

**The May Flower and Miscellaneous Writings**

**By**

**Harriet Beecher Stowe**

## INTRODUCTION.

Mr. G. B. Emerson, in his late report to the legislature of Massachusetts on the trees and shrubs of that state, thus describes The May Flower.

"Often from beneath the edge of a snow bank are seen rising the fragrant, pearly-white or rose-colored flowers of this earliest harbinger of spring.

"It abounds in the edges of the woods about Plymouth, as elsewhere, and must have been the first flower to salute the storm-beaten crew of the Mayflower on the conclusion of their first terrible winter. Their descendants have thence piously derived the name, although its bloom is often passed before the coming in of May."

No flower could be more appropriately selected as an emblem token by the descendants of the Puritans. Though so fragrant and graceful, it is invariably the product of the hardest and most rocky soils, and seems to draw its ethereal beauty of color and wealth of perfume rather from the air than from the slight hold which its rootlets take of the earth. It may often be found in fullest beauty matting a granite ledge, with scarcely any perceptible soil for its support.

What better emblem of that faith, and hope, and piety, by which our

fathers were supported in dreary and barren enterprises, and which drew their life and fragrance from heaven more than earth?

The May Flower was, therefore, many years since selected by the author as the title of a series of New England sketches. That work had comparatively a limited circulation, and is now entirely out of print. Its articles are republished in the present volume, with other miscellaneous writings, which have from time to time appeared in different periodicals. They have been written in all moods, from the gayest to the gravest--they are connected, in many cases, with the memory of friends and scenes most dear.

There are those now scattered through the world who will remember the social literary parties of Cincinnati, for whose genial meetings many of these articles were prepared. With most affectionate remembrances, the author dedicates the book to the yet surviving members of The Semicolon.

Andover, April, 1855.

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THE MAY FLOWER.

UNCLE LOT.

And so I am to write a story--but of what, and where? Shall it be radiant with the sky of Italy? or eloquent with the beau ideal of Greece? Shall it breathe odor and languor from the orient, or chivalry from the occident? or gayety from France? or vigor from England? No, no; these are all too old--too romance-like--too obviously picturesque for me. No; let me turn to my own land--my own New England; the land of bright fires and strong hearts; the land of deeds, and not of words; the land of fruits, and not of flowers; the land often spoken against, yet always respected; "the latchet of whose shoes the nations of the earth are not worthy to unloose."

Now, from this very heroic apostrophe, you may suppose that I have something very heroic to tell. By no means. It is merely a little introductory breeze of patriotism, such as occasionally brushes over every mind, bearing on its wings the remembrance of all we ever loved or cherished in the land of our early years; and if it should seem to be rodomontade to any people in other parts of the earth, let them only imagine it to be said about "Old Kentuck," old England, or any other



corner of the world in which they happened to be born, and they will find it quite rational.

But, as touching our story, it is time to begin. Did you ever see the little village of Newbury, in New England? I dare say you never did; for it was just one of those out of the way places where nobody ever came unless they came on purpose: a green little hollow, wedged like a bird's nest between half a dozen high hills, that kept off the wind and kept out foreigners; so that the little place was as straitly sui generis as if there were not another in the world. The inhabitants were all of that respectable old standfast family who make it a point to be born, bred, married, die, and be buried all in the selfsame spot. There were just so many houses, and just so many people lived in them; and nobody ever seemed to be sick, or to die either, at least while I was there. The natives grew old till they could not grow any older, and then they stood still, and lasted from generation to generation. There was, too, an unchangeability about all the externals of Newbury. Here was a red house, and there was a brown house, and across the way was a yellow house; and there was a straggling rail fence or a tribe of mullein stalks between. The minister lived here, and 'Squire Moses lived there, and Deacon Hart lived under the hill, and Messrs. Nadab and Abihu Peters lived by the cross road, and the old "widder" Smith lived by the meeting house, and Ebenezer Camp kept a shoemaker's shop on one side, and Patience Mosely kept a milliner's shop in front; and there was old Comfort Scran, who kept store for the whole town, and sold axe heads, brass thimbles, licorice ball, fancy handkerchiefs, and every thing else

you can think of. Here, too, was the general post office, where you might see letters marvellously folded, directed wrong side upward, stamped with a thimble, and superscribed to some of the Dollys, or Pollys, or Peters, or Moseses aforenamed or not named.

For the rest, as to manners, morals, arts, and sciences, the people in Newbury always went to their parties at three o'clock in the afternoon, and came home before dark; always stopped all work the minute the sun was down on Saturday night; always went to meeting on Sunday; had a school house with all the ordinary inconveniences; were in neighborly charity with each other; read their Bibles, feared their God, and were content with such things as they had--the best philosophy, after all. Such was the place into which Master James Benton made an irruption in the year eighteen hundred and no matter what. Now, this James is to be our hero, and he is just the hero for a sensation--at least, so you would have thought, if you had been in Newbury the week after his arrival. Master James was one of those whole-hearted, energetic Yankees, who rise in the world as naturally as cork does in water. He possessed a great share of that characteristic national trait so happily denominated "cuteness," which signifies an ability to do every thing without trying, and to know every thing without learning, and to make more use of one's ignorance than other people do of their knowledge. This quality in James was mingled with an elasticity of animal spirits, a buoyant cheerfulness of mind, which, though found in the New England character, perhaps, as often as any where else, is not ordinarily regarded as one of its distinguishing traits.

As to the personal appearance of our hero, we have not much to say of it--not half so much as the girls in Newbury found it necessary to remark, the first Sabbath that he shone out in the meeting house. There was a saucy frankness of countenance, a knowing roguery of eye, a joviality and prankishness of demeanor, that was wonderfully captivating, especially to the ladies.

It is true that Master James had an uncommonly comfortable opinion of himself, a full faith that there was nothing in creation that he could not learn and could not do; and this faith was maintained with an abounding and triumphant joyfulness, that fairly carried your sympathies along with him, and made you feel quite as much delighted with his qualifications and prospects as he felt himself. There are two kinds of self-sufficiency; one is amusing, and the other is provoking. His was the amusing kind. It seemed, in truth, to be only the buoyancy and overflow of a vivacious mind, delighted with every thing delightful, in himself or others. He was always ready to magnify his own praise, but quite as ready to exalt his neighbor, if the channel of discourse ran that way: his own perfections being more completely within his knowledge, he rejoiced in them more constantly; but, if those of any one else came within the same range, he was quite as much astonished and edified as if they had been his own.

Master James, at the time of his transit to the town of Newbury, was only eighteen years of age; so that it was difficult to say which

predominated in him most, the boy or the man. The belief that he could, and the determination that he would, be something in the world had caused him to abandon his home, and, with all his worldly effects tied in a blue cotton pocket handkerchief, to proceed to seek his fortune in Newbury. And never did stranger in Yankee village rise to promotion with more unparalleled rapidity, or boast a greater plurality of employment. He figured as schoolmaster all the week, and as chorister on Sundays, and taught singing and reading in the evenings, besides studying Latin and Greek with the minister, nobody knew when; thus fitting for college, while he seemed to be doing every thing else in the world besides.

James understood every art and craft of popularity, and made himself mightily at home in all the chimney corners of the region round about; knew the geography of every body's cider barrel and apple bin, helping himself and every one else therefrom with all bountifulness; rejoicing in the good things of this life, devouring the old ladies' doughnuts and pumpkin pies with most flattering appetite, and appearing equally to relish every body and thing that came in his way.

The degree and versatility of his acquirements were truly wonderful. He knew all about arithmetic and history, and all about catching squirrels and planting corn; made poetry and hoe handles with equal celerity; wound yarn and took out grease spots for old ladies, and made nosegays and knickknacks for young ones; caught trout Saturday afternoons, and discussed doctrines on Sundays, with equal adroitness and effect. In short, Mr. James moved on through the place

"Victorious,  
Happy and glorious,"

welcomed and privileged by every body in every place; and when he had told his last ghost story, and fairly flourished himself out of doors at the close of a long winter's evening, you might see the hard face of the good man of the house still phosphorescent with his departing radiance, and hear him exclaim, in a paroxysm of admiration, that "Jemeses talk re'ely did beat all; that he was sartainly most a miraculous cre'tur!"

It was wonderfully contrary to the buoyant activity of Master James's mind to keep a school. He had, moreover, so much of the boy and the rogue in his composition, that he could not be strict with the iniquities of the curly pates under his charge; and when he saw how determinately every little heart was boiling over with mischief and motion, he felt in his soul more disposed to join in and help them to a frolic than to lay justice to the line, as was meet. This would have made a sad case, had it not been that the activity of the master's mind communicated itself to his charge, just as the reaction of one brisk little spring will fill a manufactory with motion; so that there was more of an impulse towards study in the golden, good-natured day of James Benton than in the time of all that went before or came after him.

But when "school was out," James's spirits foamed over as naturally as a tumbler of soda water, and he could jump over benches and burst out of

doors with as much rapture as the veriest little elf in his company. Then you might have seen him stepping homeward with a most felicitous expression of countenance, occasionally reaching his hand through the fence for a bunch of currants, or over it after a flower, or bursting into some back yard to help an old lady empty her wash tub, or stopping to pay his devoirs to Aunt This or Mistress That, for James well knew the importance of the "powers that be," and always kept the sunny side of the old ladies.

We shall not answer for James's general flirtations, which were sundry and manifold; for he had just the kindly heart that fell in love with every thing in feminine shape that came in his way, and if he had not been blessed with an equal facility in falling out again, we do not know what ever would have become of him. But at length he came into an abiding captivity, and it is quite time that he should; for, having devoted thus much space to the illustration of our hero, it is fit we should do something in behalf of our heroine; and, therefore, we must beg the reader's attention while we draw a diagram or two that will assist him in gaining a right idea of her.

Do you see yonder brown house, with its broad roof sloping almost to the ground on one side, and a great, unsupported, sun bonnet of a piazza shooting out over the front door? You must often have noticed it; you have seen its tall well sweep, relieved against the clear evening sky, or observed the feather beds and bolsters lounging out of its chamber windows on a still summer morning; you recollect its gate, that swung

with a chain and a great stone; its pantry window, latticed with little brown slabs, and looking out upon a forest of bean poles. You remember the zephyrs that used to play among its pea brush, and shake the long tassels of its corn patch, and how vainly any zephyr might essay to perform similar flirtations with the considerate cabbages that were solemnly vegetating near by. Then there was the whole neighborhood of purple-leaved beets and feathery parsnips; there were the billows of gooseberry bushes rolled up by the fence, interspersed with rows of quince trees; and far off in one corner was one little patch, penuriously devoted to ornament, which flamed with marigolds, poppies, snappers, and four-o'clocks. Then there was a little box by itself with one rose geranium in it, which seemed to look around the garden as much like a stranger as a French dancing master in a Yankee meeting house.

That is the dwelling of Uncle Lot Griswold. Uncle Lot, as he was commonly called, had a character that a painter would sketch for its lights and contrasts rather than its symmetry. He was a chestnut burr, abounding with briars without and with substantial goodness within. He had the strong-grained practical sense, the calculating worldly wisdom of his class of people in New England; he had, too, a kindly heart; but all the strata of his character were crossed by a vein of surly petulance, that, half way between joke and earnest, colored every thing that he said and did.

If you asked a favor of Uncle Lot, he generally kept you arguing half an hour, to prove that you really needed it, and to tell you that he could

not all the while be troubled with helping one body or another, all which time you might observe him regularly making his preparations to grant your request, and see, by an odd glimmer of his eye, that he was preparing to let you hear the "conclusion of the whole matter," which was, "Well, well--I guess--I'll go, on the hull--I 'spose I must, at least;" so off he would go and work while the day lasted, and then wind up with a farewell exhortation "not to be a callin' on your neighbors when you could get along without." If any of Uncle Lot's neighbors were in any trouble, he was always at hand to tell them that "they shouldn't a' done so;" that "it was strange they couldn't had more sense;" and then to close his exhortations by laboring more diligently than any to bring them out of their difficulties, groaning in spirit, meanwhile, that folks would make people so much trouble.

"Uncle Lot, father wants to know if you will lend him your hoe to-day," says a little boy, making his way across a cornfield.

"Why don't your father use his own hoe?"

"Ours is broke."

"Broke! How came it broke?"

"I broke it yesterday, trying to hit a squirrel."

"What business had you to be hittin' squirrels with a hoe? say!"



"But father wants to borrow yours."

"Why don't you have that mended? It's a great pester to have every body usin' a body's things."

"Well, I can borrow one some where else, I suppose," says the suppliant. After the boy has stumbled across the ploughed ground, and is fairly over the fence, Uncle Lot calls,--

"Halloo, there, you little rascal! what are you goin' off without the hoe for?"

"I didn't know as you meant to lend it."

"I didn't say I wouldn't, did I? Here, come and take it.--stay, I'll bring it; and do tell your father not to be a lettin' you hunt squirrels with his hoes next time."

Uncle Lot's household consisted of Aunt Sally, his wife, and an only son and daughter; the former, at the time our story begins, was at a neighboring literary institution. Aunt Sally was precisely as clever, as easy to be entreated, and kindly in externals, as her helpmate was the reverse. She was one of those respectable, pleasant old ladies whom you might often have met on the way to church on a Sunday, equipped with a great fan and a psalm book, and carrying some dried orange peel or a

stalk of fennel, to give to the children if they were sleepy in meeting. She was as cheerful and domestic as the tea kettle that sung by her kitchen fire, and slipped along among Uncle Lot's angles and peculiarities as if there never was any thing the matter in the world; and the same mantle of sunshine seemed to have fallen on Miss Grace, her only daughter.

Pretty in her person and pleasant in her ways, endowed with native self-possession and address, lively and chatty, having a mind and a will of her own, yet good-humored withal, Miss Grace was a universal favorite. It would have puzzled a city lady to understand how Grace, who never was out of Newbury in her life, knew the way to speak, and act, and behave, on all occasions, exactly as if she had been taught how. She was just one of those wild flowers which you may sometimes see waving its little head in the woods, and looking so civilized and garden-like, that you wonder if it really did come up and grow there by nature. She was an adept in all household concerns, and there was something amazingly pretty in her energetic way of bustling about, and "putting things to rights." Like most Yankee damsels, she had a longing after the tree of knowledge, and, having exhausted the literary fountains of a district school, she fell to reading whatsoever came in her way. True, she had but little to read; but what she perused she had her own thoughts upon, so that a person of information, in talking with her, would feel a constant wondering pleasure to find that she had so much more to say of this, that, and the other thing than he expected.

Uncle Lot, like every one else, felt the magical brightness of his daughter, and was delighted with her praises, as might be discerned by his often finding occasion to remark that "he didn't see why the boys need to be all the time a' comin' to see Grace, for she was nothing so extror'nary, after all." About all matters and things at home she generally had her own way, while Uncle Lot would scold and give up with a regular good grace that was quite creditable.

"Father," says Grace, "I want to have a party next week."

"You sha'n't go to havin' your parties, Grace. I always have to eat bits and ends a fortnight after you have one, and I won't have it so." And so Uncle Lot walked out, and Aunt Sally and Miss Grace proceeded to make the cake and pies for the party.

When Uncle Lot came home, he saw a long array of pies and rows of cakes on the kitchen table.

"Grace--Grace--Grace, I say! What is all this here flummery for?"

"Why, it is to eat, father," said Grace, with a good-natured look of consciousness.

Uncle Lot tried his best to look sour; but his visage began to wax comical as he looked at his merry daughter; so he said nothing, but quietly sat down to his dinner.

"Father," said Grace, after dinner, "we shall want two more candlesticks next week."

"Why, can't you have your party with what you've got?"

"No, father, we want two more."

"I can't afford it, Grace--there's no sort of use on't--and you sha'n't have any."

"O, father, now do," said Grace.

"I won't, neither," said Uncle Lot, as he sallied out of the house, and took the road to Comfort Scran's store.

In half an hour he returned again; and fumbling in his pocket, and drawing forth a candlestick, levelled it at Grace.

"There's your candlestick."

"But, father, I said I wanted two."

"Why, can't you make one do?"

"No, I can't; I must have two."

"Well, then, there's t'other; and here's a fol-de-rol for you to tie round your neck." So saying, he bolted for the door, and took himself off with all speed. It was much after this fashion that matters commonly went on in the brown house.

But having tarried long on the way, we must proceed with the main story.

James thought Miss Grace was a glorious girl; and as to what Miss Grace thought of Master James, perhaps it would not have been developed had she not been called to stand on the defensive for him with Uncle Lot.

For, from the time that the whole village of Newbury began to be wholly given unto the praise of Master James, Uncle Lot set his face as a flint against him--from the laudable fear of following the multitude. He therefore made conscience of stoutly gainsaying every thing that was said in his behalf, which, as James was in high favor with Aunt Sally, he had frequent opportunities to do.

So when Miss Grace perceived that Uncle Lot did not like our hero as much as he ought to do, she, of course, was bound to like him well enough to make up for it. Certain it is that they were remarkably happy in finding opportunities of being acquainted; that James waited on her, as a matter of course, from singing school; that he volunteered making a new box for her geranium on an improved plan; and above all, that he was remarkably particular in his attentions to Aunt Sally--a stroke of policy which showed that James had a natural genius for this sort of

matters. Even when emerging from the meeting house in full glory, with flute and psalm book under his arm, he would stop to ask her how she did; and if it was cold weather, he would carry her foot stove all the way home from meeting, discoursing upon the sermon, and other serious matters, as Aunt Sally observed, "in the pleasantest, prettiest way that ever ye see." This flute was one of the crying sins of James in the eyes of Uncle Lot. James was particularly fond of it, because he had learned to play on it by intuition; and on the decease of the old pitchpipe, which was slain by a fall from the gallery, he took the liberty to introduce the flute in its place. For this, and other sins, and for the good reasons above named, Uncle Lot's countenance was not towards James, neither could he be moved to him-ward by any manner of means.

To all Aunt Sally's good words and kind speeches, he had only to say that "he didn't like him; that he hated to see him a' manifesting and glorifying there in the front gallery Sundays, and a' acting every where as if he was master of all: he didn't like it, and he wouldn't." But our hero was no whit cast down or discomfited by the malcontent aspect of Uncle Lot. On the contrary, when report was made to him of divers of his hard speeches, he only shrugged his shoulders, with a very satisfied air, and remarked that "he knew a thing or two for all that."

"Why, James," said his companion and chief counsellor, "do you think Grace likes you?"

"I don't know," said our hero, with a comfortable appearance of

certainty.

"But you can't get her, James, if Uncle Lot is cross about it."

"Fudge! I can make Uncle Lot like me if I have a mind to try."

"Well then, Jim, you'll have to give up that flute of yours, I tell you now."

"Fa, sol, la--I can make him like me and my flute too."

"Why, how will you do it?"

"O, I'll work it," said our hero.

"Well, Jim, I tell you now, you don't know Uncle Lot if you say so; for he is just the settest critter in his way that ever you saw."

"I do know Uncle Lot, though, better than most folks; he is no more cross than I am; and as to his being set, you have nothing to do but make him think he is in his own way when he is in yours--that is all."

"Well," said the other, "but you see I don't believe it."

"And I'll bet you a gray squirrel that I'll go there this very evening, and get him to like me and my flute both," said James.

Accordingly the late sunshine of that afternoon shone full on the yellow buttons of James as he proceeded to the place of conflict. It was a bright, beautiful evening. A thunder storm had just cleared away, and the silver clouds lay rolled up in masses around the setting sun; the rain drops were sparkling and winking to each other over the ends of the leaves, and all the bluebirds and robins, breaking forth into song, made the little green valley as merry as a musical box.

James's soul was always overflowing with that kind of poetry which consists in feeling unspeakably happy; and it is not to be wondered at, considering where he was going, that he should feel in a double ecstasy on the present occasion. He stepped gayly along, occasionally springing over a fence to the right to see whether the rain had swollen the trout brook, or to the left to notice the ripening of Mr. Somebody's watermelons--for James always had an eye on all his neighbors' matters as well as his own.

In this way he proceeded till he arrived at the picket fence that marked the commencement of Uncle Lot's ground. Here he stopped to consider. Just then four or five sheep walked up, and began also to consider a loose picket, which was hanging just ready to drop off; and James began to look at the sheep. "Well, mister," said he, as he observed the leader judiciously drawing himself through the gap, "in with you--just what I wanted;" and having waited a moment to ascertain that all the company were likely to follow, he ran with all haste towards the house, and



swinging open the gate, pressed all breathless to the door.

"Uncle Lot, there are four or five sheep in your garden!" Uncle Lot dropped his whetstone and scythe.

"I'll drive them out," said our hero; and with that, he ran down the garden alley, and made a furious descent on the enemy; bestirring himself, as Bunyan says, "lustily and with good courage," till every sheep had skipped out much quicker than it skipped in; and then, springing over the fence, he seized a great stone, and nailed on the picket so effectually that no sheep could possibly encourage the hope of getting in again. This was all the work of a minute, and he was back again; but so exceedingly out of breath that it was necessary for him to stop a moment and rest himself. Uncle Lot looked ungraciously satisfied.

"What under the canopy set you to scampering so?" said he; "I could a' driv out them critturs myself."

"If you are at all particular about driving them out yourself, I can let them in again," said James.

Uncle Lot looked at him with an odd sort of twinkle in the corner of his eye.

"'Spose I must ask you to walk in," said he.

"Much obliged," said James; "but I am in a great hurry." So saying, he started in very business-like fashion towards the gate.

"You'd better jest stop a minute."

"Can't stay a minute."

"I don't see what possesses you to be all the while in such a hurry; a body would think you had all creation on your shoulders."

"Just my situation, Uncle Lot," said James, swinging open the gate.

"Well, at any rate, have a drink of cider, can't ye?" said Uncle Lot, who was now quite engaged to have his own way in the case.

James found it convenient to accept this invitation, and Uncle Lot was twice as good-natured as if he had staid in the first of the matter.

Once fairly forced into the premises, James thought fit to forget his long walk and excess of business, especially as about that moment Aunt Sally and Miss Grace returned from an afternoon call. You may be sure that the last thing these respectable ladies looked for was to find Uncle Lot and Master James tête-à-tête, over a pitcher of cider; and when, as they entered, our hero looked up with something of a mischievous air, Miss Grace, in particular, was so puzzled that it took her at least a quarter of an hour to untie her bonnet strings. But James

staid, and acted the agreeable to perfection. First, he must needs go down into the garden to look at Uncle Lot's wonderful cabbages, and then he promenaded all around the corn patch, stopping every few moments and looking up with an appearance of great gratification, as if he had never seen such corn in his life; and then he examined Uncle Lot's favorite apple tree with an expression of wonderful interest.

"I never!" he broke forth, having stationed himself against the fence opposite to it; "what kind of an apple tree is that?"

"It's a bellflower, or somethin' another," said Uncle Lot.

"Why, where did you get it? I never saw such apples!" said our hero, with his eyes still fixed on the tree.

Uncle Lot pulled up a stalk or two of weeds, and threw them over the fence, just to show that he did not care any thing about the matter; and then he came up and stood by James.

"Nothin' so remarkable, as I know on," said he.

Just then, Grace came to say that supper was ready. Once seated at table, it was astonishing to see the perfect and smiling assurance with which our hero continued his addresses to Uncle Lot. It sometimes goes a great way towards making people like us to take it for granted that they do already; and upon this principle James proceeded. He talked, laughed,

told stories, and joked with the most fearless assurance, occasionally seconding his words by looking Uncle Lot in the face, with a countenance so full of good will as would have melted any snowdrift of prejudices in the world.

James also had one natural accomplishment, more courtier-like than all the diplomacy in Europe, and that was the gift of feeling a real interest for any body in five minutes; so that, if he began to please in jest, he generally ended in earnest. With great simplicity of mind, he had a natural tact for seeing into others, and watched their motions with the same delight with which a child gazes at the wheels and springs of a watch, to "see what it will do."

The rough exterior and latent kindness of Uncle Lot were quite a spirit-stirring study; and when tea was over, as he and Grace happened to be standing together in the front door, he broke forth,--

"I do really like your father, Grace!"

"Do you?" said Grace.

"Yes, I do. He has something in him, and I like him all the better for having to fish it out."

"Well, I hope you will make him like you," said Grace, unconsciously; and then she stopped, and looked a little ashamed.

James was too well bred to see this, or look as if Grace meant any more than she said--a kind of breeding not always attendant on more fashionable polish--so he only answered,--

"I think I shall, Grace, though I doubt whether I can get him to own it."

"He is the kindest man that ever was," said Grace; "and he always acts as if he was ashamed of it."

James turned a little away, and looked at the bright evening sky, which was glowing like a calm, golden sea; and over it was the silver new moon, with one little star to hold the candle for her. He shook some bright drops off from a rosebush near by, and watched to see them shine as they fell, while Grace stood very quietly waiting for him to speak again.

"Grace," said he, at last, "I am going to college this fall."

"So you told me yesterday," said Grace.

James stooped down over Grace's geranium, and began to busy himself with pulling off all the dead leaves, remarking in the mean while,--

"And if I do get him to like me, Grace, will you like me too?"

"I like you now very well," said Grace.

"Come, Grace, you know what I mean," said James, looking steadfastly at the top of the apple tree.

"Well, I wish, then, you would understand what I mean, without my saying any more about it," said Grace.

"O, to be sure I will!" said our hero, looking up with a very intelligent air; and so, as Aunt Sally would say, the matter was settled, with "no words about it."

Now shall we narrate how our hero, as he saw Uncle Lot approaching the door, had the impudence to take out his flute, and put the parts together, arranging and adjusting the stops with great composure?

"Uncle Lot," said he, looking up, "this is the best flute that ever I saw."

"I hate them tooting critturs," said Uncle Lot, snappishly.

"I declare! I wonder how you can," said James, "for I do think they exceed----"

So saying, he put the flute to his mouth, and ran up and down a long

flourish.

"There! what do you think of that?" said he, looking in Uncle Lot's face with much delight.

Uncle Lot turned and marched into the house, but soon faced to the right-about, and came out again, for James was fingering "Yankee Doodle"--that appropriate national air for the descendants of the Puritans.

Uncle Lot's patriotism began to bestir itself; and now, if it had been any thing, as he said, but "that 'are flute"--as it was, he looked more than once at James's fingers.

"How under the sun could you learn to do that?" said he.

"O, it's easy enough," said James, proceeding with another tune; and, having played it through, he stopped a moment to examine the joints of his flute, and in the mean time addressed Uncle Lot: "You can't think how grand this is for pitching tunes--I always pitch the tunes on Sunday with it."

"Yes; but I don't think it's a right and fit instrument for the Lord's house," said Uncle Lot.

"Why not? It is only a kind of a long pitchpipe, you see," said James;

"and, seeing the old one is broken, and this will answer, I don't see why it is not better than nothing."

"Why, yes, it may be better than nothing," said Uncle Lot; "but, as I always tell Grace and my wife, it ain't the right kind of instrument, after all; it ain't solemn."

"Solemn!" said James; "that is according as you work it: see here, now."

So saying, he struck up Old Hundred, and proceeded through it with great perseverance.

"There, now!" said he.

"Well, well, I don't know but it is," said Uncle Lot; "but, as I said at first, I don't like the look of it in meetin'."

"But yet you really think it is better than nothing," said James, "for you see I couldn't pitch my tunes without it."

"Maybe 'tis," said Uncle Lot; "but that isn't sayin' much."

This, however, was enough for Master James, who soon after departed, with his flute in his pocket, and Grace's last words in his heart; soliloquizing as he shut the gate, "There, now, I hope Aunt Sally won't go to praising me; for, just so sure as she does, I shall have it all to



do over again."

James was right in his apprehension. Uncle Lot could be privately converted, but not brought to open confession; and when, the next morning, Aunt Sally remarked, in the kindness of her heart,--

"Well, I always knew you would come to like James," Uncle Lot only responded, "Who said I did like him?"

"But I'm sure you seemed to like him last night."

"Why, I couldn't turn him out o' doors, could I? I don't think nothin' of him but what I always did."

But it was to be remarked that Uncle Lot contented himself at this time with the mere general avowal, without running it into particulars, as was formerly his wont. It was evident that the ice had begun to melt, but it might have been a long time in dissolving, had not collateral incidents assisted.

It so happened that, about this time, George Griswold, the only son before referred to, returned to his native village, after having completed his theological studies at a neighboring institution. It is interesting to mark the gradual development of mind and heart, from the time that the white-headed, bashful boy quits the country village for college, to the period when he returns, a formed and matured man, to

notice how gradually the rust of early prejudices begins to cleave from him--how his opinions, like his handwriting, pass from the cramped and limited forms of a country school into that confirmed and characteristic style which is to mark the man for life. In George this change was remarkably striking. He was endowed by nature with uncommon acuteness of feeling and fondness for reflection--qualities as likely as any to render a child backward and uninteresting in early life.

When he left Newbury for college, he was a taciturn and apparently phlegmatic boy, only evincing sensibility by blushing and looking particularly stupefied whenever any body spoke to him. Vacation after vacation passed, and he returned more and more an altered being; and he who once shrunk from the eye of the deacon, and was ready to sink if he met the minister, now moved about among the dignitaries of the place with all the composure of a superior being.

It was only to be regretted that, while the mind improved, the physical energies declined, and that every visit to his home found him paler, thinner, and less prepared in body for the sacred profession to which he had devoted himself. But now he was returned, a minister--a real minister, with a right to stand in the pulpit and preach; and what a joy and glory to Aunt Sally--and to Uncle Lot, if he were not ashamed to own it!

The first Sunday after he came, it was known far and near that George Griswold was to preach; and never was a more ready and expectant

audience.

As the time for reading the first psalm approached, you might see the white-headed men turning their faces attentively towards the pulpit; the anxious and expectant old women, with their little black bonnets, bent forward to see him rise. There were the children looking, because every body else looked; there was Uncle Lot in the front pew, his face considerably adjusted; there was Aunt Sally, seeming as pleased as a mother could seem; and Miss Grace, lifting her sweet face to her brother, like a flower to the sun; there was our friend James in the front gallery, his joyous countenance a little touched with sobriety and expectation; in short, a more embarrassingly attentive audience never greeted the first effort of a young minister. Under these circumstances there was something touching in the fervent self-forgetfulness which characterized the first exercises of the morning--something which moved every one in the house.

The devout poetry of his prayer, rich with the Orientalism of Scripture, and eloquent with the expression of strong yet chastened emotion, breathed over his audience like music, hushing every one to silence, and beguiling every one to feeling. In the sermon, there was the strong intellectual nerve, the constant occurrence of argument and statement, which distinguishes a New England discourse; but it was touched with life by the intense, yet half-subdued, feeling with which he seemed to utter it. Like the rays of the sun, it enlightened and melted at the same moment.

The strong peculiarities of New England doctrine, involving, as they do, all the hidden machinery of mind, all the mystery of its divine relations and future progression, and all the tremendous uncertainties of its eternal good or ill, seemed to have dwelt in his mind, to have burned in his thoughts, to have wrestled with his powers, and they gave to his manner the fervency almost of another world; while the exceeding paleness of his countenance, and a tremulousness of voice that seemed to spring from bodily weakness, touched the strong workings of his mind with a pathetic interest, as if the being so early absorbed in another world could not be long for this.

When the services were over, the congregation dispersed with the air of people who had felt rather than heard; and all the criticism that followed was similar to that of old Deacon Hart--an upright, shrewd man--who, as he lingered a moment at the church door, turned and gazed with unwonted feeling at the young preacher.

"He's a blessed cre'tur!" said he, the tears actually making their way to his eyes; "I hain't been so near heaven this many a day. He's a blessed cre'tur of the Lord; that's my mind about him!"

As for our friend James, he was at first sobered, then deeply moved, and at last wholly absorbed by the discourse; and it was only when meeting was over that he began to think where he really was.

With all his versatile activity, James had a greater depth of mental capacity than he was himself aware of, and he began to feel a sort of electric affinity for the mind that had touched him in a way so new; and when he saw the mild minister standing at the foot of the pulpit stairs, he made directly towards him.

"I do want to hear more from you," said he, with a face full of earnestness; "may I walk home with you?"

"It is a long and warm walk," said George, smiling.

"O, I don't care for that, if it does not trouble you," said James; and leave being gained, you might have seen them slowly passing along under the trees, James pouring forth all the floods of inquiry which the sudden impulse of his mind had brought out, and supplying his guide with more questions and problems for solution than he could have gone through with in a month.

"I cannot answer all your questions now," said he, as they stopped at Uncle Lot's gate.

"Well, then, when will you?" said James, eagerly. "Let me come home with you to-night?"

The minister smiled assent, and James departed so full of new thoughts, that he passed Grace without even seeing her. From that time a

friendship commenced between the two, which was a beautiful illustration of the affinities of opposites. It was like a friendship between morning and evening--all freshness and sunshine on one side, and all gentleness and peace on the other.

The young minister, worn by long-continued ill health, by the fervency of his own feelings, and the gravity of his own reasonings, found pleasure in the healthful buoyancy of a youthful, unexhausted mind, while James felt himself sobered and made better by the moonlight tranquillity of his friend. It is one mark of a superior mind to understand and be influenced by the superiority of others; and this was the case with James. The ascendancy which his new friend acquired over him was unlimited, and did more in a month towards consolidating and developing his character than all the four years' course of a college. Our religious habits are likely always to retain the impression of the first seal which stamped them, and in this case it was a peculiarly happy one. The calmness, the settled purpose, the mild devotion of his friend, formed a just alloy to the energetic and reckless buoyancy of James's character, and awakened in him a set of feelings without which the most vigorous mind must be incomplete.

The effect of the ministrations of the young pastor, in awakening attention to the subjects of his calling in the village, was marked, and of a kind which brought pleasure to his own heart. But, like all other excitement, it tends to exhaustion, and it was not long before he sensibly felt the decline of the powers of life. To the best regulated

mind there is something bitter in the relinquishment of projects for which we have been long and laboriously preparing, and there is something far more bitter in crossing the long-cherished expectations of friends. All this George felt. He could not bear to look on his mother, hanging on his words and following his steps with eyes of almost childish delight--on his singular father, whose whole earthly ambition was bound up in his success, and think how soon the "candle of their old age" must be put out. When he returned from a successful effort, it was painful to see the old man, so evidently delighted, and so anxious to conceal his triumph, as he would seat himself in his chair, and begin with, "George, that 'are doctrine is rather of a puzzler; but you seem to think you've got the run on't. I should re'ly like to know what business you have to think you know better than other folks about it;" and, though he would cavil most courageously at all George's explanations, yet you might perceive, through all, that he was inly uplifted to hear how his boy could talk.

If George was engaged in argument with any one else, he would sit by, with his head bowed down, looking out from under his shaggy eyebrows with a shamefaced satisfaction very unusual with him. Expressions of affection from the naturally gentle are not half so touching as those which are forced out from the hard-favored and severe; and George was affected, even to pain, by the evident pride and regard of his father.

"He never said so much to any body before," thought he, "and what will he do if I die?"

In such thoughts as these Grace found her brother engaged one still autumn morning, as he stood leaning against the garden fence.

"What are you solemnizing here for, this bright day, brother George?" said she, as she bounded down the alley.

The young man turned and looked on her happy face with a sort of twilight smile.

"How happy you are, Grace!" said he.

"To be sure I am; and you ought to be too, because you are better."

"I am happy, Grace--that is, I hope I shall be."

"You are sick, I know you are," said Grace; "you look worn out. O, I wish your heart could spring once, as mine does."

"I am not well, dear Grace, and I fear I never shall be," said he, turning away, and fixing his eyes on the fading trees opposite.

"O George! dear George, don't, don't say that; you'll break all our hearts," said Grace, with tears in her own eyes.

"Yes, but it is true, sister: I do not feel it on my own account so



much as----However," he added, "it will all be the same in heaven."

It was but a week after this that a violent cold hastened the progress of debility into a confirmed malady. He sunk very fast. Aunt Sally, with the self-deceit of a fond and cheerful heart, thought every day that "he would be better," and Uncle Lot resisted conviction with all the obstinate pertinacity of his character, while the sick man felt that he had not the heart to undeceive them.

James was now at the house every day, exhausting all his energy and invention in the case of his friend; and any one who had seen him in his hours of recklessness and glee, could scarcely recognize him as the being whose step was so careful, whose eye so watchful, whose voice and touch were so gentle, as he moved around the sick bed. But the same quickness which makes a mind buoyant in gladness, often makes it gentlest and most sympathetic in sorrow.

It was now nearly morning in the sick room. George had been restless and feverish all night; but towards day he fell into a slight slumber, and James sat by his side, almost holding his breath lest he should waken him. It was yet dusk, but the sky was brightening with a solemn glow, and the stars were beginning to disappear; all, save the bright and morning one, which, standing alone in the east, looked tenderly through the casement, like the eye of our heavenly Father, watching over us when all earthly friendships are fading.

George awoke with a placid expression of countenance, and fixing his eyes on the brightening sky, murmured faintly,--

"The sweet, immortal morning sheds  
Its blushes round the spheres."

A moment after, a shade passed over his face; he pressed his fingers over his eyes, and the tears dropped silently on his pillow.

"George! dear George!" said James, bending over him.

"It's my friends--it's my father--my mother," said he, faintly.

"Jesus Christ will watch over them," said James, soothingly.

"O, yes, I know he will; for he loved his own which were in the world; he loved them unto the end. But I am dying--and before I have done any good."

"O, do not say so," said James; "think, think what you have done, if only for me. God bless you for it! God will bless you for it; it will follow you to heaven; it will bring me there. Yes, I will do as you have taught me. I will give my life, my soul, my whole strength to it; and then you will not have lived in vain."

George smiled, and looked upward; "his face was as that of an angel;"

and James, in his warmth, continued,--

"It is not I alone who can say this; we all bless you; every one in this place blesses you; you will be had in everlasting remembrance by some hearts here, I know."

"Bless God!" said George.

"We do," said James. "I bless him that I ever knew you; we all bless him, and we love you, and shall forever."

The glow that had kindled over the pale face of the invalid again faded as he said,--

"But, James, I must, I ought to tell my father and mother; I ought to, and how can I?"

At that moment the door opened, and Uncle Lot made his appearance. He seemed struck with the paleness of George's face; and coming to the side of the bed, he felt his pulse, and laid his hand anxiously on his forehead, and clearing his voice several times, inquired "if he didn't feel a little better."

"No, father," said George; then taking his hand, he looked anxiously in his face, and seemed to hesitate a moment. "Father," he began, "you know that we ought to submit to God."

There was something in his expression at this moment which flashed the truth into the old man's mind. He dropped his son's hand with an exclamation of agony, and turning quickly, left the room.

"Father! father!" said Grace, trying to rouse him, as he stood with his arms folded by the kitchen window.

"Get away, child!" said he, roughly.

"Father, mother says breakfast is ready."

"I don't want any breakfast," said he, turning short about. "Sally, what are you fixing in that 'ere porringer?"

"O, it's only a little tea for George; 'twill comfort him up, and make him feel better, poor fellow."

"You won't make him feel better--he's gone," said Uncle Lot, hoarsely.

"O, dear heart, no!" said Aunt Sally.

"Be still a' contradicting me; I won't be contradicted all the time by nobody. The short of the case is, that George is goin' to die just as we've got him ready to be a minister and all; and I wish to pity I was in my grave myself, and so----" said Uncle Lot, as he plunged out of the

door, and shut it after him.

It is well for man that there is one Being who sees the suffering heart as it is, and not as it manifests itself through the repellances of outward infirmity, and who, perhaps, feels more for the stern and wayward than for those whose gentler feelings win for them human sympathy. With all his singularities, there was in the heart of Uncle Lot a depth of religious sincerity; but there are few characters where religion does any thing more than struggle with natural defect, and modify what would else be far worse.

In this hour of trial, all the native obstinacy and pertinacity of the old man's character rose, and while he felt the necessity of submission, it seemed impossible to submit; and thus, reproaching himself, struggling in vain to repress the murmurs of nature, repulsing from him all external sympathy, his mind was "tempest-tossed, and not comforted."

It was on the still afternoon of the following Sabbath that he was sent for, in haste, to the chamber of his son. He entered, and saw that the hour was come. The family were all there. Grace and James, side by side, bent over the dying one, and his mother sat afar off, with her face hid in her apron, "that she might not see the death of the child." The aged minister was there, and the Bible lay open before him. The father walked to the side of the bed. He stood still, and gazed on the face now brightening with "life and immortality." The son lifted up his eyes; he saw his father, smiled, and put out his hand. "I am glad you are

come," said he. "O George, to the pity, don't! don't smile on me so! I know what is coming; I have tried, and tried, and I can't, I can't have it so;" and his frame shook, and he sobbed audibly. The room was still as death; there was none that seemed able to comfort him. At last the son repeated, in a sweet, but interrupted voice, those words of man's best Friend: "Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father's house are many mansions."

"Yes; but I can't help being troubled; I suppose the Lord's will must be done, but it'll kill me."

"O father, don't, don't break my heart," said the son, much agitated. "I shall see you again in heaven, and you shall see me again; and then 'your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.'"

"I never shall get to heaven if I feel as I do now," said the old man.

"I cannot have it so."

The mild face of the sufferer was overcast. "I wish he saw all that I do," said he, in a low voice. Then looking towards the minister, he articulated, "Pray for us."

They knelt in prayer. It was soothing, as real prayer always must be; and when they rose, every one seemed more calm. But the sufferer was exhausted; his countenance changed; he looked on his friends; there was a faint whisper, "Peace I leave with you"--and he was in heaven.

We need not dwell on what followed. The seed sown by the righteous often blossoms over their grave; and so was it with this good man. The words of peace which he spoke unto his friends while he was yet with them came into remembrance after he was gone; and though he was laid in the grave with many tears, yet it was with softened and submissive hearts.

"The Lord bless him," said Uncle Lot, as he and James were standing, last of all, over the grave. "I believe my heart is gone to heaven with him; and I think the Lord really did know what was best, after all."

Our friend James seemed now to become the support of the family; and the bereaved old man unconsciously began to transfer to him the affections that had been left vacant.

"James," said he to him one day, "I suppose you know that you are about the same to me as a son."

"I hope so," said James, kindly.

"Well, well, you'll go to college next week, and none o' y'r keepin' school to get along. I've got enough to bring you safe out--that is, if you'll be car'ful and stiddy."

James knew the heart too well to refuse a favor in which the poor old man's mind was comforting itself. He had the self-command to abstain

from any extraordinary expressions of gratitude, but took it kindly, as a matter of course.

"Dear Grace," said he to her, the last evening before he left home, "I am changed; we both are altered since we first knew each other; and now I am going to be gone a long time, but I am sure----"

He stopped to arrange his thoughts.

"Yes, you may be sure of all those things that you wish to say, and cannot," said Grace.

"Thank you," said James; then, looking thoughtfully, he added, "God help me. I believe I have mind enough to be what I mean to; but whatever I am or have shall be given to God and my fellow-men; and then, Grace, your brother in heaven will rejoice over me."

"I believe he does now," said Grace. "God bless you, James; I don't know what would have become of us if you had not been here."

"Yes, you will live to be like him, and to do even more good," she added, her face brightening as she spoke, till James thought she really must be right.

\* \* \* \* \*



It was five years after this that James was spoken of as an eloquent and successful minister in the state of C., and was settled in one of its most thriving villages. Late one autumn evening, a tall, bony, hard-favored man was observed making his way into the outskirts of the place.

"Halloa, there!" he called to a man over the other side of a fence; "what town is this 'ere?"

"It's Farmington, sir."

"Well, I want to know if you know any thing of a boy of mine that lives here?"

"A boy of yours? Who?"

"Why, I've got a boy here, that's livin' on the town, and I thought I'd jest look him up."

"I don't know any boy that is living on the town. What's his name?"

"Why," said the old man, pushing his hat off from his forehead, "I believe they call him James Benton."

"James Benton! Why, that is our minister's name!"

"O, wal, I believe he is the minister, come to think on't. He's a boy o' mine, though. Where does he live?"

"In that white house that you see set back from the road there, with all those trees round it."

At this instant a tall, manly-looking person approached from behind. Have we not seen that face before? It is a touch graver than of old, and its lines have a more thoughtful significance; but all the vivacity of James Benton sparkles in that quick smile as his eye falls on the old man.

"I thought you could not keep away from us long," said he, with the prompt cheerfulness of his boyhood, and laying hold of both of Uncle Lot's hard hands.

They approached the gate; a bright face glances past the window, and in a moment Grace is at the door.

"Father! dear father!"

"You'd better make believe be so glad," said Uncle Lot, his eyes glistening as he spoke.

"Come, come, father, I have authority in these days," said Grace, drawing him towards the house; "so no disrespectful speeches; away with

your hat and coat, and sit down in this great chair."

"So, ho! Miss Grace," said Uncle Lot, "you are at your old tricks, ordering round as usual. Well, if I must, I must;" so down he sat.

"Father," said Grace, as he was leaving them, after a few days' stay, "it's Thanksgiving day next month, and you and mother must come and stay with us."

Accordingly, the following month found Aunt Sally and Uncle Lot by the minister's fireside, delighted witnesses of the Thanksgiving presents which a willing people were pouring in; and the next day they had once more the pleasure of seeing a son of theirs in the sacred desk, and hearing a sermon that every body said was "the best that he ever preached;" and it is to be remarked, that this was the standing commentary on all James's discourses, so that it was evident he was going on unto perfection.

"There's a great deal that's worth having in this 'ere life after all," said Uncle Lot, as he sat by the coals of the bright evening fire of that day; "that is, if we'd only take it when the Lord lays it in our way."

"Yes," said James; "and let us only take it as we should, and this life will be cheerfulness, and the next fulness of joy."