

A LESSON.

BY SUSAN M. DAY.

Three children to their mother's side had pressed,

And eager voices made their loud acclaim,
Conflicting prayers, imperious request,
Wide differing tastes, that could not be the same.

I marked with wonder, how with patience wise,
Untroubled brow, and loving, gentle smile,
She hears each one, to each she soft replies,
And all their va'ying wants does reconcile.

One wish she grants, another I deny,
Yet gives the plender something in its place;
Loves all alike, sees with impartial eye,
And measures gifts to meet each sutor's case.

And thus, when once you said to me, dear friend,
That you believed in God, but not that he
To individual prayers his ear would lend,
Since oft conflicting men's desires must be—

I thought of this sweet mother, and her plan,
How she the children's wants did satisfy,
And learned how God's far wider wisdom can
Most loving grant, and tenderly deny. —S. S. Times.

STEP BY STEP.

A TRUE STORY, BY JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

Of work, as of greatness, it may be said, some are born workers, some become workers, and some have their work thrust upon them. Philippa Wade seemed to have been a born worker—from early childhood she was never content unless she was doing something useful, something to help somebody; but that form of work at which she finally settled seemed to have been thrust upon her. At twelve, having been sent home from China, where her father was in business, Philippa spent a fortnight with a married sister before going to boarding-school. Her brother-in-law seemed a model of all that was excellent, devoted to his wife, diligent in business, and the fondest of fathers. Philippa noticed that the two children would not go to bed in the evening unless this general father carried them up on his shoulders. Philippa went to school, and she had letters from her sister, and by degrees some shadow seemed to be falling over that home, and lengthened across the letters that came thence.

At eighteen Philippa finished her school life, and, as dressed in graduation white she came from the platform with her diploma in her hand, she received a telegram summoning her to her brother-in-law's funeral.

The aunt with whom she had spent her vacations accompanied her. Philippa found the house, once so comfortable and bright, shabby and poor; the sister once hopeful and healthful, was aged and forlorn; more than the darkness of death lay on this dwelling; the figure in the coffin was the mere wreck of the once handsome, genial man, and a broad scar which marked the cause of death, was upon the temple. Three little children stood sobbing together at the coffin's head, and Philippa heard the boy, eldest of the group, choking down his tears, and administering strange consolation to his small sister. "Never mind, Katy, never mind; don't cry dear, now you won't be scared any more nights." What need to say that this ruined family was but another holocaust to intemperance? Philippa looked at the changed face of her sister; looked at the wan, pitiful children, one of them suffering from a nervous disease, looked at the impoverished household, looked at the marred face of the corpse, heard the whispers, "better for them," "a blessed release," "nothing left for his family," "such a fall," and her whole soul rose up against the monster vice that so dominated and destroyed in the land, and she made a calm, unalterable resolution to be henceforth, with all her might, a temperance worker.

Thereafter, the home and the family must be reconstructed; the widow and her youngest child were practically invalids; Philippa's parents had died during her six years at school; she had a brother in business, this sister and her three children, and her

uncle, out of these members a new household must be formed.

The funeral was over, and Raphie Wade and his aunt took council; Philippa sat and listened; the widow and her children had gone to their rest; their nights might be quiet now; earth had shut her doors closely about the madman who had been wont to come home furious. Philippa's mind was full of high planning and courage; she was ready to go forth alone, armed only by her earnestness, and battle with the Destroyer of Homes. Here was the great city, seemingly wholly given over to idolatry, to the worship of Baal; here was a wide field for her work, here she would toil night and day, and gather in her trophies of saved souls. Philippa was full of zeal for souls; it was but lately that she had consecrated her life to Jesus; she heard the cry, "What doest thou?" and she was longing to make large answer. She had not yet learned that there are some to whom God says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." And now, with these warm, eager desires to be up and doing, she listened, startled, to the arrangements her brother made for the future of his family circle. He was junior partner in a large iron works, and in the hills thirty or forty miles from any town, was a branch of the works, which it had called into being; there was a substantial home for the superintendent of the works, and there it had been decided that Raphie Wade must go, to oversee a very important branch of the business.

"I am afraid it will be lonesome, aunt," said Raphie, "but there is the only place where I can have a house, and be able to maintain this family in comfort."

"There is no need for us to be lonesome," said aunt Grace, calmly, "if we are doing our duty and love each other. I have no doubt that the change of scene and the pure air may benefit Dora, and, perhaps, bring entire health to poor little Kate. It seems to me a very providential thing for these children."

"But," thought Philippa, "is it providential for me to be shut out from all opportunities of usefulness?"

Energetic aunt Grace went hopefully on with her planning. "Dora is completely broken down. If her unhappy husband had lived six months longer, I am sure she would have died; we can look to her for nothing; we must nurse and comfort her; but I can keep the house, and Philippa can teach the children. Can you not, dear?"

"Certainly," said Philippa; but thought, "This is such small work to do, any one could do that."

Aunt Grace continued: "Dora's furniture and mine together will fit out the home comfortably, and I will take my own old servant along."

"It seems hard on Philippa to ask her to go there," said Raphie. "There is no society; except the laborers' houses, there is only one house near, the home of a large land-owner; our firm owns absolutely nothing but the one bank, and the space occupied by our buildings; this land-owner, Mr. Cortin, is an unbeliever, worst of all, there is no church and no opportunity of enjoying church privileges. It will be like burying you alive, Philippa."

"Never mind," said Philippa; she could say no more; the condemnation to doing nothing, the being set apart from the work she longed for, was cutting her to the heart.

"To go there," said aunt Grace, "seems the direct leading of Providence. A young girl like Philippa can not live apart from her family, and I am sure she would not wish to; we must bear our burdens together. And as God is the God of the living and not of the dead, He does not bury His people; even there He will lead us into activity. To care for and train these three children will be no small matter. They may do great things."

"But," sighed Philippa in her secret soul, "I want to do something myself. I feel a worker's energy."

However, Philippa was the last one to make anybody's burdens heavier by complaining. She set herself to aid in the preparations for departure; but busy as she was, she had time for many thoughts as to the work she had hoped to do, and must leave undone. She had meant to distribute tracts, to attend a mothers' meeting for poor women, to teach in Sunday-school, and get up a boy's temperance society. Other girls, perhaps, were planning what dresses, parties, amusements they should have; Philippa

had planned Christian work, and lo! an angel stood across her path, and shut up the way!

And so the time for going to Bambeck Bank drew near. It was the last Sabbath at home; Philippa was very weary—the night before she had been up for hours with little Kate; the child was subject to screaming fits at night, fancying that she saw her father coming in drunk and raving; it was the poor creature's only inheritance from her parent! Being so tired on Sabbath evening, Philippa did not go so far as her own church; she took Paul, her ten-year-old nephew, for escort, and they went into the nearest house of prayer. Here was the text of the evening:

"And ye shall hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."

And this was the thought that Philippa carried away; it fell upon her soul like a benison from heaven. God's people are not required to do their own planning. The worldly man plans for himself; sometimes he works out his plan to the end, at other times a Divine Hand intermeddles and brings all to naught. But God plans for His own. He will lay out our work for us; all we have to do is to perform the work, and take the steps as He allots them to us. Perhaps He only gives out the work fragment by fragment, but it is worth doing well, as part of some great whole. Here is a factory; this man works on a spring, that on a case, that on a wheel, that on a hand, a face; but together they produce the finished watch at last. Let us, therefore, be content to have God plan for us, and leave out our work for us; all will be well at the end.

"Still," said thoughtful Paul, as they went along together toward the nearly deserted home, where there were so many miserable associations, "still, I suppose God's workman always carries along God's tools, don't he? There's no telling what may turn up. Aunt Philippa, if I were you, I would take out to Bambeck a lot of Bibles, and tracts, and hymn-books."

Thus was Philippa unconsciously rebuked by a child. She had been feeling, as if at Bambeck there could not possibly be work for her to do, outside of her own home circle. At Bambeck she had concluded that there were no souls to be saved, and had consoled herself for going there, with the thought that God might soon open the door for them to go elsewhere. But on this Sabbath evening Philippa reached cheerful assent to God's will. Evidently it was the Father's voice that had called, the Father's hand that had mapped out the way; why then hesitate to heed it? God's way is always a good way!

A few days more and the family were at Bambeck; the children drew long breaths of mountain air, and exulted in grass and daisies. Raphie was busy at the Works; aunt Grace and Philippa, and the maid, with a little feeble help from Dora, were bringing order out of chaos, and setting up a home. Paul came to his younger aunt; "Aunt Philippa, I am glad that this house is away from the other houses, and has a big back garden; you keep Kate there and don't let her go by the village, for she is so afraid of drunken men, and they always make her worse. Is it not such a pity, aunt, that Kate can't remember father nice; I remember him when he was so nice, and that is the way I try to think of him, and forget all that is between; but poor Kate, she only remembers how he used to scare her; she has been scared ever since she was a baby; wouldn't it be dreadful, aunt, to have her grow up into a woman, looking so frightened, and jumping and starting at everything! But yes, aunt, there's drunken men here; I saw one; I guess they are everywhere. Oh, dear me, it was a very heavy sigh for so young a child!

Saturday night found things at the home reduced to very reasonable order. Sunday was a day of rest; Philippa taught the children, and spent the rest of the day in reading; after tea, as the May evenings were clear and light, she went to her aunt Grace.

"Aunt, I have been thinking all day about these people here; no church, no Sunday-school; I want to know how many of them there are, what they are like, how they live, whether there are any children among the houses. Will you not come out with me and survey the land and see what are its possibilities?"

The aunt and niece went out together. The village was made up mostly of board-

ing shanties or houses for the men of the Works; only five or six families, and those with but few, and very bold, unpromising-looking children; the population consisted mostly of men from twenty to forty years of age.

Mr. Cortin, the land-owner, their only neighbor of means, had set up on his own property, as near to the Bank hamlet as possible, a "beer and liquor store," in other words, a low tap-room. Most of the men seemed to be in this den, drinking and talking. The hamlet lay on a single street—the Works at one end, the taproom at the other; the narrow lane leading from the superintendent's house, which was owned by Mr. Cortin, entering the village street, close to the liquor store. Philippa and her aunt reached the hamlet at this unpromising point, and were literally stared at by tipplers. As they walked down the street they saw three men leaning on a gate. Philippa thought when she first desecrated them that she would speak to them, ask if they ever had any religious services, or any Sabbath reading. But as she drew nearer, her heart failed her; she began to think that her aunt was the elder woman, and should open the conversation. Aunt Grace, however, was less enterprising and active than her niece, and it did not come into her mind to do any work outside of her own home, or the regular organizations of her own church. The men were passed in silence; then Philippa's heart began to reproach her. Would her Master have passed three immortal souls, without giving them one word of the news of salvation? Three men without the Gospel! Three who by another Sabbath might be swept into eternity, and not one word of Christian inquiry or cheer spoken to them! They must be better disposed than many others, as they were not at the tap-room. As she with her aunt reached the end of the village and took a cross-path over the fields homeward, Philippa began to pour out these feelings; they would not have sprung up in her aunt's mind, but being presented, she approved them in part.

"But we could not speak to them on the street, dear; and what could we say? And yet, poor fellows!"

"Aunt, I have tracts at home; let us get them and come back; it is but a very little way by this path, and I will give the tracts. I feel so dissatisfied."

"I suppose it can do no harm; they will see that we mean well; I suppose they will take no offence."

So Philippa and her aunt Grace got the tracts, and came as they went, and there still were the men, leaning on the gate. Aunt Grace almost wished they had not been there, this seemed such an odd errand of Philippa's. Philippa stopped short. She did not know how to address these men, what to call them; an embarrassed flush rose up on her frank, pleasant face, and pleaded for her. She plunged in *medias res*.

"Will you have a tract? They are very nice; they are stories by John A. Swarth."

"Thank ye kindly," said the central man, taking the tracts and distributing to his companions. Among the rest were two leaflets. One with the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the simple, unadorned Scripture, only on the top of the page there was a picture of the prodigal feeding swine in a far country. This attracted the eye of the man to whom it fell. He held it out:

"I'm not good at reading, Miss; would you read it out to me? it's short."

The fact was, Philippa's voice fell pleasantly on his labor-tired ear, and he wanted to hear more of it.

Philippa took the leaflet, looking undecided.

"The ladies should not stand," said the eldest of the men; "will you have chairs near the step, ladies?"

The chairs were brought, and aunt and niece sat down; they were being led on, from one thing to another. Philippa read the wonderful story, "A certain man had two sons;" clearly and feelingly uttered, it fell fully on the Sabbath evening air, and as it proceeded, another man joined the listeners. When the leaf was read and returned, the possessor of the other leaflet came forward; he was a young man, and spoke eagerly.

"Miss, here's a hymn here my mother used to sing! Miss, will you not sing it through? Seems like I could once catch the tune, I could sing it myself."

The hymn was, "Children of the heavenly King."

Philippa could sing; she took the paper,

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