

## I WILL TRUST AND NOT BE AFRAID.

Begone! unbelief,  
My Saviour is near,  
And for my relief  
Will surely appear:  
By prayer let me wrestle,  
And he will perform;  
With Christ in the vessel  
I smile at the storm.

Though dark be my way,  
Since he is my guide,  
'Tis mine to obey,  
'Tis his to provide;  
Though cisterns be broken,  
And creatures all fail,  
The word he has spoken,  
Shall surely prevail.

His love in time past  
Forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last  
In trouble to sink;  
Each sweet Ebenezer  
I have in review,  
Confirms his good pleasure  
To help me quite through.

Why should I complain  
Of want and distress,  
Temptation or pain?  
He told me no less:  
The hours of salvation,  
I know from his word,  
Through much tribulation  
Must follow their Lord.

How bitter that cup,  
No heart can conceive,  
Which he drank quite up,  
That sinners might live!  
His way was much rougher  
And darker than mine;  
Did Jesus thus suffer,  
And shall I repine?

Since all that I meet  
Shall work for my good,  
The bitter is sweet,  
The medicine is food:  
Though painful at present,  
'T will cease before long,  
And then, O how pleasant  
The conqueror's song!

## RUTH'S OPPORTUNITY.

BY BELLE WILLIAMS IN HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

A brighter morning never dawned on the little township of Greenville than of a certain day in the summer of '81. The sun rose with a fierce glare, boding intense heat before night-fall. Every ray seemed like a fiery dart sent down to destroy the few lingering traces of verdure, for rain had not fallen in weeks, and plants and animals were alike consumed with thirst.

The sun had wide range for havoc on Mr. Leonard's farm, and it blazed relentlessly down upon his well-tilled acres, upon his roomy barns and stables, which sheltered the panting cattle, and upon a little "root-house," used as a storage for winter vegetables, that stood half under-ground and covered with earth. But on this retreat the tyrant cast his beams in vain. The shadowy room within was delightfully cool, and there in the doorway lay little Scott, the five-year-old baby of the household, with his chin resting on two chubby palms, his cheeks planted in the damp earth, and his elbows beating the air, intently watching a swarm of ants. The old root-house had been a favorite haunt of the little fellow during the hot, sultry days of summer, for it was so near the kitchen that he never felt lonely there.

"Breakfast 'most ready, Ruthie!" he called out, still surveying the interesting ant colony.

"Almost, little man," said sister Ruth, appearing at the porch door to see what the small lord was about.

Ruth Leonard made a charming picture as she stood there shading her eyes with her hand, framed in by a clustering mass of honeysuckle vines. Yet no one called her a pretty girl. Though only sixteen, she was very tall and strong for her age, every well-formed limb indicated the possession of muscular strength, and her broad shoulders seemed just fitted to bear burdens. Her thick brown hair was brushed plainly back from a low forehead and braided, but the braid was oftener coiled up in a loose knot to "get it out of the way." Not a suspicion of a curl was to be seen, for Ruth always forgot to "put up her hair," and Nature

had evidently intended it to hang straight. A pair of keen gray eyes that often grew dark with unsatisfied longing, yet hid in their depths a world of conscious power, a straight nose, and full red lips, complete the picture—a picture which had become to father and mother as their daily bread.

Ruth turned away smiling, and went on with her work of setting the table. Suddenly a shrill voice echoed through the room. "Hi, Betty! ho, Betty! it's all in n'eye!" came with piercing distinctness from the open doorway, accompanied by scuffling as of a brigade of robbers, and boisterous Hal presented himself.

"Now, Hal—" began Ruth.  
"Now, grandmother," reiterated Hal, striking an attitude, "don't read off more than a yard of lecture before breakfast."  
"Henry, behave," commanded a stern voice from the other side of the room, which caused a noticeable decline in Hal's spirits.

There stood Mr. Leonard, having just come down-stairs unnoticed by the young scapgrace. He held little Lou by the hand, a delicate, sensitive child, older than Hal, though scarcely taller than her sturdy brother.

"Here come the provisions," remarked Hal, as Ruth brought in a smoking omelet from the kitchen.

"Go call Scott," said his father; which cruel mandate obliged the young gentleman to remove his admiring gaze from the repast.

"Ay, ay, sir," he responded, and in a few minutes he reappeared with Scott, who was very red in the face, and howling most frantically. Hal had the little fellow's skirts gathered tightly in one hand, while with the other he firmly grasped the neck of his dress, just as he had picked him up from the ground, "making him walk Spanish," as he termed it.

The family gathered around the table, and Mr. Leonard asked a blessing on the food in a sad, pleading voice. For several minutes the children seemed awed into silence. At length Ruth broke the stillness.

"Did you see the doctor again last night, father?"

"Yes, daughter."

"What did he say?" she eagerly asked.

Mr. Leonard could not at once trust himself to speak, but after a moment he replied, in a husky voice, "The doctor says your mother will never walk again."

The quick tears sprang to the girl's eyes as she thought of the dear little Quaker mother upstairs, lying so patiently on her bed of suffering, who only a year ago before that terrible fall, which hurt her back, had been well and happy.

Lou began to sob outright, and great-hearted Hal again brushed his coat sleeve over his face, but this time to wipe away the tears.

"Does mother know it?" asked Ruth.

"Yes."

"How does she feel about it?"

"Cheerful as ever," replied Mr. Leonard.

"She never thinks of complaining, but only of comforting us."

The children brightened up a little at these words, for their blithe spirits refused to be long downcast, especially when they felt sure of seeing the same bright, loving mother unchanged—all except Ruth; her sober face too well expressed her thoughts.

"Oh, father," broke in Hal, presently, "Jake Murphy says the fire has caught over at Liberty."

"Yes," replied his father, absently, "they are having a desperate struggle with the fires this summer."

Lou's great blue eyes had grown brighter and brighter while he was talking, and a pink spot glowed in each cheek as she asked, "Do you think it could get here?"

"No, I think not; the wind is decidedly westward, and the people of Liberty will probably take all possible measures for checking its progress."

Mr. Leonard sighed as he spoke, and he seemed to be looking straight through Ruth rather than at her. Perhaps he was wondering how the four bairns and the sick wife were to be fed and cared for all winter if no rain came to save his falling crops.

Just then a low call was heard for Lou.

"Yes ma'am," answered the little girl, running to the foot of the stairs.

"Will thee bring mother a nice glass of cold water?"

"I will, mother," rang out Ruth's cheery voice; "I'm coming anyway."

Ruth went out to the well with her tin

water pail, that her mother might have a draught fresh and sparkling. As she lowered the bucket, peering down into the mossy depths, she noticed how low the water was—lower than she had ever seen it, for their well was never known to fail, and in these times of drought the neighbors from far and near drew their daily supply from Farmer Leonard's spring. "We'll have to be very careful of it," she thought, "or it will give out."

Ruth returned to the house with her cool refreshment, and taking one of the best goblets from the pantry, gave an extra polish with a fresh towel, and filled it with the water, "because it would taste so much better out of that."

"I thank thee, deary. How good it looks!" said the invalid, drinking eagerly. "Thee takes a deal of trouble for thy mother."

"And why shouldn't I? Thee is the best of mothers," responded the girl, tenderly hugging her.

Ruth now began to busy herself about the room. She wheeled out a big armchair by the window, padded it out with pillows into comfortable proportions, placed in front of it a little stuffed cricket, and threw a fringe soft shawl over the whole arrangement. She then gathered up all the stray dishes, placed everything in order and carefully dusted the room.

A pair of loving eyes watched these operations, following every motion; but not a word was spoken, not a word of the doctor's decision, not a word of the life long suffering in store.

"Now, mother," said Ruth at last pausing in front of her, "we'll have thee up in a twinkling," and with one strong motion she quickly lifted the slender form, so light in its best days, and so reduced by pain and suffering now, into the chair.

When she had settled her comfortably, and arranged the blinds so as to make a pleasant shade in the room, she brought the mate to the little stuffed cricket, and sat at her mother's side.

"What is it, daughter?—what troubles thee?"

"Oh! a great many things, mother," answered Ruth, laying her head on the sympathetic breast.

"Well, suppose thee tell mother the greatest trouble, and then the second, until thy mind is unburdened?" and the soft hands gently smoothed the brown hair.

"Well, the first is about thee; and the tears would come in spite of her."

"Why, my dear child, do not grieve over that. Almost a year has gone by, and another will soon pass; and think what a calm, peaceful time I may have with so busy a little housekeeper to do everything."

"Ah! but that is just the trouble, mother," said Ruth, earnestly, as she lifted her tear-stained face. "I feel so good for nothing when I have only the same homely little duties every day. I do so long for a chance to be great and good."

"My daughter"—and Mrs. Leonard took both trembling hands in her own—"does thee know that the only way to be good and great is to do faithfully the work that is nearest thy hand? Let thy whole heart be drawn into each homely duty, and when an opportunity comes to do a great work, it will find thee ready."

Ruth said nothing, but the deep, strong look in the gray eyes expressed a firm resolve.

Presently there was a clatter of stout boots heard on the stairs.

"Harry is coming," said the mother with a smile.

In burst the noisy urchin, all aglow with excitement, his hair flying, eyes blazing, and breath so nearly spent that he could hardly speak.

"Don't you smell the smoke?" he gasped. "Something's up! Father—and a crowd of men—have gone off—into the woods—to see what's the matter. There's danger, I tell you. Come on, Scott, let's sit on the big post and watch."

"Thee'd better go down and see about it," said Mrs. Leonard to Ruth, as the two sat staring blankly into each other's faces.

"I will, mother," assented Ruth, recovering her waned energy, as she ran down the stairs.

A strong wind greeted her upon opening the outer door, blowing into her face a sickening smell of burned wood. The whole space seemed overcast, and a thick heavy haze was settling down upon fields and buildings as far as the eye could reach.

"Harry! Harry!" she called excitedly, "where's father?"

"Gone to the woods, I told you. Oh, there he comes!" and Hal peered into the gloom as he looked in the direction of the woods.

Ruth saw a dark moving object coming toward them. She waited for no second look, but sped away like the wind into the nearest field.

"Oh, father, what's happened?" she cried, breathlessly, running up to him and catching his arm as she turned to keep pace with his long strides toward the house.

"We're going to burn out," he answered, with set teeth, "and there's no time to lose. Go get your mother ready to move, while I harness the horses. We must reach the lake within an hour, or—"

"How can we?" uttered Ruth, aghast.

"Ten miles!"

"It must be done. Quick, daughter!"

The girl needed no further bidding but ran homeward, calling to Hal as she passed, and charging him to keep near the house with Scott.

Ruth made straight for the store-room, and filling her arms with a pile of blankets, she carried them to the door and threw them on the ground, ready to spread in the wagon. She then hastened to her mother's room, and found her pale and composed, trying to quiet Lou, who was sobbing hysterically.

"Mother, we're gone. Not a thing can be saved. Father's getting the wagon ready to drive us to the lake;" and Ruth began to dress her mother, slipping on a loose wrapper, and covering her with shawl after shawl as a protection from the scorching air.

"Try and gather up some of the clothing, Ruth, if there's time," said Mrs. Leonard, controlling herself into calmness.

Ruth obeyed, pulled a sheet from the bed, and crowded into it such articles as were nearest at hand.

"Oh, mother!" screamed Lou, and hid her face, as a blinding smoke burst into the room enveloping the place in darkness.

"We must go," Ruth cried, as she snatched her mother up in her arms, and stepped firmly toward the door, clasping her burden tight to her breast, and followed by Lou, clinging frantically to her skirts.

Hurriedly Ruth groped her way down the staircase and through the lower rooms, stumbling over the furniture, until they reached the scorching blast without. Upon emerging from the house a burning shower of cinders met them.

Not a sign of father or the wagon.

"Come, put your dress over your head, Lou," panted Ruth, whose hands were smarting with pain.

There was not a moment to be lost. They must flee somewhere, for the house was already ablaze. An awful yellow glare lit up the dense darkness, and an every side the crash of falling trees filled the air with a terrible din. On they rushed through the blistering heat, scarcely knowing where, Ruth still bearing her precious burden, and the children clinging to her in wild despair.

How long they pursued this headlong flight no one knew. All sense of time was lost; it might have been minutes, or it might have been hours. Suddenly Ruth lost her balance. She gave utterance to one piercing shriek, but she never let go her burden, and then she slid down, down, down. The terrified children screamed as they rolled over and over, and then all was silence and darkness.

Ruth was the first to recover.

"Mother?"

"I'm safe. The children?"

"Oh, where are we?" moaned the little ones, creeping— their hands and knees toward the familiar voices. They managed to reach the sheltering embrace of mother, who lay unhurt amid her wrappings just as she had slipped from the staunch arms that saved her life.

Ruth began to feel around; for even the ghostly light of the flames had vanished, and not an object was visible in the thick, deep gloom. Branches and briars and low bushes upon all sides. With each turn the dry twigs and leaves crackled, and in attempting to move, the girl found her clothing caught upon thorns that projected on all sides. It was with difficulty that she managed to extricate herself, bruised and benumbed as she was, but it was necessary to explore further. The ground felt hard and clayey, and was covered with stones. Turn-