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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1962

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

"Dear me!" Cindy exclaimed as she made another long stroke with her brush. "It seems I can't ever paint the way I feel inside of me," and she looked with disgust at the easel Tommy and Donnie had made for her.

"It must be this easel," she complained as the boys entered the room.

"What did you say?" Tommy asked innocently.

"Cindy," her ten year old twin chided, "don't blame the boys. It's you."

"Benny," she said crossly, "how dare you? I've been trying so hard to paint that hill of beautiful snow with the big red barn beside it, and I can't, I can't!" she wailed.

"Don't cry," Donnie soothed, "Maybe we can make you a better easel next time."

"It's not the easel I tell you," Benny insisted, "it's Cindy. She's just no artist! It's simple as that to see."

"Now, now," mother said sweetly but sternly as she stood in the doorway, her hands covered with bread dough. "No more arguing! It's not allowed in our home. Christ has been and shall ever be, our Divine and honored guest; He listens to everything we say and think," she added softly. "Find something else to do this cold, snowy day. The cinnamon rolls are almost ready for baking and you know how good they taste with a glass of cold milk! No warm cinnamon rolls for any of you if I hear any more arguing."

"I know what we'll do," Tommy suggested, "Let's write our New Year's resolutions on a big sheet of paper and see who can keep them the longest," and his merry eyes twinkled as he said it.

"Oh goody!" Cindy said as she dropped her brush and ran to the big oak desk for a pencil and tablet, "This will be fun," and a childish giggle escaped her pretty lips.

"Hm!" Benny grumbled, "Maybe it's not going to be as much fun as you think." He almost scolded to Cindy that it was impossible for her to keep her resolutions, when he remembered mother's good rolls and the warning. He bit his lip stubbornly in solemn resolution. He knew what he'd do after the warm cinnamon rolls were eaten!

Tommy and Donnie sprawled out on the big braided rug in the dining room; Cindy sat at the long kitchen table and Benny sulked over his sheet in the living room. Peaceful silence pervaded the old house except for the tea kettle making a soft purring sound and the quick, light strokes of mother's rolling pin rolling out the pie crusts.

"I'm finished," Tommy shouted from the dining room. "I have only twelve this year."

"Oh no!" Benny said sarcastically. "You should have at least a hundred -- or more," he added as he laughed a loud, mocking laugh at his brother.

"I only have ten," Donnie said softly, "and I just can't think of anymore."

"I have exactly twenty four," Cindy said thoughtfully as she looked over her list, "And I'm ashamed I must make these resolutions again. So many are the same as last year," and she hung her head in shame.

"Naturally," Benny said nastily. "You'll break them all before today's over. Just you wait and see!"

"I will not," Cindy said indignantly.

"Just wait and see," Benny said tartly to his sister. "Just wait and see., wait and see., wait and see...." he repeated in a sing song manner.

"Benny!" Mother rebuked. "You're the one who makes me break all my resolutions," Cindy cried. "Oh, if only I'd have had a twin sister instead of a hateful brother," and she broke into loud sobbing.

"Cindy," mother said softly, "Tommy and Donnie are twins and they don't quarrel like you and Benny do."

"But they're brothers!" the silken haired girl replied. "If... if . . . Donnie was a girl like I am they'd fight too. Boys! Boys! Boys! Everybody's a boy here but me."

"And me," mother reminded, "and I little being a 'girl,' if you don't." Then looking over the shoulder of her dark haired daughter she read:

"Resolutions -- by Cindy," in neat handwriting, which was so characteristic of the girl in both her person and her work.

No. 1--"I resolve to love Benny," in big quotation marks. 2--"I'll NEVER argue again." 3--"I'll always be obedient to mother and father." 4--"I'll NEVER take advantage of Tommy and Donnie again."

On and on mother read, then, turning to face her round faced daughter she said brokenly, "Cindy, you've already broken many of these." Calmly she called all the children around the big kitchen table and read each list aloud, then, gathering all the papers together, she pushed them into the cook stove where the coal was making red hot embers and quickly devoured them.

"Mother! Our resolutions!" the boys gasped.

"They're better off in there -- burned to ashes -- than for you to vow and keep vowing, then break them," mother said as she tearfully continued. "Each of you two," pointing to Benny and Cindy, "resolved to love the other. Already you've broken that resolution and the one about no more arguing. You have hatred in your hearts and are considered murderers."

"Oh, mother! No!" Cindy cried, for the word was as ugly and as nasty as the drunk man she had at one time seen lying in the gutter.

"Yes, you do, dear," Mother said kindly, "If you don't have love in your heart you must have hate, for our heart is so constituted that if perfect love doesn't abide therein, hatred does. When Christ lives in our heart, the whole being is filled with Divine love which makes it so easy to love everyone-- even the unlovable: when we have hatred in our heart we're then a murderer for God's Word says 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer shall enter heaven.' You're both full of hatred and strife and none of these things will ever enter heaven."

"But mother," Cindy said brokenly, "I do want to go to heaven. I want my heart so full of Him and His Divine love that I can love even Benny." Then rushing over to where her tall, dark haired twin sat she threw her arms around his neck, begging him for forgiveness.

"You're ready for prayer now," mother said as she led all her children to the throne of grace. In a little while Cindy's face was radiant with the light of God and heaven shining all through her. She knelt by her twin who got gloriously saved after confessing his meanness and sins.

"I'll never write another resolution," Benny said over his second glass of milk and fourth cinnamon roll. "They're no good anyhow."

"That's right," Mother affirmed. "Resolutions are from the head; confessions, restitutions, and old-fashioned godly sorrow and repentance are from the heart. Another roll?" she asked as Benny and Cindy sat side by side working a puzzle with Donnie and Tommy.

A warm tear of gratitude rolled . carelessly down mother's soft cheek. Quickly she turned toward the window and the snow-covered forest, whispering her thanks to the Lord.

The whole kitchen was warm and at rest, with more than the warmth from the stove! Melissa, the furry yellow kitten seemed to sense it too, and rolling over on her side she stretched the full length of her body on the braided rug by the stove and purred her soft contentment with the music of the tea kettle.

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Story 2

THE POTTER'S VESSEL

Philip sat near the register in the bedroom he shared with Frank and warmed his feet as one sock dangled carelessly from his little finger. How good the heat from the little round coal heater in the living room below felt! Especially when the ground was white and all crusted over with snow and ice. The windows resembled the fancy lacy pattern on the big table cloth in the dining room.

"You ready, Philip?" Mother called sweetly up the big stairway, "Breakfast's almost ready and everybody else is downstairs."

"Coming Mother," the day dreamer called as he quickly pulled his socks over the warm, soft toes, then slide like lightning down the smooth banister rail.

"Mother told us not to do that." Esther reminded soberly. "It's quite dangerous she says."

"Philip!" Mother said sternly, "How often must you be spanked for the same thing?" and she reached for the little switch she kept handy on top of the cabinet. "I'm really sorry you're so forgetful dear," she said softly, "But this will help you to remember. You can injure yourself again, Philip," she warned as she administered the punishment.

The snow was falling like down from the goose backs big, puffy white flakes and, after breakfast Mr. Winkler said, "Mother, it's too bad outside to do anything here on the farm so I was thinking, how would you like to go down to the village and get you some more cloth for sewing while I take the children to Uncle Joshua's pottery shop?"

"Oh. James!" Mother exclaimed brightly, "That would be wonderful! I'd love it!"

"Then we shall do it," Mr. Winkler said happily. "Esther, Ruth, and Naomi," he called to the girls, "Get these dishes done and put away while Philip, Frank and I finish the barn chores. We're going to the village and Uncle Joshua's today -- by way of bob sled!" and he laughed a joyous laughter that rang like music through the entire house.

After family worship the children tumbled into the straw on the bob sled, covering themselves with the thick, scratchy, wooly blankets mother brought. Daddy, Mother and baby Stevie sat on the front seat, bundled up like Eskimos in the far North country. Mr. Winkler tapped the horses lightly with his reins and away they went gliding -- as graceful and smoothly as the big swans on the pond in the village. The horse hoofs on the crusted snow made a melodic, rhythmic sound while the children's noses grew red as cherries from the biting cold. They prattled, sang and teased and when the village church steeple appeared the children clapped their mittened hands for glee at the bottom of the hill was Uncle Joshua's pottery shop and this would be the first time ever they had been allowed in to see the wheel at work.

The village of Contentville looked like some picture card from the past, Men and women who had any bravery about them whatever, ventured out into the crusted snow with thick, furry coats, woolly caps, warm mufflers and high boots while every roof top tree, fence rail and garden glistened. glimmered and shone like the lighted chandelier in rich Mrs. Boss's house. The children's excitement mounted as Mr. Winkler gently helped his wife off the" sled.

"Be careful now Mary, and have a good time my dear," he called as he climbed back into the sled and started down the street to Uncle Joshua's.

"Everybody stay with me and don't touch anything in the shop," father said as the five excited children waited patiently near the door while he hitched the team of white horses to the big hitching post in front of the shop.

Once inside the old shop Uncle Joshua patted each small head then began work with ten big, eager eyes upon his dexterous fingers.

"How beautiful!" Naomi whispered to Ruth as Uncle Joshua formed the soft, gooey looking clay into a vase that, before their eyes, was nothing short of perfection.

"You like it?" the elderly pottery maker asked of his nieces as a merry twinkle entered his eyes.

"I . . . we think it's beautiful," Esther answered timidly. Just then old Josh threw it into a large tub and let it break into many, many pieces.

"Oh!" the startled onlookers gasped in astonishment.

"That beautiful, beautiful vase!" Ruth whispered.

"We'll remake it," the old man said soberly. "It had too many bubbles in it. We'll make it again another vessel, a second best vessel or vase."

Again the wheel began whirring and humming. "Come here children"! Uncle Josh said loudly above the noise of the wheel. "You see all those vases and pottery pieces in that tub? They're not on the shelf in display because they've had some blemish in them: either air bubbles or

too soft or too hard. I can use none of them except to make them over remelt and reshape them again. It's exactly the same way in our life; Christ, the Master Potter, has been working for years on some of His creations, trying to make them a vessel unto honor and glory for Him, "but by not going on into the experience of Holiness an air bubble of pride inflates their ordinarily beautiful life and, as the Scripture says 'Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit' before a fall.' They fall, and how terrible is the fall! God's name is dragged into the ground and souls are dragged with them to Hell. Then there are others who just have no stability about them -- they're too soft -- they're afraid to stand up for Jesus and what the Bible teaches. God has no place for such as these. He wants soldiers. Men that will have a good, solid back bone for Him and His cause! Nor can he use anyone who's too hard -- as some of my pottery gets. These folks think they 'know it all,' and can't be led or taught. God's Word tells us that 'the Wisdom that is from above is first, peaceable . . . easy to be intreated,' and it's teachable. Never get to the place where you think you know everything. Stay pliable in the Lord's hands; ask Him to teach you and then be open to whatever methods He may use in teaching you dear children.

He may use strange methods sometimes in His teaching but follow Him just like this pottery gives under my fingers. Perhaps it would rather be something other than a vase, but it never resists my touch! It's pliable and seems perfectly content to be made into anything I so choose. God can only use each of you as you follow Him in every way and every place He so chooses."

"Oh, Uncle Joshua!" Naomi said softly, "Since I have been saved and sanctified that's just the way I want to be -- always"!

"Naturally," the old man said misty eyed. "That's the normal state of a real Christian. Now, come with me! And the kind white haired pottery maker led the way into a room with soft gas lights flickering in their lantern cases, and row upon row, shelf upon shelf of beautiful, perfect pottery. Big vases, tall vases, fat vases, small vases; large vessels, round vessels and tiny ones, all lined in perfect symmetry on the shelves.

"You're a perfect vessel!" Samuel whispered to himself, "Like I always want to stay," and he grew starry eyed at the thought of being a perfect vessel for Jesus, 'Not having spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing,' as Ephesians said.

"You like it?" Uncle Joshua asked as he lightly touched the slim, young boy's shoulder. Then taking it carefully off the shelf he placed it in Samuel's hands. "It's yours my boy," he laughed.

Each of the group received a vase of pottery piece to their special liking and taste, then, as the bells on the horses' bridles jingled merrily over the crusted snow and ice, up the hill toward home, the children looked down to the picture card village and, with firm resolutions each vowed they would be the very kind of vessel God wanted him to be.

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Story 3

BURT'S SLOW GROWING PLANT

"Mother! Father!" Jack said excitedly as he burst into the kitchen. "Aunt Tilda has another new boy at her house. May Carla and I go over to play?"

"Please, Mother!" begged the slender girl Carla. "He's fine looking, Mother. Not at all like Dick was when Aunt Tilda first took him," began the lanky boy Jack.

"No! You can't go!" Mrs. Worth said sourly. "Now, nor ever!" father emphatically said.

"But, but, Father, Mother! "Why?" Jack began again. "Dick really turned out fine. Why, he's, he's a preacher and a truly good man today."

"Makes no difference," the Mother said sternly. "He was a bad boy once and that's what he'll always be so far as your father and I are concerned!"

"But that's not fair nor . . . right, Mother," Carla said softly, "for he found the Lord Jesus Christ in saving grace, and he certainly did change, and is a really respected citizen today; and then Marilyn, too, got saved and is all changed since old Tilda got her. Why, she's the best nurse at City Hospital. You read what the newspaper said about her."

"Sometimes I don't know what to think of that old woman," said father. "She's forever taking in delinquents and waifs since her husband died. Now this again!" and he sighed a big, heavy sigh.

"She told us only last Sunday in our class that we should do unto others as we wanted them to do to us," Jack said quietly, "and I guess she's just practicing what she preaches. Since her Johnny died she feels she owes it to others to help them out of their troubles and heartaches."

"Well, just don't you get it into your head that you're going to make friends with anybody she takes in. Do you hear? Both of you!" commanded the stern father and mother.

A hurt sigh issued forth from Carla and she walked thoughtfully out to the porch swing and her waiting book, with Jack just behind her.

The two sat down on the big swing in bitter thought. Finally Jack broke the silence with:

"Sometimes I wish I were one of those boys or girls who live over at Matilda Goodheart's house! They're happy! She's kind and good and . . . and . . . patient with them. She makes saints out of them!"

"No, not she!" came Carla's quick reply. "As she so often says 'It's Jesus, boys and girls! Jesus makes a saint out of a sinner!' She only helps the Lord Jesus to make them good."

"I almost hate this place," Jack said thoughtfully "Why, Betty and John are allowed to play with the boys and girls Tilda takes in."

"Yes, I know that," Carla began. "Both Betty and John's Mother and Father are Christians and they watch closely as the children play."

"But they're not getting scolded, jumped on and hollered at all the time," again Jack said bitterly. "I'm tired of this and some day I'm going to run away from home" And he stomped off the porch to find a shady spot and pout as Carla became deeply absorbed in her book.

"Hi there!" trilled a soft, melodic voice. Carla looked up in time to see Betty and John Start looking in through the palings of the picket fence.

"Hi!" she called cheerily "Where are you going?"

"Oh, we're going over to help cheer Burt up. Old Matilda's got her another boy since two weeks ago, and Betty and I always try to help Aunt 'Tilda revo . . . revo . . ." John stuttered.

"Revolutionize," Betty slowly pronounced.

"That's it," John said brightly "We try to help by being kind and loving. Burt's mother and father are both drunkards and just allowed the children to do anything they wanted to do, and one night Burt got into trouble and was put in a home for bad boys, so when old 'Tilda heard about him, she prayed and asked the Lord's guidance. She said she felt like she should try to raise Burt right. So he's there now. Want to go over and meet him? Betty and I've been going over every day since he came. We take our Bible story book along and Betty reads to us for a long, long time," and a pleased boyish grin played across his face as he said it.

"I can't go," Carla began sadly. "I really do want to go, but Mother and Father say he's a very bad boy and Jack and I must never go near him. Oh, Betty, I wish you and John would pray for Father and Mother They're so cross and . . . and . . . hard," she almost whispered it.

"Why, of course we will," said the blue-eyed, radiant Betty "Maybe they're under conviction like you were one time too. But now we must be going or Burr will feel we've forgotten him, and Aunt 'Tilda said we must help plant confidence in him. No one seems to have believed in him and he has no confidence in himself now."

"Good-bye, Carla," John called as they rounded the small bend in the lane.

"Maybe some other time you may go," Betty called.

Burt was sitting beneath the apple tree in the yard waiting for Betty and John As they entered the seclusion of the blossoming branches Burt whispered softly:

"Sit down and be real quiet! Hear them?" he asked after the two were settled on the soft, cool grass near the trunk of the big tree.

"Hear what?" asked John. "The bees," Betty said softly. "Just listen to them! There must be hundreds of them up in the tree gathering the sweet apple blossom nectar for their honey."

For a long time the trio sat silently -- listening to the soft hum . . . m . . . hum . . . m and buzz..., buzz..., buzz of the bees. A playful summer breeze skipped lightly by, carelessly ruffling Betty's long brown hair and causing a shower of pink and white satiny petals to flutter gently to, the earth below, spreading a carpet of velvet all around them. Lovingly Betty gathered a handful and placed their satiny cool petals to her face and lips as she inhaled deeply of the perfume. It was Burr who broke the silence and the spell.

"Know somethin'?" he asked. "I really like it here! Aunt Matilda's wonderful and I... I'm beginning to feel that life is really worthwhile. This morning in family devotions I prayed clear through! I got saved, John and Betty[I've never known a joy and peace such as I now have and I don't ever, ever want to leave 'Aunt Matilda," and he looked fondly to the old rocker in the big front porch where 'Aunt Matilda' sat crocheting.

"Why, Burt," Betty began as tears flowed freely down her face. "That's wonderful! The angels in Heaven have been rejoicing all day over your being born again or saved! Praise the Lord!" she added reverently.

"I knew you'd find Jesus soon!"

After John and Betty had gone home, Burt sat by Aunt Matilda on the porch. Very thoughtfully and slowly he said:

"Aunt 'Tilda, I was just thinking -- wondering I guess you'd say. For days I've tried to make friends with Carla and Jack but they just won't let me be friends. Why? Why, Aunt 'Tilda? Do you know?"

"Burt," and the be-spectacled elderly lady looked toward the garden as she continued softly and kindly, "you remember the garden you've planted for me?"

"Why yes, I do," he answered. "You remember the onions, radishes, and carrots you've sown and the tomatoes and beans you planted?"

"Yes."

"Well, some plants grow faster than others and some seeds germinate quicker than others too. You planted a garden some years ago. You didn't mean to plant bad seeds but you did; and those dirty bad seeds made you grow filthy weeds and bad plants -- in your life, that is -- as a result, people remember you for those bad things. Oh, I know you're different now and will be different from here on out since you found Jesus, but people will have to see your good plants or good fruits being produced before they'll have confidence in you, Burr. Confidence is a sl-ow, s-l-o-w growing plant, but it's beautiful when grown. Now it's up to you to produce that

beautiful plant by proving to Carla and Jack that you have been transformed and changed. Soon they will believe in you. Already you have been producing good fruits on this plant. Never forget, dear boy, reputation is what people think we are, but character is what we know we are."

"Oh, Aunt Matilda!" said the boy excitedly, "I see it all so plainly now. I must live a good, clean, consistent, Holy life like you and Betty and John have been living, then people who are watching me will see it and build up confidence in me."

"That's right," said the lady, starry-eyed. "Matthew 5:16 says, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven!'"

"I'll do just that by being good and kind and loving like Jesus. Aunt Tilda, may I please make some lemonade and take some of your cookies to Jack and Carla and tell them what Jesus did for my soul, and that [love them."

"You certainly may, Burt," she said motherly, then prayerfully added, "and may God be with you, and help you, and make you a great blessing for Him!"

She heard him say softly to himself, "Confidence plant! You grow slowly, but you're going to grow deeply and firmly."

A soft whistle came floating through the house; Aunt Matilda prayerfully folded her wrinkled old hands and bowed her head as tears of gratitude and joy flooded her happy heart. Another prodigal had come back to Father's house and was safely sheltered in the fold.

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Story 4

RETURN OF THE WRENS

The sun shone brightly and warmly on the earth as the new day dawned; not a cloud in the heaven to frown upon the newly plowed fields and fast growing pansy bed. The frogs in the pond and down by the swampy, marshy places had ceased their loud love calling, giving way to rest and another new day. Elizabeth Ann had just gotten settled beneath the pear tree when Mrs. Bronson's voice reached her.

"Good morning, Bethie," she called through the palings of the picket fence. "A very lovely morning isn't it?" and Elizabeth Ann noticed she was working in the aster bed near the fence.

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Bronson!" she answered in her soft, sweet voice. "It is a most beautiful morning. I was just noticing the sky. How blue and cloudless it is this morning! Didn't the Lord make everything just beautiful!" She exclaimed joyfully.

"It's very lovely all right, regardless of who made it," the neighbor said tartly. The child noticed, with great perplexity of spirit, that every time she mentioned the Lord and anything pertaining to Him, Mrs. Bronson seemed filled with bitterness and sarcasm.

"I'm so thankful I can be out in mother's garden with the flowers, birds and bees, the sun and . . . "

"Looks like God's unfair, Beth," the woman began, "Crippling you like you are, until you sit all day long in that miserable wheel chair; no romping, playing and jumping about as the other children do!"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Bronson!" the girl said defensively, "God didn't do it: He only allowed it to happen -- for a very special reason, mother has always felt."

"And what could that reason be, may I ask? Other than unjustness and unfairness?" Mrs. Bronson snapped as she continued working.

"We don't know," the child said cheerfully, "But in the book of Romans, the 8th chapter and the 28th verse we read, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to those who are the called according to his purpose.' It's for a reason -- a very definite reason Mrs. Bronson," and she looked closely through the palings to her neighbor.

"I just can't see it. I still think God's been most unjust to allow that to happen to you -- a young active child! Why couldn't some old man or woman have had that accident and not you? Why Beth? Answer me! They'd have been nearly ready for the grave anyhow, but your life has merely begun," and Mrs. Bronson threw her trowel on the ground in disgust.

"Maybe God wants to show you something you've been afraid of for a long time," the child said softly and sweetly.

The few words startled the woman whose face turned ashen white. After a few moments of deliberation she came close to the fence and looked longingly into the dark, appealing eyes of the beautiful girl.

"You're so right Bethie," she said affectionately and brokenly. "God has had a reason." Whereupon she broke into loud, lamentable sobbing. "You . . . you . . . remind me . . . so much like our own darling Phyllis Ann. She would have been your age -- lacking one month. She was crippled at the age of two and died when she was four. I loved that girl! How we loved her! But He took her and I've never felt the same toward God since."

"Oh," Elizabeth Ann said softly. "That's wonderful! She's in heaven with Jesus and the angel band and she's so... o... o... o happy! Her pain and suffering are all over and she's free from all care and sorrow. Mrs. Bronson, she's waiting for you. Unless you let Jesus save and sanctify your soul you'll never see her again. Maybe . . . maybe that's why Jesus took her --"to make a road for you to follow; now that you haven't been following and making preparation He may have allowed me to fall off grandpa's big wagon and be crippled to remind you of your little girl again."

Mrs. Bronson said nothing but stared hard at the dark, good smelling earth beneath her then, leaving trowel, garden rake and all, she ran sobbing into her elaborate house. Elizabeth Ann watched as she closed the door behind her, praying all the while for the weeping woman.

She sat watching, listening. The whole realm of nature had suddenly come alive. How glad she was to be able to be a part of it! The trees had burst out with beautiful new spring green dresses, and the pear tree, under whose boughs she had taken shelter, was superfluously adorned: so extravagantly in fact, that it was shedding the myriads of blossoms like snow flakes on her lap, her head and at her feet. The air was permeated with an exotic aroma of blossoming perfumes, all the while enticing swarms Of busy, buzzing bees. The child watched as the industrious creatures extracted the sweet nectar and goodness -- always in a rush. They seemed aware that winter was creeping up on them, though, at the time it was far from the girl's mind. As the sun's warm fingers gently reached through the pear limbs and stole warmly over her back her heart and mind were at rest and at peace. The wisteria vine which had climbed all over the big arbor in the back yard, was heavily laden with big, purple clumps of flowers that hung like long bunches of grapes; while the daffodils, jonquils and narcissus stood on tall slender stems, waving their brightly bonneted heads at her.

A soft, warm breeze wafted the fragrance of the opening lilac blossoms to her just as a small, nervous wren burst out in melody above her head. The wrens had returned! Her heart beat loudly and rapidly! What was it she had always felt?

The busy little creature began its arduous task of cleaning out the old nest and making way for the new. Elizabeth's Ann's eyes missed nothing. The little wren house was being prepared for at least two, possibly three, new sets of babies. Big tears coursed down her cheeks as she listened to the sweet tenor and soprano singer in the tree tops; the voice becoming more and more animated and excited.

She didn't notice anyone by her side until she heard a soft "Ps... st! Bethie! Come here!" She couldn't believe her eyes! There stood Mrs. Bronson with a beautiful big doll in front of her tenderly pleading, coaxing for the crippled child to come.

"But... but . . . Mrs. Bronson, I . . . I . . . can't walk," she exclaimed helplessly.

"Let's try. Shall we?" and the woman's voice had a new, challenging tone to it. "Now come Bethie," she coaxed, "As soon as you reach the dolly she's yours."

"I'm . . . scared," the child said feebly as she raised herself off the chair, "but I'll... try. Mother says God helps those who help themselves, so . . . here I come," and she laughed a ripple of laughter that caused the neighbor woman to weep.

"Good enough," Mrs. Bronson said softly as Beth fell softly into a small heap on the satin soft petals. "Did you hurt yourself dear?" and she tenderly picked the child up and placed her gently in the wheel-chair.

"That was kinda' fun," Elizabeth Ann laughed. "Let's try it again. I do believe I took at least one step."

"We'd better wait just a little dear," Mrs. Bronson said softly as she held tightly to the small, fair hand. "But every day we'll try -- together! You're soon going to be walking again."

"How do you know?" Beth asked innocently.

"I prayed Bethie! I just got saved in my house and I've been talking to my Lord about you now. He used you to accomplish the mission your accident was intended for; now I'm going to believe Him to heal your body just as I believed Him to save my soul," and a beautiful light shone on her face.

Day after day the two worked secretly together -- always beginning with prayer; and daily God gave strength to the frail limbs, until one sunny day as Beth was walking ten, twelve and twenty steps, mother came around the blooming forsythia bush, then, seeing her daughter walking she rushed to her and clasped her tightly to her saying loudly, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

"He saved Mrs. Bronson too, mother," the dark haired girl laughed after every one had stopped talking and praising the Lord. "You said He had a reason for this, and He did?" And she slowly walked over to the radiant looking Mrs. Bronson then, throwing her arms around her she said softly, "I love you, dear Mrs. Bronson, and I'll always be part your girl too." Then very softly she whispered, "Know what? The Lord told me I'd be walking some of these days when the wrens returned, and here I am!" She stood straight and tall just as two small' wrens burst into fervent 'Alleluias' of praise.

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Story 5

THE HAWK AND THE HEN

Ferne and Lynette sat contentedly beneath the big apple tree with Mother, as Roy and Drew climbed high into its branches pretending they were squirrels. All around them lay the pretty pink blossoms that fell lightly to the earth beneath.

"Oh, Mother," said Lynette, just feel how silky and soft these pink petals are. They feel almost like satin, don't they?"

"Yes, they do," Mother said softly as she picked a handful up and let them sift gently through her fingers to the ground, then added, "just listen to the soft buzz of the bees as they gather the nectar from the blossoms. Makes me feel kind of sleepy though," and she began to yawn.

"Oh, Mother," began Ferne, "don't go to sleep now, please!" she begged. "We want our story. Don't we, Lynette?"

"Oh, yes," answered Lynette, "You left off reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' yesterday right where little Evangeline realized she was dying and would soon be Home with Jesus. Would you read now? Please, Mother!" she asked

"All right girls," Mother said laughing, "but first we must call the little squirrel boys down to earth." Then looking up into the branches of the trees where Roy and Drew were sitting, gazing contentedly at the fleecy white clouds that skipped like lambs across the heavens, she said cheerfully, "You two little dreamers! Get your heads out of the clouds and let's go visit with Uncle Tom and Evangeline by way of Bookville, shall we?"

"Goody! Goody!" said the boys, scampering down the tree, and swinging their long legs in mid air for a brief minute, they gently dropped to the earth on an Apple Blossom Carpet; then lazily stretching their body its full length beside Mother, they said eagerly, "Well, here we are! Let's begin, shall we, Mother?" and Mother smiled understandingly at her two boys.

The children followed Uncle Tom, Mammy, and ever mischievous Topsy to the bedside of the beautiful Evangeline, and as her departing spirit blessed each one of the unfortunate slaves in deepest love and pity, and her last act of kindness was bestowed by giving one of her fair curls to each of the precious black slaves who had endeared themselves to her, they, too, were enfolded in the tenderness of the moment.

When finally her spirit departed the body and she told all she was going Home where all was peace and rest, the children began to sniffle and weep. The boys looked quickly away to the pasture land and meadows, trying to hide their tears when suddenly Drew called out excitedly, at the same instant sitting upright, "Mother, look! A big hawk's about to get one of Penny's chicks." Then he saw the wings swoop low and as Penny called and clucked all the little yellow fuzzy chicks ran quickly beneath her outstretched wings for protection -- all, that is, but one! Again Mother Hen called and pleaded, then scolded, for the errant little chick to run for shelter and protection but to no avail. Already it was too late! The fierce bill and long, sharp claws had gathered the furry ball of yellow into his strong claws and was soaring into the heavens, carrying the easy prey to some sheltered tree or woods where he could feast unmolested on the tender little morsel.

"Why didn't you stop him?" Lynette cried and looked pleadingly at Mother as she wrung her smooth, fair hands.

"Because I couldn't, honey," Mother said softly.

"But . . . but . . ." and fresh tears commenced falling down both girls cheeks as Ferne said, "but, Mother, that was Pudge my own little fuzzy Pudgy!"

"That mean old hawk!" Ray said, then feeling suddenly chivalrous, he threw back his shoulders and added, "If only I'd have had Dad's rifle! Oh, if only! I'd have let him have it and he never would have forgotten what happened to him!"

"I guess not," laughed Dale, "for the way you feel now, he'd have never remembered anything again!" and they all laughed.

Marking her book with a book marker, Mother carefully closed the book, then calling to each of the children, she said gently, "Now let's all settle down for a little, shall we? Roy, you and Dale sit over here on my left side while the girls will sit here to my right."

Immediately obeying and sitting down beside Mother, the children asked excitedly, "What is it, Mother? What is it?"

"You know the Bible says, 'The devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'"

"Yes," said Lynette, "but what does that have to do with us, and poor, poor Pudgy? She's gone!" and she buried her face in her hands.

"Just this, honey," Mother said thoughtfully, "none of us saw that hawk until it was too late; then there was nothing we could do! Simply nothing! We looked on helplessly as the bad cruel hawk carried Pudgy to her doom. But . . ." and a soberness clouded her face as she spoke, "was it all the hawk's fault?"

"Why, of course it was," Roy quickly answered. "Bad old thing!"

"Think again," Mother said. Then quickly she added, "You all heard Penny clucking, calling, and even pleading, when she saw the danger, and all the others are safe and sound beneath the little shelter out there because they not only heard, but they did something about it; they ran to Mother Hen's big outstretched wings and crawled beneath them in the shelter and they're all very much alive, all except Pudgy, she was too stubborn and wouldn't heed Penney's warnings and her woosings, and she had to pay the price with her life. Now Satan is so much like that hawk -- only much worse and he's a deceiver. He's walking about today seeking all he can devour. He's watching for your souls, children, like the hawk watched for the first chick he could easily catch, and unless you study the Holy Bible which will make you wise unto Salvation and Entire Sanctification, the devil will get your soul in the end like Pudgy was carried away by the hawk.

"Today, the Holy Spirit is wooing and pleading with your soul, and He says, 'Roy, give me your heart!' or 'Dale, you better get sanctified,' and He is telling you girls to allow Christ to come within your hearts and then all your quarreling and arguing will cease. He sees the danger that lies ahead for you, like Penny saw the danger for her chicks. When Jesus departed this earth, He sent the Holy Ghost down from the Father in Heaven, to woo, plead with, and warn us of what lies ahead, but it's up to us to decide what we're going to do. We'll either repent and confess and forsake our sins and see Jesus some day, or like Pudgy, we'll spurn the call of the Holy Ghost and say 'No' and eventually be lost forever and ever in Hell, to be tormented in the flame where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not. It's up to us to decide. I feel you dear children better decide now what you're going to do with Jesus. Are you going to help crucify Him afresh again by continuing on in your sins or will you repent just now and let Jesus come into your heart?"

There was silence for some time, then Lynette spoke:

"Mother, for a long time now the Lord's been talking to me, and I'm to blame for all our arguments, not Ferne," and weeping bitterly she said, "I want everybody here to forgive me for fussing when it's time to wash or dry the dishes. It's my wicked heart, but I'm going to get saved right now. I'm tired of this awful sin within my heart." Then turning to Ferne before she began to pray, she said, "Please, Sis, forgive me. Can you? I'm to blame!"

"No. No," and Ferne, too, was on her knees weeping. "It's I, Lynette, not you. I'm a hateful somebody but I, too, want to get really saved. Forgive me, Lynette, please do!" and as the girls arms went about each other in love, the dear Lord Jesus gloriously saved their souls and forgave all their sins.

Roy and Dale, after long hard tearful praying, finally surrendered all to God and as Dale rejoiced and shouted over a clean, pure heart of Holiness, Roy praised the Lord with a loud voice because all his sins were washed away.

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Story 6
LITTLE WHITE LIES

"Ron . . .nie, Ron . . .nie!" Peter called loudly as he took long strides to the driveway toward Ronnie's house.

"Ronnie, where are you?" whereupon he began to whistle with all his might. It was sort of a code the two playmates had with each other, three loud, short whistles, then a brief period of waiting; if it wasn't answered they knew the other wasn't home. Peter waited near a big lilac bush, then repeated his call; this time it was answered from somewhere near the Wisteria Vine and Peter quickly ran around the side of the house to the arbor where the Wisteria Vine was in full bloom. Once beneath it he looked up through the lattice work to see beautiful purple clumps of flowers hanging down like the grapes on Grandpa's farm. A soft, gentle breeze skipped playfully by, making the dark green leaves tremble and rustle with excitement.

"You goin' fishin' Ronnie?" the lanky lad asked of his chum.

"No. Not today!" came Ronnie's quick reply.

"Why Ronnie, you told me . . ." and ten year old Sandy's mouth flew open wide as Ronnie quickly interrupted her with--

"No. I'm not going fishing today Peter. Thought I'd stay around here a little bit then go help Dad on the car. It's not been running too good and Dad has it all apart trying to fix it."

"But . . . but . . . Ronnie," ejaculated Sandy, only to be cut short with a volley of conversation by her brother. Picking up Sara Jane she walked thoughtfully into the kitchen where Mother was busily engaged in pouring the hot syrupy mixture over the apple dumplings before baking them.

"Why Sandy," she began as she saw the crestfallen countenance of her youngest child, "you mustn't look so sour! It makes nasty lines on your face and you'll look old before your time. Come now and smile big and prettily for Mother." And she lovingly patted the silken braids as she said it.

"Oh, Mother!" Sandy burst out tearfully. "Ronnie's been telling lies. He just told Peter Crawford he's not going fishing, and he told me only a few minutes before Peter came that he was going," and a fresh shower of tears followed.

"Are you sure of this honey?" Mother asked sadly.

"Yes, Mother, I heard it with my own two ears. He really did say it, and it's a sin to lie; for I remember hearing you and Daddy read about all liars going to Hell where they'll burn and burn forever and ever and . . . and . . . never die," she added with a shudder.

"You are so right darling," Mother said soberly. "And we must really pray for Ronnie or he'll be lost; for no liar can enter into Heaven."

Just then a soft knock sounded on the screen door and Mother saw the full, round face of Rose Marie Blan peeking through the screen.

"Oh, hello, Rose Marie," she said smiling. "Do come in. Can't you?"

"I don't have long, Mrs. Stowe," Rose Marie said as she stepped lightly inside, "but we're having a surprise wedding shower on Rosalind this Thursday and I just wanted to invite you to come. The children will still be in school at that time."

"Thank you Rose Marie," Mrs. Stowe said. "I'll certainly be there, the good Lord willing, and try to bring Rosalind something real useful for her new home. How did you ever manage for it to be a surprise for your sister? Doesn't she even surmise?" Mrs. Stowe asked innocently.

"Surmise? I guess not! You must just know all the tricks, that's all. I just couldn't have her finding out so I told her a few little 'white lies.' No harm meant at all, and I'll fix it all up after the shower but . . . "

"But what, Rose Marie?" Mother asked bravely. "Just what would you do if death were to take you right now? No lie is white in God's sight; all lies are black and come from the devil himself, for God's Word tells us plainly that he -- Satan -- is a liar and the father of lies. So if you've lied Rose Marie, the devil must be your father. Jesus would have never told a lie and no liar can enter into Heaven. Do you feel as though the Lord would take you in the rapture if He were to return just now, and you having told lies?"

"But . . . but . . . Mrs. Stowe, you just don't understand," stuttered Rose Marie. "You make me feel like I'm... really bad.., and . . . and wicked."

"Just think it over," Mother said sweetly as she laid a tender hand upon the other woman's shoulders, then added softly, "and then obey what God tells you to do. Better for Rosalind to know if needs be and you to tell the truth, than to have her surprised and you being a liar in God's sight"

"But, Mrs. Stowe, I heard our preacher one time say he told a 'little white lie' too when it was necessary," Rose Marie defended.

"Maybe so, Rose Marie, but they be blind leaders of the blind and both shall fall into a ditch Go by God's Word, dear. Search its pages and see what Jesus has to say about the matter. The liars -- "all liars" -- He says, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not. The road to Heaven is a straight, Holy and narrow way and few there be that find it, or go in thereat. There are no white lies dear; again I repeat."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Stowe," said Rose Marie. "I'll surely fix it up right away and find a place of prayer where I can get in touch with God. I do want to make it home to Heaven. I'm so glad you told me this," and she was weeping softly as she told Mother good-bye and asked her to pray for her.

Just then Ronnie burst in with "Hey, Morn! What did Rose Marie want? Did she bring us any candy again?" Then, sensing that all was seriousness, he said with carefree unconcern:

"I'm goin' fishin'. I'll be seein' you in time for supper,"

Sandy's pretty, pink lips flew open. wide but not a word could she utter. Two salty tears rolled like big diamonds down her fair rosy cheeks as Mother said firmly:

"Ronnie, sit down here. You're not going fishing -- today, nor tomorrow, and not for at least a week."

"Oh, Mother!" he wailed forlornly. "Why not? You know how much I love to fish!"

"Yes, I do know how much you love to fish, but it's settled dear. You can't go. You told Peter a short time ago that you weren't going fishing -- you were going to help Daddy on the car -- well, since you lied . . . "

"It wasn't a lie -- not really, that is." He said blushing, "It was a . . . a . . . kinda' a . . . a . . . little 'white lie,' Mother. You see, I found a dandy new fishin' hole where the bass are really running and I didn't want anyone along. That's why I told Peter."

"So!" Mother mused softly. "Your selfishness led you to lie." "I . . . didn't., lie .', . I . . . " "Ronnie," Mother's soft voice went on. "In God's sight there is only one color of lies --they are black; black as the outer darkness itself! God makes no allowance for what you call 'white lies'; a

lie is a lie and must be confessed and put beneath the precious blood of Jesus Christ or it will damn and doom your soul. No lie -- nor liar -- can ever get into Heaven, son. Heaven is a pure place, and a clean place, and only pure and clean people in heart will ever enter there. You must repent too of your exaggerations -- that fish that you said measured twenty-two inches, but actually only measured eighteen -- must be confessed and repented of, dear. Since you're not going fishing you start on the lawn; and then the garden needs weeding and more tomato and cabbage plants must be set out, so there's lots of work."

"Oh, Mother!" Ronnie began tearfully, "I'm so sorry I lied. I'll go over to Peter's right now and begin making straight paths, then will you pray with me when I come home? I'm so sorry and I want to be saved and know that Jesus has forgiven me. I must make Heaven my home." and he was sobbing bitterly as he said it.

"Run quickly to Peter and confess your lie and sin to him and ask his forgiveness then hurry back, dear; Mother and Sandy will be waiting here on our knees by the big rocking chair," Mother said gratefully as she put a comforting arm around Ronnie's broadening shoulders.

Mother watched prayerfully as her young son walked out into the warm June sunshine. A Heavenly smile played across her face. Ronnie may even come back into the house shouting -- his heart was being prepared for Jesus to come in and take possession.

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Story 7

MR. BLUE JAY'S LESSON

"Thief I Thief!" scolded Mr. Blue Jay as Linda and Mirandy, the big rag doll with long, yellow wool braids, entered the shade of the big pine tree.

Linda loved to play "tea party" with Mirandy on the soft Dine needles, and she was especially delighted to lie down on the thick, soft carpet and listen to the wind as it whispered through the branches of the pine.

"How still and silent everything was," thought Linda. Still, except for the fussing, scolding Blue Jay who darted low toward Linda and scolded and scolded.

"Why can't you be quiet?" she asked as he darted low enough for her to touch his beautiful breast of blue.

"Mirandy doesn't fuss like you," she added, "and she's only a little girl. Why, I can hear things the old pine tree whispers when it's just Mirandy and me," Linda continued, then leaning Mirandy's limp body up against the trunk of the tree she said softly and affectionately to the much-worn doll:

"Now stay there dear! Mother's going to the store for some groceries but she'll be right back." Then placing a light kiss on the top of her soft, yellow head Linda walked out from beneath the spreading branches of the pine to a clump of azaleas that grew a short distance away in the big back yard of the plantation.

After some conversation to the store owner in the azalea bush Linda returned to the pine, calling softly:

"Mother's back, Mirandy! Now that wasn't long! Was it?" and just as she entered the shade of the lowest branch she saw Mirandy on her face with Mr. Blue Jay making low, swooping attacks upon her poor head. He flogged Mirandy's soft wooly head with his wings and pecked at her black button nose until Linda went screaming to her rescue.

"You bad, bad bird!" she scolded as she clutched Mirandy tightly to her bosom, at the same time receiving a sound flogging on the top of her soft black, curly head from Mr. Blue Jay.

"Why, you . . . you . . . scratched me," cried Linda as she ran weeping into the kitchen to Mother.

"Why Linda, what ever has happened to you?" asked Mother when she saw the terrified child and her bedraggled-looking Mirandy.

"Did you fall?" continued Mother, "or... or..."

"No! No!" cried Linda. "If only I had fallen! But it's much worse, than that. Old Mr. Blue Jay won't even allow me to play tea party under the big pine tree anymore. He . . . he . . . really hurt Mirandy. Just look at her pretty black button nose! Why Mother, he's all but pecked it off her," and the little girl began crying afresh and anew.

Mother put aside the dust mop she was using and gathering the weeping child into her arms; then gently carrying her over to the big, old-fashioned rocker that always remained near the sunny south window of the kitchen Mother again questioned Linda.

"You say the Blue Jay pecked Mirandy?"

"Yes, Mother, and he really flogged my head too," and the little girl reached up to touch the sensitive spot.

"Well now, that's too bad"" Mother began as she planted a soft kiss on the top of her little girl's head and one on Mirandy's badly pecked out nose.

"We'll fix Mirandy's nose back all right but Linda, I guess you'll have to wait a few days before you play tea party under the old. pine tree again. You see dear, the Blue Jays have a nest full of tiny blue feathered babies and he's protecting his family, that's all?" "Well, he didn't need to peck poor Mirandy," continued Linda drawing the old worn doll tightly to her. "Mirandy wouldn't hurt anybody."

"No indeed she wouldn't," said Mother, "but Mr. Blue Jay was just protecting his family from any possible danger and, in fact, he'd give his life for his family if it were necessary."

For some time there was silence except for the low creaking of the rocking chair as Mother rocked Linda and Mirandy, then Mother spoke up again and said:

"Linda, that just reminds me of what the book of Ephesians says in chapter 5, verses 25 through 27. It tells us in there that husbands should love their wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word,

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"Now God has given Mr. Blue Jay instinct which teaches him when there's danger around and many humans kill birds you know, Linda -- so Mr. Blue Jay is willing to fight for the protection of his mate and their babies. Nearly two thousand years ago God saw many millions of souls were headed toward Hell and wrong doing so He sent His only beloved and begotten Son Jesus, into the world. This blessed Son of God -- Jesus -- willingly gave His life to save us from all our sins and from an awful Hell. He took upon Himself our sin, Linda, and our shame, and He went to the cross willingly, just as Ephesians says 'Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.' His was love, honey, just like the Blue Jay's is love; but Christ's love was such that no pen can record properly and no tongue here on earth can exactly describe. Because of His great love He came down to earth and become sin for us though He Himself never knew sin, but was without sin, and then when Satan must have thought he could drag the most of the world to Hell with him, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour gave His own precious body on the cruel, cruel cross and willingly died in our place so we could be free from all sin. Isn't this wonderful, honey?" Mother asked Linda as the tears flowed freely down her soft, pink cheeks.

"Oh yes, Mother," Linda said reverently, "and, Mother, I'd like to get on my knees again and thank Jesus for saving my soul."

"Of course, dear. We'll do that just now," and Mother and Linda knelt side by side at the old rocker and thanked the Lord Jesus for giving His life for all mankind. Then Mother heard Linda say affectionately:

"I really do love you, Jesus! You saved my soul and made me very happy within, and . . . and . . . Jesus . . . please take care of Mr. and Mrs. Blue Jay's little family. Mirandy and I'll play somewhere else while you help their babies to grow."

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Story 8
INFLUENCE

The day was warm and sunny. Robbie pulled his old straw hat farther down over his forehead to shield his eyes from the sun's bright glare. He sat tall and erect on the hard wagon seat, the reins held loosely between his chubby fingers. Pet and Bill, the big white, broad backed horses kept a slow even pace, the clatter of their newly shod feet making a melodic 'clip, clop, clip clop' sound. Robbie cast a warm, affectionate glance at his grandfather whose thoughts seemed to be roving the fields like the many pretty butterflies and rabbits. He noticed a trace of a smile play across Grandpa's kind face as he carelessly chewed on the end of a straw.

"A penny for your thoughts, Grandpa," Robbie finally ventured.

"My thoughts! Ah! Yes! Now let me see," the soft spoken old man said gently.

"First, I was thinking how great my God is to make these beautiful fields of waving grain, the velvety green hayfields and the many brightly colored butterflies. Then I was just musing to myself about you Robbie."

"Me, Grandpa?" asked the lad. "Yes, you son. If you keep going like you are now you'll make a great preacher of Holiness some day."

"But, Grandpa," began Robbie, "I... I... really don't intend to be a preacher I want to be a farmer like you, and have big, fine horses to work with and a wagon full of grain and...."

"Maybe so," Grandpa quickly interrupted. "But we must always be subject to God's will for our life. Don't get too many plans and ambitions of your own but ask the Lord to lead you and direct your life. He may have something different and greater for you. Our life is not our own, son. We've been bought with a very dear price -- even the shed blood of Jesus Christ -- and we must be as pliable in His hands as was that clay you were playing with this morning. You made marbles, walls and bridges out of it, Robbie. Maybe the Lord will make you a farmer but maybe He needs you to be a real old-fashioned Holiness preacher too when you're grown."

"I'll be anything He wants me to be," said the sober faced boy as he looked lovingly at the two big horses he was driving.

"That's the spirit! Now look to your right and you'll see the stream that turns Mr. Miller's big water wheel at the mill," said Grandpa.

Robbie cast a long, wistful glance in the direction of the stream and as they rode up beside it he pulled gently on the lines and said "Whoa," whereupon the obedient and well trained horses came to an abrupt halt.

"May I listen for just a little bit, Grandpa?" he asked.

"Of course you may. In fact, we'll both listen. Seems to make you realize just how big a God we're serving when you get out close to nature," the elderly man said hoarsely as a tear of gratitude flowed carelessly down his sun tanned cheek and dropped lightly to his callused hands.

For a long time the pair watched and listened as the silvery ribbon of stream gurgled, laughed and rippled in and out among the rocks. A mountain trout did a graceful performance as it fed on the flies and gnats that flew just above the water. A huge dragon fly darted here and there like some mechanical toy, then finally came to rest on top of one of the gray rocks that stood above the water.

"He looks for the world like a little airplane. Doesn't he, Grandpa?" Robbie asked as he pointed to the dragon fly on the rock.

"Yes, he does," Grandpa replied. "He'll not harm you so you've nothing to fear. This is so peaceful! I love to listen to the gurgling of the brooks and streams. The Lord made all things good and beautiful until sin entered this world by way of Eve disobeying God, then things changed quite a bit."

"I wish Adam and Eve would never have sinned. Robbie said thoughtfully as he watched a piece of driftwood float swiftly down stream toward the waterfall.

"It would be quite a different story if sin hadn't entered into the picture, my son," Grandpa said tearfully. "And now perhaps we'd best be on our way or the mill will be crowded with farmers wanting their grain ground."

The last mile or two seemed to Robbie to be the most beautiful stretch of road he had ever been over. On either side of the narrow, dusty road grew towering pine, giant fir and oak trees. The air was cool and pine scented and he heard the melodic song of the wood thrush as he sang to his mate somewhere off to his left, while the stream's gentle murmuring gradually grew louder and louder as it went roaring over the falls near the old mill.

Grandpa tied the stately team of horses to the hitching post near the big doorway of the mill. Together the Miller and Grandpa unloaded the coarse, brown sacks of golden wheat and corn. As Robbie entered the dusty mill, a sweet, tantalizing fragrance lingered everywhere.

"What is it, Grandpa? That good smell in here?" he asked.

"That's the sweet smell of the crushed and ground grain, dear child," Grandpa said as he placed a loving hand on the slim shoulders of the lad.

"You know, son," he continued, "the grain must be crushed, then ground fine before you notice that wonderful odor. It works the same in our life. There's full of sweetness within us but many times it takes sickness, sorrow and heartaches to crush us and bring out the sweetness that's within our life. The dear Lord Jesus only allows enough of these crushings to bring out the sweetest fragrances that are within us."

Robbie thought seriously for a long while, then in a barely audible voice he said hoarsely, "I see, Grandpa! I want my life to be like that."

He watched eagerly as the Miller emptied the bags of golden grain into a big hopper, then pulled the switch on a machine which ground the grain into flour for Grandma's bread and cakes. He had just gone outside to stand in the doorway where he could watch the giant paddles on the water wheel as it caught the laughing, silvery water that spilled loudly over the falls and turned the mammoth wheel 'round and 'round when he heard a loud rattle, clatter, and noise. Coming 'round the bend in the road he saw the old community fire truck. The men riding it shouted:

"Fire! Fire! Fire over at Kuppy's farm! Help! Fire!"

The Miller and all the farmers heard the familiar loud clanging and banging, then the shouting, and everyone rushed to the doorway -- pushing, shoving and bumping into each other. The Miller's clothes and hair, his face and hands, were all covered with white flour dust and Robbie soon found all the farmers and himself covered with white flour dust as the Miller pushed his way through the crowd of men to the front of the group shouting:

"Assemble yourselves. We must all go to Kuppy's to help fight that fire! We will leave things in charge of Grandfather Cool here and his young grandson. Turn off the main machinery," he ordered, "and tell the farmers as they come what's happened. I'll be back as soon as I can." Then slapping Robbie and Grandpa an understanding affectionate slap on the shoulders he raced after the already receding farmers, his dust showering Robbie's small form and leaving him with two bright eyes looking out upon his white hands and clothes.

"Grandpa! Look!" Robbie began. "I'm dusty like the Miller, and my eyes feel pasty and funny. Look at my clothes! They're all dusty and white too! When he slapped me his dust flew all over me." Then turning suddenly to Grandpa he burst out laughing--

"Grandpa! Grandpa I W h y . . . you're a real miller today! You're all dusty and white too. You're full of the Miller's flour dust. Wait until Grandma sees us!" and he laughed so hard the tears rolled down his dusty cheeks making white flour rivers. Grandpa walked calmly over to the main switch and pulled it, putting off all the machinery. Putting a big, gentle hand on his grandson's shoulders, he said:

"Robbie, let's sit on the big flat rock over near the water wheel. I have something to say to you."

Together the pair seated themselves on the big, gray rock where they had a commanding view of the valley at the bottom of the hill.

The old log mill to their left stood stoutly and firmly -- constructed a century or more ago of stout logs and beams. A building that, could it speak, would have told of great revivals had in the small country church, and of the sorrows and joys of hard working men.

The big water wheel made a continuous 'splash, splash, splash, splash' sound as it turned 'round and 'round. A soft mist, coming from the huge wheel sprayed gently over Robbie and Grandpa as they sat watching and listening. After some time of silence, Grandpa said:

"Robbie, you're a great and fine grandson! I'm really glad you're Grandma's and mine! Your life is much like the miller's, though, son."

"My . . . life? Like . . . his?" Robbie asked slowly and thoughtfully. "How, Grandpa? I'm not a miller, I . . . I'd like to be a farmer, but will be anything Jesus wants me to be," he said again.

"The Bible says 'No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.' In other words, we're all influencing someone whether we're aware of it or not; someone is watching you, Robbie. Your life is either being a blessing or a curse to someone, and, like the miller who covered you over with flour in his haste and excitement, you are influencing someone by your life, your behavior and your example. The miller didn't realize he was dusting all of us with flour when he touched us; all he thought of was helping Mr. Kuppy out, and, in his haste he left a lot of his dust upon our clothes: Now this will wash out in Grandma's washing machine, but your influence upon others will never be able to be washed out. That's why it pays to live always for Jesus and to keep your heart and life clean and pure. You'll be able to influence someone -- maybe many souls -- to get saved and make it home to Heaven. If you live for the devil and sin, you'll take many with you, by your life, to. Hell. Yes, son," the white-haired man said soberly, "this flour dust will wash out clean in the washing machine, but our influence, never! never! Let's be determined always to lead others toward Heaven and Jesus by being a godly influence and example."

"Oh! Grandpa," Robbie said misty-eyed, "you make me feel so much like a soldier."

"We're all soldiers in Jesus' great Army, son," said Grandpa, "and may God always make you a great influential soldier for Him."

"I will, Grandpa! I promise you, I will! I want to be a soul winner for Jesus."

Robbie and Grandpa walked silently away from the water wheel to the mill -- the sun glistening brightly upon the silvery haired man and a thoughtful, sun tanned youth. The latter had a look of fixed determination in his eyes. His influence would be as stout and enduring for Christ as was the old, antique mill!

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Story 9

PASSING THE TEST

Mindy sullenly sat down under the big magnolia tree with Clarissa, the well worn rag doll, by her side. She listened to the merry voices of her brothers and sisters as they floated to her from

the old spring house, hating herself for being so touchy and easily offended. Maybe poor old dead Joe was right!

The thought of Joe sent the tears rolling down her pretty plump cheeks. No one loved old black Joe better than Mindy! Ever since she could remember, Joe and Mammy Josey were her bosom friends. They not only worked hard on the plantation with Mindy's father and older brothers, but they belonged.

Long after old Joe was smitten with the lingering illness that finally killed him, mother and father Hawthorne eared for the old servant as tenderly as any of their children. Joe and Josey were different! They loved the Lord and though, many times when she had been sullen, sulky and cross, Mindy ran to Joe or Josey for comfort, she received a tender, loving but pointed, reprimand:

"You'se too sensitive dear chile," old Joe had said, "Now honey, if you gets what Mammy Josey and toe's got, things'll be dif'runt. Yes'm, you needs more o' Jesus, Mindy. He'll make yo' sweet sho' 'nuff and you'll not be fo 'evah' poutin' and sulkin'," and the old couple gently folded the child to their bosom.

"Why did you ever have to take my black Mammy Josey and old black Joe?" Mindy sobbed to the Lord, then, laying her black curly head on Clarissa's soft stomach she wept bitterly -- lonesome for old Joe and Josey.

"Ya' still poutin'?" called a voice from the edge of the magnolia tree, and a shiny black face was soon beside Mindy, looking down into her tear stained eyes as he continued:

"Yo' needs to get 'ligion like old Joe and Mammy Josey had a'fore yo' passes de test Mindy. Ah haint nev'ah passed de test mahself yet, but I'se goin' to. Yassuh! I'se goin' to fool dem brudders and sistahs o' yourn, and get de ole time 'ligion like Joe had," and a big salty tear rolled down his cheek at mention of Joe.

"Go 'way Jeremiah," Mindy said kindly to her utter amazement and surprise, "I want to think."

"Jes' think, not pout?" Jeremiah asked innocently.

"Yes, think, Jeremiah. I'm going to get saved exactly like old Joe and Josey and show those nasty brothers of mine that I do have the real thing," Mindy said defiantly.

"Yo' gots to get 'ligion in yo' heart Mindy, else if yo' gets it in yo' head it jes' haint gonna' work ag'in. Yo' gets it de way God want yo' to have it," and a far away look came over the colored boy's face as he said it.

"You sound like a preacher, Jeremiah, you really do," Mindy said as she sat upright and looked squarely at the small boy before her. "Why Jeremiah, God may be wanting you to be a preacher and..., maybe..., you'll tatke Old Joe and Mammy Josey's place to help win your people to Jesus."

"De Lawd be praised," Jeremiah said, "But firs', I gots to get de ole time 'ligion an' pass de test. Dem brudders o' yourn sho' do test yo', and Mindy, dey knows who got de Saviour. Yo' Mommie and Poppa has de' real thing; yassuh! Dey's been tested and tried and my Poppa, he say, 'dem Hawthornes sho' 'nuff has de old time 'ligion. Dey's sweet, kind, lovin' an' good like Jesus.' Mindy, I'se goin' to de cotton patch all by mahself an' I'se goin' to pray clear thru'," and he vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, big tears of contrition rolling down his chocolatey cheeks.

For a long time after the serious minded Jeremiah was gone, Mindy sat thinking -- pondering all the things she had just heard and turning them over in her mind, then, taking Clarissa by her long, limber arm she raced into the big white house. Walking ever so softly so as not to awaken baby Anna, she hurried to the bedroom where she picked up the Bible old black Joe had given her just as his spirit was departing. Lovingly and tenderly she pressed it to her bosom as she ran down the porch steps to the pecan grove.

She found a large pecan tree with branches that stretched long and leafy toward the ground then, settling on a thick clump of grass beneath its sheltering boughs she began reading in the 5th chapter of Galatians. When she came to the last part of the 13th verse she swallowed hard, realizing how miserably she had failed -- "But by love serve one another" it read. She couldn't even endure a few testings let alone serving those who were her constant trial. Her heart smote her in condemnation and, as she continued reading about the works of the flesh and then the marvelous fruit of the spirit in such glorious contrast her soul had an intense hunger after God.

She remembered reading what John said, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Yes, her heart was full of condemnation; for while she had been a professor of the Lord she knew Him not. True enough, she had read His Word every day and even said prayers to Him, but actually, she had never really and truly prayed until she had touched God. She had tried so hard to be impressionable! How sinful she saw it all was and so full of hypocrisy! The tears began flowing freely and praying was easy as the Lord sweetly rent the skies and came down to the big pecan tree and the hot cotton patch and saved Mindy and chocolatey Jeremiah.

The hot summer days slipped lazily by when one day Danny began his teasing and testing. Instead of pouting and sulking as she usually did, Mindy said not a word but smiled sweetly instead. It so baffled the brother that he began stuttering and stammering, "What's the matter with you and Jeremiah, sis? Why a fellow can't even have fun around here anymore. You never get mad nor pout..., and..., and..., sulk and"

"No, Danny," Mindy interrupted, "and you won't either if you get saved and sanctified. This time He is living in my heart -- not a dry, unworkable profession in my head -- but deep within my heart there's a hidden peace and love. Yes, Danny, I am different because He abides. I had to dig deeper than any thing I thought I had, and you must too if you ever intend to see Heaven." Just then Mindy heard a familiar voice calling from the big magnolia tree.

"Coming Jeremiah," she called through the open window and, kissing mother on her soft rosy 'cheek she tenderly picked up the Cherished Bible and ran to the tree.

"De Lawd be praised, Mindy," the colored boy said joyfully. "Dis am gettin' bettah all de time! Jes' today dat big brudder of yourn, he say, 'Jeremiah, wha'ssa mattah wid yo' and Mindy? Yo's so dif'runt; can't nevah git yo' and Mindy mad no mo'," and a big grin enveloped his entire face as he continued, "Ah believes we'se passed de test sho' 'nuff," and he held his stomach as he shook convulsively with laughter.

"Let's just thank the Lord Jeremiah. After all, He alone can keep us," Mindy said humbly, then added thoughtfully, "Let's see; we were in II Timothy weren't we? If you're ever going to be a preacher Jeremiah Johnson," she said firmly, "You're going to have to study real hard. Let's go over yesterday's lesson, shall we?" and all became serious beneath the big magnolia tree.

High overhead a mocking bird lifted his voice in sweetest song as the Bible reading lesson continued.

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Story 10 CRACKING WALNUTS

"Grandpa! Grandpa! Where are you?" William called as he ran down the rose bordered pathway to the big stone well, his feet shuffling noisily through the thick carpet of red and gold colored leaves.

"Right here, Sonny. I'm right here," the white haired old gentleman said feebly as he continued his nut cracking on the topmost stone of the big outside fireplace where the heavy black iron kettles were hung for butchering day.

"What you doing?" the lad asked.

"Crackin' nuts as you can plainly see," Grandpa chuckled.

"Those old hard walnuts?" William asked. "Why mother never even hulls ours let alone cracks them. They're too hard to crack and too nasty to get out." And the boy sat on the big stone wall watching eagerly, his long lanky legs crossed in front of him.

For a long time neither spoke. The air was laden with the smell of fall. A purple haze hung heavily over the valley as the smoke from a dozen leaf fires ascended in a sleepy, lazy way heavenward. William watched a busy, bushy tailed gray squirrel make his way noiselessly along the old zig-zag rail fence that joined hard to the mountain, his jaws protruding like mumps as they held the thick coarse nuts in them. He saw his winter storehouse and where the industrious little animal had stacked away his loot. Profound silence reigned, except for the methodical ring of the

hammer and the gentle dropping of the leaves. A wonderful feeling enveloped the boy's being and he felt like he wanted to always remain right there by grandpa, near the little musical creek, the old well and the big open, stone fireplace.

"I never want to grow big." He almost whispered to grandpa.

"Why, Sonny," the sweet old man said tenderly as he lay a loving hand on the boy's knee, "Twouldn't be natural. No sir! God made you a boy so He could make you a man."

"But grandpa, I want to always stay little so's I can stay real close to you." And he blushed lightly as he said it.

"That's fine Sonny," the old man said as he straightened his aging form and stood erect. "You may always stay close to grandma and me but God has made you to grow big if you're normal and healthy. If you didn't grow we'd be worried about you -- right smart too -- and we'd try to find out why you aren't growing." And he laughed as he picked up the hammer and began cracking more walnuts. Again everything was silent with fall and William settled back to wishful thinking and idle daydreaming.

"You like to do that grandpa?" he asked after awhile.

"Kinda' do, Sonny," Grandpa replied.

"But they're so hard to get out," the lad affirmed.

"Maybe not as hard as everybody thinks," Grandpa mused. "You see William, there's a right way to do it, and then the goodies come out easily. Then too, there is a wrong way!"

"Really grandpa! How?" The eager boy asked as he leaped to the ground beside grandpa.

"Well, in the first place," Grandpa mused as he extracted a big, fat walnut, "When anything's as good as these nuts are it's worth working for. Kinda' like God's Word: It's full of good things, but only those who are diligent enough to search for the hidden good things, find them. The majority of people are lazy and don't take time to search for the good things in God's Word, and they never know all the wonderful things that are contained therein. Just as it takes time to get these choice nuts -- time, patience and effort -- it's the same with the good things in God's Word: we must search for them or we'll never find them. These nuts aren't as hard to crack as many folks think they are; it's knowing how to crack them. See!" -- and he gently but firmly hit another fat walnut on its pointed head, popping it open gently, in so doing several of the fat, crisp goodies dropped out.

"Why grandpa," William gasped in astonishment, "Your nuts stay big and whole, not squashed and crushed with walnut shells all through them. How do you do it?"

"Like I told you, Sonny," the old man began, "It's in knowing how to do it. The right way! See!" And he set a big, plump nut down, its pointy head straight up toward the sky. "Now," he

laughed as he gave it several sound - cracks, holding the nut tightly between his thumb and forefinger, "See how nicely they come out? all in quarters. It's the way you go about it that determines whether you extract them in quarters or whether you crush them," and he held a crisp, fat nut meat for William to eat. "Eat it, he said, "there's lots more here. This is the second quart I've picked out for your grandmother."

"Grandpa," William began tearfully, "You know how Michael feels toward me. I... I . . . was just thinking Do you suppose I was cracking the nut the wrong way?"

A puzzled look enveloped the aging man's face but in a short while he brightened up and, as the tears began flowing he said reverently, "Could be, Sonny! Could be! Why don't you try the right way now?"

"That's just what I'm going to do grandpa," the lad said as he swung his body around and headed for the neighboring house and Michael.

An hour slipped by, still the bent, gray-haired form continued his nut cracking.

Just as the sun was being tucked into the purple blue cradle of the western sky and evening pulled her star studded drapes, a soft shuffle of feet warned grandpa of the approaching lad. Silently and thoughtfully he stood by the beloved form, then, lovingly throwing his boyish arms around grandfather's body he said tearfully:

"It worked, grandpa! It worked! I told Michael that I was to blame! I asked him to forgive me and told him I was sorry for the misunderstanding we had; and grandpa, you know what?" and a far away look stole over his young face as he gazed intently toward the heavens, "I prayed with Michael. Jesus saved him and forgave me of all my sins too. I thought I was saved but my attitudes and spirit weren't like those of a saved boy -- they weren't like yours grandpa. You always stay so sweet and kind and good, and . . . and . . . like . . . Jesus."

"'Tis Jesus alone who makes one good, Sonny," and a tear rolled down the rosy cheek as he gathered the small hand in his own big one and started up the pathway, the stars sprinkling star gems all around their feet.

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Story 11

HOME FOR THANKSGIVING

Manuelita poked his walking stick more deeply into the soft, powdery clay dirt as he wound in and out along the narrow dusty trail that led homeward.

Already he had left the dry creek bed and sprawling valley far behind and was climbing due upward to the red brown flat mesa and home. His heart beat wildly at the thought of home.

Thanksgiving was just one day away and since he and his mother and father had become Christians he went to a 'school for learning' many miles away from home. Only at Thanksgiving and Christmas did he get home and then he had to walk a good day's journey.

The air was fresh and crisp as the lad climbed ever upward, over jagged rocks and through mesquite, sage and cacti, but the small brown boy seemed not to notice the biting of the wind as every vein, muscle and sinew were warm, vibrant and alive from the rugged climb. A small, impish prairie dog stuck his round head out of his hole to view the whistling lad, then vanished beneath the brown, parched earth in time for Manuelita to see him.

"You've nothing to fear," the boy laughed merrily down into the small opening. "I'm your friend," and he went whistling on his way, realizing his hairy friend wouldn't soon reappear.

In the pathway just ahead of him a large jack rabbit sat, momentarily twitching his oversized ears, then darted with lightning speed away into the dense sage brush.

"You need not fear me," Manuelita coaxed as he stooped low and looked into the dense brush. "I'm a big part of this great, wide, wonderful land too and we must be friends." The jack rabbit, however, was far, far away and had no mind to linger long with strange intruders.

The sun's last dying rays splashed gold paint all over the valley below and recklessly spilled purples, blues, and reds on the rocks all around him. This was the time of day he liked best of all. When God came down and painted the desert, mesas and plateaus with careless unconcern. He stood for a long while, watching as the great ball of fire slowly descended the Wapotomie Mountains and the canyon below him became as a great secret, sealed-in cave totally enshrouded in darkness.

As he began the steep climb upward and was almost at the summit of the path where he would reach the mesa, something cold stung at his face. He reached up to brush over the place where it had hit him when a great deluge followed. Snow and sleet! He must hurry or he'd never make it before the moon had gone halfway across the heavens. He quickened his pace but the blinding storm made it impossible for him to go on. Frantically he searched for the big rock he knew stood at the top of the pathway but to no avail. The sleet was stinging his cheeks and biting bitterly at his bare, unmittened hands and suddenly he was aware of the fact that he was lost. He could not see the narrow pathway which had already become deeply covered with snow and ice and every bush and small tree looked alike. What should he do? Quickly he decided what to do, then falling to his knees he began praying. Many precious promises flooded his mind as he knelt there but one seemed unusually comforting -- "He shall give his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in, all thy ways" That was it! He must believe God and trust Him to somehow get him to the rock and to shelter! Rising to his feet he set out, not knowing where he was going but having perfect confidence that the Lord would lead him rightly. Seldom ever did they have snow but Manuelita, knowing the terror and devastation of the freak snow storms, sought the shelter of the rock as his father had lovingly taught his children. How thankful he was that Father and Mother had turned from their false religion to the Christian's religion! He / had something way down, deep inside his young heart that gave him a peace and inward rest even while the storm was raging. Jesus was his constant companion and loving Guide and he knew he had nothing to fear. Only a

few years back he would have been crying and praying to the dead stone god but not anymore! He had found Jesus, the Christ; the Saviour of the world; his heart was at rest and at peace.

What if he didn't get home for Thanksgiving! The thought filled his young heart with sudden yearning for he knew that small Miguel and big brother Pedro would all be waiting for him in the small village of San Raphael. He knew, too, that Mother would have a young pig stuffed and roasting over a big open fire outside, along with lots of fried beans, hominy, tostadoes, tacos, tamales and tortillias. The thought of food sent hunger pains through his stomach and his legs were weakening from slipping and sliding so much on the ice and snow: Suddenly he saw a large object' in front of him and, reaching out, he lovingly touched it. The rock! At last! The Lord had led him to the rock! He lowered his body as he crawled around its icy side, trying to find the small opening which would admit him, giving him protection from the icy wind, snow and sleet, as well as shelter for the night. By morning the storm would undoubtedly have passed over.

He crawled into the narrow passageway which widened out considerably after having entered a small distance and, thankful for a dry, sheltered spot, lay down to rest. Suppose the storm was raging on their beautiful mesa too and Father set out to find him! The thought filled his heart with great fear for he knew how many lives were lost in these freak storms. At last, from sheer exhaustion, he fell asleep, thankful for his warm buckskin jacket.

Sometime during the early morning hours he was awakened by the cry of a lone coyote outside the rock. He sat upright and peered out into the night. The storm had passed by, leaving behind it a glistening, shimmering mantle of ermine all over the earth. A beautiful moon rode lazily over the sky and Manuelita heard voices; suddenly a small, gray animal darted into the cave and bounded up on his lap, yapping joyously.

"Wolf! Wolf! Where'd you come from," Manuelita asked, hugging the animal fondly.

"He's in there," Father's voice said, "for Wolf went in."

"Father!" the young boy said, rushing out of the big rock with Wolf, the pet coyote, at his heels.

"Thanks be unto God! You're safe! 'Twas quite a storm, son," and Mr. Figurea clasped his son tightly to him.

"The Lord led me to the rock and to safety, Father," Manuelita said joyfully.

"Just as He became our Spiritual Rock in a shelter from the approaching storm that is soon to break upon this earth. He is good! Bless His Name!" and the tears began rolling down the older man's face.

"Let us go home, son. Mother will be waiting and have some hot tacos for you." "I'll have my Thanksgiving dinner after all!" Manuelita said dreamily as he started upward with his father and Pedro. The moon seemed to be throwing sparkly gems all about them as the mesa came into view and Manuelita's feet seemed to glide across it.

"Thank you, Lord, for Thy Angel," he whispered softly upward,

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Story 12

THE GUIDING STAR

Samuel and David huddled closely together, then pulling their loose flowing robes more tightly about their slender bodies they settled down for the night's vigil over their father's sheep, their shepherd's staff dose by their side.

The night was crisp and cool; every now and then a brisk east wind raced by, whipping at their robes and making the long naked branches of the trees to tremble violently. The night had a thousand eyes, watching and shimmering at them from above, and was filled with sad, lonesome, and strange sounds. The sheep were restless, and, though bedded down for the night had difficulty in peacefully settling as in other nights. The lad's keen sensibilities noted all this, and, unconsciously they became immediately alert, sitting erect and straining their hearing for any sound of imminent danger.

Far, far to their right they heard the mournful call of a lone Coyote. A chuckle escaped Samuel's young lips for he realized what cowards they were.

As the young shepherds began their second attempt at settling down a mournful cry was wafted by the wind to their listening ears. For a long while neither moved or spoke -- too intent upon listening and trying to distinguish the sound they had just heard. After a long while David, though trying to be brave, spoke with trembling voice:

"It.. kinda' . . . sounded . . . like . . . the hungry wolf . pack." And a shiver raced up and down his spine like electric shocks.

"No David," the older brother said thoughtfully, "It's not a wolf pack, else the sheep would be in real confusion and turmoil; but I don't know what it was." And he settled back to serious thought.

"Maybe... maybe.., a hyena, or . . . or . . . a panther," the young lad said, edging more closely to his brother's side.

"Now, now David," Samuel said tenderly, "Have no fear. Too long I've cared for, and lived with, father's sheep I understand their every move and reaction. 'Tis true, something strange is making them restless, but have no fear of wolves, panthers and hyenas: three times our God helped me to slay those wild beasts with this very shepherd's staff, and He'll help us tonight if needs be. Remember what father told us to do when fears possessed us?"

"Yes, Samuel," the young lad said, trustingly looking upward.

"Shall we quote it together then?" Samuel asked.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee," both lads quoted from David's 56th Psalm.

"Now, shall we trust Him?" Samuel challenged. "I learned so many valuable lessons by just being alone with God and father's sheep, David. I'm most eager that you learn too. If you'll trust the Lord Jehovah now, in this, He'll put you to a larger test of confidence and trust some day. The Lord, under Whose wings we have come to abide, will defend and deliver us."

"Oh Samuel! I do want to be like you -- so strong, chivalrous and brave, and . . . and . . . so much like Jesus," David said.

"Not like I am brother," Samuel said tenderly, "But like Jesus! Strive hard to be like He is; not a brother of flesh and blood like yourself." And he lovingly patted the shoulder of his young brother.

For a long time the two sat, watching the stars as they twinkled and shimmered in the vast expanse of heaven and listening to the soft breathing of the sheep. A good, warm feeling overwhelmed their being as each realized that he was a part of God's great universe. A shooting star plummeted earthward in fiery brilliance then burned out as quickly as it had appeared. The lone coyote continued his baying at the moon and was answered by a second, far, far away.

Samuel suddenly sat upright, resting his shepherd's staff over his knee when again the faint cry was heard: this time more clearly and more distinctly.

"It's a lamb, David! That's what it is!" and the faithful youth was on his feet, straining to hear from whence came the sound.

"But Samuel," the younger lad said thoughtfully, "We counted father's sheep and you said they were all here."

"I know David! I know! 'Tis none of father's sheep, but it it... could ... be Uncle Nathan's."

"But Samuel," David continued slowly, "He . . . hates Father . . . since he . . . became a Christian ... and.., got saved. He's angry at all of us for . . . turning from our faith to the Christian's religion."

"'Tis true David! Everything you say is true; but we cannot, we must not, take this attitude and let that helpless little creature be rent and torn by the wild beasts. You remain here by the flock while I go in search of the lost creature."

"I'm . . . I'm... just a wee bit scared, I guess; but I'll stay," David said bravely. "You'll not be long, I hope."

"Be brave, my brother," Samuel encouraged. "'Tis the times you are alone that you grow as a giant for God. Surely He will care for you as He has for me."

Suddenly David exclaimed, "Samuel, Samuel, look! Yonder Star! How bright it is! See! and it is moving!"

"God be praised!" Samuel began as he clapped his hands for joy. "'Tis like the star the wise men saw which led them to the Christ child."

"Go Samuel," David urged. "God will take care of me. He has sent His star to us for a purpose. I'm no longer afraid; I sense an Unseen Presence with me."

"Fine lad," Samuel said, patting his brother's slender shoulder, then disappearing into the night.

For a long time Samuel walked, stopping every now and then to listen for the soft bleating. He heard its faint cry getting louder and louder then, coming into dense growth of thicket he plunged recklessly into the brush. The thorns and briars tore at his robe and shredded it, still he continued until, at his feet he heard the pitiful cry. He stooped low and gathered the bleeding creature into his strong arms then carefully, lovingly, carried it out of the thicket and briar patch.

Keeping his eyes upon the star he journeyed on until he came to a creek bed and, by the soft, muffled breathing he knew he had been led to Uncle Nathan's flock of sheep. Should he search for the elderly man or just place the lamb in the flock and be on his way, he wondered, when, like a bolt of lightning, something hit him, striking him on the shoulder. He fell to the ground and the star shone in such brilliance until Samuel's young face was illuminated by its glow. Then, seeing it was his brother's son, Nathan began speaking, harshly at first, but melting more and more under the illuminated face before him.

"Samuel! What brings you here?" he asked crossly. Then, seeing the bleeding lamb cradled softly in Samuel's good strong arm he said brokenly,:

"Forgive me son! Forgive me! 'Tis my own lost lamb you've brought and I have so ill treated you."

"'Tis quite all right Uncle Nathan," Samuel began. "Look! Just look at the Star! 'Tis the same star as led the wise men to the stable where the Lord Jesus Christ was born. See it? It has guided me to you tonight. Can't you believe and accept this, Uncle Nathan? Father loves you and has not ceased praying for you since he got converted and became a Christian."

The old man, with head bowed and tears flowing, said never a word as Samuel continued.

"He is a different man, Uncle Nathan. Even you must admit that; for what the law couldn't do for father grace did. He no longer lies and he made full restitution for those two cows he took

from you -- he restored you sevenfold. That is more than any of your immediate acquaintance have done. He loves you and...."

"Stop it! Stop it!" the elderly man said, raising his shepherd's staff. "Yes, yes! All the things you say are true. I want what our father has. I must have it! His is such a perpetual peace and joy since he has become a believer and a Christian -- even through adversities and times of extreme testings! But how can I find it? I've been a wicked old man and haven't had anything to do with my brother Jacob, your father, for four years. Yet I've watched him Samuel -- and your mother Lois -- she too has the joy your father has."

"And all their children too," Samuel said reverently. "It's wonderful Uncle Nathan, simply wonderful! To know we have passed from death unto life through Jesus Christ and His precious shed blood! You too may have Him. Confess and forsake all your sins and ask this despised, rejected Christ to save you."

"I want Him, son. More than I want another morsel of food," the old man said brokenly.

"Shall we pray then and tell Him all about it?" Samuel asked. Not until he felt a gentle nuzzle on his arm did Samuel realize he was still cradling the little lamb. Gently he laid it down as the little one's mother lovingly licked and cared for it. Uncle Nathan's shouts filled the heavens with gladness and mirth and the star shone brightly down upon the earth.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," Uncle Nathan shouted to the departing Samuel. "And be sure to tell your father I'll be seeing him soon. I have some restitutions to make," and his loud 'Alleluja' made the meadows ring.

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THE END OF THIS FILE