

had an inspiration, 'we will trim it with the blue silk; there can be no harm in that. Here are shirts and stockings—I am thankful for those; and this is the last thing, children—a book. I hope it is for my book-loving laddie. "How to Use Left-overs,"—for me, I suppose. Too bad, Dwight! but perhaps you can read the magazines. Now, come to supper, all, and let us wear our "bright morning faces," for we must not greet our Lord's birthday with selfish and unthankful hearts.'

After the children had gone to bed, the minister and his wife sat down together before the fire.

'Isn't that a pathetic row of stockings hung up for Santa Claus to fill?' asked the wife, pointing to the mantel.

'Yes; I hope you have fixed up some things for each of them, Lucy?'

'Indeed, I would not let them find empty stockings if—if—well, I don't know what I mean, but I know I wouldn't,' she finished, logically.

'Lucy,' said her husband, stroking her brown hair, 'I have been wondering lately if I am not making a mistake after all in keeping you and the children out here. When I think what it means to a woman of your culture and education—'

'There, dear, don't say another word. I knew it was of me that you were thinking. If there was a sacrifice at all, it was yours when you declined a metropolitan church to work for these poor people. But it has paid, hasn't it, Arthur? Think of the sheaves we found white already to the harvest without a single laborer; think of the warm-hearted friends you have made; think of the church you have built—these things are better even than full Christmas stockings; are they not, my husband?'

'Of course, of course; I believe it from the bottom of my heart, little woman; but sometimes it does seem that those at the other end are letting go the ropes. But away with discouragement, and let us thank God for the many blessings he has showered upon us.'

Next morning while the children were making merry over their simple gifts, Mrs. Colton slipped away to write a note of thanks to the church which had sent the barrel, while her heart was filled with the spirit of Christmas; later she brought it out and gave it to Dwight to carry to the post-office. He returned after what seemed an unduly long absence and hung about with a guilty air, for it seemed to him that a small piece of paper tucked in his pocket must burn a hole through his coat.

'Where have you been so long, laddie?' inquired his mother.

'Been trying to earn two cents,' replied the boy with downcast eyes.

'Two cents? What for? Did you earn it?' chorused his sisters.

'No, I didn't; I am going out again after dinner,' he replied, dodging the first two questions.

But no one could ever be certain what plans could be formed under Dwight's brown curls, so they did not press him to tell his secret; and just before supper time he came into the house with such a distinct air of satisfaction that they were sure he had managed to earn the coveted sum.

Two days after Christmas Mrs. Reginald Knight, looking over her large correspondence, picked out a letter postmarked Minnesota, and chose that one to read first because she could not think whom it might be from.

'A very touching letter,' she mused, as she refolded it. 'I suppose we hardly realize what our trifling gifts mean to those poor people. I must have this letter read to the Society, of course.' Whereupon she pigeon-holed it and forgot its existence.

Next morning she received another letter addressed in a boy's large round handwriting, and opened it with much curiosity.

'Dear Mam,—I thought I would rite and tell you about the crying time we had over that barrul, 'cause I knew my mother wouldn't.

'First—Esther and Nan cried 'cause there wasn't a doll and neither of them ever had one.

'Second—My mother most cried 'cause the

coat was too small for father—'cause our baby was too big for the close—'cause ministers' wives can't wear blue silk dresses.

'Third—Esther and Lucile most cried 'cause there was only one hat.

'Fourth—Lucile took on like every thing 'cause there wasn't any neck and sleeves in the waist.

'Fifth—Could you please change all these things and we will send back what we got.

Yours respectfully,

Dwight Moody Colton.

'P.S.—Sixth—If you had a book named the flight of pony Baker that your little boy was threw with, you mite send it along.'

Mrs. Knight leaned back in her chair and stared at the epistle before her with mingled emotions. She was touched by the pathos of this naive little letter, but her self-satisfaction had received an uncomfortable shock.

As she pondered, Elsie Freeland came in, and without a word she put the letter into her hands. As she read a flush of shame overspread her face.

'O, Mrs. Knight, the poor little things!' she cried. 'Never a doll, and only one hat for two girls, and no book for that dear little boy. I shall spend the whole of my ten dollars on them this very day.'

'No, no, Elsie,' protested her friend, 'you will not need to give all you have if the rest of us do our share. One hat for two girls—and Marjorie has had four this season! Never a doll—and there are twenty in our nursery! Elsie Freeland, I have been a selfish woman!'

'You are not a bit selfish, Mrs. Knight; everyone knows how generous you are. But I think perhaps the trouble with us all is (if you will pardon a girl for saying so) that we don't think about the Lord's work as we do about other things; it is just the scraps of our thought and time and effort that we have left for Him; anyhow, that is the way with me.'

'You are right, dear child, that is the way it has been with me; but if I don't correct it for myself, and Marjorie from to-day, it will not be the fault of little Dwight Colton.'

You should have been in that missionary's home when a box sent by express arrived a week later. There was some crying this time, also, but it was for sheer joy. Everybody talked and laughed and cried and wondered all together.

How it could have happened no one could decide; for no one could connect Dwight's two-cents with a postage stamp, nor his postage stamp with a letter. Probably they would never have known if Dwight had not suddenly remembered that he had promised to send the first things back, and had whispered his confession into his mother's ear.

The Luck of Robbie.

(Mrs. Emma A. Lente, in the New York 'Observer'.)

'Hey, Rob! Come an' go fishin down Silver Creek. Just a good day for fish to bite.'

'I know 'tis boys, but I've got to work.'

'Work—on a holiday! Let it go, an' come on. Work can wait.'

'Not this work. I've got a lot of weeding an' transplanting to do.'

'Fussin' over flowers all of Saturday mornin'! Fore I'd let a lot of old merry-goos an' sturshuns keep me from a day's fun! You're silly.'

'I'll do something for fun this afternoon, that is, if I get through,' replied Rob.

'You won't git through. Weeds 'll grow

while you're pullin' 'em. Well, bye-bye, an' luck to yer diggin'!'

'Rob's no good since he got that flower craze,' grumbled Sammy Darrow. 'Fussin' over plants is all well enough for wimmen-folks, but for a boy to waste his time that way makes me sick! Race me to the creek, boys!'

Meanwhile Robbie Ward bent over his garden beds, patiently weeding and transplanting asters, and training sweet peas the way he wanted them to go. It did not take him all day, and in the afternoon he had a fine drive in the country with his uncle, the doctor.

His plants grew while he watched them, and grew twice as fast when he slept, until their thriftiness was the wonder of all flower lovers.

When Children's Day came, a magnificent bunch of Robbie's sweet peas stood on a table at the minister's right hand, and received a word or two of notice. When the service was over they were taken to the minister's sweet wife, who was too ill to be at the church.

A few days later Robbie's mother asked him to go to the Old Ladies' Home, and take a glass of currant jelly to a dear old lady who lived there for many years.

'You might take her a few of your blossoms, too,' added his mother, 'I know she loves them.'

With a willing hand the boy picked his very choicest blooms, and on his return from the Home, he said:

'Well, mamma, she liked the jelly and sent her thanks, but she just loved the flowers; she said she doted on nasturtiums, an' she hadn't had so many in years—not since she had a little home of her own an' raised 'em. But she gave some away to the other old ladies, because they made such a time over 'em. How many live there, mamma?'

'I think there are but nine now.'

'When I have flowers more plenty, wouldn't it be nice to take a bunch for each one? Don't you think so?'

'Yes, it would be a lovely thing to do.'

And so each week through the rest of the summer a bouquet went to the Home for each of the nine old ladies, and many, many were the thanks and blessings bestowed on the thoughtful little lad.

His careless mates who often laughed and jeered at him, were very willing to accept his lavish bounty, and the sick people whom he knew were often remembered.

'The more flowers I pick the more I seem to have,' said Robbie. 'They just hurry to blossom over night, so we can have the very sweetest for our breakfast table.'

'Do you sell your flowers?'

Robbie looked up from his picking to see two ladies leaning over the garden paling and smiling at him in a beguiling manner.

'No'm, that is, I haven't; I give lots away, though. Wouldn't you like these?' and he offered his hands' full over the fence.

'Oh, how lovely! Yes, we want them, but we want to pay you for them.'

'You needn't, really, and—oh, that's too much,' as two bright ten cent pieces lay in his hand.

'No, indeed, it isn't too much, and we want the same to-morrow, and every day we are in the place, if we may.'

So for two weeks Robbie had twenty cents daily for flowers, and when the ladies went back to the city, they took a large basket full, leaving him with a crisp dollar bill in payment, and an ambitious dream of raising flowers on a larger scale for the city market.

'Rob's an awful lucky boy,' grumbled Sammy Darrow. 'He's been the pet of the hull town all summer on account of his givin' away flowers so, right an' left, an' now he's gone an' sold pretty near four dollars' worth, an' got loads of flowers left. I don't never have no luck like that. I wish't I was him!'

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