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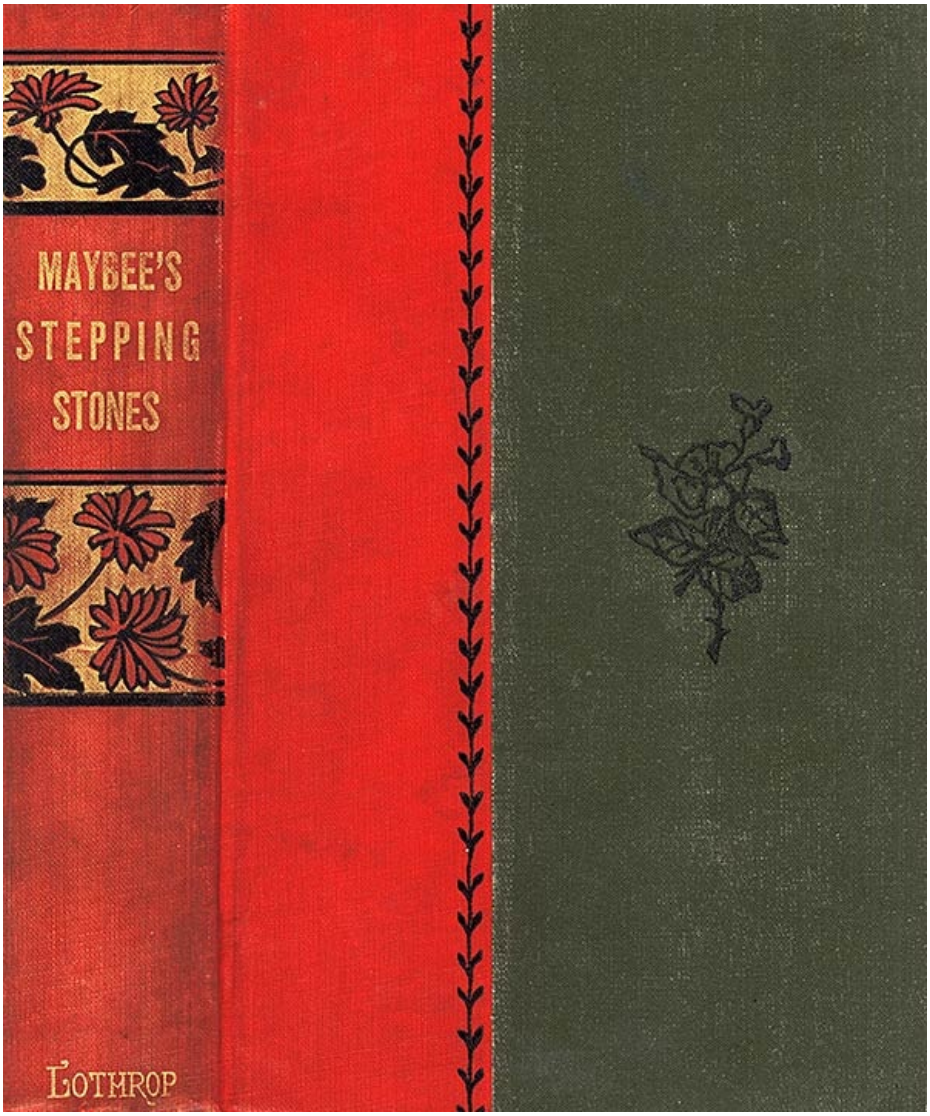

# MAYBEE’S STEPPING-STONES.


**WELCOME**

# MAYBEE'S

# STEPPING-STONES.

BY

ARCHIE FELL,

AUTHOR OF "EARTHEN VESSELS," "WORTH WHILE," "APRON-STRINGS," ETC.

**"The gold of that land is good."—Gen. 2:12.**

BOSTON:
D. LOTHROP AND COMPANY

To the

CHILDREN OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL,

INTO WHOSE HAPPY FACES

I HAVE LOOKED, FROM WEEK TO WEEK,

FOR SO MANY YEARS,

AND WHO HAVE LISTENED SO EAGERLY FOR THE SPOKEN

WORD, THOUGH NEVER SO UNWORTHY,

This little Volume

IS MOST LOVINGLY DEDICATED,

WITH A PRAYER

THAT IT MAY BE INDEED

TO THEM

*STEPPING-STONES TOWARDS HEAVEN*.

# CONTENTS.

# Maybee's Stepping-Stones.

## I.

### MOTHER KNOWS BEST.

**"But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him."**

"Tod's coming!" said Maybee, dancing up and down on the doorstep.

"How *do* you suppose they'll behave?" said Sue, taking books, lunch-basket, and two clean pocket-handkerchiefs from mamma's careful hands. "Tod is so queer; and what shall I do with Maybee's tongue?"

"Do exactly as you would be done by," said mamma, smoothing the anxious little forehead. "Remember, everything will be new and strange, and keep the wee things under your own wing as much as possible. Be very gentle and patient, help them over all the hard places, and my word for it, they will be your most obedient servants. I think Mabel means to be very good and quiet," she added, stooping to kiss the dimpled chin on the doorstep.

"Yes'm, 'course," nodded Maybee, skipping away to meet the freckle-faced Theodore, six months her junior. "On'y my ap'n's so slippery it will rattle, and Tod's got starch in his shoes, so's he can't go very sofferly."

Sue took Tod's other hand and walked on in her most matronly manner.

"Good-morning," said Bell Forbush, coming out of her gate. "You look for all the world like a hen with two chickens. Don't tell me those tots are going to school."

"Why not? Maybee is six," returned Sue, dignifiedly, "and Tod wants to go everywhere she does, so aunty said he might."

"They'll be such a bother, only, of course, you can leave them quite by themselves; they'll get broken in all the sooner."

"Mamma expects I'll take care of them," said Sue, dropping behind with Bell.

"Oh, fudge! Grown-up folks never seem to think we need any better fun than looking after such small fry, when really they ought to wait on us. In English schools they call them fags, and make them run errands and everything. Now, take my advice, Sue Sherman: put those young ones in a front seat, and just let them know who is who to begin with. Fan is going to bring her croquet this morning."

Mamma had said, "Be very gentle and patient, help them over the hard places, and they will be your obedient servants"; but to have them mind simply because they ought to was a deal easier, and besides, Sue was so fond of croquet and the children would only be in the way. "You mustn't stir one inch till I come back," she said, lifting the little dumpy figures into the seat Bell picked out, and running off, mallet in hand.

It just suited Maybee,—the shouting, laughing, and general confusion; but poor little Tod! He couldn't hide his face on Maybee's shoulder because it would "rumpfle" her "ap'on," and so he hung his round flaxen head at a right angle very trying to his bit of a neck. It was such a relief when a tall, black-whiskered man rang a bell and it grew suddenly quiet. He liked the singing and reading, and he could even venture to look around when the hum of study and recitation began. Maybee, on the contrary, found that dull and tiresome.

But we can't begin to tell all the day's trials,—how Maybee crept away to where Sue and Bell were busy with slates and pencils, and was picked up by the stern Mr. Blackman and dropped back into her seat as if she had been a spelling-book, after which Tod didn't dare wink when anybody was looking; and how Maybee crawled away again to an empty seat, and played "keep house" with the peanut-shells, bits of chalk and crumbs stowed away in the desk; how she meant just to touch her tongue to the ink-bottle, and tilted it up against her nose and all down the "slippery" white apron; how Sue gave them their lunch at noon, and sent them alone to the pump to wash; how Joe Travers sprinkled water all over them, and Tom Lawrence ran off with

the “apple turnovers”; how somebody called Tod a “toad,” and tried to scrub off his freckles, and everybody else laughed at the way Maybee’s saucy little tongue sputtered, and her big black eyes blazed with indignation; how Tod’s miseries reached a climax, just before school was dismissed, in a loud outburst of grief, and how Mr. Blackman, with pity in his heart no doubt, but multiplication and mountains and a million or less of other matters in his head, laid a huge hand on the little yellow pate, stopping the flow of tears as suddenly as a patent stop-cock; and how the tears turned to a big fountain of revenge way down in the angry little heart, so that when Sue tied on their hats and bade them walk straight along home, behind Bell and herself, Tod broke out with an emphatic “You bet! my’ll knock ’ou over.”

“Why, The-od-erer Smith! you wicked boy!” exclaimed Maybee, very much shocked. 12

Bell and Sue were already some ways ahead, talking over their new hats.

“All ’em big toads say it,” pouted Tod, “an’ my’s going to gwow till my can pound ’em heads off.”

Poor little Tod! Both lips and heart blackened with the touch of evil, so much worse than the dust and ink on Maybee’s white apron.

When the girls stopped at Bell’s gate the little flaxen and brown heads had both disappeared.

“They’ve lagged behind on purpose. Come in and I’ll show you my new dress,” said Bell. Then Sue must see it tried on. Of course the children had gone right along home. Sue wasn’t so sure, but Bell talked so fast it was half an hour before she could get away.

“They may have gone to aunty’s,” said mamma, looking anxiously up and down the 13
street, after Sue had stammered out something about “waiting,” and “supposing,” and “not thinking.”

But they were not at aunty’s, and the two mothers ran here and there, half wild with fright. Uncle Thed was out of town, but Papa Sherman was summoned from the bank; and in the gathering twilight, men, women, and children went hurrying about the village, across the outlying green fields, into the dark, lonesome woods. Sue, up-stairs, her face buried in the pillows, sobbed and moaned and listened.

Oh, if she had only kept fast hold of the little hands! if she had only kissed the tired, dirty little faces! If she had only taken mother’s advice instead of Bell’s! Such sorrowful “ifs”! And then on her knees she whispered over and over, “Dear Father in Heaven, if you will only bring them safe back, I’ll never—never—never forget mother knows better than all the little girls in the whole world.”

# II.

## LED INTO SIN—AND OUT.

**"And He shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."**

WHERE were Tod and Maybee?

Half-way between the school-house and Bell Forbush's, a sort of cart-path led off from the main road into Farmer Grey's sugar-orchard, shaded with large, thick-leaved maples, carpeted with soft, green grass, and spangled with golden dandelions and buttercups.

"Isn't it nice? S'ouldn't 'ou like to go down it?" asked Tod, the new, "starched" shoes feeling, oh, so hot and dusty!

"Yes; but Sue wouldn't let us," said matter-of-fact Maybee.

"My don't care, my *will!*" returned Tod, shaking two soiled fists at Cousin Sue and her chatty friend. "Let's wun."

It was a sudden temptation, and Maybee yielded at once. Hand in hand they scampered down the cool, shady lane, never once stopping till the farther side of the orchard was reached. Then, how they rolled and tumbled in the fresh, green grass! What handfuls of daisies and violets they picked! and what a dear little brook they found, babbling along over the stones, and how fast and far they skipped along beside it, tossing in dandelions to see if the fishes liked butter, and launching bits of bark loaded with clover blossoms.

"Hello! What's going on?" cried Dick Vance, the laziest, wickedest boy in school, now on the way after his father's cows. Tod recognized one of his noon-time tormentors, and straightened himself up, muttering, "My'll kill you, you bet!" with a furtive glance at Maybee, who was busy a little ways off, launching a whole fleet of maple-leaves.

"Ho! here's a man for you," cried Dick. "Ain't he a stunner now! Regular man, he is."

Tod relaxed a little at the compliment.

"Want me to make you a boat, a real boat with masts?" asked Dick, dropping down on the ground and opening his knife. Is there any magnet stronger than a knife to draw little boys to itself? Tod settled down just a few feet from the new-comer. Dick whittled and talked; Tod edged nearer and nearer.

"I wouldn't make boats for many boys," said Dick, "but you're 'cute. If I had a sail, now! Let me have that red pocket-handkerchief of yours. By thunder! we'll have a gay one."

"By funder! my will," echoed Tod, exactly as Dick meant he should.

Maybee had followed her little fleet quite out of sight. There was no one but the All-seeing Father up in heaven to hear, and Dick seldom thought of him; so he went on, saying vulgar, wicked words, and dreadful oaths, laughing till he had to hold his sides to hear Tod echo them in his droll baby-fashion. After a while Maybee came hurrying back into hearing of the low, mean words Dick was rattling off so glibly. Then she stopped.

"The-od-orer Smith, come right away, quick as ever you can!" she screamed, with her fingers in both ears. "My mamma says it's catching-er than anything."

Just then down went the sun behind the woods, and a great darkness settled suddenly around them.

"Who put ve light out?" asked Tod, huskily.

"God," said Maybee, solemnly; and something in her large black eyes, uplifted so trustingly, checked the sneering laugh on Dick's lips and made him slink quietly away, without even a whistle.

"Now let's sit down and see God hang the stars out," said Maybee.

"My don't like it to be dark," whined Tod.

“Why, don’t you merember what the verse says,—that one ’bout the chickens under their mamma’s wing? 18

“‘Dear little girl, dear little boy,
Afraid of the dark,
Bid your good-night to the daylight with joy,
Be glad of the night; for hark!
The darkness no danger at all can bring,
’Tis only the shadow of God’s kind wing.’

What you s’pose my mamma meant, ’bout Sue’s wing? ’course she don’t have any, but God does; on’y He’s so big we can’t see Him cover us all up safe. I like to feel Him though, don’t you?”

“No,” said Tod, “my’s afwaid of bears an’ fings.”

“Pho! it was naughty children the bears in the Bible eat,” returned Maybee,—which remark was sorry comfort to poor Tod.

“Ma-bel! Ma-a-b-e-ll!” called somebody away off in the distance.

“Oh my! I do b’lieve we’ve forgot to go home,” exclaimed Maybee, jumping up and pulling Tod in the direction of the voices.

You must imagine all the kissings and huggings, how soundly Tod slept all night, and 19
how Sue kept pinching Maybee to be sure she was really there. The saddest thing is yet to be told.

At breakfast next morning Tod used some of the wicked words he had learned. Oh, how grieved and shocked his mamma was! Tod was positive he should “never do so any more,” after he had been away with her up-stairs and asked God to forgive him. But the very next day, although Sue scarcely left the children a moment, Dick contrived to coax Tod away, and persuade him it was manly to swagger and swear; and then Tod kept trying it a little all by himself, and somehow the bad words would slip out when he didn’t mean them to. Mamma talked and punished,—little punishments at first; then she tried scrubbing the inside of his mouth with soap-suds, and twice she shut him up a whole day, with nothing but bread and water. Still Tod persisted in “talking big,” as he called it, and at last, with tears in her eyes, mamma gave him over to Uncle Thed, who took him away into the library, and used a little 20
stick just as Solomon says we must sometimes. Then he insisted on a whole long week without any good-night kisses from mamma, which almost broke poor Tod’s heart.

“My’ll never say ve bad, ugly words adin; my *hates* ’em!” he broke out one night, just as mamma was going down-stairs; and this time he kept his word.

Do you think they were cruel to the little boy? But you know Maybee’s white apron had to be soaked, and rubbed, and boiled, and bleached, before it was fit to wear again.

And so, although naughty Dick was sadly to blame, we are sure, when Tod is a man, he will be thankful for all the suffering which helped take away the stain of that dreadful sin from his heart and tongue.

# III.

## NAUGHTY DICK.

**“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”**

WHIZ went a paper-wad past Ned Holden’s head. He didn’t need to look up from his Compound Interest to know where it came from: most of the mischief started with Dick Vance. Little Joe Burns, puzzling over c-o-u-g-h, b-o-u-g-h, d-o-u-g-h, caught a glimpse of Dick’s eyes through a pair of green goggles and giggled outright. Sue Sherman tripped and fell on her way to the grammar class, but the string was in Dick’s pocket before anybody saw it. But that wasn’t the worst of it. Wherever Dick was on the playground, there the boys played “for keeps,” cheated in “tallies,” swore over their quoits, and made ruinous bargains in jack-knives; and where Dick was, there too were more than two thirds of the other boys. You can easily guess he wasn’t an ugly, cross-grained, disobliging fellow. That isn’t the kind of stuff Satan chooses to make tools of. No one could learn more quickly than Dick, although he hated study and seldom had a perfect lesson; and a better-natured, kinder-hearted boy you couldn’t find in that school or any other. So whatever Dick said “Do,” the others generally did, and whatever Satan put into Dick’s head was generally the thing to be done. And Satan was leading him from bad to worse as fast as possible. A year ago, Dick would have scouted the idea of taking a twenty-five-cent scrip from Mr. Bower’s money-draw. It began with a few nuts “hooked” when Mr. Bowers was drawing molasses: it would end—where? Dick never stopped to think.

The week Tod began going to school, Dick played truant one day. It was the first time; for the boys, even the scape-grace Dick, stood very much in awe of Mr. Blackman.

“Won’t you catch it to-morrow?” said they all; but the next morning Dick walked coolly up to the master’s desk and presented a note of excuse. And then what a glee he set the boys into, telling how he had to pretend somebody was driving cows and one ran down a lane, and there was nobody to help but Dick, although it made him late at school, and Mr. Blackman would insist on his bringing an excuse. Just a word and his father’s name would do.

O Dick! You would have scorned that lie a year ago.

But now it seemed quite the thing; and when a large circus was advertised in an adjoining town, it was an easy matter to persuade, not only himself but Joe Travers also, there would be some way of getting round “old Blackman.”

Now, one thing is certain about a circus: there *may* be lots of good people there, but there is *sure* to be plenty of wicked ones, and Dick very naturally got among them,—fellows who had outgrown marbles and taken to cards.

Nothing else would have drawn Dick into the low drinking-saloon, or tempted him to taste the vile stuff sold there. They had a “Band of Hope” in school, and Dick had always stood by his pledge. But he was in for a “good time” to-day, and before he knew it had drank enough to make him reckless and quarrelsome.

Fortunately for Joe, that state of affairs disgusted him and sent him off home, tired and cross enough to confess anything. Fortunately or unfortunately for Dick, stumbling over the same ground several hours later, business had suddenly called his father out of town; his mother’s thoughts were all on her dairy and kitchen; to-morrow was Saturday,—no hurry about Mr. Blackman. Dick’s chief concern was how to keep a promise made his new acquaintances to go gunning the next Sunday. He had been brought up to respect the Sabbath, outwardly. Mr. Vance always shaved, put on his best clothes, and read his newspaper. Dick put on *his* best clothes and lounged on a sofa over the vilest trash put up in an illustrated weekly. Mr. Vance didn’t believe in any kind of religion. Mrs. Vance was always too tired to go to church. To them, it was man’s day of rest simply, not God’s SUN-day of light and love and praise. No wonder Dick seldom thought of the all-seeing Eye, looking straight down into his wicked heart, reading all his plans.

It was easy enough: wrong-doing so often is. He asked permission to spend the day at his grandfather’s, some four miles away. He frequently walked over there on Sunday; and getting an early start before his father was up he had nothing to do but

take down the old gun from the shed-chamber and stroll away at his leisure. But long before noon Dick was thoroughly tired of being ordered about, sent to pick up the game, sworn at for being in the way, in short, of being made to feel his youngness, —*not* of the sin, nor of seeing the poor little birds and bright-eyed squirrels, to whom the sunshine and green trees meant so much, writhe and gasp, and die in his hand. He determined at last to strike out for himself in quite a different direction from the others. Up and down the woods he tramped. All the birds and beasts must have been taking their noonday nap; Dick grew impatient, and suddenly brought his gun to the ground, with an oath. There was a loud report, a stifled scream, and poor Dick lay senseless on the ground.

# IV.

## THE LITTLE RED HOUSE.

**“In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword.”**

Such a funny little clatter! The birds waked up from their afternoon nap, and half a dozen brown nut-crackers stopped to listen, with one tooth just inside the tempting white kernel.

“I’m so glad we came home this way,” Maybee chattered on, quite unconscious of the scores of bright eyes watching her. “Only look, mamma! I guess here’s where the birdies and butterflies had their Sabbath School. So many yellow buttercups, just like little question-books, and daisies and violets for picture-cards; and don’t that funny little brook sound mos’ like a m’lodeon? Oh, see that birdie washing his face! How do you s’pose they merember which tree they live in? I guess their mammas are telling ’em Sunday stories now, they’re so still. Oh, my pity! Here’s all their dear little water-proofs,” and down dropped Maybee in a patch of dainty, nodding, pink lady’s slippers. So many, and such splendid long stems!

“What do you s’pose God made ’em all for?” said Maybee, thoughtfully, trotting after mamma with both hands full.

“I wonder if old Aunty McFane wouldn’t like a bunch to stand beside her bed?” smiled mamma.

“May I give her some my own self? ’cause there’s nobody to pick her any. Mose has to go straight to that rackety old mill soon’s he’s got breakfast, an’ Peter’s too little. ’Sides, Mose won’t let him go in the woods, ’cause he’ll get lost. I b’lieve I must run, mamma; I’m in such a hurry.”

She was back in a trice, however, pale and trembling. Hadn’t mamma heard something very dreadful? Mamma listened to little faint twitterings up in the tree-tops, —that was all,—and pinching the color back into the dimpled cheeks, they walked on, up the path leading to the low, red house where the McFanes lived.

Little brown sparrow sitting close under the eaves could have told them what Maybee heard; she had been watching the tumbled, dusty figure dragging itself slowly and painfully along across the fields from the woods. Poor Dick! It was such a long way to the little red cottage, and then when he tried to call somebody, everything grew strange and dark again; the queer little groan he gave was what Maybee heard. By and by he opened his eyes, but somehow he didn’t care to move or speak. He heard little brown sparrow twittering to herself up under the eaves; he heard the brook gurgling noisily along down in the hollow, and then he heard voices through the open window,—a thin, piping voice saying, “But God didn’t send any wavens to bwing it, gwan’ma, as he did to ’lijah.”

“No, deary; grandma didn’t say he would. You see, ma’am, I’ve told him stories to make him forget like he was hungry, and there’s none like those in the good Book. O ma’am! there’s nothing like that, and the harder things are, the tighter you can take hold of the promises. You mind, ma’am, when that baby was left on my hands an’ me only jest able to hobble round, and how at last it came to lying here from morning till night, with only Mose to help, out of mill hours; but that wasn’t nothing at all to having his work stop entirely, and the little we’d scraped together go and go, and he a-worrying an’ tryin’ to find something to do. Five weeks to-morrow! and last Monday we hadn’t a cent left. He’s tried everywhere for a job; that last tramp over to Luskill Mills is what ails his feet. Friday morning he couldn’t step a step, and not a thing in the house but some dry bread. We’ve never trusted Peter alone, so he dars’n’t go as far as the main road, an’ we’re quite a ways off of the path, even. But I knew the Lord could send somebody. He does hear when folks pray. Don’t you see, Peter, instead of the ravens he sent the kind lady?”

“We come home this way ’cause it was so hot,” put in Maybee; “but I do b’lieve He let Sue come tagging after, so’s mamma could send her home quick to bring you some supper, and p’raps He just made those flowers a-purpose; you know he sees to the sparrows.”

“Does He really?” thought Dick, looking up at the nest over his head. “I wish—but I

suppose He knows how wicked I've been, and won't care. I wonder if that's Sue?"

A light, quick step went up the walk, followed by a scream of delight.

"You must excuse the little fellow, ma'am; he's so ravenous," said a man's voice, and it trembled too. Dick wondered if he was crying. Then he heard the rattle of dishes and the hum of the tea-kettle, and by and by a pleasant voice bidding Sue run back and ask Dr. Helps to come and look at Moses' feet.

"You won't disbelieve again, will ye, Moses?" said the grandmother. "You see, 32
ma'am, he couldn't just believe God cared anything about us, and it's dreadful to be in the dark and not feel sure there's an Eye seeing the end from the beginning all along, and a Hand ready to help as soon as ever the right time comes."

"I wonder if He saw me down in the woods," thought Dick, dreamily, the voices sounding farther and farther away. "What was it grandpa used to tell me,—'Remember the Sabbath day'; but I didn't *forget* it; I never cared. I wish He wouldn't look way down in my heart; it's such a great Eye, and it sees all the bad. Oh, how bright it is, and it hurts so! If He only would go away!"

But the sun, which Dick fancied was the great all-seeing Eye, shone steadily down on the poor, pinched white face, and the voices inside went on:—

"It doesn't seem, gran'mother, as if such a great Being could care for poor, wicked creatures like us."

"He made the littlest flower, Moses, as well as the great mountains; and as for the 33
wickedness, didn't he let his own dear Son die just for us?"

"O me! I do b'le've I'm going to cry," said Maybee, slipping past the doctor and around the corner of the house, full upon Dick, lying still and white, with a wild, staring look in his eyes.

Her screams summoned mamma and the doctor, who together carried him into the one front room of the cottage, and laid him on the "spare bed," clean and white, if Mose had been sole housekeeper for many months.

"He mustn't be moved again," the doctor said; but "they could bring whatever they pleased to the cottage," he added,—a hint Dick's father wasn't slow to take, for besides idolizing his boy, he was a kind-hearted man, and fairly shuddered when Maybee's mamma told him how nearly starvation had come to the little red house.

Dick knew nobody that night nor for many days; but the sun, as it peeped in morning 34
after morning, and crept reluctantly away at night, found out two things,—that Dick's mother loved her boy better than her dairy, and that little Peter was growing fat and rosy on something besides "dry bread."

# V.

## “DOT.”

**“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day.”**

DICK opened his eyes one morning and began to wonder where he was. It seemed as if he had been sailing over mountain-tops and crawling about underground for years. And now, could anybody tell where he had waked up? It wasn’t like any room at the farm-house,—the white-washed walls, smoky ceiling, and bare floor. Such funny red posts to the bedstead, and a big, clumsy red chest under the window! On the chest were tumblers and bottles, and beside it, in a creaky wooden chair, sat a fat, jolly-looking woman, rocking away as if she had nothing else in the world to do. Where had Dick seen her before? Oh, he remembered! she came to their house when his mother had the fever last fall. Through an open door he could see a cooking-stove, a little red-haired, red-stockinged boy, playing with a Noah’s Ark, and another bed, with such a pleasant old lady’s face on the pillow,—such a happy, smiling face,—and a thin, wrinkled hand stroking lovingly a bunch of dry, faded flowers on the stand close by.

While he was watching her, somebody leaned over and kissed him. Dick’s eyes filled with tears, but he knew his mother through them. Only it was so queer for her to kiss him. He could just remember her doing it when he wore dresses, like the little red-haired boy. Since then she had been too busy; she always praised him when he ran errands promptly; she laughed at his jokes and tricks, kept his clothes clean and whole, and made him no end of pies and cakes. Indeed, she was always baking, brewing, churning, sweeping, dusting, mending, or sleeping. She came around the bed now, with a bright little porringer in her hand, gave him something nice to swallow, tucked the clothes around his shoulders, and told him to lie still. He shut his eyes, and was sound asleep before he knew it. When he opened them again the nurse was nodding in her chair, the tea-kettle singing on the stove, and the pleasant-faced old woman sat bolstered up in bed, with the little red-haired boy and our old friends, Maybee and Tod, curled up on the foot, listening with all their eyes and ears. So Dick listened too.

“You see we can’t do wrong,” she was saying, “without troubling somebody else, like the little black-and-white rabbit, you know.”

Peter nodded “Yes.” “No; what was it?” said Tod.

“Why, once there was a little black-and-white rabbit named Dot. He lived with his mother and sisters in a nice little house, in a nice large yard full of green grass. But he was always fretting and whining to get out and hop about the lawn and garden. He liked to nibble the trees and the tender green sauce. ‘Which is exactly what master says you mustn’t do,’ said his mother. ‘He’s mean,’ snarled Dot. ‘No, he isn’t; he gives you plenty to eat that’s nice, and besides, he says there are cruel boys and dogs outside. I advise you to listen to him,’ and Mrs. Bunny took a mouthful of fresh clover. ‘I’ll risk ’em,’ muttered Dot, digging away at the palings till he found a hole big enough to crawl through. ‘I wish you’d show me where the garden is,’ he asked the first boy he met. ‘To be sure. Perhaps you’d like me to carry you?’

“Dot was lazy and forgot all his mother’s warnings. He had a most delightsome ride, but, oh dear! at the end he found himself shoved, head first, into a low, dark box, with hardly room enough to turn around. There he stayed pretty nigh a week, with nothing to eat but coarse hay. His new friend tormented him almost to death, pulling his ears, pinching his nose, and punching him with sharp sticks, and at last he grew so thin he managed to squeeze through between his prison bars. Good or bad luck led him straight into a most beautiful garden, with beds of beets, turnips, radishes, celery, lettuce, everything tender and sweet as sunshine and dew could make it. He ate so much he could scarcely stir, and was just about to curl down under a currant-bush for a quiet snooze when a big man began pelting him with stones. Poor Dot! limping and panting he tried to find the gate, but had finally to crawl under a stone wall. He slept there that night, and didn’t dare even to stick his nose out the next morning till he was so hungry he couldn’t wait another moment. There was a nice clover-field close by, but he had hardly taken a nibble when up ran a big black dog, growling and barking, and there would have been an end of Dot but for a blackberry thicket. He dived into that, and Bose had too much regard for his sleek, fat sides to follow. Every few minutes,

however, he would come capering back, and set Dot's heart beating so he was sure it would come out of his mouth. Not for hours did he dare venture out, all bleeding and dirty, the forlornest looking creature you ever saw. But that wasn't the worst of it. He was real thankful to see the white palings of his old home just ahead, but instead of going straight there, naughty Dot concluded to take a final stroll across the lawn and taste of the young fruit-trees in the orchard. It was an unfortunate time, for Harry's papa—Harry was Dot's little master—had just started to drive down the carriage-way, and Billy, although a very discreet old horse, was nevertheless woefully afraid of anything white. He shied suddenly at sight of Dot, overturned the buggy, and left poor Mr. Wells lying on the ground with three broken ribs.



"'Such a bad, ungrateful, disobedient rabbit!' groaned old Mrs. Bunny, when Dot at last crept back through the same hole he went out of. 'See how much trouble you've made! Poor old Jones was depending on his garden-sauce to pay his rent; that Joe Barker got whipped for being late at school three mornings; and here's master laid up for nobody knows how long.'

"'Nobody knows the trouble *I've* had,' grumbled Dot, snatching at the fresh, sweet clover. 'How could I know whose garden 'twas, or imagine that great horse so silly as to jump at poor little me?'



"'You couldn't,' returned his mother, gravely. 'You aren't old or wise enough. That's why we need a Master to tell us just what to do. You see, things are all joined together somehow, and doing just one wrong thing is sure to make no end of a bother. Mark my word, there's nothing like having a good master, and doing exactly as he says. If you don't, there'll be trouble all round, depend upon it."

# VI.

## CHOOSING A MASTER.

**“And Elijah said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.”**

DICK found lying still from morning till night very dull and tiresome. Mose was at work again, and as the good-natured nurse took upon herself the general house-work, which Mose had managed for more than a year under his grandmother’s direction, Dick was necessarily left alone a good part of the time. It was quite a relief when little Peter was allowed to scramble over the bed, asking questions by the score; still more delightful was it to be bolstered up in the big wooden rocker and drawn out into the cheery little kitchen beside cheery old Aunty McFane, who knew exactly the kind of bear stories boys like best to hear. It seemed a little strange nothing was said about his going home, and that lately his mother had so seldom come to see him.

One day when nurse had gone out to gossip with some of the neighbors, Dick’s patience gave way, and he broke out, with an oath,—

“Great deal folks care for a fellow,—not to come nigh him for most a week! Shut up in this hole, kept on slops, and the doctor running knives into you when he takes a notion.” Another oath finished the sentence.

“Didn’t you know, haven’t they told you your mother was sick?” said Aunty McFane, gravely.

Dick leaned back among his pillows, white and trembling. “How—why—what made her sick?” he stammered.

“She jest overdone, tending to her work and looking after you; and one day, when you was the worst, she came in the rain and got chilled through. She’s never been well sence, but she kept up till last week. She was better yesterday. I don’t think God means to take her from you just yet.”

Dick looked steadily at the old clock; the little mouse nibbling away in the pantry stopped to hear how loud it ticked through the stillness.

“It’s like the little black-and-white rabbit,—all comes of my going to the —— circus,” said Dick at length, with another oath. He didn’t mean to add that: it slipped out before he thought.

“Yes, it *is* like. Folks, as well as rabbits, need a good and wise Master,” said Aunty McFane, very soberly. “Do you know who is your master, Dicky?”

Dick moved uneasily. Ever since the day he was hurt, that great, all-seeing Eye had seemed to be looking straight into his naughty heart, and it wasn’t a comfortable feeling.

“I—suppose—it’s—God, if He’s everybody’s,” he said, in a low voice.

“Oh no! God hasn’t any servants only those who choose to obey him. It was Satan who told you to go to the circus, and coaxed you off gunning on the Sabbath, and put those dreadful words in your mouth just now. God’s commandments are very different. You know what they are, of course, Dicky?”

“The ten commandments? Grandpa used to tell me, but I—why, I keep most all of them, I guess. I don’t make ‘graven images.’”

“I don’t suppose you do yet, sonny, as the men do who worship their big stores and houses; but if we love anything better than we love God, it’s an idol, an’ I’m afraid you’ve got one idol named Self. And then there’s ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain,’”—Dick dropped his head,—“and this, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’”

A little lower drooped the red face.

“Honor thy father and mother.”

“I’m all right there,” cried Dick, suddenly straightening. “I never call my father the ‘old man,’ as some boys do, nor make as if I was too big to mind mother.”

“I’m glad of it, Dick; I hope you can plead ‘Not guilty’ to all the rest; only remember

Jesus said, ‘Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.’ And then there’s the ‘new commandment’ Christ gave us, ‘Love one another.’”

“There’s—I—you know, the other one, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ and I—I have taken things, little things, sometimes,” said Dick, hurriedly.

“O Dicky Vance! To think Satan could make a brave, kind-hearted boy like you into a thief. How does he pay you? By making you real happy and giving you lots of fun? At the circus the other day, for instance.”

“I should have had a good time if I hadn’t got in with those fellows.”

“But it’s just ‘those fellows’ Satan will always keep you with.”

“We had a tip-top time the other day; we played truant,” said Dick, eagerly. “We went fishing away up by the Crossing, and there didn’t a single bad thing happen. I don’t like stories where every bad boy gets drowned or something.”

“Nor I, either; but did you feel all right? Didn’t you have to keep looking round to 47
see if anybody was coming, and go ever so far out of your way for fear of meeting some one?”

“Why, how did you know?” exclaimed Dick, in surprise.

“I didn’t; I only know it’s the way Satan’s servants mostly do. I shouldn’t think a boy like you would fancy that,—sneakin’ round, afraid to look in folks’ faces. Now, ain’t you ten times happier the days you learn all your lessons and mind the rules, than you was then?”

“I don’t try that often enough to know,” said Dick, laughing and coloring at the same time. “I’ve thought more’n once I *would* turn square round and keep right up to the mark; but it’s a plaguy bother to toe a straight crack.”

“Now, take my word, Dick, it isn’t half so hard as ’tis to toe Satan’s crooked ones; and besides, *my* Master helps his servants; he don’t call them servants, he calls them children. Only think! the great God, who made heaven and earth, letting us call him 48
Father, hearing us when we pray, and promising to help us over all the hard places. Why, Dick, he would even help you get your lessons.”

Dick shook his head unbelievingly.

“But I’ve tried him,” continued Aunty McFane, earnestly. “I’ve tried him more than fifty years. He says he numbers the hairs of our heads, and there can’t be anything littler than that. And then he sent his only Son to die for us. We hadn’t done as the Master, who knew better than we, had told us to do, and so Jesus came to ‘save us’ from our sins. Does your master make any such way for you out of trouble? Which do you think is the best one to follow, Dick? because you can’t serve both; you must choose.”

Dick made no reply, and Aunty McFane, too wise to spoil what she had said by saying too much, closed her eyes as if to sleep. I think, way down in her heart, she was asking God to bless the poor boy and help him to choose then. By and by, laying one 49
hand suddenly on his shoulder, she quietly said, “What would have become of you, Dick, if God hadn’t sent little Maybee here that day?”

Dick buried his face in his pillows and burst into tears.

# VII.

## TOD’S STRATAGEM.

**“The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”**

“Come here, you little toad! Before I would play girl-plays the whole time!” cried Joe Travers, one of the big boys, to our little friend Tod, who was running as mail-agent between two of the pretty play-houses under the old oak.

Tod dropped the brown paper mail-bag as if it had burned him, and looked around. Maybee’s sharp little tongue was buzzing away in the farthest corner of the playground. Sue was busily “setting table.”

“Come over here, and we’ll have some jolly witch stories,” called Joe, persuasively; and over went Tod, leaving the poor mail bag, containing Sue’s invitation to a “kettledrum,” and Bell’s telegram for rooms at the Polygon Hotel, soaking in a little pool of water left from yesterday’s rain.

Tod had become a general favorite with both boys and girls. His shyness led him to choose the latter; but the boys, having discovered his fondness for “horrifying stories,” liked nothing better than to get him away by himself, and manufacture the most frightful tales possible on purpose to see the big blue eyes open to their widest extent, not caring a straw that they resolutely refused to shut at night unless mother was close by. To-day, however, Joe had only a simple witch story, about a little boy, stolen from his parents and brought up in a hovel, but finally rescued by the witch and restored to his real father, who lived in a splendid palace, etc. etc.

“Guess, then, him had bus’els of choc’late ca’mels, and riding-horses,” said Tod, smacking his lips.

“Don’t you wish you was that little boy?” put in Tom Lawrence, rather disappointed that Joe’s story was no more exciting.

“Well, but I know something,” said Joe, with a wink at the other boys. “I met an old woman this morning, an’ she told me—”

“What?” cried a dozen voices.

“Well, suppose Mr. Smith wasn’t Tod’s father.”

“My sha’n’t!” said Tod.

“Oh! you needn’t unless you want to; only if ’Squire Ellis was *my* father, and I could live in that big house on the hill, and have a pony and a dog and a gun and all sorts of things—”

“Did—she—say—my papa—was that great, big man with a cane what keeps that great big store an’ wides two horses to once?” asked Tod, excitedly.

“Oh, I can’t tell you any more, you’ll have to find out yourself,” returned Joe, very sure an idea, once lodged under the flaxen curls, would never lie still.

All the afternoon Tod thought it over. Every morning, of late, he had lingered in front of a new *café*, looking longingly at the snowy *méringues*, set off by dark, rich chocolate-browns. His sweet-tooth was one of Tod’s weakest points, and for that reason Papa Smith rather limited his supply of pocket-money, and seldom fished anything less harmless than peppermints out of his own pockets. Tod supposed it was simply from lack of means. Esq. Ellis, now, “could just buy that safe man out if he wanted to.”

“P-i-g, ponies,” spelled Tod, with such a grand plan in his head he could think of nothing else. When school was out he privately invited Maybee to a picnic in the grape-arbor at six that evening, and then, under pretence of going round by his father’s shop, set off alone up the main street. Straight into the big store he marched. Esq. Ellis was busily talking with a couple of men. Tod had been taught manners, and waited patiently beside him till the gentlemen turned to go, then he began: “Please will you—”

“Carter wants that order filled before six o’clock,” said a clerk coming up in the opposite direction.

Tod clutched at the broadcloth coat:—

"*If* you please—ice-cream an' ca'mels,—they're so jolly; an' if—you know—I'm your little boy—couldn't you just give me fifty cents right straight off, please? My wants it the very worse kind."

The busy merchant glanced down into the earnest little face; the clerk touched his arm; he turned quickly.

"The impudence of these beggars! Scott, I thought I told you not to allow them inside. Is that bill made out for Edson & Dodge? And don't forget Dorr is to have samples at once. How about Carter now?" and he hurried away.

Tod walked dejectedly to the door, his little heart swelling with grief at that horrid, *horrid* word "beggar." What if his face and hands were grimy and his apron torn? "My guesses,—'t any rate, my'll try the other one," and off he flew up the street, around the corner, into his father's office. Papa was there, talking to a man of course. Tod slipped 55
one grimy hand into his and waited, choking back the grief that would keep the red lips in a quiver. And the moment the man was fairly gone, he sobbed out,—

"Please, papa, won't you? it's so jolly! Just fifty cents for ice-cream and ca'mels. My wanted a party so bad! but he wouldn't, an' she's coming, you know."

"If you please, sir, Thorpe is waiting to know about that No. 7," said somebody in a white paper cap.

"In a moment, John," said Mr. Smith, sitting down in his chair and taking Tod in his arms. "Now, papa's little man, what is the matter?"

"Just fifty cents, please, papa, for Maybee and me to buy choc'late. My wants it so bad, papa,—jus' the worst kind."

"Dear me, that's *very* bad, isn't it? and Sweet-tooth has been very patient of late, to be sure. So Maybee is coming to a party! Well, well, there's a bright, new, silver half-dollar. How'll that do? because papa's in a dreadful hurry." 56

Nose, chin, whiskers and all,—how Tod covered them with kisses, squeezing his "own-y to-ny papa" tight as two little arms could.

"Guess my knew how to find out certain true," he said, sitting with Maybee under the grape-arbor half an hour later, both faces well plastered with chocolate. "Guess the *own* papas see through a hurry, quick 'nough, when my asks 'em weal hard."

# VIII.

## THE HELPING HAND.

**“Will He plead against me with *his* great power? No; but he would put *strength* in me.”**

When Dick came back to school you would scarcely have known him, he had grown so tall and stout. The younger boys looked up at him admiringly; the older ones held a little aloof.

It wasn’t at all the Dick who ran away to visit the circus a few months before. In the first place, this Dick was a travelled youth. As soon as his mother was able to ride out, the doctor had ordered them both up among the mountains to try what the clear, bracing air would do to mend matters. It was up there in a little nook among the rocks, with only a bit of blue sky looking in between the tall trees, his mother, with one hand laid lovingly upon his shoulder, had told him how sorry she was she had all these years been too busy to love and serve the kind Father above, who had spared their lives and given them so many blessings, and how she meant now to try and please Him first of all. Dick was very sure he meant to be a better boy, but he didn’t care to think much about God. Of course he could be good just as well. So this Dick went to church and Sabbath School; this Dick was trying not to swear, and no longer loafed about the street-corners and saloon-steps.

The boys had an idea it would be a very sober, stiff old Dick, but they soon found out their mistake. He was as full of fun as ever, only now he tried to keep it for playtimes. Study, however, was uphill work; he had been idle so long, and there were plenty of boys ready to laugh at his blunders, to tempt him into some sly fun, and especially to report every time he swore or broke a rule. Mr. Blackman, too, remembering the old Dick, was forever accusing him of this, that, and the other bit of mischief. Poor man! Wasn’t he tried almost out of his life with the care of so much perpetual motion, and hadn’t Dick always been the most troublesome screw in the machinery? And wasn’t it the most natural thing in the world, when anything went wrong, to give that the first twist?

The brook, beside which Dick gave Tod his first lesson in swearing, ran through a large field not far from the school-house. There the boys went to drill, to fly their kites, and to play base-ball. The brook was much wider there, with a high, steep bank on either side, and of late the boys had taken to walking across on the narrowest plank possible, balancing on one foot in the middle, turning somersaults, and otherwise imitating Blondin at Niagara. The water was shallow and the bottom sandy, so their frequent tumbles resulted in nothing worse than a wetting.

One day, as Tod stood by in open-mouthed astonishment at their performances, it occurred to Tom Lawrence what fun it would be to make the little fellow walk across.

“My couldn’t,” said Tod, his teeth chattering at the bare suggestion.

“Oh yes, you can,” joined in half a dozen boys, ready, as boys too often are, for any fun, no matter at whose expense. “Quick, now, or we’ll duck you!”

“Here comes Dick Vance; he’ll send him over quicker’n lightning,” cried Joe Travers.

Tod looked around at the tall, stout figure leaping the wall; almost a man, Dick seemed to him. Poor little Tod! he felt his doom was sealed, and trembled to the tips of his shiny shoes.

The boys crowded up, shouting, laughing.

“Make him go over there? Of course I can;” and Dick, swinging the little fellow upon one shoulder, bounded over the narrow plank before anybody had time to think.

The boys cheered lustily; boys are never slow to appreciate a daring deed. But “It isn’t fair!” “No play!” followed close upon the cheer.

“You’ll have to do it, Chicken Little, or they’ll make a prodigious row,” said Dick. “Look here, now. I’ll hold one hand all ready to catch you, and promise, sure as I live, you sha’n’t fall; and do you trot straight along without thinking anything about it. Why, it’s just as easy,—with me, you know.”

“You bet! By funder!” rejoined Tod, with a sudden explosion of bravery.

“Don’t let’s say that sort of words any more,” said Dick, looking ashamed and sorry. “Let’s just say we’ll try.”

“My *will*,” responded Tod, confidently, trudging on without looking to right or left. “My *can* do it, ’cause your hand is so big.”

Tod cheered as loudly as anybody when he was safe on *terra firma* again, and then the boys strolled off to base-ball. “What’s up now?” they wondered, as Dick struck off into the woods instead of joining them. “Oh! it’s that fuss this morning. Dick’s riled; got some of the old grit left.”

That morning Dick had made a mistake in putting an example in Long Division on the board; while he was diligently hunting it up, the boys in the back seat—of course 62
Dick was yet in the lower classes—began to chuckle and cough provokingly. Tom Lawrence wiggled his fingers insultingly, and quick as a flash, Dick chalked out a head on the board, unmistakably Tom’s, with a big balloon for a body.

“So that’s the way you do examples!” said Mr. Blackman, coming up just as it was finished. “No wonder such a dunce calls nine times seven, sixty-four. Rub that sum out, sir, and do it over.”

Now, of course, Dick was wrong and Mr. Blackman was right; only, if the latter had known how hard Dick had studied that ninth table the night before, for fear he should fail, and how patiently he was trying to find his mistake when the boys began to laugh, he wouldn’t have spoken just so. Dick was quick-tempered,—such natures always are,—and in a trice he had swept figures and face from the board, and taken his seat.

“You are to put that example on the board again,” said the master; but Dick was firm 63
as a rock; he couldn’t,—wouldn’t,—shouldn’t.

There the matter stood. Until he did, and at the same time made a public apology, Mr. Blackman would not consider him a pupil.

Dick sat down under a tree to think it over. Such a pity to leave school just as he was trying to learn something; but—put that example on the board again? He never could. Expelled! How grieved his mother would be; but a public apology,—never! To be sure, he ought to obey Mr. Blackman; he had really been trying to; but this,—this was too hard. How could he?

What was it Tod said? “My *can*, ’cause your hand is so big.” How queer that should remind him of his talk with old Aunty McFane, about masters! What did she say?

“My Master will help over all the hard places if you ask him.”

His mother prayed, Dick knew, but he had never really felt like it himself. God was so great; but then, he cared for the sparrows. He was so great? Why, that was the very 64
reason he could help everybody. What was the text his mother had repeated only last Sabbath evening? “*I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.*”

The boys stared the next morning, and some of them, I am sorry to say, sneered a little, when Dick, after saying, “I am sorry, sir,” went resolutely to work upon his example again; but Mr. Blackman shook him heartily by the hand, remarking,—

“Only keep on in this way, Dick, my boy, and you’ll surely make a worthy man as well as a fine scholar.”

And Dick, with a bright smile on his face, thought, “‘My can,’ because God’s hand is ‘so big,’ and he does help folks when they ask him.”

# IX.

## BELL'S BARGAIN.

**And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.**

Bell Forbush had told something very private to at least fifteen of the girls, nothing more or less than that her Cousin Mate, the dearest, prettiest cousin anybody ever had, was coming to stay at her house two whole months. She was grown up, and very stylish, so rich she didn't know what to do with her money, and yet so good everybody loved her almost to death. For weeks after her arrival Bell regaled the girls with descriptions of Miss Marvin's dresses and jewelry, the latter having a special fascination for Bell, particularly a necklace and cross, to possess which, she more than once hinted to Cousin Mate, would make her perfectly happy.

"My mother gave it to me just before she died," her cousin had said very sadly, which ought to have made it sacred in Bell's eyes. *She* had a father, mother, and two big brothers, while poor Cousin Mate was an orphan, with no nearer relative than Bell's mamma. She was very kind to the little girl, too, letting her wear her coral pin and bracelets to school, and opening the pretty ebony jewel-case whenever Bell wanted to feast her eyes on the pearls and rubies inside.

But oh, that necklace and cross! There was nothing quite like that. Bell tried it on over all her dresses, and lay awake nights fancying how she would look at church in it, and what Nettie Rand would say to see her wearing such an elegant thing.

About this time Jenny King had a birthday. It came on Saturday, and she made a tea-party for her friends. Bell's new white piqué was just finished, and Cousin Mate had given her a wide blue sash to wear with it. If she could only have the necklace and cross!

Wasn't it queer Cousin Mate should happen to go away the day before, to stay over the Sabbath? Had she taken the necklace with her? Bell crept up-stairs just at dusk to see. Didn't Cousin Mate always let her look at it whenever she liked? and, yes, there was the tiny key left in the ebony casket. Suppose she should wear it, what harm would it do? Cousin Mate would never know it, and it was only borrowing, any way. To be sure, she ought to ask leave, but—

Bell kept thinking it over,—how beautiful the soft shimmer of gold would be in the lace at the neck of her dress, and how the lovely pearl cross would gleam out from among the blue ribbons.

The more she thought, the more it seemed she really must. It wasn't so very wrong, and something might happen: Miss Marvin might think it was lost, and she could keep it for her very own. At break of day she stole into the spare room again, and slipped the chain into the pocket of her new dress, ready to put on when she reached Mrs. King's.

"I—mother—mother was afraid I—might lose it—under my shawl," she explained to that lady, who offered to clasp it for her, saying, It is something quite new, isn't it, dear?——"

"Oh! it—it is Cousin Mate's; she—she lent it to me," stammered Bell.

"I didn't believe it was yours," said Nettie Rand, provokingly.

"It isn't mine yet," returned Bell, reddening, "but Cousin Mate has just as good as promised it to me."

Ah, Bell! there is no addition like that Satan sets us to do.

But how heavy the little chain grew before night! or was it the sense of wrong-doing made the time drag so wearily to Bell, and made her so glad to wrap her shawl over the long-coveted possession and hurry home through the dusk? Who should meet her on the steps but Cousin Mate herself, returned unexpectedly, and ready, as she always was, to take off the little girl's hat and give her a kiss.

"I—I—it's cold," said Bell, holding her shawl tightly together,—"and—and I want—something up-stairs."

Straight to the spare chamber she hurried, and unpinned her shawl. *The necklace was gone.* She looked on the floor, on the stairs, shook her shawl and wrung her hands; but it was surely gone. It was there when she left Mrs. King's. If she had only put it in her pocket! but she was afraid Nettie Rand would laugh. She couldn't go back. Would anybody find it? Should she ever see it again?

She went slowly down to the parlor.

"It's very strange," mamma was saying, "Katy has been with us too long to doubt her honesty, but this new second-girl,—it must be. Of course the chain could not go off without hands. I took the poor girl out of pity, and she has seemed so anxious to please. Oh dear! there's no knowing whom to trust."

Bell slid into a chair, pale and trembling. So Cousin Mate had missed her chain, and thought the new girl had taken it. Her first feeling was one of relief. Then she wondered if they would send the poor girl to states-prison, and what the end of it would be.



"You are all tired out, aren't you, dear? playing so hard," remarked her mother, by and by. "You had better go straight to bed."

Cousin Mate offered to go up with her as she often had of late. Bell talked as fast as she could, pulling off half her boot buttons in her haste. As she stood up to have her dress unfastened, something slid to the floor,—something bright and shining; and there it lay,—the necklace, telling its own story. Bell sank in a little tumbled heap beside it, covering her face with both hands.

"Oh, my little Bell! would you have sold yourself for that?" asked Cousin Mate, dropping down in turn beside her, and drawing the whole little heap into her lap. "Would you have sold yourself for that?" she repeated, uncovering the shame-stricken eyes with one hand, and holding up the necklace with the other.

"Sell myself!" echoed Bell, wonderingly.

**"Oh my little Bell, would you have sold yourself for that?"—Page 70.**

"Yes; you know Satan is always trying to make bargains with us. Did you stop to think how much you paid him for this? First, that most precious of all gems—TRUTH, which you can wear forever in Heaven, while this, you know, moth and rust can corrupt, and thieves steal away from you. And then did you forget, Bell, that this sin,

unrepented of, could shut you out of heaven? Would you give up that beautiful home for this poor little trinket, my darling? And didn't you forget, too, that God was looking down upon you, so grieved and sorry? Wasn't it a *very* poor bargain, dear? Would you take the necklace for your very own at such a price?"

"No, no! I never want to see it again," sobbed Bell. "Oh! what shall I do?"

"I will tell you what God said once to his disobedient people," said Cousin Mate, softly: "'*Ye have sold yourselves for nought*,' '*Ye shall be redeemed without money*.' You know *how* He 'redeemed' them, Bell, and Who it is that 'was wounded for *our* transgressions.'"

# X.

## WALKING WITH GOD.

**And Enoch walked with God and he *was* not; for God took him.**

Miss Cox, Sue's Sabbath School teacher, was absent, and Miss Marvin, Bell's cousin, heard the class. Bell was in it, and Nettie Rand, Jenny King, Sarah Ellis, Dick Vance, Robert Rand, Varney Lowe, and Will Carter,—five girls and four boys. The lesson was on Elijah, and the boys were exceedingly interested in speculations about the chariot of fire, its probable appearance, and did Miss Marvin think Enoch had a chariot too?

"It seems the writer of Enoch's memoir thought that of very little importance; at least, he said nothing about it," rejoined Miss Marvin, smiling. "But then he only used fifty-three words any way; and yet how much we seem to know about Enoch. Did you ever think of it?"

"Memoirs are awfully stupid; most always there's three volumes," said Varney Lowe.

"Paul wrote the second volume of Enoch's," said Miss Marvin. "You will find it in Hebrews, eleventh chapter, fifth verse. But there are only thirty-two words in that."

"It doesn't say much in Genesis," said Jenny King, who had opened her Bible, "only how long he lived and that Methuselah was his son."

"And that God took him," added Sarah Ellis, who had opened her Bible too.

"One other and best thing of all, twice repeated,—don't you see it?" asked Miss Marvin.

"Oh, yes; that 'he walked with God'; but I never could understand really what it meant."

"What is the first thing necessary when two people walk together?"

"To keep step," answered Will Carter, who was captain of the "Young Rangers."

"And to do that they must be agreed, mustn't they? have one common impulse, do the same thing."

"But we *can't* do what God does," said Sarah Ellis, in a tone of surprise.

"Can't we? What does God do?"

"Why, he makes everything and keeps making it beautiful, and takes care of everything and everybody."

"And isn't that what he wants us to do? to help beautify this world of his, just the little bit right around us, helping ourselves and others up into better things as fast and as far as we can? I think that was what Enoch did. What else is necessary for people to walk happily together?"

"They must like the same things," said Dick, "or they won't have anything to talk about."

"Very true: Enoch must have loved what God loved, and so should we. God loves truth and holiness, everything pure and noble and good, and he hates sin. What next?"

"They must love each other," suggested Sue.

"Yes, indeed; two will never walk together long unless they love one another. God loves everybody, and Enoch must have loved God or he couldn't have walked with him. God said to those who refused to walk in his ways, '*All day long have I stretched forth my hand, but no man regardeth.*' That reminds me of what I saw coming to church this morning. A gentleman was walking across the fields, with a dear little yellow-haired boy beside him, who tried his best to take as long steps as his father."

"I most know it was Tod," whispered Sue.

"You all know the stepping-stones across the marsh where the mud is so black," continued Miss Marvin. "The stones are some ways apart, and the little fellow drew back doubtfully; but after a while, taking hold of his father's hand, he began jumping from one to the other. Perhaps you remember a little stream of water trickles between the last two stones, and there he stopped again. His father smiled, and held out his other hand, and without waiting a second the boy seized hold of it and sprang across,

straight into his father's arms. I saw the gentleman hold him tightly, and give him half a dozen kisses before he set him down. He was so glad, you see, to have his little son trust him so entirely. Now, it seems to me that is the way Enoch 'walked with God.' Paul says 'he pleased God,' and I think it was because he trusted Him, just as that little boy did his father. God is our father, you know, strong and wise enough to lead us."

Tinkle, tinkle went the superintendent's bell.

"I wish you'd hear our class next Sabbath," said Dick. "Miss Cox never tells us anything only what's in the book."

"There is more in the book than we can ever learn," said Miss Marvin, pleasantly. "We want to help each other find out what it means and obey it. I'll tell you what I will do. If you will all come to Bell's next Saturday night we will study the lesson together, 77
—as many as would like to, I mean."

"May I come?" asked Maybee, who had stopped to wait for Sue.

"Yes, indeed, the more the better; and I've a pretty bit of poetry perhaps you will like to learn. Now, good-by."

"Don't you think—does it seem quite fair—you know it would be so much nicer to go up in a chariot than to be sick and die; and to think only just two! Shouldn't you like it better?" asked Sarah Ellis, lingering till the others were all gone.

Miss Marvin glanced out at the open door, from which the elegant carriage belonging to the child's uncle, Esquire Ellis, had just driven away, then back to the faded muslin dress and plain straw hat beside her. Sarah's mother was a widow, and supported herself and daughter by doing fine sewing.

"We must remember this," she said, slowly, looking down into the uplifted eyes: "if we really *trust* God he will surely lead us by the very best way to himself; and when we 78
are with him *up there* it will make little difference *how* he took us from *down here*."

"I must send *her* my 'Brown-Haired Bess' that I've promised Maybee," said Miss Marvin to herself, as Sarah walked thoughtfully away. "I believe the 'hidden life' is beginning to show in that sweet, earnest face."

# XI.

## BROWN-HAIRED BESS.

**“They said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.” 2 Kings 2:15.**

Fan, handkerchief, and gloves in waiting lay;
  She turned them gently over,—brown-haired Bess,
Stroked each one fondly, then looked up to say,
  “There’s lilies, mamma, in your drawer, I guess.”

Mamma smiled down upon the upturned face,
  And ’gainst the rosy cheek she softly laid
A letter. “Oh! they made it in the place
  Where violets blossom,” said the little maid.

All out of sight and sound played noisy Fred;
  Came in, so happy, when the sun went down.
“Out in the field you’ve been,” his mother said,
  “Among the clover and the grass, new-mown.”

“How could you tell? Oh! I know,” laughed the boy,
  “I’ve caught the sweet, and brought it all away;
Just so, you said, I’d bring a pain or joy,
  As with the bad or good I chose to play.

“And in my lesson on the apostles bold,
  It said, ‘They’d been with Jesus.’ Did it mean
They brought away the pleasant things he told,
  And showed to other men what they had seen?”

So brown-haired Bess, trying the livelong day,
  To be obedient, patient, loving, true,
Serving the Master in her child-like way,
  Can show as plainly as the violets blue

The fragrance of a life “hid evermore
  With God, in Christ.” Lord, humbly we implore
Thy Spirit on each little child may rest,
  And make them, one and all, forever blest!

# XII.

## MAYBEE'S STEPPING-STONES.

**"But God *is* the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another."**

A HARD, driving, northeast storm. No hope of its breaking away at noon; no getting out with water-proof and rubbers, even; no Sabbath School,—"nothing but a great, long, dull, tiresome day," Sue said, sitting down to breakfast with a face as cloudy as the sky.

"'Thout papa preaches, and mamma sings, and we make-believe meeting it," rejoined Maybee, inclined to find a bright side.

Around the breakfast-table on Sabbath mornings, everybody at Mr. Sherman's was expected to recite a text of Scripture, and that morning it happened papa and Maybee had chosen the same one: "*But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.*"

"Suppose," said papa, "we take that for a text, and write a sermon,—Sue, Maybee, and I; Sue, with her Concordance, shall look out in the Bible the sort of people God 'putteth down' and 'setteth up'; and Maybee, with mamma's help, shall find the names of some of them. Then, when I come back from morning service, we'll put our heads together and make an application."

What a short forenoon it seemed! Right after lunch they were to meet in the library. Maybee drew a big chair behind papa's desk for a pulpit, and placed the chairs in rows for the pews. Then it occurred to her, with mamma for choir, there was nobody left for congregation, and she coaxed Bridget in from the kitchen, rather against that individual's inclination.

First they sang the Sabbath School hymn, "Better than thrones"; then papa prayed a short prayer, so simple Maybee could understand every word, after which he gave out the text, and called upon Sue for her part of the sermon. Sue had it neatly written out, and read,—

### GOD IS THE JUDGE.

| | |
|---|---|
| Those that walk in pride he is able to abase. | Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock. |
| He casteth the wicked down to the ground. | The Lord lifteth up the meek. |
| Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground. | Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. |
| There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise. | Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. |
| For the arms of the wicked shall be broken. | But the Lord upholdeth the righteous. |

"Very well. Now, Maybee."—

And Maybee counted off on her fingers, carefully using her right hand for the good men, "Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon"; and then with her left hand, "Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam,—and—and—I can't think, but lots of little bits of kings what wouldn't mind him."

"Does the text mean God always promotes the good and puts down the wicked?" asked papa.

"Oh, it can't," returned Sue, "because there's Esq. Ellis, ever so rich, and he never goes to church; and Say Ellis's mother is real poor, and just as good as she can be. And you know Varney Lowe's father has failed, and everybody calls him good."

"They don't live in the Bible,—that's why," said Maybee. "God put all my wicked folks right down, and let all the good ones have real nice times."

"How was it with poor David when he was hiding away from Saul?"

"Oh, I see!" cried Sue. "It means He will, sometime; but"—and her face clouded

again—“there’s Aunty McFane, just as patient and good; she’s always had dreadful times, and she’s so old she can’t live a great while longer.”

“God may not think best to ‘lift her up,’ till he takes her to himself,” observed mamma.

“Then we can’t tell anything about it, now, as they did in the Bible.” 85

“Don’t you remember when we went to the review of troops,” said her father, “we couldn’t see any order or reason in all the marching and counter-marching; but there was the General on horse-back, with all the whys and wherefores in his mind. We could see it a little more plainly after we climbed that high hill, and looked right down upon them. And so when we ‘get up higher,’ we may know more of God’s plans than we do down here. Meanwhile, the text is to teach us, that he is the great Commander and Judge, doing just what he pleases with his creatures. It is for us to trust he will work out the very best plan possible.”

“I can’t just see why he lets good folks have any bad times,” said Maybee.

“Once, when you and Tod were very little, you were making mud-pies in the garden, having a splendid time; and Aunt Sue came and took Tod away to be washed and dressed. They were all going to a picnic on Beech Island, where he would have ever so much more fun; but the poor little fellow couldn’t understand that, and screamed and cried all the time they were getting him ready.” 86

“Getting ready’s horrid, anyway,” said Maybee.

“Oh no,” said Sue, “not if we keep thinking of what is going to be.”

“That’s it,” said papa. “And we are put into this world to ‘get ready’ for heaven. You know we must be washed in the blood of Christ and clothed with his righteousness before we can enter that beautiful land, and when God takes anything from us that would hinder our getting ready, we need not mind when we think of what is ‘going to be.’ I remember, too, how afraid Tod was that day, of the cars and boat, and how he fretted because Uncle Thed wouldn’t let him walk instead of carrying him over the sand and rocks. So we often grumble at things in our lives,—things God means shall help us along faster towards heaven. We are always wanting to try our own ways.”

“Just as I did the time Maybee was lost,” said Sue. “I think I shall always be sure mother knows best, now.” 87

“And that is a long step towards trusting our Father in heaven,” said papa pleasantly.

“Oh, oh! see the sun!” cried Maybee; “and there’s Uncle Thed and Tod going home from church.”

“Guess my new wubber boots wasn’t afwaid of the wain,” said Tod, running in and holding up one foot triumphantly. “We comed over the stepping-stones, too. Oh, my! an’ the mud’s all water, now; covers ’em most up.”

“Those stepping-stones are just a nuisance,” remarked Sue. “I wish they’d build a nice plank walk over the marsh.”

“My don’t,” said Tod. “It’s weal fun to take tight hold of papa’s hand and let him step you wight along.”

Uncle Thed lifted Tod on his knee.

“Were you having a meeting here, and isn’t it through?” he asked.

“We were just seeing how far we’d got to heaven; I mean, how was the best way,” said Maybee. “And Sue was so frightened when Tod and me was lost, she won’t never do so again. That’s a step, you know.” 88

“Dick an’ me isn’t never going to say ‘By funder’ no more, neither,” said Tod complacently.

“Isn’t Dick just as different as can be?” said Sue. “Only think, mamma, if you hadn’t gone into Aunty McFane’s that day—”

“Oh, yes,” put in Maybee, “I’m going always to b’lieve God takes care of everybody when they ask him.”

“And how little squirrels ought to mind their masters, and boys too, my guesses,” added Tod, reminded of Aunty McFane’s story.

“Dick told Miss Marvin the other Sabbath,” said Sue, “that he wished everybody knew what a good master God was. Will Carter laughed, and coming home he asked Dick how many prayers he said a day. I know Dick was real angry, he turned so red and then white, and he didn’t speak for ever so long. Then he asked Will if he didn’t like to ask his father for things he wanted, and why one need to be any more ashamed of praying. Say Ellis said she wished she could walk with God the way Miss Marvin said it meant. Do you believe children can?” 89

“Why not?” said Mr. Sherman, “if they do as Tod does about the stepping-stones,—take fast hold of God’s hand and let him lead them.”

“And then they’ll be like ‘Brown-Haired Bess,’ and folks’ll know they’re ’quainted with Jesus,” said Maybee.

“Guess they’d better have their own papa,” put in Tod. “Ain’t any use to ask th’ other folks.”

“Exactly,” said Maybee’s papa. “Now let’s sing ‘Nearer, my God, to thee,’ and dismiss our meeting.”

While they were putting back the chairs Maybee told her mother what Miss Marvin had said about the stepping-stones, and how it must have been Uncle Thed and Tod, because she saw Uncle Thed hug Tod to-day when he told about them. 90

“Don’t you s’pose,” said Maybee thoughtfully, “that’s why God has stepping-stones up to heaven ’stead of a plank walk?”

# PART SECOND.

## I.

91

### BETTER THAN "A RICH COUSIN."

**"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work."**

Miss Cox had found a destitute family down by the Mills, and enlisted the girls of her Sabbath School class to provide suitable clothing, in which the children could come to church.

They were to meet at her house Saturday afternoon to sew, having, the Sabbath before, brought what money they could to purchase material. Bell Forbush had given a whole dollar, while poor Sarah Ellis shook her head sorrowfully when asked for her mite.

"But you will come and sew, and that will do just as well," said Miss Cox, putting down twenty-five cents for Sue Sherman.

92

"I gave every bit of my pocket-money," whispered Bell to Sue; "but, you see, Cousin Mate will give me some more if I just ask her; for, don't you think, she's going to stay all summer, and she has such lots of money she's always giving me some."

Sue was more than half inclined to envy Bell this stroke of good luck in the shape of a rich cousin. She quite envied her the next Saturday afternoon. It sounded so grand for Bell to say whenever anything was found to be lacking, "O Miss Cox! I will give that. I'll run right over to the store this minute."

Buttons, trimmings, handkerchiefs, hair-ribbons, even,—"I had no idea we should make out such complete outfits, and so pretty," said Miss Cox, "and we shouldn't but for you, Bell."

"Bell will certainly become bankrupt if she keeps on," said Jenny King.

"Not while she has a rich cousin to go to," said Nettie Rand, in her provoking way.

93

Bell colored, but had the readiness to say frankly, "that's the secret of it. Cousin Mate wants me to be benevolent, and has promised to find all the money I need."

"Great way of being benevolent, that is!" said Nettie, tossing her head.

"It's doing good just the same," rejoined Sue, standing up for her friend, "only it must be real nice and easy to know whatever you want is to be had just for the asking."

Say Ellis looked up with a bright smile, but she said nothing.

"We are very much obliged to Miss Marvin and to Bell too," remarked Miss Cox, basting away on the last little sacque. "The younger ones are all provided for now, but there's an older girl. I can't even get a chance to speak to her yet; folks say she's a wild, high-flyer of a thing, with an ugly temper, and that she uses dreadful language. I don't know as we can do anything—"

94

"Oh! that Tryphosa Harte," interrupted Nettie. "She's perfectly horrid. It's that girl who stood on the steps and mimicked us, the other night, Bell."

"She's just about your size, isn't she?" resumed Miss Cox; "and I was thinking, if each of you should give her something of your own,—things you had done wearing of course, but tasty and like other people's, dress her up real pretty, you know,—and all take some sort of interest in her, we might get her into Sabbath School and help her be somebody. They say she's uncommonly smart."

"But, Miss Cox, she makes all manner of fun of anything good. I'll ask mother to give her my last summer's sacque, but I shouldn't dare speak to her," exclaimed Sue.

"I could give her one of my cambric dresses and I dare say Cousin Mate would get her a hat, but she's so disagreeable I never want to go near her," said Bell.

"It wouldn't be a bit of use, I know," put in Nettie Rand. "She'd only laugh in our faces the minute we said Sabbath School to her; and I think it's hard work enough to ask folks to be good when they treat you decent. I dare say father would give her a pair of shoes, but they'd never walk into church, I'm sure of that." 95

"I should call it casting pearls before swine," laughed Jenny King. "Please, Miss Cox, don't set us to driving any but *little* pigs into Sabbath School: you can coax round them easy, but that Tryphosa Harte,—it would take the meekness of Moses to begin with, and the patience of Job to hold out. I know meekness and patience and perseverance are nice things to have, but, you see, none of us has a rich cousin to keep us supplied with that sort of pocket-money."

Again Say Ellis looked up, with a flash of sunshine in her mild, blue eyes, and this time she spoke:—

"I'd like—to try, Miss Cox. I never spoke to her but once, and then she threw mud at me, but I could—try; and I'd like—to give something. Would a pair of stockings—"

"Yes, indeed; she'll need everything, I suppose," said Miss Cox warmly. "If you *would* try, Sarah dear. I have an idea one of you would succeed much better than I." 96

"Whatever did you offer for?" asked Jenny King, as she and Sarah walked home together. "It will be just a waste of kindness."

"But if there's plenty more to be had, we needn't mind," said Say, smiling.

Jenny stared, and then said slowly, "But I do mind having a dirty, ragged thing like that turn up her nose at me. You just try how it feels a few times, and—"

"But don't you know—I was thinking—I'm sure it's something like," stammered Say.

"What *are* you getting at?" laughed Jenny good-naturedly, as they stopped before the gate of the small cottage where Sarah lived.

"Why, you said we hadn't any rich cousin to give us patience and meekness, and I thought, wasn't God a great deal better, because, you know, it was in our Sabbath School lesson,—Whatsoever we ask, He can give it to us. Only think,—*whatsoever!*" 97

"Yes, but I never thought of taking it so, really."

"*I* thought of it when Sue said it must be nice to know we could have anything we wanted. You see, I couldn't give any money, because mother has to work so hard, and I wondered supposing I had and asked God to make it up, if he would. And when it came to doing something, I was sure he'd help if we all prayed. I wanted to ask the girls to, but I didn't quite dare."

"Isn't it queer," said Jenny thoughtfully, "how afraid we are to talk about such things to each other? Now, we asked Bell to ask her cousin for a dozen things, and it isn't so very different asking God, only that he's so great."

"Which makes it so much the better, and he has—different things, you know, patience, and love."

"Oh dear! it's such hard work to use those things, I'm afraid I don't want them much," sighed Jenny; "but I'll pray about Tryphosa. I begin to pity her more already." 98

"Going to give away your stockings!" exclaimed Tilly Ellis, Sarah's little sister, that night, as the latter was looking over her one small drawer of underclothing. Neat, and whole, and enough, but very little to spare: that told the whole story at the Ellis's.

"Yes, Tilly; you know God wants us to do good, and he's promised to give us everything we need, and I think he'll show me how I can earn some more. I'm going to try it anyway, because if I didn't give her something, she wouldn't know I really wanted to help her."

Tilly was too sleepy to ask who "her" was; and the next thing either of them knew, it was the Sabbath morning, and the birds were holding a praise-meeting under their chamber-window.

# II.

## TRYPHOSA.

**"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."**

ALL Say's attempts the next week to make Miss Tryphosa's acquaintance were unsuccessful. Once a small boy directed her to the wrong street; once a drunken man reeled against her on the narrow side-walk, and frightened her back; another time, the door was locked. At last, however, she gained admittance, having been vociferously welcomed at the gate by all the younger children. Mrs. Harte set her a chair, remarked, "Tryphosy was som'eres round," and went back to her wash-tub. Say did her best with "the weather," the "health of the family," and "the hard times." "Yes" and "No" was all the help she had. The room was hot and close with steam from the 100
"suds," the stove smoked, the children fingered her from top to toe, and after waiting nearly an hour she was glad to make her escape.

"Call again. See you any time!" sounded from somewhere in mid-air as she went down the rickety steps. She looked up, and from amongst the woodbine which ran all over the roof of the old house recognized the face she was in pursuit of.

"Oh, please, are you Tryphosa? Do come down! I want to see you very much," she said earnestly.

"Catch a weasel asleep!" "Does your mother know you're out?" "Ain't we fine!" and then followed a string of oaths which made poor Say cover her ears and hurry home as fast as she could.

She had no idea of giving it up, however.

In one corner of the yard, right amongst the thistles and bitter weeds, she had noticed a little patch of fresh earth, where had been set a bunch of columbine, two tiger-lilies, a scraggly rose-bush, and one bright, pert, little pansy. On the Sabbath she 101
asked the children whose it was.

"Oh! that Phosy's," they said. "She thinks a sight of that garding. Wasn't she hoppin' mad last night, 'cause pa pulled up the holly-hocks Bill Finnegan had just bringed her!" Bill worked at the Squire's, where they "had posies as *was* posies."

Early Monday morning Say took up her one pet scarlet geranium. There were half a dozen others, but none so full of buds, none she had so closely watched from the first slipping. She didn't even wait to eat her breakfast, for fear of missing Tryphosa.

"Here, let alone! What you after now?" called out the same coarse voice, from up in the woodbine, as Say stooped over the forlorn little flower-bed, transplanting her geranium.

"I've brought something for you. Come and see if you like it," said Say, without raising her eyes.

A rumble, tumble, thump,—and the weird, wicked-looking face was thrust close to 102
her own. "What'd you bring it for?"

"Because it was so pretty I wanted you to have it," returned Say, pressing the earth firmly around the roots.

"Don't tell me! You've got an axe to grind," said the girl, a smile lurking around the full, red lips and dull, dark eyes in spite of her frown.

"No, I haven't; that is, I *do* want something, but it's something you'll like. We thought—we want ever so much that you should come to Sabbath School."

"I'd look well, wouldn't I?" and Tryphosa, who had leaned over to finger the bright, scarlet blossoms, straightened herself, and glanced down defiantly at her ragged dress and bare feet.

"No, we've some real nice clothes, our very own; you're just as big as we, and if you'll come——"

"Well, I ain't a going to. 'Betty, put the kettle on,'" and away went Tryphosa, to reappear in a moment on the roof among the woodbine, where she sang and shouted 103
till Say had turned the farthest corner.

Say went to bed that night utterly discouraged, but the next morning she was bright and hopeful as ever. Was it because she so earnestly asked the Father to give her, out of his abundance, more patience and perseverance?

Wednesday night, slipping one of her two pairs of pretty striped balmorals into her pocket, she started slowly towards the mills again, dreading the interview in spite of herself, and passing and repassing the rickety old steps several times before she could make up her mind what to say first.

"Want to see how it's growed?" and Tryphosa suddenly bounced out of the door, bringing up on the grass beside her flower-bed. "It's just jolly! but I don't believe yer care any great shakes about my going to that there place."

"Oh! but I do, really; we want you to come very much, Miss Cox and all; and we have 104
such nice times, and we sing," said Sarah, stepping inside the gate.

"Well, fetch on yer clothes an' I'll see."

"Oh! but couldn't you come to my house Sunday morning? Miss Cox thought—"

"Oh, ho! ye ain't going to give me the duds, only fix a fellow up for the show. Much obleeged, but that don't go down, not by a jugful!"

"No, oh! no," began Say earnestly; "but wouldn't you *rather* come to my house and let me braid your hair just like mine, you know, and have mother fix in a ruffle and—and a ribbon?"

Something kept suggesting just the right thing to our Say.

"And see here," she added, pulling out the balmorals, striped brown and gray with just a thread of scarlet, "I've brought these because I thought you'd like to be sure. They're for your very own, and I'll bring the shoes to-morrow."

The dull eyes fairly glistened and the rough, tanned cheeks dimpled under the 105
frowning eye-brows. "Well, hand 'em over. I'll be there. No, come to think, I was going after blackberries Sunday. You'll have to wait a week, unless," and the eyes snapped maliciously, "you could come to the factory and help awhile Saturday afternoon, so's I could get out earlier."

The dirty old factory! But Say hesitated only a moment. "Yes, I'll do that if you'll promise sure."

"Sure it is!" and Tryphosa held out a dirty brown hand; "but you don't mean it; you're only foolin'."

Say's mother might have to sew very hard for a living, but it was very different from taking in washing and having a drunken husband to worse than waste the greater part of his own and the others' earnings. Say was very different from the factory girls. Phosy could see that.

"But I do mean it," said Say, shaking the soiled hand so heartily Tryphosa actually grinned with delight.

There was a whole suit ready Saturday night. Miss Cox attended to that, and Say 106
was on hand in the afternoon. The girls said it was a shame and pitied her dreadfully, but never once thought of offering to go with her to the "horrid old mill." And oh, how hateful Tryphosa was! She introduced Say to the mill-girls as "Sister Sainty," kept them in a roar over her probable exploits in the Sabbath-School line, and held Say in suspense with a dread of impossible accidents.

But she made her appearance, bright and early, Sabbath morning, comparatively quite docile, submitted to be washed, shampooed, braided, and ruffled, with a most martyr-like air, and came out from the process not so very unlike the five other girls, among whom Say seated her, with such a happy look in her own blue eyes. Just to see her sitting there more than repaid the trouble.

"The faith that conquers," said Miss Marvin, watching the two go away from Sabbath School together, "is the faith that goes right to work, and keeps at it."

# III.

## PLAYING "INJUNS."

**"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."**

"We're playing Injuns; that's what 'tis," said Tod, as his mother opened the shed door and stepped back, exclaiming, "Well, what now?"

Jackson, the gardener, had been painting brick-work, trellises, vases, etc., and put away his materials, red, white, and green paint, with the brushes, on the lower shelf of the tool-room, opening out of the shed. Tod and Maybee had discovered the treasures, and with the help of an old feather duster had transformed themselves into quite respectable savages.

"It'll come off easy," said Tod, pulling out the feathers and rubbing his hand over both cheeks, blending the different colors into one neutral tint, around which his yellow hair stood out like an aureola.

"Was there ever such children!" sighed Mamma Smith despairingly. "There's no washing it off. Do come here, Dolly, and see what *can* be done."

"Oh laws! jest let me have some sperits of turpentine," said faithful Dolly, who had reigned in the Smith kitchen years before Tod was born. "I'll go get some of Jackson, and do you childern jest run round to the kitchen. We'll hev it fixed in no time."

"I sha'n't have any spurtuntine on my face," said Maybee decidedly, as Dolly disappeared in search of Jackson. "What's water for, I'd like to know, if 'tisn't to wash in,—soap an' water, that's what my mamma uses. I don't think Dolly knows."

"My guesses her does," returned Tod, looking ruefully at each little red and green finger, "but—it's being scwubbed; my'd rather scwub his own self."

"She won't spurtuntine me," repeated Maybee, slowly following Tod, who, to his honor be it told, never thought of going anywhere but straight to the kitchen. "What makes you let her?"

"'Cause my mamma say her must, an' my doesn't want to be a forever 'n 'never Injun, does my?"

"I'd just lieves," rejoined Maybee sullenly. "We hadn't played scalp 'em, nor had a pow-wow, nor nothing. It's real mean they found us so quick."

"Only—p'raps 'twould a dried on," said Tod, looking doubtfully at Maybee's tattooed cheeks and feeling of his own.

"Hurry along!" called Dolly, from the back door. "I can't fool round all the morning; and besides, I was jest going to fry some crullers, an' you know what kind of boys 'tis gets hot crullers to eat; 'tain't red and black ones now."

That helped Tod wonderfully. He marched in like a Trojan, and manfully stood all the rubbing and rinsing, with only a faint little squeal whenever nose or ears threatened to come quite off. Maybee curled up in a chair, her black eyes shining defiantly from out the red and green rings.

"'Twasn't so very bad, was it, Bub?" said Dolly, with a final sweep of her softest towel, "and you're as sweet and clean as a posy, letting alone the turpentine smell. Now, lemme give my crullers a stir, an' we'll look after you, Miss Maybee."

"Guess I can look after my own self," muttered Maybee, slipping over to the sink in Dolly's absence, and seizing a cake of yellow soap. Two or three whisks of the soapy hands over her face, and the black eyes shone out from the mottled ground-work like stars in a cloudy sky.

"Oh, my gracious!" said Dolly, reappearing. "Now you've been and done it! Didn't you know ev'ry such thing only makes it wuss an' wuss? You couldn't never git it off, yourself, try as long as you live. Come, I sha'n't hurt skersely any."

"Feels good now," said Tod encouragingly.

"'Tain't more'n half off, much," rejoined Maybee, who, like all uncomfortable people wanted to make somebody else uncomfortable.

"Yes, 'tis," affirmed Tod, feeling his face over.

“You don’t know; you haven’t looked in the glass,” pouted Maybee.

“Yes, my does, ’cause her said her’d get it off, an’ her never tells lies,” answered Tod triumphantly.

“To be sure,” said Dolly, giving Tod a hug. “Come, now, it’s just as easy.”

“I sha’n’t!” persisted Maybee, backing into the farthest corner. “I won’t be washed, so there!”

“Oh well, jest as you please,” said Dolly, gathering up her towels. “If you’d rather look like a wild Injun, I don’t know as anybody cares. Remember, it’s your own fault, that’s all.”

Now Dolly had forgotten and the children knew nothing about Tryphosa Harte, sitting just inside the dining-room door. Tryphosa had come for the clothes; her mother did Mrs. Smith’s washing, and she was waiting for the bundle to be made 112
ready. She had never come for the clothes till since she began to go to Sabbath School. She liked, now, to meet the girls of her class on the street, to get a pleasant “Good morning” from Miss Cox or Miss Marvin, as she passed, and above all to have Say Ellis run out, as she was sure to do, and walk a little ways down the lane with her. By working extra at noon she could get the half hour for her errand, and it was a great help to her mother. Tryphosa never used to think of that, but she thought of a great many new things now-a-days. Yesterday Miss Marvin heard the Sabbath School class, and in her plain, simple way had told them how sin blackened and stained the heart, and how only the blood of Jesus could make it clean again; that nothing they could do for themselves would whiten it the least bit: they were simply to ask God, and he would make it “white as snow.” But people didn’t want to be clean, she said, or else they wanted to be cleansed their own way, although God’s way was so simple. It was 113
so very strange everybody didn’t want God for their friend and heaven for their home.

Hearing or caring about God or heaven was all new to Phosy, but she thought she could love Miss Marvin’s God; she didn’t feel afraid, as she did when Miss Cox talked about him. She would like such a friend; she would much rather have her heart sweet and clean, like the clover-fields, than like the filthy, dirty streets down by the mills; but she couldn’t understand the “*how*”—the three steps Miss Marvin called it,—wanting, asking, believing. Listening to the talk out in the kitchen that morning, somehow it grew wonderfully plain. Wasn’t it something like? Maybee didn’t want to be clean, or rather she wanted to be washed her own way; and how foolish she was! Tod had trusted himself to Dolly, and his round rosy, happy face told he had not been deceived.

Up in the little attic chamber of the old house, in the few minutes saved from her 114
scanty nooning, Phosy kneeled down, and with a whole heartful of longing, said, “Dear Father in heaven, wash me, for I want to be clean, an’ nobody else can make me.” Then she went away to the noisy factory, happier than she ever remembered of being before.

“What’s come over Phosy Harte?” said one and another of the girls as the days went by. “She don’t swear more’n half as much, and she goes purring round, spry and happy as a kitten.”

They didn’t know, they wouldn’t have understood if they had, the “new life” that had come to Phosy. They could only see what it was doing for hand and eye and tongue. She might not always be as happy. There were all those dreadful habits to be fought with and conquered; but a great God had promised to help her,—one whose word never fails, and who had laid up for her “white robes” and a “crown,”—for all those, indeed, who are “washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb,” not for sin-blackened souls who refuse to be made clean.

# IV.

## GREEDY BELL AND HONEST BENNIE.

**“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.”**

“NARROW escape!” said one to another as the crowd separated.

A run-away horse had dashed against the phaeton containing Mrs. Forbush and her niece, upsetting it, and throwing both occupants out. Fortunately their own horse remained perfectly manageable, and a few slight bruises were all the injuries received. Miss Marvin was taken up insensible, but soon recovered.

“Nothing worse than a shock to the nervous system. She will be out in a day or two,” said good old Dr. Helps, who never frightened his patients to death for the sake of a marvellous cure.

The next morning Miss Marvin’s purse was discovered to be missing.

“It was in your chatelaine pocket and must have dropped out. Of course, with such a crowd you’ll never see it again; but then, it’s a mercy our necks weren’t broken,” said Mrs. Forbush, consolingly. “I’m going down street, now. Bell will wait on you. Don’t exert yourself at all, remember.”

Just after Mrs. Forbush had gone, there was a ring at the door. Bell peeped out of the window.

“It’s only a boy—a telegram, may be. I’ll run down myself,” she said.

She was back in a moment all out of breath.

“O Cousin Mate! it’s your purse. Bennie Cargill, he found it this morning right where you were upset. Don’t you know you asked Sunday who that boy was up in the gallery, and—”

“Stop a minute, Bell.” Miss Marvin opened her portemonnaie. “It’s all right; the boy hasn’t gone, has he? Run quick and give him this,” taking out a bill, “and ask him to come and see me some day, so I can thank him myself.”

Bell hurried down again, out of doors, into the street.

“Oh, no indeed!” said Bennie, coming back to meet her, and touching his cap politely. “I couldn’t; my mother wouldn’t like me to take anything for doing what I ought.”

“But my cousin sent it to you, and wants you to come and see her some day.”

“I should like to do that ever so much; but not this, please. It would look as if I did it for pay.”

“Well, what if you did?” said Bell, whose finer impulses, I am sorry to own, had been deadened by vanity and selfishness.

“I would rather do it because it’s *right* and *honest*,” said the boy simply, at the same time putting both hands behind him as if afraid the longing awakened by the new, crisp bank-note might prove too strong a temptation. “I think *she* will understand,” and he walked briskly away again.

“*I* think she’s made a mistake in the bill. Ten dollars,—what an idea! And to think he refused it,” soliloquized Bell, looking even more longingly than Bennie had done at the bank-note. “What a lot of things it would buy! If it was only mine,—and I don’t just see why I needn’t. She’s given it away; of course it can’t make any difference to her who has it now,” and upon that Bell tied the bill into one corner of her pocket-handkerchief, and stuffed the handkerchief into the deepest corner of her pocket.

“Had he gone far? Did you have to run? Why, how red your face is,” said Cousin Mate when Bell reappeared. “Sit down now and tell me all about Bennie. Was he glad of the money? Somehow I fancied from the boy’s face that——but of course all boys like money. Will he be likely to spend it all for nuts and candy? Because in that case I shall wish I had made the amount less.”

“I—don’t—think—he—will,” said Bell, busily straightening the bureau-cover. “He—he’s a very nice boy and a splendid scholar. Mr. Blackman wanted him to fit for college, but they’re real poor; they live up-stairs in Mr. Pratt’s house, and Mr. Bowers

took him into his store. They say he makes him work real hard. His father's gone to sea, or something. They aren't exactly in our set; we never call," concluded Bell in her grandest manner.

"And it isn't likely he'll ever call on me," said Miss Marvin, smiling, "My imaginary hero proves to be a real flesh-and-blood boy, honest and industrious, and willing to be paid for both,—in money rather than in kindness and sympathy. And so endeth my adventure."

Bell sincerely hoped so; but as it happened, the next fine day Dr. Helps called for Miss Marvin to ride with him. It also happened that one of the doctor's patients detained him a long time, and that while Miss Marvin waited, leaning back in his 120
comfortable buggy, Bennie and his mother passed slowly by, talking very earnestly, and never dreaming any ears save those belonging to the doctor's old horse were within hearing.

"Now, mother, don't you almost wish," Bennie was saying, "that I had taken the ten dollars Miss Marvin offered me?"

"No, Bennie; to know my boy was both honest and honorable, doing right without hope of reward, gives me more pleasure than a dozen visits could."

"But it would be such a nice rest for you, and we haven't seen Aunt Em for so many years, and it is *so* pretty up in Derryford in the summer."

"I know, Bennie, and the trip would do you a great deal of good, but we will try to be patient a little longer. God always gives the means when he sees the end to be best for us."

That was all Miss Marvin heard.

"I am afraid the shock was more serious than we realized the other day," remarked the doctor, as he unfastened his horse; "or have I tired you all out keeping you waiting 121
in this hot sun?"

Miss Marvin tried to smile and assure him there was nothing the matter. She couldn't tell him of the ache way down in her heart to think her little Bell had deceived her again.

And Bell's mother! Oh, how shocked she was, and astonished and mortified! She couldn't believe it; and when Bell herself confessed it, and produced the identical bill, it almost broke her heart. Her only daughter guilty of anything so mean and low and wicked!

Did she forget how, in all the years since God gave that daughter to her, she had never prayed beside her pillow, had never talked with her about the all-seeing Eye looking down into our very hearts? that instead she had taught her, by example as well as precept, to consider this world "all and in all"?

When the temptation came, strong and unexpected, what was there to keep the child 122
from yielding? To get is the world's maxim, to give is God's. Poor little Bell had learned only the first; she grasped eagerly at what seemed good, and found only sorrow and shame.

"It is so pretty up in Derryford in the summer!" Miss Marvin knew that; she had spent three months there once upon a time, and now she took a fancy to try a few weeks at the old-fashioned farm-house again. But she wanted somebody for company, and a nice boy to drive her around the country. Why weren't Bennie and his mother the very ones? Bennie was looking pale, and his mother too. Was it true Mrs. Cargill had a sister in that very place? Then her plan was certainly the right one. Miss Marvin certainly made it seem as if she was getting as well as receiving a favor.

"And now," cried Bennie, when she had called the second time and concluded all the arrangements, "it has come, means and all. So much better than the ten dollars could 123
be!"

# V.

## GOD'S SIDE THE STRONGEST.

**"And he answered, Fear not; for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them."**

PAPA and Mamma Sherman, Uncle Thed and Aunt Sue were going to the beach for a day, and wouldn't be home until very late. Tod was to stay with Maybee, and Sue had the privilege of asking anybody she pleased for company. Bell was sick, so she chose Jenny King and Say Ellis. Bridget attended to dinner and was then allowed the afternoon out. Getting tea was all the best of it to the children. They put every available piece of silver on the table, even to the coffee-urn; they didn't feel obliged to eat bread-and-butter for manners, but began and ended with cake and crullers,—Dolly's crullers, which she had sent over by Tod "with her compliments." Tod said he guessed that meant the sugar outside, "'cause her didn't always have it on,"—not a bad definition of compliments in general. 124

When supper was ready, Tod wanted to say grace as papa did.

"You don't know how," said Sue.

"Yes, my does"; and Tod, folding his hands, said very slowly and gravely,—

"O Lord, for pity's sake. Amen."

Nobody laughed, he looked so serious; only Sue began, "I told you——"

"Don't," whispered Say. "He meant it all right, and I guess God understood."

While they were eating, a rough-looking man came up to the open door and asked for a drink of water. Tod jumped up at once and handed him his own little silver mug.

"What a nice boy!" said the tramp. "Wouldn't he give a poor fellow a bit of cake, now?"

Maybee hastened to pass the cake-basket, with all the politeness imaginable.

"My papa's gone to the beach," said Tod, trying to be sociable.

"Be back pretty soon?" asked the man. 125

"Not 'fore ten or 'leven. It's a great long wide; and Bwidget is goned, too."

"Got any dog?" asked the tramp, emptying the cake-basket, much to Maybee's discomfiture.

"No; my hasn't got any dog, 'cept Buff, and her's a cat. An' we can't say 'Have some more,' 'cause you's eat it all up. Guess you forgot my cup; mos' put it in your pocket, didn't you? S'pose you must go now. Call again, thank you."

"Wasn't he horrid?" said Sue. "I don't believe you ought to have talked to him at all."

"Guess my has to be polite; guess my mamma makes me politerest to poor folks," said Tod.

"How he did look at things! S'pose he thought it was pretty nice," said Maybee, tossing head very much like Bell Forbush.

"Well, he's gone, and I'm thankful," said Sue. "We won't do the dishes because we might break something, and Bridget ought to be here pretty soon. I'll lock up the silver in the side-board and keep the key till she comes. Don't you think, the last time mother let her go, she stayed till the next day; but of course she won't to-night." 126

But 'of course' she did. Eight—nine—ten o'clock. The children shut the doors and lighted the lamps. Tod began to look sleepy and the older girls a little anxious. They tried to while away the time telling stories, and of course recalled all the horrible things they had ever heard. Each little heart gave a great thump when a loud rap sounded on the side door.

"It's only me," said a whining voice. "You're such nice children, you'll let a poor fellow in to stay all night, I know."

"Why, it's my man," said Tod, wide awake. "Course, he's got to stay somewheres nights."

"But mother says, never open the door after dark, till we know who's there. I'll tell

him what mother does," and raising her voice, Sue called out, "You must go to Miss Pratt's boarding house on Walnut Street. That's where folks stay." 127

"But we ain't got any money. Just open the door an' give us a few cents, can't ye?"

"We mustn't open the door," gasped Jenny, "for don't you know, when they get in they murder folks and everything."

Tod gave a howl, and disappeared under the sofa.

"You sha'n't come in—never!" screamed Maybee, stamping her foot.

"Open the door, or we'll break it down," was the gruff reply, whereat Maybee vanished under the table as rapidly as Tod had done.

The door began to be violently shaken. With a thoughtfulness quite beyond her years Sue put out the lights, and grasping the keys of the side-board tightly in one hand and Tod in the other, she led the way softly up stairs.

Looking out in the moonlight they could see three men go away from the door and begin to try the different windows.

"Oh! they're *so* big, and there's only us. They'll come in and get everything, and kill us, just as sure. Oh! what shall we do? What shall we do?" and Sue, her courage suddenly giving way, dropped on the floor, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break. 128

"No, no! Don't you remember," said Say, her own lips ashy white, "the side God is on is the strongest, always. He can't be with those bad, wicked men, and if he's with us, we're a great many the most."

"I was real bad last week, but I've been forgived," sobbed Maybee.

"My sweared a little swear yes'day, but my didn't mean to; my said 'Good Gwacious!'" moaned Tod.

"God doesn't love us because we're good," said Say softly. "You know we're all just as bad as can be."

"I ain't neither," said Maybee stoutly. "I ain't half so wicked as Tryphosa Harte."

"Oh, but didn't you know," whispered Say, shivering as the back door rattled noisily, "Tryphosa is trying to be a Christian."

"I guess I'm bad 'nough, and I'm real sorry," said Maybee, quite subdued by another shake of the side door. 129

"Do you think God—is really close to, near enough to help us?" asked Sue earnestly. "You ask him, Say; you're so much better than I."

They kneeled down in a row beside the bed. Outside, three desperate men had succeeded in partly raising a window. A little more, and it would admit them. Miles away, papa and Uncle Thed were driving leisurely along, never dreaming Bridget had left their dear ones unprotected save by the Eye that never sleeps.

What was there to prevent a deed of blood, as dreadful as those we read of almost every day?

What but God's angels, if so be they were around those helpless little ones, as they were around the prophet Elisha in olden time,—invisible but strong.

Farmer Trafton had that day been to Weltford market, ten miles away; had been belated in disposing of his load, and was slowly jogging home with his stout hired man beside him. The tramps, swearing at the unmanageable window, drew back in the shadow to wait till the team had passed. But just opposite the gate, one of the lynch-pins broke. 130

"Well now," said Farmer Trafton, "here's a pretty go—at this time of night; all honest folks abed and asleep. How'll we fix it, Jake? Have to step in and borrow a bit of Sherman's wood-pile, sha'n't we? Hillo! here, what's to pay?"

Three men were running swiftly away down the garden and through the orchard.

"God didn't send his angels," said Maybee, when at last she nestled safely in papa's strong arms, "but that dear old Mr. Trafton was just as good, wasn't he?"

"Betterer," said Tod sleepily, "'cause we was 'quainted with him, an' he told us such nice stowies, an' a hymn; my's going to learn it." 131

# VI.

## STRONGER THAN PAPA.

**“And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”**

“MAKE me a butterfly, papa,” said little Bell,
“His wings all gold and scarlet, trimmed with diamond dust.”
“I could not if I tried; the how I cannot tell,”
Smiled papa. “But,” said little Bell, “Somebody must.”

“My little rose-tree has forgotten its spring dress.
It’s so queer how they change their winter cloak of snow!
Please fix mine over, green and pink, like all the rest.
You can’t? O papa! Why? *Somebody* does, you know.”

“My birdie died; they had it stuffed; you’d never know
But what it was alive. The trouble is,—ah me!
They quite forgot to put the music in, although
My papa says they can’t. But *Somebody* did, you see.”

Bell’s papa was so strong and wise she never dreamed
Of danger when he held her; even in the gale,
When the brave captain said, “We’re lost; there is no hope,”
And through the storm and darkness rose a fearful wail.



She nestled closer in his arms, “Mamma, don’t cry!
Papa can take us home all safe to Baby Will.”
“My darling, only *One*,” her father made reply,
“Can say to winds and storm-tossed ocean, ‘Peace! be still.’”

Safe in her own dear home she knelt, our happy Bell,
Saying, “I’m glad there’s Somebody up in heaven above,
Who’s stronger than papa.” Said mamma, “That is well,
But better still, my darling, to know his name is Love.

“He it is, who careth for the sparrows when they fall,
He, who clotheth field and forest, dell and leafy dome;
He who heareth little children, and, the best of all,
Safely leadeth those who love him to his heavenly home.”

# VII.

## REAL “MINDING.”

**“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.”**

MAYBEE stood by the window with a very sober face. There wasn’t much to see so early in the morning; only the street, a few passers-by, and over the hills, a spiral of white smoke where the cars were hurrying away towards the great city, carrying mamma and Sue with them. How long it would be till night! And mamma had said when she kissed her good-by, “I want Maybee to do exactly as Aunt Cynthia tells her, all the whole time. If she gets tired of play, there’s her garden to weed, the play-room to put in order, and that last seam to sew.”

Now, Aunt Cynthia didn’t like children; she didn’t “like anything much, except patch-work,” Maybee said, “an’ she must be made of patch-work, ’cause she always had stitches in her back when she was real cross.” Maybee would never sew patch-work for fear it would make scowls over her eyes, like Aunt Cynthia’s; so mamma had taught her to sew on soft, white under-garments for herself and her dollies. That “last seam” was in a night-dress for Lauretta Luella.

“I’ll sew it right straight up. That’ll please my mamma awfully,” thought Maybee.

“Ma-b-e-l!” called Aunt Cynthia from up-stairs. “Come here, this minute, and slick up your bureau-drawers.”

“I’m busy,” said Maybee, threading her needle.

“Never mind; come right along. What would your mother say to things being tumbled in this way?”

She would say “Put them in order,” Maybee knew. She *had* said “Mind Aunt Cynthia.” But Maybee felt more like sewing her seam, and mamma told her to do that, didn’t she? So the little girl sat still, and Miss Cynthia, after calling several times, arranged the drawers herself.

**“I’ll sew it right straight up.” p 134]**

“And now, Mabel,” she said, coming into the parlor with the inevitable big basket of patch-work, “you can sew very neatly, and I want you to help me a little while.”

“I can’t,” said Maybee shortly; “mamma wants me to do this.”

Aunt Cynthia could have told Maybee that her mother wanted that particular red-and-white bed-quilt a great deal the most; for the Ladies’ Sewing Society, of which Mrs. Sherman was president, were about sending a barrel to some poor, needy home missionaries, and she wanted the quilt to put in. But Aunt Cynthia only shut her thin lips tightly together, and sewed away as fast as she could. Maybee finished her seam, folded her work up neatly, and laid it where mamma would see it the first thing.

“Now I’ll weed my garden. Aunt Cynthia, will you please put on my thick boots?”

“You’re not going one step out of doors; so that matter’s settled,” said Aunt Cynthia.

Now, mamma would have explained that black, watery clouds had spread over the 136
blue sky since sun-rise, and a thick, white fog crept up over the hills and meadows, making it very imprudent for a little girl, threatened with croup the night before, to go out, even with thick shoes on. Aunt Cynthia didn’t believe in telling children all the whys. She insisted on the good, old-fashioned obedience, that never asked questions; and I’m not sure but it *is* better than all questions and no obedience, which is so much the fashion now-a-days.

“She’s cross, and I’m going out anyway,” said Maybee, trying to forget what mamma said about minding. “That garden *must* be weeded, and if she won’t put my boots on I shall go without them.”

She worked busily till noon, the dampness steadily penetrating the thin slippers and light muslin dress.

“It’s a mercy if you haven’t killed yourself,” said her aunt, who, buried in her beloved
patch-work, had actually forgotten the child. “Now I must make you a bowl of hot 137
ginger tea,” she continued, forcing Maybee to lie down on the lounge, and covering her over with half a dozen blankets, “and you mustn’t stir one foot out of this room again to-day. Mind, now.”

But Maybee had set her heart on putting the play-room in order. Mamma never liked such a looking place right off the front hall; so when Aunt Cynthia started down street, after more calicoes, Maybee slipped up-stairs, all in a perspiration as she was, and arranged and re-arranged, swept and dusted the neglected room, sorted out Lauretta Luella’s scattered ward-robe, and washed her three china tea-sets, quite unmindful of the cool draught through the hall.

That night mamma found a tired, fretful, little girl, waiting by the window, with hot, feverish hands, aching head, and smarting throat.

“A very naughty girl!” Aunt Cynthia said severely, “who hadn’t minded in one single thing.”

“But, mamma, I tried to please you, I did really,” said the hoarse little voice. “I 138
worked so hard! There’s the play-room and the garden—”

“Yes, dear, they both look very nicely. You deserve the ticket papa promised when the weeds were all gone, as well as the one you was to have when Luella’s dress was finished. But, Maybee, think a moment. Did you do it really to please *me* or to please *yourself*? Have you been mamma’s good, obedient little Maybee to-day?”

“It’s nicer *doing things* than ’tis minding,” said Maybee, hanging her head.

Sue looked up from the parcel she was untying: “There, mother, that’s just it. I’ve tried, you know, ever since that night we were so frightened, to do things to please God; but it’s—it’s the *minding* I don’t like.”

“The natural heart loves to do great things,” said Mrs. Sherman, drawing her eldest daughter closer to her; “it is only the ‘new heart’ that *loves* to *mind* God.”

# VIII.

## AND THE LAST, FIRST.

**"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here."**

Miss Cox was out of town, and Miss Marvin had the Sabbath School class. The children liked Miss Cox, but thought nobody could equal Miss Marvin. "Miss Cox gave them good dinners enough," Dick said, "but somehow, Miss Marvin made them taste better." Dick was trying hard to make up for lost time, and to get the mastery over his mischievous propensities. He wasn't trying in his own strength, either. That first time he asked for and found a Helping Hand wasn't the last; and since Aunty McFane told Miss Marvin about Dick, that lady had taken especial pains to cultivate his acquaintance, chatting with him on all occasions, and sympathizing in his little trials and failures, till the two had become firm friends. That may have been one reason why Will Carter was a bit jealous of Dick; that, and the way he was rising in favor with Mr. Blackman.

The greatest change, however, was in Tryphosa Harte. You would scarcely have believed the quiet, happy face at the end of the seat was the same, Say had seen peering so disagreeably over the roof of the old house. The sour, ugly mouth was almost always smiling now; the fierce, scowling eyes were full of eager desire; the loud, coarse voice low and gentle, and her whole bearing so subdued and yet so thoroughly in earnest it was a comfort to look at her.

"Why, I really like Tryphosa," said Jenny King, walking home one day beside Miss Marvin; "she is as different as can be. Don't it seem queer, rather, she should become a Christian right away, and Sue Sherman and Nettie Rand and me, who've been talked to all our lives and know exactly what we ought to do, never get a bit nearer, as I see?"

"It's the old story over and over, away back to the Jews and Ninevites," said Miss Marvin, smiling rather sadly.

"The Jews and Ninevites?" repeated Jenny inquiringly.

"Yes; you remember, don't you, that when God sent his servant Jonah to reprove the people of Nineveh they repented at once, and prayed to God for help; but when God sent his own Son to the Jews, his chosen people, who had been 'talked to' all their lives by his prophets and his providences, and who 'knew exactly what they ought to do' when the promised Messiah came, they refused to listen, they didn't want to believe; and 'publicans and harlots went into the kingdom' before them."

"But, Miss Marvin," began Jenny hesitatingly, "don't you think such folks—like Tryphosa, she was so dreadfully wicked—ought—I mean, need it more than—than—"

"Good people, like you and me, who never do anything selfish or unkind or hateful," said Miss Marvin, smiling. "Perhaps; only the apostle Paul, one of the best men I ever heard of,—a brave, upright, moral man, before he became a Christian,—called himself the "chief of sinners"; and if—"

Turning a corner they came suddenly upon a group of boys,—Tom Lawrence, who had just been taunting Dick with some of his old scrapes, and Dick, who, in a blaze of passion, had been uttering oath after oath.

"There's your model Sabbath-School scholar!" Will Carter had sneeringly said.

Miss Marvin appeared to have heard nothing of all this; she spoke to them all pleasantly. Dick slunk hurriedly away; Tom disappeared no less rapidly, followed by the others boys of his set; Say Ellis called to Jenny from across the street, and Will Carter was left to walk along with Miss Marvin.

Almost before he knew it, he was talking over all his many plans and hopes for the future. To fit thoroughly for college, to graduate "A No. 1," work himself into an "up-stairs lawyer," to make rousing speeches that would carry everything before them, possibly to step from the Legislature into Congress: that was Will's ambition.

"And a worthy one," said Miss Marvin encouragingly. "It will fill this life full of work and happiness. Now, what are you doing for the next, the life that is to last always?"

The boy drew himself up stiffly. "I do the best I know how, and that's all anybody

can," he answered proudly. "*I* don't pretend to great things and make a fizzle of it, as *some* boys do."

"The best you know how," repeated Miss Marvin. "Well, do you know as much as you ought?"

Will reddened. "I—I don't quite understand."

"I mean this, Will. Suppose God were to ask you to-day that same question—Do you know as much as you ought?—Couldn't Dick Vance rise up in judgment against you,—you, a deacon's son, whose father has prayed for you every night and morning since you saw the light, has shown you by example what a Christian's joy and hope is, and urged you every day to make it your own? Dick, as you know, has never been in Sabbath School until very recently; had, before that, scarcely heard a word at home about another life; and yet, unless I am very much mistaken, Dick will go home to-night and repent bitterly of the sin into which he fell just now, while Will Carter, who flung his failure in his face, will rest satisfied he is doing the best he knows how."



There was no reply, and Miss Marvin, stopping at Mrs. Forbush's gate, said simply, "Please think it over, Will. I believe Dick is trying every day to learn of Him 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Be sure, Will, it is not true of you, as God said of the Laodiceans, 'Thou knowest not thou art miserable and poor and blind,' for not until you see your *need* of the wisdom from above will you seek help of One 'mighty to save,' and who will let no one who trusts him 'make a fizzle of it.'"

# IX.

## PHOSY'S WORK.

**"——and by it he being dead yet speaketh."**

"FIRE! Fire! Fire!"

One voice, then a dozen, the cry taken up and swelled into a deafening clamor by half a hundred boys just let loose from school; then the clang of bells, quick, imperative, not startling people from their midnight dreams, but checking them mid-way in the daily rush of toil and pleasure.

Uncle Thed, taking an early dinner to catch the train, left his fork sticking straight up in a mouthful of meat, and dashed away to his shop. Farmer Vance clapped his hat on his head, and then flew round and round the house to find it. Old Mrs. Pratt threw her silver spoons into the sink, and locked up her dish-pan in the china-closet.

Ding! ding! ding!

"It's the factory," cried somebody.

"The factory where Phosy Harte works," echoed a group of girls huddled, with white faces, into Say Ellis's yard.

"Lucky it's just noon; all the hands will be out. The old thing will go like tinder," said the crowd surging past.

But they were not all out. In the upper story Phosy was busily at work, making up the odd minutes taken for her walk. Half a dozen of the other girls had gathered round her, hats in hand, laughing, talking, not catching the faintest sound from below, not even noticing the smell of smoke which had emptied the other rooms in half the usual time. Nobody thought to warn them in the selfish scramble for safety. When at last they opened the door to go down, a dense, black column of smoke met them, and through it, enticed by the little draught from the door, came a sharp, pointed tongue of fire, up, up, wrapping the old stairway in a sheet of flame, and cutting off all chance of escape in that direction. They ran to the windows.

"Ladders!" shouted the crowd. But alas! not one was long enough to reach them.

"Splice it!" "Bring ropes!" "No, mattresses!" "Carpets!" "They must jump!"

Men jostled each other in mad haste for they knew not what.

"Jump! It's your only chance!"

One after another the frightened girls flung themselves down, one to be caught safely in the strong arms of a stalwart fireman, another reaching the ground with simply a sprained ankle, still another with a broken arm; while a fourth, falling beyond the mattress, was taken up bruised and bleeding, but alive, and life is dear at any cost.

Only Phosy Harte and Judy Ryan were left,—Judy a poor, deformed girl, half crippled, who would not, dared not jump, and Phosy, waiting, coaxing, beseeching.

"It will be too late."

There are soft mattresses and strong carpets below. Phosy begs, almost pushes the poor girl out, and she reaches the ground safely; but flame and smoke have driven Phosy back.

"The other window!" shouts the crowd, and half-blinded she springs over the low sill just as a fireman, who has succeeded in finding a long ladder, is raising it in place; she strikes it heavily, and drops limp and lifeless.

They lift her tenderly. One faint moan, a gasp,—that is all.

Back to the old house they carry her, past the little garden she had risen so early that very morning to weed, into the low room, with its close, sudsy, smoky atmosphere, which she will never brighten more.

"And nobody'll never know the comfort an' help she's ben to me these last few months," said the poor, over-worked mother, wringing her hands helplessly. "I ain't been to none of yer meetin's for years, but if it's them what made her so handy an' happy-like I'd be glad to try it meself. She's asked me enough, the Lord knows, an' I

allers meant to go sometime, jest to please her. Oh! I'll never forgit how she's prayed nights with them childern—"

There four little voices took up the wail of grief, and more than one rough fireman drew his sleeve hurriedly across his eyes.

"She is through with all suffering," said good old Dr. Helps, who had been working busily over the poor, crushed body.

"It's a blessed thing for the child," said Deacon Carter, as they walked away, "but it's a strange Providence that took the one bit of leaven out of that miserable batch of humanity."

Upon the pine coffin, the girls in Miss Cox's class laid a wreath of beautiful hot-house flowers; but all over the lid, and inside, around the pale face and over the white robe, were fresh, fragrant pond-lilies, their subtile perfume filling the room. No one knew who scattered them there, only as Miss Marvin laid one tenderly between the waxen fingers, Bill Finnegan said huskily, "Thank'ee, ma'am; she liked 'em best of anything." 150

The next Sabbath and the next, in the empty seat where Phosy had always sat, lay a bunch of the same pure, lovely lilies. Nobody knew how they came there, but their sweet breath seemed like pleasant memories of her who had gone. The fourth Sabbath an awkward, ungainly figure, in coarse homespun, shuffled down the aisle and stopped beside the row of neatly-dressed boys. Dick moved a little nearer to Varley, and motioned the new-comer to sit down.

"I—it's Bill Finnegan, ma'am, an' he'll not be gettin' in the way," he stammered, as Miss Marvin left her seat to speak with him. "You see, *she* was allus askin' me to come, but I didn't think so much about it, then. I'd like, bein' as this was her class, if you don't mind. I'll do the best I can; she was forever talkin' about the things she heard tell of here, an' ef I could learn, I'm thinkin' it won't harm a feller."

Up-stairs, in the pew nearest the door, sat Mrs. Harte in the faded black bonnet which had done her service when her husband's mother died years before, when "Daniel" was sober and industrious,—sat, with the tears running down her cheeks, getting, as she phrased it, "a fill of the good things Phosy talked so much about, to stand her through the long, lonesome week." 151

And not many days afterwards there came to Dr. Helps' door—for the doctor's genial, sympathizing heart was known far and wide—a great, rough man, with blood-shotten eyes and haggard face.

"I want to sign the pledge, if so be you think it's any use," he said. "I'm only old Dan Harte, that ev'rybody gin up long ago, except *her*,—Tryphosy. *She* kep' talkin' an' talkin' in sech a lovin' way, an' only the Sunday afore, when she went away to meetin' she kissed me. I was sober for a wonder, an' sez she, 'Father, if the Bible is true, what will you do when you come to die?' I can't git them words out of my ears, an' you see I know there must be a something, to so kind of change Tryphosy from the fiery, hifalutin thing she was, to the purty-spoken, quiet, happy little cretur she got to be. And I thought mabbee, seein' I'd quit drinkin' ag'in an' ag'in, an' couldn't never hold out, if there was anything in this ere religion Phosy got hold of, to help a feller, it's Dan Harte what wants it." 152

Good old Dr. Helps! not content to send away this weak fellow-mortal with a chapter of good advice, and some harmless tonic from his medicine-case, but who could and did kneel down beside him then and there, with a faith strong enough to hold up even this wreck of humanity for the Divine healing. Surely of him shall it be true, "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear."

And down in a dirty alley-way, between two tenement houses, Judy Ryan was teaching half a dozen ragged urchins a hymn Phosy used always to be singing about the mill. She had caught it at the prayer-meeting; and somehow plain, homely Boylston had suited her even better than the livelier Sabbath-School melodies. In her quaint fashion she had explained the words to Judy, and now, through her, was she not yet speaking to the poor, neglected souls in Pinch Alley? Wasn't the "little leaven" working still? 153

# X.

## PHOSY'S HYMN.

**"If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever."**

"My son, know thou the Lord,
Thy father's God obey;
Seek his protecting care by night,
His guardian hand by day.

Call while he may be found,
Seek him while he is near;
Serve him with all thy heart and mind,
And worship him with fear.

If thou wilt seek his face,
His ear will hear thy cry;
Then shalt thou find his mercy sure,
His grace forever nigh.

But if thou leave thy God,
Nor choose the path to heaven,
Then shalt thou perish in thy sins,
And never be forgiven."

# XI.

## MAYBEE'S REBELLION.

**"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."**

MAYBEE waked up out of sorts. Nothing went right. Her berries were sour, her fritters "wrinkly," her egg-toast "smushy."

After breakfast she went out to play, and in half an hour had contrived to break one of Sue's croquet-mallets, lose Tod's ball, left by mistake in her pocket, and upset the board on which Bridget was drying sweet corn. She came in, hot and tired, and crosser than ever.

"Untie my bonnet, quick!" was the first thing mamma heard.

"How do little girls ask?" she inquired.

"I don't care! I want it off, quick; it's hot, and Bridget tied it so hard I'm most choked."

"Well, say 'Please,' and mamma will try to make her little girl more comfortable."

"Oh dear! I always have to do something horrid. I'll untie it my own self," whined Maybee, tugging at the strings of her big shaker till she had drawn them into the tightest of hard knots; then she picked and twisted and pulled, but the depraved sun-bonnet only screwed around against her nose, or tilted up till it really threatened to strangle her. So at last she sat still on the hassock, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, tears and perspiration making grimy furrows over her cheeks, the poor shaker bent into a triangle, from the apex of which looked out two defiant black eyes.

"When Maybee says 'Please,' mamma will help her."

But Maybee wouldn't say Please, and the little bent shaker wandered off to the play-room. She was never tired of "keeping house"; but—in a sun-bonnet! Oh dear! She tried to "make believe" it was a cap like old Mrs. Pratt's, but all the same, it would be dreadfully in the way. When she wanted to look for anything, she must turn way around; she couldn't "cuddle up" Loretta Luella the least bit; she couldn't play go to parties, and as for going to bed, there would be nothing to do but lie flat on her back and stare at the ceiling.

She ran hopefully down stairs when the dinner-bell rang, sure that mamma would relent; for how could she ever manage to find her wee mouth inside that big bonnet?

"Say 'Please,'" said mamma.

Maybee shook her head and clambered sulkily into her high chair.

"What's this,—a small butcher wagon? Bless me! if there isn't somebody inside!" said papa taking the shaker between his two hands and tipping it back till he could see the grimy little face. "Isn't it time the colt had its blinders off, mamma?"

"When she will say 'Please,'" said mamma pleasantly.

"Oh! *that's* the way the wind blows," and papa, after asking a blessing, began carving the nice roast.

Jenny King had come home with Sue, and try as hard as they could, the triangular sun-bonnet, bobbing this way and that, was too much for their gravity. They all laughed at last, which sent Maybee off in high dudgeon, although she had scarcely eaten a mouthful. There was to be chocolate blanc-mange for dessert: she really must have some of that, and slipping into the kitchen she began coaxing Bridget to untie the knot.

"Shure, an' it's beyant me," said Bridget, after two or three ineffectual efforts. "It's too big an' clumsy me fingers are intirely."

So Maybee stole back into the parlor, curled up on the sofa, and listened to the cheerful rattle of dishes and hum of voices, growing, oh! so dreadfully hungry.

By and by she saw Jenny and Sue go off with their baskets. After berries, to be sure, and she might have gone with them.

A little later mamma came in with her sewing.

"Won't Maybee say 'Please' now, and have on a clean dress?" 159

But Maybee only sat still, and looked straight out of the window.

It *was* trying when callers were announced that the poor little shaker must trudge disconsolately up-stairs again. But it would be tea-time pretty soon. Wouldn't mamma let her dear little girl have any supper? Why, she would certainly starve to death before morning. Didn't it make folks sick to starve to death? and wouldn't they have to have the doctor? Then how would mamma feel? If she should die—but no; Maybee would rather not think about that, herself. None but good people went to heaven, and good people said "Please," she supposed. *She* didn't want to. She hated "Please." And —why hadn't she thought before? she could just go and get the scissors, and cut that knot right straight off. Mamma's work-basket was in the sewing-room. Armed with the big shears, one little fat hand grasping each handle, she climbed up to the bureau-glass, carefully put them astride the troublesome knot, and gave a quick snip. 160

Something sharp went into her chin, something warm trickled down her neck. Had she cut her throat? That always "bleeded folks to death." She gasped a little, sat down on the floor, and began mopping up the stream of warm blood with a pillow-sham. She felt weak and tired, but she couldn't lie down, for there was the knot tight as ever.

"Sue! Sue!" she called faintly, as somebody ran past the door.

"I can't stop; Jennie and I are going home with Bell," answered Sue, half way down the stairs.

But somebody must help her.

"Bridget, O Bridget! do come up here a minute," she called softly down the back stairs.

"An' shure, it's not I that'll be laving me work to look after the likes of ye," muttered Bridget, heated and tired with her ironing.

What should she do? She crept slowly down the stairs and through the back entry, 161
the big pillow-sham stuffed into the front of the shaker, and quite concealing the tall clothes-bars of freshly-ironed linen Bridget had just set out to air. Over they came, completely covering her.

"Mamma! mamma! O my mamma!" she screamed. "Oh-h! please, my dear mamma! *please!* PLEASE! 'fore I'm deaded over an' over."

That call wasn't in vain. Strong arms picked her tenderly up; soft, skilful fingers untied the hateful knot, and bathed the poor, aching face; loving lips kissed away the tears.

"Oh, but it's been such a horrid day!" whispered Maybee to papa, when supper had been eaten and it was time to say good-night.

"Dear me! How did it happen?" said papa.

"I happened it myself," returned Maybee soberly. "Folks most always do, don't they?"

"Exactly," said papa. "The trouble that comes of sin we mostly put ourselves into."

"An' what does peoples do who haven't any mammas to pull 'em out?" inquired 162
Maybee anxiously.

"Whom did Maybee grieve besides mother, to-day?"

"God," she answered solemnly.

"And only God can help us out of sin. Even mamma cannot keep Maybee from being just so naughty again, but God can. Remember that, little one, and ask him to-night to make you always his own good little girl."

# XII.

## "BECAUSE."

**"Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded."**

"WHAT *is* the matter?" inquired Maybee, coming suddenly upon Tod, sitting on the door-step, with one fist screwed into either eye, and big, round tears dropping off the end of his nose.

"My new knife, it's all losed!" and Tod buried half his face in a small square of Centennial cotton.

"Oh me suz! an' I've lost your ball," returned Maybee consolingly. "There's never a shower 'thout it rains, my papa says," which misquoted proverb Tod proceeded to illustrate with a fresh burst of grief.

"You see," continued Maybee, "Sue said I mustn't fire it that way, because it would go in the tall grass. I shouldn't never thought of it if she hadn't, and now papa won't let me go and get it."

"My hasn't got anyfing," wailed Tod, behind his handkerchief.

"It'll be in the hay if the cows don't eat it," said Maybee cheerily. "Where'd you lose your knife?"

"Over in the marsh; it sinked, you know."

"How came you playing down there?"

"Wented myself."

"Who said you might?"

"Nobody," very faintly.

"Oh!" said Maybee significantly, "naughty boys always lose their knives or something; but never mind, let's go an' see Aunty McFane and little Peter."

"Can't," said Tod dejectedly.

"Why not?"

"Can't go frough the gate for one, two, three days; mamma said so."

"What for?"

"'Cause—'cause—my runned away."

"Well," with a long-drawn breath, "let's go on the front pizarro and play steam-boat; only—you'd better have a clean apron on. Such awful patched pants, an' that jacket! Why, you're ever so much the biggest!"

"Can't help it," said Tod sulkily. "Can't have no other clothes on for the greatest long while."

"Well, if I sha'n't give it up! What for?"

"'Cause—'cause I played with the grindstone in my best jacket."

"The-od-o-re Smith! Aunty's told you over and over again she'd punish you if you did."

"My knows it," said Tod meekly: "an' my mamma's so pur-sistent; might have finked she would."

"Of course. What a goose! Well, then, let's go in the shed and play store."

"Isn't any fings there. Mamma's locked 'em all up, 'cause my kep' forgetting—no, cause my didn't want to put 'em away when she said it was time"; and Tod stared straight up at the blue sky overhead.

"I hate 'becauses,'" said Maybee emphatically,—"*that* kind, anyhow. I just had miserable times, my own self, all yesterday."

"'Cause why?" asked Tod, with alacrity.

"*Be*cause my strings all knotted up tight—no; 'twasn't, neither; I just wouldn't say

‘Please,’ and the ‘becauses’ kept happening right along,—horrid, all of ’em. There’s always one with things you ought to do and don’t want to, and things you want awfully to do and mustn’t. They’re tied right tight on, too. And then there’s a nice kind, when you get a ticket because you’ve sewed your seam, or something. I wish they’d made ’em all like that.”

“Are you sure which is the best kind?” asked aunty, coming out on the stoop, and sitting down between them. “What did papa snip the baby’s hands for, this morning, Tod?”

“Oh! ’cause her *will* put her fingers in the sugar-blowl,” returned Tod contemptuously.

“Was that a good or bad ‘because’?”

“Why, my s’poses her don’t like to be snipped; but you know if we ’lowed her to touch fings, her might burn her on the teapot, an’ spill the gwavy, an’ every-fing; ’sides it isn’t polite, an’ we must learn her to behave,” concluded Tod, with an air of superior wisdom.



“That is just it,” said mamma, drawing the little reasoner into her lap. “We all need to learn a great many things that we should not if there were no ‘becauses.’ God lets the bad ‘becauses’ *happen*, as Maybee says, to teach us how to be better, or to keep us from something that would harm us. Let me tell you a little story all in rhyme, and then we’ll see if we can’t happen the ‘good becauses,’ by doing just what God wants us to.”

# XIII.



## WHY FRED WAS PUNISHED.

**“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.”**

Our Fred, the merriest boy ever seen,
  Was now in disgrace. We were all so sad.
But saddest of all was his mother, I ween,
  The dearest mamma a boy ever had.

She had argued, entreated, commanded in vain.
  Poor, foolish Fred still refused to obey.
Poor, foolish Fred! who would sadly complain
  To do without mamma one single whole day.

So strong and so loving, so wise and so good,
  So ready to help, so patient to bear,—
Could any one do what his dear mamma could?
  Or take of her boy such fond watch and care?

She waited and waited, but Fred only grew
  More sullen and stubborn; then, with a tear,
She said, oh! so slowly, “It never will do
  To leave him unpunished, tho’ never so dear.”

The verdict was given,—at home to remain
  That day of all days, the Fourth of July.
And mother, whose lips framed the sentence so stern,
  Grieved more than we all, her boy to deny.



Patient to wait, strong and loving to help,
  But firm against wrong,—he’ll thank her, someday,—
The mother, who, seeing the gain through the pain,
  With punishment barred Sin’s broad, tempting way.

And so our Father in Heaven doth wait,
  Lovingly, patiently; once and again
Calling us back from the broad, gilded gate
  Which leads down to death, through sorrow and shame.

His love, strong and tender to help and to bless,
  Though stern and unyielding, is love no less
When it bars the way with punishment sore,
  Than when it waits at the Open Door.

# PART THIRD.

## I.

170

### FARMER VANCE.

**“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”**

Farmer Vance and his wife were taking tea at Mr. Sherman’s. Mrs. Vance and Mrs. Sherman were old schoolmates, and always exchanged yearly visits.

The two gentlemen had talked over the coming election, specie payment, business prospects, and came finally to the Centennial.

Did Mr. Vance think of going? Well, he didn’t know; should like to well enough. Fact was, he’d been unfortunate about his help all summer,—had them off and on; couldn’t think of going unless he found some reliable man to look after things. By the way, did 171
Mr. Sherman know of anybody who wanted to hire out for the rest of the season?

Yes; Mr. Sherman was sure he knew of just the man, or at least a man who needed just such a place. He had been employing him for a few weeks, and could vouch for his willingness and ability. It was Dan Harte, living in that little old house on the corner—

“Dan Harte!” echoed Mr. Vance, laying down his knife and fork.

“Yes, Dan Harte,” repeated Mr. Sherman, reaching for another biscuit; “and a better gardener I wouldn’t ask for.”

“How many sprees has he had in the time?”

“Not one.”

“You’re joking now. Why, I know Dan. He worked for me, years ago. As you say, he was willing and competent, but he *would* have his times. He was soaked through and through with whiskey then, and he has been going down hill ever since.”

“But you see, he has turned square around and is going up now.” 172

“Oh, sho! he’s done that time and again. You remember the temperance flurry we had three years ago? I helped the thing along then, mostly on account of such fellows as Dan. Don’t believe in so much fuss myself, although I don’t make a practice of using the stuff. But, as I was saying, Dan signed the pledge. Wasn’t the least bit of use; he was dead drunk in less than a week. I wouldn’t give that,”—snapping his fingers,—“for all his promises and pledges.”

“I confess I should have little faith myself were it not that now he has an Endorser whose word never fails,” rejoined Mr. Sherman, quietly.

Mr. Vance looked his surprise, and politely waited for his host to proceed.

“I do not say he will *not* fall again,” resumed Mr. Sherman, “but I *do* say that so long as he keeps his trust where it is now, on the Divine arm, he will stand firm. Dr. Helps called my attention to his case first. He said he believed the man had become a 173
Christian, and he was anxious to get him employment out of doors, away from those low groggeries around the mills. I could quite easily create a supply for the evident demand, and am not sorry I did. One can’t do a better thing than to extend a helping hand to a fallen brother.”

“Oh, of course, of course; but my word for it, he’ll give in to his appetite again, sooner or later. It’s in the nature of things. I haven’t your faith in this church business. Haven’t been inside one myself for twenty years, to say the least; never brought up my boy to, either. Folks all prophesied he’d go to destruction, but I ain’t ashamed to stand him alongside of Carter’s boy, to-day.”

Mr. Sherman lifted his eyebrows slightly.

What but the very church influences the father despised had checked the boy in his downward career and led him up to better things?

“Dick is very steady at church,” he remarked.

“Yes, oh, yes! he and his mother have taken to it of late. I let them have their own way; that’s my creed—every man as he thinks—liberal, you see. Freedom is what our forefathers came over here for.” 174

“Freedom to worship God,” amended Mr. Sherman, quietly. “I believe in that liberality. If a man will truly worship God after the dictates of an enlightened conscience, I won’t quarrel about his creed. But I want him to let the true light shine on his conscience, not merely the flickering flame of reason or science.”

“Can’t all see alike; don’t believe in any of it myself,” rejoined Mr. Vance, pushing back from the table. “Come, let’s have a look at Dan. If I thought it would last long enough to pay, I’d really like to hire the fellow.”

Some six weeks later Mr. Sherman met the farmer on the street, and stopped to inquire after his new workman.

“It beats all!” said Mr. Vance. “The man’s in earnest this time, and no mistake. Does seem as if he’d hit the right tack at last, and I can’t help believing he’s going to hold out, in spite of myself. Anyhow, wife and I are going to start for the Centennial next week, leaving Dan monarch of all he surveys. Now, I’d like to ask if you really pretend it’s his religion makes all the difference? for he *is* different from what he’s ever been before; there’s no denying that.” 175

“I do most sincerely believe it is wholly by faith in a helping Saviour that man is to-day clothed and in his right mind,” rejoined Mr. Sherman, earnestly.

“Well, I never saw anything just like it,” said Mr. Vance, preparing to move on. “It astonishes me every time I look at him. I may come to church myself some day just to inquire into the thing. Be some staring, wouldn’t there? Plenty of room I suppose?”

“Room and a welcome and a blessing, I trust, for ‘whosoever will,’” said Mr. Sherman shaking his friend’s hand heartily. “Come, and get on the ‘right tack,’ yourself.”

“Well, look out for me next Sunday, then. I’ve more than half made up my mind there’s something in it, after all. Nobody can deny it has worked a wonderful change in Dan Harte,” and Mr. Vance walked hastily away. 176

# II.

## TELLING THE TIDINGS.

**“And we declare unto you glad tidings.”**

THERE was to be a Sabbath School concert, quite an elaborate one, and both girls and boys were interested to make it a success.

“What do you mean by ‘success’?” asked Miss Marvin of her class who were eagerly discussing the parts assigned them.

“Oh! get lots of people here and have ’em say it’s grand—tip-top,” said Varney Lowe.

“To go ahead of all the other churches,” said Bell Forbush.

“Not to have one single failure,” added Nettie Rand.

Miss Marvin shook her head smilingly.

“Real success means more than that,” she said. “You are going to tell once more the ‘old, old story.’ There will be people here not so familiar with it as you and I may be. Which will you aim to have them remember,—the manner or the matter?”

The girls looked doubtfully at each other, but the closing exercises prevented further remark. The class, however, remained after school to decide when and where to meet for rehearsals.

“You must all come to my home every other night,” said Bell decidedly.

“I’m afraid—perhaps—I thought Miss Marvin didn’t approve,” suggested Sue.

“Indeed I do; you cannot take too much pains to speak clearly and correctly. Shall I explain what I did mean? Suppose you make a feast for your friends, and they pronounce it the best they ever ate. At the same time, you find a poor man starving close by your door. You may give him never so little, but you feed him tenderly, and save his life. Which will give you the most satisfaction,—the thought of that, or the praises of your friends?”

“That, of course,” said Varney Lowe. “It’s so splendid to save anybody’s life. Heroes always do.”

“Well, you are preparing for your friends a feast of good things from God’s storehouse of truth. You cannot serve it too royally or arrange it too attractively; but remember, there will be souls here, starving, absolutely dying,—although they may not believe it themselves,—for the bread of life. Would it not be the truest success to feed one such soul with the crumb you are each to bring?”

“Nobody ever notices *what* we say,” interrupted Bell, rather flippantly.

“There are two things I wish you would do this week,” continued Miss Marvin, without noticing the interruption; “one is, to invite your parents to come——”

“I most think father will, this time,” put in Dick, his face all aglow.

Mr. Vance had been to church for several Sabbaths.

“Of course we shall ask them, we always do,” said Nettie Rand.

“And will you also ask your Heavenly Father to be here and help you to speak the words so plainly and earnestly as to make them stepping-stones by which somebody shall get nearer to Himself,—somebody perhaps, who has not even started heavenward?”

Will Carter shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. There was only one faint “Yes’m.”

“Can you tell me,” said Miss Marvin pleasantly, “why this is more strange or difficult to do than the other? Remember, if we really *want* that best kind of success, and ask God for it, we shall surely have it.”

Maybee and her dearest girl-friend, Nanny Carter, stood close by waiting, as usual, for Sue. Nanny was busily talking:—

“You haven’t seen my new bronze boots, an’ there’s my beautiful brown an’ gold stockings; won’t they look *el*-egant up there on the platform? and aren’t you glad

we’re all to dress in white? Shall you wear a brown sash? it’s *so* fashionable, and which *do* you think’ll look best for me, pink or red flowers?” 181

“I don’t know,” said Maybee absently. “But isn’t it queer—about the stepping-stones, and helping folks? Don’t you wish we could?”

“Could what?” asked Nanny, who hadn’t heard a single word.

“Why, our verses,—make ’em stones, you know, to help folks along. Just s’pose, now, everybody’s verse was a really, truly stone, how thick they’d be, and p’raps lots more folks would go to heaven. I mean to ask Him.”

“Ask—who—what? You’re dreadfully poky to-day. I shall go and walk with Will,” said Nanny; and for once Maybee did not coax her back, she was so busy thinking.

She kept thinking, too, all the week. Never did she learn a piece so thoroughly, or take more pains to recite it loud and distinctly.

“It can’t help anybody ’thout they can hear it, course,” she said when Sue praised 182
her. “An’ please don’t put on my bib-collar with the crinkly lace be-cause I can’t help thinking ’bout it—it’s so lov-er-ly, you know; an’ I want to think ’bout the folks who don’t love God. I’ve asked Him to make my verses help ’em. Have you?”

“Oh, dear, no! I forget all about it only when Miss Marvin is talking,” said Sue sorrowfully.

“I s’pose that’s why there isn’t more stepping-stones to help folks up to heaven, —’cause other folks forget, don’t you? But you might ask Him now before we go, you know.”

So they knelt down together, and two earnest little prayers went up into God’s great, loving ear.

Even talkative Nanny felt the influence of Maybee’s quiet, happy face, as the classes took their respective seats, and listened attentively while the superintendent read a chapter and the pastor prayed.

Then the school sang the hymn beginning,— 183

“Our joyful notes we gladly raise,
To Him whose name we love.”

After which the superintendent announced the subject of the concert by reading the following anecdote.

# III.

## JESUS’ NAME.

**“And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”**

“NONE OTHER NAME.

“FROM THE GERMAN, BY H. H. H.

“A BLIND man sat before the door of his hut and read in his Bible. He did not read with his eyes, but with his fingers. With his fingers? Exactly so. Blind people have an unusually keen sense of feeling, so that books have been printed for these unfortunate ones with letters which stand out from the page. In an incredibly short space of time they learn the different forms of the letters so thoroughly that as their fingers swiftly follow the lines, their mouths pronounce syllables, words, and sentences. Of course this requires much toil and much patience.

“My reader will now believe what I said, that the blind man who sat before his hut was reading his Bible. Many people, old and young, stood near and listened to him with amazement. A gentleman who was passing was attracted by curiosity and reached the place just as the blind man who was reading in Acts iv., had apparently lost his place. While he was searching the lines with his fingers he repeated several times the words, ‘None other name—none other name—none other name!’

“Several of the bystanders laughed at the bewilderment of the blind man, but the strange gentleman, sunk in deep thought, left the place at once. For several weeks the grace of God had been working in the mind of this man, and had awakened in him the consciousness that he was a sinner. In vain had he tried one way after another to bring peace and rest to his heart. All his religious work, his good resolutions, his altered life, —nothing had availed to free his conscience from so unendurable a burden and to make his heart truly happy.

“In this frame of mind he had drawn near to the blind man, and like the sound of solemn music these words had struck upon his ear, ‘None other name!’ And as he reached his home and sat down to rest, the words rang still in his soul like the sound of distant bells, ‘None other name—none other name!’ The longer he meditated upon these wonderful words, the brighter glimmered the light of grace in his heart, hitherto so unquiet, so that at last he cried out in wonder and delight, ‘Now I understand it, now I see it! I have sought my salvation in my own works, in my prayers, in my own improvement. Now I see my error clearly. Only Jesus can save and bless. Henceforth I will look to Him. Beside Him there is no way of life,’ ‘for there is none other name—none other name—none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved!’”

The moment the superintendent paused the school began singing,—

“There is no name so sweet on earth,
No name so sweet in heaven,—
The name, before his wondrous birth,
To Christ, the Saviour, given.
We love to sing around our King,
And hail him blessed Jesus;
For there’s no word ear ever heard,
So dear, so sweet as Jesus.”

And then Maybee, slowly, earnestly, and so clearly not a word was lost, repeated the first verse of the hymn,—

“I love to hear the story
Which angel voices tell,
How once the King of glory
Came down on earth to dwell.
I am both weak and sinful,
But this I surely know,—
The Lord came down to save me
*Because He loved me so*.”

Like a low, sweet echo, the whole class of little girls began singing,—

“Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak, but He is strong.”

Then Maybee went on,—

“I’m glad my blessed Saviour
Was once a child like me,
To show how pure and holy
His little ones might be;

And if I try to follow
His footsteps here below,
He never will forget me
Because He loved me so.”

188

And the class sang again,—

“Jesus loves me, He will stay
Close besides me all the way,
If I love Him, when I die
He will take me home on high.”

Maybee:—

“To sing His love and mercy
Our sweetest songs we’ll raise,
And though we cannot see Him
We know He hears our praise;
For He has kindly promised
That we shall surely go
To sing among His angels
Because He loves me so.”

Class, singing:—

“Jesus loves me, He who died
Heaven’s gate to open wide,
He will wash away our sin,
Let His little child come in.”

And as the last note died away, the choir took up the sweet refrain and softly chanted,

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”

189

Mr. Vance, who had listened indifferently to the prayer and reading, leaned eagerly forward as Maybee’s clear, earnest tones fell on his ear; but when the class took their seats, and Dick looked around inquiringly, his father’s head was bowed on the front of the pew. Asleep, was he? Dick thought so, with a keen pang of disappointment.

Recitation followed recitation. At the last came Sue Sherman, trembling a little, for Sue was very timid, but with a strong hope in her heart that God would remember her prayer.

# IV.

## THE INVITATION.

[RECITED BY SUE SHERMAN.]

**“But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God and an everlasting king.”**

I have a Friend, a precious Friend, unchanging, wise, and true,
The chief among ten thousand. Oh, that you knew Him too!
When all the woes that wait on me relax each feeble limb,
I know who waits to welcome me. Have you a friend like Him?
He comforts me, He strengthens me. How can I then repine?
He loveth me. This faithful Friend in life and death is mine!

I have a Father, true and fond. He cares for all my needs;
His patience bore my faithless ways, my mad and foolish deeds.
To me He sends sweet messages, He waiteth but to bless.
Have you a father like to mine in such deep tenderness?
For me a kingdom doth He keep, for me a crown is won.
I was a rebel once: He calls the rebel child His son.

I have a proved, unerring Guide, whose love I often grieve;
He brings me golden promises my heart can scarce receive;
He leadeth me, and hope and cheer doth for my path provide
For dreary nights and days of drought. Have you so sure a guide?
Quench not the faintest whisper that the heavenly dove may bring:
He seeks with holy love to lure the wanderer ’neath His wing.

I have a *home*,—a home so bright its beauties none can know;
Its sapphire pavement and such palms none ever saw below;
Its golden streets resound with joy; its pearly gates with praise;
A temple standeth in the midst no human hands could raise;
And there unfailing fountains flow, and pleasures never end.
Who makes that home so glorious? It is my loving Friend.

My Friend, my Father, and my Guide, and this our radiant home
Are offered you. Turn not away! *To-day* I pray you “*Come*.”
My Father yearns to welcome you His heart, His house to share;
My Friend is yours, my home is yours, my Guide will lead you there.
Behold One altogether fair, the faithful and the true!
He pleadeth with you for your love; He gave His life for *you*.

Oh, leave the worthless things you seek! they perish in a day.
Serve now the true and living God, from idols turn away.
Watch for the Lord, who comes to reign; enter the open door;
Give Him thine heart, thy broken heart: thou’lt ask it back no more.
Trust Him for grace and strength and love, and all your troubles end.
Oh, come to Jesus! and behold in Him a loving Friend.

As the school began the closing hymn, Mr. Vance took his hat and slipped quietly out. All the evening Maybee’s words had been ringing in his ear,—

“The Lord came down to save me
Because He loved me so.”

And now, as he walked slowly down the street, he found himself repeating, “None other name, *none other name*.” Back and forth, past the farm-house gate, he paced; then striding hastily through the garden and orchard, he flung himself on the grass, under a clump of maples.

“My Friend, my Father, and my Guide, and this our radiant home
Are offered you. Turn not away! *To-day* I pray you ‘*Come!*’”

He would settle the matter *now*. Big drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. He heard the little gate shut. Dick had come home; he and his mother would be anxious; but still the man sat motionless. The proud heart was so unwilling to own he had been mistaken, that he needed a Guide, that the “living God” had any claim upon him.

Fifteen minutes—twenty—half an hour. Mrs. Vance looked up as her husband entered the door, her questioning eyes met his; he answered her with a smile and the words from Sue’s hymn,—

“I was a rebel once; He calls the rebel child His son.”

How glad Sue and Maybee will always be that they asked God to make “stepping-stones” of their verses for somebody, and that the somebody was Dick’s father!

# V.

## DICK'S "YOKE."

**"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."**

You would suppose, now, Dick would be more in earnest than ever; but we all have to learn that when circumstances are most favorable and pleasant is the very time Satan will contrive to lay a temptation in our way and trip us if he can. For some time Dick had been very regular at the prayer-meeting. The boys sneered and laughed, but Dick had never minded, and now that his father went with him and Deacon Carter frequently commended his perseverance, and even the minister occasionally added a word of approval, Dick began to pride himself on the fact.

"Remember, we go against the Lyntown Winners to-morrow night. Don't fail us for the world!" said Tom Lawrence to him one day. Dick was decidedly the best player in the base-ball club.

"I must," said Dick, "because I can't get back in time for our meeting."

Possibly Dick did not know how grand a tone he assumed.

"*Our* meeting!" mimicked Tom. "S'pose they couldn't run the thing without his lordship. I say, Dick, it will be a shame! Carter'll be hopping mad."

"I can't help it. Carter knows nothing will take me away *that* night!" and Dick walked rather consequentially off, quite right in his refusal, but entirely wrong in the spirit of it.

"Won't, hey!" muttered Tom. "We'll see!"

Somehow Dick did not enjoy the meeting that evening half as much as usual. He would keep thinking about the "base-ball players," wondering which side had come out ahead, what kind of new uniforms the "Winners" had, and how soon the "Catapults" could afford the same.

It was queer, after that, how many things happened on Thursday night. All the croquet parties, the boating, fishing, riding. Perhaps Tom could have explained the "happen,"—Tom and Will Carter.

The prayer-meetings grew duller and duller to Dick. There were only a few there regularly, and they always said the same thing. Dea. Carter's prayers were dreadfully long, and the minister talked as if he never would stop. And then the minister must go and start a young people's meeting on Tuesday evening. Tuesday, Thursday, and a Bible-class Saturday nights! What was he thinking of? As if it wasn't hard enough to bone down to rules and walk Spanish all day long without having every other minute full of prayer-meetings and that sort of thing. Dick's father, too, as if to make amends for the long, prayerless years, had prayers twice a day. Dea. Carter only had them in the morning. Really, it seemed as if duty was leading poor Dick a slave's life.

"Be over to the Squire's, to-morrow night I suppose?" said Tom, the day before the annual party given by Esq. Ellis to the young people in "peach time."

"Yes, after meeting. I must do my sums before that. May get over in time for the spread," rejoined Dick somewhat dubiously.

"Pho! that won't answer. Didn't you know the Squire had set up half a dozen croquet sets, and we're to be prompt at six o'clock? The best player has some sort of a gim-crack, and nobody stands half a chance beside you. I told the Squire so. He'll think you backed out. Most likely Carter'll come in next. Better be on hand."

"Well, perhaps. I'll think it over."

And Dick thought it over,—how Dea. Phelps and Dr. Sault and Mr. Bugbee were very seldom at the prayer-meeting; how many church-members never came at all; how even Miss Cox stayed away for lectures and concerts. How many of us, young and old, like Dea. Phelps and Mr. Bugbee and Miss Cox, will find, away on in eternity, that we have helped somebody to just such a wrong decision as Dick came to!

He was on the croquet-grounds precisely at six, and played his best. The Squire applauded vociferously, and there was no end of complimentary remarks, enough to

turn an older head than Dick's.

"Worst of it is, I stayed too late," he said to Tom the next morning; "and there's those examples,—not a single one done. Had to help father every blessed minute after I got up."

"Never mind, here's my key. Just copy 'em right out,—everybody does. Don't be squeamish now; just for once, you know."

"Pity to fail, so near the end of the term," said Will Carter. Will would not have used a key for the world; he was very particular on such points; but he had not the least scruple about tempting Dick to forfeit his honor. And after a little hesitation, Dick yielded.

Once it would have seemed cute and quite the thing to deceive Mr. Blackman; now, it made him feel mean and uneasy, especially when that gentleman remarked, "I think you are almost sure to take the prize in mathematics, Dick." 200

But for that remark, however, I don't believe Dick would ever have touched the horrid old key again. As it was, Tom *would* lay it so "handy," and Satan was sure to raise a doubt in Dick's mind about the correctness of a certain multiple or divisor. Just one glance would determine; and so the glances multiplied and divided into a very common denominator.

"You'll be over to base ball to-night, won't you?" asked Tom one Thursday morning, not long after.

"Of course he will," remarked Will Carter passing by, "or he'll be turned out of the Catapults; *that's* sure."

Turned out! just as they'd got their new uniforms! Of course he must go.

"And look here," continued Tom, "didn't you see me have a paper, my grammar exercise, in my hand all finished, when we came over the marsh yesterday?"

"No, I didn't," said Dick. "You said you hadn't once thought of it." 201

"Oh, fudge, now! What a poor memory! Why, man, don't you remember seeing me lose it? slipped on the stones, you know. Come now, if you don't, Blackman'll keep me in to-night, sure as pop."

"But you wouldn't have me tell a lie, I hope?"

"Oh, no; *we* don't do such things *now*, *we're* too good,—only when it comes to them examples," said Tom, forgetting the practical part of his grammar. "But mind, now, if you don't trump up something to get me off—you used to be up to that sort of thing—I'll let on to Blackman all about that key; and then where's your prize?"

Dick turned it over and over in his mind as he walked slowly home at noon.

"My guesses you doesn't know what this is," called Tod from his father's steps, holding up a leathern belt with something like shoulder-straps attached.

"No; what is it?" said Dick absently.

"It's what my mamma used to tied me up wif, when my was vewy little, so my wouldn't eat gween apples and curwants an' goo-woose-berries. Her don't have to, now." 202

"Why not? Don't you like 'em?"

"Yes, but my likes my mamma better-er; an' her says th' other fings is weal much nicer, so my doesn't want 'em. Here's anover some-fing,"—Tod was helping Jackson overhaul the tool-room. "It's to catch fings in; and once my mamma said, my mustn't touch, an' my did, and it pinched—awful. My couldn't get away one bit; the more my pulled, the tighter-er it wouldn't let go."

"Quite a lesson for you and me in all that," remarked Miss Marvin, overtaking and walking along with Dick.

"Was there?"

"Yes; did you never think how full Moses' law is, of 'Thou shalt not's'? while Jesus' commands are, *Do* this and that 'because you love me.' The Jews were like children, knowing so little about God they had to be 'tied up,' as it were, with strict laws; but when Christ came, He set His people free from rites and ceremonies, and made *love* the motive power. And that trap reminded me how Satan catches and holds us,—the 203

‘tighter-er’ the more we try to get away, you know.”

Yes, Dick knew. He, Satan, was holding him fast now, at least Tom Lawrence was, for him; and if he tried to get away, oh, how hard it would pull! How did he ever come to put his hand in?

“Miss Marvin,” he broke out suddenly, “if we love God shall we like to do everything He tells us?”

“I think so, when we love Him with all our hearts.”

“But—there’s the prayer-meetings, you know. Don’t they ever seem dull and tiresome to you?”

“Yes,” said Miss Marvin frankly. “I think God knew His service would sometimes conflict with our selfish and worldly hearts when He said, ‘Take my *yoke* upon you’; a 204
yoke, more or less *restrains* and compels; but almost in the same breath He added, ‘My yoke is easy.’ You and I, who once wore Satan’s yoke, know that Christ’s is easy, in comparison, don’t we, Dick? And the more we love Him the easier it becomes.”

“Yes,—I mean I did,” stammered Dick when she paused for a reply. “You see, I used to go to meeting, at first, because I loved to, but lately it’s been more because I *had* to. I’ve just left the love right out, and *that’s* where I fell in. Miss Marvin, please excuse me. I don’t dare wait a minute for fear it’ll pull so hard I sha’n’t get clear away.”

He ran down the street to Mr. Blackman’s, surprised that gentleman at dinner, made a full confession, and although with no hope of winning the prize, went away happier than he had been for weeks.

“Got that little thing all arranged for me?” asked Tom, with a wink, as they went up the school-house steps together.

“No, Tom. I don’t wonder you thought I could lie or do anything, but I’m just going 205
to begin all over again,” said Dick meekly.

“No objections, I suppose, to my telling Mr. Blackman a few things to start with?”

“Not in the least, Tom, for I’ve told him the whole story myself. And I don’t mean to 206
draw, in that ‘yoke’ again right away.”

# VI.

## MAYBEE'S PLEDGE.

**"I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord."**

THE temperance wave sweeping over the country sent a little ripple into our quiet village of Whithaven. There were a few meetings held, a few beer-saloons closed, a small amount of earnest, personal effort, and then the tide of evil flowed on, stronger, if anything, than before.

"Patient, persevering effort—where is it to come from?" said Dr. Helps, despairingly.

"From the wives and daughters," said Miss Marvin, hopefully. "We will pray and work in our quiet way, trusting God for the result. Poor aunty is almost heart-broken over Warren's disgrace. You know he was picked up drunk on the street last week." 207

So the ladies met weekly, not for discussion, but for prayer; they reorganized the children's "Band of Hope," they talked temperance at their tea-parties; and it was Miss Marvin's suggestion that each member of the Sabbath School should try to get one new name on their pledge a week. Even the smallest scholar had his printed pledge with a pencil attached.

"I shall never dare ask anybody who drinks," said Sue Sherman.

Maybee said nothing. That some grave matter was working behind the troubled little forehead, mamma knew very well, but she was quite willing her little girl should solve the problem herself if she could.

The secret was this: Waiting in the post-office one day, Maybee overheard one gentleman say to another, "So Dan Harte's been drinking again? How did it happen?"

"Oh, he was at work for 'Squire Ellis, had a slight ill turn, and was dosed with liquor the first thing. To use Dan's own words, it set him on fire. He couldn't eat nor sleep till he'd been down to Caffrey's and drank himself dead drunk." 208

"All over with him now, isn't it?"

"I don't think so. He seems more determined than ever. But there's no safety for such poor fellows unless we can put the temptation quite out of their way."

"Which you won't be likely to do at present. Of course the 'squire didn't mean any harm?"

"Oh, no! and he didn't mean any harm to Warren Forbush, I suppose."

"It's a pity about him. There wasn't a finer young man anywhere round when he graduated last fall; talented, too."

"Yes; and that gay new billiard-room on Pleasant Street is doing for him exactly what Caffrey's did for poor Harte; but, mind you, he took his *first* glass at the 'squire's last New Year's. He visits there frequently now; the 'squire has an adopted daughter, you know. That affair last week may open her eyes to the mischief their wines are working. 209 What's the use battling against whiskey and lager beer, and letting wine and ale alone? I believe in trying to save even the poorest specimen of humanity, but I tell you, all the while the best blood in our country is going to fill drunkards' graves."

"I'll get 'Squire Ellis to sign my pledge," thought Maybee, her black eyes flashing with her new-born purpose.

But how? That was the problem.

The two families did not even exchange calls. The 'squire had some trouble, years ago, with his brother, Say Ellis's father, in which Mr. Sherman had been involved.

Maybee walked around by the big store and looked in. Could she ever speak to the big, broad-shouldered man, ordering, overseeing, directing, with his sharp eye and quick, decided utterance?

The next night she coaxed Tod around that way.

"Suppose we go in," she ventured.

"No, my *won't*," rejoined Tod, emphatically.

Evidently she need expect no help from that quarter. 210

"If I could meet him on the street," she thought; but the portly business man passed her as indifferently as he did the hand-organ on the next corner.

Every day, for two weeks, she extended her walk past the big store on her way to and from school. Every night after her usual prayer went up the whispered petition, "Please, dear Father, show me how."

At last she made a confidant of Sue.

"Mercy on me! Nobody ever could, and besides, you won't have any chance."

Quite crushed by this chilling response, Maybee fled to mamma.

"He'd ought to; he's hurting folks when he don't know it," she sobbed. "Won't you or papa or some big body ask him to please stop?"

"*May be*," said mamma, wiping away the tears, "it is this little body's special work, and if it is, God will provide a way. When He has a work for us to do He always opens 211
the door. Only be patient, and watch and wait."

A week or two afterwards, Tod, neat and clean as a pin, started for papa's shop. Esq. Ellis stood in his store door. It had been an unusually profitable day, and the merchant was in the best of humor.

"Well, my little man, where are you bound?" he smilingly remarked, as Tod came along.

"My isn't *your* little man. Her said my was, but my isn't; and my isn't a beggar neither," rejoined Tod, straightening up.

"Well, 'pon my word! if it isn't the little fellow who wanted fifty cents one day, and I was in such a hurry—"

"Own-y-to-ny papas stop hurwying when their little boys ask weal hard," persisted Tod.

The merchant's lip quivered: there came to him so suddenly the touch of little fingers hidden away in the grave for more than twenty years, the sound of childish voices to which he had never answered "Nay." He sat down on the steps and drew Tod 212
to him.

"I used to love little boys," he said, huskily, "but it's so many years ago. Will you tell me your name, and come and dine with me some day?"

"But my shall be my own papa's little boy."

"Yes, yes; but you could come and see me because I haven't any little boys. You shall have something nice."

"Choc'late ca'mels and ice-cweam?"

"Yes, and I'll send the carriage for you,—let me see, to-morrow. Wait a minute and I'll write mamma a note."

"Can't Maybee come too?"

"Who is Maybee?"

"Why, don't you know Maybee Sherman, my cousin?" asked Tod, in astonishment.

"Sherman, Sherman? Oh, well! she's only a small chip, and it is time bygones were bygones. Yes, I'll write Maybee's mamma a note, too."

Wasn't Tod on tiptoe with expectation, and didn't he and Maybee sit back so straight 213
in the grand carriage, behind the colored driver, as almost to break their dear little necks? And how splendid everything was,—the pictures, the fountains and flowers, the china and silver, Mrs. Ellis in her silk and laces, Miss Georgiana with her diamond rings and soft, slender hands.

"I wonder if I dare," thought Maybee, her heart giving a sudden bound as the waiter came in with the dainty tray of wine-glasses. "If you please, Mr. 'Squire, would you—so other folks wouldn't—'cause they can't help it," she broke out earnestly, slipping her little pledge on top of the glass her host was raising to his lips.

"What? How? Nonsense! What does such a little midget as you know about such things?"

"Please—I *do* know; it's so *very* bad. You see, they were both drunk,—Phosy's father

and Bell Forbush's big brother; an' he's so nice; an' you've only to write your name under there, and never give anybody any more." 214

If she had coupled Dan Harte with Walter Forbush! But she had said "Phosy's father." The 'squire looked at his daughter. She leaned forward, with crimsoning cheeks.

"We have wanted so much not to use it any more," she said in a low tone.

He turned to his wife.

"I think it would be better every way," she ventured. She would never have dreamed of making the suggestion, knowing how hard and selfish the worldly heart had grown, missing the touch of those baby fingers.

Walter Forbush and Dan Harte! He coupled them now in his own mind. Was it a common weakness, and would the one ever sink as low as the other? Suppose *his* boys had lived—and been tempted? Even old Dan Harte was once somebody's boy, fair and promising.

"Take the wine away," he said to the waiter, at the same time picking up Maybee's little pencil and writing his name in full under the simple promise. 215

"I knew there'd be a 'door,' somewhere! Mamma said God could make one," said Maybee, joyously. "And to think you 'vited me your own self!"

# VII.

## THE “NEW SONG.”

**“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”**

“It’s coming up fast!”

“Work lively, boys! Do your best and you shan’t be sorry.”

How they raked—great, heaping winrows! How they tossed—huge fork-fulls, half covering the men on the loads! How they hurried the fat, lazy horses and slow, plodding oxen hither and thither across the fields!

Meanwhile the low muttering of the thunder grew louder and louder, and large drops of rain came thicker and faster.

“Pitch on what you can and make for the barn,” called out farmer Vance. “It’s no use trying for the rest, and we’ve got the heft of it. Drive up! Steady, Joe!”

“I reckon there’d a been some pretty tall swearing if the shower’d come fifteen minutes sooner,” said one of the men, swinging his coat over his shoulder and walking leisurely after.

“Vance may do a little in that line yet,” rejoined another, who was shouldering rakes, forks, and a pile of hay-caps. “Look at that load, will you? Just a lee-tle—there it goes!”

A stone on one side, a slight depression on the other, the unwieldy mass swayed, toppled, and slid to the ground, carrying with it the driver and Dan Harte, who floundered out of the drift as the rain began to fall in torrents.

“Now look out for breakers! Take Dan and Vance together, they’ll make it hot for Joe.”

These two had helped the farmer through more than one haying season, and were accustomed to the passionate outbreaks of a naturally quick temper.

“An’ if there’s one thing more aggravatin’ than another it’s to have a lot of hay, jest in complete order, get a right down soakin’,” remarked the first speaker, as they hurried up to the scene of the disaster.

Joe, the driver, was staring bewilderedly around; Dan had already seized a pitchfork; the farmer stood by the horses’ heads.

“You ought to have looked out for that low place,” he was saying. “Where were your eyes, Joe? Never mind now, the mischief’s done. Scrabble up, and drive on with what’s left,—no use crying for spilt milk. We’ll pick up the pieces some other time. It’s coming, boys! Into the barn all of you!”

The man in the shirt-sleeves looked at his companion and gave a low whistle of astonishment.

"Beats all!" said the other; and then, as the tree-tops began to reel in the oncoming tempest, everybody rushed for shelter. There was ample room on the broad barn-floor. The horses quietly munched their oats, the men disposed of themselves here and there, some astride of milking-stools, some stretched at full length on the soft, sweet-smelling hay, some propped up against the open door, till the shifting wind obliged 219
even that to be closed against the rain and hail.

"I say, Harte, tune up; give us a rouser. Haven't heard you sing for an age; wish you had your fiddle."

All the frequenters of Caffrey's groggery knew Dan's musical powers, which were really of no mean order, albeit for years they had served to gratify the lowest passions of vile, half-drunken men. Many a time he had helped the speaker make night hideous.

The man nudged Dan now, showing the neck of a small flask in his pocket, as he whispered, "Give us a regular high one, and here's for you."

Farmer Vance was busy with his horses. Dan waited a moment, a flush of red showing through his bronzed cheek. Then in a full, clear voice, he broke out with—

"Ho! my comrades, see the signal
Waving in the sky,
Reinforcements now appearing,
Victory is nigh!

*Cho*:—"Hold the fort for I am coming, 220
Jesus signals still.
Wave the answer back to heaven,
By Thy grace we will!"

Farmer Vance was the first to strike in on the chorus; he sang a tolerably good bass. Very soon two or three of the others caught the strain, and the barn fairly rang with the soul-inspiring words.

"I give it up," whispered Joe Derrick to our friend of the shirt-sleeves. "Think of Dan Harte singing psalm tunes! There must be a something to turn him right square about so. An' the old place, too. Been by there lately? Looks like a garding—all the front yard does. An' he's built on a shed for his wife to wash in; actu'ly has a carpet in t'other room."

"I suppose you an' me could have carpets, Joe, if we'd let drink alone," said the other, soberly. "But what beats me is the way Vance held in out there in the hay-field. 'Tain't natural, 'n I can't account for 't. If anybody'd a told me that man would stand 221
there and see that hay as good as sp'iled and never say a word—he looked kind a riled, you could see that—I'd a risked my best hat!"

"But seein''s believin', and as for hearin'—Hark, now!"

Dan had struck into,

"No surrender to the foe!
Shout the cry where'er you go.
Falter never! we must win,
No surrendering to sin.
No surrender! Let it be
Battle cry for you and me.
God will help us, He is near,
He is with us, do not fear.

"No surrender! then at last
All our conflicts over-past,
Glad will be our welcoming
To the city of the King.
Forward, then! fall into line!
Bright the conqueror's crown will shine.
Storm the camp of sin and wrong,
Sweet will be the victor's song."

"I ain't sure but we'd better enlist," said Joe, half-laughing, but drawing his sleeve suspiciously across his eyes. "I never thought much of psalm-singing an' new doings; 222
but when you see they're good for something—I tell you what: if Vance says anything more about our going to church, I'm his man. I believe I'll try a hand at that myself."

# VIII.

## THE WONDERFUL BOOK.

**“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”**

“Aunty McFane is real sick,” whispered Dick to Sue Sherman in the Sabbath School class. “I stopped there this morning. The doctor says she can’t live a great while.”

“I’m so sorry. Who is with her?” asked Sue, her face full of real concern.

“Judy Ryan. Father has hired her to stay all the time. Isn’t it nice?”

“Splendid! Judy is so neat,—and she likes what Aunty McFane likes.” Sue added the last in a still lower whisper.

“I know,” said Dick. “She had just been reading a chapter in the Bible out loud, and Aunty McFane said there was a promise for every ache she had. Isn’t it funny,” he continued, turning to Miss Marvin, “that folks just as different as can be find exactly what they want in the Bible?”

“It was provided for everybody by One who knew all hearts,” rejoined Miss Marvin; “and the more we study it, the more wonderful it seems. I remember reading once about a silver egg, prepared as a present to a Saxon queen. You opened the silver by a secret spring, and there was found a yolk of gold. You found the spring of the gold, and it flew open and disclosed a beautiful bird. Press the wings of the bird, and in its breast was found a crown, jewelled and radiant. And within the crown, upheld by a spring like the rest, was a ring of diamonds which fitted the finger of the princess. ‘So,’ said the author, ‘there is many a promise within a promise, in the Bible, the silver around the gold, the gold around the jewels; and too few of God’s children ever find their way far enough among the springs to discover the crown of His rejoicing or the ring of His covenant of peace.’”

“There are great minds who don’t believe a word of the Bible,” said Will Carter.

“Yes; but in spite of all these great minds can do and say, men, women, and children go on, year after year, finding comfort, happiness, and help, as well as eternal life, in its pages.”

“Oh! it’s all well enough for poor, low, ignorant people, who haven’t any other comfort,” rejoined Will, carelessly.

“Poor, low, ignorant people like you and me, Will,” said Miss Marvin, quietly. “*So* poor, we have no right to a foot of God’s great earth nor one breath of His pure air, save as He suffers us to use it; so ignorant, we cannot trace one step of the way back to our Father’s house. I remember an anecdote like this:—

“‘Young Harry was sent on an errand one evening in early winter. After giving him his message his mother said, “Be sure you take the lantern with you, Harry.”

“‘“Bother the lantern!” answered the boy, gruffly and disrespectfully; and he started, muttering to himself, “What do I want with a lantern? I guess I know the way well enough!”

“‘Very soon Master Harry, in crossing the street, stumbled into a hole which had been made by a recent rain. By this fall he knocked the flesh from his shin-bone and covered his clothing with mud.

“‘On his way back he forgot the fence had fallen in near the edge of the ravine. As he groped his way along the bank, he fell over, and went sprawling to the bottom of the ravine.

“‘With much ado and after many bruisings, he got into the road once more; but when he finally reached his mother’s door, he looked more like a scarecrow than a living boy.

“‘The lantern would have saved him from all this: wasn’t he a foolish fellow not to take it?

“‘But what shall be said of those boys and girls who know the Bible to be the only lamp which can guide their feet safely through the paths of life to their home in heaven, and yet refuse to carry it! Are they not still more foolish?’”

“I remember a story something like that,” said Jenny King. “It said,—

“‘A boy was once sailing down a river in which there was a very dangerous channel. He watched the old steersman with great interest, and observed that whenever he came near a ball of painted wood, he changed his course.

“‘“Why do you turn out of your way for these painted balls?” asked the boy.

“‘The old man looked up from under his shaggy brows, too much taken up with his task to talk, and simply growled out, “Rocks.”

“‘“Well, I would not turn out for those bits of wood,” said the boy; “I would go right over them.”

“‘The old man replied only by a look. “Poor, foolish lad,” it said, “how little you know about *rocks!*”’”

“Yes,” said Miss Marvin, “many a poor soul has looked at the buoys in the Bible, 228
pointing out some danger, and said, ‘I know better; I shall sail right along,’ and has gone down in a sea of darkness and desolation. Remember, too, a good sailor *studies* his course: he is not content with a glance at the map or chart now and then. So, my dear boys and girls, let us *study* God’s Word, searching in it for hidden treasures, for only those who find its pearl of great price can ever be truly rich or wise or happy. Sceptics and unbelievers seldom search the Scriptures. They deny without examination and reject without trial. Their Bibles have no ‘pins’ in them like the old lady’s, of whom I read not long since. As her sight began to fail, she found it hard to find her favorite verses; but she could not live without them; so what did she do? She stuck a pin in them, one by one, and after her death they counted one hundred and sixty-eight. When people went to see her, she would feel over the page after her pin, 229
and say, ‘Read here,’ or ‘Read there’; and she knew pretty well what promise was by this pin and what by that.”

“I think Aunty McFane knows her Bible almost by heart,” said Susy, with a tear in her eye. “And did you ever hear her repeat that beautiful hymn? I learned it from her one day, it was so pretty.”

“Tell it to us, please. I think there will be just time enough before the bell rings.”

# IX.



## AUNTY McFANE’S HYMN.

**“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”**

Weary of earth and laden with my sin,
I look at heaven and long to enter in;
But there no evil thing may find a home,
And yet *I hear a voice that bids me come*.

So vile I am, how dare I hope to stand
In the pure glory of that holy land,—
Before the whiteness of that throne appear?
*Yet there are hands stretched out to draw me near.*

The while I fain would tread the heavenly way,
Evil is ever with me day by day:
Yet on mine ears the gracious tidings fall,—
Repent, confess, thou shalt be loosed from all.

It is the voice of Jesus that I hear,
His are the hands stretched out to draw me near;
And His the blood that can for all atone,
And set me faultless, there, before the throne.



’Twas He who found me on the deathly wild,
And made me heir of heaven, the Father’s child;
And day by day, whereby my soul may live,
Gives me His grace of pardon, and will give.

Yea, thou wilt answer for me, righteous Lord!
Thine all the merit, mine the great reward;
Thine the sharp thorns, and mine the golden crown;
Mine the life won, and thine the life laid down.

# X.

## HOW TO BE GOOD.

**“Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”**

“Oh, dear! I wish I had something to do,” sighed Maybee one afternoon. “I think it’s real mean for Tod to have the measles ’fore I catched ’em too; ’cause we could have played sick all together; and now, mamma stays over there and leaves me all alone—”

“That is just like *some* little girls,—wanting to make their mothers all the trouble they can,” remarked Aunt Cynthia, severely. “Get your little chair and I’ll read you a story out of my basket.” There were always a great many slips of paper in the “patch-work basket,” mostly poetry, with now and then a story.

“Mamma always holds me,” pouted Maybee, dragging up her little rocker rather reluctantly.

“Such a great big girl! I should be ashamed. I never wanted to tire *my* mother that way,” said Aunt Cynthia, turning over one paper after another.

“I don’t believe she ever wanted you to,” muttered Maybee, curling her head down on the sofa-pillow, and preparing to listen.

Aunt Cynthia put on her glasses, cleared her throat, and began:—

“‘Ma! get me the Bible, ma! I’m going to commence to be good, for there is a comet coming that’s going to strike the earth and burn it up!’ said little Frank one day, as he ran with great haste into the room where his mother was sitting.

“‘There is a Bible on the table, my son,’ said his mother; ‘but who has been talking with you about the comet?’

“‘Oh! I heard the men in the yard say so. Where shall I read? It has opened here itself. Shall I read aloud, ma?’

“Frank answered his mother’s question, and then without waiting for his mother to reply to what he had asked her, began to read from the book of Malachi as follows: ‘For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Here he paused, and seemed to be reading to himself; then in a manner more composed he said, ‘Is that about the comet, ma?’

“But his mother was prevented from replying by the entrance of her brother, who presently, noticing Frank was reading the Bible, inquired if he was studying his Sabbath School lesson.

“Frank replied that he was not, and added ‘I’m afraid the comet is coming to burn the earth, uncle.’

“‘And where is Charles?’ said his uncle. ‘Is he not afraid, too?’

“‘Charles is out in the yard piling wood. I told him he’d better come in and read the Bible, but he said pa had told us to pile the wood, and that he remembered his last Sabbath School lesson, and could think of that if he *wanted* to, without reading the Bible; but I meant to be good, so I came right in as soon as I could. And now shall I call Charles, uncle?’

“‘Has he got the wood all piled?’

“‘I don’t know, uncle, but I don’t think he can have piled it all by this time.’

“‘And if he comes in, who will pile the wood?’ asked his uncle.

“‘I don’t know; perhaps pa will,’ said Frank, somewhat thoughtfully.

“‘And would it be better for your father to pile the wood than for his two little boys to do it?’ inquired his uncle.

“Frank waited awhile before he replied, and then said, in a tone of earnest surprise, ‘Why, Uncle Thompson, do you think it is being as good to pile wood as to read the Bible?’

“His uncle replied, ‘To pile wood when it is the proper time to pile wood is as much an act of goodness as to read the Bible in the proper time.’

“‘Why, uncle, I thought it was always proper to read the Bible at any time. Isn’t it?’

“‘The truths of the Bible you should have stored in your mind,’ replied his uncle, ‘and be always ready to act upon the precepts which it teaches; but *duty* can never call you two ways at the same time, so there may be times when it is more proper to do something else than to read the Bible. As you have the Bible before you, you may turn to the sixth chapter of Ephesians and read me the first three verses.’

“‘I can tell without looking, uncle, for that was our last Sabbath School lesson. It is, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise. That it ‘may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.’” I said that last Sabbath to my teacher; isn’t that right, uncle?’

“‘Yes, you have the precept in your mind; you can repeat it very correctly. You can 237
repeat the fifth commandment, too, can you not, Frank?’

“‘Yes, sir, I can say them *all*,’ replied Frank, in a very happy tone.

“‘And what does the *fifth* teach you to do?’

“‘To obey my father and mother. Is *that* right, uncle?’

“‘Yes, Frank. The Old Testament and the New give you the same instruction. Now, *when* must you obey?’

“‘My teacher said we must obey when we hear the command.’

“‘Yes, that is the time; not like a little boy I knew of last winter, who went into the room where his mother was sitting, with a snowball in his hand which he was eating. His mother bade him put it into the urn, for she was afraid it would make him sick. He kept taking bite after bite, and at length, when asked which he loved best, the snowball or his mother, replied, “I love my mother best, but I can’t *eat* my mother.” 238
Then to please himself he dropped the small piece he had left into the urn. He might have said he loved *himself* the best, for we always try to please those most that we love best.’

“‘That was *me*, uncle; I remember it,’ Frank replied. ‘And *can it be*, uncle, that my heavenly Father is as well pleased with me when I pile wood as when I read the Bible?’

“His uncle replied, ‘To perform any duty with the spirit of obedience is pleasing to your heavenly Father. “To obey is better than sacrifice,” and great knowledge of the Scripture without practising it cannot make a Christian any more than great knowledge of geography can make a voyager of one who never leaves his home. The supposition that a comet is about to destroy the earth is groundless; but if you fear God and keep His commandments, not forgetting to do your duty after you have closed your Bible, you will be prepared for any event that may await you. Do you understand me, Frank?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ replied Frank, smiling, ‘and I’m going to help Charles, and to tell him 239
what you say.’

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“There! isn’t that a nice story?” said Aunt Cynthia, complacently. “You see, what God wants is for every little boy, and girl, too, to mind their fathers and mothers. Praying and reading the Bible doesn’t do the least mite of good unless we do all our stents without fretting, and remember to hang up our hats, and when mother wants—”

“I don’t like morals stuck on behind,” said Maybee, with a defiant toss of her head. “It’s a good ’nough story, an’ I’d just as lieves not hear any more about it.”

# XI.

## BELL'S BIBLE READING.

**"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."**

"WASN'T it perfectly splendid?" said Bell Forbush, coming out of church.

"Did you think so?" queried Jenny King, stretching her neck for another glimpse of Miss Georgiana's new fall hat. "I thought it looked for all the world like an L with a French roof, built right on to the back of her head."

"Oh! I meant the sermon," said Bell, coloring, with a consciousness how much more frequently it was bonnets than sermons she meant. "I do think it was lovely. Don't you, Cousin Mate?"

"'Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things,'" returned Miss Marvin, 241
smiling, and dropping behind to speak with Judy Ryan.

"Do you suppose we could read the Bible to poor folks and show them how to be real nice, as he said that beautiful young lady did?" resumed Bell, walking along with Jenny.

"I don't know. It's always '*beautiful* young ladies' in books. Don't you remember in 'Ministering Children' about the 'snow-white pony,' and the children all running to meet her, and the old blind women so glad to see—hear her, I mean—"

"You know," broke in Bell, "there's lots of poor folks down to the Mills."

"Yes; but they wouldn't like it, I don't believe; we're so small."

"Why, I'm most as tall as my mother, Jenny King; and besides, doesn't Cousin Mate say the Bible can help everybody? That's enough to convert them, of course."

They stopped to ask Sue Sherman to join them.

"We'll go separately, and see who reads the most chapters to the most folks," said 242
Bell.

"Does Miss Marvin approve?" asked Sue.

"Yes, indeed. She told us we ought to first," returned Bell, enlarging a little upon her cousin's suggestion.

They set out promptly Monday afternoon,—Sue with some misgivings, as Bell would not allow her to consult her mother, because no one was to know anything about it till all the folks down at the Mills began to come to church. Wouldn't people be so surprised!

At the first house Bell found a big, red-faced woman, washing, with a dozen children, more or less, rolling around on the floor. "Wouldn't you like to send the dear little things to Sabbath School?" inquired Bell, in her sweetest manner.

"Faith, an' haven't they a church of their own, an' a praste to look after them, letting alone it isn't your business at all, at all?" was the rather indignant response.

"Perhaps you would like to hear me read a chapter in the Bible," persisted Bell, very 243
graciously, at the same time drawing her light muslin dress away from the wooden chair one of the "little dears" pushed towards her, without the dusting process so common in stories.

"Get out wid your hiritic books, an' you a turning up your noses at the likes of us!" snapped the frowzle-headed woman, facing her visitor with arms akimbo. Bell took a rather informal leave, and hurried on to the next house. A little, meek-faced woman, who had evidently been crying, opened the door.

"Shure, an' I wish you'd do something to make my poor Tommy feel aisier! The docther says he'll die for sure," and she broke out in violent demonstrations of grief.

"I'm certain he'll be glad to hear some of these beautiful verses," rejoined Bell, opening her Bible,—"only," she added, as a sudden thought struck her, "I hope it isn't anything catching?"

"It's some kind of a faver with a quare name. Poor little Tommy! he'll be so glad to

see somebody." And the mother opened the door into a small, close, although passably clean room. 244

"I—I don't believe I can stay now," stammered Bell. "Here's a nice tract. I really can't stop." And away she went, thinking to herself, "It may be the *yellow* fever or something horrid, and I should certainly catch it. Dear me! look at the children's heads in that large tenement house; it will be such a bedlam it's no use to go in. And next comes Molly Dinah's; she's so dreadfully dirty, I shall just lay a tract right in at that open window." As she did so, a coarse, tawdrily-dressed woman looked out of the house opposite.

"Molly's not at home. Won't you come in and wait, dear? It's seldom so purty a face comes our way. An' I should know you was a born lady just by your walk. Do sit down, miss," and she wiped a chair with her ragged dress, after the most approved style.

Bell was on tiptoe at once. Here was just the opportunity.

"Would you like to hear a chapter from the Bible?" 245

"Sure, wouldn't I? It's long since the likes of me has been that lucky. You have beautiful eyes, miss, and such a lovely complexion!"

Bell, highly gratified, selected the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm.

"How beautifully you read!" exclaimed her listener when she had finished. "Haven't you a bit of loose change a body could buy a sup of tea with? What with the hard times, it's meself hasn't tasted tea for months, an' you see how the old room looks."

"Yes, indeed," said Bell, dignifiedly. "I was just thinking how much better it would be if only the windows were washed and those shelves cleared up. Your dress, too, is very ragged, and it doesn't take money to keep ourselves clean and neat. *I* am not allowed to drink tea, and—"

Presto! what a change! Bell was glad to get out of hearing.

"Is that you?" called Jenny King, from across the street. "How *do* you make out?" 246

"I've called at four houses," returned Bell, evasively.

"Honor bright? Why, I've been reading the whole time to one real old man. Had to holler like anything. I declare! here comes Sue with a big pail and a mite of a boy. Where have you started for now?"

"Berrying. Want to go?" laughed Sue.

"A queer way to read the Bible," remarked Bell, loftily.

"Well, it all seemed to go together. I found a little girl with a sprained ankle and read her some Bible stories; one was about the healing of Jairus' daughter, and she cried right out and said, 'O mother! don't you wish that Man would make me well? we want the berries *so* bad!' and I coaxed her to tell me all about it. Some crusty old woman has engaged to buy all the berries they will bring her every day for two weeks, and the money is to pay their rent; but she's so fussy if they disappoint her one single night they'll lose the chance. Saturday night Abby hurt her foot, and this little chap 247
can't go alone, although he's a dabster at picking, aren't you, Bub? To-day and to-morrow the mother has to wash for folks; after that she can go herself; so I've offered. Let's all go and get them a lot."

"The idea of *my* picking berries to sell!" exclaimed Bell.

"Or to give away, either," laughed Jenny. "Never mind, I'll go with Sue, and you can call at all the other houses, you get along so fast, Bell."

"I do believe that good Man sent you," said little Abby, clapping her hands, when Sue came back with three well-filled pails.

"I think He did," whispered Sue, with tears in her eyes. "And you must be all ready early in the morning, Jaky, before it is so hot."

"And will you bring the Book and read another bit?" asked Jaky's mother. "I've never believed a word of it before, but it sounded wonderful comfortin' to-day with your 248
doing and all. I'll never say 'em nay again when they ask for the childers to go to Sabbath School."

"It needed the berries and Bible both, didn't it?" said Jenny, thoughtfully, as they walked home. "How came you to think to offer? I never should."

Sue hesitated.

“I guess I know,” said Jenny, hurriedly. “You prayed beforehand, and I forgot all about it. I do believe that makes all the difference in the world.”

# XII.

## WHAT COUSIN MATE SAID.

**“For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”**

“I DON’T think reading the Bible to folks is any sort of use,” said Bell, coming out on the piazza where her cousin was sitting, the next Saturday night.

“Have you been trying it?” asked Miss Marvin.

“Why, yes; last Monday I went all the whole afternoon, and I never saw such hateful, disagreeable people in all my life,—they didn’t seem to care the least bit; and then Sue and Jenny went off berrying—”

“I met Sue this afternoon, and she says some little boy and his mother are coming to Sabbath School to-morrow.”

“They are? Dear me, I couldn’t get a single one to say they would come. I don’t think the Bible is so very powerful.”

“Let me read you a bit of poetry,” said Cousin Mate, opening her book.

“Let me hear, too,” said Jenny King, coming up the path and sitting down on the steps.

“Thy Word, a wondrous guiding star
On pilgrim hearts doth rise,
Leads to their Lord, who dwells afar,
And makes the simple, wise.

“Thy Word, O Lord! like gentle dews
Falls soft on hearts that pine.
Lord, to thy garden ne’er refuse
This heavenly balm of thine.
Watered for Thee, let every tree
Break forth and blossom to thy praise,
And bear much fruit in after days.

“Thy Word is like a flaming sword,
A wedge that cleaveth stone;
Keen as a fire so burns thy Word,
And pierceth flesh and bone.
Let it go forth o’er all the earth,
To purify all hearts within
And shatter all the might of sin.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with our Bible-reading,” said Bell, peevishly.

“I was thinking,” said Miss Marvin, “how carefully the gardener needs to loosen the earth around his plants to help the dew in its work; and how, although the sword may be keen and studded with jewels, there must be a strong, willing arm, obedient to a wise captain, before it can accomplish its whole mission.”

“But what has it to do with us?” repeated Bell, impatiently.

“Why, can’t you see?” said Jenny. “We didn’t do our part of the work right.”

“I should like to know why.”

“Well, for one thing, I forgot to pray,” said Jenny, hesitatingly; “and—well, to make folks love the Bible I guess you have to show them you love their bodies, somehow, don’t you, Miss Marvin?”

“Exactly. When God sent the apostles out to preach the gospel, He gave them, not only the Word, but power to heal the sick and work many miracles. They had also, what you forgot to ask for, the help of God’s Holy Spirit.”

“But you told me your own self about a man who found just a torn page of the Bible, and it made him a Christian,” said Bell, sulkily.

“Yes, God can make His Word accomplish what He will in any way He pleases. But *we* need, when we use it, the Holy Spirit, and warm, sympathizing, helping, human hands as well.”

“I’m going to try again,” said Jenny. “I’ve been picking out some verses for my old

man, and I’ve made him a little pocket for his spectacles; he said he was always losing them.”

# XIII.

253

## “CHRIST” OR “SELF.”

**“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”**

“Let me read you something else, Bell, dear,” said Miss Marvin, after Jenny had gone. “Perhaps it will show you another reason why you met with so little success, last Monday.

### “THE MASTER’S FACE.

“A great artist called together his friends to view a magnificent work, on which he had been long engaged.

“‘Tell me,’ he said to the friend on whose judgment he most relied, ‘what do you think is the best point in my picture?’

“‘O brother,’ said the enraptured artist, ‘it is all beautiful; but that chalice,—that is a perfect masterpiece, a gem!’

“Sorrowfully the artist took his brush and dashed it over the toil of weary days, and 254
turning to his friends, he said, ‘O brothers, if there is anything in my piece more beautiful than the *Master’s face* I have sought to put there, let it be gone!’”

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“St. Bernard once preached an eloquent sermon which all the great and learned went away applauding; but he walked sadly home with downcast eyes, while occasional sighs revealed a mind deeply dejected.

“The next day he preached a plain but earnest discourse, which touched the hearts of many, but elicited no applause. That day his heart was glad and his countenance glowing. On being questioned why he should be sad when so applauded, and yet so cheerful when he received no praise, he answered, ‘Yesterday I preached Bernard; to-day, Jesus Christ.’

“So we shall have most comfort ourselves in our teachings when we have most of 255
Christ in them; then, too, we shall do most good to the souls of others.”

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Bell sat still, listlessly twirling her rings.

“My dear little cousin,” said Miss Marvin, “was it God’s glory or your own you thought of, when you set out to draw all the people of Mill Village into our Sabbath School? Did you want them to admire and love yourself, or the Lord Jesus of whom you read? Was it Self or Christ you were trying to serve?”

“You always make me out wrong! but I shan’t trouble people reading the Bible any more,” said Bell, flinging herself into the house.

Cousin Mate resumed her book with a sigh. “Poor little Bell!” she thought. “How much harder a master Self is than Christ! One makes us willing servants to our fellow-men, the other makes us miserable slaves to our own passions.”

# XIV.

256

## MISS LOMY'S SERMON.

**"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."**

Miss Lomy was helping Mrs. Sherman with her fall sewing. There were three sisters who lived in the square two-story house on the hill. The house full of old-fashioned furniture was all their father left them, so Miss Lomy "went out" sewing, Miss Nancy "took in" work, and Dolly, the youngest, a staid, sober woman of fifty-five, attended to the housekeeping.

Miss Lomy had lost all her teeth, which puckered her mouth into the funniest little O; there were wrinkles all around her eyes,—in fact her face was so covered with wrinkles that when she laughed, as she did every five minutes, it made you think of the ripples chasing each other over a lake after a handful of pebbles has been thrown in, 257
and her two merry blue eyes lighted them up for all the world like the sunshine. Everybody was glad when Miss Lomy came, and nobody could decide which flew the faster, her tongue or her needle.

"You know you promised to make my dollie a severless jacket to-day," said Maybee, one morning.

"Yes, dear, if I get through with this mending before your ma has that other suit cut and basted," returned Miss Shelomith, cheerily.

Maybee watched her needle creep in and out of the frayed edges of a fearfully long gash.

"I tore that getting through the hedge. It's my every-day dress though: what makes you take such teenty-tonty stitches?"

"So it'll look nice, to be sure."

"Nobody'll ever see it, because most always I wear an apron."

"I reckon the Lord'll know about it," said Miss Lomy, with so much reverence in her 258
tone you knew there was no levity in her meaning. Involuntarily, Maybee's eyes went up to the ceiling, and then her wee bit of a nose followed, disbelievingly.

"You don't suppose God looks at such things! Of course He don't," she said, slowly.

"Well, now, if He cares for the sparrows and the weeds and all such, and numbers the very hairs of our heads, it stands to reason He'll notice whether little girls' dresses are neat and whole,—which they wouldn't be ketched together the way some folks do their darning. I reckon He sees all we do, big *and* little, and it ain't so much the 'what' as the 'how' he takes account of."

"But, Miss Lomy, He has to see to the sun and the rain, and the ocean full of ships, and the things growing, enough to feed everybody." 259

"*To* be sure; and that's what's so wonderful,—to think of His holding the sea in the hollow of His hand, and not forgetting to show the little ant where to find its supper."

"But He *has* to do that; and He don't have to notice everything we do."

"No, He just wants to, and that's the most wonderful of all. Because, you see, it's as easy again to do things well when you are trying to please Him. Pleasing folks is a doubtful matter: you may, and then again, you mayn't,—accordin' as they're cross or over-particular or feeling down in the mouth; and there may be times you mean well and don't make out much, an' they'll blame you all the same. But the Lord knows just what we try to do, and gives us credit for that. He ain't never out of patience neither. Then there's another thing. Folks can't watch you all the whole time, and there's a temptation to sort of slip things over, the way we oughtn't; but the Lord, He's looking every minit, there's no getting away from His eye; and so when you're working to please Him, you'll just do your best right straight along."

It was a short sermon, so short and simple Maybee could stow it all away in her busy little brain. Some time afterwards she went with Sue to see Molly Dinah. Molly Dinah had happened in to Mrs. Flynn's one day when Sue was reading to Abby. 260

"I've most forgot all I knowed of the Bible," she said, sorrowfully. "You see, I can't read a word, myself. I'm a member of the church, though, in good an' reg'lar standin', if I ain't sot down in one for years. I ain't lost my hope, neither, but it's so old, sometimes I'm most afeared it's worn out. I wish you'd come and read to me onct in a while, to sort of patch it up."

So Sue went. Poor Molly! Cleanliness, like godliness, was with her a thing of the past. Once a year, perhaps, some of her neater neighbors, out of pity, gave her the benefit of a little lime and soap. Otherwise, dirt and disorder reigned undisturbed. Sue longed, but did not quite dare, to suggest a reform, although Molly listened very attentively to her reading.

That day, however, when Sue had shut up her Bible, Maybee broke out with, "Do you s'pose the Lord likes the way your house looks?" 261

"Well, whatever does the dear child mean?" said Molly, holding up both hands.

"Why, Miss Lomy says we ought to do things to please God, 'stead of men; so now, I don't darst to throw in whole pods when I'm shelling beans. You get through quicker, but you don't feel so nice when you shirk. Of course, if He's looking, you want to do everything just perzactly right."

"Well, to be sure! I never thought of that; but I don't really think He sees in here much."

"I shouldn't think He *could*, through that window," said Maybee, severely; "but if He counts the hairs on our heads, don't you s'pose He'll know whether our faces are clean?"

"Well, I *do* declare! Didn't seem as if it paid to slick up, so few folks come in; but if I thought the Lord really minded—"

"I'll help you wash the window," said Sue.

What a busy time they all had for the next two hours! The sun actually looked in and laughed before he said good-night. And at the end of the week—for Molly was capable enough when she set out—you would scarcely have known the place. 262

That Saturday afternoon it was that the minister sat in his study, utterly discouraged. What had his year's work amounted to? Not one soul saved or comforted that he knew of. His eye fell upon his church manual; he took it up and read the name, Molly D. Inan. Some one had said that was the woman down at the Mills known as Molly Dinah. Some one ought to have looked her up, long ago. He took his hat and went out.

"To think the minister has actu'lly come to see me!" said Molly, drawing out her one wooden rocking-chair. "I do suppose if the church folks had only noticed me a leetle more, I shouldn't never have stopped going. You see, I hadn't thought *then* about the Lord's minding. I'm proper glad I'm slicked up. You ain't no idee how it looked, an' I

never even mistrustin’ the Lord cared, till that little Miss put it into my head, how we should do everything to please Him instid of folks. And it does help wonderful, to think He’s lookin’ and mindin’. I jest scrub with a will, now.”

“You’ve cheered me up, ’mazingly,” she said, as the minister took his leave; but he carried away more cheer than he brought. He, too, could go to work “with a will,” remembering it was the Lord, not men, he was seeking to please.

And the next Monday morning little Benny Cargill, when he opened the store, swept down all the cobwebs he could reach, and brushed out all the corners, because the minister said in his sermon, “*Whatsoever* ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.”

# PART FOURTH.

## I.



### HOW NOT TO BE TROUBLED.

**“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.”**

“I SHOULD like being good well enough, if we could only do it once for all, and have it done with,” said Maybee, despairingly; “but to just keep at it and *keep* at it! Don’t you ever get tired, mamma?”

“How little children know about the doctrines nowadays,” remarked Aunt Cynthia, severely. “Now, I knew them all by heart before I was old as Maybee,—sanctification, perseverance of the saints—”

“It was sinners I meant,” said Maybee, scowling, “folks what have to be forgiven every single day. I do believe, mamma, the harder you try the worse it is. So many  things keep happening, things you don’t like, while things you *want* to happen, won’t; and Miss Nancy says if anybody ever gets real good and happy, they’re most sure to die.”

Miss Nancy was very different from Miss Lomy. She had a thin, peaked face, a mouth always drawn down at the corners, and reminded you of a northeast drizzle as much as anything.

“I thought somebody had been talking to my little girl to make her so blue this morning, or else that she had lost her way,” said mamma.

“Lost what, mamma?”

“What was the hymn you learned last sabbath? Wait a minute,—let’s smooth out some of the scowls, and shake a little sunshine into these cloudy eyes. There! that’s better. Now we’ll listen.”

Maybee laughed, and climbing into mamma’s lap despite Aunt Cynthia’s warning “Ahem!” she began,—

“The world looks very beautiful
And full of joy to me:
The sun shines out in glory
On everything I see.
I know I shall be happy
While in the world I stay,
For I will follow Jesus
All the way.

“I’m but a little pilgrim,
My journey’s just begun;
They say I shall meet sorrow
Before my journey’s done.
The world is full of sorrow
And suffering, they say.
But I will follow Jesus
All the way.

“Then, like a little pilgrim,
Whatever I may meet,
I’ll take it, joy or sorrow,
And lay at Jesus’ feet.
He’ll comfort me in trouble,
He’ll wipe my tears away.
With joy I’ll follow Jesus
All the way.

“Then trials cannot vex me,
And pain I need not fear;
For when I’m close by Jesus,
Grief cannot come *too* near.
Not even death can harm me,
When death I meet one day.
To heaven I’ll follow Jesus
All the way.”



“I know what you meant, now, mamma,” and Maybee jumped down, with the discontent quite gone from her face and tone. “If we are ‘following Jesus,’ we shan’t mind the bad things, and only be all the gladder when He takes us up to heaven.”

# II.

## TOD'S "PERSECUTE."

**"The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."**

TOD came home from school one day, his eyes red and swollen, his clothes dusty and tumbled; with him came Maybee, fierce, angry, revengeful.

"They're such dre-eadful boys!" she sputtered,—"such mean, hateful, wre-etched boys! I wish I could pound 'em! I wish they'd catch the measles or lock-jaw, an' mos' pretty near die! I wish—"

Aunty laid one hand over the angry lips.

"Let's wait till we feel pleasanter," she said. "Run up to the bath-room, both of you, and then into the nursery for a nice play with baby. After that we'll hear about those 'dre-eadful' boys."

"It was some of those new ones and Tom Lawrence. You see, Tod wouldn't, and they hung him right straight up. It's just that way always when folks try to be good! they'll make fun, and I wish—"

But aunty playfully drove the little talker through the hall and up the stairs.

Half an hour later two clean, happy-faced children came into the cool back-parlor, and nestled down beside her.

"Well, what is it?" she said.

"Wam, we play marbles, you know," began Tod.

"Big boys an' all," interpolated Maybee.

"Yes; and my beat 'em—"

"*Who* beat?" asked mamma.

"My—me—no, *I* beat 'em," amended Tod, who was learning the nominative case; "an' then they wanted to play for keeps, an' I said my mamma wouldn't 'low it; and they laughed real loud and teased me to put up my new dime 'gainst Tom's knife, you know; *and* I said I couldn't 'cause it was wicked, *and* then they said 'Pish!' and 'Pho!' and spwinkled sand in my hair, and made b'lieve pweach, and then somefin fell out of Joe's pocket,—I mos' know it was Mr. Blackman's pencil, what he scwews out of a hole when he w'ites; but Tom said I must pwomise to say it wasn't if anybody asked me; an' I couldn't, 'cause it would be a lie; an' then they put a wope awound my neck and tied it up in a twee. It scairt me some."

"I saw 'em," said Maybee, her eyes flashing; "but we can't go one step off our own side, now; and if you say a word to Mr. Blackman, he calls you a tell-tale. I'm glad he's going over to the 'cademy; we'll have a woman-teacher, and I guess she'll 'tend to things and not be flustrated to bits, neither."

"But what became of my little boy?" asked aunty rather anxiously. "Did he stick bravely to the right?"

"I wasn't vewy bwave,—I cwied," said Tod, carefully examining his thumb, "'cause they kep' pulling; but I didn't pwomise, an' then the bell wung—"

"But the minute school was out they went at it again," broke in Maybee, unable to wait Tod's slower utterance. "An' Tom followed us coming home and told Tod to get right down on his knees and say his prayers. It *is* nice to pray, isn't it, Aunt Sue? and all good folks do, don't they? and God tells us to, doesn't He? But when they talk about it so, they make you feel perzactly as if it wasn't nice at all, and they always will, if you are trying to be good; they'll just poke fun at it and make you feel awful. And then they shut Tod in Mis' Lynch's yard and fastened the gate. I wouldn't let Tod go to that school another single day."

"*I* would," said aunty, stroking the downcast face beside her.

"Well, then, he'd better not say much more about being good."

"He'd better not *say* much about it, only when it's necessary, but I hope he'll *be* just

as good as he knows how."

"An' be laughed at, an' screwed round, an' hung up?" queried Maybee, with wide-open eyes.

"I am sorry the boys were so unkind, but it is better to bear it than to do wrong. I don't really think they meant to hurt you." 272

"It hurts 'nough to be scairt, and poked fun at, *I* think."

"Yes; but whose little servants are you trying to be? Who tells you to be brave and honest and truthful?"

"Jesus," said Tod, softly.

"Well, once, when papa was a little boy,"—how eagerly the four little ears listened!—"he went a long journey, away up into Vermont, with his father and mother, Grandma Smith, you know. They missed their way one night, and had to sleep in a log cabin, with only dry bread and cold johnny-cake for supper. The little boy looked pretty sober; there wasn't much johnny-cake, and dry bread he didn't fancy at all. Their host, who had given them the best he had, said, possibly, by going a quarter of a mile, he could get the boy a drink of milk. Theddy's eyes began to shine; but he happened to look around, and there was mamma eating her dry bread without a drop 273 of tea or coffee to moisten it. 'I can eat dry bread too, if my mamma does,' he said, bravely, putting away the johnny-cake, and taking the dryest crust on the plate."

"Oh, wasn't he nice!" cried Tod, clapping his hands.

"I mos' know *my* papa would have done perzactly so, only he wasn't there," remarked Maybee.

"I think so, too," said aunty. "And should not all Jesus' little boys and girls be willing to suffer, if He did?"

"Not—to—be—crucified?" inquired Maybee, huskily.

"Yes, if need be; but Jesus suffered many other things. The Jews used to stone Him and tell stories about Him and call Him names; and don't you remember, when He was before Pilate, how they spit in His face, and put a crown of sharp thorns on His head, and mocked Him and struck Him—"

"Boys just like Tom Lawrence, do you s'pose?"

"Yes, I suppose the men and boys then were very much like the men and boys now; 274 and you remember Jesus told His disciples if they persecuted Him, they would also persecute them."

"Well, but did they?"

"Yes; all the disciples were treated very unkindly, and most of them put to death by those same wicked Jews."

"Folks don't do so now?" said Maybee, rather anxiously.

"Not in our own land; but they sometimes laugh at those who follow Jesus, and try to frighten them out of being good."

"Is that being *persecuted*?" asked Maybee, in astonishment.

"'Tisn't but a little mite of a persecute, when we fink about Jesus's, is it, mamma?" said Tod. "I don't mean to even cwy, next time."

"And remember," added aunty, this time stroking Maybee's rosy cheek,—"Jesus never answered back nor wished any evil upon His persecutors. He pitied them and 275 asked God to forgive them."

"Yes'm," said Maybee, drawing a long breath. "I guess—I'd better not think 'bout that Tom Lawrence any more."

# III.

## WILL CARTER.

**"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men."**

"Seems's if our minister never preached such helpful sermons," said Miss Lomy.

She would never know *how* helpful her own little sermon, handed over from Maybee to Molly Dinah, and from Molly Dinah to her pastor, had proved to the latter.

He had written over his study-table,

"*Unto the Lord and not unto men*,"

but men found the simple, earnest, glowing words he brought from thence strangely attractive. The congregation grew larger, the prayer-meetings were never so full. Some of the boys, Tom Lawrence among them, began to drop in and fill the "back seats," not to laugh and whisper, but to listen with apparent seriousness.

"Like as not they would come into Sabbath School if we asked them. Our class is running-over full, but we could have another seat, and Miss Marvin might work wonders with Tom," said Dick to Will Carter. The two were good friends now, having entered the academy together, with Will ranking too far ahead to fear Dick's rivalry at present. The misspent years in the past would always bother poor Dick.

"For goodness sake, don't get any more riffraff into our class!" rejoined Will, contemptuously. "That Bill Finnegan is bad enough. Count me out if there's to be any more."

"But what can we do? They'll expect to come in our class if we ask them."

"Let them alone, then. I don't see any particular need of doing anything. I give you fair warning, there'll be trouble if you do."

Varney Lowe walked home with Will that Sabbath, and talked about the meetings, the sermon, and the Sabbath School lesson, till Will broke out impatiently, "One would think you were about setting up for a saint yourself, Lowe. Do talk about something else. I'm disgusted with the whole matter."

Varney was a little surprised, but on the whole rather relieved to hear that. The truth was, he had almost made up his mind he ought to be a Christian. He had thought while Mr. Sampson was preaching he would say so in meeting that evening. First, however, he determined to sound Will Carter. Will was the deacon's son and prided himself on doing exactly right.

This was the result, and if Will was simply disgusted, he, Varney Lowe, would drop the matter altogether, which he did, much to Miss Marvin's disappointment.

A week or two afterwards the minister met Will on the street, and after a few pleasant remarks, asked very earnestly, "Will, my boy, when do you mean to become a Christian?"

Just at that moment Tom Lawrence went sauntering past, and Mr. Sampson, turning quickly, laid one hand on his shoulder, saying, "And you, too, Tom,—don't you want to be a Christian?"

Will drew himself up stiffly. Didn't Mr. Sampson know he and Tom were two *very* different boys?

"I have more than I can attend to, now, sir," he replied; "what with all my studies and the Lyceum; you know I have Geology and Chemistry this term, and I really haven't time for those other things even if I felt any desire."

Mr. Sampson looked grieved, and transferring his hand from Tom's shoulder to Will's, he stooped and whispered something in his ear.

"Wish I knew what 'twas," thought Tom, walking slowly on.

Directly Mr. Sampson was beside him. "You didn't answer my question, Tom."

"I—oh! I'm dreadfully busy, too; you know there's hen-roosts to rob and melons to hook and all the circuses to tend to. I really couldn't if I wouldn't."

It was very rude and saucy in Tom, but street-corners and saloon-steps soon teach a boy to be that.

Mr. Sampson, however, instead of looking horrified and disgusted, laid his hand on Tom's shoulder again, and said, "My dear boy, you may work for Satan all your life,—work hard, too,—and depend upon it, he'll turn you off at last without even a reward of merit. He promises well, I know. He may pay up a while in counterfeit coin most as good as the real, except that it won't pass in another world, but he'll give you the slip some time. There is only one Master whose 'promise to pay' is good for this world and the world to come. I've served Him twenty-five years, and I ought to know something about it, hadn't I? Come to my house to-night and let us tell you what a good Master he is. A few of us are going to meet to talk over this very thing. This evening, remember, at seven o'clock."

"Going over to the parson's?" inquired Tom, strolling around by the deacon's that 281
night, and finding Will on the steps, using the last bit of daylight for his book. "Thought I'd go along, if you was."

Will looked at him a full minute without speaking. What a battle there was between good and evil in that sixty seconds! Then he said coolly and deliberately, "No; I'm not going, and I don't know what it is to *you* if I was."

"Nor I either; haven't the least idea," rejoined Tom, turning on his heel and whistling his way back to Jack Mullin's, to play "toss-up" as usual.

Will sat still in the gathering darkness, recalling the words Mr. Sampson had spoken in his ear:—

"You may be shutting others out of heaven, as well as refusing to go in yourself, Will. Remember what Christ said of such. You know you are a leader among the boys—" (Yes; Will straightened even now at the thought,—but what was it Mr. Sampson 282
added?) "for good *or for evil*." For *evil!* The idea! Will Carter, with his character and scholarship and high hopes of becoming a brilliant orator, who meant to lead men some day to help elevate the world. But suppose, meanwhile, he had hindered Varney Lowe or even Tom from becoming a Christian. Would it be shutting them out of heaven? And what was it Christ said of such?

Away off in the wood a whip-poor-will seemed to make reply, "Woe-to-poor-Will! Woe-to-poor-Will!" while close beside the step a cricket chirped sorrowfully, "Shut-out-of-heaven! Shut-out-of-heaven!"

# IV.

## HOW DICK CARRIED THE DAY.

**“And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.”**

DICK could not quite give up his Sabbath School project. He first did what the apostle James tells all those who lack wisdom, to do, and then he consulted Miss Marvin. She proposed that the boys of her class should withdraw and form a new one, inviting as many as they pleased from outside to join them.

“But none of us want to leave you,” said Dick, regretfully, “and it won’t help the matter for Will any.”

“I shall be sorry to lose you, but it is the good of others, not our own pleasure, we are seeking. And Judy tells me there are several of the mill girls who would join the school if they could come into her class. Wouldn’t Will take hold of it if you should let him go ahead about organizing, etc.?”

“Sure enough, that will suit him exactly. I wish Miss Cox hadn’t moved away, so she could take the girls. Whom shall we have for a teacher?”

“Oh! we will find somebody. First, catch your class—”

“No, it’s first catch Will Carter; and I rather think I can if I set about it right,” said Dick, musingly.

“Be wise as a serpent but harmless as a dove,” laughed Miss Marvin. “Fishers of men sometimes need to work as warily as those who go down to the sea in ships.”

Dick went around to Will’s that very night and began earnestly setting forth the advantages of the new class and the necessity of Will’s taking the lead.

“You know we’ve always depended on you for the reasoning out of things, and the making it interesting generally,” he said.

And it was true every word. Will always had his lesson well learned, was posted on the historical parts, could see straight through an argument, kept all the dates on his tongue’s end, and could ask questions by the half hour. It was only when they came to the practical parts he shrugged his shoulders and looked listlessly out of the window.

“The boys will all think as much again of the class if you get it up, and there’s no telling how much good you might do,” continued Dick; and to his great surprise Will raised no objection whatever. Whether Dick’s pleasant way of putting things, or the steady chirp-chirp of the cricket under the doorstep, had most to do with it, nobody knew.

He preferred, however, that Dick should see the other boys, and invite anybody he liked,—yes, Tom Lawrence, and even Jack Mullin, for all he cared.

Varney Lowe consented as soon as he heard Will had. Dick went to see Bill Finnegan; but the good, honest soul knew he wasn’t expected to have any opinion. He did not relish leaving Miss Marvin, but said he knew lots of fellows down by the Mills who ought to come only “they’d never hear to his askin’.”

“Show ’em to me. I’ll pitch into ’em,” rejoined Dick, hopefully. “I’ll come over to-morrow noon, and you and I together will fetch ’em, see if we don’t.”

He met Tom Lawrence next, and was quite taken aback by a prompt, decided “Not by a long shot!”

He had felt sure of Tom. How he did coax and persuade! What inducements he offered! How skilfully he parried every excuse! till at last Tom wound up with,—

“For pity’s sake, hush up! Go it is. You’re dead set, now, Dick, since you ‘begun over,’ and you ain’t none the worse for it either.”

Wasn’t that a compliment worth having?

“And I shall depend on you to bring Jack Mullin,” said Dick. “He and some of the other boys do just about as you say.”

Tom straightened as proudly as Will ever did. It is a weakness of human nature, generally, to prefer leading to being led.

“They’ll be on hand, trust me,” he said; and Dick went his way, so thoroughly happy he had to turn a somerset every other step. He must run around and see Robert Rand; but Rob wouldn’t care a straw,—he never said anything any way.

What was Dick’s astonishment when Rob declared his intention of leaving Sabbath School altogether. It took him so completely by surprise he could not think of a thing to say; he had never dreamed of opposition in that quarter, and just did the very first thing his Master put it into his heart to do. He threw both arms around his friend’s shoulder, and said very earnestly, “I’m so sorry, Rob, because I’ve been hoping this great while you’d be a Christian, too.”

And then he stood back, utterly confounded, to see the usually impassive Robert hurry off into the orchard and fling himself down on the grass, sobbing like a child. He followed him, half-frightened, half-hopeful. “What is it, Rob? Tell a fellow, can’t you?” 288

“It’s—you know—I didn’t suppose anybody cared. I’d have been glad to, if I knew how; but you never said a word, and she never even looked at me in particular.”

You could detect something of Nettie’s jealous disposition, but there was more of a real longing for personal help and sympathy which had been withheld. Even Miss Marvin, faithful Christian that she was, had, as too many of us do, looked into the eyes full of eager questioning, wilful defiance, or forlorn hopelessness, but had passed thoughtlessly by the dull, ordinary, well-enough boy.

“She didn’t mean to,—indeed she didn’t,” said Dick, slipping one hand into his friend’s; “and I never supposed you ever thought of the thing; but I have—prayed for you, Rob, lots of times; and only think, if there’s two of us to pray for the rest—oh, I’m so glad you’re really going to try!”

Was he going to? Had he really decided? People of Robert’s temperament seldom fully make up their minds without strong outside pressure. This, Dick’s earnest, 289 taking-for-granted manner had furnished.

Almost before he knew it, they were going in Mr. Forbush’s gate. “Miss Marvin could tell him how, so much better,” Dick said. There seemed no way of backing out, even if Rob had wanted to, and he certainly went home that night more thoroughly in earnest than he ever was in all his life before.

# V.

## HOW FARMER VANCE REASONED.

**“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”**

Mr. Vance was to take the new class in Sabbath School. He declared it was the most absurd thing ever thought of, but Mr. Sampson insisted. He knew the farmer to be a well-read man, and that, although but a learner himself in Bible lore, he had that quick, keen, sympathetic grasp of human nature which enables one to attract and influence others. Only Will Carter objected. He had supposed Mr. Sampson would take the class himself. What could Farmer Vance, who had only recently begun to attend church, teach a boy well versed in algebra, geometry, and all the ’ologies? Will made extra preparations for that first Sabbath, studied up on Biblical history, primed himself with contemporary events, and fully expected to utterly confound the plain farmer at the outset.

The latter had his hands full, to say the least,—what with the factory boys, to whom everything was new and strange; Tom and his set, who meant to have a good time out of it; stupid Bill Finnegan, indifferent Varney Lowe, and wise Will Carter,—but his ready tact, a suggestion here, an illustration there, a hand upon Jack Mullin’s knee when the latter’s risibles threatened to become unmanageable, a quiet deferring to Will’s gratuitous information, all together, maintained at least a show of interest and order. Very plainly, however, he considered contemporary events of minor importance. Will secretly chafed at the way everything drifted round to the one first, foremost thought,—Christ and Him crucified. Heretofore he had always been able to dodge the practical questions, but Mr. Vance made them all practical. The lesson was in the twenty-sixth chapter of Second Chronicles,—

“*Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign.*”

“Just a year older than Dick and Will,—and only think how much more he knew!” said Robert Rand, so honestly even Mr. Vance smiled.

“Was knowing so much the cause of his prosperity, Robert? Read the fifth verse.”

“*As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.*”

“Do you suppose the Jews invented the engines of war mentioned in the fifteenth verse?” interrupted Will.

“Possibly.”

“It seems we made a mistake when we named our Base Ball Club. It’s the Catapulta, you know; but the catapultæ were used for casting *darts*, and the balistæ for *stones*. Sometimes the stones weighed three hundred pounds. Rather awkward things, compared with weapons of war now.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Vance. “Men have spent a great deal of money and genius to perfect the art of killing each other. But some day—”

“Josephus says,” interposed Will, “that engines of this sort were used with tremendous effect in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. They would discharge stones to the distance of two furlongs. There was an elastic bar, you see, bent back by a screw or cable, with a trigger to set it free, and a sort of spoon towards the top to fling the stones. At the siege of Jotapa, they were sent with such force as to break down the battlements and carry away the angles of the towers. Both sides used them at the siege of Jerusalem.”

Here Tom Lawrence puckered up his mouth and rolled his eyes around in such mock amazement that a broad smile over-spread Bill Finnegan’s freckled face, and Jack Mullin giggled outright.

“The main point was, which side used them with the greatest effect,” said Mr. Vance, who had read Josephus thoroughly, but who had quite another thing in his mind. “By the way, Jack,” and he turned suddenly to that young scapegrace who was slyly slipping a bent pin in Will’s direction,—“I saw an enemy slinging stones, or something worse, at you the other day, and you not doing the first thing in self-defence.”

“Who?—me!—what?” stammered Jack. “Reckon there don’t nobody fire stones at this

chap and not get as good as they send."

"Yes, there's an enemy who must have machines something like those Will has described. He begins with very small stones. You wouldn't really think *Satan* had anything to do with that little game of 'toss-up' you and Tom were having. He flings very little sins at first,—just a bad thought, a wrong desire,—and we think it's all fun; but by and by there comes a three-hundred-pounder and takes men right off their feet, puts them in state-prison, or sends them to the gallows. We need something to hurl back in self-defence, you see. Do you remember what telling shots Christ sent against the tempter on that high mountain? *Bible truth!* That's what you want for ammunition, 295
boys. Have plenty of that, keep close to your great Captain, and you are safe. Uzziah forgot that last part. Dick, tell in your own words what happened to him."

"He grew proud as he grew great, and insisted on burning incense, which only the priest had a right to do, and God sent leprosy upon him."

"Josephus says," put in Will, "that there was an earthquake just at that moment, and a rent made in the temple through which the sun shone upon Uzziah's face, and he was immediately struck with leprosy."

"That should remind us of the day of judgment," rejoined Mr. Vance, solemnly. "Then all the earth shall be shaken, and Christ, the Judge, shall sit upon His throne, the brightness of His glory far exceeding the sun; and in that clear light all who have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb will be shown covered with the dreadful leprosy of sin. It says of Uzziah not only that the priests thrust him out of the temple as unclean, but that he himself 'hastened to go out,' he was so ashamed and 296
confounded. Just so sinners in that dreadful day will call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them. Will you, my boys, be of that number who must go away *forever* from the presence of the Lord?"

The superintendent's bell announced the closing exercises, and then the boys rushed noisily out.

"Every word forgotten already," thought Mr. Vance, watching Tom and Jack go whistling down the street.

"What does make our Will so uneasy?" his mother said that night, as the former sat down to read, first on the doorstep, then in the garden, in the parlor, and lastly in his own room.

*She* couldn't hear the cricket, the bees, even the clock, saying over and over, "Shut out of heaven *forever!* Shut out of heaven *forever*,—*forever*,—*forever*."

# VI.

## FARMER VANCE'S "LEADING."

**"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."**

"When one has a 'leading,' it is best to follow straight on, isn't it, mother?" asked Farmer Vance, bringing in a basket-full of sweet corn for dinner.

"It's the safest way, I suppose," answered his wife, with a smile. She was busy over her ironing table, the week's mending yet untouched, the fall sewing ready to step into line, corn and apples waiting to be dried, with no end of pickling and preserving. Her hands still kept time to the old tread-mill measure of household duties, but her heart had now a rhythm of its own. She could afford to smile,—to watch and even wait for God's opportunities.

"It's about those boys of mine," resumed Mr. Vance, with a peculiar emphasis on the possessive case every Sabbath School teacher would do well to feel. "It seems clear to me that when folks haven't an appetite for good, wholesome food (remember, it isn't stomachs, it's *hearts* I'm talking about), you want to begin with something that'll relish, and work round gradually to the right sort. In other words, if you want to get hold of a fellow's heart, get a good grip of his hand first. Now, suppose I should take the whole class over to the beach for a couple of days, camping out, you know. It would be something of a treat to those factory boys, and I've an inkling young Carter wouldn't object."

"You couldn't have thought of a better plan," said Mrs. Vance, changing her irons. "Only do be careful! I'm so afraid of a sail-boat."

"Oh! Griggs will take us out, and he is an old seaman. All the trouble is, everything is hurrying me just now,—corn, apples, and potatoes to be harvested. I don't know how to spare a day, but we ought to go next week if we go at all, and I can't help feeling it may help amazingly by and by. It's what I call a '*leading*,' and I take it, obedience comes next in order."

"I don't think people look for such 'leadings' as much as they might," remarked Mrs. Vance, leaving her ironing to beat up a pudding.

"Don't *obey* them, you mean," said Mr. Vance, stopping in the doorway. "That's the point. It's superstitious folks who keep looking and listening for them. I reckon they *come* when we need them, and all we're to do is to follow."

A "leading" or nor, all the boys were delighted with the project. Will Carter pronounced Mr. Vance a "brick," and the factory boys gave three cheers and a "tiger" when he came out of the office with a leave-of-absence for the whole half-dozen.

The appointed day was the very perfection of an Indian summer. They were on the road long before sunrise, the big moving-wagon having been duly packed with cooking utensils, bedding, and provisions the night before. There were sixteen in all, including Mr. Vance and the driver. They reached their destination in time to catch the fish for their dinner. Cooking it, eating it, getting up the tents, going in swimming, hunting for crabs, and strolling over the beach used up the afternoon. Everybody declared the sun had cheated them, and slipped out of sight an hour too soon.

And then, all the long, cool, delicious evening, they lounged on the rocks, telling stories, guessing riddles, singing familiar songs,—was there ever anything half so jolly?—with the round, full moon overhead and the great tranquil ocean spread out before them.

"And not the least bit of a preach," thought Will, as he rolled himself up in his blanket and stretched out beside Dick, already sound asleep. "I had my suspicions he'd contrive to make us feel earthquake-y before he let us off for the night. But that little short prayer was well enough, and I certainly never heard anything like that one hundred and seventh Psalm. I wonder if it was the way he recited it, or having the 'wonders of the deep' right before us. You could almost see the 'stormy winds' lifting up those huge waves. And how grand it was when we all repeated together, '*Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!*' I don't see how Mr. Blackman can help believing there is a God. I wonder if he ever read that Psalm. There's something in this religion. What a different

boy Dick is! But then, there was room enough for improvement. Now, I've always done the best I could, unless it is about going to those meetings, and I mean to go some time when it comes right. I've really meant, ever since that first Sunday Mr. Vance talked to us, to think more about such things, and—What's that? Somebody singing!"

# VII.



## ALMOST PERSUADED.

**“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian.”**

Somebody was singing,—a rich, clear, tenor voice. Will could hear every word distinctly:—

“‘Almost persuaded’ now to believe,
‘Almost persuaded’ Christ to receive.
Seems now some soul to say,
‘Go, Spirit, go thy way,
Some more convenient day
On thee I’ll call.’

“‘Almost persuaded,’ come, come to-day,
‘Almost persuaded,’ turn not away.
Jesus invites you here,
Angels are ling’ring near,
Prayers rise from hearts so dear.
O wand’rer, come!

“‘Almost persuaded,’ harvest is past,
‘Almost persuaded,’ doom comes at last.
‘Almost’ cannot avail,
‘Almost’ is but to fail.
Sad, sad that bitter wail—
‘Almost, but lost.’”



“It must be somebody from those tents around the Point,” thought Will, turning over; “but what do they sing such doleful words for? I wish Dick would wake up, or else that I could go to sleep. That water makes me nervous,—such a steady swash, like a great sob somehow, or as if—”

Will buried his ears in his blanket and began counting backwards, to shut out the “sad, bitter wail” softly echoed by the waves as they chased each other over the moon-lighted beach.

# VIII.

## NEEDLE ROCK.

**“What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.”**

Griggs took them out sailing the next day, but was obliged to be back before noon to accommodate a second party; so Mr. Vance concluded to stay over another night, enjoy a sail by moonlight, and start for home early in the morning.

Meanwhile, he took one of the horses and set out to hunt up an old friend settled somewhere in the vicinity. The boys were to spend the time as they pleased, provided they kept out of danger. Half a dozen of them, headed by Jack Mullin, started on a tramp along shore, with their lunch in their hands. Two or three others borrowed a gun of Griggs and struck off inland.

“Let’s we have dinner over on that big rock,” suggested Dick. “The Point makes nearly out to it,—just one or two hops, and there you are.”

“Griggs says those low rocks and that strip of sand are all covered at high tide,” remarked Bill Finnegan.

“High fiddle-sticks!” said Will Carter, who never lost an opportunity of snubbing poor Bill. “Better wait till you’re asked for advice. We’ll dine on the peninsula, and if it changes to an island, so much the better. *I* shouldn’t suppose such a swimmer would be *afraid*.”

Will could not forgive Finnegan for being the best swimmer in the party. Why couldn’t he have told he was born and brought up beside the water, and was as much at home in it as a water-rat?

Will had expected to lead off himself, most of the boys being novices, and chose to consider Bill’s accomplishments a personal grievance. Dick, on the contrary, was overjoyed to see how Finnegan “blossomed out,” as he termed it; dull, awkward, uncouth at home, down here among the rocks he was as ready and wide-awake as any of them.

“You know your father said we were to keep out of danger,” he remarked to Dick, as the latter began preparations for his picnic.

“Yes; but man alive! don’t you know the tide can’t come in in a minute? I don’t see any harm, only the trouble, and ‘many hands make quick work.’ Lend us a couple, won’t you?”

Needle Rock seemed especially suited to their purpose. There was a broad, shelving base large enough to accommodate them all comfortably on the shady side of the sharp, conical peak which gave the small promontory its name. They found a sort of natural fire-place on the opposite side, where they built their fire, broiled fish, and made coffee. If one was smoky and the other muddy, nobody considered it any objection, and nobody so much as looked at the sky, till a loud peal of thunder sounded just over their heads. They were on their feet in an instant. The sky was fearfully black.

“Take what you can and hurry over to the wagon!” cried Dick, seizing the coffee-pot and one lunch-basket.

“But the path—where is it? Oh! it’s all gone—all *gone!* We are drowned! We *are* drowned!” and poor Robert ran this way and that, half frantic with fear.

“Don’t be a goose, Bob!” said Will, his own voice a trifle unsteady.

“I’m not sure it wouldn’t be a good thing if he was,” said Dick, taking a quick survey of the situation. “You were right, Finnegan; we oughtn’t to have come over here, but I meant to keep a good lookout.”

“Pho! all ’tis, we must climb up on that high shelf,” said Carter, carelessly. “Of course the rock is never half covered. Out of the way, Bill, unless you are too scared to move.”

Bill shut his teeth tightly together and moved a little nearer the edge. He had heard Griggs say the water sometimes rose to the very tip of the Needle. Most likely that was in a storm; but if the wind should go on increasing, and nobody knew where they

were!

"We shall be 'high' if we aren't 'dry,' up here," called out Dick. "Only it's a dreadfully narrow 'shelf.' Next time we'll look twice before we leap."

"Oh dear! the water's clear up to our fire-place," cried Robert, shivering with the rain and fright. "Don't crowd so, Varney. What *shall* we do if it comes any higher? Oh, I shall certainly blow off! Do get up here quick, Bill, so I needn't be right on the edge."

"He's looking out for a more comfortable berth, where he won't be crowded," sneered Will, wedging himself into a corner.

"I'm going around the other side," Bill spoke sharp and quick, and disappeared under the overhanging rocks.

"Come over to me, Rob," said Dick. "There! brace your feet and you'll be all right. It's going to be more wind than rain, and if we only stick close—" but there was a tremor in his voice which silenced the oath on Tom Lawrence's tongue, and sent a 309
paleness over more than one cheek.

For the next fifteen minutes nobody spoke a word, or could have heard themselves if they had, it thundered so incessantly. The wind came in gusts, seeming to gather strength in each lull of its fury.

"How high is the water now?" asked Rob, when only the lashing of the waves broke the stillness. "Has it carried away the tea-kettle?"

"I guess it's gone to sea by this time," said Dick, trying to speak cheerily, although he shuddered at the steady rise of the angry waves towards their narrow refuge. Pretty soon Varney uttered a sharp cry as the white foam broke over his feet.

"Couldn't a fellow swim ashore, if he knew how?" asked Tom, huskily.

Will Carter stood up and looked around.

"Not in such a sea as that, and there isn't a boat in sight," he said, shortly. "There's no way; we might as well give up; it will be over our heads in less than an hour."

He dropped down again, face to the rock. One loud, bitter cry for help broke from 310
them all. The wind caught it up mockingly, shivered it into a hundred little echoes, and went shrieking away again. The boys crept still nearer together.

Suddenly Robert, who was clinging convulsively to Dick, cried out, "Say it over, Dick! Say it out loud! Will said there wasn't *any* way, and that's so dreadful. Please, Dick!"

"I can't think of the beginning," Dick said slowly. "I learned it last winter, you know, but the third verse came to me when Will spoke. Perhaps I can think of the rest," and in a voice low and tremulous at first, but growing stronger and clearer as the wind battled against it, he repeated,—

Once, tossed upon an angry, boiling sea,
  A boat was dashed upon a dreary shore;
Heart-sick and like to die, his comrades three
  Cried, "Cuthbert, let us perish! hope is o'er.

"The furious tempest shuts the water-path;
The snow-storm blinds us on the bitter land."
"Now, wherefore, friends, have ye so little faith?"
God's servant said, and stretching forth his hand,

He lifted up his reverent eyes and spake: 311
  "I thank Thee, Lord, the way is open there!
No storm above our heads in wrath shall break,
  And shut the heavenward path of love and prayer."

Sweet to me comes old Cuthbert's word to-day,
  Sweet is the thought that Christ is always near;
I seek Him by the ever-open way,
  Nor yield my courage to a shuddering fear.

The storm may darken over land and sea,
  But step by step with Christ I walk along.
Dear Christ, the storm and sun are both of Thee,
  And Thou, Thyself, art still my strength and song!

# IX.

## THE RESCUE.

**“He bringeth them unto their desired haven.”**

DICK sprang suddenly to his feet. “There’s something—I do believe—yes, it is—it *is* a boat. Call, boys, as loud as you can! *All* together, *now!*”

The wind stripped the frail sound into shreds, but all the same the boat came steadily that way, and was evidently making directly for them.

Brave Bill Finnegan, when he disappeared behind the rocks, had stopped only long enough to pull off his clothes and cast one quick, appealing glance up into the blackened sky, with a thought of Him who he had been told could still even the raging sea; then he struck out into the boiling, seething waters. It was their only chance. Help, if it came at all, must be summoned. He might reach the shore, and he might not, but he would make the attempt. What a plaything he was for the mad waves! How they whirled and tossed him, blinded him with the spray, deafened him with their roar, strangled him, chilled him, laughed him to scorn!

But his strong muscle and early training stood him in good stead now, although it was some minutes after he was seemingly flung upon the shore before he could more than crawl out of reach of the cruel water. He climbed the cliff at last, and fortunately found Griggs close by, in a sort of shanty, taking a smoke with two other brawny-armed, bronzed-faced seamen. In less time than we can tell it, although not without some growling about the foolishness of boys in general and the fool-hardiness of Bill in particular, the three were on their way to the Needle. Bill insisted on going back with them, but was peremptorily ordered up to the house, where he was taken in hand by Mother Griggs, sent to bed, dosed with hot drinks and rubbed with warm flannels till even his anxiety for the boys was lost in a sound sleep.

When he opened his eyes they were all there. Dick sprang on the low couch, and gave him a suffocating hug. Mr. Vance leaned over, with tears in his eyes, and said, “How shall we ever thank you, my brave boy!” Then Tom and Varney and the rest crowded up, laughing, talking, sobbing,—a little hysterical yet, in spite of Mother Griggs’ herb teas and hot baths.

The clouds were all piled away in the southwest, their gold and crimson linings fluttering in the sunset; the tired waves rolled heavily in, scattering pearls and diamonds over the black, pitiless rocks; the moon crept quietly up in the background: but a sail was out of the question even had any one felt inclined. Robert and Bill were content to lie quietly on their couches; none of the others were apparently the worse for their exposure. Mother Griggs insisted on making a chowder for the entire party; Griggs himself regaled them with “yarns” about life in mid-ocean; but it was a very quiet evening, and the talk would continually drift back to the day’s adventures.

“Cur’us, ain’t it, now, how things work round?” said Griggs. “I’d a good mind as ever I had to eat to put in at Long Wharf where I left t’other party, and wait till the blow was over,—I could see it comin’; but Larkins an’ Sam wanted to git on towards home. Ef we hadn’t, ye see, there wouldn’t a been a man anywheres round. It’s what *I* call cur’us.”

Bill looked up eagerly at Mr. Vance.

“I see Mother Griggs’ garden survived the shower,” the latter remarked carelessly, going to the window; “I expected to find it washed away, lying on a slope so. Ah! there is a sort of breakwater to turn the freshet. How fortunate that should be there, in the nick of time!”

“Guess I think too much of my wife’s posies not to look out for the wash,” said Griggs, slapping his own knee approvingly. “I fixed that there thing more’n a month ago on purpose.”

“And don’t you suppose the God who rules the tempests loves His creatures enough to provide a way of escape from any or all dangers?”

“Well, now, you’ve come it over me slick,” said Griggs, taking out his pipe, and thoughtfully wiping his mouth.

“And not only from temporal dangers,” continued Farmer Vance, “but he has also provided a ‘way of escape’ from temptation, sin, and death.”

“I’ve allus reckoned there *was* a God,” said Griggs, slowly. “One can’t live close t’ the sea and disbelieve that there; an’ I’d like to believe He ’tends to things down here, but it never struck me jest so afore. Take an early start to-morrow, sir?”

“We must have a short sail first, to leave a pleasant taste of old ocean in our mouths,” rejoined Mr. Vance, smiling; “and now, boys, before we separate” (half of them were to sleep in the big covered wagon and the others on Mother Griggs’ kitchen floor), “let’s have our Psalm again. I don’t believe anything could express our feeling like that grand one hundred and seventh”; and in a voice slightly tremulous he began, —



“*Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good*;”

and, as they had done the night before, but with a far different understanding of its meaning, the boys joined in the refrain,—

“*Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men.*”

Once and again and again; but after the words—

“He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

“They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths.

“Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

“Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven,”—

one and another voice trembled and broke. Even old Griggs cleared his throat suspiciously.

Mr. Vance quietly added the last verse,—



“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord,”

and with a short, simple prayer, closed a day the events of which no one of them could ever forget.

Even old Griggs would never again look out anxiously over the stormy seas, without a thought of the words—

“So *He* bringeth them unto their desired haven.”

# X.

## WILL'S DEBT.

**"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise."**

"I'M sorry, Bill, and *so* ashamed."

Will Carter said that, sitting beside Bill Finnegan, in the big covered wagon. The others had all jumped out to run up the last, long hill on their way home.

Finnegan's pale face flushed scarlet. Will had not spoken to him the night before, had avoided him all that day, and his quick Irish blood had felt it keenly.

"It was downright mean, the way I treated you," Will continued, "and meaner still not to have owned up sooner, and before the boys too. I'll do it yet. Only say you forgive me, Bill, and if there's anything in the world I can do for you—ever, please let me. I shall never forget you just the same as saved my life."

Bill was looking back, out of the carriage. "It's queer, folks do forget—that," he said, absently, and then, flushing more deeply, he continued hurriedly, "I didn't mean—I was thinking—it's all right, Carter, an' you needn't never say no more about it, afore the boys nor no time. 'Twas just as much for Number One you know, what I did; and them other things ain't worth minding, now. Only if—maybe, you could help me a bit; you know how so much better."

"About lessons?" asked Will.

"Well, no, not exactly; I'm dull enough at them, but it's the '*understanding*,' I'm thinking about; because I ain't the least bit '*wise*.' I'm going to try all the same, though."

"Try what?" asked the other, in surprise.

"Why, the 'way,'—provided, you know. It come all plain to me last night, after Mr. Vance had prayed, and we'd all got quiet, how we belonged to whoever made us, an' if the waves obeyed Him, it was certain we'd ought to; and if we was so thankful to Him for taking us out of danger yesterday why didn't we thank Him for keeping us out every day? I never had, you see; an' it struck me we should call it mighty mean in folks to take so much kindness from one another and never say 'Thank 'ee.' And then I thought if this great, kind God had provided a 'way,' why shouldn't folks choose to go in it; there can't be a better one. I'd always supposed being a Christian meant sort of giving in to a Master, knuckling right under, and never having your own way nor nothing. I think people do have an idea it's a come-down to pray and all that, don't you? I did, anyhow; and when I see how, instead, it was Him doing all those 'wonderful works' for us, and we just turning our backs on the way He'd provided,—why, I made up my mind I'd turn right square round. That's all there is to it, ain't it? to begin I mean; and if you'd tell me what comes next."

"You're a great ways ahead of me now," said Will, thoughtfully. "I haven't even made up my mind."

It was Bill's turn to look surprised.

"I believe I've felt a good deal about it as you have," continued Will, "as if it was something beneath me; but you've made out it is mean and ungrateful *not* to be a Christian. I thought it would be giving up a great deal, and you talk as if it was just stepping into the best possible 'way.'"

"Well, isn't it, don't you think?" asked Bill, earnestly.

"Why, yes, it does look so; but what are you going to do about 'conviction' and 'change of heart,' and lots of things nobody can understand?"

Bill shook his head.

"I don't even know what they mean; all I know is, I'd ought to serve Him that made me an' takes care of me, an' I mean to. O Mr. Vance, won't you tell us how 'tis?"

That gentleman had looked in at the back of the wagon, but seeing the two boys in earnest confab had quietly withdrawn; now, however, he climbed in.

That he made plain things even plainer may be inferred from the happy, hopeful look

that replaced the puzzled expression on Bill's face. Will drew quietly back when the noisy crew came trooping in, and scarcely spoke till they were nearly home. Then he leaned forward, and under cover of the loud talking, said quietly, "It's queer, Bill, but you've set this thing straight for me, and helped me make up my mind at last. That leaves me doubly in debt, you see."

"No, oh no, indeed!" returned the other, earnestly. "It was all Mr. Vance."

"Well, both of you together, then; but remember, old fellow, I'm 'yours to command' for life, or ought to be, whatever this old proud heart of mine may say to the contrary."

"And we'll both be *His* 'to command' *always*," said Bill, his plain, homely face glowing with the thought.

# XI.

## MR. BLACKMAN.

**"I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at home also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."**

"I HOPE the c'mmittee's satisfied now," sputtered Maybee. "They've got a degraded school, with me in one room and Tod in another. I don't care! Mr. Blackman's gone to the 'cademy, and we have wimmins to teach us. Mine has curls, and Tod's hasn't, and mine prays a real nice little prayer before she says 'Our Father.' Mr. Blackman never said only that, quick's ever he could,—Amen! ring-a-ling-a-ling, right along together, as if it didn't mean nothing 'tall."

Maybee was right. "Our Father" had no meaning to Mr. Blackman.

Dick and Will, who were both trying to be Christian boys now, were talking it over one day. "It isn't so much what he *says*," Dick remarked, "as the feeling he gives you that the Bible and such things are of no account, anyhow."

"Yes, and then it sounds so grand," Will rejoined, "when he talks about the Good and the True and Beautiful,—how they of themselves will help men up, and how Reason teaches us all we need to know, and about matter and law and evolution. I couldn't understand it any more than I could father's free agency and election, but it made me feel easier, and didn't say *do* anything in particular, so I liked to think it might be true. Queer, wasn't it, Bill Finnegan should be the one to open my eyes? but queerer yet, as he said, that I or anybody could ever forget or not care that Christ died for us."

Dick looked thoughtful. "It seems stranger anybody can believe there is a God, and not care to know about Him or try to please Him, than it does not to believe in Him at all, like Mr. Blackman. I wonder if he reads the Bible? He never goes to church. Would you dare ask him to?"

"To go to church? Mr. Blackman? No, indeed!—that is, I shouldn't like to. He is so much older, and he turns up his nose,—that is, he makes you feel as if it was all nonsense."

"But it ought not to make us feel so. If he should turn up his nose at the sun, we shouldn't think any the less of it. I've a good mind to. It would come a little tough to say anything of that sort to him, but—I guess I could."

"I do wish you would, then. Oh, dear! you are so much braver than I, Dick, about these things."

"Oh! that's something in the grain, I guess, but I don't see why we should be ashamed of our Master. It would be mean enough for us to feel ashamed of Bill Finnegan anywhere after what he did for us; and Jesus Christ has done so much more, besides being God's own Son and the Lord of heaven and earth."

That evening Mr. Blackman's bell rang,—the very faintest tingle; but when he opened the door, Dick looked him straight in the face, his honest blue eyes full of eager longing. "Please, Mr. Blackman, I called—I don't know how to say it,—but I—I wish—you was a Christian. Couldn't you—won't you go to the meeting to-night?"

The Bible tells of a certain king who went into battle disguised, and who supposed himself quite safe, covered as he was with a strong armor; but somebody drew a bow at a venture and smote him between the joints of his breastplate and killed him.

Now, Mr. Blackman prided himself that nothing Conscience or anybody else might say about God and religion ever had made or ever could make the least impression upon his armor of arguments and proofs; but just those few simple words, so earnestly spoken, found a crevice somewhere, and struck right home to his heart.

"What makes you wish so?" he asked, taking the boy's hand.

"Because—because you're so good and kind and know most everything, and God wants just such men for his servants. Besides, you couldn't help loving Him if you knew Him."

"Do you think so? Well, suppose I go to-night, just to please you," and Mr. Blackman reached at once for his hat.

Dea. Carter looked at Mr. Sampson, and Mr. Sampson said “Thank God!” in his heart when the two came in together.

Mr. Blackman was an excellent teacher for the older pupils, and had a great deal of influence over them; many a parent had been praying it might yet weigh on the Lord’s side. Who shall say that was *not* the reason Dick’s bold effort for the Master was so successful?

“He went to please me, that night,” Dick said joyfully, some four weeks later. “Now I guess he goes to please himself. I’m *so* glad I asked him.”

And well you may be, Dick; only remember the results are not always thus speedy and pleasant; but all the same, *never* be ashamed of your Master.

# XII.

## MAYBEE'S "PREACH" AND PRACTICE.

**"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."**

A BIT of black crape hung from the door of the little red house in the woods.

Aunty McFane had gone home.

Kind friends placed the poor wasted body in the plain coffin, covered it with fragrant flowers, and laid it away under the new-fallen snow.

"Fought the fight, the victory won!" sang Maybee that night, sitting in her little rocker before the open fire.

"I shouldn't think you'd sing wight after you've been to a fooneral," said Tod, curled up on the hearth-rug.

"Why, they sung it to-day, right beside the coffin," said Maybee, "and mamma 'xplained it to me coming home, how Aunty McFane has been fighting most seventy-seven years, and trusted Jesus all the whole time, and how she has got through, and gone to stay with Him always."

"Wimmins don't fight," said Tod, disbelievingly.

"Yes, they do; everybody does that kind of fighting. Don't you know our Sabbath School hymn says,—

"'I'm glad I'm in this army'?"

"Yes, but I thought it meant when we march Fourth of Julys and have flags and cannon and evewyfing."

"Why, The-od-o-re Smith! I'm surprised! Don't you know what fighting means, the Bible way? Suppose it's time for you to go to bed and you don't want to. It's the '*don't want to*' you fight with, and if you beat and go straight along, just as aunty says, all pleasant, that's being a conqueror; but if you don't—"

"I'm weal hungwy, ain't you?" interposed Tod. "Let's go out and snowball so 'twill be supper-time quicker."

Maybee was nothing loth, and after a nice frolic they sat down on the steps to rest and make snow images.

"Wouldn't you like to be a sure-enough soldier?" asked Maybee, rolling up a tiny ball for a head.

"I'd wather be a cap'n or a gen'wal," said Tod, "an wide a horse, and have folks say 'Hurwah'!"

"Yes, but everybody can't be generals, 'cause who'd carry the guns? And you know we can be ever so much greater."

"No; how?"

"We can be greater than Napoleon or George Washington. The Bible says so. My mamma showed me the verse. It says, '*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*'"

"What is wuling his spiwit?" asked Tod.

"Oh, it's being real mad and not saying a single word till you feel pleasant. I guess it means *feel* right, soon as you can, too. I'll show you. There comes Tom Lawrence and Jack Mullin. They'll be sure to say something awful provoking, and I shall be just as polite. Good-morning, Tom—I mean good-afternoon."

"Did anybody speak—I mean squeal?" queried Tom, staring all around. "I saw a couple of magpies—no; 'pon my word, one is a bumble-bee. Hear it buzz, now."

But Maybee worked on without a word.

"Oh, she's mad; regular spitfire, *she* is. I wonder what she's making,—a duck or a toad."

Maybee reddened, but rejoined quite cheerfully, "Tod's making a house. Mine is a soldier, and this stick is for a gun."

"Look out, then! Here comes one of Carter's three-hundred-pounders," and sending a huge snowball over the fence, the two boys moved leisurely on.

It fell directly on the roof of Tod's house, quite demolishing it.

"Never mind," said Maybee, pulling a feather out of the wing on her hat, to stick in her soldier's cap. "You saw how pleasant I was, didn't you?" 333

"They didn't skwush *your* house all to nuffin, an' you was just showing off, *you* was. I wish I could fump 'em," said Tod, excitedly.

"That's very wicked; you can't be one of Christ's soldiers and wish such bad things," said Maybee, plastering a knapsack on to her soldier. "I do, sometimes," she added, more humbly, "but I don't mean to ever again,—much," and she began singing, louder than before,

"Fought the fight, the victory won."

Tod worked away, rebuilding his house, putting on *two* "chimleys" this time. By and by, just as Maybee was giving the finishing touch to her image, he reached over for a fresh handful of snow, lost his balance, and in trying to recover himself, managed to hit the poor soldier in the breast with his elbow, leaving him a shapeless ruin.

Maybee's black eyes blazed. "Tod Smith! you did it a purpose." 334

"Yes'm," said Tod, sitting coolly down and facing her.

She turned quickly, and lifted one foot. Another moment and Tod's pretty cottage, with its "merandah" and bay-window, would have shared the fate of its predecessor; but a better thought came suddenly to Maybee, in the words of her song,—

"Fought the fight, the victory won."

A *real* victory this would be,—no make-believe, no mere "showing-off," as Tod had called it; and to tell the truth, she *did* feel just like the Pharisee mamma read about all the time she was being so polite, but *now* she was—oh, so dreadfully angry! If she *could* speak pleasant, wouldn't that be "ruling her spirit," "real, sure-enough."

"I'll try not to mind," she said, slowly. "Let's build some more houses, a whole village; yours is so pretty."

"Oh, my gwief!" ejaculated Tod. "I wanted to see if you *would* fight that Bible way, an' you *did*, an' I'm awful sorwy I made you, 'twas such a splendid soldier." 335

"I just wanted to show it to papa," sighed Maybee, furtively wiping away a few tears.

Tod sprang up, and set both feet squarely on the dainty snow-house. "There! my'll punish my's own self," he cried, forgetting his nominative case in his excitement. "My is sorwy as my can be, my never will do so again. Please, won't you forgive my this time?" and putting both arms around her neck, the little fellow burst into tears.

"I declare, there must be a thaw,—such a freshet! What *is* the matter?" asked Dick Vance, coming up the walk, and sitting down beside them.

Tod explained as well as he could.

"I don't feel much bad now," said Maybee, "but I think that kind of fighting is better to *talk* about than 'tis to *do!* Seems's if it was a miser'ble kind of a world,—the good times all chopped up so you can't get only the littlest bit to once."

"That's so," said Dick, gravely. "I've just been riled myself, and know how it feels." 336

"Did you fump 'em, or fight th' other way," inquired Tod, eagerly.

"I'm afraid I 'fumped,'—that is, I felt real cross—"

"What's the matter with you?" laughed Sue, coming out on the piazza.

"Oh! it's Tom and Jack. You know they don't come to Sabbath School scarcely any, now, but they keep promising to, and just now, when I asked them, they were so awfully provoking. I don't believe I'll ever say another word to them."

"We mustn't forget it's a fight for life," said Sue, gently. "You see, I've been talking with mother about this very thing. I do so want Bell to be a Christian, and I get *so* discouraged. But mother says a soldier must not expect to win every battle with the first shot. Some places have to be besieged for months. And she says the very hardest kind of fighting is waiting patiently and bearing meekly, because it is then we get discouraged and give up trying. So I'm going to keep on praying for Bell and do everything I can. And we must remember how wild Tom has always been—" 337

“I’d better remember I was just as bad, and might not have been a bit better now if I hadn’t been shut right up there with Aunty McFane. Oh, how good she did use to talk!”

“Dear old aunty! Isn’t it nice to think of her up in heaven, all well and happy? Think what a Christmas she will have.”

“O me! I’d most forgot the miser’blest thing of all,” broke in Maybee, dolefully. “Uncle Thed isn’t going to have any Christmas tree. I heard him tell mamma so.”

“Not have any Christmas tree!” exclaimed Sue and Tod together.

“That is as you say,” said mamma, standing in the door. “He will leave it all to you. Come in to supper now and we will talk it over,—you, too, Dick, for if we decide on the new plan you may like to join us.” 338

They listened with wide-open eyes while she told them that, because of the hard times, a great many little boys and girls would have no Christmas at all, no presents, no dinner even; that what Uncle Thed’s annual Christmas party, tree, presents, supper and all cost would go a great ways towards making such children happy, and if they would agree to go without their nice presents, Uncle Thed would help them make out a list of names; they should decide on a present for each one, and Christmas Eve they could go around and leave the parcels on the doorsteps.

“Oh, oh! in a sleigh an’ eight tiny weindeer, just like St. Nicholas!” screamed Tod. “Won’t that be nice?”

“With Steady and Frolic instead of the reindeer,” laughed mamma.

“That would be a little bit nice,” said Maybee, gravely. “And then there’ll be the miser’ble part,—not having a single thing our own selves.”

“Not exactly so; we’ll make each other some little pretty present not costing any more than what we give the poor children. But take plenty of time to think it over before you decide,” said mamma. 339

# XIII.

## UNCLE THED'S CHRISTMAS PLAN.

**"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."**

The children could talk of little else. They thought over it, slept over it, and one at least cried over it. Maybee had so set her heart on a little cooking-stove like cousin Daisy's and a new doll with a Saratoga outfit. And Daisy's papa, who lived in New York, and who, whenever he could not come himself and bring the twins, always sent such *elegant* presents to them all, might,—who knew? But now, Uncle Thed wanted them to ask Uncle Grant to send the money instead, unless he preferred giving it to poor children in the city. It would be just the *forlornest* Christmas!

"But not to have the least bit of a present nor any dinner either would be forlorner yet," said Sue, who had as secretly been hoping for a pearl ring like Bell Forbush's, and found the hope almost as hard to give up as the ring itself. She had decided, however, to try the new plan; so had Jenny King, Will Carter and his sister Nanny, and Dick Vance. Bell declared it the most ridiculous nonsense; they would be sorry enough when they saw her presents. Her mamma was going to have a tree, and invite Esq. Ellis's family. Miss Georgiana was engaged to her brother Walter, and most likely the 'Squire would bring something *perfectly superb*.

"Well, but—"

Sue laid a warning hand over Maybee's mouth. It was not to be told how one day the 'Squire met Tod and Maybee on the street and asked them what they wanted for a Christmas present; and how, when they told him Uncle Thed's plan, he laid a five-dollar bill in each little palm. *That* money was to provide new winter cloaks, trimmed with fur, for Say and Tilly Ellis. You see, Say had asked if she might *make* something for the poor children, because her mother "never gave her anything that cost money, and there was nobody else to."

Nobody else! And the 'Squire, her father's own brother, rolling in riches, with only an old grudge to hinder him from making the widow's and orphans' hearts sing for joy, once a year at least.

"It is his own loss," thought Uncle Thed, taking Say's thin, pale face between his two hands, and leaving a fatherly kiss on the pleading lips, Maybee all the while tugging at his coat and making almost audible demonstrations of her wonder what would be done with the two cloaks if Say was allowed to be of the party.

"We'll send Jackson with them while you are gone," whispered mamma; and away danced Maybee to charge Nanny Carter "not to breathe one single word about cloaks to a living soul, 'specially Say Ellis."

What a long list they made out! Thirty-four names, among which were the McFanes, —Mose and little Peter,—the Hartes, Judy Ryan, Bill Finnegan, Jack Mullin, Benny Cargill and his mother, Abby and Jakey Flynn, Molly Dinah, and some half dozen Catholic families suffering from the dulness of business at the Mills.

The Hartes lived very comfortably now, Dan having steady work at the 'Squire's; but sickness and the "hard times" would prevent their indulging in anything but necessities. Jack Mullin lived with his uncle, a hard, close-fisted man, never known to give his own children a penny's worth.

"Jack doesn't deserve a thing, any way,—he acts so," said Jenny King.

"But none of us deserve anything," said Sue, "and you know Christ said His Father was 'good to the unthankful and the evil.'"

And Jack's name was added, although Maybee demurred about trying to "mind the whole Bible to once."

It was real fun deciding what each one would like. The children puzzled their heads over it a week, and then the wonderful order went to Uncle Grant to be filled.

Christmas Eve was as clear and cold and shining as crystal and moonshine could make it. The big and little bundles, tied and ticketed with due care, nearly filled the double sleigh, but Uncle Thed contrived to squeeze in the whole party besides. Of course they left the bells at home, and the little tongues managed to keep tolerably

quiet as they skimmed lightly along.

I wish I could tell you what they left at each house, and how sometimes they looked in at the windows and watched them undo the parcels; and how Mrs. Harte was in the front room alone, fastening three bits of candle, half a dozen cornballs, as many tiny bags of candy, and one or two penny picture-books to the scrawniest little bush, and how, when she left the room a minute, Uncle Thed raised the loose sash, dropped the big bundle under the bit of pine, and hurried away as fast as he could; how Tod begged to hang the basket on Molly Dinah's door, and how the infirm old latch suddenly uncaught, and the roast chicken, round yellow apples, Tod, and two mince 345
pies rolled in all together, and how Molly Dinah laughed and hugged him, and then sat down and cried over the merino dress Sue handed her; how the little Mullins clapped their hands when Jack cut the string of the big brown-paper parcel; and how they saw Abby Flynn's mother, after she had filled the two little stockings hung beside the old cracked stove with the toys she found in the bundle of bright plaids and nice warm flannel, go softly into the little bedroom and kneel down beside the bed on which the children lay fast asleep.

"Oh, it has been so much better than pearl rings!" said Sue, when the horses' heads were at last turned homeward.

"Wait till other folks show you their things, and you haven't got nothing much yourself," sighed Maybee. "I 'xpect to feel miser'ble then."

"You couldn't feel miserable if you should try," said Dick. "Seems as if this was the first *real* Christmas I ever had."

"I don't envy Bell the least bit," said Jenny, as they passed the brilliantly-lighted 346
house.

"There'll be something miser'ble, even to a party," said Maybee, brightening. "If it isn't anything else, it'll be the fruit-cake; the molasses or something'll make you, oh, just as sick! when you've most pretty near ate enough. But then, I s'pose the miser'ble times run along between the good ones same's the mud and mire down to the marsh, and we'd better jump right over and never mind."

"Then the good times are stepping-stones," added Sue. "So much better than a plank walk, you know Tod said."

"Hasn't this been a bouncer?" laughed Dick. "I wonder how Bill likes his skates and the other fixings. I wish Rob could have come with us, but Nettie wouldn't hear a word to it."

"I know that money Rob gave me was some his grandfather sent him to buy a pistol with," said Will. "Rob asked if I thought it would be any like a 'thank-offering.' We 347
boys have enough to be thankful for this year, without any presents."

"Not forgetting the Gift for which none of us can ever be thankful enough," rejoined Uncle Thed. "Beside that, all temporal blessings and deliverances are as nothing,—God's best Gift to dying men, the Lord Jesus Christ, a saving knowledge of whom makes the only 'real Christmas.' Suppose we sing one verse of our Christmas Carol."

Out upon the clear, frosty air floated the happy voices:—

"Merry, Merry Christmas everywhere!
Cheerily it ringeth through the air.
Christmas bells, Christmas trees,
Christmas odors on the breeze.
Merry, Merry Christmas everywhere!
Cheerily it ringeth through the air.
Deeds of Faith and Charity,
These our off'rings be,
Leading every soul to sing,
*Christ was born for me!*"

Transcriber’s note:

Punctuation has been standardised; spaces have been removed from contractions. Hyphenation and spelling have been retained as they appear in the original publication except as follows:

Page 39
He eat so much he *changed to*
He ate so much he

Page 68
isn’t it, dear? “——” *changed to*
isn’t it, dear?——”

Page 84
and Say Ellis’ mother is real poor *changed to*
and Say Ellis’s mother is real poor

Page 98
whole story at the Ellis’ *changed to*
whole story at the Ellis’s

Page 110
said Tod encourageingly *changed to*
said Tod encouragingly

Page 116
in your chateleine pocket *changed to*
in your chatelaine pocket

Page 134
I’ll sew it righr straight *changed to*
I’ll sew it right straight

Page 147
into Say Ellis’ yard *changed to*
into Say Ellis’s yard

Page 159
Wonldn’t mamma let *changed to*
Wouldn’t mamma let

Page 166
t’wasn’t, neither *changed to*
’twasn’t, neither

Page 335
Seem’s if *changed to*
Seems’s if

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