

Boys and Girls

THE THREE-CENT PIECE

WOULD you like to hear about little Sara Jane and her three-cent piece? It was years and years ago, when three-cent pieces were common. Sara Jane had earned the money. She had washed the supper dishes every night for three weeks, and had not spoken a word while she was doing her work. Her mamma wished her to learn to be a quiet child. The mothers did not like to have their little daughters talking, talking, talking from morning till night, years and years ago.

The three-cent piece was in her pocket. It was hers to spend as she liked. She thought she would go to the store and buy candy with it.

The store was a mile away. It was not a large, fine building, such as you have seen. It was a small place. They kept the post-office on one side of the room and on the other potatoes, flour, sugar, cucumber pickles and onions, brooms, washboards, tin-ware, and nails, animal crackers and sticks of candy in large jars. Sara Jane had always loved to look at those jars of candy. Now she was on her way to buy.

As she went skipping and singing along the road, she heard someone call her name.

It was a brown old man, and he stood on his brown old doorstep and waited for her to come up. Sara Jane knew him. It was good Mr. Gibbs. He was their neighbour. He said to Sara:—

"Are you going to town?"
 "Yes, sir," she answered.
 "Will you do an errand for me?"
 "Oh, yes, sir!"

"I want ten cents' worth of three-penny nails," said Mr. Gibbs. "It's to fix a yard for my buff cochins. Here is the money."

She held her pocket open and he slipped it in. The dime went down and jingled on the three-cent piece. It made a pleasant sound as she went skipping on toward town—the jingle, jingle in her pocket. And the more merrily she skipped, the more merrily the money jingled.

But all at once the sound stopped. What do you suppose had happened? One piece of money was gone. The dime was gone! The three-cent piece that was left had no ten-cent to jingle against, so it could not jingle any more. That was the reason the sound stopped. It was not long, though, till there was another sound—it was little Sara Jane crying while she hunted for the money. But the crying did not make her eyes to see any better, and other little girls who cry while they hunt for things might think of that.

She did not know how she had lost it, and I do not know, either; but I think she was so like a rubber ball, bouncing and bouncing along toward town, that it made the dime bounce and bounce in her pocket, until it finally bounced out at the top. Any how it was gone. and she could not

find it, though she hunted in the road and in the grass at the side of the road.

At last she was quite tired out, and she sat down on the ground and tried to think what she should do.

Her three cents was not so much as Mr. Gibbs's ten cents, but she would give him her money because she had lost his. That made her cry again. You see, she wanted her candy so very much.

After a while she got up and went on to the store. She thought she would get three cents' worth of the nails and carry them to Mr. Gibbs.

Then all at once she seemed to have a very bright idea. She could not buy ten cents' worth of three-penny nails, as Mr. Gibbs had said, but she could buy three cents' worth of ten-penny nails, and wouldn't that be just the same? She had a shining face when she walked into the store

and asked for the ten-penny nails. Simple little Sara Jane!

Mr. Gibbs looked surprised when she handed him the small package of large nails.

"Why, what's this?" he said, and for a moment Sara Jane was afraid she had not done the right thing after all.

But he was a pleasant man. He saw she had been crying, and guessed that there had been some trouble. So he kept asking questions until he found out just how it was.

Yes, he was a very pleasant man, and he kept looking more pleasant as he put his hand in his pocket. "So you bought the nails with your candy money," he said. "Well, here's three cents. Get you some candy now, and never mind about the nails."

She thanked him, but she did not go back to the store, for she knew

mamma must be looking for her by this time. She was very happy, though, all the way home, thinking about the candy she would buy the next day.

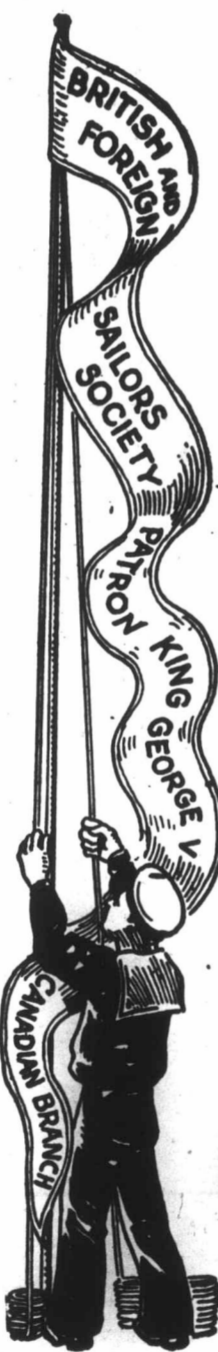
Mr. Gibbs took the ten-penny nails to town and changed them for some smaller ones. On the way home (you will be surprised when I tell you) he found the dime where it lay, tipped against two grass blades and shining in the sun.

Who would expect an old man's eye to be sharper than a little girl's? But I think little Sara Jane might have seen it herself if her eyes had not been full of tears.—Mary E. Stone, in Southern Churchman.

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