

THE LENT HALF-CROWN.

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"What are you crying for?" said Arthur to a little ragged boy that he overtook on his way home from the village school.—There was something in the kind of crying that led Arthur to think there was some serious cause for it.

"I am hungry," said the boy, "and I can get nothing to eat."

"Why don't your mother give you something to eat?"

"She hasn't any thing for herself, and she is sick, and can't get up."

"Where is your father?"

"I haven't any. He was drowned away off at sea."

"Where do you live?"

"Down there," pointing to a miserable hut in a distant lane.

"Come with me and I'll get you something."

Arthur turned back, and the boy followed him. He had a few halfpence in his pocket, just enough, as it proved, to buy a loaf of bread. He gave it to the boy, and told him he would go home with him.

Arthur went in, and saw a good-looking woman on the bed, with two small children crying by her side. As he opened the door he heard the eldest say, "Do, mother give me something to eat." They stopped crying when Arthur and the boy came in. The boy ran to the bed, and gave his mother the loaf, and, pointing to Arthur, said, "He bought it for me!"

"Thank you," said the woman; "may God bless and give you the bread of eternal life."

The eldest little girl jumped up and down in her joy, and the youngest tried to seize the loaf, and struggled hard to do so, but did not speak. Seeing that the widow's hand was weak, Arthur took the loaf, and cut off a piece for the youngest first, and then for the girl and the boy. He gave the loaf to the widow. She ate a small piece, and then closed her eyes, and seemed to be engaged in silent prayer.

"She must be one of the Lord's poor," thought Arthur, "I'll go and get something else for you as quick as I can," said Arthur, and he departed.

He went to Mrs. Bertron's, who lived near, and told her the story; and she immediately sent some milk, and bread, and tea, and sugar, and butter, and sent word that she would come herself as soon as she could get the baby asleep.

Arthur had half-a-crown at home, which he wished to give the poor woman. His father gave it to him for watching sheep, and told him he must not spend it, but put it out at interest, or trade with it so as to make something. He knew his father would not let him give it away; for he was not a Christian, and thought of little else than of saving and making money. Arthur's mother died when he was an infant, but with her last breath she gave him to God.

When Arthur was five years old he was sent to school, to a pious teacher, who cared for his soul; and knowing that he had no teacher at home, she took unusual pains to instruct him in the principles of religious truth. The Holy Spirit helped her efforts, and before he was eight years of age there was reason to hope that he had been born again.

Arthur was now in his tenth year. He considered how he should help the poor widow, and at length he hit upon a plan which proved to be successful.

His father was very desirous that he should begin to act for himself in business matters, such as making bargains. He did not wish him to ask his advice in so doing, but to go by his own judgment. After the business was done, he would show him whether it was wise or not; but never censured him, lest he should discourage him from acting on his own responsibility.

In view of these facts Arthur formed his plan.

"Father, may I lend my half-crown?"

"To some spendthrift boy?"

"I won't lend it without good security."

The father was pleased that his son had the idea of good security in his head; he would not inquire what it was for; he wished Arthur to decide that for himself. He told him to lend it, but to be careful not to lose it.

"I'll be sure of that," said Arthur.

Arthur took his half-crown and ran to the poor widow, and gave it to her, and came away before she had time to thank him.