

## HE SEES AND HE KNOWS.

**M**RS. JACKSON, a widow with four young children, lived in a small house about two miles from Westbourn. She settled near this town after her husband's death, because there were good schools in it, where her children could have a free and good education. She chose One Tree Cottage, as it was called, because, being in an out-of-the-way place, half a mile off the main road, the rent was low. Her earnings were very small, and it was only by working very hard at her needle that she was able to pay her way until the children should be old enough to earn their own living.

A time of heavy sickness came, trouble after trouble fell on the little family; the poor mother was unable to do her usual work; rent day was close at hand, and there was nothing, literally nothing, wherewith to pay. A whole year's rent was due, the landlord had been so far indulgent—fifteen pounds it was—and there was no one to whom Mrs. Jackson could go to ask for a loan of the money.

Then severe cold set in; there was a heavy snow-fall; and very sad were the faces which were gazing into the little fire in the sitting-room of One Tree Cottage one evening in December. The children knew and shared their mother's anxiety; she had borne her cares and griefs as long as she could without a murmur; but now they must know how she stood, and be prepared to leave their pleasant little home, and to go into a very small, cheap lodging. That was not all, either, for she had nothing left to carry on with until the middle of January, when some money would be due to her; and the man from whom she bought her provisions had told her he could not afford to let her have any further credit.

Tears fell fast down the poor mother's face; little Nell's head was buried in her lap; Mary held one of her hands, and looked up into her face, the picture of misery. John, naturally a bright sturdy lad, who hated to see his mother weep without being able to comfort or help her in any way, looked into the fire with a pale set face.

Suddenly he turned to her and said, "Mother, the copy I had to write at school to-day was, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity;' does-n't that mean that when things are at their worst God will send help?"

"It does, my boy, it does; and yet I fear no help can come to us in this particular trouble. Mr. Jones will not wait any longer; to-morrow, he says, the money must be paid, or we must leave, and our furniture will be sold."

"If you prayed very hard, mother, perhaps God would send us some money," said little Nell, looking up; "last Sunday the minister said we must pray hard, and God would answer, and send His angels, like He did the raven, in my picture book."

"I think mother was praying nearly all last night," said Mary, softly. "I did not sleep much, and I saw mother in the moonlight, kneeling by father's old chair every time I woke up."

It was quite true; nearly all through the night, and constantly through the day now closing, Mrs. Jackson had been praying for some way of escape out of this trouble and need. Sometimes she had felt as though her prayers would be answered, she could not tell how; but now the daylight had left the sky, the snow lay thickly on the ground, and no one was likely to come up their lonely road.

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Will Soames, the cheery kind-hearted carrier, was driving along the main road from Westbourn to Horton that same snowy evening. It was hard work for his horse, even on the good level road.

"It'll be fine and bad up that lane to One Tree Cottage," he said to himself, "and I've a mind to leave this parcel where it lies till next journey. Old Mr. Wilson told me to be sure and take good care on it; but he knows it's safe enough in my cart; and it can bide till to-morrow, or even next day, safe enough." So he made up his mind to spare himself and his good horse, and to pass the turning up the rough lane.

But somehow he could not keep in that mind. "Perhaps it's summat her needs for them sickly little wenches o' her'n," his kind heart suggested. "So up we go, Bob," he shouted, jumping out of the cart and seizing the rein with one hand, whilst he patted the beast's neck with his other. "Up we go, and nowt more about it. There's a good rest and feed for both on us later on."

"What can that be?" said mother and John in one breath, ten minutes later, as a loud rap came on the door.

"A parcel for you, missis, and a fine sweat me and Bob's in; we wanna wait till it's opened. There's nowt to pay on it," he added, as he noted a troubled look of hesitation on the widow's face, as she held the parcel unopened. "Good night, a merry Christmas to you all!"

Merry! they thought it would be the dreariest they had ever known. "Perhaps it is some sewing from Mrs. May," said Mary.

Mrs. Jackson opened the parcel with trembling fingers; a sudden feeling of hope and thankfulness had come into her heart; still her hands trembled, and fresh tears started to her eyes.

"Whoso trusteth in Him shall not be ashamed." There was a warm shawl for herself, frocks for Mary and Nell, an overcoat for John; but on unfolding the shawl out fell a letter.

"Oh! see, quick, mother, who does it come from?" cried John.

There was no name within, only a few lines in an unknown hand, to say that God had blessed the sender so richly during that year that he must be allowed to bring some Christmas joy to some of His children. There were also four crisp bits of paper, four new five-pound notes. The widow's heart was too full to speak for a little while.

"God did send it, didn't He, mother?" said little Nell. And they read the 103rd Psalm together before they went to bed.

J. A. Owen.