

and gave her full attention. That she did not understand one half of the sermon was true, but she was perfectly absorbed in trying to do so; the intentness of her gaze even attracted the notice of the preacher, who became conscious of the magnetic power of the big dark eyes so earnestly fixed upon his face.

"I like your church, I shall come again, Ruth," she remarked, as they turned their steps homeward; "but I don't understand it all, you must teach me; and, Ruth, you must get me a Prayer-Book; I see that everybody has one; Abraham must get me one at Skirley. He must drive over this week, and you must tell him where to go."

That evening, as they sat together by the fire, for the chill of autumn was creeping over the land, Stella said suddenly, "Read to me, Ruth; there are a lot of things I should like to know; read to me, and perhaps I shall find them out." Ruth complied willingly enough. She had frequently urged Stella to read, and amuse herself with books, but had found her very averse to doing so.

"She didn't care for books," she would declare; "she never meant to be a book-worm any more than father was. He always said that one was enough in a family, and mother read enough for all of them put together." She had managed to conceal from Ruth the fact that she could barely read at all. The latter had been reading aloud for some time, when, looking up, she noticed that tears were standing in the child's eyes, and slowly rolling down her cheeks, and it was some time before she could comfort her, but Stella resolutely refused to tell the reason for this unusual outburst of feeling.

The following day, in response to Stella's request, Abraham drove into Skirley, and brought back the Prayer-Book. For the first half-hour she was as pleased with it as a child with a new toy, but ere long she came to Ruth, and said sadly,—

"Ruth, do you know, I cannot read it?"

"Not read it, Miss Stella! Do you mean you cannot read at all?"

"Scarcely at all; that was what made me cry last night, when I heard you reading so nicely. I felt as though my heart would burst, when I knew that I could not do it; and now I have my beautiful Prayer-Book, and I cannot read it."

"But you can learn, Miss Stella. I will teach you, if you will let me, till Mr. Atherfield returns, and perhaps he will make some arrangements for you."

"Dear Ruth!" cried Stella, impulsively throwing her arms round Ruth's neck, "nobody is so good to me as you. I never knew till you came how ignorant I was."

Stella could scarcely bear to wait until the work of the day was over, and Ruth at leisure to commence her new duties of teacher; the child's soul had awakened, the first spark of womanhood was appearing, and it showed her that the life she had led up to the present was debased and grovelling. She had vague and indistinct cravings and longings for something higher and better, and the only way in which she could at present see any outlet for her aspirations was by learning to read.

Ruth was horrified to find that she must take Stella's "scarcely at all" in quite a literal manner, for beyond words of three or four letters, she could read nothing; but Stella threw herself into her new occupation with such ardour, and worked so hard, that before her father returned she had made considerable progress. Naturally endowed with excellent abilities, and now inspired with a burning desire to acquire knowledge and to be as other girls, she sat for hours together at her books. Ruth bustled to and fro in the kitchen, passing now and then at the little table by the window to make some explanation or answer a question; Stella would grow flushed and heated as she struggled with the