

Millington

Sunday-School Library

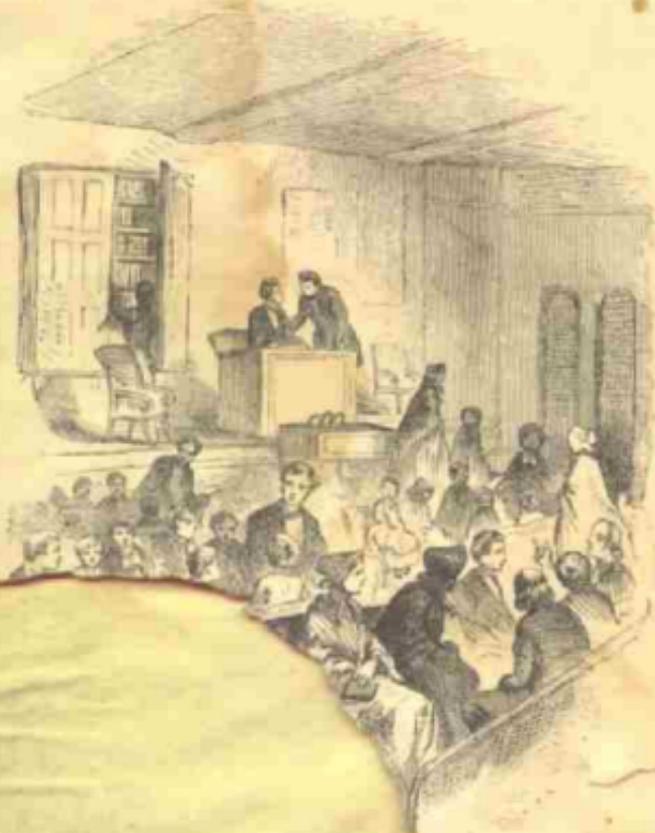
OF THE

Methodist

BAPTIST CHURCH.

No. 1

Keep this book neatly—Read it carefully—Return
it promptly to the Library.



10 00

THE

FACTORY BOY;

OR,

PROVIDENCE ILLUSTRATED.

BY A LADY.



Philadelphia:

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,

530 ARCH STREET.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1830,

By H. S. WASHINGTON,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

P R E F A C E .

ALL the essential circumstances of the following narrative are real facts: names of individuals alone are changed; some of the localities may still be recognized.

It illustrates, from actual life, the difference between morality and religion;—the doctrines of depravity, the atonement, faith, regeneration; the usefulness of the Sabbath school institution, the capability even of childhood for the highest operations of spiritual religion; the process of a genuine Christian experience; the proper treatment of the poor; the providence of God in afflictions; the pleasures and advantages of early piety.

The writer cannot claim to be the author of

these pages, but comes nearer to that character than to that of a mere amanuensis. The facts were related to her by another, who is represented as speaking in the first person, through the narrative. These facts have, however, without any material alteration, been re-arranged, and dressed in another style.

CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.	
Scenery of the suburbs of Philadelphia. Introduction to Mr. Stitson's family	9
CHAPTER II.	
Family scenes. Sketch of Mr. Stitson's history	15
CHAPTER III.	
Difference between morality and religion. May-day.	23
CHAPTER IV.	
Melancholy changes. Death scene.....	31
CHAPTER V.	
Increasing afflictions.....	37
CHAPTER VI.	
Alfred Stitson.....	43
CHAPTER VII.	
Scriptura. view of our duty to the afflicted	44

	Page
CHAPTER VIII.	
Further sufferings. Virtue in poverty. New views . . .	55
CHAPTER IX.	
Alfred gets work. Timely reliefs. A little helps . . .	61
CHAPTER X.	
Further afflictions	65
CHAPTER XI.	
Providential relief. Death of a mother	70
CHAPTER XII.	
Breaking up of the family. Good resolutions	75
CHAPTER XIII.	
The Sunday school. Depravity of human nature. Convictions of sin	81
CHAPTER XIV.	
Wrong views. Faith and works. Prayers	87
CHAPTER XV.	
The proper object of the Sunday school. Saving faith. Its effects. Alfred becomes a Christian	93
CHAPTER XVI.	
Religion a source of cheerfulness. Objections an- swered	98

C O N T E N T S .

7

	Page
CHAPTER XVII.	
Alfred's thirst for knowledge. Reading. Beauties of the Bible. His improvement	104

CHAPTER XVIII.	
Industry always successful. Great examples.....	110

CHAPTER XIX.	
Alfred at school. Special answer to prayer.....	115

CHAPTER XX.	
Objections to early religion answered	127

CHAPTER XXI.	
Another answer to prayer. Scene in the old homestead.....	127

CHAPTER XXII.	
Providence. Grateful meeting. Old acquaintance.	132

CHAPTER XXIII	
The results. Conclusion..	138

THE FACTORY BOY.

CHAPTER I.

Scenery of the suburbs of Philadelphia. Introduction to the Stitson family.

THE suburbs of Philadelphia are extremely beautiful. Nearly all my young readers have read of the Fairmount Waterworks, by which the city is supplied with water from the Schuylkill.

This beautiful stream, a few years ago, glided along its clear, rocky bed, immediately beyond the city, amidst hills and valleys, which were clothed with forests, and alive with singing birds, while the fine buildings of the water-works and the country residences sprinkled along its banks,

added to its charms. The growth of the city has injured much this lovely scenery; the hills about the basin have been much dug away, and streets and houses are crowding farther and farther towards the river. But still there are beauties remaining, which call away many of the citizens, on summer evenings, from the noise and business of the city, to refresh themselves on the banks of the Schuylkill.

I spent the long afternoons of a summer, in which, on account of feeble health, I was unable to attend to business, in rambling along these shores; and among the family groups which I frequently met, was one, which, by its neat appearance, the glad-heartedness of the children, and the affectionateness of the parents, attracted my attention. I wished for an opportunity of introducing myself to this family; and afterwards became acquainted with them in the following manner:—

A little beyond the north-western portion of the city, near that part which is called Cohoeksink, the scenery, at this time, was quite rural. Fruitful fields were waving with the golden grain. Good large farm-houses were seen scattered here and there, and a very considerable forest, called, after the gentleman to whom it belonged, "Camac Woods," offered a refreshing shade to the weary. A cool stream wandered through the length of this forest, on the banks of which I was accustomed to recline my feeble frame, until, not unfrequently, the stillness of the forest, the ripple of the water on the pebbles of its shore, and the music of the birds, lulled me into a short, but sweet sleep.

Nature is the goodly work of God, and, like a glass, reflects back the smiles of His countenance. When we can escape away from the noise and wickedness of men, to where God's works alone surround us, how serene do our thoughts become, and how

pleasant is it then to feel that there is a God who made all things, and that the beauty and benevolence which he has painted on every object, is but to show his goodness to us!

I was walking on another road than that which I usually took, one fine afternoon, directing my course to the forest, when I met an opening on my right, which appeared to lead directly to it. I judged it to be the continuation of Eighth Street. Eighth Street was not then, and perhaps is not yet, cut through the fields on the left; but, from its location, I concluded that this avenue was in the same line with it, and would, in the course of time, become a part of it.

I passed up the avenue. On the left side were three good-looking country-residences, above the fences hung boughs laden with ripe fruit, and before the doors grew shrubbery in full bloom. On the right lay a number of fields, with a range of poplars in front, along the whole length of the avenue;

in one place, the herds were reclining under trees; in another, the reapers were working. At the end seemed to commence the forest. On approaching it, however, I found that a small piece of land, covered with grain, lay between it and the woods

On entering the next lot, to the right, that I might pass around the field of grain. I saw, but a short distance before me, sitting under the shade of some trees, a gentleman and his lady, with four children. The oldest was a little girl, about nine years of age. The next two were boys. One appeared about seven years old, the other five. The youngest was a healthy, smiling little girl, and seemed about three years.

This was the neat and happy-looking family which I had met occasionally on the shores of the Schuylkill. The oldest son, Alfred Stitson, is the chief subject of the story which I am about to tell to my young readers.

Around this little group were spread collections of wild flowers, which the boys had gathered, and from which they had made a number of bouquets to carry home, and wreaths that they had placed around the heads of their sisters.

Coming so suddenly before them, and also on private land, I felt it necessary to excuse myself to them. I was glad of the opportunity; for my interest in this apparently virtuous and happy family led me to wish for their acquaintance. I had scarcely spoken, when the father of the family stopped my apology, and, with an ease which made me entirely at home with them, urged me to sit down with the company, under the shade of the trees; and in a few minutes we were all as familiar as if we had been acquaintances for years. The children made me a bouquet, while the conversation of the parents increased my interest in them all.

X
CHAPTER II.

Family Scenes. Sketch of Mr Stitson's History

HAPPINESS attends virtue ; the happiness of the heart always, and, most generally, happiness in external circumstances. Sometimes the providence of God sees fit to afflict the virtuous in this last respect, but always for their good, and therefore for their happiness in the end. This last remark, as well as the first, will be abundantly illustrated in the history of the family to which I have introduced my young readers.

It had been well trained, to domestic and what are called moral virtues. The virtuous habits of the father made him industrious, frugal, and prudent. His industry enabled him to make money ; his frugality prevented him from wasting it in unnecessary indul-

gences; and his prudence directed him in making use of it to advantage. It was thus that he was able, though at first a poor mechanic, to purchase the lot of ground where I met him, to supply his family with all necessary comforts, and to endear the poor of his neighborhood to him by his liberality.

While we remained, conversing under the shade of the trees, a colored woman, servant-maid of one of the neighboring country-seats on the avenue, approached us with a benevolent, smiling countenance, bearing in one hand a pitcher of milk, and in the other a small basket containing fruit and glasses. I learned that this was her constant habit, whenever the family visited the spot, which was usually about once a week, during the warm weather. After refreshing ourselves a little with the fruit and milk, we started for the city. The sun was fast descending to the horizon; the workmen were returning, with their scythes,

from the fields, and the herds were winding their ways, in different directions, to their shelter for the night. As the home of my new friends lay on my own course, I was induced to stop with them to tea, and spend a few hours of the evening in their domestic circle.

The introduction which was thus obtained to this family led to a frequent intercourse with them, during my stay in Philadelphia. I visited them, supped with them, walked with them to the shores of the Schuylkill, and to their own lot of land, where the acquaintance commenced, and became familiar with their circumstances and history.

Mr. Stitson was a native of New England. His ancestors were among the early settlers of the state of Massachusetts. Many of their descendants still remain in the town of N——, where yet stands the old home-

stead of his grandparents. He was apprenticed to the printing business in the city of Boston. Guided by that spirit of enterprise which leads so many of the hardy sons of New England to leave the homes of their childhood, and the graves of their fathers, to seek adventures among strangers, he took leave of his father's family, on finishing his apprenticeship, and travelled southward.

His business, he found, succeeded well in Philadelphia. He commenced as a journeyman printer; but his industrious habits soon enabled him to enlarge his plans, and enter into partnership with the gentleman for whom he worked. About this time, he married his wife in Philadelphia. At the end of each successive year, the condition of his life grew brighter. A merciful Providence blessed his business, so that he was able not only to meet his necessary expenses, but gradually to accumulate money. His

interesting little family was healthful and happy. No cloud seemed to darken its joyous prospect.

Mr. Stitson was fitted for domestic enjoyment. He was intelligent, though his education was limited to the instructions of a New England district school, and what knowledge his own observation and reading had afforded him. The regular moral training of a New England family, more strict in that day than at the present, gave a deep impress to virtuous sentiments. Steadiness, sobriety, perseverance, and laborious industry, marked the character of New England youth, wherever they were found. Mr. Stitson was a good example of New England domestic education. His tastes were pure. He loved books. The joys and affections of his fireside were well suited to make him happy. After the toils of the day were passed, he spent the earlier hours of the summer evenings in rural walks with his

family, and the long evenings of winter around his hearth, where his repose was sweetened with conversation, reading, and the smiles of his children, the youngest two of whom usually sat on his knees, while Alfred and his oldest sister shared the reading of the book of the evening, and the amiable mother sat in the group, mending some article of clothing. I have spent many evenings, enjoying these fire-side scenes of innocence and love, when tears have gushed from my eyes at the remembrance of my own dear home, which had long been deserted, and the members of the family separated by death and change.

How happy could the mass of mankind be, if they were but disposed to seek true enjoyment! Wealth will not secure it. Mr. Stitson was at first a poor man, and never rose above what would be called comfortable circumstances. His was the state prayed for by Agur: "Give me neither

poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me : ” nor are the parade, the fashion, or the distinctions of the world, necessary. The highest happiness consists in the love of God, our heavenly Father ; next to this are the virtues and comforts of a good home, where

“ The snowy wings
Of innocence and love protect the scene.”

This latter was the happiness of Mr. Stitson's family : they loved each other fervently : each seemed anxious to excel the rest in acts of kindness. They were provided with every thing which could afford them convenience or enjoyment. Mr. Stitson was particularly careful to have a good selection of books in his house, both to gratify his own love of reading and for the improvement of his children. The three eldest could already read, and were very fond of books. Their taste for reading took the

plate of those trifling dispositions which usually waste so much of the time of children. A love of books, formed when we are young, is not easily destroyed; and, while it opens a source of pure enjoyment for all our after life, likewise gives a virtuous steadiness to our habits, which may save us from a thousand snares.

CHAPTER III.

Difference between morality and religion. May-day

MR. STITSON was a virtuous man; but it must not be understood that by being virtuous, it is meant that he was pious. He had been brought up to the strictest habits of New England morality, and to some of the forms of outward religion; but he had not yet learned the difference between what the world calls virtue and what the Scriptures call "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." He not only respected but attended the public services of religion, and many people would have called him a good Christian; but yet he had not experienced, in his heart, that great change which the word of God requires. This seemed to be

the only deficiency in his happiness. Every enjoyment which temporal comforts and strict morality could afford, were his; but yet it could be said that "one thing was needful" still.

Do my young readers ask what is the difference between the character of Mr. Stitson and that of a real Christian? I will tell them. In order to be true Christians, we "*must be born again.*" Our Savior declared this to Nicodemus, who was not only moral, but attentive to the *forms* of religion; yet Christ admonished him that he "*must be born again.*" Open to the third chapter of John, and read this interesting conversation. How does the Savior repeat and enforce the admonition — "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"! Nicodemus is perplexed. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born," &c; and again he repeats — "Marvel not

that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

Then follows, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, the means by which we are to obtain this new life, viz., faith in Christ. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Do not my young readers see that, to be a Christian, we must undergo a wonderful change, and that, in order to this, we must 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ'? Now, those, in many respects, excellent people, who are called *moral*, are so from habit, or education, or it may be from pride. They have not faith in the death of the Savior; they experience no spiritual change in the heart, which is so wonderful that the Scriptures call it a passing "from death unto life," being "born again," "born of the Spirit," "taking the feet out of the horrible

pit and miry clay, and placing them on a rock," &c.

Again: Every body has sinned. The most moral people in the world will acknowledge that they have sinned, and sinned much. But, if they could now live so morally as not to sin at all, yet their past sins would stand against them. If they could be perfect now, it is only what they ought to be, and therefore it could not have any effect upon what is past. It could not take away one sin committed twenty, thirty, or fifty years ago. If they depend upon their morality, therefore, you see that they have no ground of hope; for their sins are all recorded against them in God's book of remembrance. This is the reason why our Savior said, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This will likewise show the reason why "the Son of man must be lifted up, as Moses

lifted up the serpent in the wilderness ;” for if our present good works cannot remedy our past sins, then would there be no escape from them, unless some other remedy was provided. Now, Christ came into the world for this very purpose. How plainly the Bible declares this ! — “ *He bore our sins in his body on the tree.*”

✕ If a third reason is necessary to show that morality cannot take the place of religion, we need only compare the two, and their great difference cannot but be seen. There are two classes of duties which belong to us — first, those we owe to God ; and, secondly, those we owe to men. Now, what is called morality, consists only of this last kind of duties, and it is by the faithful performance of these, that many people expect to be saved. But the first class of duties are the most important : they consist of love to God, prayer, praise, sincerity, humility, uprightness in our motives, holi

ness of heart, and many others. Behold, then, the difference between a moralist and a real Christian. Morality, so called, is chiefly external; religion is both internal and external. Its external qualities are but the effect — the shining out of its internal light and purity. Understand, then, my young readers, that a person may be a moralist, and not a Christian; but no one can be a Christian, and not a moralist.

The last walk the author enjoyed with Mr. Stitson's family, was on the first of May, the spring following his introduction to them. This day was then, and is still, to some extent, observed as a holiday of great interest in that part of the country. May-poles were erected in many places. Parties of children and youth were formed, to visit the fields and forests, at the earliest dawn, to pluck flowers while yet sparkling with the dew-drops. These joyous groups were seen returning home, before breakfast,

with wreaths in their hair, and bouquets in their hands.

In the afternoon, the children of the schools and asylums were led, by their superintendents, in bustling processions, to the banks of the Schuylkill, or by the ferry steamboats, to what was then the beautiful little village of Camden, on the opposite side of the Delaware River. The day was at this time bright and cheerful, and the only circumstance that lessened the pleasure of this walk, was the evident alteration in the health of Mr. Stitson. He had marked symptoms of consumption, but, nevertheless, seemed happy in the glad scenes of that beautiful day.

The next week, being called away to my native state, I took leave of them all, little thinking that I was to see them no more in their happy family circles. But the providence of God had appointed them another lot—a lot of affliction; and after this

period, the observation which has already been made, viz., that Providence sometimes afflicts the virtuous, but always for their good, and therefore for their happiness in the end, begins to be illustrated in their history.

CHAPTER IV.

Melancholy changes. Death scene.

Soon after his departure from the city of Philadelphia, the writer was called by business to a foreign land, and, during an absence of a few years, heard nothing of the Stitson family. On his return, he landed in the port of New Orleans, where, in looking over a file of newspapers, his attention was arrested by a notice, in one of the oldest papers on the list, of a religious address delivered to a crowded audience, on a Sunday afternoon, in the court-house of the town of Chester, a few miles below Philadelphia, on the Delaware river, by a lad, whose age was hardly above childhood. In looking over different files, he saw the notice in other papers of about the same date. It had been

copied from one paper to another, until it had taken its place among the newspaper common-places of the day. A moment's pause, while glancing at this notice, recalled to him the fact that the name of the little Christian boy was that of Alfred Stitson. It was mentioned, likewise, that he was from Philadelphia.

The author felt immediately a deep interest to know the history of the family, since his last interview with them, and could not but be anxious for the boy, lest such a premature appearance before the public should have an unhappy influence on his inexperienced mind. He hoped, however, that the providence of God, and the care of his religious friends would prevent any evil consequences.

On returning to Philadelphia, his first inquiries were after Mr. Stitson and his family. Melancholy changes had come over that little domestic paradise. A stranger

occupied the mansion, and the once smiling and familiar countenances which welcomed the visitor were there no more. Mr. and Mrs. Stitson were both in the grave, and the children were in different parts of the country, under the care of friends. None but the youngest remained in the city, whom a benevolent lady had, through charity, taken to her house. Young Alfred was the boy to whom the newspaper notice referred; but he had since gone, by the assistance of some benefactors, to pursue his education in one of the New England States. Letters received from him, and the statements of some friends, afforded the author information of the mournful history of the family during the time of his absence.

The symptoms of decline in the health of Mr. Stitson, which have already been mentioned, became more alarming. It was hoped that the summer months would relieve, if not remedy them; but his disease

was too deeply seated, and in a few weeks required him to give up his business, and confine himself to his chamber. This was the beginning of sorrows to his once happy family. It cast a gloom over each countenance. The evening walks and family reading were given up, and all hung around the bed of the suffering parent, to relieve him by their cares, and to watch every changing symptom, and gain, if possible, some cheering hope of returning health. If he appeared better for a day, it shed gladness into all hearts, and again the hope returned that their beloved father would soon leave his chamber, and mingle once more in their domestic circle, to receive and exchange their smiles and caresses. But soon again the favorable symptoms disappeared, and with them vanished their hopes.

Autumn came on, and it was seen clearly that Mr. Stitson could not linger long. The days were counted as they

passed. At last, in the month of December, he expired. It was the first death that had occurred in the family, and none of the children had ever seen a corpse before. It was a morning of heart-rending pain to them all, but especially to little Alfred. His father had loved him more dearly than the rest of his children, and had given him many little presents, which showed his partiality for him. When all hopes of his recovery were given up, Alfred would frequently shut himself in his own room, and spend hours together in looking at and weeping over these presents of his father, until the leaves of his little books were stained with his tears.

When he was dying, the children were brought to see him; but he was unable, at the moment they reached his chamber, to know them. Mrs. Stitson sat at the head of the bed, bending over her husband's pillow, weeping; two of the neighbors stood,

one on either side, holding his extended hands. His eyes were fixed immovably on the ceiling. He breathed but a few moments, and the spirit was gone. This scene, so new and so sorrowful to the children, overwhelmed them, and their weeping and lamentation rendered it necessary to remove them to another room.

The second day after his death, he was buried in a well-known beautiful burial-ground, somewhat retired from the city, in the northern suburb, which is called Kensington. The children rode in the carriage with their widowed mother to the grave, and Alfred took particular notice of the place, that he might find it again. Thither he would go frequently, and sit by his father's tomb, and weep until the darkness of the evening warned him to return.

CHAPTER V.

Increasing afflictions.

AFTER the death of Mr. Stitson, his family had no other dependence for a livelihood, beside their own exertions and the small lot of land which he had left them. What other means he had provided for them, before his sickness, were spent in attempts to restore his health. Being far away from his native state, he left no relations who could regard them in their distress, and those of Mrs. Stitson were few, and unable to afford them assistance.

The wearing attentions and watchings of Mrs. Stitson, at the bedside of her husband, and the painful forebodings with which she looked to the future, depressed much her mind, and gradually undermined her health.

She was not anxious to afford her children the luxuries of life, nor was the fear of not being able to keep them in the comfortable circumstances in which their father had placed them, the ground of her anxiety: all these she could sacrifice; but she feared that their education would have to be neglected, and they even come to the want of bread, especially if her own health should continue to decline.

Her first endeavors were to procure a cheaper residence, and to engage in needlework. She taught likewise her eldest daughter to assist her. The oldest son, Alfred, who was between eight and nine years of age, was yet too young to aid in the support of the family; so that the labors of the mother were at first their only means of living. This was soon found insufficient for a family of five members, and the sad necessity was felt of parting with many articles of household ornament, and finally

of household use, to make up the deficiency.

Only those who have experienced them, can, perhaps, judge with what feelings an afflicted family, around whose hearth once beamed the smiles of domestic enjoyment, thus part with one after another of those little conveniences, which have for years belonged to them, and the most common of which seem to have received a sacredness, at remembrances of the better days that have gone. Each article thus parted with was removed with tears, not only for the memory of the past, which it brought to mind, but also for the still darker sufferings of the future, which it seemed to forebode. At first, the framed pictures were parted with; afterwards, the most valuable articles of their furniture, until it was at last reduced to what was barely necessary for their comfort. As their circumstances became worse, they removed, at different times, into cheaper tene-

ments, until they finally were so far separated from their former neighbors as to lose their sympathies and attentions.

Long before this, Mrs. Stitson had placed the papers, relating to the land which belonged to the family, into the hands of an agent for the purpose of selling it; but he had, either fraudulently or by mismanagement, so involved the estate, that all hope was cut off from that source.

Thus darker and darker clouds seemed to lower over their helpless condition. The contrast of their present state with the past was brought to mind by every new sorrow. Once, the presence of a kind father mingled in their little circle; now, when they had most need of him, his head lay low in the grave, and they were alone and defenceless in their sufferings. Once, plenty spread their table, gladness filled each heart, and sparkled from each eye, and the fear of evil never entered their peaceful home; now,

they lived on the most scanty food, sorrow weighed heavily on every heart, paleness and care sat on each face, and still more dreary prospects seemed spread out before them.

Under these increasing afflictions, Mrs. Stitson's health sunk rapidly; grief and anxiety preyed upon her mind, and constant labor with her needle upon her constitution. She would, not unfrequently, continue her work during the most of the night, until the morning appeared. At these times, when the other children, exhausted with grief, had retired to rest, little Alfred would sit by the side of his widowed mother, during the whole of the night, endeavoring, in his artless manner, to comfort her heart with his company. He would tell her that, by and by, he would be large enough to work, and then he would make them all happy again, as his departed father had done; they should live again in a better house; they should have as good furniture and food as before; again they

should circle around their fireside in the winter nights, and spend them in pleasant conversation and reading; again they should walk, on summer evenings, along the banks of the Schuylkill; gladness would once more dwell in all their hearts, and sorrow and sighing should flee away. He would talk thus with her until the tears gushed from her eyes, and, dropping her work, she would throw her arms around him, and both would weep together. Tears are sometimes sweet to us; they relieve the sorrow of the heart

"O soothing tears! by nature wisely were ye given
To attend on human grief.
Were it not so—could man not weep his misery—
How would he bear it then?"

CHAPTER VI

Alfred Stitson.

As Mrs. Stitson's health became worse, the difficulties of providing for her little family increased: this again wore upon her feeble frame, and disabled her still more. Strong symptoms of consumption — the same fatal disease which had ended the life of her husband — began to show themselves, as if to add despair to grief, by taking away the only remaining hope of her helpless family. Not so much care for herself, as her increasing feebleness, compelled her to lessen her daily amount of labor, notwithstanding her utmost industry before could not keep her children comfortable. She was under the necessity at last of removing still farther into the suburbs of the city,

where she rented two small rooms, in the second story of a very cheap house. Here her ill health increased so rapidly, that it was scarcely possible for her to continue her labor; and, while disease weakened her frame, still severer pain oppressed her heart. She looked upon herself as hastening to the grave; and the painful thought would often occur, "What will become of my poor children, when the grave shall hide me from my sorrows?" Such a reflection often caused the tears to flow down her sunken cheeks; and her children, seeing her weep, would gather around her, and mingle their tears with hers.

Young Alfred could no longer resist the disposition of his heart to help his afflicted mother; but he could not think of any thing he was able to do. At last, he resolved to go to some of the tobacconists' and other shops, where he knew small boys were employed, and tell them the sufferings of his

mother's family, hoping that his tale of sorrow would procure him work. He entered one door after another; but his youthful appearance would not allow those to whom he applied to listen to his simple but affecting story; and while the word was on his lips, and the tear glistening in his eye, he was immediately stopped short with the chilling reply, "We have no work for you here."

After calling at all the places where he thought he might find something to do in one neighborhood, he directed his steps to another, at a considerable distance, hoping that there might be a difference in the hearts of the people in a different part of the city; but, here he went from place to place, meeting the same answer. He spent in this manner the greater part of the day, having eaten nothing since breakfast: the evening was hastening on, and he was faint with hunger and fatigue, when he saw, at a short dis-

tance, the sign of another shop, where he thought he would call, as a last hope.

He entered the door with a beating heart, hoping that he might, at last, bear home to his widowed mother the joyful news that he had found the means of helping her. There was something—perhaps the sorrowful urgency of his countenance—which secured for him, a moment, the attention of the gentleman of the store. “Will you be faithful at your work, if I take you, my boy?” said he. “I will, sir,” answered Alfred, with a tone weak, but earnest. A workman was immediately directed to take him into one of the back rooms, where the manufacturers were at work.

It was a tobacco establishment, and the business which they designed for him was what they called “turning the wheel.” A considerable number of young men were at work in the room, with boys at the wheel, all

of whom, however, were older than himself. It wanted but about an hour to the time when their work would close for the day. They proposed to let Alfred try the wheel during the hour, and, if he succeeded, engage him. He was weak with hunger, and as soon as he entered the room became quite sick with the smell of the tobacco, to which he was unaccustomed. He tried with all his power to prevent them from discovering his uncomfortable state, fearing that it might interfere with his employment. He soon was so much affected with it, however, as to be irregular in turning the wheel. The young men around began to smile at him; and, disposed to be merry, and little thinking of the sorrows which pressed on that young heart, brought a large box, and sat him upon it, in the midst of the room, as a laughing-stock. Broken in spirit, and thinking that meekness might obtain for him compassion, he submitted to their rudeness, and, leaning

his head upon his hand, he thought bitterly of his home and his heart-broken mother. At the time of stopping their work, they told him that he would not do for them. He asked for the gentleman to whom he first presented himself, in the store, determined to tell him the sufferings of his mother and her children, hoping that he would feel for them. They sent him forward to find him. On reaching the front shop, he found he had gone. His heart failed him as he stepped into the street; he burst into tears, and returned with a melting heart to his desolate home

CHAPTER VII.*

Scriptural view of our duty to the afflicted.

Do my young readers think that those workmen could have made this poor but noble-hearted child of sorrow the object of their merriment, if they had known his afflictions? They little thought of the sick and widowed mother, and her helpless orphans, who were waiting at home, with mingled hope and fear, the return of Alfred.

We should never sport with wretchedness. The poor insane man, that the boys run after in the streets, may have been deprived of his reason by some preying sorrow, which, if known, would call forth tears, instead of laughter. And what must be the feelings of any such sorrow-stricken sufferer, when he sees that even the children in the streets

seem to unite to heap wretchedness upon him?

Some people do not feel as much for the poor as they ought, because they think the wretched grow accustomed to their miseries, and cannot judge of the value of better circumstances. Perhaps this is true with some, especially those who were born in a low condition in life, and have never known what comfort is. But even this does not excuse us from pitying and helping them if we can, for it is our duty to try to raise them up and lead them to form a better taste. It is our duty to do unto them as we would have them do unto us, were we in their circumstances.

But there are many poor who have been in a happier state, around whose homes were once shed all the smiles of prosperity, perhaps of wealth and refinement. The sufferings of such must be peculiarly painful. Memory will ever be recalling the past; and

not only so, but, having been trained in their habits for a more comfortable condition, they are less capable of bearing the miseries of want.

God has set us an example of great care for the poor, in the Bible. Few if any duties are more strongly taught in that holy book than those we owe to the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. We are told that "He that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he giveth will He pay him again." Here God takes to himself the character of the poor man, as if He would throw around him a portion of His own glories; and promises to reward our charity to him as though it were done to himself. What other duty is more exacted than this, in the Scriptures?

An apostle, in giving a definition of religion, makes this a part of it:—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—to visit the fatherless and

widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world." Our Savior, in describing the judgment day, says, that "When He shall come with the glory of His Father and of His holy angels," he will make the manner in which men have treated the afflicted a leading matter of account at His bar. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in. I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink, &c. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say unto them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed, &c. Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

St. Paul, if possible, gives a still greater excellence to this virtue; for, in writing to the Corinthian church about it, he exhorts them to be liberal, by telling them that it was on the same principle that the Savior redeemed the world. "For ye know," says he, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich."

Could this duty be more highly honored than it is in these passages? Here we have it in the first place represented as performed unto God himself, as if He stood in the place of the poor; then it is made a part of the very definition of religion; then all the solemn circumstances of the judgment day are made to give it importance; and, at last, the atonement, by which alone we can hope to be saved, is referred to as an example of it. And yet how few there are who do any thing for the poor! Even many Christians seem

to think that it is no duty; and, when they do give to them, feel that it is a matter merely of benevolence, and not what they are bound to do, by the word of God. Let none of my young readers ever abuse the poor or afflicted; but pity them, and save their pennies to give to them.

The next course young Alfred took to help his mother, was to take a basket and gather chips in the ship-carpenters' yards. The fall of the year was at hand, and they all feared the sufferings of the next winter. Indeed, they knew not how they could escape its miseries, unless by going to the public alms-house. This was a thought almost insupportable to them, and they determined to do all they could to prevent such a necessity. Alfred spent his time in carrying home baskets of chips, until he had filled all the room he could find in the cellar with them, and as fast as they were removed, to be burnt, he would replace them with others.

CHAPTER VIII.

Further sufferings. Virtue in poverty. New news.

As the cold weather returned, Mrs. Stitson's illness grew more serious. She was reduced almost to a skeleton: sorrow and disease had so changed her, that those who knew her in former years could not have recognized her. She was not fit to work; yet she still endeavored to earn a little, to save her children from entire starvation. They reduced their living to almost the last necessity. They had long given up dinners, and confined themselves to two spare meals, at breakfast and supper. Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, butter, and all similar articles, were, one after another, disused. They now had meat on their table very seldom, and lived chiefly on rye-bread, potatoes, and water.

Frequently they have gone to bed supperless, after having ate only a scanty breakfast, and, perhaps, shared a piece of bread among them, instead of supper.

Sometimes, when sickness would not allow Mrs. Stitson to work much, they have gone for a number of days without any thing beside a few roasted potatoes; and at other times the last cent was spent, so that they could not even buy a candle, that she might see to work in the evening. Mrs. Stitson avoided getting in debt for any thing, because she had no hope of being better able to meet her expenses in the future. Every thing was clean and neat about her; for poverty does not render it necessary for us to be careless of personal appearance. The children looked neat in their clothing; it was not ragged, as it frequently is with the poor, though it was old and much mended.

Vice often follows in the track of poverty; but the early training of this family

secured them against moral corruption. Though depressed to the last extremity, no unworthy means of relieving themselves was ever thought of. All the refinement of feeling which belonged to them in their more prosperous days was still preserved: there was, indeed, no difference in their appearance, but that produced by want and sorrow.

It may be, that some of my young readers have, before this, thought it was hard that the providence of God should have allowed this excellent family to suffer so severely; for it seemed that they were forsaken of all hope; and if we knew their history only as far as we have already traced it, we might feel almost disposed to question the oversight of Providence; but we shall soon see that God does not err in his ways, and that our greatest trials are designed for our good.

When the cold weather had fully come, they were so pressed with want that some of

the neighbors, though poor themselves, visited them, and presented them with small quantities of food. Among these were two pious women, who had passed through the furnace of affliction, and knew how to sympathize with the suffering. The business of one was washing in different families. The remains of the tables of such families were usually given her, which she shared with Mrs. Stitson and her children. They would have suffered, perhaps dangerously, if God had not sent them this aid.

The other was likewise poor, and but little able to assist them; but she endeavored to direct them to higher comforts than this world affords. She first explained to them the true nature and consolations of spiritual religion, and corrected those false views of morality in which they had been educated, and which we have mentioned in another chapter. Mrs. Stitson felt the need of some stronger support to her mind than what she

had hitherto possessed. She listened with eagerness to the conversations of this Christian female, and soon became deeply convinced of the truths about which she spoke. This led her to pray with new earnestness for the renewing of her heart. She appeared more interested on this point than on any other, even more than that of her temporal sufferings. She did not long pray, before light dawned upon her spirit, and she felt that she had experienced that great change which we have described in the chapter just referred to.

Religion, though it does not take away our afflictions of body and circumstances, yet helps us to sustain them, and places them in an entirely new light to us. They are looked upon by the pious as the merciful corrections of God's providence; and the knowledge that they will do them good in the end, throws even a beauty over them. If any of my young readers have seen the

great Falls of Niagara, they have, perhaps, noticed the beautiful rainbow, which, on clear days, spans its foam and mist, a smile of loveliness mixing with the terrors of the scene. So it is with the afflictions of the devoted Christian: the promises of God beautify the darkest storms of earthly trial with the bow of hope; and if all around them frowns misfortune and ruin, there is in the heart a sanctuary where no misery can enter, and where God alone communes with the spirit.

CHAPTER IX.

Alfred gets work. Timely reliefs. A little helps.

Mrs. STITSON seemed a new being after this change, though fast sinking to the grave. She appeared happier than if her former health and comforts were about to return. She soon became so prostrate as to be confined to her bed, and the eldest daughter was under the necessity of attending her ; so that she likewise was able to do but little for the support of the family.

At this time, little Alfred was compelled to seek again for employment. He applied to a cotton factory, called the Globe Mill, which still stands in that part of the city called the Northern Liberties. He found work there at fifty cents a week, without board, or any other advantage. He was so

happy to find himself able to earn any thing, that he gave himself with eagerness to his work, and succeeded so well as soon to stand first among the boys, who worked in the same room; and his sweet disposition and good conduct made him beloved by all around him.

His small wages, and the assistance of the two neighbors, were all that the family had to depend upon; and it may well be supposed that they were frequently reduced to great want. His wages were paid only once in two weeks. Sometimes, before the second Saturday night, which was the pay-night, returned, the last cent was gone, and they were constrained to live on bread alone for a number of days. At one time, particularly, all was spent by the commencement of the second week, and they were looking with painful anxiety to the remaining days, when, on returning, as usual, at eight o'clock, on a cold winter evening, expecting

to go to bed supperless, Alfred saw a half-dollar piece shining in the moonlight on the pavement. As he picked it up, he burst into tears, and kissed it; then, putting his hand in his pocket, held it there while he ran with joy to his afflicted mother. When he presented it to her, in the presence of the other children, they all wept together, while she, lifting her thin arm, pointed them to Heaven, to remind them that He who hears

“The young ravens when they cry,”

had given them this timely relief. One of them was sent immediately to buy a loaf of bread; and they all ate of it, no doubt, with more grateful hearts than those have who feast at the tables of kings. Little do the rich know how much happiness they might afford merely by the crumbs which fall from their tables. The offals of their meals might save many a pang of suffering, and procure for them the blessing of those who are ready

to perish. Children, too, might gladden the hearts and the homes of widows and little orphans. The money which they spend for useless toys might be given to the poor, and many a tear be dried up by it.

Some little children spend almost as much every week as young Alfred earned in the same time, by rising before daylight in the morning, and working until eight o'clock at night. If this spending-money were given to a poor family, it would make such children feel much happier themselves than would all the unnecessary playthings they could buy

CHAPTER X.

Further afflictions.

ALFRED gave such satisfaction to his employers that he was soon advanced to a higher department of business, and had his wages raised to one dollar twenty-five cents per week, and likewise had the pleasure of getting his young brother employment in the same establishment, at fifty cents per week; so that their united wages were one dollar seventy-five cents per week.

At this time, Mrs. Stitson was totally unable to work, being confined to her bed. Her oldest daughter could do little, because she was under the necessity of attending to her sick mother; and the youngest daughter was yet too young for any kind of labor. The wages, therefore, of the two boys, with

the slight assistance of the neighbors, was all their support.

Mrs. Stitson continued to decline rapidly. It was manifest that she could not continue much longer with her suffering family. She had become so reduced as to be able no more to lie in her bed, but was compelled to sit in a large chair, bolstered up with pillows.

The certainty and nearness of her death added new affliction to their wretchedness, and a more painful one than any they had yet experienced. No provision could be thought of for the children, for she had no friends to whom she could commit them, but the two neighbors to whom I have referred, and they were unable to do any thing for them, except to advise them, and endeavor to procure them places of employment and board. This they promised to do.

Mrs. Stitson, however, had, since the religious change which has been mentioned,

such views of the providence of God as relieved much of her anxiety respecting her children. She knew God would take care of them, and allow them to suffer no more than would be for their good. She now believed that all her past afflictions were sent in mercy: the change in her own religious character might never have taken place, if her former prosperity had continued; and, after enjoying life, she might have died unprepared for heaven.

Her children, too, though they had not yet experienced the same spiritual change, were rightly instructed in the nature of true religion; and she trusted that her earnest and frequent prayers would be answered in blessings on their heads when she had gone to the grave. She conversed much with them about religion; for she knew this would be the best security for them in this world, as well as in that which is to come. Her frequent conversations affected them

much, particularly Alfred, who sometimes made the subject of these conversations his meditation all the day, while at his work. The Spirit of God, no doubt, strove with his mind; and if his afflicted mother had been able to give more attention to him, perhaps he would have become, even at this early period, a pious child.

The children felt but little anxiety for what might be their own lot, after the decease of their mother: their attention was too much taken up with her sufferings. Painful indeed were their circumstances at this time. They had hitherto suffered want alone; but now the gloomy thought of death—the death of their only parent—was added to their miseries. They loved their mother with more than common affection.

It has been said, that sometimes poverty leads to vice, but not unfrequently it strengthens virtue. The members of a virtuous poor family will generally be found to love one

another the stronger for their afflictions. Common sufferings give them a common sympathy. Denied the regards of the world, they cling the closer to each other, and pour their mutual sorrows into each other's bosoms. Thus it was with this family. Though their circumstances were hardly comfortable enough to sustain life, yet they counted it a happiness to live, even under such circumstances, for the single pleasure of loving each other

CHAPTER XI.

Providential relief. Death of a mother

THE providence of God, to which Mrs. Stitson committed her children, did not deceive her hopes. But a short time before her death, a friend of her early years found her obscure abode; one whose sudden appearance and constant attentions at this, the most trying time of their afflictions, gave to her, in the minds of the children, the character of an angel sent down from heaven.

This lady had been the bridemaïd at Mrs. Stitson's wedding, and one of the friends of her childhood. Those changes which time frequently produces in the circle of our acquaintance had long removed these two friends beyond all intercourse, and they had not even heard of each other for many years.

Their meeting at this time, in circumstances so different from those of their early friendship, was almost too affecting for the feeble frame of Mrs. Stutson. She thanked God audibly for His mercy, in sending her at the time when she herself was about to leave her orphan children.

This truly benevolent lady took the responsibility of providing places for the children, after the death of their mother. She gave them a great many little comforts; but she found them out too late to relieve their suffering parent: all that could now be done was to secure to her the protection of her children, and close her eyes, when dead.

One morning, when Alfred and his brother were about starting, at the dawn of day, to their work, they took the wasted hand of their mother, to bid her good-by, fearing that she might expire before their return; for she had spent a very restless night, and seemed too much exhausted to

live through the day. She could scarcely whisper to them her last farewell. They burst into tears. She tried to speak a few words, the meaning of which appeared to be that she had nearly ended her sufferings with them, and was about to leave them to bear their miseries alone; that she committed them to that God to whose presence she was soon to go; that they must trust in Him, so that, when they should die, they might meet her in that better world where sorrow and sighing flee away, and where "the hand of God shall wipe tears from all eyes." There was something deathly and yet heavenly in her countenance. It appeared as if, now that a friend was provided for her children, she "desired to depart and be with Christ."

The boys went to the cotton-factory. About ten o'clock, a person called for them, and told them that they must return home immediately, for their mother was dead. They ran to their home with tears in their

eyes. On entering the room, they found a number of the neighbors fixing the corpse. The two sisters sat on one side of the room, sobbing aloud. Alfred and his brother sat themselves beside them, and all wept together.

It was an hour of sad and deep feeling to these poor children. All the memories of the past crowded into that hour — their early days of joy and hope, when they knew not that such afflictions existed in our poor world; the decease of their beloved father, which first brought home to their young minds, with full force, the painful idea of death, and which was the commencement of their wretchedness; and then the dark and dreary progress of their afflictions, the sale of their furniture, their removals from place to place, the want of bread, at times; and now at last they were forsaken of their last parent — their mother.

If my reader has lost his mother, he may

know how to feel for these young orphans. Their mother was, perhaps, even dearer to them than is usual. They were, as has been already remarked, endeared to each other by their common sufferings. She had been their only protection and comfort, through that severe course of afflictions which has been described. The thought that she was now gone — forever gone — was insupportable

CHAPTER XII.

Breaking up of the family. Good resolutions.

MRS. DOUGLAS, the lady who was introduced to the reader in the last chapter, as the friend of Mrs. Stitson, provided for her burial. The children rode in the same carriage with the corpse, while six or eight of the neighbors walked by its side to the graveyard, where Mr. Stitson was buried. She was placed in the same grave.

In the course of a few days, Mrs. Douglas called some of the neighbors together, and sold to them the few articles of furniture which remained; and, not long after, she had disposed of all the children except Alfred.

The oldest daughter went to a beautiful

village, about fifteen miles from Philadelphia, to reside with an aged and pious lady, not as a servant, but as a companion of her declining years. The youngest daughter was taken to the home of a wealthy Quaker lady of Philadelphia, who had no children of her own; while the youngest brother went into the country, to learn the business of a farmer, with a very respectable gentleman of the same Christian order. Alfred procured a good boarding-place, and continued at the cotton factory, with the design of either learning that business or some other, that might be found more advantageous in the city.

It was thus that the providence of God at last came to the rescue of this virtuous family. From all their afflictions it had taken their mother to heaven; and, by the singular instrumentality of Mrs. Douglas, placed the children in circumstances of com-

fort, under the care of friends, who would be at pains to train them to the strictest habits of morality.

The death of his mother left a deep impression on the mind of Alfred. Every little act of kindness which she had shown him, was recalled and wept over by him. On Sunday evenings, he usually visited her grave, where he would sit and weep until hours after the night-fall. A single night passed not, for six months, in which he did not wet his pillow with his tears.

Her conversations about religion were often called up, and failed not to interest his attention. He was thoughtful and even sad, in his frame of mind. This had grown, by his long afflictions, into a habit, so that he felt no disposition to mingle in the sports of other boys. How could he feel otherwise? He was left, as it were, alone; his parents both sleeping in the grave; their little family

broken up, and its members scattered to different parts of the country.

Grief could not, however, enfeeble his heart. His habits of labor, by which he had been the chief support of his whole family, had given him, at this early age, a noble sense of self-dependence, which made him feel that he might yet be able to rise above his afflictions, and reach a state of prosperity, even higher than he had ever enjoyed before.

He felt much the deficiency of his education. Since the death of his father, he had not gone to school. Before that time, he had only learned to read, and for the last few years before his mother's decease, his afflictions and labors took from him all opportunity of reading; so that he now found himself hardly able to understand the most simple book.

Yet he felt a noble determination to im-

prove his mind, and lift himself above his present low condition. But, how could he do it? He had no means of going to school; and if it were possible to educate himself, he had no time for it, as he commenced his work at day-light and continued until eight o'clock at night, with only half an hour's leisure for breakfast, and three quarters of an hour for dinner.

Yet God's providence directed him to the necessary means. The children of the family where he boarded were Sunday school scholars. Alfred learned from them what a Sunday school was. With delight he saw that this institution was exactly suited to his circumstances. He accompanied the children, on the next Sabbath, and was placed in a class under a teacher, whose pious spirit and kind attentions soon won his confidence and love.

This teacher, the first morning of Alfred's attendance, sat down by his side, when the

lesson was over, and inquired from him all his history. The tears started in his eyes, as Alfred related his artless story. The young orphan went home, glad that he had found a friend in that devoted teacher, and waited impatiently for the next Sabbath, that he might return again to his presence.

CHAPTER XIII

*The Sunday school. Depravity of human nature
Convictions of sin.*

ALFRED'S teacher was intent on the spiritual welfare of his scholars. He was not satisfied barely with good lessons, but endeavored to convince them of the necessity of a change of heart. He spent, on each Sabbath, a portion of time in conversing with them directly on the subject. He usually did this by sitting by the side of one at a time, and speaking to him alone.

The heart of Alfred was already prepared to profit by such conversations; for the death of his mother had produced a deep effect upon him. It brought home to him the fact that he must die.* He pondered over this thought so much that he sometimes trembled

at it. After going to bed, he would frequently lie awake, thinking about death, and afraid to go to sleep, lest he might die before the morning.

If my young reader has been properly instructed in the Scriptures by his parents, or Sabbath school teachers, I need not tell him that it was the Spirit of God which was thus trying to lead little Alfred to the knowledge of his sinfulness, that he might see the necessity of a new heart.

It showed him his sins, by making him feel that he was unprepared to die. St. Paul says that "the sting of death is sin." Those who have been born again need not be subject to this painful fear; for the same apostle, in speaking of such, says that they can exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And in another place, — that the Savior came

into the world that he might "deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The same writer said of himself that he "desired to depart, and be with Christ;" and in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he represents the Christian as "groaning in this tabernacle, being burdened," and "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Alfred's teacher soon learned from him his anxiety on this subject, and pointed out to him the only relief, which is the renewing of the heart by faith in Christ. He first endeavored to impress him more deeply with the necessity of a new heart, by showing him the great depravity of human nature. He proved to him, by the Scriptures, that men are by nature opposed to God, or, as St. Paul says, "are by nature the children of wrath," and that, if the sinner dies without a change of heart, he must be lost; as

the Savior said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

He explained to him how it was that nearly the whole world neglected religion, because, in the first place, all men are naturally sinful; and in the second place, they resist the Spirit of God, which strives to enlighten and reform them. "They cannot see the excellency of religion," said he, "because, refusing the light of God's Spirit, and being naturally depraved, they have no power of understanding spiritual things;" and here he quoted again from the Scriptures, where St. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This explanation of the sinfulness of human nature for the first time awoke the mind of Alfred to feel properly that he was a sinner. His mother had explained to him

these things before ; but then he had no personal interest in them, nor was his mind under that degree of divine influence which it now seemed to possess ; so that he was in the state which the text just quoted describes — “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.”

The thought that he was a lost sinner, and could be saved only by the grace of God, through faith in the Savior, was now like a new discovery, and it overwhelmed him with concern for himself. His spirit was troubled within him, so that he took pleasure in nothing. He felt that his whole soul was polluted by sin, and yet that God was “ of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.”

I cannot give to my young reader a true idea of the wretchedness of Alfred's mind at this time. He felt that there was a more than natural power operating upon his heart,

and showing to him "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." He was, for months, in the deepest despondency. If he had been more fully enlightened in the plan which God has revealed in the Scriptures for the salvation of men, he would not have suffered, perhaps, so much distress; for Satan, taking advantage of his ignorance, suggested to him many fears which helped to deepen and continue his despondency.

CHAPTER XIV.

Wrong views. Faith and works Prayer.

ONE of these suggestions was, that God would not have mercy upon him ; that either he had sinned too much, or was too insignificant a being for the great God to look upon with any compassion. This thought haunted him constantly. He even dreamed of it at night, and would sometimes wake up in agony from such dreams.

Now, if he had understood the Scriptures, he would have known that the Savior came into the world to "call sinners, and not the righteous," and that he blessed little children, and estimated the soul of more value than the whole world. He would have known also, that the very fact that he felt his sinfulness and danger, was a proof

of the presence of the good Spirit with him, and that the Spirit would not thus strive with him, were it not that it might save him.

Another source of perplexity to him was the incorrect idea he had of the atonement. He knew he must pray, but he did not understand that prayer was not the *source*, but only the *means* of salvation, and that in order to make it effectual, even as a means, it must be something more than mere form, however sincere; that it must be offered in faith; for Christ says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Now, although Alfred had heard, many times, of the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Savior, yet, like most children, he had never meditated on the meaning of such words, and had only a confused idea of what it was.

The merits of Christ alone can procure salvation for a sinner. Yet we must repent,

and pray, and "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," before his merits will avail for us. But the means we use are only the *conditions* of salvation, not the *cause*. We might use all the means possible, all our days, and yet never succeed, if Christ had not died for us.

If a benevolent gentleman meets a starving beggar in the streets, and offers him relief, would he compel him to take it, if he was so insolent as to refuse to extend his hand for it, and even abuse his benefactor? and, if he should accept of it, would he do right to go away and thank himself for it, boasting that it was altogether because he reached out his hand and accepted it, that he received it, and not because of the benevolence of the gentleman who gave it to him? So it is in the salvation of our souls. We must *reach out the hand*—we must use the means of grace, not only in seeking it, but also in "working it out with fear and trem-

bling ;" but yet we can never boast of our good works, as meriting it.

Does my young reader ask, Why, then, must we use means to be saved, if all the merit of our salvation belongs to Christ? Because God has seen it would be good for us to require of us some conditions; and any little child can see, at once, how profitable it must be to pray, and do all the other duties required by the Scriptures.

Now, little Alfred was mistaken much on this point: he thought that his prayers, and tears, and strict life, alone could save him; and, though he used these to the utmost, he felt not that he was delivered from his sins: hence the more he tried thus to save himself, the deeper he sank in despair; like a man in a quagmire, the more he labors to get out, the deeper he sinks.

Alfred was praying constantly. Sometimes he would pray nearly all night, by his

bed-side ; frequently, instead of going home to his meals, he would hide himself among the bushes, in the yard of the factory, and weep and pray. Even while at his work, or while walking the streets, he was almost always turning up his eyes towards heaven, and praying in his mind ; so that many people observed the strange motion of his eyes, and would ask him the reason of it.

He knew only the Lord's prayer, and was afraid to use any other words, lest he might make a mistake ; so that in all his praying he did but repeat over and over again this prayer.

He found, however, that his mind was not relieved ; the burden, under which he felt almost crushed, seemed only to increase ; this led him to pray but the more frequently for he thought the number of his prayers could alone procure him the mercy of God. In order to be more strict, he procured a piece of chalk, to mark down how many

prayers he said a day. He would resolve, each morning, to pray a fixed number of times during the day, and marked them down, so as not to come short. The factory where he worked was warmed in winter by heated air or steam in large iron pipes, extending from room to room. One of these pipes was usually white with the marks of Alfred's prayers.

It was thus that his very efforts to relieve his mind only wearied and depressed him the more. After praying all day, he would count the number of his prayers, and wonder why he had not yet experienced the change of heart, which his teacher had explained to him, and which he felt was the only thing that could give peace to his mind. Then he would conclude that there was no mercy for him, or else his numerous prayers would have been answered.

CHAPTER XV.

*The proper object of the Sunday school. Saving faith.
Its effects. Alfred becomes a Christian.*

MANY of the scholars in the Sabbath school which Alfred attended, were pious; for its teachers were faithful to their duty. These teachers understood, perhaps better than many who have charge of Sabbath schools, what is the proper object of the institution; namely, to lead little children directly to the Savior for His blessing, as those were brought to Him, whom he blessed in the days of his flesh.

The instruction of books was but an inferior part of their labors: they believed children could be little Christians in this life, as well as little angels in the spiritual world; and they aimed, beside teaching their under

standings the knowledge of Christ, at that higher knowledge of him, in the heart, which the Bible says is "eternal life."

Neither did they confine themselves to one school, in the vestry of the church, as is usual; but established them among the poor, in the suburbs. This was one of the latter kind, and was the fifth school then under the care of one church. Such kind of teachers could not but be successful: a number of children and youth were converted and united with the church; perhaps not much less than a hundred, if not more. Many of them are now pillars in that and neighboring churches, and a number have entered the ministry.

The school to which Alfred belonged was held in the second story of an old frame building, back in a narrow alley, in what was then almost the extreme northern part of Fourth Street. It was a considerable distance from the church, so that it was

difficult to go thither after the school was dismissed. The teachers, therefore, established a small meeting for the serious scholars, in a private house, not far from the neighborhood, where they spent an hour, or more, in prayer and religious conversation with them every Sabbath.

It was in one of these little meetings that Alfred first learned the idea of being saved by faith in the Savior. A number of the scholars were present, who were then in the enjoyment of religion. One of them, who sat next to him, was much engaged in prayer: he sat leaning forward, with his forehead resting on his hand, and his elbow on his knee; and his expressions of prayer, though in whispers, were so earnest as to attract the attention of Alfred. He caught a few sentences from him, and observed that this little boy did not confine himself to the Lord's prayer, but prayed that "God would, for Christ's sake, give him a new heart." and

"*make him right.*" Alfred, inclining his head in the same manner, adopted immediately this new way of praying. He began to repeat in his heart, with much earnestness, "Lord, make me right; Lord, make me right."

One of the teachers explained to them the character of the Savior, and of his office, as the "Mediator between God and man." Alfred seized at once the thought. Surely, said he to himself, if the Savior is willing to receive these little boys, he is also willing to receive me. He believed that Christ had died for him; and not only so, but that God was willing, for Christ's sake, to have mercy upon him; and not only this, but that God was willing to have mercy upon him even then.

It may well be supposed that after such fears, and erroneous and despairing views, as he had received before, his heart was overwhelmed with joy, when these new and more

correct opinions dawned upon his mind. He burst into tears, for gladness. He felt that he had indeed found "Christ the way, the truth, and the life." It was the Holy Spirit which enabled little Alfred thus to believe in the Savior; and that Spirit now changed his nature, enabled him to live right, and filled his heart with enjoyment; so that he soon knew, by experience, what the Bible means when it says that religion "is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER XVI.

Religion a source of cheerfulness. Objections answered.

A SINGULAR alteration in the whole frame of Alfred's mind followed the change mentioned in the last chapter. It has been said that his long afflictions had given a cast of sadness to his spirit; but this was not his natural disposition. Before his father died, he was remarkable for the cheerful buoyancy of his feelings. He was now delivered from the causes which depressed him, and the healthful tone of his mind returned. This, added to the enjoyment which religion gave him, made him an example of as perfect happiness, perhaps, as this life will allow.

Not only was his mouth now full of suitable words of prayer, but his heart was filled with its spirit; the spirit of prayer appeared

to be the very breathing of his soul. His countenance was kindled with joy, his conversation filled with a heavenly cheerfulness; so that he was more than ever beloved by all who knew him. He was humble, meek, prayerful; and believed now, what his mother used to say after she had experienced the same change, that God would bring good out of all their afflictions; for he thought, if it had not been for them, his mother and himself might never have learned the true nature of religion.

Many children think that to be pious is to be gloomy; but they misunderstand, very much, the nature of religion, or they would not suppose so. It was not the case with Alfred. He now felt the truth of what a poet says of Christians—

"The day glides sweetly o'er their heads,
Made up of innocence and love;
And soft and silent as the shades,
Their nightly minutes gently move."

There is certainly nothing in religion that can depress us. It takes nothing from us but sin, and sin only makes us unhappy. There are three views of religion, which perhaps take in its whole extent; and in neither of these can we find any thing to make the religious person unhappy. They are, first, its doctrines; second, its spirit; and third, its practice.

How blessed are its doctrines to the pious mind! They teach us the character of God, as our Heavenly Father. His providence, which never slumbers nor sleeps, but hears the young ravens when they cry, watches the sparrow when it falls, and counts the hairs of the heads of his saints. They teach us also the character of the Savior, who came into the world, that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and of the gift of the Holy Spirit, who abides in the world, to sanctify and comfort the children of God

And then, what joyful views do the doctrines of the Bible give us of *ourselves*! They tell us we are immortal; that even our bodies shall be raised from death; and that, when the very stars have faded away, we shall live and bloom in the presence of "the excellent glory" of God's throne, if we are Christians!

What is there also in the spirit of religion that can produce gloom? Do you think, my young reader, that any one can be miserable who "rejoices evermore, prays without ceasing, and in all things gives thanks?" The spirit of religion does away pride, ill tempers, envy, impatience, &c., and fills the heart with meekness, heavenly-mindedness, hope, peace, and joy. What folly, then, to think that we must be unhappy if we are Christians!

And certainly the simple and beautiful practices of religion — prayer, praise, "visiting the widows and the fatherless in their affliction," "walking humbly, dealing justly,

and loving mercy,"—most certainly these cannot make us wretched.

St. Paul tells us why the unconverted think religion would make them miserable. He says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Now, to a mind in its natural state, religion looks gloomy; and if such a mind should be compelled to cherish its pure spirit, and perform its holy duties, in its present state, perhaps nothing could make it more unhappy. But we must remember that the natural heart is changed and renewed by religion; and this change gives it new tastes, so that it loves the things which it once hated, and hates those which it loved. If those who are kept from religion by such fears would recollect this thought, they would find no reason for delay. A sick man turns away with disgust from the very luxuries which he would covet, were he in health.

Would my young reader, then, be happy? Let him read again the manner in which Alfred was converted, and go to some secret place to pray and call upon the name of the same all-merciful Savior. "They that seek me early shall find me."

CHAPTER XVII.

Alfred's thirst for knowledge. Reading. Beauties of the Bible. His improvement.

ONE effect of religion on Alfred was to excite a stronger thirst than ever for knowledge. It made him feel that every person has some talent given him, "to improve withal;" that he ought to set himself to work to find out what his was, and prepare himself for some usefulness in the world.

He was not more than twelve years old; yet he thought every moment of his time was precious, and all the leisure he could get was devoted to books. He rose at four o'clock in the morning, and staid up one hour later than usual in the evening, saving by this means a few hours every day. The only books he could procure were those of the

Sunday school library, and these perhaps were the best for him, being all religious, and therefore suited to his state of mind. Through the instructions of his teacher, he was now able to read well.

My young reader cannot imagine (unless he has experienced it) with what pleasure he read the little books of the library. He was as hungry for knowledge as a starving child could be for bread. Every book he read gave him new surprise and delight.

He obtained liberty to take his books into the factory; for his employers knew so well his faithfulness, that they did not fear he would neglect his work. The machine that Alfred worked upon, was called a "mule;" the part bearing the spindles is made to move of itself outward three or four feet, when it is pressed back, the same distance, by a workman, and again moves outward. Alfred's business was to piece, or mend, the broken threads between the spindles and the

rollers. This, of course, he could do only while the machine was pressed back, when he could reach the rollers; so that he had a few moments' leisure at every advance.

It was in these few and flying moments that he would read, seizing on a single sentence at a time. On the very iron pipe, on which he used to chalk the number of his prayers, he now tied his book, open, with a string running across the page and around the pipe.

He loved, most of all, to read the Bible. It was an inexhaustible source of pleasure to him, as well as instruction; for he found in it the excellences of all other books, as well as the knowledge of the only true God. It was delightful to him to transport himself, by this ancient book, back to the olden times, when he could, as it were, talk with the patriarchs and good men who were the "friends of God" — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. He thought he could almost see them living

in their tents, keeping their herds, wandering from land to land with their families, and offering sacrifices to God in the open air.

And then, what great legislators and warriors the Bible described to him; such as Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and David: what venerable prophets, through whom God spake to men, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, &c.!

His ardent mind loved, too, the poetry of the Bible: the lofty strains of Isaiah, "whose lips were touched with hallowed fire," would kindle his soul into a flame: he would weep over the lamentations of Jeremiah, and drink in serenity and joy from the psalms of David.

But the New Testament was particularly his delight. The character of the Savior and that of the affectionate John, the noble-hearted Peter and the lofty-minded and unwearied Paul;—these were his study and wonder. Surely, thought he, no other book in the world can afford so many surprising characters, such interesting history, such

beautiful and perfect poetry, as this; and besides all these, it tells us the only way to heaven

He not only applied himself to reading, but studied before going to work in the morning, arithmetic, and writing, and English grammar. All who knew him saw his improvement, and many predicted that he would yet thank God for his afflictions.

The teachers who conducted the children's meeting, which has been mentioned, soon called upon him to pray at the end of it; and, by and by, they requested him to address the children. In the course of time, he was called upon to address the whole school; and then was taken from school to school for the same purpose. His humility and intelligence struck all who saw him, and his simple addresses were useful in leading many children to the same Savior who had blessed him.

The teachers of schools in various parts

of the city took him to talk to their scholars ; and it was not long before he addressed schools in neighboring towns and villages : so that he soon obtained the name of the "little preacher." His humility seemed rather to increase under these circumstances ; for he felt that it was the grace of God only which had made him what he was ; and the thought that he, who was a poor little orphan boy, and who had lived, for years, just above starvation, was now acknowledged as a child of God, and blessed with the kind attentions of Christians, would affect him to tears. He was very modest in his natural disposition, and could only be persuaded to speak to the children of the schools by the urgent requests of the teachers, and a strong desire of doing them good.

CHAPTER XVIII

Industry always successful. Great examples

ALFRED remained in the cotton factory more than a year after the death of his mother, during which time he made great progress in his books, though unassisted by any one. He joined the church soon after his conversion. This introduced him to many friends, who soon loved him much, and felt interested to relieve him from his lowly circumstances. They took him from the cotton factory, and paid his board in a pious family until they could place him in better business.

At the same time, a Christian gentleman assisted him in studying English grammar, arithmetic, &c. He improved so rapidly as to be able soon to enter a bookstore as clerk.

Here he had a good opportunity of studying. Every leisure hour was seized upon for this purpose. He did not read every book that happened first to come to hand, but he studied, and studied by a plan. He found he could do nothing successfully but by a system.

By thus improving every opportunity, he was soon quite familiar with geography, grammar, arithmetic, book-keeping, and history, besides a great amount of reading in biography, poetry, and religion. But with all his success, he was frequently discouraged, for he had but just learned enough to see how ignorant he was; and perhaps he was a little too much in haste to learn. He sometimes despaired of ever knowing much; but yet he was determined to struggle hard, and do the best he could.

How interesting is it to see a poor boy, after enduring, so nobly, the storms of affliction, gathering strength, as it were, from

his trials, and, leaving the idle sports of youth, consecrate himself to God, and then to the improvement of his mind!

Such industry and perseverance cannot fail of success. However humble in life a boy may be, if he has the favor of God, and is industrious and persevering, he will meet with more or less success. The history of learned men shows that intellectual greatness is chiefly found among those in poverty and obscurity. Metastasio, an Italian poet, was a friendless boy, carrying his verses through the streets. He afterwards became one of the greatest ornaments of Italian literature. Ferguson, in early life, was a shepherd's boy, but raised himself to the honor of the first astronomer of his times. Herschel, who has left his name on one of the worlds of heaven, was a soldier, and studied astronomy while on guard as a sentinel, at night. Franklin, a printer's boy, whose father was a tallow-chandler, became one of

the greatest philosophers and statesmen of modern times. The learned Dr. Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester, England, could not be kept by his poor parents at school longer than to learn to read and write, and obtained his education by walking to Oxford and getting employment in the kitchen of one of its colleges. Linnæus, the great botanist, was an apprentice to a poor shoemaker; and Cuvier, the greatest naturalist the world has ever had, was the son of a pensioned soldier, and a charity scholar at school. The list might be extended much farther. Indeed, all whose names are great in science or literature have thus been diamonds found in the earth—pearls brought up from the depth of obscurity.

If, then, a poor and ignorant boy reads the history of Alfred, let him not be discouraged, but let him give himself to God, and then, like him, apply to his books in all his leisure hours.

While in the bookstore, Alfred continued to spend his Sundays in attending the Sabbath school. He likewise frequently addressed the children of different schools in and out of the city. It was on one of these occasions that he delivered the address, at Chester, noticed in the newspapers, which the author has mentioned as the first information he met with respecting him on his return from a foreign land.

Soon after, he was requested to visit, on Sunday, a public institution of benevolence, in Philadelphia, established for the benefit of children and youth. A number of gentlemen of the city were present, and heard his address. These gentlemen were so interested for his welfare, that they made up a sum of money, and gave it into the hands of a friend of Alfred, for his education. He was sent to an academy in New England before the writer arrived in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XIX.

Alfred at school. Special answer to prayer.

WE have thus far traced this little history, from the time of the author's introduction to Mr. Stitson's family to his departure from the country; and, secondly, during his absence. The second part he has related on the undoubted testimony of others. He can now go on with further circumstances of Alfred's life from personal knowledge, and will do so as briefly as possible.

He was agreeably situated in New England. The village where he attended school is beautifully located, being in a fine hilly part of the country, and surrounded with elegant landscapes and good farms.

While there, he frequently addressed public assemblies in many of the neighbor-

ing villages, and with much usefulness. Many persons in those parts consider him the instrument, under God, of their salvation. In many places, the interest to hear him was so great, that the windows of the churches were taken out, in order that the crowds who could not get in might hear outside. After staying some time in this place, where his uncommon talents and amiable disposition gained for him the love of all who knew him, he left for college; but before he departed, the church conferred upon him authority to preach the gospel, though he was now but fifteen years old.

While he was in college, he preached in all the neighboring villages, and the same effects followed his labors. He was industrious in his studies, rising early and studying systematically; so that he not only accomplished the customary tasks, but nearly doubled them. As has been said, his early trials and toils had given him habits of

endurance and industry, which were now of great advantage to him. Indolence and discouragement never showed themselves in his conduct; but labor was sweet to him; and the harder his task the more spirit he manifested in performing it.

Alfred loved prayer. He had fixed hours in the day for this duty, and no book nor company were ever allowed to interfere with it. His absent brother and sisters were particularly remembered in these sacred hours. He believed that God designed their spiritual good, in the severe afflictions through which they had passed. This had already been proved in respect to his mother and himself, and he doubted not it would be the case with the rest of his family. Thus was he led to pray for them the more confidently. He remembered each of them in all his regular prayers; but resolved to pray for the oldest particularly, until she should be converted, and then the next, &c., until the

three should unite with him in the service of their Heavenly Father.

One evening, after thus praying for his oldest sister with great earnestness, he went to the post-office, and found a letter from her, which informed him of her union with the church of Christ, on the preceding Sabbath.

On opening this letter in his room, he fell upon his knees, and thanked God, with tears, for this merciful answer of his unworthy prayers. He was convinced now, more than ever, of the truth of the doctrine of a Divine Providence, and that the afflictions which it had allowed his family to suffer, were all sent in infinite wisdom for their spiritual good. His mother, himself, and his eldest sister, had already been led to the experience of the highest of all blessings, whilst it was altogether probable that they would have lived and died without the "one thing needful," if they had not been af-

flicted. "Before I was afflicted," said David, "I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

The next object of Alfred's special prayers was his brother. The conversion of his sister seemed to him such a remarkable answer to prayer, that he did not doubt God would answer a second time, though the circumstances of his brother were such as hardly to admit this hope; for he lived in a section of the country where he was at least seven miles from any church, and the family with whom he resided, though of the strictest moral habits, and very kind to him, appeared not to feel the value of his soul.

Yet Alfred knew that the Spirit of God could reach his heart, even without human instrumentality, if it were necessary. He not only prayed particularly for him, at his usual hours of prayer, but set apart a new time each day for this single purpose. He likewise wrote many letters to his brother,

all of which were chiefly taken up in explaining and enforcing the importance of religion. These letters were written in the fulness of his heart, and show what a strong hold religion had obtained on his feelings. Here is one of them.

CHAPTER XX.

Objections to early religion answered.

ALFRED'S LETTER TO HIS BROTHER.

My dear brother,

Do not grow tired of my frequent letters. I love you more since we have been separated than I did before, and my love for you makes me write in the manner I do. I pray for you with earnestness and tears, very often. I have found that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; and O, I would have you, my dear brother, to walk in these same delightful paths, which grow brighter and brighter, even unto the perfect day.

I know that the adversary of our spirits will suggest many objections to your mind

against the duty of giving your young heart immediately to your Heavenly Father ; but, if you could conceive, for one moment, the blessedness of true, living religion in the heart, these objections would vanish like the light mist beneath the noon-day sun.

Perhaps you think, as many young people do, that you have time enough in the future to attend to religion, without troubling yourself now with it. But do you not know, my dear brother, that this is all conjecture ? And do you not even know that there are not more probabilities for it than against it ? More die young than in advanced years ; and the tombs in every burial-ground answer this objection.

Do you say that religion will make you gloomy ? It is false ; and the reason why many think so is because they judge of it from their present wicked hearts, which cannot appreciate its excellence ; for it "is spiritually discerned." You never knew a-

Christian to say so. No, my brother, it is not gloomy; its spirit is cheerful, joyful, and hopeful. True Christians "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." They need not dread even death, but "desire to depart, and be with Christ." "For they know that if the earthly house of their tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Can such a person be miserable?

When I commenced the service of the Savior, I felt that I entered upon a new existence. Sin had afflicted my soul with great wretchedness; but the Spirit of God raised me to spiritual health, and I felt like one who, after having been confined to a dreary sick room, languishing with pain, and haunted with the expectation of death, finds himself restored to all the feelings of health, and goes forth, from his gloomy chamber, on a beautiful day of spring, when the soft

breeze kisses his pale cheek, the flowers smile beneath his feet, the birds sing for joy in the trees around him, and the heavens shine with brightness above him. Every thing looked pleasant and good to me, but the sins of men, and my heart overflowed with joyfulness.

It may be, my dear brother, that you expect, by and by, to have feelings more suitable for religion—that you will grow better, and therefore be more fitted to become a Christian. This also is a false impression; for your heart will grow harder with delay. Even if you should commit no more open sins, yet delay, itself, would be a constant sin; and certainly you cannot make yourself better by sinning. Suppose a man, living on the side of a mountain, wished to ascend to its top, would it be of any advantage to him first to go down to its base?

If you desire religion now, you need not

wait for the Spirit of God, for that desire proves that the Spirit already operates upon your mind. You never would have such a desire without the Divine Spirit. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Many people pretend to be waiting for the influences of God's Spirit, while they are refusing to give heed to the suggestions which the Spirit is actually making to their minds; like a person who is accustomed to sit in a room where there is a clock: the clock may strike the hour, and he not notice it. If we would but turn our thoughts in upon our own hearts, we should not fail to find these reasons and influences to make us feel, and excite us to religion.

No opportunity can ever be better for you than the present. Your sins are increasing, your heart hardening, and your dying hour approaching every day. Stop not, then, my brother. Fly to the foot of

the Savior's cross, and, with tears and a broken heart, pray God, for his Son's sake, to have mercy upon you. You have a dear mother in heaven, and a sister and brother on the way thither; will you be left behind? No; you need not — you will not.

CHAPTER XXI.

*Another answer to prayer. Scene in the old home
stead.*

THE prayers and letters of Alfred were not unavailing for his brother: he began to reflect, and reflection deepened his interest on the subjects about which Alfred wrote.

If men would but reflect on the excellences of religion, they would not be so indifferent to it. But, alas! they will not pause to think, or it would appear to them as an angel of kindness and loveliness, sent down from heaven, to bless, with its presence, our pilgrimage of tears; to encourage us in the hour of despondency; to sanctify our joys; to relieve our sorrows; to bend over us with tenderness and hope, when on the sick bed; to embosom and bear us away

to heaven, in its arms, in the dark hour of death.

Reflection led the brother of Alfred thus to view it; and soon he sent a letter, in which he informed him of his determination to be a Christian, and that he walked every Sabbath seven miles to attend the nearest church.

Alfred was now, more than ever, confirmed in the promises which God has given to prayer. He not only prayed for the conversion of his brother, but went so far as to implore God to provide him the means of education, and then call him out into His vineyard, to preach the "everlasting gospel" to the heathen.

After several months, he received another letter, dated at the house of the minister of the church just mentioned, stating that his brother had given up his business, and was then residing with him for the purpose of preparing to enter college, with the design

of devoting himself to the missionary work.

How remarkably were the strongest expectations of Alfred fulfilled by this wonderful change in the circumstances of his brother! This striking case furnished him with more satisfactory proof of the existence of God, and the efficacy of prayer, than all the metaphysical arguments which the human mind could produce.

Again he thought of his early afflictions, and of all the temporal circumstances in the history of his family. He now felt most grateful for them, as the means which finally led them to the knowledge and experience of religion. With a full heart he would frequently say, in the language of David, "It is good that I have been afflicted." But one of the family still remained,—his youngest sister; and she became the next object of his supplications, in the additional time which he had set apart daily for prayer

On completing his studies, Alfred prepared to return to Philadelphia; but started first to visit the birthplace of his father, and some of the most interesting scenes in New England, doubting that he would ever again be so near them, after returning to his home. He arrived, late on Saturday, in the town of his father, and immediately made arrangements with the minister of the place to preach for him the next day.

It was at his church that the relatives of Alfred, who still remained, attended the worship of God. The word had been spread around, of his arrival, and after the service he was introduced to some twenty persons who were more or less related to him. With one of them, the widow of one of his father's brothers, he was taken to the old family residence. Most of the others went thither with him.

Soon after their arrival at the house, two miniatures were brought from another room

for his examination. The family gathered around him. He gazed at the pictures a moment, and, with the tear starting in his eye, recognized in one of them his mother. The other was the likeness of his father; but, being taken in his earlier days, his features were not so readily recalled.

They were sent to these friends at the time of their marriage. When Alfred entered the house, he knew not of their existence. Alfred sat with the miniatures in his hand, and related the history of his family. As he detailed their afflictions, the tears trickled down the tender cheek of childhood and the furrowed face of age; and when he recounted the wonderful manner in which Providence had provided for the children, and had led them to the knowledge of God, the half-suppressed whisper of gratitude murmured among the company.

CHAPTER XXII.

Providence. Grateful meeting. Benevolence. Old acquaintances.

AFTER leaving his friends, Alfred visited many other places in New England, and spent a Sabbath in one of our sea-coast cities, where he likewise preached.

In this city existed a church which had been closed for a few years. Its location was unfavorable for gathering a congregation, and it had been occupied successively by four denominations of Christians, without success. Two pious gentlemen had been endeavoring, for some time, to get up an interest again for it. They heard Alfred preach, and, learning that he had finished his studies and was about to return home, they proposed to him to tarry in the city,

and pledged themselves to have the deserted church purchased for him. He had learned by experience to place confidence in the guidings of an overruling Providence, and, after suitable reflection, consented.

This was another proof of the merciful care of God towards him. "When father and mother forsook him, He took him up." He gave him the means of religious instruction, placed him among his own children, raised up friends to provide his education, conducted him in health through his studies, and now pointed him to a place of labor in his vineyard. He had, indeed, been able to say, at the close of each year, since the death of his mother, that it was better than the one preceding; and now the prospect of usefulness and happiness seemed to open brighter than ever before him.

Before entering upon his labors, he departed to visit his friends in Philadelphia.

He was there introduced personally to all those benefactors who had sustained him at school. His brother and sisters met him there also. They assembled at the house of Mrs. Douglas, the benevolent lady who took charge of them at the decease of their mother. They all knelt down, and Alfred offered, with a full heart, their thanksgiving to God. Tears of gratitude flowed down all their cheeks. How changed were their circumstances! Those poor little children, who, a few years before, were reduced almost to starvation; who were friendless, and whose only parent was sinking into the grave, without leaving any apparent hope for them, — met now in the enjoyment of every blessing which was necessary for their happiness. The three eldest were members of the Christian church; one of them a minister of the gospel; another preparing to be one; they were surrounded with friends; the future was full of hope to them; sorrow

and sighing had flown, and all tears, save those of joy and gratitude, were wiped away.

The eye of Mrs. Douglas could not but kindle with gladness at the recollection of having been instrumental, to some extent, in the happiness of these orphans. She wept with them, for joy.

O, there is a serene sense of pleasure produced by the consciousness of having relieved the woes of an afflicted fellow-being which is next desirable to the smile of heaven — a joy far more enviable than the exultation of the victor, marching in triumph from the field of blood, or the satisfaction of the monarch, enthroned with the security of power. The heart of Howard, no doubt, experienced purer bliss, while sacrificing his fortune, his time, his health, and finally his life, in traversing Europe, mingling with its wretchedness, wiping the tear of agony from the cheek of the dying prisoner, in an at-

mosphere filled with pestilence and death,— than did Napoleon, when he swept over the same continent in the chariot of triumph, with the crowns and sceptres of its kings strown in his course.

Alfred preached in the church to which belonged the Sunday school which he had attended. The house was crowded, and many of his hearers were his former Sabbath school-mates. Since his conversion, a large number of them had grown up to manhood, and were now useful members in that and other churches.

While preaching, two of them sat with him in the pulpit, who had entered the ministry during his absence; and, on hearing of his return, came from neighboring towns where they preached, to visit him. When he descended the pulpit, some scores pressed around to shake his hand, most of whom were the fruits of the same revival in the Sabbath school.

He visited many of the places dear to his memory, while in Philadelphia; such as the house where his mother died—her grave—the building in which the Sabbath school was formerly held, which was now an old shattered and deserted shell, and the lot of ground which was the scene of the author's first acquaintance with the family

CHAPTER XXIII.

The results. Conclusion.

MANY interesting facts must be omitted from this narrative, or it will grow too long for the patience of my young reader. We therefore hasten to its conclusion.

Alfred returned to New England, and commenced his labors as a pastor. Notwithstanding the failure of other attempts in the same place, this succeeded: in a short time the house was filled with hearers; and at the end of two years, upwards of two hundred names were on the record of the church, the most of whom were the fruits of his labors. A prosperous Sabbath school was established in the vestry, and all the usual

institutions of Christian benevolence and usefulness put in operation.*

His brother, assisted by friends, entered college, to prepare himself for the ministry, with the design of becoming a missionary to the heathen.

The aged lady, with whom the eldest sister resided, died, and left her some property. She returned to Philadelphia, where she married a pious gentleman, an influential lay officer of one of the churches of that city.

His youngest sister continued with her foster-mother. He still observed the special time of prayer for her daily, with strong confidence, that, sooner or later, God would answer him.

The property also, which has been mentioned as left by his father, and had been

* It is now an active and influential church, though its first youthful pastor has gone, as a missionary, to carry "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" to other lands.

rendered unavailing to them, by fraud or mismanagement, was restored, and, indeed, every blessing which could be considered necessary for their happiness was provided for them.

This little history, my young reader, is an example of that good Providence which numbers the hairs of our heads. The same Providence watches over you; and if you will devote yourself to God, as Alfred did, His blessing shall attend you also. Learn likewise from it not to murmur at afflictions, or repine if others seem more prospered than you. Our sufferings are frequently our greatest blessings; and if we could see as God sees, we should desire the very trials He sends us. Alfred would frequently, in after life, utter with emphasis the language of a poet, who says, —

“ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

" His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet will be the flower

" Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

