

hours all through the week, and when Saturday came Miss Helen's parlors were full; and the little bits of children were there as well as the older ones. She was just as glad to see them, and made them feel that they were just as much needed as the larger girls.

When we were all quiet, Miss Helen told us just what a Mission Band was meant to be and do, and how we must study about the different fields, and the missionaries who go to these places to teach; but you all belong to a Mission Band-yourselves, and do just the same things, so I need not tell you any more.

But just before we went home, Miss Helen said: "There is one thing more important than all the work you can do, and all the money you can give, without which the cause of missions never will prosper,—and that is prayer. Every one in this Band must pray every day of her life that God will bless and strengthen the missionaries, and that He will put it into the hearts of Christian people to send their money and their prayers, to aid in the work of preaching Christ to those who have never heard His name. Now, before we go home, let us kneel down and ask Him to give us a true missionary spirit, and bless all the work we may do as a mission Band." Then we all knelt, and Miss Helen prayed that God would accept the offering of all our hearts, and that He would take our work and our money and bless it, not because it was so much, but because we were in earnest, and gave it for love of Him.

At our next meeting slips of paper, on which were written Bible texts, were passed around. Each slip was numbered; and when our number was called we read our text; then Miss Helen offered prayer. For several meetings we each had either texts or verses to read, but no one ever prayed except Miss Helen. One day she asked us to pick out our own texts for the next meeting, instead of depending on her to do it. Even the little girls had their texts, and we all enjoyed reciting them, because we found them all by ourselves.

At one of the meetings, after we had been organized about four months, Miss Helen said, after she had read a few verses of Scripture: "For several meetings you have read or recited Bible-texts, talked about the country which was the subject of the meeting, recited poetry, asked questions, and have taken part in all the exercises except the prayer. I purposely gave you texts and poetry to say, that you might not be frightened at the sound of your own voices; and now that you have gained confidence in yourselves, I think you ought to help in the prayer also. I think Jesus will not be pleased with this Band, nor bless its work, until every one in it is willing to make this sacrifice for Him. In a moment we shall kneel to pray, and I will ask Bessie Bronson, Della Cutler, and Mamie Foster, each to offer a short prayer."

We knelt, and there was a long silence in the room. Not a girl said a word, and then Miss Helen prayed just as usual. When we rose we all wanted to laugh; but Miss Helen's face was so sober that we did not dare. We all expected that she would say something about it, and we were not mistaken; for after the map exercise, the singing, the reports from the missionaries, and the papers were all over, she talked to us for a few moments very earnestly about taking part in the prayers of each meeting, as well as in the other exercises. "Of course I know it will not be easy at first," she said; "it never is easy for anybody; but Jesus will help you if you ask him every day. I have a plan that will make it much easier for every one of you if you will try it. Before

you come to the next meeting, think of just one thing that you want to ask for, and have it ready in a few words when I ask you to pray. We will call these little prayers sentence-prayers, and I want everybody to be ready with one for the next meeting. How many will promise?" Nearly every hand was raised, and the promise was given.

When we left the church we talked a great deal about the new plan, and our hearts were none too brave when we thought of praying aloud, even one sentence, before each other. How could we feel otherwise when we never had let any one but our mothers hear our prayers? But we had promised, and of course we would keep the promise.

"If Miss Helen ever asks me to pray again," said Della Cutler, when we were nearly home, "I'll do it, if I say nothing but 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' I never want to see such a sorry look on her face as there was this afternoon. Let us do the best we can, girls, next time. Good-bye"; and she slammed her own gate without giving us a chance to reply, but we all felt exactly as she did.

When the regular meeting of the Band was announced in church two Sundays later, we members of it looked at each other and smiled a little, for we thought of the dreadful ordeal of "making a prayer" before people. We were all at the meeting, and each was bravely determined to ask God for the one thing she most wanted for the mission cause. After a chapter in the Bible was read Miss Helen said: "We will now ask God's blessing on our meeting, on the missionaries everywhere, and on all the little children about whom we have been studying, in the sentence-prayers you promised. Della Cutler will begin, and the others will follow, and let the prayers come quickly, one after another."

We all knelt, and though our voices trembled, every one of us prayed our little prayer, and all these together made a long prayer with many different petitions in it; for, strange to say, no two of us asked for the same thing. When we rose from our knees we looked at each other in wonder, surprised to see what an easy thing it was to pray aloud, after all.

For several meetings we had sentence-prayers, until by and by our leader suggested that each of us have two sentences instead of one. You can easily see how it soon became not only an easy task, but a delightful privilege, to offer prayer in our meetings; and now any one of our Band may be called upon to pray at any time, and she is always ready and willing to respond.

"Isn't it nice, Miss Helen?" said one of the youngest members, after she had taken part in one of these joint petitions. "It is ever so much nicer than it used to be, because you see we help do the praying, as well as to send the money."

We all feel that it is indeed blessed to help in everything, the praying as well as the giving; and we study each month's topic with tenfold the interest that we used to, because in addition to mere information, we are looking for something for which to pray. It is strange what a zest that gives to everything; I would never have believed it before.

I hope this account of what our Mission Band has done will help other Bands to try the same plan, and also help them to persevere. Although it may be hard at first to let our voices be heard in prayer, I know that it becomes very easy after a few trials. Do, please, try it and see.

—The Missionary Helper.