

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

HOW RUTH GOT UNDER A CLOUD.

RUTH Tracey was such a wide-awake, sunshiny little girl, and had been praised so much for her bright, happy disposition, that she had made up her mind that she was much better than ordinary boys and girls.

But one day something happened at home that showed Ruth her mistake. Rose, the work-girl, fell sick, and Mrs. Tracey could not get another servant for a week. So Ruth was needed to help do the housework. Now Ruth had never been used to work at home. Her mamma thought her lessons at school, her music, and her calisthenics were enough to fill up a little girl's time; so she never asked her to wash dishes, or take care of little Robbie, or do errands, or dust, or even to take care of her own room.

But now it was all different, and our good girl suddenly grew cross and sullen and fretful and sour,—so sour that her big brother called her a little pickle, and asked her how long she had been out of the vinegar jar.

"Come, Ruth dear," said Mrs. Tracey, the second morning of Rose's sickness, "I wish you to get up right off."

"What, now? Why, it isn't light yet, and I'm horribly sleepy!"

"I will light your lamp. It is almost seven o'clock, and breakfast will soon be ready. There is ever so much for you to do before school-time."

Ruth pouted and frowned, but she did not dare disobey. So she put one little bare foot out into the cold and then another, very slowly, and in the course of five minutes she had dragged herself to the register, and put on her stockings. She worked so slowly that she was soon very chilly, and her fingers were almost as stiff as sticks. Just as she was pouring out some water for her bath, the breakfast bell rang. That gave her such a start that she let the pitcher slip from her hand, and spilt the water all over her. Then she *was* in a plight. She had no dry stockings up stairs, and it was a long way down to the dining-room where her mother was. Oh, how cross our good little girl became! She slammed the poor innocent water-pitcher into the wash-bowl; she took her stockings off and threw them across the room; she made faces at a picture that hung over her dressing-table; she went to the head of the stairs and screamed for her mamma at the top of her voice; and at last, as her mother didn't hear, she went into her room, slamming the door after her, and sat down again by the register. Help her mother, indeed! There was an ugly slop of water on the pretty gray carpet, the delicate blue wall was splashed, and—why, the stockings were wet, and Ruth's temper was lost and that was all.

By and by Mrs. Tracey came up and found—not a neat, sweet, complete little Ruthie, but a frowsled, tousled child, sitting humped over, in a bedraggled nightgown.

Mamma wasn't a woman to be "taken in" by naughty, self-willed children. She was a keen, sharp-eyed mamma, and she understood

the state of things at a glance. "Ruth is a naughty, ill-tempered girl, after all," she said to herself, "and I must cure her as soon as possible." When Ruth saw her mother, she put her hands to her head, which had really begun to ache by this time, and said:

"O mamma! it was *so* early, and I was *so* sleepy, and my head—"

"Don't say anything more," began mamma. "Get right into bed, my dear; it is almost as easy to wait on two sick persons as on one. When the doctor comes to see Rose, I will ask him to step in and see you."

"O mamma! I—"

"Not a word. Get into bed; I will bind up your head with vinegar and water, and put a hot brick at your feet."

Poor Ruth had to submit; and her mother tucked her up snugly, and went down stairs: soon she came back with bandages for her head, a bowl of gruel, and a bottle of hot water for her feet. Ruth detested gruel, but she was obliged to drink every spoonful of it. She kicked the hot bottle, and tossed about, mussing the covers, and making herself as uncomfortable as possible. But all was of no use. Her mother told her that she hoped she would soon be better, and left her alone.

Hour after hour passed away, and nobody came into her room. Ruth went to sleep, woke up, and slept again. Then she cried for a change; and at last began studying arithmetic with her fingers and toes, because she was so very tired of doing nothing.

At last she heard some one coming up stairs with her mother,—a lady who was chatting gaily and laughing. Then the door opened, and there stood her dear, lovely Sunday-school teacher,—her beautiful Miss Bella Lancaster.

"Here is Ruth," said mamma. "I will leave you to talk with her; I am very busy to-day."

Except her papa and mamma and baby brother, Ruth loved Miss Lancaster better than any one in the wide world. And now to think that she should see her in such disgrace. In bed in the middle of the day, and nothing the matter with her; and her mother down stairs doing all the housework alone. Poor Ruthie! She couldn't say one word. Miss Bella came up to the bed, looking as sweet and sorry and tender-hearted as a lady could; and Ruth just put out her dimpled arms, and caught her by the neck, and cried. She tried two or three times to speak, but her sobs choked her.

"Never mind," said Miss Bella, "I know all about it."

"Has mamma—"

"No, mamma hasn't told me much, but I can guess."

"No, you can't guess half how cross I was, and how poky, when mamma needed me so; and I always thought I was so good; everybody always said so, and called me Sunshine, and, and—" Ruth broke down again, and Miss Bella comforted her.

"You'll never love me any more," said the little girl; "you won't want me in your class again."

"Oh yes, I shall; only I am sorry that—"

"That what?"

"That you have learned so little in my class."

"But I have learned all the lessons perfectly—perfectly, Miss Bella."

"Why do you eat your breakfasts and dinners and suppers, dear little Ruthie,—for the sake of eating, or for the sake of living and growing?"

"Why, I s'pose I eat because I'm obliged to, though I like to eat too."

"You eat because your body needs food. Well, now, the Bible verses and hymns, and answers to questions that you learn in the Sunday-school, are all food for your soul, or your character. Now, darling, if this Sunday school food, that we prepare for you does you no good, I am very, very sorry."

"It does do me good, it shall," sobbed little Ruthie.

"I hope so," answered Miss Bella. "Do you remember the golden text that we had last Sunday?"

"No, ma'am; I haven't thought of it since."

"And yet we all promised to try and think of it every day in the week," said Miss Bella.

Ruth blushed and was silent.

"For even Christ pleased not himself," repeated the teacher.

"Yes, that is it," said Ruth; "I thought I should remember it, it is so short."

"But you have been pleasing yourself," said Miss Lancaster.

"Yes ma'am," said Ruth.

"And perhaps you have always pleased yourself more than you supposed; you thought you were a good-tempered girl when really there was nothing to make you ill-tempered. We have all called you little Sunshine, but there has been nothing in your life to bring clouds. The really sweet-tempered people are those who are sweet when things go wrong."

"You will never call me Sunshine again," said Ruth, despondently.

"Yes, we shall, when you deserve it—when we see you bright and happy, even if you have to deny yourself, glad of a chance to help mamma, trying to please Robbie and make papa comfortable."

"I thought I was so good," said Ruthie, the tears coming into her eyes.

"Perhaps that is the reason," said Miss Lancaster, "why you were so easily tempted to become cross and impatient."

"That must be it," said Ruth; "I wasn't looking out."

"There is another golden text that is good for us all to remember at all times,—'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' And now I hope when I see you next Sunday that you will be as bright as ever, and have a pleasant story to tell me of what you have been doing the rest of the week."

When the teacher had gone, Ruth got up and dressed, and wrote down the two texts in her little common-place book. "I will try to remember them," she said; "and I hope I shan't get to thinking again that I'm so good, and not watch at all, when I ain't a bit better than other folks, and not so good as some; the truth is folks don't know how cross they are till they have bothers."—*Mrs. M. F. Butts.*