

Ethel Lawrence was the eldest of a large family of children, the daughter of a mechanic, and had learned from her prudent mother the necessity, in her family, of careful management of its slender funds. She was an earnest, thoughtful girl, the exact opposite, in many respects, of the vivacious Kate, although the two had, heretofore, been alike in their indifference to missionary work.

The third member of the trio, Bertha May, was a marked contrast to the other two, not only in station and manner of life, but also in her religious experience. She was the only child of a widowed mother, who supported herself and daughter by the use of her needle.

Schoolmates, classmates in Sunday school, and fast friends from their earliest recollection, the three girls had joined the church together at a time of religious awakening. Bertha had been an earnest, devout Christian from that time forth; the other two had undoubtedly experienced a change of heart, and Ethel, at least, was trying to live a Christian life; but Kate lacking the Christian home influence which pervaded the lives of the others, seemed to be drifting, and her religion was more a matter of form than a real heart experience.

Kate and Ethel, at the beginning of our story, had left the missionary meeting without the trio, since she, always foremost in any missionary enterprise, had duties which just then demanded her attention; therefore Bertha had not known the effort upon her two friends of the meeting to which she had strongly urged them to accompany her, in the hope that they might become interested in missionary work.

Left to herself, Kate wandered her way home in a thoughtful mood, and after a brief conversation with her father, repaired at once to her own apartment.

Glancing at the luxurious surroundings she thought as she set her mite-box down amid the pretty and costly bric-a-brac of her room:—

"My mite-box ought to be made of silver, to correspond with my other pretty things." Then suddenly a thought flashed across her mind: "It might be lined with silver, even if the outside is plain."

When Kate's attention was again called to missions and missionary work she found herself in a strange place; how she came there seemed to her a mystery, but there she was, right in the midst of innumerable small mite-boxes, ranged tier upon tier all around her. Near her side was a table, and arrayed upon it a number of these boxes similar to the one she had placed among her pretty treasures with a smile at its incongruity there.

Suddenly a mite-box appeared to move toward the side of the table nearest Kate, and a voice, seeming to proceed from the box itself, told the following story:—

"Some time ago, together with a number of my companions, I was purchased from a missionary depot of supplies by the president of a certain Auxiliary. We were distributed among the lady members of a church, the president of the missionary society saying, 'If every one will only take a mite-box and try to fill it, who knows but that it may arouse more zeal for the missionary cause?'

"I fell into the hands of a peculiar individual, Miss Priscilla Parmelia Perkins. She lived all alone, and at first seemed greatly dissatisfied at my intrusion into her home. She placed me by the side of an old-fashioned clock which stood upon her mantle-shelf, saying as she did so:—

"What an unheard of thing—Priscilla Perkins with a

mite-box! and Priscilla Perkins without a mite to give away to any such outlandish scheme as that of trying to convert a set of heathen on the other side of the globe, when there's heathen enough on this side, the land knows! Why don't they convert some of these rascally heathen boys who tear up my flowers, and set our miserable dogs on my hens, and torment the life out of me from one week's end to the other? If they ain't heathenish enough with their pranks, then I ain't smart enough to know a heathen when I see him!"

"She sat me down rather forcibly upon the shelf, and I think she thought no more of me for some time. I grew very jealous of the clock, which never was forgotten; regularly every night at just such an hour Miss Priscilla wound her clock, but never bestowed so much as a glance upon me. Since the highest ambition of a mite-box is to be filled with silver and gold, I found myself growing more and more dissatisfied at receiving no attention. At last, one day Miss Priscilla seemed to think of me, and I had the satisfaction of receiving from her hand six pennies, which the groceryman had given her in making change; he gave her also a crisp, new five-dollar bill, which she placed carefully in her wallet.

"That very night something happened. No one ever knew how it came about, but the room was full of smoke; the kitchen floor was smoking in front of the stove, and about to blaze out into a flame, while Miss Priscilla was shut up in an adjoining bedroom fast asleep, and no one but the clock, myself, and a tiny mouse which had crawled from its hole in search of crumbs, and sat upon the mantel near me, was a witness of the situation.

"Suddenly the clock began to strike. This startled the mouse, which in its hasty flight ran against me so forcibly as to throw me from my position on the shelf to the floor; the fall and the six pennies produced such an unusual noise in the quiet house that Miss Priscilla was awakened, and, hastily opening the door leading from her room to the kitchen, she saw at a glance the situation, the floor being now in a blaze. With a slight scream she quickly snatched blankets from her bed, and soon smothered the fire, without further damage. She then lighted her lamp, and talked to herself in her usual manner:—

"Well, Priscilla Perkins, where would you and your money be if you hadn't waked up just then? What waked you up, do you s'pose?" she said, glancing around.

"I lay upon the floor, rolling back and forth in the excitement produced by my fall. Soon Miss Priscilla's black eyes spied me, and she exclaimed: 'Why! how'd my mite-box come to be on the floor? It must have made quite a noise when it fell! There, Priscilla Perkins don't you see through the hall thing? Your mite-box has saved your life! It's fall waked you at just the right moment, and to think that you begrudged even those six cents you put in the box yesterday! Where would you be now if you hadn't done it, and those six pennies rattling hadn't waked you? You go this minute and put that five dollars in your-box, and be thankful that you have a chance to help save the heathen, and ain't burnt to death—house and barn and hens and all!'

"The five-dollar bill was immediately transferred to me, and I find myself able to report eight dollars and forty-six cents, as Miss Priscilla from time to time has kept adding more mites to her box."

At this point another box took the place occupied by No. 1 during its story, and spoke as follows:—

"I represent the Baby Band. I was given to a dear little boy of three years; only a baby, but yet very