

"I am glad you are willing to deny yourselves these for the sake of a Bible. You seem to love it."

"Yes, ma'am. We couldn't do no less."

"Twas a message to us, direct, you see."

"Of course the Bible is a message to us all."

"I know that, ma'am; but ours was a special message. I'll tell you how it was."

Here the old woman took out of a broken teapot, a small paper parcel; opened it, unfolded and unfolded again, cerement after cerement, till at last there appeared a small, soiled piece of paper, on which the visitor read these words "Learn to read your Bible."

"That's it! that's the message, ma'am. You see I could do no less than I did."

"Where did you meet with this message?"

"In Rew's-alley Lane, ma'am—one day when I was coming back from the Collumpton Road. There was no leaves on the trees, for 'twas winter time, and they make a bower, like, over the road. Well, I saw a piece of paper sticking upon a thorn in the hedge, it was high up, and hard to reach, but I managed to come by it; for I felt sure it was something meant for me, and I took it home to my old man, for I could not read the words on it myself no more than a baby; but he did, and told me that it said—'Learn to read your Bible.' Now was not that a message, ma'am?"

"I dare say it was. But how did you learn?"

"I teased he, over there in bed, till he taught me: first the letters, then the little words. He was a scholar, you see, ma'am. Av! but it was weary work for us both. 'Nancy,' he often said, 'you're too old to learn.' 'Remember, 'tis a message, John,' I used to tell him; and then he'd try me again. It was years afore we got on much; but I knew all the time it was a message, and so I would not give in. At last the words began to come easier, and to put together, like stringing daisy-chains when I was a girl. He used to get out of patience too, and call me a dunce, but he was glad enough afterwards; for now he's blind, and I can read to him. But, ma'am, we sadly want a bigger print than this."

Here she showed the visitor a well-thumbed, small volume, wherein the early part of the Gospel of John was well nigh rubbed

out by the friction of the aged people's fingers—let alone some blurred passages where a tear may have fallen when the old schoolmaster had been more than usually impatient, or the scholar more than commonly slow.

"And now, ma'am, don't you see that I could not help learning to read this book, when God himself sent a message to tell me?"

When the carefully re-folded paper was again reverentially and affectionately restored to its simple casket, the visitor could not but confess that it had been, truly, a message of mercy hung upon a thorn.

And are there not many of God's children to whom such messages have been sent? The leaves of flourishing prosperity have fallen, to disclose the thorn on which such messages have hung. They have gathered it with trembling hand; they have asked to have it deciphered for them, because it was a mystery to themselves. They have heard the word, and set themselves to learn, and to obey. The lesson had been hard, and tearful, and prolonged; but the peaceable fruit has come at last, and the obeyed message has endeared the very thorn on which it hung.

### "I AM THE WAY."

"I am the way," not "I was the way for the thief on the cross," but "I am the way for you to-night;" not "I will be the way when you feel you need more, and when you have worked yourselves into a better state;" but "I am, sinner, I am the way just now. I am the way for thee, just as thou art; to all that thou wantest I am the way." We sometimes see railways approaching towns, but they do not bring them right into the heart of the place, and then you must take a cab or an omnibus to finish the journey. But this way runs right from the heart of manhood's depravity into the very centre of glory, and there is no need to take anything to complete the road. You recollect what good Richard Weaver said on that platform, there, when he was illustrating the fact of Christ saving sinners, and saving them just now. He told us a story of his friend in Dublin who took him a first-class ticket for Liverpool, as he said, "All the way through," and