

## Hiram Hurd's Five Dollar Bill.

(By Sarah L. Tenney, in the 'Christian Intelligencer.')

Mrs. Underwood was tired out. All day long she had been looking over boxes and bundles, cleaning out chests and bureau drawers preparatory to the inevitable spring cleaning. Her work was nearly completed save for a huge pile of motley rags heaped up in the middle of the room, giving it a general air of confusion and untidiness. These still remained to be sorted before her day's work would be satisfactorily accomplished, but she was far too weary to apply herself to the task, slight as it seemed to be in itself considered. It was, therefore, with a sigh of relief she heard the voice of her son Archie, just returned from school, in the hall below, followed by himself as he ran gaily over the stairs into the room where she was at work. Mrs. Underwood was one of those delightful wives and mothers who seek to conceal from their family all petty annoyances in the domestic machinery, or any personal worryment, so it was a very cheerful voice and pleasant smile, although a very tired mamma, that greeted her son's return.

'Well, Archie, I am very glad to see you. I had hoped to have this room all to rights before you came, but I found so much else to do, it was quite impossible. Are you willing to do it for me, dear, so I may rest a few moments before getting tea?' If a slight shade of disappointment came over Archie's face it was only for a moment, and was not, perhaps, to be wondered at. He had hurried home from school to engage in a game of baseball with his companions, who were waiting for him in the street below. But he answered, 'All right, mother! Just let me go and tell the boys, so they can get some one else in my place.' In a moment he returned and set himself about the task awaiting him. His mother explained what she wished done—the white and colored rags each put in separate piles, and then tied up in bags, ready for the ragman when he should make his customary rounds. For some time he worked on in silence, his mother resting quietly on the lounge and regarding him with fond affection.

'You shall have all the money they bring, Archie, for your unselfishness in giving up your play to help me,' said his mother, and the boy felt more than repaid for his brief disappointment. He was saving up all his earnings for a greatly desired object, and had already more than half the amount required. He worked away with a will, and was very nearly through his task, when he came across something that caused him to pause in his labors. He glanced up at his mother, and seeing she was not asleep came and placed in her hand a loose page from the Holy Bible.

'I found it among the rags,' he said, 'and you have told me never to destroy or throw away even a leaf from the Scriptures, and here is a whole chapter. What shall I do with it?'

Mrs. Underwood regarded it thoughtfully for a few moments. It was from that most precious of Christ's teachings—the fifth chapter of Matthew, printed in small but clear type.

'It is far too valuable a portion of God's Word to be lightly thrown aside, my son,' she said at length. 'I will tell you what we will do with it. Fold it carefully, and enclose it in a piece of clean, white paper,



AFRICANS CARRYING THATCHED ROOFS.

then put it in with the colored rags where it will be more likely to attract attention. Then send a little prayer along with it, asking God to take care of it, and bless it to some poor, needy soul.'

Archie did as his mother advised, not forgetting the prayer, and soon the rags were all neatly sorted and tied up ready for the rag pedler. In a few days he came, and Archie's heart was made glad by the bright, new half-dollar he received in exchange for the rags and other cast-off articles of merchandise. The pedler transferred them all to the bags on the back of his cart which were already nearly full, so that after receiving this new consignment, it was impossible to tie the bags up tightly. So it came to pass, as the waggon jolted down the street, and turned a sharp curve at the corner, some of the top rags fell out, and were borne along by the light breeze in different directions. Among them was the Bible leaf, which being somewhat heavier than the others on account of its wrapping, remained where it fell in the gutter on the side of the road. There it lay for a couple of days, and had Archie Underwood seen it at the end of that time, perhaps he would have thought God had paid little heed to his whispered prayer.

But as poor, half-drunken Hiram Hurd came staggering along the street that second afternoon, his eye fell upon the soiled little parcel, and he eagerly seized it, though how he accomplished the act without himself falling into the gutter was a marvel. As he unrolled the outer covering, its contents, dampened by the night's moisture had sort of run together and took on the shape of a bank note to his distorted imagination, while the 'V' at the head of the chapter designated its value.

'Ha! I'm in luck to find a five dollar bill right on the street. Mollie and the young 'uns havn't had much to eat for a week past. Guess I'll fill up with a drink

and then get 'em a good square meal for once—say a turkey and all the fixin's. Won't they be shurprised?'

So he gloated to himself over his new-found treasure. 'But, shtay!' he reflected for a moment seriously. 'Guess I'd better get the dinner first, and fill up afterwards.' Full of this praiseworthy thought, he hastened as rapidly as his deplorable condition would permit to the nearest market, and demanded of the dealer in loud, peremptory tones, 'What turkey fetchin' today, Mr. Wells?'

Mr. Wells, the provision dealer, glanced contemptuously at his customer as he recognized him and his condition, and curtly replied, 'More than you can afford to pay, Hi, so be off with you!'

'Hey, what's that you shay?' exclaimed the drunkard in a threatening tone. 'Can't pay for it, hey?' Then suddenly lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, he came close to the dealer and informed him, 'You are mishtaken this time, my friend. I've got money enough to pay for the turkey and all its fixins', and I want 'em sent up to my house right off, I do.'

'I'd rather see your money than hear you talk about it, Hi,' was the dealer's response. 'Our terms are cash.'

'Look-a-here,' exclaimed Hiram, pulling the dirty piece of paper out of his pocket and flaunting it triumphantly in the face of the storekeeper. 'How's that for Hi!' laughing in a maudlin way at his own silly joke.

The astonished Mr. Wells, deceived for a moment by its dark, soiled appearance into thinking it a genuine bill, took it from Hiram and unfolded it, immediately bursting into a loud, harsh laugh.

'That'll hardly pass for a fiver here, Hi,' he said, tendering it back 'though it'll be worth as much to you, maybe, if you'll mind what it says. Now get out of here! You're in the way of more profitable customers,' he