

CHAPTER XII.

"A GOOD TURN."



SUNDAY once more—and round Mary's chair, placed in the middle of the bare schoolroom, and as usual close to the almost red-hot stove, the lads belonging to her Bible-Class were sitting in various attitudes, some bolt upright upon the backless benches staring at their teacher, some stooping over the Bibles held in outstretched hands upon a level with their knees.

"Read the verse again, please, Beresford," said Mrs. Jaxon. "There's something else in it that nobody has mentioned yet, but which means a great deal."

The young man's gruff voice sounded through the half-empty building—

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."
 "Thank you," from Mary. "And I think we have tried to understand most of it, haven't we? Just let us go through it once more to make sure. Why have we to give our bodies to God?"

"Because He've bought 'em. Paid a price," responded Stacey; adding upon his own account, "wain't be honest, else."

"Quite truc. But there are other reasons, are there not?"

"Pairst o' Him a'ready," answered Riley. "Members o' Christ', like oor legs and arms is members o' oos, you said."

"And," more slowly and thoughtfully still came the words in Charlie's accents, "i'cos we wain't gie oor bodies wi'oot gieing oor souls too. I mind the text you told oos in St. James. 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.'"

"Yours is the best answer," his teacher said, smiling at him. "Yes, the person who always speaks rightly must have the clean heart from which to speak, I am sure. Then we go on to 'a living sacrifice,' which means——"

"For allus. Lifelong," answered Wilson. "Not on'ey at nows and thens."

"And holy?"

"Trying t' be loike God," reverently answered Charlie again. He had indeed brains and memory beyond the average. "'Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.'"

"I like the texts quoted in that way," Ma.y remarked. "Well, what of the next point, the most wonderful of all? Can you tell me, Palfreyman?"

"Acceptable unto God." But he spoke carelessly, and a cloud swept over Mrs. Jaxon's face. Try as she might, she could apparently produce no good result upon that rough boy.

"Acceptable—which is to say, that He will receive these bodies which He made, that He really regards them as valuable. If God Himself, the Creator, values them, surely we ought to do so, lads."

A little pause. Then Stacey looked up with an inquiry: "Is 'reasonable service' what oos 'adn't noticed?"

The Vicar's wife nodded.

"Yes. Now who can explain it?"

But in that there was clearly a difficulty. No one hazarded a suggestion until Fred Shirt muttered that "Moother carls t' flour reasonable toimes it's cheap."

At which idea one or two smiled, including Mary herself. She had half expected some such remark.

"No, no! Let me help you. Somebody tell me what makes the difference, the real difference, between a man and those great monkeys you were telling me you saw in a caravan at the fair, Beresford?"

But it was Furniss who replied, a look of intelligence gradually stealing over his features.