

Change is one of the grand features, not only of our life, but of our age; the old must give place to the new; the natural to the artificial; the beautiful to the useful, and they who would seek to see the face of nature unmarred by the hand of man, must set forth as upon a pilgrimage, almost, to a far-off land.

X.

To those, whose feet have not always trodden the crowded highways of life, but oftener its less-frequented by-ways, how varied seems the lot of man, how countless the phases of joy and sorrow which fill up the measure of his cup!

Such was the tenor of my thoughts, as on a day in July, I sat on the crumbling threshold of that picturesque ruin, known in the vicinity as "Ramsay's mill." It was a spot round which sad and happy associations alike clustered; once the scene of all those domestic joys which make life pleasant and desirable; but error, and at last guilt, had crept in, bringing blight and sorrow with their train of misery and desolation.

The dwelling-house, which for many years had been the shelter of the miller and his family, was also tenantless and going to ruin. The doors had fallen from their fastenings, and the windows were open to the sun and storm, affording free passage to the swallows, which twittered joyously around and down the chimneys, and through the deserted rooms, unimpeded in their flight.

The little garden, once so thriving and productive, was overgrown with rank weeds, save here and there a sun-flower looking down from its tall stalk upon the miniature wilderness; yet, there was one remnant of domestic life left—a lonely cat, stealthily creeping along the overgrown paths and beds, in quest of a chance subsistence, loth to leave the home where she may have been fondled for years. But the petting mistress, on whose lap Tabby had slept so cosily the long winter evenings before the warm fireside, would fondle her no more, and the prattling child, whose cradle was so soft and warm, had gone too.

The mill-buildings were no less dilapidated: the huge wheel had grown mossy and decayed, and the flume that once carried the water upon it, was gaping with rents from the frost of many winters. The interior machinery had been mostly removed, to do its work elsewhere, leaving but cold and silent walls, upon which the cobwebs hung heavy and undisturbed.

Yet there, for many years, the trusty miller had plied his trade, till his white locks showed not the flour-dust that gathered on them.

Sons and daughters were born and reared in the dwelling near by, and grew up, some to be a blessing—others, the reverse. The boys were strong and hardy; and one, loving and dutiful, followed in his father's footsteps, and lightened many of his labors

The other, and the elder, loving better the noise of the great city than the clatter of the mill, which had become a familiar sound, left his father's roof with no parting word or blessing, and became a wanderer.

He had been his mother's favorite; but though her loving heart yearned after him and mourned him for years, even to the day when her sorrow went down into the grave with her, his shadow never again darkened his father's threshold.

Once only were faint tidings brought the old man of his long-lost son; but it were better that they should have been unheard, adding, as they did, another sorrow to those which burdened already the stricken household.

Mabel and Kate, the twin sisters, with the other brother, were left, and by their tender sympathy did much towards gladdening the declining days of their parents.

The girls were dissimilar in everything but age. Mabel was gentle and loving, fair-haired and azure-eyed: Kate haughty and impulsive, with hair and eyes dark as night.

She had more tact than her gentler sister, and knew so well how to school herself, that of the two, it was difficult to decide which had the greater charms.

Kate, however, was her father's favorite, yet it was her destiny to be "a thorn in his side," a reproach and sorrow to the neighborhood.

Mabel married, and with the trustfulness of her nature, bade farewell to all that was loved and familiar, and with many tears went to the far west, there to shed her gentle influence, and brighten a settler's home.

Kate went from home also, soon after her sister, but stealthily and by night. The flattery of an unprincipled man had won her heart, and in an hour of impulse she yielded to persuasion, and forsook her home. Words may not describe the sorrow that overwhelmed the old couple; suffice it to say, it broke their hearts.

On a stormy winter's night, a year or two after the last occurrence, the erring and long-lost brother once more stood in his childhood's home. He was a worn and broken man now, for the riotings and wanderings of years had done their work; but where was the once happy circle, of which he was the first broken link? But one, his brother, was left to tell him of the past. The wanderer had hoped to have his father's blessing before he died, but the grey-haired man had been in his grave for months. The prodigal-repentant, but still bound by shackles he could not break, and bowed down by remorse, soon filled a drunkard's grave.

Of that broken family, one only now remained at

home, and he, at last, gathering up all that was available of the little property, rejoined his sister in her western home, there to recount the trials they had borne, and strive once more to be happy.

It is a sad history! yet on that old door-step I had often sat before, but never with such feelings of sadness as then. To me, the story was familiar, but never had the loneliness of the spot seemed so oppressive, or its desolation more complete.

Gladly, if possible, would I have called back the vanished years, the miller to his labors, the fond mother and her children to the cheerful fireside, with all those joys so rudely blighted and gone forever.

It was the last week of October, in which I again trod the shady glens of Dark-Hollow; the trees were putting on a gayer livery, and the summer birds were flocking off to the more genial South, engendering in the spirit a feeling alike of gladness and melancholy.

The twilight was deepening in the woods, as I neared the old mill, which lay by my path homeward. In a locust grove, upon the sloping hillside not far distant, gleamed the white tents of a camp-meeting just convened, and as the wild melody of their spirit-stirring hymns echoed through the hollow, bringing dread thoughts of Death and the Judgment, I sat

again in that crumbling doorway, and listened to the sounds which so truly harmonized with the memories of the spot.

“They pealed along—those hymns of night,
The anger of the Lord their theme;
With echoing swell and cadence light,
O'er mountain wild and gliding stream.”

XI.

ONE of our own writers has said, “the value of life deepens incalculably with the privilege of travel.” The remark is a truthful one, but how few there are who fitly appreciate the privilege. There are thousands of our fellow-men who spend their lives in roaming the world; some, in search of change and pleasure; others, of wealth, whilst many more go shifting about like helmless barques, with

No guide—no quest,
Knowing no rest.

Some pluck flowers at every step; others, fruit, like the apples of the Dead Sea, fair to the sight, but filled with dust and ashes.

Some find their highest joy in alleviating the woes of others, whilst too many, like the Pharisee of old, pass by on the other side.

Such was my train of thought as I occupied a seat in a crowded stage-coach traversing a dusty highway of a neighboring State. As we pitched and rattled along, I amused myself by surveying the countenances of my fellow-travellers, as is my habit on such occa-