

**WARNER SUSAN, ANNA
BARTLETT WARNER**

**KARL KRINKEN,
HIS CHRISTMAS
STOCKING**

Susan Warner

Karl Krinken, His Christmas Stocking

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**Susan Warner, Anna Bartlett
Warner, Amy Lothrop
Karl Krinken, His Christmas Stocking**



“A roast chicken!—Oh, Roswald!—How mother will like a piece of that! How good it smells!”—[P. 161](#).

SUGGESTIVE

I think it necessary to come to the help of the Public—

Lest Miss Wetherell should not have her dues, they are giving her the dues of every one else; and whatever my hand may have to do on “Ellen Montgomery’s Bookshelf,” there it is—even though “a discerning Public” perceive it not. No matter for that—I had as lief be behind the books as before them; but must enter my protest against facts which are no facts.

Therefore kind Public, Messrs Editors, and friends in general, I propose this division of the volumes; by which my sister and I will each in turn have written them all. *Whatever book or part of a book you particularly like, thank Miss Wetherell for it;* and let all those pages which are less interesting be charged to the account of

AMY LOTHROP.

New York. Dec. 13. 1853.

THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Wherever Santa Claus lives, and in whatever spot of the universe he harnesses his reindeer and loads up his sleigh, one thing is certain—he never yet put anything in that sleigh for little Carl Krinken. Indeed it may be noted as a fact, that the Christmas of poor children has but little of his care. Now and then a cast-off frock or an extra mince pie slips into the load, as it were accidentally; but in general Santa Claus strikes at higher game,—gilt books, and sugar-plums, and fur tippets, and new hoods, and crying babies, and rocking-horses, and guns, and drums, and trumpets;—and what have poor children to do with these? Not but they might have something to do with them. It is a singular fact that poor children cut their teeth quite as early as the rich,—even that sweet tooth, which is destined to be an unsatisfied tooth all the days of its life, unless its owner should perchance grow up to be a sugar-refiner. It is also remarkable, that though poor children can bear a great deal of cold, they can also enjoy being warm—whether by means of a new dress or a load of firing; and the glow of a bright blaze looks just as comfortable upon little cheeks that are generally blue, as upon little cheeks that are generally red; while not even dirt will hinder the kindly heat of a bed of coals from rejoicing little shivering fingers that are held over it.

I say all this is strange—for nobody knows much about it; and how can they? When a little girl once went down Broadway with her muff and her doll, the hand outside the muff told the hand within that he had no idea what a cold day it was. And the hand inside said that for his part he never wished it to be warmer.

But with all this Santa Claus never troubled his head—he was too full of business, and wrapped up in buffalo skins besides; and though he sometimes thought of little Carl, as a good-natured little fellow who talked as much about *him* as if Santa Claus had given him half the world—yet it ended with a thought, for his hands were indeed well occupied. It was no trifle to fill half a million of *rich* little stockings; and then—how many poor children had any to fill? or if one chanced to be found, it might have holes in it; and if the sugar-plums came rolling down upon such a floor—!

To be sure the children wouldn't mind that, but Santa Claus would.

Nevertheless, little Carl always hung up his stocking, and generally had it filled—though not from any sleigh-load of wonderful things; and he often amused himself Christmas eve with dreaming that he had made himself sick eating candy, and that they had a stack of mince-pies as high as the house. So altogether, what with dreams and realities, Carl enjoyed that time of year very much, and thought it was a great pity Christmas did not come every day. He was always contented, too, with what he found in his stocking; while some of his rich little neighbours had theirs filled only to their heart's *discontent*, and fretted because they had what they did, or because they hadn't what they didn't have. It was a woful thing if a top was painted the wrong colour, or if the mane of a rocking-horse was too short, or if his bridle was black leather instead of red.

But when Carl once found in his stocking a little board nailed upon four spools for wheels, and with no better tongue than a long piece of twine, *his* little tongue ran as fast as the spools, and he had brought his mother a very small load of chips in less than five minutes. And a small cake of maple-sugar, which somehow once found its way to the same depending toe, was a treasure quite too great to be weighed: though it measured only an inch and a half across, and though the maple-trees had grown about a foot since it was made.

“Wife,” said John Krinken, “what shall we put in little Carl's stocking to-night?”

“Truly,” said his wife. “I do not know. Nevertheless we must find something, though there be but little in the house.”

And the wind swept round and round the old hut, and every cupboard-door rattled and said in an empty sort of way, “There is not much here.”

John Krinken and his wife lived on the coast, where they could hear every winter storm rage and beat, and where the wild sea sometimes brought wood for them and laid it at their very door. It was a drift-wood fire by which they sat now, this Christmas eve,—the crooked knee of some ship, and a bit of her keel, with nails and spikes rust-held in their places, and a piece of green board stuck under to light the whole. The andirons were two round stones, and the hearth was a flat one; and in front of the fire sat John Krinken on an old box making a fish-net, while a splinter chair upheld Mrs. Krinken and a half-mended red flannel shirt. An old chest between the two held patches and balls of twine; and the crooked knee, the keel, and the green board, were their only candles.

“We must find something,” repeated John. And pausing with his netting-needle half through the loop, he looked round towards one corner of the hut.

A clean rosy little face and a very complete set of thick curls rested there, in the very middle of the thin pillow and the hard bed; while the coverlet of blue check was tucked round and in, lest the drift-wood fire should not do its duty at that distance.

John Krinken and his wife refreshed themselves with a long look, and then returned to their work.

“You’ve got the stocking, wife?” said John, after a pause.

“Ay,” said his wife: “it’s easy to find something to fill it.”

“Fetch it out, then, and let’s see how much ’twill take to fill it.”

Mrs. Krinken arose, and going to one of the two little cupboards she brought thence a large iron key; and then having placed the patches and thread upon the floor, she opened the chest, and rummaged out a long grey woollen stocking, with white toe and heel and various darns in red. Then she locked the chest again and sat down as before.

“The same old thing,” said John Krinken with a glance at the stocking.

“Well,” said his wife, “it’s the only stocking in the house that’s long enough.”

“I know one thing he shall have in it,” said John; and he got up and went to the other cupboard, and fetched from it a large piece of cork.

“He shall have a boat that will float like one of Mother Carey’s chickens.” And he began to cut and shape with his large clasp-knife, while the little heap of chips on the floor between his feet grew larger, and the cork grew more and more like a boat.

His wife laid down her hand which was in the sleeve of the red jacket, and watched him.

“It’ll never do to put that in first,” she said; “the masts would be broke. I guess I’ll fill the toe of the stocking with apples.”

“And where will you get apples?” said John Krinken, shaping the keel of his boat.

“I’ve got ’em,” said his wife,—“three rosy-cheeked apples. Last Saturday, as I came from market, a man went by with a load of apples; and as I came on I found that he had spilled three out of his wagon. So I picked them up.”

“Three apples—” said John. “Well, I’ll give him a red cent to fill up the chinks.”

“And I’ve got an old purse that he can keep it in,” said the mother.

“How long do you suppose he’ll keep it?” said John.

“Well, he’ll want to put it somewhere while he does keep it,” said Mrs. Krinken. “The purse is old, but it was handsome once; and it’ll please the child any way. And then there’s his new shoes.”

So when the boat was done Mrs. Krinken brought out the apples and slipped them into the stocking; and then the shoes went in, and the purse, and the red cent—which of course ran all the way down to the biggest red darn of all, in the very toe of the stocking.

But there was still abundance of room left.

“If one only had some sugar things,” said Mrs. Krinken.

“Or some nuts,” said John.

“Or a book,” rejoined his wife. “Carl takes to his book, wonderfully.”

“Yes,” said John, “all three would fill up in fine style. Well, there is a book he can have—only I don’t know what it is, nor whether he’d like it. That poor lady we took from an American wreck when I was mate of the Skeen-elf—it had lain in her pocket all the while, and she gave it to me when she died—because I didn’t let her die in the water, poor soul! She said it was worth a great deal. And I guess the clasp is silver.”

“O I dare say he’d like it,” said Mrs. Krinken. “Give him that, and I’ll put in the old pine-cone,—he’s old enough to take care of it now. I guess he’ll be content.”

The book with its brown leather binding and tarnished silver clasp was dusted and rubbed up and put in, and the old sharp-pointed pine cone followed; and the fisherman and his wife followed it up with a great deal of love and a blessing.

And then the stocking was quite full.

It was midnight; and the fire had long been covered up, and John Krinken and his wife were fast asleep, and little Carl was in the midst of the hard bed and his sweet dreams as before. The stocking hung by the side of the fire-place, as still as if it had never walked about in its life, and not a sound could be heard but the beat of the surf upon the shore and an occasional sigh from the wind; for the wind is always melancholy at Christmas.

Once or twice an old rat had peeped cautiously out of his hole, and seeing nobody, had crossed the floor and sat down in front of the stocking, which his sharp nose immediately pointed out to him. But though he could smell the apples plain enough, he was afraid that long thing might hold a trap as well; and so he did nothing but smell and snuff and show his teeth. As for the little mice, they ran out and danced a measure on the hearth and then back again; after which one of them squealed for some time for the amusement of the rest.

But just at midnight there was another noise heard—as somebody says,

“You could hear on the roof
The scraping and prancing of each little hoof,”—

and down came Santa Claus through the chimney.

He must have set out very early that night, to have so much time to spare, or perhaps he was cold in spite of his furs: for he came empty-handed, and had evidently no business calls in that direction. But the first thing he did was to examine the stocking and its contents.

At some of the articles he laughed, and at some he frowned, but most of all did he shake his head over the love that filled up all the spare room in the stocking. It was a kind of thing Santa Claus wasn’t used to; the little stockings were generally too full for anything of that sort,—when they had to hold candy enough to make the child sick, and toys enough to make him unhappy because he didn’t know which to play with first, of course very little love could get in. And there is no telling how many children would be satisfied if it did. But Santa Claus put all the things back just as he had found them, and stood smiling to himself for a minute, with his hands on his sides and his back to the fire. Then tapping the stocking with a little stick that he carried, he bent down over Carl and whispered some words in his ear, and went off up the chimney.

And the little mice came out and danced on the floor till the day broke.

“Christmas day in the morning!” And what a day it was! All night long as the hours went by, the waves had beat time with their heavy feet; and wherever the foam and spray had fallen, upon board or stone or crooked stick, there it had frozen, in long icicles or fringes or little white caps. But when the sun had climbed out of the leaden sea, every bit of foam and ice sparkled and twinkled like morning stars, and the Day got her cheeks warm and glowing just as fast as she could; and the next thing the sun did was to walk in at the hut window and look at little Carl Krinken. Then it laid a warm hand upon his little face, and Carl had hardly smiled away the last bit of his dream before he started up in his bed and shouted

“Merry Christmas!”

The mice were a good deal startled, for they had not all seen their partners home; but they got out of the way as fast as they could, and when Carl bounded out of bed he stood alone upon the floor.

The floor felt cold—very. Carl’s toes curled up in the most disapproving manner possible, and he tried standing on his heels. Then he scampered across the floor, and began to feel of the stocking—beginning at the top. It was plain enough what the shoes were, but the other things puzzled him till he got to the foot of the stocking; and *his* feet being by that time very cold (for both toes and heels had rested on the floor in the eagerness of examination), Carl seized the stocking in both hands and scampered back to bed again; screaming out,

“Apples! apples! apples!”

His mother being now nicely awaked by his clambering over her for the second time, she gave him a kiss and a “Merry Christmas,” and got up; and as his father did the same, Carl was left in undisturbed possession of the warm bed. There he laid himself down as snug as could be, with the long stocking by his side, and began to pull out and examine the things one by one,—after which each article was laid on the counterpane outside.

“Well little boy, how do you like your things?” said Mrs. Krinken, coming up to the bed just when Carl and the empty stocking lay side by side.

“Firstrate!” said Carl. “Mother, I dreamed last night that all my presents told me stories. Wasn’t it funny?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said his mother, as she walked away to turn the fish that was broiling. Carl lay still and looked at the stocking.

“Where did you come from, old stocking?” said he.

“From England,” said the stocking, very softly.

Carl started right up in bed, and looked between the sheets, and over the counterpane, and behind the head-board—there was nothing to be seen. Then he shook the stocking as hard as he could, but something in it struck his other hand pretty hard too. Carl laid it down and looked at it again, and then cautiously putting in his hand, he with some difficulty found his way to the very toe,—there lay the red cent, just where it had been all the time, upon the biggest of the red darns.

“A red cent!” cried Carl. “O I guess it was you talking, wasn’t it?”

“No,” said the red cent. “But I can talk.”

“Do you know where you came from?” said Carl, staring at the red cent with all his eyes.

“Certainly,” said the cent.

“I dreamed that everything in my stocking told me a story,” said Carl.

“So we will,” said the red cent. “Only to you. To nobody else.”

Carl shook his head very gravely, and having slipped the red cent into the little old purse, he put everything into the stocking again and jumped out of bed. For the drift-wood fire was blazing up to the very top of the little fire-place, and breakfast was almost ready upon the old chest.

But as soon as breakfast was over, Carl carried the stocking to one corner of the hut where stood another old chest; and laying out all his treasures thereon, he knelt down before it.

“Now begin,” he said. “But you mustn’t all talk at once. I guess I’ll hear the apples first, because I might want to eat ’em up. I don’t care which of *them* begins.”

THE STORY OF THE THREE APPLES

“I assume to myself the task of relating our joint history,” said the largest of the three apples, “because I am perhaps the fairest minded of us all. The judgment and experience of my younger sister, Half-ripe, are as yet immature; and my little brother Knerly is unfortunately of a somewhat sour disposition, and therefore less likely to represent things in a pleasant light. My own name is Beachamwell.”

At this opening the two smaller apples rolled over in an uncomfortable sort of way, but said nothing.

“As for me,” continued Beachamwell, “I have not only been favoured with a southern exposure, but I have also made the most of whatever good influences were within my reach; and have endeavoured to perfect myself in every quality that an apple should have. You perceive not only the fine rounding of my shape, but also the perfect and equal colour of my cheeks. My stem is smooth and erect, and my eye precisely in a line with it; and if I could be cut open this minute I should be found true to my heart’s core. I am also of a very tender disposition, being what is usually called *thin-skinned*; and a very slight thing would make a permanent and deep impression. My behaviour towards every one has always been marked by the most perfect smoothness, and on intimate acquaintance I should be found remarkably sweet and pleasant.”

“You’d better not say any more about yourself at present, Beachamwell,” said Carl, “because I might eat you up before you got through your story, and that would be bad. Let’s hear about Half-ripe and Knerly.”

“My sister Half-ripe,” said Beachamwell, “though with the same natural capabilities as myself, has failed to improve them. Instead of coming out into the warm and improving society of the sun and the wind, she has always preferred to meditate under the shade of a bunch of leaves; and though in part she could not help doing credit to her family, you will perceive that her time has been but half improved,—it is only one of her cheeks that has the least proper colour, while the other displays the true pale green tint of secluded study; and even the seeds of influence and usefulness within her are but half matured; but mine will be found as dark as—”

“As the chimney-back?” suggested Carl.

“They are not exactly that colour,” replied Beachamwell,—“being in fact more like mahogany.”

“Well I never saw any of that,” said Carl, “so you don’t tell me much. Never mind, I shall know when I cut you up. Now be quick and tell about Knerly; and then give me all the history of your great, great, great grandfather apple.”

“Knerly,” said Beachamwell, “was a little cross-grained from the very bud. Before he had cast off the light pink dress which as you know we apples wear in our extreme youth, the dark spot might be seen. It is probable that some poisonous sting had pierced him in that tender period of his life, and the consequence is, as I have said, some hardness of heart and sourness of disposition. As you see, he has not softened under the sun’s influence, though exposed to it all his life; and it is doubtful whether he ever attains a particle of the true Beachamwell colour. There are however good spots in Knerly; and even Half-ripe can be sweet if you only get the right side of her.”

“I’ll be sure to do that,” said Carl, “for I’ll go all round. Come, go on.”

“Unfortunately,” said Beachamwell, “I cannot give the information which you desire about my respected and venerable ancestors. The pedigree of apples is not always well preserved, and in general the most we can boast of is the family name: nor is that often obtained except by engrafting upon a very different stock. For one generation back, however, we may claim to be true Beachamwells. From root to twig the parent tree was the right stuff. The remarkable way in which this came about I am happily able to tell you.

“A number of years ago, one Thanksgiving-eve, Widow Penly was washing up the tea-things, and her little boy Mark sat looking at her.

“I wish we could keep Thanksgiving, mother,’ said he.

“Why so we will,’ said his mother.

“But how?’ said Mark, with a very brightened face. ‘What will you do, mother?’

“I’ll make you some pies—if I can get anything to make them of,’ said Mrs. Penly.

“Ah but you can’t,’ said Mark, his countenance falling again: ‘there aren’t even any potatoes in the house. You used to make potato pies, didn’t you, mother, when father forgot to bring home the pumpkin?’

“Yes,’ said Mrs. Penly, but as if she scarce heard him; for other Thanksgiving-days were sweeping across the stage, where Memory’s troupe was just then performing.

“So what will you do, mother?’ repeated little Mark, when he had watched her again for a few minutes.

“Do?’ said the widow, rousing herself. ‘Why my dear if we cannot make any pies we will keep Thanksgiving without them.’

“I don’t think one can keep Thanksgiving without *anything*,’ said Mark, a little fretfully.

“Oh no,’ said his mother, ‘neither do I; but we will think about it, dear, and do the best we can. And now you may read to me while I mend this hole in your stocking. Read the hundred and third Psalm.’

“So Mark got his little Bible and began to read,—

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefiits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies—”

“Don’t you think, Mark,’ said his mother, ‘that we could keep Thanksgiving for at least *one* day with only such blessings as these?’

“Why yes,’ said Mark, ‘I suppose we could, mother—though I wasn’t thinking of that.’

“No, of course not,’ said his mother; ‘and that is the very reason why we so often long for earthly things: we are not thinking of the heavenly blessings that God has showered upon us.’

“But mother,’ said Mark, not quite satisfied, ‘it goes on to say,—

“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

“And Mark looked up as if he thought his mother must be posed now, if she never was before.

“It did occur to Mrs. Penly as she glanced at the child, that his cheeks were not very fat nor his dress very thick; and that a greater plenty of pies and other relishable things might exert a happy influence upon his complexion: but she stilled her heart with that word,—

“Your Father knoweth that ye have need of such things.”

“I am sure we have a great many good things, Mark,’ she answered cheerfully,—‘don’t you remember that barrel of flour that came the other day? and the molasses, and the pickles? We *must* have as much as is good for us, or God would give us more; for it says in another part of that Psalm, ‘*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*’ I wouldn’t keep from you anything that I thought good for you.’

“But you are my *mother*,’ said Mark satisfactorily.

“Well,’ said the widow, ‘the Bible says that a mother may forget her child, yet will not God forget his children. So you see, dear, that if we have not a great many things which some other people have, it is not because God has forgotten to care for us, but because we are better without them.’

“I wonder why,’ said Mark. ‘Why should they hurt us any more than other people?’

“God knows,’ said his mother. ‘It is so pleasant to have him choose and direct all for us. If I could have my way, I dare say I should wish for something that would do me harm—just as you wanted to eat blackberries last summer when you were sick.’

“But we are not sick,’ said Mark.

“Yes we are—sick with sin; and sin-sick people must not have all that their sinful hearts desire; and people who love earth too well must want some of the good things of this world, that they may think more of heaven.’

“Well,’ said Mark, the last thing before he got into bed, ‘we’ll keep Thanksgiving, mother—you and I; and we’ll try to be as happy as we can without pies.’

“Maybe we shall have some pleasant thing that we do not think of,’ said his mother, as she tucked the clothes down about him.

“Why what?’ said Mark starting up in an instant. ‘Where *could* anything come from, mother?’

“From God in the first place,’ she answered; ‘and he can always find a way.’

“Mother!’ said Mark, ‘there’s a *great many* apples in the road by Mr. Crab’s orchard.’

“Well, dear’—said his mother—‘they don’t belong to us.’

“But they’re in the *road*,’ said Mark; ‘and Mr. Smith’s pigs are there all day long eating ’em.’

“We won’t help the pigs,’ said his mother smiling. ‘They don’t know any better, but we do. I have cause enough for thanksgiving, Marky, in a dear little boy who always minds what I say.’

“Mark hugged his mother very tight round the neck, and then went immediately to sleep, and dreamed that he was running up hill after a pumpkin.

“But Mark woke up in the morning empty-handed. There were plenty of sunbeams on the bed, and though it was so late in November, the birds sang outside the window as if they had a great many concerts to give before winter, and must make haste.

“Mark turned over on his back to have both ears free, and then he could hear his mother and the broom stepping up and down the kitchen; and as she swept she sang.

‘Rejoice, the Lord is King;
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

Rejoice in glorious hope,
Jesus the Judge shall come,
And take his servants up
To their eternal home;
We soon shall hear th’ archangel’s voice;
The trump of God shall sound—Rejoice!’

“Mark listened awhile till he heard his mother stop sweeping and begin to step in and out of the pantry. She wasn’t setting the table, he knew, for that was always his work, and he began to wonder what they were going to have for breakfast. Then somebody knocked at the door.

“Here’s a quart of milk, Mis’ Penly,’ said a voice. ‘Mother guessed she wouldn’t churn again ’fore next week, so she could spare it as well as not.’

“Mark waited to hear his mother pay her thanks and shut the door, and having meanwhile got into his trousers, he rushed out into the kitchen.

“Is it a *whole* quart, mother?’

“A whole quart of new milk, Mark. Isn’t that good?’

“Delicious!’ said Mark. ‘I should like to drink it all up, straight. I don’t mean that I should like to really, mother, only on some accounts, you know.’

“Well now what shall we do with it?’ said his mother. ‘You shall dispose of it all.’

“If we had some eggs we’d have a pudding,” said Mark,—‘a plum-pudding. You can’t make it without eggs, can you mother?’

“Not very well,” said Mrs. Penly. ‘Nor without plums.’

“No, so that won’t do,” said Mark. ‘Seems to me we could have made more use of it if it had been apples.’

“Ah, you are a discontented little boy,” said his mother smiling. ‘Last night you would have been glad of *anything*. Now I advise that you drink a tumblerful of milk for your breakfast—’

“A whole tumblerful!” interrupted Mark.

“Yes, and another for your tea; and then you will have two left for breakfast and tea to-morrow.’

“But then you won’t have any of it,” said Mark.

“I don’t want any.’

“But you *must* have it,” said Mark. ‘Now I’ll tell you, mother. I’ll drink a tumblerful this morning, and you shall put some in your tea; and to-night I’ll drink some more, and you’ll have cream, real cream; and what’s left I’ll drink to-morrow.’

“Very well,” said his mother. ‘But now you must run and get washed and dressed, for breakfast is almost ready. I have made you a little shortcake, and it’s baking away at a great rate in the spider.’

“What’s shortcake made of?” said Mark, stopping with the door in his hand.

“This is made of flour and water, because I had nothing else.’

“Well don’t you set the table,” said Mark, ‘because I’ll be back directly; and then I can talk to you about the milk while I’m putting on your cup and my tumbler and the plates.’

“It would be hard to tell how much Mark enjoyed his tumbler of milk,—how slowly he drank it—how careful he was not to leave one drop in the tumbler; while his interest in the dish of milk in the closet was quite as deep. Jack did not go oftener to see how his bean grew, than did Mark to see how his cream rose.

“Then he set out to go with his mother to church.

“The influence of the dish of milk was not quite so strong when he was out of the house,—so many things spoke of other people’s dinners that Mark half forgot his own breakfast. He thought he never had seen so many apple-trees, nor so many geese and turkeys, nor so many pumpkins, as in that one little walk to church. Again and again he looked up at his mother to ask her sympathy for a little boy who had no apples, nor geese, nor pumpkin pies; but something in the sweet quiet of her face made him think of the psalm he had read last night, and Mark was silent. But after a while his mother spoke.

“There was once a man, Mark, who had two springs of water near his dwelling. And the furthest off was always full, but the near one sometimes ran dry. He could always fetch as much as he wanted from the further one, and the water was by far the sweetest: moreover he could if he chose draw out the water of the upper spring in such abundance that the dryness of the lower should not be noticed.’

“Were they pretty springs?” said Mark.

“The lower one was very pretty,” replied his mother, ‘only the sunbeams sometimes made it too warm, and sometimes an evil-disposed person would step in and muddy it; or a cloudy sky made it look very dark. Also the flowers which grew by its side could not bear the frost. But when the sun shone just right, it was beautiful.’

“I don’t wonder he was sorry to have it dry up, then,” said Mark.

“No, it was very natural; though if one drank too much of the water it was apt to make him sick. But the other spring—’ and the widow paused, while her cheek flushed and on her lips weeping and rejoicing were strangely mingled.

“There was ‘a great Rock,’ and from this ‘the cold flowing waters’ came in a bright stream that you could rather hear than see; yet was the cup always filled to the very brim if it was held there in patient trust, and no one ever knew that spring to fail,—yea in the great droughts it was fullest. And the water was life-giving.

“But this man often preferred the lower spring, and would neglect the other when this was full; and if forced to seek the Rock, he was often weary of waiting for his cup to fill, and so drew it away with but a few drops. And he never learned to love the upper spring as he ought, until one year when the very grass by the lower spring was parched, and he fled for his life to the other. And then it happened, Mark,’ said his mother looking down at him with her eyes full of tears, ’that when the water at last began slowly to come into the lower spring, though it was very lovely and sweet and pleasant it never could be loved *best* again.’

“‘Mother,’ said Mark, ‘I don’t know *exactly* what you mean, and I do know a little, too.’

“‘Why my dear,’ said his mother, ‘I mean that when we lack anything this world can give, we must fetch the more from heaven.’

“‘You love heaven very much, don’t you mother?’ said Mark, looking up at her quite wonderingly.

“‘More than you love me.’

“Mark thought that was hardly possible; but he didn’t like to contradict his mother, and besides they were now at the church-door, and had to go right in and take their seats. Mark thought the clergyman chose the strangest text that could be for Thanksgiving-day,—it was this,—

“‘*There is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.*’

“When church was over, and Mark and his mother were walking home again, they were overtaken by little Tom Crab.

“‘Come,’ said little Tom—‘let’s go sit on the fence and eat apples. We sha’n’t have dinner to-day till ever so late, ’cause it takes so long to get it ready; and I’m so hungry. What are you going to have for dinner?’

“‘I don’t know,’ said Mark.

“‘I know what we’re going to have,’ said Tom, ’only I can’t remember everything. It makes me worse than ever to think of it. Come—let’s go eat apples.’

“‘I haven’t got any,’ said Mark.

“‘Haven’t got any!’ said Tom, letting go of Mark’s elbow and staring at him—for the idea of a boy without apples had never before occurred to any of Mr. Crab’s family. ‘O you mean you’ve eaten up all you had in your pocket?’

“‘No,’ said Mark, ‘we haven’t had any this year. Last year Mr. Smith gave us a basketful.’

“‘Well come along and I’ll give you some,’ said Tom. ‘I’ve got six, and I guess three’ll do me till dinner. O Mark! you ought to see the goose roasting in our kitchen! I’ll tell you what—I guess I may as well give you the whole six, ’cause I can run home and get some more; and I might as well be home, too, for they might have dinner earlier than they meant to.’

“And filling Mark’s pockets out of his own, Tom ran off.

“It so happened,” said Beachamwell turning herself round with a tired air when she got to this point in her story—“it so happened, that Mark having stopped so long to talk with Tommy Crab, did not get home till his mother had her things off and the tablecloth on; and then being in a great hurry to help her, and a rather heedless little boy besides; there being moreover but one table in the room, Mark laid his six apples upon the sill of the window which was open. For it was a soft autumn day—the birds giving another concert in the still air, and the sunshine lying warm and bright upon everything. The apples looked quite brilliant as they lay in the window, and as Mark eat his queer little Thanksgiving dinner of bread and a bit of corned beef, he looked at them from time to time with great pleasure.

“But when it was almost time for the apples to come on table as dessert, Mark suddenly cried out,

“‘Mother! where are my six apples?’

“‘Why on the window-sill,’ said his mother.

“There aren’t but five! there aren’t but five!” said Mark. ‘I must have lost one coming home!—no I didn’t either.’ And running to the window, Mark looked out. There lay the sixth apple on the ground, appropriated as the Thanksgiving dinner of his mother’s two chickens.

“Mark could hardly keep from crying.

“It’s *too* bad!’ he said—‘when I hadn’t but just six! The ugly things!’

“You called them beauties this morning,’ said his mother.

“But just see my apple!’ said Mark—‘all dirty and pecked to pieces.’

“And just see my little boy,’ said his mother—‘all red and angry. Did you suppose, my dear, that if apples rolled off the window-sill they would certainly fall inside?’

“I guess I’ll never put anything there any more,’ said Mark, gathering up the five apples in his arms and letting them all fall again. But they fell inside this time, and rolled over the floor.

“You had better decide how many apples you will eat just now,’ said Mrs. Penly, ‘and then put the others away in the closet.’

“It’s too bad!’ said Mark. ‘I hadn’t but six. And I thought you would have three and I’d have three.’

“Well you may have five,’ said his mother smiling—‘the chickens have got my part. And maybe some good will come of that yet, if it only teaches you to be careful.’

“Oddly enough,” said Beachamwell, “some good did come of it. When the chickens pecked the apple to pieces the seeds fell out, and one seed crept under a clover leaf where the chickens could not find it. And when the snow had lain all winter upon the earth, and the spring came, this little seed sprouted and grew, and sent down roots and sent up leaves, and became an apple-tree.”

“How soon?” said Carl.

“O in the course of years—by the time Mark was a big boy. And the tree blossomed and bore fruit; and from that time Mark and his mother never wanted for apples. He called it the ‘Thanksgiving Tree,’ but it was a true Beachamwell, for all that.”

“But say!” exclaimed Carl, catching hold of Beachamwell’s stem in his great interest, “Mark isn’t alive now, is he?”

“No,” said Beachamwell, twisting away from Carl and her stem together. “No, he is not alive now, but the tree is, and it belongs to Mark’s grandson. And the other day he picked a whole wagon-load of us and set off to market; and we three were so tired jolting about that we rolled out and lay by the wayside. That’s where your mother found us.”

“Well that is certainly a very pretty story,” said Carl, “but nevertheless I’m glad my stocking was full. But I will let you Beachamwell and Half-ripe and Knerly lie on the chest and hear the rest of the stories, for I like this one very much.”

Carl was tired sitting still by this time, so he went out and ran about on the beach till dinner; and after dinner he went up to his corner again. The sun came in through the little window, look-askance at Carl’s treasures, and giving a strange, old-fashioned air to purse and book and stocking. The shoes looked new yet, and shone in their blacking, and the apples had evidently but just quitted the tree; while the red cent gleamed away in the fair light, and the old pine cone was brown as ever, and reflected not one ray. Carl handled one thing and another, and then his eye fell on his small portion of money. He might want to spend it!—therefore if the cent could do anything, it must be done at once; and as he thought on the subject, the sun shone in brighter and brighter, and the red cent looked redder and redder. Then the sunbeam fled away, and only a dark little piece of copper lay on the chest by the side of the new shoes.

“Now red cent,” said Carl, “it is your turn. I’ll hear you before the purse, so make haste.”

“Turn me over then,” said the red cent, “for I can’t talk with my back to people.”

So Carl turned him over, and there he lay and stared at the ceiling.

THE STORY OF THE RED CENT

“I cannot begin to relate my history,” said the red cent, “without expressing my astonishment at the small consideration in which I am had. ‘I wouldn’t give a red cent for it—’ ‘It isn’t worth a red cent—’ such are the expressions which we continually hear; and yet truly a man might as well despise the particles of flour that make up his loaf of bread.

“People say it is pride in me—that may be and it may not. But if it be—why shouldn’t a red cent have at least that kind of pride which we call self-respect? I was made to be a red cent, I was wanted to be a red cent, I was never expected to be anything else—therefore why should I be mortified at being only a red cent? I am all that I was intended to be, and a silver dollar can be no more. Pride, indeed! why even Beachamwell here is proud, I dare say, and only because she is not a russetting; while I think— Well, never mind,—but I have bought a good many apples in my day and ought to know something about them. *Only* a red cent! People can’t bargain so well without me, I can tell you. Just go into the market to buy a cabbage, or into the street to buy a newspaper, and let me stay at home—see how you will fare then. Indeed when there is question of parting with me I am precious enough in some people’s eyes, but it hardly makes up for the abuse I get from other quarters. There is indeed one pretty large class of the community who always think me worth picking up, though they are over ready to part with me. To them alone would I unfold the secrets of my past life. I might have lain in a man’s purse for ever, and rubbed down all the finer parts of my nature against various hard-headed coins; but there is something in the solitude of a boy’s pocket which touches all the sympathies of our nature—even beforehand.

“I am not, however,” continued the red cent, “I am not at all of friend Beachamwell’s temperament,—in fact I never had but one impression made on me in my life. To be sure that was permanent, and such as Time only can efface; though no doubt he will one day soften down my most prominent points, and enable me to move through society with a calm and even exterior. For it happens, oddly enough, that while beneath the pressure of years the ‘human face divine’ grows wrinkled and sometimes sharp, a red cent grows smooth and polished,—a little darker and thinner perhaps than formerly, but with as good business faculties as ever.

“When that time arrives,” said the red cent, “we refuse to tell our age; but until then we are perfectly communicative. I would at once tell you how old I am, but that you can see for yourself.

“I shall not give you a detailed account of my origin, nor of the fire and water through which I passed in order to become a red cent. If when you grow up you are still curious about the matter, you may cross over to England; and there, down in Cornwall, you will find what may be called my birthplace, and can learn with full particulars why I left it. Neither shall I relate how I was pressed and clipped and weighed at the Mint, nor speak of the first few times that I went to market and changed hands. My present history will begin with the pocket of a rich old gentleman, into which I found my way one afternoon along with a large variety of the ‘circulating medium.’”

“You do use such big words!” said Carl.

“Because I have travelled a great deal,” said the red cent. “It is the fashion. But to return to the pocket.

“What a pocket it was!

“At the bottom lay an overfed pocket-book, bursting with bank-bills new and old, while another of like dimensions held more value, snugly stowed away in notes and bonds. The leather purse in which I lay had one end for red cents and the other for gold and silver; but with my usual love of bright company, when the old gentleman slipped me in among a parcel of dingy cents I slipped out again, and ran in among the half-eagles. For I was the only new cent the old gentleman had, and as by right I belonged about half to him and half to the bank, the cashier and he had some words as to which should carry me off. I believe the old gentleman chuckled over me half the way home.

“If this part of my story teaches nothing else,” said the red cent with a moralising air as he stared at the ceiling, “it will at least show the folly of going out of one’s proper place. Had I been content to lodge with the red cents, I should but have been set to do a red cent’s work,—as it was I was made to do the work of an eagle, for which I was totally unfit. It fell out thus.

“The old gentleman walked leisurely home, having very much the air of a man with a pocket full of money,—as I should think from the deliberate and comfortable way in which we were jogged about; and when he rang his own door bell it was already quite dark. A dear little girl opened the door, dressed in a white frock and black apron.

“Oh, grandpa,’ she said, ‘I’m so glad you’ve come, because there’s a little boy been waiting here ever so long for ten dollars.’

“Well my dear,’ said the old gentleman, ‘ten dollars is worth waiting for.’

“But he’s in a great hurry to get home before dark, because he says the children have got no bread for supper till he buys it,’ said the little girl. ‘He brought a pair of boots and shoes for you, grandpa. His father’s very poor, he says.’

“Is he?’ said the old gentleman. ‘Then I’m afraid my boots won’t be worth much. However Nanny my dear, you may take him the money for ’em, since they’re here.’

“Shall I fetch you a light, grandpa?’ said the child. ‘It’s too dark to see.’

“No, no—not a bit of it,—I know how ten dollars feels, well enough. He shall have a gold piece—for the first time in his life, I’ll warrant. It is too dark to read bank-bills.’

“And opening the most precious end of his purse, the old gentleman’s unerring thumb and finger drew forth *me*, and laid me in the little girl’s open palm. The soft little hand closed upon me, and down she ran to the lower entry.

“There—’ she said,—‘here it is. Grandpa says he guesses that’s the first gold piece you ever had. Have you got a great many little brothers and sisters?’

“This ain’t gold,’ said the boy, too busy examining me to heed her last question. ‘He’s made a mistake—this is only a red cent.’

“O well I’ll take it back to him then,’ said the little messenger. ‘I s’pose he couldn’t see in the dark.’ And away she ran.

“The old gentleman by this time was enjoying his slippers and the newspaper, between a blazing fire and two long candles in tall silver candlesticks.

“Grandpa,’ said the child laying her hand on his knee, ‘do you know what you did in the dark? you gave that boy a red cent instead of a gold piece—wasn’t it funny?’

“Hey! what?’ said the old gentleman, moving his paper far enough to one side to see the little speaker. ‘Gave him a cent instead of a gold piece? nonsense!’

“But you did, grandpa,’ urged the child. ‘See here—he gave it right back to me. It was so dark, you know, and he took it to the window to look; and he said directly it was only a cent.’

“Which he had kept in his hand for the purpose, I’ll warrant,’ said the old man. ‘Took it to the window, did he?—yes, to slip it into his pocket. He needn’t think to play off that game upon me.’

“But only look at it, grandpa,’ said the child; ‘see—it’s only a red cent. I’m sure he didn’t change it.’

“I don’t want to look at it,’ said he putting away her hand. ‘All stuff, my dear—it was as good an eagle as ever came out of the Mint. Don’t I know the feel of one? and didn’t I take it out of the gold end of my purse, where I *never* put copper? Bad boy, no doubt—you mustn’t go back to him. Here, William—’

“But he looked good, grandpa,’ said the child, ‘and so sorry.’

“He’ll look sorry now, I’ll be bound,’ said the old man. ‘I say, William!—take this red cent back to that boy, and tell him to be off with it, and not to show his face here again.’

“The command was strictly obeyed; and my new owner after a vain attempt to move the waiter, carried me into the street and sat down on the next door-step. Never in my life have I felt so grieved at being only a red cent, as then.

“The boy turned me over and over, and looked at me and read my date with a bewildered air, as if he did not know what he was doing; and I alas, who could have testified to his honesty, had no voice to speak.

“At length he seemed to comprehend his loss; for dropping me on the pavement he sank his head on his hands, and the hot tears fell fast down from his face upon mine. Then, in a sudden passion of grief and excitement he caught me up and threw me from him as far as he could; and I, who had been too proud to associate with red cents, now fell to the very bottom of an inglorious heap of mud. As I lay there half smothered, I could hear the steps of the boy, who soon repenting of his rashness now sought me—inasmuch as I was better than nothing; but he sought in vain. He couldn’t see me and I couldn’t see him, especially as there was little but lamplight to see by, and he presently walked away.

“I am not good at reckoning time,” said the red cent, “but I should think I might have lain there about a week—the mud heap having in the mean time changed to one of dust; when a furious shower arose one afternoon, or I should rather say came down; and not only were dust and mud swept away, but the rain even washed my face for me, and left me almost as bright as ever high and dry upon a clean paving-stone.

“I felt so pleased and refreshed with being able to look about once more, that what next would become of me hardly cost a thought; and very wet and shiny I lay there, basking in the late sunshine.”

“I thought you said you were high and dry?” said Carl.

“That is a phrase which we use,” replied the red cent. “I was high and dry in one sense,—quite lifted above the little streams of water that gurgled about among the paving-stones, though the rain-drops were not wiped off my face; and as I lay there I suddenly felt myself picked up by a most careful little finger and thumb, which had no desire to get wet or muddy. They belonged to a little girl about ten years old.

“‘You pretty red cent!’ she said, admiringly,—‘how bright and nice you do look! and how funny it is that I should find you—I never found anything before. I wonder how you came here—I hope some poor child didn’t lose you.’

“While she thus expressed her opinion I was busy making up mine, and truly it was a pleasant one. Her calico frock was of an indescribable brown, formed by the fading together of all the bright colours that had once enlivened it,—water and soap and long wear had done this. But water and soap had also kept it clean, and a very little starch spread it out into some shape, and displayed the peculiar brown to the best advantage. Instead of an old straw bonnet with soiled ribbons she had a neat little sun-bonnet; but this was made of a piece of new pink calico, and made her face look quite rosy. I could not see her feet and pantalettes, for my back was towards them, but I have no doubt they were in nice order—she was too nice a child to have it otherwise. Her hair was brushed quite smooth, only when she stooped to pick me up one lock had fallen down from under the sun-bonnet; and her face was as simple and good as it could be. With what contented eyes did she look at me! She didn’t wish I was an eagle—indeed I thought it doubtful whether she had ever heard of such a thing. But I saw that her cheeks were thin, and that they might have been pale but for the pink sun-bonnet. Whatever *she* meant by ‘a poor child,’ little Nanny would surely have given the name to her.

“Suddenly she exclaimed,—

“‘Now I can get it!—O I’m so glad! Come little red cent, I must give you away, though I should like to keep you very much, for you’re very pretty; but you are all the money I’ve got in the world.’

“‘Now for the candy-store,’ thought I; for as she turned and began to walk away as fast as she could, I peeped into the little basket that hung on her arm and saw there a small loaf of bread—so I knew I was not to go for that commodity. She did not put me in the basket, but kept me fast in her hand as she tripped along, till we came to a large grocery. There she went in.

“Please sir to let me have a cent’s worth of tea?” she said timidly.

“Got sixpence to pay for it?” said one of the clerks to make the other clerks laugh, in which he succeeded.

“No sir, I’ve got this,” she said, modestly showing me, and giving me a kind glance at the same time. ‘It’s only a cent, but it will get enough for mother, and she’s sick and wanted some tea so much.’

“The young men stopped laughing, and looked at the child as if she had just come out of the museum; and one of them taking down a canister measured out two or three good pinches of tea into a brown paper and folded it up. The child took it with a very glad face, laying me down on the counter with a joyful ‘Thank you, sir!’ which I by no means repeated—I wanted to go home with her and see that tea made. But we red cents can never know the good that our purchases do in the world.

“The clerk took me up and balanced me upon his finger, as if he had half a mind to give the child back her money, and pay the sum of one cent into the store out of his own private purse. But habit prevailed; and dropping me into the till I heard him remark as he closed it,—

“I say, Bill, I shouldn’t wonder now if that was a good child.’

“I shouldn’t have wondered, either.

“We were a dull company in the till that night, for most of the money was old; and it is a well-known fact that worn-down coins are not communicative. And some of the pieces were rusty through long keeping, and one disconsolate little sixpence which sat alone in the furthest corner of the till, was in a very sad state of mind; for he had just laid himself out to buy some rice for a poor family and now could do nothing more for them—and he was the last monied friend they had.

“In this inactive kind of life some time passed away, and though some of us were occasionally taken to market yet we never bought anything. But one evening a man came into the grocery and asked for starch, and we hoped for bright visitors; but I had no time to enjoy them, for I was sent to make change. The messenger was a manservant, and with the starch in his hand and me in his pocket he soon left the store and went whistling along the street. Then he put his other hand into the pocket and jingled me against the rest of the change in a most unpleasant manner—picking me up and dropping me again just as if red cents had no feeling. I was glad when he reached home, and ran down the area steps and into the kitchen. He gave the starch to the cook, and then marking down on a little bit of paper what he had bought and what he had spent, he carried it with the change into the parlour. But what was my surprise to find that I was in the very same house whence I had gone forth as a golden eagle!

“The old gentleman was asleep in his chair now, and a pretty-looking lady sat by, reading; while the little girl was playing with her doll on the rug. She jumped up and came to the table, and began to count the change.

“Two-and-sixpence, mamma—see, here’s a shilling and two sixpences and a fivepence and a red cent,—mamma, may I have this cent?”

“It isn’t mine, Nanny—your grandfather gave James the money.’

“Well, but you can pay him again,” said the child; ‘and besides, he’d let me have it, I know.’

“What will you do with it, Nanny?”

“Don’t you know, mamma, you said you *thought* you would give me one cent a month to spend?”

“To do what you liked with,” said her mother. ‘Yes, I remember. But what will you do with this one?’

“O I don’t know, mamma—I’ll see if grandpa will let me have it.’

“Let you have what?” said the old gentleman, waking up.

“This cent, grandpa.’

“To be sure you may have it! Of course!—and fifty more.’

“No, she must have but one,” said the lady, with a smile. ‘I am going to give her an allowance of one cent a-month.’

“Fiddle-de-dee!” said the old gentleman. “What can she do with that, I should like to know?—one red cent!—Absurd!”

“Why she can do just the fiftieth part of what she could with half-a-dollar,” said the lady, “and that will be money matters enough for such a little head. So you may take the cent, Nanny, and spend it as you like,—only I shall want to be told about it afterwards.”

“Nanny thanked her mother, and holding me fast in one hand she sat down on the rug again by her doll. The old gentleman seemed very much amused.

“What will you do with it, Nanny?” he said, bending down to her.—“Buy candy?”

“Nanny smiled and shook her head.

“No, I guess not, grandpa—I don’t know—I’ll see. Maybe I’ll buy beads.”

“At which the old gentleman leaned back in his chair and laughed very heartily.

“From that time, whenever little Nanny went to walk I went too; and she really seemed to be quite fond of me, for though she often stopped before the candy stores or the toy shops, and once or twice went in to look at the beads, yet she always carried me home again.

“Mamma, I don’t know how to spend my red cent,” she said one day.

“Are you tired of taking care of it, Nanny?”

“No mamma, but I want to spend it.”

“Why?”

“Why mamma—I don’t know—money’s *meant* to spend, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is meant to spend—not to throw away.”

“O no,” said Nanny,—“I wouldn’t throw away my red cent for anything. It’s a very pretty red cent.”

“How many ways are there of throwing away money?” said her mother.

“O mamma—a great many! I couldn’t begin to count. You know I might throw it out of the window, mamma, or drop it in the street—or somebody might steal it,—no, then it would only be lost.”

“Or you might shut it up in your box and never spend it.”

“Why mamma!” said Nanny opening her eyes very wide, “would it be thrown away then?”

“Certainly—you might just as well have none. It would do neither you nor any one else any good.”

“But I should have it to look at.”

“But that is not what money was made for. Your cent would be more really lost than if you threw it out of the window, for then some poor child might pick it up.”

“How surprised she would be!” said Nanny with a very bright face. “Mamma, I think I should like to spend my money so. I could stand behind the window-curtain and watch.”

“Her mother smiled.

“Why, mamma? do you think there wouldn’t any poor child come along?”

“I should like to see that day, dear Nanny. But your cent *might* fall into the grass in the courtyard, or into the mud, or a horse might tread it down among the paving-stones; and then no one would be the better for it.”

“But it’s only one cent, mamma,” said Nanny,—“it don’t matter so much, after all.”

“Come here Nanny,” said her mother, and the child came and stood at her side. The lady opened her purse and took out a little gold dollar.

“What is this made of?” said she.

“Why of gold, mamma.”

“Think again.”

“So Nanny thought and couldn’t think—and laid her head against her mother, and played with the little gold dollar. Then she laid it upon me to see how much smaller it was, and how much brighter. Then she cried out,—

“O I know now, mamma! it’s made of a hundred cents.”

“Then if every day you lose ‘only a cent,’ in one year you would have lost more than three dollars and a-half. That might do a great deal of good in the world.’

“How funny that is!’ said Nanny. ‘Well I’ll try and not lose my cent, mamma.’

“There is another reason for not losing it,’ said her mother. ‘In one sense it would make little difference whether or not I threw this little gold dollar into the fire—you see there are plenty more in my purse. But Nanny they do not belong to me.’ And taking up a Bible she read these words,—

“*The silver and gold are the Lord’s.*’

“Do you think, Nanny, that it pleases him to have us waste or spend foolishly what he has given us to do good with?’

“No mamma. I won’t get my beads then,’ said Nanny with a little sigh.

“That would not be waste,’ said her mother kissing her. ‘It is right to spend some of our money for harmless pleasure, and we will go and buy the beads this very afternoon.’

“So after dinner they set forth.

“It was a very cold day, but Nanny and her mother were well wrapped up, so they did not feel it much. Nanny’s fur tippet kept all the cold wind out of her neck, and her little muff kept one hand warm while the other was given to her mamma. When that got cold Nanny changed about, and put it in the muff and the other out. As for me I was in the muff all the time; and I was just wondering to myself what kind of a person the bead-woman would prove to be, when I heard Nanny say,—

“Mamma! did you see that little girl on those brown steps? She had no tippet, mamma, and not even a shawl, and her feet were all tucked up in her petticoat; and—’ and Nanny’s voice faltered—‘I think she was crying. I didn’t look at her much, for it made me feel bad, but I thought so.’



“Mamma! did you see that little girl on those brown steps?”—P. 53.

“Yes love,’ said her mother, ‘I saw her. How good God has been to me, that it is not my little daughter who is sitting there.’

“O mamma!’

“Nanny walked on in silence for about half a block—then she spoke again.

“Mamma—I’m afraid a great many poor children want things more than I want my beads.’

“I’m afraid they do, Nanny.’

“Mamma, will you please go back with me and let me give that little girl my red cent? wouldn’t she be pleased, mamma? would she know how to spend it?’

“Suppose you spend it for her, Nanny. People that are cold are often hungry too—shall we go to the baker’s and buy her something to eat?’

“O yes!’ said Nanny. ‘Will you buy it, mamma, or shall I?’

“You, darling.’

“And when they reached the shop Nanny looked round once more at her mother, and opening the shop-door with a very pleased and excited little face she marched up to the counter.

“If you please, sir,’ she said, laying me down on the counter. ‘I want something for a very poor little girl.’

“The baker was a large fat man, in the whitest of shirt-sleeves and aprons, and the blackest pantaloons and vest, over which hung down a heavy gold watch-chain. He put his hands on his sides and looked at Nanny, and then at me, and then at Nanny again.

“*What* do you want, my dear?’ said he.

“Nanny looked round at her mother to reassure herself, and repeated her request.

“I want something for a very poor little girl, if you please, sir. She’s sitting out in the street all alone.’ And Nanny’s lips were trembling at the remembrance. Her mother’s eyes were full too.

“What will you have, my dear?’ said the baker.

“Nanny looked up at her mother.

“What would you like if you were hungry?’ replied her mother.

“O I should like some bread,’ said Nanny, ‘and I guess the little girl would, too. But all those loaves are too big.’

“How would these do?’ said the baker, taking some rolls out of a drawer.

“O they’re just the thing!’ said Nanny, ‘and I like rolls so much. May I take one sir? and is a cent enough to pay for it?’

“The baker gave a queer little shake of his head, and searching below the counter for a bit of wrapping-paper he laid the two largest rolls upon it.

“A cent is enough to pay for two,’ he said. ‘Shall I tie them up for you?’

“No thank you sir; you needn’t tie it—if you’ll only wrap them up a little. Mamma,’ said Nanny, turning again to her mother, ‘I’m afraid that poor little girl don’t know that ‘the silver and gold are the Lord’s,’ and she’ll only think that I gave it to her.’

“You can tell her, Nanny, that everything we have comes from God,’ said her mother; and they left the shop.”

“What a nice little girl!” said Carl. “I think I should like to marry that little girl when I grow up—if I was good enough.”

“The baker went right into the back room,” continued the red cent, “to tell the story to his wife, and I was left to my own reflections on the counter; but I had reason to be well satisfied, for it was certainly the largest cent’s worth I had ever bought in my life. But while I lay there thinking about it, a boy came into the shop; and seeing me, he caught me up and ran out again. At least he was running out, when he tripped and fell; and, as I am noted for slipping through people’s fingers, I slipped through his, and rolled to the furthest corner of the shop. There I lay all night; and in the morning when the baker’s boy was sweeping the floor, he found me and put me in the till, for he was honest. But just then Mr. Krinken came in with a string of fish, and the careless creature gave me with some other change for a parcel of miserable flounders. That’s the way I came here.”

“Why was he a careless boy?” said Carl. “I think he was very careful, to find you at all.”

“O because I didn’t want to quit the baker, I suppose,” said the red cent. “And I don’t like the smell of fish, anyhow—it don’t agree with me.”

“You won’t smell much of it when I’ve kept you awhile in my purse,” said Carl. “I’ll take good care of you, red cent, and I won’t spend you till I want to.”

The next day Carl had tired himself with a run on the sands. He used to tuck up his trowsers as high as they would go, and wade slowly in through the deepening water, to pick up stones and shells and feel the little waves splash about his legs. Then when a bigger wave than usual came rolling in, black and high, to break further up on the shore than the other great waves did, Carl would run for it, shouting and tramping through the water, to see if he could not get to land before the breaker

which came rolling and curling so fast after him. Sometimes he did; and sometimes the billow would curl over and break just a little behind him, and a great sea of white foam would rush on over his shoulders and maybe half hide his own curly head. Then Carl laughed louder than ever. He didn't mind the wetting with salt water. And there was no danger, for the shore was very gently shelving and the sand was white and hard; and even if a big wave caught him up off his feet and cradled him in towards the shore, which sometimes happened, it would just leave him there, and never think of taking him back again; which the waves on some beaches would certainly do.

All this used to be in the summer weather; at Christmas it was rather too cold to play tag with the breakers in any fashion. But Carl liked their company, and amused himself in front of them, this sunny December day, for a long time. He got tired at last, and then sat himself flat down on the sand, out of reach of the water, to rest and think what he would do next. There he sat, his trowsers still tucked up as far as they would go, his little bare legs stretched out towards the water, his curls crisped and wetted with a dash or two of the salt wave, and his little ruddy face, sober and thoughtful, pleasantly resting, and gravely thinking what should be the next play. Suddenly he jumped up, and the two little bare feet pattered over the sand and up on the bank, till he reached the hut.

“What ails the child!” exclaimed Mrs. Krinken.

But Carl did not stop to tell what. He made for the cupboard, and climbed up on a chair and lugged forth with some trouble, from behind everything, a clumsy wooden box. This box held his own treasures and nobody else's. A curious boxful it was. Carl soon picked out his Christmas purse; and without looking at another thing shut the box, pushed it back, swung to the cupboard door, and getting down from his chair ran back, purse in hand, the way he came, the little bare feet pattering over the sand, till he reached the place where he had been sitting; and then down he sat again just as he was before, stretched out his legs towards the sea, and put the purse down on the sand between them.

“Now purse,” said he, “I'll hear your story. Come,—tell.”

THE STORY OF THE PURSE

“I don’t feel like story-telling,” said the purse. “I have been opening and shutting my mouth all my life, and I am tired of it.”

The purse looked very snappish.

“Why you wouldn’t be a purse if you couldn’t open and shut your mouth,” said Carl.

“Very true,” said the other; “but one may be tired of being a purse, mayn’t one? I am.”

“Why?” said Carl.

“My life is a failure.”

“I don’t know what that means,” said Carl.

“It means that I never have been able to do what I was meant to do, and what I have all my life been trying to do.”

“What’s that?” said Carl.

“Keep money.”

“You shall keep my cent for me,” said Carl.

“Think of that! A red cent! Anything might hold a red cent. I am of no use in the world.”

“Yes, you are,” said Carl,—“to carry my cent.”

“You might carry it yourself,” said the purse.

“No, I couldn’t,” said Carl. “My pockets are full.”

“You might lose it, then. It’s of no use to keep one cent. You might as well have none.”

“No, I mightn’t,” said Carl; “and you’ve got to keep it: and you’ve got to tell me your story, too.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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