

"If you want to call it by such an ugly name."

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" And Ed's tone expressed unspeakable loathing and disgust.

"Couldn't do that!" said Will, mimicking Ed's tone; "how mighty virtuous you are—all of a sudden. What you been doin' all 'long but stealing—from your mother?"

Ed looked up in shocked dismay.

"That's 'bout the size of it," said Will, laughing in high glee; "but don't be so down in the mouth; might as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb—see? I know where you can get things right from a store as easy as nothing—just slip them off the counter when no one's looking. I'll show you how it's done. Bless me! What's the matter? What you so red in the face about? Got apoplexy, or swallowed your sleeve button?"

"You got me into this thing," said Ed, in a great rage; "you made out that it was all right, no harm, just being smart, an' now you turn 'round an' call it stealing an' want me to steal in real earnest. I've found you out, Will Adams!"

"Don't say so!" sneered Will; "found yourself out, you mean. You're no baby. You took the whole thing in hunkadory. an' mighty glad you were of a chance to squeeze a cent or two out of your dear ma. You needn't throw the blame on me, and make out that you're a snow white, just ready-to-fly-away-to heaven angel."

"I'd ought to have scorned the mean thing in the first place. I'd ought to have said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,'" said Ed, excitedly.

"That's good," said Will, provokingly. "Satan's shoulders are broad."

"I'm not excusing myself," said Ed, humbly.

"Oh, ain't you?"

"I'll go straight home and tell mother."

"I would! Tell what a great bad boy Will Adams is, and what a sweet little creature you are."

"I'll tell the truth," said Ed, scornfully; and with a mock bow he hastily betook himself to his heels.

But truth-telling takes courage sometimes. Ed waited until Edith

had gone to bed, and then with his little money-box in his hand he went to his mother's side. Mrs. Walton looked up, and seeing the troubled look in her boy's eyes, laid aside her sewing.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

Ed tried to speak, but a big lump in his throat choked him. Mrs. Walton put her arms about his neck and kissed him, and then Ed broke down utterly.

"I've been so bad, mother," he sobbed.

Mrs. Walton's face grew very pale, but she replied, encouragingly, "You remember the old proverb, dear: 'A fault confessed is half redressed.' Tell mother all about it."

"This is my Christmas money," faltered Ed, "and part of it I didn't get honestly."

Mrs. Walton was too shocked to speak, and Ed stumbled on:

"Twenty cents of it I—I stole!"

"O my dear boy!" moaned Mrs. Walton.

Ed felt as if he had stabbed his mother. The tale was soon told.

"Here's the twenty cents, mother, it's yours. I wouldn't use it for the world"; and a weight seemed suddenly to fall from Ed's shoulders, and he drew a long sigh of relief.

"My! I wouldn't have believed that twenty cents could be so heavy," Ed declared, with a smile, half gleeful, half rueful. "Can you ever trust me again, mother?"

Instead of replying, his mother folded him in her arms. Ed did not soon forget that hour. His mother showed him how grave the danger to which he had been exposed—that by just such slight and easy steps in wrong-doing were careers begun which often ended in complete moral ruin.

Ed spent some time the following Sabbath afternoon in committing the words of the Psalm, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity; nor sworn deceitfully."

"That's got to mean you, Ed Walton," he said to himself, "Christmas money or no Christmas money! 'Clean hands, clean money and a clean gift,' mother says.

You've got to scratch 'round, Sir Edward, pretty lively, too. Mother and Edith shall have nice presents, bought with honest money, mind you."

"I do believe it's snowing," Ed ejaculated, a moment later. "Hurrah! there'll be lots of shovelling to-morrow!"

Ed's was a true prophecy. Not only was there "lots of shovelling" Monday, but at intervals also during the week. When Saturday night came—the Saturday night preceding Christmas—Ed counted his little store of money and clapped his hands in an ecstasy of delight.

"Three dollars! If that ain't jolly! I b'lieve the Lord has smiled on me, just as mamma says, since I took to doing right."

Two radiant beings celebrated Christmas from early dawn until the evening bright and serene.

"I think ever so much more of your present 'cause you earned every cent of it yourself," Edith declared for the twentieth time and as a final preliminary to saying, "Good-night."

"And you made every stitch of that bag for my books, and it's just a beauty," Ed reciprocated. "I thought I shouldn't have any sort of a time, and it's been just the nicest Christmas! Glad I said 'Merry Christmas' to Will Adams this morning! Didn't he look glum, though!"—*Zion's Herald*.

THE PUZZLED SPIDER.

By REV. DYSON HAGUE.

I was sitting in my study one day in Halifax, when I saw a curious sight.

A little fly was clambering up my window-pane, *on the inside*.

On the *outside* there was a hungry spider.

Between them lay the transparent pane of glass.

The spider, seeing its prey, came swiftly on to seize it. There was nothing, apparently, to prevent him seizing the luckless fly. He was sure of his prize, and doubtless rejoiced.

The fly, full of fear, saw the spider coming. There was nothing, apparently, to save him. The case was hopeless.

And yet the spider was balked. The fly was secure.