

## JOHN HOWELL'S GIFT.

A shaft of golden light fell through a window of the old church. It gleamed softly on the bare floor and lighted the faded pew-cushions until they looked new and beautiful. And it lingered most lovingly of all on the head of the little organist, surrounding her as with a glorious halo.

But the organist was not playing. Her hands were resting idly in her lap, and her brown eyes looked wistfully through the darkened church.

Up to this time, Miss Morris had been able to practice every day, hoping in time to be able to play well enough to accept the permanent position of organist in the village church. But to-day her hopes and aspirations so long cherished were crushed ruthlessly down, for Jim was sick. Jim, the brother who had been her stay and comfort: who had cheerfully given up an hour's play every day to blow the organ for her.

"How long," asked the lad plaintively of the doctor, "how long before I will be able to pump for Ruth again?"

The kind-hearted doctor gave a sympathetic smile. "A long time, I'm afraid, my boy. Rheumatism is loath to take its leave after once visiting a person."

So Ruth went alone to the church that day. Not to practice as usual, but to pray quietly for the grace of patience. If only she could afford the small sum needed to pay some boy every day! But that was out of the question. She must wait until Jim should get well; wait and hope.

Ruth was aroused from all these reveries by hearing footsteps, and, turning, she saw John Howell walking up the aisle. John was the richest, most spoiled boy in Plattesville. He had always seemed cold and proud to her, and she somewhat dreaded his speaking now. But he had seen her there, and came up with a smile on his boyish face.

"I saw the church door open, so came in," he said, sitting on a bench near. "Don't let me disturb you in your practising, Miss Morris; I'd like to listen to you if I may."

"I am not practising to-day," Ruth answered. Then seeing his look of surprise, she added, "Jim is sick, you know, so I must wait awhile until my helper is well."

"Oh, I see," said John. "He blew the organ. But if you want a boy, Miss Morris, I can find one for you in a few minutes. Any of the young fellows around here would be glad to do it."

Ruth gave a little laugh. "Well, you see, John," she said frankly, "I really cannot afford to pay for one every day, so I must wait, and in time Jim will get well."

Her companion said nothing, though his mind was busy thinking of money he had wasted on trifling things—money which this young girl would have spent to great advantage and profited by the spending. The want of money had never come home to him so plainly before.

Yet what could he do? He vaguely felt that he must in some way make up for his past extravagance, and help this girl. He could not offer to pay a boy for her. And then clear as the ray of golden light, a generous impulse came into John Howell's heart.

"Miss Morris," he said laughingly, "I am an idle fellow and waste so many hours a day that you will be



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doing real good to take me in hand and help me give pleasure to some one beside myself. May I pump for you an hour every morning?"

"You are very good," said Ruth, flushing. "But I couldn't think of imposing on you so, John. It is tire-some work."

"Well," said John. "If Jim can do it why can't I? I'm considerable stronger. Suppose we begin right away."

And begin they did, and for one precious hour Ruth played steadily.

When some of John's friends found what his work was every morning, they smiled among themselves, wondering why the rich boy should want to earn money during his vacation. And only the little organist and John himself knew what prompted the service.

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## SOWING LITTLE SEEDS.

Little Bessie had got a present of a new book, and she eagerly opened it to look at the first picture. It was the picture of a boy sitting by the side of a stream, and throwing seeds into the water.

"I wonder what this picture is about," said she; "why does the boy throw seeds into the water?"

"Oh, I know," said her brother Edward, who had been looking at the book, "he is sowing the seeds of water-lilies."

"But how small the seeds look," said Bessie. "It seems strange to think that large plants should grow from such little things."

"You are sowing just such tiny seeds every day, Bessie; and they will come up large strong plants after awhile," said her father.

"Oh no, father; I have not planted any seeds for a long time."

"I have seen my daughter sow a number of seeds to-day."

Bessie looked puzzled, and her father smiled, and said, "Yes, I have watched you planting flowers, and trees, and weeds, to-day."

"Now I know that you are joking, for I would not plant ugly weeds."

"I shall have to tell you what I mean. When you laid aside that interesting book, and attended to what your brother wished done, you were sowing seeds of kindness and love. When you broke the dish that you knew your mother valued, and came in-

stantly and told her, you were sowing seeds of truth. When you took the cup of cold water to the poor woman at the gate, you were sowing seeds of mercy. These are all beautiful flowers, Bessie, and will grow up brightly and sweetly, if you water them well by a constant repetition of these acts. But more than all, I hope that my little girl has been planting the great tree of 'love to God,' and that she will tend and watch it, and allow it to grow and spread, until its branches reach the skies, and meet before His throne."

"And the weeds, father?"

"When you were impatient while baby was cross, you sowed the seeds of ill-temper. When you spoke crossly to Robert, you planted anger. When you waited some time after your mother called you, you sowed disobedience and selfishness. These are all noxious weeds. Pull them up by the root, my child. Do not suffer them to grow in your garden, or they will completely overrun it."

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise, To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

—No man can be provident of his time who is not prudent in the choice of his company.

—To fill a little space because God wills it; to go on cheerfully with a petty round of little duties, little avocations; to accept uncomplainingly a low position; to be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned, without complaint; to smile for the the joys of others when the heart is aching; to banish all ambition, all pride, and all restlessness in a single regard to our Saviour's work; he who does this for one hour is a greater hero than he who for one hour storms a breach, or for one day rushes forward undaunted in the flaming front of shot and shell.

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