

HE MIGHT HAVE SAID, "THANK YOU."

JOHN DAVIS looked very indignant as he made this remark, and well he might. He and some other workmen were sitting on the steps of a partly-built house, eating their dinners, when a ragged, famished-looking fellow came up to them and asked if they would give him a spare copper.

The man looked miserable enough, but there was a something in his face which seemed to say that his condition was not altogether caused by misfortune, and all the workmen, except John Davis, turned a deaf ear to his appeal. John did not answer it by a gift of money. If he had wished to do so he would not have been able, for he had brought none from home with him. But his wife always sent him an abundant supply of food, and, he thought to himself, "Poor fellow! I will spare him a slice of bread and meat and a drink of coffee."

Accordingly, John divided his remaining provisions, and putting one half into a piece of clean paper, he handed it to the man, who, without a word of thanks, began to devour the food.

This was not a pleasant way of receiving a kindness, but John Davis was of a pitiful temperament, and again he said to himself, "Hunger is a sharp thorn. The poor fellow is half-famished, and in his hurry to begin he forgot his manners. He shall have the coffee all the same." So he rinsed out his tin pannikin, and having filled it with the steaming coffee, he passed it to the man.

"None of that stuff for me," said the beggar, gruffly. "I can't abide your milk-and-water wishy-washy drink. If it had been a glass of good beer, or if you had joined and given me a copper or two to get something as would comfort a fellow, it would ha' been real charity. I'll not rob you o' that;" and the beggar, having pushed aside the vessel which John Davis was offering for his acceptance, with such a rough hand that most of its contents were spilled, strode sturdily away.

Now John had really exercised some self-denial in giving the man a portion of his meal. He had been a little out of sorts in the morning, and had not eaten much breakfast, but the fresh air and hard work had given him a keen appetite for his dinner. Generally he had a little to spare, but on this occasion he would not have been sorry if his wife had put in an extra slice. Seeing the need of this poor vagabond human brother, John did not ask himself whether he deserved the help; if he had, he might have turned from him as his mates had done, for vice and intemperance had left unmistakable marks on the face of the wretched wayfarer. But John's thoughts were compassionate ones, and he said, "I could easily eat all I have and more, but his need is greater than mine: he shall share what is left."

It was hard to receive such a return for his self-denying kindness, and as John first looked ruefully at his garments, down which the spilled coffee was coursing, and then after the man who was already importuning a gentleman for spare coppers, he said, in an aggrieved tone, "He might have said, 'Thank you.'"

Most of the men laughed, and congratulated themselves on not having been so easily taken in. "I saw what sort of a customer he was," remarked one. "He wouldn't get round me," remarked another; "but you are always so soft-hearted, John."

"Ay, you have hit it," remarked an older workman, who had watched this little scene with sorrowful interest. "It was John's soft-heartedness that saw the man's need, and gave him relief without taking his worthlessness into account. I agree with John that he might have said, 'Thank you;' but it is plain to see that he was not of the thankful sort. I'm afraid a good many of us are like him in that respect."

"Come, now, Edwards, you are a bit too hard," replied one of his hearers. "We mayn't be very mannerly, but I hope there's none of us that would take a kindness without giving a thank, or would go and knock a can of coffee over the man that was holding it out for us to take, and then bolt across the street without showing that we were obliged to him, if even we weren't thirsty enough for such wishy-washy drink."

There was another laugh, for the speaker imitated the gruff tones and indignant looks of the beggar so exactly, that even John Davis's face relaxed into a smile.

"I don't suppose there is, mates," said old Edwards, good-humouredly. "We are mostly fairly civil to one another; but I wasn't thinking of human friends when I spoke. We are mostly middling civil to them, as I said before. Our very selfishness keeps us up to the mark, because it is not a comfortable thing to live amongst people if we do not mind whether we please or vex them. We get paid back in our own coin. I was thinking of One who is 'kind to the unthankful and the evil,' who, in bestowing His good gifts, looks, not at our deservings, but our needs, and measures them, not by our worthiness, but by His own great love in Christ Jesus. He holds out His hand filled with mercies and favours, bought for us by the blood shed on Calvary, and though they have cost so much, and are for the eternal happiness of our immortal souls, we will have none of them. Do we show ourselves more thankful to God than that poor lost fellow did when he pushed aside the wholesome draught John Davis offered? Don't we choose what is likely to harm us, and refuse what is best for us? We are eager enough after the bread that perisheth, but what do we care for the Bread of Life which came down from heaven to save our perishing souls? We are ready enough to hold out our hands and clutch at what men call 'riches,' but how many of us are as eager in the pursuit of those spiritual blessings which 'are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold?'"

"Well said, old preacher," remarked one of the men, as Edwards paused for a moment. "Trust you for getting a sermon out of a queer text, though I hardly thought a beggar man would have found you one."

Old Edwards smiled, and answered, "The beggar man and John Davis together: and I haven't quite