

The Christmas Stocking.

By Elizabeth Wetherell, (author of 'The Wide, Wide World'.)

THE STORY OF THE FARTHING

(Continued)

"He'll look sorry now, I'll be bound," said the old man. "I say, William!—take this farthing back to that boy, and tell him to be off with it, and not to show his face here again."

The command was strictly obeyed; and my new owner, after a vain attempt to move the waiter, carried me into the street and sat down on the next door-step.

At length he seemed to comprehend his loss; for, dropping me on the pavement, he sank his head on his hands, and the hot tears

enough for mother, and she's sick and wanted some tea so much."

The young man, taking down a canister, measured out two or three good pinches of tea into a brown paper and folded it up. The child took it with a very glad face, laying me down on the counter with a joyful "Thank you, sir!" which I by no means repeated—I wanted to go home with her and see that tea made. But we farthings can never know the good that our purchases do in the world.

The clerk took me up and balanced me upon his finger, as if he had half a mind to give the child back her money, and pay the sum of one farthing into the store out of his own private purse. But habit prevailed, and he dropped me into the till.

We were a dull company in the till that night, for most of the money was old; and it is a well-known fact that worn-down coins



fell fast down from his face upon mine. Then, in a sudden passion of grief and excitement, he caught me up and threw me from him as far as he could; and I, who had been too proud to associate with coppers, now fell to the very bottom of a heap of mud. As I lay there half smothered, I could hear the steps of the boy, who, soon repenting of his rashness, now sought me—inasmuch as I was better than nothing; but he sought in vain. Presently he walked away.

"I am not good at reckoning time," said the farthing, "but I should think I might have lain there about a week—the mud heap having in the meantime changed to one of dust; when a furious shower arose one afternoon, or I should rather say came down; and not only were dust and mud swept away, but the rain even washed my face for me, and left me, almost as bright as ever, high and dry upon a clean paving-stone."

As I lay there I suddenly felt myself picked up by a most careful little finger and thumb, which had no desire to get wet or muddy. They belonged to a little girl about ten years old.

"You pretty farthing!" she said admiringly; "how bright and nice you do look! and how funny it is that I should find you—I never found anything before. I wonder how you came here—I hope some poor child didn't lose you."

While she thus expressed her opinion I was busy making up mine, and truly it was a pleasant one. Her hair was brushed quite smooth, only when she stooped to pick me up one lock had fallen down from under the sun-bonnet; and her face was as ample and good as it could be. But I saw that her cheeks were thin, and they might have been pale but for the pink sun-bonnet.

Suddenly she exclaimed:

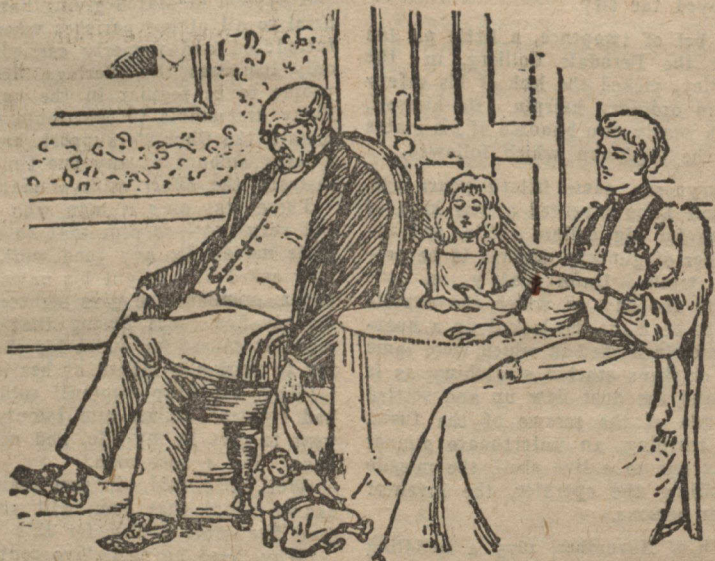
"Now I can get it!—Oh, I'm so glad! Come, little farthing, I must give you away, though I should like to keep you very much, for you're very pretty; but you are all the money I've got in the world."

"Now for the candy-store," thought I, as she turned and began to walk away as fast as she could. She tripped along, till we came to a large grocery. There she went in.

"Please, sir, to let me have a farthing's worth of tea," she said timidly, showing me, and giving me a kind glance at the same time: it's only a farthing, but it will get

are not communicative. In this inactive kind of life some time passed away, and though some of us were occasionally taken to market, yet we never bought anything. But one evening a man came into the grocery and asked for starch, and we hoped for bright visitors; but I had no time to enjoy them, for I was sent to make change. The messenger was a manservant, and with the starch in his hand and me in his pocket he soon left the store and went whistling along the street. I was glad when he reached home, and ran down the area steps and into the kitchen. He gave the starch to the cook, and she carried the change into the parlor. But what was my surprise to find that it was in the very same house whence I had gone forth as a piece of gold!

The old gentleman was asleep in his chair now, and a pretty-looking lady sat by, reading, while the little girl was playing with her doll on the rug. She jumped up and came



to the table, and began to count out the change.

"Two-and-sixpence, mamma—see, here's a shilling and two sixpences and fivepence and a farthing—mamma, may I have this farthing?"

"It isn't mine, Nanny—your grandfather gave James the money."

"Well, but you can pay him again," said the child; "and, besides, he'd let me have it, I know."

"What will you do with it, Nanny?"

"Oh, I don't know, mamma—I'll see if grandpa will let me have it."

"Let you see what?" said the old gentleman, waking up.

"This farthing, grandpa."

"To be sure you may have it! Of course!—and fifty more."

"No, she must have but one," said the lady, with a smile.

Nanny thanked her mother, and, holding me fast in one hand, she sat down on the rug again by her doll. The old gentleman seemed very much amused.

From that time, whenever little Nanny went to walk, I went too; and she really seemed to be quite fond of me, for though she often stopped before the candy stores or the toy shops, and once or twice went in to look at some beads, yet she always carried me home again.

"Mamma, I don't know how to spend my farthing," she said one day.

"Are you tired of taking care of it, Nanny?"

"No, mamma, but I want to spend it."

"Why?"

"Why, mamma—I don't know—money's meant to spend, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is meant to spend—not to throw away."

"Oh, no," said Nanny; "I wouldn't throw away my farthing for anything. It's a very pretty farthing."

"I won't get my beads then," added Nanny, with a little sigh.

"That would not be waste," said her mother, kissing her. "It is right to spend some of our money for harmless pleasure, and we will go and buy the beads this very afternoon."

So after dinner they set forth.

It was a very cold day, but Nanny and her mother were well wrapped up, so they did not feel it much. I was just wondering to myself what kind of a person the bead-woman would prove to be, when I heard Nanny say:

"Mamma, did you see that little girl on those brown steps? She had no tippet, mamma, and not even a shawl, and her feet were all tucked up in her petticoat; and"—Nanny's voice faltered—"I think she was crying. I didn't look at her much, for it made me feel bad, but I thought so."

"Yes, love," said her mother. "I saw her. How good God has been to me, that it is not my little daughter who is sitting there."

Nanny walked on in silence for some time, then she spoke again.

"Mamma, I'm afraid a great many poor children want things more than I want my beads."

"I'm afraid they do, Nanny."

"Mamma, will you please go back with me and let me give that little girl my farthing? Wouldn't she be pleased, mamma? Would she know how to spend it?"

"Suppose you spend it for her, Nanny. People that are cold are often hungry too. Shall we go to the baker's and buy her something to eat?" (To be continued.)