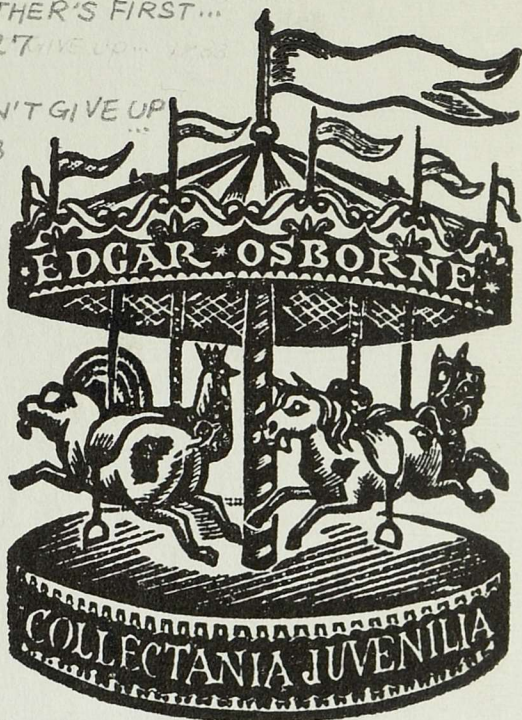


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COUNTRY CLERGYMAN  
FATHER'S FIRST...

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DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP;

OR,

THE GOOD SON.

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LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY HARVEY AND DARTON,

GRACECHURCH-STREET.

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1833.

DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!

THE GOOD BOY.

Joseph Rickerby, Printer, Sherbourn Lane.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY HAZLEY AND WATSON,

GRACECHURCH-STREET.

1838.



## PREFACE.

DEDICATED  
TO MY NEPHEW  
HUGO.





## PREFACE.

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THIS is the first of a series of volumes intended to afford *unobjectionable* reading for children. There are many works professing to be written for the same purposes, which are certainly unexceptionable in regard to principles and taste, but which are ill adapted to juvenile readers in these respects:—

1st. They contain passages which are unintelligible or uninteresting except to those who are experienced in the feelings of later years, or in the ways of the world.

2nd. They deal too much in generalizations and abstractions: they do not “speak in pictures” which convey the moral to

the “mind’s *eye*,” the only means of making a vivid impression on children.

3rd. The life and interest of the narrative are, from the above causes, or from the introduction of confused and difficult language, so ill-sustained in many parts, that the reader gets the very injurious habit of skipping over such pages, and attending only partially to the book before him.

In this attempt to render some of the stores of adult reading accessible to the young, the Compiler hopes to avoid these errors, and to open to young readers a vista into the future scenes of this varied world, without overpowering them with too extensive a prospect.

The Compiler is indebted to Miss Mitford’s “*Lights and Shadows of American Life*,” for the first tale of the series.

## EXPLANATIONS OF SOME AMERICAN TERMS.

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<sup>1</sup> *Clearing*. A space of ground in the American forests, cleared for cultivation by cutting down the trees.

<sup>2</sup> *Daubing* and *Chinking* are performed, the first, by covering the walls with mortar composed of clay and straw; the second, by filling up the interstices or spaces between the logs with small bits of wood.

<sup>3</sup> *Splits* and *Clefts* are logs *split* and *cloven* into pieces of various thickness for building purposes.

<sup>4</sup> *Puncheon*. Planks of wood are so called.

<sup>5</sup> *Girdling trees*. A circular cut or ring, two or three inches deep, is made with the axe quite round the tree, about four or five feet from the ground. This puts an end to vegetable life, and the destruction being accelerated by fire, the corn crop is no longer overshadowed by the leaves. This is practiced only with the very large trees, which from their size are very difficult to cut down.

<sup>6</sup> *Trace*, or track through the forest, formed by frequent passing.

<sup>7</sup> *Snaggs*. Trunks of trees floating down the stream, and which get entangled in the mud at the bottom.

<sup>8</sup> *Sawyers*. Floating masses of wood.

<sup>9</sup> *Bluffs*. Elevations, partly rocky; one side steep, and the other sloping and covered with wood.





# GEORGE MASON.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN the autumn of 1816, the Rev. Mr. Mason arrived towards sun-set at a settlement, eight miles south of the Iron Banks, in what is commonly called the Jackson Purchase, on the Lower Mississippi. The family had emigrated from New England, and consisted of this gentleman, a man of dignified appearance, though indicating fatigue and feeble health, and turned of forty; his lady, with a complexion originally fair, but now browned by the suns of a long journey of sixteen hundred miles, in the warmest days of autumn, and with an expression of great sweetness, though clouded by care and sorrow; and five children, four sons and a daughter. George, the hero of this tale, was a fair, blue-eyed boy, of about fourteen; Lizzy, a pretty little girl of twelve, with bright black eyes, and glossy ringlets of black hair curling in her neck. Her shrinking and timid manners were the consequence of the retirement in which she had lived, and of the fears inspired by the rough people amongst whom they had been travelling. Henry,

Thomas, and William, were ten, eight, and four years old. It was altogether a group, in which the parents excited uncommon interest, and the children were lovely beyond what I shall attempt to describe, because I would avoid expressions that might be deemed extravagant. Still less can I paint that mingled dignity and lowliness, which is apt to mark the countenances and manners of our western ministers, who constitute the connecting link between the rich and the poor : their education, and the respect paid to their profession, placing them upon a level with the rich ; and the scantiness of their subsistence, placing them upon a level with the poor. It was obvious, from their fatigued and weather-beaten appearance, that they had travelled a long way. A slight inspection of their dress, and the hired waggon that had brought them and their baggage from the banks of the Mississippi, where they had, that morning, disembarked from a flat boat, manifested that one of their trials had been the want of sufficient money to bring them comfortably over such a long way, by such a tedious and expensive route. There was a shyness about them, too, which marked that the outlandish aspect of the planters who stood staring at the new comers, made a disagreeable impression on them. Real dignity, however, is an internal thing, independent of dress and equipage. A family could not have been reared, as these had been, where self-respect had been inculcated every day and

every hour, both by precept and example, without showing the influence of this discipline, be their dress and appearance in other respects as they might. There was a look of decency, and an indescribable, but easy-felt manner, perceptible in every individual of this family, which manifested, at a glance, that it was the family of a gentleman. It repressed the rude curiosity of two or three tall planters habited in deer-skin shirts, with fringed epaulets of leather on their shoulders, a knit sash, of red green and blue about their waists, buck-skin pantaloons and mocassins, a rifle on their shoulders, five or six dogs attending each of them, and a dozen ragged, listless negroes behind them. There was much rough, but well-intended complimenting and offers of aid, on the part of those who had come down to welcome the new settlers to their cabin in the woods. It might have been welcome after a little time, but at present, the dim shades of twilight gathering over the boundless woods, the savage aspect of these huntsmen and their negroes, even the joyous evening yell of the hounds, the unwonted and strange terms of welcome, the foreign look of every thing about them; all this was of a character to inspire dismay and home-sickness, in the hearts of people lately transferred from a pleasant New-England village. Weary, and but slenderly furnished with the simplest means of subsistence, whether they looked round them upon the new society, in the midst of which their



lot was cast; upon the dark and sterile woods, whose leaves were falling about them; or into the roofless and floored cabin, where they were to shelter for the night—the whole scene was desolate and chilling. In such circumstances as these, God is a shade, a shelter, and a high tower of defence. The younger children had wept with weariness, thrown themselves upon a blanket, and were asleep under the open sky. The neighbours saw that the strangers were weary, and wished to be by themselves. They had considerably provided plenty of provisions, spread bear-skins for them in the interior of the cabin, and left a black woman to cook supper and breakfast for them. In that mild season and cloudless weather, there was nothing formidable to them in the idea of leaving the family to repose on bear-skins under the canopy of heaven. One after another, with the significant western salutation, “I wish you well,”—left the travellers to themselves. The little children were too soundly asleep to be awakened to supper. The parents, George, and Eliza, eat that which was provided for them by the black woman, and soon forgot their cares, and slept as soundly as if they had been stretched upon beds of down in a palace.

Mr. Mason had purchased, on report only, and without having seen it, this unfinished log-house in the midst of a “clearing”<sup>1</sup> of three acres, cut out of the forest eight miles from the river. The nearest habitation was



distant two miles. Beyond that there was a considerable settlement recently established. Some of the planters were comparatively opulent, and had a considerable number of slaves.

A bright morning sun, slanting its beams through the forest, at this season delightfully rich with all the varied colours of autumn; a plentiful breakfast, provided for the family before they were awake, by the black woman, and to which she awakened them; the keen appetite of the children, refreshed by their sleep; the air, prospects, and cheerful sounds of the morning, rendered the scene before them as different from that of the preceding evening as can be imagined. Every member of the family was exhilarated; and the whole conversation was, how they should render the habitation comfortable, and lay in a sufficient quantity of provisions for the approaching winter. Immediately after breakfast, at the departure of the black woman, the father was seen in company with George, making mortar from the clay, and exerting himself to fill up the intervals between the logs, (in the language of the country, "*daubing*" the house,) and by all the common expedients of the country, to render the habitation a warm and secure shelter from the frosts and rains of the approaching winter. Though his neighbours were rough, some of them were kind in their way, and they came and aided him. He saw in their mode of managing the business, that

there is a dexterity to be acquired only by practice, and that they knew better than he how to "*daub*"<sup>2</sup> and "*chink*"<sup>2</sup> a log cabin. In a couple of days, which, fortunately continued fair, the house had a roof, which would turn the rain, though the covering was of cypress "*splits*,"<sup>3</sup> secured in their places by logs, laid at right angles over them, and a chimney which did not smoke, although it was made of "*clefts*,"<sup>3</sup> plastered with clay mortar ; the intervals between the logs were tightly closed with *chinking*, well covered with the same material. A partition of small and straight timbers, with an opening cut through one end for a door, divided the area of the cabin into two rooms, one of which contained one, and the other two husk mattresses. The neighbours assisted him to raise another smaller cabin, in the language of the country a "*log-pen*," covered and "*daubed*" in the same manner, but without a chimney : and here was another mattress, on which George and Henry slept. These mattresses, thanks to the cheapness of bleached cottons in America, had an appearance of coolness and neatness, which spread a charm round the precinct of the rustic, but clean cabin. Mr. Mason was obliged to employ some part of the small sum of money that remained to him after defraying the expense of their long journey, and which he reserved for the most pressing emergencies, in purchasing a supply of winter provision. These consisted of the substantial materials of



a west-countryman's fare—corn, bacon, and sweet potatoes. Such are the appointments with which a hundred thousand families have commenced in the Western settlements, and with which they have probably been more contented and happy than their descendants will be when dwelling in spacious mansions.

When the white frosts of November rendered an evening fire necessary, when a bright one was kindled on their broad clay hearth; when the "*puncheon*"<sup>4</sup> shutters,—for glass had they none,—had excluded the uncertain light and the chill air of evening; when the table made with an adze from white poplar *clefts*, was spread before this fire; when the repast of smoking corn-loaf, sweet potatoes, and fried bacon, were arranged on it; when the fragrant tea was added in remembrance of New England, for they still retained a few pounds brought all the way from that country; and when the whole was seasoned by cheerful conversation, and that appetite which is felt in such cabins, and by industrious back-woodsmen in the highest perfection,—the guests at this humble feast had no need to envy the best fed alderman of London. A brilliant blaze, kindled with dry wood, enlightened the whole interior of this fresh looking, rough-cast, timbered apartment. Their faithful dog, Rover, who had followed them all the way from their late home, and who was now doubly dear to them, sat beside the table, looking earnestly upon its contents, apparently as hungry

and as happy as the children, wagging his tail, and occasionally uttering a yelp of joy to fill up the pauses of cheerful conversation. The prolonged and distant howl of the wolves, the ludicrous, and almost terrific noises of a hundred owls, the scream of other nocturnal animals, the measured creaking of the crickets and *catadeds*, and the gathering roar of autumnal winds along the forest, only sweetened a sense of present protection to the children, and rendered the brightness of the scene within more delightful by contrast with the savage and boundless forest without. I have never passed, and I never expect to pass, happier hours than I have spent in such a cabin. It has seemed to me that a back-woodsman's cabin just risen in the forest, rendered happy by innocence, competence, contentment, and gratitude to the Supreme Being, concentrates affection and produces some singular associations of contrast, that render it the chosen and hallowed abode of that unassuming, simple happiness, which is the most durable and satisfying that we can feel here below. I have delightful remembrances of my long sojourn in such places ; and as they return to my thoughts, I earnestly invoke the blessing of God upon their inhabitants.

The children were delighted with these first essays of the life of a back-woodsman. A circumstance contributed to heighten the charm. The sixth day after their arrival, a deer strayed so near the cabin, that George



shot it from the door. The same day the father and son, in exploring the grounds directly about them, with the view of commencing a clearing, started a bear from the cane-brake. He retreated slowly and growling from their path ; and made his retreat upon a prodigious sycamore. A passing neighbour came to the place. Two or three dogs surrounded the tree, and made the woods ring with their cries, which indicated to a knowing huntsman, that fear was mingled with their joy. A few rifle-shots brought the animal to the ground. There was something less wounding to their feelings in the slaughter of such a ferocious beast, than in that of an inoffensive deer. Apart from the spirit-stirring sport of bringing down a monstrous fat bear, the meat, which is excellent, and easily preserved, was a matter of no small consideration to a family like this. Even the skin is an important item in the arrangement of a backwood cabin. The hunting of the day furnished ample materials for pleasant evening conversation and amusement. Tender pieces of venison and bear's meat smoked upon the table. The success of that day seemed to promise, that there would be no danger of want of meat, while they possessed a rifle, powder, and lead. The black eyes of Eliza glistened with intense interest, as she contemplated, with a shudder, the terrible claws and teeth of the savage animal, observing, that much as she longed to gather the wild-flowers, she should always tremble to go

into the woods where such beasts were common. George exulted, in the spirit of a little Nimrod, as he related the circumstances of bringing down the bear, to his younger brothers, who had not been permitted to be present. The only misfortune of this pleasant little circle was, that there were generally two or three speakers at a time. One practiced in the study of canine physiognomy would have read the satisfaction expressed even in Rover's countenance, as he sat with his eyes fixed on George, evidently listening with all his ears, and perhaps regretting the want of speech, that prevented him from giving his opinion of the bear-hunt. Even Mr. Mason turned a countenance brightening from its usual languid expression of sickness and fatigue on Mrs. Mason, who, it would appear had been averse to this emigration. "Eliza," said he, "are you sorry now, that we have brought our little ones here?" Mrs. Mason admitted that the first samples of their new way of life were more pleasant than she had anticipated.

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## CHAPTER II.

It is unnecessary, and would be tedious to explain at length the causes of Mr. Mason's



removal from New England to the banks of the Mississippi. It will suffice to say, that both he and his wife had been reared delicately. His salary as a minister was very small, and his family increased too rapidly for his means. His parish refused to augment his stipend, he consequently resigned his office, and resolved to seek his fortune in the western country. His wife at first argued against a plan which appeared attended with so much difficulty and risk, but she loved and respected her husband, and she ceased to oppose his wishes.

I need not describe the departure of this family from their New England home. As their minister was leaving them, the villagers, some of them at least, seemed to repent, and to understand and feel the loss of so good and kind a man. Many tears were shed on all sides. Mr. Mason himself found it more painful than he had expected, to break away from a place where he had for the long space of sixteen years identified his feelings with the joys and sorrows of the people; where he had prayed with so many sick, and followed so many dead to their long home. His wife, pale, silent, and in tears, embraced her aged mother. The children kissed and shook hands with their school-fellows. Old people said, "Good bye, Mr. Mason; pray for us; we shall never see you again." The children, their eyes swollen with weeping, were packed along with Mrs. Mason and the bulky baggage, into a two-horse waggon. Young George sat

in front as driver. Suppressing his tears, and making a hasty farewell, he drew his hat over his eyes, cracked his whip, and started his team. Even the old dog appeared to see that matters went wrong, and whined piteously, as he followed the lingering steps of his master, who walked behind the waggon, turning, from time to time, to take a last look at his church-spire, glittering in the beams of a warm September morning.

Most of my young readers will be able to fill up the picture of the little trials and the accidents of a journey to the western hills. They can imagine how often the horses were knocked up, the harness broke, and the waggon itself escaped upsetting. They can imagine how often the children cried with fatigue and sleepiness at night; and how fresh and gay they were, when setting out, after a full breakfast, on a bright sunny morning. But few of them will so easily imagine how often they met with rough unfeeling people, or how often they were cheated in their tavern bills, as well as in bills for repairing the waggon. But if they met with many painful occurrences on their long journey, they met with many pleasant ones too. If the gullied road or the rain-washed precipices rendered the way impassable for the waggon, in other places they found many miles in succession of pleasant travelling. On the whole, there were many more fair days than stormy ones. George proved himself, for a boy of his years, a steady, careful driver.



While he was whistling in front of his waggon, and cheering his horses, and the children were asleep among the baggage, their father and mother walked many a pleasant mile, seating themselves occasionally for rest on the breezy side of a hill or mountain, and tracing back, as on a map, the dusty road, the river, villages, spires, mansions, and groves, which they had left behind, the old dog reposing at their feet whenever they rested. There is a charm in the ever-shifting mountain and valley scenery, on such a long route, that was felt in all its delights, not only by Mr. and Mrs. Mason, but by our friend George.

In due time, and with the common experience of sweet and bitter things, they had toiled over the last of the Alleghany mountains; had descended to the Ohio; had sold their waggon and horses; had purchased a flat boat, and were floating down the beautiful Ohio, which happened this autumn to be in an uncommonly favourable state for boating. They had admired the forest, the valley, the "bluffs," and the incipient towns and villages as they alternated on its long course; had encountered the sweeping and turbid current of the Mississippi; had disembarked at the Iron Banks, and hired a waggon to carry them out to the settlement, where, as we have seen, Mr. Mason had purchased the cabin and the clearing mentioned in the first chapter.

As they became better acquainted with the settlers, they found them illiterate and rude.

The most distinguished amongst them professed no superiority over the rest, but what they derived from their wealth ; some possessing, beside a number of slaves, a drove of horses and four-wheeled carriages, which they honoured with the name of coaches. The Masons soon discovered that there were disagreeable people elsewhere as well as in New England ; but their general circumstances were so pleasant and novel during the winter that succeeded their arrival, that Mr. Mason pronounced himself as well satisfied with his new condition as he had anticipated. Young George became a hunter of considerable expertness. Whenever they chose, by rambling a few hours, they could bring home wild ducks, squirrels, opossums, and rabbits. The coffee and tea which they had brought with them, it is true, were soon exhausted ; the want, at first, from the power of habit, was felt as a painful privation. The milk of a couple of cows which they had purchased, supplied, however, a more healthful and nutritive substitute, if not so pleasant to them as that which they had been compelled to renounce, since they could not afford to recruit their stock. When the weather or other circumstances forbade his working abroad, Mr. Mason found sufficient occupation for his leisure hours in reading the few books he had brought with him, and in instructing the children.

In his own family, as a substitute for public worship on the Sabbath, he adopted a pri-



vate course of worship, blending interest and amusement with religious instruction. Prayers, instructions, select readings from the Scriptures, tales calculated to excite moral reflections and benevolent feelings, first by the father, then by the mother, and the children in succession. Their understandings were exercised by questions. Their hearts were improved by representations of the beauty of humility and kindness, contrasted with the baseness and self-torment of pride, and the bad passions that follow in its train. One grand aim in this worship, was to represent the Almighty in that amiable character in which He shows himself in his words and in his works; and sedulously to shield their minds from any ideas of his being and providence, but those of mercy, love, justice, goodness, and truth. It closed with a kind of court of enquiry. The general tenour of the children's deportment, words and actions, during the past week, underwent a solemn review. The facts were proved; the character and tendency of the actions pointed out; the source whence they had arisen explained; and, if matter of reprehension existed, what ought to have been said or done in the case declared; and, finally, praise and blame were distributed according to the merits of the actions.

When these services were concluded, and the ardour of the sun quenched by his descent behind the forests, they walked together into the woods and clearings. Every object in these walks was at once a source of instruc-

tion and amusement, and a theme whence Mr. Mason did not fail to deduce new proofs of the wisdom, mercy, and power of God. The moss, or the evergreen at the foot of the sycamore ; the paroquets settling on their branches to feed ; the partridge flitting on their path ; the eagle screaming in the blue sky, far above the summits of these trees ; the carrion vultures sailing round, and at times, to the eye, seeming to lie still in the air, as they scented intensely in the heights of the firmament, for their appropriate food ; the squirrels skipping, and performing gambols indescribable, or sitting with their tails elevated over their heads, and curling gracefully back, nibbling the wild fruits ; the rabbits starting from the cane-brake ; the endless variety of trees and shrubs around them ; the prodigious grape-vines climbing to the highest tops ; the violets, even now, at the end of autumn, close on the heels of winter, starting into bloom ; the diversified seed-capsules of flowers that had already come to maturity ; the various starry forms of the gossamer down of seeds, sailing slowly in the breeze ; in fine, every object which they met, was sufficient to excite the attention and interest of the family, and furnish a theme for a lecture on natural history, or a warm and heartfelt sermon on the goodness and wisdom of the Creator. It is thus that minds rightly trained every where find amusement and instruction.

Yet, though they had these delightful Sabbath walks in the woods ; though it was a source



of constant delight and amusement to the parents to answer the thousand questions of their children, raised by the novelty of the objects in their walks; though the illusive veil which imagination spreads over an unexplored region, still rested upon the country,—we must not infer that they were all the time happy, and had not a mixture of bitter, with their pleasant things. It belongs to earth to have this mixture, and our friends were not exempt from the portion of man every where under the sun. On their return from such walks, there was no tea and coffee to cheer them. The children were nearly barefoot, while the creole children of the settlement, when they met them, would hold up their red morocco shoes, as if to provoke painful comparisons. They now began to discover that if there were jealousies, divisions, and heart burnings in New England, the same evil existed here in an aggravated form. To meet these evils they had, besides religion, one grand resource. Would that every family had the same! Nearly one half of the misery of this earth proceeds from disunion and selfishness in families. The voice of wrangling, dispute, and separate interests, is heard in the family dwelling. Good angels scatter not their blessings in such habitations. Such was not the log cabin. Their evening union was one of peace, love, and joy. Every one, even the youngest boy, scarcely five years old, brought kindness and good feeling to the common

stock. The bright evening fire was kindled: the Bible was read: they prayed together; and each of these affectionate inmates loved the other as he loved his own soul. This mutual affection showed in every word and action. When the members of a family really love one another, this is food and raiment, and society and cheerfulness, and every thing. To such a family external sorrows are like weights pressing upon an arch, the strength of which increases with the amount of pressure applied. But when to poverty and trouble, and sickness, are added selfishness, disputing and quarrelling within, I know not how the members of such a family can sustain life.

With this resource, the winter wore away comfortably and pleasantly, notwithstanding their passing disquietudes and vexations. On every fine sunshiny day, Mr. Mason was employed with young George, before the sunbeams had dissolved the frost, *girdling*<sup>5</sup> the trees. The latter had his little axe and grubbing hoe, cutting down the smaller trees, delighted with the mellow appearance, and the healthy smell of the virgin mould. A hundred times his delight was excited by seeing the grey and black squirrels skip away from the trees which he began to fell. The paroquets in their splendid livery of green and gold were fluttering about the sycamores, raising their shrill scream, as disagreeable as their plumage is brilliant; and seemed to be scolding at these meddlers in their empire



The red-birds, springing away from the briar copse, which he began to disturb with his grubbing hoe; the powerful mocking-bird, seated at its leisure on a dead branch, and pouring its gay song, and imitating every noise that was heard; the loud and joyous bark of their favorite dog, as he was pursuing his own sport beside them, digging for an opossum; the morning crow of the cock; the distant cry of the hounds in the settlement, ringing through the forests; the morning mists lying like the finest drapery of muslin, spread over the tops of the trees; these, and a thousand mingled and joyous cries of animals in the woods, filled his young heart with joy, and often arrested his axe and his hoe. In such pursuits passed away the morning till breakfast.

When the labour of clearing was resumed after breakfast, the mother and Eliza came out, attended by the younger children, and looked on the work as they sat on the logs already cut. A falling tree was a grand object to them. Henry, now a stout boy of ten, had already obtained permission to take his share in these labours. Not unfrequently the whole group would suspend their toils, and laugh to watch him tugging at the branch of a shrub, catching by its points upon others, and pulling him back, delighted to see his little cheeks flush with exultation and exercise, and note the promise of future perseverance in the efforts which he made, until he had



overcome the resistance and added it to the pile.

After sun-set it was a high treat to the children to fire the huge piles of dry bushes and logs, heaped for burning, and to see the flames rising above the tops of the highest trees, enlightening every object around, and disturbing the owls and roosting birds from their retreats. The noise of the bursting cane-stalks was like the report of a thousand guns, and they called these nightly fires their celebrations. Not but there were also discouragements and difficulties in this work of clearing. Mr. Mason was both unused to labour and feeble in health. To cut down a single Mississippi sycamore of the large size, required three days of his best exertions. Of course he was compelled to let all the largest trees to stand in his clearing, only deadening them by girdling. How it grieved him to see his rich and level field marred in its appearance, by a hundred huge standing dead trees, and the broken limbs and branches, which the wind was constantly detaching from them. It was trying to his temper too, to have one of his rude neighbour planters (for since the Mason family had ceased to be a novelty, they experienced a sensible diminution in the kindness with which the other settlers had received them) surveying his work with affected pity, expressed in conversation something like this. "Why, Doctor, if you do not get a greater force, you will have a field hardly large enough

for a '*truck patch*.' One of my negroes would cut many more trees in a day, than you will in a month. Doctor, you must have some negroes."—But he took especial care not to offer the services of his.

But the severest of the whole was splitting rails. This was a task absolutely beyond the strength of young George. The kind hearted boy was assiduous to hand the wedges and the maul to his exhausted father. In this most laborious business there is a dexterity only to be acquired by practice. Many a tree, cut down with great labour, would not split at all. It was long before Mr. Mason, with his utmost exertions, could make five and twenty in a day. It did not mend the matter to be told, by those who looked on his work, that one hundred and fifty a day was the regular task of each of their negroes. At night Mr. Mason's hands were one blister. Poor George could count his blisters too. Mrs. Mason bound up their sore hands, and turned away her face to conceal her tears. The severe toil caused Mr. Mason rheumatic pains and sleepless nights. He found, moreover, when stormy weather confined him to the house, that a body full of the pains of exhausting labour unfitted him for mental exertion. But neither the voice of complaining or of dejection was heard; for in this cabin there was union, mutual love, confidence in God, and the hope of immortality.

The middle of March approached, and in



this climate it is the dawn of spring. The wilderness began to be gay ; the rose-bud in a thousand places was one compact tuft of peach-blow flowers ; the umbrella tops of the dog-woods were covered with the large blossoms of brilliant white ; at every step the feet trampled on clusters of violets ; the swelling buds and the half-formed leaves diffused on every side the delicious perfume of spring. The labours of Mr. Mason had been slow and painful, but they had been constant and persevering. A little every day produces a great result. In four months the clearing was increased from six to nine acres, which were well fenced, and fit for planting. The surface of the soil was black, rich, and perfectly pliable. It was a pleasant novelty to him to plant corn without ploughing, and among thick deadened trees, reaching almost to the clouds. The field was laid out in rows in right lines, by taking sight from one tree to another. The father went before, making a hole for the corn with his hoe. George followed, dropping the corn into the hole, and covering it with his. Eliza, with her face shaded by her large sun-bonnet, and Henry with his broad-leafed straw-hat, with little bags pinned to their sides, walked beside George and their father. They carried beans, the seed of pumpkins, squashes, cucumbers, and the different kinds of melons, to hand to each, where a place offered that seemed suitable to these seeds. A garden, or as the



people call it a *truck-patch*, was also prepared, and sowed and planted with such seeds and vegetables as their more considerate neighbours had taught them were congenial to the soil and climate.

The violent thunder-storms of that country and season were at first a source of alarm to the family. They trembled as they heard the thunder echoing through the forests, and saw the lightening firing the high dead trees. They soon perceived that the thunder-bolts fell harmless to the earth. Their ears became accustomed to the crash, and the beautiful mornings that followed, hailed by all the birds of spring, and embalming the air with the mingled odours of the forest, more than compensated for the passing terrors of the night. There are a few lovers of nature who will be able to comprehend the enjoyment of this family on visiting the field the first sabbath after the crops had come fully up. It is a delightful spectacle to one that has eyes and a heart. It was the promise of future support to those who had nothing else on which to depend; of subsistence and comfort to all they loved on earth. It was cultivated vegetation sprung up on the wild soil, where nothing but weeds and bushes had flourished from the creation. I enter into their delight, as their eyes caught the straight stems of the corn, rising in lines that already marked the rows with a vigour of vegetation and depth of verdure which they had never seen corn

wear before. Parents and children gazed with unsated eagerness upon the melons and cucumbers, starting up with leaves broader and fresher than any they had ever beheld in New England. There they had required great care in preparing the hills, and laborious attention to the kind and amount of manure; here, they were barely deposited in the virgin soil. There, in March, the ground was still covered with snow; here, these vegetables had already thrown out their second leaves. The inspection of the sweet potatoe patch, which was large, and the hills of which had been prepared with great care, was a source of still more gratifying curiosity. Our emigrants were all fond of this vegetable, and had never seen it growing. It was therefore with the highest gratification that they watched the unfolding stem, and the first developement of the leaves of this beautiful creeper.

The season was favourable, and their crops came forward to their utmost hopes. To watch it daily advance was a constant source of amusement. But the sad leaven of sorrow remained at the bottom of their cup. The great heats of the climate began to make themselves felt early in April. The lassitude that ensued was a new sensation to this family, and at first not unpleasant. But the increase of this lassitude, as the season and the heat advanced, became a source of apprehension to Mr. Mason. Half an hour's labour in the field, after the sun was up, completely drenched



him in perspiration, and left him powerless to renew his work, until he had rested an hour upon his mattress. His inward apprehension was, "If such be the effect of an April sun, what will be that of July and August?"

Their neighbours, now grown familiar with them, had broken through the first unconscious restraints, which had arisen from feeling the difference of their education and characters from those of the strangers. They accused them of pride and self-importance. There were even two or three wicked babblers among them, that went so far as to say "that Mr. Mason had been driven out of New England for slandering the President, and passing counterfeit money." The effect of such reports was soon visible to our poor emigrants, in the rude and contemptuous manner with which they were treated by most of their neighbours. As these stories remained uncontradicted, the propagators of them began to say aloud what they had hitherto whispered. The reports at last came to the ears of the calumniated family, and, at first, caused some pain. After considering what was to be done,—whether they ought to vindicate themselves from such imputations,—it was unanimously settled, that people who could invent and circulate such idle falsehoods, would only invent and circulate others if these were refuted. That it was wise and right to let the whole pass unnoticed, and to meet their neighbours as before, and to think or care nothing



about slanders which they were conscious of not deserving.

Midsummer already furnished their table with green corn and the common vegetables of the season in ample abundance; but their joy in the prospect of their crops was damped by observing, that as the summer heats advanced, the health of Mr. Mason more visibly sunk under the influence of the season. He could no longer labour abroad more than an hour in the day, and that in the morning before the sun was above the trees.

The heavy dews, which lay like rain upon the leaves of the corn and the rank weeds, were found scarcely less noxious to his health when he was drenched by them, than the heats of the sun. Young George, fully comprehending the case, laboured from morning till night to spare his father, and to keep down the weeds. It discouraged him to see that more grew up in a night, than he could cut down in a day.

In attempting to work with his son in the sweet-potatoe patch, in the middle of July, under the influence of a powerful sun, Mr. Mason experienced a *coup de soleil*, and was assisted to his bed by the united exertions of his wife and children. During three hours, he was not expected to survive from one minute to another. I do not design to describe the agony of his family. He who knows how they loved one another can imagine it. There are events whose suddenness throw

the mind into a kind of stupefaction, and it was only when Mr. Mason exhibited signs of being out of immediate danger, that tears were shed by those who watched over him.

He slowly rallied until evening, at the hour when he had been accustomed to summon the children to prayers. After informing them that he was too weak to do it this evening, he requested them to retire into George's house, as the other cabin was called. He then held a long and solemn conversation with Mrs. Mason, touching his situation and hers, and his wishes in regard to her and the children for the future. To Mrs. Mason's question why he dwelt so much on these subjects at this time, he replied calmly, that he was convinced he never should recover from his illness. Mrs. Mason was deeply affected at this communication, and tears were her only reply.

He said that it behoved rational beings to foresee evils, and forearm themselves against them, instead of shutting their eyes upon the consequences, and shrink from duty through the enervating influence of indulged grief. He seriously insisted on an absolute trust in the sustaining and gracious care of the Almighty, and placed before her the guilt of doubting the love and mercy of Him, "who noteth the fall of a sparrow, and heareth the young ravens when they cry."

"Dear Eliza," he continued; "I cannot now foresee what you will do for subsistence, or how you will do to rear our helpless chil-



dren among this rough, uncultivated people. But I have seen a thousand times that God never forsakes them who do not forsake themselves, You know my motto—‘*Nil desperandum.*’ You have heard me repeat it a thousand times in every shadow of difficulty. Perhaps I did unwisely in bringing you here. It is useless now to mourn over what is irretrievable. Besides, at the time of coming to the decision of removing to this settlement, I called all the reason and forecast that I possessed to the deliberation : and I know you are too kind not to forgive what was done for the best, even if it turns out ill. I think still, that had it pleased God to spare me for a few years, that I should have become comfortable in my circumstances, and should have felt that I had done well in seeking independence in this way. As regards the future, I mean that which follows death, I thank God that my mind is fixed and settled. I shall resign my spirit in humble confidence to Him that gave it, thanking him, that through his Son, my Saviour, I have no anxiety about it ; but am humbly confident, that in his own gracious way, and in the mansion fitted for it, He will render me happy.”

Next day Mr. Mason had strong fever and shortness of breathing, and was wholly unable to rise from his bed. The heat of the season was intense. The paleness of anxiety was spread over every countenance in the family. The physician resided at the distance of eight



miles, and Mr. Mason affirmed that his disease was such as to derive no advantage from medical aid; and he was unwilling that they should incur the expense of sending for him. Mrs. Mason made no reply, but assented to George's proposal, made to her in private, to find his way through the woods to the bank of the Mississippi, where the doctor resided. Henry begged to be allowed to accompany him. A tear stood in the eye of Mrs. Mason as she kissed them both, and bade them make haste, and not return without the doctor. A trip of eight miles and back through dark forests, in which they would not pass a single house, was an undertaking sufficiently daunting for two such young and inexperienced boys. But love triumphs over fear and death; and these boys so dearly loved their father, that nothing was formidable to them, which they could do for him.

On the way, such conversation passed between the brothers as might be expected from their years, their errand, and the forests through which they passed. Henry was afraid of wolves, bears, and panthers. More than once he cried with the soreness of his feet. Once they lost their way, mistaking a cow-path for their "*trace*." They might, perhaps, have wandered into the inextricable tangle of the swamps, and have perished, had they not providentially been met by a man hunting his cattle on horseback. Seeing them wandering on towards the swamps, he naturally compre-

hended their mistake, and led them back, and put them in the right way. They arrived at length on the banks of the river, and told their tale of distress. The physician was absent, not to return till night. They received a promise that he should be sent on, immediately upon his return. The people of the house where the doctor boarded, pitied them, and treated them kindly ; but nothing could induce the affectionate children to tarry longer than half an hour. The time of their return was that of burning noon ; but their road was one continued covert of shade, and they reached home in safety. The physician arrived in due time, and expressed no certain opinion of Mr. Mason's case. Hope and fear alternately swayed the family for some days, and they endured the wearying agony of suspense. He was sometimes better, sometimes worse. Perhaps he might have recovered, had he been able to obtain the common comforts which his case required. But the depressing heat of the season was against him. The affection and ingenuity of those about him devised every thing that the field, the garden, or the woods, could yield, in the way of sustenance or medicine. But neither affection nor ingenuity can create from nothing ; and a hundred things so necessary to the comfort and recovery of a sick man like him, were absolutely out of the question in that place. Every one of this family completely vanquished with grief and dejection, but George. Since his return from



the river to fetch the physician, his character seemed to have undergone an entire transformation. He was the only one who shed no tears. He looked thoughtful, but was always calm. It was sufficiently evident that this apparently strange deportment, in an unexperienced boy of fourteen, who had hitherto been supposed to possess the keenest sensibility, did not at all result from want of feeling, but from a high purpose, and a fixed determination not to let grief and discouragement unfit him for his duty. His thoughts seemed to be constantly occupied in inventing some kind of food, or drink, that might be strengthening or pleasant to his father. He appeared, all at once, to be endowed with courage, vigilance, and patience, for watching him, and the skill and management of a nurse for taking care of him. It was affecting to see with what heroism, zeal, and tenderness, this noble boy discharged offices, sometimes laborious, sometimes disagreeable, and at all times trying to the patience and fortitude even of professed attendants upon the sick. It was love for his father that taught him, and every where, and in all trials, love can teach every thing, and, like faith, can "remove mountains."

The affection of Mr. Mason had not been visibly partial, but he had been the helper and companion of his father. The firmness of the child had exactly matched with the declining health, and sometimes (when he thought of



the helpless state in which his death would leave his little family) the depressed spirits of the parent. It will be manifest, that the display of such new and untried proofs of character in the son on this occasion must have increased the love and confidence of his father. The rest, Mrs. Mason, Lizzy, and Henry, took their turn indeed in watching, but nothing ever kept George long from his station beside the bed, by night and by day. There would he sit, holding the hand of his father, and looking steadily in his pale and emaciated face. Whenever George was for a moment away, and the father awoke in his absence, the first thing his eye sought was his cherished son. When George returned, resumed his place, and asked what he could do, the reply, as his satisfied countenance turned towards his son, was—"nothing."

The sickness of Mr. Mason had taken the form of a gradual, and almost imperceptible, but fixed and incurable decay. The physician came a few times, and then assured Mrs. Mason, in private, that he could do no more for him. It might be a useful history, to relate how suspense in this family settled into the conviction that nothing could save him, and that they must prepare to part with him. But words go but a little way in explaining or describing this process, every stage of which is an agony as yet unfelt, and therefore inconceivable to the majority of my young readers.

It ought to be told, for the honour of human nature, that the neighbours, although seemingly rough and insensible, felt that there was misery in this family. Towards the close of Mr. Mason's sickness, their slaves were sent every day to watch and aid the family, and bring to it such food and comforts as their case required. They performed, also, all the laborious duties of preparation for harvest, and left the family no cares but to watch over its dying head.

For some days before the scene closed, Mr. Mason dozed a great deal, awaking only at intervals to transient fits of distress, and turning from side to side. He spoke little more than to call for water. The hand of George was instantly clasped in his, and his look told that he had then obtained all he wanted. His lips would often move for a moment, and perhaps a tear or two would roll down his cheeks, and he dozed again.

Such was the state of things until the 25th of September. It was the Sabbath evening, and a glorious sun-set. The sun was sinking behind the trees into the misty veil of Indian summer; the turtle-doves were cooing mournfully in the woods, as though sad at the departure of day. Mr. Mason roused, and instead of relapsing, as usual, into drowsiness, seemed to revive to unwonted consciousness. It was the effort of the spirit about to take its final flight. He requested that his family might assemble about his bed. The whole



family, even to little William, the youngest boy, was instantly about him in silent awe, and sorrowful expectation. They were there to hear his last words, and to witness his last struggles with mortality. In his left hand was a hand of each of the children, in his right, the hand of the pale, worn, speechless companion of his toils—his wife. His eyes were turned upwards, and his lips moved evidently in prayer. When he had finished this voiceless communion with his Maker, in a firm, distinct tone, he uttered the following words:—

“The last twelve years of my life have been a succession of days of pain and sorrow. I have a thousand times anticipated all the circumstances of this hour. For myself, I should rejoice to be gone. Death is but the pang of a moment. All that is terrible in this hour is, in leaving you behind. Love of you has such entire possession of this heart, that it seems to me as if it could not grow cold. Eliza, my wife, you need strength, and while you ask it of God, struggle for it yourself. We are not here in ‘the valley of the shadow of death,’ to melt in sorrow; but to conflict firmly with suffering, temptation, and with the pangs of death itself. My last charge to you is, to shed as few tears for me as may be after I am gone, and to strive to associate pleasant, instead of painful remembrances with the intercourse we have had together. Strengthen yourself for your duty, by trusting in God. Look to Him, and never



despair. Will you promise your dying husband this?"——

A shuddering movement of her head gave consent.

"For you, George," he continued, "I see the firmness of duty in your eye. God has endowed you with the strength of mind necessary to take care of this helpless family. You are to labour, and to pray, that you may act with the singleness of firm and wise judgment for these dear ones that I now commit, under God, to your care. In the management of them, will you promise me to be faithful, prudent, and affectionate?"

A slight struggle was perceptible on the beautiful and sun-burnt face of the noble boy, which indicated the effort he made to suppress his tears. It was but for a moment. He bent down, and kissed his father's forehead, and uttered, in a steady voice: "Dear father, think only of yourself. I promise all." The father convulsively grasped the hand he held in his, looked intently and eagerly in George's face, and said, in a low voice, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"—These were his last words.

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### CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN accustomed to perform the last duties for the dead in the settlement, with the

aid of two or three slaves, prepared and robed the body for its last sleep. While this was doing, the mourners remembered the promise so recently given, and they walked backward and forward in the paleness of grief; but there were no murmuring words, no audible lamentings. The little children clung to their mother with an expression of fear and awe, at what was to them so strange and incomprehensible as the cold motionless body of their father, and the sudden separation of all the little services which all had been so long and unremittingly employed in rendering him. Silent respect and sympathy were on the countenances of their neighbours. The passing slaves stopped, took off their hats, gazed reverently for a moment on the face of the dead, and passed on. Slander had been busy with the name of the deceased while living; but the claims of truth and justice are every where felt and acknowledged sooner or later.

I may remark, in passing, that it is the character of people such as those amongst whom Mr. Mason expired, to be deeply moved with such scenes of distress. Whatever appeals directly to their senses powerfully affects them. They forgot their envy and slander of the living, and were saying, in an under tone among themselves, what a wise and learned man he had been, and how they pitied his helpless family. They were considerate and sincere in their offers of the aid of servants, provisions,

and all the little decencies and preparations for such a funeral as the customs of that region prescribed. There was no white person at that time within thirty miles, who was accustomed to perform the religious duties on that occasion. This circumstance was stated to Mrs. Mason. It aroused her feelings from the stupifying effect of her grief, to think that her husband, who had so many hundred times prayed over the lifeless bodies of others, should himself be carried to his long home without prayer. Pompey, a converted slave of one of the principal settlers, was in the habit of preaching to the negroes, and of praying at their funerals. Mrs. Mason preferred that he should perform the funeral solemnities of her husband, rather than have none at all.

I should be glad to give the reader as distinct an image as I have myself of this rustic funeral in the Mississippi forest. I see the two solitary cabins standing in the midst of the corn, which over-topped the smaller cabin. I see the high and zig-zag fence, ten rails high, that surrounds the field, and the hewn "puncheon" steps in the form of crosses, by which the people passed over the fence into the inclosure; the smooth and beaten foot-path amidst the weeds, that leads through the corn-field to the cabins. I see the dead trees throwing aloft their naked stems from amidst the corn. I mark the square and compact enclosure of the deep green forest, which limits the prospect to the summits of the corn-stalks,



the forest, and the sky. A path is cut through the corn a few feet wide to a large sycamore, left in its full verdure in one corner of the field, where Mr. Mason used to repose with George when he was weary, and where he had expressed a wish, during his sickness, that he might be buried. Under that tree is the open grave. Before the door of the cabin, and shaded by the western slope of the sun behind it, is the unpainted coffin, only wanting the covering plank. In it is the lifeless body of the pastor, the cheek blanched to the colour of the bands about the neck, and contrasting so strongly with the full and flowing black silk robe, in which, in the far country of his birth, he had been accustomed to go up to the house of the Lord. I see the white mothers, their children, and a considerable number of blacks who had been permitted to attend the funeral, in consideration of the service which was to be performed by one of their number. I see the tall and swarthy planters, with the stern authority and rude despotism, which they exercise over their slaves, and their conscious feeling of their standing and importance, impressed upon their countenances. I see the pale faces of the little group of mourners, struggling hard with nature against lamentation and tears. They could not have, and they needed not, the expensive and sable trappings, which custom has required for the show of grief. Their faded and mended dresses were in perfect keeping with the despondency in their

countenances, and their forlorn and desolate prospects.

The assembled group was summoned to prayer. The black, who officiated, was dressed, by the contributions of his fellow-servants of the whole settlement, in a garb as nearly like that of the methodist ministers, who were in the habit of preaching in the settlement, as the case would admit. The position was to him one of novelty and awe. His honest and simple heart was affected with the extreme distress of the mourners. He began at first in awkward and unsuccessful attempts, to imitate the language and manner of educated ministers. He soon felt the hopelessness of the effort; and poured out the simple, earnest effusions of real prayer, in language not less impressive from being uttered in the dialect of a negro. He dissolved into tears from his own earnestness; and, while the honest and sable faces of his fellow-slaves were bathed in tears, the contagion of sympathy extended through the audience, producing a general burst of grief. I should despair of being able to catch the living peculiarities and dialect of the discourse, or exhortation, which followed. Nevertheless I shall attempt an outline of the beginning, which may fairly serve as a sample of the rest.

“White Massas and people, please to hark and hear the poor words of Pompey. Great God let white men bring poor Pompey over the sea, and make him work hard in field.



Great God good, when he seem hard with us. He send good men to turn Pompey's heart, and make him Christian. Strange things God work. Here Massa Mason, great Yankee preacher, know all tongues, read all books, wear the grand gown you see there in coffin, preach in big meeting. He come way off here to Massaseepa to die,—die in the woods. Nobody pray over him, but poor Pompey. Well, me think all one thing for God. Me feel here when me die, me go to Heaven. God no turn me out, cause me no got book learning. Massa Mason he die, he go to Heaven. Oh! Lord God, touch Pompey's lips, that he speak a word in season to poor Missis, and the dear children. Oh! Missis, you see Heaven, you no want him back. No sin, no labour, no tears."

And the poor earnest slave proceeded to pour forth from the fulness of his heart, all the motives of resignation, patience, and hope, that his retentive memory enabled him to utter. The audience melted anew into tears. When the service was finished, he recited in his peculiar accent and dialect those beautiful verses of a funeral hymn, which he had so often heard repeated as to have committed it to memory:

"Those eyes he seldom could close,  
By sorrow forbidden to sleep," &c.

I have never heard voices so sweet as those of some black women on such occasions. The



thrilling tones will remain on my memory as long as I live. To me, too, there is something very affecting in that sacred music in which the whole congregation unite. Every one joined in this hymn, and it seemed to be a general wail sent up from the woods to heaven.

When the hymn was ended, the man whose business it was to direct the ceremony, proposed to those who wished to take a last look at the deceased to come forward. It is the common custom in that country for widows who affect refinement, to shut themselves up in retirement from the funeral solemnities of their husbands. But not so did Mrs. Mason. She walked firmly to the coffin side, and all her children came with her. They looked long at the pale and care-worn, but peaceful countenance of the being who had been next, to God, their stay and dependence. At a signal from the same man, the lid was placed on the coffin and nailed down. Twelve of the principal planters were the bearers. The mourners walked directly behind the coffin, and the whole mass of people followed through the corn-field. The coffin was let down with cords into the grave, and the fresh black soil heaped upon it. According to the custom of that region, each one present took up a handful of earth, and threw it into the grave. A couple of stakes were planted, one at the head and the other at the foot; the neighbours dispersed to their several abodes; and the widow and

her children returned to their desolate dwelling.

Let us look into the cabin of this sorrowful family in the evening after the funeral. The chair in which the deceased used to sit, stood empty in its accustomed place. The supper was removed untouched. Even the little children moved on tip-toe for fear of disturbing the silence. A tear trickled down Mrs. Mason's cheek when she took down the family Bible at the accustomed hour of evening prayer, and gave it to George. The boy remembered that his dying father had confided to him the task of taking care of and comforting his family. That he had warned him against the indulgence of fruitless lamentation. He opened the Bible at that sublime and pathetic chapter of Job, which begins, "Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days and full of trouble:" a strain of poetry that sounds in my ear always like a funeral hymn. He had reduced to writing his father's evening prayer, as he remembered it, and in a firm and distinct voice, he read it. He sang sweetly, and had long been accustomed to lead the evening hymn. But this was now an effort beyond his firmness, and instead of the ordinary concert of voices, was met by a general burst of grief. I need not describe how dark this night looked to the children, as it settled on the forest, nor describe the thrill with which the long and dismal howl of the wolves echoing through the woods, came upon their ears ;



nor the convulsive shudder with which the orphan daughter lay down beside her mother ; upon the mattress on which her father had died.

The days that followed seemed to them of immeasurable length. George and Henry went to the field, as they had been wont when their father was alive ; for on the first morning after the funeral, it was agreed to proceed to their duties, as usual, in conformity with his dying charge. Resolution in a well principled mind can do wonders. " But the heart knoweth," and will feel " its own bitterness." The boys dreamed at their task, and thought too intensely of something else to make much progress. Days, however lengthened by sorrow, came and went to them as though they had been in joy. For a few days the neighbours looked in upon them, with countenances of sympathy for their loss ; but in a fortnight the bereaved family was regarded with as much indifference as the dead trees about their dwelling.

I do not purpose very particularly to narrate the subsequent fortunes of this family, any further than as their circumstances are calculated to develope the character and conduct of George. It is only necessary to say, that, for the present, the family were amply supplied with corn, and the common vegetables from their field, which nature had been beneficent in ripening for them, during their utmost distress. They might, therefore, behold the ap-



proach of winter without any immediate apprehension of starving. But people may suffer, and suffer acutely from poverty after the fear of the immediate want of food is removed. The clothes which they brought with them from New England, were wearing out, and they had no means of replacing them. The deer-skin dresses, so common in the country, were still more expensive to purchase, than the cheap domestic articles. Either were alike beyond their means, which, as regarded money, were entirely exhausted by the sickness of Mr. Mason. There are many resorts and expedients in such cases, to which backwood's people are accustomed, which the Masons had yet to learn. The decent habits of the mother had hitherto kept the clothes of her children whole, by patching and darning. But this could not be possible much longer. There are severe frosts even in that fine climate, and five children could not be always confined to the narrow precincts of a log-house. In the bright and delightful frosty mornings of December, it is natural that children should feel the cheering elasticity and invigorating influence of the frosts as other animals. They soon, like the domestic fowls and animals, became accustomed to running abroad unshod. But when they returned from their excursions, to hover round the fire, their feet red, inflamed, and smarting to agony with the reaction of the fire, the tender mother felt the inflammation as keenly as though it had been in

her own heart. Her own sufferings of the same sort were as nothing in the comparison.

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## CHAPTER IV.

WHENEVER the question of the future course of the family was in discussion, and the question of "What were they to do?" followed by gloom and despondency, George failed not to recall to them his father's last declaration: "That God never forsakes them who do not forsake themselves."

"They were in good health," he said, "and in a country where sustenance was easy to be procured; and, if they could only hit upon the right way, some one might surely be devised, in which they might become independent of every body, and take care of themselves." The grand object of all their conversations was to find this way.

Few if any of my young friends can have any idea of the heart-wearing study of this family, to find some track, by following which, they might obtain sufficient money to clothe themselves, and pay the doctor's bill and taxes. Destitute as they were, these bills were presented, and payment pressed with persevering importunity. In discoursing every evening upon this matter, Mrs. Mason, George,

and Lizzy, were of course chief speakers, though Henry, Thomas, and even little William, often made their speech, and threw their light upon the subject. If the reader would not feel a smile out of place in the circle of this afflicted family, he could not have restrained one at hearing some of the propositions of the junior branches of this family counsel. Henry proposed the mystery of bird-catching, and sending cages of mocking-birds, red-birds, paroquets, and turtle-doves, to New Orleans for sale. Thomas was for applying their exertions to the gathering reed-canes, and sending them to the northern manufacturers for weaver's sleys. George had high hopes from a chemical composition for ink and blacking, which he expected to complete from the vegetables of the country. Mrs. Mason and Lizzy limited their projects to the tried and simple experiment of raising cotton, and spinning night and day, to clothe themselves, and manufacture a little surplus for sale. A thousand inconveniences attended every experiment, as preliminary difficulties equally insuperable appended to another. Night after night, and week after week wore away in unprofitable speculations. The party generally retired from the evening fire to their beds, their brains dry and exhausted by useless searching for some practicable project, and their hearts sunk with the discouraging impression, that nothing was before them but the same hopeless poverty.



But when their supper of milk, corn-bread, and sweet potatoes was finished, and they were again assembled about the evening fire, the repetition of Mr. Mason's maxim, "never despair," like a voice from Heaven, renewed their courage and strength for a new discussion of their prospects. Success, as it ought, ultimately attended these counsels. The postmaster, on the bank of the river, had noticed George, and had inquired into the circumstances and character of the family. He was a man that had both an understanding and a heart. While Mrs. Mason and her children were wearying themselves in fruitless attempts to invent some kind of pursuit in which to employ their industry, he had more than once been occupied in the benevolent desire to be useful to them. As a foretaste of good-will to them, he was in the habit of sending George the newspapers and pamphlets that came to his office, after he had perused them. These were beneficial to them in a hundred ways. In an imperfect way they supplied the want of books. They learned from them the events, passions, and employments of the great world without their forests. The thousand projects and discoveries of manufacturing inventiveness were brought to their view. They could trace the range of other minds in the same enquiries which themselves were pursuing with so much interest. Among other inventions in manufactures, they noted with keen interest, that the town from which they had emigrated

had become famous for the manufacture of a new kind of grass bonnets, in imitation of leg-horn straw. A premium of fifty dollars had been obtained by a school-mate of Lizzy's for a bonnet of this kind, which had sold for thirty dollars beside—eighty dollars for a single bonnet, and that made by a girl, neither older, nor more ingenious, than herself! In fact, the whole family, from constantly seeing the manufactures going on about them while in New England, had become familiar with all the mysteries of cutting, bleaching, and platting straw, and with every stage of the operation, from cutting the grain to arranging the artificial flowers on the finished bonnet. From a dissertation upon the kind of grass used in this manufacture, George was confident that it was none other than the identical crab-grass which was such an abundant and troublesome inmate in their corn-fields. So impatient were they all to satisfy themselves upon this point, that, immediately after reading the article in question, George and Henry sallied out with a light, at ten o'clock at night, to gather some of the crab-grass, and to satisfy themselves as to its capabilities for the manufacture. The grass was still unharmed by the frost, though so late in the season, and Mrs. Mason and Lizzy found it to succeed as an experiment beyond their most sanguine expectations. They retired to rest, full of cheerful and golden dreams, even Lizzy dreaming that the children were all clothed in new suits, with shoes



and stockings, and that she and her mother were once more fine.

This was a project for immediate and earnest trial. Sufficient quantities of the grass were collected from the corn-field. George and his brothers concluded to try their skill upon the coarser manufacture of Vevay straw-hats for gentlemen, of which some for domestic use were already made in the settlement. In the newspapers too, were minute dissertations on rearing silk-worms, and on the making of silk. The woods about them abounded in mulberry-trees, and there were acres covered with young and thriving ones, such as were represented to be in the right stage, to furnish tender leaves for feeding the silk-worm. Eggs for rearing the worms were offered gratuitously, to encourage this species of industry. Behold the promise of pleasant, practical, and profitable labour, both for winter and summer.

The trials and efforts of Mrs. Mason and her daughter were commenced with the morning light, and scarcely relinquished until midnight. Their slender fingers were guided by the skill derived from practice in New England, by way of amusement, and by having been educated where such operations and pursuits were familiar, and carried by almost every one about them. It is true, they did not succeed to their satisfaction at once; but active and ingenious people, who are in earnest, and determined not to be discouraged, seldom fail in such efforts, and soon improve upon their



first attempts. Courage, patience, industry, and perseverance, conquer all difficulties in practice. The inexperienced manufacturers made many mistakes at first, and their progress was slow. But in the course of the winter, the mother and daughter finished two grass bonnets, of which the first might be said to be very tolerable, and the second, even beautiful, in comparison with Leghorn straws. George and his brothers, in the same interval, had completed eight gentlemen's straw hats, which were considered merchantable; besides one of a less perfect workmanship, the fruit of their first essays and experiments, for each of themselves. The last half dozen were wrought with considerable ingenuity and neatness.

In the same period, they had made considerable preparation for the manufacture of silk, in which they were favoured by their friend, the postmaster, who not only furnished them with all his printed instructions in relation to this business, but franked their letters requesting eggs, and they had the pleasure of learning that their requests were granted, and that the eggs were forwarded according to their desire.

March came again: the brooks were once more tufted with the beautiful blossoms of the meadow-pink, and the woods rendered gay by the opening flowers of the red-bud. These pleasant harbingers of spring admonished them to begin their preparations for

subsistence through the coming year. It was necessary that the field should be ploughed this season. The frank deportment and the persevering industry of George had so far won upon the good feelings of the planters about them, that two of the richest offered to send their slaves and teams to plough it for him. This was regarded in the family as a benefit from Heaven; for they could not expect a second crop without ploughing; neither had they been able to devise any means of getting it done. They were inspired with new courage, and the circumstance was regarded as an omen of future good fortune.

How in every difficulty did these poor things miss their departed guide and support! And when any thing occurred to brighten their prospects, how they missed the kind and cheerful partaker in their joys!

The grand obstacle overcome, it was proposed that before planting, George and Henry should carry the fruits of their winter's industry to the village on the banks for sale, at the time when they were advertised by the papers that a steam-boat would arrive there from New Orleans. It seemed the only chance that offered for a market for their hats and bonnets. They had made some attempts to sell these articles to their neighbours. They had even offered the last bonnet for the ploughing of their field: but such is the effect of prejudice, that these men found the bonnets and hats mean and coarse, compared with much



meaner and coarser ones brought from their stores. An impartial eye could have seen at once the superiority of our friends' manufactures: but these had been made at home and under their eyes, and by a destitute family with patched garments and bare feet. Those that they fetched from the stores were far-fetched and dear-bought. People are too often apt to undervalue what grows up under their eyes. Of all this Mrs. Mason was fully aware. Highly as she thought of George, and highly as he really deserved to be thought of, she was aware that he must be an inexperienced trader—that his market was an unpromising one—and she allowed herself to indulge very slender hopes from the proposed excursion to the river. But there was not a shoe or stocking amongst them. Notwithstanding her's and Lizzy's patient patching and mending, their clothes were verging to that state of raggedness when patching and mending could do no more. As the mother made the last arrangements for the departure of her boys, it was with many prayers and tears. Nevertheless the grand maxim of her husband, "never despair," came to her thoughts, as though it were his spirit hovering near to cheer them. Her last and best exertions was to render the lads as neat and decent in their appearance as circumstances would permit. But though their dress was so patched, and seemed that the original colour could hardly be discerned, it was still manifest that they



were the children of a mother who had been used to comfort and respectable society. After giving them all the counsels suggested by maternal apprehension and fore-cast ; after long and laborious dictation of what was to be said and done in various supposed cases ; she packed up the merchandise in two bundles, in the only two decent handkerchiefs she had left, the larger to be carried by George, and the smaller by Henry. She kissed them both, suppressed her starting tears, and trusting the return purchases, if they should sell the hats, entirely to the judgment of George, and to his knowledge of what they needed most, she sent them forth.

It was a beautiful March morning when they started, and the swelling buds of the spice-wood filled the air with aromatic fragrance. Wherever they crossed a *run* with a southern exposure, they saw the delicious meadow-pink and the red-bud in flower. The beauty of the day, and that inexplicable spirit of freshness and joy to the whole creation, which spring diffuses over earth and through air, and with which it fills every thing that has life with gaiety and song ; the canopy of branches in the grand forest through which they passed, just beginning to be tinged with countless points of green ; every object in their way was calculated to cheer our youthful travellers. They too were full of the freshness and buoyancy of youthful existence, and

the sweet illusions of hope were diffused over their minds. They bounded along, whistling and singing, and for the first six miles of their way, no doubts or fears had mingled with their expectations. But all of us, from four to four-score, are creatures of the elements; our joys and our sorrows, the fabric of a passing remembrance; a floating cloud, a change in the temperature, and the sunshine of the mind vanishes with that of the sky. Before our travellers reached the river, the sun rose high, and the day was sultry. They had become weary, and the excess of their morning gaiety and hope was gone. Henry began to confess his doubts and discouragements. George was in his heart as discouraged as his brother, but he had learned by practice the hard lesson of putting a good face upon a hopeless project. So he taxed his utmost ingenuity to prove to Henry that nobody could even hope to succeed in any attempt; with a sad countenance and a discouraged look. "If we do not look cheerful and full of hope when we arrive," said he, "that alone would spoil our market." He then tried by every argument he could find, to persuade his brother that they would actually do well. Children are easy to convince when they wish to be convinced. While they rested a few minutes, George entreated his brother to look cheerful; and by making such efforts with him, he actually became so himself. More of the secret of success in our



undertakings lies in this, than our young readers, or, indeed, many of our grown readers imagine.

When they were a little rested, they arose with their morning faces on, and resumed their march, whistling and singing, until they arrived at the river. The steam-boat had just fired its guns, and swept to the bank in all the pageantry of flags and music, as they arrived. It may be imagined what an imposing spectacle it presented to boys, who, for so many months had seen nothing but log-cabins and trees. Hundreds of waggish boatmen were cutting their jokes and plying for employment on the deck and in their boats along-side. Seventy-five or eighty gaily dressed cabin-passengers sprang ashore as soon as the plank was put out. A trading boat was moored a few rods above them. George considered this as a good omen. The people in these boats are known to be traffickers, who deal in every thing. Besides, it was to remain there two days, whereas the steam-boat was only to take in wood and a few passengers, and would depart in two hours; of course, the first trading essay of the two boys would be made upon the steamer. It will be seen that it was but an unpromising business for two ragged boys to carry such articles as hats and bonnets on board such a vessel, returning from New Orleans, crowded with passengers, some of them dandies, some of them belles, many of them empty, heartless, and unfeeling, most of them in a careless, sel-



fish frame of mind, and scarcely one of them disposed to offer a fair chance to the speculation of our poor little merchants. True, they were boys with fine handsome faces, and decent manners, and keen observers might easily have noted that they were not common boys. But who, of the idle, self-conceited men and women on board this steam-boat, greedy only for some kind of heartless amusement, would inspect them closely enough to look beyond their first appearance and their rags? Besides, all that could be supposed capable of such a purchase, had been to the great mart of finery, New Orleans, and would little think of supplying themselves with any thing they had overlooked there, in such a place as this. All these thoughts were sufficiently obvious, even to the inexperience of George. His heart palpitated; his mouth was dry; and, as he gave his hand to his brother Henry to lead him along the plank on board the steam-boat, his very hand trembled, and was covered with a cold sweat. Never had the poor boy more urgent occasion for his father's maxim, "never despair." He made a vigorous effort to conquer his feelings, and walked up to a tall gentleman with an air of patronage and authority, who seemed to be intimate with some of the ladies.

"Will you please to buy one of our hats or bonnets, Sir?" said the boy.

The gentleman answered carelessly, but not unkindly, "My boys, I have no need of either."

But as if struck with the singularity of the offer of such articles in such a place—"Let us look at them, though," he continued: "what kind of hats and bonnets do you make here?"

To have an opportunity to display his articles was an unexpected advantage, and no small point gained. So he very modestly undid his handkerchiefs, and spread his hats before the gentleman. "Come and look, ladies," he said. "Why, they are really fine. It would be curious to have come all the way from New Orleans, to buy bonnets at the Iron Banks! Who made these articles, boys?" he continued, handling them rather roughly.

"My mother and myself," answered George. "Please not to rumple them, Sir."

By this time a circle was formed round the boys and their merchandise. Some of the ladies showed their wit at laughing at the idea of bonnets being made at such an outlandish place. Another took one of them, and screwed it sideways on her head, giving herself a great many of what she thought pretty airs, in order to attract the attention of the gentleman, and to make him laugh. George felt every ill-natured remark upon his hats and bonnets as he would have felt an insult upon his mother, and every rude pull upon them as though it were upon his heart-strings. His temper, for he was a high-spirited boy, was fifty times ready to burst forth. But he saw that all depended upon his self-command. So he swallowed the angry words that were ready to be



spoken, and attempted to conceal the palpitations of his heart as they agitated his tattered jacket, and bade himself be calm. Some tumbled over his hats, remarking that they showed an astonishing ingenuity, and began to ask questions about a family that could originate such manufactures in such a place. To all these questions George, and even Henry, had such modest, prompt, and proper answers, that persons of much thought and feeling would naturally have been roused to interest in them. But unfortunately these people, like many others equally shallow, preferred to show their own wit and talent at ridicule, rather than exercise consideration and benevolence to little paupers like these. There was, in particular, a forward young lady, with a fine complexion, who was pretty, conceited, and vain, the belle and wit of her circle when at home; she was, moreover, wealthy, and dressed as fine as colours, ribands, and lace, could make her. She made such ridiculous efforts to squeeze the handsomest bonnet over the huge combs upon her head, that Henry could not help crying out in terror, that "she would spoil the bonnet." A lady of more amiable character, and more consideration, saw and pitied the distress of the boy, and begged her, if she did not wish to purchase it, at least to return it uninjured. The young lady coloured at this rebuke, and gave the bonnet back to George, comparing it, however, with her own Leghorn, bedizened with flowers, but really of a very



inferior texture. "You see, my boy," said she, holding out her own beside his, "that I can hardly want to buy such a thing as this. Still, as you seem to be poor, I will give you half a dollar." At the same time she offered him one from her splendid purse. Half dollars had been rare visitants with George, and he thought how much it would purchase for his mother. A glow passed over his cheek: he knew not whether what he felt was pride, resentment, or proper spirit. He was not even sure whether he ought or ought not to accept the money. But he answered promptly, "Thank you, ma'am; I should be glad to sell, but I did not come to beg. As you do not find my bonnets worth buying, I will go." An answer so proper from a boy so young, and so dressed, produced an instant and unexpected impression. It did the business for George. It aroused attention, and created instant sympathy. The considerate lady, who had spoken before, whispered a person who seemed to be her brother, and a momentary conversation ensued between the ladies and gentlemen in general. The gentleman came forward, and asked George the prices of his bonnets and hats. "Six dollars for the one, and four for the other; and seventy-five cents for each of the hats;" was the answer. The gentleman remarked, as one who was a judge, that the best bonnet was a fine one, and ought to sell for more than six dollars. He proposed to buy it, and dispose of it by lottery, to which

the company assented by general acclamation. He paid George six dollars, and took the bonnet. The example was contagious. All at once, it was discovered that the men's hats were light and fine for the approaching summer. The story of the cleverness of the poor boys ran through the crowd, and in a few minutes George had sold five of his hats.

Delighted beyond measure, he skipped up the ladder among the hundreds who were crowded on the deck. There was no hope for the sale of the remaining grass bonnet, among the plain and hardy fellows there; but no one laughed at him for being ragged, and he sold another of his straw hats. The bell now rang for all who had gone on shore to come on board again, and for all on board that did not belong to the boat, to be off. The cannon fired, and George was admonished that the steam-boat was getting under weigh. He carefully led his brother Henry ashore, and with very different feelings from those with which he came on board. He had in hand ten dollars and a half, and to him it was the treasure of the Indies. The boys were now in the humour to be delighted with seeing the gay steam-boat, with her colours and pennons flying, move majestically round as the wheels threw up the foam, and as she began to take her strong march against the current of the mighty stream. There still remained one bonnet and two hats. The boys had now acquired confidence from success, and they



walked up the stream a few paces, to where the trading-boat was moored. The two partners, who managed it, probably took them to be boys bringing eggs on board for sale. One of them held out his hand, to lead them aboard.

“What do you ask for your eggs?” was the question.

“We have none to sell,” answered George; “but an imitation Leghorn bonnet, and a couple of gentlemen’s straw hats.”

The traders were shrewd fellows from Connecticut, whose business on the river, as they phrased it with the true northern accent, was “trading and trafficking,” and to whom no article of barter came amiss. Like the people in the steam-boat, their curiosity was excited by having such articles offered there, in a region where they had been accustomed to suppose nothing was manufactured. These knowing traders examined the articles with seeming carelessness, but the character and circumstances of the boys in a moment, learned that they were Yankees, and perceived that they offered their articles cheap. They ascertained too, at once, that they had money, which they wished to expend in purchases. Such an opportunity to “trade and traffick” was not to be lost.

The sight of so many goods, arranged for show and effect, and with many a gaudy article on the external part of the shelves to strike the eye, could not fail to arrest the



admiration of the boys from the woods. Henry held up his hands, exclaiming: "Oh! brother, brother! what would I give, to carry home some of these fine things to mother and the children! Dear George, you *must* buy some of these things for them."

After a little pretended difficulty about the price, the traders purchased the remaining bonnet and hats. But it was part of the contract that the boys were to receive their pay in goods, and moreover, to expend their money in purchases there, they engaging to furnish every article as cheap as it could be bought at the stores. Sorry I am to say, that George, with all his natural cleverness and quickness, had better have thrown his articles into the river, than have dealt with this trader. But *one* was endowed with a heart and a conscience. The artless story of the boys had moved his pity and his feelings. He was determined that no advantage should be taken of their youth and inexperience. He called his partner aside, and told him as much. The younger of the traders remonstrated, but, being the inferior partner, was obliged to yield, while the elder dealt with them. The whole amount of the purchase was to be sixteen dollars. The trader made many considerate and kind enquiries, with a sincere view to inform himself what they most needed at home. It was a business of extreme perplexity with George, to decide between conflicting claims in their purchases. He went on shore with

Henry, to consult with him on points that he was reluctant to mention before the traders. After all, it would have occupied all day to fix on the specific articles to purchase, had it not been necessary that he should decide in season to return home that night. The important selections at length, after much doubt and solicitude, and aided by the honest and more decided judgment of the trader, were made. They consisted of patterns for a chintz dress for the mother and daughter, a pair of shoes for each of the children. Two dollars that remained were bestowed in coffee and sugar, luxuries that had not been tasted in the family since the first month after their arrival in the country. The trader had not only given them the full value of their money and articles, but had generously allowed them more, and in the noble spirit of saving their feelings, and wishing them to receive it, not as a gift, but as a purchase. The whole amount, when done up in a bundle, was no inconsiderable package, and constituted a burden too heavy for their strength and the distance they had to travel that night. Fortunately, a neighbour from the settlement was at the river, carrying out a load of articles in his horse-waggon to the settlement. He offered to take their package, and even themselves back again. But, as his waggon was heavily loaded, and inconvenient and uncomfortable as a vehicle, they thankfully accepted the offer for



the transport of their package, preferring themselves to return on foot, as they came.

This matter arranged, away marched the boys for home, with hearts as light as a feather. It was cheering to hear their young voices echoing in songs through the woods, as they walked briskly forward. The still dusk of a March sunset overtook them before they reached home. It happened in this case, as it always happens, that too high a flood of joy is succeeded in the mind by an ebb of sadness. The solemn sensations of decaying light in the forests, weariness, and the reaction of feelings that had been too highly excited, drew from Henry, with a long sigh, as they rested for a moment, this remark: "Dear George, it takes away all my gladness in carrying our fine things home, to think that my poor dear father is gone, never to come back. Oh! I would give all this world that he were only alive and well; what we have got would render him so happy! Oh! how glad he would be to see that we are able to make ourselves comfortable, and able to take care of ourselves. I shall never see him more, and I care nothing about all we have bought."

As this thought came over him, in all its bitterness, his surcharged heart found vent to its feelings in a burst of crying. George was not a little proud of his reputation for philosophy, but he had been brooding in his mind over the same gloomy train of remembrance; and



this ill-timed remark of his brother's, the echo of his own thoughts, so nearly vanquished him, that he was obliged to turn away to conceal the tears that were forming in his own eyes. While they were thus crying in company, their neighbour's waggon came up with them. His company, and the view of their package, introduced a new train of thought. They were still two miles from home, and as the waggon parted from their path there, and took another direction, it became necessary that they should take their package themselves. It was heavy; but it was a precious burthen, and they wiped their eyes, as George resumed it. In this way they arrived in view of the house. The sweet low voices of the mother and daughter were heard, singing the evening hymn. They distinctly heard the burthen of the closing stanza,

“ Oh! guide the dear ones safely home.”

Rover received them with caresses at the door. The two boys threw down their package as they entered, and, rushing to the arms of their mother, made no effort to restrain their tears of joy. They both sobbed together, “ Father, dear father, if you were only here!” But the tears, and kisses, and embraces, that followed, were only those of tenderness and joy. They all agreed, that if his spirit could be among them, it would be to chide them for any other feelings than those of gladness on this occasion.

And now, after half an hour spent in this way, came on, of course, the happy business of unrolling the goods, and displaying their purchases. My readers may have seen a lady dressed for a ball, they may have seen a dandy sport a new suit of clothes in an entire new fashion; but I question if they have ever seen or heard of a more real, heart-felt, honest exultation of joy, than that of this family. Ah! my dear readers, I hope you do not know by experience, as these poor people did, that it is bitter privation that teaches us the value of things; that it is poverty which instructs us to be content and glad with a little. Who can tell the gladness of heart of this mother and daughter, that they should be once more decently and comfortably clad? The two boys exulted in their own wisdom, cleverness, and management; and, as a spice of evil often mixes in our good, I much fear that there was in their hearts a dawning feeling like that of the great monarch in the Scripture, who said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" Add to this, the gratified pride of Mrs. Mason, in seeing the proofs of premature industry and capacity in her children; and in witnessing the fulfilment of her departed husband's prediction, "that God would never forsake them, if they did not forsake themselves." But she too had, like her two sons, her painful revulsion, after the first burst of joy. She, too, remembered the eye that used to kindle with affection at seeing the happiness



of his family. She remembered him with whom she had shared her joys and sorrows. She remembered his satisfied look, as he saw his children seated round the evening fire. She felt how happy this evening would have made him. In vain she said to herself, that his ashes only were under the sycamore tree, and that his spirit was in heaven, far above such poor and trifling joys. She was, after all, but a frail being of flesh; and unavailing longing for his loved society, to share the happiness of that hour, brought bitterness in the midst of her joy :

“Some natural tears she dropped, but wiped them soon.”

Coffee was prepared, the first they had tasted for a year; and the refreshing beverage had a relish which they cannot know, to whom it is a daily repast.

To make the dresses was now the work of Mrs. Mason and Lizzy. Privation rendered this occupation a perfect pastime. The boys, meanwhile, were in the field, busily employed in planting, and delighted, on their return from work, to watch the progress of the important operations within the hut. The needleworkers, too, often came out to observe the diligent labourers in the field. During this inspection, you might have seen George in all the dignity of head workman and overseer, directing Henry to straighten the rows, and



Thomas to take some kernels from the hill, or add them as he saw the case require. These subalterns also had a pleasure in manifesting, under the eye of their mother, their prompt obedience.

The imagination of the reader may easily supply the detail of a considerable interval of time that ensued, marked with no incident but the rejoicings of the first Sunday after the boys' return, in which the family assembled for their customary prayers in entire new dresses from head to foot. We should mention, that ever since the death of Mr. Mason, Sabbath had been, in the log-cabin, a day of the same kind as when he lived, and which we have already described. It was in vain that their neighbours strolled by with their dogs and guns, and invited the boys to share with them the pleasures and the profits of the chase. It was in vain that even the women came past the house with their fishing-rods, to fish in the neighbouring creek. The day was always spent by the Masons in a manner worthy of beings who hoped for immortality; and these duties, so far from being remitted after the father's death, were more exactly performed. Nor was it a day of gloom; for it had long been the principle of Mr. Mason, to make it a cheerful and pleasant day to the children. The day never passed without an affectionate remembrance of him whose body mouldered, indeed, under the sycamore near them, but whose spirit, the mother told them, was pro-

bably permitted to be invisibly present with them.

The field was planted, and the corn waved in its beauty. The showers descended, and they were again cheered with the prospect of an ample harvest. The materials for the labours of the winter were prepared, as they were matured for gathering. It was a delightful employment for them to tend their silk-worms; for this season they calculated upon little more than an experiment. But they contemplated, with untiring pleasure, the manifestations of the wisdom and contrivance of God, in the labours of these humble animals. They admired the beauty of the little silken world in which they enclosed themselves, and saw, in the increase of their stock, and the extension of their occupations, the promise not only of pleasant employment, but of adding to their means of support. One of their most important arrangements was, before evening prayer, to settle the business of the succeeding day, and parcel out the amount of time that should be appropriated to each duty. This appreciation of time, this wise and settled distribution of it beforehand, redeems half a life. By rising an hour earlier than other people, and by drawing on the evening an hour later, by which two hours are gained each day; by having all the employments of the day, and the length of time to be devoted to each, they gained altogether at least four



hours a day upon the most industrious of their neighbours.

Yet, with their utmost industry, the evils of poverty pressed hard upon them. Their sugar and coffee were soon expended, and the privations rendered more disagreeable from the inclination for such luxuries having been rekindled, and the habit renewed by this transient indulgence. This perhaps was the least well-judged of George's purchases. Yet it must be said in his favour, that he had not so much the gratification of his own palate in view when he bought them, as the idea of procuring a treat for his mother. A single dress for each of them rendered the want of a change more striking and painful. The doctor's bill and the tax bill were presented anew, with the remark, that "people ought to pay their debts before they make themselves fine." Here too had George's eagerness to satisfy the most evident wants of his family made him improvident and forgetful of these claims upon them. There were a hundred other things, too numerous to mention, to which, stinted as their means had been, they had nevertheless been used—things necessary to common comfort—the want of which was sufficiently galling. But poor people that have religion and sense, learn to bear many evils, and to endure the want of many things without repining. Mrs. Mason, inculcated nightly upon her children that it is not only making themselves miserable, but wicked, to fret and murmur



because others had means and comforts which they had not, or to harbour angry feelings against those foolish people who despised them on account of their poverty.

The spring and the summer passed away calmly, and without other incidents than those every where brought about by the progress of time. Their days glided by in their quick innocent employments. Every day added to the strength of the children and to their knowledge, as far as their mother and their own observations, directed by her, could instruct them. Every day developed the energy, firmness, and forethought of George. Their silk was laid by for future winding. An abundant supply of crab-grass, for the manufacture of the coming winter, was provided. At this period of hope and cheerful anticipation, an event befell them of which they had been forewarned, but which yet fell upon them like a thunder-stroke. They had been told, that they must expect the sickness of *acclimation*, called "seasoning," in the phrase of the country. They had been too busy, too much occupied, and too deep in their schemes for the future, to think of sickness till it came.

The corn had just began to whiten on the ears, and the intense heats of summer to soften into the milder temperature of autumn, when, one morning, Mrs. Mason felt a chill, which compelled her to go to bed. Her lips and hands had the customary livid appearance. She had hardly lain down, before the three

younger children came in from the field, all attacked in the same way. They too laid themselves down in their beds. The fits of chill in each were most severe, from Mrs. Mason to her youngest boy. Their teeth chattered and a kind of low moaning noise, accompanied by violent and spasmodic shaking. Each was under the influence of a delirious excitement, and the cry of "*drink ! drink !*" was uttered with the eagerness of a traveller expiring with thirst on the parched sands of a desert. A couple of hours passed in this way, when they dozed for a few moments, and then roused up, with cheeks crimsoned with fever, and another kind of delirium, attended with new tones and accents of distress. Lizzy and George were continually carrying the water-gourds, first to one, and then to another. The patients seized the vessel with a convulsive grasp, and held it so long that one would have thought that they would have suffocated themselves by the eagerness and duration of their drinking. This paroxysm lasted somewhat longer than the former, and, when it had passed, a few moments of agony succeeded ; then the sweat began to start, slowly at first, and without much sensation of relief. But soon it burst from every pore, and dropped from each particular tress of hair. This immediately brought calmness and relief, and a delightful langour, which they only know who have felt it, attended by such soothing and tranquillizing sensations, as we may suppose to belong to the spirit of the just, af-



ter the last struggles of escape from the prison of the flesh.

But though relieved, they were so weak that they were unable to rise from their beds. A thick fog arose above the tops of the trees, and the sun went down in utter darkness. What a night for this family, of which only two of the children were able to walk from bed to bed of the sick! Lizzy was, as may be supposed from her age, subdued and pale as death. George felt that the grand trial of his fortitude was come. He repeated his father's maxim, as he kindled the evening light; told them, in the common proverb of the West, that "*The darkest hour in the night was just before morning*;" talked with them calmly of this sickness as the common course of things in this country; and remarked that, though distressing to endure, they ought all to be thankful; that it was by no means a dangerous disorder, and prophesied that they would all soon be well of this "*seasoning*" and find it to be the harbinger of new good fortune.

Still he was aware, that in such violent attacks, something must be done to arrest the fury of the disease. He consulted none but his sister: he made every necessary arrangement within the limits of their slender means, to meet the renewal of the paroxysm, which, he was aware, the patients must expect again on the morrow; (for he had often heard a description of the disorder;) and he was away, before daybreak, on the road to the river to



fetch the doctor. There was now no brother Henry to accompany him, whose prattle might serve to beguile him on the way. The day was sultry, and the subject of his meditations dreary and full of gloom. But courage and affection achieve wonders. He reached the river early in the day. The doctor could not accompany him back as he had hoped, but promised (as is customary in that climate and at that season, to avoid heat and flies, and to save time) that he would start for the log-cabin of the sick family at midnight. George was on his return by ten in the morning. He had already accomplished half his distance home, when he felt himself suddenly seized with a chill. So violent was the attack that he found himself obliged to stop and sit down. Fortunately the disease had attacked him on the bank of a rivulet, and at the ford. He crawled on his hands and knees through the mud, and bending over the water, drank as long as he could hold his breath. A momentary sense of relief caused an impulse of courage to flash through his frame, and he thought that he should be able to resume his journey. He waded through the ford, and staggered a few steps. All would not do. Every thing flashed before his eyes in long and flaky streams of green and yellow light, succeeded by darkness. His head swam, and thick pantings oppressed his bosom. The poor fellow fell, but fortunately on the moss at the foot of a sycamore. It was some minutes before conscious-

ness returned ; and, as he felt as he had never felt before, and perceived that he was covered with a cold clammy sweat, his first idea was that the hand of death was upon him. Even then, the noble lad thought only of the poor sufferers at home, looking in vain through the evening and night for his return. It was long before he could gather strength to repeat his adage, and resume his courage. He settled himself as comfortably as he could on the moss, and in a position as convenient as might be to crawl to the stream. It was a thought sufficiently gloomy, it must be admitted, for such a lad to contemplate his probable chance of expiring there in the woods, unattended and alone, and, perhaps, be devoured by panthers or wolves, even before the death of nature had taken place ; and leave the sufferers at home entirely forlorn. But he said, "*Our father, who art in heaven !*" and he prayed first for those at home, and then for himself, and laid himself down to await the disposal of Providence. His paroxysm was increased by fatigue, and the want of a bed, and the comforts which even his home would have afforded. He was afflicted with partial delirium and devouring thirst. Once more he fainted in his efforts to crawl up the bank, after drinking. It seemed to him, indeed, on regaining his couch of moss, that he must there expire. Such was his situation, as the dark night came upon him, and the distant howl of the wolves rang in his ear. In the midst of his thoughts within him, it occurred to him the doctor would soon be passing that



way, and could help him home. But then it would be necessary that he should remain awake, or the doctor would pass him, ignorant that he was there. The sweat soon began to flow, and he was easy, languid, and his eyes so heavy, that sleep seemed irresistibly to weigh upon his eye-lids. He attempted a hundred expedients to keep himself awake. An invincible drowsiness pressed upon him, and nature levied her tribute. He fell into a profound sleep. The angels of God not only guarded this pale and exhausted lad from the wolves, but inspired pleasant dreams into his innocent bosom. He fancied that he had just returned home. His mother and the children were recovered, and were about him with kisses and caresses. Water seemed to be handed to him, and, in his eagerness to grasp the gourd and bring it to his lips, he awoke himself from his dream, just as he heard the distant trampling of the doctor approaching on horse back.

It might have startled another to have been thus called upon, as he passed, by a feeble human voice imploring aid at that hour and in that place. But the doctor was a man of temperament such as not to find miracles in incidents wide from the common, and, when he learned the state of the case, it was nothing strange to him to find a sick lad on the way, who had just passed the paroxysm of the ague. He made some difficulty about taking him up behind him, remarking, that he seemed very comfortably situated, and that he could notify his mother to have him sent for in the morning.



Poor George had to exert himself to the utmost to be taken up. But he succeeded at length, and was carried home.

When George returned, he found that Lizzy, towards night, had likewise been attacked, and that the family had suffered inexpressibly for want of water. But they were still alive, and the sight of him and the doctor revived their spirits. The doctor prescribed as he thought the case required; and I am sorry to add, that it appeared to him to call for cheap medicines. He was a man who made most exertions for those who pay best. Physicians generally, are kind men, and there are few who would thus have left a helpless family in the woods, with the nearest neighbour distant two miles, and each member so sick as to be unable to go to the spring and bring a gourd of water for the rest, without having attempted an arrangement to procure some one to nurse them. But this doctor had a thick head and an unfeeling heart. He daily saw much misery and sickness of the same sort, and he thought very little upon the scene before him, except that it afforded him little immediate prospect of a bill. He thought in this case, I rather imagine, if he thought at all upon the subject, that men were made to be sick, take pills, and pay the doctor; and, as this family could not do the last, he felt it right to hurry away to those patients who could. Be that as it may, he left the family, in which no one was able to walk to the spring, to shift for themselves. They had all taken medicine, and this had pro-

duced an exacerbation of the morning attack. It was distressing to hear their groans during the paroxysm, and their incessant cries for drink. However Mrs. Mason and George might be able to sustain the agony of thirst in silence, it was an effort of self-restraint not to be expected of the rest.

For aught that appears, they might all have expired together, without any relief, had not Providence, in its own merciful way, sent them aid. Pompey, the old slave who had officiated at the funeral of Mr. Mason, had been on an errand to the river, and had returned that way. Hearing the groans within, he was induced to stop, and enter the cabin. What a scene was before him ! There was none to bring them water to quench their burning thirst. His kind heart was affected. He repaired to the spring for a couple of gourds full of water, and gave them drink. He opened the shutters, to ventilate the room. He cut green boughs, and put them in the windows, to keep out the sun, and admit the coolness of the air. He grated the tender corn of the half-ripe ears, and made them gruel. He made their beds, and assisted them from one to the other while he did it. In short, he did every thing which a diligent and affectionate nurse could do, with the means of the house, and then fell on his knees beside their beds, and prayed with them. Nor was his prayer less effectual above, or less cheering and consoling to the patients, because it was uttered in the broken accents of



an African dialect. He then sat by them, and talked to them in his good-natured and affectionate way, bidding them take courage, and promising that he would hurry home, and ask leave of his master to return and watch with them. And as he was old, and, as he said, of little account in the field, he had no doubt that his master would allow him to come back and stay with them. He added—"Me cure heap people of the ague. Me know six times more about him than the doctors. Me come and cure you all."

A solemn conversation between the mother and these children on their beds ensued. The two younger children were wild with delirium of fever ; Henry, Lizzy, and the mother, were in utter despondency ; and certainly few prospects on earth can be imagined more gloomy than theirs. The only article in the cabin for sustenance was corn-meal, and the alternative before them seemed only that of perishing of sickness or hunger. George, though the sickest of the whole, held fast to his grand maxim. He declared an undoubting confidence that all things would yet go well with them. He exhorted them to consider how mercifully God had dealt with them in many respects already. From their rich experience of the Divine mercy in time past, he called on them to take courage for the future. None but people so situated know what invigorating refreshment arises to cheer despondency, and banish despair, from one such firm and undoubting prophet of good.



In due time Pompey came. The kind-hearted and considerate slave had perceived their condition. From the stores of his fellow-servants he brought a little sugar and tea. Of his master he had begged powder and shot. He killed several squirrels and partridges in an hour's hunt. With these and grated corn, he prepared a nutritive and rich soup. He then went along the "run," and gathered *cupatorium perfoliatum*, or thorough-wort. He gave to each a cup of the infusion of those leaves, a grand remedy among the slaves in such cases, and perhaps the best that can be given. The medicine operated at once powerfully and gently, and when the fever and the effect of the medicine were passed, a devouring appetite returned. Their fear and dejection were dispelled, and the kind black fellow was in the midst of them, a sort of ministering angel, and enjoying their thankfulness and their hopes, with all the sympathy of his affectionate nature. He prayed with them again in the earnest language of thanksgiving and praise, and he sang his own wild hymns as a part of the worship. Nor did he take his sleep on his blanket beside them on the floor until he had ascertained that all his patients were asleep.

Next day, it is true, their fever returned, but with symptoms of abated violence, and an hour later in the day. The same medicine and the same diet was repeated, and with the same effect. The duration of the fever was short, and the attack of this day comparatively mild. On

the third day of his attendance, instead of the infusion of thorough-wort, he gave an infusion of dog-wood, wild-cherry, and yellow poplar bark. On the fourth day, nothing remained of the sickness but a kind of pleasing languor, and Pompey pronounced the fever "broken," assuring them that all that was now necessary, was to use great caution to prevent relapse, or in his phrase "getting it again."

They were now able once more to help each other. Leaving them materials for soup, and killing them abundance of small wild game, obtained in those woods with little trouble, he left them with the tears and "blessings of them that were ready to perish," as his reward. As they shook hands at parting, George gave him his promise, if ever he was able, as he hoped one day to be, to purchase him, and give him his freedom. In a few days the family were perfectly recovered, and able to resume their usual routine of cheerful occupation and industry. They had indeed incurred an additional debt of twelve dollars for the visit of the leaden-hearted physician, who shortly let them know as much, by presenting his bill.

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## CHAPTER V.

FOR a considerable time, it does not appear that any striking incident occurred to our



friends. The web of their life was of "mingled yarn," such as falls to the common lot of mortals. Their scheme of silk-making had not been pursued to such extent as to yield much beyond amusement ; though it was completely successful as far as it went. They laboured incessantly at their occupation of hat and bonnet-making. But it was not always that George was so successful in his sales as he had been at first. Lizzy had plied her spinning-wheel with cotton of their own raising. But still poverty pressed hard upon them. Mrs. Mason and the children again wanted the plainest articles of comfortable clothing. Part of the doctor's and the tax-bill still remained unpaid. But nothing weighed so heavily on the spirits of George and his mother, as the necessity of such unremitting labour imposed upon them all, as left them no time for the instruction of the younger children. The progress of George and Lizzy had been respectable during the life of their father, who had devoted his whole heart to his task, and who had found in them uncommon docility. But it went to the heart of Mrs. Mason, to see Henry, Thomas, and William, growing up in the woods, as ignorant and undisciplined "as the wild ass's colt." Some more enlarged and efficient plan had occurred to the scheming mind of George a thousand times, to remedy this and the various other evils of their condition. His aspiring thoughts and purposes spurned the idea of vegetating his whole life in the forest, without



any better object in view, but that of obtaining his daily sustenance. But to go abroad, (for his plans always terminated in the necessity of this,) and to leave his dear mother and her other children, whom his dying father had confided to his care, without protection in this wilderness—this, too, was an idea from which he recoiled. Yet he always said to himself that it was better to inflict on them and himself a lesser evil for the sake of effecting a greater good; and that he ought to give them and himself the pain of leaving them, for a time, in order to fix them and himself in a position where they could remain comfortably and permanently together. His friend, the post-master of the village, had often conversed with him on the subject. He was extensively acquainted with the captains of the steam-boats that traded on the Ohio and the Upper Mississippi. He recommended to George the place of clerk to one of these, for which he thought him peculiarly qualified, by his being uncommonly ready at figures, and his writing a beautiful hand. Whenever George named his scruples, he resolutely and, at last, successfully combated them; proving to him, that he was ruining his own prospects, as well as those of his family, by remaining in ignorance in the woods, and in pursuits which, however industriously followed, could never procure an adequate maintenance for them.

Still, the idea of leaving his mother, sister, and little brothers, alone and unprotected, was

a painful one to George's affectionate heart. But in turning over the subject, and taking a view of it on every side, it occurred to him, that it was a part of the duty of mental firmness to take such measures for their advantage and his own, even though they involved the painful necessity of a separation. Once or twice in their evening conversations he had ventured to hint the suggestion of the post-master to his mother. She had already considered in her own mind the possibility of such an event. She had even allowed herself to contemplate the subject with so much steadiness, as to see that it would be for his interest as well as for that of all the children, and of course her duty to consent to it. She had deeply and religiously meditated on her duties; had considered that, however her own selfish affections might wish to detain him, she must be convinced that he could do much more for the family in such a line of occupation as the post-master had proposed to him, than he could do at home; that it would enable him to see the world, and form his character to exertion and self-dependence. In the second conversation which they held upon the subject, she consented to his project, and only required a little time to accustom her mind to the idea of separation.

Not many days afterwards, George received a letter from the post-master, informing him that a most favourable opportunity offered for his obtaining a clerkship on board one of the



first-rate steam-boats. The terms were thirty dollars a month. This excellent man offered, in consideration of the wants of George's family, and the diminution of their present means of subsistence, by the loss of his labour, to advance twenty dollars, (on the prospect of being repaid of the wages proposed,) to be expended in articles for their comfort. When George read the letter to his mother, it was, notwithstanding all her good resolutions, as if an ice-bolt had gone to her heart. But she remembered her duty. She only begged him and the other children to retire. It was breaking open the unhealed wound occasioned by her husband's death, and she wept, as a tribute to feeble human nature. She then prayed to God for resignation and courage. This is the way to accomplish high and good purposes. When George and the children returned, they found her calm, and the matter was settled in her mind. She told him that she not only consented to his going, but considered it the best thing he could do.

The heart of George was relieved. It seemed to him impossible that he could ever have forsaken the cabin, unless she had so expressed herself. He hurried to the river, saw and thanked his friend, and was about to ascend the Ohio, and would return in a few days. The captain was pleased with him, and he was with the captain, and the prospects held out to his view. The bargain was settled, and he was to be on the bank when the boat returned, to



take his place on board of her. It must be allowed that, when George saw the noble boat sweep away up the stream, she carried a piece of his heart with her, and assisted him to overcome the reluctance he had felt at the thought of leaving his mother and his home.

It is unnecessary to relate all the conversations which took place before George's final departure between him and the different members of his family. He was the only one of their number who had yet developed strength of character, and the mother and the children leaned upon him not only for support, but to resolve their doubts, and to decide their plans. Meanwhile, Mrs. Mason had faithfully investigated from all the sources within her reach, the dangers of the river, and had heard, with all its exaggerations, of every accident that had ever happened to a steam-boat on the Mississippi or Ohio. She learned all she could gather about storms and "*snaggs*,"<sup>7</sup> and more than all, the dreadful death of scalding by the bursting of the boiler.

Neither was George idle on his part. He had expended the advanced twenty dollars for the comfort of the family during his absence. Henry was of sufficient age to take his place in the charge of the field, and the stewardship of their little concern of silk, the bonnet manufactory, and their other humble affairs. Many and solemn charges did he give him. The mainpoints were stated in writing, that they might not be forgotten when he was gone. It

was an affecting charge on both sides; and when Henry received this responsibility, he gave a promise as solemn that he would strive faithfully to discharge its duties.

It is painful to me to relate the distress of the family on the day of separation. They recited their prayers for the last time together. They mingled their voices for the last time in the song of evening praise. The last evening of tender and solemn conversations passed away. The last promises of affection, remembrance, and prayer for each other, were made. They parted over-night, and according to arrangement, long before the sun arose, he was gone. In the morning his place at breakfast was empty; and the mother and her forlorn young ones walked about, dreaming and silent, and in stupefaction, not unlike that which followed the death of Mr. Mason.

George was turned of eighteen when he was thus turned upon the world. He was dressed decently, thanks to the aid of his friend the post-master, but in the most plain and quaker-like style. A small handkerchief-bundle, containing his shirts and a bible, constituted all his baggage. As I have said, he stole away before the family had risen in the morning, to avoid the agony of those partings which make a separation so distressing. The deepest emotions excited on such occasions, are not always those that show themselves in words or tears. When he had taken the last look of mother, sister, and brothers, and their humble cabin, which

together made that dear and sacred word *home*,—a word which means more to a good mind and heart than almost any other in our language,—he turned round before he crossed the stile which led out of the field, and gave the dear spot a benediction that rose to the Almighty from a pious child, an affectionate brother, and a pure heart. “God keep you,” said he, “and watch over your innocent slumbers! For me, though now a wanderer in the wide world, I will think of you, and the thoughts shall be as a talisman to shield me against temptations. I will think of the pale face of my mother. I will think of the last look of my father. I will think of Lizzy and my dear brothers.” I consider such reflections as the best possible security against temptation to degradation and vice that a young man can possess. Such thoughts must be expunged effectually from the mind before he can be led widely astray.

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## CHAPTER VI.

HE arrived at the landing, met the steam-boat, closed the contract with the captain, and found the tender thoughts of home become less vivid, as they were mingled with his new occupations, so different from his former ones. Instead of the silence and seclusion of a small



clearing in the forest; instead of the loved and infantine voices of his brothers, and the sweet tones of his mother and sister, he was in the midst of a confusion of sounds, which could scarcely be paralleled in Babel. Above, below, around, is the incessant babble of human voices. Oaths, singing, reckless laughter, incessant beating upon a piano-forte in the state cabin, the roaring of the furnace, the sharp hissing of the steam, the eternal pounding of the machinery, the increasing dash of the wheels in the water, the bustle of the fire-men, the boat-men, and the deck passengers, all this, rendered more impressive by immediate contrast with the silence of the woods, was now continually in his ears and before his eyes. Long habit has rendered such sounds familiar to me, and George's ear, too, became, after a while, accustomed to them.

But he was the same person in the silence of the woods, and in the midst of this new and most singular form of society. In this place the repulsiveness of vice kept him as firmly in the habits of virtue as the absence of temptation, reflection, and right views of things, had at home. He was never out of temper, but always calm and collected. With all the wayward spirits with which he had to deal, he still possessed the incalculable advantage of retaining entire possession of himself. The consequence was such, as self-control, good judgment, right principles, and correct deportment, seldom fail to produce. He grew rapid-

ly in the esteem of the captain and crew, and almost invariably secured the good-will of the passengers.

The accounts of the boat were kept in the most perfect order. The most contentious, dishonest, and even intemperate, found his books so clear, his representations so unanswerable, his feelings so under command, and his firmness and moderation so unalterable, that no disputes occurred. This calmness of manner, and the control which he exercised with gentleness and good feeling on the various bad and dishonest characters, who, under the appearance of gentlemen, are often found in such assemblages, soon obtained for him the same influence among the rough people on deck as he possessed in the cabin. Of course, when the company were discharged at New Orleans, the number of his friends might almost be said to equal that of the passengers. Many of the circumstances of these new and strange modes of life were positively painful, and that in no small degree. There were others that, so long as they retained the charm of novelty, were delightful. He was never weary of contemplating the noble river. When he sat on deck in his night-watch, and every thing on board the boat that had life was still but the fire-men, it was a spectacle that filled his whole mind to see, by the light of the moon, the great and powerful vehicle, borne down with such rapidity and force between the dim and misty outlines of the forest on either hand. By day, the verdant banks, the ever



varying scenery, the ambrosial fragrance of the willow-skirted shores, the cries of the water-fowl, wheeling their courses over-head, were circumstances of delightful contemplation to a musing mind like his. The variety of characters on board, the different opinions, tempers, and passions, developed by the incidents and conversations on the trips, were a constant study to him. Books, too, were accessible. The boat carried a considerable library. Most of the passengers had a select assortment of books, and I hardly need add of such a character, that every moment of his time, that was not necessarily devoted to the duties of his employment, and the occasions of food and sleep, was occupied either with reading, or the intense study of the ever-open book of human life before him.

The crowded and bustling city of New Orleans presented a new page of the great volume of human nature. He saw himself amidst a moving mass of life—of people of all nations, languages, and manners. When borne along with the tide, and seeing among the hundreds that surrounded him not an individual who knew him or cared for him, or was connected with him in any other way than as being a common heir of mortality, then it was that the comparison of this world of strangers, forced upon him a contrast of it with that dear little world, which was engraven like the lines of a map upon his heart—the little square enclosure cut out of the forest, his mother,



Lizzy, and her brothers, dragging themselves sorrowfully to their task, and thinking affectionately of him. Then it was that his heart cried out in the earnest petition of the Scriptures, " Oh, that I had wings like a dove !"

In the steam-boat, amidst the passengers, or in the city, he remained still the same. He uniformly spent his Sabbaths as nearly according to his former habits as his present pursuits would admit. He had his bible. He had his assigned hour and the privacy of his berth, where, on his knees before God, he poured forth to the Almighty all the unrestrained feelings of his affectionate and filial heart. Then he called to remembrance his mother's necessities, and the determination that no fear of the charge of meanness should tempt him to squander any part of his wages ; that profusion and extravagance should not seduce him from his purpose, to carry home to her, all that he could save from expenditures that were indispensable.

He had another object in view. His cherished purpose was to become captain of a steam-boat. His intention was to qualify himself thoroughly for that post. With this view he spent much of his time on deck, gleaning information concerning the river from experienced boat-men. He studied the currents, the boils, the eddies, the marks of shallow and deep water, the indications for steering in the night, and all the hundred complicated aspects of this dangerous stream. The captain and

pilot were pleased to instruct him in all the art and mystery of steering, and the management of the boat. He made the powers and capabilities of the engine a thorough study. His eye saw all, and he ceased not until he comprehended all that could be learned on board the boat. So well had he profited by these lessons, that, on his return trip, he found himself invited to take his watch at steering along with the pilot. He managed his watch in such a way as to show how rapidly he had profited by his lessons. Time with him, as it ought to be with every intelligent and virtuous young man, was seen in its true value. He perceived that it was all the estate to which he was born, and he determined that not a fragment of this precious patrimony should be lost. When not occupied with one kind of duties, he immediately sped to another. He was reading, writing, gathering information about the country, or in some way engaged in steady reference to his future views in life. He was absent on this trip two months. Good sons, in whose bosoms the heart throbs naturally under the left breast, can tell how he felt as the boat was rounding to the Iron Banks. The passengers, observing the changes from crimson to paleness in his cheek, jested with him about some sweetheart there. But George's was still a profounder and a holier feeling, too deep to endure a jest. The boat was to lie-to one day for repairs. The only requisite which he sought in the horse that he hired to carry him out to the settlement,



was fleetness. For once he was a hard rider, and urged his horse to the top of his speed.

I cannot describe the tears of tenderness that rushed to his eyes, or the heaving of his bosom, as he came in view of the clearing. He sprang over the stile, and in the next moment he was in the arms of his mother. My dear young reader, such a meeting is worth more than all the pleasures of dissipation for an eternity. Besides God, and the hope of indulging friendship and these delightful feelings in eternity, there is nothing worth living for on earth but the love springing from such relations. All on this earth is a dream, but virtuous affection and the charities of home. Riches, power, distinction, are all cold externals. This reaches the heart. How proud and happy felt Mrs. Mason to fold this dear son to her maternal bosom ! How boisterous the joy of the boys ! How proud was Henry to give an account of his stewardship ! It was a full hour before the books, toys, and dresses, the varieties he brought from the far city, were even looked at. The pure in heart only know the pleasures of real and deep enjoyment ; and such high satisfactions as these are only to be bought by absence and privation. It was long before the mother and sister remarked how much he had improved in appearance, now that he was plainly but respectably dressed. Besides smaller articles, he had brought some books, a box of paints, and drawing paper—a present for his sister from a friend whom he had acquired



on his passage—and to his mother forty dollars.

To follow George's fortunes through the three succeeding years, would be little more than a repetition of similar incidents with those I have just related. All the while he continued in the same employment, running between L—— and New Orleans eight months in the year; and between that place and P—— on the Ohio, during the sultry months. George was already a great man in the estimation of the settlement. All accounts of him tended to the same point. All agreed that he was an excellent young man. Mrs. Mason exercised the most rigid economy in her family, but by the aid of their ground, and the assistance derived from the wages of George, and the proceeds of the industry of the children, which he had opportunities to dispose of in New Orleans, they were not only comfortable, but laying by a little fund. Lizzy was appointed school-mistress, and applied herself with assiduous industry to the instruction of the children, and many of the silent hours of the night she spent in reading, and in application to her studies. Almost every return trip of the steamboat allowed George a little time to spend with them. For fear he should not be allowed sufficient time to go out to their cabin, they always made it a point to be on the bank when his boat was expected. There are many mothers who can imagine the impatience with which they used to gaze on the point below, round

which his boat first hove in sight. There are many who can imagine the meeting which took place between the parties when he actually did arrive. There are many who can imagine the pangs of separation with which these short meetings terminated. I need only add, that, to soften them as much as possible, George kept a detailed account of all he saw, enjoyed, suffered, and felt; a history of events, thoughts, and actions. The mother, between every visit, conned this journal a dozen of times. Each of the children was familiar with all the words and phrases in it; and in their own essays at letter-writing, all the thoughts of brother George became matters of classical quotation and illustration.

My hero's progress in gaining the confidence of his captain, and the general regard of all with whom he was associated, was steady and unvarying. After the first trip, his wages, in consequence of his uniting the duties of clerk and pilot, were increased from thirty to forty-five dollars a month. While at New Orleans in 1822, he received by mail the offer of the command of a beautiful new steam-boat, which had just arrived at L——, with an ample salary and perquisites. It was the point to which he had been constantly aspiring, and was of course not to be refused. He would have found it difficult to obtain a release from his present captain, had not his boat been condemned, as no longer sea-worthy. When he had settled with George, he gave him demonstra-



tions of affectionate friendship at parting, equally honourable to both.

The ill-fated steam-boat Tennessee was just starting at this juncture for the Ohio, and with the multitude of passengers in that boat he took his passage. I was at New Orleans, and on the *levée*, when she swept round for display in the river, fired her gun, and, with her deck and cabin crowded with passengers, moved off, amidst the shouts, acclamations, and boisterous gaiety of those on board, answering by waving of hats, handkerchiefs, and all the usual *demonstrazione* on the shore. Never was a more beautiful winter morning. Little could any one have foreseen or conjectured the terrible catastrophe that took place but a few days after such demonstrations of joy. Every one in that region has heard, that in a dark, stormy, and sleety night, in one of the most furious cypress bends above Natchez, she struck a "snagg," and burst in her bow. Among the numerous passengers were many women and children. What a scene of horror to these unfortunate beings! The midnight cry reached them while asleep in their berths. The water poured in upon them, and all was wailing, confusion, and despair. Some exhibited, in this terrible emergency, that presence of mind and that noble forgetfulness of self which belong to superior natures. Others manifested the extremes of cowardice and selfishness united. On such occasions it is that we see the dignity and the degradation of human nature brought



together and grouped in strongest contrast. Every one has heard that there was one person paddling about the sinking boat in a skiff, in which he might easily have saved a dozen persons, keeping at a distance, however, to allow no one to get on board. He was calling the while, most earnestly, upon some of the drowning passengers to throw into his skiff his saddle-bags, in which was a paltry sum in dollars.

Amidst the screaming, agony, and distraction of the scene, George remained calm and self-possessed. To some he imparted counsel respecting the best mode of getting on shore without a boat, on a timber or a plank. In many cases he saved the parties by repressing resolutions arising from despair or terror. When he was no longer useful in the sinking boat, he swam on shore behind a pirogue, which was so over-loaded as to upset. It had already arrived near the shore, and he saved a mother and her child from those that were on board. When the boat first came to the shore, he assisted to pass her cable round a tree. Had his directions been followed, the boat had been saved. But other counsels prevailed, and it was determined to loose the cable from the first tree, to get a-fast round one that was deemed more favourable for bringing the boat ashore. The cable once loosed from the first tree, the boat whirled off into the stream with such power, that they were unable to make fast to another. Her

fate was soon consummated. The engineer behaved like a patriot, or a martyr. Universally beloved on board, there were friends, who, in escaping themselves, thought of him, and besought him to save himself in the pirogue, which saved so many of the passengers. His answer was noble: "There is no chance for her if I quit the engine;" and he kept the wheels in motion, until they were choked with water, and was drowned in the engine-room, struggling to the last moment to perform his duty. The dwellers on the Mississippi ought to raise a statue to his memory.

When all that remained on board, in the darkness and in the storm, and in the whirling wrath of that mighty and sweeping river, were plunged into its waves, it needs little effort of imagination to conceive what a scene it must have been. The mother was whirled under the current, among the "*sanyers*,"<sup>8</sup> with her babe clinging to her neck; and between thirty and forty perished. How many our hero saved we cannot tell. There were other generous spirits besides him exerting themselves to the utmost of their power. He was sometimes swimming behind a canoe full of people, and paddling it to the shore. Relinquishing the canoe to some one who could not swim, he was next seen dragging some rescued victim ashore by his hair. One poor wretch who had floated a considerable distance down the stream, had caught upon a sawyer, and amidst the general uproar, had been crying for



help a long time in vain. George heard him, and carried a canoe to his relief, and brought him safely to shore, after he was so far exhausted by his exertions and sufferings as to be unable to speak when he was brought to land. It cannot be doubted that our young friend suffered much himself from cold, exposure, fatigue, and exertion in swimming against the current. But he enjoyed the most exquisite satisfaction that a good mind can experience on earth, that of meriting the gratitude, and receiving the blessings of many saved by his exertions, when they were ready to perish.

Having done every thing that benevolence and humanity could dictate for the people who had been saved from the foundered steam-boat, and having bestowed his tribute of unavailing sorrow on the many who perished, notwithstanding all his efforts, he set out on his way back to Natchez. Thence he took passage in the first boat to L——. The pilot engaged for that boat was found, on trial, to be unfit for the duties which he had assumed. George was engaged in his place, which once more put him on pay. This was a circumstance which the remembrance of his mother's condition forbade him ever to forget. This boat could not stop at the Iron Banks. From a certain point, indeed, where they took in wood, he had a chance to send a note to his mother, informing her of his fortunes, and that he should be back in a fortnight from that day,



requesting her, at that time, to be at the Iron Banks with the children.

He had a short and pleasant trip to L—— and a safe return in his own large, new, and handsome boat. Mrs. Mason and her family were on the banks of the river several hours before the time appointed for his return. The mother and the four children were seated under a spreading oak, a little below the summit on the eastern declivity of the Iron Banks, eagerly looking up the bend, affording a reach of vision of about five miles to a point where the further view of the river was obstructed by the woods at the opposite shore. Every one has observed, that in a state of extreme impatience a minute lengthens to an hour. The children complained of delay. Even the equanimity of the mother was vanquished, and she fidgetted and wondered what detained the boat. Half a dozen times the children had imagined the column of smoke above the trees, and had cried, clapping their hands, "There she comes!"—By and bye, there is no mistake, and she is really seen; and the children begin to caper for joy. In a few minutes afterwards the white bow is just seen shooting from behind the trees. In a minute afterwards a noble steam-boat "stands confessed," with her colours and pennons flying, and an immense cylindrical column of pitchy smoke streaming away behind her, bearing down upon them at the rate of twelve miles an hour. The mother's heart still flutters in suspense,

for it may not be her son's boat. In another instant that doubt is dispelled. A burst of white smoke shoots from the bow, and the children wonder at the length of time before her cannon is heard. Then they are sure it is the boat they expect. By this time there are a hundred people on the bank, watching the approach of the new steam-boat. I could almost envy the exultation of the mother and son, as the noble boat rounded to the shore, and as George descried Mrs. Mason, and the children under the tree, and as these distinguished him standing on the bow-deck. In another moment the son was ashore, and folded in his mother's arms.

The interest this spectacle excited in the crowd of spectators, who in such cases, are uniformly seen lounging on the shore to witness the landing from a steam-boat, was a strong evidence that the amount of deference, respect and homage, in common minds, is regulated chiefly by external appearance. The Mason family was now considered as a rising one, and made as good an appearance as the wealthiest in the settlement. Three years before, in the same place, the same family would have appeared either objects of indifference or derision. To the dwellers on the shores of the Ohio and Mississippi, there are but few personages entitled to higher and more heart-felt homage than the captains of steam-boats. The coming of a steam-boat breaks the silence of the forest. It brings the population and



the fashions, and the news, and the show of a city among them. It purchases their wood, milk, meat, eggs, and vegetables, and it sells them groceries, finery, and whisky. For half an hour they exult in the bustle and traffic, and news of a city. It is intensely enjoyed for the time, for they are aware that the pleasure is transitory. The cannon is fired; the boat is under weigh; and in ten minutes nothing interrupts the silence of the forest again, but the screaming of the jays.

In the short interview which George had with his mother, entirely new arrangements were made for the future. He had taken a handsome house, in a thriving village near L——, which had the advantage of schools of a higher class and respectable society; and here he proposed to place his mother, and to take her and the children up to their residence on his return from New Orleans. She was to sell her clearing for whatever it would bring, and be on the bank with all her goods and chattels, ready to embark, when the steamboat should return. It need not be doubted that all this arrangement was entirely satisfactory to her, even had it not been made by one who, she knew, was little apt to make wrong decisions.

George's voyage to New Orleans and back was marked by no accident, and the boat hove in sight of the Iron Banks within two hours of the time assigned for her return. His family had made every preparation for removal, and



were on the bank, awaiting the return of the steam-boat. A great many respectable passengers came up in her. The family meeting took place a little removed from the public gaze, after which George led his mother and sister, followed by three fine, brown, healthy-looking creole boys, dressed in new suits of blue, and looking a little shy and awkward at first, into the cabin. Mrs. Mason was handsomely attired in black, and though pale and careworn, still had a face and figure which attracted general notice, and excited uncommon interest, as well as the beauty of her daughter Lizzy. The state cabin into which George introduced them, dazzled the eyes of the younger children. It was seventy feet in length, supported by pilasters, and ornamented with mirrors. At one end was a considerable library in an open alcove, and at the other was a circular arcade, beyond which was the bar, making a display of liquors, refreshments of all kinds, and fruits, amongst which were pine-apples and bananas. The finishings were fine, even to gaudiness, and the floor carpeted with Venetian carpeting. The curtains in front of the births were of yellow silk, drawn up with tassels and festoons. Folding doors led to the ladies' cabin, in which some one was playing on the piano-forte. The furniture and the doors were mahogany. Such were the splendours and luxuries that had already made their way into the Mississippi forest.

Mrs. Mason had never been in a steam-boat before, and she felt the common apprehensions on the occasion. But she soon began to feel assured, by perceiving how manageable as well as swift was this mighty movement against the current of the Mississippi. A certain confidence and pride, dear to the maternal heart, began to be felt in the reflection, that her good son, hardly twenty-one years of age, had the command of the powerful machinery that pushed on this floating city.

I can imagine few conditions more favourable to enjoyment, than this trip of Mrs. Mason's to her new residence on the Ohio. Every thing conspired to render this a charming voyage. The season was the pleasantest in the year, that is to say, spring; and that season is no where more delightful than on the shores of the Ohio. A large portion of the passengers were of the most respectable class, and many of them very agreeable. The boat was in fine order. The river was full to the brim. The vernal gales were breathing their sweetest influence from the south. The verdure of the forests, as far as they could be seen from the boat, had that depth and grandeur which are peculiar to the lower course of the Ohio and Mississippi, with the exception of two or three solitary "bluffs"<sup>9</sup> on the Mississippi, the children had but once seen hills since they had lived in the country. The first bluffs that are seen in ascending the Ohio are singularly magnificent and grand.



There is deep water, directly on the verge of the shore, at the foot of these bluffs. They have a nobleness of rounding, and a whimsical variety of summits, which I want words to describe. The boat sweeps along at their base, and early in the afternoon is completely in the shade. Oftentimes, these bluffs appear as if they would roll down upon the boat, and dam up the beautiful river. I have never seen spring more charming, and I have never known existence more enjoyable, than in sitting on the guard of the boat, in mild weather, in the spring, after the sun has sunk behind these noble hills. At this season, on pleasant evenings, there is an ineffable softness and mildness in the temperature, and a balmy fragrance in the atmosphere. There is not, I think, a more beautiful shrub in nature than the red-bud in full blossom. It is a perfect tuft of peach-blossom flowers, and they make such a show on the precipitous declivities of these "bluffs," strung one above the other—and diffused on every side through the forest, that, taken into the eye along with the splendid white flowers of the dog-wood, the wilderness at this season may literally be said to blossom. A hundred romantic stories told by the boatmen, about the "house of nature," "the cave in the rock," the residences of robbers, and their exploits of blood, and the attacks of the Indians in former days, concur to make this scenery impressive and interesting beyond most others in the country.



Mrs. Mason spent this first evening sitting on the guards of the boat, as it was gliding swiftly along, in the shade of the lofty and flowering "bluffs," on the north bank of the Ohio. She sat on a cushioned settee, with her two younger children on her right hand, and Lizzy and Henry on her left. George coming backwards and forwards to join in their conversation, as often as his avocations as Captain permitted. The scene was full of sublimity and repose; and the shrubs, the flowers, the cliffs, the trees, the sky, and the columns of smoke spouted up from the tubes of the furnace, were beautifully painted in the water, as the boat seemed to fly over the painting, and yet to transport it as it went. The children expressed their untrained admiration by interjections—"Oh! how beautiful!"—"Only look here!"—"Look there!" was echoed from one to the other. The mother enjoyed the scene with the calm and pleasing silence of contemplation, and communion with the Author of this beautiful nature. Half way up the cliffs, the birds were singing their vesper hymns, undisturbed by the uproar of the passing boat.

On arriving at her destination, Mrs. Mason found herself comfortably situated in a good house, and in a large and populous village. The children were forthwith put to school. From August until October the steam-boat was laid up, and George spent all this happy interval with his mother. In his next trip to the Iron Banks, he performed his promise to

Pompey, the kind slave, by purchasing him from his master, and setting him free. But the poor black's grateful heart bound him to Mrs. Mason and her family for the remainder of his life.

We shall here take leave of our friends, now that they are settled happily in the comfortable dwelling provided for them by George's affection and industry. I do not say that they are all perfectly happy. But they love one another, and are the helpers of each others joy. Though they have the other evils of mortality to struggle with, they have no fear of poverty; and as they have benevolent and generous hearts, affluence has descended upon them as a refreshing shower, spreading happiness and abundance all around them.

My dear youthful reader, whenever you are in any way tempted to discouragement in any of your engagements, remember the old maxim, that "the darkest time in the night is just before day." Exert yourself in hope. Be industrious, diligent, and innocent. Trust in God. Never despond, and assume the genuine American motto, "Don't give up the ship."

THE END.









