

Childrens' Department

THE BASKET-MAKER'S CHILDREN.

BY MRS. E. B. SANFORD.

"There comes Sis: I see her! Good, she's got a paper too: see her wave it in the air! I hope it's just full of pictures!"

"Let's tell 'Rushy that she's coming!" And in a moment more Jerusha, the eldest girl, came out of the hut with the baby in her arms, as eager as the younger ones to greet the approaching "Sis." "Why can't she run, I'd like to know!" cried the boy impatiently.

"She's had a long walk, Pete; maybe she's tired: you run and meet her if you want to: you and 'Cindy."

"No, I sha'n't go!" said 'Cindy: "Rushy wants to see that paper's much as we can do, and she'll have first look!"

But Sis was really trudging along pretty fast, and a few minutes more brought her within meeting distance for the whole group, baby and all.

Down they sat on the ground while Sis displayed her paper, and told what she knew or guessed about the pictures.

"Oh, now if we could only read about 'em!" exclaimed 'Cindy. "Can't you make out a little of the reading 'Rushy? do try!"

Poor Jerusha took the paper and blundered through a few lines: then she shook her head.

"I wish't I could read for ye, so I do! But I can't make any sense of it you see."

"And besides, I must hurry and get dinner: father'll be wanting it. Sis, you put away your good clothes and then take baby, will you?"

"Yes: and after dinner we'll have Sunday-school, can't we 'Rushy? And Sis can tell us all she remembers!"

Jerusha, the motherly elder sister of this group of children, was under fourteen, but large and strong for her age. She had need of her strength, for her mother had died a few months before, and there was no one but herself to keep house for her father, and care for the baby.

The father was a basket-maker, a rough sort of man, but fond of his children in his own way. Their home was some four miles from the nearest village, and there was not even a school very near: the children might have been sent to school more regularly if any one had cared much about it perhaps; but as it was, none of them had ever learned to read well.

They had begun to care now themselves. "Sis," as Mary the second girl was always called, had gone over to the village on some errands a few weeks before, and there had met and talked with a lady who had urged her to come in to Church and Sunday-school and to bring her brother and sister.

Sis was delighted with what the lady said, and begged so hard to be allowed to go that Jerusha had set her homely wits to work to make the child respectable according to her ideas, and had sent her off the next Sunday.

It took all the faded remnants of gentility that the hut possessed to make up this outfit for Sis, so there was no chance left for Peter or Lucinda. This was no trouble to the children at first; Pete was very shy, and did not care to encounter the village boys and the strange teachers, and 'Cindy was too fond of romping about to want to go where she must sit still so long.

But all this was changed after Sis had been to the village one or two Sundays. The little girl came home with her head and her heart full of all that she had heard and seen and learned. The story of the Saviour's love was new and wonderful to all the children of the hut, and the others now begged earnestly to be allowed to go with Sis and hear and learn for themselves.

But 'Rushy shook her head.

"You must just wait till I can fix ye up decent," she answered. "Maybe if pap has a good sale for the work this time he'll let us have a little money for clo'es; but I ain't a-goin to let ye go down there to be laughed at—that's poz!"

Sis told something of the trouble to her friend at the school when she asked again after her brother and sister, and the lady seemed interested. "Tell your good sister," she said, "that if she will let you bring them down to my house some day, I think I can find some things that will help fit them out for church."

Sis speeded home with this message; but to her disappointment, and the stormy grief of the younger

ones, 'Rushy shook her head more positively than ever.

"I guess we ain't a-goin' to be beggars, any way! Be we, pap?"

The father, thus appealed to, took his pipe from his mouth long enough to hear the merits of the case, and agreed with 'Rushy, as he always did.

To be continued.

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