

A Dozen of Them



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A DOZEN OF THEM.

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Contents

Chapter 1.....	1
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapter 3.....	15
Chapter 4.....	21
Chapter 5.....	27
Chapter 6.....	31
Chapter 7.....	36
Chapter 8.....	41
Chapter 9.....	44
Chapter 10.....	49

AND THOMAS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, MY LORD AND MY GOD.

HE SAITH UNTO HIM, FEED MY LAMBS.

IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT, AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON, CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN.

I AM HE THAT LIVETH, AND WAS DEAD; AND BEHOLD, I AM ALIVE FOREVERMORE.



YOUNG Joseph sat on the side of his bed, one boot on, the other still held by the strap, while he stared somewhat crossly at a small green paper-covered book which lay open beside him.

“A dozen of them!” he said at last. “Just to think of a fellow making such a silly promise as that! A verse a month, straight through a whole year. Got to pick ’em out, too. I’d rather have ’em picked out for me; less trouble.

“How did I happen to promise her I’d do it? I don’t know which verse to take. None of ’em fit me, nor have a single thing to do with a *boy*! Well, that’ll make it all the easier for me, I s’pose. I’ve got to hurry, anyhow, so here goes; I’ll take the shortest there is here.”

And while he drew on the other boot, and made haste to finish his toilet, he rattled off, many times over, the second verse at the head of this story.

The easiest way to make you understand about Joseph, is to give you a very brief account of his life.

He was twelve years old, and an orphan. The only near relative he had in the world was his sister Jean aged sixteen, who was learning millinery in an establishment in the city. The little family though very poor, had kept together until mother died in the early spring. Now it was November, and during the summer, Joseph had lived where he could; working a few days for his bread, first at one house, then at another; never because he was really needed, but just out of pity for his homelessness. Jean could earn her board where she was learning her trade, but not his; though she tried hard to bring this about.

At last, a home for the winter opened to Joseph. The Fowlers who lived on a farm and had in the large old farmhouse a private school for a dozen girls, spent a few weeks in the town where Joseph lived, and carried him away with them, to be errand boy in general, and study between times.

Poor, anxious Jean drew a few breaths of relief over the thought of her boy. That, at least, meant pure air, wholesome food, and a chance to learn something.

Now for his promise. Jean had studied over it a good deal before she claimed it. Should it be to read a few verses in mother's Bible every day? No; because a boy always forgot to do so, for a

week at a time, and then on Sunday afternoon rushed through three or four chapters as a salve to his conscience, not noticing a sentence in them. At last she determined on this: the little green book of golden texts, small enough to carry in his jacket pocket! Would he promise her to take—should she say each week's text as a sort of rule to live by?

No; that wouldn't do. Joseph would never make so close a promise as that. Well, how would a verse a month do, chosen by himself from the Golden Texts?

On this last she decided; and this, with some hesitancy, Joseph promised. So here he was, on Thanksgiving morning, picking out his first text. He had chosen the shortest, as you see; there was another reason for the choice. It pleased him to remember that he had no lambs to feed, and there was hardly a possibility that the verse could fit him in any way during the month. He was only bound by his promise to be guided by the verse if he happened to think of it, and if it suggested any line of action to him.

"It's the jolliest kind of a verse," he said, giving his hair a rapid brushing. "When there are no lambs around, and nothing to feed 'em, I'd as soon live by it for a month as not."

Voices in the hall just outside his room: "I don't know what to do with poor little Rettie today," said Mrs. Calland, the married daughter who lived at home with her fatherless Rettie.

"The poor child will want everything on the table, and it won't do for her to eat anything but her milk and toast. I am so sorry for her. You know she is weak from her long illness; and it

is *so* hard for a child to exercise self control about eating. If I had anyone to leave her with I would keep her away from the table; but everyone is so busy.”

Then Miss Addie, one of the sisters: “How would it do to have our new Joseph stay with her?”

“Indeed!” said the new Joseph, puckering his lips into an indignant sniff and brushing his hair the wrong way, in his excitement; “I guess I won’t, though. Wait for the second table on Thanksgiving Day, when every scholar in the school is going to sit down to the first! That would be treating me exactly like one of the family with a caution! Just you try it, Miss Addie, and see how quick I’ll cut and run.”

But Mrs. Calland’s soft voice was replying: “Oh! I wouldn’t like to do that. Joseph is sensitive, and a stranger, and sitting down to the Thanksgiving feast in its glory, is a great event for him; it would hurt me to deprive him of it.”

“Better not,” muttered Joseph, but there was a curious lump in his throat, and a very tender feeling in his heart toward Mrs. Calland.

It was very strange, in fact it was absurd, but all the time Joseph was pumping water, and filling pitchers, and bringing wood and doing the hundred other things needing to be done this busy morning, that chosen verse sounded itself in his brain: “He saith unto him, feed my lambs.” More than that, it connected itself with frail little Rettie and the Thanksgiving feast.

In vain did Joseph say “Pho!” “Pshaw!” “Botheration!” or any of the other words with which boys express disgust. In vain did he tell himself that the verse didn’t mean any such thing; he guessed he wasn’t a born idiot. He even tried to make a joke out of it, and assure himself that this was exactly contrary to the verse; it was a plan by means of which the “lamb” should *not* get fed. It was all of no use. The verse and his promise, kept by him the whole morning, actually sent him at last to Mrs. Calland with the proposal that he should take little Rettie to the schoolroom and amuse her, while the grand dinner was being eaten.

I will not say that he had not a lingering hope in his heart that Mrs. Calland would refuse his sacrifice. But his hope was vain. Instant relief and gratitude showed in the mother’s eyes and voice. And Joseph carried out his part so well that Rettie, gleeful and happy every minute of the long two hours, did not so much as think of the dinner.

“You are a good, kind boy,” said Mrs. Calland, heartily. “Now run right down to dinner; we saved some nice and warm for you.”

Yes, it was warm: but the great fruit pudding was spoiled of its beauty, and the fruit pyramid had fallen, and the workers were scraping dishes and hurrying away the remains of the feast, while he ate, and the girls were out on the lawn playing tennis and croquet, double sets at both, and no room for him, and the glory of everything had departed. The description of it all, which he had meant to write to Jean, would have to be so changed that there would be no pleasure in writing it. What had been the use of

spoiling his own day? No one would ever know it, he couldn't even tell Jean, because of course the verse didn't mean any such thing.

“But I don't see why it pitched into a fellow so, if it didn't *belong*,” he said, rising from the table just as Ann, the dishwasher, snatched his plate, for which she had been waiting. “And, anyhow, I feel kind of glad I did it, whether it belonged or not.”

“He is a kind-hearted, unselfish boy,” said Mrs. Calland to her little daughter, that evening, “and you and mamma must see in how many ways we can be good to him.”

BLESSING, AND HONOR, AND GLORY AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, FOR EVER AND EVER.

THEREFORE, ARE THEY BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD, AND SERVE HIM DAY AND NIGHT IN HIS TEMPLE.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.



IT gave Joseph a curious sensation to hear his verse sung over and over again by the choir, the great organ rolling out the melody and seeming to him to speak the words almost as distinctly as the voices did. He had chosen that first verse as his motto for the month, with a dim idea that it somehow fitted Christmas, though he couldn't have told why he thought so. It was sufficiently unpractical not to disturb his conscience, at least; and of this he thought with satisfaction. It would not do to have to live by so many verses. That last month's selection, "Feed my lambs," had perfectly amazed him with its power to keep him busy. It was not only little Rettie, always on hand to be amused, or petted, or helped, in some way, but it was the little neighbor boy who followed his brother when he came for milk; and the little Irish girl who cried over her spelling lesson; and the little Dutch boy 'whom some of them made fun of, in Sunday-school. Many a time during the month, Joseph had sighed a little, and smiled a little, over the

bondage in which that verse held him and had got to hold him for a whole year, and he wondered if Jean had known what she was about. At least he must know what he was about; another verse of that kind would not do to follow soon. This one was grand and majestic, ever so far above him; it was not to be supposed that he could in any way join that wonderful army who were praising. Joseph listened to it with a curious mixture of awe over the grandeur, and satisfaction that it was his, and did not trouble him.

He was seated in the great church, and it was Christmas Eve. The children's anthem was being sung first by the choir, then by a troop of children who appeared to catch the strain and re-echo it as far as their shrill young voices could reach. This was the closing anthem of the evening.

It had been a very nice evening to Joseph. He had taken part in the recitation, and his teacher had whispered, "Well done, Joseph," when he took his seat.

He had mounted little Rettie on his knee, the better to view the great Christmas-tree, thereby winning a smile and a "Thank you, Joseph!" from Mrs. Calland.

He had answered to his name when called, and received a handsome Bible from his teacher; altogether he had never spent a happier Christmas Eve. He saw himself writing a letter to his sister to tell all about it; and just then that anthem burst forth. Then the minister arose to pronounce the benediction. But instead of doing it, he made a little speech.

“Children,” he said, “I heard one of you call the anthem a grown-up anthem. I asked what that meant, and the little fellow who said so, told me it wasn’t for boys and girls, but for angels, and such things. That is a mistake. It is for you and me; you at four, and I at forty, and all the rest of you who are all the way between. ‘Blessing and honor;’ suppose we go no farther than that. Can’t we bless Him? Can’t we say thank you to the Lord for all his mercies? And can’t we honor Him? Don’t you remember that every little thing we do, or keep from doing, because we think it would please Him, is an honor to Him?”

There was more to the talk; not much, though, for the minister knew better than to make a long talk on Christmas Eve. But, bless you, it was long enough for Joseph! It came over him with a dismayed sort of feeling, that with all his care he had chosen a verse which was going to hedge him about worse than the other had.

“Every little thing we do, or keep from doing. Oh, dear!” he said, and was startled to discover that he almost said it aloud. “A fellow gets all mixed up with verses and things, and can’t stir. I wish Jean had been asleep when she made me promise.”

However, he got through Christmas day beautifully. It happened that every duty of his that day had to do with what he liked, and was no trouble at all. It was mere fun to sweep the light snow from the front walk, in the clear sparkling morning. It was simply delight to hitch up the ponies and go to the depot for company who were coming to the farm to dinner. He liked nothing

better than to turn pony himself, and give Rettie a ride on her box sled; and so through the day everything was merry and happy. I am not sure that he thought of his verse more than once; that was when they were seated at the beautiful dinner table and a sentence of thanksgiving in the blessing reminded him of it. Not unpleasantly; he found that he felt very thankful indeed, and would just as soon say, "I thank you," as not. If that was what the verse meant by "blessing" he was more than willing.

In the evening the school-tree was to be enjoyed, and none looked forward to it more than Joseph. For the past two days the schoolroom door had been shut against them all, and speculation had run high as to what glories it would reveal when next it opened for them. The time was drawing near; Joseph came with a bound from across the hall, at Farmer Fowler's bidding, to see if the kitchen doors were closed against the wind which was rising. He had heard the call to open the schoolroom doors; in ten minutes more all the mysteries hidden therein would be revealed.

In the middle of the kitchen he stood still. I am not sure but it would be very near the truth to say that his heart stood still as well as his body. The door leading into the dining-room was open, and in the great dining-room fireplace there crackled, and blazed, and roared a freshly adjusted log, sending up flames which lighted the entire room as with sunlight glory. But the fire did more than glow and sparkle; it snapped—sent out spitefully across the room regular showers of brilliant sparks, lighting, some of them, on the cedar with which the mantel was trimmed. Joseph sprang to them

before they did mischief, then stood again as if rooted to the spot. A fresh log, very large, one of the sputtering kind, and it would sputter in that way, sending out its showers of dangerous sparks for a half-hour at least—longer than that—until all the fun in the schoolroom was well over.

What of it all? What concern was it of his? He didn't put the log on. He had never been set to watch the dining-room fire. No; but what was that? "Blessing, and honor, and glory!" Well, what of it? What had blessing, and honor, and glory, to do with a few sparks which might not do a bit of harm if left alone to themselves? Sparks almost always died out if let alone.

What was that he said—"Every little thing we do or keep from doing, because we think it would please Him, is an honor to Him?"

Dear, dear! Why need the minister have said that? It wasn't talk for Christmas Eve! And was it to be supposed that he, Joseph, who had never belonged to a family Christmas-tree before in his life, could stay out there and watch sparks while all the fun was going on? He really couldn't. Hark! Listen to that shouting! The fun had begun; he must go this minute. Wait! Look at that spark! It had lighted on the tissue-paper mat on the lamp-stand; it was going to burn! It will burn, it will blaze and set the house on fire! No, it won't; the wicked and industrious little sprite has been firmly crushed in Joseph's fingers, and has died, and left only a sooty fleck on the whiteness to tell of its intentions. But Joseph turned from it, and sat down in the big wooden rocker, near the snapping log, his face sorrowful and determined.

There was no help for it. The fun must go on, and the snapping must go on, and he must sit and watch it. "Every little thing we keep from doing" he could keep from going into the schoolroom, and he knew it would please Him.

"Because," said Joseph scornfully, to the log, "any idiot would know it was the right thing to do. You are not to be trusted, you snapping old thing, and you have got to be watched." Why, then, he was bound to do it, because he had promised to be led by the verse of his choice. "It's enough sight worse than the other one," he told the log mournfully, meaning the other verse; and then he kept watch in silence; no more sparks made even an attempt to do any harm, which Joseph considered mean in them after having obliged him to stay and watch them. They might at least have given him the excitement of undoing their mischief. He even meditated deserting them as past the dangerous point, but just then a perfect shower blazed out into the room, and though they every one died out before they settled, Joseph told them that was no sign of what they might choose to do next time.

At last there came a prolonged shout from the distant schoolroom, mingled with the opening of doors, and the hurrying of eager feet and cries of:

"Where is he? Where's Joseph?"

"Why, where in the world can Joseph be?"

And the dining-room was peopled with eager searchers, among whom came Farmer Fowler.

“Why, my boy,” he said, as Joseph arose from the rocker, “what in the world does this mean? Haven’t you been in at the fun, after all? We didn’t notice until your name was called. Why weren’t you there?”

“I had to watch the sparks,” said Joseph, pointing to the snapping log. And then I am glad to state that those sparks did show a little sense of decency, and coming out in a perfect shower, lighted on the other tissue-paper mat, and Joseph had to suit the action to the word, and spring to its rescue.

“Well, I never!” said Fanner Fowler.

“I really think that is remarkable,” said Mrs. Calland. But whether they meant the sparks, or the log, or the tissue-paper mat, none of them explained.

And then all the children talked at once.

“Why, you had a hand-sled!” said one.

“A perfect beauty!” exclaimed another.

“One of the boss kind!” explained a third. “And it has your name on it in red letters.”

“Come on in and see it!” Whereupon the troop vanished with Joseph at their heels. He thought he could safely leave the sparks to Farmer Fowler’s care for awhile.

“Father,” said Mrs. Calland, “I think that is a very remarkable boy; I wish you would let me have him. I believe Harry would take him into the office.”

“We’ll wait and see whether you can do better by him than I,” said Farmer Fowler, his eyes twinkling. “I think your mother has

plans for him. Well, mother, I don't know but he saved the old farmhouse for us tonight. That log is uncommon snappy. He is an unusual boy, somehow, and no mistake."

"I told you so from the first," said Mother Fowler, looking as pleased as though he was her son.

But Joseph knew nothing about this, and, in fact, had forgotten all about his verse. He was examining his new sled, and thinking how he would describe it to Jean when he wrote.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH.

BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN.

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

NOAH DID ACCORDING UNTO ALL THAT THE LORD COMMANDED HIM.

I WILL BLESS THEE; AND MAKE THY NAME GREAT; AND THOU SHALT BE A BLESSING.



THERE was a broad smile on Joseph's face; he was fully satisfied with his verse for the month.

In the first place, it was very short—only five words; in the second place, he had no brother, so it was not possible for it to get him into what he called “scrapes,” by living up to it.

Now you know which verse it is? Yes; that is the very one: “Am I my brother's keeper?”

Yet the New Year's Eve frolic was not over before he found the verse fitted in. They were having a tableau party, and Joseph was dressed in an extraordinary manner—like a youthful musician of the olden time. Mrs. Calland had managed—nobody but she knew how—to arrange for him a most remarkable wig of soft curling hair; the mustache part was easy; a little burnt cork settled

that. Then there was little Fannie Stuart and her brother Rex dressed surprisingly!

It was just as all the toilets were completed and Mrs. Calland was ready to arrange her living picture behind the curtain, that Joseph's verse came into prominence.

I am not sure that he would have thought of it in just the way he did, had it not been for Mrs. Calland's remark as she finished arranging Rob Walker's cloak. Rob Walker was a day scholar who had been invited to the evening's fun because they were sorry for him; as he was at his uncle's, more than a thousand miles away from home, during this holiday time. He was another musician, representing a different style of dress, and Mrs. Calland, as she fastened the wide collar about his neck, had said:

“Why, how this dress changes one's appearance! You and Joseph would pass for brothers, now.”

After which, Rob, much amused, had called his companion “Brother Joseph.”

It was while she was bending over Rex that there fell from Mrs. Calland's own collar a gleaming pin which Joseph did not know was a diamond; but he knew it was beautiful, and very much beloved by Mrs. Calland. He knew, too, in less than five seconds after its fall, what became of it.

Rob, the almost stranger among them, also saw it fall, gave a swift glance about the room to see if others were looking, then stooped and put the gleaming thing in his pocket, and said not a word! How utterly astonished and dismayed was Joseph! He could

not go on with his part, and took such stupid positions instead of the right one, as to make the others laugh, and to call from Mrs. Calland the question:

“Why, Joseph, what has happened to you? Are you taking a nap?”

“Brother Joseph, you must do better than that, or I’ll disown you,” said Rob good-naturedly.

“Brother Joseph!” The words chimed in with the boy’s thoughts. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Something seemed asking Joseph that question.

Unless you are the sort of boy who can understand it without explanation, I don’t know that I can help you to feel how dreadfully Joseph hated to meddle with this matter. It was so uncomfortable to think of going to Mrs. Calland with tales about another boy! He knew just how grave she looked when any of the scholars pointed out the faults of others. And *such* a fault! Did Rob really mean to *steal*?

If so, the owner ought certainly to be told; yet perhaps Rob meant only a little mischief, and would give the pin back in a little while; in which case, how very mean he, Joseph, should feel to have been tale-bearer. But then, on the other hand, what if Rob shouldn’t give it back?

“I don’t care,” said Joseph to himself; “what business is it of mine, anyhow? I didn’t take it, and I am not supposed to know anything about it. What is Rob Walker to me?”

Am I my brother’s keeper?

It startled Joseph to think the verse seemed to fit what he was planning. If the truth must be told, one grave fault of this boy, Joseph, was to shirk responsibility. Besides, he had the fault common to many good-hearted boys; he hated to be called a “tell-tale;” hated it to such a degree that it was hard work for him to tell, even when he felt sure that telling was duty.

There was much thinking, and there were also many blunders, over which the young people had great merriment, before Joseph finally reached the point:

“I don’t care, I’m going to tell her. If she thinks it’s mean I can’t help it; if she thinks I don’t do it with the right feeling, I can’t help that either: I believe I ought to tell. That little old verse of mine will go and choke me if I don’t; and Rob, maybe, will choke me if I do; but I can stand his choking better than the other. Who would have thought there would be a place for that verse to fit in?”

With Joseph, to decide, was to perform. Very grave indeed Mrs. Calland looked when she bent her head and received the hurriedly whispered story.

Still, her words encouraged him: “You did just right, Joseph, to speak to me quietly. Don’t mention it to any person; we will both be quiet and I will decide what to do.”

But Joseph remained sober all the rest of the evening.

You may imagine he was on the alert when, nearly two hours afterwards, as they were making ready for the closing tableau, Addie Fowler suddenly said, “Sister Kate, you have lost your pin!”

Everybody but Joseph looked at Mrs. Calland; he looked down on the floor, and felt his face grow red.

“I know it,” said Mrs. Calland quietly. “It has been gone for some time. I must have dropped it early in the evening.”

There was an instant bustle of looking for the pin, but it was Rob Walker’s voice stopped them:

“I know where it is; I guess you will find it in the Italian musician’s pocket; those fellows are always thieves.”

Then you should have seen the red in Joseph’s face. He looked over at Mrs. Calland, now, in a helpless, pitiful sort of way, which made some of the scholars say in whispers:

“Why, would you think it possible! I would never believe it if he didn’t show it in his face at this minute!”

At the same time, the poor fellow dived both hands into his pockets and drew out, sure enough, the gleaming thing; whereat Rob laughed loud and long. But no one else did.

What a “scrape” for a boy to get into! What in the world was he to do? What would Mrs. Calland do or think? Would she possibly think he stole it, and then tried to palm the theft off on Rob? Hark! What was that she was saying in her quiet voice:

“Never mind laughing any more, Robert; we will not keep the company waiting for the closing tableau; but by and by you shall tell me why you picked up my pin, carried it in your pocket for nearly an hour, then slipped it slyly into Joseph’s pocket. You must have had some reason for it all; remember, *I saw you do it,*”

continued Mrs. Calland; then added, “but we will not keep our guests waiting longer, now. Get your places, girls.”

“I don’t believe I could have thought *you* would steal it, my dear boy,” said Mrs. Calland to Joseph, late that night, when at last she was alone with him for a moment in the kitchen. “I don’t think I could look into your honest eyes and imagine such a thing; but of course what you told me, put me on my guard and prepared me to watch poor Rob. So, you see, your verse saved yourself, and will be helpful to him in the end. I think the boy means only mischief; but it is mischief of a very malicious kind, which might have brought trouble upon you. I think you ought to thank sister Jean in your next letter, for suggesting such a shield for her brother.”

From which you will understand that Joseph had also confided to Mrs. Calland the story of the verse.

SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

FEAR NOT, ABRAM; I AM THY SHIELD AND THY EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD.

IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY.

ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE.



POOOR Joseph covered his head under many bedclothes and said the words with trembling tongue. He was certainly very much afraid. How the verse could help him he could not imagine, yet it was some comfort that it began with those assuring words, “Fear not.” He had been only amused when he made the selection. His name was not Abram, and he declared to himself that he had done nothing to be rewarded for, nevertheless he chose that verse.

Nothing which required any “doing” would he have for this month. He had read over the other verses carefully, but they seemed too serious.

“Seek ye first—” No, not that; he meant to do no seeking.

“Escape—” No; there was something else to do.

“Fear not—” That was just the thing. To be sure he had nothing to be afraid of, and did not believe he ever should have. Now, under the bedclothes, he thought of it and shivered. What was the matter?

The story is quickly told. It was vacation time, and the scholars had all gone home. On the morning of the day just past, the entire Fowler family had gone to spend the day with friends, leaving Joseph in charge of the house. They were to come home on the eight o'clock train; but eight o'clock came, and the train whistled and puffed itself into the depot, and the mail wagon, in the course of another half-hour, rolled by the Fowler gateway. Rolled by, to Joseph's dismay.

There was no other train until nine o'clock in the morning. After that, for an hour, Joseph sat by the kitchen fire, and did some serious thinking. The day had been lonely enough for a boy who was used to many people about him, but a long night in this great shut-up house all alone, was a good deal of a trial. Still, there was no help for it. Joseph decided that from the first. True there were neighbors a quarter of a mile away where he had once been caught in a storm, and spent the night with the boys. He could scud over there across lots, and he knew they would be glad to see him; but he did not give that matter a second thought. He had been left in charge of the house, and did not intend to desert it.

So, after thinking awhile, he covered the fire, locked all the doors, and whistling a great deal, took his lamp and went up to his room, repeating in his mind, even while he whistled, the verse which began, "Fear not," and wishing that his name were Abram.

After some trouble he had gone to sleep. But now he was wide enough awake and trembling in every limb. There were people stepping softly around the house, and at least two windows had

been tried. Burglars! There was little doubt of it. Listening, he heard their voices, not speaking very low.

“There isn’t a soul at home,” someone said. “I was at the train myself, and I heard the mail driver say, Why, the Fowlers were coming on this train, and there ain’t one of ’em here.”

“They missed it, I s’pose; and they can’t get here now till morning; we’ll have a good haul; the house is well stocked with things easy to move.”

After that, do you wonder that Joseph covered his head with the bedclothes and trembled? He was in the attic chamber, and the door was locked. The thieves would hardly be likely to trouble him; they would find treasures enough all over the great old farmhouse. But how dreadful to lie there and listen to things being stolen! What could he do?

Suddenly his heart began to beat in such great thuds that it seemed to bump against the head-board. He had thought of something to do. What if he should go from room to room and light the bracket lamps all over the house? Might not the burglars think there were people in charge, and run away?

But, on the other hand, might they not think of *him*, a little boy, and break in, and dispose of him, and have it all their own way?

“Thud! thud! thud!” said his heart; but Joseph was already out of bed. He said it aloud, while he was drawing on his clothes, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield.” If ever a boy needed shielding,

he did; and what if his name wasn't Abram? God knew his name, and God could shield him. Joseph did not doubt that.

His hand trembled so much that the first and second matches went out; but the third lighted his lamp. A moment, and the rays from the great hall lamp with the reflector behind it, flamed into the snow-covered street. The noise below had suddenly ceased. From room to room went Joseph, shivering with cold, and with fear, but flaming up the lights until there was certainly an illumination in the Fowler homestead. Now he had done all he could, and might lock himself in the attic room and wait. What would be the result? Would the burglars be frightened away, or would they suspect the true state of things, and only wait to plan a way to get rid of him? With his head under the bedclothes he waited, shivering. For how long? He could not have told. It seemed to him hours and hours!

Every little while he bobbed his head out, and listened; all was still. However, this did not greatly encourage him; of course the burglars would know enough to work quietly now. Suddenly there was a sound outside.

"Whoa!" said a strange voice, loudly, almost under his window. Then a loud thumping at the kitchen door. Oh, what should he do now? They had come back reinforced, and meant to break down the door!

"Joseph!" shouted a voice, "*Joseph!* Joseph!"

Mr. Fowler's voice, as sure as the world! Do you need to be told how suddenly Joseph bounded out of bed and rushed down two flights of stairs to the kitchen door?

"What does all this mean?" said the astonished master. And then, when he heard the story, "Well, I do say!" But what he might have said he kept to himself. "We missed the train," he explained, in turn, as soon as Joseph's explanations were over. "The others can't get here until nine o'clock; but I thought you would be a good deal disturbed, so I got the privilege of coming on the three o'clock freight, and caught a ride out with Barnet and his hens. Well, well, well! When I saw the house all ablaze with light, I thought first of fire, and then of lunatics."

Joseph slept late the next morning; slept, in fact, until the nine o'clock train came in, and all the people were at home, moving softly, so as not to waken him.

"It was a brave, wise thing for a boy of his years," said Farmer Fowler, after he had told the whole story and answered all the questions poured out on him from the excited family. "In fact, it was about the only thing that could have been done. There's no telling what he saved us by his quick-wittedness and pluck. The snow tracks show that there was quite a party of them. I'll tell you what it is, mother, let us write to that sister of his this very day, and spread out our plans. My mind is quite made up that it is the thing to do."

About this time, Joseph awoke with a start and a smile. He had been dreaming that he was really Abram. "I was carried

through it, anyhow,” he said, as he made all speed with his dressing. “I don’t see but I was shielded as well as Abram could have been; and as for the reward, why, I don’t want that.”

And yet it was on its way at that very moment; such a reward as Joseph had not dreamed of.

GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING.

SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE, AND I KNEW IT NOT!

AND HE SAID, I WILL NOT LET THEE GO EXCEPT THOU BLESS ME.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD IS WITH THEM THAT FEAR HIM; AND HE WILL SHOW THEM HIS COVENANT.



IT was evening, and Joseph was alone in Mrs. Calland's classroom; he had been left there in charge, to receive any messages which might come to Mrs. Calland while she was away attending to other duties. Joseph was often the one chosen for this work; as a rule, he was proud of the trust. Tonight he was restless and unhappy. A great temptation had beset him. Examination day was drawing very near; there were reasons why he was especially anxious to appear well in arithmetic. He had worked hard over his lessons, and tonight he looked hard at the little walnut secretary and felt his face flush over the thought which haunted him.

He had heard Mrs. Calland when she said with a half-relieved sigh as she folded a large paper, "There! I have selected the examination problems with as much care as possible. The scholars who can solve those will prove that they have worked faithfully

during the term.” Then she had placed the paper in a small box on the third shelf of her secretary, and locked the door.

What was there strange about all that? Nothing, only a very unusual thing had happened. At this moment the secretary was not only unlocked, but the door stood half-way open. During all Joseph’s stay in the house he had never seen the door open before, unless Mrs. Calland stood close to it. Now for his temptation: that paper, he was so near to it—if he could only know just what problems were to be given out on examination day! Just to see whether any of them needed his special attention. Of course he would not copy any work; he wouldn’t be so mean as that. All he wanted was a glance at the different pages from which the selections were taken; then he would work over all those pages, and all the pages near to them on either side. What harm could there be in that? It would simply be a review, and Mrs. Calland believed in reviews! Yes; he reasoned in just this ridiculous way, sensible boy as he generally was. Don’t you know that Satan often makes fools of people?

It is sorrowful to tell, but Joseph’s fingers seemed to ache with the longing to get hold of that paper. It could be done so easily, and replaced, and no one be the wiser. People always knocked who came to that door; no one but Mrs. Calland herself would enter until he gave the invitation; and Mrs. Calland, he knew, would be engaged for at least an hour. He moved toward the secretary slowly; much as though a serpent was seated on the shelf, charming him forward.

As he moved, he re-arranged the story in his mind, making it sound better. All he wanted now was to find out whether certain pages which had been especially hard had been selected from, so that he might make himself doubly safe on those pages. He has come nearer; he is right beside the shelf! His hand is outstretched; another moment and he will have the precious paper. Wait! Look at the door! Slowly, steadily, as if moved by some unseen hand, it glides by the outstretched arm and closes. Click! The paper is safe; the door has a spring lock, and only the tiny key on Mrs. Calland's watch chain can open it!

Joseph drew a long breath, and his heart beat so hard that it made him feel faint. How came that door to close just at that moment? Not a breath of air seemed to be stirring in the room; not a jar that Joseph could imagine, had there been to do the work. At that moment, almost as distinctly as though a voice had spoken them, Joseph seemed to hear the words:

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”

This was not his chosen verse; in fact, he had not chosen one. He had declared, as he read them over in his tiny book, that there wasn't a verse there which a boy could use; and he had waited in doubtful mood what to do about his promise, and had learned none of them, so he thought; yet this verse, it seems, had clung to his memory, and came now solemnly before him.

Was it possible that God had sent an angel to close the door and so “shield” this new Joseph from his enemy? The perspiration started on the boy's face. He felt awed, and frightened, and

grateful, all in one. He struggled with the queer feeling in his throat, and almost thought he must cry. How glad he was that that door had locked itself! What insane feeling had possessed him? He felt now as though there was nothing in the world great enough to tempt him to touch that paper!

So busy had he been with his thoughts, that he had heard nothing of the opening and closing of doors in the hall, and the little bustle which announced an arrival. But at this moment he did hear steps nearing the room, and Mrs. Calland's voice.

"We shall find him here," she was saying. "I left him in charge. He is my boy to trust. He knows nothing about it; it is our surprise for him." Then the door swung open, and the pleasant voice continued, "Joseph, I have brought you a birthday present." And there, smiling, radiant, in the doorway was his sister Jean!

"Oh, oh!" he said, and then, his head on her shoulder, he burst into tears.

"Why, the poor fellow!" Mrs. Calland said. "The surprise has been too much for him."

"My bonny boy, my bairn," murmured Jean, fondly stroking the brown head. "Nothing bad has happened; everything is beautiful."

They did not know what was in Joseph's heart; but all the while he was murmuring: "Oh, what if I had! I could never have looked Jean in the face again! And I should have done it, I'm afraid I should, if —if *he* hadn't shut the door."

BUT THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH AND SHOWED HIM MERCY.

COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD; TRUST ALSO IN HIM AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.

HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER; WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.



H E had sat with his head in Jean's lap when he chose the verse. She was passing her hand tenderly over the curly mass and telling him she had always been glad that he was named Joseph, for his good father; and that if he should grow up to be as good a man as his father, she should be perfectly happy; and then she had asked if he did not think that first verse would be a good one for him. Had not the Lord been with him in a very wonderful way during these past months? Only think of the good and pleasant things which had come to him! And now she, his one sister who loved him so much, instead of being a hundred miles away from him hard at work in a close, warm shop, was to live in this pleasant home, and do work which would be only play, compared with what she had been doing, and have a chance to study a little each day.

In his heart Joseph admitted that somehow the Lord had been very good to him; but, being a foolish boy, he did not say much about it. He chose the verse as a kind of thanksgiving verse, he told Jean with a roguish smile. It was the very first day of April, and before the day was done, something happened to Joseph.

For a brave boy, he had one rather foolish fear. He had a horror of toads; in spite of many resolves not to do so, he was almost sure to scream whenever he saw one. Of course, this was known among the schoolboys, and in planning their mischief for “April fool” two or three of those who were a little out of sorts with Joseph for not joining them in all their pranks, agreed together to send him through the mail a handsome box neatly done up in white paper, and containing the ugliest-looking toad they could find in the country. Over this scheme they giggled a good deal, and were careless in talking it up. The secret leaked out where they would least have wished it; but this they did not know at the time, and went on with their preparations.

The day and hour came; the boys and girls who had been admitted to the secret, as well as those who knew nothing about it, were gathered in the dining-room awaiting Joseph’s arrival with the evening mail. Mrs. Calland was there also, and Joseph’s sister Jean. At last the door opened, and his bright face appeared.

“I’ve got a big mail,” he said. “A letter for almost everybody, and a nice-looking package for myself; who do you suppose could have sent me something by mail?”

The question was asked of Jean, and his eyes were so bright and glad, that for a moment the three boys who knew what was in the box felt sorry and ashamed. What a pity to frighten that pleasant face, even for the sake of an April fool. But it was too late now. The package was being untied; letters waited, while the scholars gathered around, full of curiosity. A neat pasteboard box came to light.

“It is a handsome box,” said Joseph, in a happy tone.

“Take care, Joseph,” said Mrs. Calland, “it is the first of April, you know.”

“I know it,” laughed Joseph. “I half-believe that the box is full of nothing; but it is a handsome box, anyhow. I’ll keep it for pens, and things.”

Then the three boys looked at one another and wished with all their hearts that it was full of nothing. The joke they had planned did not seem half so funny as they had thought it would. They wished Mrs. Calland and the sister would go away; but they stayed, and the box was open. Soft white tissue paper covered whatever it held.

“It is done up like something precious,” said Joseph, handling it, nevertheless, in a careful manner, half-prepared for a practical joke of some sort.

At last there were exclamations of “Oh’s!” and “Ah’s!” and the treasure was in Joseph’s hand. A toad? Yes, a toad, large as life and very natural; but it was made of silver, and carried in its ugly mouth as pretty a napkin ring as was ever placed on the Fowlers’

table. What delighted excitement there was! How pleased everybody seemed to be, including three boys whose faces were as red as the roses on the mantel. It was an “awful scrape” they admitted to themselves, and yet they were glad, just as glad as they could be. It was simply splendid in that ugly toad to go and turn into silver.

“I don’t believe I’ll ever think a toad is ugly again,” said Joseph, with sparkling eyes. “How I wish I knew who gave it to me! Every word the card says is ‘April Fool,’ and I don’t know the handwriting.”

The three boys did; a fellow from the village had been hired to write the words.

“Never mind,” said Mrs. Calland; “it is from friends, that is plain, and they want you to learn to see certain phases of beauty in everything God has made. A *silver* toad is certainly pretty, whatever may be said of the real creature.”

Three boys with very red faces sought a private audience with Mrs. Calland that very evening. They were sure it was she who had helped them out of a scrape which they were sorry they ever went into; they were *so* much obliged to her!—more than they could tell; and if she would let them pay for the lovely toad, and keep their secret, they would always be grateful. They liked her “April fool” ever so much better than their own, and they would never be guilty of trying to play mean jokes, after this.

Mrs. Calland was gracious and helpful, as she always was, and the three went away saying to one another that she was “just

splendid, anyhow,” and Joseph was one of the best fellows they knew, and they were glad they gave it to him! Already it really began to seem as though they had meant to give just that thing all the time.

“Jean,” said Joseph, lingering in her room waiting for the nine o’clock bell to ring, “I don’t see but the verse is a good one. Did you ever see how it fits in everywhere? Who would have thought that any of the boys cared enough for me to make me a real splendid silver present for April fool? I’m most sure it was the boys; and—it’s a queer thing to say, but maybe the Lord might have put it into their heads, because the second of April, you know, is my birthday, and he knew I hadn’t any father and mother to make me a present. Don’t you think it might have been?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Jean, “I know it might.”

HE INCREASED HIS PEOPLE GREATLY; AND MADE THEM STRONGER THAN THEIR ENEMIES.

THE LORD IS THY KEEPER.

I WILL BE THY MOUTH, AND TEACH THEE WHAT THOU SHALT SAY.

CHRIST OUR PASSEVER, IS SACRIFICED FOR US.

WHEN THOU PASSEST THROUGH THE WATERS I WILL BE WITH THEE; AND THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY SHALL NOT OVERTHROW THEE.



SEVERAL of the boys were listening and laughing. “And he drawls his words,” said Joseph, “and loses his place, and drops his lesson leaf; and never by any luck or chance asks a question that isn’t right before him on the leaf. Oh, he’s a rare teacher! I tell you what it is, when I get to be a man I won’t teach Sunday-school unless I have an idea of my own to give out now and then.”

Joseph’s sister Jean overheard this; it made her sad; she knew very well that Joseph’s teacher was one not calculated to win the respect of a bright boy like her brother. He was a good man, but he did not seem to know how to teach a class of wide-awake boys. She talked with Mrs. Calland about it, and wondered if anything

could be done. This was the way Mrs. Calland came to have her talk with Joseph.

“How much time do you give to the preparation of your lesson, Joseph?”

“Why, there isn’t anything to prepare. He just asks the questions, and we read the answers, when we can find ’em.”

“I know; but suppose you should come into my history class with as little preparation for reciting as you give to the Bible lesson; what would be the result?”

Joseph shrugged his shoulders. “Mrs. Calland, if you should come into the history class and do nothing but put on your spectacles and read from the book, ‘What is the name of this lesson? What did Moses then say? What did Moses do next?’ I don’t know what kind of lessons we would get.”

“But I want you, for the moment, to forget about every person but Joseph Holbrook, and tell me what he does to make the lesson interesting.”

“I!” said Joseph, astonished. “Of course I can’t do anything.”

“I don’t quite understand why. You certainly asked some good questions in the history class yesterday, which helped the interest very much.”

“Oh, that’s different,” said Joseph.

“I know it is different; you were interested in history, and wanted to know more about it; and you were interested because you had carefully studied the lesson.”

“I should not know a thing to ask in Sunday-school,” declared Joseph stoutly, but Mrs. Calland only smiled on him and went away. It was because of that talk that he stopped, astonished, over the third verse, when he went to his little book to select his next one.

“I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”

“Queer!” said Joseph aloud. He meant, it seemed queer to him that those words should be there just then. Was it a possible thing that the Lord might mean *him*, Joseph Holbrook, to consider them as spoken to him, about the Sabbath-school lesson, for instance? Was there anything he could say which might help? It was this thought which made him read the next lesson over carefully, that very night. There were some references in it which he did not understand, and he resolved the next day to look them up; this he did, and found himself growing interested.

He read the lesson over each day that week, and thought much about it, chiefly because he had become so interested that he could not help thinking about it.

On Sunday, as soon as the lesson was read, he asked, “How many Israelites do you suppose there were at that time?”

The teacher looked astonished, but pleased, and was ready with his opinion.

“Seems to me they had forgotten Joseph very soon,” said young Joseph again. “It wasn’t so very long after he died, was it?”

This started more talk. Then the treasure cities grew very interesting; Joseph had been studying in history that week,

something which was connected with them, and the talk which was started was pleasant and profitable.

“Do you think it was a very wise plan which that old king had?” Joseph asked. Then the boys each described the plan which he would have tried if he had been king; and altogether, the superintendent’s bell rang before they were half through with the list of printed questions.

“Didn’t we have a good time today?” said one of the boys, passing out. And the teacher pushed his spectacles on his forehead and told Joseph it did his heart good to see how carefully the lesson had been prepared.

Joseph thought about it a good deal. He said nothing to the scholars at home. None of them were in his class; but he had a little talk with Jean, that night.

“I forgot my verse,” he said. “Didn’t think of it once till Sunday-school was out; but I asked lots of questions, and answered some, and had a real good time; I only did it because I was interested and wanted to. Do you think, Jean, that the Lord might have put into my mind some of the things to ask? Because the others seemed interested in them right away.”

“I haven’t a doubt of it,” said Jean heartily. “He helps us in all sorts of quiet *little* ways, as well as in great ones. Besides, He promised, you know. You don’t suppose Moses was the only one He was willing to tell what to say?”

Joseph had no answer ready. He sat silent and thoughtful for some time; it seemed a wonderful thought that the Lord could

possibly care what questions he asked in Sunday-school. Yet the “verse” had been chosen by him for the month, and in school as well as out, he was bound to trust the Lord for words to speak.

“I know one thing,” he said suddenly, “I shall always study my Sunday-school lesson after this; it makes Mr. Stevens a much more interesting teacher!”

JESUS SAID UNTO THEM I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.

JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THEY HEART.

THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF.



RETTIE was seated on the bright rug in the schoolroom. It was Saturday, and it was raining. Joseph had been, for the last half-hour, entertaining Rettie, making a building for her out of spools and buttons, with scissors for the big gate; now she was absorbed in a lovely red paper heart which he had just cut out for her, and he had time to glance over his verses and decide which to take.

“Nobody ever does it; I never saw or heard of a fellow who did.”

Mrs. Calland came into the room at the moment.

“What is it, Joseph, that nobody ever does?” she asked.

Joseph looked up astonished, then laughed; he did not know he had spoken aloud.

“I was thinking of this verse,” he answered: “‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!’ I don’t believe people ever do that.”

“I’m not sure; I heard of a little boy, once, who loved a very little girl-neighbor of his so much better than himself that he gave

up a whole hour of his Saturday afternoon to her, because she could not go out in the rain.”

“That won’t do,” said Joseph, laughing again, though his face flushed and he looked pleased. “I didn’t want to go with the boys, and I had nothing in particular to do, and would rather amuse Rettie than not; so you see, I just pleased myself.”

“I see. Well, I knew a man once, who in a small matter carried out the rule. He was a poor man and he wanted a certain kind of easy chair for his daughter. A neighbor of his who had lost a great deal of money and was selling his goods, and going to move away, had a chair of the kind wanted, and offered it to this man for five dollars. It was worth a great deal more money than that, but its owner did not expect to get what it was worth, and needed money; so the poor man bought it for five dollars and was to bring the money for it in the afternoon and take it away. In his shop that morning, he heard a gentleman say he was going to offer ten dollars for that very chair. ‘Now,’ said the poor man to himself, here is something for me to think about; *I can’t afford to pay ten dollars for the chair, but this man can, and is willing to do it, and its owner needs the money; to be sure I have bought the chair and can claim it if I choose, but then, if I were in his place, what would I want done?*’ The end of the matter was, that he went at noon and told the man that he would not take the chair away, because he thought someone was coming to offer ten dollars for it. The other man appeared, just as he said he would, and the owner of the chair got his ten dollars. What do you think of it all?”

“Why,” said Joseph, “I think the first man had a right to the chair for five dollars.”

“I don’t doubt it; at least, what we call a legal right; but judged by the verse you have just repeated, I am not so sure of it.”

Then Mrs. Calland went away, leaving Joseph more thoughtful than little Rettie liked.

He said no more about the chair or the verse, neither did Mrs. Calland; but she smiled to herself when she heard Joseph’s voice in the hall that evening, talking to little Dick Wheeler:

“Here, little chap, is your knife. I really don’t think you ought to sell it for a quarter; it is all I can afford to pay, but if you really want to get rid of it, I know a boy who would pay as much as forty cents.”

“Why!” said little Dick, “I did sell it fast and true.”

“I know you did, but I’ve brought it back. You see, I’m *sure* you can get forty cents for it, and I’m sure it is worth it, and I’m sure if I were in your place I should want to have it; so here’s the knife, as good as it was day before yesterday, when I bought it.”

“Joseph has discovered that little Dick is his neighbor,” said Mrs. Calland softly. “I hope he doesn’t imagine that I knew anything about the knife. How strange it is that I should have happened to tell him that story! And how steadily the dear boy grows!”

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.

HE DELIVERED ME BECAUSE HE DELIGHTED IN ME.

BRING FORTH THEREFORE FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.

HE IS ABLE TO SUCCOR THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED.



It was Jean who helped him choose his verse. She had a private notion that the Fourth of July was a rather dangerous time for a boy, so she hinted that of all the July verses the one which she thought the most helpful was the very last. It made some talk; Jean was sewing a button on his shirt and he was waiting for it, so there was time for a few pleasant words. Joseph said he remembered the lesson for next Sunday; he looked it over last Sunday afternoon, and that if a fellow knew as much about the Bible as Jesus did, of course it would help him, but that he, Joseph, would never expect to think of the right verse.

“But that,” said Jean, “is *Jesus*’ part; if you learn the verses, he has promised that the Holy Spirit shall remind you of them at the right time, if you depend on his help.”

This thought seemed new to Joseph, and held him dumb with wonder that the great God could actually take time to remind a boy of his Bible verses!

He chose the last verse, with a dim notion of putting the thought to the test of experience. There was never a day more full of temptation than that same Fourth of July. Turn which way he would, it seemed to Joseph that the tempter was waiting for him.

It began the day before; the boys coaxed him to join them in a midnight frolic, when the bells of the village should be made to ring, and a wheezy cannon should bang, and various other noises should help to make night hideous.

It was really very tempting. Joseph had not much patience with people who wanted to sleep the night before the “glorious Fourth;” and it seemed to him that boys ought to have free license once a year to make all the noise they could.

But then, Mrs. Calland did not approve of such doings, and had expressly hoped that none of their family would be guilty of helping along the village uproar. Still, the boys argued that she need never know anything about their share in it; she would be in bed and asleep when they slipped away; and they would slip back, long before she was up in the morning; and there would be a noise, *anyhow*, whether *they* helped make it or not, and they might as well have the fun.

“Not with eye service as men pleasers.”

Where did that verse come from? Joseph did not know it was stored away in his memory, until someone brought it suddenly

before him at that moment. He could not help speaking the words aloud, they fitted so perfectly, and he added, "No, you don't! if you fellows want to do behind her back what you would be ashamed to do when her eyes were on you, why, I suppose you will, for all me, but I don't propose to train in any such company."

The boys "poohed" and "pshawed" a little, but the conclusion of it was that they gave up the plan. He had no trouble the next morning in convincing the boys that it would be mean to put a torpedo under Rettie's crib and scare her awake. Because she was such a little thing, and was very much afraid, and the old verse "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," came in to do good service. It is true that Will Jenkins said Rettie *wasn't* his "neighbor; " that she roomed two flights of stairs below him; but he laughed, while he said it, and looked a little ashamed of himself, and no torpedoes were placed under Rettie's crib.

But the next scheme held out strong temptations for a fun-loving boy. It was all very well for little Rettie to be afraid; but it did seem ridiculous for Sarah, the tall, pretty-faced, good-natured chambermaid to have such a horror of firecrackers that she would run and scream whenever she heard one snap. Joseph did not understand this in the least, and felt disposed to ridicule it. So when the boys hurriedly planned their next bit of mischief, he was on the very verge of joining them. It was such an excellent opportunity: Sarah was out under the gnarled old tree, with Rettie on one side of her, and the little daughter from the next neighbor's, on the other, and they were having a grand frolic. What

unutterable fun it would be to fasten the strings of her long apron to the tree, and then set fire to a bunch of crackers at her feet; and when she squealed and tried to run, she would find herself tied fast, and would have to stay and see what innocent things firecrackers really were. The boys rolled on the grass and laughed over the thought of how her eyes would look, and how she would squeal! Yes, Joseph was almost ready to help in this; because no one could possibly be harmed, and what sense was there in a grown woman being scared with firecrackers?

“Yes, sir, we’ll do it,” said Will Jenkins. “We’ll have one bit of fun this morning, anyhow. Luckily for us there isn’t a Bible verse that will fit it. There’s the Golden Rule, even, encourages us: ‘Do to others whatever they do to you.’ Didn’t Sarah sprinkle us with a dipper of water, this very morning? Tell *me* it was an accident! I saw by the twinkle in her eyes that she meant it.”

If he hadn’t misquoted that verse I am not sure that Joseph would have stopped to do any thinking; but the thought which struck him was that Satan had done that very thing at the temptation of Jesus! Was this a temptation? Ought he to want help to get out of it?

“Consider them that are bound as bound with them.” Was that Bible? Yes, he was sure of it; though when learned, or where found, he did not know. It was absurd for Sarah to be “bound” by such silly fears; but then she *was*; and if the words meant anything, they meant that we must try to put ourselves in other people’s

places and see if we should like done to us what we were about to do to them, *provided* we felt about things just as they did.

“S’posin’ I was most dreadful scared at firecrackers,” said Joseph to himself, and that “s’posin’” cleared the air wonderfully. He told the boys decidedly that he couldn’t join them, and there was a rather heated argument, in which the Bible verse took a prominent part; and before it was concluded, Sarah’s frolic was over, and the opportunity for mischief had passed.

I have not time to follow my boy through the day, but he was really amazed at night over its history; almost it seemed to him that the Fourth of July ought to be named “slave” day, instead of “independence,” so many of the boys were slaves to fun.

About their latest scheme he knew nothing. It was no more nor less than to take a pitch-pine stick, dress it in white garments saturated in benzine, set it up in a pine-knot seat on the stone floor of the dairy, and fire it at just the moment that Hannah the cook would visit the dairy for butter for tea. How royally *scared* she would be to see a woman in white all ablaze! This precious piece of mischief was planned most carefully, and finally abandoned, for the simple reason that Joseph was the only one of the scholars who could gain access to the dairy.

“And there’s no kind of use in applying to him,” said Will Jenkins. “He’s so chock full of *Bible* that all he will do will be to pitch a verse at a fellow. We’ve just got to give it up.” Which, fortunately for them, they did.

THE PEOPLE WHICH SAT IN DARKNESS SAW GREAT LIGHT.

GRACE AND TRUTH CAME BY JESUS CHRIST.

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS, I AM NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFIL.

MAN LOOKETH ON THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART.



IT was little Dick who helped our Joseph into trouble. The fact is, little Dick was skillful in getting up trouble for other people. He liked apples; most boys do; but little Dick liked them so much that he could not help taking them from the tree by the garden wall, before they were ready to pick; and before the injunction had been taken off that not one of the scholars must so much as touch them. It is quite a long story, how little Dick reached the point where he felt as though he *must have* just one apple, whatever happened; and how he stationed his friend and constant companion in mischief, Rufus Miller, to watch that nothing special did happen, while he climbed the wall for just a taste.

Something happened. Hannah came to the back door and called John, the coachman. That was all; but it was enough to frighten little Dick so much that he lost his balance and pitched

over the wall with a loud cry, carrying a branch from the apple-tree with him.

Rufus, much alarmed, ran away, leaving the sobbing little boy with scratched face and torn trousers to get along the best way he could. You will understand that he was not very badly hurt when I tell you that after he had gotten a little over his fright, he waited to pick every apple from that broken limb and stuff them into his pockets, as many as would go in, and tug the rest home in his hands. He meant to get to his own little corner closet before anybody saw him; and if he didn't, it wouldn't matter; folks were always giving him apples.

So reasoned little Dick; but the scratched face smarted, and he could not help crying, which made it smart worse. In this plight Joseph found him, pitied him, comforted him, offered to carry some of his burdens, stuffed his own pockets with the, fruit, saying as he did so, "What pretty apples! Did Farmer Brooks give you these?" and did not think it at all strange that Dick cried on, without answering.

The scratches were soothed at last, the torn trousers, together with little Dick's bump, reported to Mrs. Calland and properly cared for, and peace was restored; that is, to all outward appearances. Greedy little Dick ate every apple from the broken limb during the day, except a little red-cheeked one which lay in the bottom of Joseph's pocket, unknown to anybody.

By six o'clock in the evening, trouble came. Farmer Fowler found the broken limb, guessed that some of the boys knew more

about it than he did, told Mrs. Calland, and a search was the result. No trace of that peculiar kind of apple anywhere, except—Oh, dear me!—in the pocket of our Joseph’s school trousers, which he had changed when he went to drive Mrs. Fowler to town.

Can you imagine what anxiety there was in the home after that? Mrs. Calland declared that it could not be *possible* Joseph broke the limb, and Farmer Fowler admitted that he would almost as soon have thought of the minister doing it, but, after all, there was the broken limb, and there was the tell-tale apple. When Joseph returned from town, and Mrs. Calland sent for him and told him the whole story, his face was redder than the little red apple.

“Mrs. Calland, you don’t think—” he burst forth excitedly, but she quietly interrupted him.

“I don’t think anything about it, Joseph; I am going to think just what you tell me. I know it will be the truth, even if you did, by accident, break a limb of the choice tree.”

“I didn’t,” he said, speaking more quietly. “I didn’t, Mrs. Calland, and I did not know one was broken, and I did not know that apple was in my pocket; but I can guess now, how it got there, and I’ll tell you, if you say so; but it isn’t about me; and Mrs. Calland, don’t you think folks would be a great deal better off if they would tell about their own scrapes?”

Mrs. Calland admitted that she thought they would; told him he need say no more at present, and the next morning took the apple with her into the schoolroom, told part of its story, then called on any boy or girl who could tell any more, to rise and do

so. This did not mean Joseph, as she had explained to him, that when she called for information, he was not to speak.

No one rose; Joseph tried not to look at little Dick, but stole a glance at him, and saw that although his cheeks were redder than usual, he was busy with his spelling-book and did not mean to speak.

“Joseph,” said Mrs. Calland, that afternoon, “I will not ask you yet, to tell me what you can guess about this sad business; but you may answer my questions: were the persons who, you guess, know about it, in the school-room this morning?”

“Yes’ m,” said Joseph.

“That will do,” said Mrs. Calland. The days passed, and no word was heard about the apple.

Joseph’s heart was very sore. Mrs. Calland treated him just as usual, but Farmer Fowler occasionally cross-questioned him—as much as his promise to Mrs. Calland not to make Joseph tell what he suspected would admit—and Joseph felt that when he shook his head, and said: “It is very strange,” Farmer Fowler thought *he* was in some way to blame. It was hard.

Jean sympathized with him, but said very little; the fact is, she longed to have him tell the whole story and bring the right person to justice.

There was one evil result of all this, which none but Joseph knew. He could not feel right toward little Dick. As the days passed and the little boy seemed much as usual, but kept his lips tightly closed, Joseph glowered at him often when no one was

looking, and could not help feeling that something dreadful ought to happen to him; and that he certainly could never forgive him. There were times when he wished that Mrs. Calland would command him to tell the whole story, so that he might see Dick brought to shame. But Mrs. Calland seemed to have forgotten about it. She asked no questions, and Farmer Fowler continued to say occasionally that it was very strange.

Matters were in this state when, one evening at the quiet hour when all the home scholars were gathered in the school-room and Mrs. Calland read to them from the Bible, she read slowly and carefully the verse which Joseph had, some time before, chosen for his own.

“Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

She closed her reading with that verse and began to talk—a few earnest simple words, to help the scholars to think of that solemn truth; then she asked them to bow their heads, and in utter silence look for a moment at their hearts, and try to think what God saw there at that moment.

Now, the verse had for some time been Joseph’s greatest comfort; he had repeated it perhaps oftener than any other verse of his during the year; as often as Farmer Fowler had sighed and spoken of his injured apple-tree with its choice graft, Joseph had thrilled with satisfaction over this thought:

“Oh, yes! You sigh, and look at me; and I know you think I am to blame; and God can see right into my heart; and he knows I have nothing to be ashamed of.”

And as often as he thought of something which would displease God’s all-seeing eye, it was found in little Dick’s heart, not his own. But on this evening as he bowed his head with the rest, under pledge to look into his own heart, he started as though a thorn had pierced him. What did he see? Why, an ugly weed named “*Hate*.” Yes, actually, he almost hated little Dick! What a dreadful thing this was; almost as bad, perhaps to God’s sight *just* as bad as poor little silly Dick’s unspoken falsehood! Yet how could he help it? He could not feel right toward little Dick!

The silent minute was passed, and heads were upraised. I do not know but Joseph in his distress would have begged to be excused and have gotten to his room, if little Dick had not at that moment taken all the attention. He came with a sudden rush to Mrs. Calland’s side, bowed his head in her lap and sobbed:

“I don’t want Him to see it in my heart; I did eat the apples! The branch broke; I didn’t mean to break it; and Joseph didn’t take one, and he didn’t know where the apples came from; and I don’t *want* to be a naughty boy.”

You can imagine what a time there was after that.

It was late when Joseph went to bed; he stayed a good while with Jean, talking things over, after all the other scholars were quiet for the night.

“I oughtn’t to have any trouble in forgiving him,” he said, in answer to a question of Jean’s. “I don’t suppose weeds of hate look much better than weeds made out of lies. When it comes to hearts, I guess maybe little Dick’s looked most as well as mine.”

CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM, FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU.

THEREFORE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM.

EVERY TREE THAT BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT IS HEWN DOWN AND CAST INTO THE FIRE.



I WANT a nice *still* verse,” said Joseph, with his head in Jean’s lap. “Things have been in such a bustle for so long, it seems as though all the verses were hot, and had stirred up a fire somehow—no, I don’t mean that, either; they have helped put out the fire, every time, but I want something nice and still.”

Jean smiled; Joseph must be almost tired out if he wanted still things. “I’m sure you can be easily gratified,” she said. “Look at the very first verse for the month.”

“Say it to me,” said lazy Joseph, “I don’t want to stir.”

So Jean said it: “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”

“But I haven’t any care,” he said, after a moment’s thought.

“Never mind; some care may come, before you expect it; and you may find it good to be prepared. It is a nice still verse, and unless you take the next one to it, I don’t know that you can do better.”

“What is the next?”

“It is the Golden Rule.”

“Then I don’t want it. I don’t want a bit of *doing*; there will be enough of that when school begins. I’ll take the still one.”

Exactly two days from that talk, this, which I am going to tell you, happened. Miss Emerson was visiting her sister, who was a pupil in the Fowler School, and did not go home for vacation, for the reason that a large part of her home had gone to Europe. Miss Emerson was an elocutionist, and volunteered to give a little entertainment during her visit, for the benefit of the library in the Fowler School.

On the evening in question she was in her room giving the finishing touches to her toilet, and the audience was already assembled in the large parlors waiting for her.

“Let me see,” she said, speaking to her dog Trust, I suppose, as he was the only one present beside herself, “no, I believe I won’t wear diamonds; it would not be in good taste for so small a gathering. They will think I am too much dressed as it is, I presume. I haven’t time to lock these up again. Trust, you may stay here and take care of them; remember, old fellow, you are not to let anybody touch anything of mine until I come back.” She held up her finger at Trust for emphasis, and he gave an intelligent bark in reply; then she smiled on him and swept away.

Five minutes afterwards she was saying in the hall, “Are they waiting? Well, I am quite ready—oh dear! I have left my fan in my room.”

“Joseph will bring it,” said Mrs. Calland who liked things to begin promptly. “Joseph, bring it to me in the parlor. Miss Emerson, will you come now?” And Joseph scampered for the fan.

It lay on the table behind the jewel case. Joseph sprang in breathless, his hand ready to grasp it, when a low growl arrested him, and the fiery eyes of Trust were upon him. He took in the situation at once; Trust was in charge, and he would not be allowed to touch the fan.

“All right,” he said good-naturedly; “I won’t, old fellow. Your mistress wants it, but you cannot be expected to understand that, and I’ll report you as doing your duty.”

Not so fast, my boy; Trust not only distrusts you too much to allow you to touch the fan, but he does not mean that you shall escape him. At the first step toward the door, he grasped Joseph’s trousers with his fierce teeth, almost grazing the skin, and held on. It was by no means a pleasant position. Joseph did not understand dogs very well, was a good deal afraid of this one, as was everybody in the house, and had been glad to think of getting away as quickly as possible from his fiery eye, and here he was a prisoner! For how long? The entertainment was not yet opened. Two hours at least before he could hope that Miss Emerson would reach her room. If her fan was not forthcoming, some other fan would be handed her, and no one would remember that he had been sent for it. What was to be done? Clearly nothing but to stand still and endure Trust’s stern gaze.

Shall you be surprised if I tell you that Joseph's heart beat fast? He did not know how soon Trust might weary of holding on to cloth only, and conclude to try a bit of the flesh underneath it. In point of fact, Trust soon let go with his teeth; but held on with his eyes. Joseph did not dare to move a muscle, lest it might be taken for resistance, and receive punishment. Was ever a worse dilemma for a good-intentioned boy?

It seemed strange to him long afterwards, the sudden sense of courage which came with the words which memory brought him just then: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

Wasn't this care? Had he ever a worse anxiety? Did not God know all about it? Could He not protect from this danger, as well as from others?

The loud thuds which Joseph's heart were giving, began to quiet. It was a trying place, one full of care, certainly, but he began to have a strange sense of security; a sort of assurance that Trust would do no more than guard his mistress' property, and that he, Joseph, so long as he stood still, would escape injury. Two hours of standing perfectly still! Never mind, he could bear it; and he was beginning not to be afraid.

Which of you can tell why Jean, just a moment before this, should whisper to Mrs. Calland, daring the voluntary, "Do you know where Joseph is?"

"He is with the scholars, I suppose," answered Mrs. Calland, a little surprised at the question. Where should Joseph be but in his place? She had already forgotten that she sent him for a fan.

What made Jean anxious? She couldn't have told you. Joseph was never in mischief, was almost certain to be where he ought to be, yet his sister fidgeted, stretched her neck up to get a glimpse of her brother, and finally slipped quietly away to investigate. The boys did not know where he was; the girls had not seen him since supper. Oh, yes, Laura Akers saw him just before the entertainment commenced; she heard Mrs. Calland send him to Miss Emerson's room for her fan; she was passing the hall, and heard her give the direction; he was to bring it to the parlor; she presumed he had done so, but she had not seen him come in.

Neither had Jean, and in two minutes more she knocked at Miss Emerson's door and said, "Joseph!"

Trust looked toward the door, and gave an ominous growl. Joseph spoke in low, quiet tones:

"I'm all right, Jean; Trust is on guard and won't let the fan go, nor me either. Don't make a fuss; just run and ask little Fanny Emerson to come here a minute; Trust will obey her."

This sensible idea was at once carried out. Fanny Emerson, the young sister of the elocutionist, came in haste, exclaimed over the situation, scolded Trust, and carried off both Joseph and the fan in triumph.

When the owner of the fan heard the story a few hours later, she exclaimed over it, too; looked a trifle pale; told Joseph it was well he had sense enough not to try to move, for Trust would have torn him in pieces.

“I quite forgot that I left him on guard,” she said. “I don’t know how you escaped so easily. Mercy! If he had bitten you I would never have forgiven myself.”

“I should think not,” said Jean, her, face flushing. She could not help feeling a little indignant.

But Joseph smiled.

“It is all right,” he said, “I wasn’t hurt a bit.” It was only to Jean that he added, afterwards, this bit of information:

“I was scared, Jean, most as much as I ever was in my life; but it came to me all of a sudden that it was big enough to be called a ‘care,’ and I just tried, you know, to give it to Him; and somehow, I don’t know how, *He* took it. It does beat all how those verses fit in!”

I HAVE NOT FOUND SO GREAT FAITH, NO, NOT IN ISRAEL.

WHY ARE YE FEARFUL, O YE OF LITTLE FAITH.

THE SON OF MAN HATH POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS.

ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH, BE IT UNTO YOU.

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE.



BUT I have nothing to give,” said Joseph. He was, as usual, talking with Jean about the verse he would take for the month.

“I’ve *received* enough, I’ll own that; a fellow never received a nicer year in his life than I have spent here; but I haven’t a thing to give, as you know yourself.”

Jean sewed in silence for a few minutes, then said, “It seems strange to me that a bright boy like you, with strong hands and feet and a good sensible tongue and a pair of eyes of his own, should make a speech like that.”

Joseph laughed a little. “Well, I have those things, of course,” he said at last. “Everybody has; but I can’t very well give them away.”

“I don’t see why not. I’m sure of one thing: it makes very little difference what else you give, so long as you hold on to those. Why don’t you give your heart, out and out, Josey, and be done with it?”

“How do you know but I have?” said Joseph, after resting his chin on his hand and looking thoughtfully out of the window for awhile.

Jean looked at him eagerly, a bright light in her eyes. “Sometimes I think you have, Joseph, but you never said so in words.”

“A fellow doesn’t say everything he thinks; but I always meant to tell you I did it, Jean, quite a while ago; and I mean that my hands and tongue and all that, shall be His forever; but I was thinking of money and such things when I said I had nothing to give.”

“Oh, Joseph! Never mind the money. Don’t you suppose He can get it for you whenever He wants you to give any? I’m so glad!”

She looked it, out of her eyes; and she did what was not usual with her—drew his brown head close to her lips and kissed him two or three times; tender, slow kisses such as his mother might have given him.

Joseph said nothing, only winked hard, and told himself that his sister was the best sister a boy ever had, and he chose the verse she suggested for the month.

That was the reason it came to him, while he stood talking with merry little Nellie Ayers, as she sat on a bench in the workshop, her great green-eyed cat in her arms. Nellie Ayers was a character in the school; a homeless orphan to whom Mrs. Fowler was almost a mother, just because her heart was large and she could not help being. Nellie was bright, and warm-hearted, and thoughtless, and in a hundred thoughtless ways gave more trouble than all the other scholars put together. Mrs. Calland even reached the point of sometimes saying, "I really don't believe we can keep Nellie another year unless she is changed in some way."

Just now, Nellie was putting as much mourning into her words as her merry heart could furnish, as she explained to Joseph, "Why, I haven't the first thing to put in the special collection for next week. I wish I had; I'm the only girl, I guess, who won't have anything. I wish they'd let me give my shoes and stockings; I hate to wear them; but Mrs. Calland won't allow that; I wouldn't like her to see me this minute sitting here without them. Or I might give Muffy; she is all I have of my *very* own; but she wouldn't look well in a collection-box; besides, she would be sure to say 'Meow' right in the midst of the prayer, maybe," and then Nellie laughed.

It was then that Joseph thought of the verse. Surely none had received more freely than Nellie; yet what had she to give in return? This set him to studying.

"What do you want to give anything for?"

“Why, just because I do. All the girls are going to; why shouldn’t I want to? You don’t think I haven’t any heart, do you?”

“Oh, no! But I was wondering what the motive of it all was, you know.”

“The motive? Why, you ought to know; one would think you had never heard Mrs. Calland talk. Doesn’t she say a hundred times a week that we must give always for Jesus’ sake?”

“That’s just it. Is that what you want to give for?”

“Why, I suppose so, of course.”

“Then why don’t you give yourself?”

“Myself?”

“Yes,” said Joseph steadily, though there was a flush on his face which deepened as he went on. “Out and out; settle this whole business forever. Give your hands, and your feet, and your tongue, and —well, your *heart*, you know, and that covers all the rest. If folks really want to give for Jesus’ sake, I say, why don’t they give the only thing He wants, instead of hunting around for something that they haven’t got, and he doesn’t want them to give?”

Said Nellie, “You are a queer boy! Why, that means— do you mean being a Christian?”

“Yes; I said so, out and out. Why not? That is giving the thing He has asked for; and He doesn’t care for all the money in the country unless we do as He wants us to.”

“Have you done it?”

“Yes, I have.” The whole face was rosy red now, but Joseph’s clear eyes looked steadily into the face of the little girl. “I belong

to Him; I've given to Him all I've got; strength and voice and everything. I'm going to serve Him the best way I know how."

He said not another word at -that time, but turned away, leaving Nellie to her kitten and her thoughts. He had not the least idea how large a harvest would grow from that little seed. It was only a few days afterwards that Nellie came to Mrs. Calland with something hid under her little work apron. "I don't know whether it will do to put in the collection basket," she explained, her cheeks rosy, "but I haven't any money, you know, and I truly mean this."

It was a carefully-shaped heart cut from pure white paper, and on it were printed these words:

TONGUE HANDS
FEET TIME
STRENGTH
ALL FOR
JESUS

"I have given them all to Him," said Nellie, "and He will understand that if I had any money for the basket that would belong, too."

There were tears in Mrs. Calland's eyes when she kissed Nellie. "He will certainly understand," she said. "Give the heart to me; it is very precious. I will put a silver dollar in the basket in its place, and keep the heart in memory of my little scholar. You have given the only offering which He cares for, Nellie."

"That was what Joseph said," was Nellie's answer, and it set Mrs. Calland to questioning, to learn that the consecration of this

young, and heretofore almost wasted life, was the first fruit of Joseph's seed-sowing.

But not the last; during the fall term a new spirit seemed to pervade the school. The change in Nellie was decided and marked, and being a little girl of energy, she worked with all her heart in this new way which she had entered; awakening a new courage in Joseph's heart; helping him to see a dozen ways of "giving" which had never occurred to him before.

While the golden days of October were still smiling on them, one and another, and yet another of the scholars, came quietly to Mrs. Calland with the story of their new-born life, hid in Christ; and each time she traced the seed-sowing to Joseph and Nellie.

"He is helpful in every way, and our troublesome, mischievous Nellie is going to develop into a real comfort, thanks to his leading." This was the sentence with which Mrs. Calland closed a long talk with Father and Mother Fowler.

"Well, mother," said Farmer Fowler, "you and I think about the same, I believe; and I don't know as we need wait any longer. Mrs. Calland will be carrying him off before our eyes, if we don't make haste;" and he smiled on his daughter as he spoke.

"Harry would carry him off in a minute," said Mrs. Calland, "and make a merchant of him." Harry was Mrs. Calland's city brother-in-law, with whom her husband had been in business during his lifetime.

"I don't doubt it; and Joseph would make a good one; but your mother and I have about decided to make a son of him, that

is, if you will have him for a brother. I was for waiting a year or two longer, but she wants it done out and out; and I don't know but she is right."

"I'm sure she is," Mrs. Calland said, with radiant face. "He is just the boy to be a son to you always, and, as for me, I'll adopt Jean; I don't believe I could get along without her."

But Joseph does not know a word of all this yet. He will soon be told, but I determined that you should know it first.

The End