

band. They had just been robbing a "diligence," or stage-coach of the country, and now, at the dead of night, they were, as their wont, selling the results among themselves by auction.

At last, after various garments, watches, and goods of all kinds had been disposed of, a *New Testament* was held up to view. Alas! nobody bid for that, and ribald jokes and unholy laughter greeted the sacred Book.

Then one of the number, more wicked even than the rest, suggested that a chapter should be read for their edification, which all applauded as an excellent idea. In mockery the reader began, and in mock attention the others listened, then clapped their hands in derision when it was finished.

And had the power of the Word failed? Not so; one amongst them, unheeded by the rest, had sat all the time with hands fixed on his knees and eyes cast down. When it was time for them to disperse, one of his mates touched him. "Come, old fellow," he said, "wake up; if anybody ought to have that Book it's you, for you're the biggest sinner of us all."

The man started. "Yes," he gasped, "I'll buy the Book, let me have it," and it was flung over to him. He put it in his pocket without a word, and when in the morning the others stole into the nearest town to turn their spoil into money, he retired to the loneliest place of the forest to commune with his own spirit, sorely stricken as it was by the Spirit present in the Word.

We cannot tell what the passage was, but in God's marvellous over-ruling Providence it was *the very same* his father had read the last morning he left his home thirty years before!

And in his mind's eye he could see—as clearly as if it had been yesterday—the happy family gathered around the breakfast table, the mother's face, the father with the open Bible, and then all kneeling in prayer for God's protection and blessing. A prodigal son he went away that day, and had never since opened a Bible nor bent his knee.

But now conviction had come, the arrow was in his heart, and all day long in bitter anguish of soul he mourned over the wicked life he had led. Darkness came, then the morning light, and with it a ray of light to the penitent. God's Holy Spirit whispered peace—peace through the Saviour who had died for sins as desperate as his.

Changed from a hardened robber to a subdued and softened one, henceforth to live a different life, he sought a minister and told his story; then, to prove his sincerity, delivered himself up to justice. He was tried, condemned, but ultimately pardoned, after a short imprisonment, on account of his good character.

He became, in course of time, servant to a

nobleman, and at last, as a reclaimed criminal, leading a consistent Christian life, and saved by the blood of Jesus, he passed away to join the dying thief in Paradise. Can any one think lightly of the Word of God when such is its power to touch the stubborn heart of a desperate outlaw such as this?

Can any one think little of the Holy Spirit which can thus melt that heart into tears, penitence, and trust? "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12.)

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John vi. 63.) M. K. M.

### A FAITHFUL SERVANT.

"On the deck of a foundering vessel stood a negro slave. The last man left on board, he was about to step into the lifeboat. She was almost laden to the gunwale, to the water's edge. Bearing in his arms a heavy bundle, the boat's crew, who with difficulty kept her afloat in the roaring sea, refused to receive him. If he came, it must be unencumbered and alone—on that they insisted. He must either *leave that bundle* and leap in, or throw it in and stay to perish.

Pressing it to his bosom, he opened its folds, and there, warmly wrapped, lay two little children, whom their father had committed to his care. He kissed them and bade the sailors carry his affectionate farewell to his master, telling him how faithfully he had fulfilled his charge. Then lowering the children into the boat, which pushed off, the dark man stood all alone on the deck, to go down with the sinking ship, a noble example of bravery and true fidelity, and the love that 'seeketh not her own.'"

"I thank the goodness and the grace  
Which on my birth have smiled,  
And made me in these Christian days  
A happy Christian child.

"I was not born a little slave,  
To labor in the sun,  
And wish I were but in my grave,  
With all my labor done."

The right and manly thing ought to be easy to do, and one can only wonder why that right and manly thing is not always done. And yet, who has not failed to do it? Who has not found the gateway to the right path seem a very arduous and humble one? The great road of sin is a crowded one, while the path of individual duty must necessarily be trodden alone.