

MY NEGRO SABBATH SCHOLAR.

It was one of those perfect Sabbaths in the early June, that I walked with trembling heart along the locust-shadowed sidewalk leading to our little chapel. On that day was our colored Sunday school to be organized; and we, who only a few weeks since had professed before men and angels to love our Saviour, were to be enlisted in our Master's vineyard.

What can be done to improve the religious condition of the colored population, was a question which had long occasioned anxious thought among the goodly of our village. Originally slaves they had, when the law of liberation was proclaimed through New York, refused to remove further than grassy common, where almost within the shadow of "massa's house," they were allowed to build their humble cabins. Increased afterward in numbers, the suburbs of the town had become edged with their miserable tenements. One or two attempts were made to establish preaching among them by a minister of their own race, but thus far without success. True to the "brick church," a part of the gallery was set apart especially for their use. Still the "dark corner," (as the mischievous niggers called it) was only occupied by a few old uncles and aunties, while the rest, though within sound of the sweetest of all Sabbath bells, were as utterly without God in the world as their brethren in Africa.

At length a Sabbath school was determined on. As most of those able and willing to work were already engaged, one of the officers of the church volunteered to superintend the school, provided he might have the assistance of a band of young girls, who had hitherto been privileged to assemble week after week as a "Bible class"

in the pastor's study.

On the first Sabbath, about thirty or forty children were assembled, of all ages and sizes, with wondering eyes; and in a few moments I found myself seated in a chair before six boys, whom I at once recognised as some of the worst village urchins, always to be seen at the depot or on the hotel steps, laden with baskets of apples and peanuts, they their own best customer. I was about to ask for more hopeful subjects, but our earnest superintendent only held out to me the class book and pencil—and I was alone with my destiny.

Among the names, I registered Andrew Jackson, Andrew Jackson, Jr., Marquis Lafayette, George Washington, and Byron Clarke. When about to inquire the cognomen of the last, I was forestalled by his calling out in a stentorian voice, "My name ain't nothing but Bill Jones; but I guess you have heard of the boy who sings nigger songs, and dances Jim Crow at the Harrison House." He was unfortunately not mistaken in his notoriety, and the task before me assumed a new magnitude. None of them could read, and after an hour of A B C, I proceeded to ask some simple questions of Bible history, of which I soon found that they knew absolutely nothing; their ideas of God even were as wild as those of the little Hindoos. So I began at the beginning. I spoke of the six days of creation; then of the deluge. When in my account of the ark and its wondrous freight, I was interrupted by one,

"Did they have any bears?"

"Yes," I answered.

"And lions?"

"Yes."

"Elephants?"