

gang. Foul language, oaths, and miserable companions, together with the humiliating sense of being considered a criminal, seemed to crush out of poor Joe all hope of ever holding up his head again and being a man.

But at last his sentence was served and he was free—free to take up the same wretched life again while searching for work. And so it came to pass that one morning Ruth's father came into the warm kitchen and said, 'Mother, here's a boy outside asking for something to eat—says he's hungry but wants to work for his breakfast. Better fix up a nice plateful and I'll take it out—he's hardly fit to come in here.'

Joe ate the generous breakfast and drank the cup of steaming coffee out on the bench under the tall cypress tree. Already life looked different to him—for he was going to stay a few days on trial and show what he was worth. At the end of the few days his new employer said he would keep him a month, and now the month was almost gone and nothing had been said about his going. That was the short and simple story of Joe thus far. In his suit of cheap clothes which Mr. Hartwell had given him, with hair cut and face clean-shaven, Joe was not at all a bad-looking young fellow—quite the contrary. But he was heavy and awkward in his movements and painfully shy when Ruth or her mother spoke to him. Perhaps that was why Ruth had said so very little to him.

Joe sat down on the bench under the cypress tree and felt in his pockets. Ruth watching him through the screening muslin of her sash curtain, saw him take out a little tin-type picture in its case of red paper and pasteboard. He leaned his elbow on his knees and held the picture in both hands studying it intently. Ruth smiled to herself; 'Joe's little sweetheart, probably,' she thought; but just then he folded the picture, leaned back against the tree, and a big tear splashed down upon his hand. 'Mother,' he said softly to himself. Homesickness showed in every feature of his honest face and in his eyes. Ruth found her own tears falling presently—tears of sympathy—it was so pathetic, poor, homesick boy!

'Perhaps,' said Ruth to herself, as she went slowly downstairs, 'perhaps if I ask him now he'll go—he's been thinking about his mother, and that's a good symptom.'

Joe colored furiously when she approached.

'Isn't it lovely out of doors?' she asked as she looked off through the blooming orchard. 'It's just beautiful to be alive in the spring, don't you think so?' 'I'm sure you must like California, coming from such cold winters as North Dakota has! You do, don't you?'

Ruth opened the conversation thus, and almost before Joe realized it he was answering her questions about his northern home and a little later was even showing her the tin-type in its well-worn case. Joe was astonished at himself. It had been so many weeks since he had talked so freely to any one, and somehow it seemed not all difficult to describe to this blue-eyed girl his prairie home, where there were so many children that he felt as though he must 'get out.' Ruth listened sympathetically and led him on to tell of himself and his journey.

Joe told it all, and was surprised to see that Ruth took the news of his deep disgrace very calmly. He had half expected that she would turn from him in involuntary disgust, and that would be the last of it, but only pity shone in her blue eyes. And then she asked him to attend the Christian Endeavor meeting that evening. 'I am to lead,' she said simply, 'and I should like to have you come.'

And greatly to Joe's own surprise he went. Ruth, it must be confessed, shrank a little at first at the thought of meeting all those familiar eyes as she would enter the church with this strange, poorly-clad youth whom none of the young folks had seen, but she had made up her mind to do it 'heartily as unto the Lord,' and so she did it.

She introduced him to a few young men whose hearty handclasp reassured poor, bashful Joe, and found him a seat where he would not feel conspicuous.

Joe enjoyed the singing, perhaps, best of all; joining quite heartily in some of the old familiar hymns. He listened reverently to the earnest, simple words in which Ruth referred to the topic of the meeting, and admired the readiness with which the young men took their part in the service. Were such things possible for him, he wondered, and his face grew more serious and earnest than ever as his thoughts sped on into the future. Life seemed to promise little to him compared with what these other favored fellows had before them, but perhaps—perhaps—

Ruth walked home by his side. 'Did you enjoy the meeting?' she asked. 'I hear you sing, and feel so glad to know that you can sing. No one sings at home but me, and won't you come into the parlor a little while this evening and practice some of the old hymns?'

What an evening that was for Joe! Ruth at the piano, Mr. and Mrs. Hartwell in their easy-chairs, the soft, yellow lamplight in the pretty parlor, the scent of violets, and strangest of all, Joe in the midst of all singing with Ruth, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,' and 'Rock of Ages.'

Was it any wonder that Joe's mother, a week later, in her poor home, read a long, long letter with falling tears—tears of joy that her boy had found such friends and such a home, and from her heart a simple prayer went up that God would bless the dear young girl and make her the instrument of her boy's salvation.

Six months have passed, and Joe no longer sits in the shadows of the Christian Endeavor meetings. His name appears on the topic cards, his serious, quiet voice reads the lessons and leads the meeting, and his clear tenor rings in all the hymns. Joe is becoming a power in the Christian Endeavor Society, and is leaned on by others. Ruth is proud of him although he is still her father's 'hired man,' and Joe himself sometimes wonders if he is the same disheartened, discouraged boy who served ten days on the chain-gang because he was hungry and asked for food.

Life looks bright and promising to Joe now. The possibilities of even a 'hired man,' are great when there is push and energy and a never-ceasing desire to learn. And best of all, through the simple endeavor of a sweet young girl, who thought and cared for others and 'lived her religion'—yes, best of all, and more than all, Joe is a Christian.

The Dean of Westminster recently received and escorted over Westminster Abbey representatives of Evangelical Christianity from the European Continent, from Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Canada, and the United States of America, who had arrived in London in order to attend the jubilee celebration meetings of the Evangelical Alliance, which have been held at Exeter Hall and the Conference Hall, Mildmay Park. On Sunday, in over a hundred London places of worship special reference was made to the celebration.

## The Thank Offering.

(Woman's Missionary Friend.)

'There is a sudden and urgent need for an increased appropriation,' wrote the general secretary of the Woman's Board of Missions; 'can you not double your thank-offering this year?'

Mrs. Ayres, president of the society of Fairtown, read the appeal with a sigh. Winter sunshine flooded the cheery room, parlor and library in one, that busy Monday morning. Evidences of a refined and cultured personality were in all its appointments, though the only expensive article of furniture was the fine piano, vibrating yet from the touch of skilful fingers.

'How can a greater effort be made?' she thought a little wearily as she left the room to take up the work waiting for her busy hands, and recalled meantime the earnest appeal she had made at the last meeting. 'Yes,' she soliloquized regretfully, 'I must make time somehow, and send a personal note to every member. Twenty-five letters, and the days are so full. That lecture and social afternoon must be given up.'

The president of Fairtown society had a genius for figures. With a moderate income, by her careful, intelligent management, she made home a cozy nest of comfort for her scholarly husband and their children. Brimful of executive ability she marshalled her forces for success. She knew the exact condition of the treasury, and supposed she knew the resources from which she might draw. With characteristic force she bent her energies to the task of doubling the amount of last year's thank-offering. By Friday evening personal notes had been delivered to each of the twenty-five members.

They ran after this fashion:—

'My Dear Friend:—

'Money is the great need of the hour. I never longed for wealth as I do now. An urgent appeal has come from the secretary of the Woman's Board of Missions for an increased thank-offering. Let us double our contribution, by a great personal sacrifice, if necessary. With an earnest prayer for God's blessing on our effort,

'Your sister,

'FRANCES AYRES.'

The last note despatched she turned for an hour of needed rest to her favorite corner, at the sunset window of the dainty parlor, her well-worn Bible in her hand. With a sudden flash of illumination she read words long familiar, 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Over and over the sweet, imperative command she went, and a voice whispered:

'You have done with your might what your hands found to do, how about the loving?'

'I love my Lord and his work,' she said faintly.

'Yes, truly and earnestly,' came the answer, 'but with your might? Are you willing to pour out your heart in more than the abandonment of loving, to give the treasures of your home and friendship that all such possibilities in you may be laid at his feet, a joyful thank offering? You have longed for wealth in this emergency, and not for selfish purposes. God knows the latent power of your heart. You do not, and now he asks the priceless gift of the might of your love.'

'O Christ!' The strong, sweet face was buried in her hands. The hush of the quiet room was broken now and then by a long, quivering breath. 'It means so much. Help me to love with my might.'