

Only a Dime

It was only a dime, earned by the sweat of a youthful brow—a single shining dime, which made one little heart to pulsate with pleasure and pride as he placed it carefully away.

How should he spend it? A score of pleasant visions flashed before his mind. He knew that it might purchase all the little toys peculiar to boyish play. But only the year before Willie had given his heart to Jesus, and after the kind pastor had welcomed him into the church, he said to him: 'Willie, in this land of ours there are many little boys and girls who have never heard of Jesus. Cannot you, out of your earnings, help to send them the blessed word of Christ's undying love?' And Willie, with a heart beating in the strength of its early love, had answered, 'Yes.'

Ah! but should he send this, his first and only dime? It was his own; his very own; he had toiled so hard to earn it, surely he could not be expected to part with it thus. Then came the remembrance of the pastor's words and the thought, 'Christ died for these little boys and girls, and they do not know it.' He was generous and impulsive, and in a moment his heart was all astir with pity and love. 'Yes, I will do it,' he cried. 'I will take my precious dime and send a Testament to one of those boys.' He bought it, a neat little Testament; and on the fly-leaf the pastor wrote the words, 'From Willie Gray to a little boy who has never heard of Jesus,' and beneath it the words, 'For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.'

Out in a rude settlement in Dakota lived a herdsman and his little son. Years before, he had settled there, and the bright-eyed boy, his only companion, had never heard the name of Jesus. In his babyhood the mother had died and the father, never a Christian, had from that time hardened his heart against God.

One morning at the door of the rude hut the father found a small package simply labelled 'To Willie.'

The child was wild with glee. Never before had a gift fallen to his lot. What could it be? The father's heart was touched with the child's innocent delight. 'A little book? What is it, papa?' he cried. The father looked startled, and a confused look of shame covered his face. 'A Testament, Willie.' 'What is a Testament, papa?' 'God's word.' 'Who is God?' Here the man was startled anew; the name had not crossed his lips for years. It was a simple question, but the child had to repeat it.

'Who is God, papa?'

'The maker of heaven and earth.'

'What? did he make all things?'

'Yes, Willie.'

'Oh, what a great man he must be! Will you read the story to me?'

The father paused irresolute. Should he do it? Read to his son of the God who had removed from him the dearest, ay, almost the only object of his love? The child's pleading looks decided him. He turned to the sacred page and read the simple story of Christ's birth; the wise men following the guiding star in the east; the wicked Herod who would destroy his young life; the young lad questioning the lawyers in the temple; the tender and simple parable taught by the man Jesus; his holy and just dealings with the disciples; and last, his shameful betrayal and death on the cross.

When he finished, the little child by his side was weeping.



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'Oh, papa, did the good man, Jesus, die on the cross for you and me?'

'Yes, Willie.'

'Then I mean to love him; don't you?'

The father's heart was touched by the words, and they mingled their tears together—the man who for ten years had denied the existence of his maker, and the child who had never before heard the touching story of the cross.

'And a little child shall lead them.'

By this simple agency the hardened and sin-stained heart of the father was brought to the foot of the cross.

One morning, to Willie Gray in his Eastern home, came this little missive:—'To the little boy who sent the Testament to my little boy: May God's richest blessing ever rest upon him. He has been his instrument in bringing two souls to Jesus. He has made me confess the Saviour whom I denied. He has filled my child's heart with the peace of God. Thank God with us for his saving power. If our lives are spared, my son shall be trained to proclaim the blessed truth of the Gospel. Again I say, God bless Willie Gray.'

You cannot guess the joy that thrilled the heart of Willie Gray that day. Humble and happy for the spirit and love which prompted him to send to the little boy in the West the Testament purchased with his precious dime.

Many years later, and the pulpit of that church in Willie Gray's village was vacant. Willie was grown to manhood, and now known in the church as Deacon Gray. One Sabbath morning there came a candidate into the pulpit bearing the marks of genius in word and look. He prayed, and his hearers bowed before the presence of their

living God. Then he gave his text, those words of Ezek. ii., 9—'A hand was sent unto me,' and told the touching story of his own early life—the Testament, the simple gift of the lad which had brought to the cross the heart of the father and the tender heart of the child. With emotion he said, 'My father is in heaven now, brought there, through God's grace, by the hand of Willie Gray.' The young deacon was visibly startled. What! was he never to hear the last of that simple gift of his? How many hundredfold was he to reap from that dime, his first earnings?

After the service, as the young preacher was grasped by the hand by one and another of the warm-hearted people, he felt one grasp, heartier than the rest, as Deacon Gray quoted the words, 'For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.' In answer to the inquiring look, he continued, 'I am Willie Gray.'

'Then by the grace of God I have found the man to whom I owe my life of ministry here. "A hand was sent unto me."'

It was only a dime, but how many souls had it blessed! How often had it glorified the name of God! It had increased his followers, but by what number? It had already enriched eternity, but who could tell how many more were to follow, led by its teachings?

Only a dime—but given in the name of Jesus it shall go on bearing fruit while the foundations of the earth stand.

Only a dime—and a father led to Jesus, and a young child is trained for the ministry of Christ.

Only a dime—and the soul of the child who gave it grows tender in love for his