Little.

Hast thou little? Be content;
It is more than many have;
Joy in little makes it much,
And will help thy soul to save.

Canst do little? It's enough;
Do it well and let it be,
It will count as much as more,
When thy Judge requires it thee.

Little talent well improved,
Little service rightly done—
Be it all thy Master asks,
Brings the victor's palm and crown.

Hopeful, gladsome, humble, too,
In thy toiling find thy rest,
And the little toils of time
Shall forever make thee blest.

Selected Serial.

MARGIE'S MISSION.

BY MARIE OLIVER,

Author of "Ruby Hamilton," "Old and New Friends," "Seba's Discipline," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

"Don't, dear," she said tremulously. "We know God never forsakes those who put their trust in him; and hasn't he promised to be a Father to the fatherless? We are both Christians, Kirke, and though our lamps seem a little dim at present, I believe they will burn brightly. Now listen to me, dear! I don't want you to work and I lie idle just because I have never been away from home. I mean to help you all I can; and I intend asking Mr. Low to give me a situation in his store. Standing behind a counter is not the worst thing in the world, and besides, I should be near you. I am quite sure he will make room for me. He is a good man, and was father's firm friend. Then we will try and find a good home for Mildred and Margie"—Ruth choked.—"To be sure we have always been together, but if God has seen fit to separate us, we ought not to complain. He has let us love each other longer than he has some others."

"Ah! but you are girls." Kirke sat up. He had always been taught to regard the weaker sex with reverence, and it fretted him to think of his gentle sister Ruth exposed to the rude taunts and slurs of sharp-tongued shop-girls. "It seems as if I could not have it so, yet it is the only way I can see at present. But, thank God, I am growing older every day, and then!"—Kirke's lips shut resolutely together.

"Remember there is a season for all things; first for the boy, then for the man," said a voice in the doorway, and uncle Toby's genial face looked in on them. Ruth Morton uttered a cry, and clung with both hands to the old man's neck.

"Well, well, now," he managed to say as he freed himself from her embrace. "I had no idea you'd be so glad to see an old body like me. But I was sitting round home doing nothing, and Kizzie says, 'Why don't you take a run up and see the children? Maybe 'twill freshen them up a bit.' Fancy me running, and my old legs stiff with the rheumatiz! But any way, I came as quickly as I could, and it seems as if I was just in time to help you out of your difficulty. I couldn't help hearing a little of your talk, Kirke, as I came in, and all I want to say, my boy, is not to fret about Ruth as long as Toby Hale has a roof over his head. You are young yet, and will need all you earn; and though I know Ruth wants to help, it isn't necessary she should go out into the world to do it. Aunt Kizzie has more orders now for her stockings than she can fill, and Ruth is a first-rate knitter. Besides, Kizzie is getting to drop stitches, and needs a pair of young eyes to look them up. So I propose Ruth shall come to us as soon as she can, and help aunt Kizzie with her sewing, knitting and lace-mending. We want Margie and Mildred too. Mildred can beat me in making fancy baskets. Her little fingers are just suited to the work, and trade has picked up wonderfully since Blunt & Co. opened their new store. As for Margie—well, we can't do without her, any way. The old house is getting lonely. We need a little one to cheer us up, and no one can do that like Margie. As for you, Kirke, I've seen Mr. Low this afternoon and had a talk with him. He tells me he intends offering you a home with him. He spoke highly of your ability and interest in business, and remarked he supposed a larger salary wouldn't come amiss. So if you'll take an old man's advice, my boy, you'll let Kizzie and me take care of Ruth and the little ones, and follow the leadings of Providence."

"O uncle Toby!" Ruth's arms held him closer. "I believe God sent you to us. We were groping in the dark before you came, and now it is all light. How can I thank you? Oh! I did dread going among strangers, after all, much as I wanted to help Kirke."

Kirke Morton could only shake the old man's hand.

"One of these days I will repay you," he said brokenly.

"Tut, tut, boy!" said uncle Toby, "let the Lord do that. He'll give better measure, pressed down and running over. Why, it makes my old heart young again to think of having little folks about the house." And the old man hurried away to talk the affair over with his good wife Kizzie.

Thus the future of Ruth and her loved ones seemed mapped out. She had been bereft of an earthly parent, but her Heavenly Father had not forgotten her. Instead of the cold world she so much dreaded, she was to share the security of another home, and the companionship of those she loved and who loved her. Surely God was good.

Again she found herself standing by the window overlooking Lois' home. How she longed to be able to sob her full heart on that beloved friend's breast. It seemed as if years had passed since her loving nature had received its first great shock, yet it was only a few days ago. She had not seen Lois to speak with since. Death affected dainty Lois. The closed blinds of the old Parsonage sent a chill over her, so she had kept away till the day of the funeral, and then had found no opportunity to talk to Ruth. Poor Ruth! She had no father now into whose ear to pour her troubles. He lay in the village churchyard, and the daughter he had loved so tenderly, stood by the study window alone.

Slowly another week climbed its round in the ladder of months, and saw the little Parsonage with closed blinds, the gate nailed up, and the rose bushes and pansies left to themselves.

Ruth had not given up her old home without a struggle. Every beam and rafter was dear to her young heart. Here Margie had been born, and here her parents had died. Here was her father's study, and there was her own dear little room tucked away under the eaves. Looking back at it as she stood in the doorway, she wondered if with the next family that moved in, there would be another young girl to dream like dreams by the side of the window where the roses hung the thickest, and if she would care for the pansies as tenderly as she had done. Then she put all thoughts of the past from her mind, and leaving the present to take care of itself, went out to face the future.

It seemed as if uncle Toby's house had expanded to its utmost after Ruth and her two sisters came to share its peace and quiet; but somehow the extra burdens set lightly on aunt Kizzie's shoulders. She liked Ruth's modest ways and Margie's willingness to do whatever uncle Toby desired. Despite their limited means, the good couple did not hesitate to do all they could to make the lives of the orphan girls pleasant, receiving in return, as uncle Toby prophesied, full measure from the Lord, pressed down and running over, in the shape of extra orders for fancy baskets and woollen stockings.

Now that Ruth's schooldays were over, but very little happened to give variety to her daily life; and though her heart grew heavy whenever the Academy bell was heard calling the scholars to their accustomed duties, she would resolutely close her ears to its cheerful voice.

Margie went every day, and would occasionally bring a trifling message from Lois; but Lois did not come herself. She told Nora Ruth's black dress oppressed her. Besides, Ruth no longer cared for fun and frolic, and Lois was all spirits. Ruth Morton could not but feel that her friend Lois was drifting out of her life. Yet she could not let her go without making an effort to hold her; and one afternoon while the shadows were lengthening across the street, she tied on her simple black hat, and opening the little gate, walked away in the direction of the house on the hill.

Lois was out among her flowers, watering-pot in hand, but she saw the slender figure coming up the walk, and after a moment's hesitation, went forward to meet her.

"How do you do, Ruth?" she said, "O Lois!"

Those two little words betrayed all the pent-up grief in Ruth's heart. Reaching out her arms, she threw them about the astonished Lois, and laying her head on her shoulder, burst into tears. Poor Ruth! it seemed years since she had had a friend to turn to. To be sure aunt Kizzie was kind, but aunt Kizzie was not Lois.

Lois unclasped the clinging arms from her neck gently.

"Don't, Ruth," she said. "You know I don't like to see any one cry. In my opinion, tears are useless things. One never knows what becomes of them. Oh! how horrid your black dress looks. It makes me shiver. I never could endure black. How suddenly your father died, didn't he? Heart disease is terrible. It must have been a great shock to you?"

"Yes." Ruth slowly straightened herself up, and stepping back, let her arms fall by her side. "Yes; death is sudden, even when we are prepared for it. A great change has come to me, Lois, but not so great as the one which has come to you. Lois! Lois! what is the matter? You are no longer yourself! We were always good friends, what has come between us?"

Lois's cheek reddened.

"Why, of course we were always good friends," she said. "Nothing has come between us that I know of, unless—unless it is that—well, Ruth, you are different from what you used to be."

Lois ended with a jerk.

"'Different from what I used to be!'" Ruth repeated her words slowly. Then as their meaning dawned on her, a smile lighted up her sad face. "Yes," she said, "I am different, Lois. I have become a Christian."

"I know it." Lois watered her flower-beds heedlessly, breaking off several rare blossoms in her haste. "I expect that is the trouble, Ruth. You are a Christian and I am not. Now if I have an intimate friend, I want her to be fond of the things I am, and you know I dote on parties, theatres and operas. I never could see much pleasure shut up in a poky old prayer meeting, singing long metre tunes, and listen to this and that brother drawl through a long exhortation on the evil of the very things they would do themselves the first chance they got. It seems to me, Ruth, that you and I are travelling two different roads. Why, I have got where I don't dare laugh for fear you'll think it wicked! I am afraid to tell you of the slightest flirtation, lest I see your face fall. It's no use, Ruth. The world and Christianity can't pull well together. One always makes the other sick, and since the night you told me you had decided to become a Christian, I've felt I was hardly the companion for you. I'm flighty, you sober. I'm heedless, you a pattern of propriety; and so—and so"—

Lois faltered under the steady brown eyes fixed on her. How clear they were! How honest! How sincere! She watched them till she saw an expression of pain steal into them, then her own dropped. A silence of several minutes followed, then Ruth broke it.

"I am sorry I have disappointed you, Lois," she said, "but I cannot say I am sorry I have become a Christian. I hope you will be one too, one of these days. It pains me to think that our pleasant intimacy must end so soon, and yet"—

"It needen't," interrupted Lois eagerly. "You know, Ruth, that you are the only girl in Maplewood I ever really and truly loved; and everything might be as it always has been, if you would only give up some of the queer ideas you've got into your head lately. I am sorry, you know, that you have lost your father, and I really want to do something to help you. I was talking with papa about you last night, and I made a suggestion which he fell in with instantly, though I knew he would before I made it. Dear papa, he is so good! I suppose you've heard I am going away, Ruth? No? Well, that is news, for I supposed all Maplewood had it by this time, though I only decided last night. Yes; I am going abroad next month to complete my education. Papa's business calls him to Europe, and he thinks a change will prove beneficial for me, as the Academy here is not first-class. I shall probably be gone two years, and the house will be closed while I'm away. Now, Ruth, comes the most important part to us both. Will you go with me? The conditions are slight, when you take into consideration all you will gain; a change in dress (you know I hate black), a return to your old light-hearted manner, and an interest in the things I love. Of course I don't expect you to become gay all at once. Your bereavement prevents that. But I want a companion, and had rather have you than any girl I know. I am sure so long as Mildred and Margie are well taken care of, Kirke would think my offer too good a one to be set lightly aside. Only think of it, Ruth! Music, art, books, dress, free of all expense to yourself for two years."

To be co tinued.

A Bad Habit.

There is a certain very bad result from tardiness at church not often dwelt upon, that of those early in place looking round to see who is coming in late. It is highly impolite to the one occupying the pulpit and irreverent to the God we are professing to worship, if from Scripture reading, praise, or in prayer, as do some, we turn to observe curiously those who are tardy. Yet one-half of the average congregation thoughtlessly do it.

At a series of meetings once held in the vestry of a large church, the entrance to which being a side door, the congregations had to turn half way round, they almost invariably did so in one body as each late-comer entered. The minister conducting the exercises was totally deaf. One night after several meetings, the pastor said, just before sermon time,—

"Our good brother here in the pulpit, as well as myself, has been much annoyed by the habit of this congregation turning their heads each time the door is opened. As he hears nothing of the confusion made by the late comers, he says Satan has suggested to him that there is an invisible string extending from each person's nose to the door-knob, so that when it is turned everybody's head is drawn around, and the idea is so ludicrous that amid the distress at your lack of interest in the services, he is often inclined to laugh at the absurd suggestion. Will you see that he is no more annoyed?"

Of course no more heads were turned that night. After the service the deaf man said,—

"Brother I think the Lord has interposed mightily in my behalf. You know how Satan has tempted me, and while you were giving the notices tonight I prayed earnestly that the people might be so impressed by my message that they would not turn round as they had been so universally doing all through the preliminary exercises; and you must have noticed how every eye was upon the pulpit all the time since."

"Very true, Brother H——," was the reply written on the deaf man's tablet, "but while you were praying to God to keep the people from turning their heads I was talking to them on the scandalousness of doing so."

"Ah," responded the deaf man, "I see; faith and works go together. We must watch as well as pray."

That was many years ago, but to this day I scarcely ever turn my head to observe who is coming in without remembering that reproof, much needed in all the churches of our land.

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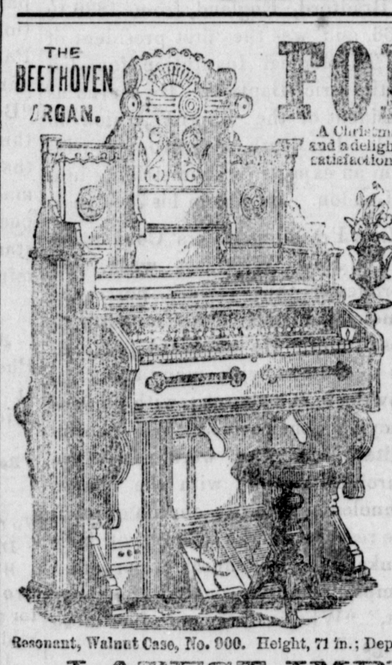
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