

The Parable of the Pounds.

HERE is a "story with a meaning" told by Jesus. A nobleman took a long journey, and left a pound with each of his servants. "Occupy," said he—trade, use wisely, make the little into more. It was not that the nobleman wanted more for himself, but he wished to see how wise, industrious, and faithful these servants were. They were left to do as they thought right until his return. They set to work, some idly putting the money by, or even wickedly wasting it; some making a good use of it. Now, what does this mean? Our Master is away from our sight. He went from earth more than eighteen hundred years ago; but He will return, to be a King. And we are waiting for Him. While we wait He has given us something to do—something to do it with. What has He given us? Our minds—that we may learn; our tongues—that we may speak wisely; our busy hands; our loving hearts; Sundays to improve.

Yes, everyone, however "young or small," has the "pound." What shall we do with it? Waste, hide, or improve? How can we improve the gift? By remembering that it is not ours, but Christ's. By seeking His teaching and help, by remembering always that He will come again.



"OCCUPY TILL I COME."

Faithful Johnnie.

YOU have often read of what is called the "Fall of Man;" and when Adam and Eve fell into disobedience, *sin* entered for the first time in the beautiful world that God had made. Perhaps some little child may think, as many a wise man has done before, that God might have made Adam and Eve so that they *could not* do wrong, and only capable of doing what he wished. Why did he not? I will put a little picture before your mind, and perhaps you will guess the reason why.

A father was sitting in his library one day, writing his morning's letters. His little boy of five years old was playing beside him with his toys, when the bell rang, and a servant came upstairs to tell his master that some one wanted him below on important business.

"Johnnie, said the father, as he rose" "put your

hand here, and keep it on that letter of mine, until I come back.

"Yes father," cried the little fellow, delighted to be of any use. But when half an hour had passed away, and no father had come back, Johnnie grew rather tired of his task. He had looked at every picture, and counted every spot on the carpet as far as he could see, and his little hand grew very weary of holding open the page. Another half-hour passed; but Johnnie held bravely on. Father had bidden him, and he would do what father wished; but oh, how tired he was, and how dark it was getting! Where was papa? Poor little Johnnie! Papa had got interested in his business, and started off with the man who had called upon him, forgetting all about his little boy and the letter. And do you know, children, that Johnnie waited an hour and a half before his father came back, and he stood *all that time*, holding

the letter and *obeying his father*. When Papa came back and found what his faithful little boy had done, he caught him in his arms, kissed him lovingly and praised him for his simple obedience.

Now, on the same table where the letter lay stood a heavy stone letter-weight; and had Johnnie's father chosen, he could have put that on his letters, and left it there in perfect safety. The letter-weight was not capable of obeying

him; it could only just lie where he placed it. But had he used it, and come back and found it as he had left it, would he have kissed and praised it, or loved it better for its obedience? Oh no! the difference between Johnnie and the letter-weight was, Johnnie *could* disobey and do wrong, and he obeyed in spite of it; while the letter-weight *could not* disobey, and did right because *it could not do wrong*. Which obedience did the father more value? Which would you?

I think, from this illustration, dear children, you will see why God made Adam and Eve, and you and me, *able to do right or wrong*. He wanted our choice, and real, loving, child like obedience to His wishes; not for us only to do good because we could not do naughtily. When we choose, in spite of being able to do wrong, to do God's will and please Him, He is so good as to love, and to love us, if possible, more dearly. He delights in our loving obedience. Will you try to remember this.