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While her voice in all its glorious fullness rang out in fresh vibrating tones.
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A Life Illumined

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW PREACHER.

"At last we've got a right smart man in the pulpit, and one that I hope will suit folks," ejaculated Mrs. Chase, the housekeeper at the parsonage, as she adjusted her hat to a more satisfactory angle and smoothed her new kid gloves with an air of having made a remark of some importance.

"Yes," assented a little woman standing near her. "And what a wonderful delivery he has!" Here Mrs. Whipple, wife of one of the pillars of the church, broke in with, "A good text that was from Exodus. He'll suit as long as he preaches that kind of sermons."

"'Sh, not so loud! Here he comes;" said Mrs. Williams as she joined the crowd which was waiting to shake hands with the new minister, Richard Manville.

They had been conversing in the vestibule of the church, but now, as the congregation came thronging out of the auditorium, the little group of women scattered.

"I thought you were never coming, Naomi," ex-
claimed Mrs. Williams, as she turned from greeting the minister, and putting her arm through that of her niece, she made her way down the long, shady walk to the street.

The churchyard was generally the meeting place for the village people and to-day was no exception. On this particular Sunday the farmers gathered in little groups under the sheds in the rear of the church to hear from each other the progress of their spring work and to discuss the possibilities of a good season for crops. In the front of the church there was a general flutter of excitement, for a new minister was an event of real importance. As Mrs. Williams and her niece reached the street and turned their steps toward their beautiful home,—the Manor, just adjoining the parsonage,—detached bits of conversation about the minister reached their ears.

“Well, Naomi, everybody seems to be talking about the new minister, what is your opinion of him?”

The girl looked at her aunt and smiled. “Why, Auntie, I think he is a finished gentleman—his manner is so dignified and almost grave. He seems to be all that one could wish. He talked with the members of the choir before service, and said that we must be his helpers.”

“They say he has everything needful save a wife.” Mrs. Williams said this with something like a sigh in her voice; but the tone was lost upon Naomi who tripped lightly up the great stone steps of the Manor and entered the house.
When Naomi Carol was but a baby, her mother and father had suddenly met with a fatal accident, leaving her, an only child, alone in the world. Naomi's nearest relative was Mrs. Williams, her mother's sister, who was a widow with no children of her own. It thus came about naturally that she left her small rooms in Winstead, the adjoining city, and took up her residence at the Manor. The original name given to this fine, old place was Hilcrest Manor, but it soon became simplified and generally spoken of as the Manor. This pleased Naomi as in her mind she had always likened her home to an English estate.

With plenty of money at her command, Mrs. Williams secured the best tutors possible to educate her niece, and as the child's voice had shown signs of wonderful possibilities, she had had it cultivated.

Naomi had been the soloist in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence for several years. She was one of the most popular young women in the parish, and well she deserved to be. Her wonderful charity, her loving disposition, the spontaneous cheer and blithesomeness of her nature had blessed many a despondent heart. She was beautiful in character, and beautiful to look upon. Her wealth of red-brown hair, her pink and white skin, her deep violet eyes, fringed with curling lashes matching in color the shade of her hair, and with it all a vivacious charm and sweet graciousness of manner, made her a most attractive young woman. She was only nineteen years old, and was peculiarly girlish in her manner, but to the thought-
ful observer she seemed to have a dignity and seriousness beyond her years.

As Naomi stood before her mirror removing her hat, and pushing back the little ringlets which had strayed over the dainty shell-like ears, she happened to glance out of the window at her side. The tall, athletic figure of the new minister was just turning in at the gate of the parsonage, and with eager interest she watched him as he went up the path and disappeared in the house.

"I wonder if we shall be good neighbors," the girl mused. For a long time she stood at the window and it was chiefly of the new minister that she was thinking, but her thoughts were not frivolous. Naomi was a strange mixture of girl and woman. She had inherited from her father an eager, studious mind, and had shown an unusual capacity for mental development. At times she startled her aunt with her revolutionary ideas, and caused the bewildered lady to say, "It is those queer fine print books, Naomi, that upset you so. Only ministers of the Gospel should read things like that." But the girl had found from these books that there was a big world of thought and feeling of which no one had ever told her, and she longed to learn more. She was still a girl in her frolics and good times, but in thought she was a woman. "Perhaps Mr. Manville can help me," she said to herself as she turned from the window.

Physically, morally, intellectually, Richard Manville seemed to be all that one could desire. Tonight
while he sat by the table in his study, his thoughts turned to his mother whom he had left in the Middle West. For years his studies had taken him away from home, and even when he had completed his education for the ministry, he had only one short week at home before a call from New York State came to him. His mother yielded unselfishly to the separation, and now he was many miles away, almost in a strange country, and with every face unfamiliar to him. But he intended to exert every effort to make this, his first pastorate, successful, and one had only to look at the fine, strong face, the firm lips and chin, to believe that he would succeed. Although he was broad-shouldered and had a powerfully built frame, yet something in the soft brown eyes and a certain tenderness which at times played about the mobile lips, unconsciously made one trust him and feel that at heart he was gentle.

Presently he rose from his chair, extinguished the light, and approached the open window. The great disc of the sun had sunk behind the tall elm trees. The air was balmy, the grassy lawn seemed rimmed in a halo of light, while the budding flowers and trees were sweet with a charm and mystery all their own. There was not a sound to break Nature’s sweet and solemn repose. Silence and peace brooded over the world. As the man gazed out upon the night, he saw that the Manor was brilliantly lighted. Suddenly a sweet, clear voice trembled out upon the evening’s stillness. As the gentle breeze wafted the notes of the song to
him, he listened eagerly. Where had he heard the voice before? In a moment his face cleared. It was the same voice that had attracted his attention during the morning service. He remembered now that Mr. Simpson, in showing him the points of interest in Lawrence, had remarked that the Manor was the home of the talented soloist of their church. When the voice that had broken the stillness ceased, his gaze went upward to the starry heavens and fell again to the silvery earth. The wondrous stillness and glory of it all sank into his very soul, and with eyes fixed upon the heavens, a silent but soul-filled prayer rose to his lips: "God grant that in this new field of labor I may be so used as the instrument of His love, that I may see a wayward soul reclaimed and a life illumined."
CHAPTER II.

A RENCONTRE.

On the Wednesday following the first preaching of the new minister, Naomi, as was her custom, met the choir in the church building to rehearse the music for the following Sunday. She had lingered after the others were gone, for she loved the quiet of the large room, and was never tired of singing with the quaint old organ.

Richard Manville, passing through the churchyard just at this time, caught the rhythmic rise and fall of the clear voice. Noiselessly he entered the church and for a few moments stood unobserved. Presently the music ceased and the girl rose from the organ. Although she seemed tall, she was slightly under the average height. The abundant red-brown hair was uncovered, and the cheeks were slightly flushed. The violet eyes had an astonished expression in them when she discovered Mr. Manville, and he, utterly unprepared for such a vision of loveliness, was for a moment at a loss for words.

Quickly recovering his usual self-possession, he was about to speak when Naomi said, flushing slightly, "You are Mr. Manville?"

“Yes,” replied the minister, advancing with a
smile, "and you are our soloist, but I do not remember your name," he added, extending his hand.

"Naomi Carol," replied the girl, as she placed her small hand in his.

"Please do not let me interrupt you," he pleaded, "I came in search of a book to which I wish to refer."

As he moved toward the pulpit, Naomi could not help admiring the tall, well-proportioned figure. While she was gathering up her music, he approached her again with the book in his hand.

"I must confess it has no business here," he said holding it up to her view.

"A book on modern thought," she murmured, interestedly, and her face showed a look of pleased astonishment.

"Do not mistake me," Mr. Manville hastened to say, as a flush mounted his brow. "My perusal of the book was simply to acquaint myself with the ideas set forth."

"I do not see why you need excuse yourself," began the girl with impulsive candor. "I should not hesitate to read the book, and I believe one might find some good ideas in it."

The minister was slightly disconcerted as she turned her clear, frank eyes full upon him.

"Surely a book like this could give no one right ideas," he said. "In fact, it is along the new thought lines, which show at once that it is detrimental. There are some who would leave the straight and narrow path that our fathers travelled, and seek new
ways and means of conversion, but we know, do we not, Miss Carol, that one should beware of false doctrines?"

"Certainly, false doctrines should not be accepted as truth," acquiesced the girl, with a charmingly candid but somewhat amused look, and with a tone of voice which seemed to the minister to carry a veiled meaning.

"Surely you cannot mean to infer—"

"I mean to infer nothing," interrupted Naomi, with a flash of piquancy, though the faintest twinkle of merriment danced in her eyes.

"But do you read this kind of literature?" persisted the man.

"I select my literature with the greatest care, and desire to read nothing but that which tends to uplift one's thought and purify one's ideals."

The exquisite quality and modulation of the voice, together with the simple words spoken with such charming frankness and conviction, forced the man to say quickly, "Pardon me, Miss Carol. I believe I have been rude." He had been standing near her, as she gathered her music into her lap, but now he sank into a seat.

Naomi saw the troubled look on the man's face. "I am a great reader, and of course you are too," she said, with naive simplicity.

As the man thought of the many times he had pored over his books long after midnight, he responded with great emphasis, "Yes, I am a great reader."
Naomi gave a little sigh of relief. "Then, of course, you are a broad and liberal-minded man," she exclaimed, "and I am glad. Doubtless you keep in touch with the trend of advancing religious thought and—"

"Pray do not misunderstand me, Miss Carol," he interrupted quickly, with a troubled look into the youthful face before him. "As your minister, I feel that I ought to make my position clear to you. True, I have read some of the literature pertaining to modern religious beliefs, but I find it in all respects unworthy of consideration, utterly deplorable and disastrous. The vows I took at my ordination would not allow me to sanction as Truth such ideas as are being promulgated in the recently founded sects and movements."

Naomi was silent, and the minister was quick to notice the cloud of disappointment that had flashed over the open countenance.

"You are a member of this church, are you not, Miss Carol?" he queried, with slight concern in his voice.

"Yes," she returned simply, "I joined this church when I was but a child. It is the church to which my parents and grandparents belonged. My dear father was a very earnest church worker."

The minister felt a tone of sadness in the voice, and as his glance met Naomi's, he saw a suspicion of tears glisten on the thick lashes. Remembering the facts that Lawyer Simpson had given him about the tragic death of Mr. and Mrs. Carol, he said, kindly, "And
therefore, the church is doubly dear to you, Miss Carol, and you are glad to accept unquestionably the faith of your parents."

But he was somewhat taken by surprise as Naomi smiled and returned gently, "I cannot say that I agree with you, Mr. Manville. There was a time when I did accept, as you say, unquestionably and unreservedly, the faith of my parents, but through earnest reading and research, I have arrived at different conclusions."

"You mean that you do not accept the beliefs of this church?"

"Indeed I have not admitted that," she returned evasively. "I hold that the religious beliefs of our fathers should be sacred to us, but one should not unite with a certain church simply because it is the church to which his ancestors belonged. I do not believe in a blind, dogmatic or passive faith. I believe in choosing a religion which appeals most to one's reason,—one that is practical and adaptable to everyday life, one that follows most closely the teachings of the Master."

"Certainly, of course," assented the man; "but does it not occur to you that your father wanted the best also, and that you are safe in believing as he believed? I myself would ask for no greater faith than that of my saintly mother."

But the girl shook her head and smiled. "Indeed our parents' faith may have been beautiful and sincere, but is not the world advancing, Mr. Manville? Is the world accepting today the ideas formulated
years ago? The advancement of the world in ideas, inventions, discoveries, seems to me marvellously startling. Men are not content today with the discoveries of yesterday. Thought is constantly expanding and reflecting more of the wisdom and understanding that God intends for man. We see improvement in all lines of manufacture, in music, in art, in science, and why should we not accept improvement in our attitude toward religion? Progress would be at a standstill if we believed that the facilities which our parents enjoyed were good enough for us. If advancement is possible in material ways and means, why is it not possible and desirable in spiritual thinking?"

The minister listened in silence, but in grave wonderment, to the girl's earnest words. Naomi was entirely unconscious of the beautiful picture she made as she was speaking with such impulsive enthusiasm. Her pretty head was slightly bent to one side, and the delicate rose tint of her cheeks deepened perceptibly as she talked.

Mr. Manville found it difficult to associate this comprehensive speech with the dainty, flowerlike face before him. Before he could frame a reply, the girl rose, and glancing at him somewhat timidly, said, "I believe—I know—I fear I have spoken too freely to a stranger—and a clergyman besides." The wave of color now swept up to her brows. "You will please pardon me, and now I must return home. Billy will be wondering what has become of me."
"Indeed, Miss Carol, I should be delighted to continue our little talk," began the minister, chiding himself for his awkwardness. Somehow this fairylke young person seemed to have robbed him of his usual complacent self-possession.

"It is well to think deeply, to live rightly, but not to leave the well-beaten track made by the dear souls who have lighted the way before us. You will understand this better when you are as old as I am, and when you have learned more of the world and its ways." He looked at her with grave gentleness, and the smile that lighted his eyes showed a depth of sincerity and tender feeling.

Naomi was content to drop the subject, and as they reached the door and stepped out into the churchyard, she called in her clear, bell-like voice, "Billy—Billy!"

Presently a huge black cat bounded to her side, brushing against her dress, and purring vociferously, as it cast disdainful glances at the minister.

"What a beautiful animal!" exclaimed he.

"Beautiful indeed," declared the girl, as she gathered him in her arms and gently stroked his rich, shiny coat.

The man could not help remarking the evident affection that the cat showed for his mistress.

"Yes, money wouldn't buy his fidelity. Sometimes he seems my only true friend." Her voice had a touch of sadness in it, but the next moment she was pointing across the open country, exclaiming joyously,
“You have come here in the most beautiful part of the year. Lawrence is a veritable orchard now,” and even as she spoke, a light breeze stirred the loaded branches of the apple trees, scattering the delicious odor of the opened blooms.

“I am sure I shall enjoy living in this quiet town. One seems so near to Nature here. It will be a pleasure for me to prepare my sermons under those beautiful old trees in my garden. By the way, Miss Carol, I believe our gardens adjoin.”

Naomi placed Billy on the ground and gave him a last caressing pat, straightening herself as the minister spoke. Her eyes twinkled and little dimples came and went around her mouth and chin.

“Yes, you have a most exquisite bush of white lilac which overhangs my garden,” she said, demurely. “I was nearly—in fact, I must confess that twice I have actually been tempted to break one of the fine sprays.”

“By all means do so, Miss Carol. I shall be so busy getting acquainted with my new surroundings that for a time, at least, my garden will not receive much of my attention.”

They had now reached the street and Naomi, stopping abruptly at the end of the shady walk, bade him a hasty good-bye.

“Good-bye,” he said, “I trust we shall see each other again and continue the talk we have begun.”

“Oh, I fear I have already spoken too impulsively”; and at the thought of it, a wave of rich color again swept her cheek and brow. Calling Billy to her side,
she passed lightly down the road, and was quickly lost to sight.
CHAPTER III.

NAOMI VISITS MARION CARMEN.

As Mr. Manville turned to go home, he was met by his faithful fox terrier, which was circling about in the trail of the departed Billy, and sniffing the ground disdainfully.

"Come along, Tippie," he said, as the animal seemed loath to leave the ground that had been travelled by one of his natural enemies. "A beautiful cat, Tippie—and a beautiful mistress."

As he strode on, his terrier trotted soberly at his heels. "She certainly is a study of curiously mingled characteristics—a childlike face, a woman's intellect, one moment a flash of sunshine, the next serious, earnest, scholarly; a sweet voice, a charming manner, but no doubt frivolous, Tippie." But as the vision rose to his mind of the sweet, frank eyes that had looked so squarely into his, he leaned over and patted the dog's head gently. "Anyway, Tippie, although we are next-door neighbors, and for that reason shall see something of each other, you and I will doubtless be a long time in learning all her moods." An expressive wag of the tail was the terrier's only answer, as he trotted by his master's side.

Meanwhile Naomi was chiding herself for her im-
pulsiveness, and wishing that she had not spoken her mind so plainly.

"Aunt Margaret, I know he thinks I’m strange," said Naomi, as they sat at luncheon. "I could just read it in his face. He looked so sober and grave," and then as she chipped an egg, she suddenly broke into a merry peal of laughter.

Mrs. Williams looked up with just a trace of concern in her face at Naomi’s sudden merriment. "I hope, dearie, that he will not get a wrong impression. He knows, of course, that you are a member of the church?"—a shade of anxiety in her tone.

"Yes, Auntie, I told him. No doubt that will cover up a multitude of my sins in his eyes," replied Naomi, with a toss of the head, and a shrug of the pretty shoulders, which troubled her aunt.

"Don’t, Naomi, don’t talk that way."

"But, Aunt Margaret, you know it’s true. The mere fact that one is a church member often serves as a cloak for one’s misdoings. There’s our Sunday School superintendent, Mr. Simpson. To be sure he is a most prominent member of the official board of the church as well as a very influential person in the community, but you know, Aunt Margaret, that the deference to his opinion is more compulsory than spontaneous. I suppose our new minister will think from his Sunday demeanor and position that Mr. Simpson is a worthy and holy personage. If he only knew what I know about that man!" and the violet eyes suddenly darkened.
"I do not wish to talk about these things, Naomi, and I hope that you will never breathe a word of this to Mr. Manville."
"Why?" innocently.
"Because—because it may not be true."
"Aunt Margaret, you know it is true," declared the girl, firmly. Naomi well understood her aunt's attitude. So long as a church member fulfilled his duties on Sunday, and made long prayers at the midweek prayer meetings, she appeared content to suspend judgment on the rest of his conduct.
"You seem to have taken a different attitude toward religion lately," said Mrs. Williams, somewhat timidly. "I believe those books are doing it."
"What books?" interrogated the niece, with arched brows.
"I do not know what their titles are, but I do know that you no longer seem to be satisfied with the books in your father's library. Really, Naomi, the table in your study is just covered with books which you have bought recently."
"Yes, I know, Auntie," said Naomi, resting her head in her hands. "I have read the best of all father's books and have gained much good from them, but you know that the men and women who wrote them lived—well, they lived a long time ago. The books which I have lately purchased are written by the thinking men and women of today."
"Well, child, read what you like, only don't let it change your religion. I myself think that the read-
ing you have chosen is much too deep and serious for a young mind like yours."

As they rose from the table, Naomi lifted Billy from his favorite, lazy position in the sun and, placing his front paws on her shoulders, cried, "Now, Billy, Auntie thinks that I'm too young to look into serious questions—what do you think?" She held him out at arm's length, but Billy's only reply was a blink of the sleepy, yellow eyes and a contented drooping of the ears.

"Well, perhaps we shall know some day just what the Reverend Mr. Manville really believes," continued Naomi.

The new pastor had been in Lawrence but a short time before he proved himself a blessing to the community. The congregation took on fresh life, as was always the case with each change of ministers. The prayer meetings were well attended, and already the members were looking forward to the fall revival. It was evident that the new minister had won the respect of the leading members in the church. He showed from the first that he was not in sympathy with any modern movements, but intended to follow carefully in the well-beaten path of his predecessors. This, in itself, was enough to insure his standing in the parish, for while the Lawrence people sanctioned progress and change of thought in all material ways and means, nothing but the strictest adherence to the religious views and beliefs of their ancestors was tolerated.

Mr. Manville spent much time in preparing his
sermons, making pastoral calls, and attending the various committee meetings, but he generally reserved the early mornings for work in his garden. Idleness was something alien to his nature, and the moments which he spent with the hoe were for him pleasant ones indeed. One morning when, with coat off and sleeves rolled up, he was working vigorously among the plants, and feeling that he had not a care in the world, Naomi Carol happened to pass the parsonage. She was on her way to spend the day with Mrs. Marion Carmen, her most intimate friend. It was necessary for her to pass very near the garden, and she stepped lightly. She saw that she was unobserved, and paused just a moment to watch the stalwart workman who seemed to have imbibed the exhilaration of the early hours in the open air, for the strokes of his hoe were strong and vigorous ones; and presently she caught the sound of a deep-toned whistling which seemed happy and buoyant.

Fearing that she would be seen by him, she walked on briskly, and soon Mr. Manville and his garden were, for a time at least, forgotten.

"Oh, Naomi, I'm just delighted to see you!" exclaimed Mrs. Carmen, as she warmly embraced her friend, and drew her into her cozy sitting room. "Howard is not at home, and we can have the day all to ourselves."

Mrs. Carmen was somewhat older than Naomi, although the two had been friends since childhood. It was only since Marion's recent marriage to Howard
Carmen that Naomi had omitted some of her weekly visits, thinking that perhaps her friend would prefer to be alone in her new home with her new-found happiness.

"You do appear perfectly contented," declared Naomi, as she looked long and earnestly into her friend's face.

"Of course, I am, dear," was the blushing reply. "Howard never denies me anything. It was only yesterday that I talked with him about having a reception, or rather a social gathering, with the new minister as our guest of honor. He was interested at once and thought the idea an excellent one."

Naomi well knew of Howard Carmen's interest in the church, for he had now become a prominent member of the official board. "I think it very gracious of you both, Marion, to extend such kindness to Mr. Manville, and I believe he is one who will appreciate it."

The two young women spent some time in planning for the event, and in discussing the list of invitations.

"I believe I'll just give verbal invitations," exclaimed Marion suddenly, as she looked over the long list of names she had written. "You know some one will surely be slighted if I make the invitations formal, and I really believe it would be best to make the affair quite general and allow all to come who may wish to meet the minister socially."

"Yes, I think that is a wise plan," agreed Naomi. "What a fine place for a reception! You have such a beautiful lawn, and your flower gardens never looked lovelier."
"I suppose Mrs. Lovejoy and her two daughters will be there," began Marion, with a laugh. "Did you notice on Sunday how she pushed poor little Marjory Miller aside in order to present her Celia and Claudia? She really made quite a scene in the church."

"I had not heard about it," rejoined Naomi, "but I can imagine the whole thing. Mrs. Lovejoy is so desirous of marrying off her daughters that she really forgets to be ladylike at times. Poor Marjory Miller," she continued, as a shadow fell across her face. "Marion, I know that girl is not happy. I only wish she would confide in me, but when I talk to her, she just shakes her head sadly and remains quiet. Lawyer Simpson holds some secret power over her, for she trembles with fear as soon as he approaches."

"Yes, I have noticed it. I have thought it strange that after Mr. Simpson had taken her into his home as one of his family, Marjory should fear him. He seems to take a great interest in her."

"Interest in her!" repeated Naomi, with exaggerated scorn. "Did you ever know Mr. Simpson to take an interest in anything outside of his own personal affairs? Several times when I have called at his home I have found dear Mrs. Simpson in tears. He is very unkind to her—of that I am sure—and I really believe he is too stingy to supply his family with proper food."

"Why, Naomi!" cried Mrs. Carmen, as she looked
with astonishment into the indignant, flushed face of her friend. "I never heard you make such statements before. Surely you must be mistaken. Mr. Simpson always seems so pleasant and cordial at the Sunday School. Of course, as our superintendent, I have seen a good deal of him, and I have really thought him quite delightful."

Naomi gave a faint sigh. "Yes, Aunt Margaret thinks well of him, and so do many others. He has a way of appearing at his best to all the ladies—except his wife, and she, poor soul, rarely receives any courtesies from him. As you say, he is affable and suave in his manner; but, Marion, I even doubt his veracity and his honesty."

"But do you think it is right for you to say that, dear? Perhaps you are misjudging him. I know that Howard admires him and thinks he makes an excellent superintendent and Bible class teacher, and you know, Naomi, he is one of the pillars of the church."

Naomi saw that to continue the subject would be useless, and another sigh escaped her lips. "Well, time will prove whether or not I am mistaken in our pillar of the church, Marion. The very way that Marjory cringes when he comes near her, tells me that something is wrong."

"I do remember that she shows a strange feeling towards him at times," agreed Mrs. Carmen, "but you know that Marjory has such a gentle, tender disposition, it would be easy for one to wound her unintentionally. She has lived with Mr. Simpson for a
good many years and they make her one of the family. You remember that after her mother and father died, the lawyer took her into his home just through kindness."

"Yes, until lately I, too, have believed that he had taken her just through kindness, but something tells me—" Here she broke off abruptly, and after a moment's pause continued, "Anyway, I will say no more, only that Marjory is not made one of the family, but is their servant and does not even eat at the same table with them."

Marion raised her hands in amazement, but just at that moment the telephone rang, and the subject was not resumed.

When Naomi returned home, and gave the news of the reception, her aunt, who thought the plan a delightful one, asked, "What shall you wear, dearie?"

"Never mind that, Auntie, I have plenty of pretty clothes. I have something of greater importance on my mind just now."

As Naomi seated herself in a deep-cushioned chair in her private sitting room, her chin in her two upturned hands, she appeared to be thinking profoundly. "I wonder if I did right to speak to Marion about Mr. Simpson today. She has always thought well of him, and now perhaps I have planted a seed of suspicion in her mind. However, I feel sure I am right. I believe he is a wolf in sheep's clothing and ought to be exposed. But should you sit in judgment upon your neighbor?" the inner voice questioned.
“No, of course not,” avowed Naomi aloud. “Every evil that is covered will be revealed. No sin can escape its punishment. I must have patience and wait, and the time will surely come when I shall be able to help Marjory Miller.”
CHAPTER IV.

HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE FIRE KINDLETH.

The days flew by quickly, and before Naomi realized it, the morning of Marion’s party had arrived. Rising early, she pushed back the snow-white curtains from her window and looked out. The air was perfumed with the opening blossoms of the honeysuckle that grew directly under her window, and the blithe, mirthful tones of a robin’s warbling came to her ears. Prop-ping her face upon her hands, Naomi gazed with delight into the cloudless sky overhead, and then upon the soft green of the lawn. The village of Lawrence lay cradled in a wealth of orchards and fields, resplendent with foliage and flowers. The fitting and beautiful words of Lowell floated through her mind, and she said them softly to herself:

“And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays;
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
And instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.”

26
When Naomi and her aunt reached the Carmen’s house, they found that most of the guests had already arrived. Groups of the younger people were wandering about the rose gardens and their gay voices rang out merrily in laughter. The older folks were seated in comfortable chairs under the large elms in front of the house. Naomi’s circle of friends was large, and she was warmly received wherever she went. She was talking gayly with Mrs. Carmen when they were approached by Mr. Simpson and Mr. Manville. Naomi noticed that the lawyer had one arm thrown familiarly across the minister’s shoulders and that their conversation was being carried on in earnest tones.

"Naomi, I am glad to see you, and pray allow me to tell you what a charming appearance you make."

It was Mr. Simpson who spoke, and his keen eyes gave her a rapid, yet comprehensive survey from head to foot. “I have had the pleasure of greeting our hostess before.” And he smiled blandly upon Mrs. Carmen.

Naomi could not account for the feeling of repulsion which swept over her, as she took his proffered hand in greeting. He had known her since she was a child, and it was natural that he should call her by her given name, she argued to herself, but today for the first time she felt a resentment because of it. Recovering from a momentary embarrassment, she glanced up to find Mr. Manville’s gaze fixed upon her. Thinking that he might have divined her thoughts, a rich warm color flooded her cheeks. She quickly regained her
composure, however, as he arranged some chairs for the quartette and spoke quietly and evenly. As Naomi watched him, she wondered in a childish way how such a tall man could be so graceful.

Soon they were all chatting sociably, and Mr. Simpson told some interesting anecdotes so cleverly that even Naomi was forced to laugh, and she became the merriest of the party.

Mrs. Lovejoy, who happened to glance their way, had a sudden feeling of envy, as the sound of gay laughter reached her ears. Both Mrs. Carmen and Naomi were gowned in simple white dresses, while Naomi wore a soft knot of blue ribbon at her throat and in the thick coils of her auburn hair. Mrs. Lovejoy gazed at the simple, girlishly clad figures, and then turned to the gaudy and elaborate toilettes of her daughters, who just at that moment were standing somewhat awkwardly apart from the rest. She rose at once and started to escort them to the merry group, but just then Mr. Manville rose to receive the greetings of several persons who approached him. Mrs. Lovejoy immediately resolved that, before the day was over, her daughters should have an opportunity of conversing with the new minister.

Presently refreshments were served from small tables under the spreading elms. Naomi had joined a group of young people, while the minister was seated at the table with his host and hostess. Mrs. Carmen had had her victrola and piano carried from the music room and placed among the tall, green ferns and bloom-
ing flowers which formed a delightfully picturesque background. To be permitted to hear Melba, Michai-
lowa, and Tamagno, was gratifying to some, but the
young people enjoyed most the popular airs and pa-
triotic selections. As the notes of America died away,
the hostess approached the table where Naomi was
seated, being gayly entertained by Wallace Waring-
ton, a local poet of some talent.

"Pray, Mrs. Carmen, don't excite the palpitation
of my heart," said the poet, as he rose and laconically
placed his hands over the region of that organ. "I
have not yet completed my 'Voices of Summer,' and
a slight cold which I have contracted would render my
voice quite inadequate—"

"There, there, Mr. Warington," interrupted Mrs.
Carmen, laughing gayly at his feigned plea. "We
all know how excellently you could render any one of
your charming verses; however, I have not come for
you this time, but for Miss Carol."

"Pray, Mademoiselle, rise and grace the occasion.
Had I the powers of the nightingale, as you have, I
would indeed invent no excuse. May I escort you to
the piano?" and rising, he gallantly extended his
arm to Naomi.

"Come, Naomi," urged Mrs. Carmen, "we want you
to sing for us. Now please don't disappoint me, dear,"
as Naomi laughingly refused Mr. Warington's arm.

"But, Marion, I have no music here."

"Oh, you can sing divinely without your notes,"
interposed the youthful poet, with another attempt at gallantry.

"Silly boy!" exclaimed Naomi, as she laughingly allowed him to lead her to the piano, where Mrs. Carmen had already taken her place to render the accompaniment.

More than one admireing glance was cast upon Naomi's young, fresh beauty. More than one person noted the delicate rose tint in the fair, upturned face, the gold which glittered in the rippling brown hair as it fell loosely away from the white brow, the light poise of the dainty figure, while her voice in all its glorious fulness rang out in fresh vibrating tones. Everyone in Lawrence knew that Naomi Carol had a marvellously sweet and beautiful voice, and nearly every one had heard her sing many times. But never before had she sung with such exquisite abandon, such youthful freshness and fervor. Her very soul seemed to pour forth its song of gladness in such wonderfully perfect tones that when the voice ceased, there followed a silence of wonder and awe.

Wallace Warington was the first to break the pause. "Bravo! bravissima!" exclaimed he, as he joined vigorously in applauding the singer. "Your voice is a wonder," he breathed, with excited show of feeling.

"Nonsense," returned the girl, while her eyes sparkled and mischievous dimples played around the full red lips. "Mr. Warington, you are a flatterer."

"Indeed, he is not, Miss Carol," said the deep, low
voice of Richard Manville, who had approached unobserved. "You have a voice from heaven."

Something in his eyes, as they gazed for a moment into hers, brought a swift rush of color to the fair face, and she quickly withdrew the hand he had taken in his own. A little group had formed about Naomi, with congratulations upon their lips, when suddenly a piercing shriek startled every one. The cry had come from Marjory Miller, who, with another piercing cry, fell senseless to the ground. Naomi, prompted by her sympathy for the girl, was quick to reach her side, but not before Mr. Simpson, who lifted the slight form not too carefully in his arms. Naomi caught the words that he whispered in the dulled ear, "None of your spells here, girl."

Incensed beyond measure at what she had heard, Naomi brushed the man aside and deftly opened the collar of the girl's waist, while Mrs. Lovejoy excitedly applied her smelling salts.

"I think a physician should be called." It was Mrs. Carmen who spoke, when the girl showed no signs of reviving. Quick to act, Wallace Warington with long strides disappeared down the road, and in an incredibly short time returned with Dr. Elliot in an automobile.

After a hasty examination, the doctor stated that the girl needed immediate attention, and he suggested that she be carried into the house of the hostess, since Mr. Simpson's home was at some distance.

"Certainly," acquiesced Mrs. Carmen.
But Naomi, who had not left the girl's side, suddenly seized the physician's arm. "Mrs. Carmen needs to be with her guests. Carry her to my home," and with one hand she pointed peremptorily to the Manor, and with the other gathered the girl's collar and belt from the ground. Without a word the doctor took the limp form in his strong arms, and before the lawyer knew what had happened, physician and patient, accompanied by Naomi and Warington, swept down the road and out of sight.

Mrs. Williams was quick to respond to her niece's wishes, and soon Marjory Miller was resting peacefully in the blue room of the Manor. After the doctor had gone, Naomi took her place at the bedside. Her aunt begged to relieve her, but she would not yield, and all night she remained at the side of the patient. For a while Marjory would rest quietly, and then would talk deliriously. Naomi at first paid no attention to the girl's wanderings, but as she caught the name of Mr. Simpson, unconsciously she bent her head to listen.

The doctor had told Naomi and Mrs. Williams that Marjory was of a very nervous and delicate temperament, and that he had once before treated her for a condition similar to this which she was now experiencing. "If she does not grow stronger as she grows older, she will one day have a fatal collapse," he said.

A few days passed before Marjory was pronounced out of danger. "And some nursing is yet required," the doctor said to Mrs. Williams. "Surely your niece should allow some one to take her place."
But Naomi was firm in her resolution not to resign her post to any one save her aunt. "No one else shall be with Marjory," she thought, "while she talks deliriously." It was fortunate indeed for poor Marjory that she had such a helpful friend, for even with the tender care and nursing which she received, she faded away to "'most a shadow," as Mrs. Williams said.

Although Marjory had passed her eighteenth birthday, she looked much younger than this. Mrs. Simpson had kept her dresses short, regardless of her age, and as the girl was fragile and much below the average height, people never thought she had "grown up."

At last Naomi was rewarded for her tireless care and nursing, when one evening as she entered Marjory's room, she found the patient awake, with bright and questioning eyes.

"Oh, Naomi, why am I here? I cannot understand!" and she passed one thin hand across her forehead. "How—when—"

"Now, Marjory dear, not so many questions at once. Oh! I'm so delighted to see you better." And she took the little hands and clasped them in her own.

"I remember, Naomi, it happened the day of the party. Tell me, how long have I been here?" And she looked with wondering eyes about the attractive room.

"Not too long, Marjory, and you will soon be well now."

"But what day of the month is it, Naomi?" per-
sisted the girl, "and oh, tell me how I came here, and what about Mr. Simpson?"

"Don't be alarmed, Marjory. No one has cared for you except Aunt Margaret and myself. You have been here just two weeks today, and now if you remain quiet, I will tell you all about it."

For a long time they talked, Marjory eagerly asking questions, while Naomi answered with truthful candor. Marjory's gratitude knew no bounds, when she learned how much of Naomi's time had been spent in the sick room.

"You have thanked me enough already," exclaimed Naomi, with a suggestion of tears in her eyes, as the sick girl wept out her gratitude on the other's shoulder.

"Oh, it would have been terrible had I been sick again in Mr. Simpson's house!" Suddenly the big blue eyes looked still bigger and a flush swept over the pale face, while the small hands were clasped tightly together.

To Naomi the girl looked as though she were facing a terrible ordeal—a fateful crisis in her life. "Naomi," and now the voice shook with the suspense she was undergoing, while her breath came in little pants, "did I ever speak of Mr. Simpson while I was delirious?"

Naomi, feeling that the truth would be best, replied gently, "Yes, dear."

"Did I say—oh, tell me, Naomi, what I said."

Fearing that her patient was becoming too excited, Naomi spoke reassuringly to her and placed her so
that she reclined in a more comfortable position. Then quietly she repeated to her all that had been revealed. "But your secret is safe with me, Marjory. Rest assured, no one will know what you have said until the right time comes. Now you must quiet all your fears and believe with me that only good will come to you."

Their conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Williams. She was so delighted at finding the patient in her right mind that she suggested telephoning the good news to the doctor at once.

"Wait until Marjory has had a good supper," said Naomi, as she wrote down a bill of fare and handed it to her aunt.

"But do you think it is right for Marjory to eat these things?" cried the woman, as she quickly ran her eye down the penciled sheet.

"Yes, indeed," replied Naomi, smiling. "Did not the doctor tell you that you could rely upon my orders?"

"Yes, but—"

"Now, no 'buts,' Auntie; do hurry. I know Marjory is just famished." And indeed Marjory did justice to the tempting meal which was sent to the room.

"Yes, that will do nicely, Katie," Naomi said, as the maid arranged the tray by the bedside. "Now please lower the shades and light the room for us."

A half hour later Naomi selected a book from the table and seated herself in a comfortable blue wicker
chair close to the bed. "Now, Marjory, I want you to be obedient to me," she said playfully, "as you know I am the nurse. I am going to read to you, and I want you to put everything else out of your mind. This will rest and refresh you."

Marjory listened attentively as the voice sounded sweet and clear in the quiet room. At first she was soothed by the gentle rhythmic sound of Naomi's voice, but presently she was attracted by the subject-matter itself. That it was a book of religious nature she was certain, but never before had any reading so eased and quieted her. "My troubles seem to disappear," she thought, "and I feel so rested." Only once did the listener interrupt the reading.

"Naomi, I think God arranged it just this way, and I feel relieved that you know my secret and it is safe. Who knows but that you may in time be the one to supply the missing link?"

Naomi looked up at her with a tender little smile. Even after she was assured of the quiet, regular breathing, Naomi continued for some time with the reading, then closed the book and sat for a time in deep thought. "Indeed God may have so arranged it," she softly murmured, as, standing by the bedside, she looked down upon the slumbering girl.
Chapter V.

The Retreat.

Mr. Simpson had repeatedly sent word that he wished Marjory to return home, and now the girl held a missive in her hand which was couched in no tender language, but stated in unmistakable terms that she must return before another day had elapsed.

"But how could I have gone before today?" she exclaimed to Naomi, as she tremulously fingered the unwelcomed note. "Last week when he sent for me, the doctor would not allow me to go. Oh, Naomi, how could he write me such a cold, cruel letter! It makes it doubly hard for me to leave you and this beautiful house."

It was the afternoon of the third day of Marjory's convalescence, and the two girls were seated in the beautiful sun-parlor of the Manor. Marjory looked pale and thin, but the expression of strained fear had left the little oval face, and even Mrs. Williams had remarked on the look of hopefulness that had now taken its place.

Naomi had discovered that Marjory's wardrobe was a scanty one, and that the few dresses which she had were made in an unbecoming style, or in no "style" at all. Without saying anything about it, Naomi had
filled a suitcase with some of her own pretty clothes and had it ready for Marjory to take with her.

"It is not Mrs. Simpson's fault," Marjory had explained, as they were conversing about her clothes. "She does all her own sewing with the help I give her, but she has so little money to do with. She has to account to her husband for every penny she spends."

"Oh, to think of the awful injustice he has done you, Marjory! You might be wearing——"

"'Sh! Naomi, remember your promise. You know I can prove nothing—nothing."

"I will never betray you, dear, but the time must come when Mr. Simpson's dishonesty will be uncovered. Right is right, and God will give you what is yours. We will have patience and firmly believe that sin cannot hide itself, and that you cannot be deprived of that which belongs by law and justice to you. Remember the time-worn saying, 'Murder will out.' Right will uncover the wrong and punish the evildoers."

"I will remember all the beautiful things you have told me, Naomi. It was such a blessing that I came here." She took one of Naomi's soft pretty hands and stroked it caressingly.

"Every sorrow has its blessing, every cloud its silver lining," murmured Naomi. "You still have something for which to be grateful."

For one moment the little thin face looked happy; the next, tears filled the eyes and sobs shook the deli-
cate frame. "But nobody loves me, Naomi, nobody cares—I have no place in life."

"Hush, Marjory, how wrong you are in your belief! God loves you; you have as much right to live, to love and to be loved, as the stars have to shine and the sun to give us light. Indeed you have a far greater right, for are you not the image of God—Love? You have a work to do and a place to fill, and God will reveal it to you."

Marjory lifted her tear-stained face to ask wistfully, "But when, Naomi? When?"

"Now," was the earnest reply. "Just as soon as you realize that God is everything to you. To Him there is no yesterday, no tomorrow. It is right for you to have a place now, for you to love and be loved now, for you to enjoy freedom now; but, dear, you will have to know and love God first before you can realize and partake of all this good which rightfully belongs to you. You know the Bible says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.'"

"You talk so beautifully, Naomi, and so confidently. I have never had a Bible of my own. It may sound terrible for me to say so, but I have never cared for religion. Don't misunderstand me, Naomi," continued the girl with flushed cheeks, as though she had said a terrible thing, "but I would rather be good and stay away from church than to attend church and then not live up to what I profess to be."

She was surprised as the other replied with a win-
ning, reassuring smile. "You think just as I do, Mar-
jory. There are a great many persons who never go
to church, who make no outward profession of being
what is called religious, yet who are more in the proc-
ess of entering heaven than some of those who occupy
high positions in the churches. It is not professing
the Truth which counts so much, as it is living the
Truth in our daily lives. I have placed some books
in your suitcase which I should like to have you read,
and one is a Bible. I believe you will find them in-
teresting and helpful, and I think they will give you
an understanding of what religion really is."

"I will read all you have given me," exclaimed
Marjory, with passionate impulse, as she kissed the
hand which she was holding in her own. "Every one
knows how good, how kind, how charitable you are to
those in need. You have surely found the secret of
true religion."

"I am only just finding it," returned Naomi, as a
glad smile swept her face. "I still have much to
learn. But now, dear," she continued in a lighter
vein, as she glanced at the small clock on the mantle-
piece, "we have but another hour together. I have
cautioned the driver to go carefully; you can trust
him to take you home safely. I will visit you as
often as possible, and remember that Love will de-
liver you, and return to you all that has seemingly
been kept from you."

A little while after Marjory had gone Naomi de-
cided to go out into the fresh air to take one of her
long strolls. She was fond of roaming about the beautiful grove belonging to her estate, superintending the care of the garden, and taking long walks into the open country.

Billy showed his delight, as he bounded lightly by his mistress’ side across the newly cut meadow, stopping now and then to spring into the air after a tempting grasshopper, which usually evaded his claws.

“Oh, Billy,” declared Naomi, as she raised her finger chidingly, “don’t you know that you should not destroy life? Poor little grasshopper! He wants to enjoy God’s dear sunshine, and you must let him. Now come on for a race, Billy.”

The girl ran down an incline, and Billy, with a last regretful glance at a grasshopper struggling on the ground near him, bounded after her. Knowing well his mistress’ favorite haunts, he was soon at her side as she made her way through a small hedge of trees.

“We will soon be there, Billy!” she exclaimed in excited pleasure, as she gathered her skirt about her, and lightly tripped over stones and bits of soft green moss. Soon they reached the little brook which dashed and sparkled over the shining stones, making its way noisily between the irregular rows of maple trees.

“Here we are!” and with a joyous laugh, she sprang toward a huge rock, which was her accustomed resting place.

“Oh!” It was not so much an exclamation of fright as a cry of astonishment that came from her.

“Miss Carol, indeed I beg your pardon, I fear I
have frightened you.” And a tall manly figure rose from a half-recumbent position on the grass.

“Mr. Manville!” she gasped, continuing to gaze with astonished eyes at the man before her. The next instant the humorous side of the incident appeared to her, and the expression of her face became arch and merry, while a silvery peel of laughter broke from her lips. Suddenly she hesitated; the tinge of red deepened in her cheeks, and the laughter died out of her face, while tears of confusion filled her eyes.

“Oh, Mr. Manville, how could you!” And at the memory of how she had skipped about in Tomboy fashion with Billy, she dropped her face in quick embarrassment.

Mr. Manville had always prided himself upon his self-control, his complacent, cool manner, but he had never before seen as beautiful a young woman in blushes and tears. Knowing that he had deliberately remained seated upon the grass by the rock, while Naomi was tripping about with Billy, and that he had also deliberately watched every movement of the graceful, supple body without attempting to make known his presence, he, too, was embarrassed. For just an instant he felt that he would like to take her hands in his, and he was surprised at his own voice when he said: “Really, Miss Carol, I beg your forgiveness.”

Naomi quickly regained her composure, and drawing herself up to her full height, lifted her eyes to his face.

The man was conscious of a thrill of a new emotion
as he studied the beautiful picture before him. "How queenly she looks without being tall," he thought. Her upturned face was sweet and girlish. The rippling hair from the uncovered head was falling loosely away from her brows, while her delicate skin, warmed by the healthful exercise, was tinted with nature's own exquisite coloring. As the deep violet eyes continued to look reproachfully at him, he found himself growing vaguely disconcerted.

"You do not answer me," he said at length.

Naomi, feeling that perhaps he had been sufficiently rebuked, said quietly, "If you can pardon yourself, why then I will forgive you."

"Then I am going to consider myself forgiven, Miss Carol, though I may not have deserved it. Let us sit down," he said, motioning to the great smooth rock near which they stood.

Naomi acquiesced in silence.

"To begin with," said the minister, "I think my offense extends back farther than my unwarranted silence. "I am afraid that I have wandered unwitted onto your property."

"Yes, I suppose it belongs to me," as she glanced about her. "My father's estate embraces much of this surrounding country. However, as this is the most ideal and tempting spot around here, I can easily forgive you for yielding to its enticement. When Billy and I want a special treat, we always remember this place. By the way, where has Billy gone?"

"I fear I have interrupted his frolic." And a
reminiscent twinkle came into the brown eyes of her companion.

"You have indeed," declared the girl, in a tone of forced severity, "and you don't even look sorry."

The man made no reply to this, but continued to look at the picture beside him.

"You are not a bit like a minister," continued Naomi, with charming candor, as she studied his face with embarrassing closeness.

"I am sorry," he replied with a grave smile, as he submitted to her careful scrutiny.

"Oh, you need not be," she returned, with an arch smile. "It is impossible for some ministers to even seem—just men."

The man's smile deepened at the naïve remark.

For a moment they both watched the brook as it sparkled in the sunshine, while a light breeze wafted to them the sweet fragrance of the early mowing.

“What is that beside you?” queried Naomi, as she pointed to a pile of papers on the rock.

“This,” he said, gathering up the loose sheets and arranging them carefully, “is my sermon. I thought this a delightful place to get ideas.”

“Indeed it is just ideal,” returned Naomi, with enthusiasm. “May I ask your topic?” Then, as as afterthought, “But I suppose you would rather have me wait until Sunday.”

“Why, no, Miss Carol, I shall be delighted to tell you.” As he glanced again at the carefully written manuscript, he continued, “I have selected this text:
‘To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.’”

If the minister had thought the bright, joyous figure beside him too young and frivolous to understand the deeper side of life, he had a surprise in store for him.

“Your text certainly contains a wealth of meaning. What is your idea of being carnally minded?”

At the simple, direct question the man flushed slightly, but he replied quietly: “To be carnally minded means to be so occupied with worldly ideas and pursuits as to forget that for every moment of our time we must give an account.”

As he spoke, Naomi studied his strong face. He had removed his hat and she now noticed that the dark brown hair was well streaked with gray, although he looked not more than thirty. The smooth, closely shaven face was handsome and intellectual and bespoke a gentle, kind disposition not always found in a body of such great proportions.

As he finished speaking, it seemed to him that a smile as of regret crossed the girl’s lips, and when her eyes met his, he thought there was something akin to pity in the glance.

“Do you not agree with me, Miss Carol?”

Now the face lighted as with inspired thought. “Yes, and no. I believe what you say is true, yet I would make my definition more at length.” The eyes looked away into the blue distance, while she continued: “The carnal mind is the mind opposed to
and directly contrary to the Mind which was in Christ Jesus. To be spiritually minded—to know that Spirit, God is the only Mind and power, as Christ Jesus knew and demonstrated—means to know that all reality is in God, and that nothing is real or true except that which proceeds from God. When we enter into and continue in this knowledge, and thus become spiritually minded, we find life and peace. That kind of consciousness or mind which believes that there is a power other than God, good, is opposed to the mind of Christ, and so this consciousness may be called the mortal or carnal mind—and to be mortally or carnally minded brings about all the discords of earth."

All the while Naomi had been speaking, she had kept her eyes fixed upon the deep blue of the sky. She had spoken slowly, carefully. Indeed, it seemed to the man before her, as he listened to the rise and fall of the musical voice, that she was very deliberately choosing her words, and when she turned her eyes to his, he saw a dreamy mist in their liquid depths which seemed to tell him that she had been expressing her inmost thoughts, even at the risk of not being understood.

There was a moment's silence broken only by the twitter of birds in the overhanging tree.

Richard Manville had a deeply religious nature, and always took enjoyment in discussing the serious questions of life. He was both surprised and delighted to find in Naomi Carol a woman of high ideals
and aspirations. "Your ideas are beautifully expressed, Miss Carol, but I fear they are rather transcendental."

"No, indeed," she replied, confidently. "They are practical and demonstrable."

The minister smiled—smiled to think that this girl's ideas of religion could possibly be more practical than his own. But he had still many surprises in store for him.

To Naomi's assertion, he said, "Jesus was divine, and therefore he had power to do great works and demonstrate his authority. It is not in the province of man to have the power that the Saviour had."

"There I must be allowed to differ with you, Mr. Manville. While no one has yet attained to such a full understanding of God as did Jesus Christ, still I believe it possible for one to demonstrate in a degree all the teachings of the Master. Does not the Bible say: 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus'? Surely it is only as one manifests the Christ-mind that he is entering into the life and peace that your text promises."

Naomi was quick to note the expression of surprised amazement which swept over the man's face. For a moment she wished she had not spoken if it were only to be misunderstood, but the next instant a smile parted the red lips and, as she raised her face to his, she said gently: "Mr. Manville, I forgot that I was speaking to my pastor. I think perhaps I had better
not voice any more of my ideas, when they differ from yours."

Again the man could not account for the feeling that took possession of him. Always of a cool, even disposition, he felt annoyed that he should be so easily affected by the sight of the sweet face which was now upturned to his in the most innocent yet bewitching fashion. He was surprised at himself as he found himself saying: "Indeed, Miss Carol, I want to know your ideas. It will bring us—it will make us more like friends to exchange our thoughts along these lines. Cannot we become friends?"

"You know that occasionally next-door neighbors find it impossible to become friends," returned Naomi, with a roguish smile. Then she added gravely: "And you may regret it."

Regret being her friend, knowing her ideas and aspirations! The thought was ridiculous.

"Indeed, what could cause me to regret it, Miss Carol?" he asked with wonder in his voice.

There was an indefinable expression in the eyes which met his, but she made no response.
CHAPTER VI.

"THE LETTER KILLETH."

"I hope, Mr. Manville, that you will preach to us from the New Testament," said Naomi, as the conversation drifted back to the church. "I have heard Exodus, Leviticus, and Proverbs preached from ever since I was a child, and I believe Lawrence would be glad of a change; at least it is in need of a change."

"Then I fear I shall have to disappoint you, Miss Carol. From what I have seen here, and from what the elders tell me, I believe that the people in Lawrence still need the law preached to them. There is nothing like it to draw souls to Christ. You know we shall have a revival here in the fall, and I must arrange my sermons to lead up to it. There are many souls here, I am told, that need to be awakened and brought to a realization of sin and its punishment."

Was he dreaming, or did he see again that look of disappointment akin to pity sweep over the fair face and quickly disappear? When she looked at him, her eyes betrayed no inward feeling, and she said quietly: "I am sorry you think that way. There are indeed many souls in Lawrence that need an awakening. There are many who need to know that hypocrisy is sin, and there are many here who need to be redeemed,"
not through the religion of fear, but through the religion of love."

Before he had a chance to reply, Naomi sprang lightly to her feet. "I must be going," she said hastily. "I believe Billy has deserted me."

They walked side by side along the winding path which led through the meadows and brought them to the Manor. Naomi had regained her sunny manner and Mr. Manville was listening as one entranced to her ingenuous, sprightly talk.

"You will come to see my garden some day when you are not busy writing sermons, will you not, Mr. Manville?" queried she, as they reached the gate.

"Indeed, I shall be delighted. This is only a goodbye for the present," as he pressed her hand.

Tippie was standing at the parsonage gate waiting for his master, and now as he approached, the terrier ran toward him, barking and springing about excitedly, and then caressing his hands as though he had been gone several days instead of a few hours. The man stooped and patted the dog's head, though his mind was at that moment elsewhere.

"Tippie, I am a fool. I cannot account for my own feeling. I have seen prettier faces—that is, more regular, classical features—why should this one take such a hold on me?" And a vision of the bright, sunny face rose before him. "She has such charming grace that she has bewitched me, that is all; but it will soon pass," with a shrug of the broad shoulders. "And who knows, Tippie," as he took the black-tipped nose
between his strong fingers, "who knows but that it is all assumed? The smile, the grace, the manner, may all be—just assumed. I'll make believe it, anyway," he concluded, "and that will help me to forget her."

Having decided up this course of action, his mind was relieved and he walked briskly up the lane to the parsonage. As he reached the stone steps leading to the vine-covered piazza, Mrs. Chase, the housekeeper, appeared in the doorway. He knew at once that something had happened. Mrs. Chase's habitually smooth and even countenance showed nervous excitement while her black eyes had a strained, tense expression.

"Mr. Manville, I have been waiting and watching for you," she began. "An awful thing has happened to Dave Starr; he's been killed, overtook in his sin. His wife is goin' on so that the neighbors sent word for you. Oh, it's terrible, sir!" and she wrung her hands.

"Quiet yourself, Mrs. Chase, and tell me all about it." They entered the house and he motioned her into a chair. His own calm, even voice did much to restore the woman's self-possession. "Now, let me hear it all."

"Well, it was this way. You know that Dave Starr drinks terribly. He has been drinking these last fifteen years. All the preachers that ever's been here have tried to convert him," with a grave shake of the head, "and they preached some mighty powerful sermons on hell, too, but it didn't take on him. Once
it came near taking, and people thought he’d get converted sure, 'cause after one sermon he heard on fire and brimstone, he stopped drinkin' for a spell, but it didn’t last. It didn’t take deep enough.”

Mr. Manville had only known Mrs. Chase since his stay in Lawrence. Having brought no housekeeper with him, he was glad to have her remain after his predecessor had removed to another charge. “I know the place and the folks so well, I’d rather stay,” she had said. However, he had been with her long enough to hear the history of nearly every one in the town and knew well that he would gain nothing now by interrupting her recital. She would tell it all in time, so he waited patiently.

Mrs. Chase paused a moment for want of breath, then went on: “Well, it seems that last night he went into Stevens' saloon as usual for his beer before he went home from work, and he got some drink and carried out more in a jug. His wife—nice woman Kate is, too—met him at his door. She saw he was drunk as usual, but she's more used to talkin’ to him drunk than sober, so she asked him if he’d go over to the Simmons’ and take a cup of custard to Mrs. Simmons. Now the Simmons are worse off than the Starrs, though Lord knows, they’re poor enough—but Kate Starr had been with Mrs. Simmons all day 'cause a new baby had just come and she had taken care of her. Poor Mrs. Simmons had not enough to eat in the house, so when Kate went back home, she fixed up some nice little custard for her—took it right out of
her own mouth likely—and now asked Dave to take it over. Kate explained all this to Dave as he stood in the doorway. Dave had a big heart, even if it was a drunken one, and he could be full of feeling 'cause I've seen him cry at revivals, so he says: 'Sure, I'll take it to her, poor thing.' Them's the very words he made use of, and started down the road. Kate wanted him to leave the jug, but he wouldn't listen to her, but carried it in one hand and the basket for Mrs. Simmons in the other. He hadn't far to go—just down the road like and a bend, and he was there."

Mrs. Chase paused to moisten her lips, while the preacher sat in grave silence.

"Well, what really happened after that, nobody just knows. Dave delivered the custard all right and even inquired for the baby and Mrs. Simmons, and then turned for home. Dr. Elliot, walking along about that time, saw something that looked like a man in the road, and found Dave Starr dead—run over by one of those infernal—oh, I forgot, Dominie,—one of those automobiles, though the Lord knows what it was doin' around the place that time of night. It's bad enough for a person to get out of their way in the daytime, let alone in the dark. But the jug was empty—likely enough he'd emptied it after he left the Simmons', and was then struck dead—killed right in his sin, and never was converted. It's a terrible lesson to folks in Lawrence. I hope you will make it your next subject for Wednesday evening prayer meeting."
“Yes, the wages of sin is death,” said the grave voice of the preacher. “And how is his wife?”

“Well, that’s why I was watchin’ for you,” declared the woman, wholly forgetful that a half hour had elapsed since he had returned. “It’s her I want to tell you about. She’s takin’ on terrible. The neighbors have all been in to see her. I just came from there a short time before you came home. She won’t listen to the reason of religion, but calls for you.”

“I will go to her at once. Will you prepare me a light supper? I may not be back for some time.”

Mrs. Chase now flew to the kitchen, and it was not long before the minister found himself at the door of the Starrs’ home. It was a one-storied house with no paint, and he could see, even in the dusk, that the roof was beyond repair, while the two steps leading from the ground to the door were entirely broken away. As he was standing for a moment looking at the dilapidated building and picturing the want the inmates must have suffered, some one within suddenly struck a light which aroused him to the painful task at hand.

“Poor woman!” he thought, as he knocked gently.

The door opened and a girl of about six stood in the doorway with wide eyes and pale, thin face. “Come right in, preacher,” said a voice from behind, and Mrs. Starr drew back the child and brought forward a chair.

After a few words of comfort from the minister, the woman burst forth beseechingly: “You will not tell me what the elders all say,” here the voice was hushed
to a whisper, "that Dave is lost? Oh, he cannot be lost!" A picture rose to the woman's mind. It was not the drunken husband who had abused and even struck her, but it was the man who had once told her that he loved her, the man who had held her hand in his and asked her to be a help-mate to him. This man was dead in the next room; and they had told her that his soul was lost.

As the pastor had made no reply, the woman raised her grief-stricken face. "Is he lost, preacher? Tell me, is he lost?"

"It is not for man to say, Mrs. Starr. Let us leave it to God in His infinite wisdom."

"But he was not converted, and he died in sin, didn't he?" she persisted.

"Yes, he died in sin, but try not to think of that, Mrs. Starr," replied the man gently, as he moved toward her and took her hands in his. "Try to think that God knows best. His ways are past finding out and you must leave judgment to Him. His goodness is everlasting."

But the woman would not be put off. She must hear the truth from the minister's own lips. "But if he'd never been converted, and if he was cut right off in his sin, then he must be lost—mustn't he, preacher?"

Oh, the yearning in the voice! Mr. Manville put his hands to his forehead. These were the scenes that made his heart ache. If he could only tell her that her husband was not lost,—but no, he must be true to his
No human pity must dim his spiritual duty toward the woman. "God help me," was all he could think.

The woman, agonized beyond control by the awful suspense she was undergoing, now threw herself at his feet and with her hands upon his knees, exclaimed hoarsely: "Oh, preacher, tell me the truth! God could never do such a thing as to burn Dave in hell! When he wasn't drunk, he had a good heart and I was in hopes he'd be converted at this next revival, for you're the kind that would have brought him in. You'd have preached about hell and that always affected him. Why some times he'd stay sober for days after he'd heard one of them sermons—but now he's gone! Oh, say it's not too late, preacher!" as she raised her face full of awful yearning.

Richard Manville lifted his head, and had the woman not been so completely wrapped in her own sorrow, she would have noticed the white face and the deep lines about the mouth; but all she saw was the passionate pity in his eyes, as he looked down upon her. He spoke not a word, but in that look she knew his answer. With a groan of agony, she sank to the floor.

Tenderly he raised her, speaking to her words of comfort. For a long time he talked to her about God's love, His infinite wisdom and goodness. She had at last become quiet,—the suspense was over, though her last hope was gone. She listened with pathetic stillness, as he told her that it was all for her own good. "God means it all for the best; He sends
us sorrows to bring our hearts nearer to Him. We must trust Him." Then he knelt by the woman's side and prayed—prayed that God would give her strength to bear what He had sent upon her, assured God that they loved and trusted Him who, in His infallible wisdom, governed all, and finished with the declaration: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'"

The minister rose to his feet, took the woman's hand in parting, and placing something in it, with a "God bless you," was gone.

"A five dollar bill," she murmured listlessly, as she opened the crumpled paper in her hand. "He is a good man and has a tender heart. Of course he must be loyal to God and his own convictions. But oh, it is hard to love God if you believe He has taken from you your loved one!"
CHAPTER VII.

"BUT THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE."

The next morning, bright and early, Naomi was out watering the roses.

"You know, Thornton, I watch these blooms as closely as you do," she said to the gardener, who stood by observing her, as here and there she gently drew forward a bud that it might feel more directly the warmth of the sun, or inspected the bushes carefully to make sure that Thornton's pruning had been thoroughly performed.

"Oh, these beautiful, beautiful roses! How I love them!" she exclaimed, as she walked among the flower beds which the man had arranged in artistic design on the spacious lawn. "I can almost see the buds open, can't you, Thornton?" and she took a beautiful pink bloom in her hand and gazed at it intently.

"Yes, Miss Naomi, I sometimes think I can."

"And just look at these sweet peas," continued the girl, as she reached the end of the walk near the road. "Had you not trained them so nicely, they would have climbed this great stone fence."

"Good morning, Miss Naomi."
At the sound of the voice, the girl looked up quickly, and was surprised to see Mr. Simpson and John Warren, the village grocer.

Everybody in town knew John Warren, and everybody liked him. Also, everybody knew that he had never been converted and that he seldom attended church. Many ministers had tried to convert him, but none had succeeded. As Naomi looked up, she instinctively compared the appearance of the two men. The lawyer was tall, while Mr. Warren was short and stout. The lawyer had steel gray eyes, set close together beneath a narrow forehead, which gave an unpleasant, cunning look to the shrewd and determined face. The eyes of Mr. Warren were kindly, laughing eyes, which told of an even, good-natured disposition. Warren's face broke out into a smile as he greeted her.

"A bright morning, Miss Naomi, and indeed you look as bright as the day itself."

The three talked together for a few minutes, and Naomi was about to turn back to her plants when Mr. Simpson remarked casually: "Have you heard about Dave Starr?"

"No, has anything happened to him?" queried Naomi anxiously. Naomi knew all the families in the church and visited some of the poorer ones regularly. Only the week before she had taken Mrs. Starr a basket of fruit and some clothing for the children, and the woman had remarked that her husband was not drinking as heavily as usual.
"Yes, it's likely he thinks something is happening to him about now," replied the lawyer with ironical coolness. "He's dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes, dead. He was run over by an automobile—overtaken in his sin. He was never converted, and the wages of sin is death. Mrs. Starr won't believe he is in hell, but he is just the same," he finished, with something very like satisfaction.

"Mr. Simpson, how can you become his judge?" Naomi spoke with indignation, a little spot of bright red appearing on either cheek.

"I simply believe the Bible," he replied dryly, as his narrow eyes sought to confuse hers. "The soul that sins shall be damned. Have you been in the Bible Class so long, and yet are in doubt of sin and its punishment?"

"I do not believe in it," declared Naomi, with quick vehemence.

"Believe in what?"

"I do not believe in a place called hell," said Naomi, in clear, ringing tones, and with eyes that looked directly into the cold, gray ones.

"H'm," murmured the lawyer, as he eyed her with a critical glare. "H'm," he repeated, hardly knowing what else to say.

"What's the good of religion if there isn't a hell for sinners and the unconverted?" His glance was comprehensive enough to include the man at his side.

"The unconverted are by no means the only sinners
in the world, Mr. Simpson," averred Naomi unequivocally. "It is only as we remove the beams from our own eyes that we can note the slivers in another's. Religion is to teach people to be honest, to help the poor and needy, to be loving and kind; to practice what one preaches; to be a good husband—"

Naomi was here interrupted by Mr. Warren, who exclaimed excitedly, "Do you think that's religion, Miss Naomi?"

"I believe that all this is necessary in order for one to be a Christian," was the gentle, yet firm reply.

"Then I'm one, and I never knew it." The man clapped his hands in a delightful fashion. "I haven't a bad habit, Miss Naomi; that is, I never drink, smoke, or swear. I pay my bills, which is more'n some folks right in the church can say. I give to the needy and I'm good to my wife and children, and what's more, I make no pretense of bein' what I'm not. And to think that I've got religion, and didn't know it. Well, I'll be hanged! But, Miss Naomi, you belong to the church, how is it you think different from Mr. Simpson here?"

"I joined the church before I realized what religion was—before I was able to think for myself."

"Well, you keep to them ideas, Miss Naomi, 'cause they're better, heaps better'n any I've yet heard from the pulpit."

"Say, Mr. Simpson," he continued, as he pulled the lawyer by the sleeve, "what do you do when a tramp comes to your door?"
‘I pray for him,” was the cool rejoinder.
“Well, I give him a cup of hot coffee and a roll. Now I reckon if you were hungry and without money, you’d take the coffee any time in preference to the prayer.” John Warren laughed, while the lawyer’s face kept its accustomed rigor. “Now every time the preacher asks for the sinners to stand, I’m the first feller to jump up, but I never got that—what you call it—‘converted’ yet. Say, Miss Naomi, wouldn’t it be a great thing if some night, at some of them cokin’ revival meetings, the preacher’d ask for all the hypocrites to rise. Think you’d stand up, Mr. Simpson?” The man laughed heartily.

No one ever got angry with John Warren, for no one took him seriously.

The lawyer grunted.

“It’d take a sunbeam from heaven to melt that icy heart of your’n,” and he gave another chuckle, “but I must be a-goin’ now.”

After the men had left, Naomi hurried to the house, and changing her morning gown for a walking suit, was soon on her way to Mrs. Starr’s. She carried a basket containing cold meat, bread, and some jelly, which Mrs. Williams and the maid had packed while she was dressing. As she quickened her steps, she was thinking of the tragedy that had made Mrs. Starr a widow, and wondering how the woman could support herself and her small children.

Naomi was so intent upon her thoughts that she did not notice a man coming toward her, until she
almost ran into Mr. Whipple, who was just returning from Mrs. Starr's.

"Good morning, Miss Naomi, I suppose you are on your way to administer consolation to the widow. I'm just coming from there."

Mr. Whipple was a thin, short man, and had a very high-pitched voice. It always seemed to Naomi that his voice proceeded from somewhere near the top of his head.

"Yes," she replied, gravely. "Mrs. Starr will need all the support we can give her, now that she has no husband."

"She will indeed," returned he, as solemnly as the high voice would admit. "It's an awful example for unbelievers, Miss Naomi,—a fine topic for the new minister for revivals. This is a subject that will touch sinners' hearts with live coals from off His altar. The Lord be praised!" Mr. Whipple repeated this pious phraseology in an unctuous way, which he generally reserved for such occasions.

The girl's eyes flashed under their dark lashes. "I think it would be better if the church and all of us gave attention to the widow and leave the judgment of her husband to God."

"You are not talking sound speech now, Miss Naomi forget not the law in your sympathy." He shook his head at her gravely. "I prayed with her, and I believe she feels more resigned now. Praise the Lord! She kind of wanted to ignore the matter, but it's an awful judgment on the man. As I told her, it couldn't
be plainer that he was overtook by hell, but praise the Lord for His judgment!"

"What! Mr. Whipple, you do not mean to say that you told that poor woman that her husband is in hell?" The consternation in Naomi's voice was sufficient to make the little man fairly jump with astonishment.

"'Course I did. What's hell for if Dave Starr didn't go there?"

"Oh, the awfulness of such a creed!" Naomi trembled with indignation and horror at the thought. "The dear woman—how could you tell her such a thing—how dare you!"

For a moment the man seemed to wilt under the scathing look of the eyes that were almost black in their intensity.

"Miss Naomi, what's come over you? Sounds as if you are back-slidin'. What I have said has been preached in this here church ever since you've been born. Why, you've been brought right up under it. That the wicked are damned is as plain in the Bible as the nose on one's face. Why God says so."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Naomi passionately. "The law of mortal man has said so, never the law of God." She did not wait for a reply, but hurried on with a sickening feeling at her heart.

Mr. Whipple watched the girl until she had disappeared. "Lord bless my soul! Naomi Carol a back-slider! Dave Starr a drunken sinner not damned! Why where's the good of a hell at all then?"
Naomi's heart went out in pity as she took the chair Mrs. Starr placed for her. They sat in a small one-windowed room used both for a kitchen and a living room. The wall was not papered and the plaster had broken away in places. As Naomi contrasted it with the dining room of the Manor, she shuddered.

Mrs. Starr had seated herself opposite Naomi, who at the sight of the grief-stricken face hardly knew what to say.

"I've brought something for the children," she began gently, as she placed the basket on the table, "I thought you might not feel like cooking at this time."

"Thank you, Miss Carol. It was thoughtful of you. John Warren sent me a basket of things, too. It's so kind of him, and he's not a Christian either."

"Did no one else help you, Mrs. Starr?"

"No one, but the preacher—in that way. They've all got ways for their money, I suppose. They've all been here though," with a sigh. "They came and prayed for me to be resigned to God's will." Here the voice caught in a sob, while a big tear rolled down the thin, drawn face.

"Mrs. Starr, I'm so sorry," and Naomi took one of the rough hands in her own and stroked it gently. These were really the first words of sympathy the bereaved woman had received. The first thought of the others had been for Dave's soul. Ah, Dave's soul, where was it now? At the thought, she turned again to her sorrow.

"Miss Carol, I'm a Christian woman, but I can't
understand God's love for us. Poor Dave never had a chance, and no learnin'. He left home when he was a boy because of the lickin's he got from his drunken father; he got the drink habit from him, you know. We've always been poor, and the only company Dave had was lyin', swearin', drunken men. Oh, couldn't God have helped us if He'd wanted to? And then Dave wasn't all bad, either; he seemed glad to take the custard down to Mrs. Simmons, and even inquired for her and the baby, and said he hoped they would get on all right. Oh, why does God love one more than another? Why is one soul saved and another lost? How can I love God when He sent Dave to hell?"

Naomi did not try to interrupt the recital. She knew that the poor woman was pouring out the deepest anguish a human heart could feel. Her own eyes were dimmed with tears, and her voice was passionate with yearning as she said: "Dear Mrs. Starr, oh, believe me, God is Love. Your husband is God's child as much as any one else, and no human soul is ever lost. Does not the Bible say: 'All shall know me, from the least to the greatest'? It is not true that one can burn eternally. God is not cruel or revengeful. All of us will always have a chance to be better. It is never too late for one to repent and forsake his sin. Believe me, for I tell you the truth."

The rigid, strained look relaxed, and the words came in a low, hoarse whisper. "Then you don't believe that Dave's in hell?"
"I don't believe he is in hell any more than he was last week, and I know there is no such place as hell."

For a moment the face brightened at this ray of hope, then it fell again with despair. "But the preacher—he was here last night, and he wouldn't tell me but what Dave was lost, and oh, I begged him so to tell me that Dave would get another chance! But he couldn't say it. He said Dave was cut off in his sins."

Again Naomi shuddered at this terrible doctrine. Should she contradict the minister? And how could she explain it to the woman? But before she had a chance for further thought, she was interrupted by the widow.

"Miss Carol, you are a Christian, aren't you?"

"Yes," returned the girl simply.

"Well, the minister preaches hell and damnation. How can you be a Christian, and not believe it?"

"It is true, Mrs. Starr, that I have belonged to the church here for several years, but it is only lately that I am convinced that it placed the wrong interpretation upon much that is found in the Bible, and that many of its doctrines do not conform to the teachings of Christ. Believe me when I tell you that God is divine Love, that there can be no place called hell because God fills all space, and wherever your husband is, he has as much opportunity for seeking and finding God as he had here."
“Don’t deceive me, Miss Carol. Do you really believe that he still has a chance to reform?”

“I believe it with my whole heart.”

There was no mistaking the girl’s ringing sincerity. Her honest, earnest eyes looked straight into the tear-dimmed gray ones, while her voice carried a weight of conviction in its steady, clear tone.

For a long time they talked, the widow listening earnestly, hungrily, to the words of love and cheer as they fell from Naomi’s lips. The girl made God’s everlasting and impartial love and care for His children all so clear to her that, as she listened, it seemed as if the very room itself were filled with life, not death; hope, not despair; trust and joy instead of the awful nightmare of fear and anguish.

A gleam of sunlight now came through the small pane of glass and seemed fairly to radiate its brightness in the small square room.

“Now I must go,” exclaimed Naomi. “It is time for lunch; but I shall come soon again, and please accept this with my love,” and she slipped a bill into the woman’s hand.

“You have been so good, Miss Carol. You have lifted such a load from my heart. God certainly sent you here,” and she bent reverently to kiss the girl’s hand. “You don’t think I’ll forget all you’ve said to me and that terrible fear come upon me again?”

“No, you will not forget,” Naomi replied reassuringly. “What I have told you will become clearer to you as you ponder over it.”
"But the preacher—what about him?" in a troubled voice.

For a moment Naomi felt startled herself, but the next instant her face cleared. "Don't think anything about him, Mrs. Starr; just leave it with divine Love, and everything will come out all right."
CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMPACT.

It was on the Monday following the second Sunday in August that the minister was at work in his garden. "I fear I have neglected my home duties," he remarked to his housekeeper, as immediately after breakfast he went into the woodshed in search of his garden tools.

Mrs. Chase stood in the kitchen doorway watching him. "Well, you've been a' tending your flock, Dominie, and souls come before gardens."

The minister smiled. "How sweetly the birds are singing," he thought, as he began to use his hoe among the vegetables. A robin had lighted on the ground near him, and began to pour forth a rapturous song, regardless of a pair of fascinated canine eyes which viewed him from a distance.

Presently he paused a moment in his work to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. Unconsciously his gaze sought the Manor grounds, for had he not seen its mistress among her flower gardens even earlier than this? Since the encounter on the day when he had watched the girl as she romped playfully with Billy, he had not been able to put her wholly out of his mind. Again he pictured the laughing, winsome face,
the delightful, fascinating manner, and how, with a flash of spirit, the violet eyes would turn almost black, and the face look earnest and serious. "They tell me she is the richest young woman for miles around, but nothing in her demeanor would give one that impression," mused Richard, as he worked vigorously among the cucumbers.

Just here his soliloquy was interrupted by a sharp bark from Tippie, who was running toward the front gate. Richard looked up, to see the object of his thoughts. Naomi Carol was at that moment passing his gate, and when she saw that she was recognized, she playfully waved her hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Manville," she exclaimed, as the minister, hatless, coatless, and with the hoe still in his hand, approached her.

Her eyes spoke their innocent admiration as she gazed upon the muscular form before her. How broad his shoulders were! She had imagined that most men were broad-shouldered because of the heavy padded coats they wore, but there was no mistaking the genuineness of this well-built frame. How big and strong he seemed!

But the minister was so engrossed with the mere fact of being again in her presence that her look of admiration entirely escaped his notice. He was silently looking at her.

There are many men who seldom notice a woman's apparel unless there is something striking in it, and Richard Manville was one of these; but now he found
himself observing the fresh white linen dress with its dash of blue on the cuffs of the elbow sleeves and around the low square-cut yoke. It was a simple dress, to be sure, but the low neck with its blue trimmings seemed wonderfully becoming to the fair skin of its wearer. A large white garden hat, tied loosely under the chin with soft blue ribbon, completed the simple toilette.

While he unconsciously studied the picture she made as she rested one small hand on the gate, Naomi was saying:

"I have been watching you from the Manor, and thought you were working altogether too strenuously with your hoe this warm morning." She paused, her hand on the latch—"May I come in?"

For a moment the man hesitated, while a wave of color swept up to his brows. It was as if she had asked if she might come into his life. Something told him that upon his answer depended his gain or loss of her friendship, while the words she had spoken to him in the Retreat, "You might regret it," now rushed swiftly to his memory. While he hesitated, Naomi looked at him wistfully, smiling.

"May I come in?" she repeated.

At once he advanced to open the gate, standing aside that she might enter. "Indeed you may," he said gently, "and welcome."

They walked slowly toward the garden, the minister carrying his hoe on his shoulder, while Tippie circled ebulliently in front of them.
"The truth is, Mr. Manville, I want to see that golden-glow of yours, which I catch a glimpse of from my side of the fence. Ah! here it is," she cried, hastening to the flowers.

"How exquisite!" and she paused in admiration. What could the man do but immediately pluck the choicest sprays!

Just at this moment Mrs. Chase appeared at the back door, and was almost stunned with consternation at what she saw.

"Now that's queer of the parson. I've heard tell, too, that he ain't much on ladies' society. Why, those two daughters of Mrs. Lovejoy's positively gush over him, and he don't pay them no attention at all. Now that do beat all, that he should give Miss Naomi some of them golden-glow. He's told me more'n once that I must on no account break those flowers, 'cause 'twas the handsomest thing he'd ever seen, and there he's a-pickin' some himself. Well, 'pears to me that the best of men are simple-minded on some things, but I suppose as it's for Miss Naomi, it's different."

But, simple-minded though it may have been, the minister found pleasure in presenting to his fair guest the beautiful cluster he had plucked.

"I love your garden," Naomi said, glancing around her with appreciative eyes. "The bushes seem to grow in such charming, unlooked-for places. One would think Nature had had her own way here instead of man."
A smile lingered around the corners of the minister's mouth. "And do you not think that men can be artistic, Miss Carol?"

"I believe that men are not naturally artistic in the arrangement of flowers," replied Naomi, with that charming frankness which made her so attractive. "You know that men are naturally methodical," she hesitated, with a faint blush, "and that they reason and plan rather mathematically."

"But your vegetable garden," she continued, as they turned their steps in that direction, "is indeed a credit to you, and do you care for it all yourself?" She noticed the absence of weeds and the recently watered plants.

"Yes," returned the man, with a smile.

"I had thought that ministers did not know now to work—I mean," she went on hurriedly, "to work with their hands, to work as you have done here."

"And why not?" queried he, with an amused look.

Naomi glanced at him somewhat timidly. "I have thought—I mean it always seemed to me that ministers were not—"

He caught the appealing glance from her eyes, but did not assist her.

"Well, that they were different from ordinary men," finished she, as the color deepened in her cheeks.

"Some of them may be," he remarked with a smile, "but I am glad that I know how to make a garden, Miss Carol. My father has a large farm in the Middle
West, and I am quite familiar with country life and farm work."

"Oh, it must be delightful to live on a farm where one can enter more into the real spirit of outdoor life."

"Why, this is country here, Miss Carol, and I understand that you have a farm of many acres."

"Yes, Lawrence is a country town, of course, but it is so near the city of Winstead. I fancy it must be very different from the rural life of the West. My farm seems more like an estate. Then, too, I believe that the people of Lawrence must be different from those in other places. The church here rules the people. They have no desire to think for themselves, and so they have become narrow, and instead of advancing with the world in thought, they would rather hold to their old beliefs and spend their spare time in watching the affairs of their neighbors."

Naomi did not speak in any spirit of criticism, and it was really refreshing to the minister to hear a young woman express herself with such impulsive freedom. Then, too, he seemed to feel some sweet intimacy with her as he stood in his shirt-sleeves unembarrassed, while she talked with such confiding ease.

"Don't let me keep you longer from your work," she said, as he placed his hoe on the ground. "I must be going now. I am on my way to Mrs. Simmons'. Her baby is not well, and, poor woman, she has so many other cares that she welcomes any outside help."

"She does not come to church," began the minister in a tone of voice that might imply anything or nothing.
"Of course she does not," with decision. "She cannot even find time to sit down and enjoy a moment of quiet thought and composure."

"But she should try to arrange to attend services once in a while; her—"

"Attend services," interrupted Naomi deprecatingly, while she raised her delicately arched brows with a faint movement of surprise. "How little a man knows about a woman with six children, and a drunken husband! A few moments' quiet thought would rest and refresh her far more than a church service."

"Miss Carol, you surprise me."

"I believe it with all my heart, Mr. Manville. I believe that the woman would gain more from a few moments' realization of God's love and presence, than she could gain from hearing a sermon on—well, for instance, a sermon about the wicked being everlastingly punished."

As the man looked into the pure, animated face, he felt the glance of the earnest, serious eyes as if they were reading his innermost thoughts.

He listened in silence while a flush, as of guilt, swept over his face. "You did not like my last sermon then?"

"No," was the quiet response.

"And why, may I ask?" queried he, hardly daring to consider her answer.

"I think we had better talk about something else." She spoke low and her words carried with them a wistful gravity.
"No, I want your answer," he persisted, with gentle insistence.

"I did not enjoy your sermon, because I believe you did not preach the truth; I mean I think that your interpretation of the text was wrong."

The girl spoke with firm, unwavering confidence, but with a gentle regret, that she must wound the heart of the big man beside her.

"My interpretation? No, do not say mine," he began. "It is what I learned from the great teachers in the theological school. Any other Methodist minister would give the same interpretation."

"Then that is all the worse," averred the girl, with a deprecatory smile. "Why don't you reason it out for yourself, Mr. Manville? Why accept that as truth which is not susceptible of proof? Have you got to believe and declare a thing to be true simply because it is taught by the schools? The interpretation which you rendered may be taught in certain schools, and very likely it was taught in those same schools a hundred years ago, but even that does not prove its value. The world is advancing in knowledge of religion as well as in other directions. How could it be possible that God had anything to do with the death of Dave Starr? No wonder people fear God when they hear of such an awful thing being laid at His door. Can it be possible for God to produce both good and evil? Such belief is not founded upon the teaching of the Scripture, which says that a fountain cannot yield both salt water and fresh. Life
and death, good and evil, holiness and sin, are opposites and cannot proceed from the same source. You wished that we might be friends, but if our beliefs are so totally different, we have no common ground. If the convictions which we entertain of the most sacred things in life are at total variance with each other, then we really live in separate worlds. Suppose that a man dies trying to save the life of another, do you believe that God is responsible for his death? Is it justice for God to take a man's life when he is following the Golden Rule? No! a thousand times no! Yet, if you make God responsible for one death, you hold Him responsible for every death, for every accident and sorrow in the world. Oh, how can you think God would be so cruel, so revengeful, so unmerciful!"

Had the earth suddenly been swept from beneath his feet, the minister could scarcely have been more astonished. His right to believe and proclaim the teachings of his theological school had never before been questioned. In perplexed silence he gazed into the face of the girl's which was aglow with the intense feeling she had expressed, while her very soul seemed to shine from the depths of her clear, bright eyes.

Seeing her listener's amazement and perplexity, Naomi realized at once that she had allowed her utterances to shock him, and, womanlike, she went to his rescue.

"Forgive me, Mr. Manville, I should not have spoken so to a minister, but you asked me, you know."
Noting the concern in the gentle tones, the minister at once forgot his bewilderment.

"You did perfectly right, Miss Carol. Did I not ask you to think of me as a man rather than a minister? You did right," he repeated with a smile that was both forced and sad, "but your ideas are new to me. They startled me, and I shall need time to think them over. Of course I feel sure that you are in error, and that the church is right, but—"

"But you may be mistaken," finished Naomi, with a return of her old playfulness.

"I was not going to say that, Miss Carol," he said gravely. Then he was silent again. It was preposterous that the church could be wrong, of course! Well then, if this girl's thought was directly opposed to his, then she must be far from the truth. He must convert her; he must show her the error of her belief,—but how? The intensity of her earnestness convinced him that she had a strong mind, and perhaps one not easily influenced. If they dropped the subject altogether, there would always be something about which they could not talk, and the friendship which had sprung up between them would have no foundation. And was not he her minister? Why should he ignore the matter? Why not save her soul? Suddenly an idea occurred to him. The grave, anxious look left his face, and a tender smile played about the corners of his mouth.

"Miss Carol, if you and I think differently upon this
subject, if your interpretation of the Bible is opposed to mine, one of us must be wrong?"

"Yes," answered the girl simply, "one of us must be wrong."

"I am willing to put my belief to the test, are you?"

"Indeed I am," she responded, with shining eyes.

"Well then, we will make a compact. I will allow you the first privilege, as you are the—the—"

"The weaker sex," supplied Naomi, with a bewitching smile.

"No, as you are the younger," he finished, with a vein of gallantry. "You may expound to me your convictions, and if I am not converted to them, you must listen to mine."

The girl's face seemed illumined, as impulsively she held out her hand. "I give you my promise," and as the full meaning of his sacrifice dawned upon her, she raised her eyes, soft with emotion. "You are the noblest man I ever met," she breathed.

He grasped the outstretched hand, and for a moment held it in his own. "I believe we shall never regret having made this compact, Miss Carol, for the convictions of one of us must illumine the life of the other."

But Naomi's heart was too full for speech. Silently he walked by her side, as she passed down the little path.

"Good-bye," she said, pausing at the gate.

"Good-bye—for the present," with a note of appeal in his voice.
Motionless he stood and watched her as one who has listened to beautiful music and is loath to break the spell. As she reached the bend in the road, she turned, and seeing him still standing at the gate, waved the spray he had given her.
Chapter IX.

As the Sparks Fly Upward.

It was just two weeks after Naomi Carol had talked with Richard Manville in his garden and he had not forgotten a single detail of the conversation. For the moment her ideas, expressed as they were with such intensity of conviction, had shaken his certainty of mind. After she had left him, the garden had no more attraction for him that day. How could he work with his thoughts in such turmoil! Putting on his hat and coat, he had struck out for a tramp through the open country. Such physical exercise had never yet failed to calm any mental disturbance that he had experienced. He walked rapidly up one hill, down another, and rounding a turn, he found himself on a grassy spot, on a little knoll in the center of which grew a great oak. Reaching the tree, he flung himself in its shade, and was soon lost in thought.

Richard Manville had a strong, determined nature, yet withal a deep tenderness and gentleness of heart. He felt the strength of the young woman’s character and a certain admiration for her open rebellion against the established forms of belief. He had known many young women in his church at home, but Naomi Carol was different from them all. She was so earnest, so
frank, so honest in her expressions. There was no sham, no shirking, no "put on" about her. And she had given him her confidence; she had, as it were, flung open the door to her soul—that sacred chamber to which only the nearest in thought and understanding are allowed admittance—and he had entered. His blood tingled at the remembrance of the compact they had made.

An overwhelming conviction swept over the minister that Naomi Carol had entered his life for a purpose; the end he could not see, but that she was to play a great part in his life, he felt convinced. Then slowly his thoughts went back to her criticisms of his sermon—of his beliefs. Again he heard the voice: "Why don't you reason it out for yourself, Mr. Manville? Why accept that as truth which is not susceptible of proof?" What had she meant? Did he not prove his religion by saving souls? Then he began to reason with himself in order to quiet his unsettled thought. "Did not God create death? Did not He allow and permit it? Why, of course. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.' 'God is a consuming fire.' And then, what else had she said? 'If God permits the death of sinners, then why should He also be responsible for the death of a man in the act of doing good?'"

He puzzled a moment over this; then there came to him the passage: "Whosoever shall lose his life, the same shall find it." Did not Christ give his life for the world? This thought refreshed him; his mind was
again fixed, and he laughed at his confusion of the hour before, for he had answered satisfactorily to himself every criticism that Naomi Carol had made.

Now as he sat in his study, his chair and table drawn up to the window, he considered his text for the following Sunday. He had given Naomi—why should he not call her that in his own thoughts? It was a simple, sweet name, and a Bible name as well. Then it flashed to him that the word "Naomi" meant delight; somehow it all seemed so suited to her. Again he went back to the subject of the moment. He had given Naomi—now he could say it with an easy conscience—the privilege of presenting her convictions first. Oh, but he could preach to her! He could arrange a sermon that would meet her need, that would place her on firm ground. For the moment he forgot it was Naomi to whom he would preach, it was a soul, a soul in danger, a soul that he would save for Christ.

With tender lines about the firm, yet gentle lips, he meditated concerning a text. Should he choose one from the Old or the New Testament? The Old Testament seemed to give the idea of God as a power to be feared rather than to be loved and obeyed. The New Testament presented the life of the blessed Christ, the Saviour who died on the cross that all might have their sins washed away with his dearly-bought blood. Yes, he would preach from the New Testament.

At that moment he chanced to glance out of the open window and saw Mr. Whipple passing the par-
sonage. As the man neared the gate, he looked up, and seeing the minister at the window, beckoned to him.

The minister glanced at the clock; it was just four. No doubt Mr. Whipple was on his way to the post-office and wanted company. Reaching for his hat, he was soon walking beside him.

"Well, Brother Manville," began the high-pitched voice, "I 'spose you be anxious for a revival. You'll soon start on one, I reckon. Them's the good old times, praise the Lord! Dominie Stuart did some mighty good work here last fall. Many needy souls were brought to the altar. Why, at one of them cokin' revivals, that man preached so powerful on sin, damnation, and the outcasts, and pleaded so terrible for sinners to come to the altar, that Dave Starr stood up that night; but it didn't last. I guess he was too deep in sin already to get religion."

As the minister made no reply, the man continued: "But there's lots more souls in Lawrence that need savin', Brother Manville, and we are countin' on you to bring them to the altar, praise the Lord! There's John Warren. Every preacher that's ever been here has tried on that man."

"He is not a bad man, is he, Brother Whipple? He seems very kind and pleasant. You know I meet him in the store very often."

"Well, no he ain't what you might call bad," returned the other, ruminating upon the exact definition of the word, as he removed his hat and stroked one
side of his bald head; "but then you know, Brother Manville, he ain't saved."

There was a pause for a few moments, while the two men walked in the direction of Warren's store, which served also as a post-office and was the headquarters for all local gossip.

Mr. Whipple had something on his mind; he felt that it was his duty to give the minister a word of warning. He coughed behind his hand and then blew his nose, but Mr. Manville was not familiar with Brother Whipple's habits and waited courteously for him to resume his normal attitude. At last he spoke.

"Brother Manville, we're all much in sympathy with your sermons—so far. We've had that kind preached to us this long time, and they're the best in the long run. The sermons on love and piety are all right—once in a while—but we don't want them often. We like the kind you give us from Leviticus and Exodus. Proverbs, too, is good. Those are sound doctrines, and we're in hopes you'll keep them up. I remember we had a young preacher here once on trial and all his sermons were from John and Revelation, but they didn't take. He said he was modern, I think he called it, or maybe 'advanced' is the word. We applied immediately for someone else and that is the time we got Dominie Stuart."

They were nearing the post-office now. Mr. Whipple again cleared his throat. "Brother Manville, while it's awful important to seek for lost souls, you mustn't forget to keep your eyes open for any stragglers, I
mean them that has been converted and would fall from grace,—backsliding you might call it. They do a powerful lot of harm sometimes, by takin’ others along with them. You know when one sheep jumps the fence, if you don’t stop ’em, more’ll follow. So keep your eyes open for backsliders, Dominie. The good book tells about some of them deceiving the very elect.”

They had now reached the store, and there was no more time for conversation. “Come in, Brother Manville, I have quite a big order to get, but if you’ll wait, we can walk back together.”

Mrs. Chase ordinarily attended to the ordering for the parsonage. Occasionally she asked the minister to bring her a pound of tea or a bottle of vanilla, when she knew he was going to the store for his mail, but today he had no errands to perform.

“I will get the mail,” he replied, “and then I shall be glad to wait for you.”

A country store and post-office is generally the assembling place for farmers, deacons, and laymen for miles around, and the store in Lawrence was no exception to the rule. A crowd of boys was standing around the steps watching for the arrival of the mail wagon, while inside the store was filled with blue smoke from the pipes of those who were giving their orders.

The boys scattered as the two men approached. “Good mornin’, parson; good mornin’, Mr. Whipple.” It was the store-keeper who spoke in his bright, cheery manner.
"Morning, indeed," ejaculated the wife of Mr. Whipple, who at that moment could be seen at the gingham counter. "John Warren would say good morning if it was the middle of the night. Some people do beat all in their habits of speech." Here she came forward and greeted Mr. Manville with a smile that she reserved for just such occasions.

She was a small woman with sharp black eyes, and she talked so rapidly and in such a short, crisp fashion, that it almost made one feel like bestirring himself, just to listen to her. "I've been buying calico for the Ladies' Aid Society," she remarked by way of explanation to the minister. Then turning to her husband, "Archibald, as you're here you can wait for my order. I'll go on. See that you're home in time to tend the chickens," and she was gone.

Mr. Manville received a letter from his mother, and wanted to read it while he waited for Mr. Whipple. He never liked tobacco smoke, and moreover he wished to be alone while he read the letter. He seated himself on a bench which he found on the shady side of the store. He had read the letter over twice, and was still waiting for Mr. Whipple.

The group of boys and men had collected again about the steps, and the minister could hear plainly the conversation which was taking place. At once he recognized the deliberate and slowly monotonous voice of Mr. Simpson.

"I say that man must not come into this town. We've enough of his sort around here now."
"But have we a right to keep him out, Mr. Simpson?" said a voice, unfamiliar to the listener. "And more'n that, I don't believe we'd be able to."

"I say that man must not be permitted to live here, and I'll take measures to stop him."

"Well, who knows that he wants to come," drawled out another voice. "Mebby it's all hearsay, anyway."

"No, I tell you he wants to come," reiterated the lawyer. "I just got a letter from a friend of mine in Hampton, and he says Jake Ramsey and his family are getting ready to come here. No doubt he is leaving Hampton because he's forced to, and he wants new surroundings where he isn't known, but he's picked out the wrong place, boys, because I know him, and we will band together to keep him out."

"Why don't you give the feller a chance?" The questioning voice sounded very much like that of Mr. Whipple, but the minister saw that the speaker was only a young boy.

"Give who a chance?" queried John Warren, as he appeared in the doorway, wiping his face with a big red handkerchief.

"Jake Ramsey, of Hampton," cried a dozen voices.

"Well, what's he done—and who is he?"

The crowd waited for Mr. Simpson to explain, and they did not have long to wait.

"Done? And who is he? He's a drunken bum, a loafer, and if reports are true, a jailbird as well. Anyway, if he hasn't been in jail, he ought to have been." This part of the sentence was sotto voce, but not so
low that the minister did not catch it. "He wants to come to Lawrence, he wants to live here, and we must put a stop to it. We've got enough drunken ingrates around here now. I say we must put a stop to it. We'll call a meeting of the official board and appoint a committee to—"

"You'll do no such thing. And even if you do, it'll do no good. Ain't this a free country, and can't a man live where he pleases?" The minister knew the voice to be that of John Warren, although he could not see him.

Mr. Manville had not yet discovered it, but John Warren was the only man in Lawrence who had dared to contradict Lawyer Simpson and still retained his friends.

"He may please to live here, John Warren, but no one will welcome him."

"Yes, they will; yes, they will. I will for one, and I reckon there's others whose hearts ain't as tight as your'n. He may not be as bad as he's painted and somehow or other I always like to give a feller a chance."

Just then Mr. Whipple stepped up and put his hand on the lawyer's shoulder. "It's all right to give a man a chance—sometimes—John Warren, but in this particular case I know Mr. Simpson is right. Revival times are comin' along soon, and we have enough right here in our own town to save without spendin' our time on Jake Ramsey. Likely as not he'd have a very bad effect on them very souls that
are nearin' conversion. We'll call a church meeting and see what's to be done."

The minister waited to hear no more. He thought he had already heard too much. Forgetting his promise to wait for Mr. Whipple, he quietly started for home.
CHAPTER X.

DOING UNTO OTHERS.

Mrs. Williams was busy giving orders to the cook. "Remember, Nora, that Miss Naomi will have Mrs. Carmen here for lunch today. And, by the way, I wonder why Miss Naomi does not come down to breakfast? Billy, where's your mistress?" But at this particular moment Billy had his two front paws on the windowsill and was blinking at a large robin which was pegging away industriously at a worm close to the house.

"Traditions, forms, and selfish aims,  
Have dimmed the inner light;  
Have closely veiled the spirit world  
And angels from our sight,"

sang Naomi, as she appeared in the doorway.

"That doesn't sound much like one of the gospel hymns, dear," began Mrs. Williams, as they entered the dining room.

"No, Auntie, I didn't get it from the gospel hymn book," returned the girl simply. "Don't you like it?"

"I didn't quite catch it all, dearie, but I could tell by the sound of it that it wasn't the doctrine of the
chapel. The new minister seems to select just the right hymns to fit his sermons. Somehow the last hymn always seems to put the finishing touches to what he has been saying. By the way, Naomi, wasn't it a fine, strong sermon that he preached last Sunday?"

"I did not enjoy it, Auntie," was the quiet response.

"Why, Naomi, every one said it was the best sermon they had ever heard. Is anything troubling you lately, dearie?" as the girl made no response, but busied herself with the arrangement of a vase of roses.

"No, indeed, Aunt Margaret," and the bright face showed the truth of her statement. "Why?"

"Well, you seem different of late, although I can't explain it. I wish you wouldn't do so much reading. I think you are too young, and, Naomi—" here the woman paused for a moment—"Mrs. Whipple was telling me about a conversation you had with her husband."

At once there flashed into Naomi's mind the talk she had had with Mr. Whipple on her way to see Mrs. Starr. "Well, and what was it?" queried she, as the voice stopped.

"You told Mr. Whipple that you did not believe in hell." The woman said the words in a shocked whisper, as if she feared the very walls had ears.

"Auntie, I do not believe in a localized hell. I am convinced that one makes his own heaven and his own hell; that one can be in hell in this plane of existence as well as in the next. It is simply a condition of consciousness."
"Oh, Naomi, who has made this strange change in you? It is as Mr. Whipple surmises,—you are straying from the fold. And they will lay it at my door, I am sure!"

"No indeed, they will do no such thing," asserted the girl, with decision. "I am not a child. Can I not think for myself? Have I not a right to my own convictions?"

"But the church, Naomi! Think of the example you set; think of the talk it will make! Oh, if the minister ever hears!"

A little smile parted the full red lips, but was quickly gone. "Do not worry about this, Auntie. If the members of the church practice their preaching, they will not allow anything I say to disturb the harmony of their feelings."

"But, Naomi, you are a member of the church."

"Yes, I am at present," the girl responded quietly. At this Mrs. Williams began shaking her head, while her heart fluttered with anxiety for the girl. She must make another effort to put her on the right track.

"Dearie, you must know that we live here only to prepare for the next world. We must prepare to face the judgment seat of Christ. Why, Naomi, do you not know that your hope of heaven depends upon your belief in hell?"

"Auntie, do not take this so to heart," as she put her arms lovingly around the trembling form. "I used to believe it, but I do not now. I cannot believe
in such a monstrosity as the thought that there is a
hell to which God sends his children. Why even a
human being would not be so cruel as to punish his
child eternally. I would not want the heaven of such
a God. No, I could not love God if I thought He
placed man upon earth, gave him no chance in life, put
him where He knew he must fall, and then punished
him for falling.”

“But justice—justice must be satisfied,” breathed
the woman.

“Yes, Auntie, sin is punished so long as the sin re-
 mains, but God is unchanging, eternal Love. Some
day I may tell you more of what I have learned to be
the Truth, but not now; and, Auntie, remember that
I love you.” With a tender clasp of the hand and a
kiss, she was gone.

Mrs. Carmen lunched that day at the Manor. It
was early in the afternoon when she set out for home,
and Naomi insisted on accompanying her.

“Billy is to come with us so that I shall have com-
pany on the way back,” she said, laughing. And the
big cat, only waiting for the invitation, now ran lightly
before them, turning his head every now and then to
make sure that his mistress was following.

Church matters were not mentioned between the
friends, but they talked a long time about Marjory
Miller.

“What do you think, Naomi?” said Mrs. Carmen,
as they were nearing her home. “My husband was
telling me that a certain man—a very disreputable
person, I understand—wants to come here from Hampton; you remember that is the place where Marjory was born."

"And will he come here, do you think, Marion?"
"I hope not," responded the other gravely. "I believe the church will take a hand in keeping him out."
"But who knows that he is an undesirable person?"
"Why Lawyer Simpson knows his whole history. You know he took Marjory from Hampton."
"But Mr. Simpson may be mistaken, Marion. Anyway, it must have been many years ago that he was in Hampton. Perhaps the man has become better since then, and then again he may wish to seek a new home to get a fresh start in life."
"Oh, Naomi, you are always making a loop-hole for people. It is sweet of you, or course, but you must not let it carry you too far. We will have to take Mr. Simpson's word in the matter, and undoubtedly the church will stand by him."
"I could not give any support to such an act, Marion. It would not be right."
"Would not be right?" queried the other, with wide-opened eyes. "Why, no one ever takes a stand against Mr. Simpson. He is right, of course."
"It is never right to condemn a man without a hearing, Marion. I certainly shall not support such a plan." Mrs. Carmen knew by Naomi's voice that she had made up her mind.
"But Mr. Simpson always rules in the church—no one ever dares to oppose him."
Naomi’s eyes flashed for an instant, but she quickly recovered herself. “Anyway, we will not worry over it, Marion. It will come out all right, if we let God govern. And now I am going to leave you. I believe I shall not go directly home. I think I will call for a few minutes at Mrs. Simmons’. I hear that her baby is not well.”

Naomi quickened her steps after leaving her friend’s gate, and soon she was at the desired destination.

“You are so good to come, Miss Carol,” cried the woman, as she wiped the dust from a hard-bottomed chair with the corner of her apron. “It’s the best I’ve got, Miss,” placing the chair for her guest.

“It is all right,” replied Naomi, seating herself as if she had never known the luxuries of life. “I came to help you. Let me take your baby, now—dear little thing. I will put him to sleep while you do whatever needs your attention in the house.”

Naomi could not help noticing the clean and neat appearance of the baby’s clothes. Inwardly she marvelled at it.

Mrs. Simmons handed the baby to Naomi. “He’s not well at all, Miss Carol. I’ve got five children besides, but oh, I would not want to lose him.” Softly she kissed the pale, wasted face.

“You need not lose him; do not think of such a thing,” breathed the girl, but as she looked closely into the little face, she saw how thin it was, how peaked; and the tiny hands were almost transparent. Perhaps
he was hungry! Naomi's heart yearned to be of help to the family.

"I will have Thornton bring you a basket of things tonight, Mrs. Simmons, and I will send some nice rich milk for the baby every day."

"But you have just sent me a basket," replied the woman, with tears in her eyes, "and what a Godsend it was."

"And I am going to send you a nice, warm shawl for the baby," continued Naomi, who was feeling the little hands which were icy cold. Wrapping the little one in a light blanket, she seated herself in a rocking chair near the window.

"Miss Carol, that chair isn't easy. It is nearly worn through the seat."

"It is all right," was the cheerful rejoinder. "I want to rock the baby while you do your housework."

"While the children are out playing, I will do some mending. Poor Jimmy will be glad to have the holes in his stockings mended."

The room was silent except for the voice of Naomi, as she caroled softly to the little one in her arms.

Presently Mrs. Simmons looked up from her stocking. "Did you see a shadow on the window, Miss Carol? It almost seemed as if I saw some one standing there."

"No," replied Naomi, with a smile. "You must have been mistaken."

But the woman was not mistaken, and had Naomi been looking she would have seen the face of Richard Manville, for he had stopped at the house intending
to make a pastoral call. Pausing at the door, he had heard the sweet, low singing and wonderingly he had peered through the window which was near the door.

At first he saw only the woman sitting quietly mending, with what was almost a cheerful look on her face, and then his gaze had found Naomi. She had the child close in her arms, and her eyes were fixed upon the waxy face. While she rocked it gently back and forth she sang softly. Richard Manville, forgetful of himself, looked long and earnestly at the scene as if to stamp it forever in his memory. The sweet face had never looked more beautiful to him, and as she raised the child slightly in her arms and bent her head in a caressing fashion, the picture of the maiden that he had in his heart seemed suddenly illumined with the tenderness of a woman.
CHAPTER XI.

A THRILLING SERMON.

When the minister reached home, he went directly to his study. Seating himself in his favorite chair at the window, he dropped his head in his hands. Already he had thought it over many times, but now he went over it all again.

He had met Naomi only a few times during his stay in Lawrence, but on each of these occasions something had occurred which made the meeting more than a commonplace one.

He recalled again the first meeting at the church, when he had thought her a girl, a mere child; then the meeting at the Retreat and her strange remarks about his text. He recalled in every detail the visit she paid him in the garden. He saw her standing at his gate, asking, "May I come in?" in that sweet, bewitching manner. And now, tonight, he had seen her again. The picture had sunk deep into his heart. How good she must be! What a warm, loving heart she must have! She, a girl of wealth, surrounded by every possible luxury, to enter that dilapidated, forlorn home and tend a sick baby, so that the mother might do some mending. And this girl,—no, this woman,—was facing the wrong direction. Her soul was not fixed upon sound doctrines. She was in danger—
yes, in imminent danger—and he must save her. He would save her! Had he not always thought that she had entered his life for a purpose? It must be for the purpose of her salvation!

With this thought uppermost in his mind, he went to work upon his sermon. He had made his decision that he would preach from the New Testament. Drawing the Bible toward him, he eagerly turned the pages of the book. It was midnight when he extinguished his light and sought his bed; but his mind was at peace, and when Sunday dawned he felt ready to deliver his sermon.

The minister reached the shady lane leading to the church at the same time as Mr. Whipple.

"I hope you're remembering my bit of advice to you the other night, Dominie—about the lost sheep."

The minister nodded his head affirmatively, but in an absent manner, Mr. Whipple thought. That Mr. Whipple had Naomi Carol in mind had never for a moment occurred to the minister.

The church was well filled—it had been filled at every service since the new minister's arrival. And now they waited.

The choir was at the left of the pulpit, and Naomi's seat was in such a position that she had a side view of the minister. She watched the quiet dignified movements, and, as she looked closely at the fine face, she thought he seemed pale. Something about the tall form this morning was to her almost pathetic.

The organist played the opening voluntary, while
the usual commotion was taking place in the seats. It was the first Sunday of the fall season, and there was much curious turning and twisting on the part of the women and girls to observe the new styles in hats. The profusion and variety of colors in ribbons, feathers and wings, was indeed quite striking.

The opening hymn and the prayer were finished, and the minister stepped to the desk and carefully arranged his manuscript upon the crimson velvet of the pulpit. The women removed their gaze from their neighbor's hats and settled themselves in their seats with an air of resignation. The young girls fidgeted. The boys shuffled in their seats, and the men crossed their legs.

By far the most placid face in the audience was that of Mr. Simpson, seated in the front row. His eyes were fixed with unwavering attention upon the man in the pulpit.

The momentary confusion passed, and the church became quiet, as the people waited for the sermon.

As the minister stood quietly gazing down upon them, a ray of sunshine shot through the plain glass window and rested upon the tall, grave form.

His voice rang out clear and steady: "You will find my text in the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, the 36th verse: 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.'"

That it was a powerful sermon, no one could deny, and, as he continued, no one could help remarking that the man was putting his whole soul into his words.
When he spoke about the danger that awaited the unsaved souls, certain members nodded their heads at each other with an air of satisfaction, and fixed their eyes deprecatingly upon the sinners in their own families, hoping that the endangered ones would be made to heed the warning. Then they gazed back at the preacher who stood with hands folded upon the desk and eyes fixed longingly, tenderly upon them. In glowing terms he poured forth the sound doctrines of religion, and the unchanging decrees of the Infinite.

Now he left the pulpit and came to the edge of the railing. His face was strained, his eyes fixed anxiously upon the solemn, upturned faces. He turned slightly, taking the choir into his gaze, and then he faced the congregation.

He had seen the face of Naomi. For a moment it blurred his vision. Her gaze had been riveted upon him, her lips were almost stern; yet there was an unmistakable look of pity and compassion about the face which he could not fathom.

Again he spoke: "Dear soul, accept this gospel of Christ. He died that we poor sinners might be saved. Pause at this awful sacrifice; think of the torn, lacerated side, the bitter shame, the awful agony of the cross. Picture how he suffered that we might be redeemed, that we might be saved from outer darkness. Beloved, behold him, the bleeding Prince of life! Sinners, see your Saviour die crucified! Was ever grief like this? He was slain for you, for me, to bring us back to God. Oh, believe the records of
the Bible! You are all bought with Jesus’ blood, and pardon for all flows from his side. Come, beloved,” he entreated, “and stand at the bleeding side of this Saviour while his outstretched arms are open to receive you. Oh, dear one, come before it is too late! Before you have gone so far in your darkened sense of unbelief that it becomes impossible for you to turn back. Christ waits for you, will you come?”

Tenderly, passionately he pleaded. The audience had been worked up to a state of tense excitement,—a nervous, emotional, spasmodic ecstasy. Then the tension broke, as with a deep drawn breath came the words, “Let us pray.”

All joined heartily in the singing. Naomi’s voice for once refused to sing, so with eyes riveted upon her book, she followed the words:

Someone will knock when the door is shut,
By and by, by and by.
Hear a voice saying, I know you not,
Shall you? Shall I?
Someone shall call and not be heard,
Vainly will strive when the door is barred.
Someone will fail of the saint’s reward,
Shall you? Shall I?

The congregation seated themselves, and now Naomi rose to sing her solo. As she raised her eyes to the audience, she saw the gaze of Mr. Archibald Whipple fixed upon her.

The congregation of Lawrence had always felt them-
selves fortunate in having Naomi Carol sing for them. They knew that her voice would be well paid for in the city churches, but Naomi had never sung in any church outside of Lawrence.

While the organ played the opening bars, all eyes were fixed upon the singer. It was nothing new or strange for them to look upon Naomi Carol, but what they saw in her face this morning was something they had never witnessed before. They forgot to inspect the soft, white, lacey gown; forgot to admire the little red-brown curls that fell caressingly about the sweet, rounded face, and the thickly fringed lashes which matched them in color; they forgot all save the expression on the face and in the eyes which seemed to look directly into the soul of each one. There was compassion and pity there, and yet the countenance seemed to be illumined with light,—tender, soft, and radiant. The sweet full voice seemed vibrant with passion, love, truth—a certain ring of gladness they had never heard before. Not a person stirred as the girl sang.

"Our God is Love, unchanging Love,
And can we ask for more?
Our prayer is vain that asks increase;
'Twas infinite before.
Ask not the Lord with breath of praise
For more than we accept;
The open fount is free to all,
God's promises are kept."
"Our God is Mind, the perfect Mind,
Intelligence Divine,
Shall mortal man ask Him to change
His infinite design?
The heart that yearns for righteousness,
With longing unalloyed,
In such desire sends up a prayer,
That ne'er returneth void.

"O loving Father, well we know
That words alone are vain,
That those who seek Thy will to do,
The true communion gain.
Then may our deeds, our pure desire,
For growth in grace express,
That we may know how Love Divine
Forever waits to bless."

The voice ceased. For a moment the girl lingered, letting her eyes rest wistfully, almost pathetically, upon the audience before her, then quietly she resumed her seat.

Following immediately as it had the eloquent discourse, the solo seemed not to be appropriate to the sermon. As Mrs. Whipple remarked afterwards, "It didn't fit in well with that powerful address on saving souls. It didn't have enough doctrine in it." However, the closing hymn gave the desired finish to the service, and all save one voice joined exultantly in:

"Tomorrow may seal your eternity's doom,
There's danger and death in delay."
After the benediction was pronounced, the congregation dispersed, while the minister descended slowly from the pulpit.

Mr. Simpson was the first to greet him. It was the custom of the members to allow him this privilege and to hear his opinion of the sermon before expressing theirs. The lawyer rested his hand affectionately upon the minister's shoulder. "Brother Manville, that sermon was enough to rouse the sinner to the unsaved condition of his soul. It was good—very good."

The pastor acknowledged the compliment in a few words, for his thoughts, at that moment, were elsewhere. He walked almost hurriedly, and standing in the vestibule, greeted all who passed out.

"I see you took my suggestion to heart," remarked Mr. Whipple. "Fine sermon that was, just in line with revivals."

Mr. Manville remained in the vestibule until he was left alone. "She had not come. Where could she be?" He hurried back into the church. No one was there save the janitor, who was gathering up the hymn books.

"Are you lookin' fer any one, Dominie Manville?"

But the minister only continued to gaze about the room in bewilderment. Naomi had never failed before to shake hands with him after the service, and although she had never at any time alluded to his sermons, still she always cheered him by her presence. Today was the first time she had missed speaking to him. Had he offended her?
The janitor repeated his query, while he wondered at the look of disappointment on the minister’s face.

"Are you lookin' fer any one, Mr. Manville?"

"No,—not exactly," he replied, looking around in bewildered fashion. "Did none of the members of the choir remain?"

"'Pears not, Dominie. Hope they didn't forget, if you wanted 'em to stay. Miss Carol, sir, hurried out of church about the first one. Wonderful sweet woman, Miss Carol, is sir, and a powerful nice piece that was of hers today." But to this the minister made no response, as he quickly left the building.

Although he had put his whole soul into his sermon, it had not brought him the peace of mind he had expected it would. Instead, he felt that as far as Naomi Carol was concerned, he had made a failure of it. As he remembered the clear conviction of her tone as she talked with him that morning in the garden, he felt that it would take more than one sermon to change her strange way of thinking. And then he was harassed with the thought that she would believe he had meant the sermon for her. He dared not think what her feeling might be.

However, he was not allowed much time for thought on this subject, for Mrs. Chase soon called him to dinner, and today she was particularly anxious to direct the conversation.

"There's no getting around it, Mr. Manville, that the ways of the Lord are past finding out, and He does work in a mysterious fashion. Why is it poor folks get
more’n their share of trouble? There’s Mrs. Simmons’ got five children besides a baby two months old. The baby’s sick and more’n likely ‘ll die. They can’t afford much doctorin’, you know. But, Dominie, what’s God send so many babies to poor folks for? And if He sends them, why does He want to take them away only two months after they’re here?”

The minister made no response, but this omission was not noticed by the housekeeper, who went on with her monologue.

“When you come to think of it, Dominie, we never know from one day to the next whether we’re going to wake up alive or not, or what day we may catch some of them terrible germs goin’ about in the air. I was reading only yesterday about folks bein’ careful of dust, but land’s sake, Dominie, if the Almighty made us out of dust, I shouldn’t think a little of it would hurt us now and then, would you? Truly it is marvellous how the Lord deals with us.”

But the minister was not at that moment considering the marvels of the Lord, and immediately after dinner he seized his hat and left the house.
CHAPTER XII.

MR. MANVILLE'S DILEMMA.

Meanwhile Naomi's mind was not all tranquillity, and immediately after dinner she hurried upstairs to her room, and taking a book and a dark shawl, started out for the Retreat.

"This is really the only place where I can think uninterrupted," she mused, as she spread the shawl upon the ground and seated herself on it. "Poor Billy, he wanted to come, but I felt as if even Billy would be in the way today."

The fluty notes of a meadow lark trembling with mysterious sweetness caused Naomi to gaze about her. The serene September day was full of pulsating life, while varying shades of green and brown could be seen everywhere. Naomi's eyes wandered to the exquisitely tinted clouds, and she heaved a long sigh. Presently her thoughts turned definitely to the morning service.

"I suppose he put his whole heart into that discourse, but I cannot see what good will result; and he believes that that is the religion of Christ!" As she recalled the sweeping glance with which he had taken the choir into his gaze, she was beset with conflicting emotions. That he had meant the sermon for her, she was con.
vinced; and as she remembered the look Mr. Whipple had sent her, she was half inclined to be angry. "But then, I suppose the sermon was intended for my good," she meditated, "but why should he care so much about the condition of my soul?" A vision of the tall, dignified form, with the tender smile she had often seen play about the mobile lips, rose before her. Perhaps they might never happen to converse on that subject—again—but why should it matter?

Had any one seen the warm flush that swept the fair face, he would have known that to Naomi Carol it did matter. As her eyes wandered off to the distant blue of the hills, her thoughts turned to her mother. If her mother were there, she would surely understand her thoughts and think as her child was thinking. The bright face suddenly became wistful and sad. Again she saw the eyes of Mr. Whipple fixed upon her as if she were an unsafe individual.

"No, I shall never sing in the choir again," she decided. She loved the church of her childhood, but the reading and studying she had done along a new line of religious thought had convinced her that she could no longer follow in the path the church directed. "I must break with it sooner or later," she thought, "and God will guide and direct my steps. I will live my religion, and the church people will live theirs, and those who will accept my help I shall always befriend, and those who will retain my friendship will find it unchanged. I must be honest with myself, with my convictions, although it may be hard. O mother, mother
dear, how I miss you! How I long for the mother's love I have never known," she murmured. For a moment she allowed her feelings to overcome her. A smothered sob broke from her lips, as she buried her head in her hands.

It was at this moment that Mr. Manville suddenly appeared not more than twenty feet from where Naomi was seated. He had finished his walk and had decided to spend a quiet hour in the identical spot that Naomi had selected for her reverie. Taking a short cut from the open country, he had wandered through a small wood, and as the fields were altogether unfamiliar to him, he did not know he was so near the spot for which he was in search. As he climbed over a stone wall and dropped lightly to the ground, he was not only surprised to find the secluded spot right before him, but he was transfixed with amazement to find the object of his thoughts before his very eyes.

But Naomi was so self-absorbed that she had not heard the slight noise at her side. Silent, motionless he stood and watched her. His mind was filled with conflicting ideas and emotions. He was uncertain what to do. That she was grieving he was aware, for he had heard the smothered sob that had escaped her, and he saw the bit of lacy handkerchief that she held to her eyes. He was so close that he knew he would frighten her if he spoke, and what right had he to force himself upon her privacy? He would turn quietly and go back, but somehow his limbs refused to obey the thought and then it flashed upon him that he was the cause of this
grief. He had openly confessed to her that her soul needed saving. Surely he had made a terrible mistake. Her soul! Why, it was as innocent, as pure, as tender as a lily! It was not her soul that needed saving, it was simply that her thought about certain doctrines did not exactly agree with the creeds of the church. But what if they didn’t? She was young; one could easily mould her thought. Strange it is how the sight of a woman’s tears will move a man.

Helplessly he stood and gazed at the pathetic little figure. Fearing that she would move, he placed one hand upon the wall to steady himself, and as he did so, a tiny stone loosened under his grasp and fell to the ground.

Instantly the forlorn girl on the grass glanced in the direction of the sound.

“Oh!”

Manville was quick to note that it was an exclamation of wonderment and surprise. He came forward eagerly and, without waiting for invitation, threw himself on the ground beside her.

After her first exclamation of amazement, she sat motionless with downcast eyes, waiting for him to speak.

Richard Manville was a man not easily aroused. He was controlled by the head rather than by the heart; but at the picture before him, his former self seemed suddenly changed. His old coldness was swept away, as it were, and he was strangely thrilled with a new exaltation, and intensifying of that same
mysterious spell which had lightly touched him before when he was near Naomi. Now, to see her sitting there so like a wilted flower, with the signs of tears still on the fringed lashes, almost unnerved him. Her face had no color save the crimson lips. She wore no hat, and a stray sunbeam had found its way through the branches of the overhanging boughs and nestled in the wavy tresses. One small hand of perfect contour played with a bit of grass at her side.

He did not speak, and suddenly she lifted her head. Their eyes met. The violet eyes, sweet and childlike, yet grave and earnest, looked full into the brown ones, and then fluttered down.

He had been unprepared for her swift glance, and he had therefore met her gaze with a grave tenderness of which he himself had been scarcely conscious. Instantly the pale cheeks flushed, and there was an uncomfortable silence.

Presently Naomi shifted her position, and lifting her face again to his, she broke out into a merry peal of laughter. As well expect the birds not to sing or the stars not to shine, as to expect Naomi to be serious for very long.

"Mr. Manville, why do you look so grave?" she began, with forced playfulness. "And did you fall from the heavens that you landed here so mysteriously?" Her laughing manner helped the man to regain his poise, but the gravity still lingered in his eyes, for he could not forget that he had seen her crying but a few moments ago.
“Miss Carol, I fear I have been heartless and rude beyond question. The conviction that I had been hopelessly in error drove me for a long tramp through the country, and then I turned my steps in search of this retreat. I did not expect to find it just here, so where I scaled the wall, I was so completely surprised to see you here and in tears that I became unpardonably rude. I did not know whether to stay or to fly; and while I hesitated, you looked up.”

How refreshing it was to hear this grave man confess a fault as a child might have done. Naomi instinctively felt the honesty, the goodness, the gentleness of his character, but she continued her playful mood.

“And suppose I will not forgive you?”

“I should deeply regret it, Miss Carol. But you will forgive me, I am sure, for you see it was no premeditated act of mine, as I never expected to find you here.”

“Well, I’m not sorry you hesitated, Mr. Manville, and now that you have come uninvited, what can I do but allow you to remain?”

He smiled back into the mischievous eyes, but he could not change his mood as quickly as the girl had.

“But Miss Carol, I saw you crying.”

“Well, and mayn’t a girl cry, Mr. Manville?”

“But one does not cry unless there is something to grieve over.”

“Oh, how little you understand it, Mr. Manville! A girl may cry for a hundred trifling reasons.”
The minister opened his eyes in astonishment. It was true indeed that he knew few young women and none intimately. "But you had a reason for your tears," he persisted. "Tell me was I—did I do anything to cause them?"

The low voice, with its accent of tenderness, again sent the blood to her cheeks, but she only returned the query with one of her own.

"Why should you think of such a thing, Mr. Manville?"

That her continued playful mood was assumed, he felt sure. "I am sorry you will not trust me," was all he said, but the simpleness of the remark and something in the grave voice caused Naomi to confess instantly.

"I was crying because—well, because for the moment I felt lonely." She paused. "You see I have never known a mother's love. Although Aunt Margaret has been goodness itself, yet there are times when I long for my mother. She was so sweet, so beautiful! Today something occurred which gave me a feeling that no one understood me, and then I longed for mother," she finished simply. Her eyes were moist, and her lips trembled a little.

Her listener's face was very pale, and his eyes troubled. He was at a loss to know just what to do and how to conquer the emotions which were almost mastering him.

As Naomi glanced up, she saw the wave of distress which swept over the mobile features, and with the
swift change of mood which made her so charming, she cried: "But it's all over now, and I feel happy again. I never remain sad long. Now you must not think any more about this—this crying. You must not, really." She gave her head a pretty little nod of emphatic decision. "Let us talk about something else, about—" her thought sought eagerly for a suitable subject.

"My sermon," finished the minister, while the earnest gravity darkened in his eyes.

"Oh, no indeed, anything but that!" A mischievous dimple appeared on each cheek. "If we want to keep the peace, we must not discuss your sermon."

"But, Miss Carol, I wish to discuss it with you," said he, gently but firmly. "I must talk with you about it."

He looked at her appealingly. The look, together with his tone of voice, checked the girl's merriment, and at once she replied gently: "Very well, Mr. Manville, it shall be as you wish."

"Then be frank with me and tell me, did you think that I had you in mind when I gave my discourse this morning?"

"Yes, I thought so," breathed the girl, while she kept her eyes downcast.

"I was wrong, Miss Carol. Can you, will you pardon me?"

"I have nothing to pardon, Mr. Manville. You did what your sense of duty prompted you to do."

The minister was painfully conscious that she
accented slightly the word *duty*. He dared not ask himself whether duty alone had prompted him.

"But I have regretted it every moment since," he continued.

"Regretted your sermon?"

"No, regretted that I had you in mind while I was delivering it."

"And why, Mr. Manville?"

The question fairly took his breath away. A flush mounted to his brow.

The girl was quick to see his confusion, and said lightly: "You think I am not so bad then?"

"I think—" but the minister hesitated, and then stopped abruptly. It was not natural for him to assume an attitude foreign to his temperament. But this time Naomi did not go to his rescue.

At length he spoke. "I believe I have exaggerated in mind the difference of our opinions along religious lines, and although you may express yourself differently, I believe your ideas on the important questions of religion cannot be really unlike those of the church."

"Then you are greatly mistaken," returned Naomi simply.
CHAPTER XIII.

NAOMI PROCLAIMS HER CONVICTIONS.

"Mistaken?" repeated the man, as if he had not heard correctly. "Why am I mistaken?"
"Because our ideas on the fundamental principle of religion are different."
"But you have been converted; you are a member of the church of which I am the pastor."
"Yes. I have been converted," replied the girl quietly, and to the man at her feet the words seemed to carry a veiled meaning. "And at present, I am a member of your church." She paused a moment, then opened her mouth as if to speak further, but no sound came from the parted lips.

The minister felt that with all his queries, he had really gained no satisfactory replies. He must know more, he told himself. If she were a member of his church, he had a right to know her religious beliefs, and so he made another effort.

"Miss Carol, will you tell me if you liked my sermon this morning? I mean, of course, if you take an impersonal view of it."
"No, Mr. Manville, I did not approve of it. I do not believe in that kind of a sermon." She had spoken quietly, almost gently, as if she understood the
care, the study, the labor which he had put into that sermon, and as if she would not deliberately wound him.

His face flushed, not only because his pride had been wounded by the simple answer, but because he had not expected such a reply. But he asked, gravely, "Why?"

Naomi had turned her face slightly aside, and was toying with a bit of grass at her side. Now she looked at him.

"Mr. Manville, if you want to know my reasons for not liking your sermons, I will tell you, but you must take it impersonally—I mean you must not feel hurt at what I say. Remember, it is not you I am criticising, but your sermon, and," she continued, "I will answer all your questions, and shall be glad of the opportunity to answer them, for does not the Bible say: 'Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you'? But you must bear in mind—you must remember," the voice stopped for the briefest second.

"I will remember, I will bear in mind all you have said."

Now she turned her eyes meditatively upon the blue distance. "I take it for granted that your sermon was intended to awaken the unsaved soul, and I did not like it because I do not believe in the method you employed. I do not believe that the way to reform sinners is to tell them about hell and punishment, and thus through fear coerce them into accept-
ing God. I do not believe in rehearsing in any emotional way the account of the crucifixion, the death of Jesus; for in this way, you are apt to produce a momentary, emotional sensation. The sinner, or wrong thinker, may be influenced by your personal delivery or recital, by the ecstasy you are feeling, and through this he may be led into believing that the quickened feeling you have stirred in him is conversion. The next day these emotions may have passed out of his mind as though they had never entered, and he has gained no lasting good from the excited feelings which the sermon had aroused.” The girl paused, but did not turn her head. “I hope you are remembering, Mr. Manville, that it is not your particular sermon to which I object, but the sermons in general that are delivered along these lines.”

“But every word of the sermon was true, Miss Carol. The sinner must be saved, if possible, and what can bring him to his senses any better than the recital of the death of the Saviour who suffered for mankind?”

Naomi did not reply for a moment, and when she spoke her voice was low and gentle. “I do not understand the atonement as you do. To me, it has a far different significance and meaning.” She looked at him now, as if to see what effect the words had produced.

Although the words had been gently spoken, they were a shock to the minister. How could her views regarding the atonement be different from his, and be
correct? he asked himself. No, of course they were wrong and perhaps grossly so. He was about to defend his point of view and defend it vigorously when he remembered the compact—he was to allow her the first hearing.

Naomi had watched the fine face with its varied emotions and was not surprised when he said gravely, "Please tell me what your convictions are, Miss Carol."

Naomi again turned her face toward the horizon, while the man listened.

"I believe that Christ Jesus was the way-shower; that he came on earth in order to show men how to understand God, how to rid themselves of sin, how to become right-minded; but I do not believe that Jesus' death ever saved another from his sins or punishment that comes as a penalty for sin. I do not believe that the mere blood of Jesus did anything for the salvation of mortals. I do not believe that Jesus' death on the cross should be made a slogan for bringing men to repentance. I do believe," and now the voice took an added strength and fulness, while a beautiful light lingered about the fair face, "I do believe that we should bring men to God by telling them of the beauty, the grandeur, the simplicity of Jesus' life, his teachings, his works. I believe that we should lay a greater stress upon these than we do upon his death. The original meaning of the word atonement is at-one-ment, and this indicates that the atonement of Jesus Christ consisted in his prov-
ing his at-one-ment with the Father. I believe that the Saviour's death was vicarious, in the sense that he involuntarily allowed himself to pass through the trying ordeal when he might have averted it, for he said he could call upon his Father for deliverance. He proved his infinite love of mankind in that his life was unselfishly sacrificial. While I believe that every step of the Master's career was essential for the salvation of the world, still I do not believe that the mere recital of his death agonies on the cross is as significant as his life, his works, his teachings. He showed his great love of mankind in passing through the ordeal called death, but he did not die that any mortal might be saved simply by this death ordeal. He allowed men to try to destroy him, so that through the resurrection he might prove to them that life is deathless.

"You must believe in the divinity of Christ?" as the voice paused for a moment.

"Most assuredly I do."

"Miss Carol, the Bible states that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from sin."

"Mr. Manville, you will agree with me that the Bible employs much figurative and symbolic language. The material blood of Jesus was the same as the blood of any other mortal. The blood of Christ is love, life, truth; and divine Life, as expressed through Christ, is the Saviour of the world. It is the eternal love of the spiritual Christ which is poured forth for
the salvation of the world. Blood is simply a symbol of the sacrificing love of the eternal Christ. 'Except ye eat the flesh' (that is, truth) 'of the Son of man, and drink his blood' (life,—love) 'ye have no life' (true or eternal) 'in you.' I am grateful to Jesus for the love, compassion, and sacrifice which he manifested for us, but I am more grateful for the truth which he taught,—the truth which enables men to know God aright—which knowledge is life eternal.'

"And what do you think was the truth which Jesus taught?"

"I believe that Jesus Christ taught that through the help of God men can gain dominion over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He not only taught this truth, but he practised it as well. He also taught that love can conquer hate, and that, with the right understanding of God, harmony can be made to supplant discord, and life can conquer death."

"May I ask what you mean by a right understanding of God?" queried the man.

"I believe that a right understanding of God is the basis of true religion, and this understanding of God I never received from the Lawrence Methodist Episcopal Church." There was no doubting the positiveness of this remark. Already the minister felt almost hopeless of accomplishing the task he had set before him.

"But I do not see how one's thought about God could change, Miss Carol," he remarked, with simple gravity.
"Well mine has changed wonderfully. I believe that the majority of people hold some mental picture of God when they pray to Him or refer to Him in thought or speech. The hymns which refer to the 'great white throne' and the book which shall be opened, lead one to think of God as personal. I have been taught by the church to which I belong that God knows both good and evil, that He sends or permits, the evils, sins, sicknesses, accidents, and deaths in the world, and that Christians should be resigned to these calamities and believe that they are the outcome of His inscrutable will. I have been taught that God is not the only power; that there is another power called the devil; that there is a localized heaven and a localized hell."

"And do you not agree to any of these doctrines?"

"No, I believe differently. I believe—no, I am certain—that God is not corporeal. He is Life, Love, Truth. He is the only creator, power, and presence. I believe that 'He is of purer eyes than to behold evil.' As light knows nothing of darkness, so God is in no way connected with calamities, accidents, and sicknesses; and instead of being resigned to these conditions, we should seek to gain dominion over them as the Master taught. I do not believe in any personal devil, for how could there be one if God is the only power? I believe the only devil there is, is the world's thought of evil, reflected in the mentalities of men. I believe that hell consists in mental and physical suffering produced by wrong thinking and
living; that heaven is a state of mind, the absence of fear and the consciousness of God exemplified in righteousness and love. I believe that one can determine his own heaven or his own hell."

These simple words struck a responsive chord in the minister's thought, although he would not admit it even to himself. That the girl before him was honest in her convictions, that she showed an intelligent, resourceful mind, he was thoroughly convinced.

"Miss Carol, are these ideas original with you?"

"No indeed," returned Naomi, glancing at him. "There are many people who believe them; in fact, the world at large is getting tired of dogmas and creeds and wants a practical, operative, everyday religion."

"But religion should be of such a nature as to prepare men for eternity and heaven," argued the minister.

"If one finds the right understanding of God, he finds heaven," breathed the girl. "The only eternity there is, is the eternity of consciousness." She paused a moment, then raising her lighted face, the blue eyes looked directly into the brown ones, and the voice carried with it an intense earnestness.

"Mr. Manville, why preach that men should prepare to meet God in the hereafter? Religion should not be for the purpose of preparing souls for death, and a far-off heaven. God will never be any nearer to us than He is now, for in Him we live and have our being! If men were taught a practical, operative principle of religion, they would meet God now, and they would need no further preparation for the here-
after; finding God is finding heaven. The teaching that God is good, but that man is a sinner, has separated men from Intelligence.”

The upturned face seemed to gather an inspired light, the eyes which looked at him were looking far beyond him, and the voice spoke with such a ring of truth that he forgot the eyes, the hair, the form and personality of the young woman at his side, and saw only the mentality. It was as if the very door of her soul had been opened and for one brief instant he was admitted; and what he saw, he kept forever in the sacred memory of the dearest and tenderest moments of life.

At length he spoke. “Miss Carol, I have not met your convictions with arguments, because I promised that at the start you were to have all the privileges. It has made me very happy to think that you have expressed your heart’s convictions to me, and they are sacred to me. Now I am going to ask you just one more question along the lines that we have been discussing. I want to think over all the ideas you have expressed to me, and they would not be complete unless you tell me how you believe sin can be destroyed? It is only because your ideas regarding the atonement are different from mine that I ask this question.”

“And I shall be glad to tell you.” The girl now spoke in a cheerful, happy, and almost buoyant tone, as though she were really talking to one who understood her.
"I believe that sin was brought about because of a false conception of God and life, and that it is through spiritual illumination and prayer that sin can be destroyed. The word *forgive* is made up of two words, *give* and *for*. Sin is forgiven only as righteousness is *given for* or is put in the place of sin. Sin is never forgiven until it is destroyed in the human consciousness and entirely forsaken."

"Thank you," he said simply. And Naomi believed the subject to be ended.

A light breeze suddenly stirred the overhanging branches, and a shower of yellow leaves fell upon the uncovered heads of the two below.

Naomi's mood changed almost instantly and she laughed merrily. "This must be symbolical of a shower of blessings," she said, while she shook her head and brushed the wavy tresses with her hands. She bent her head forward so that the minister might see if she had removed all traces of the truant leaves. As he told her that she had shaken them all out, his eyes rested upon a dainty knot of blue ribbon which a moment ago had nestled in the brown coils, but now lay upon the folds of the dark shawl.

"It must be late, Mr. Manville," exclaimed Naomi. "We are forgetting the time. How quickly indeed it has passed!" And she glanced at the tiny watch in her belt. "Look at the pink and mauve clouds making place for the sunset! Aunt Margaret will think I am lost. I must be going."
Her companion sprang to his feet and extended his hand. As their hands met, a sudden thrill passed through him, and a feeling, which for the moment made him tremble, took possession of him.

Naomi was saying something and laughing, but he did not know what it was. He wondered if she had felt the tremor that had swept over him; but as she raised her eyes, he saw nothing there but her childlike, innocent frankness. To hide his confusion, he stooped and gathered up the shawl, and, as he did so, the blue knot fluttered to the ground. Arranging the folds carefully, he placed the shawl upon his arm. He saw that Naomi had turned slightly from him and was smoothing the wrinkles in the soft, white dress. He stooped and, almost with a guilty feeling, transferred the knot from its resting-place among the leaves to the inside pocket of his coat.

"We shall have a beautiful sunset to-night, Mr. Manville. See the glorious colorings in the west."

The minister's tall, athletic figure led the way across the meadow, while his dainty, girlish companion followed closely with almost aerial lightness. Naomi had met many men when visiting her uncle in the city, but none of them had impressed her as did this grave man at her side. As they walked along, each content with his own musings, she noticed how carefully he led her in the smoothest places, and how, now and then, he stopped to remove a bit of brush that lay in the path.
Neither spoke until they were nearing the Manor. "I think I shall leave you at this bend," said Naomi, "I have only a few steps now and I want to reach the house unobserved." She placed one hand upon the gold-brown tresses. "Those leaves played havoc with my hair, and I believe I have lost—" She paused a moment, while both hands now sought for the knot.

"Oh it is nothing! It doesn't matter at all!" she said, as she saw the look of concern which swept the man's face. "It was just a bit of ribbon. Don't look so concerned.

"Now indeed I must hurry. Come and see my conservatory some day, Mr. Manville."

He watched the movements of the lithe, graceful figure, as she moved quickly along the path, folding her skirt about her and walking with that easy carriage which he had begun to know as part of her.

Reluctantly he turned his steps toward the parsonage.

Tippie was waiting at the gate as usual, barking his delight. "No, Tippie, I am not going into the house just yet," he said, as the dog sprang up the parsonage steps. The minister walked slowly across the lawn and, seating himself on his favorite bench under a big tree, was soon lost in thought.

But Tippie felt that something troubled the usual serenity and complacency of his master, and he tugged away at his shoe-strings and trouser legs to attract the attention which he craved.
“Don’t, Tippie, not now,” said his master, placing his hand on the dog’s head. “Come, lie down and be quiet and we’ll talk it over together.” The faithful animal flung himself at his master’s feet and gazed up into his grave face with that trustful expression which a dog can so easily assume.

“Tippie, what is this feeling that has come over me? Why should I be so easily affected by the grace, charm, and beauty of this girl—woman? I have seen many women, but this one is—well, she is different, so wholesome, so refreshing, and withal, so innocent and lovely. Yes, I can say it to you, Tippie, old boy.” And the dog waved his short tail and caressed the big hand as if he thoroughly understood his master’s remark. “And I not only admire her beauty, but I admire her soul. When she looked at me with those violet eyes, the tears still hanging to the curling lashes, then, Tippie, I became a person unknown to myself. I felt as if I should take that delightful bundle of pink and white beauty into my arms. But this is folly, insanity, madness, and I will not allow it! Such temptations come to the best of men, I suppose, but I know that with me the feeling has been momentary, and I shall not allow it to recur. The young woman is nothing to me, of course, and now I am glad it’s over and I am myself again.”

But a few moments later he thought of the blue knot, and a flush mounted to his temples as he removed it from its resting-place. How like her it seemed, as the scented fragrance perfumed the air. “Yes,
I admire her for her convictions,” he thought, somewhat irrelevantly. “She has a deeply intellectual character and a woman’s heart and understanding. Who knows but that her thoughts and convictions may be truer than mine?”

Silently, almost reverently, he folded the blue knot, and, placing it in a small, black leather case, he returned it to his inner coat pocket. “And now I am master of myself. I will not permit any light fancy to come between me and my work. My work! I must not forget that; my business is to feed the souls which depend upon me.” And with a smile, he rose and entered the house.
CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTRINE VERSUS ENLIGHTENED FAITH.

The September days continued bright, warm, and beautiful. There seemed no interruption to the unclouded sunshine, but to Naomi the days were all too short. Now as she came downstairs dressed for the street, she met her aunt in the hall.

"Out again, Naomi? It is early in the evening I know, but you will be sure and be home before it is dark, won't you? Where are you going?"

"I am going to Mrs. Simmons', Auntie. Her baby is very sick and you know she so appreciates the help one gives her. I will try to be back early."

As Naomi came back from the kitchen with a basket on her arm, her aunt said: "Please don't make any engagement for tomorrow night, dear, for you know it will be prayer meeting night. You have not attended the meetings regularly lately and every one regrets that you have resigned as our soloist. I believe the head ones of the church are somewhat concerned about you, Naomi. I tried to make excuses for you, to say—"

"Don't make any more excuses for me, Auntie. I resigned as soloist because the official board will no
longer allow me to make my own selections, and because I found it impossible to sing those dreadful orthodox hymns any longer. I don’t believe one should fill one’s mind with such sad and pitiful wailings. Those mournful words depress me.”

“Oh, child!” was all the aunt said, as she looked with tenderest pity upon the face at her side.

“And besides, Auntie, I do not care to feel compelled to attend the services, and now that I have resigned from the choir, I may not attend the church—regularly.” The last word was added after she had seen the wave of despair which swept over her aunt’s face.

“But the meetings, Naomi, and now the revival will soon be here!”

“I am sorry, Auntie dear, to wound you, but I really don’t enjoy the meetings either. It is worse than useless for me to sit and listen to Mr. Simpson pray. For many years he has thanked the Lord that he is among the saved souls on earth, and you know well enough, Auntie, that he does not live the religion he professes. One would think him a walking saint by the way he raises his eyes to the ceiling when ‘bringing the congregation into the Lord’s presence.’ I think God will bestow His blessings upon the worthy without being favored by the advice of Mr. Simpson. And Mr. Whipple prays along the same line,—always advising God with such pious intonations as to the best way in which to bless the church, its members and the town in general, and begging Him to pour forth His blessings more abundantly.”
"Naomi, what has come over you? It is really sacrificial for you to go on so. Oh, I do hope the minister will hear nothing of this."

"Don't worry, Auntie, about the minister." The girl stooped and kissed the woman on either cheek, and added, "Now dry your eyes and don't think anything more about it."

Naomi, walking briskly, soon found herself at Mrs. Simmons' cottage.

She was surprised to have one of the children answer her light knock, telling her that the mother was in the bedroom with the baby. "And the minister is there, too," said the voice in a loud whisper.

Naomi had been in the house many times before, and was well acquainted with the children, who now gathered round her eager to see the contents of the basket. She soon learned that the baby had grown much worse and that the doctor had left only a few moments earlier, saying that the child could not live until morning. The five small children had been left to themselves in the living room and had had no supper.

Taking a cloth out of the basket, Naomi spread it over the small, square table. Five pairs of eyes watched with wide-open astonishment, while Naomi deposited bread, honey, milk, butter and some sliced cold meat upon the white cloth, and very soon five pairs of hands were rapidly at work helping themselves to what seemed to them the most delicious meal they had ever tasted.

Naomi could hear the voices in the adjoining room,
first the tearful one of the woman as if she were pleading for her child's life; then the deep, full voice that she recognized at once as the minister's. While it seemed strong and grave, still there was in it a gentle, tender note as if of compassion. Presently the door opened and a tall, dark form filled the doorway. He knew that Naomi was in the house, because both he and Mrs. Simmons had recognized her voice as soon as she had entered. As he watched her standing by the table replenishing the plates of the hungry little ones, a smile crossed his lips. Naomi had noticed that same gentle smile before, and now she began to feel that it was a part of the man. Even as she looked at him she thought how unusual it was for such a big man to have so gentle a smile. It seemed to so illumine his face as to give it a softened look, which made one feel unconsciously drawn to him.

At once Naomi went to him. "May I come in?" she breathed. There were no other words of greeting, as she extended her hand.

"Yes, come in." He still held her hand, as he closed the door softly and led her to the side of the bed.

Naomi was nearly overcome with emotion, as she looked upon the wasted little form, and then upon the tear-stained face of the faithful mother. The yearning, hopeless and half-resigned look which she gave Naomi, seemed almost to overmaster the girl's brave spirit. Without a word, she took the two hard-working hands and pressed them with her own soft ones.
The minister stood at the foot of the bed with his head bowed. For several moments the three stood thus. Then the woman spoke in a whisper, "I am glad you came to the children and me."

Naomi answered her with a look only, as she gently pressed the hands which she still held.

"Tell me," she murmured, "what can I do? How is he?" as she looked down upon the tiny form.

"He is going fast," returned the mother, with a broken sob. "He seems quiet now, but he has spells of terrible agony. He screams, and oh, it is awful, the pain he suffers. The minister was just about to make a prayer, Miss Carol. He wants to pray with me now, while the baby is quiet." The woman spoke brokenly, tremulously.

Naomi gently released the hands. "I understand," she said simply, while her eyes sought the minister's face, questioningly.

He recognized at once the question in her mind. "You need not go, Miss Carol. Sit here by the window." He arranged a chair in the far corner of the room, near the window, then he approached the woman and the child, and without a word Naomi crossed the room and seated herself in the chair which he had placed for her.

The lamp on the small table at the foot of the bed dimly lighted the room. The woman and the minister seated themselves and as they talked earnestly together, they almost forgot the quiet, motionless form
in the corner, although every word they said sank into the heart of the listener.

"But, Mr. Manville, must it ever be so? Must we always accept these things as God's will? It does seem so hard to bear."

The woman had gone over it all before, but the man replied gently, "We must be satisfied that God knows best. He will stop the pain when He sees fit. We cannot always understand His ways, but we must trust Him just the same."

"But how can God permit a helpless little child to suffer so cruelly? If He could stop the pain, why don't He? I would relieve his suffering if I could. Oh, how gladly would I bear it myself! And you tell me that God's love is greater even than a mother's love?"

Naomi was seated so that she could look directly into their faces. The small lamp seemed to throw all its light upon the two bowed forms at the bed. The minister had been sitting with his head in his hands, and now as he lifted it Naomi was startled to see the drawn lines about the mouth, where only a short time ago the gentle smile had played. She listened eagerly for his answer.

"God's love is greater than ours, for did He not give His beloved Son?"

"Yes, I know," interrupted the woman with feverish haste, "but how does that apply to this sinless little one? Does the death of our Lord keep this dear baby from suffering, and will it make him live?"

But no answer came from the drawn lips.
"Does God send both life and death, sickness and health, joy and sorrow?"
"Yes," was the low response. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh."
"It seems so hard, so cruel," went on the woman. "It will be hard for me to love God after baby goes."
"You must be resigned, Mrs Simmons. You must know that His ways are infinitely above ours. He knows what is best for you and the little one. Let us pray."

The quiet form in the corner was forgotten, and both now knelt upon the carpetless floor. Naomi had heard many prayers, but never had she heard a prayer in a death chamber before, and as she listened it seemed that she could stand it no longer. Her heart seemed almost dislodged in her bosom, as reverently, passionately, the man pleaded with God to spare the life of this little one. Such tones of eager, anxious, fervent pleading she had never heard before. He prayed that God would let the little one live, that the mother would feel His dear love, would know that He heard and answered the prayers of His dear ones. Presently the deep, vibrant pleadings ceased, and the voice took on another strain. "Oh, if it be not Thy will, dear Father, to spare this little one, in order that we may feel Thy love and presence, grant that this dear mother will still trust Thee to the uttermost. Help her to pray, 'Thy will be done,' and to be resigned to Thy unfailing, unaltering, and inscrutable will of wisdom."
The voice would have continued, but at that moment a wail of agony caused the mother to spring quickly to her feet.

"Oh! oh! How can I bear it!" cried the woman, wringing her hands in despair as she gazed upon the writhing form. The child's voice was almost too feeble to cry, but the smothered sounds of pain and agony were worse than any cry of pain Naomi had ever heard.

The sounds continued until even the man could stand it no longer. "Have you no medicine?" he asked hoarsely.

"The doctor said it would do no good," was the broken response. "And then, too, it's impossible to give it to him." Vainly the woman tried to gather the form in her arms, but with a wail of despair she sank upon her knees, and with one arm flung over the child, buried her head in the covers.

When the spasm ceased, the child again lapsed into stupor. The woman rose to her feet. "I cannot bear any more. It will kill me, God help me!" she cried hopelessly.

"And God will help you."

Both looked up in astonishment to see Naomi Carol standing near them. They had forgotten her presence.

The grief-stricken woman was so exhausted that she saw or felt nothing but the hand which gently forced her into a chair; what the man saw in Naomi's
face, he had never seen before. It was filled with a beautiful, inspired light, and intense yearning; it bespoke power and confidence, rather than the despair which he himself was feeling.

How strong, how firm, how tall and womanly she seemed as she turned toward him. Her eyes looked into his very soul,—they carried such earnestness in their depths.

"Have you done all that you can do?" the words were simple enough, but they somewhat disconcerted the grave man.

"Yes," was all that he could say.

"May I—may I talk and pray?"

At once he guessed the reason of her inspiration.

"Yes, you may do, say, anything," he returned gently, and without another word, he arose and placed his chair for her, while he himself took the place she had vacated.

"God is a very present help in time of trouble," gently repeated the firm voice to the bowed form in the chair.

"He's—he's beyond God's help now, Miss Carol, and how can I go through it all again?"

"You need not. Let me care for the baby." Tenderly the girl lifted the little form in her arms, and wrapping it in a warm blanket, she slipped with it back into her chair.

"Miss Carol, I tried that, but you won't be able to hold him—you won't be—"
"Let us think of God's promises, Mrs. Simmons. Let us fill our hearts and minds with His love and truth. Do you not believe in prayer?"

The simple question roused the woman. "I used to—but it has done no good for him."

"Perhaps it is because you have not prayed in the right way," went on the confident voice. "You know our Master taught the prayer, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

The woman would have interrupted her, but the voice continued: "God's will is the will of health, the will of harmony. Can you think of heaven without thinking of happiness, health, and harmony?"

"No—of course not."

"Well the prayer reads, 'Thy will, on earth as in heaven.' So God's will for us is health, harmony, and happiness."

"But don't you believe God made the baby sick?"

"No, I know He did not."

The woman's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "Then you don't think I should be resigned to it?"

"Of course not. Since it is not God's will that your little one should suffer and die, you need not be resigned to it," was the calm response.

"But the Lord giveth and taketh away."

"God gives us understanding, love, and faith, and this takes away our fears, ignorance, and doubt. God gives good and takes away evil."
The woman’s face had already lost some of its look of despair. Her mind was ready and anxious to take in these new thoughts about God.

“Let us just think that God is Love, Mrs. Simmons. If we know that well enough, your child will live.”

“My child will live!” exclaimed the incredulous voice of the woman, while the man in the corner listened in breathless silence.

“Yes, your child will live if we know that God wants him to live, and if we realize and feel His infinite love, power, and presence.”

Naomi continued to rock gently the child which lay in a stupor in her arms. “Let us repeat some of God’s promises to us; it will take our mind away from death and sorrow and fill us with confidence, trust, and faith in God.”

“And do you believe, Miss Carol, that if we have faith and trust in God, He will restore my baby’s health?”

“Of what use is your religion to you if your faith in God is not sufficient to bring the answer to your prayers? Listen now while I repeat some verses from the Bible.”

“If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick.’

‘For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord.’

‘Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.’
'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.'

'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.'

'And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him and he will save us.'"

Hungri ly the mother drank in every word as it fell from the girl's lips. And the woman was not the only one who listened. To the minister, every verse that Naomi had repeated was entirely familiar, but never had the words seemed so alive with significance as they did to-night. The voice was so clear, so strong, so confident, that each verse seemed to reach his ears with new meaning. His despair had also left him, and he found himself feeling God's presence and power in a way he had never felt it before. There seemed no sadness, no cause for grief now in the room. He seemed buoyed with confidence in God that was new and strange to him.

Suddenly the little form began to move, and the little face to twitch.

"Oh, there it comes again, that awful, terrible agony!" exclaimed the woman.

"Why do you doubt God? Why don't you trust Him?" Naomi's voice sounded tender, yet full of passionate reproach. "Of what use is the Bible if you do not believe in God's promises? 'He that wav- ereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.' We have claimed God's promises, and
now we must trust Him. While God is here, strength
is here, harmony is here, good is here. We must not
doubt, falter or fear, for as light can remove darkness,
so can the realization of God's power and presence
remove this pain and anguish. 'Be still and know
that I am God.'"

The woman stopped weeping, and the minister
listened with amazement to the faith he saw exem-
plified. The child continued to writhe in Naomi's
arms, while low moans came from the lips, but never
once did her faith waver or weaken. The face only
seemed to take added inspiration—a glow inspired
only by the faith that worked within her.

Presently the little one became more quiet, while
a hopeful, expectant look now flooded the girl's face,
and she began to sing softly:

"If God is all in all,
His children cannot fear;
See baseless evil fall,
Knowing that God is here.

If God is all, in space
No subtle error creeps;
We see Truth's glowing face
And Love that never sleeps.

Oh, Perfect and Divine!
We hear Thy loving call,
And seek no earthly shrine
But 'Crown Thee Lord of all.'"

The beautiful soul-rendered words brought a hush into the room, and as they died away, there was a moment's profound stillness broken only by the breathing of the sleeping child.

The mother heard the regular breathing of the little one, and the man in the corner also heard it and bowed his head in his hands. What he had witnessed had put his faith to shame. The scene would never cease to live in his memory. He raised himself and looked into the face of the young woman, as she gazed with the mother upon the infant's peaceful features, and he could but think, "According to your faith be it unto you."

For a few minutes Naomi continued to hold the child in her arms, then gently she laid it on the bed and covered it with the blanket.

The mother's face was radiant with happiness, her feelings too great for utterance, as she listened to the quiet, regular breathing of her loved one. "You think he is all right now—he will live?" she breathed, looking into the earnest face at her side.

"Can you doubt it?" was the reassuring reply. "God has restored him to you, Mrs. Simmons. You must never doubt His will, His love again. I will remain here a short while longer if you wish to care for your other little ones."

With a light, joyous heart, the mother left the room.

It was not strange that Naomi in all her earnestness, her concentrated thought upon the mother and the
little one, should have forgotten the presence of the quiet form in the corner. Now as the woman left the room, at once she remembered that he was there.

Presently he stepped to her side. Her face had a halo of light about it that surpassed all beauty of features. Silently he stood with her, his emotions too great for expression.

They both gazed down upon the sleeping child. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," murmured Naomi passionately, fervently, as one who had fought a good fight and whose faith had stood the test.

"Amen," echoed the earnest voice of the minister.

A ray of moonlight streamed through the small cracked pane of glass by the vacant chair in the corner, and seemed to encircle with its pale, soft light, the silent watchers at the bedside of the slumbering child.
CHAPTER XV.

THE SECRET REVEALED.

Two weeks later, the revival in the church began. Naomi had thought the matter over carefully and had decided not to attend.

"At least, not tonight," she said to herself, "and perhaps not at all. There is no need for me to be where my heart is not. Although Mr. Simpson might not agree with me, I know that mere church attendance does not constitute religion. I am so glad to know that it is of far greater importance to think rightly and to live rightly."

It was now eight o'clock in the evening and except for the servants Naomi was alone in the house. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and as she pulled back the curtains from the drawing-room window, she continued for some time to gaze upon the bushes and trees which were being made so visible by the lighted heavens. She could even distinguish the leaves, as, swayed by a gentle breeze, they fell silently to earth.

"What glorious moonlight!" exclaimed the girl, and covering her shoulders with a thin, silken shawl, she went out into the open air. She walked down the broad stone steps and out upon the lawn, and
stood watching the stars as they hung motionless in space, and the silvery white cloud touched with the light of the queen of heaven. The air was balmy and seemed weighted with the perfume which the sun had drawn from the hearts of the flowers. The katydids and crickets kept up a continued symphony in the orchard near by.

Presently the silence was broken by another sound. To Naomi it seemed like a low moan. With quickened senses she stood motionless, listening. Again it sounded, but this time she was aware that it was a voice speaking, although the tones indicated that the person was in distress. Following the direction of the sound, she walked slowly and fearlessly until she reached the tall, green hedge which protected the Manor from the street.

She saw distinctly a man standing in dejected attitude with one arm resting upon the big iron gate. When she was so close to him that she might have touched him, she stood absolutely still. So softly had she walked down the path that the man had not heard even the rustling of the silken skirts as they swept upon the brown leaves.

"Oh, I am utterly forsaken! What shall I do! Where is God?"

The man had lifted his head and was now gazing upward into the starry heavens. The drawn face and look of despair could be easily discerned by the silent listener.
That he was in desperate need she felt convinced. That he had called to God was proof enough to her that he was not an evil man. She needed to know no more. "God is everywhere," she breathed.

Swiftly the man turned. It was as if he had heard the answer to his prayer.

"You are in trouble. Can I help you?"

She seemed to him like an angel of mercy. The moonlight shone full upon the uncovered head, while the soft folds of the silken skirt, fanned by the gentle breeze, swept in clinging folds around her.

As he stood looking full upon her, Naomi, with a sweeping glance, noticed that the clothes were well worn, but neat and tidy, and although the face was full of pain and grief, she felt that it was caused by no fault of his own.

At length he spoke, "I thank you for your words. I hardly know how to reply. I am in the deepest trouble and know not which way to turn."

His voice was cultured and quiet, carrying with it none of the roughness of a common tramp. His manner was respectful, as with touching pathos he stood holding his worn hat in his hands.

"Can you not tell me about it?" continued the sweet voice. "I may be able to help you."

"Are you a member of the church here?" he asked, with sudden interest, as with one hand he motioned toward the white painted church which could be plainly seen from where the two were standing.
It was a moment before Naomi replied quietly: "Yes."
"Well then, perhaps you can help me. I was not allowed admittance to the church tonight. I went there to hear the services, and they would not allow me to enter."
"Would not allow you to enter?" repeated the young woman incredulously. "And why not?"
"Because Mr. Simpson had given orders that I should not be admitted."
Naomi plainly showed the indignation she was feeling, as she knitted her pretty brows with vexed perplexity. "How dare they keep a man out of God's house, and this the first night of their revivals. This they call religion!"
"But that is not all. They will not let me live here in Lawrence; they will force me out of the place, after I have already settled here with my wife and children."
"They—who?" interrogated the girl, with a flash of suspicion.
"The heads of the church, the minister, I suppose, and the elders."
"But why do you think they will not allow you to remain here?"
"Because Mr. Simpson sent a man to inform me that I must leave the place at once. But I thought if I went to the meeting and let them see that I wanted to be peaceful, and that I'd turned over a new leaf, they would let me stay."
"You will pardon me, Miss Carol, but I cannot yet see why you cannot retain all those thoughts and still hold your position in our church."

A cloud seemed to sweep the fair face, and for a full minute there was a silence. Then she spoke, in a low, gentle voice. The pink in her cheeks deepened, but the eyes did not falter as they looked full into his own.

"Mr. Manville, because of our compact that day in your garden, I have revealed to you the deepest, most sacred feelings of my life. I have shared them with no one else. You will remember that it was you who suggested the terms of the compact between us, but as I had given my consent to it, I believed it to be only fair for me to show you my feelings regarding the different questions as they came up in our conversation, and also to show you by example that I live the truth which I believe. There will be those who will criticise and misjudge my actions and words, but I must be true to my convictions. You would not wish me to be otherwise, would you?"

"No," murmured the man, in response to the simple query.

"A great wrong is done when churches or organizations, as a whole, drift into the substitution of ecclesiasticism for religion. All history and human experience show that in religious movements there is a strong tendency to substitute the human for the divine, as the years go by. Only a distinct and definite policy on the part of the leaders of the
church to minimize human government and man-made regulations and to encourage each individual to rely directly upon God for government can avert this danger.

"There are certain creeds and doctrines in the church here which my heart tells me are not broad enough; they are dogmatic and narrow, and I no longer believe in them. Then, I have found that the church is managed by a certain clique; that is, a few men in the church really govern not only the church but the whole community in general, and these same few men, Mr. Manville, do not live Christian lives in their homes and toward their fellow-men.

"I in no way wish to judge them, nor do I say this with any spirit of malice in my heart; it is simply that I have discovered that their everyday life is quite the reverse of their Sunday profession. I can no longer continue as soloist in the church, as the official board wish me to submit my selections for their approval. Since I can no longer sing the words of those hymns of 'sound doctrines' as they call them, and since they will not allow me my choice along more cheerful and inspiring lines, I therefore saw no alternative but to send in my resignation. The church people seem at a loss to understand my motives, but up to the present time, I have not felt it necessary to reveal to them—" she paused—"to reveal to them what I have to you."

The man's face lighted up at these words. His reply was earnest, and his voice was deep with emotion.
“I cannot tell you what your friendship, what your ideas have already meant to me. I believe that, acting as you are upon your heart’s convictions, you are acting right, and God bless you,” he said gently, almost reverently.

A silence followed, broken only by the sweet chatterings of the birds in the cedar branches.

When they began talking again, it was in a lighter vein, and soon Naomi suggested that it was time to think about dinner. “And I want to show you my library before we dine,” she remarked.

As she rose, a flower slipped from the bunch she held in her hands and dropped to the ground. The man stooped for it, and in handing it to her their hands touched.

For the first time a new sensation took possession of the young woman. To assume a manner different from what she felt was not natural to her, and now she was at a loss for words, as she felt the sudden flush of her cheeks and the rapid beating of her heart. She tried to raise her eyes to thank him, but with a startled expression in their depths, they fluttered down.

He looked at the drooping eyes and the delicate flush, while his own face glowed with the passion he was feeling. The thought that she had even for an instant lost her self-possession immediately restored his own control and complacency of manner, and when he spoke it was to call her attention to a beautiful red-breasted robin which had alighted near them.
"I think they are our most beautiful bird," he said, as side by side they walked slowly toward the house.

It was when dinner was over that Mrs. Williams suggested that they go into the drawing room and have Naomi sing for them.

"We miss her so at the services," said the aunt suggestively, hoping that the minister would follow up the remark with some suitable speech. But fastening his eyes upon the girl's face, he said in a low tone: "To hear Miss Carol sing would please me beyond anything else."

And Naomi was glad enough to seat herself at the piano; anything, she thought, to keep her face averted. She felt uneasy with herself to find that just the few words the man had spoken had brought to her a thrill which she could not explain.

She passed her hands lightly over the keys in search of a song. She meant to have sung some beautiful piece of sacred music which she had lately learned, but before she knew it she found herself playing the prelude of a secular song, and at once the pure tones floated forth in all their glorious freshness.

"Yes, I have heard the nightingale,
As in the dark woods I wandered,
And dreamed and pondered,
A voice passed by all fire
And passion and desire;
I rather felt than heard
The song of that lone bird;
Yes, I have heard the nightingale."
"Yes, I have heard the nightingale,  
I heard it, and I followed;  
The warm night swallowed  
This soul and body of mine,  
As burning thirst takes wine,  
While on and on I pressed  
Close to that singing breast;  
Yes, I have heard the nightingale.

"Yes, I have heard the nightingale,  
Well doth each throbbing ember  
Of my heart remember,  
The voice that I then heard  
Was greater than winged bird;  
The music of the song  
Right from the heart was born;  
Yes, I have heard the nightingale."

Naomi was not conscious that she had put her soul into her words. Never for a moment had the thought of Richard Manville occurred to her while she was singing. She had sung the partly-improvised words many times before; but tonight, because of this new ecstasy which had momentarily swept over her, the simple words seemed vested with a new meaning and, hardly knowing what she was doing, she had sung with an exquisite abandon, a passion, a sudden fire, of which she was totally unconscious.

The words ceased with the same fantastic notes with which they had begun, and even the stillness echoed the pulsations each heart was feeling.
With each verse, the minister had felt his heart beating in warm sympathy to the emotion expressed by the singer. He knew the girl better than she knew herself. True, he had known her only a short time, but what has time to do with the understanding of hearts? And does not mind comprehend mind without need of words? Full well he knew that Naomi Carol had no thought of him while she was singing; she was expressing her heart's emotions, the exuberance of soul which, at that moment, possessed her.

Mrs. Williams felt that her niece had never sung better in her life; in fact, she had never heard her sing so beautifully, but she was disappointed in her choice of music. Why had not Naomi chosen something religious, considering that the minister was present?

There was a moment's hush, and then Naomi rose and faced the two listeners. She hardly knew what to expect, as she looked from one to the other with a strange, startled expression in her face. Her eyes glowed brilliantly, and her lips trembled nervously.

The minister was so fascinated by the beautiful vision before him that for a moment he was speechless and could only listen as Mrs. Williams spoke:

"That was lovely indeed, Naomi, but perhaps Mr. Manville would rather have heard something more—sacred."

The girl still stood by the piano, her dainty, supple
form drawn to its full height. The man felt that the tension of the moment must be broken and hardly knowing what he said, he stepped near her and, taking one of the trembling hands in his, spoke in a low grave voice.

"Miss Carol could have sung nothing that would have given me greater pleasure. Indeed you have a wonderful voice. I have never heard it equalled."

The quiet, gentle tones restored Naomi at once to her usual self-possession. She made some laughing response, and gently withdrew her hand. A moment later she had forgotten that anything had happened to disturb the joyousness of her soul.

The minister pleaded a business meeting at the church, and regretted that he could not spend the evening with them. Naomi walked with him out upon the lighted piazza.

They paused for a moment to admire the beauty of the evening. The curved bow of a new moon hung clear and bright in the western sky, and the wind whispered gently as it moved through the trees. While they stood there, a man came from the rear of the house. Naomi quickly left the side of the minister, and stepping to the edge of the porch, called, "Mr. Ramsey!"

The man stopped abruptly, then quickly walked toward her.

"Yes, Miss Carol."

"Will you please wait? I wish to speak with you."
"I shall be glad to, Miss Carol," and, lifting his hat, he turned and retraced his steps.

Mr. Manville did not particularly notice the man, for he knew that Naomi employed several workmen on her place. Before departing he felt compelled to speak a word about the meeting to which he was going. Already he realized that he had taken a wrong course, but he had been informed that no one ever disputed the authority of Mr. Simpson, and he had made no protest; his conscience, however, was not easy.

"Miss Carol, have you heard about a Jake Ramsey who has recently settled in the village?"

Her first thought was to confide in him, but she remembered that the man had told her that even the minister had not taken his part, so she simply replied in the affirmative.

"The church board believe he ought not to be allowed to remain," went on Manville, while a slight flush crept into his cheeks.

"And why, Mr. Manville?" with a rising show of spirit.

"Because—well, because Mr. Simpson has discovered that the fellow has a bad character and might have a bad effect upon the community."

The coral lips smiled a bit contemptuously. "And must a man be turned into the streets simply because Mr. Simpson desires it?"

As the minister made no response, she continued, although now her voice had regained its natural com-
posure: "Surely, Mr. Manville, you will not sanction so wrong a step. The man cannot have an awful character when he seeks admittance to your revival services."

"I have not seen the man, Miss Carol. Was he out last night?"

"He was turned away from the door of the church—the church which was then inviting sinners to come to its altar."

The minister was so shocked at this piece of information that it never occurred to him to wonder where Naomi had discovered the fact.

"I do not know the man. I know nothing about him," he began.

"But if you are the minister in charge of the congregation, should you not investigate before you yield consent to something which may not be right?"

The simple words so directly spoken caused the man to flush deeply.

"Pardon me, Mr. Manville,—pray forgive me. I have no right to speak to you in this fashion."

"I have nothing to forgive, Miss Carol. Did we not agree to forget the 'minister' and to think only of the man? You are right. I have acted the coward in this matter. We have called a special meeting tonight and I will speak my mind on the matter. I only wish I could get hold of this Jake Ramsey. Nothing would be better than to have him appear in this meeting and speak for himself."
"You think so?" queried the girl anxiously.
"Why certainly, don't you?"
"Indeed I do," she replied gravely,
"Miss Carol, you have great faith."
"Yes, and I believe that out of this affair will come a blessing." Then she abruptly changed the subject, and walked with him for a short distance down the lighted path.

As they paused in the path, Mr. Manville said, "Miss Carol, when you visited my garden, I gave you my choicest spray of golden-glow, and now I have visited your roses, and you have given me nothing by which to remember them."

Even as he spoke, she loosened the bunch of crimson roses at her waist, and, selecting a half-opened bloom, held it toward him.

He thanked her and continued to gaze upon the lighted face. Again he saw the same startled radiance shine from her eyes that he had seen when she had finished her song in the drawing-room.

It was just at this moment that Mr. Simpson and Mr. Whipple stood upon the church steps talking in a desultory way before entering upon their graver duties. The minister's tall, muscular figure could not be mistaken, as he stood in the lighted path of the Manor with Naomi Carol at his side.

It was several minutes later that both Naomi and her guest saw a bright light suddenly flash in the church building.

"I cannot tell you how much this afternoon has
meant to me,” he said, with a tender smile, as he held her hand in parting.

But Naomi only murmured a gracious good night.

She watched him until he had reached the tall, white posts at the gate, then she lightly fled up the walk.
CHAPTER XVII.

THE VOICE WHICH SAVED.

As she reached the house, Thornton appeared, and asked if she wished to see Jake Ramsey.

"Yes, send him to me at once," was the quick reply.

In a few words she explained to the man the nature of the special meeting in the church, and advised him to go at once and seek admittance to it. "Surely they will not deny you a hearing. If Mr. Carmen is there, he will see that justice is done, I feel sure, and I am convinced that the minister will not yield his consent to this outrage which they are undertaking. Go," she continued, "and Truth itself will be with you." And, with quickened feeling, the man directed his steps toward the lighted building.

For some time Naomi lingered on the piazza, her mind occupied with the thought of the meeting. She knew well that if Mr. Simpson had set his forces to work against Jake Ramsey, he could make it very uncomfortable for the minister should there be a difference of opinion. Naomi remembered that, a few years ago, a new minister had preached only a few sermons in the place, and for some unknown reason had resigned. Afterward it was rumored that he had
taken a stand against Mr. Simpson in a matter of church business and the lawyer had quickly secured his dismissal. What would it mean if Mr. Manville should take this man’s part tonight, in spite of the attitude of the lawyer? The fair face instantly flushed. She felt sure that under those circumstances his term in Lawrence would be shortened. She did not stop, however, to ask herself what it would mean to her if he should leave the village. Her first thought was for the man, Jake Ramsey. Again she saw his face as he stood by the gate and told her that he had settled in Lawrence to begin life anew, and now they were going to force him, his wife and children, from it. Naomi could not forget his strained, terrible look of despair.

With quick decision, she entered the house, and covering her shoulders with a silken wrap, glided down the path, and was soon at the church steps.

The window had been left open to admit the October air, and even the front door was slightly ajar. From the steps she could distinctly hear every word that was being spoken.

It was the voice of Mr. Simpson. Naomi could almost imagine she saw him standing with his head slightly lowered, while the narrow, keen eyes were bent upon his listeners.

“Gentlemen, I tell you that this man must not remain here—cannot remain here. Look at him! What has he but the look of a convict stamped upon his face?
I tell you that I know he is a drunkard, a reprobate, a loafer, a runaway from his wife and little children.” Naomi caught the tender inflection upon these sacred words. “He will be a hindrance to the spiritual growth of the community and will set a bad example to the souls now ready and seeking for conversion. We should purify our town in every manner possible. You saw how Dave Starr was cut off by the hand of the Lord. It is not the Lord’s will for these drunken sinners to pollute His temple, and it rests upon the shoulders of this—ahem—this committee of trusty and God-appointed men to see that the church is protected, and the doors of the town of Lawrence closed to all evil doers who would enter only to defile it. I feel assured that our honored and deep-thinking pastor will co-operate with us in this matter and lend his hand and thought to that which will prove a blessing to the church and to the community.”

The girl upon the doorstep paused, motionless, as almost breathless she listened for the voice that she knew would now speak. She pictured the tall figure rising with an expression of gravity about the fine face and the stern lips set. But now the deep, full tones fell upon the listening ears.

“Gentlemen, brothers in Christ, I would not be a true, loyal disciple of the Master, nor a faithful server of mankind, should I not speak the honest thought of my heart. In no other way could I honorably fill my position as minister of this church. We have listened to Brother Simpson’s remarks, and I believe
that he is honest in his statements and has the betterment of the church and community at heart. But, brethren, we should do nothing hastily, we should give this matter our careful, prayerful consideration. Perhaps the man, when Brother Simpson knew him, was all that he has depicted; but may not the man have changed since then? I have heard it rumored that he has come to Lawrence to turn over a new leaf, and that he intends to live an earnest, sober life. Brethren," and now the voice took on a sterner, firmer tone, "we cannot, as God-appointed leaders of this church, turn a seeker after God from our midst, and if he has truly come here to lead a quiet, peaceful life, can we deny him? I do not say, however, that this is his attitude of mind. I personally know nothing about him, but let us believe that God has directed his steps here tonight that he may speak for himself. Then we can rightly judge his character and his intentions, and can deal honorably with him. Would not this be the best way, brethren?"

There was a shuffling of feet. Although Naomi could see nothing, mentally the whole scene in the dimly lighted room was perfectly clear to her. Mr. Whipple now rose to his feet. Under cover of blowing his nose violently, he felt around for the proper terms with which to express his opinion, while the minister fixed his eyes upon him.

"Brother Manville," he began, in squeaky, bird-like tones, "you have been with us such a short time, barely six months to be exact, that—ahem—you have
not had the opportunity of knowing the almost infallible wisdom and discretion of our Brother Simpson in matters pertaining to the church's welfare. Brother Warden and Brother Carmen will bear witness to these facts, I am sure," and with a sweeping glance he took in the two mentioned men. Here he paused again to gather ideas, while he coughed behind his hand. "Our Brother Manville means right, I feel sure, but he must be—ah—cautious in expressing his ideas without first consulting the valued and more experienced judgment of Brother Simpson in all matters pertaining to the growth of the church and to the community. Our Brother Simpson has made a thorough investigation of this case, and he has given us his prayerful conviction regarding this matter. It would be well indeed for the members present to carefully consider the remarks of our Brother in this matter before voicing any personal ideas. Our minister meant his suggestion regarding the case in all good faith, I feel sure, but I will leave it to the rest of the committee to add their voices to mine that we will leave the decision of the case in the hands of our Brother Simpson." With this he sat down.

Mr. Warden now responded to the look he had received from the former speaker, and rising, fixed his eyes intently upon the floor, wagging his head in an emphatic manner. "Since we have asked the blessing of God upon our deliberation in this matter, and since we have listened to our Brother Simpson's ideas and valued information, we can well afford to abide by
his decision,” and with a jerk and another wagging of the head, he resumed his seat.

The minister’s face showed amazement, grieved surprise, and a rising spirit of indignation as he listened to the expressions of the committee, while now and then his glance turned to the back of the room where sat the forlorn figure of Jake Ramsey, his face over-spread with disappointment and hopelessness.

Here Mr. Carmen rose to the occasion, while Mr. Whipple muttered in a loud whisper, “He’ll spoil it all now, if you’re not mighty careful,” with a look at the remaining brethren.

Naomi was relieved when she heard the voice of Marion’s husband.

“I want to say that while I respect the advice of our Brother Simpson, still it seems to me, should you all agree to it, that we should consider the man as he now stands. As our minister has suggested, perhaps Mr. Ramsey has repented of his past ways and looks to us to help him in living a better life. It seems to me that it would be well to hear what the man has to say for himself, now that he has come into our midst, and if any one here knows aught about the man’s present life, it seems to me that it would be well indeed for such a one to speak.”

The front door creaked upon its hinges, and all eyes were turned in that direction as swiftly and with noiseless steps a white-robed figure entered. Reaching the side of the crest-fallen man in the rear of the
room, she paused, while her voice, clear as a bell but vibrant with emotion, could be heard in the remotest part of the room.

"You will pardon my coming in, but as I stood outside the church, I distinctly heard the remarks of Mr. Carmen, and feeling that I might assist somewhat in bringing this weighty matter to a just decision, I have interrupted your meeting."

All eyes were fixed upon the young woman, as the words fell clearly from the steady lips. The radiance of her face seemed to be reflected in the countenance of the man at her side and the drawn features relaxed and a hopeful look overspread his face. She wore no hat, and her hair, stirred by her quick flight from the Manor, fell in soft ringlets about her head; her cheeks were crimsoned with the rush of her emotions; but the onlookers saw only the brilliant eyes fixed upon them. Something in their depths caused more than one man furtively to remove his gaze from her. There was a moment's suspense. The minister's surprise had rendered him speechless. It was the painfully deliberate tones of Mr. Simpson which broke the silence. He turned in his chair until he directly faced the fair intruder.

"If Miss Carol knows anything about the past life of Jake Ramsey, we shall be pleased to listen."

Naomi noticed the emphasis placed upon the words but the opportunity to speak was all she desired, and now she hastened to reply.
“Yes, I know much regarding the past life of Mr. Ramsey.”

“Then perhaps Providence has directed your steps here to tell it.” The lawyer’s tones were somewhat anxious.

Without moving nearer to them, the girl began: “You are right, Mr. Simpson. God alone led me here tonight to tell what I know of the history of Mr. Ramsey, so that no crime of injustice be committed, and so that the church may take its stand for truth and mercy. I have learned from an authentic source that the man here,” pointing with one slender hand toward Ramsey whose head was bowed in a turmoil of emotion, “has been all that has been described. He has been dishonest, imprisoned, a feeder upon the husks of materiality and sensuousness, a deserter of his wife and children, but,” and now the eyes seemed to burn themselves into the ones before her, while her voice hesitated with emotion, “this man has turned from his evil ways and repented. Liquor and passion have become abhorrent to him; he has been welcomed back by his wife and made to feel again the joys of home. And not only that, but his Heavenly Father saw him when he was a great way off and welcomed him. The man has felt the calm of sin forgiven; he has repented and turned from the error of his ways. He wanted to make a new home for himself and his family, and, praying for guidance, they made their way into our midst. He found a house and received a welcome from some of the people
in the town. John Warren sent him a basket of provisions, for which he would accept no payment. The man's heart was grateful, happy, and with this feeling he sought the inspiration and power of the church. He came to the first revival meeting held here."

The lawyer's face had lost its accustomed serenity, and was now flushed with anger. He opened his mouth to speak, but as the brilliant eyes fixed themselves upon him, they seemed to see right into his cramped, narrow soul, and only an inarticulate sound fell from the ashen lips, while the voice repeated.

"He came to his church and was turned from its door." A mortal dread now appeared on the face of Mr. Whipple, and with a shamed expression, his eyes fell. "This church which speaks its welcome from the pulpit for wayward souls, for the penitent, closed its doors to this soul seeking admittance, and crest-fallen and despairing the man turned back his steps. It is this man's soul that you are here tonight to judge—and God grant that you be merciful."

The voice ceased. Again the room was quiet.

The lawyer was almost beside himself with wrath that this girl had dared to defy him, and yet her knowledge of the man's movements caused him to reflect upon the possibility of her having further knowledge of the man's dishonesty. As his gaze now fell upon her, he was uncertain as to the most diplomatic course to follow. However, his wrath soon asserted itself again, and he sprang to his feet. There was no premedita-
tive cough or pursing of the lips. His voice was hard, and a thickening scowl bent his brows till they met.

"Brethren, you will of course, not allow your hearts to be moved by the excited emotions of this young woman. Her love for the theatrical has caused her to overstep her better judgment. This is no time for heroics or scenes. I tell you plainly that this man shall not remain in Lawrence." Each word was uttered in staccato fashion, slowly, deliberately, authoritatively. "And this committee should close this session at once with a unanimous voice."

But the minister would take no such stand. It was against his sense of law and justice, and with a firm voice, he said, "I believe you are in error, Brother Simpson. Let us hear something from the man himself. Let him present his own case."

The emotions of Mr. Whipple and Mr. Warden could not be described. That the parson dared openly to defy the will of Lawyer Simpson was an unheard-of thing. That it would go hard with him because of this they knew. But the honest heart of Richard Manville knew nothing of the underright which often rules a church. He had believed that those appointed to care for the spiritual growth of the church were honest, loyal souls, and the fact that he was awakening to the falsity of this belief did not alter his conduct in the least.

"Jake Ramsey, will you speak?" The voice was full and clear and carried with it a conscious power of purpose and of right.
The man in the rear seat rose quickly, his thoughts only waiting for expression.

"Gentlemen, in the sight of God I speak nothing but the truth when I say that every word that you have heard from the lips of Miss Carol is the truth. True, I have been an outcast from all that is pure, good and holy, but thanks be to God, I have been led back into the narrow path. I have repented and ceased from my sins. I am honest in thought, deed, and purpose, and I approached this sanctuary only to feel the outpouring of God's blessing. I was turned from its doors, turned back into the depths of despair and doubt, but even as my soul wrestled in anguish, a hand touched my sleeve and in answer to my heart's question, 'Where is God?' a voice replied, 'God is everywhere.' I lifted my bowed head and a woman stood near me, her face lighted with mercy. Patiently she listened to my story, and lovingly, fearlessly, helped me to place my trust again in God. Her simple words of truth revived my faith and gave me new courage. Now I ask only for justice. What is your verdict?"

Without pausing a moment, the big form of Richard Manville strode down the aisle and grasped the hand of the speaker.

"As a minister of the Gospel of Christ, I give you my welcome into his church."

The minister was disappointed that none of the others followed his example. The icy tones of Mr. Simpson fairly cut the air.
"You have overstepped your authority, Brother Manville. You should be guided by the opinion of this committee. I regret that you have been so easily swayed by this man's assumed attitude. I shall enforce my words that he shall not remain in Lawrence. He will be turned out of his house, and no one will give him work."

Mr. Simpson knew that he had great influence among the people of the town, and now he expected to exert it.

"Oh, but you are mistaken, Mr. Simpson!" interrupted the girl still standing in the aisle.

"Well, who will house him? Who will give him work against my wishes?" thundered the enraged man.

"I will." The ringing tones filled the room.

The lawyer had for the moment forgotten that Naomi Carol owned many of the houses in the town, and he also forgot that she supplied a great many men with work about her estate.

That the minister had taken the man's part was apparent to all. Mr. Carmen stood somewhat apart from the rest, hardly knowing with which side to take his stand. Mr. Warden was wagging his head desperately, almost tragically, thinking of the fate that lay in waiting for the new parson. Mr. Whipple coughed and blew his nose alternately, but the dark angry face of the lawyer did not relax in expression, as he murmured hoarsely, as if this were his last resource:
"As God is present in this meeting, can you not hear His voice speaking for us to protect our fold from wolves in sheep’s clothing?"

In answer came the passionate tones of Naomi, "Rather do we hear the voice of Him who said: ‘For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’"
CHAPTER XVIII.

REFLECTIONS.

As Naomi finished repeating the words of the Master, she glided quickly from the building; Jake Ramsey had also quietly departed. Soon all had left except Mr. Carmen, who lingered that he might say in his quiet, easy fashion: "Brother Manville, you have not been with us very long, but you must learn to go cautiously at these meetings."

"What do you mean, Brother Carmen?" the minister exclaimed, with a flash of his dark eyes. "Am I not to voice my opinion? Am I not to speak the convictions of my heart?"

"If your convictions are contrary to the voice of the committee, you should use your discretion and feel your way. I just wanted to warn you that no preacher ever remained long in Lawrence after openly opposing the will of Lawyer Simpson."

"But is this church governed by Mr. Simpson?" asked the man in an amazed voice.

"To a great extent, yes. He is the main support of the church. In fact, the church could not get along without him, and we consider his opinion in all matters."

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"But did you not see the injustice of the lawyer's words and actions? You yourself suggested that the man Ramsey have a voice in the matter."

"Yes, I suggested it," was the quiet reply, "but I said, 'providing it meets with the approval of the remaining members.' We have to be cautious, Brother Manville, and I regret that you were so indiscreet."

"I do not understand the situation, I fear," returned the minister, and he passed his hand across his brow as though in an effort to clear his mental vision. "If I am chosen minister, leader of this fold, is not my judgment, my opinion, of more value than that of any one else?"

"No," was the unblushing response. "You must bear in mind, Brother Manville, that you are"— The man paused; he was honest and blunt in expression, still he hesitated to so rudely awaken this grave young minister to the real condition of things. "You are the selected, yes hired, servant of the church."

"Ah! I think I am beginning to see," replied Mr. Manville, gravely. "I am the hired servant of the church, and should my opinions, my judgments, not be in sympathy with those of the members of the official board, why"— He finished the sentence with a grave shake of the head.

"Exactly, Brother Manville," declared the other, glad that the man had understood the case without the need of further words. "The people like you and your sermons, and I am giving you this bit of warning
for your own good. You are young in the field, you
know," he finished apologetically.

When, with slow steps, the minister left the church,
he sought his favorite seat upon the open lawn. His
mind was still somewhat dazed and he needed time
for reflection. He was grateful for the dampness of
the night air as it struck his face. At any other time
he would have admired the canopy of stars overhead,
but now he saw nothing of the wonderful transfor-
mation of the evening into night. He sank into deep
thought, to be interrupted by a cold something,
which pushed itself persistently into the hollow of
his hand. Gently he patted the head of the faithful
Tippie who instinctively understood that his master
was in some trouble and showed his affection by
cressing the big hand which patted his head.

"Lie down, Tippie, and be quiet." And the dog
in obedience to the command placed himself reluc-
tantly at his master's feet.

It was clear to the young minister that he must
accept the unwelcome truths which Mr. Carmen had
attempted to reveal to him. He had always felt that
Mr. Simpson assumed an unwarranted supervision
over the church and its affairs, but that it ever reached
the tyrannical height it had attained tonight, was
a most painful surprise to him. And now his eyes
were being opened to the fact that the lawyer was not
the pious, unerring, faithful individual that his sur-
face appearance would have led one to believe. The
minister's face flamed with indignation as he remem-
bered the awful words of condemnation that had escaped the lawyer's lips. Why had he not met the man Ramsey with mercy? Why was he so determined to force him from the town, as well as refuse him admittance into the church? Intuitively he felt that the lawyer had some reason for his action which he had not disclosed to the committee. The crafty cunning of the man was now plain to him. And what was it that Mr. Carmen said to him? Why—if he did not follow in the way in which the lawyer led, he would not remain long as pastor of the Lawrence church.

He drew out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. This then was the spirit which ruled the church of Christ. At once there flashed upon him what Naomi had said that afternoon as they were seated under the great tree in front of the Manor. "The church of Lawrence is ruled by a clique. In fact, certain ones rule not only the church, but through the church would extend their power even over the community, and some of these same ones do not live what they profess; they are not Christians in their home lives and with their fellow-men." This, then, was what she had meant. Slowly the significance of it all now came over him. Mr. Simpson with two or three confederates controlled the church. "I am only the hired servant, to be dismissed if my thoughts and actions do not conform to this ruling spirit," was his thought. He clenched his hands at the thought. "Am I the servant of Christ or the
servant of Mr. Simpson? Is this a sample of what goes on in the churches, or is it an exception? And does not my future success depend in a great measure upon the standing that is given me in this, my first charge?"

The sound of the town clock as it struck the midnight hour roused him from his reverie. With bowed head and slow steps, he made his way into the parsonage and up the stairs to his study.

After turning on a light he dropped wearily into his chair, but as his gaze rested upon the well-worn Bible and the familiar, much-loved books upon his table, the tension of his mind was relieved. Just the presence of the silent but living witnesses of God's love soothed him, and with a mind more at peace he made ready for sleep.

But sleep seemed driven far from him tonight. Now there rose before him the vision of Naomi Carol as, fearlessly and with inspiration born of a great faith, she stood in the church aisle near Ramsey. Again he saw the illumined countenance, as she addressed the committee. "Was she afraid of Simpson, and did she bend to his will?" No, unfalteringly she had declared that the man would find both work and shelter in Lawrence. Naomi Carol had not only taken her stand for right in opposition to Mr. Simpson, but she had wrestled with her own conscience and arrived at the point where she would no longer attend a church so badly warped by the tyrannical government
of those who were not even Christly in their treatment of their fellow-men.

The feeling that perhaps Naomi had struggled through this same problem that he was now facing, seemed to bring him a ray of comfort. Her fearlessness, and above all that conscious power of strength which she exhibited, brought him the satisfaction of knowing that she proved her faith by works, and that, if she had found her way out of this problem, he could also.

Then his thoughts drifted away from church matters, and he mused only of Naomi. "Yes, it was but a short time ago that I was infatuated by her laughing eyes and charming manner, but now I see that it is the light of soul which illumines her face and makes it beautiful; it is the strength of her character, the broadness of her faith, which give brilliancy to her awakening womanhood. Was it not she who had touched the sleeve of the despondent man and restored his confidence in God?"

It was near dawn before he finally fell asleep, and when he awoke, it was only to travel over again in thought the events of the night before.

Although no morning sun proclaimed another day, Naomi was up early and, looking from her bedroom window upon the threatening clouds, wondered if she would be able to carry out her plans for the day.

She had intended to make her weekly visit to Mrs. Starr's, and from there walk to Mrs. Simmons'. A basket was to be prepared for each family, and Naomi,
always superintended this herself. She gathered from a well-filled bookcase some reading matter which she intended to enclose with the other contents of the baskets. Again she glanced meditatively upon the darkened landscape. "And I must see Marjory today," she said aloud. "I will telephone Mrs. Simpson to let Marjory spend an hour with me this afternoon, if the weather permits. I don't suppose she could spare her longer than that."

The threatening clouds soon emptied a gentle shower upon the warm earth, and by eleven o'clock the sun had crept from its hiding place and broken out in redoubled brilliancy.

Naomi quickly dressed herself for the street and with Thornton to carry her baskets, was soon on her way to make her visits.

She was returning home about three o'clock when, as she passed Mr. Carmen's residence, her friend tapped on the window and earnestly beckoned her to enter.

"I can stay only a few minutes," declared Naomi, as she had seated herself in Mrs. Carmen's cozy parlor, "because I have an engagement at home at four o'clock."

"I wanted to tell you," Mrs. Carmen exclaimed in breathless enthusiasm, "how splendidly brave you were last night. Howard was telling me about it. It was lovely of you to take that poor man's part, and you are just a darling," and she finished her praise with a fond hug. "But, Naomi, dear, don't let your
new ideas get the better of your good judgment," she added, with a becoming matronly air. "I hardly dare think how Mr. Simpson will consider your attitude—you know you really openly defied him."

"Why, Marion, I simply followed the dictates of my conscience; if it happened to disagree with Mr. Simpson’s ideas of Christianity, why—"

"'Sh!'" interrupted the other. "Mr. Simpson may have been somewhat stern in his remarks, but you know, dearie, that the church could not get along without him, and for that reason we must smooth over any little differences of opinion that may arise."

"But is the saving of a soul, the dismissal of a hungry heart from the very threshold of our church, a matter of small importance, Marion? Is it in the province of Mr. Simpson to decide who shall enter the church to be saved, and who shall be turned away as an outcast beyond redemption? And is it according to the law of liberty that he shall say whether or not a man and his family may live in the town of Lawrence?"

Mrs. Carmen appeared shocked at this outburst from Naomi. Her own face showed a shamed confusion as she tried to make excuses for the lawyer’s attitude.

"You may be mistaken, you know, Naomi, regarding Mr. Simpson’s motives in taking a course against this fellow. No doubt there is some good reason for his attitude, which his feelings do not prompt him to make public, and he believes that the church should respect his advice and opinions and trust him."
"Marion, your heart tells you that this man Jake Ramsey has not had a fair treatment, and your husband thinks the same, but for policy's sake, and because you wish to hold the church together, you dare not advance an idea contrary to the thoughts of the leaders in the church. The man told me with his own lips that Mr. Whipple met him as he was about to enter this church meeting, and said that his presence was not desired in the building."

Mrs. Carmen's face flushed with embarrassment, as she asked: "And you were the one who talked with him after he was turned from the church?"

"Yes," replied the other gently. "It was God who guided my steps to him, and I believe with you that Mr. Simpson has a reason for taking this course against the man, and that he does not care to take the public into his confidence."

"But, Naomi, the minister! What will become of him?"

Mrs. Carmen did not notice the faint pink which crept into the fair face at the mention of the minister's name.

"Why, what do you mean?" she breathed, in astonishment.

"Well, you know," replied her friend hesitantly, "that the lawyer will not tolerate a minister who so daringly defies him as Mr. Manville did last night."

A startled look swept the flushed face, but was quickly gone.
"I understand," she replied, in a low, tense voice. "Just because Mr. Manville took a stand for his own convictions, regardless of the craftily worded speech of Mr. Simpson, and because he extended his hand in fellowship to a repentant mortal in defiance of the lawyer's order to banish him without a hearing—then it is expected that Mr. Manville will have to pay the penalty!"

"Naomi, you really shock me by your abruptness."

"But is not that what you mean, Marion?"

"I had something like that in mind, but I should not have used those expressions. It sounded rather—rather—" But she could not find a suitable word.

"Rather blunt," finished Naomi with a strange smile, "but it is the truth, nevertheless."

"Surely you must admit, Naomi, that the minister was very indiscreet."

"Indiscreet! No, a thousand times no! He was grand! I can see his tall form now, as with long strides he came down the aisle and extended his hand to the poor fellow. He could not have done otherwise as a follower of Christ, and I respect and admire him for it."

Naomi had put more feeling into her speech than she was herself aware of, and now Marion noted the flash of the violet eyes and the damask rose in the cheeks.

"Naomi," she said, "you cannot lend your support to the minister even if you think he was right, if he
did not consider the wishes of the lawyer and the other members of the committee."

The girl's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "I believe and trust in God who is the Principle of righteousness, and I would not be honest in His sight and in the sight of my own conscience, should I do otherwise than stand by the one who heeds the teachings of the Master. No ecclesiastical clique, no one on earth, could force me to trample my heart's convictions under foot. Unflinchingly shall I use my influence to support the cause of right, love, and mercy."

Mrs. Carmen felt the truth of the thrilling words, but she had not the courage of her convictions, and believed, with her husband, that the easiest way is the best, and that the church must be the first consideration.

"I am already overstaying my time," exclaimed Naomi, glancing at the pretty clock on the parlor mantel. "Good-bye, Marion dear, you know I love you."

Mrs. Carmen could not withstand the winning tone and the radiance of the soft eyes, and in the bottom of her heart she fairly worshipped Naomi for her strength of character and the truthful spirit that possessed her.

The two young women held each other in a loving embrace, and then Naomi turned her steps homeward.
CHAPTER XIX.

A THRILLING SCENE.

It was eight o'clock that evening when Mrs. Williams was startled by a loud rap at the front door. "Somebody has forgotten about door-bells," she mentally commented.

"I will go to the door myself," she said aloud to the maid who, just at that moment, had carried the silver into the dining room and had heard the repeated rap.

A little boy stood at the door, his attitude one of timidity, while his glance rested furtively upon the figure who stood holding the door open.

"What do you want?" repeated the woman for the second time.

"I am Lawrence Simpson," he began.

"Oh yes, to be sure, you are the little Simpson boy." The voice was very kind now. "What can I do for you, Lawrence?"

"I came over with this note for Miss Carol," he began, as if he were repeating a lesson, "and I am going to wait for an answer."

The woman took the note from the extended hand,
and asked the lad into the reception hall, but he shook his head stoutly and said that he "would wait on the stoop."

Closing the door softly, Mrs. Williams went in search of her niece.

"Naomi!"

"Yes, Auntie, I am in the library."

"Oh, I might have known you'd be with your books. Child, you read too much. But here's a note for you; Lawrence Simpson brought it. I hope it is nothing of a painful nature.

Naomi's lips curled ever so slightly. Swiftly she scanned the missive. It read:

DEAR MISS NAOMI:

Since my visit with you this afternoon, I have learned something of great importance, and you must be advised regarding this at once. It is impossible for me to go to the Manor again. Will you please come to me without delay? It is a matter of great concern to us both.

Hastily,

MARJORY MILLER.

Naomi reread it, while her aunt stood with an anxious look upon her face.

"Nothing the trouble, dearie?"

"It is a note from Marjory, Auntie. She says she must see me at once. I really do not understand the
letter myself, but the girl must be in trouble of some kind.” Once more she went over the missive. (It was very much cramped.) “Somehow it doesn’t sound like Marjory. It seems so ‘businessied,’ but, poor child,” she thought, “I suppose it was the only paper she could find and no doubt she wrote it in a great hurry.”

“Auntie, I must go to her. Will you tell the boy that the answer is ‘yes’? He will understand.”

“But, Naomi, it is late, and you—”

“I must go,” interrupted the girl, in such positive tones that Mrs. Williams well knew no persuasion would stop her.

“You will need a warm wrap, Naomi. The October nights are cool. Of course you will have Thornton go with you.”

Naomi was arranging some truant locks before the mirror, but now she hastily drew aside the curtains and peered out.

“Oh no, Auntie, it is a beautiful evening, and you know it is but a ten minutes’ walk to Mr. Simpson’s. I shall not need Thornton.”

“But you will need him coming back,” remonstrated the aunt.

“Yes, but I will telephone you before I start, and then you can send him.” Hastily slipping into a long, loose coat, she was soon on her way to the Simpson residence.

Marjory had spent an hour with her in the afternoon, and Naomi had repeated to her all of Jake Ramsey’s revelation.
The poor orphan girl was almost dumb with amaze-
ment. "Twenty-five thousand dollars," she gasped,
and then her face had sunk sobbingly into her hands.
That her father had lovingly made adequate pro-
vision for her future, and through the wickedness of
Mr. Simpson she had not been educated but had
been forced to live as a servant, was more than she
could bear.

(Tenderly Naomi had raised the soft cheeks) and
kissed the wet eyes. "Rejoice," she had said, "that
the evil has been uncovered, and that some day you
will receive all that your father intended you should."

"But how?"

"We don't know, but divine Love will surely open
the way," Naomi had replied.

The confident words had filled the orphan with en-
couragement, and when she left the Manor she carried
with her the conviction which Naomi had inspired.

As Naomi walked swiftly along the quiet street
which led to the lawyer's house, she wondered what
Marjory could possibly want of her. Had the lawyer
obtained an inkling of the matter and forced the girl to
a confession of her knowledge? Naomi felt a slight
tremor run through her as she thought that she might
be forced to speak to the lawyer tonight. "But no
harm will come to me," she declared. "As I have
done no wrong, I need have no fear." Reassuring
herself thus, she quickened her steps. Suddenly she
thought she heard the crunch of footsteps behind her
on the gravel walk of the driveway, but she did not turn her head, and was soon at her destination.

For a moment she stood by the big iron gate and looked intently at the house. There was a dim light in the parlor. She noticed that the shades of the long French windows were drawn, but she could see that the window nearest her was unlocked and ever so slightly opened. She pressed the gong.

It was Lawrence who opened the door.

"Please come in, Miss Carol. Marjory will be here in a minute."

No sooner had the words fallen upon her ears than a sickening sense of fear possessed her,—a nameless dread, a premonition that something was not right. How would Marjory dare send for her at such an hour of the night—it could not be possible! But as she stood gazing into the boy's face while he waited for her to pass, there was no alternative but to enter. With a prayer in her heart, she stepped lightly into the hall. The boy motioned her into the parlor.

Naomi had scarcely seated herself near one of the French windows when the lawyer entered the room from the hall and closed the folding doors behind him.

"Good evening, Miss Carol," he said in his usual deliberate manner.

Naomi had been quick to notice that he had locked the doors when he brought them together, but her voice betrayed no fear, as she replied quietly, "Good evening, Mr. Simpson."
As she said this, she rose from her chair, and taking a step toward the middle of the room, asked, "May I see Marjory a moment?"

Before replying, the man's keen eyes glanced swiftly to the other door of the room, but that was closed tightly. "Pray resume your seat, Miss Carol," he said.

Something in his smoothly modulated tones and the glitter of the cold gray eyes aroused the young woman's indignation, and she spoke with a flash of hauteur.

"I have come to see Marjory, Mr. Simpson. Will you kindly call her?"

"Not at the present moment, Miss Carol. If you will resume your seat, (I will give you the desired information.) A sarcastic smile played about his sinister mouth, and his eyes looked directly at her. The violet of her eyes deepened almost to black, as unflinchingly she returned his look.

"Mr. Simpson, you sent that note to me." Naomi did not put it as a question, but spoke it as a conviction of her heart.

"I did, Miss Carol. Now will you be seated?"

The girl paid no attention to his remark, but continued to gaze steadily at him.

"Well, and what is your verdict, my fair maiden?"

"I think you are a coward."

The words were spoken in a low, distinct tone, and brought a faint flush to the man's face.
“Much obliged for your compliment, but in the future you will keep such words to yourself, my lady.”
“I will listen to no more of your insults, Mr. Simpson. Kindly unlock that door.”

The words were bravely, courageously spoken, and gave no evidence of the rapid beating of the girl’s heart.

“That door shall not be opened until you have replied to all my questions.”

“Very well,” was the cool reply. Naomi knew that it would be useless for her to scream or attempt to leave the room, for the man before her was powerful in his treachery. Her voice was calm, but inwardly she was earnestly, passionately praying for deliverance.

“Answer me; has Jake Ramsey been telling you anything about me? If he has, I’ll break every bone in his cursed body!” He took a step nearer her.

A slight noise caused both to glance in the direction of the tall French windows, but the man with a swift glance assured himself that the shades reached to the floor and the white curtains were pulled together.

“Answer me,” he repeated.

Naomi felt that it would be of no use to appeal to the man’s honor, for he had none, but this might be her one chance to accomplish good for Marjory. She would at least make the attempt. She knew that he could not carry out his threat against Mr. Ramsey because of his position in the church. Swiftly
these thoughts passed through her mind. Raising her head slightly, she looked full at him.

"Yes, Mr. Simpson, he told me something concerning you."

"What did he tell you about me? Tell me the truth, now."

"I will tell you," was the simple reply. "He told me that at the time Marjory's father died, he was his private secretary and knew in detail the condition of the dead man's financial affairs. He made you the executor of his will and left $25,000 to his daughter. With $5,000 you bribed Mr. Ramsey into silence and you deliberately kept the $20,000 from the poor, innocent orphan."

"That is a lie," he thundered, glaring at her, though his face wore a deadly pallor. "How dare you accuse me, the leader in the church, of such a crime!"

"Shame on you, for taking the livery of Christ upon you wherewith to cover your sin. I repeat that Marjory has been kept from her legal rights, and steps shall be taken to see that she secures them, even at this late day."

Naomi had not intended to venture so far in her speech, but her indignation got the better of her and the words were out before she thought.

The face of the lawyer grew livid with rage. He glared upon her. "You will not leave this room tonight until you promise me that neither you nor Jake Ramsey will ever breathe a word of this out-
rageous lie to a living soul. Do you hear me? Promise me I say!"

"I will make no such promise, Mr. Simpson, and I trust in God for my protection."

With a bound he was at her side. "You won't promise me—eh?" he put out his arm threateningly. Crash!

The French window flew open with force enough to throw it from its hinges, as the great form of Richard Manville burst into the room. With one powerful clenched fist he knocked the lawyer almost senseless to the floor.

"You insulter of womanhood! You cowardly cur!"

For an instant the two stood gazing down upon the sprawling figure. Manville's eyes were flashing with indignation, his face flamed, while he with difficulty controlled his desire to thrash the man within an inch of his life.

Until now Naomi had suppressed any excitement that she felt, but as she realized the protecting power of the man at her side, the tension broke and she trembled from head to foot. With a sudden yielding, she placed one hand on the sleeve nearest her. Swiftly he removed his gaze from the struggling figure on the floor. Taking the trembling hand into his own strong one, he looked down into the frightened yet trustful face with a poignant tenderness which he did not attempt to conceal.
"You are a brave little woman," he said in a low, passionate tone, as he pressed her hand. "I hope I did not frighten you." At that moment the lawyer with an effort scrambled to his feet.

"You shall pay dearly for this," he said, glaring vindictively at the strapping figure which stood ready for battle. "What right have you to enter the room unannounced?"

"The right that any man has to protect a woman from such a cowardly villain as you are."

"How dare you apply such words to me, the pillar of the church." His voice quivered with wrath. "How dare you!" he repeated.

"Calm yourself," said the minister, with provoking ease of manner. "It is getting late and there is business to transact before we part tonight." Much to the lawyer's amazement, he placed a chair for Naomi, then turned back to him. "Now will you kindly make out a check for that $25,000, payable to Miss Marjory Miller?" The voice was quiet, stern, authoritative. The lawyer now understood that the minister had overheard the entire conversation.

"You impertinent meddler! I shall have you dismissed from the church at once."

"Never mind the church, at present," rejoined the minister. "Are you going to make out that check?"

"I tell you I spent all the Miller fortune in settling up the man's debts."
"You did nothing of the kind," reiterated Manville. "And this accounts for your attitude toward that poor fellow. You bribed him into silence, and now you fear that since he has left his old ways, he might flash a light upon your evil conduct which you do not care to expose to the public. You a pillar of the church! You ought to be in the county jail for cheating a poor orphan girl out of her rightful inheritance. You pose as the upholder of the church! You cur of a man!"

The lawyer cowered under the force of his wrath and slipped, weak-limbed, into the nearest chair. He realized now that he had no girl, no mere child, as he had thought, to deal with; he had a powerful, determined man—one who stood like a giant in physical and moral strength.

"You have two propositions to consider," went on the stern voice. "One is to make out the check about which I have already given you the details. If you refuse, I shall put this matter at once into the hands of expert attorneys, and you will be forced to show all legal documents pertaining to the case, and of course all the receipts you have of the $25,000 which you say you have expended to clear the dead man's debts."

The lawyer saw that his villany had found him out. His small, narrow eyes rolled in his head like those of a man threatened with apoplexy. Great drops of perspiration broke out on his brow, while his face was ashen with fright and fury.
"You—you would ruin the church! Do you not think of that? The notoriety of a minister taking action against an elder of his church!"

"Surely you would be a fine example to set before the church and the community!" said the minister, with a wry smile. "And now instead of thinking about making restitution, you are thinking of the church. You pious, sanctimonious dog, who prays in the midst of the congregation for the widow and the fatherless, and who carries around the stolen money of a dead man! Have you no redeeming qualities? Have you no desire even now to make restitution for your evil deed?"

The young minister's voice now took on a softened tone, and for several minutes he pleaded, almost tearfully, with the man to confess his sin. "If you will but do the right thing now, the matter will never be exposed. Miss Carol and I will give you our word," as his glance took in the motionless form where he had placed her.

Naomi nodded her head affirmatively, but the accused man only reiterated his threats to have the minister thrust from the church.

"Very well, we will go, Miss Carol."

He unlocked the folding doors and threw them open; then he hesitated. Turning again to the lawyer, he said, more gently than he had yet spoken, "Think the matter over carefully, I will give you until tomorrow noon. If I do not receive by that time a
certified check to the amount I have stated, I will at once seek lawful justice for Marjory Miller."

The minister and the young woman walked out of the house, closing the door quietly behind them. The lawyer was left alone with his problem.
CHAPTER XX.

THE TRAGEDY OF HEARTS.

"And you followed me?" repeated Naomi, as if she had not heard correctly.

Side by side they were walking rapidly to the Manor.

"Yes," reiterated Richard. "It was this way. The night was so tempting that Tippie and I were walking around the lawn and speculating upon a few moments' repose under the canopy of stars, when I saw the chap Lawrence run by us and for want of something better, I stood still and watched him. From where I was I could plainly see him run up the Manor steps, pause a few moments, and then quickly disappear. I was about to turn toward my favorite bench when I saw you glide swiftly down the walk and out through the gate into the street. I saw that you were dressed for the street and instantly felt that you were on a mission of some kind, and I was determined that you should not go unattended. As you turned down the side street, I followed you. You remember once you paused a moment and listened?"

"Yes," nodded the girl.

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"My heavy steps sounded upon the gravel walk, and if you had turned, undoubtedly you would have recognized me. You can imagine my amazement when I saw you pause before the lawyer's house, and then enter. Although I had no inkling of the trouble brewing, yet I determined to remain at the gate until you appeared again. Soon I heard Mr. Simpson's voice. It sounded sharp and rough, and as the window on the porch was slightly ajar, I heard you demand that he unlock the folding doors. Then I sensed trouble and, stepping upon the porch, I listened by the window—and the rest you know."

"Oh, I remember now. We both heard the noise. I was praying all the time for a way of deliverance. I was startled of course as you crashed into the room and threw the lawyer to the floor, but after that first moment's amazement, it seemed only natural that you should be there."

They had entered the walk on the Manor grounds, and as they reached the great stone steps, they lingered for a moment in the starlight.

The man looked down into the girl's face, but saw there only a serenity of features and expression. A tender smile played about the small mouth, but he felt that it was only the reflection of her reminiscent thoughts and was not at that moment intended for him.

"Miss Carol, you are a brave little woman. Although your physical strength could not battle with the man you had to deal with tonight, your moral
strength and courage never left you. I can picture you as you stood before him."

"It was my faith in right that kept up my courage, Mr. Manville," she murmured softly. "I knew that divine Love would protect me if I trusted and stood firm."

The simply spoken words almost moved the man to tears as the sense of them rushed over him. And this was the woman whose soul he had once planned to save! His own religious convictions seemed to laugh at him when placed beside the simple, childlike, yet understanding trust before him. He knew that Naomi's trust was no blind faith; he felt that it was the confirmation of her spiritual knowledge.

Again, in his thought her words echoed on the night's stillness! "I knew that divine Love would protect and deliver me if I trusted and stood firm." Hardly realizing what he was doing, he stooped, and clasping her hands he kissed them with passionate reverence, then turned swiftly from her and was gone.

Trembling, she stood where he had left her. Her face and the hands which he had kissed were burning, and her eyes shone with startled radiance. Then quickly she passed into the house.

All the next day a great quietness seemed to envelop her. Her flutelike voice did not echo its music through the great halls of the Manor as usual. After acquainting her aunt with her safe return, she had gone immediately to her room, and in the morning had confided
to her only a little of what had transpired in the lawyer's home.

After lunch, feeling that the very atmosphere of the house was oppressive, Naomi wrapped herself in a light, tight-fitting coat, and placed a soft, big-brimmed felt hat upon her head. After a few moments' fruitless search for her hat pins, she decided that she had mislaid them the night before. Opening the drawer of her dresser, she selected a soft crimson ribbon and tying it over the hat, converted it into a becoming poke bonnet. Hastily knotting the ends into a huge bow under her chin, she started off for the hills.

Billy took the path which led to her favorite rock in the Retreat, and without a word Naomi followed. As she stood watching the sparkling brook, the fleecy clouds, the chattering squirrels, she was reminded of the day that she had gambolled about with Billy, and turning, had seen the eyes of Richard Manville fixed upon her. She recalled the tender smile that she had grown to know so well. Hastily she turned her face toward the huge rock as if she almost expected to see the tall form rise in answer to her thoughts; but, save for the scampering squirrels, the place was uninhabited.

Presently Billy bounded after a young rabbit, and Naomi, left to herself, found peace and quiet at the side of the sheltering rock. She was so absorbed in her thoughts, that she did not hear the crackling leaves and twigs under the heavy step of Richard Manville until he was very near her. A wild impulse to escape
seized her, but, as if divining her thought, with one big stride he was at her side.

"Please stay, Miss Carol."

The voice was low, but she was conscious of the intensity of his feelings. She knew he expected her to look up, but she did not dare; she was afraid he would read the turmoil of her heart.

He dropped at her feet as he had the Sunday when he had first found her here. But today had he planned it, or had fate directed his steps hither?

With her face slightly bent so that the broad brim of her hat almost hid the profile from view, she sat, outwardly quiet. Her heart told her what the man had come to reveal to her, and with quickened pulses she was praying for strength.

There had been no words of greeting. Neither had expected it of the other.

There was a moment's stillness, broken only by the carolling of a bird in the bough directly over them, which presently spread its wings, and as if it was unwilling to listen to the tragedy of hearts, hastily took flight.

"Naomi, I love you." The words were simple, but they voiced the storm of passion which swept the very soul of the man before her.

Tenderly, reverently, and yet with the fervor which bespoke the fullness of his offering—as if he were laying his very life at her feet—he repeated: "Naomi, you know that I love you."
A tremor crept over the young woman at his side. The head drooped until the face was entirely hidden.

"Naomi, beloved, look at me. I love you, and want you to be my wife."

"No, I cannot, I cannot." The words were whispered so softly as to be almost inaudible, but the quickened senses of the man heard them, and his face became ashen and his big hands trembled.

"Naomi, look at me. Only when you raise your eyes to mine, and look into my soul as you say 'I do not love you,' will I believe you."

But except for the trembling of the drooping figure, there was no answering movement.

"You dare not look at me, Naomi, with those words on your lips. Your truthful spirit could not utter them, but it is my right to know. Beloved, look at me; it is my right." The voice was full of tender yearning.

Slowly Naomi raised her drooping head, and for one moment allowed the hungry eyes of the man before her to look into her very soul. Except for the red of her trembling lips, the face was strangely white. In that moment when soul meets soul, the minister read the heart's message. Although her eyes were troubled with conflicting emotions, nothing could hide from him the new, unspeakable glory which for an instant showed her face.

"You do love me, Naomi," he breathed exultingly, extending his arms.
The girl was heroically fighting the greatest temptation of her life. She uttered no word, but sadly shook her head.

"I do not understand," he faltered, dropping his arms to his side. Then with gentle insistence, almost with authority, he begged, "Naomi, tell me—can't you see you are trying me almost beyond my strength? Do you love me?"

"Yes, I love you. With my whole heart and strength, I love you." There was no doubting the earnest throbbing words, but they carried with them a moan of sadness, almost despair.

He moved swiftly toward her, but she quickly raised one hand to check him.

"Do you not consider—can you not understand what stands as a wall between us?" The voice gathered strength as she went on. "We do not think alike on the gravest question of life—religion. I am about to withdraw my letter from the church, and so how could I stand at your side, your wife, you the minister of the church? No, no; it could not be." She spoke as if in answer to an inner persuasion. With a quick little gesture she brushed her hand across her face, as though to blot out the sweet vision of herself as the wife of the man she loved. "While I love you, I can but follow the dictates of my own conscience. I have prayed earnestly for guidance, and I cannot forsake the way that God has pointed out to me. You are convinced that God has led you into the ministry and that the creeds and doctrines
that you preach are truth itself, therefore you must live true to your convictions. I could not love you, nor honor you, did you do otherwise, but as long as you remain a minister of this church I cannot be your wife."

The words were gently spoken, but they were firm and carried with them the ring of decision, and knowing her as he did, the man realized that no persuasion, no pleadings would change her.

"Tell me, Naomi, if I thought as you do if I went about doing good and radiating love and kindness as you do, but did not preach from the pulpit, was not a minister, would you be my wife?"

"Gladly, yes."

"Then I will give it all up," was the impulsive reply. "I am already beginning to see that the spirit which governs the church is not what I have believed it to be. Have I not discovered the leading man of the church to be nothing but a hypocritical thief? And have I not already been told that my ideas, my convictions of right, are to be in subjection to the authority of the official board; that I am but the hired servant of these few determined, selfish individuals? I will give it all up, Naomi," he burst forth hotly.

"You—you would give up your chosen life work for me?"

His voice was low and hoarse. "Yes, at this moment I am tempted to say that I would give up all for you, even my chosen life work."
But now the girl’s brave, true spirit asserted itself. His weakness only made her stronger. “Hush!” she breathed, “you know not what you are saying. You are not true to yourself, to me, to God.”

Her face lighted up with divine inspiration. “When you can leave your church with the same convictions that prompts my withdrawal from it, then come to me and I will be your wife.”

The man, towering above her, trembled with emotion. It was as if he had heard his own life sentenced to utter darkness and despair.

Naomi bravely kept back the tears that would have fallen had she given way to her feelings, while she watched in silence the grief of the man at her feet.

For some time they remained silent.

He, the minister, the guider and leader of souls, weak in the hour when love and duty waged a war in his breast, was led by the woman who, strong in her soul’s convictions, placed God and the good of the man she loved before her own cry for happiness. He knew that he might as well try to change the ocean’s course as to weaken the prayerful decision of the girl before him, and sadly he raised his head.

Naomi was almost frightened at the despair on the loved face. No smile lighted the countenance; the mouth was drawn and the lips trembled.

Torn with conflicting emotions, she exclaimed impulsively: “I must be true to my ideal of husband and wife. They should be like two notes of perfect chord
sounding together in sweetest harmony, thinking alike on all the questions of life, following together, in the broadest sense, the teachings of the Nazarene; never content with their present views of life and truth, but constantly and with one accord seeking and imbibing all that tends to uplift thought and being; away from creeds and dogmas into works and honest living, away from the bondage of material forms and customs into the freedom of loftier ideas and inspirations, away from matter into Spirit, from sense into Soul.”

The earnest vibrant tones ceased, and the man rose as if a benediction had been said over him.

“I am not worthy of you.” He spoke in a hoarse whisper, while passionately, yearningly, he gazed into the face of the girl who now stood beside him, as if indeed it might be for the last time.

Gently, almost timidly, she touched his sleeve. “You are worthy of the love of any woman. I have faced my problem, and now you must face yours. God is with us both. Remember that I love you and will love you always. When you can come to me and say that your heart will no longer allow you to preach the creed that you now profess, then come and I will joyfully, gladly, be your wife.” The voice softened almost to a whisper, as she watched the drooping head of the man she loved. “We have declared our love for each other, and it is holy, pure, and noble. Can we not trust the rest with God? Surely He will open the way. He will remove all blindness from our
eyes; and if we are for each other, then that which now separates us must dissolve into nothingness. Divine Love will lead us both if we trust—only trust."

It seemed strange that it should be the man—the minister—who needed counsel and assurance from the girl. But never before had he so needed the strengthening words which she uttered. (Her brave, hopeful spirit was all that kept him up.)

"Beloved, how can I leave you! You have come like a ray of God's sunshine into my life. Your sweetness, innocence, purity, your sublime faith and unfaltering trust in God have thrown a light upon my path, and now you would leave me. I cannot bear it!"

Passionately he seized the two trembling hands and held them firmly in his own.

"Don't—oh, don't make it harder for me to bear," begged the girl. "Can't you see I have thought and prayed over it? I have made my decision, and you must leave me—I can endure no more."

Placing one of his broad palms under her chin, he raised the face until it was turned upward to his own. Passionately, yearningly, he gazed upon the features he knew and loved so well.

His voice came almost in a whisper: "God bless and keep you always."

And Naomi found herself alone.
Chapter XXI.

Richard Manville Faces a Crisis.

Alone in his study with the door closed, the minister wrestled with himself. Only a few hours before he had left the room in a turmoil of happiness. He had felt certain that he would find Naomi at the Retreat, and had eagerly gone thither. While he walked with big strides across the open country, he was remembering her as he had seen her that evening at the Manor, when she sang the nightingale song. The sweet, strong face, the startled expression of the dark eyes, as if something had entered her being and was struggling for recognition, the fluttering of the lashes as he had taken her hands in his own, the sudden crimson blushes—aah! it was not coquetry. That was no premeditated acting. Had she been less unsophisticated, had she been more mature in her knowledge of love and hearts, she would have averted her face from his searching eyes. Never would she have stood and tremulously faced him. He well knew that Naomi had not known at that moment that she loved him. It was the words of the song that had startled her, awakening an answering chord in her own heart. And it was with this strange, sweet thrill upon her
that she had turned and faced him. That she loved some one, he was convinced, for her countenance had betrayed her secret even before she had acknowledged it to herself.

Perhaps it was some one else she loved! He had known her but a short time, and she had many friends. At the thought his hands clenched spasmodically, and his strides lengthened until he stood with her by the side of the great sheltering brook.

But now he was in his study. He had seen her, he had talked with her, he had learned it all. His face was drawn and tense with suffering. The passionate, tender love which had filled his eyes but a short time ago had vanished, and an expression of blank despair had taken its place. His whole appearance bespoke the extent of his hopelessness, the bitterness of his despair.

Although he had not yet faced the problem which Naomi had laid before him, an overwhelming conviction took possession of him that she had passed forever from his sight. She had entered his life unannounced, had blessed him with her rare, sweet and truthful nature, had told him with trembling lips that she loved him and would always love him; then, gently but firmly, she had uncovered the barrier that like a wall stood between them and thus kept them apart.

Still it remained with him to destroy this seeming barrier and claim her for his wife. Could he do it?
That was his problem. Which meant the most to him—his church, his convictions, his God, or his love for Naomi Carol? These were the thoughts which tormented his mind.

His eyes roamed restlessly around the room. The books that faced him from the open bookcase seemed silently to cry out their love for him. An unfinished sermon lay upon the table at his side. Letters and pamphlets on business matters pertaining to the church lay unopened upon the desk. And now his eyes fell upon a list of names. It contained the names of those individuals who, during the present revival, had expressed their desire to enter the fold. Everything at which he looked—in fact, the very room itself—seemed to cry out for his love, his truth, his abiding faith. Ah! but Naomi! How could he say the words which would perhaps forever keep him from the one he loved! "How I love her!" he cried. "If I choose my calling, my ministry, I lose her; and if I choose her, I sacrifice my ministry, my chosen life's work."

His face blanched until it was ashen white; his big hands were clenched together on the small table before him, his great body trembled with the turmoil of his soul; then suddenly his head sank forward upon his hands.

For a long time he sat battling with himself. The words of Naomi rang again and again through his thoughts. "When you can leave your church with the same conviction that prompts me to withdraw from it—then come to me and I will be your wife."
The clock ticked on. The evening came and filled the room with its soft, subdued light.

Some hours later he raised his head. There were strange, sad lines about the face, and the eyes were wet and full of pain. Rising, he went to the window which looked out upon the Manor and unconsciously his thoughts went back to the first night that he had been in Lawrence. He remembered standing by the same window and looking toward the beautiful old place, while at that same moment the clear, sweet notes of a song had reached his ears. Now he flung open the window and strained his ear as if he would again hear the beloved voice. "No, Naomi could not sing to-night," he exclaimed aloud. "Yet it may be that she is waiting for me, now. I can almost see her beckoning me to come. My brave, true Naomi!" The man turned and, staggering toward a chair, fell upon his knees in prayer.

The dawn of a new day found that no sleep had touched the eyes of the tired Richard Manville; but his night's vigil had brought him a decision, the decision which Naomi Carol knew he must make—he would abide with his church.

As he went through with the morning's preparations for the day, he felt that he had lived years since yesterday. "Yesterday," he murmured, "it held for me the greatest joy and the greatest sorrow of my life."

If Mrs. Chase did not speak to him of the change in his appearance, it was not because she had not no-
ticed it. "Land's alive!" she muttered, as he walked slowly back to his study after breakfast. "I've seen lots of ministers go through with the revivals, but I've never seen it affect them like that. Like enough he's been up all night going over his discourses for tonight's session. It's nice, of course, to have so many souls brought to the altar, but it's mighty hard on the parson. He seems about done up."

When the minister reached his study, he seated himself at his desk and began to open the mail of yesterday, which until now had not been touched. Ah! His glance fell on a large sealed envelope. Opening it quickly, he found what he had expected, the certified check from Mr. Simpson.

He rejoiced over it, but was it not Naomi's victory? Was it not through her compassion and encouragement that the man Ramsey had confided in her, and had revealed to her the crime of Lawyer Simpson? Yes, he told himself, it was through Naomi Carol that restitution had been made, and now none but Naomi must reveal the good news to the orphan girl and restore to her the stolen fortune.

Without a moment's hesitation, he called for Mrs. Chase and asked that she deliver a missive in person to Miss Carol. When she returned some minutes later, she tapped lightly on the door of the study. "Miss Carol asked me to give you this."

He seized the letter in the outstretched hand, and as soon as the door was closed behind the retreating figure, he tore open the seal. The letter ran:
DEAR MR. MANVILLE!

I am glad to receive the check for Marjory Miller. I will give her the full account of the events which occurred in Mr. Simpson’s parlor. No doubt she will wish to thank you for the manner in which you helped her.

You will be surprised to learn that I am leaving Lawrence—for a time at least. It will be better for you, and better for me. I am sending you my most precious and most valued book. You will see at a glance that it bears on religion and that it interprets the Bible. It was through the reading of this book that I became convinced that the church of which I was a member does not interpret to the full extent the teachings of the great Master.

It is because of my trust and abiding faith in God’s government that I have the strength to leave you.

I love you and shall never doubt your love for me, nor shall I ever cease to pray that God’s light will illumine our paths and bring us each the happiness of Soul.

May divine Lord bless and lead you, is the prayer of

NAOMI CAROL.

He carefully read the letter many times. Then taking from his inner pocket a small black notebook, he opened it and his eyes fell on a knot of soft blue ribbon. For several moments he held it in his hands caressingly, while his mind travelled back to the day that he had picked it from the grass. Tenderly and with deliberation, he laid the ribbon upon the letter before him; then carefully folded them together and, placing them in the envelope, locked it in his desk drawer.
"And now she is gone," he said aloud, "brave, loving Naomi!"

Richard Manville had been long in reaching a decision, but once resolved, he was now more at ease. A settled sense of melancholy rested upon him, although he went bravely to work upon his evening's sermon.

He had but barely finished it when, looking out from the window, he saw three men coming down the street. He watched them with absent, preoccupied air. They turned in at the parsonage gate and had almost reached the steps of the parsonage before he realized, with a start, that they were coming to see him.

Drawing on his coat as he went, he hastened to the front door to meet them.
CHAPTER XXII.

CHURCH POLITICS.

The trustees of the church had never visited him before, and it was evident to the minister, as he ushered them into the parlor, that their business today was of painful importance.

"Could it be about Marjory?" he thought, as he placed chairs for his visitors. But he knew that Mr. Simpson would never dare to reveal the truth about the orphan and Jake Ramsey.

Mr. Warden, the youngest member of the official board, shuffled his feet nervously under his chair, coughed slightly and looked at his colleagues. Mr. Simpson had seated himself in the most comfortable chair which the room afforded, and was looking with curious suspicion about the room. Mr. Archibald Whipple looked imploringly from one to the other of his companions. No one spoke.

The pastor had greeted each in his quiet, easy manner and with a grave gentleness which somewhat disconcerted the one who had been appointed as spokesman.

With painstaking carefulness Mr. Whipple now
blew his nose, whereupon the minister looked at him in grave expectancy. The latter was fully convinced that something of importance was about to be said; but no one spoke, and Mr. Whipple only fingered nervously the felt hat he held in both hands.

"I think, Brother Whipple, we had better make known to Brother Manville the nature of this—ah—call." Mr. Simpson spoke in his deliberate fashion, choosing his words with careful slowness as if to enforce upon his listeners the importance of his speech, and looking directly into the grave face of Mr. Manville.

The cold, steel eyes said as plainly as words, "You gave me your word not to mention that affair of the other night, but now that I've got a chance, I'll get even with you yet." And he settled back complacently in his chair, as though he expected to get the keenest enjoyment from what was to follow.

The minister thoroughly understood the lawyer's wireless message, and turned his eyes expectantly toward Mr. Whipple.

Another cough, then the voice, pitched to its highest key, began: "Ahem, Brother Manville, we regret exceedingly that we are forced to speak to you on this—ah—painful subject, but you understand that, as officials of the church, we oftentimes have—ah—painful duties to perform, but as faithful stewards we cannot neglect the spiritual welfare of the church. The church members expect us to do it, and although sometimes it is most terrible—ah—unpleasant—"

But here Mr. Whipple stopped and coughed, while
he cast furtive glances at the faces next to him. Both of the other members signified their assent to his statement. The minister's eyes had never once left the man's face, though as yet he had no hint of what was coming.

"Proceed," he said, keeping his eyes still fixed upon the speaker.

"Well—ah—we are here today to consider ways and means of dealing with a certain individual of our church who is—ah—falling from grace and—" Here a cough interrupted further speech for a moment, while he glanced at the window back of him as though considering a means of escape, "and taking others with her."

The room was very silent. Suddenly the face of Richard Manville paled noticeably, and the lines about his mouth became hard and stern; but he waited.

Mr. Warden now went on with the speech, though his eyes could not meet the gaze of the minister fixed so steadily upon him.

"This girl, to whom Brother Whipple has referred, has stirred up considerable—ah—confusion in our midst and has had a bad effect upon the spiritual condition of some of our earnest members. She has what is called—" here his lips twisted themselves wryly as though the words contained some poisonous venom—"ahem, advanced thought, and not only does she think opposite to the doctrines of this church of God, but she is maliciously, wickedly—"

"Stop!" thundered the voice of the minister.
The eyes of Mr. Warden had been fixed upon the floor during his recital, and he had not observed the wrath which was rising in the minister's face. Now the thundering voice nearly made him jump from his chair, and his teeth closed upon the word with an abrupt snap.

"Who is this to whom you refer?" The voice fairly shook the room, and the men glanced nervously at each other.

But Mr. Simpson had kept his composure and now he rose to the occasion. Looking at the minister as a cat might at a mouse at whose painful expense he was making sport, he said with cutting deliberation:

"The woman's name is Naomi Carol."

With an effort the man kept himself from clutching the lawyer's throat. Without a word or a movement he continued to gaze at the sinister face as it rested with provoking ease upon the hands which held a hickory cane tightly between the steady knees.

"You contemptible cur," Richard's eyes said plainly, and then he turned them threateningly upon the other members.

"What is this you say about Naomi Carol?"

He spoke the words with an effort. It seemed almost sacrilegious to mention the name of the woman he loved in the presence of these warped and crafty men.

"She has advanced thought, or scientific ideas some folks call it," reiterated Mr. Whipple, gaining courage from the unmoved attitude of the lawyer.
"Her soul is in danger of fallin' from grace, if it is not already lost, and the disease is spreadin' in the church. Mrs. Starr and Mrs. Simmons, who have always attended the services when their duties would allow it, have—ah—been infected by words from Miss Carol. We must consider the welfare of our church, Brother Manville. It is bad enough for one soul to go down to hell, but we must not allow others to be dragged along with it. So we have met here this afternoon to decide what measures to take in disciplining this unruly spirit."

Again the minister controlled himself with a mighty effort. His eyes burned, his teeth were set, and his face was rigid. He longed to choke the words back into the man's throat, knowing full well that Lawyer Simpson was the instigator of it all, but the sweet face of Naomi now rose before him. "When you can leave your church with the same conviction that drives me from it." Ah! How did the religion of these men, the spokesmen of the church, compare with the religion of Naomi Carol! Again he saw her at the bedside of the dying infant, heard her prayers declaring her abiding and unwavering trust in God's power to restore health to the little one. Again he saw her in the church standing by the side of Jake Ramsey, begging the brethren to mete out mercy and justice; and now these same men would pass judgment upon her and proclaim her fallen from grace. For an instant the man trembled as though he knew not which way to turn.
It was just at this moment that a knock came upon the door and, without pausing for an answer, Mrs. Chase entered with a letter in her hand.

“I beg your pardon for interrupting, but Miss Carol has just sent this over. It is for Mr. Simpson. Miss Carol, I believe, saw you all comin’ in.” With a nervous bow the woman departed, closing the door carefully behind her.

The room was silent save for the slight noise which accompanied the opening of the sealed letter which the housekeeper had handed Mr. Simpson. Several moments passed while he read, with characteristic slowness, the few plainly written words. His face betrayed to the onlookers that the meeting had suddenly been shorn of its intended results. With modulated voice he read aloud the words which expressed the resignation of Naomi Carol from membership in the Lawrence Church.

A look of disappointment was plainly stamped on the faces before him, and the minister felt that they were disappointed because they could take no action against her.

“Ah, well, for the present we will allow this matter pertaining to the spiritual condition of the church to drop, but we have another mission here today, Brother Manville.” It was Mr. Simpson who spoke, and his voice now took on a self-congratulatory tone as if this time the object of the visit would hit its mark. “Brother Whipple, will you acquaint our pastor with the rest of this—ah—unfortunate affair?”
This time the blowing of the nose was of longer duration than usual. The Brother was not at all sure of his speech as he began: "You are a young preacher, you know, Brother Manville, that is, not young in years, but in experience, in discretion pertaining to the church. You know that we would hold our church from every appearance of evil, and—ah—it has grieved us that you have been a little careless of yourself in—ah—a certain way. You will agree with us, Brother Manville, that as spiritual leaders and upholders in the church, it is our right, our duty, to point out any error that might creep into our midst. If it happens to be in the—ah—actions of our pastor, the duty is—ah—doubly painful, but it must nevertheless be performed." Here a cough demanded his attention, while the eyes of the minister fairly burned into the speaker, who resumed with great embarrassment.

"Now—ah—an unmarried man and preacher needs to be extremely careful of his behavior, and we and the ladies of the church have noticed that you have been a little careless of late—not that you may mean any real harm, Brother Manville, but you know we must—ah—shun even an appearance of evil so as to keep our church in the straight and narrow path. Your—ah—attentions to Miss Carol have aroused some talk among the members of the church. She is not safe, you know, now since she has become a backslider."

"How dare you speak of her thus?" demanded the
minister, rising to his feet, his face flaming with indignation, his big body trembling with wrath. "You who have known her since her childhood, who know her life to be pure, simple, and righteous; you who are familiar with her charity, her loving deeds in the community; who listened to her as she stood pleading with you to show mercy to the man whom you would force from the sanctuary of our church! How dare you pollute her name!" The form of Richard Manville stood like a towering giant over them.

"I think we had better be going, now that we have acquainted our pastor with our mission," murmured Mr. Warden, as he gazed longingly at the closed door, and shuffled his feet as if in preparation to depart.

But now it became the duty of Mr. Simpson to clinch the matter. "Brother Manville, it grieves the church to see your attentions towards this young woman in question, inasmuch as she is—er—a lost soul, a straying soul, and so we wished to show you the wisdom of avoiding her company. But now that she has openly separated herself from the church, we must insist that your attentions to her cease at once. You will understand," sneered the voice, with tantalizing sarcasm, "that Naomi Carol would never be a fitting wife for a minister of the gospel."

The eyes of Richard Manville as they glared at the speaker caused him to rise quickly and retreat a step. He had not altogether forgotten the blow which
he had received from that powerful fist only a few nights ago. The other two members of the committee were already at the door.

"You coward! You may speak to me of my duties in the church, you may upbraid me for any error in my speech or action pertaining to my duties with the church, but upon the sacred subject of love, you may not speak. I may be your servant in all church duties, but in matters of the heart I am servant to no one. You have overstepped your privileges. Go!"

The very room seemed to vibrate as, with one hand raised, the powerful form of Manville stood pointing to the door.

"Go!" he repeated, as they stood spellbound, gazing upon the strength accumulating in every muscle in the man's body.

The three men left the room with embarrassed haste, but the stern figure never moved. He stood with uplifted hand until the outer door closed, and then sank into his chair.
Chapter XXIII.

Richard Manville's Eyes Are Opened.

The golden glory of autumn had died. The winter came and went, and still Richard Manville was preaching in the Lawrence church, disappointing some, satisfying many.

Not a word had he heard from Naomi since her departure in October. Vainly he tried to gain some information from her aunt, but every effort had failed. The good lady only shook her head sadly and offered no information. Mrs. Carmen had told some one in the minister's presence that she believed Naomi had gone abroad, but she knew nothing definite of her whereabouts.

Meanwhile the little village sorely missed the bright smile and the sweet, happy voice of the mistress of the Manor. Thornton made weekly trips to several homes in the village, leaving baskets of provisions as Naomi had been accustomed to do. Flowers were cut from the hothouse and sent to the sick ones, as though to speak mutely of Naomi Carol's continued love and thought for them. Those who had endeavored to unite the minister's name with that of Naomi Carol had long since ceased their busyings. John Warren
had declared openly that it was the "blamed pious hypocrisy of the church" that had caused the girl's sudden departure.

No one regretted her absence more keenly than Jake Ramsey and his family. The man had entered into business for himself in the town, and soon proved to be an honest, upright, and a law-abiding citizen. Although he was not a regular attendant at the Lawrence church, those with whom he came in contact felt that he "had religion," nevertheless.

Mr. Simpson had never made any allusion to the minister about the check he had forwarded for Marjory, and when the girl left the village, the people were informed that she had gone away on a visit.

It was some months after the three official members of the church had called upon the minister regarding the disciplining of Naomi Carol that Mr. Whipple again made his appearance at the parsonage, but this time he was alone.

"I came to speak with you about Brother Simpson," he began simply.

"Yes," nodded the minister gravely, wondering if the lawyer had revealed anything to the man before him.

"This is a sad affair—a very sad affair of the lawyer's," continued the man, shaking his head.

"To what do you allude?" queried the listener, curiously.

"Brother Simpson has told me something concernin'
the matter of Marjory Miller; he needed some little assistance in order to comply with—ah—your demands, so he called upon me."

"You mean you helped him financially?"

"Exactly so," trembled the man’s voice. "He trusted me with this —ah—bit of unpleasantness and I shall never betray him."

"But why should you wish to shield him?" The grave eyes looked steadily at him.

"Why, because of the church of course. You must remember that Brother Simpson for years has been the main support of the church. He is the leader in its spiritual as well as its financial welfare. It would ruin the church if ever this unfortunate affair about our dear brother leaked out. That is what prompted my call upon you today."

Mr. Manville ignored the latter part of the speech and, looking full into the man’s face, said with cool emphasis: "You know, then, that Mr. Simpson is a thief, that he stole a dead man’s money, and deprived a poor orphan girl of her rights."

"Hush! Brother Manville. I cannot allow you to apply such language to an elder of our church. It shocks me; it is really unchristian!" The voice trembled with excitement.

"It is true, nevertheless," resumed the minister, with cold disdain. "It shocks you to hear such language applied to a high officer in our church, but does it not shock you more to know that this high officer is guilty of such a dastardly crime?"
“Ah, it must be admitted that our Brother made a mistake,” cringed the thin voice, as the calm, steady eyes of the minister never removed their gaze from the man’s face. “We all make mistakes, you know, Brother Manville, and this matter most directly concerns the church. It is the church that I am thinking about.”

“Indeed the church needs our protection against such wolves in sheep’s clothing, Brother Whipple, and I trust that your visit here today is to inform me of your desire, now that you know the true character of Mr. Simpson, to discharge him immediately from the official board.”

But Mr. Whipple looked up in blank amazement. “Discharge Brother Simpson! Why, Brother Manville, you don’t know what you’re sayin’. The church would never survive it. The scandal would reach far and wide and would be the ruination of the church—and after such a successful revival, too! That would be unchristian. Remember the holy words say, ‘Judge not.’”

“You seem to have forgotten your unchristly attitude toward Mr. Ramsey,” returned the minister, blandly. “You remember that you would offer him no forgiveness, and sought to turn him from the community as well as from the church. You would deliberately throw a repentant man out upon the world to starve.”

“But that was different,” returned the other, squirming in his chair.
“Yes, that was different.” The minister’s voice was stern, but it carried with it a ring of sadness. He turned his eyes again upon his caller.

“Do you mean to tell me that, knowing Mr. Simpson to be a hypocrite, a thief, a contemptible villain, you will shield him under cover of the church? That you wish to retain his services in our church?”

“Hush, oh, hush!” begged the man, as he glanced uneasily about the room. “Brother Manville, you must be more careful of your words. You must be more charitable. Surely you can see that it would not be—ah—diplomatic for us in any way to censure our Brother. It would ruin the church, I tell you.”

“Do you not think it will be the ruination of the church if this man continues in office?” The minister’s voice trembled with wrath. His whole sense of justice was outraged.

Mr. Whipple rose. He felt that his stay had been long enough. “Really, Brother Manville, I cannot remain to hear you—ah—slander the name of our Brother in Christ. I came here intendin’ to ask you to be more—more friendly, more cordial to Brother Simpson. It has been remarked by members of the church that you treat him coldly of late, and we feared that should this—ah—lack of harmony continue between our pastor and an officer of the church, it might lead to—ah—needless questionings and would be detrimental to the growth of our church. You will see the wisdom of this as you think it over, Brother Manville.” And with that he made a hurried departure.
After the man had gone, the minister went up the stairs to his study. Another disappointment! Why did his thoughts always turn to Naomi in such trying moments as these, and why did he always hear the ringing words, "When you can give up your church with the same convictions which are prompting my withdrawal from it." But he waited to hear no more. Snatching his hat he left the house and walked for hours in the open country. When he returned, his mind was irrevocably fixed. Henceforth he would stand for the right at all board meetings. He would allow no quibbling from any member, he would seek no favors, he would preach as his conscience dictated, he would turn a deaf ear to any hints which should be given him regarding his choice of texts. "I may be a hired servant of the church," he exclaimed vehemently, "but henceforth, I will stand unflatteringly for Christ. I will make no concession to the trustees, even for diplomacy's sake, and when they wish me to cease my ministry with them, they can notify me."

And so the winter had gone, and now the robins were foretelling the approach of Spring, and still Richard Manville continued to fill the pulpit of the Lawrence church.

That his sermons had taken a decidedly different trend during the winter no one in the church could deny, neither would any one deny that it was his sermons which had attracted the attention of some of the most intellectual men in the community—men who before this had not been church-goers. He seemed to
these listeners what he really was—an earnest, tender-hearted man, with enlightened faith and understanding. He had ceased preaching about damnation and hell fire, and (now preached as Christ did) in a simple, direct manner, reaching the heart and appealing to the reason at the same time. No one could say that his sermons did not carry out the words of the great Teacher. He delivered his messages forcefully, thoughtfully, and with no encumbrance of dogmatic cobwebs, doctrinal views, or sectarian ideas. He repeatedly stated that the world was fast awakening in every branch of human knowledge and activity, and asked why it should lie dormant in religion? Why should one cling to the ideas of his fathers when great and inspired minds were now teaching more practical, everyday views of religion? “It is in our daily life that we need to apply our religion,” he had often said. “Church membership will never save a soul; it is the daily living which counts. Ask yourself, ‘Am I living a life that I would willingly lay bare to the world? Would I care to admit my neighbor into the vestibule of my heart? Am I a faithful husband and father? Am I honest in little things, truthful in my conversation, and upright in my business dealings? Ponder well these questions and their answers, because it is upon this that your Christianity largely depends.”

The growing congregations voiced their words of approval and delight to the minister, but the older members of the church, and particularly the members of the official board, wagged their heads in wrathful
disapproval. The minister understood their thoughts and became convinced that they intended soon to approach him with a request for his resignation.

And so one Sunday in June, immediately following one of the most inspiring sermons that had ever been preached in the Lawrence church, the minister left the pulpit to come nearer the audience and stood close to the altar railing.

His face was pale, his eyes moist with feeling, but the low, soul-filled words were clear and steady.

"Beloved, I am fully aware that when I think as I do, when I preach as I have to you today, I am not following the creed, dogmas, and doctrines of this church, nor am I following the wishes of the official board which hires me. I cannot go back to where I once stood, I cannot think as I once thought; therefore I can no longer conscientiously preach to you from this pulpit. My beloved brethren, I must part with you, but in the words of Abram I say, 'Let there be no strife I pray thee, between me and thee; for we be brethren.' My understanding of God has grown to a more practical and demonstrable knowledge; my faith and my ideas of life have broadened; my thoughts of spiritual truths are clearer, grander; and in every way I have a more satisfying realization of God and His Christ than I ever had before. I feel more attuned to God's love and goodness than ever before. Therefore, my beloved brethren, it is with a sad, yet joyous feeling, that I now sever myself from my ministry as
pastor of this church, but it by no means closes my ministry as I have come to understand it.”

After the benediction was pronounced, the congregation crowded around him to express their surprise, their heart-felt regret, and the minister knew that with many, their words rang true. “No one has ever told us the things you have preached,” they said to him; “the church needs such brave, strong-minded men as you.”

The pastor listened to it all and gravely, resolutely shook his head. “My convictions led me into the ministry,” he said, “and my convictions now cause me to tender my resignation.” In reply to the many queries whether he would preach in another church or join some other denomination, his face lighted up with an eager smile, as he said gently, the words which many of them were prepared to hear: “I shall unite with the Christian Science Church, and shall strive with all my power to preach and to live the golden truths of the Bible as revealed through Christian Science.”
CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LIFE ILLUMINED.

It was early in the afternoon that the minister set out for his last walk among the hills which had become so familiar to him. His spirit was buoyant, and he had an acute sense of joy as he listened to the swelling of the robins' song. The light breeze stirred the tall green grass of the fields, and wafted to him a delicious fragrance from the nodding flowers. The sunlight was warm and comforting.

"What great things can happen in one short year," he exclaimed aloud retrospectively, as he walked in his favorite direction across the fields. "I followed my heart's convictions and entered the ministry; I was earnest and conscientious; and yet today, in the height of my success, I have severed my connections as a preacher of this church." But the face bore no trace of regret, no shade of sadness. Rather did the eyes shine with greater light and the countenance glow with increased strength.

He stopped at the tree under which he had flung himself one day when, after a talk with Naomi upon religious questions, his mind had been in a turmoil of emotion. The old tender smile now played about
his lips, but soon the handsome face was grave and thoughtful.

"My Naomi! my beloved!" And his thoughts had the force of spoken words. "You came into my life but to bless it, and before I realized to what heights your inspired influence had brought me, you slipped silently from my sight. Although a terrible fear whispers that I may never see you again, I am inspired by the remembrance of your child-like confidence and faith to trust to God's guidance and government."

With eyes fixed upon the azure heavens, he said aloud, "And now, O God, I trust. No shadow of doubt shall darken these my last days in Lawrence. But I must have one last glimpse of the great rock under the evergreen tree by the brook, just to fancy her there," he told himself, as slowly he walked in that direction.

Approaching the running brook, he paused long to gaze upon its sparkling waters. Then with slow deliberation, as one who looks to feel rather than to see, he turned toward the great sheltering rock.

The man's eyes became fixed, while his heart gave a sudden leap and then seemed to stop beating. Had his mental vision of Naomi come to life? or could it be—was it Naomi? Overpowered by a sudden rush of joy and a gladness that was almost fear, he stood rooted to the spot.

Suddenly the figure turned and faced him.
“Naomi!” he breathed, as with a bound he was at her side.

There was no mistaking the swift, glad light of the eyes turned to his, and almost in a dream he found himself breathing, “My beloved!” while he gently clasped the unresisting form to his heart.

“Tell me,” he exclaimed, releasing her only to gaze with passionate joy into the glorified face, “how did you know I would be here?”

“Tell me,” she echoed, with a touch of her old playfulness, “how did you know I would be here?”

She smiled as she watched the varied expressions which swept over the man’s face. “Do you still think you are dreaming?” she asked.

For answer the man took her chin into his broad palm as he had done once before, and raising her burning face until her eyes looked into his, gazed long and tenderly into their liquid depths. Through a rift in the trees a bright ray nestled upon the uncovered head, while a stray lock of hair cast its shadow upon the exquisitely moulded cheek. The depths of the violet eyes told him their own wondrous story. With mingled tenderness and reverence, he kissed the sweet, trembling lips.

“Tell me all about yourself,” he insisted, as they seated themselves upon the soft green turf.

“I have not changed in thought since I left you,” murmured Naomi, “and you?”

“I have changed a great deal.”

“I know it,” she said. “I saw the glow on your face
before you discovered my presence here. And your ministry?”

“I preached my farewell sermon in the Lawrence church today.”

Naomi's eloquent eyes expressed the joy that her lips refused to utter.

“The first evening that I was in Lawrence, I stood by my open window and listened while your sweet, clear voice fell upon the evening's stillness. I could not catch the words you were singing, but the sweetness of your tones brought a feeling of quickened inspiration to me, and as I stood looking up at the stars, I prayed to God that I might remain long enough in Lawrence to see a life illumined. Little did I dream how that prayer would be answered. I have indeed seen a life illumined—my own life; and you, beloved, have illumined it.”

“No, not I, but divine Love.”

Neither spoke for a moment, then the man continued.

“You do not ask about my plans, my future?”

“I am content in knowing that it is through your heart's convictions that today you ceased your work as minister here. I have no fear for your future, for your true ministry has but just begun. God will open to you ways and means of serving Him with your enlarged faith and understanding.”

“I have written my mother that I shall soon be with her for a time,” he said after a pause. “Naomi, you will go with me?”

And he was content with her answer.
“All the world seems happy today,” exclaimed Naomi, looking into the fond eyes with a bright, happy smile.

“All the world would rejoice and thank God if it could but understand Him as we do in Christian Science,” he answered, drawing her close to his heart.

And so, united by the bonds of friendship, love, and truth, they stood at the threshold of their new life.

THE END