

COLUMBIA LIBRARIES OFFSITE



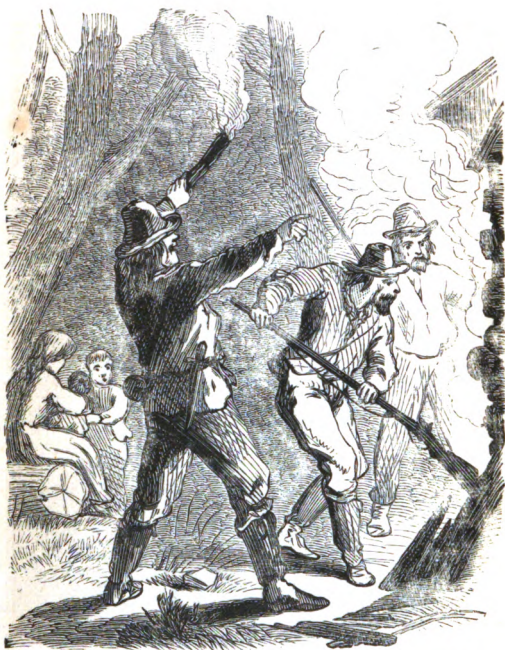
1002146916

**Columbia University
in the City of New York**

THE LIBRARIES



**Bequest of
Frederic Bancroft
1860-1945**



Fire, skilfully applied by these incendiaries, lit
the cabin.—Page 73.

THE CABIN IN THE BRUSH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"MARION THROUGH THE BRUSH," "NANNIE BARTON," "CONVICT'S
FAMILY," &C. &C.

"I will be found of them that sought me not."

PHILADELPHIA:
J. P. SKELLY & CO.,
NO. 21 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET,
(Second Floor.)
1867.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by
J. P. SKELLY & CO.,
In the Office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern
District of Pennsylvania.

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY ALFRED MARTIEN.

To those who have spent the last few years in the peaceful East, the following pages may seem the web of a romance.

Those to whom the "Brush" is a word unknown, who have dwelt in blissful ignorance that there is in this enlightened land such a region of darkness, and who have heard of bushwhackers and guerrillas only in stray newspaper paragraphs, may need to be assured that all the characters and incidents are *true*. Living men, and women, and children are these; real homes and trials that have pressed hard on living hearts.

Contents.

	PAGE.
I.—THE FAMILY IN THE BRUSH.....	7
II.—A HARD WINTER.....	31
III.—THE LONELY GRAVE.....	52
IV.—THE NIGHT VISIT.....	68
V.—THROUGH THE WASTE.....	82
VI.—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.....	106
VII.—THE WONDERFUL NEWS.....	125
VIII.—STEPS RETRACED.....	141
IX.—THE FELLOW-TRAVELER.....	164
X.—THE FAITHFUL MOTHER... ..	189
XI.—JOY IN THE MORNING.....	207

THE CABIN IN THE BRUSH.

I.

THE FAMILY IN THE BRUSH.

THE Brush is a region of country forming a portion of southwestern Missouri, and stretching down into Arkansas; woodland in part, but generally what its name indicates, an undergrowth of scrawny shrubs, the rude products of an untilled and stony soil. Hundreds of human beings live indefinitely in the Brush. Out of the Brush, in the war time came guerillas and bushwhackers, of whom fear-

ful tales were told. Into the Brush no home missionary has found his way; there, no school-house sends forth the hum of earnest child-voices like a busy hive. Over the Brush breaks no sweet sound of Sabbath bell. In the Brush dwell uncouth children, men and women, with scarcely a thought rising above the earth they live upon. When the Brush is roused by echoes of the woodman's axe it is for the building of some rude log-cabin; when the soil is turned by the plough-share it is but in some small corner where it is to be a poor "potato patch," or straggling field of corn, sufficient for the few wants of to-day. Here, nevertheless, poor, degraded, and outcast, live those bound to us as kindred by common descent, bodies that must moulder, as we shall, under the sod, and

souls that shall meet us at the bar of God.

In the Brush, in 1864, beyond the Arkansas border lived a mother and her children. Their home was a cabin, built of unhewn logs and "chinked" with mud. It boasted of but one room, and that was without a floor save the beaten earth. Nearly the whole back of it was occupied by the huge chimney. Poor as the dwelling was, it had been this woman's home for years; here all her children had been born, and in spite of its poverty and roughness she loved the place. The woman was Rachel Craig, and her children were five in number. With her own hands Rachel had toiled, helping James, her husband, to build the cabin. It had but one window and one door, yet rude as it was, they looked

upon it as quite a triumph of architecture, and it sufficed for their untutored wants. To the house they had added a shed for a cow, and a pen for a pig, a small space poorly cultivated for corn, cabbage and potatoes, and about the whole a fence of unpeeled saplings. They had no neighbors nearer than five miles, but people in the Brush do not expect or care to live very near together. When the sounds of war had aroused every one all over the land, to take either one side or the other, and had penetrated even into the Brush, sending out the lawless spirits there to congenial scenes of strife, James Craig by some means took a different side from his acquaintances, and went off in a loyal regiment. Left alone in her cabin with five little children, Rachel had no complaint to make. She had known

many women left for a less cause than war, and if James chose to go she had nothing to say. Accustomed all her life to hard outdoor labor, Rachel could take care of the cow and pig, collect her own fuel from the Brush, dig her own potatoes, and grind up her corn in their own rude way. Unaccustomed to look beyond the needs of the present hour, Rachel, having a roof to shelter her, and food for several meals to come, literally took no thought for the morrow, and had her usual quietude all undisturbed. Of the children, the eldest was not seven years, and the youngest only two months old. An uncouth flock of little ones were they, with heads that had never known hats, and feet that had never worn shoes. Brown, and not over cleanly were their faces; their elfish locks, uncombed,

were bleached and thin ; their eyes a light blue, their limbs bony and long, "little frights," some might call them, and, adding to this personal appearance, manners wild as those of young Hottentots, and dress composed of a single garment each of homespun linsey, they did indeed afford a strong contrast to the children of thriving Eastern homes. These children were of cheerful dispositions and loving hearts ; there was little jarring in their sports together, and they clung to their mother with a love that rejoiced her. A very loving, devoted mother in her own way was Rachel, no mother more so ; she lived but in her children, and would have defended the little group of white savages with her life. Her love, being entirely uninstructed, never moved her to wash their faces, smooth their tangled

white heads, or give them more than one garment each; worse than this, she could teach them nothing, having never learned anything herself. For these Brush children there was no prayer whispered at their mother's knee; no reverent mention of God's holy name; no stories from the sacred Word of Joseph, or of Samuel, of the Widow's son, of Elijah, raven-fed, or of the Captive Maid in her Syrian home. Rachel had no Bible, if she had had one, she could not have read it. She had no hymns stored up in memory wherewith to lull her babes to sleep; she had never seen a minister, never heard a prayer.

There may be some who can scarcely believe in the existence of such ignorance in our own land. Dear friends the half has not been told you! Help for the West, my

fellow Christians, for the West, standing as Macedonia of old with pleading lips and a pitiful cry!

Had a stranger asked Rachel's children that common question, "Who made you?" they would most likely have taken refuge in the cow-shed, or the most remote corner of the cabin; or, if they had gathered courage to reply at all, would have cried, "Mammy;" "mammy" being in their eyes the highest power. As for poor "mammy" herself, she might possibly have somewhere heard of God, perhaps even of him as the creator of herself and the world, but that he constantly watched over her, that he felt in her a fatherly interest, that he desired her good, that her children were precious in his eyes, she had never for one moment thought. As for thoughts in fact, Rachel's

were so much of the earth, earthy, that they seldom got beyond her hoe, her cow, and her spinning-wheel, and how they should provide food and garments for her five little children. Jim, Rachel's eldest child, was a poor, feeble creature, wasted away by many an illness; a wan, pinched, miserable object, perhaps all the dearer to the mother even for that, and the sure signs set upon him, readable even by her ignorant eyes, of an early death. Next to him came a boy and girl, dark and ruddy of cheek, lithe and vigorous of limb, with noisy lungs, ungovernable, hardy appetites, genuine children of the backwoods, sturdy and fearless. Next after these was a boy of two, a wretched infant that had never walked, dividing with the healthy girl-baby his mother's cares. Rachel seldom saw

her neighbors. Poor Jim was unable to go so far, the two babies could not walk at all, and hour after hour, and day after day, Rachel sat on the log door step, her arms listlessly folded over her knees, her baby rolling on the ground at her feet, her elder children amusing themselves digging and playing in the dirt, making huts after the model of the hut in which they lived, concocting mud pies, and opening channels for miniature rivers. But as the autumn hastened on to winter, Rachel roused herself to some action. The corn, a scant supply, was brought in, the stalks were taken to the shed to be the chief winter provision for the cow. The potatoes were dug, and a few roots and weeds were brought in for Brindle's provender, and Rachel listlessly waited for cold weather, as when

cold weather came she would listlessly wait for spring. Thus it is ever with those who have no hope beyond the present life; like the Jews of old they cry "in the morning, would God it were even! and at even, would God it were morning!" The first promise of trouble that came seriously to Rachel was the want of salt. She had only a pound of fine salt, and a quantity of rock salt not nearly sufficient to salt her pig when it should be killed, and none could be obtained nearer than twenty miles, and indeed she had not a penny to buy any, even where it was to be sold.

She must, therefore, wait until cold weather before the pig was killed, that the cold might assist in its preservation. Winter at last fairly set in, earlier than usual, and one day Rachel undertook to kill

2*

her pig. She had made a fire not far from her house, and there were her children, gathered with childish curiosity, to watch their mother cutting up and preserving in her own rude way, the chief part of the winter's food. The pig being killed and partly dressed, Rachel went with her second and third children, the hardy Mose and Hannah, into the brush about her clearing, and after an hour's hard labor, had collected a good supply of fuel. She then made a grand fire in her fire-place, and hung over it her large iron pot. The baby was put in the warmth of this fire in its home-made cradle, wherein all its four brothers and sisters had been rocked. The child, accustomed to taking care of itself, lay with its round blue eyes intently watching the bright tongues of flame as they leaped and roared

up the black throat of the chimney. Meanwhile, the children and their mother out of doors, had made, under Jim's direction, a little fire of their own, and were going to cook their own dinner.

"Mammy," said Jim, "you must give we'uns the pig's tail for our fire."

"And give we'uns some fat to cook on a stick!" cried Hannah.

"I don't like fat without roughness," whimpered Mose.

Now this remark of Mose being unintelligible to civilized children, it must be explained that by roughness he meant vegetables of any kind, potatoes being the principal variety brought by use to his knowledge.

Rachel, never wearying of her children or their demands, brought three potatoes

from the cabin, gave them the pig's tail and the required fat, and a very little salt, for this time of killing the pig was a gala day to the Brush family, and she felt it only right to give the little ones a treat.

"I hope Dick Tad ain't going to have no pig's tail," said Jim, as he watched the precious morsel twisting and turning on the hot coals.

"Why, how now?" said Rachel, who was preparing the pig's head and feet for immediate boiling.

"'Cause he rocked me, me and the baby," said Jim.

Now, to little dwellers in the East, rocking any one may not seem an enormity, so it must be explained that in the Southwest "rocks" are stones, and *rocking* is equivalent to *stoning*.

"If I ketch him rockin' my children," said Rachel, angrily, "I'll teach him! I'll pull his hair and beat him with a stick!" Pity that thus a mother should foster the anger and revenge burning on the hearts of her children, but Rachel had never heard the gospel of peace, she knew not of Him, who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again," who bids us "love our enemies."

When Mose came, Hannah toasted her strips of pork on a stick over the fire, and carried one to solace the baby in the cradle. The potatoes and the pig's tail were also cooked, and the children ate, well-pleased with this noon-day meal of their own preparing. Rachel, too busy to stop to eat, put the pig's head and feet in her pot in the house to boil, and having one or two large pieces of pork cut which seemed in her way, she

put them in a small tub in the house also. Well for her that she did this. About four o'clock the sound of horses' feet startled her. It was a sound unheard perhaps for months in those solitudes. Looking up, she saw three men riding close up to her sapling fence. The men were mounted on shaggy, raw-boned steeds; they wore torn, slouched hats, suits of homespun, ragged and soiled; one had no shoes; over their shoulders were carried shot guns, and each one had in a leathern belt about his waist a revolver, and one of them a knife. Rachel knew they were bushwhackers, though it was a class of men she had not before seen.

"Where's your old man?" demanded the foremost of the three stopping, while his horse, almost as savage looking as himself, gnawed at the fence.

"Gone off; I don't know whar," replied Rachel, taking up Bill, the two-year old, in her arms, while the other three children clung terrified about her skirts, peering out from their refuge at the unwelcome visitants.

"Gone sogering?" asked another man.

"Guess he *has*," responded Rachel, tartly.

"Which side's he gone an' took?" asked, angrily, the third one of the group.

"His own side, I reckon, what do I know 'bout sides?" returned Rachel, who knew nothing of the beauty of truth, and always said what she thought would best suit her purpose.

"Now look here, woman," said the first speaker, striking the fence with the stock of his gun, "he ain't on our side, an' we know it. None of your palaverin' to us. What's that you're doin'?"

"Look and see," replied Rachel, surlily.

"We do see, cuttin' up pig! well, it'll do just as well for we'uns as for you'uns," and thus speaking, the men threw their halters over the palings of the fence, and springing to the ground walked up to the fire.

"This is your pig, I s'pose?" said one of the men, sneeringly.

"Yes, it's mine; leave it be!" cried Rachel.

"It's our'n now!" said one of the men. "We'll eat what we want and take the rest."

"You shan't, you shan't; it's all my children have for winter, they'll starve if you take it."

"Likely as not," said one bushwhacker,

"but we don't care; starvin's getting to be common these days."

A wild idea of doing battle for the preservation of her property, the chief food of her family, rushed into Rachel's mind; but one of the men, pulling his revolver from his belt, and stepping closer to her, said,

"See here, woman, you take your young ones and git into your cabin, if you know what's best. Whose going to care if we kill the whole pack of you?"

"Yes," said another, divining Rachel's love for her children, "or carry' off one of the young uns for a bushwhacker, too. Here's one would make a gay one, and we'll take him as well as the pig," and the man caught up Mose by one arm, and held him aloft, screaming and struggling.

"Give him to me; let me take him into the house; take the meat, but give me my boy!" shrieked Rachel.

"Who wants him, fat, dirty little lump," said the man, laughing, and throwing the child roughly down.

Rachel, holding Bill in her arms, and clasping the hand of the sobbing Mose, drove Jim and Hannah before her, as angry, terrified and distressed beyond measure, she retreated to her cabin. Once there, she locked, or rather bolted the door, for its fastening was a strong wooden bolt, and though she well knew that neither the door or the walls would be any sure protection from her reckless visitors, she felt relieved when she had shut them out. Drawing a low stool to the fire she took the babe in her arms, and sat down in despair. Jim

and Bill curled themselves upon the hearth at her feet; Bill finding contentment in sucking a piece of meat, but Jim crying softly in terror and sympathy with his mother. Hannah crept into the cradle, but the unconquerable Mose stood on tiptoe by the window peering out, and betimes reporting the progress of events.

“Mammy! them bad men gettin’ all Brindle’s fodder for dey hoss!”

Then a new fear started into Rachel’s mind. Brindle, the cow, now nearly their sole dependence, was out in the Brush, picking up what scanty sustenance she could find above the frozen earth, should she wander homewards the bushwhackers would most assuredly kill her, or drive her off; in either event starvation would be the lot of Rachel and her babes. Trembling lest

Mose should announce the four-footed friend's return, Rachel sat still by the fire.

"Mammy!" again from Mose, "dey men cookin' meat and smoking de pipes!"

The meat in the pot over the hearth-fire was now done, and Rachel rose to put it away, giving first a few morsels to the children. Glancing out, she saw the men had rolled logs and stones near the fire, and were sitting there waiting for their meat to cook. Hannah and the two babies slept at last; even Mose grew weary of his watch, and curled himself upon the hearth like a family cat. Rachel took her seat by the window, Jim came and got in her lap with his arms about her neck, and tears still running slowly over his wan, unchildish face. It had grown dark, but the fire out-

side was kept up, and in its light Rachel saw the forms of her three tormentors feasting on her meat, their guns leaning by their sides, and their horses pawing and restless in the background. In this hour of fear and oppression poor Rachel had no comforter; she knew not of Him who "neither slumbers nor sleeps," who hears "the young ravens when they cry, who gives to the lion his food," who says to the children of men, "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee." Poor Rachel, grieving mother, lonely and forsaken wife! Sitting there in her cabin among her sleeping little ones, the dreary winter upon her, starvation staring her in the face—death maybe from a ruthless man's bullet at her very door. Unhappy woman without help or hope, yet in all these hours of trial that mighty,

3*

tender, but, to her, unknown God, was working his merciful purpose. "His ways are not as our ways, or his thoughts as our thoughts."

II.

A HARD WINTER.

THE bushwhackers mounted their horses, having first ladened them with meat, and rode off about midnight, one of them firing off his gun at the cabin, by way of a parting salute. The ball buried itself in one of the logs that formed the walls, and so was harmless. The fire smouldered away; Jim drooped his head sleepily and was laid upon his bed; Rachel herself found refuge in slumber. Early in the morning Rachel went into the Brush to search for her cow; she found the poor animal at last, looking cold and hungry,

and there was but little food at the shed to be given her, the horses having devoured the larger portion of it.

"Poor Brindle," said Rachel, as she drove the animal home, "you're starvin' like the rest of us."

At home Rachel strove to calculate how many weeks there would be before spring, and to divide by this the number of her potatoes and ears of corn, to know how much they could each eat in a day or at a meal. This complex piece of arithmetic took her a long time to unravel, she might have begun at the other end of the example, and calculated how little each one could eat and keep up life, for this was only the result at last. Warned by recent experience, Rachel resolved to hide her small store of provisions, fearing another visit from the

bushwhackers would deprive her of the last morsel. Mose and Hannah, with their lively tongues and inquisitive eyes, were quite in the way of hiding anything, but she took time when they were asleep, or out of doors, and dug a deep hole which she lined as well as she could with stones, and there she hid, covered with bark and saplings, her corn and potatoes ; taking out enough for a few days' provision, which she concealed among the log walls. Over the cache she had made in a corner she spread her bed, burning, partly from necessity, and partly from sheer desperation, her rough bedstead. Indeed Rachel was now afraid to leave her children alone lest the bushwhackers should return and carry off one of them, or kill them all from pure malice, and Rachel felt that she must keep near them to defend

them or die with them. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends." Rachel was ready to lay down *her* life for her children, but knew nothing of him, "Who commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Knowing that the cabin could be home to her but a little time longer, Rachel used her fence and her pig-pen for fuel. Dreary days followed, days when all were hungry, the little ones growing thin and old-looking, taking no interest in play; and the mother sitting with folded hands in a maze of wonder as to how they could stay where they were. To start for another place with two babies who could not walk, and poor Jim who would fall down from exhaustion before going half a mile, seemed impossible.

On a dark, stormy night, when the wind was driving the fast-falling sleet fiercely about, Rachel had milked her cow, and as usual bringing in the milk in an old basin, had given it yet warm to the children for their suppers. The little ones were asleep, the baby in the cradle, Bill and Jim on the bed, while Mose and Hannah were curled up on the hearth to get the heat of the dying fire. A trampling of hoofs aroused Rachel, who sat on a low stool before the fire, resolving the painful old question, how could she go? or how could she stay? A heavy blow on the door from the stock of a gun, and a loud voice angrily demanding why folks were kept out in the storm, warned her to admit whoever was without. Two men entered, their garments dripping, the sleet clinging stiffly to their hair and

shaggy beards. Their equipments of guns, bowie-knives, and revolvers, being enough to alarm any woman, even though bold as Rachel. The men strode up to the hearth, the younger pushing Mose and Hannah roughly with his feet, and standing so that the water dripping from his clothing formed a little pool about them where they lay.

"Ain't you got no better fire nor this to dry a fellow?" growled this younger man.

"I can make it up again," said Rachel, throwing on the embers what fuel was in the house.

"Go get some more," said the elder man. "Haven't you nary shed to tie them hosses in, 'stead of leavin' them out thar?"

"Ef she haint, we'll bring 'em in here," said the other.

"I've got an old shed, I'll tie 'em up for you," said Rachel, hastily, thinking of the shelter poor Brindle was in, gnawing at a few forlorn cornstalks.

"Tie 'em up, but none of your tricks."

Rachel led the horses to the shed, and brought in as much of her fence as she could carry; she gave one man her only chair, the other her stool, and then ventured to lift up Mose and Hannah and place them on the bed. She then wiped the moisture from her face and hair, put a fragment of a shawl about her shoulders, and sat down on the floor by the bed. The men pulled off their worn hats and boots and set them to dry, examined and wiped their arms, and then one of them took out a leather bag wherein were hard biscuit, pork, and cheese.

Mebby this 'oman's got something for us to eat?" said the younger man.

Rachel arose and getting two cold potatoes held them out sulkily.

"Is them all?" queried the elder bushwhacker.

"Every bite or taste I've got," asserted Rachel, untruthfully.

"What'll you do for eatin'?"

"Die, starve, that's what I'll do," she retorted bitterly.

"I don't want yer taters," said the man.

"I do," said the younger, coolly taking one at a mouthful, and holding the other over the fire to warm. Back went Rachel to her seat by her sleeping children. The men ate what they had in the bag and then fell into conversation.

"A rainy, ugly, awful night," said one.

"I say, Sime," said the gray-haired man, "these here nights make me think of all the bad deeds ever I done."

"Poh! what's them?" said the other.

"The many men we've made stiff and still!"

"Poh! them Union fellows think fighting on their side takes 'em straight to the good place the parsons tell about; so it's just a kindness to put 'em out of the way."

"And to think of the old men an' the children, an' the women folks we've shot like rabbits."

"Hoh! who cares?" said Sime.

"Sech nights make me think of my old mammy. She comes to me jest as plain, when you're all sleepin' round the fire, Sime, she comes as plain, standin' up, with her handkercher tied over her head, her

grey hair hangin' down over her shoulders, her finger pointin' at me, up and down, up an' down, an' she keeps sayin' 'I larnt ye better, I did, I did!'"

"Don't be a fool," said Sime, angrily; "what on airth did the old woman larn you?"

"Oh, 'bout their bein' a God who takes 'count of all our doings an' reckons 'em up, and pays us after we's dead. 'Bout bad folks burnin' up, and all sich."

"D'ye b'lieve it?" questioned Sime.

"Not gin'rilly; but nights like this here, when it is all so black, an' wild, and she keeps pointin' and speakin' at me all the time, I *do* b'lieve it. I kin see her now when I shet my eyes, standin' right yonder in the chimney corner!"

"Ugh! you make a fellow's flesh creep.

Why didn't you stick to her talk if you like it so much?"

"'Cause she died nigh fifty years ago, when we was goin' to Ten'see from whar we lived up in 'Mont State. I wan't no more nor ten then, an' dad an' I did our ways an' not her'n."

Rachel listened eagerly. What had she ever taught her children that should follow them long after she was dead? Nothing, nothing at all, and yet, as she argued to herself, "that's cause I don't know nothin'!"

"Sometimes," said the old man, "I think I'll go live in the Brush all 'lone like, and never do no more bad things."

"Pooh!" said Sime, "folks wouldn't let you 'lone no how. These times ye must kill or be kilt; them's *my* notions. What's that woman starin' at now?"

4*

Rachel averted her eyes that had been fixed keenly on the elder stranger's face.

"What do you keep in the shed?" asked Sime.

"Nothin'," replied Rachel, still falsely.

"'Cause ef it's a cow, or a hoss, or a pig we'll hev it in the mornin'!"

Rachel now lost all hope of keeping Brindle, and wondered how the children would live deprived of their suppers.

Towards morning the men dosed, Rachel went out for more fuel, and by the faint grey light led Brindle from the stable and drove her into the Brush. Then taking a fresh supply of fuel she went in and threw it on the fire. The action woke the men, who asked if the storm continued.

"No; the wind's fell an' it's goin' to be clar," she replied.

After a whispered conversation, the men gathered up their equipments, and coolly telling Rachel she had nothing worth carrying off, got their horses and went their way. They had apparently forgotten Brindle. Three weeks passed and one night Rachel was aroused from sleep by a bright light and the report of a gun. Looking through her little window she saw several men, who had fired her shed to light them in the work of cutting up the carcass of poor Brindle whom they had just shot. For nearly two hours they pursued their task; the shed was a heap of coals, the meat was divided and tied up in portions of the skin, the bushwhackers were ready to depart, when one rode up to the door and ordered her to open it. Rachel obeyed and stood before him expecting death. "We've got your cow for beef,

it's poor enough; an' the shed made a candle to cut it up by. Next time we call around this way, we'll light the cabin—we aint time now," and so he rode away, leaving Rachel stupefied under this new disaster. Her cabin was doomed; she felt sure that in the snow and storms of winter she should be rendered homeless. Her neighbors were as poor as herself, and the five miles between herself and the nearest house seemed an impassable distance; Jim she could not carry, and he could not walk so far. Filled with these gloomy forebodings, with no thought of God, in whom she could place her confidence; without the Christian's faith which can cry, "All these light afflictions which endure but for a moment shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Sometimes the few words of the grey-headed bushwhacker, that there was a God who took account of all men's doings, and that there was a punishment for evil deeds after death, were the subject of hours of musing. She did not feel that they had any particular interest or application for herself, but she hoped they were true, that her enemies might be repaid for the miseries they had brought upon herself and her family. Rachel had so little idea of God or his requirements, of herself and her sinfulness, that it never once entered her mind that she had done anything wrong, or that she was liable to condemnation.

On the morning after the cow had been killed, Rachel carefully collected the scraps and bones that the bushwhackers had left scattered about, and hiding the scraps in the

snow, made the bones into broth, a poor broth to be sure of only bones, salt, and corn meal, but the children ate it ravenously, and Mose and Hannah always hearty and hungry said they wished the men would kill a cow every night; they were glad Brindle was dead, her bones were so good.

"You won't say so to-night, children," sighed Rachel.

"How'll ye get on with no drink of warm milk? What'll Jim and the babies do?"

Indeed poor Brindle was sadly missed. Jim and Bill cried for their evening milk, and the baby, not getting enough to satisfy her from her half-starved mother, fretted and slept but poorly. Forced by necessity, Rachel now spent much time in the Brush, seeking for squirrels, rabbits, or the few

birds that had not gone farther south. On these expeditions she took Mose and Hannah, as they were hardy enough to endure the cold and exertion, the three feeble ones she left in the cabin, Jim bolting the door 'after her. Each time as she went out she pressed the three children in her arms, and kissed their little faces as if for a last farewell, and ever as, after her two or three hours search for food, she returned home, she looked with fear and trembling towards the clearing, lest her hut should be but a heap of ashes, and her children dead.

Now and then Rachel succeeded in getting some little animal to eke out their scanty supply of food, and frequently she dug roots out of the frozen earth, of which she made a sort of tea that she esteemed more nourish-

ing than water, though, having neither milk or sugar for it, it was not very palatable. Of the skins of the rabbits and squirrels she made mocassins, with the fur, inside, for herself and the children, in their walks.

One day after a three hours' search in which Rachel had obtained only a few roots, she was going anxiously homewards, while Mose and Hannah pried eagerly into the bushes on either side of the way. Suddenly Mose began pulling at something partly concealed by the last fall of snow, and triumphantly dragged to light a leather bag, the cord that had held it over its owner's shoulders had broken, probably pulled by some tree as he rode along, and it had fallen off unheeded. Rachel examined the adjacent ground to see if there

were any tracks, and finally convinced that the bag had been dropped sometime previous, hurried on to her cabin. Once there the bag was as eagerly opened as if it had been expected to contain gold or gems, and indeed food was of far more importance to Rachel than anything else. The children shouted as three biscuits, a little paper of brown sugar, and nearly two pounds of pork were taken from the bag.

“It’s mine, it’s mine! I found it!” cried Mose. “Mammy didn’t find nuffin to-day. It’s mine, but you’uns can hev all you’uns wants.”

Poor little Mose! children are often called generous who divide with others their abundance of candy and cake, how much more generous he, thus ready to divide the

food which he had craved so many long, hungry days!

Of the bag Rachel made a sort of boots for Jim, whose thin, bare feet ached with cold as he ran over the earth floor.

Thus the winter months dragged heavily away. March, windy and cold in its earlier days, grew mild, and through the Brush the blue-birds and jays began to call, the woodpeckers to hammer, the little buds to swell and shyly open, and the earth about the tree roots grew moist and warm. Again Mose and Hannah played before the door, the baby trying her strength by lifting herself up on her feet, but poor Bill, deprived of sufficient food, or the wise care he needed, still could not walk, only crawling about, a pitiful sight. Jim grew feebler and thinner every day. Night after night

he tossed in feverish unrest, and daily had less appetite for his coarse fare. Poor Rachel saw the end was near and wept.

3*

III.

THE LONELY GRAVE.

SPRING brought to Rachel and her family a new article of diet, oak-salad. This was the young leaves of the oak tree boiled with a little salt, a most miserable fare for human beings to be sure, yet one that kept up the feeble fires of life in many an emaciated frame, while waiting for the days of peace. Rachel with Mose and Hannah would go forth into the Brush to gather the oak leaves, and on these the three lived, leaving the scant portion of corn and potatoes for Jim and

the two babies. Jim could no longer walk, exhausted with illness, he lay on the bed or on a quilt spread on the floor, watching with dull eyes his mother and the little ones. Rachel, with a breaking heart, watched for the coming of death. She held the sick boy in her arms, smoothing his light hair, kissing his thin, fevered cheek, and looking tearfully into the blue eyes that were soon to close forever. There was no sweet hymn of heaven sung to little Jim, no song of "the happy land," of "Jesus merciful and mild," holding out loving arms to welcome him on the other side of the river of death. Rachel could not tell that little child of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," who took young infants in his arms and blessed them. Poor little Jim, like many a child in heathen

5*

lands, was dying, and had never heard the name of Jesus !

On an April morning Mose and Hannah were eating oak-salad from an iron pan as they sat on the ground before the cabin-door. The baby was trying to help them dispose of the unpalatable meal, taking now and then a taste, and turning away displeased. Bill lay on the ground looking up into his mother's unhappy face, and Rachel herself sat in the door-way, now and then glancing at Jim, who lay in a heavy sleep. The sound of voices and footsteps called the attention of Mose, who shouted, " Mammy, here's 'em Tads ! "

Rachel looked up and saw a family who had been her nearest neighbors, living five miles from her cabin. An elderly woman and two little girls, each laden with a

bundle, walked on at the pace of persons who have a long journey before them, while two boys, now running, now playing, now fighting with each other, bade fair to exhaust their strength at the beginning of the way. Taking Bill in her arms Rachel walked out to meet them, asking in broad Brush dialect, "Whar now?"

"Up into 'Souri," replied dame Tad.

"Starved out?" asked Rachel.

"Ya'as, an' burned out. Them bush-whackers burnt our cabin last night. Son Joe he's off with the Fed'als, and *we're* marked. Your turn next, Rachel; better pull up stakes and come 'long with we'uns. We'uns can wait a matter of half an hour while you'uns packs up."

Rachel shook her head. "We's starvin', oak-salad an' a few ears of corn's all we's

got. But here are two babies what can't walk, and Jim's goin' to die. He sleeps all the time, and ain't eat a morsel this two day," and big tears rolled down her face as she spoke.

"As fur them babies, mebbly we mought help you wid them, seein' our men's both in the Fed'al side, but Jim's the rub; it's better for him to die, and fur you, too. Move off as soon as ye can, Rachel."

Rachel choked down her sobs and watched her neighbors disappear in the Brush. The bushwhackers were then near, and would certainly burn her house. Eighteen ears of corn remained of all her store, these she took from her house and hid in a secure place on the edge of the Brush.

All day she sat and watched for her enemies to come and burn her house, and death to claim her boy. Slowly the fever

burned Jim's life away—feebler and feebler, like an exhausted lamp gleamed the light of life in his eyes. Night came dreary and dark, the winds whistled, the rain beat against the house, a little fire had burned awhile on the hearth, and before it sat Rachel on the floor, holding Jim on her lap, while Mose and Hannah stood in grieved and frightened silence on each side of her. The two babies were asleep on the floor and Hannah had covered them with a quilt.

“Why don't Jim wake up?” asked Hannah.

“He'll never wake up no more,” sobbed her mother.

“He's slept all day. I should think he'd want to eat suffin',” said Mose.

“He'll never eat again. My poor boy, my poor little boy.”

"How he looks, how his eyes go away in his head, how his breff comes out and goes away for so long," said Hannah, wiping off with her little dirty hand the tears that ran over her mother's cheeks.

"He is going to die," mourned Rachel, "poor little Jim is going to die. I shall have no little Jim. He will die and be put in the ground.

"Bad mammy to put Jim in the ground, you shan't do it," said the unconquerable Mose.

"I can't help it; he'll be dead, and he must be put in the ground. Oh! I'd rather be there myself than put my little Jim in the dark, black, hateful ground."

There was no light shining over the grave for Rachel; she knew not who had lain in the grave, and made it blessed for ever; for

her there were no thoughts of a bright heaven where her child might go, where sickness and hunger and pain should never more be known. Mose and Hannah were crying in sympathy with their mother, when the door swung open and a heavy step called their attention. It was the gray-haired bushwhacker.

Recognizing her guest, Rachel exclaimed, bitterly,

“Here you have come to burn the roof over my boy’s head while he is dying. Kill us all, you have taken everything we had, and now my Jim is going to die and I don’t want to live, kill us and have done with it.”

The man drew up a stool, poked the embers on the hearth until they blazed and then flung on a rocker of the cradle that

Mose had that day broken off. He looked curiously about the room for a few minutes, and then said,

"You'uns needn't be afraid of me. I'm all alone, and *I* ain't gwine to kill a mother or her chil'run. I hed a mother onct, I did."

"Mammy says Jim's goin' to die," said Mose, who had no fear of man before his eyes.

"He is, sure enough," muttered the man.

Rachel sighed.

"You feel bad 'bout the lad," said the stranger, looking keenly into her face; "but wot's the use. 'Taint much good you, nor I, nor the young'uns gets livin'. He'd better die nor hev gray hairs loike mine."

"What good'll he get by dying, I'd like to know?" said Rachel.

"My old mam used to tell 'bout chil'run hevin' a good place to go to after they was dead, and how they got made angels of, or something of that sort of, an' how she lived 'spectin' to meet them chil'run she had berried in some good place, whar she'd hev 'em for ever. Ef she *did*, it's more nor she'll hev of *me*."

"Think it's true?" asked Rachel.

"The ole woman wusn't given to tellin' lies; *she* said it was wicked," replied the man, doggedly.

Rachel's eyes brightened; there might yet be some good in store for little Jim. Then the shadow of sorrow and ignorance darkened again. "I don't want to lose my Jim," she murmured.

The man rose. "That ere boy's got only a few hours afore him," he said. "I reckon we'll not get here afore he's gone. But when you get him berried you'd better move off. Sime and the rest know as how your old man's gone to the, Fed'als and they're gwine to burn your shebang."

Heavily he tramped away into the wind and rain, the fire burned low, and died, then Rachel had no heart to light it again. Mose and Hannah sank down on either side of her, and slept. The darkness grew thick, the night was so full of the outcry of the storm, that she could not hear Jim's beloved breathing, without bending down very close to his face. The night wore on, the hot breath came feebler and fainter. Rachel could only tell when the boy was dead, by the breath failing to come back with a gasp,

the body growing a heavier weight on her arm, and the hands getting chill in her eager clasp. She knew it at last, and yet she sat there until the storm had died away, and the grey dawn stole in at her window; then she woke Mose and Hannah, and laid Jim's body on the bed.

"Jim is dead," she said to the children.

"Are you going to put him in the ground?" asked Hannah, terrified. Her mother nodded.

"You shan't do it, I won't let you!" screamed Mose. Then, running to his brother's side, he cried, "Wake up Jim! Jim, we'uns will run away. Mammy's got bad an don't love you, Jim!" each word a dagger to the mother, whose heart was breaking.

After an effort to rouse his brother, Mose said, "Mammy, why *don't* Jim wake up?"

"He's dead, he will never move or speak any more. We must hide him in the ground, and then go off afore them men come and kill us all."

"Be quick then, mammy," whined Mose; "be hurry, I don't want to be kilt."

Rachel bathed Jim's face and hands, put on him a torn but clean garment of homespun, fashioned like a sacque. She smoothed his hair back from his brow, and closed his eyes, laid his hands quietly by his side, and spread over him a clean old blanket.

Making a fire she put oak-salad to boil for Mose and Hannah, and two potatoes to bake for the babies. These preparations made, she took her hoe and shovel, and went out to form the grave for her first-born; Mose and Hannah, keeping close by her side, watched all her motions. The ground was

marked out, and the sod broken, when it was time to give the children their breakfast. Rachel was too sad to eat.

Again at work, she labored hard for some time, for she wished to make the grave deep. She lined it with small branches, and put a few bits of board where the head was to lie; the four children sitting on the ground to watch the work.

All was ready at last, Rachel and the little ones gave Jim a last kiss; Rachel wrapped the body carefully in the blanket and carried it to the grave. It was a sad thing for that mother to lay the child down in the narrow bed she had fashioned, cover the blanket first with twigs, and then with earth, heaping all up as best she could, and piling at head and foot a little heap of stones. Looking at it through her tears,

6*

when all was done, Rachel could still see through earth, and twigs, and blanket, that pale, thin face she had loved so well.

It was noon then, and she gave the children something to eat, forcing herself to take a little food, for she had a dreary way before her. Still the little grave seemed to chain her; she could not leave her buried boy so soon. She turned to leave the place again and again, and yet each time came back to look, and weep once more.

To her benighted mind her *child* was lying there alone. Poor ignorant mother, how would her heart have rejoiced, and gathered strength could she had known her little child was with God, a part of Christ's glorious Calvary-purchase.

Evening found her still lingering at the spot she called her home. She had made

up the few rags of clothing belonging to her children in a bundle, and wrapped all about with a thin quilt. She had tied a tin cup to a string to hang over Mose's shoulder on the journey, and now determined to risk one more night in the cabin, and with the earliest dawn to set forth on the journey she had marked out for herself.

For the last time she lit the fire on the hearth, and sat with her children before it.

For the last time she laid her babe in its cradle, her children on the bed, and then, worn out with sorrow and fatigue, lay down beside them, and fell into a heavy slumber.

IV.

THE NIGHT VISIT.

TRAMPING through the Brush came the bushwhackers at midnight, intent on mischief. The desolation of Rachel's poor abode did not move their hearts to pity. With cruel laugh and jest about the woman and children, soon to be homeless, they tied their horses to the adjacent trees, and carefully peered about the clearing to see if there were any signs of hitherto undetected prosperity. The hoe and spade leaning against a stump attracted the attention of one of this party of four, Sime—our former ac-

quaintance, if we are not ashamed to claim him as such.

"Hullo!" cried Sime, "the old woman's stole a march on us, she's bin hiding somat, money or wittles! Come on boys let's unearth 'em."

Following his steps his companions went to the stump, and then carefully examined the ground about it, in a moment Sime stumbled upon the new made grave.

"Thar now," cried one of the men, "one on her chil'run's got a house *we* can't burn it out of, ain't it?"

"Better off in sech a house nor we'd be, sech a bad set as we am!" said the gray haired man. "Thar's the old un talkin his blarney agin," cried Sime. "Can't ye hush up? Likely as how you're seen your mammy agin to-night?"

"Yes I have," said the old man sternly, yet with a tremor of superstitious fear in his voice, "she run in front of my hoss all the road here, shaking her head, and pointing her finger at me!"

"Pshaw, you're goin' mad," said one of the men.

"Not goin' but gone. I've been *mad*, ever sence I was as high as your shoulder."

"Come," cried Sime, impatiently, "we'll turn out the crew in the shebang, unless they chooses to keep in an' burn up, and then we can see how many there is of 'em. Mebby this grave's a hoax after all." The old man, recalling the warning he had in a better moment given to Rachel the night before, hoped when he saw the grave that the woman and her other children had fled for safety.

Therefore when the door was found fast, and was presently, in obedience to Sime's angry summons, opened by Rachel herself the old fellow inwardly noted the folly and obstinacy that he concluded had made her cling to the shelter of her doomed house. One of the men lit a fat pine knot he had with him, and, raising it high above his head, explored the little dwelling. Meanwhile Rachel stood with a babe on either arm, and Mose and Hannah clinging to her side. The search being finished, the torch-bearer, with Sime's aid, piled the few poor household effects together; nothing was spared. Mose's battered tin cup and Rachel's bundle crowned the heap of bed, cradle, stools, clothes, and spinning-wheel.

"Come, now," said Sime, turning to the terrified family, "how many are there of

you'uns? One, two, three, four, five,
Wher's tother un?"

"Dead and buried," replied Rachel, faintly, in that bitter hour greatly envying Jim's fate for herself and four other children.

"Clar the door thar!" shouted Sime, and the old man and his companion stepped from the threshhold. "Now you'uns go out but don't ye go fur, I'm comin' out to her. Ye watch this big bon fire."

Rachel slowly left the house with her little ones, and, knowing the uselessness of flying when she had been ordered to stay, sat down on a log holding her babies close to her bosom to protect them from the damp night air, while Mose and Hannah clasped her neck, leaning on either side. In a few moments the darkness was lit up by the fire kindled in the centre of the

house, and which threw its glow through the door and window. Fire, skilfully applied by these habitual incendiaries, lit the cabin, and the dry log walls and pointed roof blazed right fiercely.

Sime now sought his victims.

"Yer house is warm ain't it?" he asked, sneeringly.

"May as well be when a body's nothin' to eat in it."

"Ef ever ye see yer old man," he continued, vexed at Rachel's reply, "jest tell him as how we treat them this way wot joins the Fed'als."

"I'll never see him again," returned Rachel despairingly.

"Jest tell him wat a fine warm blaze his shebang made; don't forget!" This taunt eliciting no reply from Rachel, Sime jerked

Mose by the hair, saying, "How dose *you* like bonfires!"

True to his wild, fearless nature Mose caught the offending hand of his enemy, and bit it nearly to the bone. The man furious from pain, eager for revenge on both mother and child, shook Mose until he was nearly breathless, and then said to Rachel, who had vainly striven to stay his angry arm, "You're got too many of em; 'there's bush-whacking blood in this young panther now. I'll keep him and larn him who to use his teeth on!"

Mose here gained breath enough to scream, and wildly did Rachel pray her foe to leave her boy; but Sime rendered more set in his cruel purpose by her anguish, took Mose under his arm and strode off with him into the Brush. Obeying her first

instinct Rachel sprang up to follow her child and his captor, when a firm hand caught her shoulders and held her down, "Woman!" cried the grey-headed bush-whacker, sternly, in her ear, "you brought this on yourself. What for did you stay one night. Ye'll never get the young 'un by runnin' after him, stop wher ye ar, mebby you'll git him. You'll lose these others ef you get so wild!"

Rachel sank back as he loosened his grasp. She felt she had brought on herself this new calamity, she had lost another child by her fatal delay by her first born's grave. With bitter self-upbraiding she accused herself of destroying Mose, her bold, loving boy. Wonder indeed it is that her heart did not break in that hour of agony. Hard indeed had been the life of this daugh-

ter of the Brush from her babyhood, and here was its bitterest hour. Sime did not return. The cries of the captured Mose had been suddenly hushed. The three other men lingered a little in fiendish delight over the destruction they had wrought, and then, when the cabin roof and walls fell in with a crash, and only the great chimney stood above the heap of smouldering logs, they turned towards their horses. The old man went out of his way a little toward Rachel, "Keep here till mornin'," he whispered, "mebby ye'll git the young'un by daylight. Don't ye stop longer nor it's light nuff to travel. Mind ye, now!"

"I will, I'll mind ye this time, old man. Oh ef I *only* had before!"

Left alone at last, the little ones moaning with cold, Rachel drew near the fire. She

took her place near the corner where her bed had been, and, after sitting there several hours, she remembered that nearly a dozen potatoes had been left buried in her cache.

Putting down her babies she took a stick, and, after long endeavor, succeeded in getting at the precious roots baked by the heated earth but not too much burned to eat. Leaving these in the ashes to keep warm, as the dawn was now advancing, Rachel with much fear stole to where she had hidden the eighteen ears of corn. She found them safe and tied them in a linsey apron she had on. Taking this bundle she returned to the fire, despairing of ever seeing Mose again, and resolved to give her little ones their breakfast, and hasten on her way. The three were roused, and, at the promise of potatoes, rubbed their sleepy eyes and

were straightway wide awake. Hannah, however, cried bitterly for her brothers, asking if Mose, too, had been put in the ground.

Poor Rachel cast her eyes for perhaps the fiftieth time towards the Brush, in the faint hope of seeing her returning child, when, oh, joy, she heard the branches rustle and the fallen dead twigs crack as a horse passed along, and, now before her exultant eyes, beheld the old bushwhacker with Mose, his face all swollen and stained with weeping, held before him. Before Rachel could spring up to welcome her child, or Hannah could shout her delight, the horse was by them and the bushwhacker swung Mose down into his mother's lap.

"Have sense now, and git along with ye!" he cried, gruffly; and while Rachel divided

her exclamations between gratitude to him and endearment to her stray child, he rode off.

Resolved to tarry no longer, Rachel divided the potatoes, and all made a rapid meal; then, while Mose and Hannah ravenously gathered up even the burnt skins to eat, Rachel lifted up her babies, shook out the ashes from their clothing, and smoothed her own dress ready to depart. A child on either arm, Mose and Hannah close before, thus Rachel took her way.

"Mammy! I'se had my breffus; afore you gin it to me, too!" cried Mose, suddenly waking up to the realizing sense of having eaten twice since the evening before.

"Wher; wher did ye get it?" asked his mother.

8*

"In a 'ouse. In a 'ouse like our'n; an' mammy, I had pork an' ash-cake!"

Pork and ash-cake! At the mention of these unwonted luxuries Hannah puckered up her face to cry.

"Whish, now!" exclaimed Rachel; "mind how poor Mose was carried off and shook to bits!"

Despite his mother's assertion, Mose was a right sturdy-looking chap yet, and growing remorseful, said, "I would not have eat Hannah's breffus, only I clar forgot when I saw 'taters!"

"Eat 'em, to be sure; poor boy, when will ye get more?" said the mother, gloomily.

"I want to go to a 'ouse. I want pork and ash-cake, too!" whimpered Hannah.

Cheer up, Hannah, even such dainties as pork and ash-cake shall be thy daily food in good days to come.

A tender eye, and a mighty hand was guiding this little band of refugees in all their desolate way.

V.

THROUGH THE WASTE.

SLOW, indeed, was Rachel's progress. Her vigorous frame was somewhat weakened by the winter's near approach to famine, and even a strong person must go at a very moderate pace when carrying two children. Mose and Hannah made far better pedestrians than little eastern, or city children, but little feet take a long time to go six miles, and it was several hours past mid-day when, after many a pause to rest, the party came in sight of such a cabin as their own had been. In the door of this cabin sat an old crone

dressed in a red linsey frock, a dirty handkerchief bound about her head, and her feet bare, busily engaged in "dipping snuff."

On a log near the cabin, was the owner of this flourishing place, a bald-headed, toothless creature, over whose marred and wrinkled visage was written the story of a life spent in the service of Satan, soon to end in Satan's wages—death; physical and spiritual death.

The sound of Hannah's voice called the attention of the snuff-dipping woman, who rose, exclaiming, "Wal! ef that ain't Rachel Craig!"

"Be it you, Rachel, an' your chil'ren?" said the man.

"Yes; what I have left," replied Rachel, who felt as if the larger part of her family was buried with little Jim.

The woman led the way into the cabin, and found seats for her guests.

“ Mammy !” cried Mose, whose keen eyes had been peering inquisitively around, “ dis de ’ouse where I get breffus this mornin’ !”

The woman looked at him a minute, and then asked, “ Is this the young ’un the bushwhackers brought here? They got into some sort of a ’spute ’bout him and the old man carried him off. I’d no notion it was yourn.”

“ And are you on terms with *them*,” asked Rachel; “ do they come here to eat and sleep ?”

“ Of *course* we are ! They’re hevin’ all their own way here in the Brush ; ef we wusn’t friends with them, why we’d hev no roof nor vittles.”

“ Then this is no place for me,” cried

Rachel, dropping her head and crying bitterly.

"Rachel, what is it?" asked the woman.

"My boy is dead, and my hands have buried him. My cabin is burned, and now I am trying to get where there is food and no bushwhackers."

"That's all 'cause your man joined the Fed'als," said the owner of the cabin, sagely

The woman looked at the four children and shook her head.

"I thought I could, I can't now," said Rachel.

"Rachel, what is it ye come for? what did ye want of us?"

"I thought mebby you'd go 'long with me, mebby would help me with the chil'run, for—what I did once for ye."

The man shook his head. "We ain't Fed'als. We're well 'nuff off here."

"Or," said Rachel, desperately, unfolding the plan she had laid in many a weary hour, "I thought if you did not go you'd let me leave Bill here, and what I could spare him to eat, and I'd carry the other three to a safe place, and then come back after him. I thought you'd be kind to the poor feeble creetur, on 'count of me."

The old couple looked aghast at this proposal.

"Rachel, ye was indeed good to us six year ago. Ye did for us like a child of our'n, when we both lay in bed of fever. You nussed us night and day, and never asked a thing for it. We'd a died without ye—but keepin' the child—that's a hard thing."

"We're 'feared if the men found whose

child it was they'd be mad at us," said the woman.

"And then," added the man, hesitatingly, "ye might not come back for him."

Rachel's natural feelings took fire, and she cried, angrily, "Not come for him! Leave my boy! One dead and leave another! 'Deed I'd come for him, if the breath was in my body, and soon, too!"

"Don't get mad, Rachel," said the woman.

"Ef ye don't keep him we can just go into the Brush and die. I kept you 'live and helped you onct, now help me," pleaded Rachel.

"Old man, we might," said the dame.

"Ef you 'gree, I'll 'gree, only she must leave what she can, and come back quick."

"I will. I have only eighteen ears of corn, I'll leave nine for him; and I'll take no rest day nor night till I get him again!" urged Rachel.

"Leave him then," said the man, gruffly, half-repenting of the permission as he gave it.

"You'll be good to him," said Rachel, turning her tearful eyes on the old woman. "Jim is dead, and poor little Bill is a weakly one."

"I'll be good as I know how. I ain't none of the soft sort of folk, and I never had no chil'run. "I'll do my 'deavor, ye was good to me."

The Lord has said, "Cast thy bread upon the waters and thou shalt find it after many days." Rachel, ignorant of God and his promises, had done a charitable act six

years before in nursing these two people through a long attack of fever, and now the Lord was giving her her reward, in keeping gratitude alive these many years in the bad old hearts, and prompting them, though thus feebly and reluctantly, to help her in her sore distress.

“You’d better eat something, and get to sleep,” said the old woman. “We’ll give her a supper, old man, and let her creep up over the beams and sleep there. Keep quiet, Rachel, we may have company here in the night, though it’s not likely.”

The old man grunted his assent to his wife’s proposal and went off into the Brush. The woman cooked a meal, which, though coarse and dirty, was a feast to her starving guests. “The bushwhackers bring it here, and we cook for ’em, and keep ’em,” ex-

8*

plained the old woman. Rachel did not know that the morsel of salt meat she was eating was a fragment of old Brindle. It was a savory mouthful to her, deprived of meat so long. The meal over, the woman put a rude ladder against the wall in one corner, and, by the aid of it, Rachel and her children climbed up to a dark loft, where, on a pile of old quilts and skins, they found a bed. Little Bill slept, closely pressed in his mother's arms that night, and, as she held him thus, Rachel's heart misgave her that she might never live to return for him, or returning, might not find him.

If some voice could have whispered to her, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass," and she could have known of Him who leads his people "by a way which they know not," rest and

peace even in danger might have been hers, and, with David, she could have cried, "Though I walk through the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me!"

After the day had dawned, the woman again set food before Rachel and her children, though not without much grumbling from her husband.

After eating, Rachel gave nine of the ears of corn to the woman for Bill, and, kissing the child many times, placed him in the old woman's arms. Then with the girl-baby carried on her bosom, and Mose and Hannah hand in hand, Rachel once more took her way through the Brush.

Relieved now of carrying Bill, and, urged on by anxiety, to regain possession of him as soon as possible, Rachel went as rapidly as her children could walk. During the

day while she was resting, which was frequently necessary, she found several edible roots, and to her delight succeeded in knocking down a prairie hen, which, being lame and lost in the Brush, became an easy prey.

At night, she chose a secluded nook, a little way from the road, where she piled up branches for a resting-place, and from easily-gathered fuel kindled a fire to cook her roots and the fowl. Thus unexpectedly provided with supper and breakfast, Rachel took fresh courage, though she knew nothing of Him who leading Israel from bondage gave them "water out of the rock of flint," and now in these troublous days was guiding herself and her children; sending them food in their extremity, and preparing good out of the evil. Another day

of wandering succeeded. Mose and Hannah grew weary and wanted to stop very often ; their mother, one moment animating them with thoughts of getting to a place of plenty, again begging them to keep on as she could the sooner get Bill, or, as a last resort, terrifying them into speed by going rapidly on before.

No food was found that day, and a scanty meal was provided by parching the ears of corn and pounding it between stones. At midnight a drizzling rain set in, and our wanderers, poorly sheltered by the newly leaved trees, were before morning wet to the skin, shivering, stiff, aching and even more miserable than before. All day, through the rain they plodded on, Mose and Hannah crying loudly, and at times sitting down on the ground, flatly refusing to

stir, and the baby moaning pitifully in her mother's weary arms. At evening the rain ceased, and the sun set clear. Wandering along a little after nightfall, Rachel saw the light of a fire, and dark figures near it. Too miserable to feel fear, and in so desperate a condition, that there seemed to be nothing that could augment her wretchedness, Rachel went straight towards the light, not pausing to consider whether it were kindled by friends or foes. Instead of a party of refugees, as she had hoped, she found six or eight bushwhackers. Stepping from the gloom of the Bush into the bright circle made by the firelight, she cried, "Give us food and let us sit by your fire or we shall die!"

There was a minute's silence, and then a familiar voice said, "Come, boys, let's

be gentlemen to-night, an' feel how it goes."

The words seemed to seize the bushwhackers in a happy mood, one of them rolled up a log for the wayfarers to sit upon, close to the fire; while another cheerfully remarked, "Hold on a bit an' we'll have a supper wot is supper."

Looking around the group as they drew near, Rachel saw that he who had spoken that good word for her when she came up was he who had so truly stood her friend before—the grey-haired bushwhacker. He recognized Rachel, and, after a while, getting near her asked, "Where's the other one?"

"I left him in the Brush," replied Rachel, "but I'm going to get him again."

He strolled away, and Rachel, taking

off her baby's dripping garments, dried them by the fire. One of the men lent her a coat which she wrapped about Mose while his clothing dried, and then Hannah, too, was made more comfortable. After this the coat made a bed for the baby, while Rachel stood before the fire, turning around and around, to dry her own wet clothing. At last, to the great joy of the hungry family, the supper was ready to eat. Large pieces of bark were brought, and on these, for plates, was served an ample portion for every one of the company. What a feast, a piece of fat mutton boiled with turnips and cabbage! Rachel ate, feeling as if wonders would never cease. In similar circumstances a child of God would joyfully have sung, "Thou preparest a table before me

in the presence of mine enemies." "He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!"

After the meal, when Mose and Hannah were lying near the fire, on a pile of twigs, and Rachel, with the baby on her lap, had seated herself on the ground, the old man drew near her again, "Keep on, right on; there's a party of Fed'al scouts ahead of you. Get to them." Then lighting his pipe, which he had been filling as he spoke, he moved away. That was a night which in comparison with the darkness, the loneliness, and rain of the preceding seemed elysian to these refugees. They woke in the morning refreshed as the bushwhackers were preparing to start. While the men were filling their bags with the remains

of last evening's meal one of them gave each of the children a cold turnip, and the old man tossed Rachel a piece of meat. With this for a breakfast, they started on. The way was very rough, the limbs of the children were getting swollen and stiff from over-exertion, and the mother's feet were becoming very sore. They travelled all day, and night overtaking them before they found the scouts, they went fasting to a bed of branches hastily gathered. Again three ears of corn were taken for a breakfast and they pursued their way. This day the sun was hot, and they did not find any water until nearly night. About noon, they came to a place where horses had been recently fed, and Mose and Hannah ravenously gathered up the scattered grains of corn for a dinner. Urging on her fainting

children to walk after night, Rachel at last saw a light, and a weary half mile brought her to the camp of the scouts. The dozen men who sat about the fire eating their suppers, or cleaning their guns, received her with pity. The leader of the band, himself a father, looked with compassion on the suffering children. A cup of coffee was given to each, salt meat and hard-tack freely tendered; the baby ate the hard-tack soaked in coffee, and looked up into her mother's worn face smiling her delight. A blanket or two was spread out for a bed, a bundle of straw being put for a pillow; and, feeling a new sense of security, Rachel and her little ones lay down to sleep. Morning found them in but a poor condition to travel; the fatigues of the journey were telling painfully on

all. The scouts were preparing for a new move, and, while they made ready their breakfast, the leader gave Rachel directions for her way. "You can have your breakfast and a few tack to carry with you, but we're on short rations ourselves, and can't spare much."

"You 'uns are the first friends I've met," said Rachel, gratefully; "but captin, if you ketch them guerillas you're after, and 'taint necessary to kill *every one*, do be good to that old man with the grey hair, he was very good to me. He gave me back my boy, and spoke a good word for me, he did."

"I'll remember," said the leader, smiling. "I hope the Lord will help you through safe; I'm sure he has been with you this far or you would never have reached here."

"I don't know," said this heathen country-woman of our own good Christians. She probably had never heard of the Lord before; certainly not of him as a guiding watchful power.

They were ready to start at last, having now, half a dozen of hard tack, to tie up with the three ears of corn in Rachel's linsey apron.

"Keep right ahead!" cried one scout.

"Keep your courage up!" cried another.

"God protect you," said the leader, and the words sunk soothingly into Rachel's heart. God protect you! It seemed an earnest of some kind care about her, some friendly power shielding her, some eye to watch, some hand to guide, as the rough way cut her feet, until her tracks were marked with blood, while her weary arms

9*

ached from carrying her child. When Mose and Hannah cried to lie down and sleep, and wished they were put in the ground like little Jim, she whispered to herself, "God protect you," and it kept her from despair.

What days were those that followed, two weary days and nights, and yet a third day came after she left the scouts and Rachel still was on the road. In all this time the six hard-tack, and three ears of corn with water, and what sorrel the children gathered on the road made all their food. On one day, the wind was so high, that on the open land, they could hardly keep their footing; black clouds swept over the sky, the lightnings flashed, and floods of rain poured down upon them. There is one "Who maketh the clouds

His chariot, and rideth upon the wings of the wind," whose "lightning enlightens the world," who "sendeth the rain from His store-houses," but Rachel knew him not. While the children of the Highest fly to the "shadow of his wings" there to make their "refuge until these calamities be overpast," Rachel knew of no strength beyond her own. To the Christian the voice of the storm is—

"Come children to your Father's arms,
Hide in the chambers of my grace,
Till the fierce storms be overblown,
And my revenging fury cease.

"My word shall boast its thousands slain,
And drink the blood of haughty kings,
While heavenly peace around my flock,
Stretches its soft and shady wings."

After this day of misery Rachel took shelter in a clump of bushes, and when

the storm had ceased, with much difficulty succeeded in lighting a fire to dry the wet clothing, and parch their corn. Her heart grew faint. It seemed as if the haven of rest fled ever before her, and she feared she would fall and die in the Brush, and leave little Bill to perish in that distant cabin.

About noon on the third day she neared the town of ———. She passed several abodes of refugees, rude mounds of earth where human beings seemed to burrow like prairie dogs, subsisting on plunder and the refuse of the camps. These creatures, with angry revilings, drove her off when she asked for aid. Crossing a narrow strip of prairie land, whose beauty of green grass and early flowers lay all unheeded under Rachel's tear-blinded eyes, they came

to the roadside. No house or person was in sight, hope and courage failed. Rachel sat down on the bank, laid her babe at her feet, and, bowing her thin face upon her knees, gave way to a flood of despairing grief. Mose and Hannah, tried far beyond their childish endurance, wrung their famine-shrunken hands, and lifted up their weak voices in pitiful sobs and cries. The fortunes of our refugees were surely at their lowest ebb.

VI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

SITTING thus, too much lost in grief even to notice when help came near, Rachel and her children did not observe the approach of a buggy, drawn by a steady gray horse, and driven by a lady a little past middle life.

"What now! What is the matter here, good people?" cried the lady, reining up, and smiling sympathy and help down on the group on the bank.

"Everything's the matter," said Rachel, looking up.

"I'm hungry," cried Mose.

"I'm sick, and so tired," moaned Hannah.

"Hungry! well, that's easy helped," said the lady, busily turning over the bags and bundles with which the carriage was laden.

"We're starvin' every one on us. Six hard-tack and three ears of corn is all I've had for me and the chil'run this three days," said Rachel.

"Dear, dear; how far have you come? What times these are! Ah, here's a loaf of bread; eat it right off. That poor baby! what an afflicted thing it is! Ah, I *thought* I had a bottle of milk, and here's the cup at last; now give that baby a drink."

How eagerly the baby drained the cup its mother filled with trembling haste. Meanwhile Mose and Hannah tore off pieces of the fresh loaf, and therein found comfort.

"Slowly, don't hurt yourselves," said the lady. "Where did you come from?"

"From the Arkansas border, ma'am; 'bout fifteen miles 'low the line. We was burned out 'cause my man's a Fed'al soldier, an' my biggest boy died, and I buried him, and then I had to leave Bill, that's t'other baby, at a cabin there in the Brush, till I brought these 'uns up, and went back to fetch him."

"Dear, dear! and you don't mean to go way back for him?"

"'Deed I do, jest as soon as I can get these 'uns put somewhar."

"And what regiment is your husband in?"

"The —th Arkansas, ma'am."

"Why, now, that is my son's regiment; he's the colonel; and what company is your husband in?"

"I dun'no, ma'am."

"What is his name?"

"James Craig."

"Have you any friends about here?" asked the lady.

Rachel shook her head, and, the baby being now satisfied, she began to eat some of the bread. The keen hunger of the refugees being at last partly appeased, the lady drew from Rachel her simple but affecting story.

"Well really," said this good Samaritan. "I hav'nt been doing much for these last ten months but look after refugees, getting homes, and rations, and work for them. Some of them are so bad they are not worth helping; but yours is a very hard case. I'll take you along to my place; it is only a mile^o from here, and there you will

find an empty cabin, which the folks left only yesterday to go to Jefferson."

"Oh, ma'am, how good you are!" cried Rachel.

"There's a place behind the buggy where the two biggest children can sit and ride if you'll lift them up, and just lay the baby in here in front; then, if I drive slowly, you can keep up with me, can't you?"

"'Deed I can; how good you are!" cried grateful Rachel again, and then she laid the baby on the bags and bundles in the front of the buggy, and lifted Mose and Hannah up behind, charging them not to get asleep and fall off.

Thus arranged the procession moved on. Soon it came to a large white house whence trooped a number of children, shouting and capering about when they espied the lady.

“That’s the Orphans’ Home,” said the lady to Rachel, who was walking in the road near the carriage. “They are all refugee orphans, or, as good as orphans.”

A quarter of a mile farther on they crossed a little stream, or, as it is there called, a Branch, with trees and shrubs growing on either side, and here was a camp of nearly thirty refugees. The camp was formed of tents made of blankets, or old quilts, or even of simple enclosures of brush without a roof. Women were busy washing clothes in the branch, or sitting in their odd tents, sewing; two or three fires were burning, where several men and women superintended various cooking processes, in big iron pots. Here the lady handed out a bag or two, asked one woman how her sick child was, inquired after a man’s broken leg, and

an old crone's blistered feet, and then drove on again.

"They are refugees, that have, most of them, come here in carts with a few goods of their own; they are going on to Rolla and Jefferson before long; they get some help from Government, and have been there about a week. The old woman came twenty miles further than you did, and all alone;" thus the lady explained to Rachel.

Not far from this encampment was a rough board cabin, with a pig-pen near, and a space of ground enclosed for a vegetable garden, wherein two young women and a boy were at work. An older woman was hanging up clothes on a line, and a boy was making a hen-coop.

"Mammy!" cried Mose, now revived by his food and the ride, "Dar's dem Tads!"

"Sure enough," said the lady, "the Tads are a thrifty set. They built their shanty, and take in washing from the camps; they'll get along you may be sure."

Here the attention of Dame Tad was attracted, who, dropping the blue shirt she was ready to hang up, rushed into the street crying, "Why! Rachel Craig, is it you? Land, you look like a ghost, poor creeter."

"It's me an' my chil'run," said Rachel.

"And where's Jim?"

Rachel shook her head, her eyes filling with tears, at the thought of good days coming, that Jim might not see.

"Jim's all put in the ground," cried Mose. "Oh you bad mammy!" he added, doubling up his little fist.

"Poor thing, and where's Billy?" pursued Dame Tad.

10*

"I left him at McQueen's, but I'm going after him."

"Not all through that Brush agin, Rachel!"

"Yes I am, I must have my child."

"Well," said Dame Tad, resignedly, "you allus was so sot on your chil'run! You Pete Tad, pick up that ar shirt, an' rench it off an' hang it on the line!"

"So you know this Rachel Craig," said the lady.

"Oh we was neighbors allus in the Brush, and our men went off in the same Fed'al rigimint, you see."

The lady nodded and drove on. The next place was her own house, sheltered by trees, surrounded by out buildings, and a row of neat cabins, once the abode of her now free or scattered slaves, and empty now except

for a few old negroes, who clung to old time customs, and the home of all their lives, and a few refugee families, who had found this kindly shelter. At one of these cabins the buggy stopped, the door was open, the place was light and clear; in one corner of the only room was a bed, in another a pine table, and two chairs which completed the furniture.

"Here you may stay," said the lady, and Rachel lifted her children to the threshold.

"Now," continued Mrs. P——, this good friend, "the first thing is to be clean. Aunt Sally!" At this summons an old negress, in a blue check frock with a bright yellow cotton turban on her head, emerged from an adjacent cabin.

"Aunt Sally," said Mrs. P——, "bring your tub here, and a couple of pails of

warm water from the kitchen, with a cup of soap and a towel, and show this woman how to wash her children nicely."

Aunt Sally started off briskly, it was a work to which she had become accustomed.

"I will send you some clothes from the house. There are kind people who keep me supplied with clothes for my refugees, and I have got a new supply in to-day. I will see you before dark."

The lady went to her house, and in a few minutes Sally returned, provided with the articles her mistress had indicated; also a big pair of shears and a comb. Taking the children one after the other she clipped their light locks close to their heads, with almost the speed and dexterity of a professional barber.

"Now," she said, "there's nothin' for

chil'run like a good washin'. It keeps 'em hearty, and makes 'em grow. I'll wash these here chil'run, and then you can wash 'em twice a week; you'll be 'stonished to see how dey thrive."

With these words Aunt Sally put the baby in the tub, and began such a vigorous application of soap and water as amazed Rachel. In the midst of the operation a little black girl came in with an armful of clothes, saying, as she laid out the articles indicated,

"Here's a slip, and a pet'coat for the baby; there's a jacket an trowsers fur de boy; here's a frock and pet'coat for de gal. Missey sen you out some clothes purty soon," she added to Rachel. The baby washed as clean as even Sally's skillful hands could make her, was arrayed in the

yellow flannel skirt, and brown calico slip, and handed over to her delighted mother. Just then the little black girl came back with a cup of warm sweetened milk for the child, and was sent for a pail of warm water to bathe Hannah. Mose was next washed and dressed, and now who would recognize these Brush children. Their long light locks shorn off, their skins clean. Hannah in a blue dress and petticoat, the out-grown clothing of some richer child, and Mose in jacket and pants of blue jean. While these changes were going on, and the baby was put to sleep, Rachel glad of a sympathizing listener had told her story to Aunt Sallie.

“Deery me,” said the good negress, “you’ve had a mos drefful hard time, honey, but ’pears to me you’re been a

bearin' all these here trials alone, and goin' on all in your own strength."

"Oh, course," replied Rachel, "who's goin' to bear my burden, or who's else's strength kin I go on?"

"Dear heart, woman, don' ye know of de good Lord, who's went an' said, to cast yer cares on him? Don' ye mind how he says, my grace is 'nough for ye? Didn't ye never hear tell, how de good Lord Jesus Christ come into dis worl', to bear our burdens an' carry our sorrows?"

"No," said Rachel, "I never heard it."

"Well den', bless de Lord dat dis ole colored woman has had sich mercy showed her, as to hear tell all dis good news years ago! De Lord hab been very good to Sallie. In him I kin rej'ise; bless de Lord, oh my soul!"

"What is it," asked Rachel curiously, "that you're so happy to know? I wisht I knew it!"

"I wisht ye did, honey! Why dis what makes me glad. Here I, old black woman, dat folks say, all dese years didn't go for to own me own hans an feet, wot 'longed to odder folks allus, here I knows dat de Lord Jesus Christ owns me an' aint 'shamed of me, an' he will lead me all my life, an' bring good out ob all de ebil, an' will at las' 'ceive me into glory. Aint dat 'nough make a body shout fur joy?"

"Did you'se ever have any big trouble?" asked Rachel.

"'Deed, honey, I lost five as pretty little chilrun as any body ebber laid eyes on. Den my ole man an me was parted years ago an' nebber see one nudder no more; dose

was troubles, but de Lord gib me himself stid of all he took away, an' I sing, and gib tanks all my days."

Here the little girl came back with a pail of soup, a spoon, and a hot ash-cake. On these luxuries Rachel and her children made a good supper, and the weary children were put to bed. The meal over and the children in bed, Aunt Sallie persuaded Rachel to have her hair cut short, that it might more easily be washed and combed, and clean garments having been sent from the house, Rachel was left to make her toilette after the fashion of her children.

"You wash dem poor sore feet clean, an I fotch you some rags and grease, tò tie 'em up and git 'em cured."

"I havn't time to nuss up my feet, I must go fetch Bill," replied Rachel.

"Dat kind ob haste bring small speed," said Aunt Sallie wisely. "Dem feet won't walk many mile dat way. You cure 'em up an put on a pair ob shoes, an' carry some grease to rub 'em ebery nigh tan' you walk after de chile like light'nin!"

An hour later Sallie returned with rags and lard to dress Rachel's cut and inflamed feet. "Poor soul," she said as she performed this kindly office, "an' you don't know ob de Good One who had de cruel nails put in his feet for you, and wot would lub you like a brudder!"

"Why don't you tell me," said Rachel; "I want to know."

"You see, honey, I aint got de gift ob de tongue. I kin set all night a tellin' what de good Lord hab done for me, but I can't get at it to 'splain what he kin do for you."



"Then I must go without knowing it," sighed Rachel, sadly.

"No, honey. Dar's one got de gift ob de tongue. Dar's one kin talk, jest as if de good Lord made her purpose to do nuffin' else. Miss Fannie, *she* kin tell de good story ob de cross to your poor soul. Miss Fannie comin' hum' to-night an' 'den I tells her, here's a poor creeter nebber heard ob Him who bears all our burdens. Here's poor soul hungry and thirsty for de Lord's meat an' drink, an' in the mornin' Miss Fannie she come here an' tell you all de troof."

"But I must go for my little Billy. I can't leave him starvin' while I set here eatin'."

"Dar now, chile, you hab sense. Don't you see if you rest an' eat, and cure up

dese feet ob your'n, dat you kin get back all de quicker in de end? Ob course you can. An' while you'se getting 'cruited up you larn the way ob life, and dat good news wot cheers your heart an' strengthens up your soul, and you go off light an' brisk as a bee, fearin' nothing. Now, honey, go to bed."

Sallie went back to her cabin, and Rachel lay down to sleep, thoughts of poor Bill gradually drifting out of her mind, and falling into slumber, lulled by Sallie's singing her wild camp-meeting songs.

VII.

THE WONDERFUL NEWS.

THE morning found the children reviving under friendly influences, as children will. Rachel, with laudable zeal, washed their faces, and brushed what remained of their hair. The little black girl brought milk for the baby, and a meal for the rest, of what was left after the plentiful breakfast of Mrs. P——'s family. Rachel, anxious to please, and, seized with Aunt Sallie's tidy spirit, swept the room, and made her bed, then cautioning the children against engaging in making mud pies or other enterprises that might be det-

11*

rimental to their clean clothes, she sat down on the door-sill. Her feet were very much swollen and inflamed, and so painful that she hardly believed it possible that she should, in a few days, be able to retrace her steps through the Brush looking for Bill, and this thought made her heart sink. As she looked on her three rescued children, clean, well-clad and no longer hungry, she pictured Bill thin, sick, ragged, dirty, and starving, and felt as if she must fly to rescue him.

Aunt Sallie came over early with warm water, castile soap, fresh linen rags, and lard to dress the wounded feet.

“Dem feet doin’ mos’ beau’ful, honey,” she said, encouragingly; “dey will be well right soon. Dis Thursday mornin’, next Monday youse kin go for dat little chile.”

"It is so long to wait until Monday," groaned Rachel.

"Mebby it won't seem so long. An' den you'll be rested and 'freshed, and can walk off fine."

"I want to go now for Bill. I can't wait," cried Rachel, impatiently.

"Now, honey," said Aunt Sallie, reprovingly, "dat is all jest 'bellion 'gainst de good Lord. Now He's seen fit for your feet to get so lame, what for you settin' up to complain? You'll find out, honey, dat its jest all of a piece wid de doin's of de heart far from de Lord, takin' its own way, an' fretten 'gainst de Lord's ways. You jest get your heart firm sot on de Lord, honey, an' you'll be contented."

"Oh, I wish I knew, I wish I could hear about it," said Rachel.

“Miss Fannie, she comin’ right over dis mornin’ to talk to you’uns. Now dar, you feet fix beau’ful, I must go to my washin’.”

Old Sallie went to the kitchen and, presently Rachel saw a young lady in a blue lawn dress and wide brimmed hat coming towards her house. There was a shade tree near the cabin, and against the trunk a rude seat was fastened, on which the young lady took her place, and, saluting Rachel, called the children to her, to learn their names, and give them a cake. Then, by friendly inquiries, she drew from Rachel the pitiful tale of her persecutions, and of Jim’s death. As the poor mother spoke of her boy, the tears rolled over her cheeks.

“But do you not know what comfort you can take about this dead boy?” asked Miss Fannie.

"No," said Rachel, "I aint got a thought of comfort about him."

"Do you not know that the soul, that which made your child live, is not buried in that little grave?"

"Of course it aint; that went out of him."

"But where did it go."

"I don't know," said Rachel.

"It did not die; the soul can never die. God gave your child that soul when he was born, and when it was best for him to die, he took it back to himself. You tell me that your boy was sick, hungry, and unhappy all his life. His soul is now in a place where it shall hunger no more; thirst no more; there none shall say 'I am sick;' where tears are unknown; where the sun shall not light on him or any heat; where

there is no night, no weariness ; where he is clothed in white, and sings all the time new and glad songs that he has learned."

"Is that *true*?" asked Rachel, with breathless interest.

"Every word true, and there is more of joy and glory for your child than I can tell you. I would not for worlds deceive you."

"And how did you find it out?"

"From this little book," said Miss Fannie, taking a Bible from her pocket. "It is the word of the great God who made all things, and all persons, who has prepared this beautiful home for dead children, and it is all true for he cannot lie."

"And if my Bill dies, will he too go there?"

"He will, for the good God loves little children."

"But I won't never see them no more," said Rachel, sadly.

"You will, if you love the good Lord, and do His will. When you die he will take you to that home to live forever with him, and your little children."

"Of course, I will love Him. How can I help it when He has been so good to my Jim."

"You must also love him for what he has done for you, and because he loves you."

"Loves me! Oh no, nobody loves me, or not much, only my chil'run, an' their father, maybe."

"But God loves you. Hear what this Bible says, 'We love Him,' (that is God,) 'because He first loved us.' And, Rachel, He loves us more than we can love Him or

any one, even more than you love your children."

"Oh no," said Rachel, lifting up the baby, who had crawled near her, "that can't be. Why what love is like my love for these chil'run; I'd *die* for 'em!"

"But," said Fannie, solemnly, "Christ, the eternal Son of God, has really and truly died for you, and that when you did not know Him, or care for Him."

Rachel shook her head. "I can't think God loves me, like I love my children!" she persisted.

"Hear what he says Himself in His book, written to us all," and Fannie turned to different passages and read, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea they may forget, yet will

I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

"Does God care for *me*?" asked Rachel, awe-struck.

Again Fannie read, "The Lord hath appeared unto me of old saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

Rachel drew a long breath. "Them words sort of do me good, they go right into my heart," she said.

Fannie read yet once more. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, or the covenant of peace be removed from thee."

"That's news, good news, wonderful news," said Rachel, half musingly.

"I will go now. Think of all this until I come again," said Miss Fannie.

"I surely will. But come soon, Miss, I want to hear more about it."

Mose and Hannah here came up weary of play and were put to sleep. Then Rachel lay down, with the baby in her arms; her mind too full of this strange, glad news of the love of God, to permit her to sleep.

Soon after the noonday meal Miss Fannie returned.

"Have you got that good book?" asked Rachel. Fannie took it from her pocket and handed it to her. Rachel turned over the leaves with a look of awe. "I wish it would speak to me," she said.

"It will, by and by, if you learn to read it as you can do. Now I will read you what is in it."

"I've been thinkin' how can a God, so good and so great as to make every thing, look at a poor creeter like me, wot don't know nothin' at all."

"He says," replied Fannie, opening her Bible, "'But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and that humbleth at my word.'"

"I'm poor enough," said Rachel, "and I do tremble at such a strange wonderful word as God's looking at me. But what is a contrite heart?"

"It means a heart sorry for sin, and ready to do God's way, and mind what he says."

"But I don't know what he says."

"I can tell you, and he will help you to understand."

"I'm sorry ever to have done what he

don't like, and I'spose I have often, 'cause I don't know nothing," said Rachel humbly.

"You must pray to him, and ask him to teach you what is right, and what is wrong."

"Can I dare talk to God? When? where?"

"At all times, and in every place. God is always near, and he loves to have any one pray to him, and says he will not cast out any who come."

"Then won't you please tell me what to say?"

Miss Fannie then explained to Rachel the nature of prayer, and taught her a few short petitions expressive of her wants. She then left her to think at leisure upon all these new and great things.

Each day Sallie carefully dressed Rachel's

feet, which rapidly got better. In the rest and plenty she had found, she grew cheerful and strong, looked hopefully toward soon getting Bill, and then, with her children all about her, fixing a home and striving to take good care of them. As she saw the eyes of Mose, Hannah, and the baby growing bright, their cheeks losing their sunken and deathlike appearance, and heard their voices once more lifted in happy sport, she felt sure little Bill must be cured under similar care. She now hourly sent up a prayer to God, to preserve the boy and restore him to her, asking with the firm faith of a little child going to a kind parent. Miss Fannie came each day to instruct this eager pupil.

“Dear lady,” said Rachel, “how can God love me when I never pleased him, or loved him, or knew about him?”

12*

Opening that ready Bible, Miss Fannie read, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Oh, wonderful power of love! These words smote on Rachel's sealed heart as Moses' rod upon the rock, and the living waters gushed up, for when she heard these things she wept. To her heart came with power, the thought of the Lord loving her, calling her, seeking her in her lost estate; finding her in the depths of misery where she had fallen, and ready to lift her even unto himself.

"I love the good Lord," said Rachel, amid her tears of penitence and joy that

Sabbath evening; "if he'll only lead me and teach me, and show me how, and hold me up, I'll love him and try to do his will, and teach the little children to love him, and James, too, if ever he gets home any more."

"The Lord will help you if you put your trust in him; he has promised it," said Miss Fannie.

"He'll have to do a power of helpin' for such a poor creeter as I am, what keeps forgettin', and don't know hardly nothin'. I hope he'll keep those good words about his love in my mind to cheer me up. Oh, miss, if I *only* could read!"

"You shall learn when you have brought back little Bill," said Miss Fannie.

Thus the Sabbath evening passed away. Rachel lay down to sleep with a great

peace in her heart—a peace that the world could neither give nor take away—born of her love to God, of God's known love to her, and on the morrow she rose long before the dawn.

VIII.

STEPS RETRACED.

UNT SALLIE had offered to be responsible for the three children, during the absence of their mother. Rachel hastily dressed herself, and then, kneeling by her bed, repeated fervently the prayer Miss Fannie had taught her, and added to it such few petitions, as her necessities helped her to frame. After this, she kissed her little ones and went over to the kitchen of Mrs. P——'s house, where she was to have her breakfast before starting. A plentiful meal was set before her, and then Aunt Sallie came in; she

brought a pair of shoes that had been worn enough to be soft and easy; and a little box of lard wrapped in pieces of linen.

"Missey says to put on dese shoes, an ebery night to rub your feet wid de lard. Here's a bundle wot's got a frock an' a little shirt an' sun-bonnet for Bill; an' I put in a bit of soap an' wrap all in de towel so you could wash him nice 'fore you put de tings on."

"You are all so good. I'll wash and dress my Bill, you may be sartin," replied Rachel; "I only wish I could do it this minnit!"

"All in good time, honey! I put in dis bag all de provision I t'ought you could carry, some for yourself an' some fresh biscuit an' ginger snaps for de little boy.

Dere's a little mite of rice for him, too; dat gits so much bigger when it's boiled."

During this conversation, Rachel finished her breakfast. She put on her shoes, put the little box with the linen wrappings in her pocket, hung the bag on her arm, and took up her bundle.

"Here," said the black cook, who was preparing the family breakfast, "take 'long dis big handkercher. You can put it on de chile to cover up his neck an' arms. Tie your bundle up in it."

These preparations being completed, Rachel put on her sun-bonnet, bade her colored friends good-bye, and left her thanks and farewells for Mrs. P—— and Miss Fannie. Aunt Sallie followed her to the gate, exhorting her to keep her courage up, to put her trust in the Lord;

to set her thoughts on the things of Heaven, that she might forget the trials of earth; to pray constantly and promising to pray for her. The sun was just rising, filling the east with golden light, as Rachel set her face toward the Southwest, and addressed herself to her long journey for her child. Passing the cabin erected by the Tads, she found the good dame opening the door and shrilly calling to her family to begin the labors of the day. In answer to her brisk summons came sleepy voices from her sons and daughters, loud grunts from the pig ready for his breakfast, and a jubilant crowing and cackling from the new chicken coop. In the midst of this excitement, which she had stirred up, Dame Tad espied Rachel, and saluted her in her own noisy, good-

natured fashion. "Why, Rachel, woman, where's all the children?"

"Up at the house yon."

"An' whar you going, Rachel, with your bundles so airy?"

"After my little Bill."

Dame Tad put her hands on her hips, set her arms akimbo, and looked amazement.

"Goin' thar agin after all you've been through! Ain't you give that up yit?"

"Give up my child? o' course I ain't."

"You'll never find him, Rachel."

"I will; the good Lord will go with me and help me, I know he will."

Dame Tad opened her eyes wider than ever.

"Why, Rachel, you hearin' sich talk!

I've heard a bit of it from the good folks about here, but I hev'nt no time to tend to it."

"Oh, friend Tad, if you only knew what good it's done my heart, you'd 'tend to it right off," said Rachel, passing on her way. All day long Rachel went on over the boundless prairies, and toward evening entered into the Brush-land. She had only eaten a couple of hard-tack as she walked along, quenching her thirst from the creeks swollen by the April rains. The green grass had clothed all the prairies in verdure. The white blossoms of the strawberries were here and there beginning to appear. Blue violets, dandelions, arum, and bright yellow oxalis, sprang everywhere beneath our wanderer's feet. For the first time the flowers performed to her their

appropriate mission, bringing thoughts of God, who made them. Rachel's mind was very busy; one while it was fixed on her child, his probable treatment from the old people, the fearful question whether he would have been given enough to eat, to keep life in his little frame, and if she should find him, to care for him better, and make him more comfortable than he had ever been. With these thoughts came importunate ejaculatory prayers. "God take care of my little Bill!" "Oh, Lord, help me to get there quick!" "Good God, do let me find my boy alive!" and the like. And if through weariness her pace had slackened, she hastened her steps. There were other and calmer thoughts of Jesus, who had bought her with his blood, who was ready to be gracious to her and to her

children, who took little dead children to his heavenly home, there to be happy, and with that new love warmly springing up in her heart, to God and to his Christ, she resolved again and again to learn and do his will, to teach her children of him; to try to be a good, careful mother, supporting her little ones and bringing them up in the fear of the Lord. Among other resolutions the one to learn to read was prominent. Thus the day was spent, and, as she followed the road through the Brush, the lengthening shadows warned her to seek a place of rest, to gain strength for the coming day. Walking on, still feeling as if every step was a great gain, carrying her so much nearer to her child, she saw at last before her a covered wagon, drawn up by the road, the oxen that had

drawn it feeding near, and several armed men sitting in the light of a large fire, where three women were preparing supper; a dog or two and four children made up the group. Assured that they were refugees, hastening with their effects to the Union lines, Rachel timidly went up towards the fire, and asked if she might cook her supper by it, and spend the night under the protection of a company, instead of alone. The woman whom she addressed, the eldest of the group, took from the pot the long stick wherewith she was stirring the contents, and beckoning one of the men, she said, "This here woman wants to stop by our fire."

"Which way?" asked the man, tersely.

"Down 'cross the line, into 'Kansaw." said Rachel.

"Goin' the wrong way," said the man, shaking his head and frowning.

"I'm goin' for my little child. I had four children, and one on 'em couldn't walk, so I brung up three an' left them up in S——, and now I'm going for my little Bill."

"Got a man?"

Rachel nodded, dreading the next question.

"Whar is he?"

"In the army, sogerin'."

"Wot side?"

Rachel dreaded to tell, not knowing the feelings of her new acquaintances, but Miss Fannie had told her that lying was particularly offensive to God, so she answered, after a slight hesitation, "He's Union."

The whole party had gathered about

during this dialogue, and now nodded ap-
probatively, and the man said, "You kin
stay if you likes."

Rachel sat down and took off her shoes;
there was a little pool near, where she
washed her feet, and then sitting near the
fire, she rubbed them with lard.

"You've walked a long ways," said the
woman, looking up from her cooking.

"Clear from fifteen mile 'low the line,
an' carried my baby; an' this far goin'
back."

"Poor creeter!" said the woman, and by
means of some questioning soon had Rachel's
story.

One of the men had kept a place near
the fire, and listened as attentively to the
tale, as the three women. When it was
finished, he remarked, "Well, you've got

good courage to go back, an' must be pretty fond of your young 'un. I don't see how you kin do it."

"I wonder more," said Rachel, "how I had the courage to come up with three of 'em, leaving little Bill farther every step, an' knowin I must do it all over agin. Then I was goin' in my own strength too."

"And whose strength you goin' in now?" said the man.

"The Lord's. Up in S——, while I stopped thar to get my feet well, I hearn tell of the good Lord, an' I put my trust in him, and now he helps me along."

"That's cur'us; do you feel better for it?"

"Oh, yes, I do. When I went in my own strength I giv up and sot down to die,

an' the Lord sent me help, even when I didn't know 'nuff to ax for it. Now he keeps my heart up."

"Laws, me!" said the second of the women, who, frying pork in a pan, had hitherto been silent, "that 'ere talk is very like Dan'l Baker used to git off down in Texas. Don't you mind, Jo?"

"I mind," said the man. "It's talk I never took to."

"An' yet, Jo, you an' I've often said, them folks what talked it 'cause they felt it, never did no harm to nobody."

"I mind," said the man again. "It's talk I aint nothin' against. I don't know but I feels safer like, 'lon with them wot uses it."

Rachel was untying her bag to get a piece of pork and some ash-cake, when

the youngest woman, who had just taken some potatoes from the ashes, said, "Marm, can't she git her tea 'long with us?"

"Ask your dad," replied the old woman, lifting off the pot.

"Dad," being asked, said he had no objections to sharing his supper with Rachel. So she was bidden, "Put up yer wittles, an' sit by an' eat wot we eat."

Accepting this welcome invitation, Rachel had hot mush, potatoes, fried pork, and even a cup of coffee, which article had been bought with potatoes from some soldiers. After eating, the youngest of the women offered to share her blanket with Rachel, and so, the Lord having provided for his child food, protection, and a place of rest, Rachel thanked him in her earnest childlike way, and went peacefully to sleep. Morn-

ing came, the sun looked forth for a moment red and angry, and went into a cloud again—looking out for the moment he did, he doubtless saw the refugees preparing to go on their way, and Rachel, after sharing their hasty breakfast, and thanking them for their hospitality, going rapidly in an opposite direction. The promise of the red sun and the bank of clouds was not unfulfilled, a cold rain set in, Rachel put her bundle in her bag, and trying to shield it with her dress, so that the food and Bill's clothes might not get wet, went on chilly and drenched. During a lull in the storm, about noon, she got under a tree and eat some corn bread, then went on as before. The rain ceased at night-fall, and darkness came early. Wet and weary, not knowing how to get a fire while all was so soaked

with rain, she walked on hoping to find another encampment. Nor was she disappointed, though the bivouac was different indeed from that of the night before. A solitary old man had made a shelter of branches, spread for himself a seat of branches, and built before it a fire.

"May I sit by your fire? I am all alone, wet and tired," said Rachel.

"Come in, and welcome," replied the man, "it is an old story that misery likes company; I'm all alone, too, and besides the Lord has said, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,' and so here is such entertainment as I've got."

This was a new speech, and Rachel entered the shelter of the branches, overwhelmed at the goodness of the Lord.

"Wring out your bonnet, and I'll hang

it up to dry ; take off your shoes, and dry them. These are hard days, and yet I remember our Lord Jesus had not where to lay his head."

"Do you know about the good Lord?" cried Rachel, catching at the man's arm as he sat down, after putting her bonnet and shoes to dry.

"I do, thank the Lord," he replied.

"Then, maybe, you can tell me about Him more than I know. I only know what little Miss Fannie told me, an' I'm fearin' I'll forget it all by myself."

With this bond of sympathy between them, it was not hard for these two wanderers to get acquainted.

"I am going down into the Brush beyond the border on an errand like your own," said the man. "I have seen my wife and

three boys go before me into glory, and I'm alone in the world, with no kin but one brother. I've lived working with my hands, and men called me a Methodist preacher, for I have told sinners of the Lord, and what he's done for me. My brother, they tell me, has turned bushwhacker, and I'm going to try and find him, and see if he won't turn from his ways. He's an old man, but I'm older," and the stranger smoothed back his long, white hair from his brow. They had both been drying their clothing and getting warm, and now Rachel untied her bag; the man took out a leathern wallet, and both proceeded to get their much-needed evening meal.

"I know one old bushwhacker, a gray-haired man, short and thick set like," remarked Rachel.

"Did you!" cried the old man, eagerly, "there's many a grey haired bushwhacker; mayhap," he added, more quietly, "there's more of grey heads in Satan's service than in the Lord's I'm fearin."

"Maybe they never heard tell of the good Lord," suggested Rachel.

"True enough; there's many a man and woman, in the Brush, that never *did* hear of Him except in swearing talk; but most have heard enough to make 'em repent of sin and turn to the Lord, and their hearts were not like the nether millstone. In these days iniquity abounds. What might be the name of the man you mentioned?"

"I never hearn none of their names, only one fellow called 'Sime.'"

The conversation here slackened, and

Rachel, now warm and nearly dry, having finished her supper, was beginning to nod drowsily, when her companion suddenly asked, "Did you ever hear this man talk any?"

"Well, consid'able."

"You'r tired; but could you just remember what you have heard him say?"

Rachel at once related the conversation that had passed between the old man and Sime at her house, also the words he had spoken at his short stop at her house, the night of Jim's death, and how he had befriended her in bringing back her captured boy.

"It might be him," said the man, "it might be. How old did he say he was when the mother died."

"'Bout ten year."

"And then he stayed with the father?"

"Yes, and both were alike bad an' rough."

"And what State did they hail from? Vermont, was it, now?"

"I think it war," replied Rachel.

"I think it might be he," continued the Methodist preacher, "and if it is, why thank the Lord, he aint so cruel and bad as some of them, and he haint forgot all his mother told him, and he knows there is a God, and a reckoning day. I've prayed for him day and night, with strong crying to the Lord," he added, tears chasing one another down his wrinkled cheeks. "Let us pray, now, in the midst of this wilderness, my sister, let us pray to Him who holds us in the hollow of His hands."

Rachel bowed her face upon her knees,

as the old man knelt down just before the branch shelter, the flickering fire-light fitfully illuminating his thin figure, clad in a suit of threadbare butternut, his hands clasped, his haggard face lifted devoutly heavenward, and his grey hair tossed by the night wind. From the heart of that desert land, from the midst of his enemies, from cold and hunger, from darkness and loneliness, what strains of devout supplication did this child of grace pour into his Father's ear, pleading with God until that Brush-land in the stormy midnight seemed the very dwelling-place of God, the beautiful gate of heaven.

Rising on the strong wings of this old man's faith and love, Rachel's soul forgot its fears, its distresses, and she left herself, her scattered children, and her soldier husband,



Rachel bowed her face as the old man prayed.
Page 162.

all in the tender hands of the all-wise Father, and, in this happy frame, when the prayer was ended, she laid her down in peace and slept.

IX.

THE FELLOW-TRAVELER.

THE next morning the sky was clear, and the day promised to be warm. The old man kindled a fire, and each fried a bit of pork, and warmed some corn bread. While they were eating the old man asked,

“Aint there any way you can find out wot this grey headed bushwacker’s name is?”

“Well,” said Rachel, anxious to aid her new friend, “the only way is his bin haunting round ’bout McQueen’s whar I lef Bill,

an' reckon they knows his name, and mebbby I *could* git it out o' *her*."

"I was a goin' down that way, it's where the bands keep themselves, and, if you like, sister, we'll walk on together, and you can find out what you can for me and get your child, and mebbby the Lord will make you the means of my finding my brother."

"I'm agreed," said Rachel; "it's hard goin' alone, and I git down-sperreted; an' I'm feared I'll git to goin' on in my own strength like I did afore. You see I can't pray good, an' I don't know much what's right an' wrong."

"We'll go together, sister," said the man, swinging his wallet over his shoulder by a stick; and Rachel, putting on her bonnet and shoes, took her bag and bundle, and they went their way.

"Ef that 'ere man's your brother you aint much 'like," observed Rachel.

"That's all 'long of the Lord's goodness to me. There's a hard verse in the Bible, 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated;' but when I think of the case of me and brother Matt, I kind of see into it. Why did the Lord show favor to me an' not to brother Matt? I don't know, 'twa'nt 'cause I deserved it; and yet I aint findin' no fault with him on 'count of brother Matt; we had neither one of us no claim on him 'cept God's goodness and our badness."

"I can't read," said Rachel, "and I don't know much 'bout the Bible; nothing 'bout it, only Miss Fannie read out as how God loved us, and said we must repent an' turn to him and live, an' sich."

"I can read," said the old man, "but

I find so much in the Bible hard to understand. I lay it to two things; I ain't no larnin' and the nat'ral heart's at enmity with God. But, sister, there is two things in the Bible the Lord has made so plain, that 'he who runs can read,' an' a child can understand 'em. They're these things, sister: men's sinners, and Christ is a Saviour. This, sister, is all my preachin,' it's all I pretend to know. I tell 'em they're sinners, an' they're hearts know it's true, and their consciences cry out at 'em an' scare 'em, and I say, Christ is a Saviour, trust in him."

"I don't know nothin'," said Rachel; "I never had no chance only I found out I was an awful sinner, an' I knowd it was true. I'm s'prised thar is a Saviour for sich as me."

"The Bible says," replied the old man, "that Jesus Christ came to save the chief of sinners."

"That's me," said Rachel, sincerely.

"Then be glad that it is, if He's come to save you," replied her companion. After a silence of nearly an hour, the old man said, "Now I'll tell you how it was between me and Matt."

"Do," said Rachel; "I think a power of hearin'."

"I was five year older nor Matt, and when our mother died, all she had told me of good things stuck in my mind, an' when I did wrong it hurt my feelings; so I never took to father's ways, and, nat'rally enough, for father never took to me. Matt and father was just made for each other. By an' by father says

to me, I'd better hire out and do for myself, 'cause him and I couldn't agree, so I went off with a farmin' man up toward Rolla. I heard from Matt and father now an' then, and oncst or twisct I see them, but none of us could write, an' so it went on till I was a matter of twenty year old. 'Bout that time it pleased the Lord to send a preacher of his word to our part, and he stopped at our house, and the Lord blessed the readin' of the word, the prayin' and the preachin' to my soul, an' the souls of four of the family I lived with. My heart was so set on Matt and father, I went nigh ninety mile to tell them, what the dear Lord had done for me, but as the Scriptur says, I seemed to them like one that dreamed."

"An' how long ago is that?" asked Rachel.

"Why, a matter of forty year."

"An' have you served the Lord forty year? Well, no wonder if he has a likin' to ye; but here is I; why it's only a few days since I cared an acorn for him."

"That ain't the way to look at it," replied the old disciple. "'Taint by long servin' nor by much servin'; you can't do nuffin to merit the love of the Lord, it's free as the sun and the rain."

"And you're a *preacher*," said Rachel, scanning her new friend, curiously. "Well, I've heard tell of 'em, but never seed none afore."

"Folks call me a preacher, but I don't set up for it. I can't keep still when

I see perishin' sinners around me, and I talk and read and pray to them. I aint the eddication a preacher ought to have. I'se heard some preachin' that did my soul good from them that had larnin', but the Lord's blessed my workin', and I can't keep my mouth shut."

"And your wife's dead, an' your chil-run?" said Rachel, reverting to what little he had told her of his history.

"They're all laid in the grave, and I'm looking for'ard to lyin' with them as to a good thing, not that I'm impatient; I hope and trust the Lord's time is my time."

"Lost 'em all," said Rachel. "How did you bear that?"

"The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord," said the old man, meekly.

"I hope if the Lord takes away my Bill, like he did my Jim, I'll feel right like 'bout it."

"The Lord gave you grace, sister, and yet I hope and trust the Lord means to prosper us both in our arrands. It's about noon and the sun's growing very hot these days. We'll go farther after it, if we set down for the matter of an hour in some shady place."

"Mebby we would, though I grudges the time while I'm goin' toward my boy."

In a few minutes they came to a little creek running across their path, with several large trees growing near it. Here they sat down, bathed their heated faces and weary feet, and Rachel ate a hard tack, while the old man dined on a dry crust taken from his wallet. After this repast

Rachel fell into a doze, and perhaps the old man did the same, but when the hour of resting was over he was wide awake to rouse her and to lead the way as they pursued their journey.

“How long sence you sot out looking for your brother?” asked Rachel.

“A matter of three months. I’s gone here and there, one while hearing he was a prisoner, and then finding it was another than Matt. I’ve gone many a mile huntin’ out reports. Some folks made mistakes and some—may the Lord forgive them—set me wrong a purpose.”

“An’ didn’t you find no one what cared for the Lord in all this while?”

“It’s bin just as it allus has, sister, as the scripter says, some will hear and some will forbear. I’s found some who knew

the name of Jesus precious to their souls. I've found one or two who wasn't against hearin' about him. But I'se found the most sot to do evil. Negroes is pretty generally ready to learn 'bout the Lord. I'se spent a many happy hours in their cabins, feelin' we was all one in the Lord."

"It was a good old black woman first told me of the Lord lovin' folks, and folks lovin' the Lord," said Rachel, with a backward thought to Aunt Sallie and the children.

Such converse as this shortened the dreary way through the Brush. Like Christian and Hopeful, our two pilgrims shortened the way with godly conversation, holding "wholesome talk" about the "city," and the "King," and the love of "The Lord of

the Hill " to poor pilgrims. It is true our pilgrims found no Interpreter's house, or house called Beautiful, on their way through the Brush, but let us hope they will find many such in their lives. And though these two found no open door, no table spread, yet as with those two who walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a third went with them, even Jesus, instructing and comforting their soul.

Evening gathering darkly, they had just decided to stop, build a little fire, and gather branches for their places of rest, when they heard voices, and a party of five persons, three adults, and two children came up. Seeing that they were negroes, the old man saluted them. During the day refugees like our two friends, strive to avoid others, and Rachel, and her companion, had

succeeded very well in so doing. The present party had a mule laden with an old tent, and some provisions, and, finding they had nothing to fear in Rachel, or the old man, they invited them to help build a fire, and to share what they had. The tent was set up, and as soon as the fire was kindled, the black woman prepared supper. While this was being done, one of the men recognized Rachel's friend.

"Law's, ain't this Preacher Murray?" he asked.

"I'm that one," said the old man.

"And didn' you preach to us colored ones, down here in Arkansas on massa's old place? I bet you did!"

"It's likely, brother."

"We's glad to see you, preacher, an' though it ain't wise to sing, nor to shout out

here in de woods, after de supper, kin ye read us a varse or so an' we'll her' some prayin?"

"With all my heart," said Preacher Murray; so after the supper had been freely shared by all, Preacher Murray gathered his humble congregation about him. The old black woman, her husband, son, and two little girls, these with Rachel, made up this band of worshippers in the wilderness. Preacher Murray knelt in prayer, surrounded by his hearers, then he repeated a hymn from memory, and read by the fire light a portion of Scripture, interspersing the reading of the different verses with comments, which though rude, showed much spiritual discernment. After this the black man and his wife related how God had dealt with them, and Preacher Murray

asked the children a few questions, and gave them some simple instructions.

"I lived up near S—— one while," said the negro man, and I knew there Uncle Lucius, he's the preacher to the colored folks."

"I know him," said Parson Murray. "He has a little church there, and it's more than full; the black folks climb up to the windows, and stand in the door, and fill it up inside every Sunday afternoon. I've heard him. I believe he gives 'em the word of God, good simple preachin', suited for simple folks, he tells 'em they're sinners, and Jesus is a Saviour, and if they repent and turn to him, they'll have everlastin' life, and to my mind that's the gist and marrow of Scripter."

"Dat's it, dat's it," said the woman,

"bless de Lord iur knowin' dat dar is a Saviour for sich sinners!"

"And Uncle Lucius is well? I hope to say howd'y to him afore long."

"He's well as usual in body, but he's troubled in mind about his chil'run."

"Who aint," said the woman. "Thar's my big boy next to this 'un bin run off into Texas, and my big girl she's been run off by her mistress, nobody knows whar; an' when we all git free, my chil'run will be here and thar an' I don't know whar. It's mighty hard."

"So it is," said Parson Murray, "but you must trust the Lord, his ways aint our ways allus, an' yet we must be contented with 'em cause we see they're leadin' to the rest he's laid up for all of us."

"There used to be a sight of preachers

up in S——. Thar was three or four churches 'sides the colored church," remarked the negro man. "The churches is all broke up, and all the ministers gone but one that's been sent there a year ago, and the army preacher."

"Do you know 'em?"

"I went to see the army preacher. He was very kind to me. Says I to him, folks call me a Methody, but I'm a man without eddication, and don't know much about doctrines. I hope though I aint goin' to be counted unworthy by my Lord and Master to be called his follower, and get a place in his kingdom above."

"And what did the army preacher say to that?"

"He shook my hand; he didn't seem ashamed of me in my ragged butternut

clothes. Says he, 'That's a very good profession of faith,' and then he quoted that Scripter, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' and says he, 'We're all one in Christ.' "

"That war very good in the army preacher," said the man, nodding approvingly.

"It was Christian. He's got the gist and marrow of the matter too, only having more learning he can put it in a better way. There's great and sore need of army preachers, the soldiers is just running wild, going pell mell to Satan by hundreds. There's one young lad guarding at the stockade who reads, and prays, and talks, and gives tracts, and the other men call him no end of bad names, but thank the Lord I believe he'll keep firm."

To all this Rachel listened, learning more

and more, through these rude but sincere teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During the night, Rachel shared the tent with the black woman and the two children, while Preacher Murray, and his colored friends, made for themselves a bed of branches near the fire. Morning came and the little company separated, the negroes pressing with all haste toward the Union lines, and Rachel and Preacher Murray going still further into the Brush in search of the lost brother and child.

"I reckon much on gettin' to see Uncle Lucius, and hearin' preachin' in a colored church," said the negro man. Alas for his expectations! Already had the humble edifice been fired by lawless hands, because a school for colored children had been opened there, and while the unhappy blacks

were violently prevented from doing aught to save their property, the place so dear to their simple hearts crumbled to blackened ashes. The black women wept from fright, Uncle Lucius wrung his hands for his pulpit and big Bible, and hymn book, and the children filled the air with cries for their books, and slates; a rich ovation, all this grief and lamentation, to the cruel hearts that had done the deed. Who will build again the walls of this little outpost of Zion, where Christ was indeed preached with zeal and sinners were led to him?

In the day's journey, Rachel now led the way, being on familiar ground. She hoped before the setting of the sun to be at the place where she had left her boy.

Her absence from him had been far longer than she had expected, and her mind was

..

full of terrible imaginings of suffering, and a lingering death, when she thought of the hard and evil hearts her Bill had been entrusted too, and, as was often the case before, she wept.

"Don't mourn so, sister," said her good friend, "the Scriptor reads that all hearts are in the hands of the Lord, and he turns them where he will like rivers of water. The boy isn't in McQueen's hands, but in the Lord's, and them old folks are only the Lord's instruments for good, though things may begin to look as if they was evil. May the Lord give you strength 'cording to your day, and a swift deliverance out of all your 'fictions."

Another great reason for haste, and for anxiety now existed, and that was, that the provisions of the two travellers were run-

ning low. Safe in Rachel's bag lay four biscuits, a cup of rice, and about twenty thin ginger snaps provided for Bill. Hunger fierce as that which attacked Hebrew mothers in the days when "Ben-hadad, king of Syria, gathered all his host, and came up, and beseiged Samaria," or, as seized the Jerusalem matrons, when the Roman legions under Titus lay encamped around, would have been needed to force Rachel to appropriate to her own use that precious store.

Hunger was to Rachel a well-known foe. She nerved herself to meet it, feeling that with her child, once more fed and clothed, pressed to her heart she could defy all pain, endure all that might befall her, and return rejoicing to the home that awaited her.

"Sister," said the old man, "do you

16*

notice how these bunches of leaves are bitten, how the tender twigs are broken, and where the ground is soft from the rain, you can see tracks of horses' feet?"

"We must go on carefully; sister, we don't know if it is a party of bushwhackers or scouts that are near us."

About noon they came to a place where a camp had recently been. The keen eyes of the old man, accustomed to "signs" in his wanderings, scanned all closely.

"Here was the fire, an' there the horses was tied," said Rachel.

"They were ten at least, and the camp was likely night afore last," replied her companion.

Too excited to rest or eat they pressed on. "We are not more than half a mile from McQueen's," said Rachel about sun-

set. She pressed on impatiently, her breath coming short and fast, her bonnet thrown back, and her face glowing and paling from intense excitement. On, on, and now the very place is in sight; but with a wail of agony, this strong woman sank upon the ground insensible. Parson Murray saw the truth as soon as she, the cabin where the McQueens had lived was a heap of ashes, and not a living creature was in sight. Then after a little time, Rachel recovered her consciousness and a small measure of strength; she ran wildly here and there searching and calling for her child. It was all in vain, for as she looked and called the thick darkness of a cloudy night fell over the Brush. "Sister," said the old man taking her hand, "may the Lord have mercy on you in your sore distress. Let us call upon

him. Our only way is to pray, and wait for morning to search for the child."

This reasoning was not to be disputed, and with prayers and tears, through the long night, they waited for the day.

X.

THE FAITHFUL MOTHER.

FTER the long night had^d passed, our wanderers, with the first clear light, began their search for the missing boy, the old preacher, in his sympathy with the distracted mother, forgetting the disappointment he experienced, in not being able, to trace the man he supposed to be his brother. The true Christian finds it, in the genial nature engrafted upon his soul by grace, to rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, and, while good Parson Murray had grown glad, as Rachel told him she had learned to love

the Saviour, tears now poured over his cheeks as he prayed that God would give her some certainty about her child.

Their first search was among the charred remains of the cabin; here they found nothing that would indicate that the inmates had perished with the dwelling. A tin cup and a small iron pot were all that had escaped destruction. These the old man washed, saying, "We may find good use for them yet." About the site of the cabin were numerous prints of feet and horses, among these the old man searched a long time tracing different tracks to the outside of the clearing, at last he said, "Sister, I find two prints of bare feet going this way, and I think they are the feet of a man and woman, but there are no child's feet."

"But my Bill could not walk," said Rachel.

"The woman may have carried him."

"I don't think she'd be coaxed to do it," said Rachel, going to examine the prints.

"Yes, these must be old man and woman McQueen; yes, she had lost one toe, and see this 'ere track has only four toes on one foot!"

"They went fast," said old Murray, still pursuing his examination of the prints with the keenness of one accustomed to woodcraft; "see how far apart the steps are, but the woman not so fast as the man. She may have had the child."

"Where are they! Where is my boy!" cried Rachel, wringing her hands.

"Trust in the Lord, sister, and let us go forward. The only way to find the child is

to follow the tracks of the old man and woman, and these I do think to be the ones. Now, sister, let me go first, and do you keep your eyes open; slow and sure is the way when one follows such signs. They ran this way, for, though I don't find prints on this bush-ground, I see sticks out of their old places, and branches bent aside, and here's more yet, sister," he pointed to a place where a bunch of leaves had been cut off by a shot, and a rifle ball was buried in a tree, while another lay on the ground. He stood pondering these things for some time, and then said, "I make out that this deed was done in the night, and the old folks, flying through the Brush, were heard, and random shots were fired after them, and they were not hit, for I see no blood."

"They was allus friends with the bush-

whackers. I thought they was safe," said Rachel, anxiously regarding the various signs, her wiser and cooler companion was interpreting.

"I aint sure, but I 'spect this is the work of l'yal men, of Fed'al scouts."

"I didn't know they went 'about doin sich."

"They've bin tryin' to clear out the Brush this four weeks past, and doubtless they heard tell of the McQueens harboring and helping bushwhackers, and so cleared 'em out too."

Rachel nodded, but looked perplexed.

"I make it out this way," said Murray, "the horses' marks went deep as if they was heavy, and they shows all well shod; then these 'ere balls is what the Fed'als uses. Bushwhackers do use 'em when they

get 'em from soldiers they kill, but they don't often have rifles an' these 'ere long balls. Bushwhackers takes naturally to old shot guns, sech as their fathers shot deers, an' bears, an' prairie fowls with."

"Every body's agin' me," cried Rachel, excitedly. "The bushwhackers took all my livin', and burned my cabin, an' here the Unions have went an' gone an' 'stroyed the place whar I left my Bill."

"Have patience, sister, and don't let your nat'ral heart rise up agin' the Lord an' his doin's. The Scriptor reads, 'If God be for us who can be agin' us.' Jist be sure the Lord is on your side an' you can sing, 'I will not fear what men can do unto me,' an' 'he makes all things work together for good to them that fear him.'"

Rachel, after these pious exhortations,

held her peace, and they went on their search. A mile farther on Rachel spied, sticking to a thorny bush, a fragment of red linsey. "Mam McQueen wore a gown like this," she said, carefully detaching it.

"That is right, they doubtless went this way. If they fled by night we shall soon find where they stopped for morning, as, in the darkness, and being old, they could not go far."

Two more miles were passed, and they suddenly came upon two refugee women sitting in the brush. They were types of the very worst class of refugees, drunken, filthy, ragged, very children of the evil one.

On being questioned by Parson Murray, they at first demanded whiskey before they would answer, and being assured that our

travelers had none, and that Rachel was looking for a lost young child, they called her a fool, and asserted that she was far better off without the young one than with it.

"Are you getting on to the Union lines," said the old man.

"No," shouted one woman, "the Unioners are a cowardly, murdering, house-burning set of thieves."

"What have they done about here, lately?" he asked.

"Oh, ranted around like lions; burnt McQueen's cabin, and druv them all out."

"And what became of the family?" pursued he, cautiously.

"They was all shot dead, and two or three bushwhackers, what was in there getting supper."

"Have you seen any of the McQueens since?"

"No, in course we aint. What for would we be lookin' at corpses for?"

Mr. Murray took the arm of Rachel, who was ghastly pale and looked ready to faint, and hurried her away. When out of sight and hearing he made her sit down, and, untying her bag, gave her some corn cake to eat, saying, "You'll never keep up to find your child if you do this way. That woman was not telling the truth."

"You think not?" said Rachel, eagerly.

"No; very likely it was Union men that burned the house, and drove out the family. It would be likely, too, that they had shot bushwhackers or old McQueen, but they wouldn't shoot the woman, and I'm sure we're following her track."

17*

"Oh, find my child, you must find my Bill!" cried Rachel.

"The Scriptor reads, not to put your 'trust in an arm of flesh nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help,' but trust in the 'Lord for in him is everlasting strength,' and he won't make your trusting come to shame."

After half an hour's rest they renewed their search, finding still tokens that some one had rapidly passed over that unfrequented Brush-path before them, until at length they came to a place where were more decisive evidences.

"Here they stopped to rest and eat, and they made a little fire, too, see there! And here they laid down to rest a bit, see! Now you look 'round, and see if you can find any traces of the boy."

Rachel searched eagerly and hurriedly for a minute or two, and then, with a cry, flung herself upon the ground.

"What have you found?" asked the old man, hurrying up to her.

She raised herself, and pointed to a few large yellow glass beads scattered on the grass. "Bill had them tied to a string 'bout his neck," she explained.

"Then he's been here, and broke the string by pulling it."

"He pulled it when he cried," said Rachel, tears running down her face. "My poor Bill has been crying, he was hungry, and they were bad to him."

"Don't give up now," said the old man, kindly; "let us hurry on, we'll find more marks right soon now. The Lord is prospering our search; He guides our feet in the

right way. "He hears the young ravens when they cry,' so Scriptor says, 'and gives the young lions their food,' when they seek their meat from God. He don't let the sparrows fall without bein' took notice of, and counts the hairs of our heads, the Scriptor reads, and he aint goin' to forget the child."

These words were not without their comforting effect on Rachel, though, as she hurried on, she constantly pictured to herself her child sick, hungry, and neglected, and the Brush-land seemed to ring with the pitiful cries of baby misery. Seeing her thus, with tears rolling over her cheeks, the good man again addressed himself to comfort her, drawing consolation from the only storehouse he knew, and indeed the best and chiefest of all, the Word of God.

"Sister, the Scriptor reads, 'he puts all our tears into His bottle.' The Lord remembers every tear of his children, and I know for sure, sister, that he'll turn them all into blessings, and pour 'em out on us so we'll have no room for 'em. As to tears, the Lord says, he wipes 'em all away in that good land, and I hope and pray he'll take you and all your children there to enjoy him forever. Don't get discouraged, sister."

"It's so hard," groaned Rachel.

"It's often I've found it, sister, that there wasn't no way to get on, only jest to look apart all the days of livin' to that home in glory, and take comfort out of that."

"Oh, I wish the Lord would help me to do it," sobbed Rachel.

"Sister," said Parson Murray, "there aint no time lost nor wasted that is spent in waiting on the good Lord. Let us get right down here on our knees, and pray to him to cheer your soul, and give you a speedy end to these troubles, for I see they're getting to be more than you can bear."

Together they knelt, and for some moments, this good old man prayed earnestly for the unhappy mother at his side. Surely that humble, earnest supplication was not unheard or lightly esteemed by Him, who delights to call himself, the hearer and answerer of prayer. When they rose Rachel wiped her eyes saying, "now I feel better," and went more cheerfully on her way.

"Here," said the parson, pausing abruptly

a little farther on, "here I think they stopped, you can see tracks now, the ground's muddy, and it looks as if they stopped and scuffled, and pushed each other; see, there's a weed or two broken down, as if some one fell on it, and here one of them was thrown on their knees."

"They was allus fighting and quarrelling."

"And who got the best of it, generally speakin'?"

"Oh 'bout half an' half; they was a match in strength and temper, so sometimes one got their way, and sometimes the other."

Murray looked about carefully. "Here the man stood looking this way. It surely was the Lord's will to have this happen when there was soft ground. There I guess one of them turned off into the Brush, the bushes is

broken, and the weeds tramped on." Still he followed the tracks for several rods; it was a bare piece of the pathway, low and wet.

Returning he said, "The man turned and went on, and the woman got ahead, and took long steps as if she went fast. I can tell it by the four toes. The hand of the Lord is with us, let us turn in here where some one went."

"Let me go first," said Rachel, pushing onward.

It was past noon, the sun shone brightly down flickering through the leaves, and casting on the ground alternate light and shadow; there was a stream near and the trees were longer than in many parts of the Brush. As the Lord of old guided unhappy Hager to the life-giving spring in the desert,



**Rachel shrieked his name, was he dead, so white
and still?—Page 205.**

so now he guided this longing mother; she had only gone a few yards, when at the foot of a tree, a bright ray of sunlight falling over his light locks and pallid face, she saw little Bill. Rachel shrieked his name and flew to catch him to her heart,—was he dead, so white and still? Not dead but almost dying, feeble indeed was the fire of life in that little starved, chilled frame, lying on the damp ground. “The Lord bless you both,” said the old preacher bending over the mother, sitting with her child in her lap, endeavoring to rouse it from its death-like sleep. Quick, and ready as a woman’s, were Parson Murray’s movements, as he kindled a little fire, put on the pot full of water to warm, that the child might be bathed, and heated water in the tin cup to soften a portion of the biscuits and ginger-snaps, for

the famished child. When an hour had passed, Rachel had Bill nicely washed, arrayed in the clean frock and petticoat, with the big handkerchief pinned on for a shawl, and already reviving under the influences of his mother's gentle touch, and the food she was carefully giving at intervals under the old man's directions. They were going no farther that day. Mr. Murray increased his fire, and went into the wood farther, to find a bird or a squirrel for their evening meal.

XI.

JOY IN THE MORNING.

PARSON MURRAY'S hunting was even more successful than he had dared to hope. He secured a rabbit, the first he had seen for several weeks. Coming upon a little patch of wild onions by the side of the stream, he pulled up a number, and thus provided with material for a supper, returned to Rachel, who, absorbed in her recovered child, had scarcely noticed his absence.

“Sister,” said the parson, “the Lord has been better to us than all our fears, he has given you back your child, and he has sent

us food in this wilderness, as of old he sent quails and manna to the children of Israel. I trust that he is not angry with our recent murmurings, but sends us a blessing with the food."

"You haint murmured none, it was me, and now I'm sorry for it. I'll cook that rabbit after you skin it."

"We will prepare the child a bed of leaves and twigs," said Murray. "I will gather them together near the fire, and you can spread your apron on it, and let him rest. You had better take the fore legs of the rabbit, sister, with a portion of a biscuit and some of your rice, and make the child some broth. We can cook it in the pot. I have yet a morsel of salt."

Bill's bed was made and warmed, and having been fed, the child dropped into a

slumber, very different from that death-like sleep, in which he lay when at the foot of the tree. The rabbit being dressed, and the broth put over the fire, Rachel spitted the animal on two sticks fixed firmly in the ground, and set the tin cup to catch the drippings. She seasoned her cookery with a little salt, and some of the wild onions. While the rabbit was roasting, she went down to the stream to bathe her face, hands and feet, comb her hair and otherwise arrange her dress in better trim, than her anxiety since leaving S—— had permitted her to do. Returning, she found her fellow-traveler had brought up a couple of stones for seats, before the fire, and was occupying one with his Bible open on his knee. As she approached, he said, "Come sister, your child is sleeping comfortably, our savory

18*

supper is cooking, and this seems to be a good time to hear some of God's word—sit down."

Rachel took the seat he pointed out, and listened while the old man read slowly the fifteenth chapter of Luke, explaining, meanwhile, simply and forcibly, the meaning of those beautiful parables of God's care over lost and wandering creatures. It was a portion of Scripture the good man had studied often and earnestly; its words were engraven on his soul, by prayer and meditation, and because they had grown clear to him, he instructed Rachel in all zeal and sincerity. It was a peculiarity of Parson Murray's, that when quoting Scripture or speaking deliberately, he used moderately good language, on the contrary, in the freedom of familiar intercourse, or the

excitement of eager exhortation, he fell back into the rude jargon to which he had ever been accustomed. Entirely without education, he had even picked up reading in a desultory manner, and only by intense and long continued efforts, learning a little from this one, and a little more from that one, whatever of knowledge, or refinement he possessed, he had gathered from the word and indwelling grace of God. This taught him a kindly courtesy, an earnest sympathy that softened his manners, and which, despite the weather-beaten face, and worn butternut garb, showed Parson Murray superior to those among whom he usually lived.

During the reading, Rachel now and then softly stirred the broth or turned the rabbit, and by the time the chapter was ended the supper was ready. What a treat was a

warm meal of roast meat, to these two half famished wanderers! They ate heartily, and when both were satisfied, only the cup partly filled with drippings, and a handful of onions were left.

After the meal was over, Rachel proposed an examination of their stores. Emptying her bag, she decided that there was enough food to last Bill until she reached S——. For herself there were about two ounces of salt pork, half a pound of corn bread, and one hard tack. Parson Murray was not much better off in the matter of provisions, a dried herring, a quarter of a stale loaf, and four hard tack making his whole allowance. Rachel looked rather dismayed.

“Well, the child’s got enough, I won’t say nothin’,” she remarked.

“Don’t let’s distrust the Lord, he’s not let

us get clear out o' food yet, sister. He'll send us something when we need it. It'll keep us more humble and trustful like, mebby ef we have to look to Him for each mouthful. Why, sister, it's only what the birds do, and they keep singin' all the time.

"I won't complain a word, I've got my boy," said Rachel. "But," she added, looking up at Mr. Murray, "you have'nt got any track of your brother; what you goin' to do 'bout it?"

"I've made up my mind to go back with you an' the child. It don't seem right like to leave you alone, an' mebby the Lord will bring me to him by goin' back. Leastwise, I don't see my way plain in this direction any more."

"We'll turn round with a good heart to-morrow," said Rachel, bending over Bill, who

was opening his eyes, and lifting him up to give him some broth. He had seemed very dull until now, but after a few swallows of the broth he smiled, and stroking his mother's face with his little bony hand whispered "mammy." Rachel hugged him to her breast, saying pitifully, "Oh if my poor Bill could only talk good, how much bad treating he could tell me of. He's been starved and 'bused—jest look at that black mark on his little thin cheek!"

"Keep your mind off it, sister. It's all all over now, and in a few days it will be all lost out of his mind. The Lord's been very good to children in 'given' 'em short memories. Have a care, sister, 'bout settin' your 'fections too much on him 'stead of the Lord. 'Member, he's a jealous God."

"I'll try an' love the good Lord best," said Rachel.

"An' there's another thing, sister; don't set your heart as much on the boy, 'cause he's had trouble, as mother's will, so that you spoil him, an' let him get rough and bad and not mind you, an' so go to ruin!"

"I'll mind *that*, too, I hope," said Rachel.

"We had a boy, sister, that was hump-backed from a fall, an' his 'flections made us as fond of him an' so set on him, that I often thought afterwards the Lord was wise to take him away from us, 'fore we ruined him."

"I'll remember *that*," said Rachel.

"And now, sister, as we slept little last night we must be on our way airly, so we'll offer a prayer to the good Lord, who's bin so kind to us to-day, and then we'll sleep.

I hope, sister, in the morning we can say, 'I laid me down in peace an' slept, I woke for the Lord sustained me,' as David says in Scriptor."

The next morning after a breakfast of hard tack, each with the drippings from yesterday's rabbit, and cold water from the stream, Rachel and her friend set out, Rachel carrying Bill and her bag, the old man having possession of the pot, wherein was some of the broth yet remaining.

"We've bin agoin' northeast since yesterday mornin'. I won't be s'prised to find that those McQueens tried to get up near S——, where there's more to eat."

"I never want to see 'em no more," said Rachel, bitterly.

"Don't harbor up revenge in your heart. Scriptor says, 'Love your enemies,' 'pray

for those that despitefully use you and persecute you.' Ef you harbor up revenge you are none of the Lord's. David in Scriptor prays for 'flections on his enemies, but atop of the chapter it says it's in the person of Judas. I don't quite understand it, only I know Jesus says forgive seventy times seven, and I hold to that."

"I can't help feelin' as if I hated 'em, to think of this poor starvin' child left alone to 'perish!"

"Pray agin the feelin', sister, you'll be sorry for it. 'Sides it's clear to my mind that the woman held to the child 'til the old man fought her 'bout it and made her leave it."

"Mebby so," said Rachel; "she was better nor him always."

The day's journey was uneventful; corn

bread and wild onions formed a light supper, dinner they had none; however, the old man found a number of edible roots near where they rested for the night, and these they roasted for their breakfast.

As they went on in their northeasterly route, the next morning they found marks of horsemen, having passed there lately before them. They proceeded cautiously, and found before noon camping-ground, where a fire had been lit and horses tied. A little beyond this were traces of persons going rapidly along, and suddenly they came upon a leathern wallet, wherein was a piece of boiled salt meat and two hard tack.

"Again," said the old man, looking devoutly upward, "the Lord has provided our table before us. Let us sit down and eat for I faint with hunger."

They sat down at once and divided the contents of the wallet between them; after eating they rose much refreshed. Little Bill was growing more cheerful under his mother's care. His broth was gone, but he had food enough for his need, and as Rachel looked at him, lying peacefully in her arms, she forgot her own distresses.

"I think that 'ere wallet was dropped by some'un in quick flight," said Mr. Murray. Let us keep a look out."

In a few moments he added, "Yes, there have been shots fired, several, and here's blood!" The ground was indeed stained red, and following the ominous signs a little way they came to a slight descent, a little ravine formed in some rainy season, and there the figure of a man lying among the bushes on his face.

Mr. Murray went forward and turned the body over. "It's him! it's him!" cried Rachel.

"What, the old bushwhacker?" said her friend sharply.

It was indeed this evil old man, proving again the Scripture, "The way of transgressors is hard," and "the wages of sin is death." A ball had entered at his back and passed through his lung, he had run a few paces and fallen lifeless.

"Oh, I'm sorry I felt like hating him!" cried Rachel, wringing her hands. "You said I'd be and now I am. Poor old creeter! Ef ever I find the old woman I'll treat her like a mother!"

"We will stop a bit and bury him," said old Mr. Murray. So they straightened out the body, folded the stiff hands and

smoothed the hoary hair that had been no crown of glory to his polluted eye, and then scooped a shallow grave. Together they laid him in his narrow bed and covered him from the face of day, piling leaves and bushes over the light covering of mould; and this done they went slowly on, meditating what Parson Murray quoted, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

"Sister," said the parson, breaking a silence that had lasted for a long half hour, when you come to read the Scriptor, and study on it, and lay it up in your heart, you'll be s'prised to see how it fits into every day life. There's something in the Scriptor, sister, to match everything that happens. Now here, there's many a sayin' of Scriptor to suit this man's livin' and

19*

dyin'. Here's one 'Evil shall hunt the violent man to destroy him.' "

"It has, then, he was allus a werry vi'lent man," said Rachel.

"'Evil pursueth sinners,' says Scriptor, also, and, 'he that seeketh mischief it shall come upon him;' again, 'the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.' "

"It must have been in his house," said Rachel; "our house was bad enough, seein' we didn't know the Lord, but their shebang was an awful place."

"I doubt not," said the old man, as they selected a spot to build their little fire and rest that evening, "that we'll come upon these scouts; we see tracks of them all about, and it's likely we'll come upon them; they must be ridin' around, trying to clear the Brush of bushwhackers."

"I wish they'd do it; bushwhackers has done an awful sight of mischief," said Rachel.

"I've read in Scriptor that 'the wicked is the scourge of the Lord,' he uses 'em to rouse up the righteous to more and more dependin' on him, and to turn others from their ways to seekin' him."

"I wish we'd meet the scouts, mebby we'd get a bit to eat from 'em. If I only could sot down to a good square meal agin, how glad I'd be!"

"We'll be to S—— in a day or two, if we can only hold out till then," said Murray.

The next afternoon our wanderers did indeed come upon the camp of the scouts. Seeing the horses tied and the soldiers about their fire ready for cooking, they went boldly up to ask for help.

"We aint got much for ourselves, we have to travel light, and take short rations for ourselves and our horses," said the soldier Murray addressed, looking suspiciously at him.

Rachel, looking keenly at different members of the party, recognized them as those who had been kind to her on her previous journey. The recognition was mutual; the leader of the party fixing his eyes on her, said, "See here, good woman, we've met before."

"Yes," said Rachel, "I had three chil'-run then, taking them to S——; I told you I wus goin' fur another, an' here he is."

"And did you really get there to S—— and go back?"

"On course I did; I found friends in

S——. Mrs. P—— was very good to me and the chil'run, and I lef them on her place."

"Mrs. P——'s a good woman both to refugees and to soldiers," said the captain. "Sit down, ma'am, we can strive to do a little for a woman that has had such good courage."

"The Lord did help me the way you said he would," said Rachel, eagerly. "He took care of me, for all I didn't care for him. The Lord is werry good."

"I'm glad you've found it so," said the captain, somewhat embarassed by a subject upon which he seldom spoke what he really felt.

Rachel and Mr. Murray sitting down to rest, Rachel espied not far from them, partly concealed by a clump of bushes, two prison-

ers under guard. She rose, and going nearer, recognized one. Returning to her old friend, she said, "Them soldiers has got two prisoners."

"Poor, wicked bushwhackers, I s'pose."

"Yes; an' I know one of 'em."

"Who is it?" asked the old man, with more interest.

"That 'ere grey-headed un I told you of."

Murray started up, ran towards the prisoners, and after a moment's scrutiny, was about to rush up to them, when he found the soldier's gun barring his way.

"No meddlin' with the prisoners," said the guard, sternly.

"But he's my brother, my own brother!" cried old Murray.

"Wus yet; you're as bad as him, likely,

and ought to be took too. Captin! here's a butter-nut what says he's this goril's brother!"

The captain and the other scouts hurried up, Rachel with her child in her arms drawing near.

"What's all this?" said the captain.

"I am, indeed, his brother," said the parson, earnestly. He is my dear sinning brother Matt. For long months I've looked for him, to try to turn him from the error of his ways to serve the Lord.

During all this the grey-haired bush-whacker sat with downcast face, apparently stolidly indifferent.

"Who are you?" asked the captain of Murray, struck by the singularity of his speech.

"Men call me Parson Murray. I'm a

poor, ignorant man, an' lived ten mile from Rolla, till it pleased the Lord to take my wife an' boys out of this world, and being troubled in sperrit for my brother Matt, I've sot out to seek him. The Lord's seen fit I'd find him to-day a pris'ner."

"And richly 'serving of the wust what can be done," remarked one of the men; "he's a bad bushwhackin' villin!"

"Be you Parson Murray?" cried another scout, stepping up. "Why, so you be! How do, parson? *I'll* shake hands with you ef you *do* wear but'nut. The but'nut's all in your gearin', and not in your heart. Captain, this is a loyal man. I knew him up near Rolla two year ago; he was allus helpin' the soldiers, an' when I got my hand shot he nussed it up like a mother. I'd have lost it ef it hadn't been for him."

"I've heard of Preacher Murray," said the captain.

"And so have I. I aint nothin' agin Parson Murray," cried another scout.

"The parson's all right. I'm in for him," said a third.

Thus the Lord raised up friends for his humble servant even among these rough scouts; and his good deeds were winning their own reward.

"Captain," said the parson, seeing this change of feeling in his favor; "now you know I won't do my brother, your prisoner, no harm, won't you let me talk to him a bit."

The captain looked uneasy.

"Murray, you've come in a bad time," he said.

"In a good time, for I've found Matt."

"These bushwhackers have given us a sight of trouble," continued the captain; "they've made the Brush too hot to hold a living creature but themselves. We've been sent down to clear them out. Our orders are to shoot all we find, and we caught these about two hours ago. We didn't care to shoot them down like rabbits, so we brought them in to do it orderly, but we must ride on by moonrise."

Parson Murray uttered no word, but his furrowed cheek blanched and he groaned aloud. Matt sat unmoved.

"This brother of your's has done mischief," said the captain; "he's helped kill many a man. I've Scripture for shooting him: 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;' you know that, parson, you can't dispute it."

The parson did not dispute it, his head only drooped lower on his bosom. But now Rachel stepped forward. "Captin," she said, earnestly, "don't ye mind how I told you there was one old man among the bushwhackers what was better nor the rest, an' give me back my little Mose, when the other lugged him off, and how he kept 'em from comin' when my Jim was a dyin'? Don't ye mind, captin, how I axed ye to be good to him ef ye got him, and you said, 'Yes, you would?'"

"Captin," said Murray, taking courage, "can't you spare my brother's life? Oh, captin! don't send him afore the Lord with all his sins on his head!"

The appeal was not lost, it put the matter of the man's death in a more solemn light, and the scouts began to look serious. The

captain was troubled. "Murray," he said, "you're a good man, I respect you; but it's small mercy to turn loose a man who burns widows' houses and murders women and children. He's one of those that 'Justice suffereth not to live,' that's Scripture, Murray."

"But, captin, if Matt would do so no more?" pleaded the parson.

The captain shook his head, saying, "I've no faith in bushwhackers' promises."

"But, captin, let me ask him?" Getting no refusal, Murray stepped up and grasped his brother's arm, "Matt, Matt, my lad, won't you repent of your sins and turn from them, and do all the good you can; say, Matt, won't you live right?"

"I don't want to live!" cried Matt, roused into speech. "Life's been a burden

and I've been longing to be shot this twelve months! Wherever I went, there was mother, plain before my eyes, pointing her finger and 'proaching me, and cussing me, and I've hated this bushwhackin' and now I'm done with it let them shoot me."

"But, Matt, there's a God to judge you and a punishment afore you if you die in your sins. Oh, Matt, can't you repent and seek the Lord and spend what remnant of days he gives you in his service and so get to him at last? Then you can meet mother with joy."

"Quit looking at me," said Matt, "you look at me just as mother does!"

"Oh, captin," urged Rachel, "he was good to me, he won't bushwhack no more. He says he hates it, captin, and I heered him say it in my cabin a long while ago."

20*

Relenting looks passed from one scout to another as they heard and saw these things. Suddenly Matt looked up. "Give us your hand, brother. You allus took to mother's ways, and she and you'll be happy. I wus allus a bad one, and I'm meeting my reward, and it's only just. I aint no complaints. I've led a bad life and there's no forgivin' in store for me. I wish it was to live over again so I could do better."

"Matthew Murray," said the captain, coming forward, "if I let you go, will you promise me to go home with your brother, to take the oath here before us, to do nothing against that oath, to do good instead of evil to the loyal cause?"

Matt looked up, the hope of life dawned upon him, the possibility of repentance, of better deeds, rose brightly before him.

"Captin," said he, with rough earnestness, "I'll take the oath and I'll bushwhack no more. I'll go home with my brother and keep quiet. It'll be a great thing to get quit of havin' mother pointing her finger at me."

"I'll leave it to the men," said the captain, hesitating still. "Boys, what do you say, shall we let this fellow go with the parson?"

"Let him go! let him go!" came from one and another of the scouts.

"As for that other man, he has never had a good deed told of him," said the captain, "he's got to be shot." This man had had an old felt hat pulled over his whole face, he made a quick movement at these words and the hat fell; Rachel saw it was her old enemy, Sime.

Matt was released and repaired to the fire, where the scouts in a generous mood shared their evening meal with their late prisoner, Rachel and the parson. The meal over there was an ominous silence; presently two of the scouts, having carefully examined their guns, took their way into the Brush, Sime following them under guard. Short and sharp on the evening air rang the report of the rifles, Rachel shivered and with a woman's compassion forgot the wrongs she had suffered in pity for the dead. In less than half an hour the guard and the two other men returned, in that short time the death warrant had been hastily executed, the grave dug, and Sime, the bushwhacker, lay quietly under the ground.

Now the scouts examined the equipments

of their horses, put themselves in readiness to start. The captain drew near the three who yet kept their places by the fire. Holding out his hand he took Parson Murray's brown palm within his own. "Good-bye, parson," he said, kindly, "I wish you success in your instructions to your brother." He nodded to Rachel, bidding her be of good cheer, as she was nearly to S—— again.

"For you, sir," he said, touching Matt with the rifle he carried carelessly for the moment in his hand, "do you keep your oath and live quietly with the parson, if ever you and I meet in the Brush in time of war it will be instant death for you."

Matt dropped his head lower without reply. The moon had lifted her broad silver shield above the trees, the distant

stars paled in the brightness of the nearer planets, trees and moving beings threw long wierd shadows as the scouts mounted their steeds and moved toward the southwest. Left alone by the fire were Rachel and the Murray brothers. The parson repeated the twenty-third Psalm and in the joy of his heart sang a hymn of praise. Then he addressed himself to prayer, Rachel bowed devoutly down, but Matt sat erect for a moment, then, as the earnest accents of his brother reached his heart, his head fell lower and lower until it rested on his knees.

Rachel, rejoicing in the recovery and comfort of Bill, and in the hope of speedy reunion with her other little ones, fell early into peaceful slumbers, but far into the night sat the Murray brothers by the fire.

Next morning they went forward, though the sun was hot, and the wind as they came on the elevated land of the Ozark range was strong; though they had no food with them except three or four ginger cakes, the particular store of little Bill, Rachel and the parson felt too happy at having accomplished the object of their search to complain. At nightfall they found themselves only eight miles from S——. Matt and the parson had gathered wild mustard and a variety of small roots from the prairie, and these they were to boil for an unsatisfactory supper, with no seasoning but hunger. Some distance before them, they saw on the open prairie land, the glimmer of a little fire. Toward this they directed their steps. Matt had offered to carry Bill, and Rachel, glad to relieve her weary arms,

had resigned the child to him. As they came near the fire, they saw before it one lonely figure, a woman crouching close to the flame she had kindled, her grey hair floating over her bent shoulders, and her face hidden in her arms; her whole attitude one of voiceless despair.

Rachel stepped forward and spoke to her, three times repeating the question "whether they might share her fire," before the poor creature gave her any heed. Then she lifted her face, wan and haggard, in the dancing firelight—it was Mrs. McQueen.

"Go away! go away!" she cried, flinging out her hands. "You've come after your boy, and I left him alone in the Brush."

"Here's Bill, well and hearty," said Rachel, taking the child from Matt's arms,

and holding him out for inspection and verification of her statement.

"Is't you, Rache Craig!" screamed Mrs. McQueen, springing up. "Is't you, 'live, and is the child 'live, too?"

"We're 'live. I found him in the Brush."

Mrs. McQueen gazed from one to another. "You here, Matt Murray!" she cried. "Whar's my old man?"

"I dunno," said Matt.

They gathered about the fire, and Rachel, taking the pot that the parson continued to carry, said she would get their supper.

"I ain't had mine, is *that* all you got?" said Mrs. McQueen, looking at the collection of roots and mustard.

"All," said Rachel, "and we ain't eat a bite since last night, but we'll get to S—— to-morrow."

“I’ll put mine with your’n,” said the old crone, untying a cloth and taking out a piece of salt beef, weighing maybe half a pound. This Rachel cut in small pieces and threw in with her vegetables.

“I’ve got five ’tack, too,” said the old woman, “and I’ll divide with you’uns. Rache, it was all long of the old man I left the boy. He was sot agin him and wanted me to turn him out afore you’d bin gone a day, but I did as well by the young’un as I could. When the scouts burned our she-bang, an’ we run for it, he called me a fool for taking the boy ’long. By-me-bye, next day, he ’clared I shouldn’t hev him no more, so we fout ’bout it, and then I said I wusn’t goin’ to fash myself for your young’un no more, and I took him into the Brush and threw him down and run off. I’ve heard

him screamin' an' felt him hanging onto me ever since !”

“The Lord brought me to my child in time an' now he is safe. “Oh, how I thank the Lord,” cried Rachel, caressing the boy.

““I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live,” quoted the parson, feelingly.

At these words the old woman became dumb from astonishment, and remained so until Rachel pronounced the supper cooked, and removed the pot from the fire.

Satisfying keen hunger precluded all conversation. At length when the meal was eaten and all were at leisure again, the old woman suddenly said, “Rache! do *you* know whar the old man is?”

Rachel did not reply.

"Say, Rache, tell us! *do* you know whar the old man is?"

"Mam McQueen," replied Rachel, slowly, "we found him dead in the Brush, shot through by a rifle ball, and the parson and I buried him."

The woman sat as if stupefied for a moment. "'Twas all along his own fault," she said, "he left me 'cause I went too slow, and he didn't want to share with me no more. He wor a bad man, yet I'm kinder sorry he's dead; I'm glad you buried him, Rache."

'It's a fearful and an awful thing for a person to die in their sins, Mrs. McQueen," said Parson Murray; "your grey hairs tell you you ain't got long to live, don't put off preparing to meet the Lord. Repent of

your sins and forsake 'em and you'll find mercy."

"Wot you got to say to *him*?" asked Mrs. McQueen, pointing her long skinny finger toward Matt Murray.

"The same thing," said the parson, "and I hopes he'll profit by it."

"Yes, yes," said Matt, "mother ain't pointed her fingers at me this two nights!"

The old woman tapped her head with her finger, as if to indicate that Matt was going crazy.

"Oh, I'm all sound," cried Matt, "only folks did say mother didn't stare an' point her fingers at me, but *I* know she *did*."

"I'd listen to them things ef a body'd speak to me 'bout 'em, but nobody does."

"Mam," said Rachel, "I foun' friends up in S——, and I'm goin' back thar to
21*

work, and s'port my chil'run. Ef you're a mind to work honest and 'dustrious, and act good afore my chil'run, an' don't speak agin the Lord, we'll live together an' work together. Ef you don't do right, you must go by your ownself."

"I'll do well by you, Rache, I will so," said the old woman, positively.

A sunny morning succeeded this night, and right early our four wanderers started on the last eight miles to S——. Matt was subdued, Mrs. McQueen grateful, Murray overflowing with thankfulness, and Rachel all eagerness to see her children, and friends.

On reaching S——, Parson Murray bade Rachel a kind good-bye, hoping to meet her again in this world, and earnestly exhorting her to pursue the Christian's way that they might meet in a world of glory.

Rachel and her old acquaintance hastened toward Mrs. P——'s. Mrs. Tad met them on the way, much astonished at seeing Mrs. McQueen. She congratulated Rachel on her successful journey, and assured her that the three little ones were well and happy.

There was a hubbub of happy greetings, when Rachel reached the cabin at Mrs. P——'s. Mose, Hannah, and the baby screamed their welcomes. Aunt Sallie wiped her eyes, straightened her turban, and thanked the Lord. Mrs. P——, and Miss Fannie came out to speak their satisfaction. Old Mrs. McQueen was shorn by Aunt Sallie, given clean garments, and instructed to put herself in respectable guise.

Then the returned wanderers, and the children sat down to a gala dinner of roast meat, boiled turnips, and coffee.

To follow Rachel further is needless, she retained the cabin at Mrs. P——'s, and strove hard to support herself by washing, doing day labor, and so forth. Mrs. McQueen came out in an entirely new character, and behaved herself quite decently. She, with Rachel and the children, were attendants on Miss Fannie's Sunday-school for refugees, and Rachel, by close application in the evenings, was soon able to read her Bible. Bill throve on plenty of washing, and wholesome food, and soon was able to toddle about hand in hand with the baby.

Mrs. P—— wrote to her son, and obtained communication with James Craig, who thereafter sent the major part of his pay to his wife, who had it laid up by Mrs. P——.

Imitating the thrifty family of the Tads, Rachel kept her chickens, and her pig, and

the little log house on Mrs. P——'s farm, presented a strong contrast to the mud chinked cabin the bushwhackers had burned in the Brush.

Out of all the trouble of the winter, and the spring, God had brought a summer of content, and rich in eternity may be the harvesting of those few earnest words of the love of God, spoken to the heart that had never heard his name.

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether they shall both alike be good." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

THE END.

DATE DUE

SEP 24 2005

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

812C1114
P

MAR 8 1966

