

BOYS AND GIRLS

Job Turner's Daughter

(Maude Pettit, B.A., in 'Michigan Advocate'.)

The lights were all on in the school-room of Amaranth Avenue church. The group of street boys lingering about the corner saw a stream of people pouring in its doors. The night was still and hot, almost to suffocation, but in spite of this the Endeavorers had filled the room to overflowing that evening. Something interesting was going on. The crowd leaned forward with craning necks, forgetful of the oppressive heat. A young missionary from India had carried them forth to the bungalows and zenanas of that far-off land. For nearly an hour they had listened, and what was the harvest to be?

'Go forth into all the world and preach the gospel.'

Down in the heart of the audience a young trained nurse had settled months of restless questioning by yielding to God her life-service for this work. Just beside her a sweet-faced little dress-maker listened likewise to the call: 'Go ye forth into all the world.'

Oh, would she go, too? God had led her so strangely to her present place. Might she go, too? Both girls were strangers. Neither knew what was passing in the heart of the other. But a strange sympathy made them turn and hold each other's hands at the close.

Three months later, Miss Bowes, trained nurse, was sailing for India. Three months later Florence Turner sat sewing by her window at No. 90 Amaranth Avenue, where the board by the door proclaimed in gilded letters, 'Fashionable Dress-Making.'

Florence Turner sighed a little as she stitched away on the beautiful fripperies of some leader of fashion. She, too, would have gone, but the mission board had settled it briefly: 'Educational qualifications insufficient. Constitution not strong enough.' It was all summed up in that, and so Florence kept on sewing by the window on Amaranth Avenue. It was a pretty window, though, and a pretty Avenue, and a pretty residence—an unusually pretty one.

'What an ideal life Florence Turner has for a girl who sews,' said Miss Martin to her companion an hour later, as they came down from her door.

'Yes,' said Miss Clarke; 'she is very fortunate in having a home with such a nice aunt as Mrs. Clement, and she seems to have been taken up by such nice people, too. She has a very nice circle of friends.'

'She's a nice girl. Did you hear about her disappointment over not being able to go to India?'

'Yes; too bad. Still her aunt would have missed her, and she doesn't look strong.'

Meanwhile Florence Turner stood fitting a waist on her pastor's wife.

'Never mind, my dear girl, you will find your mission-field before long,' said the sweet-faced woman. And the call came to her in the next twenty-four hours in a way she little expected.

She was sitting sewing in her usual place when the postman rang and left an envelope with the home post-mark. It was written in big school-boy characters, and

not too correct spelling, that mission call. It read:

'Dear Florence,—Ma's had another stroke and she's alright now but doc Graham says it won't be safe to leav her alone no more. Old Miss Grant that run dress-making in the yellow house across from the market died two weeks ago and dad and doc Graham and the preacher think if you wood come home and take her place it wood be a lot better for ma. That Miss Grey here can't make a dress fit for a goat to wear and nobody here can take Miss Grant's place I guess Mrs doc Graham wants you to do her sewing doc said you was a swell fit when they was talking about Ma.'

'Your sincere brother

'Jack Turner.'

Florence Turner read her letter in her room that afternoon, and she did not come down again until the tea-bell rang. When she did her eyes were red. After tea she went back to her room and her eyes grew redder still.

It was a strange thing. Most people are willing enough to be called homeward. But Florence sat by the window in the twilight and kept her sorrows to herself. The electric lights shone among the trees below; an occasional carriage passed, and now and then a group strolled by in the evening air. But she did not see them. She saw another scene—an old, weather-worn house at the end of a side street in Jonesville; the door-steps were unpainted and rickety; the weeds and grass grew tall along the sand path that four pairs of boyish feet had packed hard. The front door left ajar revealed a bare board floor, and through an open window, with its broken pane, she could see an old four-post bedstead, and stretched across it a man in soiled blue duck overalls and slouched hat—a man dead drunk. That was her home as she had seen it last.

Her name had not always been Florence Turner. Her father, a Mr. Markham, had taught a country school, but died suddenly, leaving her an infant in her mother's arms. Her mother had, in the course of a couple of years, married Job Turner, the carpenter, who was building the new school-house in that section, and he had preferred giving Florence his own name which was at best a very questionable heritage. Job Turner sober, it is true, was a skilful man in his line. But Job drunk! All Jonesville knew what Job was like under liquor. And as time passed he was more frequently under it than over it. Boys in Jonesville Sunday-school always thought of Job on temperance Sunday, when the superintendent held up that imaginary drunkard. And poor Florence grew up a bare-footed child, running the streets of Jonesville, and known as 'Job Turner's girl.'

In the course of time, four little half-brothers had come to the house at the end of the street. Job was generally out of work, and as often as not stretched across the bed in his overalls. Poverty and poor health discouraged the weak little mother, and a house and family that might have been neat, at least, showed they were in the hands of one who had 'no spirit in her.'

In these surroundings pretty Florence Turner had reached the age of sixteen, when suddenly Aunt Clement, her father's

sister, swooped down upon her like a visitant from another world, and carried her off to the city. It was a new life. Mrs. Clement was a widow. Her husband had been a physician, and consequently, though her means were cramped, she enjoyed a rather good social standing in X—. As 'Mrs. Clement's niece,' Florence was asked out among some of those favored ones whom Mrs. Grundy terms 'our best people.' She showed no inclination for any line of work but sewing, and her aunt wisely let her follow her own bent, even at the sacrifice of a certain amount of prejudice and pride. She was apprenticed with a fashionable dressmaker, and in due time made a marked success in her line.

Life was indeed pleasant to her at twenty-one. She had been home but once in the five years, and already she was forgetting she had ever been 'Job Turner's girl.' And now to go back to it and sew the rest of her days in Jonesville! This mission call had nothing of romance in it. It was not to feathery palm shades or coral shores; there was none of the fascination of the unknown. She knew her field too well. She knew the very wood-pile, and the rain-baller, and the pump.

Then she fell to calculating in a businesslike way.

'You see,' she was saying in her own thoughts, 'it isn't as if Aunt Clement could afford to keep me and needed me. I really pay my board here, though most people don't know it. Before I came auntie had a boarder in the back parlor. And now that I am doing so well I pay her four a week for it. If I went she could get someone else to pay her five, and I might be putting my earnings into my mother's hands where they are worse needed. I am only one dressmaker among hundreds in the city. Miss Grant's business in Jonesville would mean nearly as much, and I could use the money at home.'

Yet Jonesville? And she would only be 'Job Turner's girl' again. No one would know there of how nice her surroundings had been at X—. The boys at home ranged from eight to seventeen now, and already Jack, the eldest, was turning out a little wild. Deacon Darklookout had had evil prognostications concerning his end. Then something whispered: 'Suppose you made the sacrifice. The ladies who patronized Miss Grant would not go to that old tumble-down house for their dresses.'

But her better angel answered: 'You could take the money it costs to board you in the city and rent the pretty lemon-colored house where Miss Grant lived, and move your people there. You would still have something left over.'

And what might one not expect from the boys if moved into a nice home, and if she herself, their elder sister, would try to brighten that home for them. Even Job Turner himself might brace up a little, if he found himself housed again like his neighbors. And as to her mother, her poor discouraged mother—

'O God, forgive me, forgive the hardness of my heart that I have neglected them all so long. I have been selfish and shallow-hearted. Forgive, O Lord.'

She understood now why the Lord had not sent her to India. She had been un-