

Dandelion Gold.

Oh, who lacks gold these bright spring days.
Gold which enriches, gold which delights,
Gold for which a man gladly pays
His best lifework, while his highest rights
Are left unclaimed, and his finer sense
Is dulled and lifeless from negligence.

I can point to a mint and mine
Where, watching the work by stolen view,
I see that heaven and earth combine
In sifting, smelting, and weighing true,
Pure golden nuggets of bright sunshine
Into precious coins of rich design.

The winter days, which quickly pass,
Are filled with harvesting sunbeams warm,
Stored in vaults 'neath the withered grass,
With rare snow-crystals in s'arilike form,
Till April's showers thaw out the mould
That May and June shall dispense the gold.

I do not mock you! That is wealth
(Tested or not by metallic ring)
Which cheers your heart and gives you health;
Come out and gather while bluebirds sing!
Each coin reflects the sun above,
And each is stamped with "God is love."

A BOY OF TO-DAY

BY

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CHAPTER I.

HE ARRIVES.

"Here at the portal thou dost wait,
And with thy little hand
Thou openest the mysterious gate
Into the future's undiscovered land."

Nine o'clock on a June morning. Breakfast had been over for three hours. In the barn-yard was the flutter of pigeons' wings, their incessant cooing; the sharp voices of guinea fowls, the low complainings of young turkeys, the cluck and cackle of hens, the triumphant crowing of cocks. Down from the hillside pasture drifted, mellowed by distance, the calls of sheep and cattle and horses; in the door-yard the bees boomed and hummed over the old-fashioned flowers that ran in straight gay ribbons from steps to gate.

The kitchen, which was sitting-room as well, was "redd up." The stove shone, the floor was spotless, the braided mats well shaken, the chairs had patchwork cushions, there were white curtains, and there was a posy in a brown mug on a window-sill.

D'rexy stood by the baking-table making pies. D'rexy's smoothly-banded hair was showing streaks of grey, and her face had lost whatever colour it had claimed in youth. Not that D'rexy cared, or even noted it; there were also some wrinkles about her eyes and mouth; she was of middle height and not so comely one would call D'rexy, in a clean calico frock, her fresh collar and immaculate apron; D'rexy respected herself and her belongings. Something in her smooth forehead and gentle eyes suggested that D'rexy preferred not to quarrel with fate or affairs, and usually gave other people their way; but there also were firmly put-in lines about the brow, chin, and lips which betokened that D'rexy, like the continent of Europe, might have her Gibraltar and her Waterloo. Moreover, there was a hint of pathos and disappointment in her face, as if there had been something lost out of her life, or never found therein. D'rexy proceeded with her pie-making with the precision of a machine, it was mechanical—she had made numberless pies.

A door stood wide open into another room, and by a window sat a woman older and smaller than the pie-maker, a white-haired woman, in a black alpaca gown; she was knitting a blue sash, and beside her on a stand lay a large open Bible; her knitting was as mechanical as the pie-making—Aunt Espey Totten had knit numberless stockings. As she knit she bent row and again to the printed page, and her lips moved; there was nothing mechanical in her Bible study, it was her daily "feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined," she was learning her morning lesson. Aunt Espey was one of those who, if

all Bibles were lost, could reconstruct a large portion from memory.

A step on the door-stone. D'rexy looked about, a stout young man in a new ready-made suit stood there, with a big old-time carpet bag in his hand. D'rexy turned back to her work, evidently it was the usual lightning-rod man, or the patent-gate man, or the new kind-of-corn or clover man, or the pump architect. If he and his kind, with their wheedling tongues, had given the Sinner Farm a wide berth, Urias Sinner would have had more money in the bank.

"Are you Mrs. D'rexy Sinner?" asked the stranger.

"Yes." Evidently this was not the man she had thought, but another just as evil the "enlarge-your-picture" man, or the patent churn, the new carpet-sweeper, the "all-modern-improvements-sowing-machine," or the new cooking utensils, rolling-pin, or scissors man, and D'rexy resolved not to look at him.

Sister of Mrs. Selina Leslie?" said the man.

"Yes." Now D'rexy was all interest, and made two steps forward. "Yes! Selina! Has she come to—"

"She's dead—two weeks ago!" It came remorselessly, and D'rexy stood still, her eyes growing big and deep. She made no sound, shed no tears, she had been living a life of repression for—well, always! Time enough for the tears when she could get away into Aunt Espey's room and cry her heart out, and Aunt Espey's soft, even voice could deal out the Promises and the Consolation verses. No tears, but the pathos in her face was tragedy now, and the young man recognized it. "I hate to bring you bad news, I truly do. But she made a good end, and she's better off, you know. She died at my aunt's house in Lessing, and as I was there—I make two trips West a year, drummer for Notion House in New York—why, I said I'd come out of my way, as we all ought to do some good in this world, to bring you the kid. She left you her little chap," and so saying the drummer looked about for his charge.

The charge had tarried to tear up a coreopsis by the roots, and now appeared in a flutter of spotted calico behind the drummer's legs. The man seized him, holding him at arm's length to keep the fat grimy fingers from his own new plaid trousers, and setting him on the threshold, performed the proper introduction: "Heman Leslie his name is; he's a good little kid; looks rather mussy just now—such a long trip, you see, and he ain't used to it. He looked nicer when he started. Here's his grip-sack, and here's a letter your sister left you."

Without a word D'rexy gathered the child up in her arms, and grasped the letter. Then hospitality, as mechanical as her pie-making, asserted itself in the usual formula, "Won't you set by and have something to eat? Will you stop to dinner with us?"

"Couldn't possibly. Thank you all the same. I've lost time now coming, but you see I had to come. I've got a rig at the gate. Good morning, ma'am. Sorry to bring bad news; but the kid's nice, you'll like him."

He was gone. D'rexy dropped into Urias Sinner's big rocking-chair and hugged her new possession close, "mussy" garments, coreopsis-root, flowers, and all. The child submitted quietly for a little. Then he began to struggle. He was uncomfortable; his plentiful yellow hair was rough and matted; it seemed to have been shampooed with a stick of moist candy, he was not accustomed to having his shoes held crookedly by one button, and his stocking-tops dangling loose at his ankles. He had been treated to oranges, ginger-cake, taffy and apples; the skin on his round pink dimpled face felt as if varnished with the memorials of this feasting; he had also devoured doughnuts, pop-corn, pie, and ham, and his digestive apparatus, unaccustomed to such supplies, was in rebellion, add to this, it is uncomfortable to have a soft skin, and the bosom of one's little garments made a receptacle for peanut shells, tooth-picks, bits of paper and a chestnut or so. Naturally the new boy's discomfort expressed itself in wiggling himself to the floor, and giving grunts of dissatisfaction.

"What you need," said D'rexy, "is a good bath and some clean clothes, and you'll get both as soon as I put those pies into the oven."

Aunt Espey had laid her knitting upon her Bible and was looking on. She did not offer to take charge of either the pies or the baby. She knew that in this accumulation of activities lay D'rexy's help.

Presently the oven door closed upon the pies, and the baking-table was cleared. D'rexy brought a small tub and put therein warm water. Undressed the newly arrived, set him in the water,

and gave him a rag and a piece of soap to occupy himself with. Then taking a low chair near him, she unpacked the carpet-bag and laid its contents in neat piles on the floor about her. As she did so, the tears began to roll over her face. This soft, chubby darling was Selina's boy, these little garments had evidently all been made by Selina's busy hands, how often had she made little dresses and aprons for Selina, and had washed Selina's graceful child-form, and rocked her to sleep in her arms. She and Selina, first and last members of a large family, with all between them dead and gone! Her mother had given little Selina to her, when that mother, dear good mother! was dying, and now Selina had gone over the river to find her mother, and also had given her a little child. The tears came faster; she could not see to wash the baby who was splashing away at a great rate in the big tub.

Aunt Espey stood behind her chair and gently stroked her arm. It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. He gives with one hand, D'rexy, while he takes with the other. He took Selina, and he sends you the little boy for your comfort."

D'rexy wiped her face on the warm garments she had just stripped from the child, and kneeling by the tub scoured her new treasure vigorously. When she had him on her lap dry and partly dressed, she began to comb his wet hair, and, lo, it fell from the comb in great silken shining rings! "Oh, Aunt Espey!" she cried, "it curls! his hair curls!" It was as the voice of a child delighted with a new doll. But D'rexy Sinner's had been a work-a-day life, dolls and all other superfluities having been left out thereof.

When the refreshed and re-dressed child had fallen asleep in her arms, she carried him in for a nap on Aunt Espey's bed. The fresh pretty little one looked like an arbutus blooming among last year's dry leaves, as he lay on Aunt Espey's big old-time bed; it had a feather-tick, patchwork quilts, a tester, and a valance, and Aunt Espey ascended to it by two steps made of cherrywood and covered with drugget. All the furniture of the room was of ancient fashion. The women and their belongings were ancient, grave, work-a-day; nothing was there fresh and young but the stranger baby, and a bunch of blue larkspur which Aunt Espey had gathered that morning.

The child slept; there fell a silence and a pause in D'rexy's well-ordered home; then came the hour of retrospection; she took out the letter—a letter from Mrs. Dobson, where Selina had boarded and died. It told how Mrs. Leslie had passed away, calmly, after a short illness from pneumonia, and enclosed a note written by Selina's faltering, dying hand. D'rexy read these lines aloud, with broken pauses and deep catchings of her breath. "Nothing to leave you, dear, good sister, but my love and my little child. You were so tender and faithful to me, I could not leave him in better hands. You were more a mother than a sister to me. Urias is a good man, he was always kind to me, and I know he will be kind to my orphan son."

Such words D'rexy read to Aunt Espey, and they talked over the old times when Selina was a bright young girl, ambitious to teach, and finding an opening in a school where she might be a pupil-teacher, had gone West ten years before. After a time she married, then came widowhood, and again she had taught to maintain herself and child. She had not come back since that summer day when, full of hope, yet grieving somewhat to part, she had left D'rexy's home.

"God has seen that she was tried enough," said Aunt Espey, "and now, D'rexy, you know that she is safe and happy, and possessing all things in the Father's house. You could not see her while she lived, but you felt careful for her. Now you cannot see her, but you have no more cares."

At noon-day Urias Sinner came home. He washed his face at the pump, hung up the tin basin and big crash towel on the porch, and came into the kitchen. His face was scorched bright red by the sun, and shone from the water, looking like a red glazed mask. His wet hair stood up in stiff points as if he wore a fantastic headdress of tennpenny nails. He dropped into his big chair with a grunt of content. Then he saw the child building a cob house on the floor. D'rexy was vigorously beating mashed potatoes.

"Who's that?" asked Urias, pointing. "That's my sister Selina's little boy."

"Sakes, D'rexy! has Selina come to visit us at last?"

Selina has been dead two weeks. She sent me the child to bring up, as I did her, Urias."

Urias contemplated the fact of Selina's death in silence for a few minutes. He had rather liked Selina, but had not been pleased at her "getting out for herself," as he called it, when she might have been useful to him; then, too, he "had never held with folks craving after a lot of book learning." Children Urias was unaccustomed to, and felt them distinctly useless. Presently he said,

"Why didn't some one else take the child?"

"There was no one else, Urias," said D'rexy.

He ought to have gone to his father's kin."

"Jonas Leslie had no kin. Jonas was a lone orphan himself."

"Well, why didn't folks out where they lived keep the child?"

"Is it likely strangers would do what kinfolks begrudge?" said D'rexy, smoothing up her dish of mashed potatoes and putting two bits of butter on top.

Urias was aggravating himself and growing bolder, as folks do.

"Then they ought to have sent him to their county-house, plenty of children go there, and I never agreed to take him."

(To be continued.)

WHAT GOD GIVES A BOY.

A body to live in, and keep clean and healthy, and as a dwelling for his mind and a temple for his soul.

A pair of hands to use for himself and others, but never against others for himself.

A pair of feet to do errands of love and kindness, and charity and business, but not to loiter in places of mischief, or temptation, or sin.

A pair of lips to keep pure and unpolluted by tobacco or whiskey, and to speak true, kind, brave words; but not to make a smokestack of, or a swill-trough.

A pair of ears to hear the music of birds, and tree, and rill, and human voice; but not to give heed to what the serpent says, or to what dishonours God or his mother.

A pair of eyes to see the beautiful, the good, and the true—God's finger-prints in the flower, and field, and snowflake, but not to feast on unclean pictures, or the blotches which Satan daubs, and calls pleasure.

A mind to remember, and reason, and decide, and store up wisdom, and impart it to others; but not to be turned into a chip-basket or rubbish-heap for chaff, and rubbish, and sweepings of the world's stale wit.

A soul as fair as a new-fallen snowflake, to receive impressions of good, and to develop faculties of power, and virtues, which shall shape it day by day, as the artist's chisel shapes the stone, into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ Morning Guide.

What the Sparrows Say.

What have we sparrows done that we are fed
By those we deemed our friends with
poisoned bread?

You sent for us that we should be your
guests,
We came to you from far across the sea,
We made our home with you, and built
our nests

On column, cornice, portico and tree,
And dwelt in the new country trustingly,
Having no thought or danger or of dread.

What have we sparrows done that we
are fed
By those we deemed our friends on
poisoned bread?

We had no fear to flock in any street,
Within your doorways we were brave to
come,

We confidently hopped before your feet
To take the offered grain or seed or
crumb.

What if we are a little troublesome?
Is it for such slight cause you wish us
dead?

What have we sparrows done that we
are fed
By those we deemed our friends with
poisoned bread?

Hear ye. For every bird ye bring to evil,
For every sparrow slain within your
street,
Shall come to judge you Hessian fly and
weevil,

The caterpillar weave a winding sheet,
And measuring worms your punishment
shall mete,

Until ye have plainly said.