







"Agnes was sitting at the door with her knitting work in her hands."—Page 56.

THE  
SILVER DOLLAR.



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“Is Mary asleep, my son?”

“Yes, mother, fast asleep at last; but she did not stop frolicking for a good while after you left her and came downstairs. She kept lifting up her head and peeping at me, and saying ‘Johnny! Johnny!’”

“I suppose she wanted me to play with her. But Annie whispered to me to take no notice of her; so I looked steadily on my book, and did not smile, though it was pretty hard to keep from laughing,

she looked so funny, and her voice sounded so sweetly; and at last she lay quite still, and now she is fast asleep. Will you come now, mother?"

"Yes, my child," said Mrs. Hallam, as she took the little boy by the hand, and left the parlour where she had been sitting with her own parents.

It was Sunday evening; and Mrs. Hallam was in the habit of spending an hour or two in conversation with her little son on that evening before he went to bed.

John always had a text or a hymn to repeat to his mother, and she would talk about it and explain it; and she would often speak of heaven and of the glorious resurrection at the last day, when the bodies of all who have loved the blessed Saviour and kept his command-

ments shall awake from their long repose in the grave, and be united again to their happy spirits to dwell for ever in the presence and service of God. Alas! for those who, having neglected their duty to God in this life, shall then awake to "shame and everlasting contempt!"

John loved his mother very much, and always listened to her conversation with delight, especially when she talked of these things. He was a thoughtful boy, but yet of a cheerful disposition and happy temper. Though he was but ten years old, he had seen changes and felt sorrow.

He could well remember the time when his mother and Mary and he lived in their own home, before his father died. He remembered when Mary was taken, for the first time, to church. She was a

sweet little child. And how his little brother William, who had been his companion and playfellow, was sick a good while, and at last died; and how he was lifted up to kiss him for the last time, as he lay in his coffin, with white flowers upon his bosom. He remembered that his father and mother wept much, and he himself felt very lonely for a long time. And it was now only two years since he stood by his father's grave, and cried bitterly when he saw him laid by the side of Willie.

Then his grandfather had brought him, with his mother and Mary, and Annie the nurse, to his own house. He was happy and contented here; but often thought of the pleasant home they left, and of his own beloved father, and especially of his last kind words to him,

when he laid his hand upon his head, and blessed him as he bade him farewell, and said "he hoped he would love his Bible and his Saviour, that when his life in this world was ended, he might join him in that happy world where sorrow is unknown."

On this Sunday evening John was particularly happy. He had just received a birth-day present from his grandfather. It was a very nice, new Bible, on the first blank leaf of which was written,

"A birth-day gift to my dear grandson

JOHN MORRIS HALLAM.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Besides this, his grandmother had given him a SILVER DOLLAR, which she

told him he could spend just as he pleased; but to bear in mind that a dollar might do considerable good if it were spent wisely. John, of course, felt quite rich. He had carried his new Bible to church, found the text, and listened attentively to the sermon, and thought he understood a good deal of it. He was now prepared to repeat the text to his mother, and gladly went with her to her chamber, where he had placed a large chair before the comfortable fire, and Annie had drawn up the table.

As they entered the room, he said, "Mother, just look at Mary. I think she is as pretty as any of the pictures I have seen in books; and she is almost laughing now, though she is asleep. Is she not a sweet little sister?"

“Yes, my dear, she is very lovely, and a treasure for which we must be grateful to God who gave her. You, too, are a great comfort to me, John. Mary is very young, not yet three years old, and cannot remember our own home, and your father and Willie; but you are much older, and can remember them well. Your sympathy has been a solace to me in times of sorrow, and you are now, my beloved child, my dearest earthly companion.”

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“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This was the text which John repeated to his mother, and from which he had heard the minister preach in church. It may be found in the sixteenth chapter

of St. Mark's gospel, and it is the fifteenth verse.

“Mother,” said he, “Mr. Mandeville said that the word *gospel* is a Saxon word, and means *good tidings*. What is a Saxon word?”

“You are not much acquainted with history yet, my child; but you can find where England is on your map, and you know that our forefathers came from that country two or three hundred years ago, and that we speak the English language. The Saxons were some of the ancient inhabitants of England, and we have many of their words in our language. The word *gospel* is made up from two words; *God*, which means *good*, and *spel*, which means *tidings*. Our Saviour came into the world to bring good tidings; and when

his ministry here was ended, and he was about to leave the world and return to his Father, he told his apostles, who had been with him and learned the things which he taught, that they must teach them to others. The text you have repeated is the command he gave them. God, in his goodness, has sent us the gospel to make us happy; and because he loves all people, and wishes all to be happy, he commands that it should be preached to every creature.

“There are many false religions in the world, but they do not make people happy like Christianity, because they did not come from God. He who made us, knows the heart of man perfectly, and knows just what will suit our necessities.”

“Mother, that reminds me of a verse I once learned, which says, ‘He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.’”

“That was said of our Saviour, who was both God and man. But did you observe we were told in the sermon that the gospel is called in the Irish tongue ‘The story of peace?’ This is only another beautiful expression of the same idea; that this gift of God is to make known to us deliverance from all evil. The prophets in the Old Testament foretold the coming of Christ, and gave the most glowing description of the blessings he would bring. If you turn to the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, you will find it begins with these words: ‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.' And in the ninth verse of the same chapter the prophet says, 'O Zion that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.' The whole book of Isaiah is full of beautiful passages relating to the character and preaching of our Saviour, and the kind, benevolent acts he should perform. Some of these you have learned; and I am sure you know the song of the angels on the night of his birth."

"O yes, mother: let me repeat it to you. It is in the second chapter of

Luke: 'And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.' "

Tears came into Mrs. Hallam's eyes as her little boy repeated these verses very distinctly, for she thought of the time when he learned them. It was the last Christmas before the death of his father. John had then repeated them to his father, who was in very feeble health. "My son," said he, "you are pleased with the excitement of this day, the gifts of your friends, the sweet hymns and anthems of praise you hear; but as you grow older and wiser, I trust a higher and nobler joy will fill your bosom at the remembrance of Christ's coming into the world, and that you will better understand the value of the precious gift of God's only Son. All things in this world are passing. Your own father, who now speaks to you, with his heart full of the tenderest

affection, will soon be out of your sight, and separated from you; but his hope in Jesus is strong, and while this outward form decays, it will cheer and sustain him, even in the dark valley of the shadow of death."

"I shall never forget those verses," said John, "nor what my father said to me when I repeated them to him. I am sure father loved the Bible, because he was a minister, and I think I should like to be one, too, when I am a man."

"But first we must be very sure that you love it as he did, and have the same earnest desire to glorify God and be useful to your fellow men that he had. And now, before I bid you good-night, I wish to tell you, that I trust you will value the book you have in

your hand, not only for its beautiful exterior, and because it is your grandfather's gift, but chiefly because it is God's word, and contains those good tidings of which we have been speaking, and those heavenly precepts which are our only safe guide through life."

John Hallam did not consider his Bible a book to be used only on Sundays, and laid carefully away all the rest of the week; but he was in the habit of reading a chapter every morning by himself, and when he went down into the parlour to attend family prayers, he took his own Bible along with him, and would find the chapter

his grandfather read aloud, and look it over attentively while he was reading it. To be sure, there were a great many things he could not understand, but then there was hardly a chapter that did not contain some verse that was very plain and instructive, and he often asked his mother to select and point out passages for him.

The wisest and best men in the world—men who have read thousands of books, and made good and interesting books themselves—have revered the Bible, and called it the best and most precious of books. Surely, then, children should prize it, and be constantly learning something from it. They may be sure they will find something new every day, if they should live to a very old

age. It is an excellent plan to commit one verse to memory every day. *bluon*

During the week after this conversation with his mother about the gospel, John often thought of what she said, and seldom took up his Bible without wishing that every boy in the world had one. He knew that very few of the boys of his acquaintance had so handsome a one as his; but it would be wrong to feel proud of it, for the outside was of very little consequence, compared with the contents. He knew, also, that there were many boys in the world, especially in heathen lands, who had no Bibles at all, and perhaps could not read them if they had. "Suppose," said he to himself, "that I had no Bible, and was living in a country where the gospel had never

been preached; how dark every thing would seem to me, and how wicked the people must be! I should not know any thing about God and the Saviour, and I should never hear the pleasant sound of the church bells on a Sunday; and, worse than all, I should not know what would become of my soul when I came to die, nor any thing about the resurrection. Now I am sure father and Willie are safe with Jesus, and, if I am a Christian, I shall meet them again. Mother tells me that we must not sorrow as those who have no hope, for the dead will all awake again, and then there will be no more sorrow nor death. Oh! how glad the poor heathen must be to know these things. How I wish the gospel could be preached to every creature."

Two or three times, before he went to sleep at night, it came into his mind that his dollar might help the missionaries. It might buy a Bible for some heathen child. Perhaps this would be spending it well, in his grandmother's opinion.

John could not quite make up his mind that he was willing to part with his little treasure; but we shall see by and by to what determination he came, after he had thought more about it.

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Annie Mac Laurin, who was employed by Mrs. Hallam as a nurse and assistant in the care of her children, was an excellent Scotch girl, whom she had known from her childhood, and in

whose family she felt a deep interest. Annie's mother, now an aged woman, was entirely blind. She lived in a small cottage about half a mile from the residence of the Morris family. She had come to that place when her two children, James and Annie, were quite young, and her conduct had been such as to secure the respect of all who knew her. Her son had for some years been married, but he continued to live with her; and his wife, who was a kind, good woman, took the very best care of poor old Agnes. Their humble house was always perfectly neat, and had an air of comfort which one does not always see, even in houses where there is an abundance of every thing that money can procure. The family were poor in a worldly sense, but rich

in godliness and contentment. Sorrow was not a stranger in that humble dwelling. It had pleased God to take to himself two little children who had been the pride and delight of these worthy people, and the loss of sight was no light affliction to Agnes. Annie used to go at least once every week to see her mother, and, when the weather was pleasant, took little Mary along with her. Sometimes John would accompany them. Agnes was very fond of children. She could not see them, but loved to hear their cheerful happy voices, and to take Mary on her lap, and stroke her soft hair, and talk with her. Mary often carried a nice bunch of flowers to Agnes, which were gathered from her grandmother's garden. There was a neat border of flowers in

their yard; but Mrs. Morris's garden afforded a much greater variety, and it was a pleasure to Mary, young as she was, to see Agnes smile with delight on receiving her gift.

The kitten seemed to know Mary too, and be glad to see her, and many a good frolic they had together.

Sometimes Agnes would sing to the children; for she had been a beautiful singer in her day, and still retained her voice wonderfully.

But there was one thing in their house which had a peculiar charm for John. This was a large edition of Pilgrim's Progress, full of pictures, which Agnes had kept with great care for many years. It seemed as if he would never be tired of looking at the pictures, and asking questions about

them. Some of them were very wonderful, such as Pope and Pagan, and Giant Despair, and he could not quite comprehend them; but he especially admired the picture of the Shepherd's Boy in the valley of Humiliation. He looked so peaceful and quiet there, in the green pastures, among the sheep and lambs; and the book said, that he had more of that herb called "heart's-ease" in his bosom, than many who were clad in silk and velvet.

This was his song:

He that is down, need fear no fall;

He that is low, no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,

Little be it, or much;

And still contentment, Lord, I crave,

Because Thou lovest such.

Agnes would patiently answer all John's questions, and explain every thing to him as far as she was able; and although she was a poor woman whose advantages of education had been extremely small, he could learn many things from her, because she had long been growing in grace and religious experience, and possessed that refinement and elevation of character which true religion always imparts.

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Winter had passed away, and the bright, beautiful summer had now come.

One pleasant morning, just after breakfast, as Mrs. Morris was walking in the garden with her little grandson,

she said to him, "Our strawberries look finely, John: they have borne remarkably well this year, and we have such an abundance, that if you know any family in the neighbourhood that has none, I should like very much to send them some. Can you think of any?"

"Well, grandmother," replied John, "there is Edward Wilson's mother; she is sick, you know, and perhaps she would like some. Are they very poor, grandmother? Edward does not come to school now, and I only see him in Sunday-school, and he wears very old-looking shoes, though his clothes are always clean and tidy."

"I am glad you spoke of that family, my child. I must go and see them. Indeed, I have been intending to do

so for some time. You ask me if they are poor. I never considered them very poor. The father is an industrious, hard-working man, and they have always appeared to live comfortably. Yet sickness is a sore trial, especially when long continued, and it brings many evils along with it. The sickness of Mrs. Wilson must have increased their expenses, and perhaps has obliged them to deny themselves some things to which they have been accustomed. You may go with me this afternoon, and we will take a basket of fruit, and some other little things to Mrs. Wilson. I believe you come out of school early to-day."

"O yes, grandmother, it is Wednesday, and I shall come home at four

o'clock. I shall like very much to go with you."

John was ready in good time to set off with his grandmother on their errand of kindness. On the way they talked about various things. Mrs. Morris asked John what kind of a boy Edward Wilson was. She said he appeared to be a very amiable little boy; but then children were apt to behave their very best in the presence of older people, especially those whom they were not accustomed to see very often, and generally their young companions and school-mates could form the most correct opinions of their real tempers and dispositions.

"Why, grandmother," said he, "he

is what I should call a very *gentle* boy. I never heard him say any thing cross, or what would tease any other child, and sometimes I have seen the tears come into his eyes when other boys were rude to him. When he went to school, he used to ask me often to show him about his lessons; (you know I am a little older than he is;) and he used to say that his mother had not time to help him, as my mother did me, and did not know as much about books either, though she was a real good mother. In one way and another I became pretty well acquainted with him; but now I only see him in Sunday-school, and then I seldom get a chance to talk with him, for you know our teacher does not like to see us speaking to each

other when she is instructing us. I hope he is at home this afternoon."

"Is not that he in the little garden?" inquired Mrs. Morris as they came near the house.

"Oh yes, grandmother, that is he. Will you let me go and speak to him?"

"Yes, John, you may stay in the garden with him, while I take the basket and go into the house to see his mother."

John followed his grandmother through the gate, and ran off into the garden, while the door was opened, and Mrs. Morris was welcomed by Susan Wilson, a neat-looking girl about thirteen years of age. But we will leave her quietly seated in the house, and look after the boys in the garden.

Edward was bending intently over a bed of strawberries, when John laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, "How are you, Edward?"

"Oh, is it you, John?" said Edward, looking up with surprise. "How glad I am to see you!"

"What are you so busy about here, Neddy, and why don't you come to school now, as you used to do? I miss you very much."

"I believe you are the kindest boy in the world, John; at any rate, if you are as good to everybody as you have always been to me, they must all love you. I feel now just as if I could tell you all my troubles. I am not so sad to-day as I was before, but my heart is full, and I am glad you have come, for I can talk with

you, and I know you will feel pleased because I am pleased now." "How bad?"

"Well, you shall tell me all about it. I know your mother is sick, and that is bad, and I am sorry for you. Come and sit down under this tree, and talk to me, just as if I were your brother, or your cousin."

The two boys seated themselves on the grass in the shade, and Edward began his story.

"You see mother has been sick several weeks; very sick, indeed; and I have been so much afraid she would die, that I could not take any pleasure in any thing. Many nights I have been lying awake a long time, thinking how dreadful it would be to lose her, and wondering what would become of us. The only thing that gave

me any comfort was, to pray that God would make her well again, and think how I would try to obey and please her in every thing, if she could only get better. Susan said it was a mercy that she was old enough to take care of mother and us. But she could not do every thing. Father is obliged to be out at work every day to support us; and little Tommy must be taken care of. We have to hire a woman to come and wash once every week, and then mother's medicines cost a good deal. That is why father had to take me out of school—to save money, and we have saved in every way that we could. But then I do not mind being out of school so much, because I am glad to help Susan by taking care of Tom.

my; and sometimes, when mother feels able to listen, she likes to have me read to her. Sunday-school, you know, does not cost any thing, and I always go there. Mother likes to have me go, and when she was well she always gave me a cent to put in the missionary box; but I do not have it now.

"Yes, you shall," said John, eagerly interrupting him; "I have five cents every week to do just what I please with, and I will always give you one." He put his hand into his pocket, and drawing out his little purse, insisted on giving Edward the three cents which it contained.

"But you have not heard all I am going to tell you," said Edward. "I shall soon be better off, and have

something of my own to give away. Do you see my strawberry beds? I have taken the whole care of them, besides the rest of our little garden. We only raise a few things, for father has very little time to spend in it. He only shows me a little, early in the morning, before he goes to work. This morning the doctor came out here after he had seen mother, and said he,

“‘Your garden looks nicely, Edward. I suppose you expect to feast on strawberries!’

“‘No, sir,’ said I, ‘I do not want them; mother will have as many as you think she may eat, and I am going to sell the rest.’

“Then the doctor spoke very kindly; he said,

“Well, Edward, I think you will certainly make a good use of money, and I wish you to bring your strawberries to me as fast as you pick them. I will buy them all, and pay you whatever you ask for them.”

“I felt very thankful, and then ventured to ask him what he thought about mother. He said that she was a great deal better, and he thought she would be quite well in a few weeks. Oh, John, you do not know how happy this made me. I could not keep from crying.”

“I do not wonder you were overjoyed,” said John, “and I think I should have cried for joy too, if I had been with you.”

“Well,” continued Edward, “I know you will not laugh at me, so I will

tell you just what I did. As soon as the doctor had gone, I went straight to my little chamber, and kneeled down to thank God that he had heard my prayer; and I thought I should always trust in him, and pray to him more than I had ever done before. You know there is a verse in the Psalms that says, 'The Lord is good unto all that call upon him'—"

"Yes," said John, "and every thing in the Bible is true."

"One thing more I want to tell you, and it is the only thing that troubles me now," said Edward. "Charles Nelson keeps threatening to come and eat my strawberries, and I am afraid he will. He always loved to tease me, and lately, whenever he is passing and sees me at work, he stops and

looks through the fence, and says, 'Take good care of them, Ned, for I expect to make a feast when they are ripe.'

"That would be a shame," said John indignantly, "and he shall not do it if I can prevent him. No; I am sure he will not; he could not be so unkind. But I must go now, Edward; I see grandmother coming out of the house."

The boys walked together to the gate. Mrs. Morris spoke kindly to Edward, and invited him to come to her house some time when he had leisure; and then, bidding him good-night, went home with her grandson.

While John had been listening to Edward's story, and sympathizing with him, Mrs. Morris had found exercise for her benevolent feelings in the house. She was pleased to find Mrs. Wilson getting better, and inquired particularly, if there was any way in which she might assist the family. Mrs. Wilson told her they managed to get along comfortably by practising strict economy. She had, however, been sorry to be obliged to keep Edward out of school. He was a good, obedient child, and had done all that he could to assist in the family during her illness. Mrs. Morris gave her some money to purchase a few things which she supposed would be useful and acceptable, and told her to place Edward at school again as soon as

he could be spared from home, and she would pay his bill until his father should be quite able to do it again.

It is interesting to observe how our heavenly Father, who regards even the fall of a sparrow, watched over and provided for this little boy. His humble prayer, when he poured out his sorrows before God, was not unnoticed, nor disregarded. Let every child who reads this remember it, and be encouraged to form the habit of secret prayer; of going to God with thanksgiving for every mercy, and with supplication in every time of need.

But if Edward's mother had not recovered, ought he to have supposed that God did not hear him?

Oh; no! God does not always answer our prayers exactly in the way we desire; but fervent, faithful prayer always brings down a blessing of some kind. If God had taken her away, it would have been because it was better that she should die, and for some very wise reasons which we might not have understood. Yet He would have blessed Edward, and provided friends to take care of him. God will not do any thing unwise or evil. "God is love;" and when he afflicts those who trust in him, he always does it in kindness. We know that the sun is shining all the time, though clouds often hide him from our sight. When the sky looks dark and gloomy, and the rain pours down, we do not feel discouraged, and think it

will always be so; but we say to ourselves, "By and by, when the storm is over, the clouds will break away, and we shall see the pleasant sun shining and the fair blue sky, and then every thing will look more fresh and beautiful than it did before." So when sorrow and anxiety spread a gloom over us, and trouble comes like a storm, we should remember that God sits above it all, in majesty and love, and if we trust in him as we ought, He will make it a rich blessing. There is nothing that tends more strongly to draw our thoughts and affections towards God and heaven, than the death of dear friends. It shows us how uncertain life is, and how helpless we are in ourselves, and teaches us our dependence upon God.

The hope of being united again with our beloved friends in heaven, is a powerful motive to preparation for it. Perhaps John Hallam was a wiser boy than he would have been if trouble had not made him thoughtful; and he might not have thought so much about heaven if he had not believed that his father and brother were there.

Thus we see that afflictions may become our greatest blessings. Some of the best people, and those who have the greatest inward joy and peace, have been most severely afflicted, and possess very few of what are called the good things of this life.

It pleased God, in his wisdom, to give Edward his heart's desire, in the restoration of his dear mother's health.

His faith and trust had been tried, and found sincere.

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I have said that John was a thoughtful boy; and it is not surprising that he should lie awake for more than an hour on the night after his visit at Mrs. Wilson's, reflecting on his conversation with Edward. He was very much interested in him, and felt that he should be delighted to do any thing in his power to oblige or please him. One thing he determined upon; that was, to find some means of preventing Charles Nelson from taking his strawberries, which he had so carefully cultivated. It was a shame that he should alarm him by such a threat,

and it would indeed be cruel to put it in execution. John was really angry at the thought of it. He knew he would meet Charles at school the next morning, and he made up his mind to speak to him about it.

In the morning, before he went to school, he told his mother what was passing in his mind, as well as all that Edward had said to him the day before.

Mrs. Hallam, seeing that John was much excited, cautioned him against speaking angrily to Charles, and said she would be sorry to have any disagreement or unkind feelings spring up between them. Though it was wrong in Charles to tease another boy in that way, she did not believe he intended to do what he threatened.

"So speak mildly and affectionately to him, my son. He will be much more likely to realize that he has been unkind to Edward, than if you show an angry spirit. That would only irritate him, and perhaps make the matter worse. You may tell him if he really wants strawberries, he may come home with you, and we will give him some."

"I will try, mother," replied John.

As John was walking to school, he saw Charles at a little distance before him. He soon overtook him, and they went on together. As they passed Mrs. Wilson's house, they saw, through the fence, that Edward was busy in his garden, picking strawberries. Charles stopped, and was going to speak, but John took hold of his arm, and said,

"No, no, Charles, don't let us disturb him."

"I don't care about stopping," said Charles, as they passed on, "only sometimes I like to tease Ned, he is so chicken-hearted; and he cries as easily as a baby."

"I should say he is very tender-hearted," said John, "and he has lately felt very sad. His mother has been sick, and he thought she would die. I wish you would not tease him, Charles. I am his friend, and I would rather be teased myself than to see him teased. I could bear it better."

"Oh, I did not know that; I am sorry if I have troubled him. He is always working over that garden, and sometimes I have told him I would come and eat his strawberries when they

were ripe. Of course, I was only in fun; for you know we have plenty of fruit at home."

"But he was afraid you were in earnest, and it made him feel very badly indeed, for he has his own plans about his strawberries, and if you knew all he told me, you would never say any thing unkind to him again."

"Well then, John, I shall just stop there as I go home from school, and tell him I did not mean it, and he need not be afraid of me. I am sure I would not do it for the world."

John was very glad of this; and after school the two boys stopped together to see Edward, and his heart was soon set at ease about the matter.

When John told his mother how

pleasantly it had been settled, she rejoiced with him.

“You see, my son,” said she, “how easily we may distress others by speaking carelessly. Charles had no intention of doing wrong to Edward, and yet by indulging his love of teasing he caused him much anxiety. He knew that Edward was sensitive, and for that reason should have been careful to avoid wounding his feelings. But he has done what all generous and right-minded persons will do. As soon as he became sensible of his fault, he confessed it, and tried to make all the reparation in his power.”

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Not long after the event just mentioned, John was sent one day to the

cottage to carry a small parcel to Agnes. It was towards the close of the day, and as he walked by himself and had no one to talk with, he found entertainment in noticing the objects around, and making his own reflections upon them. The clear blue sky and the sweet evening air, the trees in the full beauty of their summer verdure, the song of the birds, and the wild flowers beneath his feet, all caught his attention, and filled his heart with a sensation of happiness. As he came in sight of Mrs. Wilson's house, which was on his way, he happened to think how pleasant it would be to have Edward join him in his walk, and determined that he would stop and invite him. Edward's mother was

quite willing that he should accompany John, and they set off in very good spirits.

“How pleasant every thing looks this evening, John,” said Edward.

“Yes,” replied John, “so I have been thinking as I came along; and see what a pretty bunch of wild flowers I have picked on the way. I shall give them to Agnes.”

“But she is blind. Will she care for flowers? Oh! how dreadful it must be to be blind. Sometimes I have been at her house with my mother, and I always wondered how she could be so cheerful.”

“Agnes likes flowers very much; but we will talk about her on our way back. Now I want you to tell me when you are coming to school; and

how you made out with your strawberries."

"I am coming to school to-morrow, John, for mother is almost well now. She sits up more than half the time, and has been mending my clothes, to get me ready. This morning I carried the last of my strawberries to the doctor, and he paid me for the whole. Only think of it! He gave me a whole dollar, and told me I deserved it, for I had earned it. I was surprised to find he was going to pay me so much money, and felt as rich as a king. But as I intended to divide my money with Susan, I handed him back the dollar, and asked him to be so good as to give me two half dollars instead. Then he gave me two half dollars, and I am going to give

one of them to Susan to-night. Now don't you think I am one of the happiest boys in the world? I would not change places even with you, and live in your beautiful house."

The boys had by this time reached the place. Agnes was sitting near the door with her knitting work in her hands. She knew John's voice the moment he spoke, and when he told her it was Edward Wilson who was with him, she said she was glad to have a visit from him, and inquired about his mother.

John gave her the parcel with his mother's errand, and then laid in her lap the flowers he had brought.

"I thank you," said Agnes, "they are very sweet, and I know them all, though I cannot see them now. Here

are honeysuckles, and daisies, and sweet-brier, and violets, all old friends of mine, for I delighted in them when I could go and gather them myself, and look at their beautiful forms and colours. Even now, I can 'consider the lilies,' and remember the lesson our Saviour taught, of confidence in God, who 'so clothes the grass of the field,' and provides for the 'fowls of the air.'"

"Then you are not unhappy because you are blind?" said John, inquiringly.

"Not unhappy! my dear child. No, indeed; for I have a better light than that of the sun; it is the light of God's countenance. I had many years of good health and the perfect use of all my faculties before this affliction came

upon me, and I remember these years with gratitude. If my eyes are closed against outward things for a few years before I lie down in the dust, it is God's will, and I cannot complain. My children read the Bible to me, and I can sing and pray, and rejoice in my hope of heaven, and look forward to the time when this corruptible shall put on incorruption."

"But what would you do without religion?" asked John.

"Alas! my case should be sad indeed! Darkness without, and darkness within. I often think of the poor heathen, and pray that the gospel may soon be preached to all the world. But there are many, John, in this Christian land, (and I pity them as much,) who are without the true light

of religion in their souls; and who, while they go to church every Sunday, and give a great deal of money for charitable purposes, do not strive to imitate the example of our meek and lowly Saviour. I have known a child who would go to church and Sunday-school handsomely dressed, with a sum of money which he was proud to put into the missionary box, to assist perhaps in educating some little African girl or boy in the knowledge of God. This child felt himself quite superior to another in his class who could contribute but a single cent, and yet at home he would be selfish and fretful, and wasteful and disobedient; forgetting that much will be required of those to whom much is given. And a child in a Christian country, who

does not try to be a Christian, is no better off than a heathen, and has a great deal more to answer for.

“But it is growing late, and I must not keep you any longer; so good-night, and may God bless you both, and make you his own children.”

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The moon and stars were out when John drew near his home that night, and he repeated to himself that beautiful hymn which almost all children have learned, beginning

The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue, ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.

On entering the house, he was delighted to find that his uncle William

had arrived, unexpectedly, to make a short visit.

John was a great favourite with this uncle, and there was a strong attachment between them. He had always entered into John's plans and amusements, and John would hardly have told his most private thoughts even to his mother with more freedom than to his uncle William. Now that Mr. Morris lived in a distant city, they seldom met, and his arrival was always hailed with delight. Nothing could have given John more sincere pleasure than he experienced on meeting his uncle in the parlour that evening. The next day he was allowed to stay at home from school, that he might spend as much time as possible with his uncle during his short visit.

In the course of the day Mrs. Morris wished to go to town, about two miles distant, to make some purchases, and proposed that her son and grandson should accompany her in the carriage. Uncle William was so entertaining during the ride, that John was almost sorry when they arrived at the place. He soon, however, found enough amusement in the store. While his grandmother was engaged looking at the things she wanted, he examined a variety of fancy articles exposed for sale. Among them he particularly admired an historical game, which appeared to him one of the most attractive things he had ever seen. He inquired the price, which was just one dollar. After looking thoughtfully at it for a few moments, he laid it

down, and took up a doll which was very pretty. It was dressed in blue silk, with a nice little bonnet of the same colour, and a pelerine of velvet. In its hand was a funny little hem-stitched handkerchief, and on its feet a pair of bronze slippers. John could not help saying to himself, "Oh, how that doll would please Mary!" The woman behind the counter told him he had better go and ask his grandmother to buy it for his sister; but he replied that he would not disturb her, as he knew that she was very busy, and then he walked to the door and waited quietly till his grandmother was ready to return home.

Now his uncle William had particularly noticed John's movements in the store, how thoughtfully he had

looked at those toys, and then with what an air of determination he had withdrawn himself from them, and he felt some curiosity to know what was passing in the child's mind. He said nothing to him about it, however, at the time; but in the evening when they were together alone, he said to him,

“I noticed your admiration of those toys this morning, John; did you wish to buy them?”

John was a little surprised at this question, and did not seem to know exactly what to say.

“Come, now, John,” resumed Mr. Morris, “I must ask you to tell me frankly what your thoughts were about them.”

“Why do you care about my

thoughts, uncle?" inquired John, looking up with some surprise.

"I will answer your question, my boy, and then you must answer mine. Thoughts have so much to do with actions, that they are of great importance. For instance, if a person thinks a great deal about himself and his own ease and comfort, he is sure to become selfish, and to appear so; while, on the other hand, if he thinks less of himself and more of his friends and those around him, he will be much more likely to be generous and obliging. So if a poor man keeps thinking that he should be a great deal happier if he were rich, he will be very apt to become discontented; but if he puts away such thoughts, and remembers that a good conscience is better than

money, and that he may possess that if he chooses, just as well as if he were rich, he is in the sure way to be happy. Children sometimes think their parents unreasonable when they will not allow them to have their own way, and do what they please. This makes them fretful. If they would habitually say to themselves, 'Father and mother know best what is proper,' they would save themselves a great deal of unnecessary trouble, and be more agreeable to others. So you see that our character depends very much upon the kind of thoughts we encourage; and it is very natural, as I feel a great interest in you, that I should care about your thoughts. You looked so particularly thoughtful this morning that my curiosity was excited, and I

felt that I should like to know what was passing in your mind."

"Well, then, uncle," replied John, "it is a secret, but I will tell you about it. On my last birth-day my grandmother gave me a SILVER DOLLAR, and told me I might spend it just as I pleased. I have kept it until now, and have been determined not to spend it till I had considered well what would be the best way. When I saw that game this morning, I was tempted to buy it, because I thought it would be very entertaining; but I had made up my mind last night what I should do with my money, and I would not break my resolution. Then when I saw that beautiful doll, I thought I should like to buy it for Mary, but I remembered my resolu-

tion, and I knew that Mary had many playthings already; so I would not look at them any longer."

Here John paused. "Thank you, John," said Mr. Morris, "and now will you gratify me still farther by telling me how you intend to spend your dollar?"

"I am going," replied John, (with some diffidence,) "I am going to put it in the Sunday-school missionary box next Sunday, because I want to do something towards making the children who have no schools nor ministers, as happy as we are who have them both."

Mr. Morris was much pleased with all this, but hesitated to commend his determination, lest he should awaken in his young heart a feeling

of pride, and this would stain the purity and simplicity with which he had tried to consecrate his little treasure to God. Before parting with him, however, he said,

“I am very glad, John, that you are going to spend your SILVER DOLLAR in that way, and I am sure you will never regret it. ‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,’ saith the Lord, and we only give him his own when we make such offerings.”

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At length winter came again, and with it John's eleventh birth-day. It was a happy day to him, and his enjoyment was not a little increased by the following circumstance.

When he awoke in the morning he saw a strange-looking parcel lying upon his table, and when he examined it he found his own name written upon it. What was his surprise, on opening it, to see the very same doll and the game which he had admired so much, when he was at the store with his grandmother and uncle, in the summer! Besides these, there was a letter directed to himself. So he hastened to dress, and then sat down to read the letter, as follows :

DEAR JOHN,

This parcel is intended to reach you on your birth-day, and I hope it will give you pleasure. I send with it my best love and wishes for your happiness. Above all things, I desire to

see you advancing in true wisdom as you grow in years and stature.

I cannot express the satisfaction I felt at my last interview with you, when you were kind enough to tell me how you had decided to spend the silver dollar which had been given you for pocket-money. I was glad to see that you could adhere firmly to a good resolution, although tempted to break it; and that you could find a higher enjoyment in the exercise of benevolence than in the gratification of your fancy. Continue, my dear boy, to cultivate such a disposition. I am sure you must have experienced already, that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

You shall have the pleasure of presenting to little Mary the doll which

you thought she would like so much, and I hope you will find the historical game both entertaining and instructive.

You may be sure that no history can be more interesting than your own, to your affectionate Uncle,

WILLIAM.



