

make his duty clear, for the moment. But when they were seated at the table he forgot all else but the words. 'No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven,' and then followed a few words that went straight to the heart of every hearer.

After the aunt had come to seem 'like one of us,' as Joe expressed it, which was, when, as sister and nephews supposed, the visit was just begun, she received a letter from home, which contained the statement that business matters required her personal attention, so she at once made plans to return at an early day.

Joe was right, at the start, in thinking that his aunt was not in sympathy with his determination to live a consecrated life, but he little dreamed how those few tender words of thanks, offered at the first meal she partook with them, had touched her heart and carried her back to other days, happy days, when she, too, found joy in the service of her King.

'I think I will accompany you to church to-night,' said the guest, as Joe made ready to go to church. 'I did not feel equal to the effort last Sunday, and this will be my only opportunity, as my visit is to be cut short.'

'But, Aunt, I am afraid you will hardly find it worth while,' said Joe, with rising color. 'It is only a young people's meeting.'

'Oh, that doesn't matter. I would like to meet your friends,' rejoined his aunt, as she made ready to go.

The aunt seemed not to heed what was so plainly in evidence, and so, when she was on the point of joining her nephew at the door, a hand was laid upon her arm, and Joe stammered: 'I ought to tell you—that I—am—to—to take charge of the meeting this evening.'

The leader's courage failed him somewhat, at the start, in view of the listener who all her life time had had it in her power to listen to gifted speakers; but the subject for the evening was one lying so near his heart, consecration, that after a little he forgot all but the glorious theme, and dwelt upon it as only a truly consecrated one can.

The subject of religion had not been touched upon by the aunt in Joe's presence until after this service, but almost as soon as the horse was headed toward home the stillness was broken by:

'Joe, you ought to study for the ministry.'

At this the driver pulled the wrong reign, and then had his hands so full to keep the horse in the road that he appeared to give no heed to the words that took him so by surprise. But the one who never did things by halves again spoke: 'I say, Joe, you ought to study for the ministry. Have you ever thought about it?'

'Y-e-s, Aunt, to tell the truth I have thought about it a great deal—but.'

'But what? You are not needed on the farm. Your mother tells me that Jerome is soon to marry, and that the farm will then be divided; he carrying on one half and Frank the other. So you will not be needed at home.'

'I know it, Aunt,' was the answer, with a touch of sadness. 'I know, too, that I would never make a success of farming; but, to tell the truth, I never gave my future much thought until since I gave myself to Christ.'

Then the aunt, who had all along been studying the consecrated life and herself felt the uplift of it, said:

'It is your mother's wish that you should study for the ministry, and it was at her suggestion that I inflicted myself upon you to-night in order to ascertain if she over-rated your abilities.'

'My mother! Why, Aunt, this is a great

surprise to me. True, I have two or three times hinted how I felt, but mother appeared to make light of the idea of my aspiring to be a minister.'

'Yes, she told me she did, because she could not see her way clear to send you to college; but if you could have seen her joy when the way was made clear, my dear nephew, you would know that her heart beats in sympathy with your highest aims.'

'But, Aunt, I do not understand what you mean by the way being made clear, unless, for love of me, she is willing to increase the mortgage on the farm; and that I would never consent to.'

'I know just how matters stand, Joe,' said his aunt, as she patted his arm affectionately, 'but do you imagine that your old aunt could be so heartless as to let such a hero as you are pine in vain for an education when she is childless and abundantly able to give you needed assistance.'

A returning pressure of the hand which had slid into the disengaged one was Joe's only answer, and so the speaker continued: 'Yes, my brave nephew, the money for your education will be forthcoming as fast as needed, and if you are of the same mind as your mother and brothers, you will accompany me back East. The husband of a friend in New York is a minister of large experience, and we will confer with him as to the best starting point.'

'Did I understand you to say that my brothers are in sympathy with what you suggest?' was the tremulous query.

'Indeed they are, my boy. We talked the matter all over the evening when you gave us the opportunity by going to prayer-meeting, and both Jerome and Frank were loud in your praises. They frankly confessed that your bravery, in face of their ridicule, had put them to shame, and that you richly deserved all I hope to do for you.'

'Oh, Aunt!' He could not finish, but the full moon brought to view sparkling drops which told the reason why.

'Let me say, once for all,' said the one who understood in part what could not be put into words, 'that I shall always consider myself your debtor, for coming in touch with your consecrated life has recalled me to the heavenly fold, from which I had long wandered.'

Just Sunshine

(By Sally Campbell, in 'Forward'.)

It was a warm, bright room where Mrs. Reeves was sitting at work. The young woman who stood for an instant on the threshold, felt a quick appreciation of its comfort and cheerfulness.

'How lucky I am,' she cried; 'I am glad to find you all alone on a mending afternoon; we can be so cosy and sociable—'

'Come in,' said the plump little minister's wife, taking her third son's mutilated trousers and sweater from the chair nearest her. 'Come and sit right here beside me, you nice girl, and sweeten my labors by your presence.'

Frances Ellett accepted the invitation with alacrity.

'But I'm afraid there isn't much sweetening in me these days. They are such miserable days.'

She laughed, but it was an unsteady laugh, and her grey eyes were suspiciously bright.

'Poor Frances!' said Mrs. Reeves, with genuine sympathy. 'But,' shaking her head at her, 'it is not by any means the worst kind of misery. A brave young thing like you must make the best of it.'

'I'm not brave, and I don't know how to make the best of it. I wish I did. If I could just think of something to do I really

believe that my courage would come. But I have ransacked every corner of my brain and there isn't a happy thought there. Girls are such useless things!'

'They are not!' cried Mrs. Reeves, energetically. 'I am ashamed of you.'

'Well, some girls, then. Jane is not, I admit. She helps father with the accounts as well as a clerk could, he says; and mother is his right hand, his prime minister, as he calls her. Dear mother, she is as serene and steadfast as if the family fortunes were riding on the crest of the wave! When I see her I think of the verse in the Bible, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her."'

'Then do you give thanks?' inquired Mrs. Reeves, demurely.

'No,' answered Frances, slowly, 'I don't remember that I do. I mostly repine that there is no market for my talents. Jack and Robert are standing up like men under our misfortunes; they carry their end of the beam splendidly, if I do say it myself. Only I and Tommy are cumberers.'

Mrs. Reeves laid down her work and began to check off on her fingers: 'You have a father who is an honorable business man, respected by the whole community. You have two brothers who are following in his footsteps. You have a mother who is a saint and a sage. You have a sister who furnishes one with Sunday-school illustrations and home instruction every week. You have health and strength, with food and shelter and raiment. What a catalogue of woes!'

'But,' persisted Frances, 'wouldn't you be sorry if you were I, and felt that you didn't belong in the catalogue yourself?'

'Yes, dear, I should,' said Mrs. Reeves, briskly. 'That happy thought is somewhere; we must find it. But, meantime, we mustn't talk about "misery" when there are so many blessings all round.'

'I suppose I oughtn't. It makes me cross with myself and everybody else when I realize how much one's cheerfulness depends on just money. What you say is exactly true. We haven't lost one of the substantial of happiness; nothing really dreadful has happened at all. We are merely minus a good many dollars. But it does make a difference—it feels like a catastrophe. Our old, care-free, comfortable, jolly household has vanished. I feel as if I hadn't any right to enjoy myself when all the other grown-up members of the family are working so hard, I'—

But Mrs. Reeves would wait for no more.

'My dear, foolish, Frances,' she broke in, 'that is exactly your mistake! I have a fancy that just your special contribution to the family fortunes in the present crisis is to enjoy yourself. Make it your business. What disturbs your father chiefly is that he can't give his wife and children all that he would like. The good, unselfish Jane mourns that you must do without so many pretty, girlish belongings. Be happy, child; be as happy as you possibly can manage to be, and take my word for it, it will prove a bigger help than any actual money you could hope to earn.'

It was a very thoughtful Frances who walked home half an hour later. As she drew near the plain, little house, into which they had moved six months before, she scanned it critically.

'The flowers of the human race live there, which is a considerable item,' she thought.

She stopped at the rosebush inside the gate and picked the last rose left on it. She felt a pang of regret to remember how the others had been left to wither and fall on their stems.