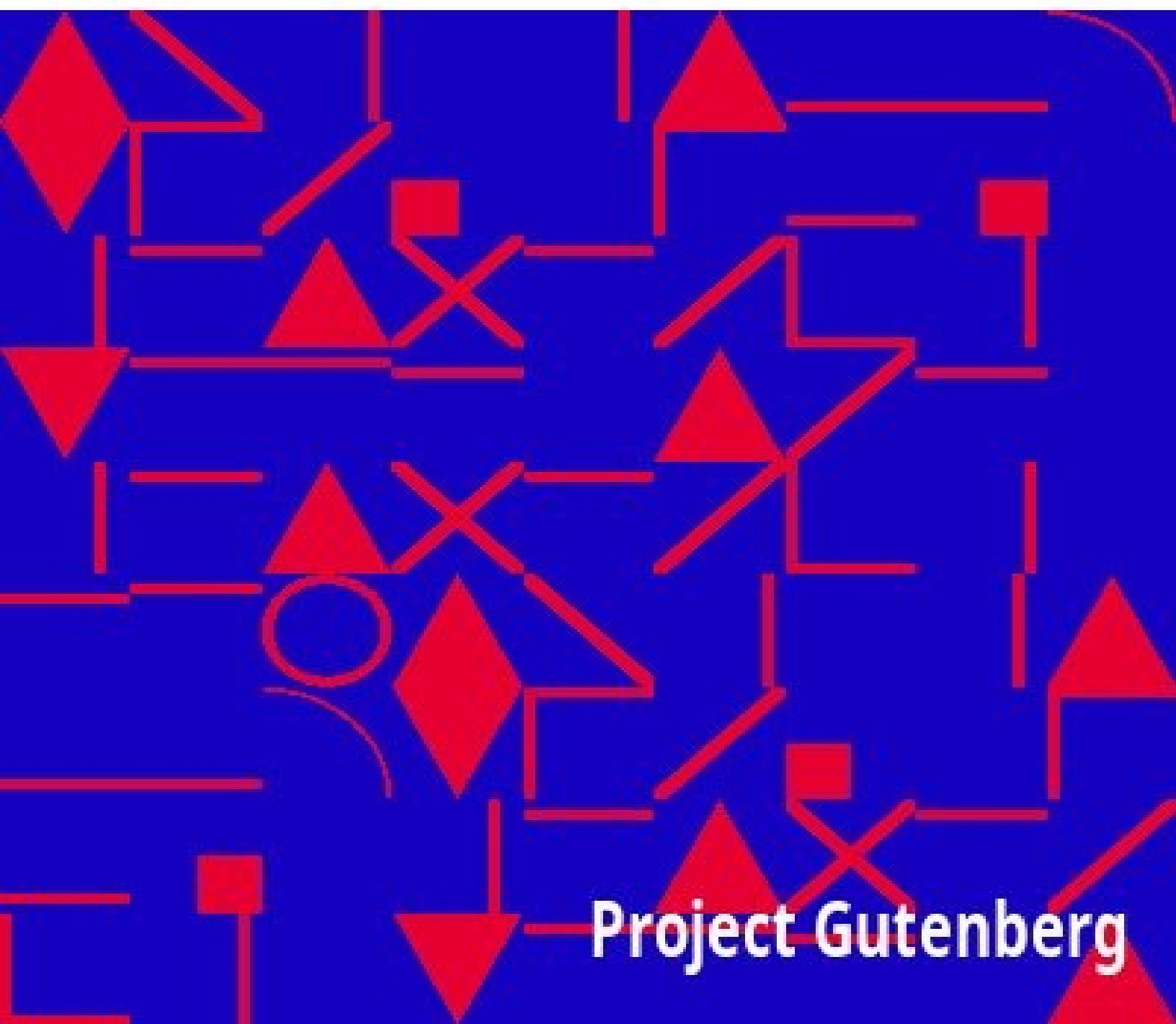


Amy Harrison; or, Heavenly Seed and Heavenly Dew

Unknown



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Front cover of the book

Decoration

AMY HARRISON

OR

Heavenly Seed and Heavenly Dew.

Decoration

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Amy kneels and prays at the side of her bed

A NEW FEELING.

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AMY HARRISON.

CHAPTER I.

THE WALK.

NE fine Sunday morning two little girls, called Amy and Kitty Harrison, set out from their mother's cottage to go to the Sunday school in the neighbouring village. The little hamlet where they lived was half a mile from the school. In fine weather it was a very pleasant walk, for the way lay by the side of a little chattering stream, which fed the roots of many pretty wild flowers; and then, leaving the valley, the path struck across some corn-fields, which were now quite yellow for harvest. And even in wet weather the little girls seldom missed the school; for their mother was a careful woman, and they themselves loved their teacher and their lessons. Mrs. Mordaunt, the wife of the clergyman, taught them on Sunday, for both Amy and Kitty were in the first class.

Amy was tripping lightly along, enjoying the sunshine. Every now and then she bent down and gathered a wild flower,—the four-leaved yellow potentilla, or the meadow-sweet, or a spike of golden rod, or a handful of forget-me-nots, watered by the stream, to make a little nosegay for her teacher; for Mrs. Mordaunt loved flowers and would sometimes take the lesson for the day from them. And she loved better still the affectionate remembrances of her children.

Kitty, meanwhile, was walking very soberly along, reading her hymn-book. Perhaps from this you may think that Kitty was the more industrious and thoughtful of the two; but it was not so. Amy had risen early that morning, and got her lessons all ready, and so she could enjoy the pleasant walk freely; for you know, or if you do not know I hope you will learn, that it is always those who are busiest at their work that can be merriest in their hours of leisure. Nothing gives us such an appetite for enjoyment as hearty work. So Amy tripped on, humming a cheerful hymn, while poor Kitty kept on saying over and over again the words of her hymn, and vainly trying to stop her ears from hearing and her eyes from seeing all the pleasant sights and sounds around her. But the birds were so busy singing, and the fish kept springing up from the stream, and every now and then a bright butterfly would flit across, or a little bird perch on a spray close to her,

and everything around seemed trying so mischievously to take her attention from her book, so that they had reached the gate at the end of the wood before Kitty had learned two verses of her hymn.

You see, these two little girls were not quite like each other, although they had the same home, and the same lessons, and the same plays. If you sow two seeds of the same plant in the same soil, you know they will grow up exactly like each other. The flowers will be of the same colour, the same smell, the same shape; the roots will suck up the same nourishment from the soil, and the little vessels of the stems and leaves will cook it into the very same sweet, or sour, or bitter juices. But with little children it is quite different. You may often see two children of one family, with the same friends, the same teaching, the same means of improvement, as different in temper and character from each other as if they had been brought up on opposite sides of the world. Indeed, it is as strange for children of one family to be alike, as for flowers to be unlike. Why is this? Among other reasons one great one is, that God has given to children a *will*—a power of choosing good or evil. Flowers have no will; they cannot help being beautiful, and being what God meant them to be. The earth feeds them, and the rains water them and make them grow without any choice or will of theirs; but with you, children, it is quite otherwise. God has given you *wills*; and it is in your own power to choose whether you will be good and happy children, and a blessing to all around you, and turning everything around you into a blessing, every year growing wiser and better; or whether you will yield to the evil within and around you, and turn health, and time, and Christian teaching, and all the good things God sends to feed your souls, into food for your selfish and idle natures, and so grow every year worse and worse. You must do one of these two things,—you may do the best. Remember I do not say you can do them *for* or *by yourselves*, but you *can do* them. God has said so. The flowers cannot choose or ask for food, and so God chooses for them and gives without asking. You are higher creatures than they, and can choose and ask, and so God will wait for you to ask before he gives; but he is only waiting for this, and he is always ready to hear.

Mrs. Mordaunt had told the children something of this last Sunday, and Amy thought of it as she walked, and did ask God to bless her teacher's words to her that day.

Now you have seen how Amy and Kitty Harrison used their power of choice. The sun had beamed into the room for Kitty as well as for Amy that morning. God had given them both the pleasant morning hours of his day to use as they

liked best. Kitty had chosen to spend them in dozing lazily in bed, while Amy had jumped out of bed and dressed quickly, and gone out to her favourite seat under an old cherry tree to learn her lessons.

So the little girls reached the gate at the end of the wood. Outside was a road, across which lay the corn-fields leading to the church, and beside it stood a cottage where Amy and Kitty used to stop to call for little Jane Hutton, one of their school-fellows. Jane's father was a blacksmith; and the Huttons were richer than the Harrisons, so that Jane had gayer bonnets and smarter dresses than Kitty and Amy. This morning she had such beautiful new ribbons that Kitty's attention was quite caught by them. And Jane too was not a little proud of them; her mother had given a shilling a yard for them at the next town. If Kitty had found it difficult to learn her lessons before, she now found it quite impossible; for in the midst of every line she could not help reckoning how many weeks' halfpence it would take, and how many times she would have to open the gate for travellers who came to see the waterfall near the cottage, before she could buy a ribbon like that.

CHAPTER II.

AT SCHOOL.

T length the children reached the school before the hymn was learned, and Kitty felt very much ashamed when, after stammering through three verses, Mrs. Mordaunt gave her back the book, saying, "I would rather have no lesson from you, Kitty, than one learned so carelessly as this." However, it was too late to repair the fault, so Kitty resolved to give her very best attention to the chapter they were going to read. It was the parable of the sower and the seed, in the thirteenth of St. Matthew. I cannot tell you all that Mrs. Mordaunt said about it, but it was something of this kind:—

"The Saviour was sitting on a little strip of level land by the side of the Sea of Galilee. Behind him were high mountains, towering one above another to the clouds; before him, the waves came rippling quietly against the low shore. Around him were crowds of people gathered together from the villages and towns many miles around to listen unto him. Had all these people come to Jesus for the same thing, do you think, Jane Hutton?"

Jane Hutton started at the question. She had been playing with her new parasol, and her thoughts were very far from the Sea of Galilee. Mrs. Mordaunt repeated the question in another way. "Do you think all the people who came to Jesus came because they loved him, and wanted to be his disciples?"

"No; there were the Pharisees," said Kitty.

"Yes; they came to try to find fault with him."

"And the sick," said Amy timidly, "who came to be healed."

"True," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "And then there were very many, doubtless, who came from mere curiosity, because they had heard their friends talk of his wonderful power of healing, or the new, wise, and strange words of him who seemed to them only the son of a poor carpenter of Nazareth. But were there any who gathered close around him, and loved his words for their own sake, not because they were new or interesting, but because they were *true* and *God's words*, because they had sins to be forgiven and Jesus could forgive, and sick

souls which only Jesus could heal?”

“Yes; there were the disciples.”

“What do you mean by disciples?”

“Does it not mean those who love Jesus?” asked Amy.

“No; don’t you remember it means scholars?” said Kitty, who was quicker than her sister, and rather proud of her better memory.

“You are both right,” said Mrs. Mordaunt. “The disciples of Jesus are those who come to learn of him; and the first lesson every one who comes to Jesus learns is to love him. Nothing can be learned of Christ without loving him.

“Well,” she continued, “our Lord looked round on the crowd: the proud and clever men who stood knitting their brows, and eagerly watching his words, and from time to time whispering to one another; the eager multitude, who listened in mute wonder to his wonderful lessons; the little group of disciples who gathered affectionately about him; the sick whom he had healed; the possessed and mad whom he had restored to reason; the despised sinners whom he had received and forgiven; and perhaps there were some pious mothers there with little children who were not afraid to come close to him, for he loved little children. But he saw more of that crowd than we should have seen if we had been there. What was it that he saw which we cannot see?”

The children were silent a minute, and then Amy murmured, “Was it their hearts, ma’am?”

Mrs. Mordaunt replied kindly, “Yes; and he saw how differently his words would tell on the hearts of the crowd around. And so he taught them a lesson in this story which we call—”

“The parable of the sower,” said Kitty quickly.

Then Mrs. Mordaunt examined the children about the parable, and finding they had attended to it and understood it, she talked to them about it.

“Now, dear children,” she said, “this school-room, with its whitewashed walls, is a very different place from the shores of the Sea of Galilee; and you, little children, with your pleasant English homes, and your Bibles, and your Sunday schools, I daresay think yourselves very different from the grave priests, and

clever lawyers, and rough Hebrew labourers and farmers, and Roman soldiers, who gathered around the Saviour then. But among you, as among that multitude, who have so long since gone the way of all the earth, the eye of Jesus Christ (for he sees here as well as there) sees two great divisions, not of rich and poor, or clever and stupid, but of those who are his disciples and those who are not. Which class would you like to belong to?"

Kitty answered eagerly, "His disciples, ma'am."

Some of the children were silent, and some spoke with Kitty; but little Amy said nothing—the tears filled her eyes and choked her voice.

"You may all be Christ's little disciples," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "He calls you to him. You may all come to him *privately*, as the disciples did; pray to him in secret, and have his words made clear to you, if you will. You may all bring forth fruit to his glory, thirty, or sixty, or a hundred fold.

"You see," she continued, "although there are only two great bodies or parties in the world,—those in whom Christ's words *live*, and those in whom they *die*,—yet there are many smaller differences among each of these parties. Some of the seed in the parable fell merely on the surface, and never was seen any more after it was sown: just as, I am afraid, some of you have often left all thoughts of God behind when you left the school or the church, and never thought of him or his words from one Sunday to another. The fowls of the air—that is, some light thought or play, or Satan, who goes about to put these in your heart—come the moment the words die on your ear, and take the good seed quite away. And then some of you like to hear about Christ, and his words and works, and are quick, and easily understand and take in new thoughts, and, perhaps, think you would like to be good children, and to love Christ, and be his disciples, and go home and go to sleep full of good intentions and plans of correcting your faults. But the next morning other lessons have to be learned, and other things to be thought about, and your faults and bad habits are strong; and so every day the echo of the Sunday's teaching grows fainter, and at last the end of the week comes, and finds you no nearer God or the fulfilment of your good resolutions than the beginning. The thorns have sprung up—the cares and pleasures of this world—and choked the good seed that was beginning to grow. And then, again, perhaps, there are some of you who would like very much to be pious, only you are afraid of being unlike others, afraid of being teased for being strict, or laughed at; for persecution does not only consist in burning or hurting the body,—little annoyances are often harder to bear than great sorrows. But think how very

cowardly this would be, how very ungrateful and ungenerous to Jesus. He bore the sneers and taunts of crowds for your sake, and bore them too when he was suffering *great pain*; and can you not bear a little laugh for his sake? Think how happy it is to be able to bear a little for him who bore so very much for us; think what joy to have his eye on us, and to hear his kind voice saying, 'Blessed are ye, little children, who confess me as your Master before men; for I will confess you to be my beloved ones before the angels of God.' And then, dear children," Mrs. Mordaunt added, "I hope there are some of you who do love your Saviour, and are treasuring up his words in your hearts; and to you I would say, there are differences even among Christ's disciples. Some bring forth fruit thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. Seek, then, not only to bring forth fruit, but *much* fruit; to be better and happier every day. God means you to do this; he will certainly enable you to do it if you ask.

"And before you leave," she said, "I will first tell you three things which I particularly wish you to remember: the *place* where the seed is to grow; the *enemies* which try to destroy its life; and *what makes it grow*. First, where is the seed sown?"

"In the heart," replied all the children.

"Are your spelling lessons, or your lessons on the multiplication table, sown in your hearts?"

The children smiled, and answered, "No."

"Then you do not expect them to bear fruit in your life. It does not improve your tempers or your hearts to learn that *h e a r t* spells heart, does it? or that 12 times 12 are 144?"

The children thought not.

"Then all you are expected to do with such lessons is to remember them; is it not?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply.

"Now that is precisely the point where your lessons in reading and spelling differ from your lessons about the Bible. When you sow seed in your memories, it is like laying up grains in a closed box. We do not expect them to grow; we are quite content if we find as many as we leave; we do not expect any fruit or growth. But when I sow seed in your hearts, it is like putting it into the ground;

we want it to *grow*. It is not enough for it to remain safe and sound; we hope that it will bear fruit in your lives. I do not care only for finding it safe in your memories the next Sunday. I long to know that it has been making you better and wiser children *during the week*, helping you to fight with faults, teaching you to love God and one another. And speaking of your faults leads me to think of the enemies the little seed has to encounter. Can you think of some of the things which try to hinder its growth?"

"There were the fowls," answered Kitty.

"And the thorns," said some of the other children.

"And the sun," said Amy.

"You know what the thorns and the scorching heat are?"

"Our faults and troubles?" asked Kitty.

"Yes. Side by side with the seed, and from the same soil, the heart, spring up thorns and weeds, which try to choke the seed. And the little seed has to struggle hard for its life; if it does not choke the weeds, the weeds will choke it. What must we do with the weeds?"

"Cut them down," said the children.

"Yes. We must fight with our faults, and not let one, however small, be neglected, or it will soon cover the garden; for all weeds grow fast. But the other enemies, the heat and the fowls, cannot be *destroyed*. The scorching sun—trials and mockery—can only injure those plants which have no root, those hearts which are not trusting in Jesus, and rooted in him. But the fowls of the air,—those powerful and wicked spirits who are constantly on the watch to crush all that is good and encourage all that is evil in our hearts,—what can the little seed do against such enemies?"

The children gave no answer.

"*It can do nothing*," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "You all see it has no power whatever; and in this, too, the seed is like us. What then can save it?"

There was a pause of a minute, and then Amy ventured to ask, "Does not God watch over it?"

"He does, my child," replied Mrs. Mordaunt. "But do you remember why I said

the plants are cared for without asking?”

“Because they cannot ask.”

“But we can ask. What is it called to ask anything of God?”

“To pray,” said all the children.

“Yes; that is what you may all do. Our Saviour calls himself the great husbandman or gardener; and now that he has risen and reigns on high, if you ask him, he will not disdain to watch over the little seed of good sown in your hearts. He will send the Holy Spirit, like the rain to young corn, to strengthen all that is good in you; and he will enable you, feeble as you are, to keep down all bad feelings, and tempers, and habits, which would choke the seed.

“So there are three things for you to remember: the seed is sown in your hearts, and must bring forth fruit in your lives; you have enemies within and without to fight with far stronger than any of you; and you have a Friend far stronger than all your enemies, who will give you the victory if you seek his aid. And shall I give you a little grain of precious seed to bear home with you?”

The children all wished it.

“Think, then, on these words, ‘*By love serve one another.*’ Try to *love* them, and pray to God for his strength to enable you, for the sake of his Son, our Saviour; for remember, though I cannot go home with you, *God does.*”

The church bells were ringing, the classes broke up to form into marching order, and the lesson was over.



CHAPTER III.

AT HOME.

ND what did the children think of Mrs. Mordaunt's words? We will follow them home and see. Little Jane Hutton, I am afraid, forgot them; for during the service her eyes kept wandering round the church in search of gay dresses and bonnets, and watching what her school-fellows thought of her own new ribbons.

Kitty Harrison had attended to what Mrs. Mordaunt said, and resolved to do it; so she found out all the places in her prayer-book, and went home full of plans of amendment, and in the evening she drew her little stool to the window, and began to read her Bible, *not* so much because she wished to learn what it said, as because she thought it *right* to read it. But, in the first place, her thoughts would keep wandering to Jane Hutton's ribbons, then she could not help listening to what her father and mother were talking about, and the kitten would keep playing with her frock; and so she got through a chapter without very well understanding it, and then was rather glad that it grew too dark for her to read any more. Soon after, the children were sent to bed, and Kitty went upstairs wondering why she did not like to read the Bible better, and rather pleased to think that to-morrow was a play-day.

Kitty had forgotten two great things: she had forgotten that to love *God's Word* we must first love *God*; and she had forgotten that the little seed could not sprout without rain, and that the dew of heaven, the Holy Spirit, must be *asked for*.

Meantime, Amy was feeling very differently. She thought how good it was of Jesus, the Son of God, to care about the love of little children, and to watch the good seed sown in their hearts, and nourish it, and water it, and make it grow; and she thought that it would be the happiest thing in the world to be his disciple, and to do what he wished, and be loved and approved by him; and she resolved to try. So as they walked home, she planned that she would go into a quiet place in the garden, under the trees, and pray to God.

But when they reached the cottage, they had to put away their Sunday things; and when Amy came down her mother desired her to keep the baby while she got the tea ready. Amy thought it hard to be hindered in her plans; but she

remembered the verse, “By love serve one another,” and it came into her mind that Christ might be as pleased at her cheerfully giving up her own way to help her mother, as if she had been praying to him, and the thought made her happy, and she danced the baby, and played with it till it crowed with delight. After tea, she could not find any quiet in the room where the family were sitting, so she went into the bedroom and knelt down by the bedside. She had always been accustomed to say her prayers morning and evening, because she had been taught, and because she would have been afraid to go to sleep without; but now it was a different thing—*she wanted something which she felt only God could give*. She wanted to be made good, to have her sins forgiven, to have strength to overcome her faults, that Christ might love her and bless her; and she asked this earnestly of him. She felt sure he would hear; and she rose from her knees with a lightened heart, and opened her Bible and read, until it was quite dark, of the Saviour and his goodness. And that night she went to sleep happy in the care of God.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW LEAF, AND HOW IT WAS FILLED.

THE next morning Amy awoke early. It was cold and rainy, and she felt inclined to turn on her pillow, but the feeling came strongly over her that she had something *new* before her, that this week was to be the starting-point of a new life; and the verse, too, which had been the last on her lips in the evening, was the first in her heart in the morning, "By love serve one another." She remembered that the fire had to be lit, and the water brought from the spring for the kettle; so she jumped out of bed, and was quickly dressed and ready to go downstairs. Kitty would not follow her example. She did not forget to ask God's blessing on the day, and then she called Kitty again. But Kitty was very sleepy; she only said she was sure it would be time to get up in half an hour, and wrapped herself up comfortably and went to sleep again. Amy thought it was rather selfish of Kitty to leave all the work to her; but she said nothing, and tripped downstairs. She had soon brought the water and lighted the fire, and brushed and dusted everything neat and bright, and then she found she had a little time to spare. Near their cottage lived a poor old widow, named Hill. Amy knew she could hardly hobble about her house to do her work, and she thought it would be a nice way of "serving one another," if she were just to run down and light Widow Hill's fire, and put her room neat. No sooner planned than done. Away she ran; half-an-hour, with Amy's light feet and busy fingers, did the work which would have cost the old woman an hour or two; and rich with the widow's thanks, and hungry with work, she tripped back to breakfast, happy to think how her mother would be pleased with what she had done.

But on entering the cottage, Amy's spirits received a sudden check; the family were all at breakfast, and her father spoke rather severely to her about her never being in time for anything. Amy did not answer; she felt ill-used, and she was too much hurt to say what she had been about; so she sat down in silence to her breakfast. Kitty was beside her, yawning as if she had only just got out of bed. "Yet," thought Amy, "no one ever scolds her; it is no good to try to please people." So Amy sat, getting angrier and angrier, and not enjoying her breakfast a bit, and thinking everybody very unkind, although she said nothing; you might, perhaps, have thought she bore the rebuke very meekly. Now, I do not mean to

deny that this was a trial for poor Amy. It is a very great trial to be blamed and misunderstood when we have been seeking to please people; but it is the pride of our own hearts which makes it so trying. If we were lowly, harsh words would not have half the power to wound us. Amy felt this, and she felt she was doing wrong, but that only made her more vexed; for instead of acknowledging her fault to herself, and asking God to forgive her and strengthen her against it, she went on brooding over her wrongs and nursing her anger in silence. After breakfast, Kitty asked her if she had been working in their garden all this time.

“No,” said Amy shortly.

“Have you been learning your lessons for next Sunday, then?”

“No,” answered Amy still more sharply.

Kitty looked puzzled for a minute, and then she laughed, and said, “I can’t see what good you’ve got, Amy, by being in such haste to get up. You seem to have done nothing but lose your temper.”

This was altogether more than Amy could bear; she made a bitter reply, and a quarrel began between the sisters, which made their walk to school very uncomfortable. It was so different from yesterday, Amy felt ready to cry, but she was ashamed that Kitty should see. Poor Amy entered the school-room with a sore heart. A bad temper is not likely to get sweet of itself, so Amy went on more and more discontented with herself, and her lessons, and everything else, until the class was called to read their morning lesson. The text from the Bible which stood at the head of the lesson happened to be, “For if you, from your heart, forgive not your brother his trespasses, how can your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses?” Amy had to read these words, and they struck to her heart; she thought of what sinful and angry feelings she had been cherishing, and how much she had to ask God to forgive her, and how little she felt inclined to forgive in her sister and others; and afterwards, as she wrote her copy, hot tears fell on the page, and she confessed her fault in her heart to God, and begged him to forgive her. Then she felt happier at once. After school, one of her school-fellows was kept in to finish a sum; she was crying, and did not seem able to do it, so Amy went quietly to her, and showed her the way, and then danced off to the play-ground. On their way home she had a harder struggle to make, and that was to tell Kitty she was sorry for her hasty words; but she conquered, and Kitty having confessed that she too had been in the wrong, the sisters felt happy again together.

This was true repentance; it was a sorrow for and confession of sin, and then forsaking the sin; it was a change of mind. That evening Amy felt very serious when she thought over the day's doings; she was weaker than she had thought—it was harder to do right than she had believed; but she resolved to try harder again to-morrow. So she went to bed hopeful, although rather sad. We shall see how her resolutions were carried out.



CHAPTER V.

TRY AGAIN.

MY did try very hard the next day, and she prayed earnestly for strength from on high. She rose early, she got everything ready in time for her father, and he praised her and called her “a thrifty little maid;” she never reproached Kitty with leaving the work to her; she went cheerfully through her lessons, and in the afternoon she had the delight of being highly commended by the mistress and set to teach one of the younger classes. After school, some of the children went blackberry-picking, and the Harrisons were of the number. They had a merry time of it; the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and the thick leaves of the wood where the blackberries grew just let enough of the sunbeams through; and Amy Harrison’s heart was full of peace and sunshine, and the woods were full of beautiful ripe blackberries, so that in a few hours the little party tripped homeward full of glee, and with baskets filled to the brim with large ripe blackberries. They were walking on fast, laughing and chattering, when Amy saw that a little lame girl named Lucy Maitland could not keep up with the rest, and so she stayed to talk to her. Lucy looked rather dismal, and her basket was not half full; she could not climb in and out among the rocks and brambles like the others. Amy felt sorry for her; she thought she would give her some from her own basket, but she did so wish to take it home full, and she did not like Kitty to have more than herself. But then the words breathed into her heart, “By love serve one another,” and she resolved to seize the opportunity; and without another word, she poured out a third of her own little store, and nearly filled Lucy’s basket. Lucy’s eyes glistened, but she had not time to say much, for the children were comparing what they had each gathered, and Amy’s basket had to be held up amongst the rest.

“Why, I thought your basket was quite full,” said Kitty.

“So it was,” exclaimed little Lucy, “but she has half emptied it to fill mine.”

The children all loved Amy for doing this, and wondered how it was they had not thought of little Lucy before; so now, many of them insisted on pouring some blackberries into Lucy’s basket, and giving part of Amy’s back to her. In this way Lucy and Amy’s stores were soon the largest of the whole, and the

children separated in good humour with each other and everything.

As Amy and Kitty entered the garden, the first thing that caught Amy's eye was her little baby sister sitting on her little chair under the window. On each side of the door grew a little rose tree, one of which belonged to Amy and one to Kitty. Amy's was a red rose. The flowers were nearly all gone, but one had lingered behind the rest. Amy had watched it with especial care: she had plucked off all the dead flowers around it, and this morning she had been thinking it would just be in beautiful bloom by Sunday, that she might take it to school as a present for Mrs. Mordaunt. And now there sat the baby with that very bud in her lap quietly picking it to pieces, and holding up the scattered leaves in Amy's face, she lisped, "Pretty, pretty!" Amy was too angry and too vexed to think, and it was of no use to scold the baby, so she snatched the rose from the baby's hands, and said, "You good-for-nothing, naughty little thing;" and then she burst into tears. The baby began to cry too, and their mother came out to know what was the matter. "O mother, how could you?" sobbed Amy passionately. "Why did you let baby sit close to my rose-bush—my beautiful rose? I had been saving it all the week for Mrs. Mordaunt—and it was my last."

Mrs. Harrison tried to comfort Amy; and Kitty offered her the best flower in her garden. They both felt very sorry for her. But Amy was not to be comforted, and so they gave up trying. Poor Amy's evening was quite spoilt,—not so much, I think, by the loss of her rose as by the loss of her temper.



CHAPTER VI.

THE TRUTH SETTING FREE.

THE next day she awoke, out of spirits and out of temper. She did not see why she should always work, while Kitty was enjoying herself in bed. She forgot the joy of serving others, and thought it very hard others should not try to serve her. We are apt to be very strict about other people's duties when we forget our own. So Amy lay in bed until the last moment, and then hurried on her clothes, and hurried over her work, and what was worse, hurried over her prayers, and thus went out to meet the day's temptations unarmed.

It never improves the temper to be hurried; and Amy was still further tried this morning by her father, who was in haste to be off to his work, and wondered why she was so slow.

"It's of no use," grumbled Amy to herself, "to try to do right and please everybody. The more one does, the more people expect. Nobody thinks of scolding Kitty for being slow."

A day so begun seldom grows bright of itself. There is a sunshine which can scatter even such clouds, but Amy did not look up to that; it did not seem to shine for her; it never does, *if you will not look up*. She felt very discontented and ill-used; it seemed as if no one cared for her, and everything worked together to torment her; and so things got darker and darker, and Amy's temper more bitter and her heart sorer every moment.

At last her mother went out, and Kitty was sent to the bakehouse, and Amy was left alone to rock the cradle and watch that the kettle did not boil over.

Amy had much rather not have been left alone just then; her own thoughts were not at all pleasant; but as she was alone she could not help thinking. At first she thought how unkind every one was, and of all the wrongs she had had to bear,—of Kitty's laziness, of her mother's rebukes, and then of her beautiful rose, and the naughty baby. "Kitty and the baby might do just what they liked, but if she did the least thing wrong she was scolded and punished." But this thought of the rose led her back to Mrs. Mordaunt's lesson on Sunday. Had the good seed borne good fruit this week,—this week that was to have been the beginning of a new

life? Had it led her to overcome one fault, to be a step nearer to God and goodness than before? Yet she had prayed and tried. What was then wanting? She was afraid she never should be God's happy child, she was so full of faults, and no one helped her to overcome them; and yet it was wretched to be as she was. What should she do?

So she sat rocking the cradle, and thinking of her resolutions and her failures until the tears rolled fast over her cheeks, and all the proud heart within her was melted into sorrow. As she sat thus, her elbows on her knees and her hands hiding her face, she heard a gentle voice at the door. She looked up. It was Mrs. Mordaunt asking for her mother. Amy was ashamed to be seen crying, and rose quickly, and answered as briskly as she could. But Mrs. Mordaunt saw she was unhappy, and she came forward, and laying her hand kindly on her shoulder she asked what was the matter.

Amy's tears flowed faster than ever now, and as soon as she could speak she sobbed out in a faint voice, "O ma'am, I cannot do right,—I cannot be good." Mrs. Mordaunt sat down beside her and said, "Don't despair, my child; you know the little song you sing in school. Try again and again until you succeed. Every one succeeds who goes on trying."

"But I have tried again and again," said poor Amy, "and I only get worse and worse. In the very moment when I want it, the strength goes away."

"Our own strength always will," said the lady. "Have you remembered to ask God for his strength? Do you remember what I told you about the little seed? its enemies are stronger than itself, but God is stronger than its enemies."

"I have prayed, ma'am," said Amy mournfully, "but I am ashamed to ask God any more. I have done what he tells us not so very often, I am afraid he never can love me;" and Amy cried bitterly.

"My child," said Mrs. Mordaunt, taking her hand, "if you had disobeyed your mother, and she were angry with you, would you run away from the house in the night, and choose rather to starve or die of cold than ask her forgiveness?"

Amy was silent.

"And if your mother could not bear to see you in want, and were to come out to you in the cold night with food and kind words, would you turn away from her and say, 'I know she can never love me, I have been so naughty;' and would you

refuse to receive her kindness, and ask her forgiveness?”

Amy bent down her head.

“Or would you say,” continued Mrs. Mordaunt, “as you saw her coming, ‘I will not go to meet her now; I will go and try to earn a few pence, and then I will come back to her and say, “Mother, I am very sorry, but here are some pence I have earned. Will you take them and forgive me, and let me be your child again?”’ Would that be *humility* and *gratitude*, or *pride* and *ingratitude*, Amy?”

“Pride and ingratitude,” said Amy in a low voice.

“And when the Lord Jesus says to you, ‘You have sinned against me and wronged me, and broken my laws; but I have come down from heaven to earth to seek you; come back to me, and I will receive and forgive you,’ would it be humility or pride to say, ‘Thou canst not forgive me, I am too sinful; but wait a little while, and I will do something good, and make myself better, and then I will come back to thee’?”

“*Pride*,” said Amy. “But I thought God only loved good children, ma’am; and I am not good.”

“God does only love good children, Amy,” said Mrs. Mordaunt very seriously, “and God knows you cannot be good.” Amy looked up in wonder.

“Who was Jesus Christ, Amy?”

“The Son of God,” said Amy.

“And what did he become man and come into this world for?”

Amy answered as she had been taught, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

“To save whom?”

“Sinners.”

“Not those who *thought themselves good*, but those who *knew* they had been *sinful*. What did he save them from?”

“From punishment,” said Amy thoughtfully.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Mordaunt, “from punishment, and from sin. He came to suffer,

that we might be delivered and freely forgiven, and to make us holy. Did it cost him nothing to do this, Amy?"

"He died for it on the cross," said Amy softly.

"He did indeed. And did he suffer all that pain and anguish of mind for nothing?"

Amy did not answer.

"It would have been for nothing," said Mrs. Mordaunt, "if we had still to earn forgiveness for ourselves. Jesus bore the punishment for us just because we could not have borne it; and he has borne it so that we shall never have to bear it now. If, then, you go and *give yourself up* to the blessed Saviour as *He calls you to do*, God will receive you for his sake, as if you had been always a good and obedient child, and Jesus will give you his Holy Spirit to abide with you always, and to make you good and obedient and happy."

"I must not wait until I am better for God to love me, then," said Amy doubtfully.

"Again, do you obey your mother in order to become her child; or do you obey her because she loves you and is your mother, Amy?"

"Because she is my mother," said Amy.

"And will your obedience make you more her child than you are, Amy?"

"No, ma'am."

"But because you are her child and she loves you, does that make you careless of obeying her?"

"If I only could be a better child to please her!" said Amy, the tears gathering in her eyes.

"It is so with God, my child," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "He loves you, not because you are good, but because he is good—because he is love, and so loved you that he gave his Son that you might be saved. Before you can love him, you must believe his word—that he loves you; and believing he loves you, he will make you good and happy. God has given the Bible to *tell of his love to you*. Read it, my child; believe it."

Mrs. Harrison came in just then, and Mrs. Mordaunt, after saying a few words to her, rose to leave.

That evening Amy took out her Bible with a new interest. “Can it be possible, indeed,” thought she, “that God has written in this book that he loves me—*me*, a little sinful child! I will look and see.” She read some of the passages she had learned before for Mrs. Mordaunt: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. lv. 1). “May I, indeed, come without anything to offer, and will God give me all I want?” Then: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 14, 15). “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John v. 24).

“Can I not *now* hear his words,” she thought, “and *do I not* believe?” She had read the words often before, but now a new light seemed to stream forth from them. She wanted forgiveness, and here was forgiveness offered; she wanted God to love her, and here in every page was some message of love from him. The Spirit of God opened the little child’s heart to the Word of God, and she read on as if she never could hear enough of this blessed news. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us; we love him because he first loved us.”

“I do believe!” she thought; and that evening, as she fell on her knees, she felt for the first time what it was to call God Our Father. Her whole heart glowed with gratitude and love to him who had so loved her. She laid her down to sleep with the eye of her heavenly Father upon her. She awoke in the morning and felt that he was near. Everything made her happy, because God sent everything, and God loved her. The streams, the woods, the flowers—they had never looked half so bright, for she felt that God had made them, and God had so loved her. At school, at her tasks,—everywhere she was happy as a bird, for God was everywhere. She could not feel cross, for God was near, *and he loved her*. She could fight with her faults now, for the Almighty was by to help her.

Little children! thousands of little children have had their hearts changed and made happy, just as Amy’s was; and so *may yours*. Only believe the love that God has to you, and you must love him; and be his dear and happy child.

Floral decoration from back cover of book

Transcriber's Note

Minor punctuation errors have been repaired.

Hyphenation has been made consistent.

The author uses both "a hundred fold" and "an hundred fold". These instances have been preserved as printed.

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