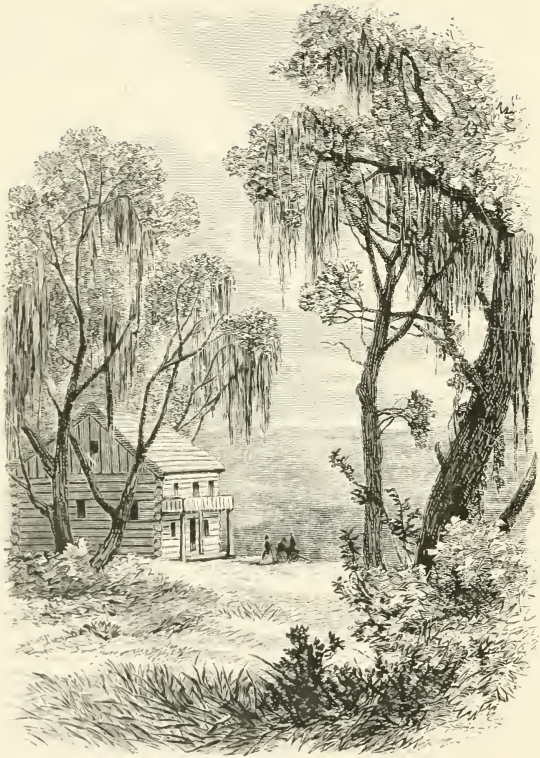


THE PRAIRIE HOME.

OAK-MOT.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM M. BAKER,

PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT ZANESVILLE, OHIO.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
No. 821 CHESTNUT STREET.

WESTCOTT & THOMSON,
Stereotypers, Philada.

CONTENTS.

OAK-MOT.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH WE TRY TO MAKE KNOWN TO YOU THE FRIENDS AT OAK-MOT.

"BEAUTIFUL! beautiful! I never saw anything more perfectly beautiful than this, even in my dreams!" If you only knew Egeria as well as we do, you would know it was she, of all the young people, who said that, without being told so.

"Think so? I don't see anything particularly beautiful in it—about twenty miles of grass. I dare say if I loved grass as much as do those cows, I would be delighted too!" It was Edward, of course, who had that to say—*that* you might have known if blindfolded!

"Listen! They do think the world of it, the cattle; what do you call them cows for? See! every now and then one or the other stops eating away for dear life, lifts up its head and cries

mo-o-o-o! which means beautiful! Yonder is one old red fellow whose feelings are too much for him altogether. Listen, mo-o-o-o! mo-o-ach! That means glorious! glorious!" Hubert, of course. And the rest had to laugh, even Edward the Great, not so much at what he said as at his funny way of saying it. Egeria had said one day it wasn't blood that ran in Hubert's veins, it was fun only; and added, what was far from being kind, that for her part she "was tired to death of it."

The only thing Prosy did was to put away Adry's thin hair from his forehead, the wind blew so, and half whisper to him,

"How do you like it, Adry?"

Only the words no more help you to understand all of Prosy's kind heart in them, than do Hubert's all the fun he means. That is the trouble. If you will please take the people here at Oak-Mot as living, breathing, everyday sort of people, not one of them without some virtues and many defects, just like all other people from Adam down.

"Very much, Prosy, very much," is all that Adry says; and he says that slowly and painfully, brightening up the moment Prosy spoke and trying to look around him with new interest.

"Very much, indeed," he added with more colour in his poor pale face.

On the whole, I am glad you were not there on the top of the hill with them that morning, to see the swift look Edward Beach gave his sick brother Adry as he feebly spoke the words. Even that clear, bright morning, with all that lovely scenery around him for the first time, could not keep Edward from doing that.

Not that it hurt Adry; with Prosy, by far his favourite sister, beside him, it was little attention he gave to any one else, even to his father or mother. Such a look as that hurt the one who gave it far more than it could have done Adry, even if Adry had seen it. It is like firing a musket that kicks to give any one an evil blow, or word, or even look; it is the one who gives it who is always hurt the most. Remember the last time you were guilty of such a thing, how badly you felt! and it will be so as long as you live.

You see, Adry was the eldest of all the children. Not that he was a child, either. Just one week before the Beach family reached their new home at Oak-Mot, Adry was twenty-four years old, though you would never have dreamed it to have looked at him; not, at least, when he sat in his

wheeled chair. Then, with his fair and beardless face, childlike eyes and ways and words, you would puzzle yourself to know whether he were twelve or twenty. In fact, were it not for his size, as he sat he might be only six or eight years old for what you knew—might as likely be a girl, with his long light hair and small white hands, if it were not for the boy's—or rather man's—clothing which he wore. None of the family liked strangers to see him except when seated in the wheeled chair, which had been made long, long ago expressly for him, because when he walked about he was so tall and stooped and feeble that he looked like a very old and infirm man. You might miss the round, rosy face of his sister Prosy from beside him as he sat in his chair in his own special corner of the fireside in winter, or on the front porch in summer—even out in the yard under some shady tree. As to his seat at table and during family worship, none of all the family could hardly remember the time when Prosy did not sit beside her afflicted brother. At the table it was this sister, of all these, who made it her care to help him to his food, often having to cut it up on his plate for him, to arrange his napkin and the like. As to family worship, Edward in his heart despised poor

Adry for it; the suffering creature made it the one grand event of the morning and of the evening. Strange to say, in his inmost heart Edward "could not endure," as he said to himself, the way in which Adry "made an idol of his old Bible, holding it so carefully and hugging it up to his bosom, as if it was the only Bible in the world!" What made it worse was this: There was one specially large Bible, the largest in the house, which Adry had looked upon, for a great many years now, as being his own personal property. If it had been full of pictures, or had been bound in bright binding with gilded edges, one could have understood why, in his weak condition of body and mind, he would have preferred it to any other. But it had not one picture in it from one end to the other, nor a particle of red morocco nor gilt. It was simply a huge Bible, in good, clear type, with plain brown lids. All agreed it was a pity poor Adry would not so much as look at any other Bible than that, it was so very much too large and heavy for his thin arms and small, weak hands. But no other Bible—no other book in all the world, for that matter—did he ever care to own or to use. It was to him something sacred indeed—more like a living thing, in fact, than a book. He could not

endure that any one of the household should touch it, Edward least of all: excepting Prosy, of course. In this, as in everything else, Prosy was the one exception. Only Sister Prosy could find the place for him at family worship or at any other time. That was one reason she always had her seat beside her afflicted brother.

Yes, you might miss this sister from his side when he was seated asleep in his chair, or looking dreamily around, or reading slowly to himself in that tone which had become as familiar to the family, from long hearing it, as the cooing of Cassandra, the wood dove, in its cage, the barking of Sour, the big watch dog, the steady ticking of the clock over the fire-place, or any other of the household sounds. Dearly as she loved her brother—poor fellow! at once the oldest and youngest child of the family—Prosy had her hundred little duties to perform, and only from time to time could be with Adry.

When he was seated, that is. Very different when he walked. The truth is, there was nothing poor Adry hated more than to walk, his feeble limbs trembled under him so. Yet it was absolutely necessary that he should take some exercise of the kind every morning and every afternoon.

If he did not walk some, as much as he could be got to do every day, he would become so—Dr. Hildon had told them years ago—that he would be bowed into a half circle from long sitting, and would at last not be able to walk at all, but would have to be carried about in his chair, and finally in the arms of some one altogether.

That walk of Adry's, about sunrise and sunset every day the year around, was a something that had to be attended to as regularly as breakfast and supper. You would have supposed, of all the children at least, that Edward would have been the one to keep his brother at such times. If Adry was the eldest, he was the next—nearly eighteen years old when they settled at Oak-Mot. Egeria, sixteen years old, came next; Prosy, fourteen or so; then Hubert, twelve. As to Bexy and Lotty, the twins, they were only some five or six years of age as yet. Hubert was strong enough—yes, and willing enough, too, as far as that goes—but then he was constantly forgetting himself when walking with Adry, and hurried his brother along much faster than he was able to go; Hubert's plan being to get done with the set task of walking the two hundred yards one hundred times every morning, and seventy-five times every afternoon, as

soon as possible. Besides, he was "so full of his fun" that he could not for his life—or, at least, did not for his brother—fail to be playing some practical joke at every turn of the walk, either with Sour, who was always at his heels, or even with poor Adry himself. One or two severe falls he had unintentionally given Adry had sobered him for the time, but it was a very short time.

"Might as well try and teach a squirrel to behave!" old Delphy had said, as indignant as she could bring herself to be with Hubert, as they should have called him—with Huby, as they unfortunately did call him, his full name being much the most comely. So that it all came upon Prosy at last. It was rather solemn exercise for her to take, but she may have owed her full and rosy health to those walks morning and evening; who knows? Certainly it was the perpetual exercise of her kindness to Adry that made her by far the best-humoured of the whole household.

Going back to Edward: of all these he should have been the one to have brought most comfort to Adry in every way. Bexy and Lotty were more so. Of all he was the very least! The only way to do is for us to hide nothing in regard to a single member of the home at Oak-Mot as we go along,

and you will learn, only too soon, that, with many noble qualities, Edward was of a scornful, discontented spirit. The fact is, he could not endure Adry.

Even on that beautiful morning when the young people stood together on the highest ground near their new home, looking abroad over the rolling prairie, waving in billows of grass to the horizon beneath the breeze that rarely failed to blow there from some quarter the year around—even there and then poor Adry, who had come with them, sometimes walking as well as he could, sometimes drawn in his wheeled chair, was a blot upon the scene to Edward.

"To think that he might have been by this time a rich man, a doctor, lawyer, member of the legislature, almost anything! and just look at him! Poor, miserable object! a grown man and sitting in his chair there like a little boy, or, rather, like a poor, puny little girl! and all day long the same poor creature! Humph! all the year long, for that matter. Why he may live till he is near a hundred years old, for what I can see, dozing in that chair of his, tottering about over the place, a burden, a shame and a disgrace to the family! and when father and mother are dead, I suppose I will have to—"

It was all said to himself. Yet Edward, who was looking bitterly at Adry as he thought all this over for the hundredth and thousandth time, raised his eyes to see Prosy looking so sorrowfully at him, and blushed and turned away.

"I never imagined for a moment I could like this wild country," Egeria was saying. "It is a new State, I should think! There was a kind of romance in pa's losing all his money and having to come out West. It is like what I've read about a thousand times. As to the people we left, except Aurelia Jones, I don't care a cent for any of them. And this prairie is a perfect romance. Look how it rolls away until you can hardly tell where the grass ends and the sky begins. It must be fifty miles to the horizon at least. And do look at those mots of timber, as Uncle Long calls them. Oak-Mot! What a queer name for one's place! But how beautiful they are, those groups of timber! See what lovely shadows they cast on the grass! I suppose it is because the air is so clear, but everything is so bright somehow! And all round it is the same—prairie, prairie all around and around!"

"You are so fond of poetry, Egy, why don't you say our mot of timber is an island in the sea, those other mots are other islands, the grass is the

blue or green water? It is beautiful!" continued Hubert. "Look at the colour of the deep grass, continually changing as it blows before this wind, the shadows of the clouds flying over the whole. I never saw anything prettier in all my life. I believe even *I* could write poetry about it."

"Beautiful poetry it would be!" said Edward and Egeria, almost in a breath.

"I don't pretend to write really good poetry," Egeria added; "at least not as good as Mrs. Hemans or Mrs. Browning, but I may some day. Just as soon as breakfast is over I intend to try. And I am eager to write to Aurelia. I have got all my journal to write off for her too, and—"

"Oh, do hush, Egy," interrupted Hubert, who had little reverence for his sister's abilities; "how does it make *you* feel, Prosy? Give us out a line or two; Eddy, here, will raise the tune, and we will all sing. Or suppose *you* try it, Adry. Come, wake up; let us hear what you think, old gentleman!" and Prosy who had, as matter of course, placed herself on that side of Adry's chair where Hubert stood, put aside the stalk of grass a yard long with which the latter was trying to tickle Adry's ear.

"Don't you feel too cold, Adry?" she said, at

the same time pulling the invalid's coat more about his breast. "The poetry is all written already," she added. "Don't you remember?—

> 'Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
> Stand dressed in living green—'"

But Hubert took it from her lips and sang the rest of the verse—

> "So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
> While Jordan rolled between,"

to the tune he had heard from infancy; one-third serious, but two-thirds in fun.

"Go home to prayers," said Adry at this point, looking up to his special sister.

"That is the truth! Adry is the most thoughtful one of us all!" said that sister, immediately, and with her motherly way. "Try and walk, Adry, a little bit. It will do you so much good. That's right; put your hand on my shoulder. Hubert will draw your chair. Not behind us, before us, Huby; you might strike against Adry. Come, Egy, come Eddy. Adry is right; it must be time for prayers," Prosy said, as she turned toward home, with her brother tottering along by his usual assistant.

"I do solemnly believe the poor fellow has only

those two ideas in his head—his big Bible and prayers!" said Edward, as he walked behind the two with his other sister.

"One other idea," said Hubert.

"What is that?" asked Egeria, somewhat doubtingly.

"And I do believe it is more to him than Bible or prayers," Hubert added.

"Oh, you mean Prosy," exclaimed Egeria, with a passing pang of conscience.

"Yes. Prosy is a dear, good, old-woman-like little body," the sister continued, somewhat with the air of a lady of sixty; for the three had fallen a good deal behind the others as they walked home.

"Only she is *so* Prosy, you know!" she added, as if in self-defence.

"And Miss Egeria Angelina Beach is so extremely po-et-i-cal!" said Hubert, mincing the words with mock politeness as he drew the wheeled chair after him.

"Come! Prosy is the best of us all, if she is so slow and round and fat and red. She's a perfect little angel, all except the wings and the singing! At least, she's vastly better than we three put together, and we all know it. Come, now!"

It was Hubert who said it. But he might as

well have been silent. Egeria was thinking of what she would write after breakfast. As to Edward the Great, he was pulling up the long blades of grass as he walked, but his head was on his breast and he was thinking to himself—

"Yes, and how bad it will look when the people around here call to see us. I know exactly what they will say: 'They've got a crazy son!' Yes, I do wish he was dead!" he added to himself, savagely, after a pause.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH EGERIA WRITES TO AURELIA JONES.

IT would have been no worse, in the end, for Aurelia, the far-away friend of Egeria, if this latter could have been in not quite so great a hurry to write her letter the moment breakfast was over.

"If you need me to help you, I can put off my writing, mamma," she had said, as the family arose from the table. But then it is all in the way you say a thing. To know exactly what a person's words really mean you must see the face of the person speaking, hear the tones of voice used. What Egeria actually meant was—

"I suppose if I must stop from my writing to help you about this hateful washing up of the cups and saucers, why I *must*, that is all!" and you might as well speak out what you really mean at once. Only God can read the heart. Yet God has given us all the power to read a good deal of the heart in the eyes and tones of people, even when their words are just the opposite. In any case, God sees you all the time exactly as you are.

"No, Egeria," Mrs. Beach had replied, "you are so full of all you have to tell Aurelia that you had better write it out and be done with it. Besides, Prosy can help me as soon as she has got Adry settled for the morning."

And so Egeria sat down among all the confusion near the window, with as much to-do as a hen arranging herself on her nest, to write. She had her own writing desk, kept under solemn lock and key, the latter worn on her watch chain. In fact, all of the family, Hubert especially, knew that Egy's writing desk was her weakest point. There was nothing which delighted him more than to hide it while they were on the journey to Oak-Mot, and terrify his sister into the belief that it was left behind. Dozens of times she had found it in its place, but bottom upwards, well knowing whom she had to thank for that. It was only because of his father's express command that Hubert had, of late, let the desk alone. It consoled him that he had so many other ways left of teasing her.

"Darwin says in his books that we are all descended from monkeys," Edward had remarked at the dinner table one day. "Every time I see Hubert at his pranks I think Darwin must be right. He only lacks a tail."

"Better be a monkey than a cockatoo, Mr. Edward," Hubert had replied. "Besides, papa says that goose of a philosopher goes back of the monkey and thinks we all began by being oysters. Any body can see that is very probable just by looking at Prosy!" And none of them could help laughing, for Prosy was such a squab of a round fat, silent little body. Only, she never "got mad," as the children styled it, at anything they said of her; and that everybody in the world who knew her loved her was well known.

"You can write away in peace till I come back," Hubert had told his sister through the window. "Pa, Edward and I are off to take a ride over the prairie. Give my condolences to Aurelia that she has to read your wearisome letters. Good-bye." Now, what a crochet needle is to some girls her pen was to Egeria; she was never happier than when she had it in hand, writing, writing hour after hour. The crochet work could be put to some use—her written pages to very little. As her love for it was so great her parents silently yielded to it. It was somewhat uncommon in girls, yet they hoped Egeria was really pious—she had long ago united with the church—though very far from being a perfect Christian, and they trusted that

Providence might be intending some use, for the good of others, by the talent, or at least passion, for writing it had given her.

Generally, it is very rude to do so, yet in this case we will take the liberty of looking over Egeria's shoulder as she writes. One thing must be said in her favour—she wrote a beautiful hand; as great an accomplishment in a girl as being able to play beautifully upon the piano, though few think so.

OAK-MOT, TEXAS,
April 2d, 1867.

MY DEAR, DEAR, DEAREST AURELIA:

I know you are dying to hear from me, if not already dead and buried because you have not heard before! But it was impossible to write on the road here. I was knocked about like a ball all the time. I hope you have not forgotten that miserable, miserable day we parted in my state-room on that odious steamboat. I tried fifty times to write to you, if I did once, but the boat shook so all the time that if it had been my last will I could not have written it. And I was in a perfect agony all the time lest we should be blown up! There must have been five thousand people killed on that boat which blew up the week before we went down the river! But we had a very fine boat, too. I do not suppose there ever was a larger or finer boat in all the world! I suppose there could not have been less than three hundred servants! If the Empress of

France has a finer dinner than we had every day I am mistaken—nothing that any human being ever heard of to eat but we had it! Only the horrid, horrid whistle! It seemed to me it could be heard fifty miles easily. It almost killed mamma. The first time it blew we were on the hurricane deck with Lotty and Bexy; when it went off they screamed as if they would die on the spot. The only one who did not mind it was dear, good, stupid Prosy. So that Adry was not hurt by it, little *she* cared.

As to that poor Adry! *you* can feel for your unhappy friend, Aurelia—can imagine what a shame and disgrace and distress he is to us! Edward hates it so, too! To think that he will always be the same if he lives to be five hundred years old! Oh it makes me so wretched! You would think I would get used to it, but I never, never can! That and pa's dreadful misfortunes make me the most miserable creature alive!

Oh you cannot tell how perfectly happy I was when we reached New Orleans! Almost wild with delight! We reached there late in the afternoon. The levee, as they call the wharf, must be at least ten miles long. I am sure two hundred steamers were lying at the shore. Thousands on thousands of people were moving about, swarming in and out of the hogsheads of sugar, bales of cotton and boxes like ants. Nearly a million of people live there, I suppose! Poor papa could not afford to go to the St. Louis or the St. Charles Hotel, which I am told are the finest on earth. So we had to stay on board all night. But he took Edward, Hubert and myself on a ride over the city. Mamma was nearly dead with fatigue. Prosy thought Adry was sick, so

we had to leave them. The gas was lit when we rode along the miles on miles of streets! It seemed to me Canal street must be at least two hundred yards wide and near six miles long, with thousands of most magnificent stores open on both sides! Right in the centre is a statue of Henry Clay, forty feet high! We drove down among the French part of the city. Such funny little houses! some of them cannot be ten feet high! But oh you ought to have seen the Cathedral! I suppose three thousand people were saying their prayers—black and white all together—in it when we peeped in! And then the illuminated clock, ten feet across; the magnificent park in front with the statue of Jackson! I suppose there could not have been less than two hundred performers in the brass band playing there among the orange trees by the fountain! I never heard such positively seraphic music in all my life! Huby was as wild as I was, only we had so little money to buy things with. It is that which kills me! A million? I know I could spend five millions a year easily! Even Edward, who is always turning up his nose at everything, was delighted.

It would take a ream of paper to tell you half I would like to! There was that poor, miserable little steamship we had to go on board of next morning! It did not seem much more than twenty or thirty feet long! We did not care for that, as we ran down the river past Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson, where the dreadful fight took place. The river seemed almost four miles broad. But when we got out to sea I was watching for the phosphorescent waves, but just as I was admiring the great billows, exactly like

fire, foaming under the bow of the vessel, I was taken so dreadfully, dreadfully sick! Papa and Edward pretend that I exaggerate sometimes, but nobody could make sea-sickness to be worse than it is! You know how sick it used to make you, at our dear old home, swinging there in the garden. Well, just imagine yourself going up as high as a six-story—or three-story, at least—house on one side, and then going down that deep again, to go up ten times as high on the other! Sick? I would rather have cholera, smallpox, yellow fever, chills, measles, scarlet fever and all the other diseases in the world at once than be sea-sick again! Papa was down in his berth; ma was groaning in hers; Delphy was lying flat on the floor, sick unto death—Bexy on one side of her and Lotty on the other, not sick at all, wondering what in the world was the matter! Master Edward tried to be very grand about it at first, but he soon went out of sight, and I saw him no more, hardly, till we reached Galveston.

Hubert tried his best to make fun of it, of course, but I do believe he was the sickest of us all—the most pitiful object I ever saw in my life! Prosy's face was as white as a sheet, though she says so little there is no telling how she felt. Adry, poor thing, just slept through it all!

Well, we reached Galveston at last. Once a big ship came near running us down. From what I can learn, if we had gone only a few inches more to one side it would have certainly struck us! But I would not have cared, I was so sick—rather glad than not!

What an amazingly long letter I am writing! But I would rather write to you than do anything else in all the

world! I am certain I would give ten thousand dollars any any day to have a letter from you!

I will come to a close as soon as I can. We found Galveston the prettiest place in the world—full of nice white houses, with verandahs and green blinds! And such magnificent oleander trees, as big as an oak tree—almost! Only the yellow fever kills tens of thousands of people here every summer! All over the city the houses have mended places where cannon balls struck during the war! From Galveston we took a boat up Buffalo Bayou, as they call it, to Houston. It may be miles deep for what I can say, but it isn't broader than your parlour! All along we would go crash! crash! against the sides and trees—magnolia trees! I am sure the magnolia flowers are not much smaller than a bushel measure. As to the fragrance, if you were to smell pretty hard I'm almost certain you could smell them where you are!

Houston was the next place. It is built on a dead level. I would not exaggerate for the world, but it did seem to me as if some of the weeds were almost as tall as the houses—at least as the people! I do not know how many people live there; not more than thirty or forty thousand, I suppose.

From there we took the cars up to Alleyton. The roughest riding in the world! We jolted about as bad as if it was in a stage! And then we stopped every hour, and at least two hours at a time! Next we got into a stage, leaving almost all our trunks to come on in wagons, and had to ride two days and one long, long, *long* night, to Austin. It was worse than riding on the Gulf!

I was too tired at Austin to look around at all. I must write you again about that place after I visit it. Only the day after we got there we came out to our place, where we now are.

If I was not so tired from travelling I would like to describe it to you. Just imagine a rolling prairie all dotted here and there, miles apart, with little groups of such beautiful trees. Live oaks, they call them. Such trees! They have great trunks, as big around as a hogshead, but not much taller than your head. At that distance from the ground they spread about and run their great limbs at even distance from the earth. Some of them bend over and grow down toward the ground, making such lovely seats to sit and sew in. That is the reason we call our place "Oak-Mot." Mot means a grove, and our house is in the centre of a grove, hundreds of yards across; on the top, too, of quite an eminence. All around us, as far as you can see, is the ocean of grass, with mots of timber here and there. We went up to a high point this morning, and, oh, it is the loveliest prospect in the world, the flying shadows and all!

We saw deer, too, as we came out here from Austin. I am satisfied the antlers on the head of one of them were as big, very nearly, as the Christmas tree, you remember, we had last year! I am satisfied, too, I saw a buffalo. Hubert said it was only a black cow, but he said it only to tease me. And, oh, we have such a splendid spring near the house; such herds of horses—thousands, I suppose, and cattle by the hundreds. I thought Bexy and Lotty would go actually crazy among the calves, whole dozens of them,

of every colour of the rainbow, making such a noise while the cows were being milked!

Sour was sick on the gulf and Cassandra would not coo a note. We are all as well as such tired people can well be. You must not let Alexander or any one else see this dreadfully long letter. It is nearly time for dinner, and I really ought not to leave Prosy and the rest to do all the work! We are in the most awful confusion yet. Write very, very, very soon. I love you a million times more than I ever did! I do not think I can live without you! The parting almost *kills* me!

Your devoted friend,

EGERIA BEACH.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH WE MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF UNCLE BROWN BOB LONG.

IT must have been hardly dawn on the morning after Egeria wrote her letter, that Mr. Beach, going out upon the front porch, started back on finding a man seated quietly on the steps thereof, mending a bridle. And a singular-looking man it was!

But stop a moment! Before going farther it is necessary you should know exactly the sort of house our friends lived in, if you are to feel at home with them.

Shut your eyes tight! Now imagine you see a vast prairie of the greenest grass, with a thick grove of live oaks in the centre thereof, on the summit of an eminence. Then suppose yourself standing in the middle of that grove or mot, and on the highest point in it, too, before a long two-story log house, having a porch from end to end in front. Can you see it before you? Well, if you do, you

see, too, there is a hall twelve feet wide right through the house, dividing its length in two, with broad stairs in it leading to the upper story. The room on your right, with all its windows opening upon the front porch—come in!—some twenty feet square, you see, is the parlour; or will be when all the furniture is arrived and fixed up. Across the wide hall is the left-hand front room, of the same size, only a little room is partitioned off in it, and Bexy and Lotty have their bed in that, while Mr. and Mrs. Beach have theirs in the room itself. Back of both the front rooms is the "shed room," being the dining room, with all sorts of cupboards and closets, which ladies so much delight in to keep their linen and crockery. Suppose we go up stairs. This room over the parlour is Edward and Hubert's room, when it is duly arranged. The other room, over the parents' room, belongs to Egeria and Prosy, with a small room in it for poor Adry; the hall dividing the boys' room from the girls'. "Why, I wouldn't think they should put *him* up stairs!" you exclaim. Yes, because it is necessary for him to be compelled to take as much exercise as possible, and the going up and down stairs does him good. I know it is *not* to have him out of the way of people calling at the house,

as I am afraid you thought it was when I first spoke of it.

The smoke-house, kitchen and all the other out-houses are a good fifty yards back from the house, you see, as you come down stairs again and stand in that end of the hall. That is always the way at the South, for several good reasons. The weather is too warm to cook in the house. The coloured people, too, like to sit up very late at night, cooking, eating, laughing, and talking; and the coloured man is almost sure to own a violin—positively sure to own a voice for singing; so that it would be impossible for the people in the house to get a wink of sleep till after midnight, unless, indeed, they compelled the kitchen people to keep better hours, which would not be doing as one would wish to be done by.

Is there anything else we can show you about the house? If there is, please say so, for we want you to feel entirely at home with us—one of the family.

Yes, Mr. Beach rubbed his eyes when he saw a strange man seated so perfectly at home on the steps of the front porch! The moment the stranger heard his step he dropped the bridle he was mending, rose to his feet, gave the broad-

brimmed old hat on his head a peculiar blow off of his forehead with the back of his hand, and came toward Mr. Beach holding out his hand and saying—

"Why, Brother Beach, how are you?"

"I beg your pardon"— Mr. Beach began, wincing, in spite of himself, at the squeeze the stranger gave his hand; it was severe enough even to draw tears. And it was no wonder he was amazed!

Please close your eyes again. Now imagine you see before you on the front porch a tall, black-bearded man, a very broad-brimmed felt hat on his head, under which clusters the thick black hair. His face, what you can see of it for the beard, is very brown indeed from the sun and wind; and a larger, browner hand, the little finger gone, you never saw—no, nor ever felt before, if he was to take yours in it and give it the squeeze he has just given Mr. Beach's. Plainer clothes no man ever wore than this man wears—brown and patched, while all sorts of powder horns, buckskin pouches, bore-chargers and the like dangle about his bosom. A very long, large rifle leans against the pillar of the porch. Mr. Beach likes the pleasant eyes and broad, honest smile of the stranger, but he continues to say—

"I beg your pardon. How are you?"

"Don't know me? Though I didn't suppose you *would!* Helen's brother—" the stranger began.

It was very hard for Mr. Beach not to show how dreadfully disappointed he felt! He had long known that his wife's brother was a back-woodsman, but he never supposed for a moment he was quite the rough—almost savage-looking—person he now found him to be.

"Is it possible *this* can be the brother of *my* wife? This the Mr. Long that Helen calls her brother Robert! Can this be the one who bought this place and had this house built for me? I feared how it might be, but this is positively dreadful, shocking, awful! What can I do?" All this passed rapidly through Mr. Beach's mind, although he gave his brother-in-law the best welcome in words he possibly could—with a faltering tongue and troubled face, however.

"Astonished to see what sort of man I am, I see!" Mr. Long went on to say, not at all displeased. "Rougher, even, than you expected? Of course. Though *you* are about the very man I looked to see! But how are Helen and the children?" and there was an eager, childlike way about Mr. Long that somewhat relieved the other.

"Don't show any surprise, Helen," Mr. Beach had barely time to whisper to his wife in their bedroom before she was out on the front porch, too, in the bearlike arms of her brother.

"Don't, don't squeeze so, Robert! I'm *so* glad to see you, but don't, don't! you will do me a mischief!" Mrs. Beach said, laughing and crying. "I haven't seen you since we were children together; and what a great, big, brown, black—"

"Bear I am!" Her brother finished it for her, not at all angry either, as pleasantly as if she had called him an angel, with tears in his eyes for joy at seeing her, and his face radiant with eagerness as he asked—

"But the children—Bexy, Lotty, Egeria, Hubert, Edward, Adry, Prosy? You see I've got all their names by heart, seven in all, and I wish they were a dozen! You know I never saw a soul of them! I know they want to see their uncle. Where are they?" and there was such a warm-hearted affection in his manner and his tones that both the parents themselves warmed toward their new relative.

"Better prepare them a little for the *kind* of uncle they'll see," he said to his sister, as she went into the hall and up stairs to inform the children.

"I saw you wanted to tell her that!" he added to Mr. Beach, with a pleasant smile; which was the fact.

"But when did you come? How could you get here so early?" began Mr. Beach.

"Early? Late, you mean. Nigh midnight by the moon when I lighted from Bobasheela at the fence. You see, I knew you all were tired out; I didn't want to stir you up at that hour."

"Where did you sleep?" asked Mr. Beach, with amazement.

"On this front porch. Where better? You see I had my blanket. I've slept in worse places a thousand times!" said the visitor, with some surprise at the question.

"I wonder Sour let you come in," said Mr. Beach, wonderingly.

"The dog? Oh, I started Bobasheela out on the prairie, and left the dog barking at *him* while I slipped into the yard. He has almost barked himself out, only you were so tired and dead asleep you did not hear. Make the best of me you possibly can, brother George; I think—that is, I hope—you'll like me the better you know me. Remember, I've had none of your advantages; have lived all my life in the woods and on the prairie. I

ought to have written more about myself, only I don't like to speak of myself, and I don't like to write; my hands are too rough for that. I leave writing to Araminty. But here they are!" and Mr. Long broke off to meet Edward, who now appeared upon the front porch, with a hearty greeting.

People never say exactly all they think when they meet. What passed between these two in *words* was—

"And you are Edward? Glad to see you!"

"How are you, uncle?"

What each *thought* as they met was—"This is Edward, heh? Fine-looking lad—a little foolish, of course. Turns up his nose at his rough uncle. Never mind—wait!" This from the uncle. From the nephew this—"Well, you *are* a bear! How we can ever get to endure you I cannot see!"

But the tears came to Edward's eyes, too, as his uncle squeezed his hand, it was *such* a squeeze!

And then came Egeria, more shocked than any yet, though concealing it very well. Her leading thought was—

"My! what a description I can give of our new uncle to Amelia!"

As to Hubert, he met his uncle in a franker,

heartier way than any of the rest. Something congenial between these two from the outset, both felt that.

"I can see *you* are the one, at last!" was what the uncle thought as they met, looking eagerly into Hubert's face, almost as brown and full of simple kindness as his own. But he half changed his mind as Prosy ran up to him and kissed him without one word, putting her arms around his neck. It was unusual for Prosy to show so much feeling; even Bexy and Lotty, standing, half combed and hardly awake, in the door, wondering at their visitor, wondered still more that Prosy was not afraid of him. And that uncle longed to take them, too, in his great arms and hug and kiss them, but he was fearful of frightening them.

"You see I'm so fond of children," he said to his sister. "I have none of my own, and these are the only kin I have in the world besides my wife. And I never saw them before! I hope they will come to like me—not yet, of course; after a while!"

"Adry will have his breakfast in his room this morning," as they all gathered, at last, around the table, said his mother. "He is only a child, poor fellow! though a man in years. I wrote you about

him, brother Robert, and the excitement of yesterday quite wore him out. He will be down to prayers; he cannot bear to miss that."

It was not until they went in to breakfast that the new uncle took off his huge hat. And, seated there, Mr. Beach said—

"Brother Robert, will you ask a blessing?" the family wondering at the solemn and simple words in which, as from the very heart, he did so.

"You do not know how grateful we are, brother, for all your kindness," Mrs. Beach said, as she poured out the coffee. "You must have had a world of trouble, and everything is arranged so much better than we could have hoped!" for all were rapidly coming to feel more at ease with each other.

"Don't say a word about it," replied her brother. "And *you* take this cup of coffee, brother George; no milk for me, sister Helen; as much sugar as you please, but no milk—never use it. I'm afraid you'll be distressed at the quantity of coffee I drink; all people are intemperate about *that* in these prairies. I never could tell why. There is this, too," he continued, after all were helped and eating heartily, as only people eat when fresh from a journey: "I must tell you another thing which

will shock you, I'm afraid. Please don't call me Robert. It is the first time I've been called that since I saw you last, when we were children together. There is no use in the world hiding it. Bob is what people call me—Brown Bob Long. I'm a little ashamed of it since you came, but it's too late to help it now. Call me Brother Bob! Uncle Bob will be easy for the children to say, won't it, Bexy? heh, Lotty?" and he smiled so pleasantly upon the twins seated opposite that they both laughed and said yes, shyly though as yet.

"The house is so much larger than I expected—the windows, too," Mr. Beach said, after a good deal of other conversation.

"I intended to explain that to you," said his brother-in-law. "Houses must have large rooms in this hot climate—windows, too. I prefer out of doors, myself. Nobody ever gets colds from sleeping in the air; you can't have too much of the air in Texas. It'll all be strange to you, at first, just as I am. You'll get used to it at last!"

"My only fear is my carpets won't fit," said his sister, looking a little ruefully around, "and our curtains."

"They *never* fit in Texas!" her brother replied, with energy. "It isn't the fashion for them to fit.

People prefer having a yard or so of bare floor around the edge of the carpet. And how can the wind get in if the curtains are in the way!" And he said it in such an earnest, almost childlike way that Egeria laughed aloud. "That's what I like," her uncle said, nodding his head pleasantly at her. "You and Edward will come to know me at last. As to Hubert here, we understand each other already. And Prosy, too. As to these little dumplings—Bexy and Lotty—they will have to get used to my beard!"

It was a much longer meal than usual, with a great deal of talk and laughter, as all grew better at home with Uncle Bob. But there was too much hard work to be done, and, after a very hearty breakfast, Mrs. Beach said—

"Prosy, my dear!"

Only that; but Prosy, who had some time before carried his breakfast to her brother up stairs, understood perfectly, and went up again to bring him down to prayers. Edward and Egeria winced and changed colour as they heard his poor, stumbling feet on the stairs. Even Hubert glanced anxiously from his mother to his uncle, as the family arranged themselves about the room for family worship. It was an old, old pang that

smote the hearts of both parents at the same time—a pang felt a thousand times, yet ever new—as poor Adry faltered into the room where strange eyes would see him.

The new relative had read the whole story in his sister's letters long ago, and he could hardly keep his eyes from a sorrowful gaze as his afflicted nephew tottered in with his small white hand on Prosy's stout little shoulder. It was only a glance, but enough to show the uncle a person as tall as himself if erect, but stooping like a very old man; with a thin, shriveled body, hardly able to move, so frail and weak it seemed. The face was that of a child of six years old, fair as a girl's, with beautiful forehead, over which clustered a few locks of thin, fair, almost white, hair. There was an aspect of suffering and yet of peace in the large, sorrowful eyes fastened on the floor as he walked. His arms were long and evidently very thin; the one not resting on the shoulder of his sister holding, with difficulty, yet closely, a large brown Bible.

It took quite a little while for Prosy to settle him in a peculiar chair supported on wheels, which had been already placed for him by Hubert. Then Prosy seated herself in a lower chair by his left side, opened his Bible for him upon his lap at the

place marked by a broad, blue ribbon, then put the finger of his white hand on the very first word of the chapter. This done, Mr. Beach read, but very slowly, indeed, pausing after each verse, the long, emaciated finger of the invalid following the words as they were read, his lips moving with a low, soft sound, repeating the words. Occasionally Prosy would look up at her father to signify that he was going too fast or too slow; but, from long use, the least signal between father and daughter was perfectly understood.

Then Mr. Beach drew the hymn-book lying beside him on the breakfast table toward him to select a hymn, Adry continuing to gaze upon his open Bible, for, to him, it was the one only book in all the world. Before the father could find a hymn, Hubert said in a low voice—

"Father, please, 'Jesus coming yet again!'" while the uncle was surprised to see Egeria's face turning suddenly very red—something a little marked, too, in Hubert's tones. And on the instant the mother raised the tune—a simple, but very sweet one—all except Edward, and, at first, Egeria, joining in the song; Adry silent, too, but listening with his sorrowful, patient eyes on the page of his book.

Try and imagine yourself among them and join us in the words, dear reader: even Bexy and Lotty did it, and with childlike notes which thrilled their uncle's heart, unused to such singing—

"As shouting Hosanna the people drew nigh,
Each child in the city caught, list'ning, the cry,
Hosanna the Christ! all too eager to wait,
Hosanna it shouts ere He enters the gate!
For Jesus coming yet again,
Let every child repeat the strain!
Hosanna! Jesus comes to reign!

E'en children the sounds of His coming can hear:
Approaching in triumph to-day He draws near!
The palms, not by hundreds, by millions are spread!
Not mantles, whole nations are strewn for his tread!
For Jesus coming yet again,
Let every child repeat the strain,
Hosanna! and He will remain!

That Jesus is coming by all things 'tis told—
In the click of the types, the giving of gold,
The voices of love and the downfall of thrones;
If silent we children, 'twould cry from the stones!
For Jesus coming yet again,
Let every child repeat the strain!
Hosanna! Jesus comes to reign!

As the last words died on their lips, to the astonishment of all, Mr. Beach said in a grave

tone, turning to Mr. Long—"Brother, will you lead us in prayer?" All knelt reverently down, the uncle waiting as quietly as if he was as well used to the pause needed for Prosy to get poor Adry on his knees as the rest were. Almost holding their breaths, the children listened for the new voice in prayer; it seemed so strange for a great, rough hunter like him to pray. But, beginning in a low, humble way, as with deepest sense that God was there indeed, their new relative put up a prayer which went to every heart there as well as to that of the great Hearer of prayer—so simple, so childlike in earnestness, so rich in Scripture, so overflowing with thanks to God for the safe coming together of all there, so importunate for a blessing upon all from that time. It was quite a short prayer, but all knew each other that much the better when it was over! In fact, Hubert felt so well acquainted with his uncle that, the first moment he could after worship was over, he whispered to him, with a mischievous look at Egeria, "Uncle, Egeria wrote those words!" and was well rewarded with the glad and surprised look in his uncle's eyes as he exclaimed—

"What! Egeria! that hymn!" while Egeria herself blushed and laughed and said—"Oh, Hu-

bert! how could you? But he is always trying to tease me, uncle;" and so ran out of the room, not so badly displeased either, for her uncle was looking at her with a kind of puzzled pleasure in his eyes, while he stroked his long, black beard with his right hand.

It was not that the lines were at all good, only it was new to him to meet one who wrote hymns, and that one his own new niece!

"He is like Orson in the story; yes, and like the Beast in 'Beauty and the Beast,'" thought Egeria, who had read altogether too many stories.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH WE LEARN SOMETHING MORE OF EACH OTHER.

"WHY, brother, what meat is it that Delphy tells me about?" asks Mrs. Beach, with whom the coloured cook has been speaking as the gentlemen went out upon the front porch.

"Ha! I was so glad to see you and the children I never once thought about it," replied the hunter. "It is a deer I shot on my way over here. I hung it up to the live oak by the corral, and never spoke of it. If I only had, we could have had some of the steak for breakfast. But I'm sure," he added immediately, blushing like a girl, "it was not that the breakfast *needed* it."

"So much obliged. I'll make Delphy attend to it as soon as her breakfast is over," remarked Mrs. Beach, a little dismayed, too, by this new duty, when there was so very much to do in putting the disordered house to rights.

"Not a bit of it, sister; that is, if you'll let me!" exclaimed her brother. "I didn't ride over from my place only to see you and talk with you all, but

to help you fix up. If only it is agreeable to you?" he added, with a simple grace which struck Edward very much. It would have interested him more if he had known that Lord Chesterfield himself knew far less of real politeness than did his uncle, Brown Robert Long, though he was.

"The only true courtesy, Edward," his father had often told him, "flows from a heart-felt love for others. No one has this love in its purest, strongest degree until he is converted, until he becomes a sincere disciple of Jesus, who laid down His very life for the love He bore us. In a word, of all men alive the true Christian is the most courteous of men."

And it makes a man a gentleman who was before a savage, Mr. Beach might have added, if he had then known Bob Long as well as you, dear reader, shall yet know him if you go with us to the end of these pages.

Very nice and correct and refined our "Mr. Edward"—as Hubert called him—prided himself upon being, and the courteous words and tones of his bear-like uncle struck him wonderfully.

"Suppose, Edward, you had, for instance, to make your choice to-day between wearing clean linen with soiled outer clothing, or soiled linen

next to your person with the finest possible broadcloth outside, which would you take?" his father had one day asked Edward.

"I would have what went next me clean, of course," Edward had replied.

"Certainly; and if you notice among men it is just a little thing like that which marks the difference. You will see persons clad outwardly in the finest fabrics, jewelry in abundance over that, while you can get a glimpse of enough to know that what is under all that is not cared for, because it will not, the persons suppose, be seen. And I have known one youth," Mr. Beach continued, with a smile about his lips, "who was very nervous about his collar and neck-tie, the fit of his shoes and the shape of his coat, yet who seemed to think that his finger-nails and ears and teeth did not matter. Inward care before outward, Eddy—of one's own person before what one has to put on. The inner man right, and then attend to the outer. Which is only saying, if you get to the bottom of the matter, the heart, the *heart* is the thing. Out of the heart are the issues of life. And remember only the blood of Christ and the Spirit of God can cleanse and keep that."

But we are not keeping as close to Uncle Bob as

the children did, following him in a body, eager to see the slain deer.

"Ah, here is something I picked up where I shot the deer, for some of you children," he said, taking his hand out of his pouch in which he had been rummaging for his whetstone. "Who will have it? Here, hold your hands!" and Egeria being the nearest, he placed his gift in her extended hand. One glance at it, a scream of dismay, and the horned frog—for such it was—dropped on the ground, all the children shrinking from it, as it lay, with exclamations.

"Why, who would have supposed anybody could object to a horned frog?" said the uncle, with some stress on the last words. "See him lying there, his little mouth open, astonished at the way you treated him. Only look at them," continued Mr. Long, producing a whole handful of them from another pocket, and displaying them on the broad palm of his huge brown hand. "See how clean and nice they are, not a speck of dust, and the little, shiny horns on their heads. They never bite, but live upon such flies and ants as they can catch, or a little air now and then. I'm told they can even do without any air. Have one, Edward?" But that young gentleman declined with

a polite wave of his hand, somewhat disdainful, too. "They can't hurt, man! Have one, Hubert?" and Hubert took one very cautiously by the horns, but dropped it again as soon it began to switch its tail about. "Well, I never thought any one— Here is a nice pair—twins, I dare say—for you Lotty, Bexy; *you* ain't afraid! Prosy isn't, I know," continued the uncle, and he laid the largest of all in her round, plump little hand, held manfully out to take it.

"Why, Prosy! how can you?" exclaimed the other children, as their sister held the frog in her hand, with some little wincing about the lips only, but not a word.

"Uncle said it wouldn't hurt me," she said at last, as soberly as a judge.

"But, remember all, a horned frog is about the only thing you can handle. Scorpions are plenty here; tarantulas, centipedes; some of the swift-jacks can sting, they say—a kind of lizard that runs like a flash. All this isn't work, however, and there's too much to do; come on!" said the uncle, as he led the way to the corral, or enclosed yard about the stables.

"I'll tell you what I'll do with this one," said Hubert, holding up one of the horned frogs which,

shamed by Prosy's courage, he had ventured to pick up. "I'll watch my chance and drop it in Delphy's lap. That will be fun indeed! Won't she holler?"

"No, Hubert. A joke is a joke; but a joke isn't a joke unless both see it in that light. A laugh isn't a good laugh unless it can go all round. I wouldn't have frightened Egeria here if I had known it—even in fun, and nobody is fonder of fun than I am; it is fun for others as well as yourself you should be after. Some day I'll tell you about poor Sam Clarke. But here we are," added their uncle as they reached the spot where he had hung the deer by the hind legs from the limb of a live oak stretching like a beam overhead, as if made for the purpose. "I wouldn't be surprised if it was," the hunter remarked in reply to something to that effect from Egeria. "Our Creator never makes anything for nothing. I never knew what wasps were good for till I saw one kill a tarantula; nor what moles were good for till I cut open one that was working among my peas, and found it full of bugs and worms that had been eating up my garden. I once knew an old man—Meggar, the wickedest creature I ever knew—dirtiest, lowest, vilest—never mind! I studied

a long time to know what *he* was good for. Oh, he was the worst—"

"But what was he good for?" interrupted Edward.

"An example!" replied the uncle earnestly. "I used to look at that poor wretch, grovelling dead drunk in the gutter, his white hair full of mud, his beard all stained with tobacco juice—the profanest; and I said to myself, Just that is what *you* will come to my fine fellow if you don't stop!"

"Don't stop?" repeated Hubert. "What do you mean, uncle?"

"Ah, never mind," the uncle replied, colouring as he spoke. "We won't speak of that. But that poor creature—with God's blessing on that bear fight we had—actually was the salvation of Doc Meggar and the other boys. And I know it was his desperate wickedness fairly drove old Mrs. Meggar to be the most devoted Christian I ever met in all my days!"

But all this time the hunter had not paused a moment from cutting up the deer, which had been otherwise prepared on the spot where it was shot.

"It was that kept me so late into the night getting here," he added as he rubbed in the salt brought for him by Hubert.

"But you haven't told us about Sam—Sam—" began Edward.

"Sam Clarke? In a minute. First, I want to know the real names of some of you. Why do you call your sister Prosy? See, she has gone back to the house," the uncle said.

"Her real name was Portia," Edward, hushing the rest with his dignified hand, answered. "Ma had some idea of her being one day a sort of Roman matron, I suppose. But she did not grow up Portia at all; she is the stupidest little squab you ever saw! We call her Prosy because she is so very prosy!"

"Yes, and because she is the opposite of Egeria, who ought to be called Poesy," volunteered Hubert—that sister having gone to the house also.

"Bexy is short for Rebecca," added Edward.

"And—Adry?" asked the uncle, hesitating a little.

"Oh, his name was Adrian at first. Pa and ma must have had great ideas of what we were going to be one day," added Hubert, somewhat gravely.

"And our dog's name is Sour, uncle, and the dove's is Cassandra," began Bexy, beginning to tire of her long silence.

"And Delphy is our cook, and Alec is her husband!" continued little Lotty.

"Yes, and George Washington Andrew Jackson Abraham Lincoln is the name of their baby; oh, uncle, it is the blackest, beautifullest baby—"

"Hush, Bexy," interrupted Edward, who was helping his uncle as well as he could, though in rather a dainty way. "You cannot imagine, uncle," he added, in a lower tone, "what an affliction—what an *awful* affliction Adry is to us; it is almost more than we can bear."

For, account for it as you can, Edward never could rest, after any one had seen Adry for the first time, until he had informed that person what an affliction they regarded the poor invalid as being. It was as if he were in a hurry to separate himself from his afflicted brother, and get safely quite above him in the eyes of others—to disavow him as much as possible, be rid of him so far as he could. It was more in his manner than in anything he said. Edward added an exclamation of impatience, if not of something worse still, as, lifting his eyes at approaching footsteps, he saw that Prosy was guiding the steps of the one spoken about to the spot where they were busy; and the next moment Prosy stood beside them, her poor brother leaning

heavily on her shoulder. At the same moment the voice of Mr. Beach, who was hard at work at the house with his coat off, was heard calling Edward.

"We need you here to help us with these tables; come quick! Hubert, too!"

Not a word was spoken for some time after the boys were gone. The hunter was evidently taking special pains with the venison. At last he ran a clean stick, which he had cut for the purpose, through the tendon of one of the hams, and placed an end in the hand of each of the twins.

"Carry it to the house, children; hold it high up; that's the way, off the ground. Delphy may want it for dinner;" and, as Bexy and Lotty marched off, proud of their burden, Mr. Long proceeded to hang up the rest of the meat by thongs to the limb overhead.

"Only keep it in the shade; the air is so dry and pure it will keep perfectly well; that is, if Sour is dog enough to keep the wolves away to-night," he added.

By this time Prosy had turned and was walking her brother to the other end of his regular course for exercise. Without ceasing for a moment from his work, the uncle looked with great interest after them as they moved slowly away.

"Talk of that wretched old Meggar!" he murmured to himself, as he looked; "if that poor afflicted lad isn't the most useful member of this household, I'm mistaken. And isn't it perfectly wonderful how many ways *He* has of working? Not that one of them dreams of it, I suppose—much less this Master Edward. I'll try and tell him some day—not now."

"Don't you get a little tired, sometimes, my dear?" he asked aloud of Prosy, who at last had reached his end again of the walk, and stood silently watching him, Adry, with his long arm around her neck, looking upon the work in progress with the artless wonder of a child in his mild, sad eyes.

"Yes, uncle, very tired sometimes. But then it's exercise for me, you know. Besides, he can stand a little at the end of his walk; not long. Then he has his chair to rest in. And Hubert would help me if I was to ask him, only he is so full of fun. Pa, too, and ma; there's Alec, too—plenty to help me. And he *must* take so much exercise every day, the doctor told us that—Dr. Hildon. Come, Adry;" and they turned away again to their exercise.

"How much exercise must he take?" the uncle asked, gently, on their return.

"Only two hundred yards or so, a hundred times in the morning, seventy-five times every afternoon—about from here to that tree where pa's coat hangs," answered Prosy, making nothing of the amount by a wave of her hand,

"How, in winter?" asked her uncle.

"We wrap him up; he *must* take his exercise, you know," said Prosy, gravely.

"When it rains?"

"We do the best we can. Sometimes Hubert or pa walks with him, carrying an umbrella. If he doesn't take his exercise he is so restless, has no appetite. You know it is not *his* fault," said Prosy, eagerly, sheltering her brother from any possible blame.

"Of course not!" exclaimed the uncle, as eagerly almost as herself.

"You musn't think, uncle," Prosy added, in a confidential way, as the two, after another round, stood beside him, "that Adry is—is—is—I don't like to say it—"

"A little wrong in his mind?" suggested her uncle, gently.

"Yes. Not one bit of it, not the least bit of it," said Prosy, with energy. "He has as good a mind as any one in the whole world. I don't say he

talks very much, but all he does say is sensible. I never knew him to say a foolish thing in my life."

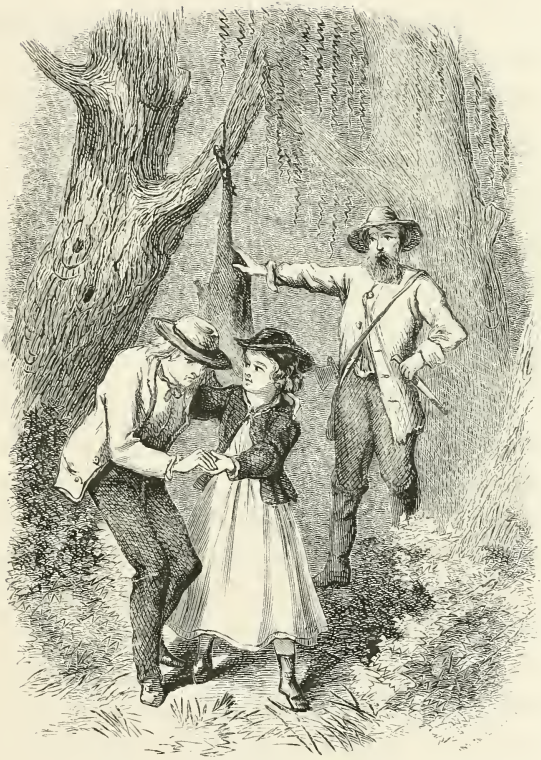
"More than Hubert and the rest of us can say, I'll be bound," added the hunter.

"It's perfectly wonderful," continued Prosy, earnestly. "Adry will sit still and silent for hours. He is thinking, thinking, thinking. Suddenly he will say something to surprise us all. He never laughs, I know, but then he never cries either, unless his back hurts him very bad, and then just as softly as he can. He is almost no trouble at all, and the kindest, gentlest brother—"

"How old is he, my dear?" asked the uncle, when they stood again at his side.

"Only think of it—twenty-four, and I'm only fourteen. You see, uncle," continued Prosy, very seriously, "he was the first child pa and ma had. Ma says he was the finest boy she ever saw, and everybody that saw him then, she says, told her the same. Such beautiful eyes! I do suppose"—confidentially on Prosy's part—"he was, until he was eight years old, perhaps the very finest child ever seen. I don't really suppose a more beautiful, intelligent child was *ever* known!" and Prosy blushed at her own enthusiasm.

"I have no doubt of it, Prosy, not the least;"



THE LITTLE GUARDIAN. Page 61.

said her uncle, as earnestly as she. "Well?" he added, wishing to hear more.

"Wait a moment, uncle. Come, Adry, once more;" and the two were off again upon their round—very slowly, however.

The hunter paused, knife in hand, to look at them as they walked from him. The poor, stooped creature, tottering along as well as he could, frail as a shadow; his eyes in Prosy's face, listening with grave, yet childish attention, to all she said, speaking to him in low, confidential tones as she supported him along, clinging to her, so much younger yet so much older than himself, as the ivy to the sapling. The very fact that Prosy was so much lower than himself was a help to Adry, with his arm around her neck. The tears rose to the uncle's eyes as he looked, and suddenly aware of it, he glanced around to be sure no one saw it.

"Well, Prosy?" he called to her as she was approaching him again.

"Oh, it is nothing much—did I hurry you too much, Adry? Only this, uncle," said Prosy, a little breathless after the walk, for she was eager to tell what to her was the great event of all history: "Adry was taken very, very sick then. The doctor had a hard name for the disease—ma knows it,

I don't. He was sick for weeks on weeks, ever so long. Oh, how he *did* suffer! They were certain he would die. They thought he was dead one day. He lay for ever, ever so long; they hardly knew whether he was alive or dead. Very slowly—you know I've heard ma tell about it so often—he began to get well. His body did, not his mind, you know. As he got still better and better his body was almost well, at least for him, but his mind stopped. I mean, that is—his understanding, you know, stays stock still at what it was when he was taken sick. But he is such a bright child, uncle, such a very intelligent child!" urged Prosy with all possible force of hand and eye and tone.

"He must have been," her uncle agreed.

"Is now," Prosy corrected him. "In a moment, Adry; lean more on me. If he was so very intelligent when a child, very much so indeed, uncle, everybody says so, and if his mind stood still then, hasn't changed, of course, you know, he is one now! People have dared to say—to call him—I tell you, uncle," continued Prosy, with all vehemence, even for her, "he is no more an—idiot—" very unwillingly Prosy got the word out—

"Than I am," said her uncle, with equal energy. "Of course he is not!" with scorn at the very idea.

"In one moment, Adry. He keeps himself as nice and clean, with us to help him, as anybody. He can read as well as, at least, any child you know. He says his prayers—I know they are not very long—as well. Look what beautiful care he takes with his hands. As to his big Bible—and he almost always has it in his arms—it is as good as new. And then—yes, Adry, we are standing too long; you are right?"

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH WE ARE VERY BUSY INDEED AT OAK-MOT.

YES, very busy, indeed!

It was on Tuesday, an April Tuesday afternoon, that the family arrived at their new home. All were too tired to do more than eat a very hasty supper, after a rapid look over their new house, and so go to sleep on pallets made anywhere about on the floors of the various rooms. The next morning the children clustered upon the knoll-top—it could hardly be called a hill, so rolling it was—to take their first good look around, as written in the first lines of this volume. That was on Wednesday. Thursday morning, you know, found on the front porch their new uncle.

The fact is, it was only after *he* came that the work of settling down really began. Mr. Beach was willing enough; Mrs. Beach was anxious enough, a great deal too much so all the time; the children were ready as could be—only a leader was necessary. It is always necessary to have a leader; not six leaders, nor two—*a* leader in everything.

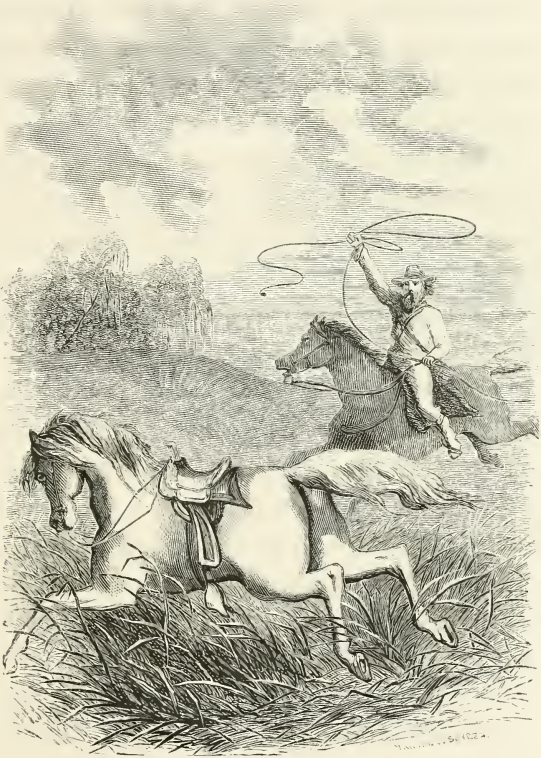
A base ball club cannot get along much better than an army without one—one *boy* there in the case of the club—to direct. So of a pic-nic; it is always best to elect some one person to command from the start. A nutting party, boating excursion, Sabbath-school festival, or whatever it is, must have some one suitable person to say quietly but decidedly, Do this! don't do that! A Sabbath-school without such a superintendent is only a mob of teachers and scholars. Not that those who strive to be head are the ones. Usually such are the very ones that need most to be ruled themselves. Some quiet one of them all—the quietest one of all generally—one who can be perfectly kind and considerate, and perfectly firm at the same time, is the one to rule. Rarely a body, however small, but there is a born king among them. God has so ordained it, because the world would go to pieces without; and, sooner or later, all acknowledge their king, though often it is a queen, and throne such in his true place; before that, all is confusion; after that, all goes on smoothly as you please. Only, if you think *you* are a born king or queen, it is others must decide that, not you; and if you are, remember that you must rule by love as well as by law.

Before Saturday came, all, from Mr. Beach down

to Juan, the Mexican stock-boy, accepted and obeyed Uncle Bob as the ruler there. Having mentioned Juan, please, once for all, to call him as if his name was spelled and pronounced like the first syllable in the word wan-der! If you call him Ju-an, he will never know what you mean—will only look at you with his black eyes full of astonishment! So much for *him!*

Not that the new uncle assumed to rule. He regarded Mr. Beach as the head of the family, of course, and was as modest as could be. No one could be quieter, or gentler. It was not so much what he said, as the way he said it. Nor so much that, as the *doing* that lay behind it!

"Another horse died last night outside the corral," Edward heard him tell Juan, Friday morning. "You lariat your mustang and drag him beyond the water-hole." An hour after, Edward and his uncle were at the corral again to get stable baskets—made of ox-hide, each one holding three bushels—to carry the books from the boxes in the yard into the house, and there was Juan trying to force his mustang up to the dead horse with a tangled rope in his hand. Now Juan ought to have herded the caballado—that is, herd of horses—out on the prairie long ago. And while



"VAMOS!" Page 67.

they were looking, Juan's mustang broke away from him and galloped off, neighing and kicking with delight. For a moment Edward could not but laugh at poor Juan. He was very short and yellow, his face all eyes apparently—great, round, black, stupid ones; on his head a stiff, black, shiny kind of hat, with stiff brim and half yard across. He looked so sorrowful! Edward had hardly missed his uncle when he saw that he had mounted Bobasheela, his own horse, Juan's coil of rope in his hand, riding at full speed after the flying mustang, yet disentangling the long rope as he went. Then, halting a moment some distance from the mustang, the rope flew like a snake from its coil in his hand, was around the neck of the mustang, and the captor was coming back at full speed; the mustang coming back, too, as fast as he could, because he had to do it or be strangled. Arrived where they stood, the rider jumped off his own horse, tied the rope around the neck of the dead animal, passed a loop around the neck of the mustang, winding still another end around the high pummel of Juan's saddle, still on the mustang. Tightening the girths of the saddle, the uncle sprang into it, gave a shout, pressing his great spurs—as large as a dollar—into the sides of the

mustang, and so went off at a run, dragging the dead horse after him as if it was only a dead kid; a steady run until far past the water-hole—the pond at which the stock drank—then a moment's halt to untie the rope, and the rider is back again and standing beside Juan and Edward as if nothing had happened. As he placed the bridle of the mustang in Juan's hand he looked steadily for several seconds in Juan's great, solemn eyes, said only one word, "*Vamos!*" and turned away.

"What does *Bar-mose* mean, uncle?" asked Edward, after a while.

"It means go. But Juan understands a good deal more than *go* by it," the uncle replied.

Yes, the least look—distant sight, even—of Brown Bob Long was enough for Juan after that. And it was as if he had said the magical words to all on the place. The wagons had arrived with all the furniture, and there was a world of work to do. Carpets had to be carried in, fitted, tacked down; bedsteads to be put up; bureaus to be moved from room to room; tables to be carried here and there; shelves to be put up, and great boxes of books to be unpacked, carried in and arranged; a chaos of pots and pans and ovens, trunks, bandboxes, mattrasses, lamps, chairs, look-

ing-glasses, wardrobes, desks and the like put in their proper places. When Juan came home with his caballado at night, he opened his eyes with wonder at such a wealth of household stuff. Uncle Bob, too, groaned at it as ten times more than was enough, but under his breath. As to Bexy and Lotty, all Thursday long, just exactly in the doorway—as the rest were bringing some washstand or basket of books in—both were sure to be!

"Twins! You are a pair of winds, instead, blowing all the time!" Hubert said, and thought it very funny indeed. But Friday morning, from the start, Uncle Bob had them seated in a swing he had made for them after dark the evening before, out of the way, under the limb of a live-oak, evidently grown for their express use, as Hubert said. No more trouble from those "bothers," as Edward called them a great deal too often.

"You must learn to think and act promptly, as powder to cap!" his uncle had replied, when Edward had thanked him for doing it; although all Uncle Bob did was no more violent nor officious than the sunshine through the trees.

"Oh, how glad I am Sunday has come again!" Mrs. Beach said, when the Sabbath had indeed come after so many days of hard work. "We are

not half settled yet, but the place is beginning to look like home. When we determined to move here, I was perfectly miserable at the dreadful work of breaking up. All the way here I was perfectly wretched at the having to unpack and place the things. What *would* we have done without brother Rob?" for that was as near to "Bob" as the sister could get. "I am so glad it is Sunday!"

Now, Mrs. Jones had said—Aurelia Jones' mother, a lady in excellent health, one who had known Mrs. Beach for many years—

"What an unhappy woman that poor Mrs. Beach—good soul as ever lived, too—makes herself! All day long it is, 'I am miserable lest Egeria should catch cold. I am perfectly wretched about Bexy and Lotty, lest they should catch the scarlatina. You can't imagine how unhappy I am about Mr. Beach's shirts. I am distressed to death about Prosy—she devotes herself too much to Adry.' Mrs. Beach *grinds* upon herself all the time. And she a Christian woman, too!"

"Yes, my dear," Mr. Jones—Aurelia's father—had made reply, "she does worry herself dreadfully. Nineteen-twentieths of her troubles never arrive; she is wasting herself literally to death for

nothing. But you must remember what poor health she has."

"It's ding-dong, ding-dong, from morning till night—miserable about something that was, is or will be! Look at Edward and Egeria! They don't have half the respect for her they ought. It tires them out. Though, I suppose, that dreadful affliction of poor Adry first begun it."

Mrs. Beach was glad it was the Sabbath. Yet she might have had unending Sabbath in her bosom if she could but have trusted more in her heavenly Father.

Yes, it was Sabbath at Oak-Mot—the blessed Sabbath!

"See, my dear, how the sunshine seems to slumber upon the scene," Mr. Beach said to his wife, as they sat together upon the front porch. "These grand old live-oaks—how they seem to sleep too, with their leaves drooping like drowsy eyelids, Egeria would say. The very grass on the prairie yonder waves more softly in the Sabbath air. The horses graze more quietly. The calves are lying in groups in the corners of their pen, as if they felt the influence; while I haven't heard one of the cows, feeding yonder, call to her calf once. You can barely see Juan's mustang, far off there past the water-

hole. He is sound asleep in the grass, with that enormous hat of his over his face. The least stampede of the horses, though, would put him in his saddle in a moment."

"If I wasn't so miserable lest, when I come to look at them, my preserves are all working!" Mrs. Beach replied. "But only look at Adry! He sits in his chair under the live-oak yonder as peacefully as if he was born here. His big Bible is open upon his knees, of course. See, his finger, poor fellow! is slowly moving along the page. I wonder how much and how little he does know. It would be a greater loss to me—I do believe to us all—to lose him, than it would be to lose Edward or any of the children. And, oh me! I am so distressed to know whether this climate is going to agree with the children! Who can tell what dreadful complaints may be common here?"

"What a lesson of patience Adry is all the time!" said Mr. Beach, who was gazing at their afflicted boy. "You know he suffers greatly at times. There is a forbearance, a gentleness, a silent endurance about him, that has something to me of—I can hardly say what—about it."

"You remember yesterday at table?" asked the wife. "He is so fond of quince preserves. I had

helped him once. Before I knew it he had got Prosy to help him again. I had to take the preserves off his plate. I only said, 'Adry, they will make you sick;' and he looked up at me in such a mild, uncomplaining way, and said, 'Yes, mother,' and that was the last of it. But I lay awake half the night thinking, suppose one of those horrid tarantulas or centipedes should attack him while nobody was near?—he knows nothing about such things—what could he do?"

"Why will you make yourself so unhappy, Helen?" her husband said to her for the many thousandth time. "If you can say anything we ought to do in the matter, very well. If we are doing our very best now, why trouble ourselves about it?"

"Haven't you some apprehension—Egeria and Edward are reading under the trees, yonder; Bexy and Lotty are out where Delphy is carding her head—about brother's wife? Oh, you needn't fear Hubert will hear; he is down at the spring. He says very little about Araminty, as he calls her," continued Mrs. Beach, "but I fear—"

"My dear wife," Mr. Beach interrupted, "don't you remember what anxieties we both had, you especially, about your brother? All the way you

dreaded to see him, were ashamed of him, dreaded his influence on the boys—"

"But he is rougher than I ever dreaded he was," his wife defended herself.

"Rough? A man who has lived almost all his life in the woods, exposed to wind and sun and every privation—of course he is rough, Helen. He has great brown hands, a huge black beard; I could wish he would not have that tremendous hat for ever on his head. He uses a good many border phrases, too; hasn't much of the parlor refinement Edward and Egeria think so much about; yet a nobler man never lived!" and Mr. Beach spoke quite warmly.

"And you really hope that he is a Christian?" the wife asked, with pleasure, too, at hearing her brother so spoken of.

"From all I can learn he was, as you know we used to hear so often, one of the most desperate characters, even out here. You remember," continued Mr. Beach, "how terrified you used to be lest he should visit us in Baltimore. And you know how you almost scoffed at the idea when we heard he had joined the church. I believe it alarmed you more than anything that went before—"

"Yes, because I dreaded it was a desperate kind

of whim—that he meant some mischief or other," began Mrs. Beach.

"That was years ago. From all I can learn, he has been a steady and most earnest Christian ever since. One of the most remarkable cases of the power of religion I ever knew. It reminds me of the conversion, that we read about, of Africaner, the savage chief."

"Thank you; not quite as bad as that, I hope. You know," continued Mrs. Beach, "how it all happened. Father was an infidel and a violent man. When Robert came home from college expelled, he attempted to whip him. Did, for that matter. But Robert never entered the house again—ran away West; for many years we gave him up as dead. When we did hear from him it was anything but pleasant news. Every mail that came I was perfectly miserable lest there would be a letter saying he had killed somebody out here, perhaps had been put in the penitentiary, or even hung by lynch law. His joining the church actually shocked me. I remember I told you, 'What in the world do you suppose Robert is going to do now?' Even now I have my fears. Who can tell whether he will hold out? He is such a large, indolent, savage-looking creature with his hat, and horse,

and gun, and things; but you do not know what a terrible temper he has. Suppose anything should happen? Suppose he should strike one of our boys?"

Mr. Beach laughed aloud, so as to cause even Adry to raise his eyes from his book.

"Well, Helen, you are the most ingenious person in the invention of troubles! I suppose," the husband continued, more seriously, "that is what he meant when that wagoner tried to cheat me so in settling up for the hauling of our goods."

"I had not heard—" began Mrs. Beach.

"Oh, nothing," interrupted her husband. "The man was very abusive; I never heard such profanity. He overcharged me on a plain contract a large amount that I could not afford to lose. I do not know what I would have done if your brother had not come up just then. I saw that he was greatly excited; I feared more for him than I did for the matter. His brown face turned perfectly livid at the man's shameful attempt to swindle and at his horrible language."

"What did he do?" asked Mrs. Beach, greatly interested.

"Nothing. He put his rifle—he has it always in his hands, as some people have their toothpick or

handkerchief—into my hands, went up close to the man, placed the sum justly due him in his hands, all without saying one word, and the man put the money in his pocket, mounted his horse and drove off without another syllable. The only thing your brother said to me, as we walked back to the house, was, 'What I look at in religion, George, is not so much its power to push as at its power to hold in. Both are wonderful, but its holding-in power is tremendous!' It struck me as a singular idea."

"He was sure he would be home by midnight?" asked Mrs. Beach after a long silence.

"He said as he started, 'Oh I'll be certain sure to do that; it'll be Sunday *then*, you know!' That Bobasheela pony of his is as wonderful a horse as his master is a man," added Mr. Beach. "Well, Bexy, well, Lotty," he added, as the little girls, inseparable in coming and going, stood on either side of him, "has Delphy learned the Lord's prayer yet?"

"It was so funny, pa!" said Bexy, who somehow was first of the two. "Delphy would say it a little and then card a little—say a little more, then card her hair a little more!"

"And she made George Washington Andrew

Jackson Abraham Lincoln say it after her. It was so funny," said Lotty, "to hear him, Our Farder wot in hebbum, hallowum —"

"Hush, Lotty," said Mr. Beach.

"And she said, 'Ise understan' one part o' dat prayer great deal better sence freedom come,'" Bexy went on to say. "I asked her, 'What part, Aunt Delphy?' and she said, 'I ain't your aunty any longer, chile; freedom's changed all dat—no relation now; you's people an' we's people, now! Its de Our Farder part—*our* Farder; I kin see what dat means, now!"

"That will do, Bexy. Never mind, Lotty, you mustn't repeat what the servants say. I'm miserable lest you should never get over their way of talking. Where's Prosy? I do wish you children could learn to call her by her right name; she is getting too old for that absurd nickname."

But at this moment, Prosy and Hubert appeared, Hubert taking a seat on the steps beside them, while Prosy went on to see if Adry did not feel like walking a little.

"Where have you been? What have you been doing, Hubert?" asked his father.

"Down at the spring, sir, talking with Prosy about Uncle—Uncle Rob—Uncle Bob-bert. She

says he's glorious, or agreed with me in saying so, I forgot which. She thinks Adry likes him as well as we do. I wonder how she found it out? But he *is* splendid, isn't he, pa?"

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH WE ARE, IF POSSIBLE, BUSIER THAN EVER AT OAK-MOT.

YES, very much more so. It takes weeks to settle matters in the house. Every article of furniture has to be tried in this part and that of the room, until its best and final spot is settled upon. Every stool and settee and chair drifts about for some days before it can find its exact place. The engravings have to be arranged, taken down, and re-arranged on the walls. In a word, the former home of the family is the model upon which the new home and all in it has to be formed.

"Ah, me, brother Rob," Mrs. Beach has said to her brother quite often, "the home we left was far ahead of this in all respects."

"I am sure, Helen, nobody could wish to live in a better house. For my part, if people would only think so, I've very little use for a house—in winter, perhaps; and powder is drier under shelter. But I don't expect the women to agree with me;

we're different, of course, as I tell Araminty," her brother has replied.

"I do wish I could venture to ask him to lay aside that abominable hat of his; it makes me ill to see it on him from morning till night," Mrs. Beach thinks, but she only says—

"I dare say it is mere habit. Did you ever in all your life hear or read about anybody having so remarkable a story as Mr. Beach's? I have thought if some one would only sit down and write it out just as it took place, it would be more wonderful than any novel. I don't mean exaggerate or color—simply tell it as it was."

"It must be, indeed. George has never had time to tell it all to me—has promised to do so some day. What he gets to know of mine will be worse than you or he fear. Never mind! You would like to have all your's written out," asked her brother, "precisely as it took place?—each one's part told just as it is, nothing hid?"

"What a strange question!" replied the sister, pausing from her sewing to look into the brown face of the hunter. To herself she added, "Why don't he shave off that great beard? It makes me miserable to see it. Who can tell?—he might be really handsome under it!"

"It's a good thing none but God knows everybody exactly as he is," said her brother, solemnly. "Only God could bear it. Some day I would like to talk to you about it, sister. I would love to do so because it is about Him; but I hate to do so, too, because it is about myself so much. Never mind, now. He is such a wonderful God! And to think I lived full thirty-five years in the same world with Him and never really thought about Him once! I declare, sometimes, when I think of it— You see, I'm alone a good deal, riding over the prairie, nothing to do but to think. Often of nights I've laid down, with Bobasheela staked off to one side, in the grass; hunting all day, you know; comfortable as a king there on the prairie, with my head on my saddle, looking straight up for hours and hours at the stars—He made so many of them, so far off—thinking, thinking of God the Maker! It's nonsense for me to try—I can't begin to explain— That a Being like that great God should actually become a man—really, now, you know, become a man—and do what he did for us—! It puzzles me," continued the brother. "I say here are people—Christians, a thousand times longer Christians than I've been, and better in every sense—and yet they

talk about everything else in the world—weather, crops, health, sickness, politics—and never once speak about God! In fact, I've often been in such company and tried to turn the talk that way—to start them in it, you know—only to set them to talking, you see, and stop myself and listen; for it is so wonderful I never get tired myself thinking of it. Humph! The very best Christians seem almost as much frightened as wicked people the moment you hint at such a thing. They may be talking so fast and earnest just before on the least little bits of things—so interested, so much to say. The moment you mention God or religion, even in the least way, most of them stop talking, uneasy, nothing in the world to say but 'Yes,' 'Oh, certainly,' 'That is a fact,' and the like."

"You must remember," said Mr. Beach, who had now joined them on the front porch and took up the conversation from his wife, who sat sewing, silent, almost embarrassed, "that even Christians are of different temperaments—"

"So I've been told, often," interrupted the other, nodding his head reflectively, yet far from being satisfied.

"And it's only here that is so. In heaven all their temperaments, at least about religion, will be

the same, I suppose. I'm not blaming any one, mind," Uncle Bob continued eagerly. "The fault is with me. To all others religion is an old story. A good many have heard hardly anything else since they were born—from their parents, in Sunday-school, whole years at church every Sunday, reading the Bible all their life and the like. Our father, you know, Helen, was an infidel. From the day I ran away you had different training from what we had together up till then. And I lived so long in the woods—for so long among people—— I don't suppose such people as the Meggars, for instance, ever had really and truly any more idea of God—belief in God as being a real person, I mean—than that dog Sour there has. Religion came upon me as sudden-like as on Saul, riding to that city. And somehow it is as fresh to me now as it was the first day. Old things have passed away; everything has become new. I don't see," Mr. Long continued, pulling at his beard thoughtfully as he spoke, "how it ever can become old to me. Maybe so—perhaps—I dare say; only I don't see how it can, now. Oh, never mind. Well, Hubert, what is it?"

"I didn't mean to interrupt you, uncle," said Hubert, who had been listening somewhat impa-

tiently, "only you've never had time to tell us what that was about Sam Clarke."

"That I began to tell you about when we were cutting up that first deer meat? It is not much. We were talking about joking people," continued his uncle, by way of explanation to the rest. "Oh, as to poor Sam, the case was this: It was during the war. Sam was a member of a cavalry company. They were in camp at the time—nothing doing; so Sam got a furlough to go home and be married. He had to be married just then because he had been intending to be married when his company marched, and the girl's people had all died, and she had no home of her own;—something of the kind. They all liked Sam—a small-made, bright-eyed, quick-spoken, lively fellow as you would wish to see, not more than eighteen or twenty. He was back from his furlough days before his time was up; but the boys had arranged to joke him for leaving at all. One night they caught him asleep, put him on his horse with his head to the tail, and drummed him through the camp. Only as a joke, you see?"

"Well?" said Hubert, eagerly.

"He has been crazy ever since," added the uncle—"a raving maniac. I saw him in the Asylum

myself—his head shaved, fastened hand and foot. For life, the doctor said."

"And his wife?" asked Egeria, who had joined them. In fact, wherever Uncle Bob was you were pretty sure to see all the younger part of the family.

"Killed her dead, poor thing! And perhaps it was better it should," replied the uncle. "That joke made more tears than fun, like a good many I've known. My idea of a joke," he continued, "is, as I told you that day, that it should be a joke all round. It's a cheating game if all the fun is on your side."

"If I could only stop long enough to think," said Hubert, promptly.

"Hah! You take it to yourself, do you? In that case I need say no more. Besides," continued his uncle, "it is time for us to get back to our branding."

It was only during a little rest after dinner that all this conversation took place. Uncle Bob had been coming and going between Oak-Mot and his own place, distant some thirty miles, as he thought he was needed—growing in the respect and affection of his relatives every day, as he seemed to be growing in attachment to them.

For some days now he had made his home with

them, to direct in the spring branding—a matter of which all were ignorant, except Juan, who was altogether too much of a Mexican to be relied upon.

More than a year before, Mr. Beach had written to his brother-in-law to select and stock and "improve" a place for him, furnishing him with the money necessary therefor. Mr. Long—and it seems so formal to call him so when not a soul in all that region knew him as other than "Brown Bob Long"—had thrown himself into the matter with the liveliest interest, and by reason of his years of experience in such things had made Oak-Mot such a ranche—that is, stock farm—as was the admiration of all the country around.

"What did you have the corral made round for, uncle?" Hubert asked, as they now walked toward it from the house.

"How stupid you are, Hubert!" Edward had replied. "Can't you see it is to keep the horses from crowding into a corner and breaking the fence down, as well as to keep them from hurting themselves against the corners as they run about? You may as well ask why the fence is ten feet high."

"Oh, that is to keep them from jumping over. And there are four corrals—one for the stables, one for the mules, one for the colts, and one for the

mares; and each covers more than an acre, to have plenty of room; they have gates, the one into the other, to shift the horses about as we like. I'm not so stupid as you think!" said Hubert, warmly.

"What is the reason," Uncle Bob asked Edward, stopping beside a huge live-oak, the great trunk of which made a curve not more than ten feet from the ground, and then, running along parallel to the earth for thirty feet, rested its farthest end actually on the ground,—"what is the reason this tree does not grow straight up, like those red cedars we saw in the river bottom?"

Edward pushed back his hat from his brow, for he had by this time seen the necessity, on account of the sun, of wearing one with a brim almost as broad as his uncle's, and tried to think. "I declare I can't say," he replied, at last.

"Hubert?" the uncle exclaimed.

"Wait a while, uncle," replied Hubert; "I'm great on riddles. Give me a while to think."

"Think away, both of you, while we are at work. You may call it a race between you, if you please, to see which reaches the reason first. Not that I like racing," the uncle added a moment after; "it may improve the breed of horses, but it ruins the breed of men, and I think *I* ought to know."

The order of the work in the corral was this. Several days before, Uncle Bob, assisted by Hubert, Edward, Alec, the black man, Delphy's husband, and Juan, mounted on good horses, had scoured all the prairie for twenty miles round, herding up all the horses belonging to Mr. Beach. Each saddle had wooden stirrups with leathers six inches broad to protect the legs from thorns in breaking a way on horseback through the chapperal, or thorny undergrowth. The pommel of each saddle was very high, with a round top as big as a saucer. This was to pass the rope around by way of purchase in holding a cow or horse caught at the other end. When that rope was of plaited raw-hide, it was called a *lariat*. When it was made of spun horse-hair instead, it was known as a *cabris*. Each horseman rode with a coil of one or the other of these, one end tied around his horse's neck, the rest passed under the saddle-flap and stirrup-leather, and tied in a neat coil by buckskin thongs behind the saddle. That was when there was no intention of "roping" anything, but only to graze the horse ridden. In that case, all that you had to do was to untie the coil from behind your saddle as you rode, and drop it on the ground when you got off. If your horse was a well-trained one, he would

graze quietly, drawing out the rope after him as he did so. When you had shot your deer, or eaten your dinner, or taken your nap—whatever it was—you could easily catch the knotted end of the rope trailing along through the grass, and so regain your horse and your seat. If your horse was not trained, you would have to tie the end to the root of some *mesquit*, a thorny sort of shrub found all over the prairies.

Both Edward and his uncle wore field-glasses, slung in a case around the shoulder, so that from every eminence, as they rode, they could pick out their own brand among the *caballados*, or groups of horses, far away. Sometimes the whole caballado would have the Beach brand, and then it would be driven in a body home. Oftener, that brand would be mingled with animals of dozens of other brands. In this case they would have, with a world of shouting and riding among the caballado, to separate their own brand and drive it off. Very often the only thing to be done was to drive the whole drove of horses to the corral at home, there pick out their own brand, and turn the rest out. Or, if any other corral was nearer, it would do just as well to make use of it for this purpose, because in Texas everybody's corral, by common consent,

is at the service of anybody who may chance to need it for a time.

This may be dull reading, as you say, but it was anything but dull in the doing. The air was so bright and pure, and the exercise so exciting, that Edward and Hubert laughed and shouted, and rode full tilt over the rolling prairie, spreading boundlessly around them, like birds that had just come to the use of their wings.

"Why, it is as good as flying," shouted Hubert, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes. "The prairie is as broad and free as the sky! How the wind whistles past me! I'm the eagle soaring toward the sun, and Jim, here, is the wings!"

And Jim, Hubert's horse, seemed to enjoy it as much as his master, as they dashed off after a rabbit with ears six inches long that jumped up just then.

"You didn't catch the 'sun' you were soaring after, at last," Edward said, as Hubert came tearing back again. "Hah, Mr. Eagle!"

"Might as well try to catch the wind!" said Hubert, all in a boil of excitement; "but I saw a caballado, uncle, from that rise yonder. There's a black, two bays, and six roans with our brand."

Now, this was the Beach brand, and I hope the engraver will be painfully careful to have it exactly

right; the least mistake will make it somebody else's brand.

This is the brand. It is upon the fore shoulder, on the right of each horse, covering a space of twelve inches. It took weeks for the new-comers to learn it, but when they did—and it is not harder than a letter of the Hebrew alphabet to remember—they could tell it at a glance, and farther off, too, than you would imagine.

Every evening for a week the party would come riding up to the corral with from ten to one hundred horses of all sorts, colors and sizes. These would be safely secured, and the next morning, after a night of sound sleep, they would be off for more, to come dashing home at evening again with another herd thundering along before them.

The colts, some not more than a week old, were collected in one pen. From this pen there ran a long alley, made of posts, boarded strong and high, ending in a queer sort of strong box, in which the colt, though standing up, was so secured by bars as not to be able to move hardly an inch one way or the other. Meanwhile Juan was ready to let each unhappy but powerless colt out of its box, by slipping out a bar or two the moment it was branded.

Hubert keeping the alley, leading to the box from the pen, filled with a line of crowding and struggling colts, pressing on, sorely against their will, toward the box to be branded in turn. Edward had charge of the furnace, a sort of metal box full of glowing coals, with a handle like a water-bucket, easily carried about as needed. Only the uncle handled the branding-iron, his hand protected from its heat, as it was taken glowing from Edward's furnace for each fresh colt, by a corn-cob stuck like a sheath on the handle. The queer figure which made the brand was not much longer than your hand, spreading out with the growth of the colt till it became as large as already mentioned. Standing outside the box, the uncle would apply the iron, almost red-hot from the furnace, to the shoulder of the colt confined within, only while you could count five, through an opening made for the purpose. A desperate struggle, a smell of burning hair, and the colt was freed from his prison, marked for life.

But it would be vain to try to describe the confusion and shouting, crowding, talking, laughing, and running about which went with it all. And the other corrals almost packed with horses of all ages and sizes, kicking, biting, neighing, rearing

up and racing round and round, as wild, almost, as so many deer.

"This is a hundred times better than college or being in the city!" said Edward, as he stood by his uncle. "I know I will like the business. I never enjoyed myself more in all my life!"

"The happiest man this world ever saw was Adam in Eden, among the trees and animals," said the uncle. "The nearer we get back to that the happier we are, of course."

"But he didn't hunt, you know?" suggested the nephew.

"No, no, that is a fact; I never thought of it before—singular!" and it was said regretfully, too, for hunting was, in this uncle's opinion, the noblest and happiest occupation—except one which we will try to mention as soon as possible—on earth.

"And he had to labor after his fall. Yes," the uncle continued, as he rested a moment from branding another and a particularly fine black colt, "and you'll find the care of stock is not all as funny as this I'm showing you now; next season you and Hubert will have to do all this yourself. Your iron mustn't be either too hot or too cold. If you brand too slight, it won't last. If you brand too deep, the worms will get in. They will get in the

mark, do all you can, and you will have from to-day to fasten every colt up here and examine and doctor them as they need. Work? You'll have to live in the saddle, riding round after your horses. They'll scatter as soon as they're out of the corral, like pop-corn from a hot skillet, over the whole prairie for fifty miles around. If you leave a colt unbranded, good-bye to it! People around here are mighty apt to clap their brand on anything they find without one. I hate to see other people's colts sucking my mares, or other people's calves running with my cows;—other people's, you know, if their brand on them is a sign. It's a habit the people have, some of them—like drinking and swearing. Let in another, Hubert."

"And now," the uncle continued, after the last colt had been let loose to tell its mother the story of its wrongs, "we've done a good day's work; one hundred and thirty-two colts branded in one day—fine, healthy ones, worth a fortune ten years hence, if cared for. Four hundred and four was the number the brand your father bought calls for—number of head in all; and we've herded up three hundred and seventy-two head. Do you know, Hubert, the title your father holds them

by?" he asked of that nephew, who had been leading Bexy and Lotty around the corral, pointing out to them, through the cracks in the fence, his favourites among the plunging and neighing mob therein.

"I suppose he got some paper from old Joe Swanks, from whom he bought the brand," Hubert replied.

"And who did *he* get *his* title from?"

"Oh, from the man he bought them of, or by having raised them," Edward answered.

"No, but where did the right begin back of all?"

"Why, uncle, Adry here could tell you that," said Prosy, who had joined them with Adry in his regular evening exercise, and now stood among them with Adry beside her and leaning upon her shoulder; and it was only after a long silence, during which no one had ventured a reply, that Prosy spoke.

"Don't you remember in the Bible, 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and—' Go on, dear Adry."

"'And have dominion—'" Adry went on with the passage, very slowly, with his eyes fixed in Prosy's, as if he read the words there—"'over the

fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'"

"Exactly!" said the uncle. "Adry's the one, at last!"

"Oh, if you only start him—give Adry a real good start, you know—he can say the rest almost anywhere in the Bible," cried Prosy, with eagerness. "It's only Adry's body that is so weak; and who cares anything for the *body*"—Prosy is contemptuous of it in her manner—"if the soul is right?"

"Precisely," said her uncle, with equal animation. "Now we will see," he added, "who of you all can tell why this live-oak grows its trunk almost level with the ground, instead of straight up. I'll catch a pet bear for the one that can tell me."

"I am sure I don't know," Edward began, very promptly, as if, had he wanted to know, he very easily could.

"This never-ending wind blows them so," Hubert suggested, after quite a silence. A pet bear was not to be had every day.

"No, for then they would all bend one way. Say, Bexy, Lotty?" replied the uncle.

"Oh, we're afraid of bears," said Bexy for both, and as reason enough for not telling.

"Prosy?" said her uncle, turning to her with an inquiring look.

"Stop, uncle. Now, Adry, uncle says what makes these trees grow so funny," replied Prosy, turning upon her brother, looking him full in the large, questioning eyes fixed upon her, and speaking very slowly. "Think, Adry;" and Prosy repeated the question, looked lovingly in his face with the uplifted finger, as of a very old grandmother indeed, and with working lips, as if repeating something to herself.

"Hah! that ain't fair. He can read your lips," said Hubert.

"Well, then, I won't," said Prosy, drawing up her rosy lips into a hard knot, but still looking at Adry.

"God—made—them—so," he said at last, very slowly, and never taking his eyes off of his sister's face.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Prosy, turning in triumph upon the rest.

"Yes, it's Adry's lips speak, but it's Prosy's soul somehow speaks by them," complained Hubert. "Oh, Adry understands *her*, of course. I do be-

lieve he doesn't think there's anybody in the world but Prosy."

But his sister was off, leading Adry over his appointed course of walking.

"What kind of soil is under the trees, uncle?" asked Prosy on her return.

"Limestone rock, under a few inches of earth," replied her uncle, with kindling eyes.

"Then the roots can't go straight down, but have to run along level with the ground under it, and the tree has to be above ground the same as it is under ground, I suppose," suggested Prosy, very modestly.

"And you all say Prosy is so stupid! Hah! I know who will get the pet bear," exclaimed Uncle Bob.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH—WELL, YOU MUST SEE FOR YOURSELF.

"IT is perfectly amazing how the time flies here in Texas!" Mr. Beach—not the first nor the last to do it—remarked at the supper-table one evening after this. "Here it is six months since we arrived at Oak-Mot."

"Yes, sir, and I'm afraid Aurelia Jones would not know me, as I often say to her in my letters. Instead of reading and embroidering, raising chickens, making butter, galloping about on horseback. Look at my hands!—almost as brown and as big as Uncle Bob's!" and Egeria held up both hands for examination.

"And look at Bexy and Lotty, Mr. Beach," Mrs. Beach added—"great fat things! Brown? Any one could tell their relation to my brother at one look. It keeps me perfectly miserable. If I tell them to keep their sun-bonnets on once, I do a dozen times a day."

"It's the wind, ma," pleaded Bexy for both.

"It's always blowing, and it will blow them off. I like it," she added.

"And Edward there," continued his mother. "I don't mind so much about Hubert—he was always such a sort of wild animal—"

("Monkey, exactly," suggested Edward.)

"That I never expected more from him. But who," continued Mrs. Beach, "would ever have supposed Edward would have grown into such a great, rough—"

"Strong and healthy youth?" Mr. Beach added for her.

"But it distresses me to death to see him so careless of his appearance. When we came to Oak-Mot," Mrs. Beach continued, "he was so particular about his collars; was wretched if his hat was not brushed, his boots blacked—"

"His hair oiled, his white handkerchief perfumed," Hubert was so rude as to add.

"And now look at him!" continued his mother. "He has only to go on to be his Uncle Bob, as he calls him, over again."

"I wish he may be as thoroughly good, as devotedly pious and estimable a man." Mr. Beach added, warmly. "I do not fancy his being called by people Brown Bob Long any more than you do,

my dear, and he is rough, very rough indeed; but a nobler Christian gentleman I never met."

"He has taught me to shoot and to swim, to make as beautiful *cabris* as anybody, and to ride, too, as well as—no, not as well as—Juan," Hubert stopped himself to say. "Of course nobody can ride as well as a Mexican."

"Except monkeys," suggested Edward. "But as to uncle," he went on to say, "I never met any one like him. Hubert and I have been more with him than anybody else, and I have had more talk with him than all the rest. I never get tired. Always something new and fresh and strong. And I do believe he is more of a Christian, too, than any of you dream of. It is the one thing uppermost in his mind all the time—so happy too!"

"You remember when we broke Thunder Storm?" Hubert began.

"Yes," Edward said; "Hubert had taken such a fancy to that black—"

"Oh, it was kicking and plunging so in the corral when we had the horses up branding," Hubert interrupted; "never still one moment, biting the other horses, tearing around the corral with his head in the air, his mane and tail flying, not a speck of white about him, you know."

"As if they didn't see you on Thunder Storm every day!" Edward remonstrated, and added: "Uncle roped him for Hubert. Such a time we had, after we passed the lariat around the tree in the corral, pulling him up to it by main force, as if we were dragging up a heavy bucket out of a well."

"You see, Thunder Storm would plant both fore hoofs straight out before him in the ground and fall back on his haunches—pulling back until his neck was almost gone! Then," Hubert continued, "he would make a sudden bolt off to one side! Then he would whirl and—kick? I should think so! I tell *you* it was all we could do to keep a turn of the rope around the tree. Oh, he is such a beauty! But he was prettiest when he was so wild."

"Because you are always on his back—never give the poor thing a moment's rest," said Egeria.

"Stop! We are talking about Uncle Bob. When we had wound him at last—only three years old, you see—right up to the tree by main force, uncle tied him there—" Edward began.

"Hands and feet," Hubert interrupted his brother. "Two days. He couldn't stir an inch, poor fellow! Nothing to eat or drink. All he

could do was to switch his beautiful tail and flash his eyes as if he said, 'Hah! you just wait till I get loose!' It made me cry to see him. It was cruel."

"Now this is just what *we* need, uncle told us that day," Edward said. "We are wilder, a long sight, by our nature, he said, than this poor horse is by his, curveting and kicking and plunging headlong. It's being tied up and tied down by some great trouble, and held still and starved a little, that we need to tame us—at least, the worst of us. Sometimes the lariat for us is sickness or a hurt, which lays us abed for months. Loss of all a man has, death of somebody he loves most—something. And something severe." Edward quoted from memory.

"And when he untied him to lead to the water-hole, it was the funniest thing I ever saw," Hubert added, laughing at the memory of it. "You see, Alec is so big and heavy, uncle told *him* to take hold of the end of the rope; Thunder Storm was weakened so by want of food and water we thought he would lead. We'd been rubbing his nose, too, and talking to him so! But I saw it in his eye. Thunder Storm didn't say a word until the last knot was untied; then he was off like an arrow.

You ought to have seen Alec holding on at the other end! He put *his* forepaws in the ground to hold back! And they went—whiz!" But here Hubert had to stop for laughing.

"Of course, Thunder Storm went off in a cloud of dust, dragging a hundred feet of lariat behind him. But uncle was after him on his Bobasheela in a moment. You ought to have seen them," Edward continued, "after uncle had got the end of the dragging rope and was on his horse again! It was all he could do—"

"Uncle had to keep Bobasheela spinning round on his hind hoofs like a top. You see," Hubert continued, as well as he could for laughing, "uncle had to keep Bobasheela's head toward Thunder Storm; if that raving, tearing thing had got a pull on the lariat to one side of uncle or the other, much less a backward pull, it would have dragged uncle and his horse over. It was only by having the strain upon Bobasheela with his fore hoofs planted straight out they could hold him. And, every now and then, when Thunder Storm would rush to one side or the other, uncle would give—oh, wasn't it beautiful?—a little twitch of the lariat, just *so*," and Hubert made an up-and-down gesture of his hands to explain; "and over Thunder

Storm went like a ball, nothing but his four hoofs in the air, he flat on his back!"

"Uncle must have worked that way with him for a good hour. At last," Edward continued, "he tamed him, so as to lead him up to the corral as quiet as a lamb."

"Because he had become so very tired," Hubert explained.

"The moment uncle had him tied up to the tree he told him," Edward continued, "'You saw you *had* it to do, boy; why didn't you just do it at once? What's the *use?*' Then he told us about that big dog he once saw led by a rope behind a wagon. The dog's neck was all raw and bleeding with pulling back. He *had* to go as those big wheels went, uncle said, if he had only made up his mind to that, and trotted quietly along. As it was, he was dreadfully hurt, and had to go at last. That is the way with us, he said; we say we won't do this, and Providence says we must; and we pull back and resist all we can, and have to go at last; and all our sufferings are just because we did not quietly go at first. He has such an interesting way of telling us things. It's preaching, if you look at what he means, all the time; but it is in so natural a way—"

"And you remember what he said about Thunder Storm afterwards?" Hubert interrupted.

"Horses are better than we are, he told us, in this, that all they want is to know what we want them to do. 'They don't understand us. You must be kind and firm, and get them to know what you want; they are so intelligent they will learn very fast if you are only patient and never get into a passion with them. We know well enough what we ought to do, but won't do it. I had to work so with him,' uncle told us, 'to make him understand. God made you his king,' he told us. 'Thunder Storm soon knows that; all you have to do is to love him and be patient with his mind, or whatever it is, which is not as good as yours, and teach him, and he will obey you all he can.'"

"But what amused me most," Egeria said, "was the funny way Thunder Storm followed your horse, Edward, with his nose to his tail."

"Oh, the reason of that was this," Hubert broke in: "next morning, after uncle had tied him up to the tree again all night, for a little more affliction, as he said, he made me get on Edward's horse—my Jim that was; not half the horse Thunder Storm is. Then he untied Thunder Storm, made a loop of the rope that was around his neck, so as to fasten tight

around his nose, too; then tied it close to the end of Jim's tail, and so passed the rope under my saddle-leathers and into my hand. I was really frightened," Hubert added; "I was sure Thunder Storm would bolt away the moment he was loose, and pull Jim backward all to pieces. But he wouldn't let me get off. As soon as he had finished tying, he gave me my riding whip, you know, and off I started. Would you believe it? Thunder Storm came on after Jim, with his nose at the end of his tail, like a pet lamb, and I rode miles over the prairie that way. Next day, uncle bridled him, put a saddle on him, got softly on—"

"And he went as fast as he could with his nose to Jim's tail; Edward was riding Jim, you remember. The faster Jim went to get rid of him, the faster Thunder Storm came on behind with his nose to his tail, as if he was tied there still. The most ridiculous sight! I wrote to Aurelia about it." It was Egeria that spoke.

"'That was the force of habit,' uncle said," Hubert continued. "'Just that way people steal, drink, swear, loaf, gamble and everything that is bad, by habit. Do it to-day because they did it yesterday. Habit! And they follow each other in a long string from the creation of the world,

fastened one after another in the same habits.' He said it reminded him of the Mexican *vaqueros*, who travel in long lines on horses, every horse with his nose tied to the end of the horse's tail before him. A man swears, breaks the Sabbath, does everything that is bad, because his grandfather and father did so; and his children and grand-children the same after him!"

"Tell it all, Hubert," Edward added. "'Habit, but not habit only. One's own heart, too,' uncle said. 'You may train a fish to do things in the water, but not to do anything out of the water, because water is its nature; it can do nothing with any amount of training against its nature. So you can train Thunder Storm to do almost anything, provided it is on the ground. You can't make him form the habit of flying like an eagle, because it is not his nature to live in the air.'"

"But I don't see what it all means," Mrs. Beach said. "It distresses me to death to hear you talking everlastingly about horses, horses, horses. It's horses, and nothing but horses, and fillies and colts, and this brand and that brand, from morning till night. I'm sick of the very sound!"

"Why, it's our business, mother," Edward said; "just as merchants talk about nothing but goods.

As to what uncle meant, it was this," and Edward coloured a little and spoke more seriously—a kind of change in Edward all felt, though they hardly knew in what respect: "'You can make a man form bad habits easily, because his heart is corrupt by nature. But no one,' uncle told us, 'could make a man form good habits any more than Hubert could train Thunder Storm to fly, because it is contrary to our nature.'"

"Well?" added Mrs. Beach much interested, with some surprise, too, at Edward's interest in such things.

"In our case there has to be a Power from above to change our nature. I can't remember his exact words," Edward continued, still more seriously. "'If we are to form good habits, or to leave the ground and take to the air, it must be by a change in our nature; not exactly,' he said, 'like turning Thunder Storm into an eagle, but as great a change. In some senses a more wonderful change, because it is the changing of a depraved heart into a holy heart—the two most opposite things in the world.' And he went on to explain how clear it is that only God could work such a change in our nature. When a man had made a habit, too, of his evil doings, it was, he said, like a double nature to

sin—the man doubly unable to save or change himself. It was all so new to me! I found out afterward it was only conversion, a man's becoming a Christian, he was telling me about. But I never thought of such matters before."

"I'm sure you've heard sermons all your life," Egeria began.

"Yes, but not like uncle's. Oh, never mind; I did not intend to speak of it." Edward added, colouring a good deal.

And Edward might have told of a good many more conversations between his uncle and himself, riding together over the prairies. One day in special, when, after talking together for some time, seated on a log in the "river bottom," as the dense forest along the river was called, uncle and nephew had kneeled down side by side on the dead leaves, and, in words whose simple fervour had drawn tears from his eyes, the uncle had prayed to God to give his nephew that new heart which He only could give, and which all must have or perish for ever.

And Adry could have told of an afternoon when, not a week before, the uncle and Edward had come in tired from horse-hunting, and had seated themselves upon a felled log beside his wheeled chair. Edward, who took as little notice of his afflicted

brother as possible, was for passing on to the house instead.

"Oh no, Eddy; let's rest here a while," his uncle had said, and, seating himself near Adry, had begun to fan himself with his "preposterous hat," as Egeria called it in her letters to Aurelia. Now, this uncle had a kind of way which carried with it the consent and obedience of those with whom he had lived. They call it eloquence in a public speaker. Soldiers have enthusiasm for generals like this uncle—gladly and earnestly do all they order. At any rate, Edward took his seat opposite his uncle on the broad stump of the tree, now cut down, upon which his uncle sat glowing and dusty from their long ride.

"How are you to-day, Adry?" The uncle said it in slow words, gently, almost indifferently. Adry had just wakened out of a little nap, sitting in his chair, and looked brighter than usual. His poor, emaciated limbs were coiled up about the tongue and rounds of his seat—half-wagon, half-chair. His sunken chest was stooped forward, his long, slender arms lying in his lap, the small childish hands clasped together. He raised his eyes as his uncle spoke, looked at him exactly as a child of six would look bashfully at a stranger.

"Well to-day, Adry?"

Edward did not know that his uncle could speak in such low, soft tones, he was so big and determined and rough in appearance.

"Very well," Adry said at last, looking up and speaking slowly.

"What pretty hands you have!" the uncle said, after a while, very quietly—for he knew how nervous Adry was—and taking one of the small, helpless hands in his.

Now the only thing in the world Adry was proud of was his hands. They were beautifully formed, perfectly clean and white, the nails nicely cut; and it was no wonder—they never did anything but rest on Prosy's shoulder or hold the big Bible. This last Adry had instinctively closed them upon, lying wide open upon his lap. A little nervous about that treasure, his only one, Adry always was.

"What beautiful hands you have, Adry!" his uncle repeated, as they lay in his, in strong contrast, too, for the uncle's hands were remarkably large and brown—"like Bruin's," Bexy and Lotty said, for Uncle Bob had caught a bear for Prosy as he promised, and it was chained to a live-oak near the corral, and called Bruin.

"Yes, I think so," Adry said, simply and with a pleased look.

"Adry, wouldn't you like to run about?" his uncle asked, Adry's eyes upon him. "Run about?" he repeated to his nephew, with a gesture of his hand over the yard around.

"No; I walk with Prosy," was the slow reply.

"But ride a horse? Wouldn't you like to ride a nice, easy horse?"

"No," said Adry, with the shudder as of a little girl, closing his eyes as he did so. "No," he repeated; "I walk with Prosy."

"Adry," asked his uncle at last, "do you sleep sweetly at night?"

"After my prayers? Yes. I sleep near Prosy."

"Who made you?"

Adry's eyes are fixed with such inquiring glances upon the questioner that he is obliged to repeat the question:

"Who—made—you—Adry?" slowly and very distinctly.

"God made me," with some amazement, at such a demand, on Adry's part.

"Where is God, Adry?" after a while.

Adry listens with surprise at such a question. The next moment, with his large eyes full upon

his uncle, he raises his long, slender arms, the finger-tips of each white hand touching those of the other, as far as he can above his head; then, very slowly, he parts his hands, bringing them down and back again upon the Bible open in his lap, but making, in doing so, the largest circle he can on either side of him; as he does it saying the one word, "Here!" But the gesture spoke for itself. It was the only way Adry could express his hearty belief that "In Him we live and move and have our being."

"Do you love Jesus, Adry?" after another silence.

Adry can hardly bring himself to believe his uncle is in earnest in asking such a question as that. He answers at last, and as if he could not have understood him—

"Yes!"

"And—Prosy," he adds, a moment after.

"Why, what does the Bible say about Jesus? Any verse, Adry?"

But Adry looks anxiously around.

"He means that Prosy must start him," Edward coldly explains.

"Oh, that is it? Listen, Adry," and the uncle begins, "'God so loved—'"

"'The world,'" Adry continues promptly, "'that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;'" but Adry says it with a feeling in his tones and a glow in his cheeks that no writing can describe—in some way, which you will have to imagine for yourself, the ardour of an aged Christian with all the artlessness of a little child.

"What do you think, Edward?" asked the uncle after a while. "You know more of him than I do. Is Adry a true Christian?"

"Why, I suppose so," replied Edward—"as far as *he* can be anything, poor fellow!"

"Suppose Adry was to die to-night, I wonder if he would go to heaven?" the uncle muses, as if to himself.

"I dare say. He is better fitted to be there than here," Edward makes answer.

"It isn't his fault getting into this—this sickness?" the uncle asks.

"No, I suppose not," reluctantly.

"Nor that he doesn't die?"

"Of course not."

"God has some reason for letting him be just what he is?"

"I suppose so."

"And for leaving him with the family so long?"

"You might say that if he was an idiot—worse than he is!" exclaims Edward.

"But, I *do* wonder! Does God have just as much some good reason for letting him live along in the family as He has for letting Egeria or any of the children, or your father or mother, or—you?"

Edward has nothing to say.

"I never met such a case before," the uncle went on to add after some silence, during which Adry's eyes were fastened inquiringly upon him. "This poor Adry, as you all call him, is the purest—suppose we say *whitest*—Christian I ever knew. You see, I've often talked with him. He is like as if an angel had got shot—a wing broken, say—and so lies bleeding on the ground here, when he ought to be there. God must mean wonderful well to you all to let him stay so among you."

"Do you really think so?" asked Edward, with astonishment, for he had always regarded Adry rather as a thing than a person. The strong sense of his uncle—broad, backwoods sense as it was—made this opinion of Adry the more amazing as coming from such a man.

"And to think that his very meekness and

patience and humility should make any one despise this pure soul dragging its poor, broken body along! Never mind! Adry, listen! 'Whosoever shall humble himself—'"

"'As this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,'" continued Adry, taking the passage from his uncle's lips, with all simplicity.

"'And whoso shall—'" the uncle began.

"'Receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me,'" Adry added.

"Don't say anything, Egeria; hush, Prosy," the uncle said to these, who had now joined the group at the log. "Only this one more, Adry," he continued. "'But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me—'"

"'It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea,'" Adry added slowly, and with his eyes now upon Prosy, by his side, instead.

"Oh, uncle, you've no idea how well Adry can remember if you only give him a start—only a little start, you know," Prosy said, after quite a silence, proud of her charge. "Listen, Egy; listen, uncle! It's ten minutes of supper yet. Now, Adry!" and Prosy held up her wise forefinger before her brother. Only a round-faced, freckled

girl of fourteen, is Prosy, clothed in a simple calico, with a little linen apron and big pockets therewith. Only an ordinary, fresh-looking, sun-burned country girl. Nothing in Prosy remarkable at all. She had a pleasant face, but she said so very little, not at all smart—very prosy indeed! It must have been because Adry, poor fellow! was so childish himself that he cared for her as he did. "Well matched!" Edward had said—yes, and Egeria too—of them, and had repeated it very often.

"But stop a moment!" Prosy says with great importance. "It's a great secret between Adry and me. Mrs. Jones, where we came from, you know, lost her little boy, Charley; he was *such* a beautiful boy! Egeria wrote some lines—don't get mad, Egy; I found them weeks ago, when we were unpacking. Listen, Adry! It was weeks ago; it was while we were walking every day. We had nothing else to do, you know. It's been the greatest secret. But this is as good a time as any. Now, Adry!" and Prosy held up her finger and began—

"'There plays about no other lips
A smile like that whose death-eclipse
Has left me dark!'"

"'Cease, yearning pain!
That smile shall glad you there again—'"

added Adry, his eyes anxiously fastened on Prosy's eager face.

"It happens so the verses give him a real good start. Now, Adry!" and Prosy continued:

"'Not like another voice on earth,
In all its tones of grief or mirth!
For ever hushed—'"

"'Twill greet you fair,
The first of all the music there!'"

Adry added.

"You see, the lines pretend two people are talking, anyhow. One telling about poor Charley; the other, comforting. Now, Adry!" and Prosy began again:

"Hush, Egy; only this one verse more, Adry:

"'Face, feature, form, grasp, glance and tone
Peculiar to our child alone!
Lost! lost!'"

"'The very one you claim
There waits to greet you—*you* the same!'"

Adry adds, painfully.

"But," added Prosy, "you can't think what work it was to make Adry say that last *you* right!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH WE COME UPON THE WORST OF THE REPTILES ABOUT OAK-MOT.

I AM afraid, dear reader, that you are not as well acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Beach as, by this time, I had hoped you would be. Truth is, we have been so hurried by the much that has to be done at Oak-Mot since our arrival there as not to have had time for anything else.

This beautiful November morning is as good a time as any to have you take a look at Mrs. Beach as she sits yonder on the front porch. We have to mention this part of the house so often because, in Texas, a family spends the largest part of its time thereon. In fact, people go into the house at all only to eat and sleep. Not always to eat, either; for, at Hubert's earnest request, the family have had Delphy spread the tea-table under what Egeria has named the Queen of the live-oaks—the most magnificent of all the trees of the mot in which the house is built, not fifty feet in front, and with a top shaped like an umbrella. Nor do Edward and

Hubert patronize the inside of the house as a sleeping-place even. At their uncle's suggestion, after trying their room up stairs for a few nights, they have spread a pallet for themselves upon the front porch and sleep there, and sweetly too, every night.

"I never knew sleep could be such a delicious thing," Hubert declares. "I always just lay down at night and went to sleep because I was tired. I got up in the morning and thought no more about it—only sleeping, you know. But out here on the front porch, or with uncle on the prairie, sleeping is like eating a pudding. I mean it is like *enjoying* something!"

"Why don't you say it is a luxury?" Egeria suggests, being better read than Hubert.

"But it keeps me perfectly wretched," Mrs. Beach remarks, "lest you should be bitten some night by one of those horrid snakes or things. Don't you remember that centipede?"

"How we were sitting at breakfast that morning and heard something go scr-a-tch, scr-a-tch on the wall?" Hubert said; "and sure enough there was a centipede ten inches long! and you know—"

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Bexy, "and how we like to have upset the breakfast in jumping up! and how, when you came back with the tongs, it was gone!"

"Yes, but," urged Lotty, "Hubert lifted up the wall-paper where it was torn, and there it was all coiled up under it like a snake!"

"I'm glad I dropped it into that jar instead of the kitchen fire," said Hubert; "and what a joke I had on Uncle Bob! He was telling us about Toad and Zed killing themselves with whisky. When he was done, I told him we had somebody die in our house from spirits, and he was so astonished—"

"Until I told him about your dropping the centipede alive into the spirits, making him so drunk it killed him," said Bexy.

"Uncle isn't afraid of them," Hubert urged. "He woke one morning after sleeping all night on the prairie, and there was a tarantula as big as a saucer just by where his neck had been all night; and that time he woke feeling something crawling up under his pants. He just made a grab of it off of him," Hubert added, with a gesture to show how it was done, "pants, centipede and all, held it tight away from his flesh till he could get his knife out of his sheath, and then cut his handful of cloth and centipede all away and threw it down. Twelve inches, he said it was; and he told me he hoped I said my prayers every night; I told him

yes, of course. 'But I don't see you kneel down by your saddle to say them when you are with me going to sleep on the prairie of nights,' he said. 'That's because I'm so *very* tired riding,' I told him. 'But don't you see you need God to watch over you sleeping on the prairie, too?' he said. 'Suppose that centipede had stuck all its hundred poisonous legs in me, for it grips with them all up to its body in a man's flesh, shooting poison as bad as a rattlesnake's through every leg, which is a fang—suppose,' he said, 'God had let it seize on me that way; I seventy miles from any whisky—'"

"Whisky?" asked Mrs. Beach.

"Oh, don't you know, ma, that is what the one bitten with anything has to drink to keep the poison from killing them?" Hubert explains. "Uncle says a bitten man can drink ever so much and not be made drunk by it; it goes to stop the poison instead of to his head, you see. It's the only thing in all the world whisky is good for, he said."

"What *could* he have done? It makes me perfectly unhappy to hear of such things. Who knows what day any of us may be bitten? What *could* he do?" Mrs. Beach asks, with a shudder. Mrs. Beach is very nervous.

"Take his knife, sharpen it like a razor, cut out all the bitten place, then burn—"

"Ah, hush, Hubert!" Egeria and her mother exclaim in a breath.

"It makes me positively sick to think of it! Suppose Bexy or Lotty were brought in with one of those horrid things;" and Mrs. Beach shudders as she says it.

"Uncle says it never lets go; it has to be cut off, and then every separate leg, or rather fang, of the hundred has to be dug out by itself," Hubert says, more from mischief than to give the facts.

"Uncle says he never yet knew a person actually killed by anything of the kind. Besides," Edward explains, "people get run over by omnibuses sometimes. But Hubert is right in what he says about the sleeping. We have slept all the summer out here on this front porch, the wind blowing over us all night, so that we have to tuck the sheet under us to keep it from blowing away. Pudding!" Edward adds, contemptuously.

"That is what Hubert thinks the nicest thing in the universe. It's as delicious as—as—oh! it doesn't matter what. I actually look forward all day to sleeping at night, as I suppose a drunkard does to his mint-julep. It is the most delightful

thing I know. Homer—I think it's Homer, it's so long since I've opened a book—says, 'Sleep is the gift of the gods,'" Edward adds.

"Who can tell first what the Bible says?" Mr. Beach asks, for the whole family are grouped on the front porch as usual.

"I know, if nobody else wants to say," Prosy says, at last. "At least I know *one* place. And Adry does, too. Adry—" and Prosy touches Adry's hand lying on the open Bible in his lap, sitting in his wheeled chair among them—"listen, Adry: 'So He giveth'—don't you remember—'giveth His belov—"

"'So He giveth His beloved sleep,'" Adry duly repeats.

"Because you start him so," Hubert complains.

"But who starts Prosy?" asks Mr. Beach.

"God," Adry replies, very solemnly and unexpectedly, all around laughing at his sober eyes as he says it, it takes them so by surprise.

"Pshaw, Adry is only a kind of—" parrot, Edward was going to say, but he thought of the scene at the log not long before and stopped.

"The only thing I hate when sleeping out here at night is the moonshine. Bright?" Hubert adds. "It's almost as bright as day. I can read

by it easy. Uncle says he wears that big hat, Egeria laughs at him so about, as much to put over his face when he sleeps in the moonlight at night as to keep off the sun by day. He never sleeps in the house," Hubert adds, with pride, "and I don't intend to, either."

"Until the Northers blow you in," Edward adds.

"As if the moon could hurt anybody!" Egeria says, for, being a poetess, she has great fondness for the moon.

"The Bible says it can," Prosy modestly suggests.

"I would like to know where?" Egeria exclaims.

Prosy lays her hand upon Adry's arm, gives it a sly little squeeze, in fact, to call his attention without the others noticing it, and begins very slowly and distinctly: "I don't remember the Psalm it is in"—another squeeze—"but it starts this way: 'Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper'"—another squeeze—"'the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand—'" a really good squeeze of Adry's arm as she pauses here.

"'The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the

moon by night,'" Adry slowly adds, true to Prosy as a sunflower to the sun.

"Oh, Prosy *squeezed* Adry! I saw her do it!" exclaimed Bexy as a great discovery.

"All the squeezing in the world wouldn't have squeezed the verse out of *you*," Hubert adds, when it was not the least use to do so.

Mr. Beach had drawn Prosy to his side and kissed her round, freckled cheek, while Mrs. Beach changed the conversation by saying—

"But what distresses me most is, that we can have no fruit here. To think of the peaches and apples and pears we used to have in our old home! There is poor little Lotty—I told you about it—she came to me the other day with her little fat hand full of some watermelon seed she had found somewhere, poor little thing! At this season of the year she craves fruit, of course. She brought the seed to me, little darling! and said, 'Won't you have some, ma? they've got a good deal of juice in them!' Miserable, withered watermelon seed! But it was all she had. I could not help it, I burst into tears—"

"And got the sugar-dish, set Lotty flat down on the floor, Bexy with her, and told them to eat as much as they wanted," Hubert was so rude as to

interrupt his mother. "Why, ma!" he went on, in warm defence of Texas, "we did have the water-melons the seed came out of—big ones, too. There used to be strawberries growing wild here once. Uncle says squirrels and wild strawberries go before the whites; yes, and partridges, too. Uncle says the Indians say whenever they see partridges, strawberries and squirrels they know the whites will certainly be along in a year or two. Isn't it strange? and there will be pecans in the fall. Besides, there's—there's—"

"I'd like to know what?" Egeria says, who has by no means the love for Texas her brothers have.

"Prickly-pear apples!" Hubert exclaims, driven to desperation. "I'm sure they are the prettiest fruit in the world."

"And who can get them without having their hands full of prickles? Besides," Egeria adds, with scorn, "you yourself heard uncle say three of them would be certain to give any one the chills."

"Uncle says one gets so they don't care for any fruit. He was in New Orleans after being years out here, and saw ever so much fruit in the market and never eat nor cared one cent for any of it; he had lost all taste for such trash. "For all that," Hubert added, warmly, "uncle says Texas is nearer

like the Garden of Eden—no such climate anywhere else on earth. The sleep we were speaking of, an actual pleasure, as it was to Adam."

"Singular Eden!" Egeria breaks in. "The idea of a Paradise full of centipedes, tarantulas, horned frogs and Comanches! no fruit—"

"Look at the grapes, wagon-loads of them—" Hubert began.

"Mustang grapes, the skins cutting your lips like a knife! and those horrid boys!" Egeria added.

"I agree they are hard cases," Hubert said. "You know our nearest neighbours live ten miles off. I was longing," he added, "to make friends with somebody new. I had got tired of you all—the children, I mean—and one can't be for ever riding Thunder Storm. I was glad that day those boys rode up to the fence while I was plaiting that lariat. They were rough as you please, of course; they live on the saddle. 'I say, old hoss, how are you?'—that's the first thing they said to me. 'Good-day,' I said. 'How are you?' 'Us?' they said. 'Us is dreffful sick, sick in bed. Doctor's gub us up! Fact is, we's dead and buried day before yesterday!' It would have been funny," Hubert added, "only every other word

was a curse. They got over the fence. Such talking! I never knew anybody could swear so; and the dirtiest talk!" Hubert added, with a blush.

"What did you ask them to stop for? It is positively frightful to think you have to associate with such people," Mrs. Beach said.

"I didn't ask them," Hubert urged. "They don't wait for asking. Their faces were never washed, I believe, nor their hair ever cut or combed. 'What have you got your Sundays on for?' they asked, and it was only my brown clothes. Such talk!" and Hubert expressed his idea of it by a whistle, "Whew!"

"Why, what was it about?" asked Mr. Beach.

"I can't tell you, sir; it was too bad to hear, much less repeat. They told me," Hubert said, "how they had stripped old Mrs. Morgan's patch of her watermelons, smashing all they did not steal. Poor old woman! and when her dog came after them, they shot it dead. Then they told about a Squire Robbins who had driven them out of his cornfield while they were stealing roasting ears, and how they had roped his best horse on the prairie the week after and cut off its ears and tail. Such oaths! Oh, there was a good deal worse than that!"

"I wonder if they never go to school," Mrs. Beach said, and added, "It makes me miserable. The idea of Hubert associating with such ignorant, vicious boys!"

"They did go to school once, they told me. They must have been with me three hours," Hubert said. "Half the time they barred their teacher out, and they told me how they put wax in his chair; and stuck pins through the hide bottom of it, to see him jump when he went to sit down. I couldn't help laughing," Hubert added, "and I was afraid of them, too. They couldn't have been over sixteen, and they seemed to me more like wicked old men than boys. At last, they said, the teacher could stand it no longer, and tried to whip one of them. The next day the boy's father, they said, went to the teacher (his name was Swan) and cocked his revolver under his nose, and told him that if he was not gone from that neighbourhood in twenty-four hours he would kill him. The teacher left—I'm sure I would—and that was the last of that school."

"We must not suppose they are a fair specimen of all the neighbourhood," Mr. Beach said; "for I know there are as good people out here as are to be found anywhere. But what can be expected in a

border State like this? It is as much a missionary field as Siam."

"If you had only heard them! They're worse than heathen," Hubert said. "Why, while they were with me they got to quarrelling which could shoot best, and before I knew it they were rolling over the corral in the dirt, cursing, swearing, scratching, and beating each other. Sour, he had laid by me growling all the time; he bounced in before I could stop him; then their big dogs did, too, and such a biting, and barking, and cursing, and kicking—all in the dirt and clouds of dust!"

"What did you do?" asked Edward. "I wish I'd been there! I would—"

"I didn't know what to do. They bantered me, as they called it, for a fight once or twice already, because I wouldn't let them catch some of the roosters to have a cock-fight, you see," Hubert said; and added, "you can't tell how glad I was when uncle rode up just then on Bobasheela. He was over the fence and in among them in a moment. He only said, 'Here! you! stop this!' and they stood there wiping off the blood and dirt from their eyes, staring at him so. All they said at last was, 'It's none of *your* corral.' 'Yes it is,' I said, 'he's my uncle.' You ought to have seen them! They

stared so at me. One of them said, at last, 'Say you! is this yer Brown Bob Long *your* uncle?' and when I told them yes, they climbed the fence, mounted their mustangs, whistled their ugly dogs after them, and rode off without saying another word."

But Hubert did not tell the rest, which was this: As soon as the young savages were gone, the uncle had said, leaning on his rifle, "And these young rips have found the way here, have they? Humph! Now I'll just tell you what, Hubert," he added, at last: "there's only one of two things for Edward and you to do. You're either to give up and become just like them—humph!—or you've got to turn to it and make them just like you. Not all at once. I think I ought to know by this time. Yes, you've got to make them Christians like, or they'll make you as bad as they are. One thing or the other."

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH WE SPEND A NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIE.

WE did intend at the beginning of the last chapter to take a good look at Mrs. Beach as she sat upon the front porch. It was not our fault that we did not. Hubert broke in upon us with his extravagance about the sweetness of sleep in the open air, and drew us off. Although, if you doubt his word, go out there and try it! Ride out to Oak-Mot from the town nearest to it. Give a good halloo at the fence when you get there. Sour will be the first to greet you, but Hubert, or whoever happens to be at home, will soon follow him and give you a hearty welcome. They will be glad to have you stay as long as you like. While there, go out hunting with them, if Uncle Bob is not too busy, and he never was known to be too busy to go hunting. But whatever you do, don't attempt to ride Thunder Storm! It does not matter how much Hubert urges him upon you; ride Jim, Edward's bay, or Pegasus, Egeria's white pony. Egeria calls him Snowflake, but Hubert began it,

and all the rest *will* call the pony Pegasus, because Egeria rides on him, and that was the name of the horse with wings which people used to say poets rode. Even Bobasheela would be safer for you than Thunder Storm, only Mr. Long was never known to let any one get on him beside himself, and Bobasheela is many sizes too small for him, too.

You see the reason Hubert wants you to ride Thunder Storm is because he pitches. That is, you will be riding along charmingly, admiring the beautiful scenery, and will suddenly find yourself flying through the air like a rocket. It will not hurt you, as you will light among thick grass a yard deep, on your hands and knees at that, as if you had suddenly taken an enormous leap like a frog. As soon as he can do it for laughing, Hubert will tell you that Thunder Storm has a way of suddenly, without a syllable of warning, while he is going so smoothly along with you, planting his fore hoofs in the earth, putting his head down between them and sending his heels in the air behind, and of course off you fly forward like a shot. "It is only his fun," Hubert will say of his unprincipled horse; and if you look you will see an actual laugh sparkling in the corners of Thunder

Storm's eyes. He has thrown Hubert in the same way very often. Hubert got very angry at first, and always, as soon as he gets on again, says—

"You want some fun do you? Very well!" and puts spurs to him till horse and rider fly over the prairie, starting the mule-eared rabbits around them—"like smoke," is Hubert's way of expressing it.

"I never see Hubert mount that horse," Mrs. Beach has said very often, "without being perfectly wretched till he gets off again, lest his neck should be broken."

"I never knew a boy yet killed by being thrown from a horse," is what her brother tells her. "Besides, you know he has to help drive up the cows and horses." And seeing that her son has never got anything worse from Thunder Storm than glowing cheeks and a wonderful appetite for his meals, Mrs. Beach is getting used to it.

Of course, if his mother forbade him to do so, he would cease to ride that or any other horse. With all his fun, Hubert treats his mother with that respect and obedience without which his uncle would not favour him for an instant.

Well, suppose you have ridden all day over the

rolling seas of grass. You *may* have shot at several droves of antelopes, but you will certainly have missed them. Uncle Bob has shot only once at a deer, and as certainly hit it. Night comes. You all dismount near some ravine in which is a pool of water. After all have staked out their horses to graze, Mr. Long will dig a hole in the earth in the centre of the ring made by your saddles, make a little fire therein, put a pot of coffee thereon to boil and slices of venison to broil.

"Why, what do you cook in a hole for?" you are certain to ask.

"Oh, if there *should* be Indians around, they would see the light," he explains, carelessly.

And you are puzzled that you do not feel more alarmed than you do. So you will talk for an hour or so over your supper about the Indians. At last you will say—

"Mr. Long, I've wanted all day to ask you. You noticed those oyster-shells as large as your hat, almost, on the tops of some of the hills we rode over to-day? And those great stones, something like snakes coiled up—"

"Ammonites," Hubert will be sure to interrupt you, with his mouth full.

"Who knows? How do *you* suppose they came

there, Johnny, or Charley?" as your name may be, Mr. Long will say.

"Left there at the deluge," you suggest.

"Yes. All these prairies were once the bed of the ocean. My opinion is," Mr. Long will continue, "that land and water changed places at the deluge; all that was under water before Noah is now land; all that was land, inhabited by the people that sinned against God, is now, with all their cities, under the waves of the oceans and seas; yes, the garden of Eden and all. The next ocean will swallow up both land and water."

"Ocean?" you ask.

"Of fire," Mr. Long will go on to say. "Don't you know astronomers have counted no less than three hundred stars which have blazed up as if on fire, and then have slowly died out and disappeared? What does the Bible say? If Adry was here, with Prosy to give him a good start— I'll try *you*, Hubert. Listen! 'The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements—' Hubert?"

"'Shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up,'" Hubert repeats.

"'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved—'" Mr. Long goes on in a serious but perfectly natural way—"'what manner of persons ought ye to be'—ought *we* to be, you know—'in all holy conversation and godliness?'" As Mr. Long speaks in his ordinary tone and from his heart, his words go, as words from the heart always do, to *your* heart. And you will be apt to say after a pause—

"I think I can say the rest, sir."

"Be glad to have you," he would add.

"'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.'"

"Very well," Mr. Long would say; "only, not 'day of the Lord;' it is 'day of God.' I do like to have the Bible just exactly as it is written. The words are all put precisely as God thought the best; and every single word has just its special meaning in the exact way it is written. It's worse than making a mistake in the multiplication table; this is the most important. Always have a verse exactly as it is written."

"You boys are getting sleepy," Mr. Long will add after a while, "and I will only say this: In the Bible you find the words Lord Jesus Christ

used sometimes together, sometimes apart. Now, these are all names of our Saviour, I know, but if you study any place in which they come, you will see soon enough that the Apostle has his special reason for using just that one of them he does in that place, or for putting them all in one—Lord Jesus Christ; that is, our King and Master—the one set off by the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be our Saviour. Those three names mean all that. Never mind, now! Only, when you repeat the Bible, always say it just exactly as it is; you can't improve on it to save your life."

And Mr. Long talks about this in an ordinary, cheerful way, as if he were telling about anything that he had seen to interest him that day. He is very often speaking of religious matters in a quiet way. From him they come in as a matter of course; not in a dull way or a sudden way at all, nor a sorrowful, either.

"Somehow, I don't know how," Hubert will tell you when alone, "but uncle manages to talk about such things in such a way that, the first thing you know, you are talking about them too. You see," Hubert will go on, "uncle thinks nothing in the world is so interesting and beautiful and all as religion."

"Now, boys," Mr. Long will add, "it's late. Time for bed. If anything *should* happen during the night, you break for that ravine. Never mind the horses; you break for the ravine, and remember to go *down* it, not up, so we will not get scattered. This is the way to make up your bed;" and Mr. Long places your saddle so as you can lay your head in its seat, the saddle-blanket spread out for the sheet, the thick grass beneath being the best spring-mattrass in the world. "If you feel any rocks under you, boys, when you lie down, best plan is to take them out at once, before you go to sleep. Only one big rock, though it isn't larger than your fists, will bother you all night."

Before you lie down Uncle Long kneels in the centre and offers a short prayer for protection all night. He is speaking so evidently to a heavenly Father with you—a Person right over you—that the very confidence of his words and tones assure you of it. And so you all lie down, with your heads in your saddles, your feet toward the fire-hole in the centre.

All say "Good-night," as a sign that there will be no more talking. But you cannot go to sleep all at once. You are looking straight up at the sky—the wonderful, wonderful sky! You never

thought the air could be so amazingly clear. The wonderful sky, far above you; all around you down to the prairie; all beneath you, around the little ball on which you are lying! Just look at them above you, around you! Worlds on worlds! Worlds on worlds! Thick as the dust when the wind is up. Worlds on worlds! Every one, or nearly every one, a sun—all the worlds around it too far off to be seen. You never had such a look at them before. You never imagined how tremendously great the universe is. And behind the million dots of light, which you know are suns of vast systems, you see the clouds of golden dust which you know to be other worlds and systems of worlds.

Oh, how great is God!

That one thought is fixed on your mind as it never was before.

How dangerous it is to sin against the Being who made all those worlds and keeps them moving!

And, oh! to think of it! That Being came into this little speck of a world out of all of those; was born a babe in a stable here; lived on this poor little dot of a world thirty years as a man!

The Being who made all these worlds was

beaten! was nailed to the cross! died for me! For—*me!*

This great and glorious God loves me with all his heart! Loves—*me!*

This wonderful Maker wants me to love him!

And you say to yourself, after a while, "I don't blame this Mr. Long for thinking so much about God. My wonder is that people think and talk about him so little."

Perhaps you draw your broad-brimmed hat over your upturned face and say, "O God, help me to know, fear, love thee!—"

And you are asleep! The horses feed near you, stopping, now and then, to shake their heads and snort, eating away, for what you know, all night. The fire in the hole crumbles into ashes and goes out. There is a long howl of wolves, sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other, but they might as well be howling ten thousand miles away in Siberia, for what you hear of them. You sleep, lying as still as if you were dead, your hat over your face, drawing in the purest air in the world from the clear ocean of air around you. The wind blows steadily from the south, bending the tall grass, stirring the hair on your head, and so passing on to be laden with the soot and smoke of great

cities, defiled with the breath of drunkards, weighted with the oaths and curses of wicked men, and so on and on, to die frozen to death on the cold plains of Canada and the North Pole.

Sleep? It isn't the word for it! One long, unbroken, delicious enjoyment all night. You will look back to that night's sleep as long as you live. Half a dozen times during the night Mr. Long has wakened, crept cautiously away for fear of wakening you, examined the ropes of the horses to see if they are all safe. Once Thunder Storm got tangled in his rope and lay on his back, kicking with all of his hoofs in the air, until Mr. Long has come to his help; but you slept on as if you never would wake. Every time he got up Mr. Long has stolen all around, putting his ear to the ground now and then to hear in case any Indians should be near. Indians! You would have slept if all the Camanches and Tonkaways to Santa Fé had been creeping upon you at once. Suddenly you wake, with Mr. Long's voice right in your ears—

"Up, boys! sun's up!"

And you lift your hat from your face and sit up in perfect astonishment to find it is broad day, the sun just peeping above the edge of the prairie yonder.

"Wash your faces over there in the ravine, boys. Make haste! breakfast is ready," he adds.

Yes, it is ready. Plenty of slices of venison broiled on the coals; a cup of coffee bubbling thereon too, for each to drink at in turn; bread brought with you. Breakfast! I guess so. It is very plain Mr. Long will have to shoot another deer or two. You eat as if you hadn't eaten for a week or so, and didn't expect anything more to eat for a week to come.

"I don't know which I enjoyed the most," you say at last—"the sleeping or the eating; both the best I ever knew. I didn't know there was so much enjoyment in such things before."

"That's the way Adam enjoyed things in Eden." But Hubert had heard Mr. Long say that before.

You see how it is. We have been carried off from telling about Mrs. Beach again.

And, at last, there is nothing to be said but that she is a tall lady, in a neat dress suited to the country—an excellent Christian lady, with something in her face amazingly like Adry; only Adry has the most peaceful of faces, and Mrs. Beach has an anxious, care-worn countenance.

"The only fault I have to find with her," Mrs. Long had told her husband when they got home

again after her first visit to Oak-Mot. "She is so miserable about this, that, and the other; at least she says she is. Distressed lest the boys will never get an education out here, and lest they will take cold sleeping out on the front porch. She says she's wretched about Bexy and Lotty, lest they should take diphtheria when the winter comes. What fat little things they are!—always together as if yoked together like young heifers. I like Hubert, Mr. Long; he has an open, brown face like your's," Mrs. Long continues; "and I like that funny little Prosy, as they call her—so solemn and mother-like with that poor Adry. Edward is conceited; at least it seems to me so. And I was satisfied all the time I was there that Egeria was half laughing at me. Mr. Beach is a quiet, sober man—"

"No wonder, Araminty, with the history he has had. I don't think I ever—" Mr. Long begins.

"Nor I either," his wife interrupts. "It is like reading a novel. As singular a story as I ever knew. And, then, that poor Adry!"

"I don't know about his being so poor. Everybody says 'Poor Adry!'" Mr. Long continues. "He does not suffer very much. He can't run and ride and hunt like a man; and he is more de-

pendent on the family than a grown man would like to be, if he only knew it. But he doesn't. The very people we pity most," Mr. Long continues—"lunatics, idiots, people in the last stages of sickness—are not half as miserable as we make them out. Their case hurts us, looking on, more than it hurts them. We say, 'How I would hate it if it was I!' But it isn't I; it's they. And sometimes from use, sometimes from weakness—very often just the grace of God given where and when it's needed—such people are far from miserable. God lets their case hurt us that we may help them. They themselves don't suffer half what we think. Just so about the dying. When a man is prepared to die, it hurts us more to see him die than it does him to do it."

"They seem to think the world of Adry," Mrs. Long adds after a while.

"They ought to," her husband replies. "That afflicted lad is a kind of centre which draws them all together around him, he is so pure and patient, so simple and loving and gentle, so full of the Bible and love for his Saviour. Not one of them would dare to say a wicked word or do anything wrong with those great eyes of his on them. I can't express the use that poor lad is to them and to me; I

don't fully understand it. But never mind that now. Light another candle, please; I want to study a little."

And very much astonished you would have been, dear reader, if you had peeped over his shoulder and seen the sort of books he laid before him on the table; very much indeed.

At that very moment, Mrs. Beach was speaking to her husband in their room about Mrs. Araminta Long.

"A good soul, I dare say, my dear. But what a horrid, horrid way she has of dipping snuff! It made me perfectly miserable. I am so glad we have trained our boys to hate tobacco! It is filthy enough in a man, but for a lady to use it! I hope it will help make the boys hate it more than they do. Filthy habit!"

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH OAK-MOT IS QUITE OF A DECIDED OPINION ON VARIOUS POINTS.

I AM so fearful you should think of Oak-Mot as if it was like Robinson Crusoe's island, or the Valley of Diamonds in which Sinbad the Sailor met with such wonderful adventures—a place that never really was, an Oak-Mot only in the air.

You are much mistaken! Oak-Mot is just as real a place as that on which you live. There it is this hour, an island of live-oaks in a sea of prairie grass. This moment, while you are reading these lines, the long gray moss, which hangs like an old man's beard from every live-oak limb there, is streaming, some of it a yard long, in the wind; if my arm was only long enough, I would hand you a lock of it to prove what I say.

Nor are the people who live there at all unreal people, like Aladdin or the Fairy Queen Biandoza-bellazetta with the Golden Hair. There they live, and eat, and sleep, and talk, and work, and do

what is right, and, alas! what is wrong, too, all day long, just like you and me.

There is Mr. Beach. He is simply a quiet man, with black hair and eyes, who has not much to say, very sober, almost too sorrowful; only he has had a history such as was enough to sadden any man. From the first, I have been trying to get a moment's time to tell it, for it is well worth hearing, only we have been so continually drawn off to one side or the other. An excellent Christian man, but no more a perfect man than you generally see in this sinful world.

You might mail me your photograph, but if I were to meet you afterward on a steamboat, or on the street, or gathering blackberries, I would never think that you—with your hair rumpled, or your hat to one side, or your sun-bonnet on your shoulders, your dress a little dusty, say—was at all the same very prim person you seemed to be when framed in the photograph. So it is with books. The moment you put a person in a book, in spite of all you can do, he or she has a prim and precise look, as if very superior to ordinary people you meet every day; and that, even, when you say only the truth about them—try to give only their photograph, in fact.

Imagine yourself at breakfast-table that morning after Mrs. Brown Bob Long has gone back to her own home after a week's visit to Oak-Mot.

"Remember, Egeria, that she is your aunt; you must not speak of her in that way," Mrs. Beach, behind the cups and saucers, is saying as we enter, in rebuke for something Egeria had said before we came. "Not that I do not hate that snuff of hers as much as any one can. But you must speak more respectfully," Mrs. Beach adds.

"Come, never mind about persons—never talk about persons; always talk about things," Mr. Beach says from behind the beefsteak at the other end of the table. "Let us see who can give the best reason why *we* will not use tobacco; hey, Bexy?"

"It is so dirty," says Bexy.

"It makes me sick at heart to see it," adds Lotty, but in such close imitation of her mother as to make the rest laugh; for girls generally are only their mothers over again.

"Well, Edward?" asks the father.

"It is a useless expense—at least fifty dollars a year for something worse than nothing. Although," adds Edward, "I confess I do like to see a gentleman smoking a cigar—"

"Because it makes him so gentlemanly to do it, you think," Hubert interrupts, as he does altogether too often. "I hate tobacco," Hubert adds, "ever since I read about those people on some savage island somewhere chewing betel-nut. It has a red juice, and they went about spitting as if it was blood. It is like the children at school; when one gets to chewing gum or wax or India-rubber, they are all at it. I hate to do a thing—a foolish thing, too—just because other people do it; it makes one think of monkeys. No gentleman even learns to use tobacco," he adds.

"Take care, Hubert! Pa once—"

"You wait, Prosy. It is generally boys that learn. They only keep up the habit after they grow to be gentlemen," Hubert says.

"Yes," says Mr. Beach, "Hubert is right. I learned to chew and smoke when I was a boy, because I thought it was manly. I was terribly tempted to learn to swear for the very same reason. But, like all foolish things, I hope tobacco is going out of use. Everybody took snuff when I was a little boy; no one does now—"

"Aunt Araminta dips," Hubert interrupts.

"That is a custom only known at the South, I believe; and it is such a vile one," adds his father,

"that it will soon go out here. Not half the people chew tobacco who used to.

"But what is *your* reason, Prosy?" Mrs. Beach asks.

"I don't know, ma, unless it is the golden rule. People oughtn't to ruin other people's carpets," Prosy goes on to say, "nor make other people's curtains smell so. Besides, you know how sick that man's pipe made us all in the stage."

"Well, Adry, why do *you* think people ought not to use tobacco?"

Edward asks it in a jesting way, yet he is far kinder to Adry than he used to be. Nobody can say exactly in what it is, yet Hubert and Edward are both changing greatly in spirit and manner since they came to Oak-Mot. And yet it was the prospect of their having to associate with her backwoods brother which had made their mother "distressed to death" ever since they resolved to come to Texas.

"Things that seem the very best for us," Mr. Beach often said, "turn out to be the very worst. The very worst often are the greatest good."

Adry only looks up from his plate at Edward with such an earnest look as makes the children laugh.

"Ask him again, Eddy," Prosy begs; and Edward does so very slowly and kindly.

Prosy squeezes Adry's arm and whispers in his ear—

"'Abhor—' don't you remember? 'Abhor that which—' Oh, Adry!" Prosy says. "Now ask him the question; only this time, Eddy," and Edward again does so.

"'Abhor—that—which—is—evil,'" Adry repeats, with great solemnity.

"Adry is right," Mr. Beach said, hushing with his uplifted hand the amusement of the children at Adry's manner. "For I never yet knew a person in my life but was sorry for having begun the habit of using tobacco, which is the same as saying it is an evil."

"Uncle Bob used to buy tobacco. He gave it up to buy books, he said," Hubert remarks.

"Books? What books?" Egeria asks, whose passion is as strong for books as that of some people for a pipe. "Pa, I never thought uncle had ever read a book in his life, except the Bible," she adds; the very idea of her rough uncle sitting down to read her volume of Mrs. Hemans, or Miss Landon, Mrs. Sigourney or Mrs. Browning, making her smile.

"You are very much mistaken," said Edward, warmly. "I intended to have told you before. It was only the last day he was here I found it out. We were riding home together, uncle and I, after looking all day for that bay mare with the white feet. We met that Bud Barton on the prairie, and had asked him if he had seen any bay mare with that brand. He hadn't, and kept us there half an hour telling us of a fight he had a few days before with some peccaries—wild hogs, that is, Mexican hogs, you know. He had climbed a mesquit to be shut of them, as he called it. They were all in a knot around the trunk of the tree, jumping up on their hind legs, snapping their tusks at him. You know how brittle the limbs of a mesquit are. Well! Oh, he was full of it! A limb broke, he said, and he came plump down right in the middle of the hogs, *ker-chunk!* As we rode off I couldn't help laughing at that word. It was *tir-smash*, I told uncle, where we came from. 'I dare say,' he told me; 'all our words were made at first to sound like the thing they meant.' Then I must needs show him my college learning, and went on to tell him how Homer describes Apollo coming down from Olympus to slay the Greeks with his silver bow; and how he used words to sound

exactly like the noise made when the arrow leaves the bow and it vibrates afterward; you remember them, father?—*Dina te klamkee argurioio boioi!* He said he had never read Homer," Edward went on. "So I must needs—of course he had never read it—tell him about the sound made by the waves rolling up against the sea-beach and then drawing back through the sand, *Poluphlois boio thalasses.* You remember it, pa? And uncle said—"

"What an amazing smart youth!" Hubert began.

"'It is strange how some better lines than those have been running through my mind,' uncle said," Edward went on. "'What lines?' I asked, thinking it was some hymn he had heard at morning prayers. 'It is only *Idou! Esteka epi tēn thuran,*' he said, and went on with the whole verse. I cannot remember it, of course, to the end—that about Christ knocking at the door. I never was so amazed in all my life. That *he* should know Greek! And that we should have been together so long—"

"And heard you boasting so much about college—"

"Hush, Hubert!—and should never have given

a hint of it. After he had told me all about it," Edward continued, "I told him he must have a wonderful memory. 'Not at all,' he said, 'only he had read the words so often.' And sure enough, he carried his little Greek Testament about in his breast-pocket. I had often seen him reading it when we camped on the prairie, but never dreamed that it was Greek. I tell you," Edward added, warmly, "the more I know of uncle the more I know there never was such a man. And as simple in everything almost as Adry here; yes, and as good. People round here would vote for him for anything in the world, from sheriff to President, I believe. And he is always down upon them, too, for cursing and swearing, hunting stock on Sunday, branding other people's calves and colts, and the like."

"They're afraid of him," Hubert exclaimed. "That day I was at the mill with uncle, that very Bud Barton—oh you know I told you about it—when he would sing those dirty songs, we were standing right over the deepest hole in the Perdernalis. Uncle made one grab at him; the next, Bud Barton was floundering and sputtering in the water! 'You needed a washing, Bud,' was all uncle said, just as cool! All the man said when he

had scrambled out was, 'Look here, Brown Bob Long; the next time you do that—' 'Say any more of those words while this boy is here and I'll do it again,' was all uncle said, just as pleasant as you please. It's what Adry said," Hubert added; "he abhors what is evil!"

"But how in the world did he ever come to learn Greek?" Egeria asks.

"I asked him," Edward replied. "'It's a very singular story,' he said. 'I do suppose there never was a man learned Greek before—no, nor ever will be a man learn that or anything else in the world—for just the reason I did. Queer notion! Yet it was a good notion; never had a better in all my life,' he said. 'But I can't tell you about it now, Eddy. Wait; I will some day.' That was all I could get out of him."

There was a long silence after this, broken, at last, by all rising from the table to go about the various duties of the day.

Plenty to do! Mr. Beach had to arrange his accounts at the desk in the parlour. Mrs. Beach, aided by Egeria and Prosy, had to attend to the housekeeping. Edward had to hear Bexy, Lotty and Hubert say their morning lessons. Then Alec and Juan had to be watched, that they did not

neglect the stock. Always some bridle to mend, saddle to "fix up." Plenty to do!

All of the next day Hubert and Edward and Juan had to make *cabris*. That, you know by this time, is hair rope; and a ranche—that is, a stock farm—like Oak-Mot needs almost as much rope as does a ship. A rope made of raw hide plaited together lasts a long time, only it will get stiff when it is wet or frozen. So will a grass rope. A *cabris* is always limp and ready for use. Their uncle had taught them to make it during the first month after their arrival; for, by all he did and said, they had learned to be always busy about something. "I put it up in this way," Uncle Bob had often said. "Loafing, gambling, drinking, cursing and swearing all go together. When you get time from work, hunt. There's no amusement in the world like that. It keeps the family in meat, too. Always have something on hand. There's *cabris;* you never can have too much of that."

This was the way Edward and Hubert went to work: First, they got a trunk without a top, in which they had stored hair of all colours cut from the longest manes and tails in the corral. Each strand was twisted by itself, using for the purpose a short stick with another made to turn about it.

Very simple when you see it, but very hard to describe. Then all the strands were twisted into one by Juan whirling away at the stick, his broad-brimmed hat down upon his shoulders behind, making him look like a Mexican saint with a glory around its head. As each strand of twisted hair was a little less than the size of a quill, you can imagine how large a rope made of four such strands would be; and how pretty it would be when I tell you that each strand was of a different colour. Nobody ever rides about in Texas without a coil of *cabris* at the saddle-bow or neatly hung to the saddle-skirt behind, so that Hubert and Edward and Juan were quite particular about having their *cabris* as neat as possible; which was right.

"I'll have to give Juan up," Hubert said at last, as he sat by the old trunk that day, keeping his brother supplied with hair for the strand, which Edward was feeding, so to speak, while Juan was whirling away at the other end, under the shade of the live-oaks, with his stick fastened to it.

"He's hopeless. I might as well talk to Sour or to Thunder Storm," Hubert added.

"Think so?" was all Edward said, for he was deep in thought of something else, as his busy

fingers kept the ever-lengthening strand supplied with hair.

"Look at him with his big black eyes! He looks steadily in your face all the time you are talking to him about who made the world, the story of the flood and all, exactly like a cow," Hubert complains. "He is born to his wretched little pictures of the Virgin Mary, his crosses and all that, exactly as he is to that big hat, the big buttons down the sides of his trousers, his yellow skin and great eyes and black hair. You might as well tell him to stop working his fingers in that odd way all Mexicans have. It's all '*Quien sabe? quien sabe?*' 'Who knows? who knows?' all the time. If he would only deny what I say, or even get mad! Not a bit of it. When I tell him what nonsense it is to pray to a dead woman, it's all '*Si, señor! si, señor,*' 'Yes, sir, yes, sir,' until, as ma says, I am sick of the sound. It's exactly like writing words in water. All Mexico is only Juan over again, uncle says."

"Is it?" Edward asks in an absent manner.

"I believe it will be worse with these prairie boys. Suppose we *do* get them to ride to the school-house, there at the Buffalo Lick, for Sunday school, as uncle says," Hubert continues; "we might

as well try to teach a corral of horses. We've got to be like them or they've got to be like us, uncle says. Missionary work, he says. Ma and pa and Egy say they'll try it. We've promised, Eddy; but I tell you, I'm afraid! It's only Uncle Bob Long there makes me willing. Boys not sixteen years old tying up that poor little Dutchman and leaving him at the creek to die, only because he was a *Dutchy*, as they call it! They need religion if ever the cannibals did! But Uncle Bob is a *mag-nif-i-cent* missionary for them; isn't he, Eddy?" Hubert adds with enthusiasm.

"Think so?" Edward replies. The fact is, he hasn't heard hardly a word Hubert has said. What he is thinking about is this: That day he had found out about his uncle's Greek the two had much more conversation together than Edward had reported. It was only the keeping up of a plenty of talk they had had before about the same things.

"'*Idou! Esteka epi tēn thuran*—Behold, I stand at the door and knock,'" Uncle Bob had repeated over and over again, as they rode side by side home through the deep grass of the prairie. "It's *krauō*, Eddy. Not one blow on the door and gone—a soft, steady beating all along it means. Let's ask Adry to read it over for us," he added, as, after

reaching home, unsaddling their horses and feeding them, they came upon Adry in his usual seat near the log in the front yard, if that can be called yard where there was no fence—only one grove of live-oaks with the house in the centre. Strange to say, not Prosy, but Egeria, was seated near Adry, sewing. Yes, and talking too, only they stopped as uncle and nephew came near and sat down by them.

"Adry, please read, beginning there," the uncle said, finding a place in Adry's huge Bible lying open as usual upon his knees, and putting Adry's small white finger upon the first word.

Adry read, very slowly—

"'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'"

"That'll do, Adry. Now suppose," the uncle went on to say, laying his hand on Adry's shoulder, "a man was to send somebody to tell you that he had a fortune for you if you would come to him, living, say, in India—a large fortune—would you go, Eddy, Egy?"

"I suppose so," said Egeria.

"Yes, sir," Edward replied, decidedly.

"Well, suppose, instead of that, the man was himself to come to you from India, with the fortune in his hands—was to come and stand knocking at your door, saying, 'Please let me in. I am a friend. I have money for you.' Would you let him in?"

"Yes, sir," both replied in lower tones.

"Think so? Suppose something had got into you so you wouldn't. He knocks again and says, 'I don't come here all this way to do you a harm; only good. Let me in and we will have a pleasant time, will sup together.' Think you would say, 'No?'" the uncle asked.

"No, sir," both replied, more softly still.

"Suppose you wouldn't! Then suppose he was to knock again and say, 'Please let me in. I am a king in my own country—a great king, with glorious palaces and armies and subjects and treasures there. But I left all to bring you your fortune; and I was wrecked in crossing the ocean to get to you—was dreadfully wounded among the rocks and waves from my love for you. Open the door and you can see the scars for yourself.' Egy, Eddy, would you let him in?"

There was something in the tones of their uncle's voice, leaning on his rifle held between his knees,

as he spoke, which said so much more than his words that both sat with their eyes down, making no reply.

"Suppose you wouldn't! And just suppose he was to knock again and say, 'Please let me in. I can help you only by getting *in* you. I am the great God that made you. I suffered and died to save you. Only let me in and I will dwell with you, as your best friend, for ever. I will never go out of the door of your heart for ever, but will live there, to forgive your sins, to teach you and keep you everywhere, to make you better every hour you live, to take you to live with me in heaven for ever.' Have you let him in? Eddy? Egy?" the uncle asks earnestly.

There is no reply. Adry, too, understands it all, his solemn eyes full on his uncle's.

"That little '*if*' in the passage—'*if* any man hear my voice and open the door'—that word *if* is the smallest word in the verse, just as the hinge is the smallest thing about a door. But all the opening or leaving the door shut for ever turns on that *if*. *If* you do not open from inside, I must go off and leave you. *If* you open, I will come in. There's Adry. I have no doubt he has opened his heart to the Saviour. Your father and mother

have, I hope. I have. You must too—must do it at once. I didn't intend to say so much. Only this: before you go to bed, ask God in your prayers to help you to let Jesus come into your heart this night. He will help you if you ask him," said their uncle, eagerly.

It was not a week after this that Prosy met her uncle and Edward at the edge of the mot one evening. She had evidently been waiting for them, Adry being at his exercise with her for some time.

"Oh, uncle!" she said as they rode up at last, "make haste and put your horses up. Adry's got something he wants you to hear;" and off the two started for another turn of the exercise.

"Well, what is it, Prosy?" Edward asked as he and his uncle joined them at last under the live-oaks.

"You see, ma called Egy away last Saturday, while she was writing to Aurelia Jones; ma wanted her to help make cake for Bexy and Lotty's birthday," Prosy went on in great excitement. "She had been so busy—we all had been so very busy—we never thought of it once. Pa was dating a letter at his desk, and said to her, 'This is the nineteenth, I believe?' Ma said, 'Bless me, yes! And its

their birthday!' So, Egy had to drop everything to beat the eggs. Well," continued Prosy, "Hubert went into Egy's desk—you see he didn't want to disturb pa at his writing—to get some paper to put in the cake-pans. He saw some verses there, and slipped them out till he could copy them. Then he put them back. You see, we want it as a surprise to Egy on her birthday, the tenth of next month. She doesn't dream anybody has seen the verses. Adry and I have been at work on them. Wait till we come back from our walk;" and off the two went, Edward and his uncle seated on the log, fanning themselves, after their long ride, with their big hats.

"Now, Adry!" said Prosy on their return, and began—

"'E'en through the adamantine rock
Incessant rain-drops wear their way—'"

"'Yet, constant as thy Saviour's knock,
Thy heart still holds thy Lord at bay,'"

repeated Adry very slowly.

"Now, Adry!" and Prosy repeats again—

"'Your joys, your pains, your friends are there
All things your heart-strings wind about—'"

"'He who gives these, would soothe, would share;
Your dearest Friend, still stands without,'"

Adry repeats, very careful with his emphasis on the right words, for Prosy had worked hard with him in that. She begins again—

"'With bleeding hands and knock on knock,
He plies your door—'"

"'Break, bars of sin!
This moment turn, thou iron lock,
And let your Lord, your Life, come in!'"

adds Adry.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH WE DISCOVER A BEAR AND—A SOMETHING STILL MORE INTERESTING.

YOU must not suppose we have told everything that took place at Oak-Mot during all these months. By no means. Island as it is in an ever-rolling ocean of grass, you mustn't begin to think it is like that other island in the story, where the people live on the lotus flowers, half asleep part of the time, and sound asleep all the rest.

True, Cassandra, the wood-dove, had rather a dull time of it in its cage in the front porch, cooing all the morning and evening and dozing with half-shut eyes on its perch between times. Bruin, too—grown to be a great bear—had little to do but to walk round and round the tree to which it was chained, except to eat its regular meals, have an occasional rough-and-tumble play with Sour, the house-dog, and sleep, coiled up into a great ball of wool. Every morning Juan and Alec drove up the horses from the corral to the water-hole to drink, stayed with them, grazing for miles over the

hills and hollows of the prairie, and drove them to the water-hole for a final drink, and so to the corral again at night. Housekeeping and sewing; teaching the younger children and reading a little; keeping the garden in order—oh, there were always a hundred things to do to-day as it came.

There were the neighbours, too. Very stout Mr. Bugg, whose name the children never could get entirely used to; Mr. Parkin Peters, who had a school far away up among the mountains, and was terribly lonely there—so much so as to find his way very often to Oak-Mot of late; Sawney MacSampson, too, the Scotch sheep-king, as all the people called him, from his having such vast flocks of sheep; Mrs. Araminta Long; a whole *caballado* of boys, and girls too, whom the Oak-Mot people were planning to gather into Sabbath-school at the Buffalo Lick. Oh, ever so many people, whom I would so much have liked to tell about, but, so far, have had no time for it.

It will take only a moment or so to tell you all about poor Mr. Brown, if we have, for the present, to speak about no one else.

"You see, it was in this way," Uncle Long explained it, the Monday after it all happened, to Mr. Bugg, whom he met hunting horses on the prairie:

"Mr. Beach had written often, since he came to Oak-Mot, back to the old States for some one to come out and preach for us. We hoped to have meetings at Buffalo Lick school-house, you know. We were glad when we heard that a Mr. Brown, a student from the seminary, was coming; and one Tuesday night, sure enough, he rode up to their door. He is a good man, Mr. Brown; wants to do good; only, as you saw, Mr. Bugg, is rather timid and has not been trained in the best way for his work—at least, for the work here. Edward, Hubert and I rode all next day around for twenty miles, giving notice of the preaching next Sunday at Buffalo Lick. So busy we never once thought about a pulpit. He was too bashful, I suppose, to mention it. Well," continued Mr. Long, "you saw the crowd at the Lick on Sunday morning, Mr. Bugg? We were so glad! more'n we had ever hoped to see. If we'd only had a pulpit! Oh, I noticed how frightened Mr. Brown was when he came into the school-house and saw there was only that little pine table to preach from. It was I that put the bricks there; he whispered to me about it. You see, I'd noticed some, left over from building the chimney, lying outside. Two bricks under each leg of the table, and that didn't

make the table high enough. You saw how he put his sermon on the table and began. Lawyers don't do that way to a jury. Stump speakers never think of such a thing. But the people listened well. If it hadn't been for that gust of wind that came so sudden! Nor even for that, if Mr. Brown hadn't made that quick motion to save his sermon. It was *that* sent the table off the bricks and set the people laughing so. Even then, if he had only put a bold face on it! But it almost killed him. Next morning nothing we could say would stop him. Back he would go, and back to the old States he did go. Who knows? He may be a blessing there. Seen anything, Mr. Bugg, of a gray mare with a black star in the forehead, with our brand?"

But Uncle Long was more distressed at this failure in their first effort at religious service at Buffalo Lick than he expressed.

"I look on it as a providence for you, Edward," he had said to that nephew as they rode to Oak-Mot together from the Lick.

"How is that, uncle?" Edward asks.

"I'm getting to hope, Eddy, that you have given your heart to your Saviour; and I am beginning to hope," his uncle continued in his hearty way,

"that you will preach Christ. If God permits you to preach some day, I want you to do it as the apostles did—in season, out of season, with all your heart and soul. If it is in a church, with the windows shut and the pulpit high enough to do it, why you can read your sermon if most good is done in that way. But if you are to preach Christ out in the West, it must be—as all the rest of the speaking here is—off-hand. You cannot study your sermon too much. But you must study what you have to say enough to be able, if the table upsets or the wind blows, to let your paper go, to look people in the eyes, and just talk to them of Jesus Christ."

But we had no idea of telling about Mr. Brown when we began this chapter. It was about those two things which took place that November morning of the bear-hunt, we wished to speak.

You are reading this book on God's holy day. If I was to give a full account of the chase of the bear that morning, I cannot see what difference there would be between doing that and your actually going bear-hunting on the Sabbath yourself. The sin is not in giving the body only, but in giving the mind and heart, to that which God forbids on the Sabbath.

They had driven the bear—I will tell only enough about it to explain the circumstances in question—into a ravine along which flowed a little stream. Hubert had become almost crazy with eagerness to get at it as soon as he saw the bear on the prairie. He had first got sight of it, riding before his father and brother and uncle that day.

"Thunder Storm *will* go first," he had said, for there was a perfect agreement between Hubert and his horse; they knew each other perfectly well. The moment Thunder Storm would see Hubert coming to him in the corral with his bridle—

"He says 'Hay—hay—hay!' that is, 'Hurrah for us! We are going to have a lope, ain't we?'" Hubert said to Prosy that very morning.

"It is not 'Hay—hay—hay,' at all." Prosy answers, very gravely. "'He saith among the trumpets, *Ha, ha!* and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting,'" she repeats.

"Yes, Prosy, but that is the war-horse the Bible speaks of. Let me see," Uncle Bob, who is mending his big spurs by the gate of the corral, adds, "if I cannot repeat all the passage; I was reading it only last week: 'Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted: neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.'"

"Isn't it beautiful?" exclaims Hubert, who has all his uncle's love for a fine horse. "I do love Thunder Storm," he adds, hugging his precious black horse around the neck; and Thunder Storm, to conceal his own feelings, pricks up his ears and snorts, as if dreadfully alarmed at Edward approaching them, all ready for their ride, although he had seen him a thousand times.

"It's the grandest thing in this world, such a bright, cool, clear morning as this, the wind blowing fresh and strong, just to be on Thunder Storm," Hubert exclaims; "to drop the rein on his neck, give him just a little touch with the spurs and say, *Vamos!* I tell you! We hardly touch the ground. It's like being an angel, and going at full speed through the sky."

"Ah, my dear boy, it is something more than

that which makes an angel. The fact is," his uncle says, "horses are the noblest animals in the world; but, somehow, having much to do with horses ruins men. Even in buying and selling them people will cheat and lie. And then racing is the worst kind of gambling."

"It seems so hard pa never will let us go to races! What's the harm? It is only seeing which horse can go fastest," Hubert complains.

"Anything is wrong," his uncle explains, "which excites us too much. There's something in dancing, playing games, racing and the like which always excites people to do worse things. Indulging in such things is like bathing near Niagara, you see—the water's too swift, and it has swept away too many."

Coming back to the bear. The moment Hubert saw it, that morning, looking so very large on the open prairie, he gave the shout—

"Oh, pa! oh, uncle! a bear, a bear!" and was off down the long slope of the prairie toward it as fast as Thunder Storm could go. The only weapon Hubert had was his pocket-knife, and this he took out of his pocket and opened with his teeth as he rode at full speed. Now Hubert was hardly to blame, yet, as is often the case, when people are too

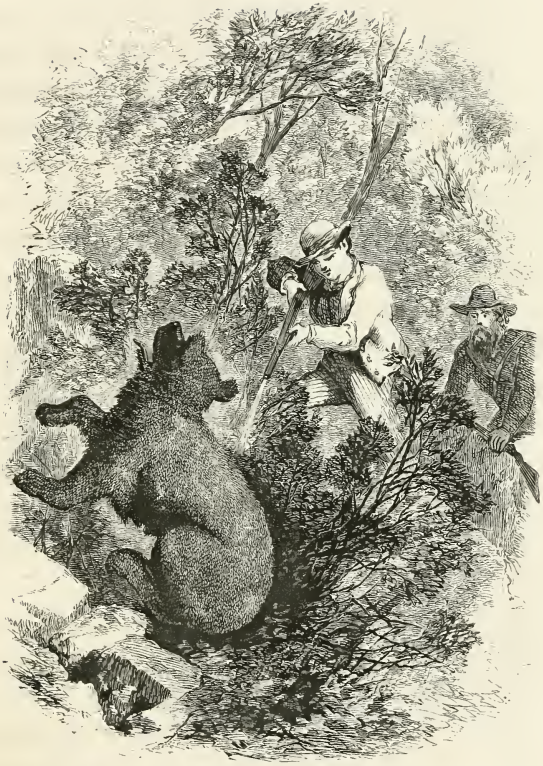
fast, he came near ruining everything by his impatience. The bear ran to the ravine, and reached it before the rest could cut in between. The only thing to do was for Mr. Beach, who would not trust Hubert out of his sight any more, to ride with Hubert slowly up the ravine, shouting and beating the bushes to drive the bear before them, while Edward and his uncle galloped up to shoot at it as it passed them. After getting half a mile up, they dismounted, tied their horses out to graze, and, one seated among the bushes on one side of the ravine, and the other upon the other side, they waited with their rifles ready until the bear should come up.

"When I speak, Eddy, do exactly what I say," his uncle said to him, as they sat opposite to each other concealed in the thick bushes, in a low tone.

"Sh—sh—sh! I hear him coming," the uncle added again, rifle ready in hand.

"*Lower your head!*" he shouted the next moment in a loud, strange voice, lifting his rifle to his eye and taking aim direct at his nephew as he spoke.

Now, Edward would have dropped his head out of the range of his uncle's rifle, only, at the instant his uncle shouted, he caught sight of a great black mass of wool, which seemed to him as big as an



THE BEAR HUNT. Page 179.

ox, not three yards off from him, tumbling along the bank of the ravine on his left, in and out of the bushes. So, instead of *dropping* his head forward, he lifted it, putting it exactly in a line between his uncle's rifle and the bear. Little he thought that for one moment his soul quivered on the very edge of the grave!

In fact, the instant after he saw the bear he forgot about everything else in the world, rose to his feet with a wild cry, brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired, the great ball of black wool rolling at the crack of his gun down through the thick underwood into the little stream below. If he had looked back, he would have seen that his uncle had dropped his rifle, his brown face turned almost as white as Egeria's with fright; and, if Edward had not drowned everything in the report of his gun and his own wild shouts afterward, he would have heard his uncle exclaim—

"O God, I thank thee!"

No wonder! At the instant Edward lifted his head and placed it thus exactly in the range of his uncle's rifle, that uncle had taken aim; his finger was actually on the hair-trigger! Only a little pressure of that finger, only a soft touch on it—the softest touch in the world—and Edward, in-

stead, would have rolled down the bank with a bullet through his head! And who can tell all the misery from this to Oak-Mot? To the uncle most of all?

His uncle sat on the bank of the ravine, for a time as helpless as poor Adry, trembling in every limb. But the shouts of Edward, as he plunged down after the bear, aroused him to his new danger.

"Hold on, Eddy! stop!" He said it in such sharp tones that Edward could not but obey this time.

"He is only wounded. He will tear you to pieces," he said, seizing the excited youth by the arm. "Besides, your rifle is empty. Besides that, if you want to do the greatest favour in all the world to Hubert, wait till he comes. Load up as fast as you can. Here they come!" he added, as Hubert, far in advance of his father, came climbing, jumping, tumbling down and getting up, shouting and running as hard as he could.

"Oh, uncle! oh, Eddy! where is he? where is he?" he burst upon them at last, exclaiming, his clothes almost torn off of him, his hat gone, his face bleeding from the scratches received as he tore his way along. "Oh, did you hit him? Where

is he? where is he?" he shouted, more like a crazy boy than a sensible Hubert.

"Look here, Hubert! Hush! you'll frighten the bear to death!" and his uncle took him in his powerful arms and held him still. "Hold on till you get cool and quiet," he said at last. "Have your senses got back yet? Now, listen. Edward has wounded the bear so that he cannot get away. My rifle is too heavy. As soon as Edward has loaded his, you creep to the side of that pecan yonder. Take a good rest, a long aim for its head. Don't be in a hurry; count ten as slowly as Adry would, then fire!"

But we are not telling a bear story. We are only telling exactly what took place then and there; and for two reasons: to show how very near any one of us may be to death and not know it; and to ask this question: Would you have been as thoughtful of Hubert as his uncle was? Would you have stopped in the middle of your triumph, as nobly as Edward did, to share that triumph with your brother?

But the grand reason why all this had to be told was this: what took place while they were skinning and cutting up the dead bear to take home. Uncle Bob kept Edward's narrow escape

to himself for the present. He had good reasons, as well as because he was going to make a special use of it with Edward.

It was in this way: Mr. Beach was too tired to help them much after he came up, and was seated among the clean gravel of the stream in which the bear had received its death-shot from Hubert, who was as proud of it as a boy can ever get to be of anything in this world. There had been a wonderful deal of exclaiming and questioning for the first hour of their work upon the bear; and they were not half through when Mr. Beach observed a little book slip out of Mr. Long's breast-pocket, as he stooped lower than before over the bear in unjointing some of its great bones with his hunter's knife. Being the only one there whose hands were not bloody, he hastened to pick it up.

"Ha, Hebrew!" he exclaimed with the utmost astonishment.

"Hebrew?" It was the exclamation of both Edward and Hubert in the same breath, looking up from their work.

"Yes, Hebrew, as I live!" their father added, holding up a beautiful little book, about half the size of this volume, with beautiful letters, too, in a strange language on the back.

"The Psalms in the language they were written in!" continued Mr. Beach, as much excited over the little book as Hubert or Edward had been over the bear.

"What if it is?" Mr. Long said, surprised at their surprise. "Please keep it till I get time to wash my hands. Now, wasn't it kind in Bruin to be killed right here in the water? It would have been a terrible job hauling him through the bushes to the water to wash away the blood. If this bear is one inch on the ribs, he is full four. It's not often bears are so fat in this country at this time of the year."

"Edward told us about the Greek," Mr. Beach said. "I was amazed at that. But you don't pretend to say you can read Hebrew?"

Hebrew is the language, as every reader knows, in which the Old Testament was written—the language God spake the Ten Commandments in—for what we know, the language Adam and Eve spoke in Eden; certainly the oldest written language in the world.

"No, not much," replies Mr. Long; "only enough to make out a Psalm or so every day. My reading Hebrew is pretty much like George Washington Andrew Jackson Abraham Lincoln's reading Eng-

lish. But we are both learning, you see." The hunter says it very coolly.

"Yes, but when could you learn it?"

"And how could you learn it?"

"And why did you learn it?"

Mr. Beach and the nephews all asked at once.

"Don't stop working, boys. It is all we can do to have this meat fixed and get home with it by dark. You forget we are twenty miles from Oak-Mot. Oh, as to the Hebrew," he added, "it is the same with that it was with the Greek."

"Yes, but how was it with the Greek, uncle?" Edward asks.

"You know I got off from telling you at the time, Eddy? I didn't intend to mention it; at least, not now," Mr. Long said, slowly. "The way of it was this," he added, after some silence, still busy with his knife: "not that I minded telling you, George, if it had come up. But I wasn't so certain about the boys," and their uncle worked for some minutes in silence.

"Of course, Robert, if you do not wish—"

"Oh, well," the uncle interrupted Mr. Beach, "I didn't care they should know what a desperate case I was. The Bible says, 'I was almost in all evil,' and there was no *almost* in my case. I don't

want to speak of it. I hope you boys may never even know of such wickedness. I can't tell you now about how I was brought to be a Christian. Paul's case on the way to Damascus— Never mind, now! I may tell you all about it some day—I don't know. Well, yes! When I had become a Christian I had a hard time with the sort of people I had lived with. The worst time of all, I knew, would be with Brown Bob Long, the worst of them all. You see, I am so made I have to go into anything with all my strength or I can't go at all. You understand?" Mr. Long continued, pausing, knife in hand, to look not at the nephews, but at their father. "I knew I was safe to be a Christian, God helping me, only by going at something in religion with all my heart and soul. I tried to make it the working hard at the Meggars and other desperately wicked people, to do them some good. Either they would conquer me or I them. 'Be not overcome of evil,' the Bible says. Yes, and the one only way not to be overcome of evil is as the rest of the verse says, 'But overcome evil with good.' Where the two come face to face, one or the other *has* to go down. It kept me busy, you may suppose. But then I couldn't be with them all the time. A good part of the time I had

to spend off by myself in my cabin at night, or riding on Bobasheela hunting; and I knew well, as I said, that of all I was the one most to fear. You have no idea how very far gone—never mind! All my life till then had been given up to sin. The habits of sin were—terrible!" and the speaker paused for some time.

"I said to myself," he continued at last, "Bob Long, this will never do. You must go at something in religion—something that will keep you from doing or thinking as of old—something that will keep you hard at it, or it will be the old case of the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Just then, through Mr. Wall, the minister whom God so blessed to me, I got—I don't remember how it begun, exactly—the books, and went at it to learn, so as to read the New Testament in the language it was written in. I had plenty of time, but it took me good two years before I could read the Greek. Hard work it was, in my cabin there of a night, sometimes till near morning—as hard as one could wish."

And there was another long silence, during which the three were busy with the dead bear, for its meat was now all cut up, and they were working with the skin, scraping and trimming it.

"But how about the Hebrew?" Mr. Beach asked at last, with deepest interest.

"Oh, just the same," replied Mr. Long, who had spoken in an unwilling manner about the whole matter. "When the Greek got easy to me, I had to look about for something else, partly for the same reason, partly because it had got to be a sort of habit to study the Bible that way. I've made too long a story of it. Mr. Wall laughed at the idea when he gave me the books to study Hebrew. I didn't blame him. Tough?" The speaker threw all the meaning he could into the word. "Tough isn't the word! A hundred times I gave it up; but a hundred and one times I went at it again. I have worked till daybreak at it; yes, till the sweat would pour down like water. In all my life I never did such hard work. I never before knew there was such hard work possible to be done. Mauling rails isn't a circumstance to it. Let's talk about something else. Oh, I can read it at last—not as one can Greek or English, of course; enough to make out the meaning. And what a rich meaning it is, down under the top! The more you study Scripture, the richer, and sweeter, and deeper it is! But we are ready now to roll the meat up in the skin."

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH WE AT LEAST BEGIN TO TELL ABOUT EDWARD'S VISIT TO HIS UNCLE.

IT is December. Edward has been spending a week or two at the house of his uncle, to whom he is becoming more warmly attached every day. Or, not at his uncle's house; rather the nights only are spent there. Like his uncle, Edward—and Hubert too, for that matter—have less and less "use for a house," as they style it. All the days are spent on the prairie, by Edward and his uncle now, in a kind of union of business and pleasure. The business is in hunting cows and horses of their brand—the pleasure being the killing of such deer, unbranded of man, as they happen upon, although, as both are done on horseback and in the bright, beautiful air, both are pleasures beyond anything Edward ever before knew.

We would like to tell of the night both of these spent in a tree over Grape Spring during this visit of Edward. You see, the deer came very early in the morning to drink there; but it was a shame to

shoot them from a tree while they were drinking without an idea that any danger was near at the spring. "It was mean," Hubert said afterward. Whether he would have refused, had he been with them, to have done the same for that reason, who can say? But we have to leave that untold. "Did you ever see such a fool?" Edward said to his uncle one morning, as they were riding as usual over the prairie. "That rabbit lay under the grass till Jim's hoof was almost on him. Then up he jumps, runs fifty yards or so like the wind, with his long ears laid back on his shoulders. If he had only had the sense to keep on! But he must needs stop by that mesquit, to put up his long ears and consider who and what sort of animals we are. All I had to do was to draw out my revolver and pop him over, as Hubert calls it. How he jumped when the bullet struck him! Poor fellow!" Edward added, as he tied the dead rabbit to the hinder part of his saddle by the buckskin thongs there for like purposes; "it is almost wrong to astonish him so. Only he was such a fool!"

"I know a greater," his uncle said, as Edward mounted and they rode along together again.

"Who is that?" asked Edward.

"Many a man you meet. That is, if it were

right to call men fools. But they are. Look at that Alec of yours," the uncle continued. "I told him if he ran his horse after rabbits over that part of the prairie which is all cracked by drought, he would do mischief. The very next day, up started a rabbit just there; off went Alec after it. Of course, his horse, the beautiful bay, put a foot in a crack, broke his leg, and had to be shot."

"And pitched Alec twenty feet over his head, breaking his arm," Edward added.

"It might have been his neck; and there he lies at Oak-Mot this moment, groaning and moaning. That's all a small specimen. Why," continued Uncle Bob, "there's Bud Barton, gambling away every cent he has in the world. And Mr. Bugg. He knows, as well as I do, he is drinking himself into apoplexy inside of two years. And how many such there are! Not that *we've* anything to boast of over them, you know," Mr. Long added after a pause. "'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' the Bible asks. But the wildest foolishness of all is— What do you suppose it is, Eddy?"

"I think I know what you mean, uncle: for a man," Edward, after a while, replies, "to know that his soul will be lost for ever, and not repent of

his sins and take Christ as his Saviour;" and Edward says it very seriously.

"I sometimes wish I couldn't see things so clear," the uncle added, after riding along for some time in silence, his huge hat drooping its broad brim over his bearded and sun-burned face, his rifle across the saddle before him—not a horse or cow in sight unnoticed by him as they rode. "I suppose it is my long habit of watching around so sharp for game and the like. It may be because the air is so clear on the prairies, and things stand out so strong in it. Perhaps because I've always taken such a common-sense look at things. People say about religion, 'Oh, yes, certainly; of course! Nobody but an infidel denies this and that. Very important, indeed. But—how are the crops, Mr. Long?' Even Christians! What is the reason people agree to walk all around religion as if it were a rattlesnake? Nobody ever pretends it is in their path to hurt them. The most important, the most beautiful thing in all the world! People only say, 'Oh yes,' and are in a dreadful hurry to get off from it to talk about anything and everything else on earth rather than that. It's like that talk I had with Doc Meggar. I said to him one day, as we were by ourselves, 'Doc, what is the

use? Let's look at things square in the face. I'll ask and you answer like a man.' 'Go ahead,' he answered. 'Is there a hell? Really, certainly now, Doc?' 'Yes,' he said, looking me full in the eyes. 'And a heaven, a glorious place, a *certain* place—such as California, say?' 'Certainly,' he said. 'Are you a sinner, sure to lose heaven and be lost in that awful place, as you are, Doc?' I asked him, as solemnly as I could. He winced a little, and at last said, very solemnly too, 'Yes, Bob.' 'And the Son of the great God that made us came into this world, was born a babe, lived and died here, to save you and me—there is not a word of truth in *that*, Doc?' 'It is the actual fact,' he said. You see," the uncle explained to his nephew, "we had often talked about it before, Doc and I, and often and often I've spent almost all night praying for him. You see," the uncle continued, "Doc and I had been together in wickedness so long, and it was either I had to conquer him to Christ, or he would conquer me. That's the steady case between Christians and those around them—no standing still, one thing or the other."

"Was that all that passed between you then?" Edward asked.

"Only this more. I said," the uncle continued:

"'And Jesus is an actual, living, breathing, loving Person—not a hero from story-books, but *an actual man*, Doc?' 'Yes,' he said. 'And he stands by you all the time and wants you to be saved by him for nothing, Doc?' 'Yes,' he said, for God had touched his heart. 'And you won't give him your heart?' I asked.' 'I can't,' he said. 'You agree that God can help you?' I said. 'Yes, sir, I do!' he replied. 'Then we'll ask God,' I said; and we kneeled down in the corner of the fence, and I tried to pray for him. And God did help him. Doc Meggar's the very hope of the church where he lives—its very pillar and prop ever since. It's all so very simple and plain," Mr. Long said, with tone and gesture which cannot be put on paper.

"I never thought about such things before we came to Oak-Mot," Edward said, after they had ridden in silence up many a rolling knoll and down many a valley of the prairie. "Of course," he added, "I had heard about such matters all my life; but they always seemed like clouds in the air. I never once thought about them as real things, like the trees and the mountains, the sun and the stars, before. And I have always thought it was something dreadful to talk about—the most gloomy and awful thing in the world. The becoming a

Christian was something like having to suffer a painful operation for some disease or for a broken leg. I can't express it. But I'm trying, uncle; that is, praying."

And Edward did not tell his uncle about his having sat by Adry not ten days before, and have him read to him from the huge Bible, lying open as usual in Adry's lap, as he sat in his wheeled chair in the shade of the live-oaks, for, December as it was, it was warm enough to make the shade pleasant.

It happened in this way: Edward had been riding by himself all day, for Hubert had gone to mill. Alec was laid up with his broken arm, and Juan could be relied upon very little indeed. As to Juan, Delphy and Alec, the colored servants, looked down upon the little Mexican as entirely inferior to them. Even George Washington Andrew Jackson Abraham Lincoln, the jet black child of these, regarded poor Juan as only an equal at best.

"Red people, yellow people, black people, white people! What a mixture the people of this country are, father!" Hubert had one day said to Mr. Beach when they happened to be speaking of some Tonkaway Indians who had camped near them on their way to Austin to beg.

"Those are not all the colours. There are one thousand people from Europe a day landing on our eastern shores. Already," Mr. Beach continued, "the natives of Asia are emigrating to our western shores. When more steamers run to and fro between San Francisco and China and Japan, and when railroads are finished to California from the Mississippi, the olive-coloured people from Asia will pour in by thousands, bringing their gods and priests with them. Then, indeed, the Christians of America will have work to do."

But we have wandered from Edward.

As he came that day from the stables, after putting up his horse, he felt glad when he saw that Adry was by himself. All day long he had been thinking, as he rode, of much that his uncle had talked to him about.

"Read to me some, Adry," he said, taking his seat on the log by Adry, and removing his broad hat to cool himself.

Now Edward had been so much more kind to Adry of late that the poor fellow's pale face brightened as soon as his brother had taken his seat by him.

"Where must I read?" Adry asked, lifting his large, soft, helpless eyes to his brother.

"Poor fellow!" thought Edward as he glanced at the thin, stooping body of his brother, all crouched together in his chair. "To think that he can never ride on horseback, or run, or swim or shoot!—can never be a real man, much less a distinguished lawyer or Congressman!" For the plain fact is, though he never spoke about it, Edward was pretty certain of being one day quite a celebrated man himself. "And then," thought Edward, "he never will read anything but that big Bible. Poor, poor fellow!"

Now, it was a weakness in Adry to prefer the large Bible he used to all other Bibles. It was a pity, even, for it burdened him to carry it about, terribly, it was so very large and he was so feeble. Yet he seemed to think there was more, Prosy said, in his Bible because it was so much larger than the others. In any case it was only a weakness. Perhaps he had too great a reverence, also, for the mere book itself—nervous if any one else even touched it, keeping it clean by excessive care, making almost an idol of it.

"As to his never being a man," Prosy had told Edward long before, "Adry will be a man, a grown man, one day—as great a man as anybody."

"I'd like to know when," Edward had said, scornfully.

"In heaven! In only a few years," Prosy said, warmly. "Uncle told me so. And pa said, 'Yes;' and as to the few years first in this world, they made very little difference."

"And uncle said it is the same with idiots," Hubert added, for he had been with them while they talked. "Not that Adry is anything of the kind, of course," he added hastily, at a look from Prosy. "But uncle says the worst idiot is only like a gold watch that has stopped running—"

"Arrested development is what the doctors call it," Edward graciously explained.

"Only some little bit of a pin or screw or lever out of place in the brain, he said," Hubert continued. "Something not larger perhaps than a pin's head wrong. Not in the mind itself, you see, not in the soul—only in the body which holds the soul. A watch stopped, but can be started again."

"Yes, and as soon as the body drops off at death the soul will go on all right, just as if it had never stopped at all. Only it will be in heaven, not here," Prosy added, solemnly. "Uncle told me all about it, and I asked pa and ma, and they said

uncle was right. Though Adry is no more anything of that sort than either of you." she added, so earnestly that her brothers could not help laughing.

You see how it is? We are trying to tell about that day Edward sat by Adry when he came in from his ride, but everything reminds us of something else that went before.

"Where must I read?" Adry asked.

"Oh, I don't care much about hearing you read. I only said so to be talking. How do you like Oak-Mot by this time, Adry?" Edward asked.

"I like heaven," said Adry, who had very few ideas indeed apart from his big Bible.

"What do you know about heaven?" asked his brother, and a little scornfully too.

"'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,'" Adry read very seriously, tracing the lines with his thin white hand as he did so. "'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of

God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.'"

Now Edward had all these words by heart from childhood, yet he had never really heard them before. Perhaps it was in Adry's slow way of reading, himself on the edge of that better world all the time, and having so little use of this; the frail finger moving along the lines; the thin face bent over the page; the hearty belief of it all in every tone.

And then his uncle had told Edward how he, Edward himself, had hung, that eventful instant at the ravine, quivering on the edge of some other world. Only the least pressure of his uncle's forefinger on the hair-trigger—the least possible, at that instant—and he would have gone into—what other world? "People say there's plenty of time to attend to religion," his uncle had then told him. "Oh, as to religion, that's all away off. This is the real world. They think they are so young and strong and all. Just that little touch on my trig-

ger, a horse frightened at a puppy springing suddenly at his nose, a little cold he takes—the least little thing in the world—and in a twinkling his real, solid, everlasting world (as he thinks) has gone from under his feet, and he is in the other world for ever and ever! And yet preparation for that other world is all nonsense, they say. Humph!"

"Needn't read any more now, Adry," Edward had said, as his brother finished the last lines above. "What paper is that?" he added, more to change the subject than anything else, for Adry had carefully removed a page of foolscap from the place where he read.

"Prosy keeps it *there*," Adry said, laying his hand firmly upon the page from which he had just read. "If you'll start me I can say part of it," he added, making it a condition of Edward's looking at the precious slip of paper.

"Very well," said Edward. "Hubert has been in Egy's desk again, I'll be bound. Anyhow, here goes!" It was pretty much a matter of mere rote with poor Adry, learning verses. Started on each line, the sounds of the following words came to him; how much of the sense who could tell? All of it, Prosy believed, and Prosy was a sensible

girl—perhaps over-partial, if that were possible, of Adry.

With Edward beginning the first words of every line or so, the two made out the lines thus:

> "'Not gates of pearl, imperial halls,
> Nor trees of life, nor jasper walls;
> Not radiant robes of heaven's own white
> To clothe us as in woven light;
> Not mighty wings to bear us far,
> Nor crowns, each gem a flaming star;
> Not harps, and therewith voices given,
> Wherewith to lead the choirs of heaven—'"

But here Adry broke down, and Edward read the rest to himself:

> "'Not verdurous palms to wave—ah, no!—
> Nor streets to tread of golden glow,—
> No, not to gain such things as these,
> Our heart from earth instinctive flees:
> The heaven by which our soul's enticed
> Is the for ever having Christ!'"

"Somehow it is Christ, Christ—always *Christ*," Edward said to himself as he gave the paper back into Adry's hand, who put it carefully back to its exact place in the Bible. "Only," he added, also to himself, "I don't think Egeria wrote those

lines—not the last ones, at least. I wonder what has come over us all here at Oak-Mot?" Edward continued to himself. "I suppose it is because we are so cut off from all the world. I am sure we've all heard about religion ever since we were born. It must be Uncle Bob. He thinks all this world is good for is to become a Christian in. He's had all sorts of adventures with desperate men out here; has a thousand stories about killing antelopes and deers and bears; has been all over Mexico, and all that; and yet he would fifty times rather any day talk about Christ. Strange! He told me only yesterday the most wonderful thing in religion isn't hell or heaven, or even our Maker. It is Christ! If Egy did write those last lines, it's plain uncle has been talking to her that way. He says that for God to become a man, and die for us, is the most wonderful thing in the world."

"Adry," Edward asks aloud, "what is that place that starts with, 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and—and—"

"'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,'" Adry repeats with great caution, as if stepping from stone to stone over a running

stream. It gives new meaning to a passage, Edward had often heard.

"There's something, Adry, in all that I never dreamed of before," Edward says, more to himself than to his poor brother. And there arises in Edward's bosom, as he thinks of it, a deep yearning—a longing—a great want. It is the craving of his heart for Christ. And that craving is the work in his heart of the Holy Ghost, sent there by Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH OUR STORY COMES TO AN END—AT LEAST, FOR THE PRESENT.

"THERE was something singular about your father's life before he came to Oak-Mot, wasn't there, Edward?" It is his Aunt Araminty, his uncle's wife, who asks him the question, as he sits at their breakfast-table, on the morning of his last day there.

Edward colours a good deal.

"Never mind just now about that, Eddy," his uncle says hastily, shaking his head at his wife over his fourth cup of coffee, as a warning not to press the question, while his nephew sits and eats with his eyes fastened on his plate. Mrs. Long is a warm-hearted Christian lady, devoted to her husband, and grown quite fond of Edward and all the rest at Oak-Mot by this time. Hubert is her pet, and has unlimited supplies of cake and pudding and preserves whenever with them on a visit; but all at Oak-Mot agree with their mother when she says—

"It distresses me to death to see Araminta use snuff as she does! Were it not for that, she would be the best woman in the world."

Only Prosy does not like the way in which her aunt keeps aloof from, and seem really afraid of, poor Adry, when she is at Oak-Mot. Prosy never dreams how much her own love for Adry makes him very different to her eyes from what he is to others. His parents had always regarded him with that peculiar tenderness wakened by God in the heart toward those suffering ones who need our love most. But, somehow, Adry has become, during the stay of the family at Oak-Mot, more the centre of their tenderest regards than ever before. Not an hour in all the day but the loving eye of some one there is upon him. Not a moment but some hand is waiting, or eager to wait, upon him. Whatever else any one is about, you have only to say, "Adry," and the thing, whatever it may be, is dropped and Adry is attended to.

"Yes, you are right," Mr. Beach has said very often of late to his wife, very sadly too; "none of the children notice it, but Adry is failing sadly. It is almost more than Prosy can bear, stout as she is, the way Adry leans his whole weight upon her shoulders as they take their walks. I am glad to

see how eager Egeria and Edward have become to take Prosy's place at his exercise. Even Hubert! They all love him so much more than they used to do, and Adry loves them more too."

"You must have noticed how sunken his eyes are, and his poor thin forehead. It almost frightens me to catch his great, sorrowful eyes fixed upon me so. And he talks less and less every day. Prosy has promised me that she will not have him learn any more verses, or get him to read from his Bible oftener than she can help."

Mrs. Beach speaks calmly, because they have had Adry continually before them for so many years, very sadly though.

"It is such a pity," Mr. Beach adds, "that he will not be contented with any other Bible than that large one! It would be a burden for *me*."

"Prosy has done all she could. You know," continues Mrs. Beach, "it was the one he first read in. He has never read a line in any other book in his life. He seems to think it is the only book in the world. And he is more unwilling every day for anybody else even to touch it. He has had it all these years, and it is almost as clean as the first hour he had it."

"Except that torn leaf the day he fell. You

remember how terribly distressed he was—more so than we ever knew him to be before? I do believe," added Mr. Beach, "that Adry sorrows over that torn place, though Prosy patched it so nicely, more than if the rent had been in his own hands, careful as he is with them."

"The fact is, with the mind of a little child, Adry is an old, old man in body," his mother says. "His thin hair is almost white, and he has not the weight of Bexy." And no more is said by either. It is an old sorrow, but both have the same sad expectation of the future. As to Uncle Long, he has often tried to make his wife understand Adry's case, but not with very much success. Mrs. Long never was anything but very strong and well in all her life, and such persons are sometimes impatient with the sick and feeble, and imagine it is always their fault, somehow, that they are not stout and strong. They don't understand, at least, and feel for the weaker ones as they should.

"That was one reason God became man," her husband had said to her one day. "'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.' 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all

points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' The truth is," Mr. Long added, "none ever love to their utmost until they have come to love Christ."

"And why not?" asked his wife, who has the greatest reverence for her husband's piety, chiefly because of his life and conduct; somewhat, also, because of his devotion to his Greek Testament and Hebrew Bible.

"One reason is, when we come to know God in the flesh, and all that he has done and is doing for us, he is One so much worthier to be loved than anything we ever imagined before that the heart throws more force into loving him than it ever did before. Understand? Then, too, when one comes to know the astonishing love he has for us, our heart, in struggling to love back that amazing love, gets a power and force of loving it never before had. Just as a man who is always trying to lift larger weights than other people, gets—do you understand?—a strength and power of lifting beyond others."

"Then you mean that a father and mother love their children, a husband and wife love each other, a friend loves his friend, and all that, more after they become Christians than before?" his wife asks.

"Exactly. In fact, I really believe no man or woman fully knows what it is to love until then. Don't you remember," her husband adds, "what the Bible says?—'He that loveth is born of God.' That is, nobody can love at all—at least, not love their strongest—until they are born of God. The becoming a Christian breaks up the fountains of the heart— Oh, I can't express it."

"Then that is the reason why the Bible says, 'If any man love God, he will love his brother also?'" says Mrs. Long.

"Yes, and why a man gets to love even his worst enemy. Such a force of affection is excited in him by coming to love his Saviour that it floods all the world besides."

You see, dear reader, how we have been drawn away from Edward, breakfasting at his uncle's table? Resisting all their entreaties, he must return to Oak-Mot that day, he says.

"What delightful weather it is! Here is the last of December, and it is as warm as August," Edward said to his uncle two hours after, as they were saddling Jim, Edward's horse.

"That is because Jim broke his *cabris* on the prairie, and we had such a chase to catch him. Perhaps one of us was a little mad, too, about it,

and that heats one dreadfully. Although," his uncle continues, "it is very warm—too warm to last. When anything gets too violent in this world, you may look out for a sudden change. I noticed wild geese flying when we were tearing after Jim just now, and we'll have a Norther before long. I hate to see you start home to-day, especially as you have so late a start; but if you think you must go, I must not stop you. I don't like people to stop me. Besides, I have to ride to mill to-day, and could not be with you."

Half an hour after, with promises soon to return, Edward was off for home.

For the first hour or so, Edward rode along rather more slowly than was usual with him. Both he and Jim had somewhat spent their morning energies in the catching and being caught already spoken of. Besides, Edward was thinking over all his visit to his uncle. Now about some hunting adventure he had enjoyed with his uncle, and then about some one of the many stories his uncle had told him of big bucks killed or bear fights engaged in by himself years before. A good many things Aunt Araminta had told him about her sister Amelia Ann and a Mr. Merkes, and once or twice Jim pricked up his ears to hear his master laugh

aloud at what his aunt had told him, and her manner of telling it; for we have to leave out as we go along a hundred things we would like well enough to tell—instructive and interesting things too. Two or three times Edward had reined up his horse, drawn the revolver, which people wear around Oak-Mot as regularly as they do kid gloves elsewhere, from its leather sheath at his belt on his left-hand side, a little behind his back, and fired at a long-eared rabbit started from under his horse, to stop and look and listen, with its preposterous ears going to and fro. Once he missed, twice he killed the rabbit fired at, and had to stop long enough to pick it up for breakfast to-morrow morning at home.

"Ah yes, my fine fellows," he had stopped once to shout to a herd of deer he saw off to the right hand, "you wouldn't dare to be there but because I've left my rifle! Wait till I come along again!" And the deer held their antlers, clearly seen against the sky for a moment, and then went on grazing, with the does and little fawns around them, in silent contempt. "It's always the way," Edward added somewhat peevishly to himself, "I never, never *knew* it to miss! So sure as I've got my rifle with me, I ride days without seeing anything.

The moment I stir out without it, the game swarms around me, begging to be shot. Uncle no more leaves his rifle at home than he does his ears or eyes; and he is right."

And this set him to thinking about that uncle again, and of all he had said and done during this last visit. And the one leading thought about his uncle was, what his uncle had done and said as a disciple of Christ; that was the great, golden thread running through it all. If religion is the main thing about a man, you see, of course it is the main thing we will remember about him.

"Humph! I wonder what makes them do that?" Edward said aloud, as he woke from deep thought to notice some horses galloping over the prairie to the left, then some more over the prairie to the right, in the same general direction. For Edward had grown, under his uncle's instruction, to be so wide awake to everything around him as he rode that not a bird or a distant deer, much less a cow or horse, on all the prairie around could escape his eye, ever on the alert.

"Ever notice how blooded horses are for ever pricking up their ears and looking around?" his uncle had said to him one day. "It's exactly that way with blooded—I mean, smart—men, too.

Always take care to see everything going on around you."

Now and then a "bunch," as Texans call it, of cows and yearlings, moving rapidly in the same direction, would catch his eye; which Edward noticed the more as such cattle generally graze along as quietly as possible.

"Why, all the stock on the prairie is afloat, all off in the same direction. What do you think of it, Jim? Wonder if it's Indians? Smell anything, old fellow?" and Edward reined up to look around him as he said it. Cows, calves, horses, all in sight, were in motion, and all toward the same point of the compass.

"Speak up, Jim! What do you think of it?" Edward said to his horse again, with a vague feeling of alarm, for it was long after noon, drawing toward night, and he was far from home and very lonely.

Jim only pricked up his ears and snorted, then started off with new vigor. What Jim meant was, if he could have spoken, just this:

"It's perfectly amazing to me you can be such a perfect goose as not to know a Norther's coming! Worse than a goose; *they* know. Didn't you see the geese flying this morning? yes, and hear them?

They kept squawking to everybody miles under them, as they flew, 'Look out down there! Norther's coming!'"

Only Jim ought to have made more allowance for his master, seeing he had only reason to go by, and no instinct. But then Edward too often forgot to make the excuse for his horse that Jim had only instinct to go by, and no reason. But Edward had eyes, if he had no instinct. Even then he might not have noticed it if he had not been riding due north. But, as he waited for Jim's opinion, he noticed a flash of lightning in that part of the sky.

The air was as still and sultry as a day in August, nor was there a speck of cloud in all the sky. The moment after the flash in the north, Edward saw that it came from a cloud almost under the horizon. As if terrified by the little flash, Edward put spurs to Jim. He now understood why the cattle were running to the nearest cover.

A Norther!

Good twenty miles from Oak-Mot! Night coming on—night pitch dark! Not a match in his pocket! Strange he didn't think once of having a way to make fire with his revolver. And then only summer clothes on; it had been so hot, and was still, for that matter.

In almost less time than it takes to write it the day was gone, and night had come upon the swift wheels of the Norther—a night of the darkest clouds. Summer was gone in an instant too, and winter had arrived, with a leap like that of a tiger, from the blue icebergs of the North Pole.

As the moments passed, it became so dark that Edward could see the road before him only by the flashes of lightning. Once or twice he had to get off of his horse and feel for the road among the grass with his hands.

Now it is very easy for you to sit by the fire there and say what *you* would have done. But suppose, like Edward Beach, you had never felt a Norther, much less been out upon a prairie in one before? and imagine that prairie to lie all around you like the vast ocean, the wind sweeping over it with terrible power, beating your hat down over your eyes, plucking desperately at your clothes, making your very horse stagger as he tries to force his way along, blinding and deafening and confusing you with its violence? It helps to bewilder Edward to feel that sudden change from a hot summer's day to the middle of winter, for the wind cuts as keen as a knife whetted on the ice-fields of the Arctic Circle. It does not rain as yet, but

Edward expects it to pour down in torrents of rain—or rather hail—every moment.

He spurs his horse along in all haste, for he remembers in a flash all he has been told about the terrible Northers. There was Mr. Bugg. One beautiful day his son Harry, twenty years old, had frozen to death not fifty miles east of the very spot he was then riding over; a beautiful day in the morning, but midwinter by four o'clock in the afternoon. And since their arrival at Oak-Mot every neighbour they had seen had told them over and over again the story of young Mrs. Bud Barton—how she was such a lovely Christian woman as to have made Bud a decent, respectable man; how she had taken little Alice, her only child, a sweet girl of four years old, in her lap on horseback to spend the day with her mother, not ten miles over the prairie; how they had got caught in a Norther in returning, getting off the horse or falling off from extreme cold, it was never known which, and had been found next day, when search was made, lying on the earth, frozen to death, little Alice nestled in her mother's arms, as she did every night, only both were now in the sleep which knows no waking till the resurrection. People said it was no wonder Bud Barton took that very day to

hard drinking again, and had been at that and gambling ever since, not having anything whatever to live for now. Nor were those the only cases.

Yet Edward only rode on the more furiously through the roaring, howling, beating storm. In his eagerness he was, without knowing it, pulling too hard upon the reins—pulling and letting go to make Jim go faster. Thus he had drawn Jim completely off the road to the right. It enraged Edward that, as sure as he loosened the reins, Jim would try to whirl off to the left. And so, between them, when Edward knew by the stumbling of Jim that they were off the road and among the tufted grass, and got down stiff with cold to feel for the road, though he made a wide circuit on both sides, holding firmly to the reins, he could not find it.

Edward was lost!

People say of a person who is lost that he gets "turned around." It means that his brain gets as dizzy as if he had actually been whirling round and round on his heels. Lay this book down, stand up in the centre of the room, shut your eyes tight, then whirl round and round as long as you can stand it; then, keeping your eyes close shut all the time, try to go to the door or the bookcase.

You are sure to go exactly wrong! Worse still, you are, for a moment, almost insane.

So with Edward. As soon as he found that he was lost, there came a singular feeling of dizziness in his head, as if he were not himself, or as if he were wandering in a dream. What made it worse was the singular folly of his horse. Jim *would* go off to the left instead of the right. That is, Jim was trying to go straight for Oak-Mot, while Edward, utterly mistaken, was trying to drag him out of the way there.

Suddenly Edward thought, "Ha! Jim wants to go back to uncle's; but he sha'n't, for I am twenty miles nearer Oak-Mot than to uncle's house." And so he continued struggling with Jim as well as with the roaring storm and pitchy darkness.

If Edward had not been so confused in mind, he would have known that the only thing he could do was to let Jim go his own way. By his instinct Jim knew, hours on hours before his master did, that a Norther was coming. That was the reason he had broken his *cabris* and started for Oak-Mot before Edward was up that morning. By the same instinct, Jim could go now in a bee-line to his stable-door, not caring one grain of corn for the

road or the darkness. Edward had become now more frightened than ever before in his life. He had not the least idea of the way home, or of the distance from home. There was nothing but thick and stormy darkness outside and confusion within. He was chilled, too, to the very marrow of his bones. Suddenly there came a singular calm into his mind. Now, at last, he lost the least and last idea of what to do. His mind stood still. He insensibly let Jim have his own way, believing that Jim was either going back to his uncle's or was as entirely lost as himself. He thought, in a dreamy way, of the Mr. Johnson who disappeared in the Yegua Bottom and was not heard of for years, but was found, at last—at least his bones were—not half a mile from his own house, the pocket-knife discovered upon him being the only way of proving whose body it was. Then he thought about his uncle; then about all at Oak-Mot; then about how sorry they would all be.

Suddenly one thought flashed upon his mind—Christ! "Pa says, and uncle tells me, that Jesus Christ was made God in the flesh to save all who asked him. Not *was*, for uncle has told me a hundred times Jesus Christ *is* alive to-day—a living Person. Why, then, he is here now. He does

not care for this awful darkness and storm. *Jesus Christ is beside me here!* Then I can ask him to help me find the way home."

For the first time in his life Edward prayed as if he was really speaking to One actually with him. He begged that all his sins might be forgiven, especially his hard thoughts about Adry; above all, his having refused to take Jesus to be his Friend for so long a time. Then and there he gave himself to Jesus. Henceforth Jesus should be to him, as he was to his uncle, the chief Friend living.

For an hour past Edward was continually looking round and round. Oh, if he could only see a light to ride for, a little light, the least glimmer of a light, on any side! No light, even after he had prayed so long. He could not stand the bitter cold much longer. If Jesus only would help him go right and go fast enough! If Jesus only would put it in the heart of some one in some of the houses he might be passing to put a light so he could see it!

"Must I not love the Saviour, even if he does not save me from dying out here in the darkness?" Then a deep calm fell on his heart. "Let him refuse to save me. He will have some good reason. Whether he saves me alive or not, from this mo-

ment I will take him as my Saviour, and will love and serve him, if he will help me to do so, for ever!"

It was so that, at Oak-Mot, none of the family gave a thought to Edward as being possibly on the road home. In fact, there was no day fixed for his return. They knew he would stay as long as he possibly could. However it was, as they gathered around a roaring fire that night, the curtains closely drawn, no one imagined for a moment anything else than that Edward was safely at his uncle's.

"The first fire of winter is always so particularly cosy," Egeria said, as she sat in the circle next her mother and sewed.

"And what a grand time Eddy is having at uncle's! Oh, I wish I was with him!" said Hubert, who was cracking pecans on a flat-iron turned up in his lap, aided by Bexy on one side and Lotty on the other, for the benefit of all. "Uncle has so many interesting adventures to tell, and pa here never has a single one," he added. And so they talked on.

Of them all, only Adry had missed Edward. He had asked Prosy about him several times during the day. Ever since supper he was restless and

uneasy. He had objected, in his mild way, to the curtains being closed.

"It must be because you have lived so much in the open air, Adry. But we can't let in the air to-night; listen how it roars," Mr. Beach had said; and the house fairly shook with the force of the storm as he spoke.

"And this is what you call your mild and soft Texas air is it, Mr. Beach? For my part— Why can't you sit still, Adry?" Mrs. Beach added, as Adry roved feebly about the room. "Stay by the fire; you will get chilled to death."

"I want my candle," said Adry in his most earnest way.

"Go to bed already? Well, Prosy, he will be unhappy until he does go. Do you carry the candle, dear, and I will help him up stairs," Mr. Beach said. "Never mind your help, Hubert; you've got that iron in your lap. Come, Adry."

"I never knew Adry to be so notionate before. Would you believe it?" Mr. Beach said on his return; "he insisted on the candle being placed in his window; yes, and left burning after he got in bed."

"Oh, that's because Adry is *afraid*. I am, in the dark; so is Lotty." Bexy gave this as her opinion in the matter.

"No Adry isn't, for I offered over and over again to stay with him," Prosy said, who had now returned; "he said, 'No, not to night.'"

"What did he want a candle for, then? Oh, I know! Because he thinks it's so much brighter than you are, Prosy. What a prosy Prosy you are!" said Hubert, hammering at his nuts, and who was always on the look-out for a joke.

Little they knew who put it into the heart of Adry to put the candle in the window! As its first gleam struck on the eyes of Edward, miles away out upon the prairie, it was as the light of heaven itself.

Saved! Hope and life, almost dead, rose again, on the first gleam of the candle, in Edward's soul. "I don't know whether it's uncle's house, or Bud Barton's, or whose; it's *somebody's!* Get up, Jim!" and he even shouted as loud as the storm would permit; and, as he shouted, down came the pouring rain, mingled with hail.

It was an hour's ride yet, Jim often stumbling; but Edward held the faint speck of light with his eyes and rode for it, as a drowning man holds to the rope from a cliff above. One good hour! It seemed as if he would never get to that distant light—never!

"Whose place can this be, Jim?" Edward exclaimed at last, as he reached the corral, so wet and cold and stiff he could hardly speak, for all was dense darkness save that little light shining steadily through the ocean of darkness and storm.

"Oak-Mot!" It was all Edward could say for astonishment, recognizing the house at last.

Who can describe the amazement of all when Edward burst upon them as they sat around the fire—burst upon them out of that awful storm, from that terrible ride?

Only, before he would speak to any one else, he managed to get up the stairs, all cold and streaming wet and stiff as he was, to Adry's room, first of all.

Prosy thought Eddy had gone crazy, and tried to pull him away. But Edward minded none of them. He wanted to see the light that had guided him, he said, as he told them all about it.

"Yes, and it was Adry put it there!" said Prosy in triumph.

"But God put it in Adry's heart to do it," Edward said, kneeling by Adry's bed, all wet as he was, and throwing his arm over his poor brother. "And I used to despise him so! God forgive me! But all that is past for ever!"

Not two months after that, Edward kneels by the same bed again, and beside the same afflicted brother, now no longer afflicted. The poor, frail body lies there, the face as beautiful as before disease smote the perishing frame. The large, sorrowful eyes are closed as if in sweet sleep. Only the wasted body of Adry is there: Adry himself is doubtless in heaven, knowing more than the wisest man on earth. Yes, happier and wiser than all the world put together.

From the night of the Norther, Adry had rapidly sunk. The physician said that the sudden change had been too much for his feeble health. To pass from midsummer into midwinter in a moment had been too much for his delicate frame. All these last weeks Adry had said less and less. Every day he sat up a shorter time in his wheeled chair—lying down, now, almost all the time. And all at Oak-Mot gave up everything else to wait on Adry. Alec and Juan come and go with the *caballado* of horses between the corral and the prairie, and nobody thinks about them or their charge. The family are always around Adry, eager to do anything for him. Adry has read less and less all these days, his sorrowful eyes resting for hours upon the pages of his large Bible lying open in his

lap, even when he cannot read a line for weakness. Yet he seems, every day, to be more and more unwilling for any one—hardly even Prosy herself—to touch his book. Very slowly he sinks away, life lingering latest in his eyes, so solemn, as with visions of the grander world upon which he is entering.

That Sabbath afternoon the household are gathered sadly around Adry's bed. Uncle Long is there too. Even Juan has left his broad-brimmed hat on the front porch, and stands at the door looking in, with Alec and Delphy beside him. Cassandra, the dove, coos softly in its cage, and the air is warm with the breath of spring again. So many years they have expected his death, yet it is sudden to them when it comes at last.

"Won't you say one little, little verse, if I start you?—only one, Adry, for Prosy?" she says to him, her eyes red with weeping, as she kneels by his bed.

Adry, lying with his Bible in his arms, answers only with his eyes.

"'Jesus—'" Prosy begins in the old tones.

"'Jesus wept,'" Adry repeats with difficulty. As he does so, he tries to lift his Bible in his wasted arms nearer his heart, turns his head away from even Prosy, and is with Jesus for ever!