

The Story Page

A Happy Birthday.

"What was the sermon about today, little girl?" asked Mrs. Clay, as Hattie noiselessly entered the room where she was lying.

"Tithes," answered Hattie, briefly.

"Tithes," repeated Mrs. Clay. "What do you mean?" "Why, don't you know, mamma? Giving tithes of all we possess," explained Hattie, indifferently, and with a slight yawn.

"Perhaps the minister didn't explain what tithes mean, dear. Maybe that is why you are not more interested. I'll tell you about the word, and then you can tell me about the sermon," said Mrs. Clay, smiling, and softly patting Hattie's hand, which she was holding.

"But Mr. Brown did explain all about it. It means dividing all our things into ten equal parts and giving one to the Lord; and, if we give it to some one else instead of keeping it for ourselves, it is the very best way of giving to the Lord, for we are all his children, and a father is always better pleased to have something done for his children than for himself."

"I am glad Mr. Brown explained it so clearly," said Mrs. Clay, with a pleasant smile. "I don't believe that I ever heard it told so simply and well before."

"But I don't like it!" remonstrated Hattie.

"Why Hattie, my dear child, why not?" exclaimed her mother, in utter astonishment.

"Why, I don't see what ever I can do about it. Take my dresses. I only have five to begin with. Now, if I divide, and give away a tenth, I can't see what good a half dress would do the little girl I gave it to, and I never could wear the piece that was left. Beside, I think, when you and papa take care of me and buy my things, that they partly belong to you, and I haven't any right to give away presents, or they won't divide even!" and Hattie threw herself into a chair in a very uncomfortable attitude, and started to put a finger in her mouth, but, remembering that was very babyish, as well as ill-natured, she quickly put her hand behind her, and patted her foot on the carpet instead.

Mrs. Clay looked half amused and altogether puzzled. How could she explain to this little girl just what was right about giving. It made her wonder if she really knew herself. At last she said, slowly.

"You are partly right and partly wrong, dear. It would not be right to give away your things without permission. You may give away your dark blue dress, though, if you wish. You have outgrown it, but it is good and pretty, and a few stitches will put it in perfect order. I'll attend to that part, if you will think of some one to give it to whom it will fit. But isn't there something, dear, that is really all your very own, something that you have worked for or earned in some way, that you can share with a less fortunate child?"

Hattie puckered her brows, and sat silent several minutes, thinking with all her might. At last she said, doubtfully.

"There are my hickory nuts."

"Very good," said mamma, promptly. "You gathered those all yourself, and, although part of it was fun, part was hard work, too, I know. Now, don't you know somebody who has no nuts and would like some?"

"I guess, maybe, Mammie Eastlake would," said Hattie. "She says that she has never been nutting. Her mother can't spare her away from home that long."

"The very person!" exclaimed Mrs. Clay, brightly. "And you would be conferring pleasure on more than one person, too, I am sure, there are so many children there, and they would all enjoy the nuts."

"I believe the blue dress would fit her," said Hattie, growing interested.

"What were you and mother having such a confab about this afternoon, Hattie?" asked Rob, at the tea table. "I hung around in the hall for 'most half an hour before either of them realized that I had knocked and should like to come in," he added, turning to his father.

"Is it a secret, Hattie?" asked Mr. Clay, affectionately.

"No, indeed, papa!" answered Hattie, returning his loving gaze, and then looking a little shyly at her mischievous brother. "I explained Mr. Brown's sermon to mamma, and then she explained it to me. I think I understood her better than I did him, and now I am going to give away some of my hickory nuts, because they are my very own," and Hattie told all about her plan. Bright-eyed Rob listened respectfully, and, when she had finished, joined heartily in papa's "Good!"

"How do you think some pop corn would taste with those nuts?" he asked. "You know I had a pretty good crop this year."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Hattie, clasping her hands in a way that showed what one little girl thought of pop-corn and nuts. "Next Tuesday is my birthday," she added. "Let's send them then. I think it would be a lovely way to celebrate."

"In that case, I'll contribute to the dinner," said Nellie growing interested. "And I shall not have the trouble Hattie did, either," with a smile, "I can divide evenly. I have just twenty chickens, and the Eastlakes shall have two."

"I want a share in this birthday celebration of tithes," said Mr. Clay. "I can't contribute all of my tenth in this way or at this time, but I want to send a part of it."

"You must let me do something too," said grandma, nodding and smiling.

"If grandma puts in anything to eat," said Hattie emphatically, "her name ought to go with it, so that they'll know how extra good it is. Really," she added, with a long drawn sigh, "what grandma cooks is too good to give away to anybody!"

"Bless your heart, my darling!" exclaimed the dear old lady, delightedly, when she could make herself heard above the laugh which followed. "If you flatter your grandma like that, she'll have to—make you an apple turnover," shaking a finger at Hattie in mock reproof.

"If that is the penalty," said Rob, "allow me not only to endorse, but emphasize Hattie's compliment."

"Oh, you rogue?" said grandma, laughing. "You'll surely make a concited old woman of me!" Then, more seriously, "But really children, there must be no hint of the source of these gifts. That would spoil it all. I might say, 'Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them,' only I don't like to regard lending to the Lord as alms-giving."

Hattie was a happy girl the next week, spending many busy minutes collecting and arranging the tithes, every member of the family wanted to take part in filling the basket for the Eastlake family and helping her with her novel birthday celebration. Even six-year-old Tommy bravely gave a bright red apple, which he had succeeded in keeping a whole day, waiting for it to "mellow."

"How shall we get it there?" asked Hattie with a puzzled look, as they were eating breakfast on the looked for morning.

"We'll have to get old Tim to take it in his wagon," answered papa. "I'll pay for expressing."

At last the basket was started on journey; and Hattie stood at the window, watching long after the wagon was out of sight. She was very happy all the morning and afternoon, making agreeable surmises about the pleasure their gift had afforded; but when evening came she grew restless, moved aimlessly about the room, or spent many minutes looking out of the window, as if watching for some one. At last she exclaimed vehemently, "I do wish I knew what they said when the basket came!"

Mr. Clay dropped his newspaper. Rob laughed, and Nellie uttered an astonished, "Well!"

"I don't care!" insisted Hattie, as she saw the smiles of amusement at her expense. "To go to all that trouble and not even know whether they got it or not is just too bad!"

"Oh, they got it all right," said papa. "Tim's trustworthy." And with that slight consolation Hattie was obliged to leave the subject.

The next day Mr. Clay came to dinner with an expression of mingled amusement and gratification on his face. "I can tell you a little bit, Hattie, of how the basket was received," he said, when they were all seated at the table. "I saw Tim this morning; the first thing he did after wishing me good morning was to say; 'Shure, Mister Clay, an' the next time we've a load like that av yesterday, I'll take it for yez for nothin'.' Bedad, an' I believe I'd pay meself for the job rather than lose the fun av it. Them kids was clane wild over the things in that basket; and Jimmie bye, the size av yer Tom was that took up wid the ridd apple that he didn't know enough to ate it. An', when they came to the nuts and pop-corn, Mrs. Eastlake clapped her hands, and says, 'Now, thin darlin's, ye can have some fun like other folks!' An' she gits thin a flat-iron to crack the nuts wid, an' a spider for 'the corn; an' thin she turns, an' sees me a-standin' an' lookin' on, an' says; 'It's all I can do, Tim, to git necessaries—sometimes I can't git them—without getting treats for the children; and they need 'em just as much as they do food, an' drink, an' clothes.' I'm a-thinkin' that same meself, Mr. Clay; and now remember, sir, the next time ye've a basket, I contribute meself an' horse an' wagon to take it somers'!"

"Oh?" said Hattie, clasping her hands; it's the very nicest birthday I ever had!"—Christian Register.

The Sunday Ball Game.

BY W. B. KING.

Elmer Minson was determined to attend the ball game. He knew quite well that it was wrong for him to go, and as a professed Christian, as a member of the church, he was not only committing a sin himself, but his actions might lead others to sin as well. He had reasoned his

mother into silence, if not consent. It was time, he told her, he had a little liberty. The church was all right; he had no fault to find with it, but there was such a thing as a fellow—giving himself an unconscious swagger—wanting something besides praying and singing on Sunday. Why shouldn't he go out in the air, and have a change, and see ball games, too, if he wanted to, on Sunday? What other time did he have to go? Surely he was old enough to do right, wasn't he?

Mrs. Minson answered, with a sigh, that he was. Well, then, he was going to see that game—and that was all there was about it. Elmer did not intend to be bluff, or cause his mother to grieve.

"But it isn't the place for a nice boy like my brother," said his sister Minnie. "They sell beer, smoke awful cigars, swear and tell stories."

"I wish you wouldn't go," continued his mother, taking heart from Mary's boldness. "When you first joined the church you seemed to want to do what was right. You used to go to Sunday School in the afternoon then. Now you never go unless your teacher meets you and makes you promise to come."

"Oh, mother, that was before I went to work. You ought to know that a fellow can't go to Sunday School all his life. Why, I'm seventeen, and I think it is time I graduated. Well, mother," after a pause, and with his voice more conciliatory, "I'm off. Good-bye and don't worry." He fondly kissed her and Minnie, and then walked rapidly down the street, trying to forget that his mother had wiped away a tear, while his sister looked quite down-hearted. He didn't like to make them worry; they were both so kind to him; but, well, a fellow can't always remain at home and be a boy.

"Hello, Minson," exclaimed a youth, one Dan Reagan, as he entered the park gate, "glad to see you out. Have a cigar—don't smoke, eh; well, you must learn. Put it in your pocket."

Elmer meekly put the cigar in his coat, while the youth rattled on in a most entertaining way:

"I didn't know you went to Sunday ball games—thought you were too good. I remember when you joined the church. At the time I said to Mike Kelly, 'There's a fellow who don't know what he's about.' Let's find a seat and keep together."

After the first inning a man scrambled in among the men and boys and began selling beer.

"Have a drink on me," said Dan graciously.

"No, thank you, I don't drink," answered Elmer, wondering why he had ever allowed himself to attend a Sunday ball game. There was a mighty roar all about him. The people laughed and jeered, told coarse jests and freely bantered each other and the players; they smoked and drank and exasperated at their hearts' content, evidently quite satisfied with themselves and the way the Sabbath had degenerated.

The pleasure of the afternoon had long since passed for Elmer. He realized that he was among the ungodly, among a class of people who were not servants of Christ, who lived for pleasure and the joys of the world. A man on the bench above him was relating an unclean narrative, several people were almost intoxicated, boys and men alike were chewing and smoking, and all talking without regard to age or condition. And far away in the distance Elmer could see the cross on the steeple silently pointing towards the blue vault above—a solemn warning of the all-seeing Eye that was looking down upon the children of men.

Acting on a sudden resolve, and while the players were coming in from the field, he slipped off the bench and quickly made his way out of the park. As he reached the gate, he saw his teacher passing down the opposite side of the street. He carried a Bible under his arm and had evidently just taught his class. Elmer ran up a side street; he didn't want this kind young man to know how he had spent the afternoon. When near home he saw his pastor coming out of a house. On the door was a fluttering of white ribbon; a death—a child. While others were going about trying to do good, he, a Christian young man, one who had called upon the name of Christ, had been among the scoffers, the Sabbath-breakers, endeavoring to find pleasure in their company.

Mrs. Minson was resting in her darkened room when Elmer entered. He walked up to her and threw his arms around her as he used to do when a schoolboy.

"Mother, dear," he said, "I am sorry I went to the game. But when I got there I could not enjoy it. I knew it was not the place for me, and I'm not going any more. Did I worry you, mother? I'm so sorry."

The mother looked into her boy's eyes and saw the light of true manliness; she kissed him and was happy, knowing that her prayer had followed him as he strode away early in the afternoon.—Presbyterian

BY W. B. KING.

While the Car was at Potsdam recently the general lines of a prospective commercial treaty between Germany and Russia were reached.