

### "ONLY A BOY."

More than half a century ago a faithful minister, coming early to the kirk met one of his deacons, whose face wore a very resolute but distressed expression.

"I came early to meet you," he said. "I have something on my conscience to say to you. Pastor, there must be something radically wrong in your preaching and work; there has been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he is only a boy."

"I feel it all," he said. "I feel it, but God knows that I have tried to do my duty, and I can trust Him for the results."

"Yes, yes," said the deacon, "but 'by their fruits ye shall know them'; and one new member, and he too only a boy, seems to me rather a slight evidence of true faith and zeal. I don't want to be hard, but I have this matter on my conscience, and I have done but my duty in speaking plainly."

"True," said the old man: "but 'charity suffereth long and is kind; beareth all things, hopeth all things.' Aye, there you have it: 'hopeth all things.' I have great hopes of that one boy—Robert. Some seed that we sow bears fruit late, but that fruit is generally the most precious of all."

The old minister went to the pulpit that day with a grieved and heavy heart. He closed his discourse with dim and tearful eyes. He wished that his work was done forever, and that he was at rest among the graves under the blooming trees in the old kirkyard.

He lingered in the dear old kirk after the rest were gone. He wished to be alone. The place was sacred and inexpressibly dear to him. It had been his spiritual home from his youth. Before this altar he had prayed over the dead forms of a bygone generation, and had welcomed the children of a new generation; and here, yes, here, he had been told at last that his work was no longer owned and blessed.

No one remained. No one? "Only a boy."

The boy was Robert Moffat. He watched the trembling old man. His soul was filled with loving sympathy. He went to him and laid his hand on his black gown.

"Well, Robert?" said the minister.

"Do you think if I were willing to work hard for an education, I could ever become a preacher?"

"A preacher?"

"Perhaps a missionary."

There was a long pause. Tears filled the eyes of the old minister. At length he said: "This heals the ache in my heart, Robert. I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher."

Some few years ago there returned to London, from Africa, an aged missionary. His name was spoken with reverence. When he went into an assembly the people rose; when he spoke in public there was a deep silence. Princes stood uncovered before him; nobles invited him to their homes.

He had added a province to the Church of Christ on earth, had brought under the Gospel influence the most savage of African chiefs, had given the translated Bible to strange tribes, had enriched with valuable knowledge the Royal Geographical Society, and had honored the humble place of his birth, the Scottish kirk, the United Kingdom, and the universal missionary cause. That man was Robert Moffat.

It is hard to trust when no evidence of fruit appears. But the harvest of right intentions is sure. The old minister sleeps beneath the trees in the humble place of his labors, but men remember his work because of what he was to that one boy and what that one boy was to the world.

"Only a boy!"—*Christian Messenger.*

### JACK THE SOLDIER.

"Can't do it. It's against orders. I'm a soldier now," said one newsboy to another.

"Yes, you look like a soldier!" was the mocking reply.

"I am, though, all the same," and Jack straightened himself and looked steadily into Jim's eyes. "Jesus is my Captain, and I'm going to do everything on the square after this, 'cause he says so."

"That won't last long," said Jim. "Just wait till you're in bad luck and awful hungry, and you'll hook something fast enough."

"No; my Captain says, 'Don't steal,' and I won't. What I can't earn I'll go without, and if I'm likely to steal any time, I'll just call to Him. He's always watchin' to see if any of His soldiers need help, and He's ready with it as soon as they ask for it. He'll help me to do anything He's told me to do."

Wise Jack! He had learned the secret of a happy, useful Christian life.