

great fierce dragon; and one wouldn't put on any armor because he said it would only be in his way, he was strong enough to kill the dragon without it, and the other said the king had told him to put it on, so he did; and the dragon came out of the woods, and when he saw the soldiers he rushed at them, spitting out fire; and the fire burnt the man without any armor on, so he couldn't fight, and the dragon killed him. But when he tried to kill the other soldier, the fire couldn't hurt the steel armor, and the sun made it shine so bright that it blinded the dragon, and after a hard fight the soldier killed him. It was an awful interesting story, mamma."

"Did Miss Alison tell you what lesson the story was meant to teach, Harry?"

"No, she told us to try and tell her; and Fred Pierson guessed that the dragon was the devil, and I guessed that the king was God, and Johnny Reid said—he knows lots, mamma—that the devil made us do works of darkness, which means bad things, and casting them away means to fight against the bad inside of us, just like the soldier fought the dragon. But nobody knew about 'the armor of light' 'cept Miss Alison, and she told us that it meant prayers, and the Bible, and going to church, and all the things that helped us to be good, and keep us from getting bad, just like armor protects soldiers from being hurt. She told us each to cast away some work of darkness before Christmas—I sang on the other side of the choir, to-day, mamma, did you see me?"

"Yes I always see you," Mrs. Morris answered, smiling at his irrelevance.

"Isn't my cotta a kind of armor of light, mamma?"

"It ought to be dear. It ought to give you a sense of protection and nearness to God, whenever you put it on. It is a great privilege to sing in the choir, Harry, to lead the hymns of praise to God, and the choir boys ought all to feel as if they could not be irreverent or careless after they had put their cottas on."

"Jim Grant eats candy in his, sometimes, and Howard Foster often talks in the middle of church."

"Hush, Harry don't tell tales. That is not casting away the works of darkness. Just try to do right yourself, and never mind the other boys. After supper I will read you some stories of knights who slew dragons, and of Christian soldiers who put on the whole armor of God, and went out to fight against the powers of darkness. I hear your father coming up the walk—run and open the door for him."

Harry thought about the Advent lesson a good deal during the week. The war-like imagery of St. Paul appealed strongly to the boy's nature, and he pictured himself going to

fight against Satan, like the heroes of old legends, and he determined to try hard through Advent to be a true soldier.

On Saturday afternoon of that same week he was walking home with Howard Foster from a short choir practice, and disputing loudly about which boy in their school could throw the best; whether Dick could beat Frank, or Frank could beat Tom, or Tom could beat Dick.

"I can throw straighter than any boy of my size in school," boasted Howard.

"Why, Fred Pierson can beat you all to pieces," said Harry, opening his eyes wide in astonishment. "He hits the vane on the top of their barn every time he tries."

"That's easy, any baby could do that," Howard answered.

"I bet you couldn't knock down the nest up in the church tower," persisted Harry.

"You mean the marten's nest hanging out of the ivy? I bet I could; that isn't so terribly high."

"It's higher than your house. I guess it's about a quarter of a mile."

"Let's come back," suggested Howard, "and see. Old John's gone home by this time."

"Mr. Alison said we mustn't throw stones in the churchyard," objected Harry. "We'd be put out of the choir if he caught us."

"But he won't catch us," urged Howard. "Come on, you're afraid, Harry Morris, afraid of your shadow—my! what an awful baby you are!"

"I am not afraid," said Harry.

"You are; you think you can throw straighter than me, and don't dare try to prove it. Anybody can brag."

Harry flushed angrily. "I do dare" he said, "and I didn't brag, I never said I could beat you—I said Fred could, but I do bet you can't knock the nest down, so come ahead and try."

The boys started back, picking up stones all along their way, and arguing the matter in a very high key.

There was no one in the churchyard, no sexton prowling about to interfere with their sport, and the boys went straight for the nest in question.

It had been dislodged from its place in the ivy and hung suspended by a single hair, which one stone, well aimed, would bring down.

Howard chose a nice big one, and threw with great precision, but it fell short of the mark by several feet. Next time he threw harder, and went far above it, while Harry watched with deep interest. Again and again Howard tried, each time sure of hitting it, but the stones still struck all around the nest, which hung as yet undisturbed.

Harry could stand it no longer.