

His parents belonged to the laboring class; but though poor in this world's goods, they were rich in Christian faith. Of his mother especially, he speaks in glowing terms, as one of the excellent of the earth. Herself descended from pious ancestry, she took her boy to God's house in his early infancy, and there, like Hannah of the beautiful Old Testament story, dedicated her Samuel wholly to the service of Christ. It is not difficult to see, in *her* godly life and influence, one of the secrets of *his* power in after years.

When about nine years of age he was bound apprentice to a farmer, and continued to labor in this calling until his college course began. Of the early part of this period of his life, little need here be said. Apparently he was forced to labor very hard, was treated frequently with harshness and sometimes with great cruelty, and was exposed to many temptations from wicked companions with whom he worked. A severe accident which befell him when about seventeen years of age, aroused him to serious reflection; and when, soon after, he listened to a sermon from the words of Solomon's Song (1: 7) "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon," he was filled with a deep desire to be counted as one of that flock which was so tenderly cared for by the Good Shepherd. He examined himself, and his convictions of sin became "deep and awful." He hated himself as the vilest being on earth, and he believed that God hated him no less. Another sermon from Heb. 5: 2, in which the compassion of Christ was emphasised, filled him with a great hope. That night, in his own room, he implored mercy at the Divine footstool, and obtained it. Here his diary abounds in rapturous expressions of joy and exultation. He says his feet were lifted from the miry clay and set upon a rock; that God was pleased to scatter his darkness, and turn the shadow of death into the morning. He says: "I had such a clear perception of Christ as crucified, bearing my sins in his own body on the tree; that God was well-pleased for his righteousness' sake; and that thus I was accepted in the Beloved, that whatever doubts, whatever darkness or depression I have felt since, I have never for one moment doubted the reality of my conversion."

His own personal salvation had no sooner been thus assured, than he became filled with a great longing for the salvation of