer; but it might not be the best thing for them or you, and you must judge. I should like to see David, but there will be time enough, for I am afraid the end is a long way off. I am a poor creetur not to feel that the Lord knows best what I can bear. It don’t seem as though I could suffer much more than I used to, seeing my mother’s suffering. And I *know* the Lord is kind and pitiful,

though I sometimes forget.”

Mrs Inglis’s answer to this letter was to go to Gourlay without loss of time. At the first sight of Miss Bethia, she did not think her so very ill. She thought her fears had magnified her danger to herself. But she changed her opinion when she had been there a day or two. The Angel of Death was drawing near, and all that made his coming terrible was that he came so slowly. At times she suffered terribly, and her sufferings must increase before the end.

The coming of the children was not to be thought of, Mrs Inglis could see. She would fain have staid to nurse her, but this could not be while they needed her at home. She promised to return if she were needed, and begged to be sent for if she could be a comfort to her. All that care and good nursing could do to alleviate her suffering, Miss Bethia had. Debby Stone was still with her, and Debby’s sister Serepta, whose health had much improved during the year. The neighbours were very kind and considerate, and Mrs Inglis felt that all that could be done for her would be done cheerfully and well.

So she went home; but through the summer they heard often how it was with their old friend. But first one thing and then another hindered Mrs Inglis from going to see her till September had well begun. Then there came a hasty summons for David and his mother, for there were signs and tokens that the coming of the King’s messenger was to be “sooner,” and not “later,” as she had feared. So Violet came home because they could not tell how long the mother might have to stay, and their departure was hastened.

But the King’s messenger had come before them. They saw his presence in the changed face of their friend. They did not need her whispered assurance, that she need not have been afraid—that it was well with her, and the end was come.

“David,” she said, brokenly, as her slow, sobbing breath came and went, “you’ll care for your mother always, I know; and you must follow the Lord, and keep your armour bright.”

She fell into a troubled sleep, and waking, said the same words over again, only with more difficult utterance. She spoke to his mother now and then in her painful whisper, sending messages to Violet and Jem and all the rest; and once she asked her if she had a message for the minister, whom she was sure so soon to see. But the only words that David heard her speak were these, and he answered:

“I will try, Aunt Bethia;” but he had not voice for more.

It was like a dream to him to be there in the very room where he had watched that last night with his father. It seemed to be that night again, so vividly did it all come back.

“Mamma,” he whispered, “can you bear it?”

By and by they went up-stairs, and into the study, which was still kept as they had left it two years ago.

“Mamma,” said David, again, “it is like a dream. Nothing in the whole world seems worth a thought—standing where we stood just now.”

“Except to keep one’s armour bright, my David,” said his mother. “Happy Miss Bethia! She will soon be done with all her trouble now.”

They watched that night and the next day, scarcely knowing whether she recognised them, or whether she were conscious of what seemed terrible suffering to those who were looking on; and then the end came.

It was all like a dream to David, the coming and going of the neighbours, the hush and pause that came at last, the whispered arrangements, the moving to and fro, and then the silence in the house. He seemed to be living over the last days of his father’s life, so well remembered—living them over for his mother, too, with the same sick feeling that he could not help or comfort her, or bear her trouble for her, or lighten it. And yet, seeing her there so calm and peaceful in every word and deed; so gentle, and helpful, and cheerful, he knew that she was helped and comforted, and that it was not all sorrow that the memory of the other death-bed stirred.

When he went out into the air again, he came to himself, and the dazed, dreamy feeling went away. It was their good and kind old friend who had gone to her rest, and it would be wrong to regret her. There were many who would remember her with respect and gratitude, and none more than he and his mother and the children at home. But her death would leave no great gap, that could never be filled as his father’s had done. She had been very kind to them of late years, and they would miss her; and then—it suddenly came into David’s mind about his father’s books, and about the sum that had three times been paid to his mother since they had been in Miss Bethia’s care. He was ashamed because of it; but he could not help wondering whether it would be paid still, or whether they would take the books away or leave them where they were. He did not like to speak to his mother. It seemed selfish and ungrateful to think about it even; but he could not keep it out of his mind.

There was another day of waiting, and then the dead was carried away to her long home.

There were none of her blood to follow her thither. The place of mourners was given to Mrs Inglis and David, and then followed Debby and her sister. A great many people followed them; all the towns-folk joined in doing honour to Miss Bethia’s memory, and a few old friends dropped over her a tear of affection and regret. But there was no bitter weeping—no painful sense of loss in any heart because she had gone.

David sat in the church, and walked to the grave, and came back again to the empty house, with the same strange, bewildered sense upon him of having been through it all before. It clung to him still, as one after another of the neighbours came dropping in. He sat among them, and heard their eager whispers, and saw their curious and expectant looks, and vaguely wondered what else was going to happen that they were waiting to see.

Debby and her sister were in the other room, seemingly making preparations for tea; and once Debby came and looked in at the door, with a motion as if she were counting to see how many places might be needed, and by and by Serepta came and looked, too, and David got very tired of it all. His mother had gone up-stairs when she first came in, and he went in search of her.

“Mamma, I wish we could have gone home to-night,” said he, when, in answer to his knock, she had opened the door.

"It was late, dear, and Mr Bethune said he would like to see me before we went away."

"About the books, mamma? I wish I knew about them."

"You will know soon. I have no doubt they will be yours, as Miss Bethia intimated before we left them here. There may be some condition."

"I wonder what all the people are waiting for? Are you not very tired, mamma? Debby is getting tea ready."

Debby came in at the moment to make the same announcement.

"Tea is ready now," said she. "I'd as lief get tea for the whole town once in a while as not. But it ain't this tea they're waiting for, and if I was them I'd go."

"What are they waiting for?" asked David.

"Don't you know? Oh, I suppose it's to show good-will. Folks generally do at such times. But I'll ring the tea-bell, and that'll scare some of them home may be. Some of them'll have to wait till the second table, if they all stay, that's one thing. And I hope they'll think they've heard enough to pay them before they go."

They did not hear very much, certainly. Mr Bethune from Singleton was there, but the interest of the occasion was not in his hands. Deacon Spry had it all his own way, and opened and read with great deliberation a paper which had been committed to him. It was not Miss Bethia's will, as every one hoped it might be, but it was a paper written by her hand, signifying that her will, which was in Mr Bethune's keeping, was to be opened just a year from the day of her death. In the meantime Deborah Stone was to live in her house and take care of it and what property there was about it. Her clothes and bedding were in part for Debby, and the rest to be divided among certain persons named. Mrs Inglis was requested to leave her late husband's library where it was for one year, unless she should see some good reason for taking it away. And that was all.

Everybody looked surprised, except Debby, who had known the contents of the paper from Miss Bethia.

"I suppose it'll be Mr Bethune's business to look up Bethia's relations within the year. Folks generally *do* leave their property to their relations, even if they don't know much about them. But I rather expected she'd do something for the cause among us," said Deacon Spry, in a slightly aggrieved tone.

"I thought she'd at least new paint the meeting house," said Sam Jones.

"Or put a new fence round the grave-yard."

"Well! may be she has! We'll see when the year's out."

"No, folks most always leave their property to their own relations. They seem nearest, come toward the end."

"I don't suppose she's left a great deal besides the house, anyway. I wonder just how much Debby Stone knows?"

It was not pleasant to listen to all this. Debby had nothing to tell, not knowing anything; nor Mr Bethune, though he doubtless knew all. So there was nothing better to do than just wait till the right time came.

"I suppose we may count upon the books, mamma, or she would not have asked you to leave them here?" said David.

"Yes, I think so. She never called them hers, you know. She will have explained it to Mr Bethune, I suppose. I think you may count on the books."

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## Chapter Sixteen.

Another year passed quietly over the Inglis household. Jem and David both did good service, each in his special calling, and made some progress in other things besides. David kept the plan of his life steadily before him, but this year did not, to all appearance, bring its fulfillment any nearer. It did not seem impossible to him that their life should go on in the same quiet routine, without break or change, for a long time, nor did this seem impossible to his mother.

There was this difference in their thoughts, however. While Davie, with the impatience of youth, grew anxious now and then, as though the sowing time were passing with no seed being put in, his mother knew that there was nothing lost to his future work as yet, that the discipline of early care and self-denial, the constant and willing giving of himself to work, which in itself was not congenial, was a better preparation than he knew. She felt that if the Master had a special work for him to do, He would provide a way for special preparation, and that His time was best. David knew this too, and was on the whole content to look forward a good way yet, for the change that must come, when his wish with regard to this one thing should be granted. He was more than content. Life went very quietly and happily with them this year, and it was a profitable time in many ways.

Jem's work agreed with him, it seemed, for he was growing tall and strong. His gay and careless temper brought him into some difficulties this year, and being at that age when a young lad making his own way is apt to become tenacious about little things which concern his dignity, and impatient of the open exercise of restraint acknowledged to be lawful and right, he needed to be gently and carefully managed. But happily this uncomfortable period did not last long with Jem. He grew manly in character as well as in appearance, and grew more, rather than less, open to home influence as he grew older.

David's fair face and quiet manner gave Jem an appearance of advantage over him as far as manliness was concerned, and strangers often took Jem to be the eldest of the brothers. Jem himself, in a laughing way, claimed to be beyond him in a knowledge of the world—on its hard side—and made merry pretence and promise of advising and protecting him in certain supposed circumstances of difficulty or danger. But in his heart he deferred to his brother, as in all things far wiser and better than he.

As to David's plans and their carrying out, Jem saw neither doubt nor difficulty. In a few years—not very distinctly specified—Jem was to become the head and bread-winner of the house, and David was to go his own way to honour and usefulness. Jem was still to be the rich man of the family, though the time and manner of winning his wealth he could not make very clear; and David laughed and accepted his freedom from care and his brother's gifts very gratefully, and professed to have no scruples as to his future claims upon him.

When Mr Oswald's household was broken up, Violet returned home. But happily an opportunity occurred for her to obtain what she had long secretly coveted, a chance to improve herself, in some branches of study, under better masters than Singleton could afford. She passed the greater part of the year as pupil-teacher in a superior school in M—, and returned home in the end of June. The year was of great advantage to her in many ways, though the children at home could not see it. She "was just the same as ever," they said, which was a high compliment, though not intended as such.

She had not changed, but she had made advances in several directions her mother was pleased to discover. Her return was a great pleasure to her brothers, but Jem was critical now and then, and spoke of "airs and graces," and "fine manners," as though she were not quite innocent of those on occasion. David was indignant, but Violet laughed at them both, and proved that whatever change had come to her manners, none had come to her temper, "which was a blessing," Jem acknowledged.

Mr Oswald's household was broken up about the time of Miss Bethia's death. Selina remained with her sister, and the little girls went with their aunt to her former home. Mr Oswald had been induced to take the sea voyage, and the entire rest from business, which his physicians declared absolutely necessary to his entire restoration to health. Frank accompanied him to England, where they both remained during the year. His health had improved, and there was some expectation that they would return at the close of the summer.

His house had been sold, and was now used as a hospital for the poor and sick of the town. The extensive grounds around it had been cut up by the opening of several new streets in that direction, and one could scarcely have recognised the place that used to be so beautiful in the eyes of the Inglis children. However, the only Oswald left in Singleton took the sale of the house, in which he had been born and brought up, very philosophically. The opening of the new streets had increased the value of the land immensely, and under the careful hands of Mr Caldwell, that and all other property belonging to Mr Oswald was being so disposed of that his creditors had a good prospect of losing nothing by him.

Philip Oswald still asserted, that but for the faint-heartedness which illness had brought upon his father, and the untimely pressure of the creditors because of it, there needed have been no failure. He asserted it indignantly enough some-times, but he did not regret the disposal of the house or the spoiling of the beautiful grounds as he might have been supposed to do.

The sudden change in the circumstances of the family had not hurt Philip. The year's discipline of constant employment, and limited expenditure, had done him good, and, as he himself declared to Jem and David, not before it was time. The boyish follies which had clung to him as a young man, because of the easy times on which he had fallen, must have grown into something worse than folly before long, and but for the chance of wholesome hard work which had been provided for him, and his earnest desire to work out the best possible result for his father's good name, he might have gone to ruin in one way or other. But these things, with the help of other influences, had kept him from evil, and encouraged him to good, and there were high hopes for Philip still.

He had not been in Singleton all the year, but here and there and everywhere, at the bidding of the cautious, but laborious and judicious, Caldwell, who had daily increasing confidence in his business capacity, and did not hesitate to make the utmost use of his youthful strength. When he was in Singleton, his home was in Mr Caldwell's house. He had gone there for a day or two, till other arrangements could be made. But no other arrangements were needed. He stayed there more contentedly than he could at the beginning of the year have supposed possible, and it grew less a matter of self-denial to Mr and Mrs Caldwell to have him there as time went on. He had a second home in the house of Mrs Inglis; and this other good had come to him out of his father's troubles, and the way he had taken to help them, that he made a friend of David Inglis. He had supposed himself friendly enough with him before, but he knew nothing about him. That is to say, he knew nothing about that which made David so different from himself, so different from most of the young men with whom he had had to do.

"In one thing he is different," Mrs Inglis had said, "He is a servant of God. He professes to wish to live no longer to himself." With this in his thought, he watched David at home and abroad, at first only curiously, but afterwards with other feelings. David was shy of him for a time, and kept the position of "mere lad," which Philip had at first given him, long after his friendship was sought on other terms. But they learned to know each other in a little, and they did each other good. Mrs Inglis saw clearly how well it was for David to have some one more ready and better fitted to share his pleasures and interests than Jem, because of his different tastes and pursuits, could possibly do. And she saw also that David's influence could not fail to have a salutary effect on his friend, and she encouraged their intercourse, and did all in her power to make it profitable to them both. Violet and the children spent a month in Gourlay; but Mrs Inglis, not liking to leave David and Jem alone, only went for a day or two. They returned early in August. Mr Oswald and Frank were expected soon. Mr Philip's spirits did not rise as the time of their coming drew near. He dreaded for his father the coming back to find no home awaiting him. He consulted with Mrs Inglis as to the preparations he should make for him; but, when it was talked over among them, it was found that he did not know enough about his father's future plans to make it possible for him to make arrangements for more than a day or two. He did not even know whether he was to remain in Singleton. He did not even know whether he should remain in Singleton himself. He could decide nothing till they came. He was altogether too anxious and troubled, Mrs Inglis told him; he had not been like himself for some time.

"Well, it ought to be all the more agreeable to the rest because of that," said he, laughing.

"It has not been. And you must let me say that I think you are troubling yourself more than enough with regard to the coming of your father."

"But it is about myself, partly, you know."

"Well, I think the trouble is uncalled for in either case. It will not be so bad for your father as you fear."

"Do you know what is the news in town to-day, Philip?" asked Jem. "That you and old Caldwell are going into the produce business together. A queer team you would make!"

"We have drawn very well together for the last year," said Philip.

Jem shrugged his shoulders, and made a grimace.

"Singleton might suit Mr Caldwell to do business in, but I wouldn't fix myself in Singleton if I were you."

"Nonsense, Jem," said David. "There is no better place than Singleton for that business, everybody knows."

"And, besides, Philip is well-known here," said Mrs Inglis.

"I am not sure that it is a better place for me because of that, Aunt Mary; but it is as good a place as any, I suppose, in which to begin with a small capital."

"Pooh! about capital! The only men in the country worth their salt began life without a dollar. Which of us has capital? And we are all bound to be rich men before we die," said Jem.

"Yes, I dare say. If I were a boy of fifteen, I might say the same," said Philip, with a sigh.

"Hear him! You would think him fifty, at least. And if you mean me," said Jem loftily, "I am nearly seventeen. I only wish I were twenty-three, with the world before me."

They all laughed at his energy.

"There is no hurry, Jem. You will need all the years that are before you. Violet, put away your work, and play, and the children will sing."

Violet rose and opened the piano, and there was no more said at that time. While the children were singing, David went out, and, in a little, called Philip from the window. Philip rose and went out also, and they passed down the garden together. By and by they had enough of music, and Violet shut the piano, and sat down beside the window with her work again. Jem had the grace to wait till the children went out, and then he said:

"Mamma, you said I was to tell you the next time, and here it is. You must have noticed yourself—Violet's manner, I mean. Philip noticed it, I could see. She was as stiff and dignified as Mrs Mavor herself. I wouldn't put on airs with Phil, when he is down as he is to-night, if I were you."

Violet looked from him to her mother in astonishment.

"Do you know what he means, mamma?"

"You don't need mamma to tell you."

"Tell me, then, Jem. What did I say or do?"

"You didn't say or do anything. You were stiff and stupid. Mamma must have seen it."

"No, Jem, I did not. If you mean that Violet's manner to Mr Philip is not the same as to you and Davie—why, you know, it can't quite be that."

"No, because Violet made up her mind long ago that Philip Oswald was a foolish young man—'not in earnest,' as she used to say. Letty can't bear people that are not quite perfect," said Jem.

Letty laughed, and so did her mother.

"Thank you, Jem. That is as much as saying that I consider myself quite perfect."

"Oh! you may laugh," said Jem, loftily; "but if Phil, hasn't proved himself steady enough by this time, I don't know what you would have! There are not many would have staid it out, under old Caldwell, and have done as he has done. To say nothing about the business not being a very pleasant one."

"He has improved very much," said Mrs Inglis.

"And, now, when he and Davie are such friends," went on Jem, who did not know when he had said enough. "I think if Davie approves of him, that ought to be enough for Violet."

"Quite enough, I acknowledge, Jem," said Violet. "I wonder where Davie has gone;" and she rose and went to the door as if to see.

She did not find him, if she looked for him, for David and Philip, after walking up and down the railway track for some time, went down to David's favourite seat on the stones of the abutment of the bridge close by the water. They were silent for some time after they went there. David sat gazing at the bright clouds that lingered after the sunset, while his friend moved up and down and flung stones into the water. By and by he sat down by David's side, saying—

"And so I am all at sea again."

"I don't see why you should be 'at sea again,' as you call it," said David. "Mr Caldwell's offer was made without any reference to me, and my refusal can make no real difference."

"It will make all the difference in the world to me."

"Philip, promise me one thing. Don't decide till your father comes and Frank. I don't know when I was so glad. See how pleased your father will be."

"Nonsense, Davie! It is no such great thing as all that—a partnership with old Caldwell."

"Hear what your father will say. I can't say how fine a thing it will be to be his partner, but your father will think it a high compliment that he should have wished it. It will be good for you—and for him too. I don't know which I congratulate most."

David was growing enthusiastic.

"It would do, I think, if you were coming with us. A clerkship now, and a partnership afterwards. There is no hope of making you change your mind, Davie?"

"Would you wish me to change my mind, Philip?" said David laying his arm over his friend's shoulder, in a way that would have satisfied Violet of his interest and affection.

"I don't know. I am not sure. I don't understand it."

"Yes, you do, Philip—or you will sometime. I mean, you will understand why this should be the best thing for me to do. You cannot quite understand all I feel about it, because you never knew my father."

"Tell me about him," said Philip.

"It is not what I could tell you that would make you understand. But—we speak about aspirations and ambitions, Philip; but if I had my choice what I should do, or what I should be, I should choose the life, and work, and character of my father."

David's voice faltered.

"Since when has that been your choice?" asked Philip.

"Always! I mean, always since he died. And, before that, he was my ideal of wisdom and goodness, though I did not particularly wish or try to be like him then?"

"And it was his wish that you should choose his profession, and live his life, and do his work?"

"He wished it,—yes. And now I wish it, not merely because of his wish, but because—I love my Lord and Master, and because I wish to honour Him as His soldier and servant—"

David did not find it easy to say all this to Philip, and there was silence for a minute or two.

"But haven't you been losing time?" said Philip.

"No. Mamma does not think so. Time should try a decision so important, she thinks. I am young yet, and I have been keeping up my reading pretty well. And, besides, she thinks the care, and the steady work, and our life altogether,—having to manage with just enough, you know,—has been good discipline for me, and a sort of preparation."

"I see! And when is the other sort of preparation to begin?"

"I don't know. The way will open, mamma always says. When we came here first, mamma and Violet meant to keep a school; but, after Violet went to teach your sisters, we could get on without it, and it was so much better for us to have mamma all to ourselves. She may think of it again, and Violet is better able to help her now."

"It is a slave's life."

"No; I don't think mamma objects to it on that ground. But there is no haste about it. I always remember what mamma said to me once—'If your master has a special work for you to do, He will provide the means for special preparation.'"

"What a wonderful woman your mother is!" said Philip.

David laughed, such a happy laugh.

"Is she? She does not think so."

"I wonder if she would be on my side if I were to tell her all about old Caldwell's plans, and how much good you could do with us—and a future partnership, and all that. Why, Davie, you might, when you are a rich man, educate any number of ministers. Wouldn't that do as well as to be one yourself?"

"That will be something for you to do. No; I don't think mamma would be on your side."

"But you are her bread-winner, as I have heard her say. How can she spare you?"

"And I shall always be so while she needs me. I can wait a long time patiently, I think. But I cannot give it up now. It would be 'looking back,' after putting my hand to the plough."

They were silent for a good while, and then Philip said:

"Tell me about your father."

David doubted whether he had anything new to tell, for, as they had come to care more for each other's company, he had often spoken to Philip of his father. But if he had nothing new to tell, he told it all over in a new way—a way that made Philip wonder. He told him all that I have told you, and more,—of his father's life and work—how wise and strong he was—how loving and beloved. He told him of his love for his Master, of his zeal for His service. He told him of his own lessons with him, of how he used to go with him to the North Gore and other places, and of what he used to say, and how happy the days used to be. He told him of his last days, and how, when it came to the end, he was so joyful for himself

and so little afraid for them, though he was going to leave them alone and poor—how sure he was that God would care for them and keep them safe until they all should meet again. Sometimes he spoke with breaking voice, and sometimes, though it had grown dark by this time, Philip could see that his cheeks flushed and his eyes shone as he went on, till he came to the very last, and then he said:

“He told me then, at the very last—even after he had spoken about mamma, that I was to take up the armour that he was laying down. And, God helping me, so I will,” said David, with a sob, laying down his face, to hide his tears, on the shoulder of his friend. But, in a little, he raised it again, and said, quietly:

“I couldn’t go back after that, Philip.”

“No,” said Philip; and he said nothing more for a long time, nor did David. Philip spoke first:

“And so it must be ‘Good-bye,’ Davie?”

“Good-bye?” repeated David. “I don’t understand?”

“You are to take one way and I another; so we part company.”

David was silent from astonishment.

“As our fathers did,” said Philip. “They were friends once, as we are, Davie, but their paths divided, as ours must, I fear.”

“It need not be so.”

“It is curious to think of it,” went on Philip. “If my father were to die to-night, he would leave his children as poor as your father left his when he died. Not that it would matter; but then my father has lost his whole life, too. No, Davie, I fear the end will be that we must go different ways.”

“Dear Philip,” said David, standing before him, and speaking with much earnestness, “there is only one thing that can separate us—your serving one master and I another; and that need not be. Your work may be as much for Him as mine. Philip, dear friend—is He your Lord and Master, as He is mine?”

Philip shook his head.

“I do not know. I fear not, Davie. What am I saying? I know He is not. I have never done a stroke of work for Him, or for any one at His bidding, or for His sake, and that is the whole truth, Davie.”

“But that is not to be the end! His soldier and servant! There is nothing in all the world to be compared with that! Have you offered yourself to Him? Will you not offer yourself to Him? Oh, Philip! there is nothing else.”

“Davie,” said Philip, hoarsely, “you don’t begin to know what a bad fellow I have been.”

“No; nor do you. But He knows, and the worse you are the more you need to come to Him. Have you never asked Him to forgive you and take you for His own? It is for Him to do it. Ask Him now!”

David threw his arms round the neck of his friend. It was a sudden act, boyish and impulsive—not at all like David. Philip was much moved.

“Ask Him, Davie,” said he, huskily.

Kneeling beside him on the stone, David did ask Him, using simple words and few—such words as Philip never forgot—words that he uttered in his own heart many a time afterwards, and not in vain.

They lingered a good while, but there was not much said between them after that, and when David went into the house, where his mother and Violet were waiting for him, he told them that Philip had gone home. By and by he said:

“The story Jem heard was true, mamma. Mr Caldwell wants Philip to become his partner in a new business. It seems he has saved something, and he is willing to put his capital against Philip’s youth and energy and business talents. It will be very good for Philip and for Mr Caldwell too.”

“It shows great confidence on Mr Caldwell’s part,” said Mrs Inglis.

“Yes; but, mamma, you said it as if you were surprised, as if his confidence might be misplaced.”

“I am surprised, dear, but the other idea I did not mean to convey. My surprise was because of Mr Caldwell’s well-known deliberation and caution.”

“Yes; the offer, even if it go no further, is a feather in Phil’s cap,” said Jem. “But Mr Caldwell is a shrewd old gentleman, though he be a little slow. He knows what he is about.”

“You look as though you expected to be contradicted, Jem,” said Violet, laughing.

“Is Philip pleased with the prospect? Will the thing go on?” asked Mrs Inglis.

“I think so. I hope so. It will be decided when Mr Oswald returns. Philip would have liked me to go with them—into their service, I mean, with the prospect of something better by and by.”

“And what did you say to him?” asked his mother.

“Of course you refused?” said Violet.

"I don't know about that," said Jem. "Davie had better think twice before he refuses such an offer. But Davie never did appreciate Philip."

David laughed at Jem, and answered his mother.

"I told him all about it, mamma. He was disappointed, but he understood, I think."

There was no more said that night. Jem would gladly have entered into a discussion of the subject, but David did not stay to listen, and Violet would not respond, and what he had to say would not have been the best thing to say to his mother, so he kept his opinion for the hearing of Philip against the time he should see him again.

When Philip came, which was not for a day or two, the first words he said to Mrs Inglis were—

"I think you ought to be a very happy woman, Aunt Mary."

"I think so too. But what has given you new light on the subject?" asked Mrs Inglis, smiling.

"And you ought all to be very happy children," said Philip, lifting little Mary, who was not so very little now, to his knee.

"And so we are," said Violet.

"And you ought to be very good, too."

"And so we are," said Jem.

"Well, then, no more need be said on the subject at present, except that I wish that I were one of you."

"Tell us about the new partnership," said Jem.

"It is not to be spoken of yet. It is a secret."

"Davie told us," said Violet.

"Oh, I don't mean it is to be a secret here! But it is not to be decided till my father comes home. Though I suppose he will let me do as I like."

"If you are quite sure that you know what you would like."

"I am quite sure I know what I would like, but I am not to have *that*, it seems."

"Is it Davie?" said Violet. "But you don't mean that you would like him to change his mind and his plans, I hope?"

"It would be selfish, wouldn't it, and wrong? No, upon the whole I wouldn't like Davie to be different, or to do differently. But I should like to be more like him."

"But you are pretty good now, aren't you," said Mary. "Davie is very fond of you and mamma and all of us. I suppose you are not quite so good as our Davie."

They all laughed.

"I will try to be good, indeed I will, Polly," said Philip.

"Well that is right," said Mary. "You should speak to mamma. She would help you."

"Yes, I think she would. I mean to speak to her."

And so they chatted on till David came in. Philip had made good a place among them. It was quite clear that they all liked him, as little Polly had said. They had always liked him from the very first, but he was more worthy of their liking now.

Mr Oswald and Frank came home in due time. There was nothing in Mr Oswald's plans for his son to prevent the carrying out of the plan for the new partnership, as proposed by Mr Caldwell. He was greatly pleased with the compliment to his son, which Mr Caldwell's proposal implied, and entered into the discussion of preliminaries with great interest. As for himself he had returned home with no design of engaging immediately in business, except the business of an Insurance Company of which he had been made the agent. He was to wait for a year or two at least.

Frank, whose health and eyesight were quite restored, was offered the place in the new business, which Philip would so gladly have given to David. Of course he was as yet not so well qualified to perform the duties of the position as David would have been, but he possessed some qualities likely to insure success that David did not have, and he had that which was the source and secret of David's goodness, so firmly believed in by little Mary and them all. He was learning to live, not to himself, but to his Master—to do His will and make known His name, and in all things to honour Him in the eyes of the world, and so he had also David's secret of peace. But for a time he had little to do, as the new firm was not publicly announced till later in the year, and in the meantime he accepted Mrs Inglis's invitation, and made himself one of the children of the bridge house, to his great pleasure and theirs.

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## Chapter Seventeen.

One morning as Mr Philip sat at breakfast reading the paper, as was his custom, he heard Mr Caldwell say—

"This is the twenty-second of September."

"The days and nights are of equal length," said Mrs Caldwell. "Dear! dear! how soon the days will be drawing in!"

"This day last year Miss Bethia Barnes died."

"Well, she was a good body. I trust she went to a better place."

"And to-day her will is to be read," went on Mr Caldwell.

"Is it indeed? Had she much property? She was a decent saving body. And who is to get it? Not that you can know, however, till the will is opened."

"I know, having been consulted about the making of it; but that is neither here nor there at the present moment. What I mean to say is this: Being one of the executors of that will, I shall have to be in Mr Bethune's office this morning, and so, Mr Philip, you will need to attend to the business we were speaking of last night yourself, in case I should be detained beyond my time."

"All right!" said Philip, looking up from his paper.

"And you were consulted about the making of the poor body's will, were you?" said Mrs Caldwell, who was by no means so silent a member of the family as her husband. "And you were made executor, and all—and you never mentioned it. Not that *that* is a matter for surprise, however," added she, reconsidering the subject. "I dare say he will be ready to tell us all about it by dinner time, though no mortal power could make him open his lips this morning. Well, I hope whoever gets the money will get the good of it, though why they should have been kept out of it a whole year, I cannot see. I hope that was not by your advice. But dear! dear! money often does more harm than good, for all so hard as we strive for it."

"It will do good this time—there is no fear," said Mr Caldwell, rising. "It has not been striven for, nor expected, and there is not too much of it just for comfort, and—it will open the way."

The last words struck Philip as familiar, and looking up he caught the eye of Mr Caldwell, who nodded and smiled, as though he ought to understand the whole matter by this time.

"There need be no more waiting now," said he, but whether he meant for himself or for Mr Philip, or for some one else, he did not say.

"All right!" said Philip, at a venture; and though he heard no more of the matter, and was too busy all day to give it a thought, he was not surprised, when he went, at night, to the bridge house, to hear that there was news awaiting him; but he was a little surprised at the nature of the news. It was Violet who told him. The children were gone out, and David was, for the moment, in his mother's room, and only Frank was with Violet when Philip came in. For this time she was quite free from the "proper" and "dignified" air of which Jem used to accuse her where Philip was concerned. She was smiling and eager when, prompted by Frank, she told him there was something he would like to hear.

"It is about Davie, isn't it?" said Philip. "Davie is Miss Bethia's heir?"

But it was not Davie. Davie had his father's library and the five hundred dollars which Miss Bethia had offered for it as well, to do what he liked with; there were some legacies to relatives, "to remember her by," Miss Bethia had written, and there was something to Debby Stone. But the house and garden in Gourlay, and all else that had been Miss Bethia's, she had bequeathed unconditionally to Mrs Inglis. It was not a large property, but it was a good deal more than Miss Bethia could have been supposed to possess, considering her way of life. It was not quite independence to Mrs Inglis and her children, but it would be a great help toward it.

"And," said Violet, with a smile and a sigh, "it opens the way to Davie."

"Yes; that is what Mr Caldwell said this morning. But you don't seem so delighted as he was at the thought."

"I am very glad for Davie. But it will be a sad breaking-up for the rest of us to have him go away. And it will be at once, I suppose, if, at this late day, arrangements can be made for his going this year to the university."

"But the sooner the better, I should think, Violet," said Frank, cheerfully.

"Yes—the sooner the better for him; but think of mamma and the rest of us. However, I know it is very foolish to look at that side of the matter, and, indeed, I am very glad."

"And, besides, if you go to M— you will see him often," said Frank. "We shall be rather dismal without you both, I am afraid."

"Dismal enough!" echoed Mr Philip.

"And if you all go to Gourlay to live, as Miss Bethia seemed to think you would, what will become of us?"

"What, indeed!" said Philip. "That is the plan, is it? It is cruel of Aunt Mary, and I shall tell her so."

"We have made no plans as yet. I hope it will be all for the best. We have been very happy here. It could not have lasted much longer for Davie. He is very glad, and so is mamma; and, I suppose, we shall all be glad, when we have time to think about it."

Philip was not so sure of that, nor Frank either, as far as their going away to Gourlay was concerned. But mamma was glad and Davie. There was no doubt of that, Philip saw, as soon as they appeared. They were rather silent for a time, and Philip saw, what he had never seen before in all his intercourse with her, the traces of tears on Mrs Inglis's face. He was not sure that there was not the shine of tears in David's eyes too. His congratulations were given very quietly, and as quietly received.

"But I am afraid it is the beginning of bad days to us, Aunt Mary, if we have to say good-bye to you all."

"It would be bad days for us, too, if that were to happen; but I hope nothing so sad as that is to follow our good fortune."

"Good-bye!" exclaimed Frank. "That is the last thing we shall think of, Aunt Mary. But, I suppose, we shall lose Davie for awhile. Eh, Davie?"

"I shall be away for awhile, if you call that losing me; but I shall be home soon, and often."

"It happened just at the right time, didn't it?" said Ned. "Just as Davie is ready to go to college."

"Davie has been ready for that any time these three years; and what I wonder is, that mamma did not hear of this at once," said Jem.

"This is the right time, I think," said Mrs Inglis.

"I am very glad it did not happen this time last year," said Philip.

"Why?" said Violet.

"I will tell you another time," said Philip.

"After all, mamma, money is a very good thing to have," said Ned, after there had been more discussion of Miss Bethia's will, and all that was to be done in consequence of it.

"A very good thing, in certain circumstances."

"But, mamma, you have always spoken as if it did not matter whether we had money or not—much money, I mean. And now see how pleased everybody is because Miss Bethia gave her's to you. I don't think anything ever happened before that pleased every one of us so well."

"I cannot say that for myself," said his mother.

"And there is not *much* money of it," said Frank.

"And everybody is glad because of Davie," said Jessie. "I think Miss Bethia meant it for Davie to go to college and be a minister like papa, and that is why mamma is so glad, and all of us."

"Nonsense! Miss Bethia meant it for mamma and all of us. She would have said it was for Davie, if she had meant it for him. Do you think Miss Bethia meant it for you, Davie? Do you, mamma?" said Ned, as he saw a smile exchanged between them.

"She meant it for mamma, of course," said David.

"Davie," said his mother, "read Miss Bethia's letter to Philip and the children."

David looked at his mother, and round on the rest, then back again to his mother, a little surprise and hesitation showing in his face.

"Do you think so, mamma?" said he, colouring.

"They will like to hear it, and I shall like them to hear it. Shall I read it for you?" said his mother, smiling.

David rose and went into his mother's room, and came back with the letter in his hand. Giving it to her without a word, he sat down in a corner where the light could not fall on his face. Mrs Inglis opened the letter and read:

"Dear David Inglis,—It is a solemn thing to sit down and write a letter which is not to be opened till the hand that holds the pen is cold in death; and so I feel at this time. But I want you to know all about it, and I must put it in as few words as possible. I will begin at the beginning.

"I never had much hope of your father after that first hard cold he took about the time that Timothy Bent died. I worried about him all winter, for I couldn't make it seem right that his life and usefulness should be broken off short, just when it seemed he had got ready to do the most good. I would have put it right, in my way, if I could have done it. But it was not the Lord's way, and I had to give it up. It never was easy for me to give up my own way, even to the Lord. But He is long-suffering and slow to anger; and by and by He showed me how I might help make up your father's loss to the church and the world.

"But I wasn't in any hurry about it, because I didn't know just how it would be with you, and whether you would keep your armour bright, and stand in the day of trial. So I waited, and went to Singleton, and talked with Mr Caldwell, and came home feeling pretty well; and all the more when I heard from your mother how she and you felt about your taking up your father's work. Still I was not in any hurry, for I thought you were not losing your time. You seemed to be learning, what many a minister gets into trouble for not knowing, how business is done, and how far a little money may be made to go. And I thought, if it were just a notion of yours to be a minister, because you had thought so much of your father, and to please your mother, you would find it out pretty soon, and get into other business. But I knew, if the Lord had called you to the work, you wouldn't be tired waiting, and you weren't losing time.

"Well, I have thought of it, and planned for it considerable, one way and another; and, lately, I have begun to think that I shall not have much more time for planning or doing either. This summer, I have seemed to see my way clear. There are not many women in the world like your mother, I can tell you, David; and she will know how to go to work better than I can tell her. So I have made up my mind to leave what I have got to her. The time you have been working to keep the family together has not been lost, so far. But, when your mother don't need you, you will be free to help yourself. I thought first I would leave you money enough to take you through college, and all that; but, as far as I have

had a chance to judge, those who have had to work hard to get an education, have come out best in the end. Your mother will know what to do, as one thing follows another in your life, better than I could put it down on paper. She'll help you all you need, I am not afraid; and if the Lord shouldn't have called you to His work after all, I would rather your mother had the property I have worked for than that you should have it to put into other business. I hope it will come all round right in the end.

"There is a good deal more I wanted to say to you, but I don't seem to know just how to put it down on paper as I want to, so I shall not try. When you read this, I shall be where your father is; and I pray the Lord to lead you in the way you should go, and make you a faithful minister of His word, as he was. Amen."

There was nothing said for several minutes, after she had ceased reading; then she only said:

"And so, now, children, you see what it was that our old friend wished."

"Mr Caldwell must have known it all along," said Philip. "Well, he told me there was not much chance of Davie's accepting my offer. I should think not!"

"Are you sorry?" asked Violet.

"I am not sure. I must think about it."

"I sha'n't seem to care so much about being a rich man now," said Jem, "since Davie is provided for."

"There are plenty more of us, Jem," said Ned.

"And mamma, too," went on Jem dolefully. "If Miss Bethia had given it all to Davie, I might have done for mamma."

They all laughed at Jem's trouble, and they grew eager and a little noisy and foolish after that, laughing and making impossible plans, as though Miss Bethia's money had been countless. David said nothing, and Mrs Inglis said little, and the confusion did not last long, for, beneath all their lightness, there was among the children a deeper and graver feeling than they wished to show, and they grew quiet in a little while.

There were no plans made that night, however; but, by degrees, it was made plain to Mrs Inglis what it was best for them to do. David went almost immediately to M—, and was admitted into the university, passing the examinations for the second year; and Violet went back to her place in Mrs Lancaster's school. Mrs Inglis decided to remain in Singleton for the winter, partly for Jem's sake, and partly that Ned might still have the benefit of school. Frank was also to be with them. Mr Oswald was not to be in Singleton constantly, and Miss Oswald was to remain at her own home all winter, and the little girls were to remain with her.

So Frank took David's place, though he did not quite fill it, and Mr Philip came and went almost as often as when the others were at home. His visits were for the pleasure of all, and for his own profit; and when the time came that they were to say "good-bye" for a little while, it was spoken by Mrs Inglis with feelings far different from those she would have had a year ago; for she knew that the discipline of changed circumstances, of care, and of hard work that had fallen upon him, had strengthened him in many ways; and, better still, she could not but hope that the influence and teaching to which he had so willingly submitted during the last year and more, had wrought in him for good, and that now he was being taught by Him who teacheth to profit, and guided by Him in the right way.

Jem had an opportunity to play at being "head of the house" for once; and it was, by no means, all play, for the care and responsibility of acting for his mother in all that pertained to making necessary arrangements, to the disposal of such things as they did not care to take with them, and to the removal of such things as they wished to keep, fell on him. He did his work well and cheerfully, though with a little unnecessary energy, and he would gladly have staid to settle them all in Gourlay. But he was needed for his legitimate work; and amid much cause for gratitude, Mrs Inglis had this cause for anxiety, that Jem must henceforth be removed from the constant happy influence of home life, and left to prove the strength and worth of his principles among strangers. If he had been more afraid for himself, it is likely his mother would have been less afraid for him. But there was no help for it. It is the mother's "common lot."

"The young birds cannot always stay in the parent nest, mother, dear," said Jem; "and I must go as the rest do. But I shall come home for a week in the summer, if it be a possible thing; and, in the meantime, I am not going to forget my mother, I hope."

"Nor your mother's God, I trust, dear Jem," said Mrs Inglis, as she let him go.

Who could tell all the labour and pains bestowed on the arrangement and adornment of the house they had never ceased to love? David came home early in May, and did his part. Ten times a day Jessie wished for Violet to help with her willing and skillful hands. They had Debby for all that required strength. She had fallen very easily into her old place, and was to stay in it, everybody hoped.

Sarah and Charlotte Oswald were to form part of their family for the next year, and Violet's work was to be to teach them and her sisters, and two little orphan girls who had been committed by their guardian to Mrs Inglis's care. But Violet's work was not to be begun till September, and after the house was in perfect order, ready to receive expected visitors, there were two months for happy leisure before that time came.

Violet and Jem were coming home together, and Sarah and Charlotte were expected at the same time. Jem was to stay for ten days only. By dint of some planning on their part, and much kindness on the part of Mr Caldwell, Philip and Frank were to have their holiday together, and they were to accompany the rest to Gourlay. At first it was intended to make their coming a surprise, but mindful of certain possible contingencies in Debby's department, Violet overruled this, and the people at home were permitted to have the pleasure of expecting and preparing for them, as well as the pleasure of receiving them, and wonderful things were accomplished to that end.

The last night had come. The children had gone away to the woods to get some sprigs from a beautiful vine, without which Jessie did not consider her floral decorations perfect, and Mrs Inglis and David were awaiting them alone. They were in the garden, which was a very pretty place, and never prettier than on that evening, David thought. Ned's gardening was a great improvement on his of the old days, he willingly acknowledged. Indeed, since their coming back to Gourlay, Ned had given himself to the arranging and keeping of the garden, in a way that proved the possession of true

artistic taste, and also of that which is as rare, and as necessary to success in gardening and in other things—great perseverance. His success was wonderful, and all the more so that for the last few years the flower-garden, at least, had been allowed to take its own way as to growing and blossoming, and bade fair when they came to be a thicket of balsam, peonies, hollyhocks, and other hardy village favourites. But Ned saw great possibilities of beauty in it, compared with the three-cornered morsel that had been the source of so much enjoyment in Singleton, and having taken Philip into his confidence, there came from time to time seeds, roots, plants and cuttings to his heart's content.

He had determined to have the whole in perfect order by the time of the coming of Violet and the rest, and by dint of constant labour on his part, and the little help he got from David or any one else who could be coaxed into his service for the time, he had succeeded wonderfully, considering all things. It was perfect in neatness, and it was rich in flowers that had never opened under a Gourlay sun till now. It was to be a surprise to Violet and Jem, and looking at it with their eyes, David exclaimed again and again in admiration of its order and beauty.

"But they won't see it to-night, unless they come soon," said he. "However, it will look all the better with the morning sun upon it. Does it seem like home to you, mamma?—the old home?"

"Yes—with a difference," said his mother.

"Ah, yes! But you are glad to be here, mamma? You would rather have your home in Gourlay than anywhere else?"

"Yes, I am glad our home is here. God has been very good to us, Davie."

"Mamma, it is wonderful! If our choice had been given us, we could not have desired anything different."

His mother smiled.

"God's way is best, and this will seem more like home than any other place could seem to those who must go away. I cannot expect to keep my children always."

"Any place would be home to us where you were, mamma. But I am glad you are here—and you don't grudge us to our work in the world?"

"No, truly. That would be worse than ungrateful. May God give you all His work to do, and a will and strength to do it!"

"And you will have the children a long time yet; and Violet—" David hesitated and looked at his mother with momentary embarrassment. "Only mamma," added he, "I am afraid Philip wants Violet."

Mrs Inglis started.

"Has he told you so, Davie?" said she, anxiously.

"No—not quite—not exactly. But I think—I know you wouldn't be grieved, mamma? Philip is just what you would like him to be now. Philip is a true Christian gentleman. I expect great things from Philip. And mamma, you can never surely mean that you are surprised."

"Not altogether surprised, perhaps. But—we will not speak of it, Davie, until—"

"Until Philip does. Well, I don't think that will be very long. But, mamma, I cannot bear that you should be unhappy because of this."

"Unhappy? No, not unhappy! But—I could never make you understand. We will not speak about it."

They went on in silence along the walk till they came to the garden gate, and there they lingered for a while.

"Mamma," said David, "do you remember one night, a very stormy night, when you and I watched for papa's coming home? I don't know why I should always think of that night more than of many others, unless it was almost the last time he ventured forth to meet the storm. I think you were afraid even then, mamma?"

"I remember. Yes, I was afraid." David stood silent beside her. The voices of the children on their homeward way came through the stillness. In a minute they could see them, moving in and out among the long shadows, which the last gleam of sunshine made, their hands and laps filled with flowers and trailing green—a very pretty picture. The mother stood watching them in silence till they drew near. Then the face she turned to David was bright with both smiles and tears.

"David," she said, "when I remember your father's life and death, and how gently we have been dealt with since then, how wisely guided, how strongly guarded, and how the way has opened before us, my heart fills full and my lips would fain sing praises. I do not think there can come into my life anything to make me afraid any more."

David's answer was in words not his own: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

**The End.**

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