

The Old Man's Joke.

By DAN CORNELL.

"Bring me the Bible." Great Scott! how we all jumped for we supposed father was asleep. We were all gathered in the big sitting room; the lamps lit and the open wood fire roaring and crackling up the big chimney, for it was brown November and the wind and the rain were chasing each other around the corners and having a high old time. Inside it was cheery enough; mother knitting, the girls busy with some fancy work or some other nonsense and laughing and chattering, and I with my stamps at my own special table. The "old man" as he likes to be called, though he seems like one of the children, was dozing in front of the fire as we supposed, but instead was looking over the November ADVOCATE which he had "swiped" as he passed my table. Well, when he asked for the bible it was like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky for he is not given to serious subjects and of course there was lots of confusion; chaff from the girls, sarcasm from me with a little seriousness from mother. But all the same he wanted that Bible, and in spite of the remonstrance of Lou, who had it full of autumn leaves, it was given him and he started in on his usual hobby "experience."

"Listen my children," he began, and of course this was an opening for Meg and she chipped in with, "and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere." We made a rush and put poor Meg under the table and kept her there until she promised to be quiet. Then the old boy began again. "Now my children" he said, "here is a chap advertising in this 'fillytickle' ADVOCATE and referring to a verse of scripture for the

number of stamps in a packet that he offers for the immense sum of ten cents. Now no doubt this foolish boy (meaning me) and hundreds of others just as foolish will rush in the cash for the packet on the supposition that a man who will quote scripture in his advertisements will necessarily be honest, and never stop to look up the verse and find the number of stamps it contains. But I with my age and experience smell a very large mouse. Why in the world don't he come right out and say how many stamps it contains? All my wisdom has come from experience and I say there is a catch somewhere. Just let me read you the advertisement and then I will find the verse and you will see that the old man is right." We all giggled as we always do and even mother smiled. "'Look up your Bible and see for yourself how many varieties of fine stamps are in my packet. It tells you in XXVI chapter of Numbers last word.'" The old man looked around the circle. "Now," said he, "I will find the verse;" and he read as follows: "'For the Lord had said of them, they shall surely die in the wilderness and there was not left a man of them save Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.'" Again he looked around, this time with a smile of satisfaction, "last word Nun. Aha my lambs what do you think of the old man's wisdom now? Send for your stamps, my boy, and then wait and wait and when they never come look up your verse and see how you are sold. Experience is the mother of wisdom."

But we all jumped for him and rolled him on the floor until he begged for mercy and promised not to give us any more advice. When we were all settled down again he said, "Now Danny go down cellar and get