

"But what will become of her past sins?" asked Miss Amy anxiously.

"I forgive them," said Christ. "All power, Daughter, is given unto me, and that of complete and eternal pardon."

"What have we been about all our lives, that we know not so much of the Gospel as these children!" exclaimed Deacon Hadlock mournfully and yet resistingly. Whereupon it came to pass that the crowd withdrew or melted away like a mist, and Margaret with Helen Weeks, her sister Isabel, her brother Judah, and Job Luce were left alone with Jesus and John. Helen fell at the feet of Jesus, and overpowered by her emotions, wept with a calm deep weeping; Margaret looked into his face, and tears came into her eyes also.

"Will you forgive me, Job," said Judah to the little boy, "for all that I have done to you?"

"Yes;" replied Job.

"Be good children and love one another," said Jesus to them, and the two boys disappeared.

"Weep not, child of my love," said he to Helen, "confide in me, dwell near my heart, obey the Gospel; I will be the life of your life, the well-spring of your soul, and in purity shall Heaven be revealed in you. The little Isabel, she shall be blest too, I will carry the lamb in my bosom." When he had said this, they two vanished from the dream.

"You ask me who is God, child," said he turning to Margaret, who now alone remained; "God is Love. Be pure in heart, and you shall see God. Love much, and he shall be manifest to you. Your flowers are fair, your spirit is fairer; I am well pleased with their fragrance, the breath of your love is sweeter to me.—Margaret!" he continued, "to you it shall be given to know the mysteries of Heaven. But the end is not yet. Man shall rise against his fellow and many shall perish. The Church has fallen. The Eve of Religion has again eaten the forbidden fruit. You shall be a co-worker with me in its second redemption. I speak to you in parables, you understand not. You shall understand at another day. You are young, but you may advance in knowledge and goodness. You must be tempted, blessed if you can endure temptation. Be patient, and earnest, hopeful and loving. I too was a child like you, and it is that you must be a child like me. Through the morning shadows of childhood you shall pass to the perfect day. I unconsciously grew in favor with God and man, so shall you. This Cross is the burden of life, which all must bear. Bear it well, and it shall bring forth flowers and

fruit to you. This Dove stands for the innocency and virtue, strength and support, that flow from God to all. In a dream have all these things passed before you. Forget not your dream. There is much evil in the world, sin not. You must be afflicted, faint not. Let me kiss you, my sweet child."

Thus spake Jesus, and the dream again changed. The two persons were seen to return to marble-like forms, and these forms became a round ball of light, which, receding through the forest, stood on the distant mountains like the setting sun, and Margaret awoke. The morning light appeared in her chamber, and as she looked from her window, she saw the golden sun coming up over the green woods, and the birds were pealing their songs through the air. Margaret went down with bright feelings, light-hearted and free; she brought water from the cistern for her mother to wash, spread the clothes on the bushes, and guarded some yarn from the birds.

CHAPTER XV.

MARGARET PASSES A NIGHT AT THE STILL, AND SOLOMON SMITH MAKES HER USEFUL.

It will be remembered that Hash, the brother of Margaret, at the Spring training, was punished not only by imprisonment, but also with an inconsiderable fine, for disorderly behavior on that occasion. Not being himself possessed of the money, he had recourse to the Smiths at No. 4, to whom he pledged his oxen for the sum advanced. To acquit himself in that quarter, he engaged his services as night-warden at the Still. In addition—for this seemed to be a point especially insisted upon—he promised that Margaret should accompany him in that duty.

The "Still," or Distillery, was a smutty, clouted, suspicious looking building, on the slope of ground between the Tavern and Mill Brook. It rose a single story on one side and two on the other, into the former of which the barrels of cider were rolled, and emptied into the cauldron below. The latter was the chief scene of operation; here were the furnace; the boiler with its *cap* for collecting the vapor and conveying it into the worm-pipe or condenser; the *refrigerator*, an im-

mense cask, holding the worm, and constantly supplied with fresh cool water, brought by a series of large troughs from the Brook above; and the *receiver*, a barrel, into which the condensed vapor of the cider, now having assumed the form called spirits, issuing from the worm, fell drop by drop. This was a large long room, dark from the absence of windows, and darker still from the accretions of smoke and dust about the walls, and filled with a strong alcoholic effluvia. There were barrels of spirits, and piles of wood lying about, and the bare earth served for a floor. Into this place at night-fall were wont to assemble the people of the neighborhood, men and boys, and sometimes girls. Here came Margaret with Hash and Bull. A pine torch was blazing on the top of the furnace. Two boys sat in the light of the fire on the ground playing mumble-the-peg. Old Isaac Tapley leaned on the furnace inhaling the fumes of the boiling cider that puffed from a leak in the cap; little Isaiah Hatch caught with his fingers the drops that fell from the worm, and conveyed them to his mouth; and the men vied with one another who should render themselves most acceptable to Solomon, helping him crowd wood into the fire. Damaris Smith politely offered to instruct Margaret in the game of Fox and Geese, which they played sitting on a bench having the requisite lines branded across it. At length the nine o'clock bell was heard from the village, a tone mellowed by the distance and the woods, and which breaking in upon many a scene of idleness, dissipation, domestic quiet, or friendly visit, admonished the gay of vanity, the devout of prayer, and all of bed-time. The people went away, and soon after Solomon, leaving Margaret and Hash to their night's work, that of tending the fire. It was not long before Hash, whom Solomon had been treating with singular generosity, exhibited signs of intoxication, and in a few minutes was extended senseless on the ground. Then was Margaret left alone, with a dead-drunk brother, a roaring furnace, a hot and hissing cauldron, barrels of detestable drink, grotesque and frightful shadows leaping on the beams; while through the aperture above, the reflected light seemed to grin at her like a demon of the Still. When the fire burnt low, she replenished it with dry hemlock wood, which snapped like the report of subterranean musketry, and the splinters of fire dashed out spray-like into the room, and fell upon her brother's face, which she was obliged to shield with boards. The gurgling of the water, as it flowed in and out from the vat, would have been music to her ears, if she were free to enjoy it; but it was

her own sweet Pond contributing to the wicked business of rum-making;—and so too was she. Would she finish her work, and flow away as uncontaminated! Her father had never troubled her with ghost-stories, and she was not disposed to conjure up alarms from that source. The night showed dark and chilly, as she looked from the door. She could see nothing but darkness, and hear nothing but the Brook as it rippled through the invisible air; but the pure coolness was refreshing after her hot and fetid furnace-work. Bull followed her to the door-sill, and crouching at her side, looked compassionatingly into her face. When she saw his gentle sympathizing expression, as she had done before, she put her arms about his neck, and wept. She did not complain, or fear, or feel any wrong or loss, but she wept irresistibly because her dog loved her; and then she continued to weep as it were mechanically because there was nothing to occupy her deep sensitive faculties, and her tears alone remained to flow out; and so too she fell to laughing, and laughed almost wildly and incoherently; then chills crept over her, partly from the increasing and overpowering coldness of the air, and partly from an irrepressible nature which must always feel cold if it be not deeply and warmly loved.

She again renewed the fire, and sat down on the bench before it, and Bull, who followed her steps silently from place to place, watched near her, and she began to try the movements of the fox and geese game, then she turned towards the fire, then she looked into the dog's eyes; and as she looked his eyes seemed to grow larger and larger, and to run together, and to cover his face. They had a soft clear aspect like water. Then it seemed as if what she saw became a great sheet of water, like her Pond, and golden waves, such as the sunset gives, chased one another over it, and those golden appearances which the moonlight occasions, she saw deep in its bosom, like strings, or eels, or fishes, frisking and playing, elongating and breaking off, dilating and narrowing. Presently she found herself sinking in these waters, and down, down, down she went, till she came to an open, hollow place, into which the light shone as from a cloud. Here she saw a bright silver basin, or cauldron set, with a fire burning under it, and three beautiful girls busy about it. One kept renewing the fire with rose-bushes, bright frost-reddened autumnal leaves, aromatic dead ferns, and white cotton grass. One threw into the pot wild flowers, eye-brights, azaleas, blood-roots, rhodoras and others; then she caught in her hands the snake-like

moonbeam appearances, and threw them in; then with a long rake she gathered a quantity of sunbeams which she put in; then turning a facet at the end of a silver pipe connecting with the blue sky, she set that running into the pot; then she threw in a handful of sweet-scented herbs, lavender, chamomile, balm, marjoram; at last cutting off a slice of the rainbow, she grated that over the whole. The third, with a long silver rod, stirred the contents of the pot. Then each one taking a silver ladle began to dip out the liquor and pour it in one place on the ground. As they poured it out, it became congealed, and the mass increasing, it assumed a human form; which was that of a female. As they continued to pour over it the contents of the pot, feet were formed, and legs, and breast, and arms, and the shape of a head. One poured on another ladle full, and beautiful eyes appeared; another another, and a delicate lovely color came out in the face; the third added her ladle, which covered the head and neck with long, dark, curling hair. When the Form was complete, they wove with their fingers out of the light, a sort of drapery which they threw over it. Then one began to sing, and another to play on a sort of harp; while the third led down from the skies the brilliant Planet Venus, by a bridle of blue taste tied about one of its rays, and as it hung floating near the ground, she fastened it to a spear of grass to keep it from going off. While the two first were singing and playing, the spirit of life came into the Form, it was animated with a soul, and stood before them a perfect human being. The three girls seemed greatly delighted with the beautiful lady they had created, and were even transported to such a degree as if they would worship her. Margaret, meanwhile, was unobserved, and without being able to have any connection with these persons, she quietly saw all that happened. The Beauty, for such the new-formed woman might worthily be called, did not, however, long consent to receive the adulation of the others, but took pains to demonstrate her equality with them in sundry pleasing ways, and the four disported together on the green grass; then they all went to bathe in a stream of clear water that opened near by. After this the Beauty was seated on the brilliant Planet Venus, which was unhitched, and holding by the blue taste as a snaffle, she sailed slowly away into the air, followed, and as it were guarded, by the others who were borne up by some invisible power in their own bodies. The growling of Bull startled Margaret, and she found she had been dreaming, and when she was fairly

awake, she discovered Solomon Smith coming stealthily through the door of the Still. His manner showed great uneasiness as if he were on some dubious expedition, he thrust his head forward, like a turkey, into every part of the building, as if he suspected somebody was hidden there, and manifested great joy when he found Hash was so completely insensible. Bull drew nearer to Margaret, and Margaret pressed closer to Bull. But Solomon told her not to be afraid, said he would not hurt her, and seating himself on the end of the bench, edged himself towards her. What he said to her was that she had been a good girl in minding the fire so well, and asked her if she wouldn't have some toddy, which she refused.

"You are a curis creetur," he continued, "and an't no moon-calf nuther. You know at the trainin', guess as how, I found you out in the rain, and took you into the Tavern, and you might have staid there all night for all anybody else lookin' arter you. Now you won't begrutch me a favor will you, Peggy? Can you tell what makes the likker come out of that are pipe?"

"No, I can't," she replied. "I wish it didn't."

"What makes dogs howl when you die?"

"I don't know. I think Bull would, if I should die."

"Didn't you know you could catch a thief by putting a rooster under a kittle? It'll crow as soon as the rascal touches it, guess as how."

"I didn't know that."

"You found the water up to Mr. Palmer's, didn't you, Peggy?" he enquired in an increasingly low and earnest manner.

"No," replied she. "The boys found it."

"You carried the stick, and Nimrod said you found it, and so did Rhody and the Widder."

"Did they say so?"

"Wal, now I want you should tell me if you ever found a four-leaf clover? Speak low; walls have ears."

"Yes," she answered, "twenty, in the Mowing."

"Did you ever kill a cricket?"

"No, they sing so pretty, I couldn't kill one."

"That's you. I wouldn't kill one. It's dum bad. Do you put a Bible under your pillow when you go to bed?"

"What, such as Miss Amy told me about? She says the Bible makes people all wicked; and Pa's Bible makes us wicked too. I don't like Bibles."

"Little coot! Don't you know the Bible is the best book in the world. I always sleep with one, guess as how.—Let me see your finger nails. Is there any black spots on them?"

"When they are dirty, and I dig roots for Obed."

"Now keep still, Peggy, I want to tell you something. I have had a dream."

"I wonder if you dream too!"

"Yes, I have had a dream three nights a runnin'. I can't tell you about it now. But look here, Peg, Hash owes us for money, and he'll have to lose his oxen if it an't paid dum soon. He drinks more than his work comes to, but if you are willing to do what I want you to, I'll let him off."

"What shall I do?" said Margaret, with some degree of uncertainty and distress. "Keep still, Bull, there, there, Bull; they won't hurt me, Bull."

"I want you to go up with me to-night to the Fortune-teller's, Joyce Dooly's."

To this proposal, Solomon, after considerable coaxing and threatening, succeeded in gaining Margaret's consent; promising that he would release Hash altogether from his obligations, if she would do as he wished.

Solomon, in a few minutes, brought a horse to the door, and taking Margaret behind him, with the dog in company, rode off. They crossed Mill Brook, went up a half mile or so on the Brandon road, when they dismounted, and took a narrow path, on foot, into the woods. It was pitch dark, and Margaret had to hold by the skirt of Solomon's coat, while he felt his way before. They espied at length a light, and entered a door. In a small, low, ragged room, in what sort of a house or place it was impossible for Margaret to tell, she found an old woman with a dish of coals and two tallow candles burning before her on a table, both of which she seemed to be intently watching. She was evidently prepared for the visit, and showed by her manner that she had been waiting their arrival. Joyce Dooly the Fortune-teller was old, her face was pinched and sharpened, her eye black and piercing; she was somewhat fantastically dressed, and began using sundry cabalistic and charmed words. Five cats darted from chairs and the chimney side, when Bull entered, hissing and spitting, and all raised their backs together in one corner of the room. This movement seemed to disturb her for a moment, but observing it more attentively she at length became quiet, as if all was right. Her immediate business was with Margaret, whom, after settling certain

preliminaries with the coals of fire, the candle wicks, the cats, some cards and astrological tracts that lay on the table, but which we need not describe, she proceeded to examine.

"In what month were you born?" asked the Fortune-teller.

"I don't know," replied Margaret.

"What, how!" exclaimed the old woman, in a tone of mingled surprise and rebuke. "Why have you brought the gal here? Nativity is the most important. In what house, Aquarius, Cancer, or Mercury,—we know nothing about it. Was Jupiter in the ascendant? The Moon in aspect to what? How can we tell?"

"I don't care for your riggledorums," retorted Solomon, with suppressed impatience. "Will she answer my purpose? You have got your money to find out that, and that is all I want to know."

"Hold, Solomon!" she said, with an overawing sternness. "The cats are against you. Keep still. Here, child, let me look at you. Curled hair," so she went on, "denoteth heat and drought; brown, fairness, justice, freedom and liberality. Your signs are contradictory, child. Venus *must* have been in square signs when you were born. Do you never have any trouble?"

"Sometimes," she replied, "when Deacon Penrose and Mr. Smith sell rum to Pa and Hash."

"Take note, Solomon," continued the woman, "she refers her troubles to you. She prognosticates disaster, sorrow and death. You had better let her alone."

Solomon became inwardly greatly excited, but he strove to control himself, and whispered something in the ears of the woman, who pursued her inspection of the child.

"Lips," said she, "fairly set and well colored, argue fidelity, and a person given to all virtue; brow high and smooth, signifieth a sincere friend and liberal benefactress; small ears, a good understanding; neck comely and smooth, a good genius; brown eyes, clear and shining, ingenuity, nobility and probity. Let me see you laugh. Teeth white and even, argue sweetness and reverence; dimples, persuasion and command; hand, soft and clear, hath discretion, service, delight in learning, peace-loving; palm D in mount of the Moon,—ha! ha! do you want to know, child! many and dutiful and fair children,—would you like to have children?"

"Yes, Ma'am," replied Margaret.

The Fortune-teller seemed to be wandering from her proper

point, and becoming quite absorbed in the characteristics and tokens of the child gave renewed uneasiness to Solomon, who expressed his feelings in a loud and somewhat menacing tone.

"Rest you, young man!" she replied, "your fortune is wrapt in that of the child. The hour cometh. Your significator must apply to a sextile of Mercury and Venus. I see a coffin in the wick of this candle. Scare the cats, let me see them jump once more. Now is your moment, depart."

Whatever might be the meaning of this visit and this singular mummerly to Margaret, Solomon, it appeared, had now accomplished his object, and was ready to leave. They plunged from the light again into the darkness, and retracing their steps through the woods, returned to the Still. Margaret would have gone in to her brother, but Solomon declared he had something more for her to do, and insisted that she should ride a little farther with him. They went up the road leading to the Pond, and arriving at a growth of trees known as the Pines, lying on the west side of the way, Solomon hitched his horse, and led Margaret once more into the woods. Reaching a spot which he seemed previously to have in his mind, he put a hazle-twig into the child's hand, and bade her go about among the trees in the same manner as she did at Mr. Palmer's at the Ledge. She was not long in announcing the movement of the twig, and the young man secured himself of the place as well as he could in the darkness, by piling a heap of stones over it. She asked him what it was for, but he declined telling; and what he would not do, we must, since, in the sequel, the whole affair came out. This young Smith had a dream, three nights successively, of gold hid in the Pines. He could not identify the precise locality, and sundry private canvassings of the earth with a spade had hitherto been fruitless. Hence his anxiety to secure the services of Margaret, whose success on a former occasion with the divining rod he had been apprized of; hence also his visit to Joyce Dooly the Fortune-teller, for the purpose of fortifying himself more completely in his undertaking. Once more in this night of wanderings and mystery was Margaret conducted to the Still. Morning had scarcely begun to dawn, and Solomon had time to dispose of his horse in the stable, and himself in bed, before the family were up. Margaret found Hash yet in his sleep, the fire decayed, and the Still dark, cold and dismal as the morning after a debauch. She rekindled the fire, sufficiently at least for her own comfort, and lying down before it, with her head upon the breast of Bull, fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARGARET ENQUIRES AFTER THE INFINITE; AND CANNOT MAKE HER WAY OUT OF THE FINITE.—SHE UNWITTINGLY CREATES A GREAT SENSATION IN THE TOWN OF LIVINGSTON.

"WHAT is God?" said Margaret one morning to the Master, who in his perambulations encountered her just as she was driving the cow to pasture, and helped her put up the bars.

"God, God—" replied he, drawing back a little, and thrusting his golden-headed cane under his arm, and blowing his nose with his red bandanna handkerchief. "You shut your cow in the pasture to eat grass, don't you, mea discipula?" added he after returning his handkerchief to his pocket, and planting himself once more upon his cane.

"Yes," she replied.

"What if she should try to get out?"

"We put pegs in the bars sometimes."

"Pegs in the bars! ahem. Suppose she should stop eating, and leaning her neck across the bars, cry out, 'O you, Mater hominum bovumque! who are you? Why do you wear a pinafore?' In other words, should ask after you, her little mistress; what would you think of that, hey?"

"I don't know what I should," replied Margaret, "it would be so odd."

"Cows," rejoined the Master, "had better eat the grass, drink the water, lie in the shade, and stand quietly to be milked, asking no questions."

"But do, sir," she continued, "tell me what God is."

The Master folded back both his ruffle cuffs, lifted his golden-headed cane into the air, and cleared at one bound the roadside ditch, whereby his large three-corned hat fell into the water. Margaret picked it up, and wiping it, handed it to him, which circumstance seemed to recall him to the thread of her feelings; and he replied to her by saying,

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas. God, child, is Tetragrammatic, a Four-wordity; in the Hebrew יְהוָה, the Assyrian Adad, the Egyptian Amon, the Persian Syre, Greek