

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Alexander Wright possessed a spirit all sunshine. "No one" was ever refused the hospitality of his old "Eastern Shore home," where the fragrance of flowers and the purity of the air inspired every visitor who crossed the threshold.

"When winter cold brought Christmas old,
He opened his home to all,
And while he feasted 'all the great,'
He ne'r forgot the 'small.'"

"Here the 'kind' Master strayed around his grounds,
Directing his men and reviewing his hounds;
If some 'chance' guest arrived in 'weary' plight,
He 'more' than bade them 'welcome for the night';
Kind to 'profusion,' spared no pains to please,
Gave them the 'rich production' of his trees and fields."

"Reed's Creek" was the "seat" of hospitality, hilarity and "unrestrained" enjoyment. Here the young men and girls of the period met, in summer and winter, to enjoy moonlight strolls, rowing, and dancing to the tune of "Uncle Dick Hinton's" fiddle, which afforded "him" quite as much pleasure as the dancers. Uncle Dick would give an occasional grunt of satisfaction, as much as to say, "There's no tire in me or my fiddle, either." When the thermometer was below zero and the snow had fallen to a depth to make sleighing enjoyable, the merry tinkle of the sleigh-bells and the merrier voices of the beaux and belles filled the air with music, as the double and tandem teams drove gaily up the pretty lawn and the skilful drivers whirled around to the inviting "big front door" and were welcomed by Mr. Wright and his sister, "Miss Vallie," who never seemed to grow weary of young company. So great was the enjoyment of the guests at "Reed's Creek" that on one occasion a "lay reader" of our church in Centreville, who had been feasting on terrapin, canvas backs, and Chester River oysters, *went to sleep on his knees, saying his prayers.* Mr. Wright told it as a fine joke, that at day-break next morning "Parson Brown's" assistant was *still* on his knees. The "Reed's Creek" larder was always bountifully supplied with diamond-back terra-