

# A Daughter of the Covenant:

A TALE OF LOUISIANA.

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A

# Daughter of the Covenant.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HOPE COTTAGE.

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”—  
JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

YOU could not have entered a sweeter Southern home. Houses, like people, have personality—each one its own temper and temperament. This was built for a bride, and seemed to know it, and itself looked bride-like—the Spanish mosses and Confederate jasmynes hanging about it like altar-wreaths.

Hinting of Longfellow and Evangeline and all romantic dreams, the Ouachita, proud of his clear, gliding waters and his willows, flowed on his way like a poem. The sunshine of the blue sky, and the sunshine of the rippling river, held communion like confidential neighbors. The landscape, with its soft quietude, was a lullaby.

There on the trellised gallery—for what is a Southern dwelling without its gallery?—a cradle rested amid its flowery setting. The cottage and cradle wore a harmonious blending, as if made for each other. Of all the tasteful furniture there was nothing more pleasing and congenial. A home which has never known that decoration is a color without its complementary tints.

A cradle with its sleeping occupant is an idyll. Flights of holy sentiment circle about it like humming-birds around Louisiana flowers. The initiated listener catches strains from the harpers by the Throne. Hearts beat close to Bethlehem's plains—"And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them."

The cradle! it is an ark of bulrushes tenanted by one who may lead to the Land of Promise. It is a basketful of the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Heaven and earth clasp hands about it. Frailty and indestructibility, mortality and eternity join in the cradle song.

The young mother comes from the door and takes her seat by the sleeper. Of course, her eyes are upon it—mother's eyes that see many

things. So a mother once looked upon a Child in a manger.

A year ago, after much planning and radiant expectancy, the newly-married completed the cottage and moved in. The building of a home is the building of a world. It is a star of the first magnitude taking its place among the constellations.

When Mary, the daughter of Mary, and Jean, the son of Jean, came together it was said by those who were supposed to know, that they were well matched. It meant that they were of the same social sphere and of the same church. When Presbyterians marry any but Presbyterians there may be no sin committed, but a part of the glory of marriage is lost. And the child that is born feels the dearth of ancestral sympathy.

From times whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, the Lairds and the La Fontaines were of godly lineage. The one was transparently of Scotch and the other of Huguenot descent. There was no bar sinister in that pedigree. They were like the limpid bayous that come from east and west and form the sunny tides of our beautiful river. Religion is enriched when well-mated.

Years ago the two families had settled as

neighbors among a population where testimony for the pure and good was needed, and where each needed the other. They were the years and territories pervaded by that indifference to God's Word, and that laxness of morals which Romanism had imported and perpetuated in Louisiana. The disregard for God's Sabbaths brought in on that wave, and still disgracing the statute-books of the State, was abroad with all its noxious poisons. The Holy Day was merely one of the holidays, and often the worst.

The Lairds and the La Fontaines knew what that meant. In Europe the ancestry of both had fought that battle to the death. They knew of the designs of Rome to acclimatize her ancient tyranny in America, and even to establish the Inquisition in New Orleans. These bolder eruptions the New World was not going to bear, but the stealthy and more baneful influences of loose religiousness and social dethronements of Deity were more difficult to neutralize. The taints were in the air.

But God had his witnesses. Scattered here and there along the dreamy water-courses were faithful households, who put honor upon the Ten Commandments and would not be seduced. A covenant religion, confirmed and solidified by successive generations, was alone likely to have

backbone to resist the strain. The Lairds and La Fontaines had good memories and knew the foe. They had inherited the testimonies of Patrick Hamilton and the Colignys. They had not forgotten those old mountain crags, Calvin and Knox. If necessary, the Ouachita would have had her martyrs as well as the Rhone and the Clyde.

And Mary, the daughter of Mary, and Jean, the son of Jean, were reared as their forefathers had been. They had not yielded to the fascinations of the daughters of Ashdod and the incursions of the sons of Philistia; and the Cupid that brought their hearts together had been bred upon the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms.

The girl and boy had played together upon the grassy banks of the whispering river, and the pictures of mistletoe and yellow jasmine and the birds, were the same in the memories of both. The light that came so pensively through the church windows, the sound of the old hymns, and the tones of Mr. Allenson, the pastor, were the same in the heart of each. The pews were in as close touch as the homes. There is safety in marriages between well-known old neighbors.

And now the young mother sits and gazes upon the features of the third in the line of

names—Mary, the daughter of Mary, the daughter of Mary. Perhaps, if traced back, it might have been carried through a dozen Highland Marys. Does the spirit of prophecy now rest upon her as upon Anna in the temple? Does the future sparkle with visions of a charming girlhood and womanhood—shining with something of the light of the Saviour's Transfiguration raiment? This is motherhood. She is praying.

The father enters and stoops and kisses the babe very gently—fatherhood, daughterhood! The sun is halving himself behind the trees across the river. The spell of an approaching ceremonial is upon the two and upon the picturesque scene. The mocking-bird up in the water-oak, now changing into "the soft, sweet, pensive, solemn strain" as sung of the bird by Richard Henry Wilde, seems to be practicing, an entire choir in himself, some of the hymns for the coming Sabbath.

"I have seen our pastor," said the youthful father, "and made all arrangements for the baptism. There is nothing he more enjoys, and he at once began talking about it like one of the apostles. Mary, the holy ordinance which made us one on that brightest of mornings was not more precious than this."

"No," she answered, "for it is the same God that hallows both. We had already plighted our hearts to each other; we have already plighted this immortal to God."

"We both prayed," he continued, "that the little one might be a daughter, giving her to the great Head of the Church before she was born. We remembered God's foreordination of the unborn Jeremiah. Jer. i. 5."

"To-day while baby slept," she said, "there was a silent drawing toward that sacred room which you helped me to plan. The architect could never understand the interest we felt in building that special chamber—our ingenuity in making it tasteful and attractive, arranged so as to take in as much as possible of the curves of the river and the blue of the sky. We meant it to be the holy of holies to our home-temple. For why should not the Father who seeth in secret have the choicest room? While there to-day I seemed to see distinctly mingling in her life what is loveliest in Mary's two grandmothers."

"I have called that secluded chamber 'Mary's Shrine,'" he answered. "It has a way of following me every day. Whenever everything goes nicely in business I feel sure that my bride has entered and shut to the door."

“I am glad,” she said, her face beaming, “that we are both members of a church that smiles upon the membership of the child. It is one of the chief glories of Presbyterianism. Dear Mother Church, she has never despised one of these little ones. Matt. xviii. 10. She has watched over their temple-rights like the angels that behold the face of the Father.”

“From my heart,” replied the husband, “I pity good people who fail to see that there is a God-given rite for recognizing and utilizing the children’s patrimony in Zion and the richness of the covenant. We have no quarrel with those who differ. We do not care to fight any battles. But as a father, I see now as never before that their loss is incalculable.”

“I love to think of the beautiful sacrament,” said Mary, “descending to us through thousands of generations and in the track of heroes. Yonder in effulgent pathway the household covenant comes steadily toward you and me; nestling in patriarchal tent; inspiring seer and prophet; illuminating the Saviour’s sad hours; carried all over the Orient by apostles and evangelists; guarded in Alpine fastnesses; prized by the faithful through direst persecutions; consecrated for you and me not only in the waters, but in the blood of France and Scotland. It has

been as the waters of Horeb following and refreshing God's pilgrim church through every wilderness."

"Yes," the husband answered with enthusiasm, "and here in our Southland cottage it is our chiefest heirloom. As our peerless Ouachita runs night and day toward his junction with the broad Father of Waters, bearing men and women and children upon his bosom, so certainly do the currents of grace bear all ages ever onward in channels of divine promise made to believers and their children."

A breeze sprang up from the river, shook out the perfumes from white flowers, and flung them around father and mother and cradle. There was silence for awhile. Then he spoke again:

"'Twas in days when the oppressor wrenched Protestant children away and reared them in distant convents in the tenets of Rome. Such were the deeper stabs of bigoted cruelty. My father and mother will have many such stories to tell. Once a girl of twelve years was seized and hurried off, the parents knew not whither. Given to God in infancy, she had been nurtured upon the Scriptures—safe equipment for the evil days. Her loved ones could only trust and pray. The promises were not stolen nor dead!

As usual, flattery and kindness were used at

first. They would bribe her to forsake faith and baptism. She understood and held to her moorings. She felt that parents were beseeching the Throne. Then, of course, came intimidation, rigor, privation, threats. Only twelve years old! But the covenant was thousands of years old! Tortures were prepared—the young girl confronted with their horrors. Accept an alien baptism and she would go free—be petted and rewarded. She refused and stood face to face with an agonizing death. Suddenly Jean Cavalier, the young hero of the Camisards, swept down upon the convent like a tempest. The tormentors were routed—their intended victim restored to that prevailing family altar. The covenant again triumphed!”

The young mother was deeply moved. To the mother-heart that scene was vivid as lightning. This was what the covenant right of the children had cost! Almost shuddering she said:

“Suppose it had been our child, our own Mary!”

“It would have been the same!” he answered.

The child’s destiny was more deeply involved in such histories than they knew. There is a mighty church, with a recorded past, which boasts that she never changes!

The little one stirred in the cradle. The evening star was brightening in the west.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BAPTISM.

“Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”—1 COR. vii. 14.

THE Sabbath dawn was like a smile from the Throne. Not from Bethlehem's pasture-fields, nor from Moriah's hill, had David ever beheld a more resplendent sunrise while singing of the bridegroom coming out of his chamber. These downy, feathery, scintillating beams were the Bible's poetical wings of the morning.

No, never were there sweeter, balmier, more winsome Sabbaths than those which heaven distills over the streams and plains and woodlands of Louisiana. They come like salutations from a palace. They scatter pensiveness like temple incense. They breathe abroad a felt sacredness as blossoms breathe fresh odors. The Sabbath-breaker in the Pelican State is an outlaw of Nature as well as of the Decalogue.

Never anywhere has God's Sunday law been stamped more impressively upon earth and sky; never anywhere has man's Sunday law been more offensively sacrilegious.

And now a model day of rest was singing its silent anthems up and down the banks of Louisiana's most beautiful river. Not a murmur came from the wavelets. The fairy-folk who play and sing in the violet-beds along the shores, had laid their guitars away. Meditation knew it was Sunday.

It was an epoch in the cottage by the Ouachita. The family altar was set close by the cradle. The Bible, wonderful in a thousand ways, is wonderful in its adaptations. The sacred volume was too familiar to this young household for them to read at random. They were worthy to take the book and to open it.

So Jean read from the chapters of the oldest records in the world as if he was reading from family records. Was not the father of the faithful near of kin to all his spiritual seed? It was not undesigned that Jean introduced his Bible-reading with these words and their context: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Gal. iii. 7-9.)

In the ancient patriarch not only were Israelitish households included, but the households of all believers.

So Jean turned backward to the charter itself and read: "Thou shalt be a blessing; and I will

bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3.) Now he reads again from the passage in Galatians: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

The patriarch's tent and Hope Cottage were pitched upon the same plain. There was the same covenant for all dispensations.

Now the reader turns to the seventeenth chapter of Genesis—a great chapter for all time to come—"As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. . . . And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee."

Canaan might be ravaged and uninhabited; nationality might utterly fail; the spiritual in this covenant was to endure forever.

Then followed the institution of the Old Testament sign and seal of the covenant, binding at eight days old; the joint signet of God and man. To the unborn heir the guarantee of Jehovah was certified as firmly as to the paternal representative. Isaac was God's child before he was Abraham's child.

And lo, the pure breezes from brook Kedron

and the Jordan were blowing along the vales of the Ouachita.

Jean was not content until he read of the Special Seed, who did not exclude, but include in himself those of all ages who should be as the stars of heaven for multitude; the emphasis put upon the one glorious Son of Promise, who was to be model church member both for babes and adults. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as to many, but as to One, and unto thy Seed, which is Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.)

Jesus himself was by distinction the Child of the Covenant. In him the seal itself was sealed. And Jean and Mary rejoiced. Odors from the lily of the valleys and the balm-trees of Gilead were breathing through the cottage windows. So they knelt and Jean prayed:

"Thou God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, thou father of our fathers, thee we bless and magnify and the everlasting covenant. As thy Sabbath was made for man, the whole race, irrespective of age, so we thank thee that thou hast given baptism, too, for the young as well as the old. As the Bible was revealed to light up the immortality of the babe as well as of the most aged, so we rejoice that baptism proclaims the same comforting truth. As the babe Jesus

was placed upon the same church standing along with the rest of us, and in the temple services Anna and Simeon gladdened in the Babe, so we praise thee that neither the water nor the blood is limited to days or years. As yonder throngs in the heavenly sanctuary are composed of all ages, no gate of pearl shut against the children, so we pray that thy will may be done in earth as in heaven."

When they rose from their knees a white pigeon was cooing in plaintive amens among magnolia blooms.

With the baby in her snowy laces, they rode along the banks of their favorite stream. They thought of the crystal river, and of sacred infants without numbers floating in light amid the celestial bowers. Sin erased, these scenes would not differ widely from heaven.

The church, well indoctrinated, felt itself a party to the ordinance. The child was her child.

But what good would it all do? Would it do the church any good to be impressed touchingly with her covenant obligations? Would it do father and mother any good to feel assured that they had henceforth the sympathy and prayers of God's people to be with them in the training of their daughter? Would it do the pastor any good to know that consecrated homes were con-

secrating the lambs of the flock and asking for the help of under-shepherd and Over-Shepherd? Would it do all these parties any good to realize that Almighty God had appointed this sacrament on purpose to declare therein his assent to the contract and his signature to the eternal results?

But how can it benefit the unconscious centre of all these holy influences? She has been unconscious all her life of the prayers offered in her behalf by those young parents and of the tender scene about the cradle this morning—but in the sovereignty of God will they do her no good? Will it do her no good to be told in the after years of this impressive baptismal hour and of the tender obligations therefore appealing to her soul? Will these solemn sanctions and holy meanings, as explained to her in the after years, do no good in the giving and receiving of instruction? All the deepest doctrines of grace cluster around the ordinance of infant baptism—all of our most glorious theology. And then will it do no good if, in answer to the prayer of faith, that Sovereign Spirit who regenerates all infants dying in infancy, should elect to regenerate this babe to-day?

This ready question, 'What good,' very flip-pant sometimes, is a little dangerous when attempting to weigh in human scales the ways of

God. 'What good,' is often limiting the wisdom and power of the Infinite to the narrowing ignorance of men!

Mary thought of aged Simeon and Anna and that Covenant Child in the temple courts. For there stood the godly grandparents—and all which that means. They are recalling the hour when these two parents were presented for baptism. Who can pray like grandfathers and grandmothers? Did Lois or Eunice more love the young Timothy?

Mr. Allenson congratulated the group of three generations upon the privileges of the hour. God had arranged this trysting-place, meeting them more than half way. Like Jesus himself, the sacrament had in it both humanity and Divinity. Neither the church nor the parents have forbidden, so the Saviour embraces the child. She is the nurseling of the King. Of such is the kingdom.

Then were made the hallowed pledges to teach and lead and pray and attract toward holiness. Bright, radiant faces—God bless them!

The minister took the babe in his arms. None could have told which seemed purer, the transparent water-drops or the white-robed child. It all meant that she was to be absolutely pure some day. And thus, with the authority of high

heaven, she was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The profound mystery of the Trinity was bequeathed to another generation. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." (Is. xlvi. 3, 4.)

In this loveliest of pictures there was no weak sentimentalism. This was proved by the prayer which probed the depths; the inborn taint of original sin; the necessity absolute in old and young for regeneration and sanctification; a full atonement beginning with the birth of a Babe and all-sufficient for still-born infant or decrepit senility; the doors of a redeemed church as widely open for all ages as doors of heaven. And then very sweetly he pleaded that all the grace implied in the ordinance might be vouchsafed to this household.

We have heard many a noble gospel preacher, but never one more eloquent, orthodox, impressive than the sacrament of infant baptism.

The sermon which followed had for its text four words from the profound Epistle to the Ephesians—"The household of God;" illustrated by four words from the Galatians—"the household of faith." The Old Testament and

the New were built out of homes. The Eden promise was made to a household. Twice afterward the entire earthly church was comprehended in a household—that of Noah and that of Abraham. These are God's miniature portraits of covenant grace. Again we find the typical group at Bethlehem. How disappointed the shepherds and wise men if there had been no Babe in it! Take the households out of the New Testament and what a blank! There are two words in the Greek for household; when household baptisms are spoken of how carefully the writers selected the term that included children! This is too invariable to be accidental.

In this same chapter the preacher called attention to Paul's further words—"The whole family in heaven and earth." Celestial and terrestrial, God would have the church carry with it all that brightens home-life—fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood, sonship, daughterhood, childhood. What a chasm in the ideal church above if the babes were excluded! The household of faith on earth seems just as chaotic without the children. It would excommunicate the Babe of Bethlehem!

It is so unnatural. The mother ewe wants her lamb with her in the fold. The mother bird wants her nestling with her in the nest.

On the ride home the Ouachita seemed to reflect some of the sparkles of the streams that make glad the city of our God. The white pigeon was talking about it in the tree-tops.

No, Mary knew not the significance of the rite—not then. Nor did the infant Isaac nor the infant Jesus know then the meaning of their circumcision. But how much it meant in the eternal counsels!

And how little did her wee ladyship know that she was to be the heroine of this story!

## CHAPTER III.

### THE VISITOR.

“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness.”—1 PETER iii. 15.

NOT long after the day of the official dedication of the child the father and mother were sitting on the porch in the moonlight. The cradle was again in sight—the babe at peace like sleeping lilies.

The constellations shone like households in the skies while their portraits were being taken in the placid river.

“For the privileges and experiences of last Sunday,” said Jean, “I would not take all yonder worlds. Our darling has seemed a little more sacred ever since.”

“Yes,” answered the mother, “at times I have imagined a halo where the seal rested. These are sweet thoughts.”

“Our baptismal skeptics,” he said, “cannot understand our joy in its precious significance. They see in it only an empty form—missing the spiritual, the inspiring, the sanctifying.”

“And it is to be feared,” remarked the mother,

“that sometimes our own people fail to feel and appreciate its power for good. Of course it is possible to make the outward administration all—no strengthening of faith, no equipment for duty. If unintelligent Presbyterians betray the ark by admitting that they expect no resultant good to the child, we need not wonder at the conclusions of opposers.”

The gate opened and Mrs. Merser came up the walk. She was a good neighbor, had reared a large family, and had been of great help to these inexperienced young parents. She loved all babies, and little Mary had begun already to return her love.

These evening visits upon Southern galleries, free and informal, are very pleasing. No extra prinking, no stiff conventionalities, the families overlap and the social and genial have their way. Mr. and Mrs. La Fontaine were glad to see their neighbor.

Did Mrs. Merser this evening seem slightly constrained? Not seriously so, but an unusual absent-mindedness, the shadow of a shade. Mary felt it. Jean suspected.

After the conversation drifted awhile, the good lady went over to the cradle and looked at the sleeper a moment; then returned and said somewhat abruptly:

"I heard that you had the poor little thing sprinkled the other day!"

Not unfrequently a little want of delicacy is noticeable on the part of those who dissent from our views on baptism. Immersion is not always synonymous with charity. In books, in pulpits and in social intercourse, there are occasionally an impatience and harshness toward honest convictions which are not models of Christian courtesies.

It was a conquering but a meek and lowly Jesus who was to come to sprinkle many nations. (Is. lii. 17.) The majorities in all nations are children.

Mrs. Merseer had not asked earlier for the child as she was always so prompt to do. She spoke again:

"Did the young one squall and fight as we generally hear of them doing? I was the first to dress the babe, and I would as soon pardon a wrong to one of my own!"

Unquestionably this latter avowal was perfectly true. We would have no one think hard of Mrs. Merseer. She could not have spoken as inconsiderately upon any other subject in the world.

"Oh no," answered Jean humorously; "she acted with the most approved decorum—the lit-

tle lady she is—evidently having an eye to the proprieties.”

“Of course she showed off the linen and laces to perfection,” continued the visitor, with some irony. “I can’t see what else there was in it.”

And she couldn’t to have saved her life.

“Certainly,” replied the young father, still playfully. “You know that the saints, old and young, are to be clothed in fine white linen.”

He was endeavoring to parry without encouraging the disagreeable. Our slowness to discuss—which ordinarily means to avoid a quarrel—is usually attributed to a conscious inability to vindicate our doctrines. On the other hand, if we perform our rites, or our pulpits would instruct our own congregations in them, it is regarded as a denominational assault. Human nature, whether baptized with much water or little, is a strange commodity. Jean knew, too, that in controversy the sex are not always at their best and loveliest.

“I can’t see,” rejoined the good lady, “how any rational being, with Bible open, can countenance any but believers’ baptism!”

Mary saw that the theme was going to be forced. She saw, too, that her friend was not in her most amicable mood. She was evidently regarding this case of “baby sprinkling,” here in

her immediate neighborhood, as a personal injury and challenge. The wife feared, too, that her husband's warm French blood might be pressed beyond its ability to answer always "with meekness." So in her gentle way she interposed:

"Of course we differ, Mrs. Merser, as so many of God's best children have differed. But our church certainly prizes and emphasizes believers' baptism—and no other. It is in this way: The adult Abraham believed and was circumcised; the same adult Abraham believed and circumcised his babe. It was faith in both cases, and accounted unto him for righteousness. It was believers' circumcision, and as much so in one case as the other. So in baptism; it is no charm, no hocus-pocus. The water, the rite itself, can benefit the adult no more than the infant. Faith is the essence of the act in both cases—faith resting implicitly on God's promises."

"But your two-months-old child could not exercise faith," replied the neighbor.

"Neither could the eight-days-old Isaac nor the eight-days-old Jesus. But somebody's faith was essential to the ceremonial in both cases. A promise existed in both instances, and that

promise had been believed; otherwise there was no true circumcision."

"You people stake a great deal on circumcision," responded the impatient listener.

"We stake a great deal on what it implied," was the answer. "Nor do we stake more on that than the Author of the Bible. In the momentous seventeenth chapter of Genesis God says: 'And the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.' Such a child, left without the appointed seal—and that by no choice of its own, but by neglect of the parents—was put outside the church membership—virtually excommunicated. With God, at least, this was a serious matter. Yet the infant of eight days could neither claim nor decline the membership, and the Lord brought Moses to death's door for neglecting it in the case of his unconscious child." (Ex. iv. 24.)

"Nor was there ever a Hebrew baby that did not cry and protest, to use modern phrase"—commented Jean, unable to suppress himself altogether.

"But circumcision is not baptism," responded the neighbor. "I can never talk with you baby-sprinklers about baptism without your jumping back from the New Testament into the Old!"

"It is no big jump," answered Jean, still smil-

ing and failing in intended silence. "We have but one Bible. In the gospels the two Testaments interlink beautifully. The Head of the Church was the same in both. John the Baptist and Jesus lived and died in connection with the Old Testament Church. That was their only Bible. In their Bible and in their church they found infant membership and never objected. If we and our little Mary had lived in that day, we and all our neighbors would have been of one way of thinking. The Baptists of that interesting era, at least John the Baptist, agreed with us. He came, you know, to 'turn the heart of the fathers to the children.'" (Mal. iv. 6.)

"I came over," said Mrs. Merser, made more genial by Jean's pleasantry, "to talk baptism, and the mother runs off after the patriarchs and the husband would turn it all into a laugh."

"Oh no," he replied; "we are trying to find infant exclusion in the Bible, and we hunt in vain from back to back. It is absolutely certain that God put the babes of believers in the church; it is just as certain that God never put them out. Very strangely some of the disciples took the notion to keep the children from the Head of the Church. The Saviour was displeased and championed their rights—'Forbid them not; of such is the kingdom of God.'"

(Luke xviii. 16.) That kingdom was the church below and above. As far as I know, that was the only attempt ever made to exclude them until suspiciously modern times."

"But I don't see," she insisted, "what all this has to do with sprinkling a baby."

She was honest in this. The mind clings to externals, missing the kernel. Infant membership is the kernel; circumcision and baptism equally the symbol. The great fact is, that the believer's child is born in the church; circumcision and baptism recognize the pre-existing fact.

Mary, feeling that she was pleading the cause of her babe, answered very gently:

"The faith of the parents brought those infants to the Saviour. They could not have come of themselves. Adult church members brought the infant church members. The scene throws a sweet illumination upon infant baptism: Believing parents feeling and owning their responsibility for their little ones; believing parents encouraged to bring them in the arms of faith to the Saviour; believing parents claiming for them their inheritance in the covenant; believing parents being divinely prepared to shape the children's beliefs."

Mary paused and then added in a low voice

and reverently: "Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief."

There was silence for awhile, and then Mrs. Merser added courteously:

"It seems to me that your doctrine can only fill your church with unconverted, unfaithful members."

"The Presbyterian Church," replied Jean, still humorously, "has never been specially marked among sister-denominations for outlawry; and, thus far at least, our little Mary has done nothing to call for exclusion."

"I can't conceive of a church carried on by babies," rejoined the good woman, rather nervously.

"It looked that way somewhat," answered the smiling father, "when out of the whole multitude 'baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,' the babies were the only ones left from that baptism to enter the Promised Land and carry on the Canaan church. (1 Cor. x. 1-6.) And it looked that way again when nobody in the temple was crying hosanna but the children, and when grown critics were sorely displeased and wanted them stopped. Then their Defender himself got into the Old Testament and quoted—'Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' " (Mat. xxi. 16; Ps. viii. 2.)

“Since our little one came,” added the young mother, “that passage, combining the Old Testament and the New and both dispensations, has been very precious to my heart. Jesus included not only those old enough to speak, but the very youngest. He knew who make sweetest praises in the upper temple. If our child should be taken, I am sure she would be among those choirs. If she lives, I feel sure that she will join us in praising God in his earthly church. That, my dear friend, was what her baptism meant.”

Between Jean’s argumentative banter and Mary’s mild seriousness, Mrs. Merser was feeling herself at a disadvantage. She had never conceived of the richness of these covenant doctrines to their intelligent votaries. Apart from an intense sectarianism, she was incapable of an injustice. She said very pleasantly:

“I had no idea you were such theologians. I thought you expected the ceremony to put some sort of a spell on the child. But did not all this come from Rome?”

“Abraham and the household covenant,” replied the father, “lived a thousand years before Romulus and Remus were suckled by the wolf—to say nothing of the callow Popes. Long before any Pontiff was dreamed of Jesus commanded—‘Go disciple all nations, baptizing them,’ al-

though there would never be a nation without babies. It was in Corinth, not in Rome, that Paul immortalized the thought that even one believing parent made the child 'holy'—ceremonially and ecclesiastically in good standing. Rome did not originate that. It blooms as sweetly on the banks of the Ouachita as it did by the Ægean or the Tiber."

"I am disappointed in your way of putting things," said the guest. "When I talk baptism, I talk baptism. You get things into the ordinance I never heard of. And, then, you Presbyterians usually let us do all of the talking!"

"The truth is," said Jean, facetiously, "Presbyterians are so content and tranquil in their faith that they forget the war-paint. Practically, as a doctrine, infant church membership is broadening and humanizing, kindling an interest in all childhood. We trust our own little one may grow up to feel that way."

"And I may make a good Baptist of her yet, when she is old enough and has sense enough," said Mrs. Merser, now in excellent good humor.

"And she shall certainly love Mrs. Merser," replied the genial mother, "and I think that she will always be responsive to the truth. That, too, we include in her baptism."

"What else are you going to get into the thing,

I wonder," the neighbor asked. "Well, we shall see, we shall see!"

She kissed the babe good-bye, and said good-night cordially to the others.

"You have behaved beautifully," Mary hastened to say to her husband after the visitor was gone. "The aggressiveness of certain systems is a little trying sometimes."

"It was my wise little wife that kept the peace," he answered. "You presided like faith, hope and charity combined—these three. Controversies on baptism have not generally given evidence of the baptism of the Spirit."

"I feel for Mrs. Merser," said Mary sadly. "She has not been happy in her sons. We will pray for them along with our own treasure to-night."

In the blue Southern sky, Orion and his children were leading the hosts of heaven. On similar nights the patriarch sat at his tent-door beneath the oak at Mamre and thought of his covenanted seed becoming like the stars in multitude. And among his descendants, on the far horizon there was One, the Morning Star, whose day he rejoiced to see, and saw it and was glad.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LAST OF THE OUACHITAS.

"Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well."—2 KINGS iv. 26.

THE cradle had become too short. It is a peculiarity of this favorite piece of household furniture. There is nothing that contracts more rapidly than the pinafores and coverlets and cribs of the home pets. The baptismal dress would now have left two-thirds of little Mary outside of it.

The prattler was making many friends. I have told but little as yet of the grandmothers—the story of Timothy with two Loises left out. One of them saw clearly that the child was growing worthy of the best blood of France; and the other was as positive that the strength of the Calendonian hills was in her wee personality. But all that would require a whole chapter to itself. Grandmothers have shaped the generations.

Men talk of blood and heredity and environment when half the time they mean the Covenant.

There was no doubt of Mrs. Merser's devotion to the little girl. She confidently expected to see her go under the water some day. And Mary was never too busy watching humming-birds and butterflies to hurry to her arms.

And so the neighbor testified, "She is a dainty sweetheart in spite of that foolish sprinkling business. But not a word—not a word! I am not going to stir up another Presbyterian hornet's nest and excite Romulus and Abraham and Remus and all that kind of thing!"

Thus she carried the pet off to the riverside to think of the Jordan and hunt the wild violets, Mary's darlings of all the flowers.

But there was another suitor, perhaps the very first of favorites. Were there ever stories like his? This was Showaba, the last of the Ouachitas.

A year ago, sitting to the windward of the magnolia fuscatti and its busy distilleries of supremest odors, the child willingly upon his knee, the tall Indian had said:

"Showaba's children are dead. Showaba's forefathers lie in the mounds. He came of a line of chieftains. These muscles were begotten by warriors. The Ouachitas were a tribe of heroes. They feared not the Natchez or Tensas of the East, the Caddoes of the West, the Arkansas of

the North, nor the Attakakas, the Man-Eaters, of the South.

“When not on the warpath, my people were kind. They caught the fish in yonder river bends. They hunted the bear and deer among the hanging mosses. When not assailed, peace sung in their hearts. The mildness of May was in their wigwams. When tomahawks of the Natchez were red, the pale faces came from the great Mechechebe to our own friendly river.”

The Indian was evidently telling of the massacres of 1682, the flight of the survivors and the beginning of what were called “The Ouachita Settlements.”

“When they came,” he said, “my tribe received them as brothers. They gave them corn and venison. Their children hunted the birds’ nests together. My people have fallen like the oak leaves. There were many wigwams; one wigwam only is left—the lone wigwam of Showaba. The silent mounds are around it. They talk to the river of the tribes that once floated upon his waters and have gone like the tides. There the squaw and her boys and girls lie buried. Showaba loves the white man’s child.”

Thenceforward the Last of the Ouachitas came every week, bringing always something for

Mary. Sometimes it was nuts and berries from the woods; sometimes ferns and flowers from their obscure hiding places; sometimes the bright plumage from the alert warblers of the trees.

Once he had brought a dead oriole but the child wept—and he brought the dead no more.

Now he had come with colored pebbles from the streams. These he had drilled and strung like beads, and the child took them and sat on his knee and placed them about her neck.

All at once the Indian gazed at the child intently and restlessly. It almost frightened her. Suddenly he rose, placed her softly in her mother's lap, and strode away.

"I will come at sunrise," he said, and was gone.

"What was it hurt Showaba?" asked the child.

And the mother asked, too, "What was the matter with the Indian? He acted as if he were not well."

But next morning promptly at sunrise Showaba was at the door inquiring for the Bay Blossom. So he called her.

Again he regarded her intently and said: "The white and red are going from the cheek of the Bay Blossom. It is the yellow poison. She will be sick. I've brought the medicines."

On his way home he had stripped the bark of the dogwood, wild cherry and magnolia—all used as tonics by the Louisiana Indians. Between the mounds, in mysterious rites at night, he had prepared the decoctions. He had not slept. To make it pleasant for the child, he had secured the honey of the wild bee.

But it was too late. What Showaba had foreseen soon came.

Louisiana has her fascinations. In her tremulant sunbeams there is a marvelous charm; in her poetical breezes a witchery of their own. Along her creeks and bayous there is the picturesqueness of dreams—and in her variegated history, too. Go out into her fields and forests or go back a little way into her past, and it all reads like pages from Scott or Rousseau—perhaps like chapters from *Le Sage* or *Cervantes*. The atmosphere suggests romance. To the young it is both sedative and stimulant, and it makes the old dream again the fantasies of youth. There is a wizzard with incantations in every grove.

Whether to the manor born, or children adopted like the *Lairds* and *La Fontaines*, we all soon begin to hum Louisiana's praises like the birds in the trees, or like one of her own inspired poetesses:

“She floats within her sunlit seas—  
A languorous lily dreaming,  
Her green hair trailed about her knees,  
And sweet beyond all seeming.  
I may not say how fair she is;  
I cannot say it—nearly;  
She’s like a radiant girl to me,  
And I—I love her dearly.”

And yet like sin amid the bowers of Eden or amid the bowers of Louisiana, there are seasons when along her innocent bayous and by her shimmering lagoons, floating in the sunlight or riding the soft moonbeams, taking the wings of the seductive zephyrs and as winsome as the night-song of the mocking-bird, the malarial go abroad unseen and enter unannounced. Fevers steal in like painted pleasures and gilded heresies. Without miasmas and without sin the Pelican State would be a paradise.

And now the flying poison was merciless, and Mary, the daughter of Mary, went to her bed. You know how the singing bird droops in its nest and the song pauses. How much of vivacity and of happiness is sometimes laid upon little couches!

The Indian came daily, sitting in the room like a pulseless statue. Behind that rigid impassiveness was there not a great unseen heart beating?

In the time of our solemn final settlement with the Indians there will be a momentous account to adjudicate with crushed hearts, broken hearts, hearts of the maltreated and unavenged.

And the bosom of the Last of the Ouachitas was burdened by the bedside of the white man's child. Again he hurried away and came with a preparation of the Indian alteratives—the Southern prickly ash, the China brier and the sarsaparilla. Once he spoke:

“I have talked,” he said, “with the Sun-God. He is mighty. He shines on the Father River and on all his daughter streams. Many moons ago the tribes of Quiqualtangi, the powerful sun-worshippers, swarmed along the Mechechebe. Yonder their Manito rides in the heavens. He scatters the mists. He burns up the fevers. He plants the medicine bushes. Now none but Showaba is left to pray to him. He will take away the yellow from the Bay Blossom.”

Little Mary heard and was distressed and would not be comforted. Was Showaba a heathen? The tears were upon her cheeks while she said:

“Showaba, there is One greater than the sun, for he made it. One whom we love, and he loves Showaba. He pities the red man's lonely cabin. He came from heaven and became a little child.”

And then she told about Bethlehem and the young mother whose name was the same as her own. At first the Indian was indifferent—for what cared he for the white man's God? But when the low, sick voice spoke of a Child and a human birth there was a gleam of light in the eye, though there was neither word nor motion.

"Jesus loves Showaba," said the little girl, and then seemed tired and slept.

"Never have I heard such preaching," commented Mrs. Merser. "She talked as if acquainted with the Saviour for fifty years—no stranger at all. And there sat that unimmersed pagan without a tear! They say he is hundreds of years old and has taken many a scalp. Wish to goodness he was the only Louisiana heathen! Except for that sprinkling, Mary is an arch-angel!"

The child grew worse and the physician increased his visits. The Indian would sit for hours silent and watching. He seemed to have little confidence in the white doctor. He turned steadily to the traditions of his people and the plants of Louisiana—the daughters of his Sun-God.

So when astringents were needed, he brought the juices of the chinquapin, dewberry and water-lily; for narcotics, the thorn-apple and

swamp laurel; for stimulants, the sweet flag, Indian turnip and wild ginger; for sedatives, preparations from the yellow jasmine.

The patient seemed happier when Showaba was near. When he came, she would brighten and her mind seem to clear. As long as they would permit, she would talk to him about the great Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, outdazzling the Louisiana sun. His eyes never left her face.

One day Mrs. Merser said to her husband at home, "Strange to say, that sprinkling didn't seem to do that baby any harm, anyhow; that's the most that can be said for it. There was not enough water to do any harm or good either. She is going to die, and I believe it will just kill the parents!"

I wonder if grandmother Lois ever waited through some dark crisis in the stomach troubles of Timothy. Grandmothers Laird and La Fontaine came together to the bedside of their only grandchild.

People will talk, you know, and they said that the old folks loved this idol better than they ever loved their own. Perhaps so. As we get older and feel the winter breezes more keenly, we need only the more the warmth of the sincere and unaffected spring-time. It was said, of course, that

they would have spoiled her if they could. But no child was ever worse for having had a pious grandmother.

One of these heads of silken gray told of a little Laird who a century ago had gone triumphantly to heaven from the Grampian hills; the other spoke of a La Fontaine maiden who ascended rejoicing under the very shadows of convents and monasteries in the vales of Languedoc.

One quoted the paraphrase of the eighth psalm by Clement Marot, published under the auspices of Beza and Calvin; the other repeated the thirty-fourth from the rugged version of old Rouse. Neither of these staunch believers had forgotten their Catechisms or ceased to visit short graves on the river banks. The resurrection seemed not far away, and would be glorious along the Ouachita.

The same hour the father said to the mother: "Our darling is very ill. We meant a beautiful life for her in God's church on earth; perhaps the Master appointed a far more beautiful life for her in the church above. We will try not to differ with the Master. She was ours to confide to him; she is his to do with her as he knows best. All that was embraced in her baptism."

"His covenant standeth sure," answered the

mother. "It covers all emergencies and cannot fail us now. I don't think the child will die. The strong impression came to me while in prayer in our favorite room. But whatever comes, it will be well with the child. That baptismal hour has returned in renewed beauty this week."

Faith can soften, it was never meant to blight the flow of tears.

The parents had felt that they must talk together apart. When they returned, the patient had aroused a little. The Indian was in his corner observing every symptom. The child's voice was very weak, but very distinct:

"Papa, mamma, you have been crying. You mustn't cry. Mary would not be afraid to go and lie down where her little uncles and aunties are sleeping. My grandmas showed me the places, and told me of Jamie and Pierre and Margaret and Annette up in heaven. I'd ask Jesus where they were, and it would be easy to find them."

She rested awhile and again opened her eyes and looked at the Indian—still as marble, but seeing everything. She spoke again:

"And Showaba would come to me after awhile. He would be lonely after Mary was gone, and Jesus would cheer his cabin and show

him the way. All we little children would meet him at the door.”

To endure the crisis, waiting, watching—all the world knows what that means. All done that can be done. Doctors powerless. The human at its wit's end. Just one resource left—only one—to wait upon God!

The midnight hour was near. The Indian was rigid as stone. The others were almost as motionless. The child had been for some time in a stupor. The sovereignty of God was in the ascendent.

The mother—for mothers must be doing something—went now and then and moistened her daughter's lips. I think the father was praying without ceasing.

And thus they waited upon the change—for life or for death. All this came in with the thorns and the thistles.

The Indian leaned forward suddenly. His eyes blazed as they fixed—anxiously, intently—upon the child. She was moving. Then she woke, certainly conscious, and looked around on all. In her cheeks came a hint of color. Did the deathliness seem to lift? There dawned a smile of recognition for each.

“Mamma, papa, Auntie Merser, Showaba,” she said. “And how glad I am! It seemed to

me that you were all dying. The tired is almost gone."

The Indian rose and took his staff.

"The Bay Blossom will live," he said. "Her Sun-God is better than mine. Showaba will bring her venison."

At breakfast Mrs. Merser said to her husband, "If that cherubim had died not all the sprinklers and sprinkling on earth could have kept her out of heaven. She can now live to be baptized at the right time and in the proper manner."

Of course the patient was still very ill, but the doctor gave strong hope of recovery. Did the birds ever sing so sweetly? Did the camelias ever bloom so graciously about Mary's playgrounds?

## CHAPTER V.

### TAUGHT AND TEACHING.

“And a little child shall lead them.”—ISAIAH xi. 6.

IN the temple at Jerusalem, in the presence of the learned lecturers, sat the class called Kallah, the Bride; the students called Beney-Kallah, the Children of the Bride. Among these, strangely, appeared the twelve-year-old Boy—he who was to grow into the greatest of all teachers. The time was coming when, under his instructions, the church herself with all her children was to be called the Bride of the Lamb.

Absorbed in his Heavenly Father's house, the young mind had lost sight of Nazareth and his earthly parents. Evidently there had come an awakening of his deeper kinship to the skies. If we see closely, there comes some such awakening in every growing child.

Had the Boy asked—“And am I indeed a member of the great church of which this resplendent building is a type?” Hillel, or perhaps his young assistant, Nicodemus, would have answered, “For twenty centuries every descendant of Abraham has been born a member of the

visible church; and therefore you were circumcised."

If the Boy had asked, "What mean ye by this rite?—what instruction is in it?" we can almost hear the great rabbi saying, "It teaches the need of moral purity in old and young, the circumcision of the heart. God would impress this upon the first reflections of the child. The last time you were in the temple your parents presented you: now you present yourself. This is God's order—the child in due time recognizing the claims of his Father's house and his Father's business."

They were not the last teachers and parents to be astonished at the understanding of the youthful. Socrates taught by asking questions. Many a little Socrates by his inquiries shows us our shallowness, and that we must learn in order to instruct.

Mary overheard the following conversation between her mother and Mrs. Merser. The good neighbor still made herself unhappy over "the sprinkling." It is hard to relinquish controversial fads. She had ceased to talk to Jean about it, dreading his polemic pleasantries, but she seemed to find it impossible to suppress her flings at the amiable mother. She said:

"I saw your husband the other day marking

his pigs. It struck me that this was what you tried to do with Mary!"

This was not sufficiently refined or kind. A fatality of such tendency seems to pervade the assaults upon infant baptism, whether in books or in pulpits or in social intercourse. Rejectors fail to understand the sacredness and preciousness of the sacrament to millions of conscientious believers. Mrs. La Fontaine knew the worth of the soft answer and replied:

"There is to us a sweetness indescribable in having the mark—the Bible calls it the seal—of our Lord upon our offspring. It holds us to the thought of God's ownership. We are trying to feel the beauty and the force of that fact more and more every day."

When the lady started home Mary joined her and followed to the gate. There she said:

"Auntie Merser, didn't you hurt mamma when you talked about treating me like the pigs?"

"Did anybody ever hear the like," answered the astonished friend. "Did you notice that? It beats anything I ever saw!"

"But, auntie, why didn't you want me taken to the Saviour just as soon as they could?"

"Bless the darling!" exclaimed the woman. "Who's been talking to you about these things?"

You are entirely too young to bother about all this!"

"But auntie, when Mary was sick and when you were all so kind and good, did you think she was too young to die and go to heaven?"

"You're a smart one!" answered the neighbor. "But wait till you get grown and I'll tell you all about baptism."

The child was not satisfied. These young minds do more thinking than we give them credit for. And, then, it's a mistaken religion which puts the child off till mature years. She asked:

"How old were you before you were baptized, auntie?"

"I was thirty-four," was the answer. "Oh it was a great day; hundreds were there; it was a blessed scene!"

"But, auntie, I don't understand. Whose mark was on you and your boys and girls before that?"

"Old Satan's, I guess," said the woman, laughing, but evidently cornered.

"And when you were baptized, did you leave your boys and girls with Satan's mark on them?"

"I suppose we did," was the reply, and with sadness in it. Mary did not know of the mother's troubles.

“On Sunday mamma was reading to me,” said the miniature philosopher, “about the Saviour’s telling who was the greatest, and about his using that child for an example. And then how he said: ‘Except ye become as little children.’ Did you have to become as a little child, auntie, before you were fit to be baptized?”

“You’re a prodigy!” exclaimed the good lady. “But we will talk all this over after you are out of short dresses.”

But Mary was no prodigy. Like your own child, her mind was constantly imbibing, inquiring, absorbing.

Mary had heard her father and mother talking over the passage in Matthew (xviii. 3, 4) to which she alluded: “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Without dreaming that their daughter was taking it in, they said that if conversion was prerequisite to baptism, then adults had to get back to the status of childhood before even they had any right to the ordinance. Not the number of years, but the childlikeness in candidates entitles them to the sacrament.

Thus the parents inferred that infant membership in God’s church is the Bible pattern for all true membership; it is the normal member-

ship. The infant has nothing to lay aside; the adult has much. The infant does not have to become old or old-like; adults must be transformed into the child-like. The child is not an intruder; he is already there by divine arrangement; it is his birthright; the old, unless they become as little children, are intruders and outlaws.

Mary's mind, like all child-mind, was naturally receptive—taking impressions when none suspected. We cannot guard the shaping and moulding too early. Thus the great commission would disciple all nations, the majorities in all nations being children. And then in teaching, we shall be taught.

We like best to think of the attractive traits of children. It must not be inferred from this that we consider Mary a faultless child. There are as few perfect children as there are perfect grown people. Our little heroine had juvenile battle-fields awaiting—errors to combat, temptations to resist, unholy impulses to control and subdue.

The parents would have need of all the ordained means of grace to aid in suppressing the evil and nurturing the good. In this they had the right to count upon the church and her ordinances.

The child saw no divorce between church and home. Home was church and church was home.

It was as much a matter of course for all three to attend Sabbath school, prayer-meeting and sanctuary worship as to go to their beds or their meals.

“Mary has her faults,” said the mother; “we must not be blind to them. The pure water drops indicated need of cleansing—the Spirit’s promised work. I am glad she is teachable—willing to be told what is right. She shows me how to look outside of self—to Another—for light.”

“And when she has done wrong and has had time to think,” answered the father, “I never saw one more sorry—more truly repentent. We may well try to become as the little child in this.”

Just then disturbance was heard in the yard, and bitter tones. It was Mary’s voice.

Hurriedly the mother rose and went to the door. She saw the small hand striking furiously full in the face of the colored boy Tobe. With this came the words:

“You hurt that kitten, and said you didn’t, and you told a story, and I don’t like you, and take that—and that—and that!”

Her hand had angry strength in it, and the boy was crying.

This was only one of many exhibitions of

temper, and the mother was pained. Earthly idols break down somewhere.

The child was led indoors, still excited. It was no time to sway the heart until the tempest was over.

“He was bad!” she insisted, “and I beat him, and I’ll beat him again!”

The father studied the child and analyzed the act. There was both good and evil in it. There was a sense of justice, and also a laudable sympathy for the injured kitten. These things must not be rebuked. There is a proper indignation at wrong. On the other hand, the little negro was defenceless, afraid, and at her mercy; and violent tempers are not meekness, and an infuriated judge is no fit avenger of an offence.

The girlhood and womanhood of the daughter must be spent in the midst of slavery. This inherited institution had entailed peculiar responsibilities, had its inherent dangers, and was liable to abuses. It might ennoble the dominant race; it might brutalize.

In 1720 the first slave ships reached the colony, but brought also from St. Domingo as part of the cargo the terrible yellow fever. It was the sad symbol of other scourges which were to avenge the robbery of Africa.

The children were to grow up in contact with

the children of Ham, and little Mary was to mingle with all these influences for good and for evil. In the person of Tobe and Showaba she was touching two great race problems—America's ordeals, too great for statesmanship.

The storm lulled, as all such storms do, and then the father spoke of the wrong to the kitten and commended her heart-interest in its behalf. But was there not another wrong? The kitten was unprotected, but so was Tobe. And he was not well-instructed—had probably never been told any better. He needed a friend rather than punishment. At the best, her act was only Lynch law. She was a mob of one—one angry girl. The Saviour taught and persuaded.

And soon the moisture came in the lustrous brown eyes, and she said that she had been worse than Tobe, and she was going to tell him so. The Scotch conscientiousness and the French fervor were both in the blood.

Soon they heard the child beneath the magnolia reasoning with Tobe about tyranny and kittendom. Whenever we have struck wrongfully, we struck the Saviour. She was sorry for hurting Tobe, and he must be sorry for hurting poor puss. And the boy said: "I sho' never do so again!"

The effect of their teaching was reacting

directly and sweetly upon the hearts of the parents. Answered prayers always come back in wholesomeness.

In the faith of father and mother, Mary would soon be with them at the Lord's Supper. During the present pastorate the table had been gradually filling with children. Years were not qualifications, but only the discernment of the Lord's body.

No stories so pleased the child as Bible stories--no, not even Showaba's. The gospel words and events were as real to her as the incidents of every-day life. She never tired of Calvary.

"If this is not faith," said her father, "I know not what faith is. To her, Jesus is a real, veritable Being, a genuine daily Saviour, and *her* Saviour. Here is child-like trust—in its essence. That which grown people struggle for is hers without a struggle. She does not have to become a child in order to enter the kingdom."

"I have but one anxiety," said the mother; "it is our environment. Society here is not religious; the young people are worldly; the moral atmosphere is not pure. Your family and mine are marked as Louisiana Puritans. The looseness of the Latin races and of their Romanism is all about us. It is in the air, and Mary must breathe it."

A Catholic family of French descent was among their neighbors and best friends. The D'Arbonnes had come over under the auspices of the Baron de Bastrop, and stood well among the immigrants.

The D'Arbonne family were not bigots. They regretted many things in the history of their church and claimed for it no infallibility. There must have been some mighty reason for their consideration for Protestants. Said Mr. D'Arbonne one evening at the La Fontaines' :

“There is music in the name Louisiana, but we have no reason to be proud of its derivation. The Grand Monarque, for whose honor the colony was called, was great in sin and crime, as well as in power and pageantry. Louis XIV. disgraced Christianity with horrible persecutions, culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and in all that followed. The La Fontaines have no reason to love him. The butcheries and banishments of the Huguenots stabbed France herself to the life-core.

“In Louisiana, too, there have been willing tools of the persecutor, but the New World would not stand it. That part of the colony now comprised within the State had been consigned to the spiritual oversight of the Capuchins, but the Jesuits plotted for power over them and over all

others until, as from France and Spain and Naples, those conspirators had to be banished in 1764. In 1789, under the Spanish domination, an unblushing attempt was made to establish the so-called Holy Inquisition in New Orleans. The Capuchin Antonio de Sedella demanded of Governor Miro forces to back him as Commissary of that bloody institution. Instead of obeying, Miro sent soldiers to arrest him and put him on shipboard for Europe. Said Miro in a dispatch of June 3rd: 'When I read the communication of that Capuchin I shuddered!'

"Not far from us, on the east bank of our Ouachita, was an old fort formed of a stockade of cypress and oak posts twelve feet long, nine feet above the ground. It was named Fort Miro in honor of the excellent Governor. If he had done nothing more for the Province than to hustle off that agent of the terrible Inquisition, his fame deserved perpetuation along Louisiana's fairest streams."

This exceptional tolerance and candor on the part of this Catholic remains to be accounted for.

Henri D'Arbonne was two years older than Mary, and had been her favorite playmate. He was a manly boy, a gentleman from birth, and in many respects her parents could not have desired a more pleasing associate for their child. The

difficulty was, as felt and regretted by her mother, in the absence of true religious culture, the unconsciousness of the spiritual, and the relaxing influence of a negative religion.

The first friction came in the form of Sabbath visiting. Outside of church hours this attractive family showed no reverence for God's Holy Day. Social Sunday calls from older members of the household continued until it was noticed that they were never returned on that day, and they gradually ceased. But the boy came regularly every Sabbath afternoon. The La Fontaines were not willing to slight the lovely boy nor to give his relatives offence. These problems are certain to arise. And they must be met.

Sabbath afternoons are a Godsend for the instruction and training of the young. Blessed seasons of calm and privilege—in these the Bible has been revered and instilled, the Catechisms learned, and the future preëmpted. Golden opportunities, no household can afford to waste them, for time and eternity.

Then, unknown to all, little Mary took the matter into her own hands and settled it. On Saturday evening she said to her playmate:

“You must come over and play with me on Monday. Showaba is going to bring me some chinquepins and I shall look for you. I shall

not expect any one to-morrow. I want to read about Joseph and Pharaoh.”

Henri did not come until Monday, and there were no hard thoughts—only chinquepins.

Henri D'Arbonne is to be an important personage in this story. By many a singing stream, in many a quiet nook, beneath the silence of the stars, many a character is taking shape and forming in the play-grounds.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FOUR SNOWY HEADS.

“For they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.”—ISAIAH LXV. 23.

**T**HIS will be one of the most important chapters of the narrative. The reader may not be able to enjoy its full meaning now, but will see it very clearly after awhile. There are many little streams springing amid forest leaves and flowers, trickling along in their hidden beds unheard and unnoticed, tiny secret rivers which even the birds and the fairies may not see; but out of these the Mississippi is made.

Back somewhere homes, too, have their quiet, noiseless rivulets; and then again, perhaps, the mighty sweep of the Father of Waters. They are tributaries sometimes to the Church of God, sometimes to the populous penitentiaries.

Mary had been to her first Communion. No communicant was surprised. Well instructed, the church prayed and expected that this sacrament would duly follow the other—early communions to succeed early baptisms. Thus in that church there were already but few wanderers from the fold.

Mary was seven years old. The writer has in mind a flock of typical seven-year-olds while these lines run on. This was a sprightly, intelligent child, but no marvel—a genuine child, such as we love perforce. Religion does not make monstrosities—does not deform the little ones into maturity before the time. Mary was simply a sweet little affectionate girl of seven, who enthroned the Saviour among her other girlhood loves. It had the freshness of the spontaneous song of the bird.

Why cannot the world understand that? How long before playgrounds and Communion tables are sweetly mated—what God hath joined together no man putting asunder. And, then, no one will expect more of the youthful believer than of the old!

Of all the beautiful things which God has made I know nothing more lovable than the presence of a trustful young disciple at the table of our Lord. And there that day the faith of pastor and people became as childlike as hers and mounted up with wings as eagles.

In church, that cloudless memorial morning, was one form never seen there before. He was motionless, and apparently emotionless, but those deep midnight eyes lost nothing of all the thoughtful scene. Showaba had promised to go

with her to the sanctuary. His eyes followed her to the table, and, as he leaned forward, the gaze became piercing. They could not have been more intent upon a Natchez enemy.

The week following came Mary's birth anniversary, and the four grand-parents were to spend the day at Hope Cottage. To make sure that no hours be lost, Mary went to escort them over. They were two handsome old pairs, of Scotch and Languedoc type, and you could see the reflection of last Sabbath in every face.

"I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors—Lev. xxvi. 45," quoted Grandpa Laird, his hair waving in the soft Louisiana winds as white as the snow on Ben Nevis.

"The Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations—Deut. vii. 9," commented Grandpa La Fontaine, his locks as snowy as the lilies in the birthland of Calvin.

These two aged members of Session had handed the bread and the wine to their grand-child on Sunday.

Moses had his elders in the wilderness of Arabia; God had his elders in the American wilderness—strong helpers still in the march toward

the heavenly Canaan. What were the Presbyterian Church without her faithful elders!

Hope Cottage was at its fairest that day. The atmosphere was subdued and genial, like the love of grandmothers. The Ouachita was as rhythmical with poetry as the Afton or the Loire. Beneath the magnolia were grouped three generations, the fragrance of spring all about them. The skies were as blue as the blue-bells of Ayrshire.

Somebody has said—Holmes perhaps—that it takes three generations to make a gentleman. Sometimes it takes more generations than that to make a lovable Christian. In the straight apostolic succession from Covenanter and Huguenot and Puritan and Heidelberg blood, there has been full time to expect delightful blooms.

In these venerable men and women church and family were closely allied in the thought of little Mary. She was not to be disappointed in the afternoon stories. The old folks were hale and happy and reminiscent.

Said Grandpa Laird, the sunshine softened like velvet upon his face by the great green leaves above: "That river never tires of reminding me of the waters of ancestral Scotland. Go where they may, the children of the sturdy Pres-

byterian land are followed by her burns and braes and wimpling rills like the Horeb stream.

‘We’ll sing old Coila’s plains and fells,  
Her moors red-brown with heather bells,  
Her banks and braes, her dens and dells.’

“But there was a time when her moors were red-brown with something else than heather bells. My grandfather used to tell me of what his grandfather told him—and that takes us back a long ways. Our kinsman knew and heard young James Renwick, who was the last of the martyrs that bled under the miserable Stuarts. Charles, a Papist in disguise and vilely profligate, had persecuted in alliance with Episcopacy. James, a willing tool of the Pope and corrupt in morals, was still pursuing the countrymen of Knox. Fathers and mothers and children were ruthlessly harassed and torn. Satan and his emissaries hate the children of the covenant.

“From boyhood James Renwick developed fervent piety. To be pious in those days was perilous. His father on his dying bed, as with the Scottish second-sight, foretold the boy’s short life and his dying for the faith. It is out of early piety that heroes are made.”

Mary moved to the side of the speaker, leaning upon him. He placed his hand upon her curls and continued :

“At college and everywhere James stood erect and bold for the gospel. He soon was a marked victim. He was put under arrest. Everything was done to induce him to waver. He would not compromise one hair’s breadth, though refusal meant death. Cargill’s execution made him only the more firm. Of course he was condemned. He told his mother he could not pray—being so taken up in praising, ravished with the joy of the Lord.”

The tears were gathering in Mary’s eyes.

“To his mother and sister visiting him toward the end, he said he was just waiting his coronation morn. On the last day he talked joyously of being within two hours of the crown of glory. On the scaffold he declared without a tremor, ‘I die a Presbyterian Protestant. I own the Word of God. I own the Confession of Faith. I adjoin my testimony to all those truths that have been sealed by blood in scaffolds, fields and seas. I leave my testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, against profanity and everything contrary to sound doctrine. Lord, I am ready.’

“And so but a boy, Renwick at only twenty-six years old went triumphantly to the block. Not long after, the last Popish king of Britain was ousted from the throne. A Calvinist had driven him out.”

Mary threw her arms around her grandpa and said with face beaming:

“I am glad I am a Christian and a Presbyterian!”

Grandma Laird, a lovely survival of the olden time, her matronly face a signet of goodness, saw the impress and began softly to repeat a poem by James Hislop, “The Cameronian’s Dream.” The shepherd boy of Airmoss had composed it at the tomb of a party of slain Covenanters. The voice deepened the music of the words:

“In a dream of the night I was wafted away  
To the muirland of mist where the martyrs lay;  
Where the Cameron’s sword and the Bible are seen  
Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green.”

Mary changed over to the knee of this gentle interpreter of poesy. In breathing stanzas was painted a scene of peace and beauty:

“And Wellswood’s sweet valleys breathed music and gladness,  
The fresh meadow blooms hung in beauty and redness;  
Its daughters were happy to hail the returning  
And drink the delights of July’s sweet morning.”

Then the poet pictures, as only poets can, the hunted victims lying “concealed ’mong the mists where the heathfowl was crying.” The bloody horsemen are at hand. Then the destined prey began the old psalm, “They sung their last song

to the God of salvation." Now grandma's tones ring out with the roundness of youth :

"Though in mist and in darkness and fire they were shrouded,  
Yet the souls of the righteous were clear and unclouded ;  
Their dark eyes flashed lightning as, firm and unbending,  
They stood like the rock which the thunder is rending."

The fearless heroes go down before overwhelming numbers. Our poet is equal to the fray. Then the supernatural lights up the scene and Mary is enraptured :

"When the righteous had fallen and the combat was ended,  
A chariot of fire through the dark cloud descended ;  
Its drivers were angels on horses of whiteness ;  
And its burning wheels turned on axles of brightness.

"A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining,  
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining,  
And the souls that came forth out of great tribulation  
Have mounted the chariot and steeds of salvation.

"On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding ;  
Through the path of the thunder the horsemen are riding ;  
Glide swiftly, bright spirits, the prize is before ye,  
A crown never fading, a kingdom of glory."

Mary drew a long breath and said : "I see, yes I see ; and I know that grandma would have died for her Saviour just as willingly !"

"Women and young girls, too," said grandpa,

“stood inflexibly for the truth, faithful unto death. So Margaret Wilson sung joyous psalms while being drowned amid the tides of Blednock.”

“A church with such histories, such galleries of heroes and heroines,” said the pretty little La Fontaine grandmother, “ought not now to be slack in withstanding error. There is witness yet to be borne. We may yet strengthen our faith with the words sung in the rocks and caves of France by the persecuted Huguenots three hundred years ago:

“ I have a friend so precious,  
     So very dear to me;  
 He loves me with such tender love,  
     He loves so faithfully!  
 I could not live apart from him—  
     I love to feel him nigh;  
 And so we dwell together,  
     My Lord and I.

“ Sometimes I’m faint and weary;  
     He knows that I am weak,  
 And so he bids me lean on him,  
     His help I gladly seek.  
 He leads me in the paths of light  
     Beneath a sunny sky;  
 And so we walk together,  
     My Lord and I.

“ He knows how I am longing  
     Some weary soul to win;  
 And so he bids me go and speak  
     The loving word for him.

He bids me tell his wondrous love,  
And why he came to die;  
And so we work together,  
My Lord and I.

“I have his yoke upon me,  
And easy 'tis to bear.  
In the burden which he carries  
I gladly take a share;  
For then it is my happiness  
To have him always nigh—  
We bear the yoke together,  
My Lord and I.”

“Foes will still beset; if not in old guises, then in new. What a mixture Europe has sent us; and is still sending, of lax systems and of mongrel beliefs! of her best blood and of her worst blood! Descendants of persecutors and of the persecuted meet face to face on Louisiana soil. Even on Louisiana soil, for many years, public worship by Protestants was crime. Spain as well as France has left her mark—deposits like the crevasses of our rivers.

“Every day we meet socially a family who crossed the ocean with Estevan Miro, and who had been bloody-handed in pursuit of the Protestants of Castile. They speak with evident pride of having been emissaries of the Inquisition. It is obvious that on the banks of the Ouachita they still feel the same intolerance

which they felt on the banks of the Tagus. Between them and the D'Arbonnes there is a vast difference. But in the midst of all these dilutions the religious atmosphere becomes relaxing; and on the part of the friends of Christ, old or young, there is as much need of brave testimony as in the days of blood."

Mary did not then know that grandma spoke of a family living near them by the name of Gonzalez. Their son Don was a fine-looking boy, of decided Spanish features, a year older than Mary, and her playmate. She would have reason to remember this conversation in the coming days.

"Now it is my other grandpa's turn," said the happy child—absorbing, always absorbing. She moved her chair, taking his hand in both of hers, and said: "Now please tell us, grandpa, about our kinfolks."

"The church is our mother," said Calvin. The children of the covenant have a right to be informed about their mother.

"In the year 1509," answered Grandpa La Fontaine, "was born in Picardy a babe that was destined to shake and shape the intellectual and ecclesiastical world. He played at religion as a Papist curate until there occurred a signal and thorough conversion of soul in his twenty-third

year. Then all was changed—his whole being aroused, and his brilliant mind and pious life were henceforth consecrated mightily to the Master's cause. His 'Institutes,' which were to impress the ages, were published when he was but twenty-nine years old. Gianthood in young Christian manhood! This was the mightiest son of La Belle France, John Calvin.

"I am coming now to my story. A youth by the name of Philip La Fontaine, a pupil of Calvin's, became thoroughly imbued with his spirit, as myriads have been, and survived him to fall a victim to the St. Bartholomew massacres of 1572. These butcheries of Protestants began on August 24th, the holy Sabbath day! Such was Rome's butchery of the fourth commandment, as well as of the saints. To celebrate the event, cannons were fired at Rome, Te Deums sung, and a medal struck by the Pope. Over 30,000 believers, including Philip, were slain to make a Roman holiday!

"The widow and her only child, Antoine, were cruelly pursued—at first to proselytize and then with brutal hatred. The mother stood firm. Then they seized the seven-years-old boy, just Mary's age, and spirited him away to an unknown monastery. There he was to be perverted to the faith of the apostate church and into

hatred of the Huguenots. To the mother this was worse than death.

“She never saw her boy again. News came after awhile that Antoine had died. Perhaps so, perhaps not. It was one of the tricks for obliterating identity. Thus the desolate mother mourned, hoping that the report was true, dying in uncertainty. Centuries have passed. What was the true history of that boy among his parents’ foes, the priests and the persecutors? Did he live? Did he leave descendants?”

If the Lairds were anxious for the child to love poetry they were to be gratified. Already she had her hours of dreaming, and there were times when she rhymed to the birds and the roses and the river. The flowing measure of “The Cameronian’s Dream” was still pulsating upon ear and heart; and after the old folks had gone and the sun had set, she sat for awhile working with busy pencil, and then she called her colored disciple and read as follows:

Never heard of John Calvin? Am surprised at you,  
Toby,

You a big Presbyterian and yet such a booby  
As to keep yourself stuffed with molasses and fever,  
And know not a thing of old Rome and Geneva.

Yes, Tobe, they will tell you John Calvin is horrid,  
With hoofs on his feet and with horns on his forehead!  
Read, Tobe; be a man; when you want to combat ’em  
Take his Institute books and fling them right at ’em!

Be intelligent, Tobe; not narrow, not chaffy;  
John Calvin never fed a poor sinner on taffy;  
If you know any boy with a heart without pity,  
You tell him John Calvin hurt nobody's kitty.

Mary was still reproving Tobe's assault on the innocent cat. Well saturated with Calvinism, poetry would never do her any harm. The rhymester's art, so soon emerging, might indicate inner harmonies which could bring sunshine to herself and others some day. To prove already its effect on Tobe, that foot which had kicked the kitten was beating time sympathetically to the metre of the verse.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PASTOR'S CALL.

"Their children also shall be as aforetime."—JEREMIAH xxx. 20.

JEAN had been reading Baxter's comment on the Saviour's words: "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." (Mat. xviii. 5.) Of this striking utterance that great and sainted man wrote: "How can infants be 'received in Christ's name' if they belong not to him and his church? Nay, doth Christ account it a receiving of himself, and shall I then refuse to receive them or acknowledge them the subjects of his visible kingdom? For my part, seeing Christ hath given me so full a discovery of his will on this point, I will boldly adventure to follow his rule, and would rather answer him upon his own encouragement for admitting a hundred infants into his church than answer for keeping one out."

While Jean read, Mr. Allenson was seen coming up the walk—always a welcome visitor at Hope Cottage. And it was always a bright hour to him.

The family did not check the joy by worrying him for not having come more frequently. They did not chill the atmosphere by dwelling upon disagreeable things in the church. They did not embarrass him by talking unpleasantly about their fellow church members. He felt the influence of their family-altar and that little room which Jean called Mary's Shrine.

Little Mary was always delighted when she saw her pastor coming. She had been taught to love him and to regard him as her nearest friend. There had been many a pleasing talk between the two. From her he had taken more than one of his sermons. Now Mr. Allenson was using her as an assistant in his work. Playfully he called her his co-pastor.

We have an old-fashioned conviction that church and pastor and Sunday-school teacher and parents are amply sufficient in the way of church societies. The venerable Presbyterian regimen avoided the expense, the publicity, the dress-parade, the craving for prominence, the masculinizing of the girls, the loss of the down from the peach. Mr. Allenson, father, mother, Miss Annette, the infant-class teacher, and our Mary, formed an admirable league. There was plenty of Westminster about it, and the child was developing symmetrically in Christian en-

deavor. The new woman had not yet been invented. Presbyterianism did not want her invented.

The pastor to-day brought excellent illustrated tracts for Mary to distribute quietly among her companions. Just now the chief objects of her zeal were Tobe and Showaba. It hinted of home and foreign missions—the American aborigines and Africa.

Mr. Allenson found this inquiring mind full of what her grandparents had told of the witnesses, older and younger, in France and Scotland. The young want facts. The fate of the stolen young La Fontaine had particularly enlisted her thought. Awake and asleep, her imagination had been forming all kinds of pictures of his after life. She little knew how that story of centuries ago, so soon after the days of Calvin, would affect her own destiny. God loses none of the threads of history.

The pastor told of the place, near Poitiers, still called Calvin's Cave, where the great reformer, then but a youth, used to administer the sacraments to the hunted Christians. The child's vivid fancy reproduced the scene.

"Thus," said the minister, "the church membership of the little ones survived from Abraham's day. It has run the gauntlet of thousands

of foes and swarms of heresies. Soon after apostolic times good men began to corrupt baptism of babes into baptismal regeneration, but no one ceased to practice and honor it. A notion sprang up that sins committed after baptism could not be pardoned, and therefore one lone voice was raised during the second century, that of Tertullian, recommending its postponement; not only to adult years, but until toward the close of life. Thus the erroneous theories of men have often presumed to combat or pervert an ordinance of God. But not for a thousand years after the death of the apostles did any one deny that it was apostolic. The testimony of the fathers is clear and unanimous."

"Who are the fathers?" asked little Mary. The question proved how closely she was listening.

"They were our earliest Christian writers, following upon the apostolic age. They are the friends of the children. The Saviour said, 'Go disciple all nations, baptizing them,' and only forty years after the death of John, Justin Martyr writes: 'Many men and many women among us, sixty and seventy years old, who were *discipled* to Christ from their childhood, do continue uncorrupt.' Thus, in obedience to the great commission, these aged believers were dis-

cipled while the apostles were living, and not over thirty-six years after the Saviour ascended. The Saviour's prescribed way of discipling was by baptizing them. The same writer declares the similarity of baptism and circumcision, both implying the same thing, 'We are circumcized by baptism with Christ's circumcision.' "

"These quotations are very striking," said Jean. "And they are valuable, too, as bearing upon the good accomplished by infant membership. Away back there those aged believers were its trophies."

"And yet they tell us," said Mrs. La Fontaine, "that we get the sprinkling of our babes from Rome."

"This was long before there was the remotest suggestion of a Papal church," answered the pastor. "So with a number of other witnesses following Justin. The word regenerate began very early to be used as interchangeable with baptize. Irenaeus, who was an associate of Polycarp, a disciple of John, writes: 'For he came to save all persons by himself; all I mean who are by him regenerated unto God—infants and little ones and boys and youths and older men.' "

"These are indeed interesting facts," said Jean. "History does splendid service for our children."

“Thus runs on the testimony,” continued the pastor; “every early witness in favor, not one against. Origen, the most learned man of his age, and born only eighty years after the days of the apostles, declares: ‘For this cause it was that the church received an order from the apostles to give baptism to infants.’ In the year 252 A. D. the question was asked whether baptism must be deferred till the eighth day, and Cyprian and sixty-two bishops answered in the negative, declaring that ‘the mercy and grace of God are to be denied to none that are born.’”

Said Jean: “There were evidently no Anti-Pedobaptists that close to the apostles.”

“In the fourth century,” continued the minister, “Pelagius, a very accomplished errorist, was accused of overthrowing the ordinance by his theories, and he answered indignantly: ‘I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants.’ Augustine, his great orthodox opponent, answered: ‘They are not able to resist the authority of the whole church, which was doubtless delivered by our Lord and his apostles.’”

“And yet,” said the mother, “they would have us believe that it was an invention imposed by Romish councils.”

“Let us see,” was the reply, “what a witness

testifies who lived fifteen hundred years nearer the apostolic days. These are the words of Austin only three hundred years after John had gone: 'If any do ask for divine authority in this matter; that, which the whole church practices, and which has not been instituted by councils, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the apostles.' "

"Thus," said Jean, "the emphatic contradiction was providentially prepared ages before the charge was made. History is a sturdy, eloquent teacher, and no Presbyterian need fear its verdict."

"We love to interest our child in its teachings," said the mother. "And we love to think of the myriads of fathers and mothers who through all these centuries have had their faith fortified by the covenant ordinance."

"It has been a sublime procession," replied the pastor; "the millions who followed century after century, in increasing multitudes, presenting their children and claiming for them their birthright. And it is a mighty procession today. The vast majorities of Christians believe and rejoice in the privilege. 'They that be with us are more than they that be with them.' "

"There is a felt chivalry," said the father, "in

vindicating the rights of the babes. The courts and the National Government would move with all their might for the defence of the rights of the unconscious infant. Shall the church be less faithful?"

"For a thousand years after Christ," said the pastor, "there were no assailants. Even immersionists immersed their babes. And yet, had it not been for immersion, I doubt if there would ever have been any attempt at infant exclusion. A misconception of the form led to a misconception of the subjects. And then the sacraments of unity were made divisive—first un-churching the infants and then un-churching the majority of adult believers."

"Losing sight of the foundation doctrine of infant membership," said the mother, "the stress is laid upon the rite itself and its forms."

"Yes," answered the pastor, "and yet, singularly, a man is claimed as founder of the system who was a member of the church from infancy! Who immersed John the Baptist? We know that he had been sprinkled on his admission to the priesthood—the only ceremonial purification he ever heard of—but like Jesus, his cousin, he was in the church from earliest childhood. If he ever went back upon infant membership he never breathed it."

"It is very sweet," said little Miss Thoughtful, "to be a member of the church like John and Jesus."

"Very precious, indeed," said the pleased pastor. "And in John we have our model of such membership. It was no accident that it is put so conspicuously in the New Testament that the great baptizer 'shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb!' (Luke i. 15.) An angel was sent from heaven to say that! Those first chapters of Luke glorify the babes. Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and Anna and Simeon had no qualms about infant church membership."

"And what a blunder," said Jean, "to have excluded that child because of age and unconsciousness! Was he not the best member in the land?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "This John was baptized by the Holy Ghost in infancy—the real baptism which the ordinance symbolizes. Infant membership in that case at least was no mistake. Of this child the inspired record testifies: 'The hand of the Lord was with him.' (Luke i. 66.) Again the picture of this little church-member is drawn and perpetuated: 'And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit.' (Luke i. 80.)"

There was silence for awhile. The eyes of father and mother moistened. The tears deepened when Mary said with a voice sweeter than a bird's:

“May the Holy Ghost teach Mary how to grow and be strong!”

The pastor was profoundly touched. These were the meanings of infant membership and the aim of his preaching. After awhile he said:

“The great baptizers of the New Testament were John and Jesus, the one with water, the other with the Holy Ghost and with fire. (Luke iii. 16; Acts i. 5.) They were fellow-members of the church from babyhood. Can we have higher ideals for the church of to-day?”

After Mr. Allenson prayed with the family and left, Mary went out among the flowers and sat thoughtfully for a while; then took her slate and wrote abstractedly as follows:

Elizabeth's and Mary's sons  
In love and beauty grew;  
May my own heart be like young John's,  
And like his cousin's, too.

They played their plays within the fold,  
Like lamb with artless lamb—  
The scions of the Church of old,  
The seed of Abraham.

Baron de Bastrop crossed the sea  
To get him leagues of land;

The little boys of Galilee  
Had legacies more grand.

It was the kingdom seers foresaw,  
Though mixed with toils and tears;  
Beside the sparkling Ouachita  
Make Mary's heart like theirs!

The little girl soon had three visitors—Don Gonzalez, Henri D'Arbonne and Showaba. The Indian had brought a basket of huckleberries from the woods, and sat quietly on the root of the tree watching the children eat and play. Suddenly Don discovered Mary's slate and, against her protests, began reading aloud her crude rhymes.

"What a guy!" he said, tauntingly. "She is authoress and parson, too. Poetry and piety on a tear! Who are these Johns and cousins and barons that she has got all mixed up!"

"I think it's a shame!" said Henri, indignantly. "You treat Mary mean. You are no gentleman!"

"Oh I guess you will soon be joining the church, too!" said Don, with a sneer. "These pious kids make me sick. But let us hear this psalm through!"

But he read no more. Showaba rose straight and towered like a giant. He fixed the boy with those wonderful eyes; strode toward him,

wrested the slate from his hand, and gave it gently to Mary.

“The Bay Blossom loves her Jesus and he loves her,” he said, giving the Spanish boy another look and disappearing through the trees.

Was this scene a prophecy of things to come?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS.

“And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.  
. . . As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to  
his seed forever.”—LUKE i. 46, 55.

**T**HIS story must often turn upon its tracks.  
The past and present and future are one  
and the same with God. We are all rooted in  
the days of old.

The French Revolution reached out its tendrils to Louisiana. Both Royalists and Jacobins kept in touch with their Catholicism in the West.

Among others, the Baron De Bastrop, the Royalist, fled from France to New Orleans during the administration of Baron De Carondelet. The latter granted him thirty-six square miles of fine land up on the Ouachita. It was to this that little Mary had alluded in the rhymes which caused the blushes upon her cheek during the scene between Don and Henri and Showaba.

For many reasons we will listen to the Baron De Bastrop as he sits at evening thinking of France and his new home:

“Who knows what may yet be the glories of my possessions to the northward? The exiled nobleman may some day have his Barony or his Dukedom by the side of the beautiful river. Why not his lordly mansion, and retinue of retainers, and illuminated halls, and many a night of wassail to enliven the flowing tides and the forests!

“Louisiana is Spanish in name, but French at heart. Nevertheless, the Spaniard sympathizes with the fugitive friends of King Louis.

“There is stringency and privation now, but the day comes when there will be great prosperity and wealth in Louisiana. Why should not the name and fame of De Bastrop be perpetuated in the woodlands and prairies of the New World!

“In the year 1731 Governor Perier marched northward to dislodge the Natchez Indians from their chief stronghold west of the Mississippi. They ascended the Red and the Black, and then entered the clear, sparkling tributary, which from its pellucid waters they called the Silver river. This was our own Ouachita. Not far from its east banks the great battle was fought, the victory won, and the soil drenched in blood. Now, again the stream flows on unstained, and farther up its course by its silvery tide await my

princely acres. Perhaps in the coming years there may be the perennial flow both of silver and gold.

“Hunting for fountains of perpetual youth, and more rabidly for the mines of precious metals, the immigration has seldom been of the best. When ceded to Spain in 1762, D’Abbadie describes the colony as ‘a chaos of iniquities.’ It is little better as portrayed by Bishop Penalvert in 1795. Our Papal Church did not seem a success as a colonizer. In 1724 was published a code utterly prohibiting any other creed or worship. This was reënacted under the first Spanish administration. The urgent need of a more moral and industrious population compelled the authorities to neglect its enforcement. Immigration was invited from the English colonies and other Protestant countries. It was because of this desire for new and better citizens that Governor Miro was so horrified when the effort was made to introduce the Inquisition.

“The singular truth is, a better feeling grew up between Catholics and Protestants than between the Catholic ecclesiastics themselves. There were not only bitter fights between Capuchins and Jesuits, but finally even more bitter between the French and Spanish Capuchins. Father Cirilo, of the latter, denounces the friars

of the former, charging them with extortion, card-playing and filling the convent with debaucheries. He calls them 'monsters rather than Capuchins.' And then, as an amusing climax, he declares: 'So great is the detestable negligence of these men that I think they are the disciples either of Luther or Calvin!'

"I speak of this because along the Silver river, near that prospective Barony or Dukedom of mine, there are Catholics and Protestants putting all this to shame and living in social harmony. Two families, one the followers of John Knox and the other followers of John Calvin, have no better friends than the D'Arbonnes, the followers of the Pope.

"In these solitudes of Louisiana, amid the forests of oak or cypress or pine, along her shining rivers and bayous, in the thin and obscure settlements, there is many a hidden history and household mystery. Who knows the antecedents of any neighbor? Not the banished Acadians alone, who began to arrive in 1755, have their romance and their pathos. The very trees wave with enigmas like mosses. Both philosopher and bard have tempting fields for speculation and fancy.

"And the Ouachita settlements have their labyrinths of thought as well as of forest. My

friends, the La Fontaines, will have their mystery to solve, and the mystery will be found in the D'Arbonnes. Heredity is a mighty thing. There are family traits that can never be explained until an unknown past is explained. The La Fontaines, idolizing Calvin, would tell us that it is God acting through the covenant. But they, too, are puzzled about the D'Arbonnes. They do not expect very much of the covenant in Papal channels.

“The D'Arbonnes have been friends of my own family from of old. Their religion has long been a puzzle for their priests. No complaint has been made of their fidelity to rites or ordinances; no penance could be adjudged for non-performance of church duty. But there was always an independence of judgment, a prompt disapproval of what they thought wrong in their church, a ready praise for what they admired in the Protestants—and all these things so candid and outspoken that it often troubled their father confessors.

“Far back we heard of one of their ancestors who involved himself seriously by harboring and protecting a flying Huguenot. Another is mentioned who rebuked a whole monastery for using too much wine. Still another talked sadly of the inmorality of some of the Popes. And yet

otherwise they were above reproach and unwavering in their devotion and liberality to the church. Now and then, all the way back, they would marry a heretic and bring in new elements of divergence. This peculiar fancy for Protestants was regarded as a D'Arbonne idiosyncrasy.

“And now, up there on the Silver river, the D'Arbonnes like the La Fontaines, and the La Fontaines like the D'Arbonnes. There seemed to be an affinity as soon as they met. And yet there are decided differences of opinion, of faith and of habit. In spite of all this, they appear to be drawn toward each other by something stronger than a common French origin. That mystery may yet be solved on the romantic Ouachita.

“The La Fontaines came over with me, and found the D'Arbonnes on the ground. They had heard of each other before. What revelations are yet to follow?”

At the time the Baron was thus theorizing, Jean and Mary had not been born, and Henri and another Mary had not come upon the scene to complicate the problem.

The Baron, unless gifted with prophecy, could not have foreseen a conversation that was to occur, years after he was gone, between a young

La Fontaine and a young D'Arbonne. Like multitudes of visionaries from Europe, contemplating sudden and fabulous wealth, the Baron had proved unequal to the development of the rich lands assigned him. Through more enterprising men, many an air-built castle was to give place to the fertile cotton and sugar fields of more rational days. Thus the Baron de Bastrop had transferred his interests to the more practical Mr. Morehouse, a citizen of the English Colonies, and had passed away. We walk daily over scenes once gilded by the dreams of the pioneers.

And thus, unaware of the mystery in their families about which the Baron had speculated, Henri and our Mary sat on the banks of the Silver river and were helping to solve the mystery in unexpected ways.

"I like you Protestants," said Henri, "but I don't like your not honoring the Virgin Mary. I think more of you because your name is the same as hers."

"Oh, we do like her," answered the growing girl. "You know the angel said: 'Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.' We all feel that way."

"Then I don't understand," he answered, "why you don't pray to her and worship her!"

“But that is so different,” was the reply. “The very first commandment is, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’ and Jesus says, ‘Him only shalt thou serve.’”

“You Protestants,” he said, smiling, “are always running over with Scripture. But I like you for that.”

“And then,” continued Mary, encouraged in quoting the Bible, “you remember how the Saviour, though loving her tenderly, reproved her twice at least; while a boy in the temple, and at the first miracle in Cana. She was good and lovely, but she was not perfect.”

“I am glad that you do not speak harshly of her as I feared you might,” said Henri, after a moment’s silence.

“Oh, no,” she said again; “we all love her and honor her; and then,” she added, laughing, “you know there was once a law in Louisiana that whoever spoke disrespectfully of the Virgin should have his tongue cut out!”

“It was a mean, devilish law,” he answered. “When my church did such things I almost hate her and the Virgin and all the rest of it!”

“But that would not be right,” she interposed; “there have always been good people in your church who were not cruel. The Virgin would not have cut anybody’s tongue out. She



knew what it was to suffer. Old Simeon foresaw her anguish and said, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.' "

"I like you for talking this way," the boy said. "I didn't know Protestants felt that way."

"Oh, yes," Mary urged with enthusiasm. "And the Virgin herself seemed to foresee and appreciate our love, for she sung, 'From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' We love her as a true and modest woman—not as a goddess—and we all want to be as lovable. And, then, we love her because Jesus loved her as we do our mothers. And mamma says she was a Child of Promise—like the rest of us; as was, too, her own Glorious Son. Grandpa says it was the model household."

At that hour the solitary of the mounds sat overlooking the river of molten silver—the last of the Ouachitas and their Ossian. Slowly he chanted:

"The Ouachitas are gone—all but one lone leaf. The leaf rustles with the sighs of the forest. Here slumber the warriors of old. Here sleep the children of the wigwams. The sun goes down in silence!

"The Ouachitas are gone—all but one lone leaf. The boats are sunk in the river. The strings on the bows are broken. The sleep of

the mounds is deep. The sun goes down in silence!

“The Ouachitas are gone—all but one lone leaf. The flowers have felt the frosts. The Bay Blossom only is left. Showaba loves the Bay Blossom. She is good, and as sweet-voiced as the oriole. Perhaps she thinks of Showaba. The sun goes down in silence!

“The Ouachitas are gone—all but one lone leaf. The leaf rustles with the sighs of the forest. The Sun-God speaks to the Indian no longer. He hides behind the great oaks and the mosses. The God of the Bay Blossom rises. She is the daughter of the day. She loves Showaba. The sun goes down in silence!”

## CHAPTER IX.

### NEW IMMIGRANT.

“Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.”—GEN. xxxiii. 5.

THERE was a sunburst and a new anthem at Hope Cottage. It was a boy! No prayer this time that it might be of the other sex, and God had sent a fine specimen of a man-child. This was years back, before the days of advanced thought and advanced crime, when olive plants are regarded as an heritage of Beelzebub, rather than of the Lord.

Little Mary, rapidly growing physically and mentally, was taken entirely by surprise—which is very beautiful. Suddenly a brother, her own! She had always wanted a brother, for Don and Henri, however elevated, did not come up to all the requirements of the ideal.

But with his parents' hearty consent, Henri had brought her for the bran-new brother an exquisite Palissy plate, which had been in the D'Arbonne family for many years. Was there a delicate and intended appropriateness in this—

Palissy, one of the godly Huguenots in the days of bitter persecution? Grandpa La Fontaine told her all about it—the famous potter exempted by the queen from the St. Bartholomew massacre because of his great skill. Mary thought again of the La Fontaine who was not spared. But she greatly appreciated the gift.

Don brought an image of very pretty design which he had found along the Bayou Bartholomew, made of gold and evidently lost by some devotee of years ago. Perhaps it was St. Bartholomew himself. It would make a very harmless toy.

Tobe was not going to be outdone. Mary's poetry had proved too much for him, and he had quit persecuting kittens. His proclivities now were birds' nests and a broken dialect, composed of French, Spanish, Indian, African and remnants of English. All of this Mary was laboring to correct. She had not yet cultivated a taste for the dialect novels which were to swarm later for the delectation of a fastidious age.

So Tobe brought "young mass" a fine specimen of a hornet's nest, the proprietors of which he had been fighting for two months, the victory finally won after many grievous wounds and worse than Indian war-whoops. He was proud

of his conquest, and brought the youthful slaveholder a gift which had cost something.

Then came Showaba, solemn and stately, but a sparkle of wonderful light in the wonderful eyes. "For the young White Chief," he said, as he handed the Bay Blossom the present in its wrapping of bear-skin. Unrolled, she held in her hand, smaller than usual and of rare workmanship, a tomahawk! At first she was amused, though she would not have let him know it for the world. But she soon felt more like tears.

"It was Shalmanna's," he said. "He was the first-born. He was strong and handsome. He was going to be great. I brought him this. He sprung up and laughed. He shook it at the trees. He was thinking of the Natchez. He walked like a great warrior. The squaw was proud. The fever came. Shalmanna lay down to die. The hand grew too weak to lift it. The Sun-God would not hear. He sleeps with the great ones of the Ouachitas. The last will soon be gone. There will be none to care for his tomahawk!"

His voice had deepened into a chant. And then he turned back to the mounds.

Mrs. Merser also brought her contributions—a soft little flannel wrapping, with many daily attentions of kindness. "I thought of bringing

instead," she said, "raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle for his loins, and calling him John the Baptist."

There were many little hints of this kind in the sick room. She was evidently fortifying against the prospective "sprinkling." Mary had slipped through her hands and been "marked" before she knew. She was finding it difficult to avoid controversy in so improper a place and time, but now and then the subject would crop out.

After all were doing splendidly and happiness reigned in the cottage and in the rocking chairs, and the mother was sitting among them proudly with the babe in her arms, Mrs. Merseur could refrain no longer. She said suddenly:

"I wonder if you are going to have that youngster a member of that old apostate Jewish church which killed John the Baptist and crucified the Saviour!"

"I would suppose so," said Jean, not willing that his wife should be drawn into any discussion. "I don't see how we can decently refuse. The Gentiles always had the privilege of entering the Jewish communion, and when they did they always brought their children in with them. And then, you know, there was Gentile as well as Hebrew blood in the veins of the Head of the

Church. Rahab and Ruth, and even Jezebel, were his ancestresses. The church is called the body of Christ—not two bodies; not a Jewish body and a separate Gentile body. He was called the Head of the Church, not of two churches.”

“But,” she objected, “you are now quoting from the New Testament; this has nothing to do with the Old. It is all about the apostolic church.”

“Well, let us see,” he answered. “Writing to the Ephesian Gentiles, Paul says: ‘Ye are no more strangers or foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.’ (Eph. ii. 16-22.) Here, evidently, not only the corner-stone, but the foundation and the superstructure in the days of both prophets and apostles, are the same.”

“You have a strange way of getting around things,” she said, laughing. “But your boy is not a Jew!”

“The day comes,” he answered, “when the Jews will all be fellow-members with us of Christ’s church. The Jews put themselves out for awhile. The Saviour tells of this in Mat. xxi. 33-43, where he speaks of his earthly church

as a vineyard, not as two vineyards, and he says that because of the wickedness of the Jewish husbandmen, 'he will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen.' It is not to be a new vineyard, but the same vineyard under different cultivators. Then—and he is speaking to the Jews—he varies the figure from a vineyard to a kingdom, still in the singular: 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' The church has had the same King, and been the same kingdom in both dispensations. It was taken from one and given to another."

"You harp on foundation and vineyard and kingdom," said the good woman, "but I talk of church."

"And Paul," he continued, "also speaks of it as an olive tree. These figures are graphic and instructive. From God's olive tree, the natural branches, the Jews, were 'cut out' and the Gentile world were 'grafted in.' And after awhile, we are told, the Jews are to be 'grafted in' again. (Rom. xi. 17-24.) From beginning to end it is the same tree—the same church. And then those who ascended to glory from the old Jewish dispensation and those from the New, have gone into the same church in heaven. Even the

earthly church and the heavenly church are undivided. There will be but one church from its beginning through all eternity. So Paul again speaks of it as only one family—"the whole family in heaven and earth." (Eph. iii. 15.)"

"But what had the old Jewish church to do with baptism?" she asked.

"Oh it had its thousands of baptisms," was the reply. " 'Divers baptisms,' the apostle calls them. (Heb. ix. 10.) It was the ceremonial sign for purification—whether of the utensils of the temple, or of the lepers, or of those touching a dead body, or of the priests. And it was always by sprinkling. John the Baptist had never been immersed, but he had been sprinkled. The ceremonial pouring of water on the hands, Jesus calls a baptism. (Mark vii. 3.) It meant the same as circumcision, the cleansing of the Spirit."

"I supposed you would round up on circumcision," she said, smiling.

"They rounded up that way a long time ago," he replied in the same good humor. "More than fifteen hundred years closer to the apostles than we, the great Chrysostom wrote: 'Our circumcision—I mean the grace of baptism—gives cure without pain, and has no determinate time as that had, but it is lawful to one at the beginning

of life, or in the middle of it, or in old age, to receive the circumcision made without hands. For this cause we baptize infants also.' ”

“Get it out of my head I can't,” she insisted, “that dragging such a mere baby into church membership is just nonsense.”

No, the kind neighbor could not see otherwise. Evidently there was a habitual exaggeration of the mere symbol, an aggrandizement of the idolized rite itself, that necessarily obscured its deeper meanings. Jean saw the mother press the child more tenderly to her bosom, and he said more solemnly :

“I feel greater anxiety for the training of a son than of a daughter. I distrust myself more ; and I want everything that God has given, *everything*, to help me under this new responsibility. The divine promises cover all needed wisdom, patience, guidance, tact. I love my God better because in all his guarantees to me he includes my boy. I love my church better, her sympathy and prayers a tower of strength, because she embraces my boy in her arms. I believe our son will come early to Christ and adorn the doctrines of the covenant.”

Little Mary, always growing, always absorbing, had heard it all and in silence. She walked a piece with the kind woman, and said when

parting: "Auntie Merser loves the baby and will help us in praying for what papa said about him."

Of course, the former generation came early to inspect and bless the child.

Said Grandpa Laird, with the silken locks of snow: "My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year." (Gen. xvii. 21.)

Said Grandpa La Fontaine, with the sheen of the lilies of France in his ringlets: "And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law and to Israel for an everlasting covenant." (1 Chron. xvi. 17.)

The grandmothers passed the treasure from lap to lap, hunting the Scotch and Huguenot features, and finding some resemblance to each of their buried sons. The two venerable men stood near and told of historic boys in the Highlands and in the Cevennes. These stories mingled with those of young Joseph and Samuel. And Mary was filled with delight, but sorry that Auntie Merser had not remained to enjoy the feast. How happy the child that is born with two pairs of godly grandparents to bless the heir of promise!

In the library that day Jean found two prayers offered by the father of one of America's

greatest and most successful preachers; one on the day of the boy's birth, the other immediately after his baptism. They were recorded at once in a diary. These prayers dedicated the son to the pulpit, defining fully the traits and talents and the characteristics of the prospective minister. In subsequent years they became the exact portrait of the eloquent and popular pulpit orator, Dr. Bethune.

"This is glorious!" said Jean. "But to us who confidently expect prayer for our children to be answered, why should it seem marvelous? I can think of no verities more sure than the covenant verities."

That afternoon a sketch of the famous French poet and fabulist, La Fontaine, fell into Mary's hands. It was written by the romantic historian of the Pelican State; Gayarré. Still dreaming of the lost La Fontaine, imprisoned in the convent, everything connected with the name attracted her. She soon became absorbed in the following beautiful words, hoping that they might be a picture of her own little La Fontaine brother:

"In the diamond-studded halls of his own creation he would become the embodiment of taste, wit, sound sense, judgment, refinement and delicacy. There he conversed with gods and

goddesses and all sorts of supernatural beings, and was ravished into ecstatic beatitude by the harp of Apollo and the songs of the Muses. There he was in communion with all the heroes and noble spirits of ancient and modern times. He summoned them to his presence and they came. He gave audience to animals, birds, fishes, insects, trees and plants; he understood their language and he drew under the titles of fables, tales and other names, a sort of *prose-verbal* of all that occurred in his realm of fancy; whilst now and then, half-opening a window of his magic dwelling, he flung out with a careless hand a few inspired sheets for the delight of mankind."

Mary was becoming constantly more in love with the beautiful in nature, in books and in character. Grandpa Laird was vigilant for her cultivation in the elements of a pure taste, knowing that therein exist and bloom some of the sweetest flowers of happiness. In the mellow Scotch he read to her from the poems of Burns and Metherwell, and never wearied of pointing to the literary gems of the Scriptures. He knew that we grow in likeness to the pages we love the best. And now she said:

"Why should not our own little La Fontaine become like what I have read—the companion

of birds and fishes and trees, and of heroes and noble spirits, with his own lighted halls of fancy, and windows in his magic dwelling, and with voice and pen able to thrill the listener! All this and a real good Christian too, better than his great namesake. And with God loving to answer prayer, why may we not have him to be almost what we please?"

Mary had heard of the proper application of the term Creole to persons born of French or Spanish blood in the colony, and of "the first Creole," named Claude Jousset, as reported in an official dispatch to the King. She was greatly interested, too, with father and mother in the naming of the boy. This explains the girlish verses which she flung off that evening among the trees:

And Mary's dolly's nose is broke,  
Supplanted by another—  
The fairest of the fairy-folk,  
My little Creole brother.

The angels brought him here because  
They thought his sister lonely—  
Two dimpled feet, two chubby paws,  
Wee heart for mamma only.

Another link, another tie,  
To yon bright world is given—  
The great and happy family  
Of noble boys in heaven.

A nest all full of life and joy  
 Up on the green boughs swinging,  
 One birdling girl, one birdling boy,  
 And all the trees are singing.

I hear the winsome river say,  
 As on his way he rushes—  
 "He'll paddle on my breast some day  
 And hunt the berry bushes."

I hear fresh strains of sweetness wake,  
 The Southland's richest singer—  
 "A great good soul for mamma's sake,  
 And worlds of joy he'll bring her."

And then the zephyrs all began  
 A soft and sweet hosanna—  
 "He'll be a strong and sturdy man,  
 True son of Louisiana."

A whisper came from skies of blue—  
 "May no dark taint befall him,  
 And grace distill like morning dew,  
 And Calvin they shall call him."

In echoes Mary's heart replies,  
 Like one bank to the other—  
 "May heaven guide with loving eyes  
 My little Creole brother!"

The father picked up the fugitive verses in  
 the yard somewhere, and that settled it, and the  
 name became—Calvin Laird La Fontaine.

## CHAPTER X.

### DON AND HENRI.

“And they could not in three days expound the riddle.”—JUDGES xiv. 14.

“COMMANDANT of ‘The Ouachita Settlements!’ First white official over leagues of forest and jungle!”

Again we pass up-stream into the eighteenth century. If we listen, the past centuries are still vocal.

Don Juan Filhiol (Fee-ole) is walking thoughtfully the banks of the river. In his deliberate step he carries with him the dignity of an officer of Don Estevan Miro, Governor of Louisiana, and Charles III., King of Spain. The sword of office, used in the wars of two empires and still visible in the Court of Justice, swung at his side. The pipe of peace was now in his lips, fragrant with pristine Louisiana tobacco. From of old the beautiful river has had its spells of revelry and soliloquy.

“Commandant of vast stretches of vacancy and possibility. Representative of Castile and Aragon, and perhaps of empires yet to be. What

sublime expanses! What charming sites for homes and cities—more romantic than those of New Orleans! I dream! Far down the future I see these trails of the sparse pioneers crowded by prosperous thousands.”

Still he walks and thinks, the smoke curling gracefully from the pipe given him by young Showaba.

“My subjects a little more numerous, my domain would be a little more inspiring. In all these primeval Ouachita territories only a few over two hundred whites—207 in 1785 and 232 in 1788—a grand net increase of twenty-five in three lonely years. Among these is our little babe Marie, queen of the valley and the fort. My capital, which she graces, is called the Prairie des Canots, the prairie of boats or canoes; these our royal chariots of state.

“How fresh in memory my slow adventurous voyage from New Orleans in the keel-boat with my charming Opelousas bride! How little boyhood and parents dreamed of this wilderness life when trudging the fields of my native Perigord in La Belle France. When the Spanish name Don Juan was given the babe, how little they knew that he was destined for a Spanish commandant!

“Yonder the canoes line the banks. Their proprietors outnumber us. They are my dusky

servitors, thanks to yonder imposing stockade of oak and cypress, named for my partial patron. That stockade tells of the supremacy of Hispania and of Filhiol. Up at the mounds the chivalrous young chieftain, Showaba, reigns in friendly alliance, sharing the kingdom of the Prairie des Canots!"

Still he promenades the bank. The pipe emits wreaths of smoke almost as dense as the hamlet of scattered cabins.

"To my high distinction in these wilds I was promoted in the year that peace was declared between Spain and France and Britain, the year of the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States (1783). The vast province has had a checkered history, and the end is not yet. Discovered by Spaniards and by Frenchmen—DeSoto, Marquette and Joliet, and La Salle; coveted by both nations, and, through mismanagement, of no profit to either; flung from one to the other like a ball tossed by school-girls; England ever vigilant on the borders; now a new, growing nation at our doors; our Miro craving and plotting for a part of its territories; that new nation certain to settle with us all future problems—nobody can surmise what is yet to come. Like yonder driftwood, we float upon the waters.

“Thrown at convenience from one master to another, there is no patriotic attachment to either. Every little settlement feels as free as an Indian tribe. The Ouachita Post is almost a republic. Meanwhile, the great God is going to select his own proprietors for the continent.

“The colony is very poor. Every settlement is proud and indigent. The colonists have been mostly adventurers, expecting the reaping without the sowing. All has been experiment minus perseverance. Indigo, cotton, sugar-cane, tobacco, oranges, figs—one after another by spasms and no intelligent enterprise in either.

“The first rebellion in the colony was against cornbread. It was the startling ‘Petticoat Insurrection,’ as it was called, of the French girls in 1707. It was deemed worthy of an official dispatch to the King by Governor Bienville, giving the perilous details. ‘The males in the colony,’ he states, ‘begin through habit to be reconciled to corn as an article of nourishment; but the females, who are mostly Parisians, have for this kind of food a dogged aversion which has not been subdued. Hence they inveigh bitterly against his Grace, the Bishop of Quebec, who, they say, has enticed them away from home under the pretext of sending them to enjoy the milk and honey of the land of promise!’ ”

“Thus the sex were at loggerheads, with both church and state, on corn! The indignant girls vowed they would leave the land of cornbread at the first opportunity. The queens of the kitchen meant to rule the New World. There has been many a day since, when both sexes would have shouted hosannas for sufficient supplies of the yellow meal.

“Oh viands of the Indian maize—whether of yellow pone, johnny cake, hoe cake or dignified dodger—come freely and establish your domicile on the hospitable shores of the Ouachita. In the name of future generations the commandant welcomes you. Fields of the waving blades and silks and tassels, favorites of the Southern sun, worth more to the continent than all its fabulous and illusive gold mines! The hungry hail you. Our wiser women salute you. No more petticoat rebellion against thy beneficent sway. Add, if you please, the milk and the honey. Let the corn dodger take the throne!

“Small as are my populations, they already embrace all sorts—Canaanite, Amorite, Hittite, Perizzite, Hivite and Jebusite. The latest importations have been a Scotch family, a Huguenot family, a French Catholic family, and a bigoted Spanish family. If Laird, La Fontaine, D’Arbonne and Gonzalez can fraternize, the

Ouachita Valley can digest and assimilate anything!

“It is not strange that the Lairds and La Fontaines should coalesce. It is heretic Knox and heretic Calvin shoulder to shoulder. It is more remarkable when La Fontaines and D’Arbonnes gravitate together. Both French, indeed, but recoil might be expected when they remember the bloody feuds between Guises and Colignys. Antagonistic as are their religions, they seemed to flow together like Louisiana bayous. There must be some occult reason for this. I really believe they look alike. But they split wide open about Sundays and the saints and cards and dancing!

“The Gonzalez household is the spice in the dish. They are typical Spaniards and rigid Catholics, and have but little respect for any other faith. Perhaps they would have the Auto-da-fes in America if they could. They even suspect the conservative D’Arbonnes of being tainted with heresy because of their generous feelings for Protestants. I seem to scent trouble ahead. Meanwhile I am watching the friendship between the La Fontaines and D’Arbonnes with no ordinary curiosity.

“But, lo! the odors of corn bread steaming up at the fort. This is better than history or

poetry. And baby Marie is waiting, too. Vive la dodger or hoe-cake!"

The commandant faced about and strode with soldierly step toward the mess-room, the sword of state beating time as he went.

In the after days Don Gonzalez and Henri D'Arbonne, boys of another generation, were sitting on the same bank where the officer had soliloquized years before. Perhaps the time is near when the speculations of the commandant may be moulding into reality.

There had been more conflicts and plans and plots and uncertainties, until Louisiana, like a slighted step-child, had become tired and irritable. Again she had been transferred to France, and then sold like a chattel in 1803 to the great, growing neighbor. Thanks to the despot, Napoleon, she had been sold into freedom. Bishop Penalvert had written in 1795: "I must speak the truth. His Majesty possesses their bodies and not their souls. Rebellion is in their hearts, and their minds are imbued with the maxims of democracy." Now, the breezes of the free had for a good while been blowing from the lakes to the gulf and from ocean to ocean.

But religious types leave deep roots, and old prejudices lurk in hidden channels, and sunken streams burst to the surface sometimes.

The boys were larger, broader, more like men than when we saw them last—growing almost too fast for these dallying, meandering chapters to keep up with them. They were similar and yet very unlike. They often differed in opinion and about all kinds of things. They were Americans, but one was a Spaniard and the other was French. It is difficult to define a boy's character. It has yet to define itself. The men of the future will take their time in developing out of the boys. So we all feel about that man-child at Hope Cottage.

Perhaps Don sought Henri more frequently than Henri sought Don. Perhaps there was an unrecognized magnet which brought them together.

"You once told me," said Don, suddenly, "that I was no gentleman. It was in the presence of Mary La Fontaine. I felt like killing you—had not that ugly redskin scared me almost to death."

"I had forgotten it," replied the other. "I remember—you were treating Mary very badly, Don. It was not nice to read those rhymes without her consent, and especially to read them to others. We all saw how sensitive she felt about it."

"But I was only joking," said Don. "It was

all fun. I wouldn't have persisted, though, had you not seized the chance to take her part and pose as her champion. It looked as if you meant to get the better of me."

"Oh, no," Henri answered; "I saw the girl was unhappy about it, and I only meant to get you to quit."

"It was just teasing—that was all," persisted Don, doggedly.

"I suppose so," was the reply; "but there is some teasing that is not right. Mary writes those things to amuse herself or to please her parents, and she never dreams of their being published abroad for everybody."

"She's awful smart," argued Don, "and I couldn't see any sense in her being so modest about it. She knew I would not try to hurt her feelings."

"Girls are girls—that's the beauty of it," said Henri, gently, "and their delicacy of feeling is greater and purer than ours—and we ought to think of that. Even Showaba saw it and protected her blushes."

"So you mean to insinuate," retorted the boy, "that your red savage was more of a gentleman than I!"

"You are out of humor to-day, Don," answered his companion. "I only mean that all

present saw that Mary was uncomfortable, and for her sake we wanted you to stop."

"You and that redskin are wonderfully concerned for Protestants," was the answer. "If I get a little older, and have a chance, I intend yet to pay that savage for the insult!"

Don little knew under what circumstances he and Showaba were to be confronted before many years.

"It is not worth while to keep up these grudges," said Henri, "either against Protestants or little girls. Whenever we find gentle, refined feelings, we boys are bound to respect them."

"I would not have minded it," persisted Don, "if you had not said I was no gentleman, and said it before Mary."

"While we are talking about it," continued Henri, "you wronged her still more when you sneered at her piety—the piety of kids, as you said. Is there anything that ought to be so safe from a sneer as the conscience of another? and particularly of a Christian girl?"

"There you go again," was the answer, "and in defence of the false religion of a Huguenot!"

"No," replied the other, calmly; "but in defence of any pious young girl—whatever her faith. It seems to me a very sacred thing. Can't

you see it so, Don? Sex is sometimes more than sects. It's a poor religion that makes us lose our politeness!"

"There was a time when your ancestors," said Don, aggressively, "were burning Mary's ancestors for just such piety as hers!"

"Yes, and France is still suffering for it," Henri declared. "The banished Huguenots carried away to other lands most of her prosperity and greatness. Some say that the terrible French Revolution can be traced to that bloody blunder. However this may be, there can be none of that kind of thing in America. The sooner we quit all such feeling the better."

"I suppose that Mary can take care of herself without your help," was the unamiable retort.

"I rather think so," answered Henri, laughing. "Have you never heard how the French girls showed their temper against corn bread? It was in Louisiana, you know! Had you noticed closely, you would have seen at first a little insurrection of Mary's indignation at your discourtesy; the religion you ridiculed was the very thing that helped her to bear it meekly."

"I understand your part in it—a trick to get on Mary's blind side and put me at a disadvantage!"

Was this an admission of Don's heart-interest

in Mary and of his fearing Henri as a rival? Boys will be boys—while the world stands.

And there was another boy in the case. Tobe had been crouching behind the large oak near the site of old Fort Miro. When the two walked away in the rapid twilight, Tobe broke for home and for Little Mistress. Almost out of breath, he told his story:

“I spied on ’em. They almost fit. Mas’ Don, he quarreled and quarreled. Mas’ Henri, he talked back. It was Indian—and then Miss Mary! It was Huguenoses—and then Miss Mary! It was Catholic and burnin’—and then Miss Mary! Miss Mary always on top! Mas’ Don, he was agin her. Mas’ Henri was for the girls—tooth and toe-nail. Tobe knows—they both like the same somebody! It was like my hornets’ nest all stirred up agin. About the time the fight was comin’ on they linked arms and went off a-laughin’!”

Mary was amused at the African Epic, but she was troubled, too. What a mixed world—even on the placid Ouachita! What right had they to be wrangling over her! During that very hour her reveries had been far away, trying to picture in fancy the fate of the lost La Fontaine—a story touching those two boys closer than any one knew; and thus her surmises had run:

Torn from mother, hope and home,  
Beneath the dungeon's iron dome,  
Within the cruel grip of Rome—  
Lo, Antoine La Fontaine!

About him crowd in gown and cowl  
Repulsive monks with angry scowl  
To fright, with horrid threats and foul,  
Lone Antoine La Fontaine.

The child stands firm, and then they bring  
Their magic drugs with deadening sting.  
Benumbing sense and everything—  
Dear Antoine La Fontaine!

And now with mind and memory gone,  
The past and God and mother flown,  
In blighted brain their seed is sown—  
Poor Antoine La Fontaine!

Thus returned her thoughts to the puzzle again. Perhaps no solutions nearer the truth would recur to her than this. I suppose that she really thought more of Antoine of former centuries than of either Don or Henri of to-day.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LIFE CURRENTS.

“Thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me.”—EZEKIEL xvi. 20.

THE poet Wordsworth, studying himself and his capacities preparatory to a resplendent creation of genius, details beautifully the formative influences which moulded both mind and heart. This is an humbler tale, but God too has written preludes and excursions and complete poems for his covenant children—rhythm and metre and idyl in the life of many a little girl. His stanzas and cantos are rhyming by hedgerow and stream.

The baptism of the baby-brother was a day of mark to Mary. It was education. She repeated to herself her Catechism over and over. “A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers.” “Baptism is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the bene-

fits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized." "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them."

The strong old Catechism asserts itself when God's hour comes. These crystalized definitions and instructions come home very sweetly to Mary now. The promises made in behalf of her little brother had been made with the same solemnity for her too. She could not designate the time when she began to love her Saviour. It seemed to her that she had always loved him. But now she loved him more for taking lamb Calvin into his earthly fold as he had taken Grandma's boys into the celestial fold.

Every new baptism comes as an impressive sermon to those already baptized. It is God's emphasis upon a venerable rite; it calls for a reinvigoration of former vows. The cradle becomes a pulpit; and Mary wanted to be purer and holier.

The week following there came another important step in her education. Her teacher at school was a Christian woman, conscientious, faithful, living her Christianity before her pupils. Father and mother would not have entrusted their daughter for five days in seven to an irreligious worldling. Public schools have sometimes antagonized and paralyzed many a holy home influence.

Now occurred an episode in the daughter's life which found her a genuine little girl, and left her almost a woman. Many a miniature voyage had she taken on the river, and up the bayous in Showaba's canoe—every trip its own romance, and its educational communion with nature. Whenever she returned, she would hasten to the house of one or the other grandpa for a reading from the poets of France or Scotland.

The desire had been growing upon our girl to venture farther—to see more of the river and of the world. The chrysalis is straining its covering. Then came the enlarged joy. The father was called to a business trip of a fortnight or more, and the sagacious mother suggested that he take the growing girl with him.

Mary herself shall tell the story. Her grandchildren will show you the old manuscript diary, written in girlish hand :

“The white steamers had long been for me one of the glories of the Ouachita. The Prairie des Canots had become the Prairie des Steamboats. Hundreds of times, seeing them sweep around the bend, I had longed to spread my arms into wings, fly on board, and go away and away exploring the silver river. Now papa and mamma have given me the wings. Nobody could know my feelings unless he was turned into a bird.

“I hated to leave mamma and Calvin. Our cottage, there among its trees, never looked so pretty as when I was leaving it. No doubt but mamma is up in that one sweet room, kneeling and overlooking these stretches as she often overlooks the stretches of heaven. Am just a little homesick—if papa were not along.

“Showaba kept up with us awhile in his canoe, but we beat him, and he has paddled away. I believe he is a Christian.

“Yonder is Tobe—a black speck on his log. As long as I could see he was whirling his arms like a windmill. Tobe has improved. I’ve got into him at last the first answer in the Catechism.

“And just look! Yonder are those great silly boys still in sight. While we were doubling around that big curve of seven miles, they cut across the neck, and there they are still waving

their handkerchiefs. Don and Henri don't like each other, and they know it.

"Now we pass out of sight of everybody. The banks look very pretty through tears. Is it so that heaven looks to the weeping? Oh! beautiful river. Oh! beautiful oaks and willows and vines, and everything. It is as calm and tranquil, and perfect as an engraving, for God is the engraver!

"A sense of bearing onward and soaring, and yet of rest and quietude. Is that the way the soul feels when floating away from the body? The old explorers ought to have called our river the River of Peace.

"And so the sun goes down. Never was the great round orb so golden and thoughtful. No wonder Showaba, knowing no greater God, worshipped him. Every leaf and ripple seems to be waving handkerchiefs, like those great silly boys.

"Thank God for moonlight! On some such night I think Perier's men entered the stream, and called it the Silver River. With my heart all in love with the Ouachita, and the Black and the Red and the Mississippi, papa—just like papa—read to me about the Pison, the Gihon, the Hiddekel and the Euphrates. Even Eden was not complete until God made the rivers. So I dreamed of Eden all night. Asleep

on the waters—and afloat—bearing onward, ever onward!”

Thus the diary glorifies the rivers. To suit Mr. La Fontaine’s business arrangements, he had selected the Trenton, called a tramp steamer because she had no regular ports, being now bound first for Natchez, and then for New Orleans. Leaving the mouth of Red river, they swung northward. The mighty flood enthused her.

“I cannot talk—I cannot write. The majesty overwhelms me. Through thousands of miles, through myriads of splendors! I can’t understand myself. It is glorious. It seems to have been a year!

“Yonder at last is Natchez, named for the chivalrous tribes. Showaba still springs to his feet at the name. It is Saturday. Papa watched all that, for he would not travel on Sunday; and then, besides his business aims, he wanted to attend worship in both cities. Largely for my sake, I think.

“My first Sabbath away from home. A little homesick again, until we walked up to the church. Then the home-feeling came back. I suppose it is always so with Presbyterians. I missed good Mr. Allenson, until the tall, serene minister ascended the pulpit. I felt drawn to

listen and love. Some Scottish ruggedness in his features, but mellowed with the mildness of the Maytime. I thought of Isaiah, when it is said, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.' The serious man looked like that. He was in mid-life, about forty years old, and like a father among sons and daughters.

"I do like beautiful English. Grandpa Laird taught me that. It honors the message more. Coarseness degrades the pulpit—so grandpa says. His text was charming—"The God which fed me all my life long, the angel which redeemed me from all evil.' Back we went into covenant times—one of the Bible's sweet benedictions from the dying. I am going to try to preserve some of the sentences for mamma:

"'Away back in the olden time—a time so old that the farthest antiquity of profane history is young in comparison—these gray fathers of the world come forth before us to act, to speak, to die. All the witchery of old that poets feel, floats around their names. God seems to have been always near to them.'

"Papa says that the preacher is himself a poet, publishing lovely hymns and books; and that he will get them for me. I am only a little girl, but I found it easy to understand and follow his flowing sentences—lovingly. I report him again:

“ ‘Jacob’s grateful acknowledgment does not relate to the bare fact that his wants had been supplied through life. It relates chiefly to the fact that it was God who had supplied them ; and the same God who had been the guide and friend of his fathers Isaac and Abraham. The daily enjoyments which I experience are valuable to me to make me happy ; but how inexpressibly sweeter when I know that no blind machine has fabricated them, and scattered them in heartless munificence abroad, but that all have come direct from the hand of God—the same God that sustained and helped the prophets and patriarchs of old.

“ ‘This fact twines a family bond around my heart, and makes me feel that I am a brother to all the beings whom God loves. Abraham’s cup has passed down to me ; and the merciful Parent who filled it for him is filling it for me. I am not a homeless wanderer, gathering chance-fruit along the highway to keep me from starving, but one of the household group, sitting at a Father’s board, and enlivened by his kindly looks while I am fed by his bounty. From this point of view, where a dying hour will place us, the gift will not be so large an object as the hand that bestows it. The pleasantness of our reminiscences will not arise from the fact that they present to

our view so many enjoyments possessed in life, so much as from the fact which they will show us—that it was the God of Abraham and Isaac who deigned to follow us with his loving kindness and tender mercy, just as he followed them.’

“When the sermon ended, I felt as if I had been borne forward by the tides of yonder river. I hope my baby brother will be a preacher. They have told me that Mr. Allenson’s text on the day of my baptism was, ‘The household of God—of faith.’ I had these sweet household feelings to-day—a dweller in the tent at Mamre. In the strength of his rounded manhood now, may the preacher himself go on beautifully to patriarchal years; the light of heaven as soft about him as the Sabbath rays about his head to-day; his own reminiscences as pleasing then as a little girl’s memory of him!

“Once more upon the magnificent river, passing somewhere over the spot where De Soto was buried, and then on to the Crescent City.”

The diary tells of the fine old Southern town, its picturesque contrasts of European and American life, its old-time Governors, Bienville, Cadillac, Miro, De Carondelet and many more; its cemeteries, and its beautiful women. And now the Sabbath comes again and she is once more in church. She writes:

“Another man of God, another ambassador of the skies! You knew it, and felt it. Not far behind the Natchez prophet in age; only lately come to this pastorate, but already their pride. He is not very pretty, but wait till he speaks and his eye awakes! Now he is transfigured, and I forgot everything on earth, even mamma and Calvin. The dear old Presbyterian Church has her armored knights. He was preaching to his city damsels; he little knew how close he was getting to the heart of a plain country maiden. And thus he spoke:

“You must not only be competent to meet the engagements of the future, but you must discharge them with the elegance and grace which is the queenly trait of a high womanly career. All the offices she is called to fill require her to be adorned with this beautiful halo. She is the chief element in the refinement and culture of a people, and becomes of necessity the chief exponent of a true civilization. Her position in the social scale indicates, as with the precision of an electrometer, the degree of sensibility and taste which has been reached by the community at large.

“For this she needs to be clothed with grace as with a robe of honor. She is at once an ornament and centre of the domestic circle. Her

presence lights the fire upon every hearthstone; and her genial presidency, like the soft radiance of the moon, diffuses contentment and peace over the home. The ungraceful woman who elbows her way with a sort of angular awkwardness through life, may be the moon still, but the moon as she veils her face behind clouds, shedding but a smothered light, and only saving the world from total darkness.

“The woman, too, is the world’s chief comforter. It is hers to still the sob of the orphan, and to cheer the desolate heart of the widow; hers to brush away the falling tear, and to hold the drooping head; hers to wipe the death-damp from the brow, and with plaintive dirge to sing the weary soul to rest. What refinement of feeling and grace of action do not these holy offices of sympathy and affection require?

“These illustrations will suffice to show that I do not employ the term grace in any technical and narrow sense, as equivalent only to the mannerism of the fashionable world. Rest assured there is a world-wide difference between the fine lady of fashion, and the true-hearted woman in the full development of that nature given her of God; and the starched elegance of the one is no more the free dignity of the other than is galvanized copper the pure coin which has stood the

test of the mint. The grace for which I plead does not reside in postures and gestures, to be measured by lines and angles; but it is that free carriage of body and soul with which a cultivated woman sweeps on through the commonest duties of life. It is the queenly deportment, as conspicuous amid the embarrassments of poverty as amid the blandishments of wealth. For its attainment a refined sensibility and improved taste are just as essential as a sound judgment and a true heart. There must be the quick discernment of the beautiful and the true, a ready command of the emotions inspired by both, and the facility of expressing them in appropriate acts.'

"And thus—and thus—and every sentence a cut-diamond, and every tone a harp. The orator was exemplifying the grace and the refinement he recommended. I found myself in tears. I had been too young, I suppose, to think about these things; but something awoke, and I was yearning as never before to be a true lady; and, with God's help, a lady I will be! I wonder if the preacher knew that he was describing mamma?

"I shall never think of Natchez or New Orleans without thinking of their Presbyterian sages, and wanting to be those two men's ideal.

A worthy daughter of the patriarchs, clothed with that royal robe of honor, adorned with that supremest halo!"

Yes, something awoke. Mary returned home with girlhood and womanliness suffusing the horizon like starlight and advancing daylight contesting the dawn.

God's covenant comprehends all agency, opportunity, inspiration, enlargement.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CRYSTALIZATION.

“And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?”—ACTS xix. 3.

“IT granulates; It granulates!” It was the year 1795, and the colony in sad condition of impoverishment and discouragement. Indigo, its chief agricultural hope, had been blighted by storms and insects. From want of skill or perseverance, cotton and rice and tobacco had proved comparative failures. Through two different series of struggling years, sugar cane had been tried without success, and left the cultivators poorer. The outlook was desperate.

Etienne de Boré ventures everything upon a new attempt. Wife and friends dissuade. It is a forlorn hope—success or bankruptcy. Expensive machinery and hundreds of acres of cane are staked upon the experiment. The decisive day arrives. Crowds of neighboring planters gather and hang anxiously upon the momentous trial.

What intensity! What solicitude! Suddenly the manager cries, “It granulates!” The excited throng catch up the words, “It granu-

lates," and send them echoing over the plantation. It meant wealth for the brave Boré and for Louisiana.

Mary was the more interested in Mr. Allenson's illustration, because on her return trip the plantation above New Orleans, on which this occurred, had been pointed out to her. The minister continued:

"Infant church-membership has proved a success. On God's plantations it has produced sweetness and spiritual wealth. It triumphed in the tents of the patriarchs, and in the homes of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and of Joseph and Mary. By the blessing of God, it crystallizes, it crystallizes! With fair treatment, with trust and prayer and home-culture, it clarifies and solidifies into character and usefulness. Two of Satan's most loyal subalterns, Pharaoh and Herod, fought the covenant infants. God saved every one of those slain babes. The everlasting covenant is the children's everlasting friend. God's sacraments do not miscarry. In the cradle, in the nursery, in the church, in the heavens, the Great Manager guards and perfects the crystals. The shouting time is coming!"

Among these myriads of believers, Mary's father and mother were happy in the rewards of promises appropriated.

Mary had taken a class in the Sunday-school; or rather she had taken three little girls and three little boys to the Sunday-school; and then, to her great surprise, the superintendent had insisted upon her becoming their teacher. The children were delighted, relieved thereby of all embarrassment. For her the responsibility was a further education. We shall hear again from that class.

Mary already had some experience in teaching. For several years she had been reading and explaining the Scriptures to Showaba and Tobe. The former was ready to sit and listen for hours to the Bay Blossom. One Sabbath evening, going back to the mounds, the Louisiana balminess over everything, he said:

“The pale-faces killed the white man’s Saviour. The Indian would not have done it. The pale-faces drove the nails. He was good and kind. He was the friend of all. They hurt and slew him. Had Showaba been there, his tomahawk would have freed him. He would have taken the scalps of priest and soldier; for Jesus loves the Bay Blossom.”

It was Peter again, ready to strike down the assailants. So there has been many a carnal fight waged around the hill of Calvary. Mary would yet get in more light upon that mind and heart.

Tobe caused her greater concern. Slavery was a more puzzling problem than the savage nations. But the Bible and Catechism were some day to solve the negro question. Fishing was now Tobe's hobby. He said he liked the New Testament because it told about going fishing.

Calvin had begun to listen to her scripture stories. In her thought he was assuredly to grow up a minister, and his sister must do nothing and say nothing to impair the ideal. She was conducting a preparatory theological seminary. Thus one covenant child is to help another—the true apostolic succession.

These cares and duties came in time to assist in solving many practical questions. She stood at the threshold of social life, confronting the problems of young ladyhood. The preoccupation of active duty is a safeguard along those quicksands.

Not long since, Mr. Allenson had thrown out from his vigorous pulpit these abrupt contrasts:

“Society is an octopus of subtlest evil and jeopardy. It dictates to homes and churches. It suborns or insults conscience. It is disrespectful to its peers and essentially impolite. It stamps its foot and underlings tremble. It plays the despot in proprieties and the pope in re-

ligion. It ostracises at will the good, the true and the beautiful.

“Society is an angel of life and light, a beneficent force for truth and righteousness. It elevates and purifies. It is the daughter of Zion, and breathes the airs of Gilead. It prompts to high and holy aims. It refines and humanizes. It is the handmaid of Christianity.

“To which of the two is your allegiance sworn? Shall you and your child be slaves of the one or the freemen of the other? Will you keep company with Nero or with Paul?”

Mary stands on the threshold. To the young lady pausing there, thinking, dreaming, the future is very winsome. Among all the constellations there are no vistas more radiant with luminaries. The room at home, however lustrous with father’s and mother’s love, has windows and doors opening outward upon a wooing empire.

Standing with clean feet upon the threshold! I have been picturing mind and soul, saying little about the casket. They called her playfully the Creole Beauty, though the sedateness of the Scotch lassie held its own with the sparkle of the French demoiselle. Roses and lilies played hide and seek upon her cheeks, and, had there been brown diamonds, you would have

thought they had chosen her eyes for models. The forehead was not obtrusive, but was shapely and reflective amid the ripples of chestnut hair. Her mouth was the embodiment of sweetness and purity—some firmness there, mingling with nestling sentiment. Her form was—just right; suggesting no question of height or weight; and about it all there was a native grace which came from both grandmothers, floating about her like an inheritance, and as the finest lace moves in the zephyrs. She might have sat for her picture to either Victor Hugo or the Wizzard of the North. Wholly unconscious of it, she was very, very lovable.

In the line of the household covenant there have been thousands just as lovable.

Thus she stands at the threshold, and the world will bid high for her. None of its idols fairer than she, and the world is always ready to jostle the older ones, and make way for the new ones. Its blandishments are spread for the daughters, and are very seductive sometimes. Its pleasures are fascinating, their faces innocent, their voices sweet. We must not be impatient with those who hear the music, and see not the poison.

Upon the threshold! Your girls must have their ambitions, and these ambitions must not

be mistreated. The outreaching vine must not be broken. The swelling bud in its calix must not be rudely handled. To be a part of the social organism, these girls have a right to be popular and loved. Christianity never meant to immure them in desert caves and convents. The angels are entitled to their wings.

At the threshold! The lassies will like the companionship of the other sex. The sweet-olive sheds rare fragrance among the taller trees. The male and female strawberries grow best in the same gardens. It is not immodest to enjoy the presence of pure young men. It is not unfeminine to shine in the social gathering, and to add to the happiness of admirers. Religion need not feel cramped or bashful in the parlor. The covenant dwarfs nothing that is truly beautiful.

Mary received invitations to three entertainments, following one another through two weeks. One was to the fashionable Gonzalez home, one to the D'Arbonne's, and one to the Feltons', members of the Church of St. Axe-To-Grind. The first of these was a dancing party, the other two were card-parties. These had become stereotyped as matters of course in the way of amusements. The families and the clubs knew nothing else. They dominated intellect and taste. They

were not the disease, but the symptoms. The disease was deeper and chronic.

Worldliness, with its usual dearth of piety, pervaded the atmosphere. There were certain old-fashioned words which had become obsolete; such as vital godliness, spirituality, heavenly-mindedness. Rome and St. Axe-To-Grind had discarded them, and the other churches had unconsciously imbibed the sedatives. Piety still has its low levels, its sunken districts, one of the most dangerous of climates for the young.

There upon the threshold, Mary had the right to feel honored by these invitations. The entertainments were given specially for her, and the attention was flattering. None but the chrysalis knows the sunshiny joy of the spread wings. The ulterior purposes of St. Axe-To-Grind were unsuspected by the unsophisticated girl. The other two families were neighbors, and it was not in her heart to fail in appreciation of their kindness.

Don and Henri had brought the invitations from their parents, and had added the offers of themselves to escort her. They were handsome young men now. These "great silly boys" had perhaps originated the entertainments. If one had begun it, the other was not likely to fail to follow.

And Mary was pleased, and—troubled. Was she to appear ungrateful for these honors? Was she to presume to turn her back upon society's accepted usages? Was she so soon to subject herself to the charge of Puritanism, and a rude display of superior piety? Was she to close the doors of attractive families against her? These were serious problems for one in the flush of youth.

On the other hand, at the first temptation, was she to slight the venerable testimonies of her church? Was she to nullify the deliverances of presbyteries, synods and general assemblies? Born within the pale of the church, baptized by its authorities, voluntarily taking the solemn vows upon herself, sitting at its communion tables—could she be content to mar the symmetry and remain within its fold as an incongruous and discordant element? And what would be the effect of such an example upon her Sunday-school class and upon her young brother? Nay, if she began at the first trial to let down from conscious obligations, where was it to end? Was society to usurp the place of church and God?

The years of young ladyhood have their chivalrous battlefields, and their heroines and victories. Mary's parents kept mind and heart upon the fight, but thought it best not yet to interfere.

And now Mary did one of the most remarkable things imaginable. She dressed herself nicely, and took a leisurely stroll of two miles up to the mounds. Along the winding path, through trees and green bushes, the curves of the river smiling upon the left, the spotless, ruffled sunbonnet flitted like a great white butterfly.

And then Mary explained to Showaba as carefully as a lawyer the exact situation. As usual he resented the Bay Blossom's clouds. Perhaps the Indian was pleased at being consulted on a question of right and wrong, and the claims of the white man's God. Perhaps that was Mary's purpose. And this was his solemn answer:

"When the bloody Natchez started their war-dances, the Ouachitas put on their war-paint; they seized tomahawk and battle-axe; they raised the war-whoop; they drove back the marauders!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DENS AND CAVES.

“For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.”—ISAIAH xlix. 25.

“**A**LL creation is after young Mistiss. They are mean as mudflat mosquitoes. They buzzes and bites. She hasn’t them pretty cheeks for nothin’.”

Tobe was watching the issue very closely. He was claiming to love his Saviour now, and Mary had taught him. The white man’s religion was the solution of the negro question.

“I spied on her. When young Mistiss gets in trouble, Tobe watches. Preacher said there were three of ’em—world, flesh and devil. I guess that means Mister Henri, Mister Don, and St. Axe-To-Grind. I spied on her. I heard her talk to that ugly Indian, and I saw him offer her his tomahawk. Ho, ho, ho! She’ll tomahawk ’em!”

Great lubberly fellow now, he threw a summer-set, and then sprang up, and flung a stone at a pine stump—straight to the centre—and made the rotten wood fly. Again he laughed, saying:

“That’s the way they goin’ to katch it. The

rotten wood is got to fly! She's sayin' nothin' now. That young lady's thinkin'. I tell you she's prayin'. I spies on Don and Henri and St. Axe-To-Grind. Tobe has a secret—ho, ho, ho!"

And he had. But that will come out in due time.

There were four other parties to the conflict, the most quiet in the world, dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. In those two homes of the old folks Moses would never have asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The breezes of heaven were as certainly stirring those locks as the cool breezes from our coziest of Southern rivers. Through their three-score years and ten they had watched the ways of the world and the ways of the churches, and there was a mellowed wisdom and a ripened sympathy for the young which was worth more than all the universities; and they were not uneasy.

Thus spake Grandpa Laird, "And I said, I will never break my covenant with you; and ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of the land." (Judges ii. 1, 2.)

Said Grandpa La Fontaine, "He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name." (Psalm cxi. 9, 10.)

Said Grandpa Laird, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm ciii. 17.)

Said Grandpa La Fontaine, "And both Testaments unite, like a duet, 'I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'" (2 Corinthians vi. 17, 18.)

Mrs. Merser was, of course, deeply interested in Mary's attitude toward these entertainments. Might not the good girl be her daughter-in-law some day, though Jim had been led off by the fashionables? She said to the mother:

"That little handful of water-drops was too scrimpy. It was not enough for emergencies like this! Oh! that we could see her now wading out of the liquid grave like a dripping fairy. It would take a freshet of the Ouachita to drown out this conspiracy!"

Meanwhile Mary had already and quietly written declinations like this:

"I certainly prize this great honor. It was so kind to your little neighbor. I hardly know how to thank you enough, and then be understood in what I am compelled to say. For I am a daughter of the Presbyterian Church, and her voice is to me a mother's voice. She censures

nobody else, but she speaks gently and faithfully to her own children. Therefore, though the recreations to which I am invited may not be wrong for others, they would be sinful for poor, unworthy me. I would not deserve your friendship if I break my church vows. I prize the invitation as highly as if accepted."

"Three tomahawks," chuckled Tobe as he carried the three regrets to their destination. There was considerable talk—the very publicity which Mary dreaded. Don hurried to the house, a little too resentful for courtesy. He aspired to be a leader in society, though his habits were becoming somewhat questionable. But "habits" are not necessarily a disqualification for that role. On Don's part there was always a disposition to have his way; to force his views upon male or female. It was an inheritance from the old Inquisition days. He spoke a little harshly:

"Mary, you've just got to come! There is no sense in this thing. It will break up all our fun. I would rather you were present than all the guests besides. Mary, Louisiana is no place for Puritans!"

Mary was distressed, and tried again to explain. Her note really ought to have been sufficient. Don never understood that point of con-

science, and he was not the only Don. He said, as he left:

“If you pursue this course, you will soon have no friends in this community!”

Perhaps this might prove true. A young lady’s conscience is not always a popular accomplishment.

Henri also came in the afternoon to plead the case. He found Mary thinking of the lost La Fontaine of centuries ago. Her mind clung to the mystery. Henri spoke in most excellent spirit:

“Mary, there are some of us who admire you only the more for this. We know you have been forced to do a very unpleasant thing, and the fault is ours. We never thought of your scruples or this would not have occurred. Up at our house we are all talking of what my father calls your backbone; and now I am sent by mother to say for her that, if you will attend, the programme can be easily changed, and that nothing shall occur which would be displeasing to you. We will be too polite to invite a guest, and then offend her conscience.”

Tears came very near to the cheek, for this was, indeed, considerate and noble. But, of course, she could not afford to impose her views upon another home, and interfere with the enjoy-

ments of others. This would certainly not be politeness. But she would never forget the offer, and kindness, and the praise.

The greatest trouble came from the Feltons, of the Church of St. Axe-To-Grind. Miss Minerva was an old maid of the old maids. There are churches which seem to have a special attraction for old maids. They flit about the altars like spinster butterflies—God bless them! Perhaps some other shrine blighted, they pour their affections unreservedly upon The Church. Miss Minerva was one of the saints of St. Axe-To-Grind. You may have known her.

And Miss Minerva was indignant; nor did she hesitate to express herself. She had some apostolic pride in expressing herself. Had they not sincerely intended to elevate and polish the girl? Had they not meant to put the stamp of their approval upon her, and accord her an entrance into the best society? It would have been the making of her; but she had treated their overtures with contempt. That note declining, not at all in correct form, was very pert. There was something essentially coarse about some people. They sunk to their natural levels. It belonged to that John Calvin sect. They were predestinated to the lower instincts. They were congenitally incapable of appreciating the intellectual and high-toned.

Logically this meant the ball-room and the gambler's tools. But evidently Miss Minerva's resentment had a profounder basis—an undertoe of motive which did not appear upon the surface. Mrs. Merser said it all came from her not having been put under the water. Strangely enough, the rascally Tobe had the clue to the situation.

One effect, perhaps intended, these heartless agitations certainly had: they made the modest young maiden very unhappy. It was unpleasant to have her name bandied about in the lips of the community. The violet shrank from the glare of the sun, and from the rude winds.

And Tobe got mad. We must not expect too much from the Christianity of Africa as yet. In the course of the morning Tobe flung ten summersets, and his brickbats skinned a dozen trees. Then he saw Mary's clouded face through the window, and suddenly he presented himself.

"Young Mistiss," he said, "Tobe spied on 'em. Doors and windows wide open, galleries are splendid places for spyin', specially where there are vines and things; and Tobe was passin', and he heard Miss Nerva say, 'Mary.' There were lots of St. Axe-To-Grinds there. He knowed somethin' was up; and he spied on 'em.

“And then he heard Miss Nerva say that St. Axe-To-Grind must keep in the lead; and she said it was the aristocratic church, and must keep itself asserted, or somethin’ like that; and she said it had got the inside track with the young people; and she said dancin’ and card-playin’ was their trump-card; and she said, said she, these are our means of grace to win ’em from their own sects.

“And then she comes to young Mistiss; and she said, Mary La Fontaine was goin’ to be liked by everybody, and it was full time to be workin’ on her; and she said, said she, that parties were the things to flatter the youngsters, and that this was the way to clinch it; and she said, that Mr. Allenson and his meetin’ house would fight it, and that this would edge Mary off to St. Axe-To-Grind. She said it was a sort of enterin’ wedge for the splittin’ And then, as a next step, she said, they would elect her a member of their guild. And she said, said she, ‘Let’s send for Don Gonzalez; he’s not a member of our church, but he’s in love with Mary, and hates the Presbyterians.’

“And all the rest seemed to be noddin’, and sayin’ amen all the way through. And Tobe got so mad he couldn’t hold still, and he left. But Tobe’s an idiot, is he? ho, ho, ho!”

And Mary was astounded. Whatever the boy's faults, he was truthful. Nor was he capable of fabricating this story. She reproved him mildly for his spying propensities, little knowing the great service this propensity was to work in a trying hour. She thanked God that she had been led to decline these invitations. Sometimes the rewards of duty come sooner than we expect. She turned to her diary, and read again the words of the Natchez and New Orleans pastors—golden sentences that had stood by her through the strain.

Still these exhibitions of human nature were a shock to the young soul—there upon the threshold. It is pitiful when our confidence in good people weakens; and it is especially pitiful for the young girl who has thought the whole world as ingenuous as her own sunshiny, transparent self.

The father and mother had been constant and loving guardians of the field—and confident. The rose-bush was being shaken, but it was part of its growth—its education. Our covenant obligations do not require that we do all the thinking and reflecting for our sons and daughters. But now the father said:

“We have been derelict. It is full time that our own better people were awaking to the rights

of the young. That the first serious test to our daughter's principles should have come from the petty amusements of life, is instructive. It proves their possible strength and tyranny; and it proves that there is a Gospel as well as a Law of amusements. The young have a right to be young, and have a God-given title to life's innocent pleasure. It is our duty to supply them. If we neglect to give the harmless, joyous and inexperienced hearts will be tempted to the harmful.

“The church has a responsibility in these matters. If we surrender the field to irresponsible clubs and irresponsible churches, it is our crime, and especially when this becomes the favorite enginery of the proselytizer. It is full time for our church to declare her independence of shoddy society pretenders. Our homes ought to supply all that is pleasing to the conscientious young; and hereafter, by God's grace, Hope Cottage shall do it!”

Mary went to the little room that has the bends of the river and the azure sky in such beautiful perspective. The sense of being wronged quieted and the resentment lulled. When she came down, face all cloudless now, she handed her mother the following lines; almost too old for her age, but the last week had done it:

Beneath the sunny skies of blue,  
Where many a smiling floweret grows,  
A burden drops on me—on you—  
But God knows!

And life laughs out and youth is sweet,  
And swarms of charms are there to please,  
And trials soon beset our feet—  
But God sees!

The future glimmers on ahead  
And flings abroad its gay rewards;  
Temptations by the way are spread—  
But God guards!

And friendship dawns along the road,  
It comes, illumines, disappears,  
The heart is strained beneath the load—  
But God cares!

The star of duty ever shines,  
A light which no dark day removes;  
The subtle foe would dim the lines—  
But God loves!

Apollyon's by-paths faint I saw  
In hidden dens and covert caves  
Beside the slumbering Ouachita—  
But God saves!

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE MANUSCRIPT.

“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness.”—  
JOHN vi. 49.

WHY should the pretentious Realism of modern fiction disclose such marked aptitudes for mud and filth? Mud and filth are very real, but so are the lily and the elect lady. The most realistic Author that ever lived has said, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” The beatitude was meant as beneficently for writers and readers as for everybody else. The lily and the elect lady whiten the world.

A good Christian sister in a household is a tenth beatitude. To the boys she is worth more than gold mines. Mary was a second mother to little Calvin. Fortunately he had the gift of admiration, and admired her greatly, and felt her conscientiousness. For his sake she was more steadily on guard against her own faults. By nature he was more impulsive and more self-willed than his sister. But God has made arrangements for the boys—as complete as for the girls—all divine and beautiful. The antecedent

rite to baptism was designed specially for the boys. The atmosphere of the Christian home is both corrective and stimulative.

Unconsciously, in her heart Mary had a model church of nine members—her brother, her Sunday-school class, Showaba and Tobe. The patriarchal covenant included the servants.

The sun had arisen in splendor over the river banks, and the Indian saluted his coming:

“The great and the good arises. My tribe worshipped thee. Lighting up the trees and the waters, they thought thee a god, and they paused in reverence. The Bay Blossom knows better, and has told of thy Creator. Showaba has learned to love him, for she is like him. Oh! that the Oúachitas had known him. Why must they pass away in the dark? They had their times of trouble; the great sun could not talk to torn hearts. They all lay down and died; the great sun told them nothing; and so the generations faded away!”

During the morning Mary strolled up to the mounds.

“The Bay Blossom comes like the sunrise,” he said.

She read to him for an hour from the Gospel of John. A book was always a mystery to him. He listened as usual with wonder and reverence.

“The Sun-god gave us no Book,” said the Indian.

Again Mary noticed the ornament wrapped in skin always hanging about his neck. To-day she asked what it was. He untied and unwrapped it, and told her it was a charm against evil spirits. She saw that it was a rude imitation of the sun. If Christianity’s fight with earth’s superstitions has lasted for nineteen centuries, and still lasts, we need not wonder that the heathen convert suffers for some while the old thralldom. Rome shrewdly accepted a drawn battle by compromising with heathenism.

When Mary spoke of the Christian religion as the all-sufficient exorcism, Jesus Christ the Guardian from every evil, Showaba said that the white man also had his charms. He rose, entered his cabin, and came out with a package carefully wrapped. Opened, there were displayed, to her surprise, a half-dozen small images and a vellum manuscript, yellow with age. Seeing the Bay Blossom’s astonishment, he told the following singular story:

Some moons ago, while hunting on Bayou De Siard, the game ascended a large oak, and entered a hollow some distance up the trunk. He followed, and succeeded in drawing it from its home. But, clinging to its nest, it had brought

out this manuscript, and the six saints enclosed in its folds.

Mary examined the strangely discovered document, and found it to be written in French, evidently of an ancient diction. Her curiosity was, of course, greatly excited, and the Indian, seeing her interest, gave it to her. Struggling at home with the dim writing and antique style, she succeeded in making the following free translation. As the meaning grew upon her, the intensity of Mary's increasing interest may be imagined.

“When, to save his soul from damnable heresies, the boy was brought far from home to the Pyrenees, to the monastery of St. Audacio, near the boundary line of France and Spain, it was not known what a peculiar series of events and what a puzzling lineage would follow. To begin the obliteration of the past, his own name was ignored, and he was called Claude. Only once was there any allusion to his home—to tell him that his mother had died, that all other relatives, because of their crimes, had fled from France, and that Holy Church was his only friend left.

“There was another tie to be suppressed. For a boy of seven years, he had a dangerous knowledge of the Scriptures. This was a serious obstacle, but with no references to the Bible now

heard, and with the voice of The Church constantly substituted, that obstacle would be gradually overcome.

“Great kindness was used. It was meant that he should find everything about him more pleasing than in his own home. As a thing very attractive to boys, for a long while very little restraint was used. The rites of The Church were made quite spectacular and imposing, and he learned greatly to admire them.

“Still, notwithstanding all holy influences, the boy’s indignation at the murder of his father, and at his own seizure from his mother, would burst forth, giving much anxiety. The first seven years of a child’s life are momentous. Of course, he was told that the civil power was responsible for these wrongs, and the Holy Church had opened her own motherly arms to receive him like a son from further evils.

“After awhile he was willing to be baptized, and in due time was confirmed. He was very susceptible to affectionate attentions. It was the benign purpose of Holy Church to educate him for the priesthood, and to employ him in the overthrow of the heresy in which he was born. But there was something that was discouraging, something that unfitted him—something that seemed to be in the blood. Among

other things, a perilous independence of thought, a disposition to question at times even the decisions of The Church. Of course these things must be subdued before it would be safe to entrust any authority to his hands. The land was too full of Huguenots to send forth any agent tainted with sympathy or insubordination.

“Every expedient was used to eradicate these things. Instruction, indulgences, penance, but in vain. The Spanish Friar Antonio insisted upon more rigorous measures. He seemed to dislike the youth, and suggested the Inquisition. But there was a strong personality which such measures were not likely to master, but which otherwise might be of great service to The Church.

“It was a protracted study and effort, until finally he was sent forth as a lay citizen with the permission and blessing of the order. For him to settle in any part of France infested by Huguenots would have endangered his soul, and a way was provided for his entering business not far from the convent. His priest was put on his guard to watch all influences over mind and heart. The eye of Father Antonio was always upon him. In course of time Claude married a zealous daughter of Holy Church. This had

been ingeniously arranged as another safeguard.

“We pass to the second generation. The details are for the use of future priests. There were three sons and three daughters. Rome never loses sight of her children. Again the priest was instructed. The mother was kept on the alert by the confessional. Every detail of home life was supervised. Still there were unfavorable developments. Not in morals, but in the proper submission. The Spanish family to which Father Antonio belonged made occasional complaints of infidelity. Claude himself criticised the confessional.

“In the third generation there were four sons. The viper’s blood is hard to staunch. Again their priests received special instructions. The Spanish family remained vigilant for Holy Church. In spite of all, two of these sons, Ambrose and Austin, wandered off into an infected province, became entangled in the doctrines of the arch-heretic Calvin, and apostatized. They discovered their descent, and resumed their former name. The Spanish family succeeded in bringing one of them into the benign grasp of the Inquisition.

“Family bents and faith are self-propagating. The executed father and rebellious mother

seemed to haunt the descendants from whom their ancestors' errors and fate and names had been rigidly hidden; and so the fourth generation exhibited—”

Here at the bottom of the page the manuscript had suddenly ended. Of course, there was more, but the remainder was not there!

Mary could not rest. Unquestionably all this had reference to the lost La Fontaine; the history for which she had longed, now falling into her hands in a marvellous way, and adding a new mystery. Why and by whom was this manuscript written? Why brought to America? Why to the Ouachita settlements? Why deposited in that strange hiding place?

Yes, evidently the lost La Fontaine of her grandpa's story! And the record concealed here within a few miles of her home! And then one of her own ancestors was Austin La Fontaine—probably one of the brothers in the third generation who became a Protestant, and took back the rightful name. What would she not give for the remainder of the manuscript? Then it occurred to her that it might still be in that tree.

On a morning as pensive and poetic as ever gladdened the beautiful river, Mary and Shwabab were sailing up-stream in his canoe toward the mouth of Bayou De Siard. There is no rea-

son that such a world should not be pervaded more with romance than with stupidity. The Last of the Ouachitas told of the day many, many moons ago, when, during this same month, he paddled between these fragrant banks with Semona, who was to be his bride, and how all the world laughed and the flowers sprang up along the shores as they passed.

In answer to a question, he gave the names of the Indian months. The year, like that of the ancient Romans, began with March—the Moon of Deer; followed in order by the Moon of Strawberries, the Moon of Old Corn, the Moon of Water Melons, the Moon of Peaches, the Moon of Black Berries, the Moon of New Corn, the Moon of Turkeys, the Moon of Buffaloes, the Moon of Bears, the Moon of Geese, the Moon of Chestnuts; and now, in the Moon of Strawberries, Showaba's espousal month, he and the Bay Blossom are passing up-stream as if afloat upon his memories.

The skillful pilot has no difficulty in finding the obscure mouth of the Bayou, and entering through the umbrageous hangings. Along the narrow channel, through interlacing boughs, avoiding the obtrusive bushes for her sake, he carefully makes his way. He had brought down many a deer that drank from these waters.

Finally, opposite a great oak, they landed. He points to an opening about twenty feet from the ground. Who had selected that wild spot for Rome's saints and manuscripts, and why? With breathless interest, she sees the aged Indian, as active as a boy, ascend, insert his arm, and persist in the search. It was in vain.

## CHAPTER XV.

### BOOKS.

“Give attendance to reading.”—1 TIMOTHY iv. 13.

ALL night long, Mary had been dreaming of the broad, ancient oak on Bayou De Siard, waving solemnly its hoary mosses, and having in its meditations some unknown visitor of the past. Again and again, she was clambering, or flying on spread wings, to the round opening or vainly exploring the cavity. But no dream-prophet told her of the unexpected way in which the remainder of the manuscript was to fall into her hands, nor of its vital influence upon her future.

Jean La Fontaine had a holiday from business, and was spending it in the most charming and rational way in the world—with his family. Very happy were Mary and Calvin whenever this occurred. While sending out tendrils in many directions, like its purple wisteria, Hope Cottage had its rarest sources of delight within its own clusters.

A busy profession and life, the father was never too busy to give chief attention to the in-

ternal happiness of his home. This was an essential part of his and its religion. Still utilizing the lesson taught him by Miss Minerva, of St. Axe-To-Grind, he was determined that his children and their conscientious associates should suffer no real loss in innocent pleasure because of their devotion to principle.

The wise, thoughtful mother was acting daily upon the same convictions as to the importance of these things—resolved to maintain her own youthful tastes unimpaired for her children's sake, intending that they both in years to come should look back to her own sitting-room, library and parlor as the cheeriest and most attractive of all earthly memories.

Mary's first party had come and gone. Young people of all churches were invited—not omitting those who had omitted her—and the flocks of birds that were holding rival entertainments in the trees along the river banks saw that they could not excel their competitors in hearty, wholesome merriment. The joy of young hearts is very beautiful. The Cottage sparkled like a great diamond, and the open rooms and ample galleries and flowery lawn were alive with the glad and the refining. The objectionable or questionable was not expected nor missed. Father and mother mingled with the lively throng,

and suggested and taught successions of amusements.

And the four grandparents were there—who but they?—the snowy locks throwing a gentle light of their own over the scene. About their chairs joyous groups were never lacking, pleading for one more story. When refreshments were served, there were scores of rival volunteers to carry first dishes to the old folks. And they were back in their own childhood again.

Said Grandpa Laird: “And at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat (Dan. i. 15).”

Said Grandpa La Fontaine: “And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof (Zech. viii. 5).”

At the close of the entertainment, and afterward, all guests declared that they had never known a more pleasant evening. One discordant note was heard from a distance. Miss Minerva, of St. Axe-To-Grind, was not content, and thus relieved her pious protests:

“It must have been a stupid affair. John Calvin on a rampage—attempting to play fashionable, while discarding the usual requisites and refinements! Aristocratic and intellectual elements all lacking! They even had the two

antiquated Presbyterian elders to adorn the scene—robbing the grave. An attempted venomous blow against the prestige of St. Axe-To-Grind. The La Fontaines are trying to boost their daughter. They evidently have their eye on the wealth of the D'Arbonnes. Rome and Geneva! That girl has cheek enough for *anything*. Oh! for a State Church."

And now it was over, and Jean was spending his holiday with his little household, and thinking of plans for their further entertainment and development—recreation and duty affiliated, and each assisting the other. The children followed Grandpa Laird in love of books. And here was an unfailing fountain of unadulterated enjoyment with which no outside pressure and no social rivalries could interfere. Jean, too, was fond both of philosophy and the *belle-lettres*—for their own sake—and would rather have conferred upon Mary and Calvin a cultured literary taste than thousands of government bonds.

"Yes, true literary taste," he said, "delicate, elegant—it is a fivefold treasure. It is a source of pleasure unalloyed; it is essentially refining; it supplies the noblest companionship; it equips one for pleasing and benefiting others; it gives symmetry and beauty to the soul."

The Southern mocking-bird, in the tallest

lawn tree, which he had preëmpted for his own, was flinging out heart-fulls of melody, while Jean, enthroned amid his home-luminaries, quoted as follows:

“When the black-letter’d list to the gods was presented,  
The list of what fate for each mortal intends,  
At the long string of ills a kind goddess relented  
And slipped in three blessings—wife, children and  
friends.

“In vain surly Pluto maintained he was cheated,  
For justice divine could not compass its ends;  
The scheme of man’s penance he swore was defeated.  
For earth becomes heaven with—wife, children and  
friends.

“If the stock of our bliss is in stranger hands vested,  
The fund ill-secured oft in bankruptcy ends,  
But the heart issues bills which are never protested,  
When drawn on the firm of—wife, children and  
friends.”

Then the bard tells of tar, soldier and merchant, wandering afar, turning loyally and longingly to these lodestars, and he continues:

“The dayspring of youth unclouded by sorrow,  
Alone on itself for enjoyment depends,  
But drear is the twilight of age if it borrow  
No warmth from the smile of—wife, children and  
friends.

“Let the breath of renown ever freshen and nourish  
The laurel which o’er the dead favorite bends;  
O’er me wave the willow, and long may it flourish,  
Bedew’d with the tears of—wife, children and  
friends.”

"Oh! papa, that is beautiful," said Mary, enthusiastically. "It seems so home-like. Where did you find it? I believe you wrote it yourself!"

"It was written by Hon. William Robert Spencer, who died in 1834," answered her father. "He was a society poet, of no very great fame, but wrote some very lovely things. Sir Walter quoted him favorably. Many of the sweetest literary gems have come from authors of no special distinction. These are the violets along the by-paths."

Jean always tried to interest his children in the personality of the authors whom he approved. They thus became inmates and intimacies of the household; and, of course, only the most worthy were admitted.

"Mr. Spencer had a prophetic glimpse of Hope Cottage," said the daughter.

Grandpa Laird was seen coming up the lawn. This was very timely. Whenever they talked of books, they thought of him. It was the rustle of the angel's wing. Calvin ran to meet him.

"I am a little jealous of your name," said the smiling patriarch, "and of Mary's giving the preference to Grandpa La Fontaine's great French reformer, instead of our sturdy Scotch reformer—him of whom the Earl of Morton

said, 'He never feared the face of man.' We will read together, some time, his rugged history of the Reformation."

Grandpa was in one of his most genial Indian Summer moods. The cows with their tinkling bells, had taken a drink at the river edge, and were browsing their way slowly homeward. It set him thinking of scenes far away, and, as he took his seat, he quoted:

"Come all ye jolly shepherds  
     That whistle through the glen,  
 I'll tell ye of a secret  
     That courtiers dinna ken;  
 What is the greatest bliss  
     That the tongue of man can name?  
 'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie  
     When the kye comes hame.  
  
     When the kye comes hame,  
     When the kye comes hame,  
 'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk,  
     When the kye comes hame.

"'Tis not beneath the coronet  
     Nor canopy of state,  
 'Tis not on couch of velvet  
     Nor arbor of the great—  
 'Tis beneath the spreading birk  
     In the glen without the name,  
 Wi' a bonnie, bonnie lassie,  
     When the kye comes hame."

"Oh! beautiful, beautiful," exclaimed the granddaughter. "Who wrote that? But it's

your broad tones that help its beauty, grandpa."

"Our boy and girl must become acquainted with the Ettrick Shepherd," was the answer. "I will send over the books. His days he spent with his sheep in the solitary hills, and his mother recited to him ancient legends and ballads at night. Of course, he became a poet. You must read *Bonny Kilmeny*."

"I do love to hear grandpa talk," said Calvin quietly.

"Nor must our beloved Southland forget the great masters of magnificent prose in Scotland and England—sentences and sentiment golden and crystalline. Historians, biographers, essayists, weavers of ennobling fiction—abounding festival for all appetites. And America is taking up the eloquent pen, and the shades of the magnolia are modernizing the groves of Helicon. Ignorance will soon be a sin!"

"We will not sin against those sweet Scotch poems, of which you are full," said Mary bewitchingly. "The Ouachita seems to pause and wait for more."

"Then we will listen to young Robert Tannahill and his exquisite rhythm," was the answer; "he who was so true and faithful to his old widowed mother. Such filial affection is itself poetry. Did words ever flow more tunefully?"

“ ‘Let us go, lassie, go  
     To the braes o’ Balquhither,  
 Where the blue berries grow  
     ’Mang the bonnie Highland heather;  
 Where the deer and the roe  
     Lightly bounding together  
 Sport the lang summer day  
     On the braes o’ Balquhither.’ ”

Mary’s pet fawn, given to her by Showaba, was standing by her side, the great lustrous eyes looking from one to another, as if she understood the allusions to deer and roe. Grandpa continued:

“ ‘Now the summer’s in prime  
     Wi’ the flowers richly blooming,  
 And the wild mountain thyme  
     A’ the moorlands perfuming;  
 To our dear native scenes  
     Let us journey together,  
 Where glad innocence reigns  
     ’Mang the braes o’ Balquhither.’ ”

“Oh! grandpa, that is enchanting,” said Mary, clapping her hands. “Our church surely had a grand home in Scotland—like herself a mixture of crags and flowers, of mountain peaks and poetry!”

Grandpa was greatly pleased. He had meant to bring her to this. He replied:

“Our church everywhere has been the foster-mother of learning and literature. The children of the covenant have been favorites of the Muses. The elect seed of Abraham were to give the

world the supremest of all literature; that Bible which was to pervade and inspire all subsequent genius. Here both prose and poetry were to find the true Pierian spring. So sang poor William Knox, who in his most wayward days turned at times in sweetest strains to the lessons of his childhood:

“‘Harp of Zion, pure and holy,  
Pride of Juda’s eastern land,  
May a child of guilt and folly  
Strike thee with a feeble hand?  
May I to my bosom take thee  
Trembling from the prophet’s touch,  
And with throbbing heart awake thee  
To the strains I love so much?  
“‘I have loved thy thrilling numbers  
Since the dawn of childhood’s day;  
Since a mother soothed my slumbers  
With the cadence of thy lay;  
Since a little blooming sister  
Clung with transport round my knee,  
And my glowing spirit blessed her  
With a blessing caught from thee.  
“‘Mother, sister—both are sleeping  
Where no heaving hearts respire,  
Whilst the eve of age is creeping  
Round the widowed spouse and sire.  
He and his amid their sorrow  
Find enjoyment in thy strain;  
Harp of Zion, let me borrow  
Comfort from thy chords again!’”

There was the silence of emotion for awhile, for grandpa’s tones were as full of pathos as his heart. Then Mary said:

“Showaba goes silently through the deep woods picking rarest blossoms from the most unsuspected places. Grandpa is like Showaba.”

“The woods are full of them—full—full,” he answered. “Let my children watch for the blossoms!”

The result of papa’s holiday was an arrangement for a quiet literary circle of Mary’s associates—to meet every Friday evening, to hunt the blossoms of sage and bard. Miss Minerva heard and commented:

“Calvinism is putting on airs. It is posing as a literary meeting-house. It is trying to ape St. Axe-To-Grind. Better call it a courting-society!”

Said Mrs. Merser: “It’s the very thing. I’ll try to have them take a course of Gale and Carson on Baptism.”

In the evening Mary strolled to the riverside, and wrote the following verses, sending them over by her brother to Grandpa Laird. Calvin said that the dear, old soul read and re-read, and was not satisfied until he had allured grandma away from her milk-skimming to listen to them:

In all the vales of fancy,  
By hedgerow or by stream,  
In all the gleeful gardens  
Where the Brownies sleep and dream;

By cotton fields in white robes,  
Or by the babbling brooks,  
There is no music richer  
    Than the music of the books.

I hear the forest warblers  
    Enlivening the trees;  
I hear the chords Aeolian  
    Attune the sunset breeze;  
There's many a wandering sweetness  
    In Nature's bonny nooks,  
But nowhere is there gladness  
    Like the gladness of the books.

There's mirth upon the meadows,  
    There's fun for beast and bird,  
There's pleasantries for humorists—  
    Airy pen and witty word;  
There's laughter in the sunbeams,  
    And in the fluttering oaks,  
But nowhere laughter livelier  
    Than the laughter of the books.

I love the eyes of friendship  
    That sparkle by the way;  
I love the pranks of young folks  
    That turn each month to May;  
But in all the fairest faces  
    And light of loving looks,  
Where is there sweeter comradeship  
    Than the company of the books?

In all the halls of pleasure  
    No choicer charm appears  
Than classic volumes mellowed  
    By the ripening of the years.  
They lighten youth with sunshine,  
    They cheer the hoary locks,  
They fill the world with heart-songs  
    And the chorus of the books.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### GREAT SILLY BOYS.

“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.”—DEUTERONOMY vii. 3.

A UDUBON, Louisiana’s most famous son, the rapturous lover of wing and nest and song, portrays as follows the espousals of the humming-birds:

“Where is the person, I ask of you, kind reader, who, on observing this glittering fragment of the rainbow, would not pause, admire and instantly turn his mind with reverence toward the Almighty Creator, the wonders of whose hand we at every step discover? . . .

“I wish it were in my power at this moment to impart to you the pleasures which I have felt whilst watching the movements, and viewing the manifestation of feelings displayed by a single pair of these most favorite little creatures while engaged in the demonstration of their love to each other: how the male swells his plumage and throat, and, dancing on the wing, whirls

around the delicate female; how quickly he dives toward a flower, and returns with a loaded bill, which he offers to her, to whom alone he feels desirous of being united; how full of ecstasy he seems to be when his caresses are kindly received; how his little wings fan her as they fan the flowers, and he transfers to her bill the insect and the honey, which he has procured with a view to please her; how these attentions are received with apparent satisfaction; how, soon after, the blissful compact is sealed; how, then, the courage and care of the male are redoubled; how he even dares to give chase to the tyrant fly-catcher, hurries the blue-bird and the martin to their boxes; and how, on sounding pinions, he joyously returns to the side of his lovely mate."

But these fragments of the rainbow, as the great naturalist calls them, are not the only knights and dames of romance in the climes of the magnolia. There is many a flowery path and shady trysting-place, where the plighting is heard, and the song of the soul is sung at eventide. Ye dried-up hearts, dignified old fellows, who have ceased to hum, "John Anderson, my jo, John," and "Ye banks and braes and streams around the Castle of Montgomery," you had better skip this chapter, shake it off with a

shake of your dotage, and bury the past out of sight. There was a time, ye fossils, when youth was no crime, and poetry was the most real thing in the world, and when ye were princes and princesses among the Utopians.

The La Fontaines had come from the land of the Troubadours. There the ancient chivalry had reverberated in canson and ballad. Every city, every hamlet, every château, had its laureate. Minstrels flocked over the listening fields like larks. And so grandpa called Mary his little Troubadour. Nor were there many weeks in his ever-fresh devotion to grandma when he did not playfully quote from the Provencal poets lines, like these by the tuneful Adhemar :

“The summer comes with all its flowers  
 And orchards rich with fruit;  
 The birds are warbling in their bowers,  
 And why should I be mute?

“In summer woods and summer airs  
 Delight I ever find;  
 And now my heart is free from cares—  
 The maid I love is kind.”

Grandpa was no fossil; and Mary heard and thought the evergreen fondness of the aged lovers very beautiful.

That same day, by an interesting coincidence, Mr. D'Arbonne, in his own home, was quoting

the following rhymes from another of the Troubadours, Girard Daniel:

“The envoys of the heart should be  
The noble deeds of chivalry;  
A daring charge, an escalade,  
A knight or banner captive made;  
A pass against a host maintain’d,  
A name through trials borne unstain’d—  
Thus love most eloquently speaks;  
This is the homage maiden seeks.”

The time was not far when Henri would recall the words.

During the week of her baptism, while baby Mary was lying in her cradle, her young father had said:

“I intend to cultivate and retain the confidence of our daughter. Next to her mother, she shall regard me as her most intimate friend and counsellor. From the beginning I will enter into all her little cares and purposes, and lead her to feel that I am thoroughly in sympathy with them. There shall be no barrier of years. We will be companions, with no secrets between us. When the time comes for her to enter the social world, I will never be too busy to attend her. She shall be kept independent of outside escorts. Young people rightfully enjoy the companionship of those of their own age, and of the opposite sex, and we must be wise in our inter-

ferences. But we business men know the character of the young men in a community, and, if we secure the confidence of our daughters, we can easily guard them from the rude and impure. I mean to win her in advance to thoroughly trust her father, and feel no embarrassment in telling him all."

Was not this a fine little picture of the fatherhood and providence of our Heavenly Keeper in the covenant?

The days came when, in a thousand little ways, Jean was rewarded for his sagacious and delicate consideration for his child. No young gentleman in the community could have shown her greater courtesy, more genial attentions. She felt as free with him as with Calvin. It was fatherhood and motherhood and daughterhood as prefigured on the baptismal morn.

And when Don Gonzales began to make his intentions unmistakable, and while his jealousy of Henri was becoming more obtrusive, when Mary's wise avoidance of his demonstrations was no longer protecting her and the worst was coming, she went to her father with her anxieties. Then he said:

"I am sorry, my child, but it is going to be all right. It is a part of a young lady's life; it is Don's highest compliment, and you will be kind.

Even if your heart could lean that way, there could never be any true congeniality. There are abysses. He carries an inherited hatred for your church and for your most sacred principles. There is absolutely nothing in common. Then his character as now shaping, my child, you could never respect, nor respect yourself in the association. Sad to say, there is a treacherousness in his nature which would at will trample upon the happiness of any one closely allied to him. His tempers are a burlesque upon true love."

In spite of all her prudent safeguards, the declaration came. Despite the most lady-like courtesy, the tempest followed; fierce resentments toward her, and foolish threats against Henri. These are sometimes the penalties for the possession of beauty, refinement and conscientiousness. The three families being close neighbors complicated the brambles. Nor could he leave without a bitter fling at Protestantism.

Tobe hurried to Showaba, and blurted it out: "I spied on him. Mister Don swore he loved young Mistress. She edged off and said *she* didn't. He got wrathful. He tore, and he pitched. She edged off, and sat as calm as a watermelon. He fumed and he argyed. He

acted like a run-mad gander. But sweet as pie, he got his walkin'-papers—he! he! he!"

Showaba straightened his great length to the rafters and took down his battle-axe.

And then followed a far greater trouble. Henri knew nothing of what Tobe and Showaba knew, and he came in a few days, and with all the grace of the Troubadours, he offered his hand, with his heart in it. And it was pleasing to her. The sunshine was full of sparkle, and the world was thrilling with melody. The humming-birds were courting in the honeysuckles. Louisiana was dreaming of paradise.

Mary had known of Henri's love before. It had crept upon her like the imperceptibility of Springtime, until the rose comes and its fragrance. Audubon could have seen the partiality of the birds.

And now the young maiden faced the greatest trial of her life. For Jesus' sake, the sacrifice must be made. It was fortunate that she was not taken by surprise; that she had thought and prayed in advance. There again stood the great church chasm; not as before—abrupt and repellent—but perhaps in a form more perilous.

Henri would respect her ecclesiastical preferences; would never wound her sensibilities, nor

interfere with her church duties. But the danger was in more stealthy guise. Their conceptions and practice of religion were essentially different. He was a gentleman, but of a type by nature and education worldly. He knew nothing of what she prized as the truly spiritual in Christianity. It would still be a house divided against itself. A home one-half worldly would be a dangerous arena for the spiritual. And she had prayed, "Lead me not into temptation."

The community was worldly, the social life was worldly, the very atmosphere was worldly; how dare she risk her principles in the keeping of one whom she admired and loved, but whose habits and sympathies were all with the enemy! There are some things which marriage cannot make one.

It would be trifling with the great household covenant. It would be Rachel hiding again her Mesopotamian gods in the patriarchal tent.

And then in the midst of all this worldliness, worldly families and worldly churches, her own church was standing in the breach. It was beleaguered from without and from within. Its own altars were besieged by waverers. And now could she, baptized within those courts, and sitting at those communion tables, put herself in a

position to paralyze her influence and compromise the testimony of the fathers?

Thus, with a wrench of a young heart in its first leanings, she told her suitor gently and delicately of the obstacles, but of her honoring the nobility of his love. In the face of the disappointment, he remained the chivalrous hero—no less so than in the daring charge or escalade of the old Troubadour. But Henri did not understand her point of conscience. It only proved her wisdom the more—the simple fact that he could not understand.

And Mary was to carry for many days the self-inflicted wound. Both of Audubon's birds had pressed their bosoms against a thorn.

Of course, the daughter told mother and father. They commended the bravery, and shared the keenness of the thorn. Jean recoiled from seeing his birdling touched, and was very gentle. These things come very close to the father-heart. And she was more incessant in her duties than ever, and was especially gentle to Calvin.

The Ossian of the Ouachitas seemed to know, and he sat in his cabin and chanted:

“The hawks are pecking the Bay Blossom.  
She was white as the snowflake. She sat like a  
star in the branches. She shone alike for all.

Why did they not let her alone? Why must the young girls be disturbed in the wigwams?

“The Bay Blossom was content in the branches. The air and the sunshine made her fairer. The father and mother saw her beauty. The robins looked on and praised her. Why came the hawks with their sharp bills? Why must the young girls be awakened?”

“The Bay Blossom shed sweets from the branches. At sunset they cheered the world’s darkness. The jasmines replied with their whiteness. The bright stars reflected her goodness. The Ouachita answered in gladness. Ah! why must the young girls be startled? What business have the hawks with the Blossoms?”

## CHAPTER XVII.

### WHEN CALVIN WAKES.

“Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?”—  
JOB xxxvii. 16.

ONCE in a while versatile Ouachita plays his poetic contrasts. Ripples of silver and gold turn into mists, the brilliance of diamonds into floating melancholy. The grassy banks lose their emeralds. The air droops under surfeits of moisture. The river god, putting off his robes of light, and wrapping himself in gray, murmurs amid the obscurity:

“Ye have not duly praised my charms. The purity of my waters above all streams, ye have not lauded in poesy and song. Ye have not appreciated the shimmering of my sunrays, the gleamings of my jeweled sceptre. Ye have not weighed in honest scales the notes of my orioles and mocking-birds, nor the smiles of ladyhood that irradiate my valleys. For my perennial hints of heaven ye have failed in gratitude. Ye have not adored aright the Maker of the rivers.

“And now ye are left a while with your laughter dimmed, your spirits sombred with Cim-

merian and Stygian blotches. The Ouachita sulks. When Louisiana days do forget their light, she beats old Egypt. Ingrates may then learn wisdom, and sympathize with the three days of darkness by ancient Nile."

Thus for the time the trees loomed in the dimness like demon spectres, and the mosses like hobgoblins.

The Crescent Presbyterian came in through the mists with a blast of its bugle-horn. In its behalf the open door policy prevailed, and, through the efforts of Mary and her class, it had become a welcome member of nearly every household in the congregation. Departments of general intelligence, discussions of current religious topics, digests of church news, themes for the family, bright pages for the children, kept wide-awake readers in touch with sound spiritual stimulus. Mr. Allenson called it his co-pastor.

Said Mrs. Merser: "As long as they feed on that fodder, there is no hope of enticing their young people into the river. They get entirely too smart. It plays on them the covenant and circumcision, and a godly seed and 'Suffer little children' until they go clear out of sight of Enon and the Jordan and the liquid grave. Yonder goes now that pretty Mary, with a carload of the

papers under her arm, and she can out-argue a court-house. Those old editors have scalped more babies than Herod or Pharaoh!"

And said Miss Minerva: "You can't do much with a Presbyterian family which fortifies with one of those poisonous sectarian organs. John Calvin's pestiferous pen rattled all Europe. It is still our worst snag. It is hard to upset Presbyterianism while its rooms are filled with books and newspapers. St. Axe-To-Grind has no chance. Say a word, and they will bespatter you with history, and catechism, and thumb-screws, and Paul, and Huguenot, and Henry VIII., and Covenanter. If I had my way, St. Axe-To-Grind should establish an Index Expurgatorius this very day, and put that La Fontaine girl's incendiary paper at the head of the list."

And then came the bugle-blast, well worth ten thousand men:

"It is the crying need; a revival among the preachers! a revival of the elders! a revival in every pew and in every home! The prevailing spiritual lethargy is appalling. Pulpits and pastorates are befogged. Parlor and nursery are under benumbing mists. Piety is apathetic. Then down go the defences. Gates yawn to error. Vigilance, zeal, religious nerve are relaxed.

“When Presbyterian bulwarks are leveled, all is at sea. When Calvin sleeps, Rome advances her lines. When Calvin sleeps, worldliness, lax doctrine, science falsely so-called, pretentious scholarship, the belittling of God’s word, shrewd proselytizing, seductive heresies, surge to the front. These things are dangerous only when piety is flaccid, nebulous, languorous.

“When Satan rages, the Presbyterian Church must stand in the breach. She is the raw-head-and-bloody-bones of errorists. And she is the coveted prey of inimical systems. To-day the Presbyterian Church needs the reinvigoration of the Holy Ghost. There must be a breaking up of dead-levels, a deeper conviction of sin, total depravity bravely preached, the law-work thorough, an assured new birth, an exaltation of the covenant of grace, the household covenant as a part of it, and, along with it all, the contrite heart seeing itself lost, and then seeing itself saved. This is the redemption of Louisiana, the hope of the church everywhere. Oh! for the Calvinistic trumpet of Baxter! Oh! for the Calvinistic clarion of Whitefield.”

Mrs. Merser read the appeal and commented: “But he never said one word about immersion! Bethabara is the place to start religious booms!”

Miss Minerva tossed her head and her words

in disdain: "A spurt of fanaticism! The Roundheads are again in the saddle. Praise-the-Lord Barebones is preaching through his nose. St. Axe-To-Grind to the rescue! If Don Gonzalez marries that immodest young agitator, one of their noisiest guns will be spiked."

Thus thick fogs still hung about the shores of the shrouded river, and the oaks stood broad and sullen like great apparitions, and the mosses swung like ghosts in the arms of gloomy giants.

Meanwhile, Mr. Allenson and his co-pastor, the Crescent Presbyterian, seemed to be in thorough accord, and his sermons and its columns sounded the alarm, and told of the remedy. The people listened to these things Sunday mornings and read about them in the afternoons. The two mighty agencies, the Christian pulpit and the Christian press, had joined tongue and pen.

Grandpa Laird, remembering these two potent factors in Scotland's history, thus spoke: "We are reminded of the pair in Zerubbabel's temple—'Then answered I and said unto him, What are these two live trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again and said unto him, What be these two live branches which, through these two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves? Then said he, These are the two

anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.' (Zech. iv. 11-14)."

Grandpa La Fontaine replied: "Genevan preaching and Genevan books shook the continent. While the Institutes and Commentaries and fearless exposures of heresy, were bringing back the minds of the people to Augustinian and Pauline truth, the living voice was stirring heart and life. History, absorbed in the public excitements and controversies, often loses sight of the almost daily exhortations of the great reformer, and his personal conferences with awakened souls. It was one continuous revival. Sound doctrine and profound experience went hand in hand. 'And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple; and he set up the right pillar and called the name thereof Jachin; and he set up the left pillar and called the name thereof Boaz; and on the top of the pillars was lily work.' (1 Kings vii. 21, 22)."

Soon came another bugle-blast from the co-pastor:

"When Calvin sleeps, infidelity laughs, and whets its blunted sword and sets its ambushes. It poses as a monopoly of intelligence. It prates of the victories of modern thought. It talks of the burial of the creeds. It sings the praises of Astruc and his imitators. It dons ecclesiastical

robes and resurrects the corpses of Arius, Pelagius and Socinus, boldly rehabilitating exploded fallacies.

“The hope of the church is in the unpopular doctrines. Make no compromises. Proclaim the fundamentals, whether men hear or forbear. Uplift the banners—the sovereignty of God, the divinity of Christ, the integrity of the Scriptures, the desperate sinfulness of man, the vicarious atonement, the necessity of regeneration, eternal rewards and punishments, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Human pride must be humbled; God’s scepter must be exalted. ‘Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ (Jer. vi. 16).”

For the next Sabbath, Mr. Allenson had two verses for his text; the divine and human working together; God and man probing the soul: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24). “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.” (Lam. iii. 14.)

Quietly, a movement beneath the surface, a young people’s prayer-meeting had been organ-

ized. It was said to have originated with Mary and her class, though it had also been in the thoughts of others. When it came to the pastor's ear and heart, tears softly flowed in his study, and the following entry was made in his journal: "Encamped at Elim, where were twelve wells of water and three scores and ten palm trees."

Of course, there came insurrections of evil. Satan is busiest when his kingdom is endangered. God's mines must be countermined. Two of these insurrections belong essentially to this history.

Soon a grand public ball was announced—the greatest social event in the annals of the *Prairie des Canots*. From the days of Commandant Don Juan Filhiol there had never been anything to rival it. The river god of the *Ouachita* had never raised such a fog.

Through the mists Tobe flung bricks at the dead willow for half an hour, and then hurried to young Mistiss. He said excitedly:

"I spied on 'em. Miss 'Nerva was in it and Mister Don was in it. He is as mad at young Mistiss as a thorn bush. I saw him strike spitefully at your fawn with his whip. And he and Miss 'Nerva both hate your church. But Miss 'Nerva says young Mistiss was jest flirtin'; that you would gladly turn Catholic to get him. Tobe

spied on 'em. They said this ball would be a divarsion, to defeat the sects; to checkmate prayer-meetin's, and all that. I saw them plan-nin' the invitations. They said they gwine to make a clean sweep."

Society was greatly excited. Dress-makers were rushed. Swallow tails out-fluttered the swallows. As intended, some of Mr. Allenson's young people were swept into the whirl.

To their surprise, Henri D'Arbonne said to his family, "I shall not attend. I am sure there is a sinister motive. Society should not be willing to be put by its manipulators in antagonism to the churches."

The second insurrection, reserved for another chapter, was more virulant, and was to startle the whole community.

That week Mary's first timid entrance into type appeared in the *Crescent Presbyterian*:

Dim hangs the sallow sun all blur'd by clouds,  
 A premonition, shapeless, twisted, vague  
 Floats in the maze, O Manager Supreme!  
 The day, the night are both alike to Thee.  
 In Thy clear ken the future holds no dark,  
 No dusk, no hidden paths and mysteries.  
 Too young to know but not too young to pray,  
 A puzzled child of Thine own children pleads.  
 A strange foreboding coils about her heart,  
 Unreasoning, dim, anomalous.  
 O God of Abram, Isaac, Israel,

Guide 'Thou her steps and choose her tenting place.  
Thy Covēnant, ancient, honor'd, evergreen,  
Withstands the ages, baffles every foe.  
The rock stands firm that bears Thy Church  
And all her little ones. Along these streams,  
In all our waiting Southland, may the light  
Of promises assured the skies illumē.  
Protect thy cause. Revive the soul that gropes.  
Keep watch and ward, and stir anew the faith  
Which carried in its arms our staunch forefathers.  
Once more I'm cradled nestling in Thy love  
A child. Thy rod, Thy staff, they comfort me.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE PICNIC.

“Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?”—JOB xxxvi. 29.

WINDING your way through a modest little mountain glen in Scotland, you note a small elevation, very shapely and symmetrical, a thing of beauty; you are attracted, and approach. God has built it there in the path of Highland winds and torrents, but storms have not roughened its contour. Coming near, you find that its foundations and centre are of imperishable granite, defying blast and freshet; solidity does not detract from its bloom and comeliness. Over it is a covering of fertility inviting the fairest plants and smiling flowers. They are all about it in happy flocks, and are uplifted in safety and beauty out of danger of flood and tempest.

We are to learn deeper things in the character of Mrs. La Fontaine, the modest Mary Laird of other days. We saw her as a bride in Hope Cottage, and in her own little room of holy retreat, which she planned during the happy honey-moon. We have seen her by the cradle,

and bringing her children to the church of her fathers and the baptismal bowl. We saw her watching by what seemed to be the death-couch of her first-born. A quiet little housewife, that is all—a home-maker, as Paul describes, revolting from the profanation of platform and ballot-box monstrosities, and from all unsexing of those whom God made feminine.

Her children came to Christ by the way of that little room; an antechamber of the covenant, and she never doubted that it would be so. Refined herself with a refinement not of the ball-room, nor its accessories, she had no difficulty in shaping and guiding those momentous things—the tastes of her nurselings.

The son gave slightly more trouble and anxiety than the daughter—for so it is—but Calvin soon learned to see both the flowers and the granite; to admire with a boy's chivalry both the noiseless strength and beauty of mamma's character. God's covenant cannot miscarry in hands and hearts like these. As confidently as sister, she expects to live to see him preach, for God and mothers make preachers. In many ways faith may yet be tried, but the little Caledonian hill, secure in its foundations and mountain fastnesses, adorned with white blooms, will survive the storms.

Said Grandma La Fontaine to grandpa: "Our son has found a Scotch diamond. She shines best in the dark. She brightens every year. It ought to be easy for Jean and his children to be Christians. 'She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.' (Prov. xxxi. 12)."

And this she said a hundred times, and rejoiced in it more and more. And Grandma Laird said:

"Our daughter is making as good a wife and mother as she was to us a child. The covenant includes wifehood and motherhood as well as childhood. She is as gentle and modest as when she was a wee girl, and yet she is as stable as adamant ornamented with daisies. Households make households. We have not lived in vain when we have given of our own flesh and blood to plant such a home by the Ouachita. 'Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.' (Prov. xxxi. 25)."

And the pastor said: "Such women are the glory of the church, the precious metals and the lily work. In her tireless fidelity and lady-like gentleness, Mrs. La Fontaine is my daily joy and inspiration. She is Bethany to the weary minister. Noiseless, non-assertive, hopeful, always with the needed word, ever true as steel.

That home is a beacon upon the Louisiana rivers. 'Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.' (Prov. xxxi. 28)."

The day came for the annual Sabbath-school excursion, and under specially interesting circumstances. All knew that there was a healthy and increasing interest in the school, an undertone of inquiry after the way of life. This could not dampen, but greatly increase the enjoyments of the picnic; and it was the whole church's holiday.

The day was perfect. Jerusalem never knew serener skies and softer airs for the Feast of Tabernacles. The woods opened their arms for the coming of the children, and the river banks never thought of calling them to order. The superintendent, very handsome, rode like a king of men, and the teachers were as proud as oriental satraps.

The squirrels and robins peeped at the invaders of their domains, and conferred about starting a Presbyterian Sunday-school of their own.

And thus wagon after wagon rolled along, filled with cheery hearts. No triumphal procession, threading the streets of applauding Rome, was ever more crowded with trophies of enchantment.

The chariot of honor was that which bore Grandpa and Grandma Laird, and Grandpa and Grandma La Fontaine. It is a beautiful as well as gracious polity which makes all ages a unit in the church of God. The covenant perpetrates no severance of families. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." "And even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." (Is. xl. 11, xlv. 4.)

The prophetic times are coming when God's covenant guarantees that all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest. (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Heb. viii. 10, 11.) The millennium will be innocent of infant exclusion. And everybody wanted this day to be millennial.

At the grounds a spring gushed from a grassy knoll, cool and sparkling, and all ages enjoyed the abundant waters as they did the fountains at Enon. The little folks were not fenced off. It would not have been like God to shut out the little ones from the stream that followed the camp from Horeb.

And now the entire throng was turned loose to enjoy themselves as freemen—all the liberty of the squirrels accorded them. The birds never

saw anything to compare with it. The church has no tyrant frowns for innocent amusements. We have no doubt but the little children went from the Saviour's arms to their plays.

And now the grown folks took part in everything, devising recreations and keeping the pleasures moving. The cheeriest among these helpers was Mary's mother, busy everywhere, the centre of admiring groups, imparting the genial sparkle of her presence to young and old. Youthful mothers, fully in sympathy with children, may be a perennial benediction in Zion. Model households act and react, trees of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

After awhile, of course, came the refreshments, the feasting, the revelry of picnic appetites of frolicsome lambs. Again Mrs. La Fontaine was everywhere, vigilant that none be slighted, on the alert especially for the timid and the poor. And were the youngest neglected because of their age? That was not the way of the Great Provider. So on the hills of Galilee there was no stinting of the juveniles, "And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children." (Matt. xiv. 21.)

During the afternoon, two groups of the well-filled were noticeable. One was of Mary and her class, seated beneath a broad beech apart,

and her six pattern pupils in the full-tide of joy. This sylvan picture was going to be remembered when the trouble came.

Another was the group constantly about the four snowy heads, evidently a favorite spot. It was Showaba's Moon of Blackberries (August), and the summer sun was forming nowhere such aureoles and halos as among those silken locks. Their funds of venerable stories was drawn eagerly upon for earnest listeners. One of these was Grandpa La Fontaine's, as follows:

“These Louisiana woods have had their days of heroism as well as Europe. Any day we may be walking over grounds trodden by the unknown brave. The colony had its heroines as well as heroes. During the year 1741 the Natchez and Chickasaws renewed their inroads upon the weak and destitute settlements. One hundred and forty warriors suddenly attacked a party of twenty-four traders by an obscure bayou, and for six hours poured in destructive fires from their coverts. The whites fought valorously until sixteen of the twenty-four perished. With this party was a young French girl, as brave as was ever celebrated in the songs of the Troubadours. Time and again she went into the most exposed positions among the rain of bullets, cutting the powder horns from the dead

defenders in order to supply those still fighting. Treading her passage over the fallen, she made her way out and in until a shot struck her, and she fell dead among the corpses. Joan of Arc never did a more valiant deed. There was many a Deborah in these American wilds."

Grandpa Laird answered: "And yet we know not the name of the young girl. We know not who bore her or loved her. The deed survives, and that's all. She was one of the thousands who passed away in the wilderness worthy of monuments, but unremembered by historian or poet. And there are thousands of such in living households to-day as noble, if the time came, as Joan or Deborah. Even yet some Louisiana Robby Burns may arise to sing the fame of worthy son or daughter, and invoke bush and bird to join the lament when the favorite passes away.

"Mourn, little harebells, on the lee,  
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see,  
Ye woodbines hanging bonnily  
    In scented bowers;  
Ye roses in your thorny tree,  
    The first of flowers.

"Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood,  
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud,  
Ye curlews calling through a clud,  
    Ye whistling plover;  
And mourn, ye whirring paitrich brood,  
    He's gane forever."

It was nearing the time of return, the sun slanting the shadows, when a sensation passed among the crowds. Where was Mary La Fontaine? Among the many varieties of entertainment she had not been missed until her class began to make inquiry. They had not seen her since an hour before, when she had left them under the beech, with basket in hand. Then some one remembered that she said she knew where the blackberries and huckleberries grew, and that she was going to surprise her girls with a dessert.

For a while some made light of her absence, saying that Mary loved to be alone, and was rambling by the stream or writing poetry in some grove, and had forgotten the lapse of time. But Mary still did not come, and the sun was not tarrying. There began to be some excitement, and it grew. Parties went out in different directions, calling until the forest reëchoed, and returning without tidings.

Had she wandered until lost? Must she remain in the wilds all night? Had she missed her footing on the abrupt banks, and fallen into the river?

It was an anxious distressed return. The six pupils of Mary's class could not be comforted. The sympathies of all flowed out toward the

mother. All remembered the mother's beautiful gladness that day, imparting happiness to young and old; and even now she was apparently the calmest and most self-possessed of all the company. She tried to cheer the grandparents, as if Mary was their child instead of hers. She insisted that God was to be trusted in the dark as well as in the light, and that it was a childish, not a childlike, faith which lets go of the covenant under the first stroke.

Soon the entire community was aroused. There were hundreds of surmises, hundreds of schemes. A company of riders spontaneously came together, and Jean took the leadership, to go again to the grounds and explore the surrounding woods, only to return at daylight and increase the solicitude. Some were talking of dragging the river bed opposite the picnic grove.

The mother remembered a paper handed her by Mary when she came from the beech. It was the last time she had seen her. The class had noticed her writing it. It was headed "Picnic Verses." When read at home, Grandpa Laird was especially affected, feeling sure that his Little Improvisatrice, as he called her, had caught the metre and dialect from the poem which he had quoted from Burns. The mother's first quiet tears dropped while she read:

Amang the boughs the cushat coo'd,  
 The bayou wimpled through the wood,  
 In throngs the youthful beauties stood  
     Wi' ane anither,  
 But nane sae bonnie and sae guid  
     As little Mither.

Hark, Scotia's cantie minstrelsy  
 Sings out its sang of love and glee,  
 The lassie's cheek, the lassie's e'e,  
     Among the heather;  
 But nane sae sweet as thou to me,  
     My little Mither.

'Mang cotton plants and sugar canes,  
 Old Louisiana's richest strains  
 May tell of happy maids and swains  
     A' blest thegither;  
 But first in woodlands and on plains  
     Is little Mither.

Her smiles are a' sae glad to-day,  
 As leesome as the bairns at play,  
 Her breastie light as lint o' May  
     Or birdie's feather;  
 'Tis sweet to see thy heart sae gay  
     My little Mither.

The fairies laugh beneath the oaks,  
 The laverocks watch the little folks,  
 The kelpies blink aboon the brooks  
     Hither and thither,  
 And a' admire the angel looks  
     O' little Mither.

The day may lower, the sunshine flee,  
 The light fade out on land and sea,  
 The gowan droop along the lee

And blue bells wither—  
Oh! may no cloud o'ershadow thee,  
My little Mither!

In the Little Mither's prayers that night, braced upon the promises, she quoted more than once from the thirty-sixth Psalm: "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE RESCUE.

“And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.”—EZEKIEL xxxiv. 25.

THE moods of nature for once were not in accord with the moods of the people. There never was a more cloudless, light-hearted, blithe-visaged morning. Hope could not have had a fairer setting in earth and sky. Sometimes we find God’s face more easily in the landscapes than in the faces of men.

Several discoveries were discussed by the various groups. By the riders headed by her father, the basket with which Mary had been seen passing out of sight, had been found at day-light on the bank of the river. It was overturned, spilling the berries which she had picked.

On the bank! Without telling the parents, several boats started to drag the river bottom.

Soon followed the information that Tobe, Showaba and Don Gonzalez had all disappeared secretly during the night—a new wonder and

a new matter for speculation. Some said that Don was Mary's suitor, and, driven by a lover's anxieties, was probably searching the woods.

There were singular conversations here and there. To a circle about him at the court-house, the Judge was thus talking:

"Days have been when such disappearances were not infrequent. We have all heard of the Crow's Nest above Natchez, the rendezvous of an organized band of freebooters in the earlier years of the century, the scourge of neighboring territories. Finally an outraged people fell upon them in vengeance, and soon afterward an earthquake destroyed their island. The pirates of Barataria, under the Lafittes, are notorious; their depredations perpetrated on land and sea until after the war with England. The old buccaneers and their romance had their successors in Louisiana.

"Within the memory of some of us, gangs of Mississippi desperadoes raged until overwhelmed by Judge Lynch. For some while our State suffered from robber incursions from across her western borders during the Texan conflicts. Nor do we forget that cut-throats have found safe coverts in our deep forests since then.

"The late election riots in New Orleans and elsewhere have encouraged the spirit of lawless-

ness. Perhaps, too, the growing bitterness and threats of war between the States have been loosening the authority of law, and giving the criminal classes the hope of new opportunities. There are many hiding places for white or colored in the jungles and among the lagoons.”

Were the Judge's thoughts connected with the loss of our Mary?

In another group Tobe was discussed, the danger from the negroes where they were in the majority; and one told of the attempted insurrection wiped out in blood during the Spanish occupation under Baron de Carondelet. Tobe had been spoiled by Mary, some said, and the negroes will not bear pampering.

Louisiana has her native elements of excitability. Her mixed races and varied history and backgrounds of romance, all shined upon by a tropical sun, make quick pulses. Hot blood has its boiling point.

The calmest spot perhaps was at Hope Cottage. Said Jean:

“During that long vain night of search, anxiety was divided and went backward and forward between the lost daughter and the Little Mither left at home. What must be our child's feelings, if alive, and what the feelings of the motherly heart! A thousand times I committed

them both to the care of a covenant-keeping God.”

“One scene, the baptismal scene, came back to me vividly,” she said, “as a prop and stay; in beauty and sweetness more effulgent than ever. I saw the wee treasure again in your arms and just as certainly in her Saviour’s. We committed her to him for life and for death. It was an eternal contract, and all through last night, even at its darkest, these words came to me over and over: ‘I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.’ (Is. xlix. 25.) I believe that we are going to witness a great deliverance.”

The church was deeply moved and many praying. Was not the church, too, a mother to the missing girl? Such providences are sometimes necessary to awaken her membership to a due sense of responsibility toward her baptized catechumens.

Mary’s class of six came to the Cottage, and begged to be admitted for an hour into the hal-  
lowed room of which she had told them; there facing the curves of the river toward the picnic ground, and, with their eyes filled with the blue of the sky, they prayed for their teacher. Perhaps this touched the mother the most of all.

The D’Arbonne household was in deep sym-

pathy. "I can't stand the talk of the people and their surmises," said Henri, walking the floor. "To stay here wanting to do, and not knowing what or where, is maddening!"

Mr. D'Arbonne was as restless and agitated as his son. "In such times as these," he said, "there should be no Catholics or Protestants. I could die for that distracted home! There have been startling emergencies in the history of our own family, and I feel somehow that we are upon the eve of others."

It was now dark, and there came a loud pounding at the door. It was Tobe, demanding earnestly:

"Where is Mister Henri? I want Mister Henri. Quick!"

Closeted together, the boy, now a young man, rushed into his story, almost out of breath:

"Tobe spied on him. He don't like you. He thinks you and young Mistiss too sweet on each other. When the news burst—she gone—I watched. He played astonished and unhappy, but I saw he wasn't. Tobe kept both eyes on him, sideways. As soon as dark came, he made off to the woods—very shy. I had told Showaba. That ugly Indian tracks like a blood-hound. We followed. Mister Don zig-zagged, but he knowed where he was gwine. He knowed they'd

crossed the river, there where her basket was found; so we chased him up the opposite side from the picnic. Of course. About midnight we saw him enter the camp. Very much at home, too. There were eleven rough men, and young Mistiss was with 'em, tied. They had all sorts of swords and guns. She was as bold as a lion. They knowed Mister Don, and he knowed them, and they all laughed. I heard him say, 'You've got her all right, have you!' I wanted to knock him down, but Showaba wouldn't let me. As soon as Mister Don got there, they were ready to go on. The ugly Indian is smart. He staid to follow and mark the way, and sent me back. Tobe will show the track. You love young Mistiss, and she likes you. Now hurry!"

In an hour twenty-five young heroes, led by Henri and piloted by Tobe, were on their way through the darkness. The information and destination were kept secret. Only a note, with these words, was sent quietly to the Cottage, "Your daughter is alive."

They went circumspectly and mostly in silence. The pursued might have outposts on the alert.

Tobe had no difficulty in finding the camping ground, where he had last seen them—where they had waited for Don. They had not long

tarried, and the trail became more obscure. The forest was thick and dark, the jungles more frequent. Only a very dim dark-lantern could be permitted.

But Showaba had left the signs and marks as indicated to Tobe; the broken boughs and fresh leaves dropped by the way. Evidently they had travelled rapidly, to escape probable pursuit. Fleet as a deer, fleet as his youth, was the Indian --to keep up with the horsemen.

Once they thought they had overtaken the robbers and prepared for fight. It might have been a bloody conflict with friends, had not Henri thought in time of the absence of Showaba, and suspected in time that these might not be the captors of the maiden. He was already learning that sagacity which was to distinguish him in the great civil war shadowed in the distance.

Inquiries were interchanged; they were regulators from another parish hunting horse-thieves who had been committing various depredations in other parts of the State. With this increase of force, it ought to be easy to surround and capture the enemy, however desperate.

The next day they all rested at noon, preferring to overtake and flank the marauders at night. Showaba's twigs were unwilted. The

trail was almost straight, pointing direct to a well-known crossing on Red River. The two companies separated, the hunters of the horse-thieves making a rapid detour in order to secure position in advance of the foe.

Before the second sun set, Tobe began to be excited. His great eyes were as sharp as a scout of the Ouachitas. The twigs were very green. "It has not been an hour," he whispered. "They must rest by midnight. The big Indian will be expecting us."

And it was true. Soon Showaba met them, and said that the robbers were encamped but a mile ahead, and that the Bay Blossom was unwithered. When he heard of the other party of pursuers and the strategy intended, he said, "I will find and show them to their place. No noise; no talk. Move and meet at midnight."

The hour came, and they advanced as silent as spectres. Tobe found every leaf.

The stars pointed to midnight. How peacefully they looked down upon angry men! Henri's party moved forward eagerly. In a moment they were upon the foe, and their guns were flashing. Another moment, and a tall form dashed in from the dim spaces beyond. Like lightning his knife cut Mary's thongs, and she was borne off to the right, out of the range of the rifles.

Then another form dashed after them. It was Don, and a ball from his gun pierced the Indian's arm. Then Showaba rose to his full height like a coming tempest, and another bullet would have brought him down, but a blow crashed upon the assailant's head, and Don fell heavily. It was a blow from Tobe's club.

The fierce combat was soon over. The posse from the other parish had followed Showaba from the rear, and the robbers, however reckless, saw themselves surrounded and overborne.

Three men were dead. A fourth was on the ground fatally wounded. The others surrendered. Henri had fought like a hero of the Camisards. Tobe found him, and took him to Mary. She met him as calmly and frankly as a flower that had known no storm.

"The Bay Blossom sits high in the trees," said Showaba. "She trembled not when the wolves howled."

Then she turned and bound up with skill and gentleness the flesh-wound on the Indian's arm—the wound which she knew was meant for his heart.

Don Gonzalez stirred upon the ground. She wiped the blood from his brow, and arranged his head more comfortably. The Indian and others stood in wonder. She said to Henri:

“Don’t be too hard on him. We will think of Him who prayed that His murderers might be forgiven.”

She heard them speak of one of the robbers fatally shot and dying. She went and sat down by him, and told tenderly of the wonderful Friend, who saves to the uttermost. She asked if he had a mother—for a mother’s love best illustrates a Saviour’s. Near the marge, he said that he had; that she had consecrated him to God, and had hoped for his salvation. Mary spoke of the sacredness of a mother’s prayers, and the faithfulness of Him who loves to listen to mothers. He assented while his eyes were glazing. She caught his last words, “O God, my mother’s God!” Who can tell what may have been the revelations of these solemn moments?

Henri was not the only one of the beholders who wept. The scene of carnage had become a sanctuary. Daughters of the covenant have wrought thousands of transformations just as improbable, O ye of little faith! And there would be multitudes of such refined, delicate Southern women, heroines of home, amid the war-shadows already on the horizon. There stood the robbers silent and in awe. This scene was to bring unexpected fruits into this story.

Henri and his brave companions gave the prisoners, Don included, into the hands of the other pursuers—to answer the charge of horse-stealing and other crimes in another parish. It was a mercy to Don. His life would have been worth but little in the indignant community at home. Mary said to Henri, “But retain yourself the baggage of the camp. Don’t lose sight of the box of cedar inlaid with silver.”

Mary and her rescuers all needed rest, and they waited till morning; all except Tobe. The good news must be hurried to Hope Cottage.

A fleet horse of one of the dead robbers was given him, for his own, and he hastened awkwardly away. He went to tell how he had spied on ’em.

Before she slept, Mary looked up to the myriads of peaceful stars, which tell of the seed of believers, and she quoted: “Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinance of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return and have mercy upon them.” (Jeremiah xxxiii. 25, 26.)

And Showaba, still watchful over her slumbers, thus chanted to the night birds:

“The Bay Blossom sleeps with folded leaves.

Her God is better than the Sun-god. He shines when the sun is set. Her enemies are scattered. They will assail no more. The time of her joy is coming. For she forgets herself for others. While men were dying, she staunched the Indian's hurt. Her touch was the touch of the pure and kind. She is the daughter of the good. The old folks think of her and heaven. In their wigwam to-night, father and mother pray, and they think they hear her singing. The lover fears that the Bay Blossom is too high in the trees. But the bright stars will bring the wedding."

## CHAPTER XX.

### MANUSCRIPT COMPLETE.

“Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.”—PSALM  
cxix. 90.

THE temptation urges that we linger among the scenes of the rescuers' return—the welcome, the gladness, the plaudits, the rewarding smiles of the liberated maiden. A public ball was discussed, and a flow of wine, but these things would flatten in the absence of the ladye faire.

And the joy at Hope Cottage where grandpas and grandmas were waiting with father and mother and Calvin! Nor were they so absorbed in their own happiness as to forget to have Mary's class at the house waiting, too. When these six were about to start, leaving the three generations to their thanksgiving, they sang a little voluntary given them by Mary the day before her abduction:

Whatever dangers may arise,  
Whatever foe besets,  
God looks observant from the skies  
And stills the foeman's threats;  
He never forgets!

Though raging storms the world invest,  
Though sun in darkness sets,  
God shields the sparrow in her nest  
And guards the violets;  
He never forgets!

The Ouachita deserts his shores,  
The drought the parch'd land frets;  
God sends the showers and early flowers,  
And fills the rivulets;  
He never forgets!

Sometimes the child of grace in tears,  
Sometimes the rash regrets;  
But on ahead the promised years,  
And palms and coronets;  
He never forgets!

A few evenings after, Henri came over to the Cottage, bringing the cedar box, and a surprising letter from one of the robbers. This letter, just received, inclosed the key to the box.

When opened, the contents proved to be the sequel to the document found by Showaba, and contained the fourteenth chapter of this story. It was the completion so earnestly longed for by Mary, and now singularly brought to her hands by her captivity. She caught intimations of this while in the robbers' camp, having noticed their special watchfulness over the box; and therefore she had suggested to Henri to make sure of its possession. The leader of the horse-thieves was not more coolly on the alert than she.

Henri and Mary were soon reading the two parts of the manuscript now brought together. How important its import to their two families and themselves! The interrupted sentence of the former fragment continued as follows:

“And so the fourth generation exhibited the same untoward and heretical tendencies. The network of agencies employed by the church, her minute detective systems, all the power of the confessional, were constantly baffled by these characteristics. A fatality seemed to follow the lineage of Antoine La Fontaine. Fully one-half of the births in this fourth generation showed the same waywardness and gave their priests trouble. They tested the sagacity of the Inquisition, and the vigilance of the Gonzalez emissaries.”

Henri and Mary paused, as with a shock, and looked at each other. Not a word was uttered. Again and nervously they applied themselves to the translation:

“The fifth generation was even worse. Just as certainly as any of them moved from the Southwestern Department and came in contact with the Calvinistic errors, they would imbibe them. The blood of Antoine La Fontaine, or rather of his heretic father and mother, seemed to pursue and infect the latest descent. Change

of name had not headed off the perverse nature. Again the fidelity of the Inquisition and its faithful abettors was invoked, and sons and daughters had to be locked up in dungeons."

"All this makes me sick," said Henri. "Our church contradicts history and impeaches its fearful testimonies, but what shall we do with our own records? When I read such cold-blooded avowals, were not my family wed to Catholicism, I would recoil from the papacy. But I am interrupting."

Again, with heads close together, they read the old French:

"Our Holy Church stakes much on heredity. She uses it and fears it. Converts from Protestantism must be zealously watched. The inherited bias is liable at any time to crop out. Our complex ecclesiastical safeguards dare not sleep. These idiosyncracies must be kept under strict surveillance."

Mary was observing this philosophy closely. Did not the promises of God and the prayers of a trustful ancestry fully account for these idiosyncracies? Is it anything more than the faithful God-keeping covenant, and mercy to a thousand generations? (Deut. vii. 9.) The old document continued:

"The sixth and seventh and eight generations

were no better. There were frequent perversions. The La Fontaine name had been suppressed, but the La Fontaine perversity remained under the name of D'Arbonne."

Again Henri and Mary started as with an electric shock. Was this the name substituted for that of Antoine La Fontaine, the stolen boy in the Convent of St. Audacio in the Pyrenees, the boy of whom grandpa had told? To suppress his identity, did he become Claude D'Arbonne? What revelations were yet to follow? They absorbed the writing with increasing intensity. It continued:

"The perilous La Fontaine peculiarities, their independence of thought, their claims to private judgment, their apologies for heretics, perpetuated themselves under the disguised name. The church had to hold the D'Arbannes under suspicion. Priests of the Gonzalez family, of the same blood with the rigid Antonio of the Pyrenees Convent—himself a Gonzalez—were kept unintermittingly upon their track.

"Finally followed the migration to America. In England and across the seas the Huguenots found toleration. La Fontaines sought the New World, and a branch of the D'Arbannes, their kinsmen, also crossed the deep. The freedom of the wilderness, and the distance from Rome,

would increase their peril. The eye of the church must be kept upon them. Everywhere they were prosperous, liberal, influential, and the church must not lose them. This history is written for the instruction and guidance of their spiritual advisers.

“Now came the startling coincidence. It has been found that a branch of the La Fontaines, and a branch of the D’Arbonnes have settled near each other in the province named for that devoted champion of the church, King Louis XIV., of blessed memory. These D’Arbonnes possess all the unfortunate characteristics of their ancestors—dangerously prone to free thought and impatient of the infallibility belonging to the church. Neither family has any idea of a common relationship and Protestant ancestry, but the intimacy cannot be wholesome.”

For a moment the two readers turned from the words, and looked into each other’s eyes. A thousand meanings were there. But the reader was not yet through. The diction and style had become more modern and easier to translate:

“Fortunately a branch of the Gonzalez family, faithful sons of the church, are also on the Ouachita. They know more of the circum-

stances than their neighbors. Spanish Catholicism can be relied upon. They had been parties to the attempted establishment of the Inquisition in New Orleans. Had this succeeded, it would have simplified many problems. The sordid commercial policy of Governor Miro prevented.

“But the Gonzalez blood remains pure and loyal. Of that blood is Father Antonio, of the same name and character with him of the Pyrenees. For this latter priest and his successors these instructions are given. The Inquisition, advocated by Antonio and his Gonzalez sympathizers, is, of course, out of the question; but all ecclesiastical authority and methods must be used to save the wealthy D’Arbonnes from their sinful tendencies. Their money, their talents, their social influence, add emphasis to these orders.”

Then followed minute directions as to penance, indulgence, and constant espionage. The face of the young man burned with indignation. The manuscript again showed indications of a still later hand:

“The difficulty and jeopardy are seriously complicated. An alliance is threatened between the La Fontaines and D’Arbonnes—intermarriage. This, as in the past, portends evil. The

boy and the girl have been growing up together, and have been lovers from childhood."

It was Mary's face now that was burning. Their heads had been ominously near together, inspecting the French. Had any translators ever struck upon such literary gems? She turned away the human roses, but Henri hurried on:

"This untoward attachment must be defeated—the marriage prevented at any cost. The girl is an intelligent Protestant, and very winsome. The loose D'Arbonne loyalty will not endure that strain. The double La Fontaine streams flowing together, though one be hidden, will sweep into the original channel.

"We have substantial emissaries. The wilderness has its secret agencies ready to our call. Don Gonzalez thinks himself in love with the girl. He hates her religion. He can be used. To effect our purpose will be easier because neither of the families suspects the common Huguenot origin."

And then the manuscript closed in yet another hand:

"These papers must be carefully guarded. To fall into the hands of these marked families would be ruinous. Nor must they be seen by the French Capuchins. Their jealousy of the Span-

ish branch of the Order would incline them in favor to their own countrymen and thus cause a defeat of our purposes. In the changes of priests, the oak on the Bayou (clearly located on accompanying papers) will be the safest depository."

Henri threw the manuscript to the floor with his foot upon it.

"And this is Rome!" he exclaimed. "Rome in America! I'll no more of it. The D'Arbonnes constantly suspected, discounted, spied upon! It is Tobe in canonicals! But we must be held for our money and as convenient tools! My father shall inspect these precious documents."

Mary was more composed but embarrassed. And she was to meet new embarrassment.

"There are other enigmas to be explained," she said. "Have you read the robber's letter?"

No, his mind had been upon key and box. He now opened the letter and began to translate the Creole French:

"On to the penitentiary or the lynching! Let me do one honest act before I go. It is all for the sake of our young captive maiden and her gallant knight. He has a right to know of her heroism. When she fell into our trap, there was no hysterics. She came as a queen comes.

Startled, of course, at first, but soon erect—the goddess of the woods!

“Her womanliness, her dignity, her religion, compelled respect from rude men. They were abashed before true Christian ladyhood. She had her Testament with her, and, when the camp fires were lighted, we were forced to listen. You would have thought us a Sunday-school.

“Only once was a profane and indecent word uttered in her presence, and, quick as lightning, one of our comrades knocked the offender down. This prompt champion of hers was the one afterwards killed, the one she talked to so beautifully while dying.

“As sweet as innocence itself, she passed among us, and remonstrated about our unholy lives, and our old homes, until we were ashamed. We would have released her before twenty-four hours, had it not been for Father Antonio, who was with us in disguise, and whose willing tool our leader was. The priest and Don Gonzalez had managed the seizure, and they had their designs. But in spite of them, I intended to set her free the night of the attack.

“I send the key. Instead of her being hidden away in Mexico or the West Indies, I shall be mistaken if the revelations of that box do not end in a wedding.

“Some months ago, the Father sent us off for the documents in the oak on Bayou De Siard. I am kin to that Bayou myself—my namesake. In the very act of pulling out the parchments, pursuing officers came upon our tracks, and we were scared off. After our sudden retreat, we found that only a part of the parchment was secured.

“I got a peep at its contents while in my care. I saw what a stir it might make in some good families on the Ouachita. The dear Father was greatly disquieted at the loss of the missing part, and, after the excitement over our former raid had subsided, he sent us back for the rest. But nothing was found. He has been in fearful perplexity ever since. Then nothing would satisfy but the capture of the girl. He is now in a lovely dilemma—must either share one of the many mansions at Baton Rouge or avow his identity and depend upon Rome to extricate him.

“I heard the young angel talking to our dying comrade about Jesus and heaven, and the memory of my better days awoke. I am determined to do one worthy deed and help two young souls to their happiness. It seems to me that I have heard my mother tell of La Fontaine blood in my own family. Perhaps that is the reason

that even a horse-thief responded so strangely to that girl's gospel talk. And now on to the penitentiary, or to a Louisiana picnic—*alias* a Louisiana lynching!"

Did our Ouachita ever appear in greater pride and splendor to any rapt souls than to Henri and Mary as his sparkle saluted them that night in the moonlight? If you would see limpid waters and nature's greens, and starry skies and eloquent moonlight at their best, walk along the marge when the full river is beyond his inner banks and taking his naps in other beds among the draped trees.

But there were other tides more resplendent in their glory, with a hundred confluent and with closer skies, which would soon be calling upon these two young hearts and upon all created things to praise and bless the Infinite Adorner.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE ELECT LADY.

“Her price is far above rubies.”—PROVERBS xxxi. 10.

THERE was reason to fear that the late excitements might interfere with the growing spirituality in the church. The abduction of Mary, the indignation which followed, the universal gladness at her return, the enthusiastic reception accorded her rescuers, might naturally displace the religious thoughtfulness pervading the community.

The late rumors grew into certainties. The fury of the mob had burst into a cyclone. It was one of those night storms of popular frenzy, provoked, dared, defied, which sometimes blaze out of Southern skies and sweep law and officials and mercy wildly before them. It is the savage in the saddle again.

The deplorable had occurred. They would not wait upon the uncertainties of the dilatory courts. There had been aggravated, multiplied offences. The seizure of the young girl doubled the maddening fury. There was no time to listen to the frantic appeals of Don and the

priest—caught in bad company, using the robbers for their own purposes, and now swept to a common doom.

Only one of the band escaped. The regulators had heard of acts of mercy performed by Alphonse De Siard; protection of a lone widow from depredations; restoration of a horse to one of their poor neighbors; and a vague report of his chivalrous deportment toward Mary. Now recognizing him at the last moment, they cut his bonds and ordered him with threats to leave their parishes—which he was not slow in doing. Then the wrath burst and the rest were hurried into the dark eternity.

Of course these things stirred all classes. The Gonzalez household sold their home and moved away.

The D'Arbonnes were greatly shocked. They did not discuss the matter publicly. Great changes were taking place in their minds and hearts. In his own home-circle Mr. D'Arbonne said:

“But for the captured manuscript, we had never known that our neighbors were of a family bitterly our enemies for centuries; tools of persecuting kings and Popes; supplying from their ranks treacherous priests and busy informers. Here they were at our doors—Rome's sleuth-

hounds, even in free America, and in the name of the Prince of Peace. Spain and the Spaniard still burn to their destruction with the smouldering fires of the Inquisition.

“Now poor Don and Father Antonio, his kinsman, have followed in hereditary steps and invited a fearful retribution. Meanwhile, even yet, and in our own Louisiana, Claude D’Arbonne, the victim Antoine La Fontaine of persecution days, is terribly avenged, and in the presence of his descendants. God rules the centuries, and first or last settles his accounts.”

No storms can disconcert the divine purposes. Beneath the surface agitations the Calvinistic doctrines move on like the profound undercurrents of the ocean. You cannot revise them out of the Bible nor out of history. No divine plan miscarries.

Running parallel with many causes and effects, undisturbed by distractions and commotions, there was a silent but mighty influence, sealed of God, which has not been named upon these pages, but which has been quietly and gently pervading and vivifying all social life and church work. It was as still and noiseless as the fragrant wild rose in the hedge—an inspiring but soothing force. This was the pastor’s wife.

The world will never know its obligations to the mistresses of the manses. They need not mount the pulpit—they mould the pulpits. They need not unsex themselves and defy God's prohibition and preach—for all preachers get their power from their homes. Martha and Mary, daughters of the covenant, helped to rest the Saviour himself and prepare him for his sermons. What splendid wives those ladies of Bethany would have made for God's preachers!

Mrs. Allenson was Martha and Mary combined—as we see in many a parsonage. Her religion embraced kitchen and parlor; her own house and God's house; her children and all God's children. She was a model housekeeper and a model friend. She was queen in an empire of her own, an empire to which you could find no boundaries.

Said her husband once in confidential mood to a fellow-Presbyter: "I have never understood my Ellen. She captivates without dreaming of it. Every one that comes near her likes her and praises. She is independent in thought and act; but, instead of provoking opposition, she carries all minds and hearts with her—and they think they are acting upon their own wishes and impulses. I have never been able to analyze the magic with which she won me and wins all

others. Never was there a woman more unconscious of her own worth or of her own power. She has no ambitions but to live Christ."

Said one of the elders: "When we fancied and called our pastor we did not know that we were calling two pastors. I think ten times more of him because of his good sense and consummate taste in marrying such a woman. She is the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs in full bloom."

Said the judge up at the court-house: "Civilization bows to superior womanhood. Jurisprudence does obeisance. Look at that modest occupant of the Presbyterian manse—meek, non-assertive, genial—as brave as Esther, as loyal as Ruth, as devotional as Anna in the temple. She is a reticent, felt presence in the community, pervasive as the odors of the magnolias."

And so with those upon the outside—for there seemed to be no outside. Said Mrs. Merser: "Nothing but a sound dipping is needed to give her wings like Venus from the sea."

And even Miss Minerva consented to say: "Here is one that John Calvin failed to turn into a reprobate. They couldn't spoil her!"

And so all denominations loved her. The young people prized and coveted her daylight smile.

And our Mary had said a hundred times:

“Oh! that I could be as good and delightful as our pastor’s wife. All the time she seems to me like a little Bible, God’s whispers on every page.”

She had come very deeply into Mary’s life. It is God’s way. And thus old and young felt the magnetism of womanly goodness.

By another community it had been said that the mother of the pastor’s wife was the most godly woman they had ever known. The baptismal seal had never disappeared from the daughter’s brow.

For some months a shadow had come over the parsonage. I call it a shadow, speaking in the language of men. Perhaps the angels would have called it the Shekinah.

We are told that the Disciples feared as they entered into the cloud. They had forgotten that Jesus was the centre of that cloud.

Disease and fading descended upon the manse, showing its kinship to all homes. The minister had often preached about the valley of the shadow. First or last the pulpit illustrates its own themes.

And the good woman knew for a good while that she must die, and her loved ones knew it. The months kept steadily on, bringing the end nearer. And the serenity of Heaven rested upon

her brow, and husband and daughter saw it there and felt the sacredness of it. The pulpit never intermitted its messages about the loving kindness, and every Sunday she was in that pulpit and the sermon, but in no unwomanly way.

Then came the social storms and ruffings of the waves. Some were inclined to involve the pastor in these jealousies and envies. Churches are not Edens with no serpent in them. Nobody is fully sanctified. The pastor was suspected of being too partial to the Lairds and La Fontaines, and according them too much influence in the church. Mary was supposed to be his favorite, and by designing persons some of the young people, principally the dancers and card-players, were led to resent it.

Of course the wife was pierced in the wounds of her husband. Those who criticised him, and praised and courted her, did not seem to know that all such thrusts were double-barbed; that no such shaft aimed at him could miss her heart or fail in the end to wear out the laboring life.

And still the serenity of heaven's frontiers continued, and her face grew purer along with her heart. For none of these things can break down the covenant.

When others hesitated about a day of enjoyment, thinking of her condition and feeling for

her, she suggested and urged the Sunday-school picnic. She knew that she might die before it came, but she loved the young people, and wanted no one's happiness retarded by her faltering breath.

Then came the news of the maiden kidnaped and the community convulsed. But there was no storm-burst in that room. It was too near the margin where the Throne is in sight. Her prayers went out and enveloped the maiden in the woods and the anxious parents in their home. The supplications of preachers' wives have gilded many a cloud. And the heedless world slumbers on and knows it not.

Calmly, too, she begged at heaven's doors—lingering close to the portals—that these turmoils might not disturb the spirit of revival which she had felt to be moving abroad.

And thus amid it all—the flash of the tempest and the rage of the adversary—there was a soothing something upon the air, a holy calm in holier places, which the angels traced to that chamber of fading at the parsonage.

When Mary returned and all were glad, Mrs. Allenson alone felt no surprise, for she was too near the borders to be astonished at any good thing that God does. To her the covenant was a verity.

“My Ellen has passed on beyond the excitements,” said the pastor. “She sees the sceptre and the hand. She shows me more and more every day what that verse means, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.’” (Is. xxvi. 2.)

A masterpiece comes back in memory, a beautiful picture full of light and quietude, with bright angels winging their way across a placid stream and seeming to hold both shores. So did the dreamy Ouachita, wrapped in visions, look during those days. Louisiana seemed to move up into the suburbs of Eden with no sword at the gates.

The heart struggled on and waxed weaker, but trust and confidence grew stronger. It was the repose of faith. She lay in the eternal arms and was not restless. Death has long since learned that he has no weapons against the covenant.

Many a home felt the impress of that privileged room. Nature appeared to recognize the steps of death's Conqueror, and to be practicing in sky and landscape for the resurrection morn. The birds and the flowers, which she loved so well, seemed to know all about it.

She talked very little about death. She was interested in the living, here and up yonder. She would not hasten the going or lengthen the

staying. Only once she said: "I am so anxious to see what is beyond I can hardly wait." But she did wait—and patiently—and cheerfully.

And all this went out upon the community as upon downy wings. The God of the covenant has a use for death-beds—and of death-beds in parsonages. They are sometimes like lights set upon serene high hills. Thus the Infinite would quiet the world. At times the whole atmosphere seemed pervaded by the celestial.

God's promises must be kept. Let us expect his antidotes, his sedatives, his unforeseen interpositions, his reactions.

Once when Mary was with her, after the rescue, the good woman said: "It was certain to turn out well. Our Heavenly Father knows how to bring good out of evil. Storms often clear the atmosphere. You will be a better and happier daughter and wife for what has occurred. God's grace is about to descend plenteously. Mary's heart will be enveloped in the showers. Religion is a young maiden's best and supremest friend."

A Saturday night full of pathos and restfulness came after awhile, with a thousand hints of heaven. She was sleeping her beautiful life away, "for so he giveth his beloved sleep." The great Sabbatism which remaineth for the people

of God, was at hand. It was a fitting close to such a life. They watched and knew not when she went.

And while the angels were bearing her away, one lingered to scatter incense over the town and to bring balms to all the troubled and to allay all disquietudes.

It was not the first or last time that a death in the parsonage has been the price paid for the sweeping of the pews.

That night Mary sat, like one bereaved and comforted, and wrote:

My Ellen, so—he called her so—  
The plain, old-fashioned name;  
The star that never lost its glow,  
Its pure and steady flame—  
The elect lady.

Ellen the fair; select and fair  
Beyond the painter's art;  
The charm that beamed in radiance rare  
Upon our pastor's heart—  
The elect lady.

Ellen the good; beloved and good,  
Who graced the preacher's life,  
And at his heart serenely stood  
To calm all inward strife—  
The elect lady.

Ellen the true; erect and true,  
A crystal to the light;  
In clear effulgence still she grew  
Upon the world's dim night—  
The elect lady.

Ellen the wise; discreet and wise,  
She breathed the upper airs,  
A living, willing sacrifice  
To Zion's thorns and cares—  
    The elect lady.

Ellen the dead; the sainted dead,  
And yet she lives again  
In every breeze and lily bed,  
And in the lives of men—  
    The elect lady.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE REVIVAL.

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses.”—ISAIAH xliv. 3, 4.

THERE are storm-centres, but there are also peace-centres. There are always here and there godly homes which feel their kinship to the parsonage. And so there were circles that seconded divinely the holy influences spread abroad by the fading and death of Ellen, the minister's wife.

Away from the hubbub, in the secret place of the Most High, amid a pious group of three generations, was a calm as deep and soft as one of our Ouachita's most breezeless May mornings. God never forgot that consecrated room at Hope Cottage which took in heaven's blue, and the homes of those four snowy heads.

Happy the church with aged suppliants encamped along its borders. Grandfathers and grandmothers are sentinels upon mountain-tops. What is to prevent their keeping the confidences of the Throne?

They knew that a juncture had arrived. These turmoils and these touching manifestations of grace at the manse were not for nothing. The forces of Satan and the forces of the Almighty had met. The battle was joined.

There are centres of power like the sun. There is no noise, no faction, no turmoil among the solar beams. One flies in silence to yonder planet, another to yonder little flower, another to yonder sick-chamber, another to yonder bird's nest, another to yonder nursery, another to yonder prison cell, another to yonder pulpit. There is no boast or hurrah among the sunbeams.

And such were the closets and family-altars of those venerable believers. All the hosts of hell would have been glad to lynch them if they could. Unboasting, noiseless as the sun-ray and sun-warmth, the faith of the aged pilgrim was radiating to all points of the compass. The pastor felt it, Jean and the good mother felt it, Mary and Calvin felt it, Tobe and Showaba felt it, Mary's class of six felt it, that escaped robber felt it. And I was going to say that even Mary's fawn enjoyed the reflections of its light and warmth.

There is a covenanted old age as well as a covenanted babyhood. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and

flourishing." Happy the church that has its quiver full of the old folks. For trust and patience, and holy desires, and prayer, and the full assurance of hope, there is no dead-line!

With the Bible of Moses and Jesus and Paul wide open, the Laird and La Fontaine seers, hair like the white robes, look out upon the Louisiana vistas and the vistas of paradise.

Said Grandpa Laird, with the sturdy confidence of Knox: "The Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto thee." (Deut. iv. 31.)

Said Grandpa La Fontaine, with all the firm reliance of Calvin: "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul." (2 Chron. xv. 12.)

Grandpa Laird talked of the revival under Josiah, and of their reading from the Book of the Covenant, and of their making a covenant to seek after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies. (2 Chron. xxxiv. 30, 31.)

Grandpa La Fontaine spoke of the revival under Nehemiah and of their making a sure covenant and writing it and everybody signing it. Neh. ix. 38.

The next Sabbath these rays from the homes of the aged believers were somehow focussed upon the pulpit. Mr. Allenson felt it, and soon everybody else felt it.

Recognizing God as leading, the pastor appointed prayer-meetings for every night that week. He expected to secure the help of the synodical evangelist, but he would first secure the help of the Almighty. He did not expect the evangelist to bring revivals around in his pocket, ready-made, to peddle out to apathetic congregations.

The Synod had been divinely aroused to the Biblical importance and power of the evangelistic office. Not the intrusion of irresponsible free-lances, not the blatant rudenesses of peripatetic errorists, not the unwholesome vagaries of latitudinarian zealots, burning over the vineyard and blighting it for a generation; but men tried and tested, orthodox to the core, wise in management, not spoiled by publicity, with the endorsement of Presbyteries back of them. The Synod accepted no second-rates or light-weights. And God had given them the man, approved and beloved.

But it would be a wrong to both the Synod and to Mr. Timothy to bring him into a field settled on its lees and expecting to stay there.

Before he came, household after household had moved on up into line with the dear old snowy heads and were at the mercy seat and expectant.

Before the first sermon was through, the minister asserted confidently: "The revival is here. God's people are claiming the promises. Look for great things! The Lord is in his holy temple."

Mrs. Merseer was not able to understand it. Not one word had yet been said about the quantity of water!

Miss Minerva, of St. Axe-to-Grind, said the sects were waxing bold. The relatives of the La Fontaine girl had become very vain since her escapade and the shrewd trap set for Henri; and this was a fit after-piece of the furor. It was unhealthy for the community. The dignity of Christianity was put to the blush. She hoped that no refined person would attend. If Don could be recalled from the dead, it would be well to get up a ball.

The services went forward solemnly, thoughtfully, prayerfully. Of course the pastor kept the meeting in hand, guiding and shaping; the evangelist honoring the pastoral office, consulting Mr. Allenson at every point, and emphasizing the three essentials in every heavenly refreshing—the truth, the Holy Spirit and prayer.

Pentecost gathered its three thousand trophies

from among the children of the covenant. This was the New Testament's eternal signature to the promises of God to believers and their children.

Mary and her little band of modest organized workers were busy among their companions. The sunshine on the river was not more noiseless. Their headquarters were in her mother's consecrated room.

At the first opportunity Calvin and several of his associates took their baptismal vows upon themselves and gladly owned their Saviour. The four snowy heads were bowed in fragrant thanksgiving, saying: "He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name." (Ps. cxi. 9.)

In welcoming these young people Mr. Allenson said: "This is God's way, and to be expected. These boys were all consecrated to the Master fervently in infancy. This scene is the logical result. Of course those who have been solemnly given to the Lord have no right to sell themselves to the devil."

This remark God used as an arrow to reach the slumbering conscience of a man, born in a Christian family, but a wanderer for years in the wilds of sin. He began to reason thus within

himself: "I, too, was given to God in baptism; it was a transfer sacred to saintly hearts; I have no right to sell myself to Satan." The conviction pursued him until he found peace in believing.

Pastor and evangelist utilized this high vantage-ground, following in God's leadings. The text that night was, "Why do ye deal treacherously by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" (Mal. ii. 10.) Heavy was the responsibility resting upon parents who did not count upon and work confidently for the salvation of the baptized; fearful the responsibility devolving upon the baptized who dishonored their dedication to God.

A young lady saw the four snowy heads sunning themselves in one of their galleries, and she went and kissed them, seating herself by their sides, and said: "I had a dear old grandma and grandpa, too. Father and mother died soon after my baptism — before I can remember. These good old folks tried to raise me right. I disappointed them—grew up worldly, frivolous, giddy. The graves of my loved ones are after me this week. I am tired of the ways of sin. Talk to me of Christ."

And the words of the old people were like the tones of the departed; like the strains of David's harp which drove the evil spirit out of Saul.

Thus the good work went quietly and wholesomely forward, Christians refreshed, and the Lord adding daily to the church such as should be saved.

One night some were startled, others not surprised, when Mr. and Mrs. D'Arbonne, their two daughters and Henri, came calmly forward and offered themselves for church-membership. Mr. D'Arbonne asked permission to make a public statement:

“Years ago my ancestors were Protestant Christians, Huguenots, saints of the Most High. One of these was ruthlessly kidnapped by Papal emissaries when a boy, his mind poisoned in a convent, and he won half-heartedly to Rome. But he and his posterity proved to be of little satisfaction to his perverters. Something from the past—faith, prayer—seemed to pursue the line of descent. Heaven was contesting the La Fontaine race—whatever the name imposed. Somebody had prayed, ‘Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.’ (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) And now, after years of uneasy exile in the enemy’s land, we are but coming home. John Calvin is claiming his own.”

After service there was a knock at the door of Hope Cottage. Mary answered it, and recognized readily the face of one of the robbers.

Evidently from manner and speech he had been a gentleman.

“You were not scared in the woods,” he said, “and you will not be frightened now. You were our captive then ; now I am your captive. There is even a little kinship between you and Alphonse De Siard, but we will not talk of that. You would rather hear of the better impulses which now and then asserted themselves in the freebooter, and have at last brought him to seek your Saviour. I, too, was given to God by Christian parents. It seems to me that I remember the white dress, the old preacher, the water-drops. I can even tell you what is the chief end of man. As soon as those wild regulators let me go I made for this neighborhood and for you. I have been attending the meeting—slipping in upon back-seats. I want you to talk to me now as you talked to my dying comrade.”

And she did. She was never lovelier than in that privileged hour. Woman need not covet the pulpit or the platform. For her the Great Designer has devised a sphere nobler and higher, and he scatters golden opportunities about these paths like violets along the tranquil bayous. The troubled find her at her best in these recesses of the beautiful.

Mary was glad that she had been a prisoner in the forest. The covenant has its classic fields

of divine romance—its grottoes of loftiest sentiment and poesy. That thief on the cross, on the frontiers of paradise, transcended in rapt sublimity all the fiction of the libraries. And that night, in the consecrated room built by her mother when a bride, Jesus led Mary's captor captive.

We shall not be astonished when her six pupils owned their Saviour and were baptized—six outside families thus linked by her efforts to a new interest in God's church. So the work widened—the promise first unto you and to your children, and then to all that are afar off. (Acts ii. 39.)

Tobe went to Mr. Allenson and said: "I heard about the new preacher and I spied on 'im. Got a place among the darkies in the galleries and spied on 'im. I like you better, but he'll do. He talked about the Ethiopian changing his skin, and I tried it and it can't be done. But young Mistiss says that Jesus won't hold the color agin me. So I want to join the white folks' church. They can teach me. They can make something out of Tobe—Jesus and they together."

It was in the good old times when owners and slaves were members of the same churches and communed at the same tables. The Abrahamic covenant did not forget the servants. These

were the palmiest days of negro piety, and morals, and happiness—and there has been no improvement upon them since.

Never to be forgotten was the scene when Showaba rose in front of the pulpit and bared his brow for the waters of baptism. Mary sat a little distance away in tears. The moonbeams struck the Ouachita, glanced, and fell in a shower about his head. The Natchez tribes, in their fierce battles, never saw him tower at the front more erect, composed, dignified. When the clear water-drops had fallen, like the tongues of fire on the foreheads of the Disciples, all were full of wonder when he calmly faced the audience and said:

“It is all because of the Bay Blossom. She weeps for joy. Her tears are pearls. But for the Bay Blossom, Showaba would have gone in ignorance like his fathers. She made the Good Book talk. She has shown him the dying Jesus. Showaba has been very sinful. He hated his enemies. These hands have torn the bloody scalps. Death and Showaba walked the war-path as partners. I take as mine the white man’s Saviour. Why do not all the pale-faces love him? Why so many in wickedness? Oh! that the Ouachitas had had the chances of the white tribes. I stand on the grave of my nation and embrace him!”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE WEDDING.

“The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.”—GENESIS xxiv. 7.

SAID the judge to his group at the courthouse: “In all the famous Code Justinian and Code Napoleon, which spread their beneficent wings over Louisiana, there is nothing more momentous than the code matrimonial. Out of this have come the prosperity and greatness of the State. The Spanish recognized the leverage and took to their bosoms the native daughters of the province. Governor Unzaga married the beautiful Miss Maxent, and Governor Galvez her fair sister; Governor Miro married the charming Miss Macarty, and Governor Gayoso De Lemas the fascinating Miss Watts. Thus the Louisiana girls played havoc with the hearts of the countrymen of Don Quixote. Our orange groves have never failed to supply the sweetest of bridal wreaths. The womanhood of the south

has moulded Governors and governments. If civil war must come, her daughters will rise to the ordeal."

On Sunday Mr. Allenson said: "God's covenant solves all the problems of marriage. There grow the roots of home; thence outspread all its branches. Parents and children find life and trust and energy and inspiration beneath its boughs. The laws of divorce in many of our States are treason to the household covenant. They throw anarchy among the promises. They commit sacrilege with cradles and family altars. Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

One evening that week Mary called to see the four snowy heads. Her heart was full of life and love. The flowers were clustered like household groups. The birds were mating in the trees. The Ouachita was thinking of his children, the bayous. The Lairds were on the gallery, talking of Scotland. Said grandpa:

"God has been wonderfully good since first I met my Mary. I had been reading Motherwell's *Jeanie Morrison*, and she had been reading Tenant's *Anster Fair*, and the result is that we have just been reading together the *John Anderson, my Jo, John*, of Robby Burns. She was bonnie, and cantie, and leesome, and leal, and

full of blushes. And just see—she blushes yet! And as in the world's morning, when Eden was painted, God saw that all was very good. And all these long years of pure delight grew out of one lassie's bosom."

Amid rare reflections of earth and sky, the La Fontaine old folks also sat on their front porch in gentle reverie, and grandpa said:

"The Troubadours sang their sweetest when my Idalette and I came together—she who had been named for the wife of John Calvin. In the words of the great reformer, testifying to the worth of the woman given to him of God, I, too, bring my tribute to her namesake—that 'she has been the excellent companion of my life and a precious help.' Ah! there go the blushes. France and all her colonies have needed nothing more than good women. She did not appreciate her Huguenot household saints. God's covenant benedictions on the babe include the future household and wife."

When Mary reached home, here came Tobe, speaking low and confidentially:

"Peggy Pargaud is the prettiest of colored ladies, and I spied on her. Nobody can make corn-bread like her. She is the best washer on the big plantation. She claimed to be a Christian, too, and I spied on her. She goes to

meetin' regular. She steals no chickens nor handkerchiefs. She keeps Sunday. She don't dance. She helps to pay the preacher. She likes Tobe. She is willin' for Mr. Allenson to jine the ceremony."

Thus matrimony seemed to be in the air. The trees and the odor-laden zephyrs and the river banks were filled with the poetry of it. Had not Louisiana once been married herself? And Mary quietly wrote:

Beneath the broad magnolia tree,  
The air alive with bird and bee,  
The jasmine censers flowing free,  
She sat in native majesty,  
A maid of noble pedigree,  
Miss Louisiana.

An heiress of superb domain  
That stretched afar o'er hill and plain,  
Romantic rivers, sunny main,  
And cotton-fields and sugar cane,  
Coquetting long with France and Spain,  
Coy Louisiana.

Till now her heart was all her own,  
And fancy free, a bloom half-blown,  
When bashful Brother Jonathan  
Began to cast sheep's eyes upon  
The rarest sweetheart 'neath the sun,  
Fair Louisiana.

A sprightly, spry young gent was he,  
Clad in his new-won liberty,

A mighty giant yet to be,  
Aspiring wide from sea to sea—  
If only she would now agree,  
Bright Louisiana.

The guardian of the River's mouth,  
The crowning glory of the South,  
Expanding in immortal youth,  
To deck the rising fame of both—  
If she will only plight her troth,  
Dear Louisiana.

A hundred tender interviews,  
A flight of loving billet-doux,  
And thus the anxious suitor sues,  
And pleads and coaxes, sighs and woos—  
How can the Creole maid refuse,  
Sweet Louisiana?

To quiet every rival's frown,  
Napoleon and his big renown,  
Our knightly Brother Jonathan  
Pays fifteen millions dowry down  
And pleads—"Be mine and mine alone,  
Lass Louisiana."

"All right," the modest damsel said,  
While o'er her cheeks the roses spread,  
And even cotton-fields turn'd red,  
And orange bowers their fragrance shed,  
While gallant Jonathan had wed  
Fond Louisiana.

The bride and bridegroom join their fates,  
In eighteen-three, congenial mates,  
And all the sky illuminates,  
And future fame irradiates  
The banner of the United States  
And Louisiana.

Just here Henri D'Arbonne came upon the scene, as he so often came during those days, and he took her pencil and added :

No priest was called to join their hands,  
 No bull of Rome with harsh demands,  
 No Jesuit or Capuchin bands,  
 No Inquisition's fell commands,  
 To tyrannize o'er freedom's lands,  
     Glad Louisiana.

The rights of conscience fully known,  
 And lulled the martyr's sigh and groan,  
 The despot from truth's altars thrown,  
 The Huguenots, their tyrants gone,  
 Have come at last unto their own,  
     O Louisiana!

The mocking-birds were filling the world with their marital odes. Said Henri :

“Once before I thought all the earth agreed upon love and marriage. We read together Audubon's description of the charming wooing of the humming-birds. Let us read from our author again: ‘It is, reader, in Louisiana that the beauties of nature are in the greatest perfection. It is there that you should listen to the love-song of the mocking-bird, as I at this moment do. See how he flies around his mate with motions as light as those of the butterfly! His tail is widely expanded; he mounts in the air to a small distance, describes a circle, and, again alighting, approaches his beloved one, his eyes

gleaming with delight, for she has already promised to be his and his only. His beautiful wings are gently raised, again bouncing upwards, opens his bill and pours forth his melody, full of exultation at the conquest which he has made. They are not the soft sounds of the flute or the hautboy that I hear, but the sweeter sounds of nature's own music. The mellowness of the song, the varied modulations and graduations, the extent of the compass, the great brilliancy of the execution, are unrivaled.'

"But, Mary, if you will set the day, I will be his rival—outsoaring and outsinging this king of song. There have been many changes since the boy stammered his love and the girl blushed her refusal. I am glad you did. It brought many a wholesome reflection, though I thought your religious scruples rigid and unreasonable then. But we were not fitted for each other in those days. There were barriers—I knew nothing of religious affinities then. Then came the revelations—of history, of covenant, of grace. We were born of the same blood, and then we were born of the same Spirit. Have not all the obstacles been providentially leveled, and is not everybody and land and sky thinking of marriage?"

"Girlhood's heart was pleading that way all

the time, and is pleading that way yet," she said.

There was another flight of melody in the tree-tops, such as was never heard on earth before. And yet I trow that the tones of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Sarah and Rebecca and Rachel, were mingling in the birds' songs.

And thus the day was appointed—to a cluster of beating hearts the most important date of all the centuries. And a thousand feathered throats caught up the syllables—the eighteenth of April, the eighteenth of April. And History clapped his hands and said: "Many long years ago the plotters changed the name of Antoine La Fontaine to Claude D'Arbonne; now La Fontaine becomes D'Arbonne again, but under the smiles of God—on the eighteenth of April, on the eighteenth of April!"

And Poetry nestled close to the heart of the little improvisatrice and whispered: "The pathway newly lighted, two loving bosoms plighted, fond destinies united — on the eighteenth of April, on the eighteenth of April!"

And the old Indian was singing up at the mounds: "The mild Moon of Strawberries, white blooms and sunny fruits, fragrant airs and smiling skies, when Showaba won the belle of the Ouachitas—on the eighteenth of April, on the eighteenth of April!"

Nor, of course, was the wonderfully human Word of God silent—"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh—on the eighteenth of April, on the eighteenth of April."

The day came as merry as Christmas comes—slowly, surely, radiantly, winged with dreams. And Almighty God, throwing myriads of new charms over field and forest and river, did not forget that marriages like this point forward in symbol to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

How beautiful she was! How pure the satiny white which robed the graceful form! How full of rhythm the thoughts that floated upon her fancy! How many the angels flying over the Ouachita that day and mistaking her for one of their number!

Mr. Allenson said: "When God intends to clothe his covenant in supreme beauty, he pictures it as a marriage covenant. 'I am married unto you,' he says. (Jer. iii. 14.) All that is most beautiful in marriage is in it, and all that is most beautiful in the covenant belongs to true marriage. The household becomes palace and temple—the divine and human in union. The promises of God to believers have the charm of bridal vows. Why may not Christian parents

expect that their offspring shall choose prudently and marry wisely? The baptismal altar faces the marriage altar. Rebecca will be waiting at the right moment at the well. Obed will be subscribing the covenant at Bethlehem."

The four snowy heads were almost as joyous as bridegroom and bride. The glamour of their own plighting was back again, in all the soft haze of days departed, in all the sacredness of their nearness to the throne. And Jean and the quiet mother were in a renewed honeymoon, and Mr. and Mrs. D'Arbonne were gladly giving a son and gaining a daughter. It is very pleasing when a union of children is a union of families. Persecuted Huguenot and persecuted Covenanter arose from the dead to bless the bans. History came, and Poetry came, and mingled their salutations and kisses among the joined hands. And Showaba, standing in serene approval, like the genius of the continent in its primeval state, now handing its dominion over to the white man, wished silent benedictions upon the descendants of the European saints, the sifted wheat of the East.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE DEATH SONG.

“In the night his song shall be with me.”—PSALM  
xlii. 8.

**A**MONG the Indian tribes now and then there were singular characters, whose ken seemed to penetrate the future. The curtains appeared to lift and their piercing eyes to look through. Our Louisiana historian, Gayarré speaks frequently of this. He tells of Bienville's selection of the site of the Crescent City in 1718, the felling of the great trees, and the prediction of the old squaw :

“Far aloft, above his head, the American eagle might have been observed towering with repeated gyrations and uttering loud shrieks, which sounded like tones of command. Of the Indian race only one representative was there. It was an old sybil-looking woman who had the wild glance of insanity and divination; and with the solemn gesticulations of prophetic inspiration, she kept singing an uncouth sort of chant, in which she said that the time of which she had been warned by the Great Spirit had

come at last; that her death-hour was approaching, which was to be on the day when white men should take possession of the spot where she had dwelt a hundred summers and winters, and when they would cut down the oak, under the shade of which she had indulged so long her solitary musings.

“‘The Spirit tells me,’ so she sang, ‘that the time will come when between the river and the lake there will be as many dwellings for the white man as there are trees standing now. The haunts of the red man are doomed, and faint recollections and traditions concerning the very existence of his race will float dimly over the memory of his successors as unsubstantial, as vague and obscure, as the mist which shrouds on a winter day the bed of the Father of Waters.’”

Thus, too, the romantic historian describes the eloquent chief of the White-Apple in the councils of the Natchez in 1729—his majestic presence—his burning words—and his startling predictions: “The doom of our nation approaches; we have had ancestors—we are destined to be the ancestors of no human beings!”

Threading the rivers and bayous to-day, strolling beneath the shades of silent forests, I know no deeper pathos than in the thought of a vanished race, once numerous and proud, then fad-

ing and disappearing; overborne under the forebodings of a coming doom which hovered about their wigwams, brooded over the playgrounds of their children. For their little ones there was no church of the Lamb, no symbol of divine favor, no assured future. It was the cradle-horror of heathenism. What a contrast between those weird presentiments and the appropriated household promises—the sure guarantees of the divine faithfulness to believers and their children! The one is the nightmare of a rayless fate, the other the halo of the Shechina. The one is the gloom of a haunted wilderness, the other a Canaan-vision from Pisgah.

The story is almost told. Since its telling began, the pen has lingered by a death-bed and a grave. Such is life. Thus writer and reader have been wandering together over the scenes of former loves and sorrows. Meanwhile nature is the same as of old, in perennial beauty and in memorial dreams. We wind among the funeral mounds; we climb their rounded sides; we think of the sleepers. The silence grows intense. The river perpetuates the name of the departed tribes. Ghosts of a hundred canoes float in and out among the shadows of the deepening twilight. The spell settles upon us, and we are listening to the death-dirge of the last of the Ouachitas:

“Showaba sings one song, and then sings no more. The Bay Blossom and her young chief will bury him among his people. They have passed away like flowers before the autumn gales, and I, I only, am left. I feel the ice in my veins. These feet drag slowly to-day. The battle-axe is heavy and dead. The canoe drifts with the tide. Ah me! ah me! the voices of my children are calling!

“Why linger amid the shadows? Showaba is needed no longer. The Bay Blossom is safe and happy without him. Henceforth the young chief will protect her. And see—there is another little Mary, and they have given her to God amid the pure water-drops, and the birdling coos in her nest, and makes heart-music for the mother. There is joy enough in that heart without the Indian now.

“The poor heathen knew nothing of the spread arms of Jesus inviting their little ones. No clear waters from the Ouachita Jordan fell upon the brows of our girls and boys. We did not know. None had told us of the joys of the baptism—our children, His children. And thus my nation, old and young, passed away in ignorance, and no successors remain. No Indian child will henceforth be born beside the Silver River. Showaba is a leafless trunk.

“These eyes grow dim. I cannot see the babe of the sweet Bay Blossom. It wearies me to walk to the Cottage. The old folks bless the new child. They rejoice in the fourth generation. They are not as old as Showaba, but they too will soon be getting tired. They will follow in the trail of Showaba. The war will be hard on the old folks.

“What is this my faint ears hear? The land appears to be full of armies. The rivers roar with thunders. White men are struggling with white men. Brothers are butchering brothers. Once they fought with the red man. They burned his villages. They destroyed his wigwams. Now their own dwellings and cities are in flames.

“This is not the shriek of the Indian woman. This is not the wail of the Indian mother. This is not the gore of an Indian chief. These are not the groans of Indian grandfathers. Perhaps the Great Spirit is avenging the Indian’s wrongs. Happy are the old folks that pass away before the dark days come! Happy the homes that have then the religion of the Cross to sustain!

“I see the young chief going from the Cottage with the war-paint on. He will have to fight with larger robber-bands than before. The Bay

Blossom stands in the porch, the hand of the little girl in hers. She tells him to be brave, and remember the God of battles. She says, all in smiles: 'None of the thousands of wars have ever baffled the covenant. Whoever dies, *that* lives! Go, take care of your honor and your country. God will take care of your two Marys. Baptisms of blood shall not abolish the baptisms of the Holy Ghost.'

"When she turns from him, the smiles melt into tears, and she kneels with the child and prays. Her warrior and her child and herself are committed to the God of the promises. So I see kneeling wives and mothers, by forest and river, all over the land.

"I see black Tobe going with the young chief. He rides the steed which was captured from the robbers. He carries the food and the water and the rifle. He carries the Good Book given them by the Bay Blossom. On battle-field and in the quarters, at home, the black men are true to their masters and the women and the children. It was the God of the covenant, and He alone, that kept them so!

"See, a sword descends upon the brave young chief. He is ever in the front of the charge. Black Tobe knocks the assailant down as he knocked Don Gonzalez; he catches the falling

hero, bears him to the tent, hands him the Bible, and nurses him well again. Through all the future years, the bloody warfare over, Tobe is cared for along the Ouachita. He sits in the church-gallery and worships.

“And Mr. Allenson goes to the wars, and preaches about the Prince of Peace. While rifle-balls are whistling, he tells of the time when swords shall be beaten into plowshares, and spears into pruning-hooks. Ministers loved their country—their own sunny Southland; and among her lifted banners they lifted the banner of the Cross. In tent and hospital, to friend and captured foe, they tell of the saving blood. On the march they bear the ark of the covenant.

“And now the boom of cannon and the smoke of conflict roll away. Homes are being rebuilt. Churches are singing again. Cradles are rocked in peace. Where the land was baptized in blood, the baptismal drops are telling of promise and purity. The children of the people become the children of God. Future wars are to be waged with spiritual wickedness. Shall not the gospel covenant be honored as never before?

“I see the streams of the South flowing with un-muddied waters. The Ouachita, loved of my fathers, queen of rivers, glitters with light from heaven. A thousand Hope Cottages grow lumi-

nous along his banks. Churches put on new glory. The household becomes illustrious. The babe is dedicated to the Master, and the little child shall lead them. Young men and maidens adore the God of their ancestry.

“Marriages are celebrated amid the incense of the mercy-seat. Family trees are redolent with heavenly dews. The Bible is the charter of the fireside. Mr. Allenson grows old, walks the frontiers, and Calvin La Fontaine is ordained, and becomes co-paster. Love is as white as the Bay Blossom.

“It is again the Moon of Strawberries. I smell their rich odors along the hill-sides. It is the eighteenth sunset—the day when the belle of the Ouachita came to Showaba’s wigwam. We sailed the bright waters together. It is again the hour for pushing the slumbering canoe into the stream.

“Dear river of my fathers! Indian warriors walked thy banks. Indian sages praised thy beauty. Indian lovers delighted in thy groves. The graves of my fathers rest near the sparkle of thy ripples. Beloved Ouachita, farewell!

“My feet grow cold; these hands are chill. I am not afraid of death! The young chief and his Bay Blossom will lay the old Indian to rest. She will look as a day after storms. Fair was



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she in her girlhood; fair is she in her young motherhood; graceful as the trailing jasmine, wholesome as breath of pines, white as the promise of God. I seem to be drifting out upon the musical, beautiful river—the Last, the Last of the Ouachitas. I leave these lands to Christians. Farewell, tall oaks, green mistletoe, gray mosses. Sleep settles over me. I see Jesus on the shore. He calls me—I know him—it is the Christ of the Bay Blossom!”