

Our Young Folks.

The Four Silverpennys

By ALICE GIRARD.

Mr. Silverpenny was a bachelor, who, at sixty-seven, found himself with few friends and no relations to lay claim to the very respectable fortune he had amassed by years of labor and self-denial.

As is not unfrequently the case, now that he had climbed to the top of the ladder he found that, so far as he was concerned, the pleasure of making money far exceeded the pleasure of spending it. The habits of years cannot be cast aside in a day, and to be lavish, or even liberal, needs, as most other qualities do, a certain amount of education. This, as regarded expenditure, Mr. Silverpenny had never had. He had come to the small inland city when a mere boy, had worked his way upwards from clerk to master, and, retired now from business, he lived in an unpretentious house, his wants attended to by a faithful, honest housekeeper, who closed her hand as tightly over her master's money as she did over her own. The two had grown old together, and their peculiarities and the practice of their small economies were now a part of their nature. To alter his surroundings, go to a more fashionable quarter of the town, live in any other way than he did, never occurred to Mr. Silverpenny. One care alone weighed heavily on him, and that was to decide what he should do with his money. Nothing in the newspapers interested him half as much as the wills of the various persons, their bequests, and how they disposed of their property; but though these perusals—extending over many years now—had afforded him much varied and strange information, up to the present date he had not come across any favorable precedent for the solution of his difficulty.

There were hospitals, orphanages, charities without number, each and every one calling loudly for support from him; but even while living, Mr. Silverpenny turned a deaf ear to such appeals, agreeing with his old housekeeper, Martha, that such places went mostly "to harbor idle vagabonds." No, he had not toiled for such as these.

Churches? In his opinion there were already too many. Schools? It was enough if boys could write and read. Poor Mr. Silverpenny! Had he carried his \$300,000 on his back he could hardly have felt its burden more heavily.

The 20th of May was his birthday, and according to custom, Martha, who had marked the festival by her choice of his dinner, was detained after clearing the cloth away to drink a glass of wine to the health of her master.

"Sixty-seven you be," she said, setting down on the table the glass from which she had sipped—"Twelve months older than you was this day last year. Him! Well, you looks it," and she regarded him fixedly.

Mr. Silverpenny winced under Martha's searching eye. He knew, as well as she did, that there was truth in her candor. During the past year, for some reason unknown, he had felt that he was sliding down life's hill two steps at a time, and it was with a sigh that he answered, "Quite true, Martha. I'm beginning to feel an old man."

"Oh, twant o' that I was thinking, for I follows so close behind ye that when you dies through fright of old age I shall quake for fear, but—well, you ain't the man you was, master."

Mr. Silverpenny nodded his head assentingly.

"And," continued Martha, "us time that if I was you I should put my house in order. Mr. Silverpenny did not answer, but he stroked his chin meditatively.

"He'n't got no relations o' no kind nowhere?"

Martha had long been acquainted with her master's difficulty.

No. Mr. Silverpenny had no relations

whatever. "Mine is a very uncommon name," he said, "very."

"I'll be bound if you sent to Boston you'd find Silverpennys in plenty. Oh, now, you don't know, master"—for Mr. Silverpenny had given her to see how he dissented from her—"why, look to me, Martha Green, I've neither kith nor kin so far as I know by; but if I'd got money to leave away, take my word if there wouldn't spring up a reg'lar crop o' Greens to claim relation with me. And so with Silverpennys—there ain't any other here 'tis true, but in Boston, don't tell me, I'll wager you'd find 'em there in scores."

This argument had frequently before been advanced by Martha, and as frequently pook-pooked by Mr. Silverpenny, but driven to his wits' ends to know what else to do, although he did not say so to her, he entertained the thought now more seriously, brooded on it that night, and the result was that some six weeks later Mr. Silverpenny announced to Martha his intention of starting for Boston on the morrow.

"That's right," she said, approvingly, "and what you ought to have done long ago."

The root of many of our paradoxical eccentricities might be traced to vanity, and without doubt some feeling of this kind had prompted Mr. Silverpenny to desire that the fortune he had to leave should be inherited by some one who at least bore his name. As he had said to Martha, it was a singular one, and when, the morning after his arrival in Boston, desiring the waiter of the hotel to procure for him the directory for that year, he opened the book to begin his search, he felt a certain degree of trepidation.

There were Silversides and Silverstones, Silverlocks and Silverthorns, not a Silverpenny—stay though. Yes, and he read, "Silverpenny, John James, baker, 21 New Street." Martha was not right, although not absolutely wrong; the scores of Silverpennys, like the cats, had turned out to be one. Summoning the waiter, Mr. Silverpenny desired that he might be directed to New Street. An omnibus which passed close by he found would take him there, and he was soon deposited some twenty yards distant from the baker's door.

The shop was a modest one, with its window full of bread, at which Mr. Silverpenny stood staring, trying to find some excuse for going in. Naturally he did not wish to at once blurt out his reasons for coming. Yet what could he ask for? there was nothing but bread there—not a biscuit—not a bun. He walked past and back again, and then, not being given to hesitation, he stepped in.

"A roll," echoed the baker's wife; "certainly," and she handed him two, saying, "That's to-day's; this is a stale one."

Mr. Silverpenny made his choice. At the same time asking might he be allowed to eat it there. "I'm a trifle tired," he said, "and it will rest me."

"Johnny, bring out a chair here."

"That's good," thought Mr. Silverpenny; "they're a boy;" but, to his disappointment, the bearer of the chair was the baker, who, placing it for him, remarked that the weather was hot but seasonable, and then presuming that his customer came from the country, he inquired how the crops might be looking down his way.

Mr. Silverpenny gave the best answer he could to the question, for being a town-bred man, except in the grain he didn't know cockle from corn. Whatever he said, however, seemed to satisfy the baker, who needed only the very smallest opportunity to let his tongue run glibly, and, to Mr. Silverpenny's satisfaction, the roll was not half got through before he was able to introduce the subject which he had kept ready all the while, by saying, "Your name, Silverpenny, is a very uncommon one."

"Ah, I believe you," said the baker, complacently. "There ain't another Silverpenny in all Boston."

"Not as you know of, Johnny," said his wife, circumspectly.

"Not that nobody knows of," asserted the baker, confidently; "and more than that, I don't believe you'd find more than one other than me if you was to search through a'l America."

"And he is, I suppose, related to you?" said Mr. Silverpenny, cautiously.

"No, not as I know of, in any way, though he's the sort of friend that sticks closer than a brother, and so he's proved himself to me, and I'm proud to be beholden to one who bears the name of Silverpenny."

"He always holds to it," said the wife, "that you two must be related to one another, he's a minister," she added, to Mr. Silverpenny, "and's got a church of his own in the country."

Fortunately, for the satisfaction of Mr. Silverpenny's curiosity, the attention of the baker's wife was at this moment engrossed by the advent of a street vender, and while the worthy housewife chaffered over the prices of cabbages and onions, Mr. Silverpenny adroitly made himself master of the baker's past history. It was a very simple one—he had fallen ill, and left his situation to go to a hospital, from which he was sent out weak, and all but penniless. At a country town he had completely broken down, and declared that he must have died from want had not the minister there—the other Silverpenny—heard his name and help him on; "and that did not end all he did for me," he added; "he lent me money, he gave me clothes, and he wrote a letter to a friend he had here—well, the parson of that very church which, if you come to where I'm standing, its spire you can see and, as it turned out, Mr. Webber, that was the clergyman's name, knew of a party here, a baker, as from being old and infirm, wanted a brisk young chap to keep things going. Mr. Silverpenny answered for me, and whether he was foolish or wise in his man, is best shown, inasmuch as that business is now mine. The old gentlemen is gone, and I stand in his shoes as master here. She," and he indicated his wife, "was his niece. I tell her I took her with the fixtures. Ah, well, I might ha' done worse. The bad job is, we've got no children, you see. 'Tis a pity, ain't it, a tidy business like this, and nobody to leave it to?"

"The other one, the minister, I mean—is a rich man, I suppose."

"Rich! Ah, bless ye, not he; he's as poor as a church mouse, and would be if he'd got the double of what he's got now, but he's a gentleman, every of him, and a Christian too; and, as I say, if he don't go to heaven I don't know who will. 'Twill be a poor lookout for such as me and you."

Mr. Silverpenny did not pick up the stone cast at him.

"Where might this gentleman live?" he said, "and is he married—has he a family?"

"Yes, there's a boy—one—and a fine chap he is. He's schooling at Andover. They pitched themselves to let him go, and I send him a cake whenever I can—a real good one, too, no mistake," and he winked his eye. "He'd tell ye, would Master Charlie, that it ain't half a bad thing to have a friend a baker."

"I should agree, with him," said Mr. Silverpenny.

"Ah, I'd do more than that for the son of his father," said the baker. "I was a stranger, and he took me in—hungry, and he fed me—naked and he clothed me. That's what I call acting up to Scripture, I da."

"And all because of your being called Silverpenny?"

"Well, so he said, but bless you, if not, he'd ha' done the same, no, mind, but he's proud of the name, oh, very, and so am I too, and rightly I take it, when there's but the two, John James Silverpenny, baker, 21 New Street, and the Rev. Anthony Charles Silverpenny, Pittsfield, Massachusetts."

Once in possession of the information he wanted, Mr. Silverpenny soon

brought his visit to a close. At parting, he shook the friendly baker by the hand, and as soon as he was out of sight of the shop he hailed a cab, and telling the driver where he wished to go, was soon deposited at the Boston and Albany station. Fortune favored his plans so far, that a train for the west was shortly starting, and having arrived at the end of his journey of five hours, he started for the parsonage.

This time he meant to adopt another plan he would no longer suppress his cognomen, but boldly sent in his card bearing the name of Silverpenny.

"Silverpenny! and not my friend the baker."

The minister into whose sanctum Mr. Silverpenny had been taken, looked at him with curiosity.

Assuredly it never entered into the reverend gentleman's mind to suppose that the possessor of a fortune stood before him. Our good friend, always a little inclined to look shabby, was now, in addition, dusty and travel-stained, the heat, excitement and hurry had in no ways improved him, and he had not Martha near to set out his proper linen.

In the good minister's sight here was a man old and needy, and it was in a softened voice he next spoke to him.

"And so, my friend, you bear the name of Silverpenny, well, I am glad to see you, for I thought there were only two left of that name."

"And I," said Mr. Silverpenny, "feared there was but one."

"No no," and the minister laughed cheerily; "not so badly off as that yet, each Silverpenny has two to help him—ah, isn't it so?" and he wondered into what straits the old man's necessities had reduced him.

"You speak there, sir, with authority," said Mr. Silverpenny, and then to enlighten him further, he add, "I have been to New Street, and seen the baker, who told me his story."

"Oh, ah—I see—yes, but don't rely too much on that fellow, he has too long a tongue and too good memory, I tell him. A mere nothing the help he got from me. He owes everything to his own industry—he's a fine specimen—a very fine specimen—a credit to the name of Silverpenny."

"May I ask if you came from New Hampshire?" said Mr. Silverpenny, anxiously. "I was born at Wishton, there."

"No, my friend, no. We are Massachusetts people—all, so far I can tell. I was born the other side of the Berkshire Hills, the only son of my mother, and I, myself," and he stifled a rising sigh, "am in a very similar condition; my poor wife is recently dead, and I am left with one ewe lamb—an only son."

"Master Charlie?"

"Ah, that fellow, the baker, spoke of him to you, did he?—the rascal, he stuffs him with cakes and sweets of all kinds, sends them to his boarding school, spoils him, you know; but he's a good boy, is Charlie, and I trust, will grow up to be a good man. I pray that he may prove worthy of our name of Silverpenny, and you, my friend, must ask it for him too. The world is full of pitfalls. Youth needs a steady helmsman."

"You must give me his proper name," said Mr. Silverpenny.

"I will; I'll write it down for you, to assist your memory. Anthony Charles Silverpenny, aged thirteen, born 1st of May. There, now, you won't forget him," and he handed over the slip of paper, adding, "You have not told me yet how I can serve you."

"You're very good; but my object in coming was merely to satisfy the curiosity I had to see another man who bore the name of Silverpenny."

"In that case you must stay and see my son; he is home for a holiday—not in now, but he will be presently."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Forty-one counties in West Virginia prohibit the sale of intoxicants.