

Spot.

(By Mrs. Minnie O. Coy, in 'Presbyterian Banner'.)

I had driven into the village one morning to do some trading, and while awaiting my turn in one of the stores, I noticed a large, handsome cat lying asleep upon a counter near which I stood. She was curled up like a ball, utterly indifferent to everything about her, never moving, beyond lazily opening her great yellow eyes and immediately closing them again, when I stepped over and gently stroked the glossy fur, though, a contented purring showed that she appreciated the attention.

'Getting acquainted with old Spot, are you, Miss Dawson?' said the store-keeper, coming over to where I stood when the customers he had been waiting on left the store.

'Yes, or trying to, but she seems to prefer a nap to my company. It is very evident that she has a good home here,' I replied.

'Well, yes; she came near losing it once, though,' he added. 'It wasn't my fault that she didn't, but her cuteness in getting around me.'

'Indeed! How was that?' I asked.

'Well, just sit down and make yourself comfortable—you can keep an eye on your pony from here—it was while we lived on our farm, several years ago. We had this cat and a couple of others, and we'd talked a good deal about getting rid of some of them. Mother there, nodding towards his wife, a little silver-haired old lady who had just entered the store with her knitting work in her hands, 'thought it would be kinder and more merciful to kill them than it would to take them off somewhere and leave them, or give them away and risk their getting as good a home as they had with us.'

'And so it would!' I interrupted emphatically.

'Yes, I dare say, but I couldn't see it in that light then, and when Spot brought home three kittens one day, a week or two old, and showed them to us with all the pride in the world, I made up my mind it was time to do more than talk of disposing of them. So I harnessed one of the horses, put the cat and her kittens into a covered basket and taking them in the carriage I drove away out to the sand-cut—over seven miles, you know—and there I turned them out on the ground in the woods and left them. I looked back several times as I was driving away. As far as I could see them the old cat stood perfectly still looking after me, her helpless babies sprawling about her feet. I had argued that it would be cruel to take their lives from them simply because we didn't want them; that they would probably find a home somewhere, and, anyway, it was early spring, and they would manage to get along somehow. But I must own that that view of it didn't look quite so plain then. I could not get the half-dazed, reproachful expression of the old cat's eyes out of my mind all day, and when evening came on, damp and chilly, I wondered how she and her kittens were getting along off there in the woods, on the cold, wet ground, instead of sleeping in their warm, cosy bed in the woodshed. It really seemed lonesome not to see old Spot around the house, and I missed her coming to jump upon my knee, as she often did.

'For some reason or other I didn't sleep very well that night. Mother, too, was wakeful. Pretty well along towards morning she sat up, saying:

"Seems to me I heard a cat at the door. Did you hear it?"

"Yes," said I. "It's Tip or Topsy. I thought they were both in the shed."

"So they are. It's Spot, I do believe!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said I sitting up, too. "Spot's far enough away from here; we won't be troubled with her again, poor thing; it's some strange cat."

"But it sounds like her voice," says mother. "Get a light and see, anyway."

'I was already getting one, and going out through the sitting-room I opened the outside door. Would you believe it? There was that cat, sure enough, and one of the kittens! The poor thing had found her way home, somehow, and carried the kitten, for it wasn't able to walk, although large and heavy for her to lug. She was dead tired out. She crawled in and lay down, not even wanting to look at the milk mother hurried to bring her. Just between ourselves mother cried—'

'Now, William,' interrupted the old lady, with dignity, 'don't lay it all to me; you know very well you were just as bad! And, indeed, who wouldn't be, I'd like to know?'

'Well, at any rate, she stayed and rested awhile, then after eating a bit, away she went. It was just after daylight of the following morning when she came back with the second kitten. That was too much for me, and I harnessed Kitty, took Spot in the buggy and drove out to where I had left them. I put her down there, and waited till she finally dragged the third kitten out from where she had hid him in a hollow tree, and brought the yowling little wretch to lay him down at my feet. Then I put them both into the basket and brought them home, and here she has been ever since, and will be, too, as long as she lives. And I've made up my mind that it is kinder to a dumb animal to kill it than it is to turn it adrift and let it take its chance of finding a good home or getting along all right.'

'Indeed it is!' I answered. 'One is sure, then, that they are not being worried or starved or frozen, and—'

But just here my pony, who had been steadily watching the door and giving various signs of impatience at my non-appearance, began such a determined pounding with her hoofs upon the sidewalk that I sprang up in a hurry, and hastily procuring the articles I wanted, we were soon speeding merrily homewards.

Reading in the Dark.

In a small village in Herefordshire lived a poor blind woman. Her blindness came on in middle life, when she was compelled in consequence to give up her occupation as the teacher of a village school.

Her cottage was two miles from the parish church; her husband had never entered its doors since their marriage, and was not disposed to take his wife. She had no children who could take her, and the few neighbors did not concern themselves about the matter, so she was compelled to remain at home; and in this way she seems to have been much overlooked.

A kind-hearted lady came into the neighborhood for a time, and in real goodness of heart, resolved to learn the system of reading for the blind, and then to teach the woman.

As soon as she was able to read she went to the cottage of the blind woman, which was, at some distance from her house.

This was followed by the unbarring of the door, when the following conversation took place—

'Why do you bar the door?'

'For fear of the tramps; for this is the last cottage before you come to the wood. My husband never comes home till eight at night, and he leaves at four in the morning.'

'Your cottage looks so nice, I suppose he earns enough to be comfortable?'

'Yes; his wages are good.'

'If God has so blessed you, how is it you never go to His house to give Him thanks?'

'It is so far, and there is no one to take me; besides, I feel so angry with God for making me blind.'

'What do you do all day?'

'I sweep the house six times, then I know it is clean; and afterwards I sit down and cry. I am so very miserable. If you were blind you would cry too.'

'I don't think I should, for I would learn to read.'

It was arranged that the lady should teach her. The poor woman was much astonished with the success of her first effort, and persevered until she could read the Bible with ease and comfort.

She read as she had never read before; not only did she read with her fingers instead of her eyes, but she read with her understanding and her heart also. The very first time she was able to read the Scriptures for herself, she laid her head on the table and burst into tears.

'I had read these words years ago,' she said, 'but they never spoke to me as they do now.'

A new life was opened to her, a new state of being, with new impulses and desires and hopes was begun. She lived the life of faith in him who had loved her and given himself for her.

The house and its surroundings seemed changed. Literally her crying was turned into singing, and her grief into praise. The neighbors heard her singing the songs of Zion when they passed her door, and that led them to enter and offer to lead her to public worship on Sundays. Her love for God's house became as strong as her indifference had been great, for, wet or dry, she would wend her way to the church, remarking, "Every soul in the place would be coming too if they could but read the Book."

The effect on her husband also was marked. He who had thought her a burden, and had often scolded and beaten her, came to consider her as one of the cleverest women in the village, for she could read in the dark, and he often invited the neighbors in to hear her. Instead of going to the beer-shop, he came home, sat by the fire and smoked his pipe, and, putting out the candle, heard her read words that were as new to him as they were sweet to her.—'Friendly Greetings.'

Any Use.

'How do I know that it is of any use to pray?' repeated Aunt Dorcas, pausing her knitting needles, and looking at the questioner. 'Did you ever send a telegraph message? Well, how do you know there was anybody at the other end of that wire, or that your message went where you wanted it to go?'

'Because I received an answer.'

'Well, that's the same way I know that prayers are heard—because I've had the answer. Maybe, if you had only left your message at the telegraph office, given no address, and gone on your way without waiting or looking for any reply, you wouldn't believe in telegrams either. That is the way a good many people send their messages to God, and even when the asked-for blessing comes to them they either forget that they ever prayed for it, or they call it one of the things that would have happened anyway.'—'Forward.'