Pioneers stories for young people set in MS Territory and Lower Louisiana. Author apparently from Arizona - see page 113 + other references.
ROYAL OAK.
THE

ROYAL OAK,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY A WESTERN TEACHER

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It is the duty of those who would make the best use of life, to improve by every passing incident, however trivial. Even the falling leaves, or the change of the seasons, may afford lessons of instruction. How much more then, should the development of extraordinary piety under disadvantageous circumstances, a remarkable conversion in which confidence has been established by a subsequent holy life, successful labors for the spiritual good of the young, amid discouragements, and seasons of religious intercourse of peculiar interest, not only be observed attentively, but recorded for the good of others.

The writer of the following unpretending stories resided several years in the South West, and gathered during that time, many incidents that were treasured in the memory or sketched as they passed, some of which are here presented with the hope that they may prove interesting and profitable to youthful readers. It has been the aim of the writer to give incidentally, a glance at the natural scenery of the country, a hint respecting the habits of the people — to transfer the
reader, for the time, to the place to which the narrative relates. It will be perceived that he has not disturbed the continuity of the story to moralize, or attempted to enforce, by exhortation, the lesson it teaches. He will have failed in the object for which the book was written, if the stories do not teach their own moral.

With a sincere desire to be useful, these sketches from my portfolio are cheerfully commended to the perusal of the youth, especially the younger members of the Sabbath school, by

The Author.
THE ROYAL OAK.

In a village, which will be often referred to in these stories, stands a venerable oak. Its aged limbs have borne the blasts of more than a century. It has been the shelter of the red man, when free as the winds which whistle through its branches, he ate his venison leaning against its trunk, or rested in its shade from the noonday sun. The leafy shrubbery which surrounded it, has been torn away, and its contemporaries have fallen by the tornado which has left many marks of its violence upon the neighboring forest, or by the more frequent encroachments of the woodman's axe. It now throws its extended branches over a large part of the west side of the public square of the village. Directly in front is the court house, towards which its shadow points significantly as the sun
sinks behind the western forest. In the rear, and fully in its morning shadow, is the jail. Almost against its base, and extending on either side, are buildings, one of which is professedly a hotel, but in the opinion of the citizens, and in fact, is a rum shop of the basest sort; the others are offspring of the same parent—dens of iniquity whose deeds of darkness, if brought to light, would, poetically speaking, wither the stern old tree which has been brought into unwilling approximation to them. During the day, especially court days, most disgusting specimens of men—accountable, immortal men,—may be seen in numerous groups, seeking its shade, insulting the passing stranger, and strengthening each other in the most abominable sin. No respectable female ventures that way, and the children whose schoolhouse is situated some distance in the rear, take a circuitous path, eyeing the spot askance as they would the lurking place of ferocious beasts.
Exactly what is done inside of these buildings, I am not able to say. Once, at midnight, to relieve the anguish of a forsaken wife, I ventured into one of them, after a young man just beginning, but becoming rapidly initiated into a course of vice. At one end of a long room were dice and billiard tables. The room was filled with men whom I did not wish to stop to contemplate, but hastily informing the first person I met of my errand, I withdrew. Not succeeding in finding him, I was about to return. But the thought of the unspeakable suffering of Mrs. C., the wife, again inspired my flagging courage. At the same moment I heard the rolling, as of distant thunder, of the balls of the bowling alley, in the rear of the house. Thither I ventured under an excitement which the hour, the place, and the cause of my visit, produced, such as I never felt before. The door stood ajar, and, unseen, I viewed for a moment the place of gambling and drunkenness. Near the door sat the object of my
search, pale, looking most frightfully from the intense excitement to which he had been wrought by ardent spirits, and the games of chance in which he had been engaged. I thought I could see the evidence of remorse written upon his youthful brow, as he turned his head away from his more desperate and abandoned companions, who were filching from him his last dollar. At a favorable moment I slipped in, and made known to him my errand, in a kind and earnest tone. "Don't stay here a moment," said he hurriedly, as if alarmed for my safety—"this is no place for you." "Nor you either, I fear," I replied—"your wife has sent me—she is distressed for you—will you not go home?"

I had no time to receive an answer, before a most revolting looking man, not sober enough to keep exactly perpendicular, slapped me upon the shoulder, and with a fierce voice and rough manner exclaiming, "Here now, stranger, take a glass with me, won't ye," thrusting at the
same time, a glass of brandy to my very lips. I involuntarily drew back, and jostling his extended arm, spilt a part of the liquor upon the floor. "Then ye think yourself too good to drink with me, do ye," said he, raising his voice to a perfect yell, and laying his hand upon a bowie knife encased in his bosom. Looking him steadily in the face, I receded a few steps, and made no reply. Recovering, in a moment, something like good nature, as if conscious he was not bandying one of his own sort, he gulped the contents of the glass down, and tossing it half the length of the room, shouted, accompanied with a knowing wink, towards me, "Ye’re a lilly livered coony; ye do’n’t know what’s good."

Not caring to encounter any more solicitations to take a glass, especially if made emphatic by the gleaming of a bowie knife or the clink of a pistol, I took the arm of the young man, and hastily retired.

Standing at one time on the opposite side of
the square, looking at the wretched beings who swaggered around the Royal Oak, I saw a desperate looking villain step deliberately to the door of one of the stores, and level a pistol within five feet of its owner. Crack went the pistol, and in bolted the rabble to see what damage was done. But nobody was hurt. Probably the hand which pointed the weapon was not very steady, or perhaps the vender of rum being used to the consequences of his trade upon his customers, had learned to dodge. No great account was made of the affair. Hanging would have lost the rumseller a good customer, and the precedent would have given the court too much business of the same kind.

Why this tree has been christened the "Royal Oak," tradition does not say. Perhaps it is because King Alcohol has reigned there over a most loyal people, for several generations. But it seems slanderous to connect the honest old oak in any way with his majesty's titles or character. It is certainly true of this
veteran, as of all of its kind, as the poet has sung,

"The oaks take water in their cups,
And that's the way the oaks 'get high.'"

We do not believe that it has ever willingly allowed a particle of the poisonous exhalations which ascend among its branches to moisten its tender limbs, however parched with drought, nor a drop of it to exhilarate its sturdy heart. We must therefore exonerate the good old tree from any implication in the crimes committed about it.

Truth compels us to add another shade to the dark picture of this place of sin, and then it will be seen under more favorable coloring than the reality fully warrants. But enough will be told to enable the reader to appreciate the benevolent labor which has subsequently been bestowed upon it, which we are about to describe

There was living, not far from the village, a small family consisting of a man and wife, and
a son just old enough to feel the molding influence of parental example. They were, at one time, possessed of a handsome property, and lived in a quiet manner. His business, that of a butcher, led him often to town, and in an evil hour he paid a visit to the "Royal Oak." From an occasional caller, he became a constant visitor; and from a single glass, he learned to take the portion of a confirmed drunkard. His wife became discouraged. The reputation of the family was lost, and she begun to sympathize with his wicked feelings, rather than abhor them. The son, though very young, learned the ways of his father, and it became to him a privilege to ride to the "Royal Oak." He obtained a few "bits" * for setting up nine pins, which he spent for spirit, or hazarded in games of chance. His father was in frequent danger of losing his life, for a row at the "Oak" was of constant occurrence. More

* Twelve and a half cents.
than once has he gone home wounded with the dirk, or bruised by a regular fisticuff encounter.

There was living in the village, at this time, an intimate friend of mine, a physician and surgeon, who was often called, at night, to bind up the maimed or set the broken legs of our *loyal* citizens. Sometimes he chose not to risk his own limbs by visiting their place of reveling, and not unfrequently he arrived just soon enough to see some victim of alcoholic influence expire. On one occasion a more than usual noise disturbed the slumbers of the villagers, and our friend the physician, was called in an earnest manner. He hastened to the spot, and found the revelers at the Oak more than usually sobered. Upon the ground, in front of the "hotel," lay two men. "Doctor, I'm afraid they've hurt each other," swaggered a drunken fellow, who had fallen beside them. Taking hold of the nearest one, the doctor raised his head a little from the ground.
"Hurt," replied he, "hurt do you say, my friend? You should have called an undertaker, not a doctor,—the man is dead." "Dead, dead, doctor, did you say?" said the drunken man, springing to his feet, and becoming at once sober. "And is he dead too?" pointing at the man who lay motionless at his side. "Has my brother died a drunkard and a murderer!" The doctor raised the hand of the man referred to and felt of his pulse. It still beat, though slowly. "You had better remove that dead body from this place," said the doctor, "and take yourself off with it, or expect to die like him, a drunkard and a murderer. I will see what can be done for this one, if the breath is still in his body."

The dead man was the butcher, the father of William Becket, whom we shall more particularly introduce to the reader.

Such was the state of things at the "Royal Oak," when the special interest of several pious persons was awakened in its behalf.
Many efforts had been made to reform the place, but unsuccessfully. The citizens generally were by no means fairly represented by the neighborhood in question. It was, on the whole, a moral village, but being a shire town and the largest in the county, the "Royal Oak" was the depot of the rowdies of the whole section of country. They were regarded as intruders, but they were many and desperate. A law had, at one time, passed the legislature of the state, prohibiting the retailing of ardent spirits. An attempt was made to make it efficient in this place. On the morning it was to take effect, a high pole was seen erected on the village green, with the effigy of the governor perched upon its top, with a junk bottle protruding from each pocket. Under the oak, sat a tub filled with rum, and by it a man with a bell, which he rang incessantly, calling upon all frequenters of the oak to drink and be merry. What they failed to buy, that day, at retail, they literally swilled from the tub without charge.
Once a fire had caught in their place of carousing, and burnt two rum stores to the ground. But neither fire nor the law, though both pretty effectual agents, had been able to eradicate the evil.

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning after the events of which we have been speaking, when two or three Sabbath school teachers, with several christian friends, were in social converse on the transactions at the Oak on the preceding night. They were joined by our friend, the doctor. He rehearsed to them the whole tragedy, and insisted that renewed efforts ought to be made for the reformation of the place.

The children too, as they came over the square, were deeply moved, and expressed much solicitude for the "wicked men." The only person who seemed to have a determined energy for the undertaking, was a female. It was Mrs. C., the wife to whose husband we have referred. She had ventured to the place often after him, and knew and felt more than
any of the group. She proposed to wait upon the owners of those infamous places. It appeared a desperate undertaking indeed, for a female to engage in such an enterprise. Insult appeared certain. But her husband was now himself again, and the fear she entertained of his relapse into vice so long as temptation should be presented, impelled her forward fearless of danger. Prompted by her example, a pious female teacher resolved to accompany her. The time appointed to commence their efforts was that very afternoon. Much of the time intervening was spent in prayer by the two friends, and others who felt deeply interested in their success. At the appointed hour they set forth, accompanied by the reformed husband, Mr. C., who, when he could not dissuade his wife from what he considered a desperate undertaking, resolved to go with her. They first visited the "hotel." As they entered the door, they were saluted by the landlord.
"Come back then, aye Bill, and with two ladies, or I'll be shot. Mean to bring me some new customers, hey, for knocking off awhile ago? Walk in ladies, into the bar—soon wait upon you."

This he said with an insulting air, for he knew the character of the wife too well to jest in good humor. "We will walk into the sitting room, Mr. O., if you please, and see you with your family," said Mrs. C., kindly. "O, my wife never sees company Sundays, and the children are reading the Bible," he replied sneeringly—"Walk into the bar—you're no better than the rest of the company." "Then, sir," said Mrs. C. resolutely, "I will say to you here, that we are come to remonstrate with you for keeping a place of such wickedness, and to tell you plainly, though in love, that God, who beholds no sin with the least allowance, will visit your iniquity upon your guilty head. The blood of the man slain at your door last night cries to Heaven against you."
This was uttered in a tone so decided and so mild, and it came withal so unexpectedly upon the guilty man, that he quailed under it like a corrected child. But recovering himself, he replied haughtily, "What has old Becket's death to do with me, woman? You would make me a murderer, would you?" and he rudely pushed her towards the door. The anger of Mr. C. was excited by the insult offered his wife, and raising a cane he held in his hand, he would have felled the landlord to the floor.

"No, husband, never," said his wife, seizing his arm, "our weapons are not carnal. God will fight for us."

Mr. C. was a young man of great physical strength, and the landlord had more than once felt the force of his strong arm, hence he was again moved by the conduct of Mrs. C. He dared not thrust her violently from the house, yet he was vexed and tortured by the reproofs she effectually administered. Lowering his voice, and assuming a milder manner, he ad-
dressed her again. "You see, madam, this is no place nor time to talk over these matters. My customers will hear the row, and surround us. Call again when it is more convenient."

"I know it is no place," she replied mildly, "and therefore I requested to see you with your family. I will instantly leave the house if you will give me permission, with this lady, to visit your family to-morrow."

"I want no interference with my family," he replied boisterously. "I can take care of them, and wish you would mind your own business."

This request had touched him in a tender place. Effort had been made to reform the house through his family, and promised well at one time, but the indignant and guilty man had sworn vengeance on his wife if she received any more entreaties upon the subject.

The loud talk had brought his wife from the sitting room. Mrs. C. was calm, conveying by her mild demeanor the reproofs of a courageous
piety. Her female friend, less bold, was firm. Mr. C. could hardly be restrained by his wife from laying his cane lustily over the head of the landlord.

"Shame on ye, landlord," shouted a half-a-dozen voices at once, as a drunken crew rushed from the bar-room. "Shame on ye to quarrel with a woman."

"I thought by the spunk ye showed just now," said one, "that ye had all the black-legs of Natchez on ye’re back. A man that will jaw with a lady ought to be lynched; but if ye want to try a round with Bill, why here's give ye a ring and fair play."

Our landlord found himself contending in a very unpopular cause. He reluctantly consented, after enduring the jeers of his customers awhile, that Mrs. C. should visit his family. He, however, resolved secretly to forestall any influence against his business by enjoining upon his wife to give her a cool reception and to consent to nothing favorable to the object of her visit.
"You can do nothing with such an abandoned wretch," said Mr. C. as they left the house. He made a fool and almost a ruined man of me, and now he would kick my wife out doors for remonstrating with him against the continuance of the means of completing his work. My cane would administer the most wholesome reproof he has had this many a day."

"You know not, William, what manner of spirit you are of," replied his wife. "There is yet an avenue to his heart, and by the blessing of God, we shall find it. I will go to-morrow and get acquainted with his family. I will propose no definite course for them to take, but will try to convince them of a better way. I shall reach the children, and perhaps get them to the Sabbath school. They will carry to the parents what they refuse to receive from me. We may, at least, save them, though the parents are past recovery."

Thus consoling herself, and forming the plan
of operation for the morrow, Mrs. C. retired with great peace of mind to her now quiet home. Her husband was temperate and greatly reformed, but not pious. She feared for him while without real godliness, exposed as he was to great temptations. She hoped that the company at the Oak would be more disgusting to him than ever, since their visit and reception at the "hotel;" and her expectations were fully realized. He became interested in his wife's efforts to reform his former companions.

The visit of Mrs. C. on the following day was as successful as she anticipated. The landlady, Mrs. O., was cool and reserved. Her reserve, however, gradually gave way when she perceived no disposition to urge any requests with regard to her husband's business. Mrs. C. caressed the children, who being unused to such kind treatment, soon expressed an attachment for her. She told them of the Sabbath school, and how happy the children were in studying the word of God.
"May I go to Sabbath school, ma?" said an interesting little girl about four years of age, to her mother. "Why don't we go to Sabbath school? We don't read the Bible neither."

"Mind your business," said the mother, roughly, "or I'll teach you something."

The little prattler was inclined to reveal more than was agreeable to the ears of the parent.

Taking no notice of the remark, Mrs. C. continued to address an older girl. "Our children take interesting books from their teachers every Sabbath, which they read and return. Are you fond of reading, my dear?"

"Father don't never buy no books," muttered the child, timidly eyeing at the same time, her mother, and seeming to expect a reproof.

The principal object of the visit of Mrs. C. appearing to be accomplished, which was to make a favorable impression upon the family, and not wishing to press matters imprudently, she retired.

The landlord was surprised on learning that
no reference was made to his business, and his consequent good humor rendered somewhat tolerable the commendation which the children bestowed upon the lady. Still, to his guilty mind, there was something which implied a re-proof in the request for his children to attend the Sabbath school. He heard them express their desire to go, with a frown; yet he interposed no authoritative injunction, and the next Sunday three of them were quietly seated among a happy group of Sabbath school scholars.

The friends who had, on the preceding Sabbath, expressed so despairingly a wish for some access to the Royal Oak community, were not more thankful than surprised at the signal success of the first effort. The children were committed to the care of the most judicious teacher. They were addressed kindly, and received each a book to peruse during the week.

"It is the first fruit of a glorious harvest," said the devoted superintendent, exultingly, "let us thank God and take courage."
A teacher's prayer meeting was held on the following Monday evening. The children of Mr. O. were made the special subjects of prayer, and thanksgiving was offered to God that a door had been opened whereby some admonition might be given to their parents and the wicked residents generally, around the Oak. At the close of the meeting volunteers offered themselves to visit other families, and secure, if possible, the attendance of their children. The benevolent design was faithfully carried out during the week. But it was found no easy task to influence people who had been addicted to sin so habitually, to correct in any degree their course. To the attendance of their children upon the Sabbath school, some of them were not opposed, simply because they knew nothing of the institution good nor bad. The case of a German family was particularly interesting. The husband and father, Mr. V., was a short, good-natured, close-fisted, money-making man, who would never do a wrong
thing but that he loved filthy lucre better than straightforward honesty. He kept one of the worst houses on the square, as he averred, "To get mine children bread," while he affected to despise the wickedness he encouraged. He was always accessible, and easily persuaded to most any course, except it interfered with the source of "Mine few dollar for von rainy day." He was esteemed and doubtless was, rich, yet he was clothed in rags, and his family were only decently attired. James, the oldest son, had, only a short time before the events of which we have been speaking, been introduced into the school of the writer.

With this family it was proposed to make zealous efforts. James already seemed favorably disposed towards the Sabbath school. By him I was introduced to his father and proposed to take his son, and if he pleased, the smaller children to school on the following Sabbath. "And how many dollar does ye ask," said he, following his ruling passion of counting
the cost. On being told it was free, he lifted up both hands in joyous surprise. "Mine Got, von school for nothing! I vill ask mine old woma." His wife was more cautious. No difficulty was experienced in getting the consent of the parents for James to attend. But it was plainly perceived that the mother was desirous for her little ones to make a somewhat respectable appearance, and they were without the necessary fit out. The females, however, managed, in their visits, this business. By kind attention they so far won upon the better feelings of the miserly Dutchman as to get a small appropriation to clothe the children according to the mother's notions of propriety, which, after all, it must be confessed, was not very extravagant. After some delay, and many persevering calls of the ladies, the children, three in number, appeared, full of curiosity, at the school.

Thus was access gained, in some measure, to two of the most hardened supporters of the Royal Oak community.
Thus things remained for some time, the children of these two families continuing to attend the school, without any very apparent good. Yet the labor bestowed upon them was not without some good fruit, as may be seen by the following incident.

I was passing to my school, one day, rather nearer than usual to the Oak, when our old acquaintance the landlord came hastening up to me full of wrath.

"I say Mr. ——, what sort of school is that ye keep on Sundays, to teach children to think themselves wiser than their father? Since my girls have been there, they'll not stay in the bar a moment on Sunday, and they even look sour at the business at all times. Last Sunday, I overheard one of them telling her mother she wished father would not sell rum any more. Now I reckon I know about what's right as well as my girls. I don't want their heads stuffed full of your pious notions."
"Are your children impudent then, Mr. O., since they came to the Sabbath school?"

"As to that, I can't say that they are, only they will be muttering over stuff which you fill their heads with—about doing to others—and I don't know what else—which I think children needn't meddle with till they get older."

"You think, then, older people are the only ones to think of 'doing to others,' as your children say, and as you cannot remember to quote the rest, I will refresh your memory—as we would others should do unto us."

"Come now, man," replied Mr. O. fiercely, I didn't stop ye to preach me a sermon. I have enough of that in the prating of the children at home, since you bewitched them with your superstitions. I'll whip it out of them, I will, shoot me if I don't. And you," he added, stepping closer to me and shaking his fist in my face, with a growl of a ferocious beast, "I'll have my revenge on ye yet; ye mean to set my family against me."
It was time to be walking, for I had to do with a man who was not to be reasoned into sobriety. The encounter had been painful, but there was one consoling fact developed. *The arrows of truth entrusted to the children, had reached their mark.* "God be praised for that," I exclaimed. Besides, he had muttered something, in the course of the conversation, about the old woman's new notions. "Perhaps," I soliloquized, "he means, his wife has some new notions begotten by the prattle of her Sabbath school scholars. Who knows what God can do? He can thrash these mountains of sin with a worm. His Spirit can, by the feeblest instrumentality, purge the vilest of iniquity."

But there was another thought which brought fresh occasion of trust in God's providence. Mr. O.'s children would now be prohibited further attendance upon the Sabbath school. Of this I was certain. I knew well the desperate wickedness of the man. The
next Sabbath proved my forebodings too true. Their places were vacant for the first time since their admission. As to the Dutchman, Mr. V., he endured almost any amount of reproof from any source, so long as he saw the dollars pouring into his coffers. Although always good-natured and willing to be remonstrated with, his heart was without relentings, while he stalked over his ruined victims to reach his gods of gold. His children, though it seemed strange, were not so susceptible of religious instruction as those of our landlord. Yet some improvement could be seen in them. They were the instruments, no doubt, of shooting at a venture, by the repetition of the truth they heard, some arrow through the joints of the harness, into the heart of their obdurate parent.

Other families were visited, the seeds of Divine truth were diligently sown and watered by tears, and prayers went up to Heaven for the openings of his providence. Since the removal of the landlord's children, a spirit of partial
discouragement had come over the benevolent laborers for the good of this neighborhood. But God was not unmindful of his people nor of his cause. He had other and efficient instrumentalities by which to accomplish his purposes.

The reader will be made acquainted with William Becket, whose father died a victim to his love of visiting the Royal Oak. He was made extremely useful to the community with which he had so sad an acquaintance. He knew the men, and his altered character, as well as the remembrance of the wrong they had done him, was a cutting reproof to them. He visited their children, and enticed them to the Sabbath school. The children of Mr. O., the landlord, excited his sympathies by their loss of religious privileges, and, seeking opportunities to converse with them, he was the means of keeping alive the tender feelings which had been begotten in them. They were kept supplied with books
from the Sabbath school library, and William occasionally induced them to attend a prayer meeting. The effect was, by the blessing of God, as was intended. Their father found them no better satisfied with his business and mode of life, than before. His wrath knew no bounds. But he could not use that authority he formerly had done, as the older ones were verging to womanhood. Besides, his wife was far from sympathizing with him in his traffic so fully as she once did. He was therefore being left alone, but his wickedness seemed only to grow the more outrageous. It was evident, notwithstanding, that an improvement had been wrought in the neighborhood of the Royal Oak, by the few years' labor of which we have been speaking. Sin had a less bold front. It was still great, but somewhat subdued. The reflecting looked with great satisfaction upon the future, for there was reason to hope that the offspring of these unreformed men would not walk in their steps.
Such was the state of things, when an unexpected providence visited the village. The epidemic which had at times raged in the river towns, had never reached this place. A single case in it had never been known, though it was the resort of hundreds during its prevalence in other places. But God's judgments are a great deep. At a time when the adjacent villages were enjoying prosperity, this one was selected for the sword of the avenger. From the month of June to September, four hundred out of the six hundred inhabitants which remained in the place, had been attacked, sixty had died, and the disease prevailed without abatement. It could be said truly that,

"The Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed."

All classes were prostrated, especially those of irregular habits. The community at the Oak were struck by the invisible hand. The landlord was one of the first that fell. He died in his sins, unrepented, and unforgiven. His
grave, scarcely out of the common path of a little thicket, is seldom visited by those who drop upon it a tear of regret. The bitter moaning of those whom he made widows and orphans, sounded like an accusing spirit in his ears as he expired.

Our friend, the Dutchman, was most violently attacked. The community upon which he preyed were scattered — many of them lay cold in death. His hope of gain was gone. Faithful christian friends visited him, and reiterated their frequent invitation of mercy from God.

"O! mine Got," he would exclaim, "Vot a a sinner." His children's talk over their Sabbath school lessons, was not forgotten. "Mine children," he would say, "tell dat von story about Jesus dat died for poor sinner like your 'n poor fader." The story of the cross was repeated, and was music in the ears of the dying man.

"I bless mine Got," he would repeat with
emphasis, "for dat von day when mine children
go to dat blessed school." Christian attention
and instruction was bestowed upon him until he
expired. There was hope in his death. His
children are still under religious instruction,
and James professes faith in Christ.

The Royal Oak is not what it was. Though
the same old tree shades it by day, and seems to
throw its protecting arms over it by night, the
wickedness of the place is not so great as for-
merly. The children of the landlord are re-
spectable and moral in their conduct. There
is neither gambling nor drinking about their
premises. A few places of infamy remain, but
they seek the darkness to conceal their evil
deeds. The children now go straight across
the square— not heeding the nearness of the
Royal Oak, and sometimes even sit down in its
shade. Mrs. C. continues her benevolent labors,
blest by the conversion of her husband. God's
judgments have wrought with his people, and the
Royal Oak is now the Reformed Oak.
WILLIAM BECKET.

The reader will permit me to introduce him to a real, not an imaginary spot, of romantic beauty in the far West. The mighty waters of the Mississippi have sometimes, when breaking away from their accustomed course, circled the base of its mimic hills, and then hurried back again to their proper channel. The evening breeze of the Gulph of Mexico, laden with the perfumes of its waters, is distinctly felt in its groves. No large city is near it. It is a village of the forest. The tall, primitive growth of pines shut it in on every side, through which the roads, overshadowed by the branches which meet at the tops, pass in various directions into a country with extensive clearings, covered the most of the year with snow-white fields of cotton. Within this enclosure of trees, are three
small churches, unpretending yet inviting in their external appearance, a few places of business, and the dwelling houses of less than one thousand inhabitants. Near the road which passes through that dense growth of trees on the south, not out of town, yet nearly in the forest, you will observe a neat little building painted white, with green blinds, and having a beautiful play-ground in front. In that building it was my lot to spend several years as a teacher of a private school for boys.

Early one Monday morning, a lady, neatly attired, stooping more with infirmities than age, with a countenance expressing at once intelligence and pious resignation, presented herself at the door. At her side stood a young lad about fourteen years of age. There was nothing in his appearance which, at the time, made any impression on my mind, except his extreme modesty of deportment, perhaps the more observable from the contrast it exhibited from most other boys around me. His dress was
neat, but of the coarsest materials. His health was evidently suffering from exertions too great for his strength and years.

"Sir," said the lady. "I wish to introduce to your school, my son William. A good boy has he been to me, and I can but poorly spare him so much from home; but you know it would be cruel to rob him, at his age, of the chance of a little learning. I know, sir, he'll not be a disgrace to your school."

The last words were uttered with an emphasis so honest, that they struck me as something more than mere parental praise. The mother embraced her son most affectionately, blest him and retired.

William took his seat with the boys of his age. My attention was arrested during the week, by his obliging spirit and perfect recitations. He seemed to possess less aptness for learning than most of his class-mates, yet at the close of the week his bill showed the greatest number of perfect lessons. The kindness
of his spirit had prevented that jealousy, on the part of his class-mates, which is sometimes shown on such occasions. No other evidence of persecution had occurred, than the appellation of "Pious Billy," which was quickly put down, not wishing to encourage any nicknames.

So great had my interest become on Friday evening, the time for closing the school for the week, that I determined to know more of William and his parent, and accordingly planned a visit to his residence the next day.

William was exceedingly pleased with my intention, and, after giving me the necessary directions, added rather despondingly, "Perhaps you will prefer a ride to Frances M.'s father's, as I heard him say he would send a carriage for you. Mother is too poor to own a carriage."

On assuring him that his mother's want of ability to show the customary courtesy of sending a horse and carriage, would make no difference, and that I should certainly come, his
countenance lighted up with joy, and, thanking me, he darted away like a bird, towards home.

The next morning found me wending my way towards the residence of Mrs. Becket, about three miles from the village. It was very early, and the servants were just going to their tasks in the fields of newly opened cotton. On approaching the end of my ride, I was not a little surprised to see, among a company of negro men and women, my young friend William; not idling nor acting the part of a driver, but busily picking cotton. He did not observe me, so I passed by into the cottage, or rather quarters, of his mother—for her residence was nothing more than a cabin, built for the negroes of the plantation. Every thing was neat, and even inviting. Around the door were a few melon vines, and a gourd had grown up and covered the front and a part of the roof. At a little distance lay a few dry limbs, evidently just drawn by hand from the woods to supply the fire.
Mrs. Becket received me with an unpretending kindness. "William," said she, "will soon return from his labors with the servants of the owner of this plantation. I need not make any apology to you for his employment, for I know that in your section of country it is customary for boys to know something of the duty of earning their own bread, but here we seldom teach our children industry, except from severe necessity. But William is not ashamed of his business, but goes merry as the morning birds, to his task. When, this morning, I proposed that he should dispense with labor to enjoy your visit, he said that you would not probably be here until nearly noon, and he would rise earlier than usual and accomplish something before you arrived. I do not believe he slept more than half the night. Before he could see to go into the cotton field, he was away to the woods, and returned with that heavy drag of wood you see yonder for a Sabbath's supply. Besides being a good while in prayer in the
little arbor, he has been in the field ever since it was light enough to see a ball of cotton.

William then prays as well as works, I observed.

"Yes, and I have much to tell you about that, but here he comes, and he will want his breakfast by this time, for he has eaten nothing to-day."

Nothing like apology or shame accompanied William's recognition of me, though he was attended by several negro boys, his fellow laborers. He sat down to a breakfast of sweet potatoes and Indian cakes, baked in the ashes, with a gourd of pure water from the spring which gushed out near his arbor of prayer. My stay at this time was short but profitable. My reflections on returning were peculiar. Angels, thought I, visit that log cabin and the walks of that lad, with more interest than they ever called at the palace of Napoleon, or watched his course of worldly grandeur.

William was punctual at school, and his pro-
gress was surprisingly rapid, without giving evidence that he possessed superior abilities. The geniuses were left behind, but so fairly and kindly, that not a jar was occasioned in the good feeling existing towards him. My visits were frequent to the log hut of his mother, who on one occasion gave me the following history of her son, connected necessarily with her own.

"Less than two years ago, my husband was killed in an affray under the 'Royal Oak' of your village, so well known as the resort of the rowdies of our county. His life had been awfully wicked, and I had shared fully in his guilt. Our only son William, as might be expected, drank of our spirit. He was disobedient; dreadfully profane and quarrelsome, and delighted in nothing so much as to go with his father in his visits to the 'Royal Oak.' For a month after his father's death, William added to my afflictions by his long absences from home with the worst boys he could have chosen. For
his wickedness I should have cared but little, if my own wants had been supplied; but I needed what little help he could afford me in getting a support. One morning he went to the village, and night came on, but he did not return. I sat up late, watched, and for the first time felt some self-reproach that I had led and was still leading my boy to ruin. I lay down, but not to sleep. I thought of my murdered husband, and that perhaps my son would be brought home dying or dead from a fatal stab of the bowie knife. What an awful night I spent! Before day, I rose and walked towards the village. My attention was arrested by some one, as I thought, in earnest conversation. I listened; it was William, evidently in deep distress. 'Mother,' he cried, 'can you help me?' I thought they had murdered my boy, and the thought drove me almost mad. 'I feel dreadful here,' he repeated, laying his hand upon his heart. 'I just stepped into the Methodist church where Jim Smith said they were
having what they called a quarterly meeting and we should have fine fun; but the minister pointed his finger right at me, and told me all about myself; he meant me, I know he did. I ran out of the house and came home as fast as I could, but I felt worse here, and thought I should die, and God would be angry with me for ever. The minister said Christ came to save sinners. I have been here all night crying to him, but I fear he can't save me.' I knew not what to say, but thought that the priest had made him crazy, and I was determined to cure him. I laughed, scolded, and threatened, but to no purpose. He spent most of his time, for several days, in the woods, praying and crying. One morning he came in, quiet as a lamb, seated himself by me, and looking pleasantly up in my face, said, 'Mother, how I love you! how I love everybody! God is not angry with me now!' From that time my William has been like an angel at my side. My heart was hard, but I could not resist the prayers I heard
him offer for me in that little thicket of trees yonder. My hope of heaven has come through him. Nothing that he could do for my good has he omitted. It is rather humbling, you know, for a boy of his age to go into the field with the slaves, to work for a living; but it was his own proposal, and by it he has earned enough to help me considerably, and to attend school, the expense of which he pays by his labor. He has, every day since he commenced, walked to town and back, studied by the fire at night, seen all my wants supplied, and besides, it seems to me he prays in the thicket more than ever. Every Saturday, as you see, he works all day picking cotton."

Mrs. B. proceeded, in detail, to tell the advantages of William's piety to herself and others, but my limits forbid further particulars.

Soon after William entered my school, he joined the Sabbath school, where he was found every Sabbath morning at eight o'clock, after a walk of three miles; after the Sabbath school,
he remained to hear a sermon, the only one preached during the day, and then returned home, and thus finished, as I for a long time supposed, the labors of the day. But it was not so. The negro children of the plantation had observed the change in William, and had been the subjects of his kind admonitions. Involuntarily almost he had become their instructor in religious things, and Sabbath evenings they would assemble around him in his little cabin no better than theirs, and he would repeat what he had learnt himself during the day, or read in the word of God. Thus the neglected, untaught, and perishing slave, was taught the way of life.

William's influence became more and more extensive and pleasing in the week-day school. He attracted, after some time, the attention of the father of one of the more favored children, and is now being educated by him for college, and by God, I trust, for the ministry.

I could draw from this story lessons of in-
struction for my young readers, and ask them to think what made William Becket so interesting a boy. But the story speaks for itself. They will all say it was the advantages of early piety.
A FAMILY SABBATH SCHOOL.

A Family Sabbath School may sound strangely to the children of New England who are accustomed to assemble, in Sabbath school, with scores or hundreds of their youthful companions. But they will not think it so strange when they are reminded that in the new settlements of our Western country families are often located in the woods far from each other. Perhaps a rude church is erected of logs where it will best accommodate the people, the most of whom travel many miles to hear the preaching of God's Word. And even this privilege they are not favored with every Sabbath, but only occasionally, as the minister can serve them, who has many such places to supply. Of course, the children of these families can have no regular Sabbath school. I am sorry to say
many of them spend this holy day in the woods with their horses and guns, or in sinful amusements at home. Some of them do not even know what a Sabbath school means, and consequently understand little of those truths which make children wiser and happier.

I once lived in a family thus situated. The village, in which there was regular preaching, was fifteen miles distant. Once in a few weeks, Divine service was held in a rude log cabin in the woods, reached by a circuitous foot-path, about five miles from our residence.

On a slightly rising ground, from which the trees and shrubs have been cleared to a short distance only, stands a beautiful white house, which has recently taken the place of a log building of much humbler appearance. The pine trees on every side lift up their tall heads so high that the grey squirrel which sits eating his nuts on some lofty branch appears no larger than a mouse. The veteran oak stretches out its brawny limbs as if to defy the stormy winds.
The numerous magnolias, ever dressed in the richest green in spite of winter's chilling breath, present a cheering and delightful contrast when the sear autumn leaves are mantling the forest. The encroachment of the woodman's axe appears in the numerous patches of cleared ground planted with cotton and sweet potatoes.

By a little spring, a short distance from the house, is a neat, small building, shaded by thick bushes and branching trees. This is the school house where the children, seven in number — six boys and one girl — are taught by a teacher employed for them alone.

In this little house they were assembled one Monday morning. The chapter in the Bible was read, and the teacher had prayed. The children looking unhappy, he requested them to lay aside their books and give an account of the manner in which the Sabbath had been spent. They all raised their hands in evidence of their readiness to begin.

"James shall speak first," said the teacher, addressing himself to the oldest.
“Edward and I,” replied James, “took our horses and dogs, and went a hunting. We started a deer and halloo’d our dogs on, and rode through the bushes and creeks, over the fences and fallen trees, until our horses were so tired they could not go an inch. We then shouted for the dogs to come off, but could not make them hear, so we had to come home without them. And pa scolded us this morning, and says we shall not ride again for a long time, for the horses are so stiff they will not be able to work for a week, and he is afraid somebody will shoot or steal the dogs.”

“But did you enjoy yourselves,” interrupted the teacher.

“No sir. Edward quarrelled with me because I would not let him ride my horse, and told pa I made him ride so fast.”

“Now you may tell us how you spent your Sabbath,” said the teacher to the next younger boys.

“We went to hunt rabbits,” replied a
bright-eyed, active, amiable little boy. “John caught one and put him in the oven there,” pointing at the same time to the stove oven in the middle of the school room. The teacher walked deliberately towards the stove, in which there had been no fire for some weeks, and opening the door, out jumped a half-grown rabbit and hopped trembling into the corner of the room. The children were much amused, but after order was restored, the black-eyed boy went on to tell that on Sabbath morning the rabbit was frightened into the hollow of a partly decayed tree, the bottom of which the children filled with dry leaves, and, setting them on fire, caused the rabbit, half dead with fear, and nearly suffocated with smoke, to try to escape, when he was easily taken. After amusing themselves most of the day with their prisoner, they had shut it up in this iron cell during the night. A contention had in the mean time arisen on the question of ownership — one claiming it because he first saw it, and
another because he caught it as it sprung from the hollow tree. The Sabbath's sun went down in a cloud to the little hunters, and they retired to bed unhappy. They had arisen and come to school, saying hard words to each other and indulging in harder thoughts.

"You haven't asked how little sister spent her Sabbath," said the same chattering little fellow who had given so honestly the history of the preceding day.

"Well," replied his teacher, smiling, "you may speak for her." But before he could answer, his sister, a forward little girl of four years of age, was on her feet to answer for herself. "O! I fell in the water," she exclaimed with much earnestness, while the other children looked serious at the remembrance of her narrow escape from drowning. She had gone, in the absence of her brothers, to play by the side of a creek below the spring which issued out of the hill-side, near the school-house, and but for the timely assistance of a servant, who heard her cries, would have drowned.
When the history of the Sabbath had been repeated, the teacher repeated the question. "Were you happy yesterday?" None answered, for they felt they had done wrong. He continued, "you see, children, what a Sabbath misspent has brought forth. The horses are injured; the dogs valued so highly by your father, shot, perhaps, by some wanton Sabbath breaker; the poor rabbit, who loves liberty as well as yourselves, most dead with fear and confinement in its iron prison; and your little sister, for the want of your care at home, in danger of being drowned."

"We'll let the rabbit go," said black eyes, his feelings beginning to show themselves in tears. To this, all consenting, the door was opened, and the poor rabbit sprang off into the woods. The children looked happier than they had done since their emancipation from school on Friday evening.

"Now," said the teacher, "I shall propose before the week closes, a better way to spend
God's day, to those who think the last to have been badly spent. Every scholar expressed a disapproval of yesterday's conduct, and they proceeded to the duties of the day.

On Friday afternoon all studies were laid aside, and the children manifested great curiosity to know what proposals were to be made to them. It must be remembered that they knew nothing of a Sabbath school, except by name, and had formed no clear idea of its nature. The older children suspected a plan to keep them at the duties of the week, and looked as if determined to make a stern dissent. The smaller ones were thinking of some innocent and novel amusement, in which the teacher would preside, and were ready to have it begin on Saturday.

The teacher introduced the subject by asking, "Are you pleased to hear me relate stories?"

"Yes, sir," answered every one with earnestness.
"Some stories about the wars," said little chatterbox, who always had a thought upon every subject which was introduced, and whose unruly tongue was sure to let it slip out. The teacher had often relieved the monotony of the school hours, by relating some stirring incident connected with our country's history, and it was upon these stories that his mind dwelt.

"It is not about the wars," continued the teacher, that I propose to talk to you on the Sabbath. But are you all willing to trust me to interest you, and to promise not to engage in any play, but come to the school-room in the morning, and listen to the stories which I shall relate? After one Sabbath, you will be better prepared to hear the plan which I shall then further explain to you."

The children gladly consented, and the little ones scampered away to rehearse the whole matter to their parents.

Leaving the children until Sabbath morning, I will introduce the readers to their parents.

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The father, Mr. M., was a strictly moral man, though destitute of experimental piety. He commenced the business of life, when a young man, on the spot where he now lived, by clearing the forest and opening his present plantation. He was enterprising and industrious, and a goodly portion of the wilds about him smiled under his hard labors, and his rude cabin had given way to a splendid mansion. The wife of his youth had died less than two years before the time of which we have been speaking. Though an intelligent and faithful mother, she had lacked the one thing needful, and the children had received no religious instruction from her lips. The present wife had just been introduced into the family. She came from a distant village where her own children, young ladies arrived almost to womanhood, remained in a female boarding school. Mrs. M. was a lady of superior talents, good education, and genuine piety. She felt a deep anxiety for the religious education of her husband's chil-
dren. With this feeling he had but little sympathy, because it was a subject he could not appreciate. Yet he was willing to co-operate, so far as its importance was impressed upon his mind. With the plan to employ his children in a serious manner on the Sabbath, he was pleased, not only because he thought it more creditable to his family, but because it gave pleasure to his wife. But Mrs. M. entered into the plan with another feeling and different motives. She felt like a christian, and was ready to act as an experienced Sabbath school teacher.

On Sunday morning the children assembled in their school-room at an early hour, with cheerful countenances and glad hearts. Mrs. M. accompanied them, to lend the influence of her presence and to assist in affording interest to the occasion. After singing and prayer, the teacher commenced in an easy and conversational manner the history of the offering of Isaac upon the altar of sacrifice. It may seem
strange to children brought up by religious parents, and taught to study God's Word, that to them it was entirely new. They did not even know from whence the story was taken. But they were particularly interested because it was related to them, explained, and made a subject of conversation.

"Would Isaac's father have killed him, if God had not called?" asked the little talker whom we will now introduce by his name, George.

"Yes, certainly, he was just about to do it."

"And would it have been right?"

"Yes, if God had commanded him so to do. Did not God take the life of your little sister a year ago, by sickness; and will he not take you when he pleases? God had the same right to take Isaac by his father's hand. But He could have restored him again to life, and some good men think Abraham expected him to do it."

The questions and deep interest of the chil-
dren had drawn out the feelings of their mother, who gave the subject a happy turn. "Was it not that Abraham loved God, that he was willing to offer up his son Isaac?" she inquired.

"Yes," said Edward, "but I don't see why God wanted him to offer up his son."

"Because, my son, God would, by Abraham’s example, teach all men who read his Word, what faith in him means. Abraham believed God would do right, and trusted fully in him, and that is called faith."

"Now," interrupted James, "I know what the preacher in the log-cabin meeting-house meant, when he told us last Sabbath we must believe in God, and that would make us please him, and would cause us to act right."

"True, if we believe God as Abraham did, and do what He commands us, though we cannot see why He commands it, the Bible says it is accounted to us for righteousness. It is God's way of making us holy. But, children,
I will tell you of another great and good Being who had an only son. This son was very dear to him, and he ruled over a great many happy beings. Yet his father sent him a great distance to a miserable people to die for them.

"Was he tied as Isaac was, and did his father kill him?" asked George.

"No, his father did not kill him, the wicked people themselves killed him."

"Then," interrupted George again, "I reckon his father made him alive, because you said God would make Isaac alive, if his father killed him."

"Yes, God did raise him alive three days after he was laid in the tomb."

The children here held up their hands, indicating that they knew of whom their mother was speaking.

"I see," said Mrs. M., "you understand me to mean Jesus Christ. He is the Son who died for you. Isaac represented Jesus Christ. When you think of this story you must also think of Him who was slain for you."
The children were now dismissed with a request to read the story over so many times during the day, that they might be able to repeat it to their teacher the next morning. George ran directly to the cabin of an aged servant, who had nursed him in his infancy, to tell her the story; little sister started off to inform her father of what she had heard, and the larger children to commit the story to memory for the morning.

Far different was the appearance of our young friends, on the following morning, from what it was a week previous, as they now came with cheerful countenances and glad hearts to the school room. The oldest brought their Bibles, and the younger longed to show their readiness to rehearse what they had heard.

The teacher began by repeating the question of the preceding Monday. "Were you happy yesterday?" Not a moment of silence followed this question, for all felt that they could answer, "Yes," without any violation of truth.
After each had showed his knowledge of what he had read or heard, the instructor addressed James and Edward—"Why were you more happy yesterday than on the preceding Sabbath, when in the woods with your guns and dogs?"

"Because," replied James, "Edward and I did not quarrel, but talked together all day about what mother and you had told us. At night we went to the stable and looked at the horses, and were glad they had not been rode most to death. Besides, father spoke pleasantly to us all day, and told us this morning we should ride on Saturday to uncle John's.

"And little sister and I," said George, "got mother to tell us all about Isaac again, and great deal more she told us too. She said that children who had a Sabbath school, learned all about the pretty stories in the Bible. I reckon we are going to have a Sabbath school."

"Was that a Sabbath school we had yesterday," asked all the larger scholars in a breath.
George’s unruly tongue had, by naming Sabbath school, awakened a new train of thought. They were none too fond of any school, and the kind of one just mentioned had always been thought of with prejudice, as something to infringe upon time which they claimed for other purposes. It had been thought wise to win them into a proper course of conduct on God’s day, rather than divulge at once a plan at which they might start, because they could not be made to understand it. They were told in answer to their question, that they should name the kind of meetings they were to have, after they fully understood them.

“Now,” said the teacher, “since you are all satisfied that yesterday was better spent than the Sabbath preceding, I shall propose a regular plan for spending each Lord’s day. The larger scholars will study the Bible story which I shall give them, and the smaller ones get the hymns which their mother has promised to repeat to them during the week. If you are all
willing to trust me, I will promise to make it a very pleasant day to you; besides, I have much to say about the Sabbath, for what it was made, and the way it should be spent. This week is the preaching in the log-meeting house, and you are all to attend with your mother and me. On the Sabbath I shall inquire of you concerning the sermon, and we will talk about it."

Leaving the children to attend to their daily lessons, we will return to the parents. Mrs. M. was determined to enter in good earnest upon the work of forming a family Sabbath school, with the co-operation of the teacher. She knew the difficulties of her task. The project had begun well, it was true; but there was a novelty in the movement, to the children, which would soon wear off. Besides, something more must be done than to relate stories, however proper and profitable in their place. A love for the study of the Scriptures was to be induced, old habits were to be broken up, and
good ones cultivated. The example of the servants was a great hinderance. Mr. M. could not be expected efficiently to co-operate. Another serious embarrassment was the frequent call, on the Sabbath, of friends who demanded the presence of the children as well as her own. All these difficulties she laid before God in prayer. He alone could keep her tender lambs from the devouring influence of sin. On rising from her knees she felt comforted and strengthened. She made an errand to the village the week following the events of which we have been speaking, consulted her pastor, and procured from him some tracts and such Sabbath school books as he could furnish. It was a meager library in comparison to the numerous and pretty volumes which the New England children are permitted to take from the hands of their teachers every Sabbath. But they would be new to her scholars, and her pastor promised to procure for her from the North a choice supply by the time these became unin-
teresting. She returned home truly thankful for the encouragement she had received.

On the following Sabbath, the scholars were punctual at their school-room. The story for recitation and conversation was the history of Joseph. George's eyes sparkled while he showed how much he knew of the story, and while he plied his mother with questions which the wisest persons could not have answered. "Sister," as the youngest child Emily was always called, thought she loved "little Benny" most as well as she loved Joseph, while George contended stoutly that Joseph was much the best. Mrs. M. entered with deep feeling into the application of the moral of the narrative. She pointed out the wickedness of the envious feelings of Joseph's brethren — dwelt upon the importance of kind feeling among children, and the certainty that God would take care of those who, like Joseph, trusted in him. The sermon of the preceding week was then discussed. Many parts of it were brought to the children's
recollections, explained and enforced, so that they felt certain they could remember more of the next sermon they heard. George thought he could have recollected it if it had been made of stories.

They were now surprised by the presentation of each a book with which to employ the remaining part of the day.

By degrees their old habits were in an encouraging degree removed, but not without much patience and toil on the part of Mrs. M. She found the corruption of their youthful hearts tenacious of its control. Often did she weep in secret; but a resort to the source of wisdom and strength in fervent prayer gave her new fortitude. There were occasions of special trial, of which the following is not an unfair example.

The children had been to see "uncle John," according to the promise of their father. Their cousins, with "uncle John," returned the visit on the Sabbath as they were accustomed to do.
The boys came with their guns, expecting to spend a part of the time, at least, hunting. Our young Sabbath school scholars felt as they had never done before. They now knew it was wrong, and that such a course would grieve their mother. But their cousins taunted them with being pious, ridiculed their scruples, and finally succeeded in persuading away the four oldest boys. It was a sad and tedious day to them. Mrs. M. wept bitterly in secret. Even their father regretted sincerely the enticement to which they had yielded.

Little George and Emily, his "sister," as we have called her, for she was seldom called by any other name, kept closely to their mother, and unknowingly reproved the visitors by inquiring why she did not talk to them and tell them "good Bible stories" as they called them. The boys returned, and the cousins left earlier than usual. The little ones then had their Sabbath school, but their brothers did not appear. They felt unhappy, and longed to un-
burden all their feelings to their mother. Yet that was too humiliating. The consolation of confession and forgiveness was not so much a matter of thought, though they remembered to have heard their mother say that whenever we have done wrong we must acknowledge it immediately. "We will tell her," said Edward, "that the cousins made us go." For a moment this seemed to quiet their feelings, and almost caused them to go with boldness to their mother.

"No," replied James, resolutely, "they did not make us go, they only coaxed us off. I reckon I wouldn't go again a hunting on the Sabbath for all the cousins in the world."

"Nor I," said John. "It was real mean in them to laugh at us because we didn't want to go when ma disliked it so much. They may go hunting alone the next time for all me."

"I do not think," said James, "that they will come again on Sunday, for when uncle John asked me if we had a good time, I told
him no. And cousin Charles looked mad, and said all we cared about lately was to hear mother's pious stories. I only wish I had heard ma's 'pious stories,' as he called them, instead of going with them, and I'm going to tell her so."

"So am I," answered every one, for they were both sorry for and ashamed of the day's proceedings. It was evident that with their feelings of sorrow and shame, there was some anger towards their cousins for the instrumentality they had had in their wrong conduct. They resolutely, however, proceeded together to their mother's room. On reaching her door, they heard her voice. She was in prayer. She prayed for them, that they might see their error; for herself, that wisdom might be given her to teach them aright, and for their cousins who had led them astray. On rising from prayer, she kindly and cordially received them. They were surprised that they were not reproached. That mild and meaning inquiry,
"Have my children been happy to-day?" fell with more weight upon their feelings than the most severe rebuke.

"We did not want to go," said the youngest boy hesitatingly, as if more than half dissatisfied with his attempted palliation. "The cousins laughed at us, and said we were getting amazing pious since we got our new mother, and they should like to know what she had to do with our taking a little amusement as we always had done. They said boys of real spirit never were tied up by such silly notions."

"I didn't hear them say that," replied James, his indignant feeling flashing from his eyes and mantling his cheeks. "I'll do as I'm a mind to for all them, and they shall not speak against ma neither."

"Children," interrupted Mrs. M., quietly, "do not reproach your cousins. They have not been instructed properly with regard to religion and God's day. It is but a short time, you must recollect, since you spent most of
your Sabbaths in amusement, and you have often gone to your cousin's for the very purpose for which they came to see you to-day. You should have told them how interesting your present employment on the Sabbath was, and have invited them kindly to have heard our exercises. They might have been won by them as you have been. If they had have refused, you could have declined politely accompanying them in their excursion. They would most likely have yielded to your wishes, and if it was reluctantly, they would have been satisfied with themselves afterwards. Now, though you yielded, you are not satisfied with yourselves, nor are they fully pleased. The course of wrong doing, children, is always hard. When we are led into sin, we wrong ourselves and those who entice us. Your cousins had a right to expect you to influence them in what was right, because you have had more instruction than they have."

"I was afraid to tell them," said Edward,
about our Sabbath school, because I knew they would laugh at us. But I mean to go to see them and tell them all about it, and invite them to come."

In this determination all the children joined, and received the commendation of their mother. They were not pressed closer with regard to their own fault. "Milk for babes," Mrs. M. used to say. "It will not do to urge the consideration of a fault upon the unenlightened, as it should be urged upon the more perfectly instructed, lest they be discouraged." She was satisfied that the children felt keenly their misconduct, and assured them of her forgiveness, and commended them earnestly to God.

When the children had retired from her room, Mrs. M. began to realize the new responsibilities which they had proposed to bring upon her, by inviting their cousins to attend upon her instructions. Her first purpose was to get them admitted into the week-day school, and thus secure the more effectual co-operation
of the teacher. But Mr. M. steadily resisted this proposition, not being willing that the quiet of the family should be disturbed by the constant presence of so many unrestrained youth. Upon more mature consideration, Mrs. M. herself rejected this plan. They might come occasionally, at least, on the Sabbath, for the express purpose of entering into the religious exercises. This therefore must be the arrangement. But the responsibility! it was very great. It was virtually coming in contact with the irreligion of the whole of "uncle John's" family. She felt that her help was in God, and earnestly did she implore His assistance. She dared not doubt that He who had so much blessed her in her labors thus far, would support her under new and more difficult exertions.

In a few weeks James and Edward visited their cousins. With much hesitation and trembling, James extended the invitation.

"To tell you the truth," replied their cousin
Charles, "I don't think much of your father's pious wife, nor of her Sunday school neither. I like to have my liberty to do what I please."

The blood mantled the face of James at this rebuff, and his first impulse was to resent fiercely the slur upon his mother. But remembering what she had told them concerning the ignorance of their cousins in these matters, and remembering, too, how he once felt about the same things, he said to Charles, calmly, "Cousin, we have a kind mother, and I do not wish you to speak disrespectfully of her, or to call her merely my father's wife. I once felt as you do about having my liberty on the Sabbath, but I am sure when you have heard the interesting stories which the teacher and mother relate, and how kindly they talk to us, you will not wish to have any liberty to go into the woods with your guns and dogs.

"Stories!" said Charles, "do they tell you stories? I thought they did nothing but pray and preach sermons, while you sat like my dog
Spot after I have whipped him, and heard them through."

"No, Charles, you are mistaken. We read some in the Bible, to be sure, and have prayers, but mother and the teacher explain the Bible lesson we get, and tell so many interesting things, I am never tired. Besides, we don't keep so silent as you suppose, but they love to have us ask questions, and never seem tired of answering them."

"Well," replied Charles, "if that is the way, I may come; but I reckon it will seem queer for any of us bucks to go to Sabbath school."

With the other cousins they were not so successful. They sneeringly resisted all entreaties, and more than once caused the unrenewed feelings of our young friends to show themselves in repelling the slurs cast upon their "pious habits." Charles was overruled by the rest, and he finally declined a visit for the avowed purpose of attending the religious instructions.
Thus this apparently open door for renewed usefulness was, for the time, closed. Yet the cousins came occasionally on the Sabbath, and were sometimes induced to listen to their exercises with interest. Sabbath visiting, however, at Mr. M.'s, was soon discontinued. The friends learned the new order of things. Some came on the week-days as cordially as ever, and a few broke off their acquaintance. After some time, the cousins so far abandoned their prejudices as to come on the Sabbath to attend the school. What the ultimate influence on them will be, eternity alone can disclose.

Mrs. M. labored with real success among her own charge. The family Sabbath school became permanently established. The arrival of a library of fine books from the North, through her pastor, gave new interest to the undertaking. But God, "whose ways are past finding out," removed this faithful teacher to higher field service, in less than five years from her assuming the duties of a mother to these chil-
dren. She died in great peace. She had the satisfaction of seeing, before her removal, her own children, two of her foster children, and her husband united with the church of God, having professed faith in Christ.
THE COTTAGE IN THE FORREST.
UNCLE REUBEN,

THE PIOUS NEGRO SLAVE.

In the midst of a dense and beautiful forest stands a neat but unpretending cottage. The jessamines climb the trees in front, and perfume the air to a great distance. The squirrel is frequently seen springing from tree to tree, or sitting on the rude logs before the door, and the birds of the most beautiful plumage sing all day long their merriest songs. Not far distant, the Mississippi rolls its majestic waters, just where the Red River pours in its tribute to swell the mighty tide as it hastens on to the Gulf of Mexico.

A ride to this cottage from the nearest town, is very delightful. The road, unless after a heavy rain, is smooth and hard; the tall trees
shade the traveller from the warm sun, and the clear, running streams occasionally crossing his way, are refreshing and beautiful. The visitor who used to stop at the gate, whether acquaintance or stranger, was received with a cordial welcome. If on horseback, the usual mode of travelling in that country, he would scarcely have thrown the reins of his horse over the post near the door, before a venerable looking negro man, with a staff in his hand, would be ready with his services. His locks were white, his form, once strong, was bent with years. The tones of his voice were clear, and always expressive of the greatest kindness. His countenance was almost angelic. It seemed to tell the business of his life, which was prayer and praise. This was Reuben, or "uncle Reuben," as he was familiarly called, a negro slave. He moved readily about the yard, to which he was accustomed, but he was entirely blind.

It was in the summer of 1838, that I spent the first night at this cottage, and became
acquainted with "uncle Reuben." I was awakened in the morning, before the sun had begun to gild the tops of the tall trees, and before the stars had entirely faded away into the brightness of the sky. The darkness was disappearing, and the birds were singing their joyous songs. But there was a sound above the songs of the birds; it was the voice of fervent and melting prayer. It came from the dwelling of uncle Reuben. He first, in a subdued tone, thanked God that he had preserved him during the night, that his days and nights were crowned with his mercies, and his cup made to run over with benefits. He dwelt with peculiar feeling upon the goodness of God in his own conversion, and his expressions were the strongest and most moving I ever heard. He denounced himself as "de wretch, de sinner plucked from de burnings." As he proceeded, his feelings became more intense and his voice louder, though there was evidently an effort to subdue it. He prayed for "massa,"
that God would give him a new heart, and for mistress, that she might "ove and praise de Lord more," and for all the little "massas," because they were so kind "to poor old uncle Reuben." "The parson" was next remembered, that he might be a man loving God with "all de heart," whose words would "make de poor sinner tremble." He then closed with a prayer for sinners, in which his soul seemed to be in an agony. No one could doubt that he had been in their situation, and that his soul then realized, in a painful degree, their danger. In this way this man of God spent about two hours every morning, and much of his time during the day.

After uncle Reuben had performed the little service required of him in the morning, I stepped into his "quarters." The "quarters" are the houses or huts in which the negroes live. They are most always made of logs, with one room, a chimney of sticks lined with clay, and one door, but no windows. Sometimes
they have what they call a gallery, or portico, in front, and as the weather is warm in summer, the negroes frequently chose to sleep upon the gallery during the night, with no softer bed than the plank floor. But uncle Reuben's quarters were much better than common. It was a frame building, with two rooms and several windows. I entered, and sat down with pleasure; for it seemed to me like a house of prayer.

"Good morning, uncle Reuben," said I, addressing him respectfully.

"Oh, it be a blessed good morning, massa!"

"Yes, it is pleasant, and a good morning for uncle Reuben to feel his way about the yard."

"O! God bless you, massa, I mean it a good morning with uncle Reuben's soul."

No theme was interesting to this servant of God but religion, and every topic of conversation was happily turned to introduce it. After stating that he had lost his sight since his conversion five years previous, he exclaimed, "But
bless de Lord, massa, I was blind, a poor blind sinner, but now I sees."

After this interview I became intimately acquainted in the family of his truly kind master, and had frequent interviews with uncle Reuben. He was always rejoicing, and full of earnest prayer. He frequently sung,

"Not a cloud doth arise, to darken my skies,
Or to hide for one moment my Lord from my eyes."

They seemed truly the expressive language of his heart.

On the Sabbath, one of his fellow-servants would lead him to the house of God, where he would sit receiving the Word in a most devotional attitude. As the preacher dwelt upon the compassion of the Savior for sinners, the tears would suffuse his sightless eyes, while the half-stifled groan indicated his irrepressible emotion. He was particularly pleased with preaching which concerned the every day experience of christians, not only because it was within the grasp of his understanding, but be-
cause it seemed to him most like the preaching of Christ. He was once asked his opinion of parson B., a well-known and popular preacher. "Ah!" said he, "he go up and up till me lose him," meaning that his language was so flowery—that he soared so high he could not understand him. "Well, what do you think of parson W.?" an excellent but very profound and argumentative preacher. "Why, he go down, down, and me lose him." "But what do you think of parson C.?" a minister remarkable for the simplicity and clearness with which he explained God's truth. "O! he preach right into uncle Reuben's heart."

The sacrament was an ordinance in which he very much delighted, because, he said, it made him think of Jesus, and what he had done for poor sinners, particularly for such a sinner as uncle Reuben.

If I were writing of a hero—a man whose life had been spent in making widows and orphans, and increasing the misery of this sin-
stained world, it would be considered in place to dwell upon the minutest incident of his life, and describe accurately the time and place of his birth. The man of God, though a *slave*, has a better record—a record on high of a spiritual birth, celebrated by angels, and to be held in everlasting remembrance by the blood-washed and glorified spirit. This was the birth of which Reuben loved to speak, and for which he seemed never satisfied with his expressions of gratitude. The circumstances of it were somewhat peculiar. Up to the year 1833, his life was one of distinguished wickedness. Possessed of a giant frame and an unconquerable spirit, he was ready to plan, and bold to carry into effect, the most daring deeds against the quiet of the neighborhood in which he lived. These mischievous feats obtained for him the name of "Rowdy Reuben," a name strikingly expressive, in that section of country, of an unprincipled and reckless man. The house of God he seldom visited. He was truly
a messenger of Satan to buffet those of his fellow servants who professed the name of Jesus. But God had reserved a simple, but successful instrumentality for his conversion. He had just retired to bed one night, after a day of unusual wickedness, when he was suddenly awakened by the frantic cry, “The stars are falling!” “The judgment is come!” He started instantly from his slumbers. The heavens were lighted with a brilliant, meteoric light. The “falling stars” were flashing and shooting across each other’s tract in every direction, balls of fire seemed to light among the tall trees and threaten the burning up of the earth. The owls and night-hawks, dazzled and startled by the unusual light, screeched most dismally. The oldest and most intelligent persons had never read nor heard of any thing of the kind so solemn and interesting. They could give no explanation of the phenomenon to the untaught and superstitious African; no wonder, therefore, that they thought the day of
doom was come, and that Reuben was fully of this opinion. Guilt increases fear; and in dread expectation of standing before God to give a fearful account, his conscience, which had been a long time silent, lashed its victim into tortures. He rolled upon the ground like one already doomed. He cried for mercy, but dared not lift his eyes to heaven, nor believe his prayer would be heard. Every sin which he had ever committed, with all its enormity, seemed to come upon him swifter than lightning, and so inexpressibly oppressive, that he thought himself sinking to hell. All around him were too much overwhelmed with the appearance of the heavens to notice, much less to comfort Reuben. The cause of his alarm passed away, but not the sense of guilt it created. The arrows of conviction had sunk deeply into his heart,—its utter hatefulness had been reflected before his eyes, and the voice of an angry God had sounded awfully in his ears. He toiled through the day, and retired to his quarters at night to
groan for relief from his intolerable load of sin and misery. God, who had used an extraordinary means for his conviction, had prepared a simple, and to Reuben, a mortifying instrument for his conversion. He sought in his distress one of the persecuted and despised of the pious servants, named Jurdon, to whom he communicated his feelings, and requested to be taught how to obtain forgiveness. Jurdon was greatly rejoiced. "Bless de Lord," said he, "dis Saul prays," and taking Reuben by the hand, he led him to an oft-frequented spot where he himself had resorted for relief in prayer from this now humbled persecutor. The recollections of that prayer were always present with Reuben. Jurdon had an important case. His prayer was the eloquent language of the Holy Ghost speaking through a consecrated spirit, and never was eloquence purer or more effectual. With unaffected simplicity he described the great wickedness of Reuben's past life, until the inquirer was almost overwhelmed with the solemn truth.
which the Holy Spirit was writing still more deeply upon his heart. He then changed his strain, plead the goodness of the Savior, the confusion which would spread through the camp of the enemy at the conversion "of de great Goliath which defied the army of de mighty God," the unspeakable joy which his brethren would have in so great a victory over their foes, and finally that God had promised "Jest dis very ting, to pardon de sinner when he cry." Such a prayer the Holy Ghost only could inspire in an untaught, simple African, and such a prayer never failed of its object. Reuben's heart melted. The clouds rolled away. Light burst into his mind, and he sprang to his feet, and throwing his arms around Jurdon's neck, exclaimed, "God no angry now." The lion was a lamb. He returned to his abode, humbled and subdued as a child, yet fearless for God as he had been for sin. His spirit seldom fainted beneath the load of reproach which was cast upon him. The signal success of Jurdon's
prayer had unfolded to him a grand secret, of which he learned more by this single lesson, than many christians, more highly privileged, learn in a long experience. He learned how powerful a weapon prayer is, and well did he use it, as the reader has already been informed.

Soon after Reuben's conversion, he was deprived of his sight by a painful disease of the eyes. The Providence which shut out the light of the natural sun from his sensual organs, opened more fully to him the spiritual illuminations which made him a burning and shining light. He was truly shut in with God, and, according to his capacity he spent his declining moments in prayer and praise. A vivid conception, and an abiding sense of the solemn scenes of the judgment, were striking characteristics of his experience. When he spoke of that day, it was with a pathos which could not fail to secure attention, and often produced deep conviction. He would say, alluding to the event which occasioned his awakening, the time
will come when the stars will truly fall, when fire will burn up the earth, and every sinner will feel more dreadfully than I felt, and it all be a reality. He would then add an exhortation full of the Holy Ghost and overwhelming emotion.

Reuben held no office in the church of God as a teacher of religious truth. He was untaught in most of those things which the world consider necessary to wisdom, but it was evident to the pious, that he entered into the sanctuary, and learnt things unrevealed to the worldly wise, or even to ordinary Christians. Hence the humble, though more highly favored of his acquaintance, loved to sit at his feet and learn. But if he ever occupied the place of a teacher, the fact did not seem to occur to him. In his own estimation, he was always the child and always the pupil.

Returning one Sabbath evening from a distant place of worship, I called at Reuben's residence. The refreshing breeze of a summer
evening was just setting in. On stopping at the gate, my friend, Squire J., himself, appeared to welcome me. The voice of simultaneous rejoicing arose from the woods in the rear of the cottage. "Reuben," said the squire, "has anticipated your arrival, and has gathered the servants together for a little preliminary exercise, before the preaching. You can rest awhile, as they will be sure to enjoy Reuben's ministrations." On inquiry, I learned that this faithful servant of God was accustomed to spend a part of each Sabbath in religious services with his companions and neighbors. Without seeming to know it, he had assumed the office of a religious teacher, which was instinctively yielded to him.

Not willing to disturb the services, and being pressed by curiosity to observe the proceedings, I crept through a circuitous path and came upon the back of the assembly with Reuben full in front. The congregation was composed of all ages and characters, decently clad and
profoundly attentive. They numbered perhaps about two hundred. They had just risen from prayer, in which, as is usually the case with the negroes, *they all knelt*. Reuben had led the devotions. The effect of his *wrestling*, for he always wrestled when he prayed, was apparent in the suffused faces, the unutterable emotion and profound attention everywhere prevailing. Reuben stood upon the fallen trunk of an aged oak, his head uncovered, his white locks waving in the wind, and repeated in a subdued and *remulous voice*,

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;"

The whole congregation rose, and with an impressiveness which forbade the indulgence of an unholy passion, sung the two lines. Again Reuben repeated,

"He to rescue me from danger,"

and too much overcome by his feelings of gratitude to proceed, he clasped his hands, and lift-
ing his sightless eyes to Heaven, shouted with impassioned energy, "Yes, me, blessed be de Lord." The effect was electrical, and one hearty, loud, united "Amen" reverberated through the woods, and all was silent again, while Reuben proceeded.

"He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

I have often listened to the deep-toned organs of our city churches, accompanied by the well trained voices of popular singers, but never did I hear music which so thrilled through my soul, as that sent up by this rude, untaught choir. There was an inspiration, a spiritual influence accompanying it, which can no more be imitated, than the living soul can be transferred to the painted canvass.

Such is a faint sketch of "uncle Reuben." The fruit of the Spirit was begotten in him in beautiful maturity. What rebuke, I have often thought, to me, a Bible reading, Sabbath school
taught professor of our holy religion. How much nearer the throne must he stand! How much brighter his crown! When the name of Napoleon shall be forgotten, when those exalted by this world's approbation shall be brought low, and the humble be exalted, then shall uncle Reuben be exalted in the kingdom of our Savior, and he be known among the redeemed as he is now eminently beloved by Him who seeth not as man seeth. If I am desponding, if my faith is feeble, and I am tempted to repine at my lot, I feel rebuked, and my faith quickened, when I recall to mind the unwavering confidence and joyful spirit of my old friend, Uncle Reuben, the Pious Negro Slave.
AN INCIDENT UPON THE MISSISSIPPI;

OR,

THE BROKEN VOW.

During a residence of several years in the Mississippi Valley, I became acquainted with many of the early settlers of that country. Among these was Judge N., a man of the most exemplary piety, of more than ordinary talents, of extensive influence and great wealth, which the providential changes of the country had poured profusely into his coffers. He did not, however, suffer his riches to become moth-eaten, but gave as freely as he had received. The poor of his own neighborhood, the widows
and the orphans, the exemplary young men, the destitute churches, all shared his liberality. His home was truly a hospitable mansion. Situated a short distance from the depot of trade, in the midst of a forest of primitive growth of trees with winding paths to the various clearings of his plantation, it was indeed a residence of romantic simplicity and beauty.

I considered myself fortunate, soon after an attack of the "chills and fever," to be favored with a note, one beautiful Monday morning, from the judge, inviting me to the comforts of his mansion until my recovery. A fine saddle horse accompanied the note, and it was not long before I was jogging merrily towards his plantation, despite some emphatic indications of a shaking from my fast friend, the ague. It was during this visit that I received from the judge the following narrative, which, though not given in his own words, retains, as far as possible, his graphic style.
In the year 18—, being then a young man full of enterprise, and having a few thousand dollars left me by my father, I determined to make an excursion from Alabama, my native State, to the upper valley of the Mississippi and Ohio. It was then a daring expedition, but its dangers only acted as a stimulus to my young blood. The plan was no sooner conceived than preparations were begun for its execution. A trusty companion, and a few servants, were necessary to carry out fully my purpose. The former was obtained in the person of my brother Caleb, the latter in a stout young negro, John, raised in my father's family, the companion of many a boyish sport, and a pious, aged servant, Lewis, who retained much of the fire of youth with the prudence of age.

Our route lay directly through the Indian country, almost untrodden by the foot of the white man, to Natchez, from thence, striking the Indian trail, we were to proceed along as
nearly as possible, the bank of the Mississippi. During the fourth day of our journey, we reached the very spot on which my house now stands. The canes were growing thick and high, and we cut our way through them with knives across what are now my finest cultivated fields. We marked the spot as one of surpassing fertility and beauty, and continued our course towards Natchez. The deer, wild turkies, and squirrels, afforded us abundant provisions, and a camp at night on the bank of a running stream with a blazing fire on one side, gave us a comfortable resting place.

We reached Natchez in the morning just as the sun was gilding the tops of the tallest trees. I stood upon the high bluff upon which the city is built, and viewed the majestic Mississippi, sparkling in the rays of the rising sun, extending beyond its banks into the forest on the opposite side, and rushing furiously onward, seeming to defy all restraint.
The arks* laden with the produce of the upper country, were drifting rapidly with the strong current towards New Orleans, and the several ports intervening. Having left home without any definite object of speculation, my purpose was now formed. It was to visit the vicinity of Pittsburg or Wheeling, load an ark with the produce of the country, float it down to some of the lower ports of the Mississippi, and discharge it, if fortunate, at a good advance of the purchase.

I remained in Natchez a sufficient time to form some idea of its moral character, which, at that time, was bad, almost beyond conception. There was then, as at the pre-

* An ark is a flat and wide boat made of rough hewn timber, to float with the current upon the Western waters. They are generally made for a single voyage down the river, and, after the freight they bear is discharged, they are ignominiously doomed to be broken up for firewood, or to build a temporary shanty.
sent time, a settlement under the bluff, reached from the top by a circuitous path, occupied by men of nearly every country, language and color, ready for deeds of darkness and desperation. Those living upon the bluff were persons of a better character, but absorbed in the idea of extensive lands and ultimately of great riches and influence. There was, however, a redeeming feature of the community. The pioneer preachers had commenced their attacks upon the strongholds of sin, and a few families were converted. They lifted up their voices fearlessly in its high places, denounced its daring wickedness, while at the same time, the plan of salvation was unfolded with simplicity and power. The fruits of their labors remain, but the most of them have gone to enjoy their reward.

The novelty and grandeur of the father of waters and its tributaries, threw so much that was romantic over our expedition, that it greatly stimulated us in our toils and dangers.
At times, as we reached the bank of the Mississippi at a point of land around which its waters bent, the opposite shore seemed distant almost beyond the reach of the eye. It appeared like a vast lake, rather than a river, inspiring feelings of inexpressible sublimity. At other times, ascending a swell in the land, we looked upon it as it wrought its silent way in the narrow channel, circling the mimic mountain for a moment, and then bursting away in derision of its pent-up course, again sweeping over an almost boundless extent of country. Disdaining the channelled path of its ancestral waters, it ever and anon took a shorter cut, burying old channels and forming new ones, and, in anticipation of modern fashions, innovating without improving. The sawyers* bowed gracefully to the passing

* Sawyers are tall trees whose roots, in their voyage down the river, catch on the bottom and thus anchor them, while the tops, reaching just above the surface, bow most gracefully as the waters rush by them. They are very dangerous to steam boats
voyager, and the snag† lifted up its jagged top in stern defiance. Instead of the present steamers, which at a distance seem to carry prows of fire, buffeting the winds and the current with a noise which awakes the silence of the forest, and causes the deer to dart away trembling with fear, the light canoe of the Indian glided like a thing of life over its unyielding waters. I love the forest and the mighty waters as they were, before the hand of civilization had marred nature's first and sublimest impressions. When the tall trees stood as they had stood for ages, battling the storm, with here and there a leafless veteran slowly and reluctantly yielding to the influence of age, going down to dust full of years, a book of wisdom to the simple Indian who leans against its trunk.

going up stream. Striking them with great force, they run them through their bottom, and sink almost immediately.

† Wholly sunken trees are called snags.
The axe levels all such; a sacrilegious deed! And I protest that the Mississippi itself is not so grand, so romantically wild as it hurries along its time worn bed, as it used to be. It is dispirited and tame at the conquests of the white man over its rushing current. No longer content to guide his wealth down its waters, he ascends from its mouth to its very source, in despite of its ancient right to carry all before it. Then, the poor Indian! he is no longer the lord of his wide domain, fearless as the panther, and fleet as the deer, but a miserable dependent upon its scanty bounties, waiting in sullen silence, until both the forest and his people shall fade away.

Passing over further account of our voyage, the particulars of our purchase, and the building of our ark, I shall proceed to detail an incident which occurred during our homeward voyage and its important consequences to one of our company — an incident which has called forth this narrative from me, for it has often
caused me to review and keep in distinct remembrance the entire enterprise with which it is connected.

The surface of the Ohio was unruffled, when far above its juncture with the Mississippi we pushed our ark from the shore, laden with the riches of the country. A long oar extended from the stern, which, swinging upon a peg as a pivot, served for a helm, while two others from the sides were managed by the negroes to keep us in the stream. I took the office of helmsman, while Caleb, the most of the time, stood in the fore part of the boat to watch for the snags and sawyers. We were "green hands" at this kind of navigation, and more than once did we whirl round in the eddies in spite of oars and helm. Our cargo being covered over even with the sides of our ark, made a flat deck upon which a cabin of the rudest sort had been built for a sleeping place, and another slight shelter for our cooking operations.
Our voyage commenced prosperously. We floated silently and smoothly along about four miles an hour, seldom touching the oars. Nothing of special consequence occurred until we reached the Mississippi. Here we found the river, though no wider, more rapid, and the navigation more dangerous. We were occasionally, notwithstanding all our efforts, whirled through the new channels among trees half fallen into the water, while our clumsy vessel was severely bruised and racked by the uncere monious usage of the snags. The summer sun had melted the snow upon the mountainous sources of the Missouri, and was pouring an irresistible tide into the Mississippi. It became imprudent to proceed, and, pulling up to the brink, we made the ark fast to the trees, waiting for the swollen river to subside.

I was quietly watching the immense quantities of wood floating by us—the vigorous young oak which seemed destined to flourish for ages, the old and decaying branches which had fallen
from a venerable sire, with all the small stuff, which, sometimes when together lodged upon a point of land, turn the entire bed of the river. The negroes had lain down, and Caleb sat thoughtfully on the side of the boat. Suddenly our fastening parted. It did not seem possible for us to float in such a current, especially with such unfriendly voyagers as were plunging under our prow, and scraping our bottom. Lewis, the pious negro, started up and looked out upon our situation with perfect composure. John looked as if he was ready for a desperate effort to save himself, whatever became of the craft and its crew. Caleb was frantic with fear. We were, the while, shooting forward like an arrow. Just ahead was a recently formed "cut off," and a submerged point of land projecting into the river, against which its divided waters were rushing with terrific fury. To strike this point would sink us instantly. Our only hope was that the pliant, overhanging branches might break the force of the collision,
or, at least, we might seize them and save ourselves before the ark went down.

"Seize 'em fast," shouted John, as we shot with the lightness of a bubble towards the point.

"God save massa Caleb, cause he no ready to die," cried Lewis, emphasising the last clause in a manner to cause more conviction in the mind of my brother than consolation. Caleb had been a great scoffer at religion during our journey, and Lewis had labored for his spiritual good with an untiring diligence. I had just time to hear from Caleb the subdued "God have mercy," and the responsive "amen" from Lewis, as we glided fairly in among the branches. We seized them with the desperation of doomed men. The receding current drew powerfully upon the ark to force it into the channel again, but with the obstruction of the trees, and our grasp upon their limbs, it was stayed. But it was evident we could sustain the contest but a short time. To be driven
from our moorings again was certain death. To forsake the boat for the branches was an uncertain safety.

The constant labors of Lewis, his last exclamation, together with the solemn and critical situation in which we were placed, had turned Caleb's thoughts to his eternal salvation.

"I bless God heaven so near," exclaimed Lewis, as his aged limbs refused any longer service, and letting go his hold, he sunk exhausted upon the boat.

"I cannot die," said Caleb, in a tone that thrilled our very souls.

A new purpose seized the mind of Lewis. His vigor seemed to return. He knelt beside Caleb, and, lifting his voice clearly above the noise of the rushing waters, he poured forth a prayer full of moving eloquence, nay, more of mighty power with God. At short intervals he would stop, slap Caleb on the shoulder, exclaiming, "Pray, believe, massa Caleb, God hear de teaf when he cry." Not one word
did he utter concerning deliverance from our perilous situation. He had made up his mind to go to heaven from the waters of the Mississippi, and his soul was in an agony for "massa Caleb" to be prepared to accompany him. Not so with Caleb. He still thought of deliverance; and while he was holding with a convulsive grasp to the yielding branch, and Lewis was wrestling in prayer, he offered one of the most solemn vows to God ever uttered. He prayed for deliverance; promised his substance, his influence, his all to God during life, if he would avert the present danger. Lewis' faith began to fail.

"I say, massa Caleb," said he, stopping suddenly, and rising to his feet, "it no matter when you dies, if you give God de heart now."

"Ah," he added, with a sad expression of countenance, "you no 'pent by 'em by," and walked towards a distant part of the boat.

I pointed to a small piece of rope left when it parted, which was before unnoticed, and di-

*
rected him to secure it to an overhanging limb. Our boat had in the mean time become firmly wedged in by the trees, so that it remained unMOVED when we all, from sheer exhaustion, let go our hold.

When we again ventured into the river, we were rapidly, but without further accident, hurried along until the waters became less powerful, and our ark was secured to the bank. Near us was a rude log cabin of an enterprising settler. We were welcomed with a cordiality characteristic of the rough men of the woods. A bountiful repast was set before us, and after our appetites were satisfied, we were entertained by incidents in the stirring adventures of our host. His stories were of a sober character, bearing the impress of truth; after their recital, he was urged to relate his early history in reference to religion, for we had learned by his conversation that he loved God. The chastening hand of God had been laid heavily upon him, and his providential dealings were of a striking character.
“My father,” said our friend, drawing up close to the blazing fire, and looking thoughtfully, "was one of the early Puritan ministers of New-England. I was taught the strictest regard for religion. The Sabbath was a holy day with our family, beginning with Saturday evening, when we gathered around the big fire and listened to instruction from our parents concerning the regulation of our future lives. My life passed swiftly and sweetly away until I left the home so dear to me for a distant school. Surrounded by boys nearly of my own age from all parts of New-England, many of whom had received but little religious instruction, I was led away from the path of virtue step by step, until my teachers, having received the strictest injunction from my parents so to do, if necessary, informed them of my conduct. I received, soon after, a letter from my mother, which merely alluded to my waywardness, requesting my immediate return home, stating as a reason the serious illness of my father."
packed up my little wardrobe, and left immediately. It was late in the fall, about the season set apart for our Thanksgiving festival. I remembered how happy I had been in days past, when innocently feasting upon the bounties of the occasion, and receiving the annual gifts of our dear parents. A deep gloom shrouded my mind. I was going home robbed of my innocence, to meet a grieved, sick, and perhaps dying parent. Every sight and sound, as I advanced, was a burden. The merry shout of the children just loosed from school, the song of the farmer as he sauntered beside his richly laden cart returning from the harvest gathering of corn, pumpkins, and other riches of the fields, were painful sounds. They reminded me of my own happy days, before my feet had wandered from virtue’s paths. As I approached my home, the sun was hiding behind the hills from which I had often watched his last beams. It seemed to me as if the last rays of peace were departing from my breast. The carriage
of the family physician stood at the door. I entered. All was quiet as the house of mourning, as it truly was. My mother met me at the sick room door, pressed my hand affectionately, and, without uttering a word, led me to the bed-side of my father. His face was pale and deathly, his eyes were closed, and his lips trembled as if striving to give utterance to some deep feeling of concern. I placed my ear close to his mouth, and heard the words 'My erring boy.' I could bear to hear no more, but sank upon my knees by the bed-side. My heart was full to overflowing. I prayed that I might but have my father's blessing and forgiveness, that my life might be less a burden if he died. While I knelt, he roused up and recognized his wayward child, laid his hand gently upon my head, and whispered in a feeble voice, 'Does my son come home penitent for his sins?'

"'Yes, father; do you forgive me?'

"'My child, what is the forgiveness of your earthly parent, who, but for the blood of
Christ, were for ever undone. Go seek forgiveness of Him whose Holy Spirit you have grieved.'

'' 'I do, father; but say do you forgive me before you die? I cannot live unless I hear you say you forgive your prodigal son. Father, O! my father, can you forgive?'

'''Yes, freely, all; but, my child, tell me if your heart is tender — do you seek pardon now — is my son a real penitent?' and his voice trembled with his unutterable emotion. I stood beside his bed while life seemed slowly but surely drawing to a close. The faint whisper escaped his lips, 'Now, now, does he — does my son,' and my imagination rapidly supplied those painful words 'repent,' 'believe,' 'pray,' for well I knew if it were my father's dying injunction, it would be in accordance with his living instruction — 'immediate repentance.' I knelt again beside his bed. 'Yes, Lord,' I cried, 'I will repent.' But my heart seemed to deny the assertion of my lips. I lin-
gered at the bed-side in an agony, I knew not how long, until I was gently removed to my room by my mother, and left alone. The night was spent in solemn vows uttered in the ears of angels as well as God. But my father, I could not have him die. Could he but recover, I would sacrifice every thing to live a religious life.

"Before day I crept slowly to his bed-side. He breathed more freely. The physician, whose experienced and watchful eye had been constantly upon him for the last twenty-four hours, spoke encouragingly. A burden seemed removed from my heart. I hurried back to my room to renew my vow.

"My father steadily recovered, contrary to the expectations of all. My mind continued thoughtful, but not changed. Present resignation to God seemed impossible, but of course it was not. I soon learned I had trusted too much to my vow, and thought too little of my father's importunate injunction to seek for present pardon.
"My father, after a short time, reluctantly consented for me to return to my studies. I was placed cautiously in the hands of a neighboring clergyman, free from the influence of my former associates. But I continued irresolute. The present never seemed my time to become pious. My interest in my soul, and concern for my vow, gradually left me. I was soon removed to college, and before my collegiate course was finished, I had well nigh forgotten the voice that once whispered as from my father's grave, 'Repent now.'

"It was thus with me when I received a letter from my mother——"

Here our friend and host stopped, as if reluctant to proceed. Tears suffused his manly face.

"Yes," he murmured so low as scarcely to be heard, "a letter from my mother. It lies in those drawers," said he, turning round and pointing to a rude apology for a case of drawers, of his own fabrication. "It informed me of
my father's death. But there was a sting in the information which it gave of his last moments, that pierced me through.

"'Your father,' said my mother, 'had long mourned irreconcilably in consequence of your impenitence, and I have no doubt it brought him prematurely to the grave. My son, think of your parent in heaven, who lisped a prayer, with his dying breath, for your conversion—think of your desolate mother, of your broken vows, and give your heart to God.'

"I awoke as from a dream. Had I murdered my father! was my mother to die, and leave me impenitent! It was too much. I locked the door of my room and knelt, humbled in the dust. I prayed, wrestled, and wept. No relief came. My broken vows!! O how they oppressed me and shut me out from any confidence in my approaches to God. I arose and sought the counsel of a pious student, whose father and mine had been intimate friends. To him I poured out my complaints.
I begged to be instructed, but most of all sought to know if there could be forgiveness for such a sinner. He encouraged me, read to me the Word of God, and carried my case, in fervent prayer, to a throne of grace. My heart melted, and my burden rolled off. I trust I have since known the consolations of religion. My delay nearly ruined my soul: soon, I have often thought, would the living in the neglect of that solemn vow have rendered my repentance extremely improbable. And since my conversion, painful clouds have crossed my mind when I have thought of my father's wounded feelings at his dying hour. God be praised that it was not renewed again to be broken! God forgive me that I ventured so far upon his forbearance!"

Our friend closed. A silence and solemnity pervaded the room. Lewis cast an inquiring look at Caleb. Caleb remained silent, disturbed, and irresolute. Lewis could not forbear to make an application of this experience, so prov
identically related, to rivet the pious purposes of my brother.

"You see, massa Caleb, 'pentance by 'em by dreadful unsartin. Heart get harder — devil say God no forgive — you believe it, die, and be lost — God by 'em by knock no more at massa Caleb's heart. Poor old uncle Lewis soon die — go to heaven — wait, look, see if massa Caleb coming. He no come. Judgment day come. I look for him all round in de happy company. No massa Caleb. He promise, then he no live better, then he promise 'gen, live worse — by 'em by God get angry — say cut him down — he die — he lost!"

Thus Lewis expostulated. We all knelt and prayed. First our friend to whose experience we had listened, offered a prayer accompanied with earnest ejaculations and gushing tears. He brought in grateful remembrance God's forbearance with himself, renewedly confessed his sin of procrastination, so hateful to him now, and upon which he looked as an awful vortex
of ruin from which he had been saved, as the sailor looks back on the waves angrily dashing upon a dreaded rocky shore, toward which his bark was just now rushing.

Caleb rose and rushed from the room. The emotions within him were almost too strong for endurance. But he did not yield to the strong persuasions of God's spirit. It was not then apparent to me why he did not, but since it has appeared plain. The love of riches — clear prospects were before us of large profits. The people of this Western country were then intoxicated with the idea of great wealth, and Caleb had caught the mania and set his heart upon idols of gold and silver. Hence his severe struggle, his hesitation and procrastination.

We parted reluctantly from our friend, who bestowed many kind admonitions upon Caleb, and bade us all a prosperous voyage as we again committed ourselves to the waters of the Mississippi.
Thus far my friend, Judge N., detailed to me the experience of his brother Caleb's connection with the expedition and incidents upon the Western rivers. Being interrupted, I heard no more, at that time, of his brother's future experience, or the subsequent events of their return home. But during my frequent visits to the Judge's house, I became acquainted with Caleb. He was somewhat advanced in years, mild and gentlemanly in his address. He was communicative, except when religion was the theme of conversation; he was then silent, or maintained a reserve which prevented any disclosure of his feelings on that subject.

On a Sabbath morning, in the spring of 18—, all was in busy preparation at the house of Judge N., for a visit to the sanctuary of God. A saddle-horse was ready at the door for each of the male members of the family, and a carriage for the ladies. The servants, too, were seen sallying out from their humble habitations in their best attire, and wending their way along
the shaded path. All was anxiety to be in season at the place of worship, for it had been announced that parson W. would preach—a man of great power in the pulpit, and a great favorite withal of the sons of Ham. It was a delightful morning. The birds were carolling upon every branch, and the breezes were as soft and the sky as clear, as imagination could conceive. The house was crowded at our arrival. The preacher took for his text "Quench not the Spirit." His manner of presenting Divine things was strikingly original and convincing. His personal appearance was rough and repulsive; his annunciation of the truth, severe, yet accompanied by an evident honesty of purpose and depth of feeling which secured profound attention. But the prominent characteristic, was the strength of thought and clearness with which it was uttered. The most common subject had a freshness under his touch which made it enchanting. On this occasion he surpassed himself, not so much in the new-
ness of the thoughts as the pathos with which they were delivered. His soul was full of sympathetic for the dying sinner. Toward the close, speaking of the abuse of the Spirit's influence, he described in glowing colors the case of those who had been the subjects of its special drawings, and the wickedness of trampling upon the tender feeling it produced. I could perceive the net was being drawn closer and closer around my friend Caleb, who had accompanied his brother to church. I watched with intense anxiety for its effect. There was a stern inflexibility in his countenance — something which seemed to say, I have no ear nor heart for the truth. But soon he was subjected to a more overwhelming attack. The preacher charged with terrible effect and cutting power, *perjury* upon the soul who broke his engagements with the Spirit of God. "And all for what," said he, "is this *perjury* against the Spirit of God? For the gratification of blind passion, or for *gold*, the dust of earth. Hea-
ven offended, and the soul bargained for the paltry dust of the earth."

Caleb’s fortress yielded under this discharge of powerful feeling and awful truth. Whether the preacher actually knew his case, and directed a shaft at him, or drew the bow at a venture, I never knew. The subject of our story had not been moved for years. Having accumulated great wealth, he had forgotten or chose seldom to recur in thought to his vow on the Mississippi. Now the whole of his convictions rushed with renewed force upon his conscience. The sweat rolled freely down his face. He looked around as though he felt he had been addressed by name, and the attention of the whole congregation drawn towards him. He remained and heard the sermon, rivetted by a solemn, heart-searching prayer. Sympathy and concern for him seemed to be its moving spring, so applicable was it to his case.

Poor Caleb! it was a critical time with him; but he yielded not. The last tender feeling re-
specting his salvation was driven from his breast. He had thrown himself upon the tide of his worldly feelings, which were driving him with fearful velocity toward the vortex of eternal ruin.

After some months, during which I heard nothing concerning my friend's religious feelings, news came to me of his death, an account of which may be learned from the following extract of a letter from the judge.

"You inquire concerning the circumstances of my brother's death. The details are painful, but as you were informed of his first prominent step in hardening himself in sin, and were witness to the last special call of God to him under the sermon of the Rev. Mr. W., I will inform you of the last fearful tragedy, especially as the recital may be used by you in warning others.

"When I was called to the bed-side of my brother, it was apparent he could not live. I informed him of this fact, and also addressed him upon the subject of his soul's best interest."
He turned his face away with cold indifference. I reminded him of the sermon. For a moment he awakened to some sensibility. He acknowledged what we had surmised of its effect, and said further, that it was the last season of religious sensibility he ever experienced. Feeling encouraged, I tremulously hinted at the vow made on the Mississippi. A painful, agonizing feeling seemed to seize him at the mention of the circumstance, which made me regret for a moment calling it to his remembrance. 'Ah!' he exclaimed, in a tone I shall never forget, 'it is all over now.'

"I knelt, in company with a pious friend, and we supplicated a throne of grace in his behalf. But he cried, 'Just so Lewis prayed, and I heeded it not. Then there was mercy, now there is none. Lewis! Lewis! would you were now here to pray for your wretched master; you are waiting at the gates of heaven for master Caleb, but master Caleb can never come,' and he buried his face in an agony of despair. We
could not pray. The heavens above us seemed to be shut—darkness, more dreadful than that of the tomb, to pervade the room. It was the shadowing of eternal night. We tried to urge the long suffering of God—the compassion of the Savior towards the dying thief, but to no effect. Every approach was parried off by the exclamation, “He has called, but I would not answer.” His case reminded us solemnly of the description of the forsaken sinner, given in the first chapter of Proverbs, which seemed to be present also in his mind. I could not doubt that God would hear even now his penitent cries, but O! the unbelief, the blinding influence of the world, and the great advantage the devil has over the soul in such a condition. No light dawned upon the mind of my poor brother. Sometimes he tried to pray, and then would break off and exclaim convulsively, “Lewis! Lewis!! O, that prayer. I resisted it. Yes, yes, ‘you no ’pent by ’em by.’ True, thou servant of God, and no mercy now remains for
your poor, ruined master. Let me alone, ye people of God! I must die without mercy.' Thus he struggled to the last, and died without a ray of hope.

"You inquire concerning Lewis, the old servant of our Mississippi adventure. He died a most triumphant death. There was but one thought that clouded his mind, and that was occasioned by Caleb's impenitence, with whom he spent his declining years, and assured him he should watch from the walls of the New Jerusalem for his approach."

Thoughtful reader, does this simple narrative contain aught to reprove thee? It has many parallels scattered along the path of mortals to eternity. Regard thy vows. It is a fearful thing to perjure thyself before God. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it."