

one they responded to her and Gretchen, and raised their thankful hearts in a psalm of bloom and fragrance.

Then came the crowning stroke of all. Dicky's visitor called; and, when she heard and saw, she surprised Dicky by promptly bursting into tears, when he thought she would be so pleased!

'The little dear,' said the friendly visitor, leaning out of the window. 'She has made the ugly yard a spot beautiful! It's a miracle, and nothing less.' Then she turned to Dicky: 'But this dry spell may ruin all. O Dicky, I have such a plan! I will send you a hose to fasten on your faucet here, and you can play a stream right in the yard. What do you think of that?'

What did he think of it? Why, it was sublime! He could be a shower and a fireman all at once! Was ever a boy so blessed?

But the landlord heard of the scheme, and he came in from his country home to put a stop to all such tomfoolery. He was not going to have his water-tax raised. No, not he! But, when he saw and heard, and when he remembered his children in the sweet country, and then looked upon the dreary tenements frowning down upon the spot beautiful, he acted just as the friendly visitor had done. He did not really cry, but he looked as if he wanted to.

'Water away!' he commanded Dicky, in thundering tones.

He almost frightened Gretchen out of her senses by saying:

'And as for you, my girl, I ought to raise your rent; but instead I'm going to paper and paint your rooms, and send you in a box of vines and plants from the country. You're a witch, that's what you are! and I'm going to keep on the good side of you!'

The vines and plants came, and they took to their new surroundings wonderfully. They covered the grimy fences with a screen of tender green; and they burst into bloom almost at once, so glad were they to teach their lesson.

Many were the weary, work-worn eyes that looked forward to the day's end and the 'spot beautiful.' The men and women were better because of it, and the children were gentler as they looked at the blossoms in Gretchen's garden.

'Now, what do you think of this?' asked the sun over and over again. And Gretchen? Why she, dear little maid, is the godmother of the flowers, and the sweetest thing of all in 'The Spot Beautiful.'

NORTHERN MESSENGER PREMIUMS.

A reliable and handsome Fountain Pen, usually sold at \$2.00, manufactured by Sandford & Bennett, New York, given to 'Messenger' subscribers for a list of ten subscriptions to 'Northern Messenger' at 30 cents each.

The People's Horse, Cattle, Sheep and Swine Doctor. This book gives a description of the diseases of the Horse, Cattle, Sheep, and Swine, with exact doses of medicine. Usually sold at \$1.00, will be given to 'Messenger' subscribers for a list of seven subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at 30 cents each.

BAGSTER'S MINION BIBLE, suitable for Church, Sabbath school or Day School. Each boy and girl reader of the 'Messenger' should possess one. Given for five subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at 30 cents each.

BAGSTER'S LONG PRIMER BIBLE—A handsome Bible, gilt edges, with the addition of 307 pages, containing the following: Valuable Bible Helps, Concordance, Alphabetical Index, Maps, and illustrations, with other aids to Bible study. Given to 'Messenger' subscribers for fifteen subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at 30 cents each.

John Throckton's Guardian.

(Jane Ellis Joy, in New York 'Observer'.)

'Please, sir, lend me a quarter?'

It was a small, ragged boy that repeated the request, addressing a number of passing men one winter night, by the light of the street lamps. Some of the men shook their heads; others passed on without noticing the appeal. Finally, two men who were walking together stopped.

'Why don't you ask me to give you a quarter?' one of the men questioned the boy.

'Because I'm a-goin' to give it back to you,' was the prompt answer. 'I ain't a-beggin'.'

The man that had asked the question laughed not altogether pleasantly.

'Ho, ho, here is refinement,' he said with ironical emphasis to his friend. To the boy he continued:

'Look here, little man, I lend money only on good security. What security can you give me?'

'S'curity?' repeated the boy, helplessly. Then two eager eyes brightened, as the meaning of the word was suggested, and he added: 'I can't give none, only my word and my willin'ness to work.'

The man laughed a great haw, haw. 'Good! You've earned your money, little Ready Wits,' he said, as he tossed a quarter to the boy, and started up the street with his friend.

'Please, sir, you ain't told me your name yet, nor where you live,' pursued the boy.

'Not done with you yet,' said the man sharply, as he stopped again. 'Are you getting up a directory in the interests of beggars, boy?'

'No, sir,' replied the little fellow seriously; 'it's in the interests of you.'

Both men laughed.

'Well, my name is John Throckton, and I live at No. 16 Fairview Avenue,' said the giver of the quarter.

Mr. Throckton's house was large and handsome, and full of fine furniture and works of art. He was very rich, but by no means generous with his money. He had given in this instance merely out of caprice. The boy's manner of asking had amused him. Seldom did he give so much as a quarter for charity. Meanwhile little Bernard Wells invested the borrowed quarter in a loaf of bread, a little piece of meat, and a little paper of tea, and carried the provisions home. His home was a single room in a poor tenement house. His father was dead, and his mother made a living by sewing on shirts. This week, however, she had been too ill to work, and her money was all spent.

'Oh, Bernard, where did you get these things?' Mrs. Wells asked when her son came in.

Bernard told his story.

'We must return the money as soon as possible,' said the mother.

But Mrs. Wells was not able to go back to her work. Bernard earned a little money selling newspapers, but this was needed to buy food and coal. Finally, Mrs. Wells died, and a brother of Bernard's father, a poor, hard-working man, came forward and offered the little boy a home. Bernard worked for his uncle, who kept a little store. But the boy was not given any money. Once Bernard asked for a quarter that he might pay Mr. Throckton, and was laughed at by his uncle.

'John Throckton has too much money already,' the man said. 'He's one of the richest men in town and one of the meanest. I guess I don't want him to get any of my quarters.'

A year passed. Bernard did not forget his obligation to Mr. Throckton. Many were the plans that he made for redeeming his pledged word.

One day when he was passing along a crowded street it was his good fortune to find a pair of eye-glasses that a lady had accidentally dropped, and the lady rewarded him with a quarter.

Bernard set out immediately for No. 16 Fairview Avenue. 'How pleased mother will be! I hope she knows!' he thought to himself as he hurried along with a light, springy gait. His steps were lighter than his heart. It was about five o'clock, and Mr. Throckton had returned from his banking house, and was in his library. He was not particularly engaged, and he told the serving man to show the boy in.

'I came to pay you the quarter,' Mr. Throckton, said Bernard, advancing into the splendid room, and holding out the money. 'I'm much 'bliged to you fer trustin' me. I couldn't git it fer you no sooner.'

Mr. Throckton gave Bernard a searching look. 'Have you not made a mistake?' he asked. 'I never lent you a quarter to my knowledge, nor do I know you.'

'It was on the street, sir,' said Bernard; 'one night—'

'Oh, oh, yes, I do remember you now. Well, well, well!' Mr. Throckton laughed again as the recollection defined itself more clearly. 'So, you are that little chap that wasn't begging?'

'Yes, sir, I'm him,' and Bernard laid the silver coin on the table beside Mr. Throckton's hand.

The man of business appeared to be interested. 'Well, my little fellow,' he said, 'I confess you have taken me by surprise.' He leaned back in his arm chair, and regarded the boy narrowly while he slipped the quarter in his vest pocket. Mr. Throckton liked to investigate the motives of actions that seemed strange to him. Directly he resumed:

'Now, little boy, if you don't mind telling me, I should very much like to know why you return this money. Didn't you understand at the time that I never expected to see it or you again?'

'I kind of thought that way, sir,' said Bernard; 'but I didn't 'low as that made any difference.'

'Yes, I see,' said Mr. Throckton, 'you wanted to feel that you were honest, and it isn't a bad thing to plume one's self on, either. Was that it?'

'No, sir, I don't know as 'twas,' answered little Bernard thoughtfully, looking his questioner in the eyes. 'It was more this way: If I hadn't brought you back your money you would have thought I was deceivin' you. Then, 'sposin' somebody else'd ask you fer somethin', someone as was real honest, and needin', and you, thinkin' of me and the mean trick I'd played on you, would say "No" to the other fellow, then I'd be 'sponsible. I'd be 'sponsible fer somebody sufferin' fer want of food, and I'd be 'sponsible fer makin' you mean and s'picious and on-feelin'—see?'

Mr. Throckton did not smile now. His