



## C H A P T E R 8

MY SCHOOL DAYS BEGAN WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS AND A HALF OLD. There were no public schools in Missouri in those early years but there were two private schools—at twenty-five cents per week and collect it if you can. Mrs. Horr taught the children in a small log house at the southern end of Main Street. Mr. Sam taught the young people of larger growth in a frame schoolhouse on the hill. I was sent to Mrs. Horr's school and I remember my first day in that little log house with perfect clearness, after these sixty-five years and upwards.

Mrs. Horr was a New England lady of middle age with New England ways and principles and she always opened school with prayer and a chapter from the New Testament; also she explained the chapter with a brief talk. In one of these talks she spoke about "Ask and ye shall receive," and said that whoever prayed for a thing with earnestness and strong desire need not doubt that his prayer would be answered.

I was so forcibly struck with this information and so pleased by the opportunities that it offered that I thought I would give it a trial. I prayed for gingerbread. Margaret Kooneman, who was the baker's daughter, brought a piece of gingerbread to school every morning; she had always kept it out of sight before but when I finished my prayer and glanced up, there it was in easy reach and she was looking the

other way. In all my life I never enjoyed an answer to prayer more than that one; and I was convinced, too. I had no end of wants and they had always remained unsatisfied up to that time, but I meant to supply them and increase them now that I had found out how to do it.

But this dream was like almost all the other dreams we have in life: there was nothing to it. I did as much praying during the next two or three days as anyone in that town, I suppose, and I was very honest and earnest about it too, but nothing came of it. I found that not even the most powerful prayer could lift that gingerbread again, and I came to the conclusion that if a person remains faithful to his gingerbread and keeps his eye on it he need not trouble himself about prayers.

Something about the way I was acting troubled my mother and she took me aside and questioned me. I did not want to reveal to her the change that had come over me, for it would grieve me to distress her kind heart, but at last I confessed, with many tears, that I had ceased being a Christian. She was heartbroken and asked me why.

I said it was because I had found out that I was a Christian just for what I could get out of it, and I could not bear the thought of that.

She gathered me to her breast and comforted me. I had gathered from what she said that if I would continue in that condition I would never be lonely.

My mother had a good deal of trouble with me but I think she enjoyed it. She had none at all with my brother Henry, who was two years younger than I, and I think that all his goodness and truthfulness, obeying everybody, would have been a burden to her but for the relief which I furnished in the other direction. I was valuable to her. I never thought of it before but now I see it.