



COBBLER
POUNDS.

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;
56, Paternoster-row ; 164, Piccadilly,
LONDON.



COBBLER POUNDS AND HIS RAGGED SCHOLARS



MANY years have passed since Sunday schools were first set up in our land, and great has been the good done by them. But

there are thousands of boys and girls who are so poor, and badly clothed, that they will not go to be taught in these schools. What then is to be done with them? Shall they be left to grow up in ignorance, sin, and disgrace? Surely not. There are now many kind persons who find out these children, and labour to bring them to live honest, decent, and sober lives. They teach them to read the Bible, to pray to God, and to look to Jesus Christ as the Saviour.

Among the first who began a ragged school was John Pounds—himself a poor man. He lived at Portsmouth, and was a cobbler by trade. His house was a small wooden one, in a humble street in that large town. Now,

John Pounds was a cripple, and though he worked hard, he could not make much of a living. To add to his trials, he had the charge of a little nephew, who was lame like himself. As he could not afford to send him to school, nor clothe him properly, he thought he would be his teacher. Then he said to himself, "I may as well have two scholars as one;" and he asked the child of a very poor woman to come to his shop, and learn his letters. The two little scholars got on so well, that he next invited a third, and a fourth; until, after a time, he had around him a class of forty poor ragged children; and of these there were about twelve little girls.

It must have been a strange

sight to see, in the cobbler's shed, John Pounds now knocking a sole of a shoe, then hearing a boy repeat A B C; now stitching away with both his hands, and then teaching another to repeat a text of Scripture. He might have had many more scholars than his shop would hold, but he could not find money to pay for a larger place; so he chose the worst and the most ragged, in the hope of doing the most good. He would sometimes follow a very poor boy in the streets, and offer the bribe of a roasted potatoe if he would come to his school.

Was not John Pounds a happy man? To be sure he was. He

was more happy than many rich men; for the smiling faces of his scholars always filled him with joy. And then he was always so kind, and had such cheerful and merry ways of teaching, that the boys could not fail to be pleased and improved. After their lessons were over, he would sometimes lay down his lapstone, and have a game of play with them. If they were absent and ill, he visited and nursed them. If they had no bread to eat, he spared a few pence, and bought them food. He also taught them to cook their food, and to mend their clothes and old shoes. It is no wonder, then, that they loved him very much.

In the year 1839 John Pounds

died. He was at that time an old man, and had kept on his school almost to the last day of his life. When he was buried, there was neither hearse nor coach, nor fine trappings; but some of the poor scholars were there, with weeping eyes and grateful hearts, following their kind teacher to the grave.

Since the pious cobbler began his ragged school, there have been many other persons who have taken a kindly interest in the good work. They have got together those who did not know a letter, nor had ever been in a school. All that many such poor children knew was to lie, and curse, and steal. They had often heard the name of God taken in

vain, but they were ignorant of the love and mercy of God. When they were asked what will become of all who die in their sins, they could not tell. They knew nothing of salvation, or the value of their souls, or the joys of heaven, or the misery of hell. But they have been taught how evil a thing it is to sin against God, and to forsake it. They have been led to bow their knees in prayer, and to ask for mercy. They have been directed to Jesus, who "bore our sins in his own body on the cross," and many have believed on him. Some have grown up to be useful men and women; and others, when dying, have thanked God that they ever went to a ragged school.

There have been also ragged schools for girls, who have been brought from a state of vice and poverty, and trained to be good servants. Some have in their early youth given pleasing evidence that they have been "made wise unto salvation."

Whether the readers of this little book have seen a ragged school or not, let them not forget to pray for those places where the poorest are taught the way to heaven; and let them not neglect to walk in that way themselves.

3478621



GOD KEEPS ME.

FROM his high throne above the sky,
The Lord can all things see ;
I cannot see him, but his eye
Looks kindly down on me.

He cared for me before I knew
That I had such a Friend ;
When my first feeble breath I drew,
He did my life defend.

He keeps me still, by his great power,
From danger, night and day ;
I could not live a single hour,
If he were far away.

But he is always near and kind,
And loves to hear my prayer ;
May I his tender mercy find,
And trust his love and care.