"That's Aunt Nab."

THE SHOE BINDERS

OF

NEW YORK;

OR,

THE FIELDS WHITE TO THE HARVEST.

BY

MRS. J. McNAIR WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF

"ANNIE LORIMER," "PATH AND LAMP," "NANNIE BARTON," &c., &c.

"Behold I say unto you lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to the harvest."

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THIS vivid picture of life among the wretched of a great city, with its illustrations of their degradation, their sorrows, and their need of help that they may emerge from the deeps of ignorance and sin, will not serve merely to interest the readers of "The Shoe Binders of New York;" thought will be awakened, compassion aroused, and the true and sole remedy for these woes be discerned. It will be seen and felt that the LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST, borne to these dark haunts by the children of God, is a power adequate to the elevation and salvation of the most degraded. Let not the young alone, but adults also read this tale, which is, alas, but too true to life, and imitate the beautiful example of Miriam Elliott, as she imitated Christ, in going out to seek and save that which was lost.

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THE SHOE BINDERS.

CHAPTER I.

HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES.

"Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in."

MAY comes in the country with whitened cherry trees, with orchards shedding rosy snow, with robin and blue bird nest-making, with green turf set with dandelions, and garden borders where violets and primroses nod to each other in the balmy breeze. But in the sinks and dens of the city, where sinning and suffering humanity augments by numbers and by contact its fellows, misery and vice, May comes hot-breathed and enervating, raising close garrets to a

fever-heat, and making dismal cellars more odious with suffocating smells, while the pure breezes, gone astray into these localities, lose their purity, and hang in tottering stairways and reeking entries hot and foul.

Here, fair and dainty daughters of the land, dwell our sisters and their children. There goes our sister, noisy and drunken, to terrified babes who know no mother's love. There, wan and haggard, lost to all hope and virtue, she trains young souls for the paths of ruin, where her steps have fallen. What shall we do for our sister? What shall we do for her against that day when the throne is set for judgment, and Christ shall make it plain that you and I have been our sister's keeper?

It was May, and holy time—the Sabbath afternoon. Up in the steeple clanged the bells, their brazen throats sending loud challenge through the better

streets of New York, and drifting off in faint and solemn echoes into haunts where no other token of the Sabbath came.

Down a filthy street and up a broken stairway a young woman passed; like the music of the bells she had wandered out of something higher and better, and the echoes came after her like voices from her home. With the light step of health and a fearless eye she pursued her way, glancing about, now and then, as if a little uncertain as to the place she sought, and thus, gaining a grim cobwebby fourth story, stopped at an open door. Opposite the door a girl of thirteen sat by a window—binding shoes. At her feet a child of perhaps five, with her back to the door, cut from scraps of bright hued morocco the shape of a small card pattern, which she held in her hand. Furniture the room had none, but an iron pot in a fire-place, and a pile of straw covered with a ragged quilt. The

young woman tapped at the door and the elder girl looked up with a defiant glance that melted into half surprise.

"I am looking for Katy Levitt. Does she live here?"

"Second story, rear," replied the girl, binding shoes again, and adding sneeringly, "I *thought* you'd lost your way; folks of *your sort* don't git here often."

"I'm looking for Katy to take her to Sunday-school, and I'd like to have you and the little one come too—won't you?"

"Hain't time, and what's the good?"

"Take time; the *good* is to learn of God who made you."

"Made me!" cried the girl, stretching out her long, thin arm, and bare brown foot, "made me! Well, he might have done better!"

Here a furious knocking, accompanied by loud howls, began on a door at one side of the room. The shoe binder was apparently unmoved by it, and the child

on the floor gave no sign of any interest but in her cutting.

"If you learn of God," said the visitor, after the noise had subsided, "you will learn to love and thank him for making you."

"Thank him! thank any body for making me ragged and dirty and hungry, hot and tired, and work, work, work! No! If any body did make me they might have done better."

"My poor, dear girl, how sorry I am for you!" said the guest, with heavenly compassion in every tone.

"Sorry? A lady said that to me once before, and said she'd come and see me, but she never came. I hain't believed in nobody's being sorry since that."

"I am sorry for you, and want to be your friend. Let me talk to you and comfort you."

The young woman went to the girl's side as she spoke, and the child on the

floor getting sight of her sprang up and took refuge in the scant folds of her sister's dress, looking forth from her retreat with frightened eyes.

"Come to me, little one!" said the stranger.

"No use of speaking to *her;* she's deaf an' dumb," said the girl, pressing the little girl to her side. The knocking and noises were here resumed for a minute or two, the knocking dying away in sobs and moans.

"Don't be skeered," said the girl, "it's only Aunt Nab, and I've got her fast; she can't git out; she's on a spree she is, and she's drunk, and I've locked her up till she's good."

"Poor child! Tell me something about yourself."

"Ain't nothing to tell. Father's in States Prison for ten years' term, and we hain't nobody else but Aunt Nab, and she's either locked up in there, or getting

drunk, or in the lock up; she's a hard one, Aunt Nab is!"

"And how do you live?"

"Oh, pinch along, hard work and poor pay," said the girl angrily. "I bind shoes and make balls for the toy shops out of the bits the shoemakers give me. Lettie here cuts out the pieces. Lettie's smart with her hands if she ain't got no tongue," she added, looking kindly at the child.

"And what's your name?"

"Ruth, and Lettie's my little sister. There never was but two of us."

"Now Ruth, lay by this work and come you and Lettie with me. I will give Lettie some pretty pictures to amuse her, and will try and tell you something to help you in this hard life. You are having sad days now, but if you will learn of God he will make it all up to you by and by."

"I hain't time. I must work or starve."

"How much could you earn this afternoon?"

"Well, a shilling—mebby."

"I 'll pay you that if you 'll leave your work and come with me."

"We a'n't fit, all rags and dirt," said Ruth, contrasting her wretched garments with the young woman's silver-gray alpaca, with its blue trimmings.

"I will not be ashamed of you. Come, you shall walk and sit by me, and I will be your friend. We 'll get Katy Levitt, and all go together. You will hear singing, and you shall learn to sing and read."

"I can read some. I tried to be somebody once, but give it up. With father, and Aunt Nab, and shoe binding, nobody can be of any account."

"Don't despair, you are too young for that. You can be somebody yet. All you want is to try in the right way, and have a little help. Come, get your bon-

nets." And thus speaking, Miss Elliot took the half-bound shoe from the girl's hand.

Ruth took from a corner a forlorn old hood for Lettie, and an antiquated and sadly-battered old bonnet for herself. Then, holding her little sister's hand, she walked by Miss Elliot's side, the defiant look settling darkly in her black eyes and lowering on her well-shaped brow.

In the second story, near, Katy Levitt was found. Her old grandmother had made her clean and neat in her patched frock and sun-bonnet, and the poor but clean room was a cheering contrast to Ruth's wretched abode. Ruth and Lettie hung back in the hall as Miss Elliot went in for Katy.

"I'm glad you picked up those children," said old Mrs. Levitt, "may be you 'll do 'em some good."

"What are they like?" asked Miss Elliot, softly.

"A hard case. Ruth's wonderful good to Lettie, but she has an awful temper, and is sulky as a bear. Old Nab's a fearful creature, and the father didn't get his deserts with ten years."

"Poor children," said Miss Elliot to herself as she led these little outcasts to the Mission School, "what need is here of faith and love and earnest labor. Help, Lord! let the King hear us when we call!"

In the entry to the Mission School stood a large pail of water, and a long brown towel hung near. Here Ruth and Lettie bathed their hands and faces, and improved in appearance and much quieted and refreshed in feeling were then led to Miss Elliot's class. The seats for each class were arranged on three sides of a small square, the teacher's chair occupying the fourth side. Lettie was put in the corner of the seat nearest her teacher and given several illustrated Sabbath-

school papers, and Ruth, beside her little sister, was furnished with a Testament. Then came the prayer to the Good Shepherd to carry these lambs in his bosom, then a sweet song of the child pilgrim going godward. Hearing all this sat Ruth, young wanderer gathered from the rough ways of life. Six pupils besides poor mute Lettie sat around Miriam Elliot. They were strangers all. This was the tenth class that Miriam had gathered into the Mission School during the two years of her Christian life. In the work of going out into the highways and hedges and compelling wayfarers to come in, Miriam was peculiarly successful. Very sweet and tender was her compulsion, made up of loving-kindness and that charity that is better than all. From a Mission School in a rather more enlightened neighborhood, she had come to this one in the vicinity of Pearl street, because here seemed greater need of work, and

here the laborers were few. Two things Miriam Elliot labored hard to impress on her pupils, that they were sinners, and Christ was their only Saviour. Here before her were six children, suffering thus early the many miseries sin has brought into the world, hardly conscious of their evil and lost condition and knowing nothing of the Way of escape.

"Children," said Miriam, "have any of you ever heard of Jesus Christ?"

"Daddy talks of him when he's drunk," said one, "but I don't know much about him."

"Mother says a little about him on her beads Easter and such days," remarked another.

"Grannie said I was to learn about him here," added Katy Levitt. "She said she heard him talked about when she was little, but she didn't pay no 'tention, so now she don't know anything."

"Children, are you happy?" asked Miriam.

"I a'n't—never was," said Ruth.

"I'd be if I was like rich folks," said a small girl.

"I'd be if I didn't have to beg about the streets and have folks look so cross at me," said a child, ragged and forlorn as Ruth herself.

"Listen, now, children. Christ made this world and all things in it. He loves you all. He made all to be happy, but you are not happy because the world is so full of bad, wicked ways. Christ left his home up in the sky, where all is glorious and happy, and came to this world and lived here a good many years, and then died that we might be good and happy. You must love Christ, because he first loved you."

"How can his living and dying help us?" asked Katy.

"God who rules all things will forgive

us our sins for Christ's sake and take us to heaven, a beautiful place where all are happy and good."

"Why can't he make us happy here?" said one.

"No one can be happy in this wicked world."

"Rich folks can," said the beggar.

"No, even rich folks are sick, and die or lose their friends and riches."

"No, no one can be happy here. It's a hateful, wicked place! I wish I was out of it!" cried Ruth, fiercely.

"And out of it to be where, Ruth?"

"Dead, put under the ground, me and Lettie."

"Ruth, your body may die and be put in the ground and turn to dust, but your soul, Ruth, all that feels, and thinks, and loves, or hates, cannot die—it must live somewhere forever."

Black shadows gathered in Ruth's eyes at these words.

CHAPTER II.

DONE UNTO CHRIST.

"WHERE'LL her soul be when her body goes to dust?" demanded Katy Levitt.

"Either in heaven, a glorious place where God is, or far away from his face, in a place worse than any of you have ever known, and which you can never leave."

"Worse 'n the p'ints?" asked the beggar.

"Yes, far worse. Full of bad people, sin and pain."

"I'm goin' to the good place," said the girl whose mother "told beads."

"Only through Jesus, the dear Jesus

Christ, who died that if you loved him and tried to serve him, you might go to heaven and live with him."

"I suppose," said Ruth, "he was rich, and had good times in this world."

"No, Ruth, he, for your sake, suffered all you suffer, and more. He had no place to lay his head. He was hungry, and thirsty, and sick, and weary; he was despised and abused, and finally put to a cruel death—beaten and put on a cross, with nails driven into his hands and feet."

"And did all this for me?" asked Ruth.

"Yes, Ruth," replied Miss Elliot, fixing her eyes on Ruth's face, and speaking in an earnest, solemn tone, "he did all this for you."

Here the bell rang, the teachers ceased their instructions, singing-books were given to those that could read, Ruth among the rest, and then they sang that

sweet song of heaven, "There is a happy land."

Miss Elliot gave a paper, or a card, or a little book to each of her class, and after a short prayer the Mission School children trooped back from the school-room to their dismal homes.

Miriam took from her purse the shilling she had promised Ruth. Lettie's eager eyes saw the transfer of the money, and she began pulling her sister by the arm and pointing to her mouth.

"What does she mean?" asked Miss Elliot.

"She wants me to go buy her some bread. We a'n't had nothing all day," said Ruth.

"Nothing to eat to-day! Did she sit there all this time hungry?"

"We're 'most always hungry. We're never full."

"But you can't buy anything to-day. The shops are shut."

"Plenty open like we go to," said Ruth.

"Ruth, you and Lettie just come home with me, and I 'll give you a meal, and some for breakfast better than you can buy."

Ruth looked eager.

"Then I can keep this for rent," she said. "The rent money a'n't made up yet."

Miriam looked at her pitifully. Here were life's cares pressing down prematurely; only thirteen, and rent and food to provide for!

"May be you want to see to your aunt," said Miriam.

"She 'll do where she is," said Ruth, indifferently.

Miriam Elliot walked on, and the two sisters followed her. Miriam went on in a muse. Crushed down by such burdens, was it possible for Ruth to lift herself up, to fix her mind on something higher

and better. Craving the present necessities of food and clothes, could she be led to think of the Bread of Life, and the garments of salvation?

The walk would have seemed long to some persons, but Miriam was young and strong, and in her walks of mercy, often made longer journeys. Ruth and Lettie had begged through too many miles of street to shrink from this walk which promised food for their hunger. Nineteenth Street was reached at last, and Miriam's pleasant home. Bidding the girls wait at the area door, Miriam ran up the steps and entered the house.

"Come, sit down and rest, child," said an old lady in lace cap and gold-bowed spectacles, who sat reading in the sitting-room.

"Pretty soon, auntie. I have two poor little scholars here who are hungry. I'm going to try and feed their bodies as well as their souls."

Miriam soon opened the area door, and brought her pupils into the kitchen. Mindful of old Deborah, the ruling power of the kitchen, Miriam spread a newspaper over one end of the table, and here she set forth meat and bread, butter and ginger-cake. With what eager haste those children ate, ate as if they never before had had enough. Miriam looked on, thinking that never in childhood had Christmas cake and pudding, or New Years' store of candies been such a treat to her as this substantial fare was to these little strangers.

Whilst the children ate and Miriam sat by a window looking into the little back yard, Deborah came down; her cap strings fluttered, and her starched calico gown rustled in righteous indignation at this fresh desecration of her kitchen and wasteful confiscation of wholesome provisions.

"Now, Miss Mirry, if that a'n't just

like you!" she cried, with some tremor in her voice.

"See how they enjoy it, Debby, and you know we have plenty."

"As if teaching and wearing yourself out hunting in dens and caves of the earth, wasn't enough for you to do, Miss Mirry."

"I knew you'd welcome these children, Debby. That little one is deaf and dumb."

"Now, Miss Mirry," said Deborah, deprecatingly, her whole manner suddenly changing, and her spectacles needing wiping, "now, Miss Mirry, don't! You know I've got a soft corner for that kind ever since it pleased the Lord——" Deborah wiped her glasses again. "Well, you know, Miss Mirry. Is she a deaf mute, really now?"

"She really is."

Deborah disappeared into the cellar, and coming back with a saucer of pre-

served pears, set it down by Lettie, patting her gently on the head, her somewhat severe face growing soft as she caught the child's upward glance, more eloquent than words, of a grateful heart. A smile like a sudden sunbeam flashed over Miriam's face as she saw it, and then was gone.

The little wayfarers rose from the table at last with wondering glances at what was left, as if amazed that there was any limit to their appetites.

Miriam took from a small drawer two brown paper bags and filled them with the remnants of the meal, and additional bread and meat from the cellar.

"Miss Mirry," said Deborah, "that little girl a'n't a thing on but that old frock."

"Ruth," asked Miriam, "is that frock all the clothing your sister has?"

"She's got a raggeder one home; I've sewed 'em together as well as I could, but they won't last forever."

Miriam went up to the attic, where stood a square blue chest, her poor box, blessed by many a poor, needy mother and child. Every week a number of little girls met in Miriam's room to make up garments for the children of the Mission School. Miriam cut and fitted their work and read to them or told them stories as they sewed. Many a pair of hose and mittens knit by Deborah, or Miriam's aunt, found their way into the "poor box," which never was empty. From this box Miriam selected several little garments for Lettie, and took them to Ruth. The girl's face grew grateful and gentle at so much kindness.

"Now Ruth," said Miriam, "there is a prayer I want you to say when you wake in the morning and when you go to bed at night; will you say it?"

"If I can remember it, and it will do me any good."

"It will do you good if when you say

it you feel in your heart that you are speaking to the great God who made you and can do everything for you, and if you really want him to help you."

"And what is the prayer, miss?"

"It is, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' and here is a card with all that Jesus Christ said about it. There, that verse is the prayer. Oh Ruth, I do want you to love Jesus Christ. You know what love is. You love Lettie."

"Yes, and father. I love my father. Folks say he's bad, and he's had bad luck, and been took and sent in for ten years; but he was always good to me and Lettie, even when he was drunk. If folks hadn't led him off to drink he'd have been good. He used to tell how he'd do better and I should learn, and we'd have a little house in the country, and a garden, but now it's all over. Oh, ten years is too long—too long!"

Ruth paused in her impassioned speech

and covering her careworn young face with her thin brown hands, burst into tears; sobs shook her slender frame.

Miriam gently placed her in a chair and resting her hand on the girl's shoulder said, "Ruth, my heart aches for you. Yours is a sad lot, but Jesus pities you, and if you pray to him for your father he will hear you."

Mrs. Elliot, Miriam's aunt, had left her reading, to come and see her niece's protegés, and standing in the door, had heard Ruth's words and Miriam's reply. The tender heart of the old lady was full of compassion for the poor children. Advancing she said to Lettie, who stood gazing anxiously about her, "Come here, my dear, and tell me your name."

"O aunt," said Miriam, "her name is Lettie, but she is deaf and dumb."

"The dear Lord pity her," said old Mrs. Elliot solemnly, drawing Lettie toward her.

Ruth by a violent effort had mastered her emotion, and now fixed her eyes on Mrs. Elliot. "Is that your aunt?" asked she of Miriam.

"Yes, my dear Aunt Elliot," replied Miriam.

"She's very different from Aunt Nab," said Ruth.

"I dare say, and yet Ruth, I wish you would try and be good to your aunt, and perhaps you can make her better. Go home now and give her something to eat; give her some breakfast to-morrow morning, and it may be kindness will go a good way with her."

"I don't love Aunt Nab. I can't be good to those I don't love. I love Lettie and father—and—you are very good to me," she added, hesitatingly.

"Love me then. But, O Ruth, love Christ most of all, and he bids you be good to all. He was good even to those that hated him and used him cruelly."

"I'll try," said Ruth, greatly subdued; and taking Lettie by the hand with a bow that had in it much of unstudied grace, she left the house.

"That girl's got a heart and good feelings," said Deborah, "but they've been roughed over.

"O Mrs. Elliot, ma'am, it minds me of that day when you found me in that little house in the woods, sitting atween them two dead bodies, with that little mute half sister in my arms, breakin' my heart!" Deborah broke off suddenly, and made a hasty errand into the cellar.

Mrs. Elliot and Miriam went up to the sitting-room, and there Miriam related what she had seen of Ruth and her home.

"Here is a new work opening before you, my dear child. May the Lord give you strength and grace," said Mrs. Elliot.

"Ah, aunt, when I think of these

wretched and neglected souls, I think, 'who is sufficient for these things.'"

"Think, also, Miriam, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.'"

"It seems, dear aunt, as though, if every person who has health and means could know even what little I do of the misery that is in this city, they would feel as if they must work with all their might to help and teach the poor. But I have not read to you to-day."

Miriam took her Bible and opened to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the regular portion for the day, as she was reading the Testament aloud to her aunt. As she was about to begin, Deborah, who also was privileged to attend these readings, entered and took her seat near the door. Sweetly on the stillness of the waning Sabbath day fell the words of Jesus: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you

from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. * * * * Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

CHAPTER III.

THE POWER OF LOVE.

"We love him because he first loved us."

OUT of Nineteenth Street went Ruth and Lettie, hand in hand, with tardy feet, as if wandering from the verge of heaven,—along Broadway, looking and feeling out of place among its marble glories,—into Pearl Street, leaving peace and luxury behind them,—with every step getting near to where all was dingy and dreary like themselves. From Lettie's echoless ears all noise and confusion, all wrangling tongues and heaven-assaulting blasphemies were shut out forever. To Ruth they came as things of custom; bitter and hateful, when they fell jarring on her over-tried spirit; to-day

they were as if she heard them not. The remembered cadences of Miriam's silver voice, Deborah's ruder but kindly utterances, and those child hymns sung in the Mission School,—these filled her thoughts, coming up one after another as rays of light break into the darkness, the heralds of the coming day. Into the house at last. You may see it any day, a cast-off shell of the old time gentility, taken possession of now by the wretched poor of the gay and proud metropolis. I cannot give you any distinctive marks; it is grim and dirty, broken-windowed and rusty-hinged, low in the attic and damp in the cellar, and tottering and tumble-down, but so are they all.

Ruth and Lettie found it easily enough. It was home to them, all the home they had. They climbed the stairways, cob-webby and creaking, as a matter of course, and, unlocking the door, found their poor home just as they left it, only no noise

now from the inner door. Ruth put her parcel of clothes and her paper bags of food on the floor, and sat Lettie down beside them; then she unlocked the closet door.

Dear daughters of America, let us take a look at our sister Nab. Fallen and degraded, yet our sister still, there she lies on the floor asleep. Her drunken passion has spent itself in aimless blows and broken cries. She is sleeping her rum insanity away. A large woman, with uncombed hair and tattered dress, if her face were less bloated and red, there might be nothing especially repulsive in it. There is many an honored, contented mother, in lowly homes, who looks much as Nab would if her dress were new and well put on, her black locks smoothly combed, and her face as Nature originally made it. Nab is no monster, but perhaps we lower our dignity and risk our reputations by being so near her. And yet,

if I remember rightly, women who were sinners stood near to Christ. Moved by some new impulse, Ruth bent down, smoothed her aunt's skirts decently about her, put her head in an easier position, and laid her arms calmly over her breast.

A kind act moves us to tender feelings towards its object. By the time these little offices were performed, Ruth was feeling kindly, and ready to give Aunt Nab her supper.

Next she took her shoe binding out from a large paper box, but looked at it with some distaste and muttering, "She gave me pay enough for all I could do to-day, and then she didn't seem to think it right to sew Sunday, though I can't see why," she put it back. She sat down by the window, and Lettie came and leaned against her lap. The child's face and hands had been made partly clean at school, yet she looked forlorn enough; and restlessly eager to do something.

Ruth concluded she would make Lettie more comfortable.

Taking the iron pot down to the hydrant she filled it and took it up stairs. On a shelf in Aunt Nab's prison, far over her head, were a few articles of tin and earthenware, and Ruth got a rusty pan and some rags, and proceeded to give the astonished Lettie a bath. Soap and water did wonders for the child, and when an old comb had smoothed her matted locks, and the under garments and apron that Miriam's little sewing society had made were put on, she looked quite another Lettie indeed, a smile of pleasure resting on her little thin face.

Ruth sat down by the window, and took her little sister on her lap. Lettie was a small, delicate child, and the new scenes and exercise of the afternoon had wearied her. She leaned against Ruth's shoulder, and composed herself to sleep. No song of Ruth's, no loving word could

find a way to Lettie's heart; but nature had taught the elder sister another way to express her love. She pressed Lettie's thin form closely to her breast, and gently smoothed and patted her cheek. Thus caressed into quietness Lettie closed her eyes and wandered away into the land of dreams, to her a doubly silent land, as she could dream of no word, or song, or faintest whisper of sound.

Sitting there Ruth remembered the card Miriam had given her, and took it from her pocket. It was a square card with a fancy red border, of the kind common in Sunday-schools. On this card was printed a portion of the eighteenth of Luke from the tenth to the fifteenth verses. Ruth was not deficient in natural ability. She read the card twice, and then began to meditate upon it.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray." The temple; oh, she had seen Trinity Church with its stained glass

windows and its pealing organ. She had in her longing for the beautiful stepped over its threshold once or twice, then shrank away, feeling as if that were no place for hunger, rags and dirt to come with million wants. The temple; there was Fifth Avenue Church, with velvet cushions and stately pulpit, and throngs of fashionable worshippers. Ruth had stood upon the steps to beg in days before she was old enough to bind shoes, but the sexton ordered her away; that was no temple for such as she. Then there was the Church of the Pilgrims, built of stone, with ivy lovingly creeping over it; there were the carpeted aisles, the solemn gloom, the handsome pews. Ruth had once crept in there, and out again. It seemed no place for her. These were the temples where men went to pray. She wondered if they prayed, as did this Pharisee. She saw him in the fancy border, with flowing robes, uplifted head and lofty scorn of

other men, in all his mien. Before his prayer, she stopped overwhelmed. If it is thus that men must pray, what could poor Ruth do. She fasted oftener than twice a week, but only for lack of bread; whatever tithes were, she did not give them, for she had nothing to give; as to thanking God that she was not as others are, did she not rather gaze on others with envious eyes, and complain against whatever power had put her where she was?

However, Miss Miriam had not told her to learn that prayer. Here was one comfort. "And the publican, standing afar off." Ah here was a kindred case. In the card the publican was shown, a poor man, meanly clad, humble and grieving. So Ruth had stood afar off, on the street corner, perhaps, not daring to lift her eyes to heaven! He smote upon his breast. So Ruth had beaten her bosom in grief and loneliness, in hopelessness and deep despair. And then his prayer,

"God be merciful to me a sinner." One reading wrote the words on Ruth's heart as with 'a pen of iron' and the point of a diamond. Mercy here was what she wanted; some pity in her bitter poverty; some help from the low estate where she was crushed and wretched. From God alone, said Miss Miriam, could mercy come.

Then sweetly into her mind came the words that Christ loved her; loved her more than she loved Lettie, and wanted her love. It was very pleasing and very strange. Musing thus she sat until it was nearly dark, and Lettie woke up. Then, Ruth proceeded to get a light. A cracked bowl of fat, with a rag in it for a wick, was her only lamp. She had no match, but groped her way down to Mrs. Levitt's back-room.

There was a candle burning there, and Katy was reading her Sunday-school paper to her grandmother. The Levitts

had a bedstead, a table, and three chairs; grand furnishing for a Pearl Street rear. There was a stove, too, and a tub, and two flat-irons, wherewith Mrs. Levitt earned part of her daily bread, by washing and ironing.

"May I light my wick?" asked Ruth, not quite so gruffly as usual.

"Of course you may," said Mrs. Levitt.

"I'm reading grannie my paper," said Katy. "It's so nice to read to somebody, and have them like it with you. What a pity you ha'n't nobody to read to."

"I'm going to read now I've got a light," said Ruth.

Up stairs went Ruth, and coming into the room with her light woke Aunt Nab, who came out of her den, and, sitting on a box in one corner of the room, swayed back and forth, bemoaning herself.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear me!"

"Aunt Nab, don't you want something to eat?" asked Ruth.

Aunt Nab hushed her plaint, astounded at the unusual question.

"Of course I do. Where is it?"

"Wait a minute, and we'll take it decently," said Ruth. In this little domestic circle, it had virtually become Ruth's to command, and Aunt Nab's to obey. Ruth, therefore, now took the brown paper that had wrapped up her last parcel of work, and spread it over a low, broad shelf, that served them for a table. Thereon she set her lamp. One of the paper bags she had hidden, lest Aunt Nab should lay violent hands on it, and sell its contents for rum. The other she emptied on the shelf, piling up the pieces of bread by themselves, placing the meat and cheese near by, and reserving a solitary fragment of gingerbread for Lettie. These preparations made for a grand meal, Ruth gave her summons.

"Now, Aunt Nab, move up your box, and eat like decent folks."

Ruth set the chair for herself, and Lettie stood by her side. Ruth was too much of a heathen to recognize God as the giver of her comfortable meal or offer him a word of thanks; but Miss Miriam, as the kind provider, was gratefully remembered, and a thought of love sent toward the brick house on Nineteenth Street. I do not know that the thought went as an angel, out of Pearl, along Broadway, and so on, and entered a beneficent presence, Miriam's home; but I do know that in God's word is written, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and the promise shall not fail.

Aunt Nab ate voraciously, but Miriam's bounty had provided for hungry ones. And, as often happens, when Nab's appetite was fully satisfied, things wore to her a brighter aspect, and her temper improved.

The meal over she retired, with her

box, to the corner, quite mild and resigned to her present condition. Ruth bethought herself of the little papers; and Katy's assertion of the excellence of a listener recurred to her. Aunt Nab in this capacity never entered her mind. So she went across the hall to a German girl, who could not read, and invited her to "come and hear something nice." The girl came with alacrity, because her family were all asleep, and she felt dull by herself. Ruth sat near the light on the shelf, her sister and guest on the floor in front of her; and then she read, and read untiringly, all that was in the papers. The reading was in rather a loud, singsong style, may be, but correct and distinct enough, and some of it even penetrated Aunt Nab's torpid brain; and she sat in the corner until Ruth finished, forgetting that there was a dram shop at the next street.

The German girl went away. Aunt

Nab and Lettie were both asleep, but Ruth lay pondering the mystery of love.

Love! It was the burden of Miss Elliot's pleading. The little papers spoke of love. Ruth was a girl hardened in a hard life; she could return railing for railing, blow for blow, but down in her secret heart was a tender spot. Ruth could love. Achilles, saith the ancient story, was invulnerable, except his heel. Ruth was invulnerable, except through her affections. She was not open to fear; she could not be bribed. Argument was powerless, but to the eloquence of love her ears were unstopped, and her hard heart warmed into flesh. "We love him because he first loved us." Not to this knowledge and reciprocating love had Ruth arisen, but thither God was leading her.

CHAPTER IV.

SOWING THE SEED.

"Blessed are they which sow beside all waters."

MONDAY morning found Ruth arising with renewed energies. The Sabbath was made for man. It is a necessity of his existence, and keeping Sabbath-rest sends him out into the week with new strength for its labors. So even that small portion of holy resting Ruth had snatched from the generally desecrated Sabbath, gave her unwonted vigor. Aunt Nab woke early too, soon after Ruth, and her awakening faculties all prompted to the corner dram shop.

"Where are you going, Aunt Nab?" demanded Ruth, as she saw her relative preparing to go out

"Going over to Finlin's," replied Aunt Nab.

"Better stay here, and get some breakfast."

"Breakfast; there aint none."

"I've got some; take off your bonnet and sit down."

Aunt Nab took off her ancient straw bonnet, which from being often slept in and sat upon, presented only a multiplicity of angles and was in a generally ragged and dismal condition.

Hanging the bonnet carefully on a peg, with an unusual fit of neatness, Aunt Nab installed herself in her chair of state, the upturned dry-goods box. From thence she watched Ruth's preparations for breakfast, which were much the same as for supper, save that she brought fresh water in a brown earthen pitcher, whereof the nose and handle had been sacrificed, in former times, to Aunt Nab's drunken indignation. The three partook

of a breakfast, which while it fully satisfied their appetites, exhausted their entire stock of provisions. The morning meal ended, Ruth got out her work. While she was doing this her aunt took the bonnet from the peg, and stuck it on her head, with a jaunty air, that, when the general appearance of the bonnet was taken into consideration, was quite cheering, suggesting that Aunt Nab was of a vivid imagination and inclined to make the best of things.

"Aunt Nab," said Ruth, "take off that bonnet and bring up your box, and go to work at these shoes. They must be done to-day, and I want some time to make these balls."

Aunt Nab twirled her bonnet on her thumb and looked sullen.

"Bring up the box, and go to work, or else you'll get shut up to-night, and then I'll never let you out again" said Ruth in stern tones.

"You'll starve me," whined Aunt Nab.

"Of course I will. If you won't do nothing, you shan't have victuals," replied Ruth, striking unconsciously near the Biblical doctrine, "If any work not, neither should he eat."

Aunt Nab yielded to the apparent necessity of the case, brought her box near the window, and began to bind shoes. She could do it well, and had taught Ruth, in days before the love of liquor annihilated every other feeling.

Lettie sat at Ruth's feet, cutting the sections of parti-colored morocco that were to make balls for a small toy-shop on Grand Street.

A kind-hearted clerk in the shoe store had given Lettie these scraps of morocco for playthings; and Ruth, taught by sharp necessity, had taken them to make balls, which she sold for seven cents a piece to the sharp-eyed Jew who owned

the small toy-shop. There are some children who never have a childhood. While the little folks in happy homes are playing with their multitudinous toys, watched by careful parents and nurses, the sad-eyed progeny of poverty prowl about the streets, earning their scanty subsistence from the gutters or the eagerly-begged penny.

Ruth was one of these. From infancy compelled to toil for herself and for others, neglected and repressed, she stepped from babyhood to sharp calculating maturity.

The friendly interest of Miriam, the influence of pleasant thoughts suggested by the little papers and the red-bordered card, the new idea that some superior Being was watching her with tender feeling, animated Ruth to new courage. True, there was very little to take courage from in her present circumstances, but the notion was gaining strength in her mind

that she might rise to a higher and better life; that that longed-for respectability, about which she had talked and planned with her father during his frequent but short-lived fits of repentance, might not be entirely and forever out of her reach. Ruth happily was one of those active souls that are never content with mere wishing and planning; that will not sit idly down longing for some great thing to do, but, once resolved upon an end, count no step too small to be taken in attaining it. Moved unconsciously by such thoughts as these, Ruth stitched at her balls, stuffed them with tow, and meditated that the floor was very dirty, and Lettie's frock so soiled as to be out of keeping with her clean apron. "To think" was followed by that other verb "to act." Ruth suddenly put down her unfinished ball, and taking the precaution to lock the door so as to insure her aunt's continuance at her work, she went to Mrs.

Levitt's. As she expected she found the old woman washing.

"Mrs. Levitt," said Ruth, "may we have a tub of suds, after you are done washing?"

"Well, I never," said Mrs. Levitt, but not crossly.

"We want to wash our frocks, and the floor, if you 'll let us have it. Aunt Nab and I will carry it up, and we won't keep the tub over an hour."

"Well, you can have it, only mind I get the tub back."

"I 'll bring it myself. I'm keeping Aunt Nab in. You see, if I keep her away from Finlin's, she 'll stop wanting her drink in a few days, and then she 'll stay sober for a week or so, and likely we can make up enough to pay the rent."

"Poor child! With such a father and aunt, you have hard times."

"Don't say a word ag'in father," said

Ruth, her face flashing angry red, and her voice trembling, "you can say what you like of Aunt Nab, but mind you let him alone."

"Oh, of course, I won't say a word against him," said Mrs. Levitt, soothingly. But Ruth rushed away, slamming the door behind her.

Ruth and her aunt worked on, having no dinner and no rest, until nearly five o'clock; then balls and shoes were done.

"Here, Aunt Nab," said Ruth, before the many-angled bonnet could be taken from the peg, "you come down to Grannie Levitt's, and help me carry up the tub of suds, and then you've got to wash your frock and Lettie's, and clean up the floor. Come on, I say."

Aunt Nab was accustomed to Ruth's dictatorship, and obeyed, muttering. When the tub was brought, and the washing was fairly begun, Ruth caught up her bundle of work, set Lettie on the

stair landing, stepped unexpectedly into the hall, and, hastily pulling to the door, turned the key, and had her relative a prisoner. Aunt Nab was too sluggish, both of mind and body, to anticipate or resist her frequent imprisonments. She was not of a surly or passionate temper when sober, and instead of making a noise, or destroying what came in her reach, when thus shut up in a sober state, she spent her indignation in low grumbling and a few tears, and waited for Ruth's return. Ruth left Lettie, whose frock was getting washed, in the room where the German girl and her mother were making red flannel shirts at sixpence apiece. Ruth got more work, sold her balls, bought some pork and corn meal, and returned home to get supper.

Several days passed on. The room and Lettie were a little cleaner than they had been the week before, for Ruth felt constantly that Miriam might come

again, and oh! how she longed for that coming!

Aunt Nab, as Ruth expected, got rather quieter, and between the ceaseless labor of both pair of hands, the rent was made up by Thursday, and paid, taking the last cent, and leaving Ruth's whole capital a bowl of cold mush.

The little prayer had been said night and morning, but Ruth was getting desperate, and had nearly made up her mind not to say it any more, for she thought it did no good. She said, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner," with but a vague notion of God and her own sinfulness, but craving mercy as a drowning man aid. But what was the use? Miss Miriam did not come. Lettie looked miserable, and pointed to her mouth. Aunt Nab said she could not live on mush alone, and if she couldn't get something to eat, she would go to Finlin's, and get something to drink; and she bound shoes

with vicious glances toward the crooked bonnet and open door, as if every stitch taken would be the last before she bolted to the dram-seller's.

Goaded by all these things, Ruth spent her wrath on the card, snatching it from her pocket and tearing it up. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," wrote Paul by the Spirit; and the promise was made good to poor, ignorant, despairing Ruth. Just as she was ready to tell Aunt Nab to go to Finlin's and stay there, and then run off herself with poor Lettie, and wander, she knew not where, she heard her own name kindly spoken, and lo! Miriam standing in the doorway, with a basket on her arm. Ruth looked into the fair, young face with joyful welcoming, then she glanced at the bits of card on the floor, and her face flushed crimson with a consciousness of sin and shame.

"Oh, Miss," she stammered, "I thought you were never coming any more."

"How mistaken you were, Ruth. No, I had not forgotten you, and God had not forgotten you. See what he sent you." Miriam opened her basket, and set it on Ruth's lap. There was cold meat, a dozen of potatoes, a loaf of bread, and a cake for Lettie, added by Deborah. Ruth looked earnestly in her teacher's face.

"Miss, did God send that or did it come out of your cellar?" she asked.

"It came out of my cellar, but God put it in my mind to get it out, and bring it here to you."

"Ah," said Ruth, with a sigh of relief, "then God was 'merciful to me a sinner.' I thought he wasn't going to be, and—I tore up the card—see there," she pointed to the floor, and looked ashamed.

"Ruth, Ruth," said Miriam, shaking her head with a loving yet reproachful look. "But here is another card. Study

this, and say your prayer still. Who is this woman?"

"That's Aunt Nab. Won't you sit down?"

"I 'll rest here," said Miriam, placing herself on the old-fashioned window-sill; then, turning to Nab, "What is your name, ma'am?"

"Nab," said that worthy woman, sewing vigorously.

"But your other name. What is that?"

"Well, Wool, I s'pose."

"Wool,—are you a married woman?"

"Well,—I s'pose I am. I married Ben Wool once, but in a day or so, he said he was tipsy, and didn't know what he was about, or he wouldn't have married me, and so he went off to sea, but it didn't hurt me to have him go; I didn't care."

This, dear friends, was a strange confession, but Nab made it, and so could

many more of our degraded sisters even in this happy land.

"Then," said Miriam, "you have no little children to love and comfort you."

"Children!" cried Nab. "Well, if them two is a specimen of children, I don't want none. One on 'em is savage as a tiger, and t'other as dumb as a post."

"Tiger, indeed!" said the irascible Ruth. "It needs a tiger to get on with you. If I didn't show my teeth, you'd show yours, and you do now."

"Ruth," said Miriam, laying her hand on the angry girl's shoulder. "'Love thinketh no ill to its neighbor.'"

"There a'n't no love lost between her and me," said Ruth.

"Dear child, Jesus bids you love others because he loves you. Be gentle to your Aunt Nab, for Jesus' sake. And now, Mrs. Wool, I'm glad I've found you quietly working. I see you are a good

hand at shoe binding. I 'll try and see you again on Sunday. You 'll be here, won't you?"

"Mebby so," said Aunt Nab.

"Aunt Elliot's boy is waiting on the stairs for me, and I have a sick woman to visit. Ruth, will you study that card when you have time, and talk to your Aunt Nab about what I have told you?"

Thus Miriam dropped her gospel seed even by the turbid waters of Aunt Nab's perverted life.

CHAPTER V.

THE EARNEST WORKER.

"Let us not be weary in well-doing."

"LAW me, what a purty creeture!" cried Aunt Nab, as Miriam passed like a bright vision from her eyes. "What's that she told you to tell me about? What has she been talking to you, and what's that you tore up?"

"She told me that God loves me, and wants me to love him. She said Jesus Christ came into this world to die for me."

"I s'pose God don't care for me; s'pose Christ didn't die for me. Think it likely, Ruth?"

"She said God loves everybody, and wants 'em to be good. She said Christ

died because he loved us all, and wanted us all to love him," replied Ruth, truthfully but reluctantly.

Love, even the love of God and of Christ, was a treasure she did not want to share, especially with her hereditary foe, Aunt Nab.

"But about them bits of paper?" persisted Nab.

"Oh, she gave me a little prayer to learn, and I thought it didn't do no good, and I got mad and tore it up."

"Oh, you're allus mad. Did you say the prayer?"

"Yes, I did," retorted Ruth, sharply.

"Do any good, think?" urged her inquisitive aunt.

"She says it did. I prayed 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' and she says he sent this."

"There, now! you've got a hull basketful of victuals, and here I am starving hungry. If you don't give me some

now, this minute, I 'll go to Finlin's straight away."

Aunt Nab snatched at the basket which Ruth jerked out of her reach. She was just about to say, "Go to Finlin's! I don't care," but the gentle face of Miriam and her lessons of love were present with her gift, so she checked the wrathful words, and said,

"You shall have all you want as soon as I wake up Lettie."

The potatoes were put away to make a breakfast with the bowl of mush, and the three made a good meal of bread and meat, Lettie sitting afterwards on the window sill, and eating her cake in tiny bites, to lengthen out the pleasure.

"Aunt Nab," said Ruth, when they were sewing again, "Do you believe all them things about loving, and praying, and Christ dying are true?"

Any mental exercise was a new and severe effort to Aunt Nab. At Ruth's

question, she dropped her work, rested her chin on her hands, and the light and shadows flitted over her broad dull face like sun and cloud over a stagnant summer pool.

"Likely they are," she said at length. Aunt Nab was pre-eminently non-committal. "Mebby they're true. When your father and I was little, 'pears like our mother used to tell us something like that."

"Why didn't she tell you more, so you'd know something about it?"

"Oh, she died," said Nab indifferently, "and then him and me was put in the poorhus, and we turned out bad like poorhus younguns allus does."

This was a fragment of family history new to Ruth, who had never asked or heard anything about the antecedents of her family. Deeper tenderness than ever filled her heart for her father, as she pictured him, the motherless and neglected

work-house child, and now, after the miserable, reckless years of sinning and repenting that she could remember, the inmate of the terrible prison-house. The large stone walls, heavy doors and grated windows imaged to Ruth unspeakable horror and desolation. Her musings were interrupted by Aunt Nab demanding,

"How much work did you bring home? How long have we got to sit binding shoes, I would like to know?"

"Always, I guess," said Ruth, bitterly. "It's just like the horses they've got in the machine to cut wood. It seems to me they're always behind that bar stepping, stepping; getting lean until all their bones stick out, and then they drop over dead, and the folks drag 'em out and put another in."

Here was a vehement disquisition, altogether out of the range of Aunt Nab's capacity; she sank helplessly down over

her work, and stitched with an apathetic air, as if she hoped the work would have its own way and kill her as soon as possible. All her dreams of freedom were compelled to hang up on the peg with the battered bonnet; for the present the inexorable Ruth had consigned her to a life of shoe-binding.

Morning and night Ruth said her prayer. The necessity of constant drudgery prevented her studying or even reading the other card. Much she thought, however, of all she had read and heard; and the idea of a day of rest devoted to making her room, herself and Lettie as tidy as possible, having a visit from Miriam, and going to the Mission School, looked so delightful, that she determined not to bind shoes on Sunday. Aunt Nab's work during the entire week had been such a help that on Saturday evening Ruth bought food, and hid away three shillings for rent, and with her

aunt went out in quest of wood, where the building of houses and ships gave promise of a harvest of blocks and shavings.

Ruth's ideas of keeping Sunday were very obscure. Early on the morning of that holy day she got needle and thread, and patched her dress to the best of her ability; then she got Mrs. Levitt's tub, and with Aunt Nab's help filled it with water; after this she bought a piece of soap. Aunt Nab was then ordered to wash the dress and their rags of bedding, which speedily dried on an adjacent roof; the dress was ironed in the German girl's room, where they were finishing some coarse laundry work they had taken in. By the time Lettie, the shelf, the box and the floor had been washed it was time for dinner; and Ruth cooked a luxurious repast of pork and potatoes. Then at last, while Aunt Nab and Lettie took a nap, Ruth sat down to study her new card.

The card was bordered with a band of gold, fit setting for the golden words within. "And he spake a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Ah Heaven-directed reproof and encouragement to Ruth, who had prayed and fainted all too soon! Again and again Ruth read the simple story of her who cried unto the unjust judge. Plainly came the lesson to her heart, that if that wicked judge, the foe to God and man, did right at last because of long entreaty, God, who loves us all, will surely avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, although he long delay. While Ruth was thinking and studying thus, Miriam came to the door. Ruth's joyful greeting awoke Aunt Nab, who rubbed her sleepy eyes, and seeing her admired young lady, came forward to her seat on the box, that she might more closely inspect her dress and general appearance.

"And now, Ruth, are you and Lettie coming to school with me?"

"Oh yes, we're all ready," said Ruth.

"And won't you come too, Mrs. Wool?"

"I hain't no clothes," said Aunt Nab.

"Why if your dress were only mended, and washed and ironed like Ruth's, it would do very well."

"'Tain't though, and I hain't no bonnet but that fright hanging up, old as the hills."

The bonnet surely was in a hopeless condition, but a vision rose before Miriam's eyes of a cast-off shaker bonnet of Aunt Elliott's that hung in the garret at home, magnificent in purple cape and strings. "Now, Mrs. Wool," she said persuasively, "If you will promise me to go to the Mission School with us next Sunday, I will bring you a bundle of dark calico to mend your frock some time this week, and next Sunday I will bring

you a new bonnet, and perhaps a pair of shoes, if you will put them on, and come to the school."

"A new bonnet!" The words were magic! Every latent spark of womanly vanity woke up in Aunt Nab's bosom. She liked new bonnets as well as you or I, my well-dressed sister. "I'll do it! Mind you bring the bonnet, and hev it big enough. Do it? I guess I will for a bonnet and shoes, and mend my frock too."

"Now, Mrs. Wool, I am going to teach Ruth all I can to-day, and you have her tell it to you when she gets home."

"If she will," said Nab, doubtfully; "she and me don't agree very well."

"You will, won't you, Ruth?"

"If you want me to," replied Ruth, unable to refuse Miriam anything. "Now, Aunt Nab, you go to bed again, and finish your nap."

Aunt Nab, uncertain about the propri-

ety of resistance in Miriam's presence, retired to her bed, and Miriam went out with the two girls, Ruth locking the door behind her.

Miriam had by this time found out the master key to Ruth's nature, love; and on this Sunday it was the Gospel of Love that she urged upon her class. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." She pictured God's holiness and power stooping to love guilty, rebellious man, and entreated her class to love God, and by Christ's example their fellow-men. Ruth's heart grew softer as she listened, and when Miriam begged them all to spread among all they knew this good news, to tell to others the story of the cross, that they might thus serve and honor Him who loved them and gave his life for them, she resolved that she would tell all she heard to Aunt Nab and the

German girl. After school was out Miriam gave Ruth a little book, a simple telling of the story of Bethlehem's babe and manger.

"Have you anything to eat to-day, Ruth?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, we've got enough; we earned more last week."

"Deborah said if you would walk up with me she would give you a pie; she baked more than will keep for us this warm weather. She has a little present for Lettie too, and wants to see her. Deborah loves deaf and dumb children. She had a sister so once."

"Where is she now?"

"In heaven. She learned about Christ, and loved him, and when she died she went to him. There she is dumb no longer."

Deborah gave Ruth the apple pie, and Lettie a rag doll with silk wig and staring blue worsted eyes, her first toy; and

wonderful was the child's silent joy over it.

With a lighter step, her heart refreshed by human sympathy and kindness, and her soul reviving under the new story of Divine love, Ruth went back to Pearl Street, Lettie skipping by her side. She found Aunt Nab surly, and ready to complain at her long imprisonment, but silenced her with pie, whereof they all made their supper.

The week began more cheerfully, but with every day Aunt Nab's fatal thirst grew stronger; and on Wednesday she seized her bonnet at an unexpected moment, and rushed away to Finlin's. Ruth and Lettie were alone until Thursday noon, when, true to her drunken custom, Aunt Nab came back staggering, and nearly helpless. Ruth, by the help of her German neighbor, got her in the closet, and shut her in. Discouraged, though this was only what she had ex-

pected, Ruth sat working and grieving, when Miriam came, bringing her little basket, with bread and meat, and the roll of dark calico.

"Where is your aunt?" she asked, when she came in.

"Shut up, 'spite of all I can do," said Ruth, drearily.

"Poor, unhappy thing! But take courage, Ruth. She cannot be cured of her habit right away, but all may be right in time."

"'T'a'n't a single mite of use. She's past mending, and I guess her dress is too, by this time, from the way she's been tearing around."

"Ruth," said Miriam, taking the girl's tired hand, "God has long patience with us, and so must we have with Aunt Nab. Now, dear girl, ask God's help to do right, and when she gets over this, treat her kindly, give her food, keep her at work, and get her to mend and wash her

dress. Show her, and help her, and next Sunday I will bring the bonnet, and a pair of Deborah's old shoes, and we will take her to the school after all. Say, Ruth?"

"I will. I 'll do anything you say," said Ruth.

Thus was Miriam "not weary in well-doing."

CHAPTER VI.

DAILY LABOR.

"Go work to-day in the vineyard."

RUTH'S mind, after Miriam left her, was like a troubled sea. One moment natural indignation against Aunt Nab and discouragement with her lot prompted her entirely to abandon her relative, or, at least, to pour forth on her, as aforetime, a full tide of wordy wrath. Then some faint emotions of gratitude to God, of desire to please Miriam, urged her to act a gentler part, and make yet another effort to do right. Thank God, who doth with temptation also make a way of escape, good triumphed; and when Ruth got ready for bed that night, she unlocked the closet door, put the

head of her heavily-sleeping aunt in an easy position, and said her prayer, feeling that if God would indeed be merciful to her, she could be merciful to Aunt Nab. Early morning found Ruth stirring; and presently Aunt Nab sat erect on the closet floor, rubbed her eyes, and looked stupidly about.

"Come out here, Aunt Nab, wash your face and eat your breakfast. It is quite time you went to work again," said Ruth.

"I think I 'll go out to—to—"

"No, you won't. You've been out once too often, already. Wash your face. There's a pot of water."

Aunt Nab washed her face, and somewhat brightened by this operation partook of her morning meal. Shoe binding was then the order of the day.

"I a'n't time to spend binding shoes," said Aunt Nab, as she took her work. "I'm going out to do some washing."

"No, you a'n't," said Ruth. "I know what that amounts to. You cleaned and washed for Mrs. Finlin, and have been taking out your pay in drink. You sold the last thing there was here to sell, months ago, and now Mrs. Levitt says she's sure you stole her wash-board, and sold that. I 'll tell you what, Aunt Nab, if you don't stop these doings, I 'll have you took up for a vagrant, or a nuisance, or something, like they did old Mrs. Karns."

Ruth spoke with energy, and Nab, putting part of the hem of her forlorn frock to her eyes, began to cry. Ruth was silent, and in that silence came better thoughts. She spoke again, more quietly. "You must do better, Aunt Nab. Come, now, hurry on with your work. Here is a parcel of calico, and to-morrow you shall mend your dress, and get it washed and ironed Sunday. The young lady was here yesterday, and

she says she 'll bring you some shoes and a bonnet, and take you to the Mission School Sunday afternoon."

"When did she come here?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"When I was in there? And did she know it?" asked poor Nab, with a faint touch of shame.

"Yes, when you were there, and she knew it."

"And said she'd bring 'em, for all that?"

"Yes. She said you were a poor, unhappy thing, and she'd try and help you, and get you to do right."

"Dear, dear! I'm glad I 'll have the shoes. Oh, me! I am unhappy enough. Oh! oh! well, I 'll have the new bonnet. I will mend my frock. I can't bind shoes no more. See how my hand shakes."

As in confused jargon Nab bewailed herself, and congratulated herself, all in

a breath, dropping stray tears and holding up her big trembling hand, Ruth's anger rose. She had never heard the sacred precept to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." She had not heard, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

Besides Ruth was far from being spiritual; and even if these things had been to her as to some of us familiar as household words, and if she had, as some of us have, made profession of godliness, peradventure she might still, like some of us, have gone on bringing railing accusations.

"Serves you right if your hand does tremble! It's all your own fault. Didn't you go and get drunk? Why won't you be sober and decent? I'll get

you put in the Penitentiary and kept there forever!"

Nab, sitting on her box, trembling and crying, was a miserable spectacle enough; but at this new torrent of reproach she fell on the floor all in a heap, and moaned and wailed pitifully.

Dear daughters of the Christian Church, shall we hold up our heads and cry "Lord, I thank thee I am not like this sinful wretch," and then, as did the Levite of old, gather up our garments, and pass by on the other side, leaving Nab lying there covered with the wounds and bruises and loathsome sores of sin?

Let us do as we may to Nab and all her kind; but God, who is rich in mercy, had a good purpose toward forsaken Nab, and sent down first into Ruth's heart an arrow of remorse and a thought of pity. She laid her hand on her aunt's shoulder, saying, "Come, Aunt Nab, get up and do the best you can; your hand will stop

trembling by and by. Come, I won't talk so to you; wipe your eyes, and you shall go to the Sunday School."

Thus encouraged, Nab rose and betook herself to work with an injured air. Lettie was amusing herself in a strange, grave, unchildlike air, with her rag doll, and Ruth mentally one moment accused herself and the next Aunt Nab, when a step on the stair-landing caught her attention, and looking up she beheld the plain, stern face of old Deborah, peering from a stiffly-starched sun-bonnet.

"Good morning, ma'am," said Ruth, rising confused. "Won't you walk in and sit down? Aunt Nab, here is another lady."

"Ladies is gittin' quite common here," whined Aunt Nab, rising heavily from her box and dropping down again.

Ruth gave Deborah her chair, and placed herself in the window-seat. The good serving-woman was out of breath

from climbing three pair of stairs, and carrying a large basket; and for a few moments did nothing but draw Lettie to her side, and stroke her now smooth hair, and pat her clean, thin cheek.

Deborah looked curiously around the room. She felt as if she had accomplished something wonderful in getting there alone and without the knowledge of either Mrs. Elliott or Miss Miriam. Deborah felt shy and guilty about being discovered in a benevolent act of this kind. Her Christianity was of rather a tart description, given to sharp sayings, and contributing only to what she considered legitimate objects of charity; *i. e.*, those brought before her in church on the regular collection days. Still, as she said, she "did do a little for the poor box to humor Miss Mirry;" and now here she was making a visit to Ruth. The case of Ruth and Lettie came closely home to Deborah's heart, reminding her of her-

self and mute half sister, in a desolate and orphaned childhood, rescued by good Mrs. Elliott, and brought by her into a life of respectable and contented industry. Unused to visiting the poor, and lacking Miriam's wise and winning ways, Deborah rushed into the object of her visit as soon as she found her breath.

"Miss Mirry told me how dreadful poor you was, and how you hadn't nothing to do with, and she said you was trying to turn over a new leaf and be somebody. Thinks I to myself, how can she do better with nothing to do with. At our house when things get past Mrs. Elliott's using, she says, 'Here, Deborah, make what use you like of this;' and never asks no more about it. I mend things up and stow 'em away in the attic, because I can't bear to see nothing wasted. So to-day I got some of the traps out for you and have brought them along with me in my basket here."

After this long speech Deborah uncovered her basket.

"There's a big, brown towel. Reckon you a'n't none. Here's a tin wash dish. I soldered up that hole myself. Here's some saucers, and a cup or two. I put 'em together with putty, and they hold right well. Here's a little frying-pan. You can use it, if it a'n't no handle. Here's a scrubbing-brush. I bought that, and a pint cup of soft soap; and here's some knives and forks. The p'int's broke off one or two of 'em, but they're better than none. There's two little tin pans. I mended them, too; and that's a hair brush. It belonged to Miss Miriam, and it's good yet."

"What a powerful lot of things," cried Aunt Nab.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ruth. "Now I can keep clean better. I had only a plate, and a pitcher, and one cracked bowl, and that pot."

"Land alive! Then you couldn't keep clean. Mind you take care of these things now. A'n't you no tub or pail?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well, I 'll ask Miss Mirry to send you one of ours. Here's some gingernuts for the little one," and Deborah pulled a paper from her capacious pocket. Still she felt as if a word of good counsel was necessary, and how to give it she knew not.

"I hope you 'll mind all Miss Mirry says; her talking and doing is just about right," she said, at length; and picking up her basket, hurried down stairs, relieved to have her mission accomplished.

Ruth put away her new treasures in the closet, and locked them up, fearing that Aunt Nab would sell them.

Aunt Nab's dress was washed and mended. Sunday morning Ruth learned her new card. This was its holy lesson. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of

all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Ruth had not got so far that she could consider herself the chief of sinners. She was quite certain that Aunt Nab might safely claim that "bad pre-eminence." She determined to suggest something of the kind to Miss Miriam that afternoon. After dinner, Miriam came with her boy, bringing Nab's bonnet and shoes, and was soon conducting her pupils to the Mission School,—Aunt Nab, glorious in her new attire, looming among the smaller ones, her wide features all radiant with delight.

This day, Ruth, for the first time, learned something of the sanctity of the Sabbath. A card was given her with the fourth commandment printed upon it, and Miriam explained a little of the meaning of "keeping holy."

Miriam also succeeded in raising in

Ruth's mind a doubt whether she were indeed any better than Aunt Nab. To Nab was given a red-covered Testament, on the promise that she would not sell it, or give it away, but would hear Ruth read a verse or two whenever there was time. Nab could not read. She had learned a little, once, but forgotten it all in her miserable years. However, she liked the singing, the pleased faces of the children, and Miriam's simple teachings, and freely promised to come again, volunteering the promise to keep the new shoes and Shaker sacred to the Mission School.

It was becoming a custom for the German girl to spend her Sabbath evenings with Ruth, hearing the lessons of the afternoon. Her family being rigid Papists, she was not allowed to go to the school herself, but here from Ruth she heard the echoes of gospel truth. Perchance these feeble, secondhand instruc-

tions may yet, by God's blessing, be as "a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon."

As Miriam went from the Mission School that day, the superintendent overtook and joined her. "That was an unpromising scholar you brought in to-day, Miss Elliott."

"She certainly looks so to our eyes, but the Lord is able to do 'great things for her, whereof we shall be glad.'"

"Ah, yes, I dare say. The warm weather is coming now, and the most of our teachers will be going into the country for the summer. I am sure I hardly know where to look for more. The poor children will be like sheep having no shepherd."

"Sheep having no shepherd." The words rang in Miriam's ears when she was alone again. Over such a spectacle Jesus could weep. She pictured those

little ones abandoned when the work of rescue was only half begun,—she thought of Ruth relapsing into sullen indifference or angry defiance; of Aunt Nab left to go her own wild way to ruin, and hurrying unchecked into a drunkard's grave. Christ died to save sinners, but we Christians cannot even work earnestly for them. That night, as, ready for her rest, Miriam opened her "Daily Food" for her evening portion, she found it "The night cometh when no man can work."

CHAPTER VII.

LOOK NOT BACK.

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

FROM the unattractive home of our poor Ruth, it is pleasant to turn for a while to the brick house on Nineteenth Street, where Miriam, dwelling, could exclaim, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage." Here in a cheerful bed-room, one morning rather late in May, sat Miriam and two companions. They were evidently in the midst of that work that occupies a part of Spring—dress-making. On the bed lay various summer fabrics, and the table between the windows was laden with all the implements of the

needle-woman. Presiding at this table, the genius of the occasion, was the family dress-maker, from long acquaintance familiarly called "Cousin Becky." She was a prim damsel of fifty autumns; frosty winters and glowing summers seemed alike to have been left out of Cousin Becky's life. Ever the same, in a purple delaine dress, stiff little black lace cap, silver-bowed spectacles immovably set on her Roman nose, with gray eyes where a depth of earnest kindly feeling coyly hid behind the spectacles, and sarcastic lips, whose sayings were wont to be short and sharp; this was Cousin Becky. Seated on an ottoman, working busily under the dress-maker's directions, was our friend Miriam; and opposite her, in a low chair by the window, a niece of Mrs. Elliott's, called Rose Robbins. Rose had light soft hair, elaborately dressed, a white morning wrapper, and a pair of white hands lying idly in her lap.

Miriam was talking rapidly and earnestly, her tongue flying as fast as her skillful fingers; she was telling the story of her new acquaintances, Ruth, Lettie and Aunt Nab, sure of a sympathetic listener in Cousin Becky, and never noticing that Rose looked excessively weary of the subject.

"Miriam!" cried Rose, when the young lady paused for a moment to take breath. "Miriam! I don't see a single new silk among your goods, nor indeed anything very handsome. Is that Organdie the best you mean to buy this summer?"

"Yes," said Miriam, "that is the best."

"Now, Miriam Elliott! I must say you are getting to be downright stingy! Last winter you wore the same dress to an evening company three times, and here an Organdie is the best you can raise. Miriam, a miserly young lady is so odious!"

"Truly, Rose, I don't want to be either

miserly or stingy, and I don't think I am."

"You don't? There now, I know your income will buy better than this. What have you done with it?"

"Lent it. That is, all I did not need."

"Lent it! ridiculous!"

"That is a wrong statement may be. I have put it out at interest."

"Interest. There! A feminine financier!"

"But I get such good rates of interest; not ten per cent., but ten times all I lend."

"What shocking talk for a young lady! Are you turning Jew? You'll get to be a miser and go to hoarding up presently."

"She is doing that already if I'm not mistaken," said Cousin Becky; "hoarding it up 'where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.'"

"Miriam!" exclaimed Rose, starting

in her surprise from her lounging attitude, "are you really giving away so much that you cannot dress decently?"

"No," said Miriam calmly. "I always have dressed decently, and I hope always shall."

"But are you going to content yourself with chintzes, and lawns, and organdies, and give the rest of your means to Mission Schools, and fourth-story-rears, and dumb Letties, and vile, dirty, horrid Aunt Nabs?"

"Rose Robbins," said Cousin Becky, "it looks as if there was a long, long way between you, in your watch, and dainty wrapper, and little hands, and rows of curls, and that vile, dirty, horrid Aunt Nab, as you're pleased to call her!"

"Long enough way, indeed," replied Rose, tossing her head.

"And yet, Rose, if you and she should at twelve this night get before the bar of God, which of your souls, think you,

would look the better in his holy eyes, yours or hers?"

"Now, Cousin Becky!" cried Rose, flushing like her garden namesake, "you know I'm not as bad as that dreadful woman!"

"My Bible," said Cousin Becky, "tells me, 'And that servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required.'"

"Oh, now, Cousin Becky, you do have such a queer way of putting things."

"I put things the way the Lord looks at them. Now here's Nab goes to school, and hearkens attentively, and a young lady in my Bible-class, who never gets at the marrow and richness of our lesson, told me last Sunday it was not for want

of time or books, but because it was too much trouble to study. What do you think the Lord will say to her, when he takes account?"

"I declare, Cousin Becky, I only went in that class to please father and our minister, and if this is the way you talk, I 'll leave it. See if I ever ask you to make a dress for me again either." Rose spoke angrily.

"As you please," said Cousin Becky, coolly. "I 'll have one pupil less laying up condemnation for themselves for wasted opportunities, and as to the dresses, it will save me being continually teased for 'just one week,' when I havn't a day I can call my own."

"Miriam," said Rose, anxious to change the subject, "where are you going this summer to spend the hot weeks?"

"Aunt Elliot is going to St. Lawrence county, in the northern part of New York, to see her sister."

"But I asked where you are going. Not in that out-of-the-world place."

"No. I have about made up my mind that it will not injure my health to stay in the city. Deborah will remain in the house, and Cousin Becky make her home here while aunt is gone, and I think I shall get on very comfortably."

"Not going anywhere! Stay in the city! Miriam, what does possess you? Are you crazy? I believe you are taking leave of your senses."

"No, coming fully to my right mind, I hope. Indeed, Rose," added Miriam, solemnly, "I have been looking at these things carefully of late, and I see that we are God's stewards, responsible to him for money, and time, and all that we have; and I think we have no right to spend on ourselves more than we need. If the Lord has given me a good work to do among his poor in this city, I have no right to withhold my money, or run away

from the work to take my pleasure anywhere."

"Well! If this isn't too queer for anything! No right to your own money! No right to go off for pleasure, when your health won't suffer by not going! What on earth have you a right to? If joining the church means all this, if it means poor boxes, and Mission Schools, and carrying about cold victuals, and coaxing up drunken wretches, I 'll never join the church. But then it don't mean that to everybody."

"To me," said Miriam, her face lit with holy zeal, "it means just this; a full dedication of all that I have and am, to be the Lord's, to use just as he pleases; and may he accept the dedication, and bless it."

"Our Lord," said Cousin Becky, "tells us, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and turning back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Dear girls, this world

is shown to us as a mighty field where we are all called to be workers. One ploughs, another drops the good seed, another reaps, some do a little of all. Whatever of money, time, health, or any good thing there is that we possess, it is an implement of labor to do the Lord's great work. Oh, girls! how wide the field; how numerous the portions lying waste, where no hand has tilled or gathered; how many the spots where the good labor is abandoned when once begun. Work, Miriam; do not go back, now your hand is on the plough. And you, too, Rose, hear the Master's voice, crying, 'The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

Miriam's eyes kindled with a kindred enthusiasm, as the good dress-maker spoke thus earnestly, but the shallow waters of Rose's inner life were undisturbed; she heard unheeding, and weary of subjects so uncongenial, brought her call to an end.

"I suppose," said Cousin Becky, after Rose had taken her departure, "that every solitary one of my pupils will go off for four or five weeks, and I shall be left without a class."

"And then, Cousin Becky, you can come down to our Mission School, and take the class of some one who has left town. The superintendent dreads a coming scarcity of teachers."

"Of course I can take a class, if my own go off."

"Three or four of my little sewing society girls are going to stay in the city, and they will come here and sew every week just as usual," continued Miriam.

"I suppose that bundle of dark calico and unbleached shirting you bought yesterday was for that box, wasn't it?"

"Why, Cousin Becky," exclaimed Miriam, "how did you know I got it?"

"I was in the store at another counter."

"I'm going to have a new dress for Lettie made, the first thing. O Cousin Becky, it is so pitiful to see her sitting in the corner of my class, so quiet, never hearing one of the sweet words about Jesus. I really think she ought to be put in an asylum, where she can learn something."

"All in good time, Miriam. It is too soon for that yet. From what you tell me she seems the one link between her sister and goodness, all that holds the poor girl from destruction. Ruth's love for Lettie keeps her heart soft and open to good influences, and gives her energy to work. Have patience. Lettie's turn will come."

"You talk just as if you knew them, Cousin Becky. You must go to see them with me. Perhaps you can manage Aunt Nab."

"I only know them from your descriptions, but shall be glad to go and see them.

As for Nab, I think you will be a better physician in her case. I'm apt to be too sharp, and women like Nab need encouraging and not scolding. I'm afraid that's where I fail. I'm ready enough with the 'terrors of the law,' but I forget 'sweetly to persuade.'"

"Perhaps you are a little too severe sometimes, and threaten vengeance, where you might allure by mercy."

"Well," said Cousin Becky, with a secret clinging to her old way, "the Bible says 'cry aloud, and spare not,' and I do 'cry aloud,' and it doesn't seem to do any good. Now, last Sunday I told Rose plainly that soft and fair as she seemed, so long as she did not give her heart to God, she was nothing but a dwelling-place of Satan, and it didn't seem to trouble her or astonish her in the least. When I look at my Bible-class, I feel like Ezekiel in the valley of vision, and ready to say, 'Can these dry bones live?'

And I am like Ezekiel crying to the dry bones alone—the Spirit does not blow."

"Remember, Cousin Becky, that your Bible says, 'In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not,' and 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening, withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether they shall both alike be good.' There, Cousin Becky, I've finished that skirt, and now I must go read to Aunt Elliot, for this afternoon is the one I spend in visiting my Mission School pupils."

"And do you seek them all out in their homes every week?"

"Yes, for fear the slender chain of influence I am able to cast over them will be broken by stretching from Sunday to Sunday, unless it is strengthened in the week by a visit and a word or two."

Miriam's hand was on the plough indeed, and by God's help she looked not back.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GROWING SEED.

"First the blade, then the ear."

MIRIAM was zealous, but hers was a zeal tempered by knowledge. She did not expect an instant and entire change in Ruth and Nab; she had read in her Bible that the blade comes first, and then the ear, the ripe corn after all. Week by week she noticed that Ruth's lessons were more faithfully learned, her room was kept clean, the frown was clearing from her brow, the look of defiance and suspicion was dying out of her eyes, and her voice had a gentler tone even for Aunt Nab.

Thanks to Ruth's constant watchfulness, the providing of enough coarse but

wholesome food, and Miriam's kind encouragement, two Sabbaths found Aunt Nab in her place at the Mission School, and for over two weeks she worked steadily at binding shoes, and keeping the room tidy under Ruth's directions. During this fortnight the rent was made up, some fuel, a peck of meal and a pound of salt purchased; and under these circumstances Ruth took fresh courage, and when Miriam, accompanied by two little members of the "poor box" society came one day, bringing a dress for Lettie and one for herself, the long wished-for days of respectability seemed not so very far off, after all.

While the two little girls showed Lettie some toys and pictures they had bought for her, and Ruth glanced from her shoe binding at the little group, well pleased, Miriam sat down by Aunt Nab.

"I am so glad to see you industriously at your work yet, Mrs. Wool. Don't you

think you are happier now, that you are staying quietly at home helping to support the family?"

"I don't know," said Aunt Nab, shaking her head; she was growing restless that day. Eighteen days of abstinence was a severe trial for the habitual drunkard. Some stimulant she fiercely craved. A strong cup of coffee might have wrought wonders then, but coffee was an unknown luxury to Ruth, and Miriam had never heard of it as a help in the inebriate's reformation. She saw that Nab was beginning to falter, and she wanted to offer her some inducement to continue in the path of rectitude.

"Mrs. Wool," she said, "are you not pretty handy with your needle?"

"I used to be, onst, but I hain't handy with nothing now."

"I dare say you could make yourself a dress if you had the calico."

"I might, if Ruth cut and fitted it."

"Well, Mrs. Wool, you shall have a new dress to wear to Mission School, if you hold out against drinking another week. Keep your mind off it. Work, and sleep, and think all you can of those verses Ruth reads to you."

"What makes you so afeared to have me get a taste? It seems as if I must have it or die. I can't no way do without it."

"Because, Mrs. Wool, I see that drink will ruin you, body and soul. The Bible tells us that 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.' God says 'Woe to them that look on the wine when it is red.' He tells us that out from that beautiful home where his people shall live forever, shut into darkness and pain, are drunkards. Besides, Mrs. Wool, think how unhappy you can make Ruth and Lettie by behaving badly. How much more comfortable they are when you work and help them."

"They ain't nothing to me," said Aunt Nab, sulkily; "they don't care for me."

"They will if you care for them."

Aunt Nab jerked at her thread, shook her head, and glanced toward the bonnet on the peg, the crooked bonnet, for many days unworn, and looked out of the open door.

"Now, Mrs. Wool, think of what I have told you, and try and do right. You will earn a new dress you know," said Miriam, calling her little companions and rising to take leave. She had brought Ruth a pie, and one of the girls had given a paper of ginger snaps to Lettie.

The stock of work that Ruth had obtained from the shoe store was finished about five o'clock. Three balls were ready to sell, and Ruth concluded to put on the new dresses and go to the store. She had a plan in her head about getting shoes for herself and sister to wear to Mission School, and she was anxious to

see how it would work. Her mind being full of this plan made her less watchful than usual. She put the pie and cakes in the closet, locked the door, and pocketed the key, but when she hung up her dress to put on the new one, she hung the key up with it on the wall. Aunt Nab noticed this.

"Aunt Nab, I'm going for more work, and I'll bring home a salt fish for breakfast. You sweep and dust while I am gone, and make up the bed as well as you can, and we'll have a grand supper of that pie and cake."

Aunt Nab made no reply. She sat with her head resting on her knees. Ruth went out with Lettie, and according to her usual custom locked the door. At the shoe store where Ruth got her work, were hung several long lines of shoes, a little old-fashioned in shape and marred by being long kept on hand, but strong and well made. These were selling at

very low prices, and Ruth resolved to ask the good-natured clerk who gave her the colored moroccos, to fit her and Lettie with a pair each, and lay them away until she should be able to pay for them, by degrees, out of her weekly work.

This request she preferred to the clerk, with some hesitation.

"What do you want shoes for, this hot weather?" asked he.

"We want to wear them to Mission School."

The clerk went to the proprietor and stated Ruth's wish. "She's a steady girl, and has worked here for a year," he said. "I guess they are doing better lately; they are tidier, and now to-day they've got new frocks, and she says, they want the shoes to wear to Mission School."

The proprietor looked at Ruth over the top of his paper. "Let her have the shoes as low as they can go, and tell her we'll take out a shilling a week from her

work until they're paid for. She can take them along now." The proprietor evidently was a man among a hundred; there are few who care to aid these poor little shoe binders.

Ruth got her shoes, and her delighted face amply rewarded the clerk for the interest he had taken in granting her desires. The bits of morocco saved from the work-room during the week were received as usual, and with her next work on her arm, Ruth went into Grand Street to the little toy-shop. Success made Ruth rich in expedients. In the windows of the shop hung rows of little jointed dolls, gaily dressed in tawdry lace and silk.

"Please, sir," said she to the Jew, when she had sold the balls, "what do you give for dressing dolls, if one finds the stuff?"

"Six cents for that size," said the Jew, handing down a wooden lady.

"Might I have three to dress? I 'll bring them back to-morrow. I have some pretty bits to dress them in which a young lady gave my little sister, and I want to earn the money."

"Vell," said the Jew, hesitating, "I pays you for one ball, and you takes de tree dolls, and when you brings 'em back I gives you de money for dem all."

Ruth carried off the jointed gentry, and went home to spend the evening in dressing them in the finery the little girls had brought to Lettie. Ruth was skillful with her needle and scissors. Indeed she was a natural mantua-maker, and her longing child-eyes had gazed at the hundreds of dolls hung up in toy-shop windows so often that she well knew how best to array them.

Out of Broadway into Pearl, hurrying by the noise and fumes of Finlin's groggery, into the shell of decayed gentility cast off like the outgrown covering of the

crab, and up the three pair of stairs as fast as Lettie's feet could go, went Ruth, carrying her salt fish, her shoe tops and her paper of dolls, her head full of air castles about earning money and buying a stove and a ton of coal for next winter, when, lo, she stopped aghast. The room door stood wide open! The closet door was open too, and Aunt Nab had gone!

One glance showed Ruth that the pie and ginger snaps had been carried off; a second revealed a knife lying on the floor by the doorway, and showed how it had been used as a screw-driver to take off the poorly put on lock. These two glances were all; and rushing down the stairs she had just cheerfully ascended, with flushed cheeks and compressed lips Ruth sped to Finlin's. She might not yet be too late. Alas, the pie and cake had been bartered for strychnine whisky; at the greasy counter, noisiest of the noisy stood Aunt Nab, her face aflame, her big hands,

that should have been plying the needle, flung about in drunken gesticulations.

Ruth turned away sick at heart. Heavily and painfully, with a weight like lead in her young bosom, she toiled up to her room again, and sitting down on the floor gathered Lettie to her bosom, and wept passionately. Tears at last relieved the excess of her feelings. She ceased to weep, and turned her mind to work. "We'll live by ourselves, Lettie!" she cried, apostrophizing the dumb child. "We will turn that bad drunken woman out, and live alone. She shall not steal all we have to spend it in drink. She shall not eat up all our living. No, she shall never come here again. I hate her, I do, I do."

Hate her! Even then the verse flashed into her angry mind, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:" and she was silent. Rising from the

floor, she took the knife and mended the door-lock. The screws Aunt Nab had taken out were yet lying on the floor; then she gave Lettie her supper of cold mush and molasses, and too heart-sick to eat a mouthful herself sat down by the window to dress the dolls.

Dreary thoughts filled her mind. She must carry back the shoes; for without Aunt Nab's work she could not spare a shilling a week to pay for them. What was the use of trying to rise, with such a fearful incubus as Aunt Nab to pull her down. Her heart was as lead within her. Suddenly as a light beaming out in a dark place came her last Sunday's lesson to her tired soul, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." A gleam of hope cheered her; a kingdom, the inheritance of the saints, might yet be hers. By God's grace, Aunt Nab could not rob her of this. The dolls were dressed, and

Ruth went to bed in a quieter frame of mind.

The next morning, while the poor girl sat trying to make her thin, weary, brown hands do as much as two pair, Aunt Nab came staggering up the stairs. In spite of all her half-formed resolutions Ruth had only to let her in and lock her up.

Afternoon came, and God's good providence sent Miriam to Ruth.

"Where is your aunt?" asked the young teacher eagerly, as her pupil rose to greet her.

"There she lies!" cried Ruth, flinging wide the closet door that since the woman had fallen asleep had been placed ajar. "There she lies! There is the end of all your working and my hoping! O Miss Miriam, I feel ready to hate her, to drive her off, and let her kill herself as soon as she can!"

"Ruth," said Miriam, tenderly, draw-

ing the excited girl to a seat, "The children of the kingdom must not strive, but be long-suffering like their king, forbearing one another in love. God, dear Ruth, bore long with me, who from infancy knew his love and loved him not. He has borne with you, Ruth, and bears with you now, for you withhold your heart from him. Let us, dear Ruth, for Christ's sake have patience with Aunt Nab, if only for a little longer."

"I will, I will," cried Ruth, shedding tears, but softer and better weeping it was than when she sat on the floor holding Lettie in her arms.

"I'll forgive Aunt Nab, and have patience with her, if God will only have patience with me and forgive me!"

If Ruth thus showed the tender springing of the good seed in her heart not less did Aunt Nab, who, coming to herself next morning, amazed Ruth by being overwhelmed with shame, and exclaiming

penitently, as she found herself on the closet floor, "There, I've went and done it again for all the lady was so good to me. Oh, I can never be good! How bad I am, how bad I am!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRUIT OF LABOR.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."

WITH downcast eyes and hesitating steps Aunt Nab emerged from her closet, and going to her box in the corner turned her face to the wall and wept bitterly.

"Crying because she feels bad, when it is all her own fault, and because she's lost her frock," said Ruth, angrily, to herself.

"Judge not that ye be not judged." How the words started into her mind as if rung out by a clarion voice; she had read them in the Testament not long before.

"She'll be wanting her breakfast; breakfast that I've been earning while

she's been making a sot of herself. I won't give it to her," urged Ruth's natural heart, turning to its old ways.

"He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust." Here was another Scripture learned and ready for using. Oh happy he whose spiritual armory is full of these polished shafts of holy writ, to repel the attacks of the tempter. Like Christ in the wilderness, he can dismay the adversary with "Thus it is written." "He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and the good." Ruth repeated the words again. Here is the great example of our Maker; God does not say, "Go in the good way," but "Come," come over it toward me who do these things; I am your great example; "Work the works of your Father."

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." The Spirit helped our Ruth to strive and conquer. She spread the broad shelf

again with bread and herrings, such as she had herself. She brought fresh water to drink, and offered the basin and towel for her aunt to bathe her heated face, and the brush to smooth her dishevelled hair. "You must try again, Aunt Nab," she said mildly; and went to her work.

Nab, wondering much at this new treatment washed and ate, then carefully setting the shelf in order, brought her box near the window and humbly asked for work.

"I don't believe you can set a decent stitch," said Ruth, looking at her aunt's shaking hands, "but I'll tell you what you can do—wash the floor and the shelf and our clothes. I hain't had time for these few days. I've hurried so with the work, and it looks too bad for Miss Elliott if she should come."

"I hope she won't; I'm afeared to see her," said Nab, mournfully.

"I don't wonder," said Ruth, despair-

ingly, as she went out to borrow a tub and bring a pail of water.

Only two days elapsed before Miriam came again. She was not growing "weary in well doing!" She had foregone her summer's visit for the sake of doing a good work, and she was doing it with all her might; "instant in season and out of season." True, Miriam had more time and means for these labors than many have. She had few cares of household labor to demand her attention, but there are in our cities many young ladies situated much as she was, and able to do as much as she did, young ladies who have said "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and yet are only following their own ease, the allurements of society and fashion, and despite their membership in the Church of Christ are "of the earth earthy."

Aside from these favored ones, who have much leisure and ample means,

there are others of whom the Lord asks less because he has given less. Of them I demand in Christ's name, Are you doing with your might the work presented to your hands? You have not ten talents, but are you doubling your two? If you can cheer but one sad soul, are you doing that; if you can give but one dollar, are you giving that? If you can spend but one hour, are you devoting that to Christ's service? Oh, my sisters in Christ, much, very much is meant by following our Master wheresoever he goes! If we follow his steps we shall go to the poor, the sick, the erring, the sorrowing; we shall lend our ears to all entreating voices, we shall open our hearts to all woes that human flesh inherits!

Messenger of mercy, doing the Master's work, came Miriam again to Ruth's home. Aunt Nab seeing her coming up the stairway, conscience-stricken and ashamed, looked in vain for a place of

refuge; she was almost ready to fly to her closet for concealment.

Finding no door of escape, she bowed her head on her knees, drew up her frock skirt around her face, and dreaded to hear Miss Elliott speak. After greeting Ruth and patting Lettie's cheek, pleased to observe that it was gaining in color and roundness, Miriam laid her small hand on Aunt Nab's shoulder. "Mrs. Wool." Aunt Nab started, but did not look up.

"Mrs. Wool." There was surely a magic in Miriam's voice, for Aunt Nab looked up now, meeting the calm, sad gaze of Miriam's wonderful, dark eyes.

"Mrs. Wool, I am very sorry for you!"

"Oh Miss," sobbed Aunt Nab, "I daren't hardly look at you. How bad I am after all you went and done and said to me, and all you told me 'bout no drunkards getting to heaven, to go and do it right over again!"

"Mrs. Wool, you have done very, very wrong, but I have hope for you yet."

Ruth brought a chair, a chair kept sacred to Miriam's use. Deborah had one day sent down the boy with a wooden pail, an old tub, and a stray Windsor chair from Mrs. Elliott's lumber-room; and this chair, very magnificent in its yellow paint, to Ruth's eyes was kept for Miriam.

Miriam sat down and opened her basket, which she had brought up from where her boy sat at the foot of the last flight of stairs. "Deborah sent you a loaf of bread and a piece of meat; we thought you would fall short this week, Ruth. I cannot give you the dress now you know, Mrs. Wool, but a good friend of mine, called Cousin Becky, sends you this apron, which will make the dress you've got look well enough for a little longer, and if you will do right for one month, you shall have the frock."

"I'll try, I declare I'll try; I do b'lieve you're an angel just dropped out of heaven," exclaimed Aunt Nab energetically.

"I'm a woman like yourself, given to sin, Mrs. Wool, and it is only by God's grace that I am kept in the right way. That same grace of God can help you and keep you from falling."

"I wish I had it, I declare I do," said Nab, vaguely.

"You must try and help Ruth all you can, Mrs. Wool."

"I will. Ruth's right good to me, she is so."

"Do you not feel happier for being forgiving, Ruth?" asked Miriam.

"Yes, Miss, I'm always happier for doing as you say."

"Here is a little tract, Ruth, that may comfort you. Is there anything I can do for you, Ruth?"

"I'd thought of one thing that would

help me get on, only you do so much, Miss Elliott."

"What is it?" said Miriam, encouragingly.

"If I had pieces of silk, and bits of muslin and fancy things, such as I suppose ladies have plenty of lying around, I could dress dolls, and make little bags and cushions for the toy-shop, or I could make up a basket of them and let Lettie go with Katy Levitt and sell them. You know, Miss, Katy sells cakes in front of Barnum's Museum, and she'd take good care of Lettie, and I'd only let her go out a day or so every week."

"I think that is a very good plan, Ruth. You will get along if you manage this way. I have many pieces and patterns you can have, and Cousin Becky is a dress-maker, and will doubtless give you all you can use."

"I'm glad you like it; now I'm sure I can get along," said Ruth, cheerfully.

Miriam went home thinking how easy it is for honest poverty to be aided. A few bits of finery, and the many little trinkets collected by young ladies, they know not where, and of no particular value; these would be capital for mute Lettie. On her way home, Miriam bought a splint basket of the right size for Lettie to carry. At home, she collected such materials as would suit Ruth, and put them in a little parcel. Then she found a scent bag, a scissor case, and an emory or two, bought at fairs. Getting interested, she put on her bonnet and went over to Rose Robbins to ask contributions.

"Oh, if you are not the queerest girl!" cried Rose, who was superintending the packing of a trunk; "I'm going to start for Niagara to-morrow, and really havn't a minute to waste. However, Miriam, just look in that top drawer. It is full of all kinds of trash I've bought at fairs

and got on Christmas trees. You can take what you like."

Miriam found a variety of articles in the "top drawer" that suited her purpose exactly. Nut shell baskets, doll pin-cushions, watch pockets, carved frames for photographs, toy boxes, a goodly store.

"Can I have these?" she asked, holding out about a dozen articles.

"Of course, and welcome! But now, Miriam, don't bother me any more with your Ruths and Letties. I'm in such a miserable hurry."

"I've got all I want," cried Miriam, laughing. "Good-bye. I wish you a pleasant visit."

"A real silly girl you are, not to be going with me," said Rose, as Miriam ran lightly down the stairs. Next day the little girls met in Miriam's room to sew. When they heard of Lettie's basket, all were eager to help. One ran

home for a little doll; another for a needle-book; a third for some dolls' shoes and a toy book, and soon Lettie had a very showy stock in trade. Miriam's hired boy carried the basket to Ruth the following morning, and returning, reported to Miriam, that he'd "never seen any one so glad in all his days, as Ruth was."

That evening Mrs. Levitt aided Ruth in fixing the price of Lettie's wares, and Katy was ready for a small compensation to superintend the selling of them.

Saturday evening a timid knock brought Deborah to the area door. There stood Ruth.

"Why, Ruth, girl, come in. What brings you out to-night, and how's the little one?"

"She's asleep, and so's Aunt Nab. Please may I see Miss Miriam, all by herself, please, if she a'n't too busy."

Deborah went up stairs with Ruth's

request, and presently returned, taking her to the sitting-room.

"I'm glad to see you, Ruth, but what is the matter?" said Miriam, as she was left alone with her pupil.

Ruth only replied by tears.

"Why, Ruth, my dear girl, what new trouble is this?"

"O Miss Miriam!" sobbed Ruth, "it a'n't a new trouble,—at least it oughtn't to be. Oh, didn't you tell me God was bearing with me when I wouldn't give him my heart, and now why can't I give it to him. Oh, how shall I give it to him?"

Long Miriam talked with her pupil; earnestly she prayed with her, but the cloud seemed only to settle more darkly over her troubled soul. Next day at Mission School it was there still. Ruth "walked in darkness, and saw no light." Tenderly Miriam urged upon her class the forgiving love of Jesus. She set him

before them as a full propitiation for all our sins. She marked in Ruth's Testament passages telling of the guilt of sin, and the grace of God, and yet Ruth went home burdened and full of trouble.

Full of trouble, and yet with a secret unwillingness to yield all and give her heart to God; this held her back; unconfessed even to herself she could not see herself "the chief of sinners," nor in need of so great salvation as Aunt Nab. So the days went on. Miriam prayed and was almost ready to despair. She exhausted argument and entreaty, and knew not what more to say. Ruth began to look on herself as having "tried to be saved and not having found Christ ready to save her." She was falling into a sort of apathy; joyless, with a gnawing, ceaseless pain in her heart, and yet a stupor stealing over her. Things prospered with her. Aunt Nab worked faithfully, and Lettie was doing well with her

basket, but at times, Ruth's fingers lingered at their tasks, and her watchfulness over Aunt Nab relaxed. Three weeks of Aunt Nab's month went by, and she was growing restless and craving again, but Ruth, self-absorbed, did not notice it.

One morning when Nab had been unusually fretful, Ruth went for a pail of water, leaving her door unlocked. She had to wait a few minutes, for others at the hydrant, and when she returned to her room it was empty. A few articles just completed for Lettie's basket had disappeared with Aunt Nab.

This roused Ruth to all her energy. She flew after her recreant aunt. She found her at Finlin's counter just raising the glass of poison to her lips. Ruth snatched the vile draught from her startled aunt, and pushing it to the dram-seller, caught up the trifles which had been laid down in payment and dragged the

only half-resisting woman back to her room. Aunt Nab was awed by the excitement of the girl, and tamely submitted to being locked up in her closet. Ruth, laying aside her work, then went to Miriam, her only comforter.

"What shall I do? So soon as I let her out she will be off again, and if she gets one taste I cannot manage her until she has had enough," she cried. Cousin Becky was sitting with Miriam, and telling Ruth to wait she left the room. In about half an hour she returned with a can of strong coffee.

"Here," she said, "go back and heat this, and give your aunt all she wants; set her to work and talk about good things to her; if she gets restless give her more coffee; keep her from going away this time and she will be stronger to resist again."

Ruth went home to try Cousin Becky's prescription, and found it fully successful.

Late that evening Aunt Nab was sleeping quietly by Lettie's side. Ruth sat in the window seat. Conscience was dealing with her. "Ruth, Ruth, you are like Aunt Nab; you cleave to your stony heart as she to her strong drink. Had you been a moment later at Finlin's, or had she resisted you, she would have been lost. If the Spirit leaves you now, if you resist God longer, you may be lost forever." Horrible was the gulf that yawned before Ruth's shuddering soul. Black indeed was the vileness of her heart, by God's mercy shown her. She fell on her knees; and through the silence of the night went up to Heaven a cry for mercy. God is not far from those who call upon him. He is not willing that any should perish. Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. There was joy in heaven among the angels that night, over a soul, Ruth's soul, new-born into the kingdom of God.

The Sabbath found Ruth, with Aunt Nab and Lettie, sitting again in her class, eager to pour into her teacher's ear the story of what God had done for her. Thankfully Miriam listened, and took courage. Here was a sheaf of her harvest. Now at last had the great love of Christ pleaded and won its own cause in Ruth's heart. The love of Christ constrained her to repentance. May it go on constraining her to good works, to walking in newness of life.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORKS OF LOVE.

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

ALL things have a strange beauty to me," wrote a young convert to her friend; "by God's grace I have put off the old man and his works, and in Christ Jesus all things are become new." Thus found Ruth. The cares and trials of her life lost much of their roughness and sharpness because God had sent them, and with fatherly love and infinite wisdom was using them to make her "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." To all persons she felt a new tenderness, born of that matchless tenderness God felt for her. The German girl was no longer called in for the sake of the plea-

sure of having a listener, but she was looked upon as a precious soul wandering in darkness, whom Ruth earnestly desired should be brought into God's marvellous light.

Aunt Nab came to share in this unwonted interest and kindness, and part of that pitying love that had been lavished on her father when Ruth thought of him, a wretched poor-house child, a lonely bound boy, and a man buffeted and tossed about, and put without the pale of fellowship by his fellow-man, were given to Aunt Nab, who had shared these same vicissitudes, bearing harder on her as a woman, and crushing her farther down below the reach of lofty-minded human charities. Stoutly upheld by strong coffee supplied by Cousin Becky, and watched by Ruth vigilantly as the golden fruit of Hesperides, our sister Nab passed her month of probation, and presently had her whole mind engaged in making up a wonderful

new dress bought by Miriam. Perhaps it was foolishly considerate in Miriam. I know Rose would have condemned it unsparingly, but she desired to have Nab's dress a matter of entire satisfaction; so she took the trouble to procure some dozen samples of calico, not concluding that "anything would be good enough and something to be thankful for, and that Nab had very likely drowned all vestiges of taste in liberal potations of whisky."

Like a pleased child, big Nab sat on her box, examining first one sample and then another, choosing now this and then that, but finally fixing resolutely on what was to Miriam, the ugliest of all, a blue ground with a small yellow rose in it. What a world of interest was there in making up this "reward of merit." How Nab's clumsy fingers slowly essayed to make neat stitches, and how she gloried in the increasing steadiness of her hands. It

was finished at last, and in making it a week had passed with no truant thoughts of Finlin's.

On Saturday evening Miriam's boy came down, bringing a dress for Ruth, the gift of the little sewing society, and a collar for Aunt Nab from Deborah. Ruth had paid for the shoes at last, and cheering indeed was the appearance of the three as they sallied out of the shell of gentility, abandoned to poverty, and took their way to that outpost of the church, the Mission School, set in the borders of wickedness to work for good. Passing Finlin's, Aunt Nab held up her head to show the carefully kept Shaker bonnet, held up her dress to show her shoes, thought proudly of the blue gown and new collar, and, moved with wrath against the till and bottles that had lured her ruinward, shook her huge fist, which, by some strange incongruity, held her Testament, full of the gospel of love!

On the walls of the school-room had been hung, that Sabbath, two large cards, bearing these inscriptions in large letters, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Miriam made each of these the subject of a little sermon to her closely attentive class; closely attentive, though Nab, it is true, made some irrelevant remarks. "That which thou hast already, hold fast until I come."

"If that's my new dress it means," said Nab, her mind filled with one idea, "I mean to hold fast to it, just as long as a rag of it hangs to me! Ketch me selling it or pawning it. See if I do!"

"I hope not, indeed, Mrs. Wool, but there is another and a better dress which you can have and hold fast to forever."

"Laws a me! But, then, Miss, I don't know as I want a better. This suits me, and as I a'n't a born lady, nor never was,

mebby it is just as good for me as that 'ere nice un is for the likes of you," she added, with an unexpected perception of fitness. "Why, Miss," she exclaimed, lighting up with the germ of a new self-respect, "I feel rich in this frock."

"Give me your Testament, Mrs. Wool, and let me read you a verse or two which I want Ruth to read to you every morning this week so you can think on them while you work."

Miriam read emphatically, so that the true meaning entered even into Nab's brain, and, for the time drove out the blue ground with yellow roses. "Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and the shame of thy nakedness

doth not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

"Here, Mrs. Wool, is what you need. If you will ask God to make you sorry for sin, and help you to serve him, and go no more in your old ways, then he will put on your soul the robe of Christ's goodness, and when you die you shall walk with Jesus in heaven all dressed in white, for you shall have been found worthy. Look at that other card. On it is written what God says. 'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.'"

"And will it please God and be overcoming if I keep away from Finlin's, and don't take no more of what I used to take so much?" asked Nab, bending forward with an eager face and voice.

"It will, indeed, Mrs. Wool. You must pray to God for help, and you will be helped to overcome. Then you will have that dear robe of Jesus' goodness."

"Will I, sure? A'n't I too bad to have that on?"

"No, Mrs. Wool. Jesus came to save the very worst of sinners. His blood can make the vilest clean."

While these words had some effect on Aunt Nab, they went deeply into Ruth's heart. She resolved that henceforth Aunt Nab should not walk alone; she would try to guide and uphold her feeble steps in the right way, she would aid and encourage her. Who could tell but Nab, sin-scarred and degraded as she was, might yet be clothed upon with Christ's righteousness.

That evening Ruth said, "Aunt Nab, I should think you might learn to read."

"Me learn to read! Why, I a'n't little enough to go to school, and then I've got to bind shoes."

"But I could teach you, Aunt Nab. A little every day, you know."

"I know you're a powerful good reader,

Ruth, but then I'm so dull you'd git cross with me."

"I'd try not to, Aunt Nab. There's a secondhand book-stand near the Museum, and I can get a primer there for three cents, and teach you the letters and little words, and then you can go into the Testament."

"I like to read," said the German girl, "but I can only read German. I wish I had a book with such pretty reading in it as that," and she pointed to the red Testament.

"I can get you such a book in German from Miss Miriam, I dare say. But do you know that if your priest found you had it, he'd take it away."

"I won't let him know it, then, nor none of them. I know there isn't anything bad in that book, and it isn't his business if there is. He gets more of mother's earnings now than I do. Look at this old frock."

Miss Miriam gladly got the German girl a Testament, and Ruth bought the primer and began to instruct Aunt Nab. It was slow work, but some progress was made. Nab really did want to learn, and it gave her some importance in her own eyes to know A from B, and O from S. Despite these advances in respectability in getting a new gown and mastering the alphabet, strong were the leanings towards Finlin's that sometimes vexed Nab's soul.

One day when the question to go or not to go had been particularly distressing, Ruth was making the fire for tea, while Aunt Nab sat with her head on her hands and her elbows on her knees, visions of full glasses dancing before her eyes—of Finlin mixing this and passing over that. Suddenly she jumped from her box and snatched the many-angled bonnet. Ruth was about to spring after her, when Nab, turning short around,

rushed to the newly-kindled blaze and thrust the bonnet in among the ruddy tongues of fire, as if that poor wreck of straw goods was the head and front of her offending. Then, having thus relieved her mind, Nab took to binding shoes with great zeal, saying,

"See if I wear my best bonnet to Finlin's! See if I do! I a'n't going there. No, I a'n't."

Ah, friends, it was a victory. Poor Nab suddenly rises to a height of heroism you and I may never attain. There she is, sitting on a box, binding shoes and talking English that is neither the Dean's nor the Queen's, and yet she is a heroine. She has won a victory over which watching angels may rejoice. She has met and vanquished temptation on a fair-fought field.

Fall and winter found Ruth and her household prospering still. Aunt Nab held on in her course of total abstinence,

and was learning to read to the satisfaction of every one.

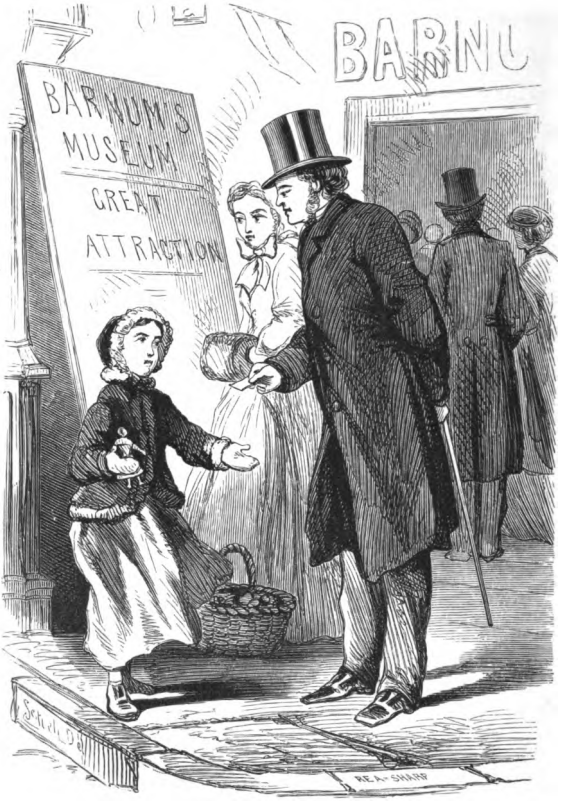
Ruth's room began to be known as a quiet, orderly place, where neatness and industry were the presiding spirits. Thus thought the other dwellers in the tenant house; but there were some who knew that true religion was there the presiding spirit, that in Ruth's heart Christ reigned supreme, and that she was doing all things as unto him. By Miriam's advice, Ruth had morning and evening devotions. These strengthened the young girl herself in the race she was running, and very helpful was it to Aunt Nab on days when the old thirst returned upon her, "like a strong man armed," to have Ruth pray to God in the morning to keep her from falling, and in the evening to return thanks that the devices of the adversary had come to nought. Little Lettie sat at these devotions, in them and not of them; her

serious eyes watched her sister as she read, and she knelt reverently beside her as she bowed in prayer, knowing not how often Ruth cried out, entreating that God, who had sealed up her ears and bound her tongue, might find some way to reveal himself to that little heart.

Ruth also commenced learning to write. Awkwardly, but earnestly, she tried to follow the copies that Miriam set, and though she had but a few moments to spare each day for this new art, she so progressed that even Aunt Nab recognized her characters, and cried out "A" and "B" as she traced the copy.

The much desired stove had been bought cheap at secondhand. Miriam advanced the six dollars, and Nab and Ruth strove hard to pay it back.

Lettie's sales prospered well. Nearly every day she sallied forth with Katy Levitt, and took her place in front of "Barnum's;" and many were the patrons



Lettie with her Basket.

Shoe Binders. **Page 177.**

of the pretty dumb child. It was freezing winter now, but still Lettie went out, a pleasant little picture, so well protected from the storm. Deborah had knit for her the warmest of mittens, and Cousin Becky had quilted her the snuggest of hoods, and the mittens were topped and the hood was bound with fur, that had been Aunt Elliott's cuffs. A dress of Miriam's had been converted by the sewing-society into a wadded sacque and a warm dress. Ruth had bought a red flannel petticoat and a red worsted comforter, and Aunt Elliott had furnished a pair of oversocks as her part of the equipment.

By her basket near the Museum doorway stood Lettie, her round cheeks nestling in the folds of the red comforter, and her blue eyes smiling from under the fur-trimmed hood, a very nice little Lettie indeed, and we must lay it to the Mission School and its faithful worker that she

was not the thin, hungry, half-naked Lettie of a year before.

So came the Christmas tide; and found things vastly improved on other Christmases in Ruth's abode, and after the work was done on Christmas eve, the German girl came in, and Ruth read to her and to Aunt Nab how Christ was born in Bethlehem.

CHAPTER XI.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

"The way of transgressors is hard."

EARLY spring came, and April was raw and foggy, with drizzling rains and penetrating dampness in city and country. Among other victims of the weather was an old woman who lived in the story above Ruth, next the roof indeed, but for a low garret with a trap-door. The old woman being ill with rheumatism, and dependent on the care of her daughter, whose daily labors never ended until nearly ten in the evening, Ruth regularly made her a cup of tea, just about dark, and went up to give it to her and rub her with liniment that she might compose herself to sleep.

Having finished these kindly offices one evening, she was returning to her own room. She had just closed her neighbor's door, and thus stood alone in the hall, when she heard her own name uttered in a suppressed but eager tone. A little startled, she opened the door she had just left, asking, "Did you call me, ma'am?"

"No, child, I want nothing," said the invalid.

Again the door was closed, and "Ruth, Ruth," came low but sharply through the gloom. There was a familiar cadence in the tones that made Ruth shiver, as if suddenly addressed by the dead. It was the voice of one long buried in a living grave. Looking carefully at the quarter whence the sound proceeded, she saw, through the darkness, peering down from the trap-door above her a haggard, bearded face.

"Father," she whispered, leaning against the wall for support.

"Hist, girl, set up the ladder and come up to me."

Ruth set the ricketty ladder in its place, and silently climbed into the garret. Her father sat on the floor, in the feeble light from the open roof, a miserable object. Clasping him about the neck, and ever speaking under her breath, Ruth, whispered, "How long have you been here, father?"

"Since last night, and I'm starving, girl. I havn't eaten anything for two days."

Ruth stayed to hear no more. She knew by sharp experience what were the pangs of hunger. Slipping down the ladder and putting it in its place, so that no passer-by would suspect the little garret of an occupant, she went to her room. In spite of all she could do she looked pale and excited. Well for her that no sharper eyes than Aunt Nab's were there. Going to the closet she took meat and

bread, and a few cakes Deborah had sent to Lettie.

"I d'clare now!" cried Aunt Nab, "if you ain't taking off Lettie's cakes for that woman. I always thought you cared such a powerful sight for Lettie!"

"But Aunt Nab, if some one else needs them more than Lettie, it is right to take them, isn't it?"

"There now! I ain't a going to look after you, and say what's right and wrong for you; I can't tell that for my own self, but I do say if you get that woman to eat that pile of victuals you'll get her to overload her stomach, and that'll be worse nor the rhumatiz."

"I'll see to that," said Ruth, looking into the hall to see that the way was clear, and then running off with the plate of food under her apron. After climbing again into the garret, Ruth with her father drew up the ladder, that no passer in the hall below might stumble upon it.

After watching her father until he had devoured the food she had brought, and painfully noting his emaciated and unhappy face, Ruth asked, "How did you get here, father?"

"I broke jail, Ruthy, I and a few more. We got away a week ago, and I left the rest so I could get to you, and I've hidden along like a wild beast, girl; like a hunted beast!"

"Why didn't you come to our room, father?"

"How did I know you'd be there after more than a year? Then, don't I know Nab—what a drunken tongue she has in her head? She wasn't to be trusted with a secret. I knew I could hide up here easy enough, and rest a bit, for I'm done over, girl,—and I thought may be something would turn up for me to eat, and I'd find if you were here. I tried to catch a rat last night, girl. I could have eat that."

Ruth shuddered. "O father, father! what will you do?" she moaned.

"You must help me to that, Ruthy. You allus did have a head and a heart for us all. That prison was being the death of me, Ruthy. Don't you see it?"

Ruth did see it. Even her unaccustomed eyes could read the heraldry of death in the thin, sunken, hectic cheek, the bright, unnatural eyes, the short breath, coming fast from the sunken chest, the skinny hand that grasped her own, the hot breath on her cheek.

They were at the farther side of the garret room, and Ruth had lit a fragment of candle, brought, with a match, in her pocket. For half an hour Ruth talked with her father; then she left him, telling him that so long a stay would rouse even Aunt Nab's curiosity. Going back to the room she worked on so diligently, that with Nab's help, the stock of work on hand was completed.

"Let's go to bed; it's late," said Aunt Nab.

"You go to bed, Aunt Nab. I'm going to finish filling up Lettie's basket, and write a little."

"Land alive! You 'll work your fingers to the bone, and your eyes clean out of your head," said Aunt Nab, with drowsy yawns, undressing, and preparing to lie down by Lettie. The bed and bedding had been much improved; there was a very tolerable resting-place now.

What bitter, conflicting thoughts racked Ruth's brain as she sewed until Aunt Nab had lain down, and then taking her copy-book turned to a blank leaf at the back, and laboriously began to write. The writing was finished about the time that Aunt Nab's heavy breathing proclaimed her soundly asleep. Taking a pillow and a quilt from the bed, Ruth stirred up the fire, and placed them on the floor by the stove. Going out of the

room, she found the entries dark and still, save the sounds of drunken riot that rumbled up from the street. Placing the ladder by the trap-door again, she said, "Come, father," and in answer to her whisper, he descended the ladder, and taking his thin, hot hand, she led him stealthily to her room. He bent down over the bed and kissed the sleeping Lettie, then drinking a cup of tea that Ruth had prepared for him, he lay down on the bed she had improvised near the stove. By the broad shelf sat Ruth, working until her articles for Lettie's basket were completed. Then, contrary to her usual custom, she put all her needles, thread, pieces and thimble in a little box in one corner of the basket. After reading her Bible awhile, she put that in the basket, too, and putting out the light knelt down to pray. Her father, Nab and Lettie were all asleep, but there is one eye that never slumbers;

one heart that never forgets, and poor, over-burdened Ruth found refuge at the throne of God's grace. A feeble, watery moon looked in at the window, and saw Ruth sitting there through the night, now wringing her hands as she looked at Lettie, now pressing them on her heart, as if it would break in its woe, now growing brave and resolute as she fixed her eyes on her father.

The foggy evening and misty night were followed by a foggy and misty morning.

About half past five, Deborah, having come down stairs, opened her area door, according to her usual custom, to look in the street, perhaps to assure herself that the iron railing or the brick houses opposite had not been spirited away. As she set the door open with her own hasty jerk, something from the wide stone sill fell over and rolled at her feet. Deborah had nerves, probably, for we are all fur-

nished with them, but her's were not of a shaking or hysterical order.

Looking down on the object, a moving one of some size, that had thus rolled into her dominions, she found Lettie, only half awake, wrapped up in her warmest garments, with something white pinned to her shoulder. Carrying her into the kitchen, where a tremulous gas light enlivened the foggy dawn, she assured herself that it was truly Lettie, and that the white something was a note, rudely directed to Miriam. Taking off Lettie's outer wrappings, Deborah placed her on a sort of lounge that occupied one corner of her kitchen, and then proceeded to make her fire and put on her tea-kettle, keeping up all the time a busy thinking that was greatly commiserative of Lettie and to the disadvantage of Ruth. The fire being made, and Lettie, reassured by the kind, homely face of her friend falling into a doze, Deborah, note

in hand, went up to Miriam's door. Roused at this unusual hour from her rest by Deborah's knock, Miriam said "Come in," and then "What can be the matter, Deborah? Are you sick, or has the house been broken into?"

"Oh, Miss Mirry," groaned Deborah, "who'd have thought after all that's been done, after all the kindness, and goodness, and taking care, and hoping and rejoicing, that girl would have turned out so desperate bad?"

"What girl, Deborah? Whom are you talking about?"

"About Ruth to be sure, Miss Mirry. Here this morning, when I set open the area door, in rolled Lettie like a bag of meal, left there sitting on that cold step this dreary dismal night, with this here note pinned on to her, like a bale of goods for all the world." While Deborah had been thus explaining the situation, Miriam had started up and lay resting on

one arm. She now reached for the note, crying, "Light the gas, Deborah, quick, so that I can read it plainly!"

Deborah lit the gas, and Miriam unfolded the paper, the last leaf of Ruth's, copy-book, blank the day before, but now in crooked lines and words rudely mixed of capitals and small letters, amid blots of ink and erasures, were these sentences.

DEAR MISS:—I leave Lettie with you, for I must leave her now. Oh do not think I am doing wrong. I try to do right. I cannot tell you what my trouble is. Do care for Lettie and poor Aunt Nab. Pray for poor

RUTH.

This amid much mis-spelling Miriam deciphered and read aloud.

"She's a bad girl is that Ruth! Doing no wrong indeed! Likely it's right to leave that poor dumb child, sitting on the steps at night!" cried Deborah energetically and wrathfully.

"I'm sure I cannot make anything out of it. Yet I don't feel as if Ruth is to

blame. I do believe she means right, though this looks against her."

"I must say, Miss Mirry, you've got a sight more patience than the Bible requires of you. I've got no charity for her, to leave a dumb child like that!"

"I'll go see Cousin Becky and Mrs. Wool after breakfast," said Miriam. "Don't disturb Aunt Elliott about it before that, and take good care of Lettie."

"Indeed I will," said Deborah; "better than her sister took. To leave her sitting on that stone step." The remainder of her sentence was lost as she descended the stairs.

Aunt Elliott was as much perplexed at this new turn in Ruth's affairs as was Miriam, but advised an immediate visit to Cousin Becky.

Taking the note Miriam went to the good dress-maker's boarding-place, and was soon shown to her room. After telling her story, Miriam handed over the

note, which Cousin Becky perused twice through well polished spectacles.

"Can't you see into that?" she asked, handing it back.

"No, indeed, Cousin Becky; can you?"

"Yes," said Cousin Becky, "as plain as day; that girl's father's turned up and she's had to run off with him. For whom else would she leave Lettie? Don't you see? Her pity and her love for him, and an idea that it is her duty to follow him take her off. I believe she's gold, true gold, yet."

"But how could he get to her? He is in prison for ten years."

"True enough. But four of those convicts escaped last week, and likely he is one, and she is afraid he'll do something desperate, and hopes she can help him and better him, and—perhaps he's sick. Come, I'll go with you to see the aunt."

Accepting Cousin Becky's view of the case, Miriam set out with her, and in due

time they found themselves in Pearl Street; then in the shell, up to the fourth story, and lo, poor Nab sitting on her box, fireless, breakfastless, amazed, afraid of herself and everybody else. "Our folks is gone!" she gasped, "and I'm afeared to go to look for them for fear I may fall into Finlin's or some of them traps. Bless you, Miss and ma'am, I'm sure and certain you're two angels just come to tell me what to do!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY OF VISITATION.

"The days of visitation are come; the days of recompense are come."

WE now see our Ruth in the anomalous position of one helping a fugitive from justice, and aiding and abetting the concealment of an escaped convict. Perchance at this revelation of depravity in our Mission scholar some legal mind is greatly shocked; yet when we consider that this fugitive and convict appealed by helplessness and misery to her womanly compassion, and moreover was her father, her dearest idol from infancy, we should see her less than our loving, impetuous, earnest Ruth, had she done other than she did. Aside from

this, my legal friend, and with due respect to your legal prejudices be it spoken, I fear that I should have done much the same myself, albeit by my own confession of a colder, less earnest and impetuous disposition than our Ruth.

On that dim and misty April morning, an hour before the dawn, Ruth made up a little bundle of clothing and gave it to her father. She had mended and brushed her father's clothes, rubbed the mud from his boots, and had made him wash and comb himself, so that he presented a less miserable appearance than on the evening before. Ruth left enough food for Aunt Nab's breakfast, and wrapped the remainder of the small stock of provisions up and put it in a tin pail; this pail and the bundle of clothes she gave her father. Quietly dressing Lettie she took her hand, and with Lettie's basket on her arm and the finished shoe binding, she left the room preceded by her father. Before

she closed the door she glanced, half regretfully, about the room and at her sleeping aunt; but this was no time for faltering or tears.

On through the misty streets, where the gray dawn contended with the gray fog, went Ruth, her father and Lettie. Very tightly was mute, patient Lettie's hand held in Ruth's, for the last time it might be, perhaps forever. Thus through the street, Lettie, amazed and unresisting, Ruth wretched but unflinching, the father in apprehension and in pain. A gloomy trio, fit for the gloomy April dawn, and now they reached Nineteenth Street, and Miriam's home; and Lettie was placed in the sheltered area doorway, and instructed by signs to wait there, and with many kisses and some choking sobs the separation was made, and Ruth and her father were going their darkened way.

On, on, through the fog and mist, as the dawn conquered more and more its

way, and still on, until houses were fewer and the busy city was being left behind.

"Now, father, keep straight on until you can find some resting-place where you can hide and wait for me. Give me the pail, father, for I must go back to the shoe store and get paid for this work and give it up. Straight on, father."

Back went Ruth, and was the first to reach the shoe store just as the small boy was taking down the shutters.

"You're early," said the clerk.

"Please, sir, can you pay me up now? I have got work out of town now, and cannot bind shoes any more. I'm much obliged to you, sir; you've been very kind to me and Lettie."

"There, there's your money. I'm sorry to lose you; you're a good steady worker."

Ruth left the store that had given her work so long, feeling as if another tie was severed.

At a secondhand clothing store Ruth bought a flaming plaid scarf; it would help to disguise her father, and keep warm that sunken chest whence sounded out so often that hollow cough. The sun had struggled through the mist when Ruth rejoined her father. She wound the scarf about his neck, and gave him the bundle to carry on a stick over his shoulder. He walked on before, with very feeble steps for a man of forty-five, and Ruth followed, noting with pain his thin, bowed figure. They reached a pile of lumber by the road-side, and Ruth spread out her shawl over the damp boards that they might sit down and eat their breakfast, for the sun, Ruth's time-piece, proclaimed it nearly eight o'clock.

"How you shiver, father!" exclaimed Ruth.

"I wisn I had something warm," said her father, as Ruth took from her pail corn bread and salt meat.

Ruth and her Father.

Shoe Binders. **Page 177.**

"There is a house, a neat little place; I will take the pail there and see if I can change something from my basket for hot coffee." So saying Ruth emptied the contents of the pail on the white cloth she had spread over a portion of the shawl, and went to the house. The coffee was freely given, steaming hot, with milk and sugar in it, but the woman at the house refused to take compensation from the basket. She bought a heart pincushion, however, and charged Ruth not to fall into bad company in her roving life.

Thus the day was spent, Ruth offering her wares at the houses they passed, selling a little, and when they sat down to rest, spending her time making some new trifle.

While resting thus, her needle was busy and her tongue was not idle. She told her father of the Mission School, of Miriam and the exceeding kindness she had shown her.

"O girl," said the father, bitterly, "if I had had a Mission School, or such a friend, I might not have been what I am, worn-out, and used-up, and broken-down by the prison, Ruth."

Then Ruth told about Aunt Nab, and the marvellous change that was coming over her.

"Ah, Ruthy," said the convict, "Nab may change and you may change, but not I, not I. The prison has set its mark on me, Ruthy, and before long it'll end in a grave; there's where it'll end, Ruthy, in a grave, a dark, damp, dismal grave."

Thus they talked, and from the room in Pearl Street and the new order of things that had come there, Ruth led her father's mind to Miriam's teachings, to the Mission School and its lessons, to the change that had come over her own heart, to the gospel of love in the little Bible carried in her basket. But this not in one day nor in two. Day after day they

walked and rested, and worked and talked. The selling was not very prosperous. The father feared the face of man. He shunned wide roads, good houses and the ways of his fellow-creatures, and chose to walk in woods and by-paths where he would be unseen.

Now and then they got to a town or village, and would get lodging in the cheapest attic of a low tavern; then the father would lie wearily on a miserable pallet, and Ruth would go about the town selling her wares, and buying the waste of millinery and dress-making establishments to make more. A very tiresome, hopeless, forlorn sort of life it was, but now and then it was brightened by a Sabbath spent near a church, when Ruth could steal into some obscure corner of a gallery, and take part in the worship of God's house. Every night and morning, no matter where they found a sleeping-place, in attic, shed, or barn, Ruth knelt

down, and drawing her father to his knees beside her, she prayed God to keep and bless them, and lead her father to himself.

Forty-five years old was the father; "few and evil had the days of the years of his life been." Forty-five years had he been sowing the wind, and now he was reaping the whirlwind. Forty-five years had he scattered evil seed, and now were his days of evil harvesting. He had sown drunkenness, dishonesty, profanity, idleness; he was reaping homelessness, poverty, banishment from society, racking pain in head and side, racking cough, shaking all his feeble frame, restless nights and weary days. But God never meteth out a punishment more than we can bear; he gave to this man amid all his miseries a faithful child, like a guardian spirit at his side; one voice to comfort him, one heart to love him, one pair of hands to help him, one Christ-touched

spirit to urge him to repentance. June came, and Ruth sometimes added to her earnings by picking her pail full of field strawberries, and selling them. Grateful also were these strawberries to the father's fevered lips, for the hectic of consumption was upon him.

"The end is coming nigher, girl, nigher every day; the prison's done its work for me. I'm gettin' well on towards the grave, the dark grave."

"O dear, dear father," cried Ruth, "if that grave might only grow to be light and welcome to you, a good refuge after a stormy life. If it might only be a calm place for your poor body, while your soul lived with Jesus. O father, Jesus loves you more than I love you. He is so merciful. Do, father, seek for Jesus now."

The father shook his head, with that dirge of many a wind-sower and whirlwind-reaper, "Too late, too late!"

Then Ruth took her Bible and read of the thief on the cross.

"Not for me, not for me," said the father.

Then Ruth read here and there, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; and though they be red like crimson they shall be white like wool." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "All sin, you hear it, father?" "Turn ye, oh turn ye, for why will ye die?—As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "All unrighteousness, you hear it, father?"

The father could read, and he took to opening the Bible and reading here and there for himself. Thus, while at times his heart was rent and crushed down into blacker despair than ever, over such

passages as—"The wicked shall be turned into hell." "As the whirlwind passeth so is the wicked no more." "He shall take them away as a whirlwind both living, and in his wrath,—" there was light for his darkness, hope for his despair, in such words as these:—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"O Ruth, girl," he would cry, "if I had only heard this before, before my heart grew hard, and I got set in bad ways. Why didn't somebody take me by the hand? Why didn't somebody say to me 'God loves you'?"

Why not to be sure! Gray-haired fathers and mothers in Israel, laborers sent so long ago into your Lord's vine-

yard, who of you let this man perish? Who neglected this corner? Who let this vine untrained, unpruned, straggle off into the mire of sin? Who of you withheld good seed from this, mayhap stony and unpromising portion of the Master's field? Whose plough was idle here? Whose cluster of the vintage, whose sheaf might this have been?

July came, hot, dusty, wearing on Ruth, who had grown thin and haggard since winter; wearing for the father, who could hardly totter on his way. Blackberries were ripe now; and Ruth got board in an old woman's shanty on a waste patch, and picked berries, and sold them about town, until the season was over. Then a plain, good-natured woman in the village offered her board and fifty cents a week for helping her in house-work a little while. So Ruth stayed there two weeks, having her Sundays to spend with her father, when she wandered out with him

among the bushes on the patch of waste land, and in shady spots under thorn trees read to him the Bible and comforted his penitent soul, as best she could, with God's words. At the end of two weeks the old woman came for her; the father was sick. He had a hemorrhage that had brought him almost into the grave he dreaded.

Two weeks passed before the father could walk. Ruth paid out her dollar for board, and worked very hard, helping the old woman with washing she took in. With recovered strength the father desired to return to New York. "I ain't afraid of the law now, Ruthy. I must go back. I can hold out to walk there. Come, girl, take me there, and get me Lettie and a shelter, until you see me die. I must go. And you'd only be going alone, you know, after I was dead and gone."

So they returned toward New York,

more slowly than they had come thence; August, September, October meeting and passing them on the way; each month seing them both more wan and miserable than the month that had gone before, and each one threatening the father with being thrust into that dismal grave, before New York, or Lettie, or a shelter should be reached.

Bravely Ruth bore it all, drinking strength and courage from the word of God, cheering her father, and urging him to seek the Lord before these days of visitation ended in the day of a Christless death.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOD OF HELP.

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help found.'

DISCONSOLATE indeed, as stated two chapters back, was the condition of Aunt Nab, when forsaken by her two nieces.

After the earnest welcome they received, Miriam and Cousin Becky sat down. Glancing about the fireless room, Cousin Becky said, "Mrs. Wool, I don't think you've had any breakfast."

"No more I hain't. I was so done out by being left so onexpected I forgot it."

"I'd advise you to get some then right off."

"Law me! ladies all, I've done with-

out, days on a stretch; 'tain't of much concern to me."

Nevertheless she went to the closet and got something to eat. "I declare if I can make it out," she said, between a mouthful of bread and one of meat, "after Ruth stood it all along of me going to Finlin's and selling her things and eating up her earnings, here just as I'm setting out to be decent, and burnt up my old bonnet, and tried to help along, she runs off and leaves me without no body to take care of me!"

"Don't be discouraged, Mrs. Wool; we'll help you and make some arrangement for you so that you shall not be alone," said Miriam.

"And to think of her trotting off Lettie in this here queer style, poor little toad!"

"Lettie is not with her, Mrs. Wool; she left her at my house, but did not stop to see any of us or say where she was going, or for how long."

"I'm struck all of a heap!" cried Aunt Nab, dropping herself, as if to verify her words, in a heap on the floor, staring at her guests with open mouth, and holding up one hand with a great crust of bread, and the other with a liberal supply of salt meat. "Something's come over that girl; she's took crazy! I could hardly b'lieve my eyes when I see her gone, and the child gone, and the Bible, and the basket, and the pail, and her clothes, an' the victuals, an' all the sewing fixins gone, an' our work! She's took crazy, depend on it!"

Miriam and Cousin Becky sat regarding poor Nab, breakfast in hand, sitting on the floor, helpless as a child, and pondered what they should do with her. A light entered Cousin Becky's practical mind. "The managers of the Home have a meeting this afternoon, and we will go up and request them to take Mrs. Wool."

"I don't want to go to the 'Tentiary, I ain't been doing nothing this good while," whimpered Nab piteously.

"Oh, it's not to the Penitentiary, Mrs. Wool!"

"Nor to the Refuge. I'll get bad again there; I don't want no Refuges for me!" And the big tears rolled over her broad cheeks, and she dropped her meat to gather up the corner of her apron in lieu of a handkerchief.

"No, not to the Refuge, of course, Mrs. Wool, but to the Home, where many dear little children are kept, and where you can have board and friends, and learn more about work, helping in the kitchen, washing and cooking, you know; you can learn to be a real good housekeeper; and who knows what may turn up. You may have a house of your own some day!" Thus Miriam cheerfully sought to encourage and strengthen the poor, weak woman.

"Oh," said Nab, considerably relieved, "I'll go there. Where's my hat?"

"But we must ask permission; we must make some arrangement first, Mrs. Wool. We cannot get you there until afternoon."

"Oh I can't be left here! I can't stop alone!" cried Nab, wringing her hands. "They'll be coming in, talking and saying, 'Oh how queer,' 'Take a drop, Nab, to keep your spirits up,' 'Just come over to Finlin's and have a taste.' And then I'll go and drink up the stove an' the bed an' all there is. Oh my, oh my!"

"Mrs. Wool," said Miriam, "Suppose I go and ask Mrs. Levitt to let you stay in her room and help her wash, until we come for you. No one need know you are there or follow you."

"That'll do, you're an angel just dropped down!" exclaimed Aunt Nab in an ecstacy.

Aunt Nab put in friendly custody,

Miriam and Cousin Becky went to the shoe store and found what Ruth had said there—arranged to store the few articles of furniture in Mrs. Levitt's room, which was large, letting her use the stove instead of her own, which was badly cracked, and then calling on the landlord told him they would settle for the week's rent due, and that he had better take back the room. Thus were the domestic concerns of the fugitive Ruth settled.

Aunt Nab was entered at the Home, to work in the kitchen and be protected from herself.

Lettie was the next care. The wished-for opportunity had come; the child might now be taught like others of her afflicted class.

The day after Ruth's departure Rose Robbins called in to take Miriam off for a shopping expedition.

"I really cannot go, Rose," said Miriam. "I must spend this morning in

getting Lettie into the Deaf and Dumb Asylum!"

"Lettie again! You are too bad, Miriam. Charity begins at home, and I'm nearer to you than this Lettie is!"

"I did not know that going to shop with you was to be regarded in the light of a charity."

"You ought to oblige me. I get twice as much for my money if you are along, for when I go alone, I waste it here and there, and get home without what I went for. How do you come to have Lettie on your hands?"

Miriam, stated the case somewhat reluctantly, for she knew she could not unfold to Rose her suspicions as to the reason of Ruth's disappearance, and that Rose would use the circumstance as a new argument against charity.

"Just what I told you from the beginning," cried Rose.

"Now I hope you're satisfied. Why

don't you turn Nab and Lettie over to the authorities, and wash your hands of the whole affair?"

"I don't see that to be my duty."

"Duty, duty, duty! How I hate the word! Dear me, Miriam, one might as well turn old woman at once, and have a host of children to worry with, as adopt all creation as you're doing!"

"I'm satisfied," said Miriam, "with my work, and I'm sure the Lord blesses it. Come, Rose," she added, tying up her bonnet strings, "I'll walk a few squares down Broadway with you. I'm going to a toy-shop to buy some toys for Lettie, so that she may have something to divert her loneliness for the first few days in the Asylum."

November came. Frosty mornings, short days, and uncomfortable storms came too. On one of these frosty mornings, amid one of these uncomfortable storms, there was a knock at the area

door on Nineteenth Street; and Deborah, going to it, suddenly confronted Ruth. Too much amazed to speak, she stepped aside, and Ruth went into the kitchen, and shivering sat down by the stove. Deborah, coming into the kitchen too, stood regarding her in stern silence, though some pity welled up into her eyes, as she saw the changed appearance of the returned wanderer. Ruth was thin and pale; her eyes were more sad and anxious than ever; there were lines about her mouth telling a stern repression of grief. Her dress was faded and patched; so were her shoes patched; and the shawl that had been Miriam's had lost something of its freshness and thickness, but was smoothly folded about her shoulders, under a calico sun-bonnet, limp with the rain and faded by many days of wearing in sun and shower.

"O Mrs. Deborah," said Ruth, looking up pleadingly, "how is my Lettie?"

"Your Lettie! She's well enough," said Deborah shortly.

"I know you are angry with me, Mrs. Deborah. I know all I have done looks very wrong and strange, but I have tried to do right as well as I know how. Please can I see Miss Miriam?"

Deborah went for her young mistress in cold silence, and Ruth awaited her teacher's coming with a heavy heart. Would she judge her harshly, and turn coldly from her too? was her loving face also to be taken away? A light step down the stairs and Miriam, fair as ever, with a loving smile, clasped the poor girl's hand, and bade her welcome.

"O Miss," sobbed Ruth, burying her warm face in the folds of her worn shawl, "you are so good to me and do not judge me hardly, for I did the best I knew how."

"I do not judge you other than as I think you are, my poor Ruth, faithful and

loving always. Where is your father, Ruth?" This in a lower tone.

Ruth looked up quickly and apprehensively.

"Fear nothing, Ruth; Cousin Becky guessed your secret at the first, but we have kept it to ourselves. Do not be afraid of me or of Deborah; tell us all." Falteringly Ruth told her little tale, and long before it was done Deborah, wiping her dimming spectacles, bustled about, making a cup of tea and frying a piece of meat, while Miriam gently took off the limp bonnet and faded shawl, and motioned her to put her damp feet on the hearth to dry.

"And now," said Ruth, "I cannot stop. I had a few shillings, and I have hired another room way down on Laurens Street. My poor father is there. I borrowed a chair and made a little fire on the hearth, but I must go back to him. O Miss, he is very near to death. I must

hide him for a few days more, so he can die in peace, by me!"

"Your bed and stove, with the other things, are in Mrs. Levitt's room."

"How can I get them?" mused Ruth. "I'm afraid to go there for fear through me they may trace father. I must hide him these few days more."

"I'll get a dray and get the things, and send them to Laurens Street. You can there wait for them," said Deborah. "I'm not one to stand against justice and the law, or to hide folks that break the laws, but who's going to turn against a dying man? I ain't, I know." Thus Deborah, while Miriam put up a basket of rice, tea, jelly, eggs, crackers, and other things fit for the appetite of a failing invalid; and Ruth ate her breakfast.

"I think, Ruth, you'd better get your room settled and your father quietly in bed; and to-morrow I will have Lettie here, and you can take her to see your

father. She is very happy in the Asylum, and is learning fast; and it will be better for her to stay there."

"I will do all you say, Miss. You are the best friend a poor girl ever had. Where is Aunt Nab, Miss?"

"She is working at the Home, and improves all the time. She seems contented, though she often worries about you."

"Poor Aunt Nab! But I can't see her while I have father; it might not be safe for father; she cannot be quiet about things you know."

Ruth was soon settled in Laurens Street; some clothes were given her to alter for herself, and the father was put in the bed which he should not leave until laid in his last narrow bed, beneath the sod.

Very touching was the meeting between Ruth and Lettie; but the dumb child shrank from her father; he had passed out of her memory. The father had a

father's heart for his children; and when Lettie drew off timidly from his bed and held back her hand from his clasp he felt it another sheaf of the whirlwind harvest.

Ruth got shoe binding again from her old employers, and as she worked talked to her father, and sang hymns to him in a low, soothing tone. Miriam, too, came with her message of mercy to this dying bed, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" this the promise and its condition. Cousin Becky, taking an hour from her day's work now and then, came, losing something of her sternness in the presence of death, telling of Christ Jesus and him crucified.

Day by day the father grew weaker; slowly labored the breath from his sunken chest; fiercely did his cough rack his feeble frame; thinner and thinner grew his pallid hand and cheek, scorched with the fever glow.

On a day when Death had been standing very near the bed, Ruth went for Lettie and Aunt Nab; there was no danger from Aunt Nab's unwary tongue now. Aunt Nab came; the old-time love she had born her brother when he and she were wretched poor-house children reviving in her heart, as she saw him lying so near to death; and she stood at the head of the bed quietly weeping.

Dumb Lettie, uncomprehending, but awed by the tears and woful faces that she saw, sat on the bed's foot to see her father die, scarce knowing that it was her father. Bending over him was Ruth, calming her voice to say, "Can you not trust to Jesus now, father? Can't you love him and cast your sins on him? O father, is Jesus making dying easy? Is he making the grave bright? Father, are you trusting Jesus?"

Silence still; the gray shadows are creeping over the father's face: the sweat

drops are on his brow, his eyes are growing very dim.

"Oh speak, father! Only once before you go, can you, are you trusting Jesus now?"

Slowly, with much effort, the blue lips part, the voice trembling, so near to final silence whispers. Ruth bends closer down to catch the words—"Lord, save me, I perish!" Gone! whelmed and lost under the waters of the sea of death, struggling up no more. Did the hand of Jesus catch that fainting soul, replying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Gone! the love and care are ended. Ruth has no father now. She folds up the thin fingers that her own are clasping, and presses down with her hands the wide open lids that they may cover the sightless eyes.

They have not heard a knock; they do not hear the opening door. A voice

rouses them; there stand an officer and two subordinates, ready to arrest in the name of the commonwealth of New York that fugitive from justice, the father.

Ruth sees it all; her eyes grow dry, her voice is calm and even; the shock has quieted her.

"You are too late; there is all that is left of father now!"

The officer lifts up the nerveless hand and lets it fall; he lays a finger lightly on the blue lips, he shakes his head, looks with pitying eyes on Ruth, and goes his way.

The father's cause has been tried and settled at a higher bar than the commonwealth of New York. Let Ruth bury her dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUBDUING GRACE.

"Subduing all things unto himself."

RUTH provided a decent shroud, the overseer of the poor sent a coffin and a cart, and now comes the funeral of the work-house boy, the convict man, the fugitive father. Out of Laurens Street, and along Mercer, so up Houston and on, on to the Potter's field. The cart rattled along; it was only a pauper's coffin, and the driver thought no need of solemn pace. On behind, all breathless with keeping up on the side-walk with what rattled so irreverently through the streets, went Ruth and Aunt Nab with Lettie between.

Some of us seeing them thus following their dead to burial said, "Poor things!"

Others of us looked after the pine coffin, and muttered "Better dead than living, I dare say!" Crape and heavy palls, plumed hearses and a train of slowly moving carriages, are apt to move our tardy pities, but what is a pine coffin in an open cart with three mourners, without mourning, half running behind?

The grave had been dug in the field they bury strangers in. It might, if carefully considered, raise in us some humble and tender thoughts, if we did but ponder who and what first bought a "potter's field." The coffin was thrust in and covered with indecent haste, and back to the room in Laurens Street went the little family. The small fire, dead like the life in the father's heart, was rekindled as that life shall be some day; the bed where the corpse had lain was smoothed over for another's rest, as the grave in the potter's field shall be dug for other pauper bones when these are dust. And now,

though none could eat, they all must work. The shroud had taken the rent money, and that must be made up; so they toiled until weariness banished their grief and made sleep, even on that bed, secure.

Miriam came to see them next morning; she found her way to Laurens Street as early as she had to Pearl; and the black boy, carrying her basket, plodded after her merciful steps. She came early, but not so early but that Ruth had been gone some time to take Lettie back to the Asylum and bring more work.

Miriam placed on the table from her basket bread, meat and potatoes. Then she sat down by Aunt Nab.

"Do you think of going back to the Home, Mrs. Wool?"

"I want to stay with Ruth, if she'll let me," said Aunt Nab, humbly; "you see it's hard for a girl like her to live alone, and I 'spect from the way she's set out she's going to keep Lettie in the Asylum

till she gets learnt. She's my flesh and blood, Ruth is, and I'll stay with her if she'll let me." Our sister had a woman's heart you see.

"I dare say she'll be very glad to have you, Mrs. Wool."

"No, no," said Aunt Nab, shaking her head. "Nobody can't be glad to have me, if she'll keep me, that's it, you know."

"You put yourself too low, Mrs. Wool; now you are doing so well, your company must be a pleasure to her. I'm afraid this is not a very good place for you; it is as bad as Pearl Street."

"Bad enough, but poor folks can't be choosers, you see, Miss. Pearl's bad, Laurens is bad, the Points is very bad; it's hard on us, Miss."

"I hope you'll be sure to read your Bible, Mrs. Wool."

"I spell out a bit every day, Miss; the folks up at the Home took a sight of pains with me, and I say my prayers too,

only they're such poor, stumbling, pottering sort of prayers, like my work when my hand shook so!"

"Never mind that, Mrs. Wool; the Lord will not cast out any who come to him, and he answers all we ask for Christ's sake. Don't forget, for Christ's sake."

"I'll hang on to that," said Aunt Nab; and then Miriam read those precious verses from the gospel of John, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you:—These things have I spoken unto you that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

"Mrs. Wool, choose Christ for your portion without delay. Now is the accepted

time." Sowing thus the good seed, instant in season, Miriam went her way.

That evening, while Ruth and her aunt sat at work by the dim light that flared wildly at the will of sharp December gusts, that found easy entrance to their poor room, Aunt Nab said,

"Ruth, wasn't your father forty-five?"

"Yes, Aunt Nab."

"And I ain't but two years younger nor him. If I die no older nor he did, I'll die in two years, won't I, Ruth?"

"Yes, Aunt Nab."

"Well, Ruthy, say"—continued Aunt Nab, with much hesitation, then forcing out her question desperately, "Ruthy, where, where is your father now?"

"I don't know, Aunt Nab," cried Ruth, bitterly, laying her face against the little table, and bursting into tears.

"There, Ruth, don't take on so. I wouldn't mean to hurt your feelings, but it's been in my mind all day, whatever I

said or did, going back to the same question, where'll I be, when I die?"

"Aunt Nab," said Ruth, lifting her face, and wiping away the streaming tears, "God gives you this time to settle that; you don't know as you'll live two years, or two weeks, and if you die where will your soul be? The Bible says, Aunt Nab, to-day if ye will hear his voice."

"Oh dear me," groaned Aunt Nab, "talk of hard hearts, Ruth! mine's as hard as a brickbat. And just look what a poor forlorn creature I am! Why, Ruth, it appears to me I ain't worth the Lord's saving, and yet, Ruth, what's a body going to do?"

"Keep calling on Jesus. He don't want you to wait to be worth it, or fit; for then you'd wait forever. Keep asking him to take you just as you are, and don't stop asking until he hears. The first of the Bible, nearly, that I learned was on a card about the unjust judge, and God's

elect crying long to him. I'll read it before we go to bed."

"And, Ruth, mayn't I stay with you now?"

"Of course, Aunt Nab, you and I will always live together, and when Lettie gets learned what they can teach her, she'll live with us too."

"That morning I woke up and found you gone so sudden, I thought you'd run off 'cause you'd got clean tired out of me. It did seem pretty hard, when I was just trying to be decentish."

"But you see now why I went, Aunt Nab. I knew everybody would think hard of me for it, but I had to go."

"Oh, I ain't no ways blaming you, Ruth," said Aunt Nab hastily; "you went and did what was right, of course you did."

"I knew it was better for father, and my duty to him, and it turned out better for Lettie, for it put her where she

could learn to read and write, and find out about God; and it does come so good to me, to find that my poor Lettie can learn that! And"—added Ruth, looking at her aunt, "it was better for you too, Aunt Nab. You have learned a good deal at that Home; you're more quiet-like, and look better, and talk better, and are so handy, I'm proud of you, Aunt Nab!"

"Proud of me! Ruthy?" And the poor creature flung her check apron over her head and wept joyful, grateful tears, over this unexpected praise. She said her heart was as "hard as a brickbat;" yet it seemed but a soft sort of a heart after all.

Toiling on still at binding shoes and so on, until a week was nearly gone; and on a sharp December day Miriam and Cousin Becky came in, wrapped in furs and merinos, and bidding cheery defiance to the cold and sleet.

"Did you think I'd forgotten you, Ruth?" asked Miss Miriam, as she sat down on a chair, and held out one of her gloved hands to the morsel of fire; while Cousin Becky's sharp eyes wandered about the room on a "Mission of Inquiry" to see if they had any more fuel.

"I knew you wouldn't forget us, Miss; you are too good to us for that."

"I've been thinking of you all the same, Ruth. Mrs. Wool wants to stay with you, and I dare say you want to have her."

"Yes, Miss, we'll both be better for keeping together!" Aunt Nab looked awkward, rejoicing at this testimony of her growing merits, and Miriam nodded brightly at her as if saying, "I told you so!"

"We don't think this is a good place for either of you, Ruth; it is too noisy, and full of dram-shops and rough people. There is temptation and danger at every

step. We find there is a snug little room, much lighter and warmer than this, over a little store up Sixth Avenue, and it will be rented for not much more than this for the sake of having good tenants. The difference in rent can be made up by a little arrangement with a woman in the next room. She goes out washing, and she'll pay you a trifle for keeping her child, two years old, while she is out."

"How kind you are, Miss, to find us such a place as that!" cried Ruth.

"I'll pay what it will cost you to move," said Cousin Becky. Aunt Nab's face brightened so sensibly at this offer that it was evident the moving had been a matter of consideration with her.

Thus Ruth's home was once more changed, much for the better this time. On the day Ruth was moving, Rose Robbins called for Miriam to go out shopping with her. "Come, you must go;

you save me so much by going with me."

"How much might I save you this afternoon?" asked Miriam mischievously.

"Oh, ten dollars, very likely," replied Rose carelessly.

"Then," said Miriam, who seemed suddenly to have grown avaricious, "I'll go with you if you'll give me half of what I save you, five dollars."

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Rose, aghast at the unexpected proposal, playfully made.

"My friend Ruth is moving to-day, and I want to entrap you into buying her a few useful articles."

"Your friend Ruth, Miriam! how horrible you are! But come on, Miriam, I'll do it, if it is only for the fun of getting the duds. I dare say you'll take me into all manner of queer holes!"

That afternoon Rose Robbins' money bought two chairs and a curtain at a

secondhand store; a brown pitcher and a bowl or two at a little china shop, and flour and bacon at a grocery, over buying which Rose made herself merry. The black boy gathered these purchases up in a hand-cart and trundled them off to the new home up Sixth Avenue.

Then came the New Year, and on the evening of the first day of the year, Ruth went out to take home her shoe binding and get more, also to buy some provisions at a store well down Grand Street, where groceries were selling at unusually low rates. Coming back along Grand Street she heard a sob from a little dim alley she was passing, and peering into the gloom saw a figure crouching against the house. Ruth had learned by sharp experience how to pity, so she stepped up to the crouching shawl-muffled figure, and laying her hand on it said, "What is the matter, my poor friend?"

"O Ruth, Ruth, is it you?" said the

figure, starting up and clasping Ruth close.

Then by the voice and features dimly seen, Ruth recognized the German girl.

"What brings you here, so far from home?" she asked.

"I have not any home. They turned me out. I will not give up my Bible; I will not go to the confess; I say the priest not know all things. He curse me, Ruth. He curse them if they keep me; then my mudder and my sister they turn me out; they push me off into the night, and say, Go to ruin alone! To-night they put me out!"

"Come with me," said Ruth. "Dry your eyes. I have a room where my aunt and I live very peacefully together; we can take you in."

Thus Ruth opened the home God had given her to take in one of his poor; and the German girl, rescued from the street where fanatic relatives had driven her,

sat down as the year before to hear Ruth read the word of God, and knelt by her side to pray. Next day the German girl got coarse shirts to make from the store where she had got work before, and the washer-woman took her into her room; the girl buying her share of food and fuel, and looking after the child to pay for the shelter. This seemed taking away a portion of Ruth's small support, but she proposed it herself; and after all it did not seem that she missed the trifle she had thus sacrificed to help another. I suppose the Lord made it up to her; he has many ways of returning what we lend to him.

After the father's death Ruth and Aunt Nab went joyfully, Sabbath after Sabbath, to that dear Mission School, where first they had heard the gospel of God's grace.

And now Aunt Nab's prayers had been answered in peace, poor wanderer as she

was; too low and vile for you and me to notice, good countrywŏmen, she was not too low for Jesus to lay upon her his blessed hands and lift up that bowed soul, and make her every whit whole.

Thus when the Sabbath bells rang sweet and clear over the city, regardless of the long way, the German girl, Aunt Nab and Ruth went gladly to meet their faithful young teacher in the Mission School; and there sat the German girl, learning that there is but one Mediator between God and man; Ruth feeding her hungry soul on heavenly food, and Aunt Nab, erst drunken, noisy, ragged and wretched, now clothed and in her right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

CHAPTER XV.

GATHERED SHEAVES.

"I will love them freely."

SPRING came after Ruth and Aunt Nab had moved to Sixth Avenue; that eventful spring, burdened with civil war. While regiments were forming, soldiers were volunteering and drilling, and nearly all hearts were waking up to the fearful interest of the times, few thoughts of the war came to either of our shoe binders in their third story room.

The news-boys' cry of war and rumors of war, the echoes of martial music floating from the squares or from Broadway, these reached their ears, jarring rudely perhaps on some lesson, telling of the

Prince of peace and millennial days. In the Mission School there was another warfare talked of, fought not with mortal arms on earthly battle-fields, but a warfare waged by the hosts of sin against the King of kings, wherein God's saints strive for masteries. Of this war Ruth and Aunt Nab knew much; during hourly temptations, strivings, or careless defeat, they felt, as do we all, that he who wins must fight; and like Paul of old could cry, "When I would do good, evil is present with me!"

Early in the spring Ruth, Nab and the German girl, at Miriam's suggestion, and by her assistance, exchanged the work they had labored at so long for making cavalry housings. As they sewed briskly on the blue cloth with its bright orange facings, they spoke of and prayed for those who were going forth to battle. Among those soldiers, although these seamstresses knew it not, was already en-

listed one, though long unseen and well nigh forgotten, who was to be known again in their after lives.

This new sewing was pleasanter and better paid than shoe binding, and though the cost of living was higher, one comfort after another crept into their little room. Where, when Miriam first found this family, all had been poverty bordering on starvation and despair, was now comfort and hope. There were chairs enough and to spare; the stove had suitable furniture; the blue dresser boasted enough of earthenware for their simple needs; the bed was neat and comfortable; the pantry had enough of their plain but wholesome fare. Best of all, on the table between the windows lay the Bible, Nab's red Testament, a hymn-book, and the books brought from the Mission School Library. The tract distributor left monthly a welcome tract; and together our three friends paid for a religious paper which

as. aforetime on Sabbath evening Ruth read to her aunt and the German girl.

There were days when time was spared to visit Lettie at the Asylum, and there were other days, at long intervals, when Lettie came to see them.

Lettie wore her slate and pencil now, and could exchange her thoughts by writing; queer little thoughts they were, brokenly expressed; but Ruth hailed every new sentence with delight. That there might be less hinderance to her intercourse with Lettie, Ruth diligently learned the manual alphabet, and the language of signs, and even Aunt Nab's clumsy fingers came to be able to weave a few sentences for the mute niece to answer. Lettie was learning other things than to write and use her fingers for her silent tongue; it was wonderful what a neat little seamstress she was getting to be; what a talent she displayed for fancy work.

"There ain't no fear but what Lettie will be able to support herself," remarked Aunt Nab oracularly; "she is so most amazing cute! She can beat us both with her little fingers."

Two of the war years sped away after all the other years that had gone so swiftly, and Ruth began to forecast a little about the time when Lettie should come home, and wonder if by new diligence she would be able to rent another little room adjoining the one they had, so as to have two, and how they might make the home most cheerful to the long absent darling.

Others were thinking about Ruth too, and to some purpose. Cousin Becky's cogitations speedily took form in words and deeds. Miriam and Rose Robbins had gone to the good dress-maker's room, each to see when they could claim her services for ten days or a fortnight.

"Miriam," said Cousin Becky, "I have

been thinking lately a good deal about Ruth."

"Dear, dear," cried Rose, "I havn't heard much else but about Ruth for these four years! Do strike on some more promising theme, Cousin Becky."

"Well, Ruth leads me to myself, which may not be a more gratifying theme. I see I am almost getting old; my hair is growing gray, and I have worn glasses this long while."

"I don't see what Ruth and your growing old have to do with each other, unless your mind has been overburdened with her," said Rose, pettishly.

"It has this to do. I might prepare some young person to take up the business I must in a few years lay aside; in other words, I must take an apprentice."

"Oh I understand you now!" cried Miriam, with sparkling eyes.

"I'm sure I don't any more than if you were quoting Greek," said Rose.

"I'll make it plain," said Cousin Becky. "Ruth is a nice needle-woman, and has a great taste for dress-making. I used to notice it so long ago as when she dressed those dolls for the shop and Lettie's basket. Now I shall take her as my apprentice, and take her where I go, to help me and to learn, and she will in time be as good at the trade as people say I am."

"O Cousin Becky," cried Miriam, "this is just one of your own nice, thoughtful, excellent plans."

"Just a real Ruthy piece of nonsense, which you never can make work. Who wants that girl about when they engage you, Cousin Becky?" exclaimed Rose, fretfully.

"I'll make it work. Now next week I am going to Miriam's for two weeks' work. I'll take her there for a start. Then I'm coming to you for ten days, and I'll bring her there."

"No, I don't want her!" said Rose.

"Then I shall not come myself," replied Cousin Becky.

"Oh dear me, what a bother it is," said Rose, resigning herself to Ruth and Cousin Becky's whims.

And so it came to pass that while Aunt Nab stitched at the cavalry housings and kept the room, Ruth went out daily with Cousin Becky, learning to be a worthy successor of that notable mantuamaker. At night Ruth went home, ever to be greeted with a pleased smile from Aunt Nab's broad, homely, good-natured face,—a face that had grown kind, and womanly, and pleasant to look upon since the evil spirit had been expelled by the grace of God. No more careworn, haggard, thin, suspicious and defiant, Ruth was now a comely young woman, doing well her daily work, gaining grace and propriety of manner from a gentle heart and daily mingling with those who were refined and good.

Two years more flew by. Ruth went with Cousin Becky from house to house, earning her daily bread, almost as welcome now everywhere as Cousin Becky herself. But though it was pleasant going from one abode of luxury to another, sewing costly fabrics and fitting graceful forms, there were other visits and dearer hours for Ruth. Her's was now a class in a Mission School, and her's was it now, to go from one to another of such dismal abodes as her own childhood had known, telling the good news Christ brought for men, cheering the sorrowful, teaching the ignorant, encouraging the despairing, going among the poor as one of the poor themselves, sympathizing with woes that she had bore herself; and telling of that elder Brother and Friend, who "surely bore our griefs and carried our sorrows—and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." When a grain of corn or wheat dropped

into the earth springs up in the ear-bearing stalk, and each one of these new kernels bears stalks again, until from the one good seed such mighty harvests spring, it is like the good seed of the word, planted, it may be, by such as Miriam in a heart like Ruth's, raising up other home missionaries to go among the poor, until the circle of good influence widens to the end of time.

While Aunt Nab sewed on soldiers' equipments and Ruth made good wages by her dress-making, prosperous days had come; they hired two rooms now, each comfortably furnished; one had a little shelf of books and a picture or two against the wall, the room Ruth was to share with Lettie when she came home to stay.

The strife was over at last; war's clarion notes had grown fainter and died away, and over the land stole the voices of peace, a benison from God. Regi-

ments were being daily mustered out; and one week Ruth and Cousin Becky were very busy at a house in Washington Place, working for the wife of a returned officer, a lady who had long shared a camp life with her husband.

They were sewing in a little back parlor, and the officer's wife sat there when a servant came to tell her that "'a soldier man' was in the hall waiting to speak with her." The lady went out leaving the door ajar.

"Ah Ben," she said cordially, "good morning!"

"Good morning, ma'am. I took the liberty of asking for you. I thought it would sort of cheer me up; I'm apt to get discouraged."

"And what are you doing now, Ben?"

"Looking for her still."

"Really, Ben, I don't believe you'll ever find her."

"I'll look right faithful; then I won't

have that to blame myself for. When I got converted I promised the Lord I'd strive to undo the bad deeds I'd done, and here's one of them."

"Then, as I've said before, Ben, very likely she would be such an incorrigible woman you could not live with her."

"She's no worse than I was, ma'am. The grace of God did much for me, and it may for her. She's a poor neglected creature, and I'll be glad to see if God's love shown to her may not win her over."

"And what steps have you taken to find her?"

"I've been around from one place to another to try and get trace of her, but I can't find her yet. Howsomever, I'll search New York and Philadelphia, and advertise in the papers, and then, if it ain't the Lord's will, I'll try and be content."

"I hope you'll succeed, as you are so set on it. If you find her let me know.

I may help you a little in some way. I think you are performing a duty."

"I've prayed for her, wherever, or whatever she may be, for this four years nearly. As soon as I found out my state as a sinner and the way of escape, I got anxious for her, not that I'd ever cared for her; only I saw in God's eyes we were bound together."

After this conversation the man went away, and the lady returned to the little back parlor. Ruth's cheeks had grown red and pale by turns as she unavoidably heard this coversation. The lady rested herself comfortably in her rocking-chair, as she remarked, "There's a man that's looking for a wife he never lived with, and whose last name before marriage he is by no means certain of; there is scarcely a chance of his finding her; and he seems quite set on it."

"What is his name?" asked Ruth.

"Ben Wool. He came into our regi-

ment a wild, rough fellow, but he turned truly to God, and is now as earnest, simple-minded, devout a man as can be found."

There was a long pause; then Cousin Becky looking over her spectacles remarked, "I think it's likely Ruth knows his wife."

"She does! Why wonderful! Yet I've heard she visits among the poor a great deal. Where is she? Who and what is she?"

"I can better tell if I find it is his wife. Let him come to my room at No. — Sixth Avenue, and he can find out all I know about this person," replied Ruth, guardedly.

"I'll tell him as soon as he calls here again. I don't know where he stays in the city."

It was nearly a week after this, and Aunt Nab had just lighted her lamp for her evening's work when some one

knocked at the door, and she admitted a tall man in soldier's dress. He was an awkward, honest-looking fellow; and Aunt Nab who had heard nothing from Ruth of the soldier at Washington Place wondered what he wanted. The man sat down in a corner remote from the light.

"I was told there was a young woman here who could tell me about something I want to know," he said, hesitatingly.

"That must be Ruthy," replied Aunt Nab, taking her sewing again. "She isn't in from her work yet, but she will be here before long likely. You can wait."

Nearly fifteen minutes of profound silence ensued; Aunt Nab stitched on blue shirts, and the man waited patiently. Then Ruth came, not observing the stranger at first, as she came from the darkness of the hall, until he came toward her. "Miss, a lady at Washington Place told me this evening may be

you could tell me the whereabouts of a woman I'm looking after?"

"Your wife, I believe?"

"Yes, Miss, it's my wife, sure enough."

Aunt Nab looked up suddenly, and back to her work again.

"And will you tell me your name, sir?"

"Ben Wool, Miss, at your service."

Aunt Nab dropped her work, and retreated to a distant corner.

"And what was this woman's name?"

"Nab, Miss. I don't rightly remember the other; we were two poor, God-forgetting, drunken things, Miss," he added humbly, "but God helping us we will do better now."

"Aunt Nab, come here to the light, and tell me if you know this man."

The soldier met Nab and looked earnestly in her face. "I believe it's she, I do, I do, and yet praise the Lord what a different woman it is!"

"The Lord has changed her as he has

you. Aunt Nab, what do you say?" said Ruth.

"It's Ben Wool, true enough, but only the Lord could have made this man out of such as he was."

"Bless the Lord!" cried Ben, lifting his hands to heaven, tears raining over his cheeks. "The Lord hears prayer! the Bible's true, he hears before we begin!"

Ah happy household, now that God has loved so freely! When Lettie came home to stay a few weeks after, what family happier than these four, Aunt Nab, Ben, Ruth and Lettie, dwelling together in the fear of God, working honestly for daily bread and clothing, telling to all they knew what God had done for their souls.

Blessed Mission School that had aided on this good work to its final success, and happy Cousin Becky and Miriam, whose labors God had crowned with his approval! Truly they had in the morning

sowed the seed, and in the evening had not withheld their hand; they had planted and watered, and God had given increase, and all was good.

* * * * * *

Daughters of the church, the fields are broad and white, the harvest is plenteous, but alas for the few who labor there! There are women, our sisters, lost and wretched, to be found and lifted up. There are little children to shine as jewels in some faithful servant's crown of rejoicing. Go! go work to-day, all your life-day in the Lord's vineyard, in the Master's harvest-field, and he will give you your wages.

THE END.