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THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL.



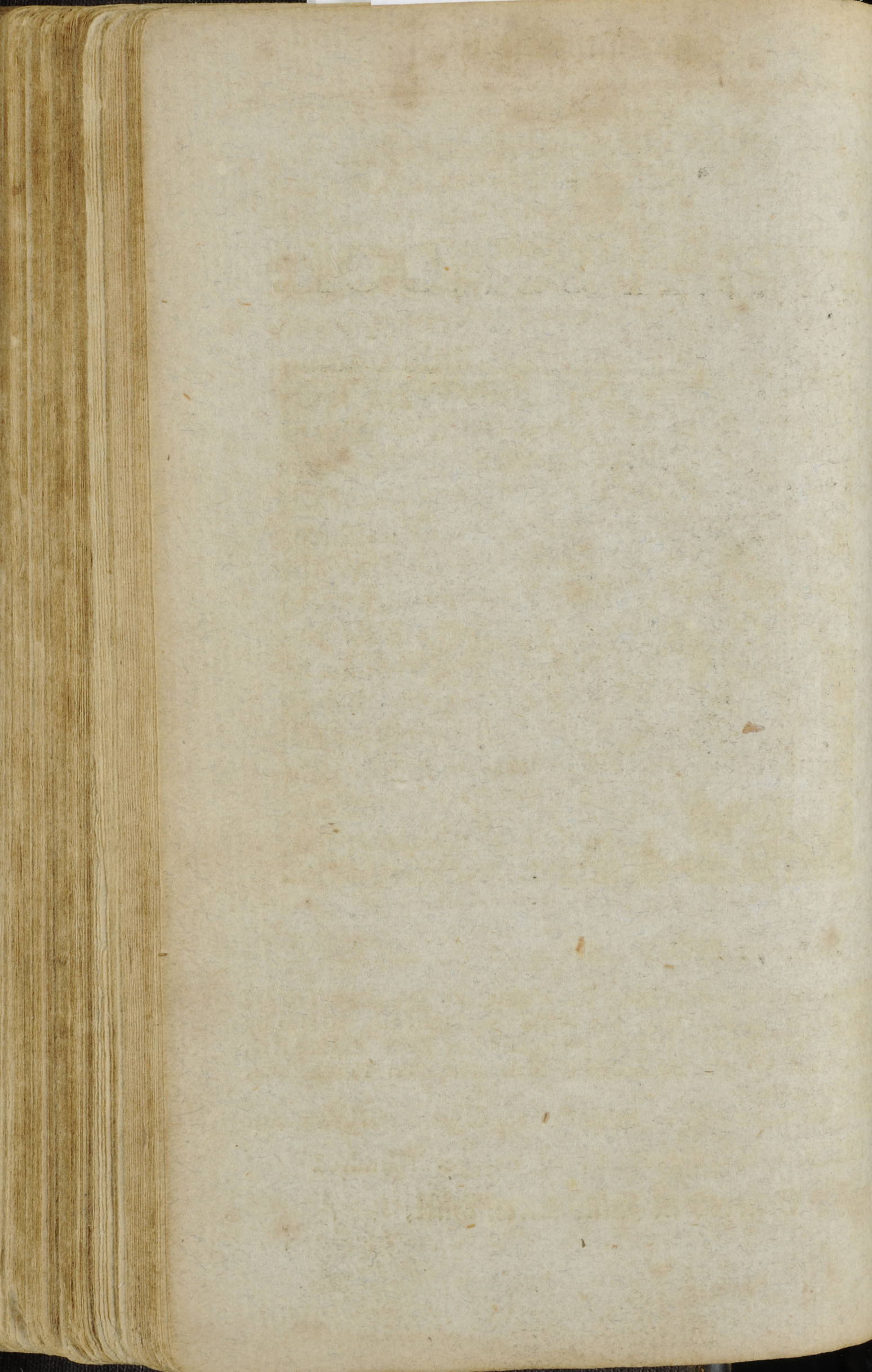
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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

PROMISED, in *The Cottage Cook*, to give some account of the manner in which Mrs. Jones set up her school. She did not much fear being able to raise the money, but money is of little use unless some persons of sense and piety can be found to direct these institutions. Not that I would discourage those who set them up even in the most ordinary manner, or from mere views of worldly policy. It is something gained to rescue children from idling away their Sabbath in the fields or the streets. It is no small thing to keep them from those tricks to which a day of leisure tempts the idle and the ignorant. It is something for them to be taught to read; it is much to be taught to read the Bible, and much indeed to be carried regularly to church. But all this is not enough. To bring these institutions to answer their highest end can only be effected by God's blessing on the following means, the choice of able teachers, and a diligent attention in some pious gentry to visit and inspect the schools.

ON RECOMMENDATIONS.

Mrs. Jones had one talent that eminently qualified her to do good, namely, *judgment*; this even the gay part of her life had kept her from many mistakes, but though she had sometimes been deceived herself, she was very careful not to deceive others, in recommending people to fill any office or office through selfishness or false kindness. She used to say "there is always some one appropriate quality which every person must possess, in order

to fit them for any particular employment. In this quality," said she to Mr. Simpson, the C^ogyman, "I do not expect perfection; but if they be destitute of this, whatever good qualities they possess besides, though they may do for some other employment, they will not do for this. If I want a pair of shoes, I go to a shoemaker; I do not go to a man of another trade, however ingenious he may be, to ask him if he cannot *contrive* to make me a pair of shoes. When I lived in London I learnt to be much on my guard as to recommendations. I found people often wanted to impose on me some one who was a burthen to themselves. Once I remember when I undertook to get a chaise for an hospital, half my acquaintance had a horse to offer me. Mrs. Gibson sent me an old woman whom she herself had discharged for wasting her own provisions, yet she had the conscience to commend this woman to take care of the provisions of a large community. Mrs. Grey sent me a discarded housekeeper whose constitution had been ruined by sitting up with Mrs. Grey's husband, but who she yet thought might be strong enough to undergo the fatigue of taking care of a hundred poor sick people. A third friend sent me a woman who had no merit but that of being poor, and it would be a charity to provide for her; the truth is, the lady was obliged to allow a small pension till she could get her off her hands by turning her on those of others."

"It is very true, Madam," said Mr. Simpson, "the right way is always to prefer the good of many to the good of one; if indeed it can be done without doing good to any one to place them in a situation in which they must feel unhappy, by not

ing how to discharge the duties of it. I will tell you how I manage. If the persons recommended are objects of charity, I privately subscribe to their wants; I pity and help them, but I never promote them to a station for which they are unfit, and thus hurt a whole community to help a distressed individual."

Thus Mrs. Jones resolved that the first step towards setting up her school should be to provide a suitable mistress. The vestry were so earnest in recommending one woman, that she thought it worth looking into. On enquiry, she found it was a scheme to take a large family off the parish; they never considered that a very ignorant woman, with a family of young children, was not fit for a school, all they considered was that the profits of the school might enable her to live without parish pay. Mrs. Jones refused another though she could read well and was decent in her conduct, because she used to send her children to the shop on Sundays. And she objected to a third, a very sensible woman, because she was suspected of making an outward profession of religion a cloak for immoral conduct. Mrs. Jones knew she must not be too nice neither, she knew she must put up with many faults at last. "I know," said she to Mr. Simpson, "the imperfection of every thing that is human. As the mistress will have much to bear with from the children, so I expect to have something to bear with in the mistress, and she and I must submit to our respective trials, by thinking how much God has to bear with in us all. But there are three things which a mistress must not be without, *good sense*, *activity*, and *piety*. Without the first she will mislead others, without the second she will neglect

them, and without the third, though she may civilize, yet she will never christianize them."

Mr. Simpson said, "he really knew but of one person in the parish who was fully likely to answer her purpose: this," continued he, "is no other than my house-keeper, Mrs. Betty Crew. It will indeed be a great loss to me to part from her, and to her it will be a far more fatiguing life than she at present leads. But ought I to put my own personal comfort, or ought Betty to put her own ease and quiet, in competition with the good of above a hundred children? This will appear still more important if we consider the good done, not as fruit but *seed*; if we take into the account how many unborn may become christians, in consequence of our making these children christians. For how can we calculate the number which may be hereafter trained for heaven, by those very children we are going to teach, when they themselves shall become parents, and you and I are dead and forgotten? To be sure, by parting from Betty my peas-soup will not be quite so well flavoured, nor my linen so neatly got up; but the day is fast approaching when all this will signify but little; and it will not signify a little whether one hundred immortal souls were the better from my making this petty sacrifice. Betty Crew is a real christian; she has excellent sense, and had a good education from my mother. She has also had a little sort of training; for when the poor children come to the parsonage for the broth on a Saturday evening Betty is used to appoint them all to come at the same time; and after she has filled their pithers she ranges them round her in the garden, and examines them in their catechism. She is just and firm

in dealing out the broth and beef, not making my favour to the parents depend on the skill of their children. But her own old caps, and ribbons, and cast-off cloaths, are bestowed as little rewards on the best scholars. So that taking the time she spends in working for them, and the things she gives them, there is many a lady who does not exceed Betty in acts of charity; this I mention to confirm your notion, that it is not necessary to be rich in order to do good; a religious upper servant has great opportunities of this sort."

My readers I trust need not be informed, that this is that very Mrs. Betty Crew who assisted Mrs. Jones in teaching poor women to cut out linen and cook cheap dishes, as related in *The Cottage Cook*.—Mrs. Jones in the following week got together as many of the mothers as she could, and spoke to them as follows:

MRS. JONES'S EXHORTATION.

"My good women, on Sunday next I propose to open a school for the instruction of your children. Those among you who know what it is to be able to read your Bible will, I doubt not, rejoice that the same blessing is held out to your children. You who are *not* able yourselves to read what your Saviour has done and suffered for you, ought to be doubly anxious that your children should reap a blessing which you have lost. Would not that mother be thought an unnatural monster who should stand by and snatch out of her child's mouth the bread which a kind friend had just put into it? But such a mother would be merciful compared with her who should rob her children of the opportunity of learning to read the word of God when it is held out to them. Remember that if

you slight the present offer, or if after having sent your children a few times, you should afterwards keep them at home under vain pretences, you will have to answer for it at the day of judgment. Let not your poor children *then* have cause to say 'my fond mother was my worst enemy. I might have been bred up in the fear of the Lord and she opposed it for the sake of a little paltry pleasure, for an idle holiday I am now brought to the gates of hell.' My dear women, which of you could bear to see your darling child condemned to everlasting destruction? which of you could bear to hear him accuse you as the cause of it? Is there any mother here present who will venture to say, 'I will doom the child I bore to sin and hell, rather than put them or myself to a little present pain by curtailing their evil inclinations; I will let them spend the Sabbath in ignorance and idleness instead of sending them to school!' Let that mother who values her child's pleasure more than his soul now walk away, and I will set down the names of all those who wish to bring their young ones up in the way that leads to eternal life, instead of indulging them in the pleasures of sin which are but for a moment."

When Mrs. Jones had done speaking most of the women thanked her for her good advice, and hoped that God would give them grace to follow it, promising to send their children constantly. Others, who were not so well disposed, were yet afraid to refuse, after the sin of so doing had been so plainly set before them. The worst of the women had kept away from this meeting, resolving to set their faces against the school. Most of them who were present, as soon as they got home

about providing their children with what little decent apparel they could raise. Many a willing mother lent her tall daughter her hat, best cap, and white handkerchief, and many a grateful father spared his linen waistcoat and bettermost hat to induce his grown-up son to attend; for it was a rule which Mrs. Jones began, that she would not receive the younger children out of any family who do not send their elder ones. Too many made excuses that their shoes were old, or their hat worn out. But Mrs. Jones told them not to bring any excuses to her which they could not bring to the day of judgment; and among those excuses she would hardly admit any except accidents, sickness, or attendance on sick parents, or young children.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Mrs. Jones was very desirous of getting the help and countenance of the farmers and trades-people, whose duty she thought it was to support a plan, calculated to improve the virtue and happiness of the parish. Most of them subscribed, and promised to see that their workmen sent their children. She met with little opposition till she called on farmer Hoskins. She told him, as he was the richest farmer in the parish, she came to him for a handsome subscription. "Subscription!" said he, "it is nothing but subscriptions I think; a man had need be made of money."—"Farmer," said Mrs. Jones, "God has blessed you with abundant prosperity, and he expects you shall be liberal in proportion to your great ability."—"I do not know what you mean by blessing," said he; "I have been up early and late, lived hard while I had little, and now when I thought I had got for

ward in the world, what with tythes and subscriptions it all goes, I think."—"Mr. Hoskins," said Mrs. Jones, "this is but an ungrateful return for all your blessings."—"You are again at your blessings," said the farmer, "but let every one work as hard as I have done and I dare say he will do as well. It is to my own industry I owe what I have. My crops have been good, because I minded my plowing and sowing."—"O farmer!" cried Mrs. Jones, "you forget whose suns and showers make your crops to grow; but I do not come here to preach but to beg."—"Well, madam, what is it now? Flannel or French? or weavers, or a new church, or large bread, or cheap rice? or what other new whim-wham for getting the money out of ones pocket?"—"I am going to establish a Sunday School, farmer, and I come to you as one of the principal inhabitants, hoping your example will spur on the rest to give."—"Why then," said the farmer, "as one of the principal inhabitants I will give nothing, hoping it will spur on the rest to refuse. Of all the foolish inventions, and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the very worst."—"And I, farmer, think that to teach good principles to the lower classes is the most likely way to save the country. Now in order to this we must teach them to read."—"Not with my consent nor my money," said the farmer, "for I know it always does more harm than good."—"So it may," said Mrs. Jones, "if you only teach them to read and then turn them adrift to find out books for themselves. There is a proneness in the heart to evil which it is our duty to counteract, and which see you are promoting. Only look round your own kitchen, I am ashamed to see it hung round

with loose songs and ballads. I grant indeed it would be better for young men and maids, and even your daughters, not to be able to read at all than to read such stuff as this. But if when they ask for bread you give them a stone, nay worse, a serpent, your's is the blame." Then taking up a penny book which had a very loose title, she went on, "I do not wonder if you who read such books as these think it safer that people should not read at all." The farmer grinned, and said "It is hard if a man of my substance may not divert myself; when a bit of fun costs only a penny, and a man can spare that penny, there is no harm done. When it is very hot or very wet, and I come in to rest and have drank my mug of cyder, I like to take up a bit of a jest book or a comical story to make me laugh." —"O Mr. Hoskins," replied Mrs. Jones, "when you come in to rest from a burning sun or shower, do you never think of him whose sun it is that is ripening your corn? or whose shower is filling the ear or causing the grass to grow? I could tell you of some books which would strengthen such thoughts, whereas such as you read only serve to put them out of your head." Mrs. Jones having taken pains to let Mr. Hoskins know that all the genteel and wealthy people had subscribed, he at last said, "Why as to the matter of that I do not value a crown; only I think it might be better bestowed, and I am afraid my own workmen will fly in my face if once they are made scholars, and that they will think themselves too good to work." "Now you talk soberly and give your reasons," said Mrs. Jones, "weak as they are they deserve an answer. Do you think that either man, woman, or child ever did his duty the worse, only because

he knew it the better?"—"No, perhaps not."—"Now the whole extent of learning which we intend to give the poor, is only to enable them to read the Bible, a book in which every duty is explained, every doctrine brought into practice, and the brightest truths made level to the meanest understanding. The knowledge of that book and its practical influence on the heart is the best security you can have, both for the industry and obedience of your servants. Now can you think any man will be the worse servant for being a good christian?"—"Perhaps not."—"Are not the duties of children, of servants, and the poor expressly set forth in the Bible?"—"Yes."—"Do you think any duties are likely to be so well performed from any human motives, such as fear or prudence, as from these religious motives which are backed with the sanctions of rewards or punishments, of heaven or hell? Even upon your own principles of worldly policy, do you think a poor man is not less likely to steal a sheep or a horse, who was taught when a boy, that it was a sin to rob a hen-roost or an orchard? Will your property be secured so effectually by the stocks on the green, as by teaching the boys in the schools, that *for all these things God will bring them into judgment?* Is a poor fellow who can read his Bible so likely to sleep or to drink away his few hours of leisure as one who cannot read? He may, and he often does make a bad use of his reading, but I doubt he would have been as bad without it. And the hours spent in learning to read will always have been among the most harmless ones of his life."

"Well, madam," said the farmer, "if you do not think that religion will spoil my young servants,

I do not care if you do put me down for half a guinea. What has farmer Dobson given?"—"Half a guinea," said Mrs. Jones. "Well," cried the farmer, "it shall never be said I did not give more than he, who is only a renter. Dobson give half a guinea? Why, he wears his coat as threadbare as a labourer."—"Perhaps," replied Mrs. Jones, "that is one reason why he gives so much."—"Well, put me down a guinea," cried the farmer. "As scarce as guineas are just now, I'll never be put upon the same footing with Dobson neither."—"Yes and you must exert yourself besides in insisting that your workmen send their children, and often look into the school yourself to see if they are there and reward or discourage them accordingly," added Mrs. Jones as she took her leave. The farmer insisted in waiting on her to the door. When they got into the yard, they spied Mr. Simpson, who was standing near a little group of females, consisting of the farmer's two young daughters, and a couple of rosy dairy-maids, an old blind fiddler, and a woman who led him. The woman had laid a basket on the ground, out of which she was dealing some songs to the girls who were kneeling round it, and eagerly picking out such whose titles suited the tastes. On seeing the clergyman come up, the fiddler's companion (for I am sorry to say she was not his wife) pushed some of the songs to the bottom of the basket, turned round to the company, and in a whining tone, asked "if they would please to buy a godly book." Mr. Simpson saw through the hypocrisy at once, and instead of making any answer, took out of one of the girl's hands a song which the woman had not been able to snatch away. He was shocked and grieved to see t

these young girls were about to read, to sing, and to learn by heart such ribaldry, as he was ashamed even to cast his eyes on. He turned about to the girl and gravely, but mildly, said, "young woman, what do you think should be done to a person who should be found carrying a box of poison round the country, and leaving a little at every house?" The girls all agreed that such a person ought to be hanged; "that he should," said the farmer, "if I was upon the jury." The fiddler and his woman were of the same opinion, declaring *they* would not do such a wicked thing for the world, for if they were poor they were honest. Mr. Simpson turning to the other girl, said, "which is of most value, the soul or the body?"—"The soul sir," said the girl. "Why so?" said he. "Because, sir, I have heard you say in the pulpit the soul is to last for ever." Then cried Mr. Simpson in a stern voice, turning to the fiddler's woman, "are not you ashamed to sell poison for that part which is to last for ever? Poison for the soul?"—"Poison!" said the terrified girl throwing down the book, and shuddering as people do who are afraid they have touched something infectious. "Poison!" echoed the farmer's daughters, recollecting with horror the ratsbane which Lion the old house-dog had got at the day before, and after eating which she had seen him flop down dead in convulsions. "Yes," said Mr. Simpson to the woman, "I do again repeat, the souls of these innocent girls will be poisoned and may eternally be ruined by this vile trash which you cry about."

"I now see," said Mrs. Jones, to the farmer, "the reason why you think learning to read does more harm than good. It is indeed far better that

they should never know how to tell a letter, unless you keep such trash as this out of their way, and provide them with what is good or what is harmless. Still this is not the fault of reading, but the abuse of it. Wine is still a good cordial, though it is too often abused to the purpose of drunkenness.

The farmer said that neither of his maids could read their horn book, though he owned he often heard them singing that song which the parson had thought so bad, but for his part it made him as merry as a nightingale.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jones, "as a proof that it is not merely being able to read which does the mischief, I have often heard, as I have been crossing a hay-field, young girls singing such indecent ribaldy as has driven me out of the field, though I well knew they could not read a line of what they were singing, but had caught it from others. So you see you may as well say the memory is a wicked talent because some people misapply it, as to say that reading is dangerous, because some folks abuse it."

While they were talking, the fiddler and his woman were trying to steal away, but Mr. Simpson stopped them and said, "woman, I shall have some farther talk with you. I am a magistrate as well as a minister, and if I know it, I will no more allow a wicked book to be sold in my parish than a dose of poison." The girls threw away all their songs, thanked Mr. Simpson, begged Mrs. Jones would take them into her school after they had done milking in the evenings, that they might learn to read only what was proper. They promised they would never more deal with any but sober honest hawkers, such as sell good little books, Christmas carols, and harmless songs, and desired the fiddler's woman never to call there again.

This little incident afterwards confirmed Mrs. Jones in a plan she had before some thoughts of putting in practice. This was, after her school had been established a few months, to invite all the well-deposed grown-up youth of the parish to meet her at the school an hour or two on a Sunday evening, after the necessary business of the dairy and of serving the cattle was over. Both Mrs. Jones and her agent had the talent of making this time pass so agreeably by their manner of explaining scripture, and of impressing the heart by serious and affectionate discourse, that in a short time the evening school was nearly filled with a second company after the younger ones were dismissed. In time, not only the servants, but the sons and daughters of the most substantial people in the parish attended. At length many of the parents, pleased with the improvement so visible in the young people, got a habit of dropping in, that they might learn how to instruct their own families. And it was observed that as the school filled, not only the fives-court and public-house were thinned, but even Sunday gossiping and tea-visiting declined. Even Farmer Hoskins, who was at first angry with his maids for learning of those *merry* songs (as he called them) was so pleased with the manner in which the psalms were sung at the school, that he promised Mrs. Jones to make her a present of half a sheep towards her first May day feast. Of this feast some account shall be given hereafter, and the reader may expect some further account of the Sunday School next month in the History of Hester Wilmot. Z.