

"There, get along with you, Tim," said Mrs. Beswick, laughingly. "You always were a boy for having your joke. I guess you can call everything you're wearing your own, seeing as how they were given to you just to take this place in. Now, mind you're a good boy and do right by your new master."

"That I will, mother," responded the lad heartily, as he passed from within the little kitchen and stepped out into the open air with a manly air that was very becoming the sturdy figure and frank, brown face.

Little Mrs. Beswick found it hard work making ends meet at times, though she washed and ironed clothes for different neighbors six days out of the seven, and was usually to be found at her post long before the work-a-day was aroused. She had seen better days, but that was when Mr. Beswick was living, and was foreman in a machine-shop. After his death, Tim and Jack had remained at school until it became evident that if they remained there longer there would not be sufficient bread to go round and fill all mouths. And so they had packed up their school books, said good-bye to their teachers, and each started out to swell the family purse. But Jack was a delicate lad, and was oftener to be found at home helping his mother with the wringer, than running errands, or working in a store. But Timothy—sturdy, cheery, generous, sunny-hearted Timothy—was always "in luck" as he termed it, and regularly brought home his earnings at the end of each week.

Two weeks before our story commences, the end house of the row of cottages in which the Beswick family resided had been rented, after having been vacant for some months. From what the old residents had seen of the newcomer, it was decided that he would not be liked. He was a tall, thin, bent man, with bushy eyebrows, and a face whose general expression was a cross one. This was Timothy's new master, Mr. Peters. He had asked the main grocer of the town to recommend to him a good boy for helping in the garden and around the house, and Mr. Hawes had unhesitatingly suggested Timothy Beswick. And this was the boy's first day at his new work.

It was late in the evening when Timothy reached home, and eager questions from his mother and brother beset him as to the nature of his new plans.

"Well, folks," began Timothy, sitting on the chair at the end of the long kitchen table and commencing to mop his brow, "I will say this for the master, he's the queerest, most unsociable, grumpy fellow I ever knew."

"Why, Tim," remonstrated his mother.

"Well, he is," again declared the boy. But lowering his voice and adding importantly, "it's my belief he's got a secret trouble on his mind."

"Oh, Tim, how dreadful," came in a low, sweet, childish voice from the darkest corner of the kitchen.

"Are you awake yet, Ruby?" Timothy said, crossing the floor and halting beside a low arm chair. "I thought you'd be asleep by this."

"I couldn't sleep, I was waiting to hear about the new master," said the girl.

Ruby Beswick was the darling, the treasure, the comfort of the Beswick household. Poor, crippled, patient loving Ruby? A year back and no girl danced on the way to school more lightly than did Ruby. And then, a fall on a slippery place one winter's day; a doctor's visit; a consultation; and then the decree went forth that only upon crutches could she again go out into the sweet, bright sunshine. At first, angry rebellion had taken possession of the child until, through the quiet, earnest ministrations, and loving, gentle counsel of Ruby's Sunday School teacher, "the peace that passeth all understanding" came to take its place in the sufferer's heart, and from that time on, commenced a new life for Ruby.

"Yes, I think he's got a trouble, and it's a trouble as makes him awful cross and snappy," said Timothy.

"Poor man," Ruby answered in a low sympathizing tone. "I'm always sorry for folks that have troubles."

"And I believe his is an uncommon one, from something I heard his housekeeper say," Tim asserted.

"I wish we could help him bear it," Ruby said, as Tim went back to his chair, and the talk became general.

But as the days passed on and Tim kept returning home with first one piece of news and then another about the "new master and his unsocial, grumpy ways," the wish became a resolve with Ruby that she would try in some way to help the new neighbor. Sitting quietly in her chair, thinking over things to herself, it seemed as though she saw them more clearly than did those who were moving around. "Bear ye one another's burdens," was a command that appeared to come with special import to her at this time. "If I could only give him the comfort that Miss Kendall has given me," she thought. "What a blessing it would be to him."

This is how it happened that one bright morning, Ruby took her crutches and made her way up past the home of Mr. Peters. The gentleman, being at that moment engaged in dismissing two daring fowls, who in company with his dog, had taken possession of his study, the door of which room opened into the garden, started as he emerged into the open air when a sweet voice accosted him, saying: