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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1966

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1
THE SIDE TRACK

Sherrie leaned back lazily in the reclining chair of the train, Teasingly she reached over and pinched her blonde haired sister on the arm.

"I'll get you back," Penney laughed

"That's all right with me," the dark haired sister giggled, edging away from her. "This long ride's getting a bit boring."

"And you were so anxious to go on this trip," Debbie reminded, leaning over her sister's seat.

"I sure miss Kenneth," Glenn said soberly, "I'm outnumbered with all these sisters of mine," and they all laughed heartily.

The train wound around the side of a towering mountain. A silver, rippling, cascading river flowed swiftly along its side to the left. At times it seemed as though they would topple into, the churning waters, so close to the edge was the track; but smoothly they glided along the beautiful fir clad mountain and the shimmery river. Just as they were about to go through another tunnel the train came to an abrupt halt. Immediately the children stood up or perched impishly on the edge of their seats, straining ahead to see what caused the sudden stop.

"A rock slide," the porter announced as he walked casually through the air cooled coach.

"How long will we be delayed?" Glenn asked wearily

"Don' know, suh!" the porter drawled "Maybe an hour or too'. Nev'ah can tell. Big rocks fail down 'dem 'dere mountains."

For two hours the passengers sat watching the foaming, churning river directly beneath them; then, quite suddenly, they heard the air chord being pulled and the train moved slowly forward into the tunnel.

The sun set lazily and sleepily behind the big purple rocks as a brilliant full moon arose and silently and majestically rode into the starry heavens. The girls looked through the vista dome at the scintillating heavenly bodies that seemed to be almost hung on some of the craggy mountain peaks. Glenn saw a buck, a stately looking fellow, silhouetted against the night sky on a bank of snow and his heart jumped with excitement

On and on into the night the train sped and, when at one thirty five in the morning all the family awakened to find the train stopped on a desolate looking piece of desert, Sherrie sleepily asked

"Why are we stopped out here, Mother? Ugh! It looks so barren and deserted!"

"Silly!" Glenn replied. "It should look that way. It's the desert."

"But why have we stopped?" Penney and Debbie asked just as the sleepy eyed porter lumbered through.

"We've stopped, Missy," he laughed, " 'cause we's waitin' on anothe'h train. We'se on a side track. Go ta' sleep an' don' worry; we's soon gonna be goin'."

"A sidetrack?" Debbie yawned sleepily "Now isn't that something! To sit here on a desert side track all night!"

"Oh, it's only been twenty minutes," Glenn said. "That's not all night. Go back to. sleep."

"I sleep better when I hear the faint whistle of the train and feel it moving," Debbie said. "I'm wide awake now so I guess I'll just sit it out," and they all laughed.

One hour and forty minutes later the fast streamliner going down the main line whizzed by. It ran with such swift speed that it seemed like big branches of trees driven by a fierce wind.

"That's scary," Penney said, drawing away from the window; but, as quickly as it had rumbled onto them, it was gone. Their own faithful streamliner glided smoothly on to the main line and into the night -- across the desert.

"Well, that's another hour and forty minutes we're late," Glenn said to Mother. "Do you suppose we'll make our connections in Denver?"

"It hardly seems possible, but one never can tell, Glenn." Mother said reassuringly. "It's surprising how much time these trains can make up."

"That old sidetrack!" Sherrie mused aloud. "Just look how far we would have been if we'd have gone ahead!"

"Honey," Mother began as she sat edging forward so she could be heard by all the children, yet not disturb the other passengers, "that sidetrack was a blessing. If it had not been there we'd have crashed head on with the other fast streamliner. That would have been a catastrophe! We'd never again have seen Daddy alive, nor Kenneth. That sidetrack is a blessing like the red lights which warn the train to stop. God has sidetracks too. Many, many times, after having prayed earnestly about a certain thing, God sets us on His sidetrack and gently whispers, 'Wait'. "If we wait until He moves us on to the main line again, we'll not get into trouble, nor cause wreck and ruin. However, if we grow impatient of waiting on God's sidetrack and run ahead with our own human reasonings and desires, we always make wreckage and ruin and cause much trouble and heartache."

"Why, Mother," Glenn said joyfully, "I never thought of that before, but it's true and . . . and . . . it's wonderful."

"Yes, it is wonderful, Glenn. To stay on God's sidetrack is always safe, until He moves you off or gives you the green light which means 'Go'. Always remember, the devil wants you to do everything in a hurry and wants you to rush into something. God, on the other hand, will plead, speak, and entreat one kindly and gently -- never rushing him -- so, when you're tempted to move in haste put it down in your heart and mind it's the devil, and never move until God's comforting voice says, 'Move now'. Always wait upon the Lord -- even if it's on His sidetrack."

Sleepily, Sherrie said, "I see it, Mother dear, and I'm so glad we waited on the side track." Then, as the sturdy streamliner carried them beneath a starlit heavens across the desert, Sherrie glided along with it to dreamland.

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Story 2

SAMUEL'S HEART

Sammy settled himself comfortably in the big easy chair near the dining room area and began reading from a book he had gotten out of father's library when suddenly his tooth began throbbing and aching. Thinking it would pass away he tried to become more absorbed in the book, only to fail. The pain wouldn't allow him to read, let alone think!

"Mother," he said, as he entered the cheerful kitchen, "I feel sick all over. Oh my tooth!" and he held his jaw as tears of pain rolled down his ruddy cheeks.

"Which tooth is it, Samuel?" and she was by his side.

"The same one that gave me trouble a few months ago."

"I'll bring you an aspirin. Maybe that will relieve the pain."

For some time after he had taken the pill, his pain left completely but a short time later on the old hurting, throbbing and pounding was back.

Around three o'clock the following morning he moaned pitifully. "Can't you do something, Mother? This pain is unbearable."

"I've done everything I know to do, dear. There's only one thing that will really help you and you told us last time it hurt that you didn't want it."

"You . . . you . . . mean go to a dentist?" Sammy asked weakly. "That's right, Samuel."

"Can...can... we ... go right now?"

"We'll have to wait at least six hours longer -- until the dentist opens his door for patients."

A moan escaped the young boy's lips as he doubled up on the davenport and cried.

When Dr. Babb saw Sammy he knew he had troubles . . . bad. painful troubles!

"The old tooth again?" he asked smiling.

"Yes, sir," Samuel replied weakly, suppressing his tears.

"Well, well! That's too bad, Sammy. Looks like it's going to have to come out this time," and he prepared to get rid of the trouble maker.

"Please! I want to get rid of it. It hurts," and, in spite of all his trying to be brave, the tears of pain coursed down Sammy's cheeks.

"Oh, that's wonderful relief!" he said as the pain was numbed and deadened, and he laid his head back sleepily and relaxed.

"Well, now! See here!" and Dr. Babb held the extracted tooth up for Sammy to see. "This was a trouble maker. It looked beautiful on the outside but the inside was corrupt. See this big abscess? That's what has caused you all your trouble. Right at the root of the thing," and he held it more closely for Sammy and his mother to see. "Deceitful things they are. Just to look at them one would think they're all right; but hidden down beneath the gum -- where one can't see with the natural eye is where the trouble is, right at the root!"

Samuel gave Mother a quick, enlightened look as he said, "Yes, I see! Terrible trouble maker; that abscess fastened to the root! I really see," and Dr. Babb gave his patient a funny, quizzical look as he made these statements, but Mother understood -- perfectly too.

"Oh, Morn! I see now what you were trying to tell me yesterday morning, and I'm sorry I was so slow at understanding. Last night and this morning in Dr. Babb's chair God revealed the nature of my carnal heart to me. It's terrible, Mother! Like my tooth, it has an abscess at the very center of my heart. I have had selfish desires and motives and I want Jesus to so fill me with His Holy Spirit until all of me is filled with Him and there's not one little bit of my self life left, but Christ is all in all," and bright tears of contrition for keeping the carnal nature within his heart began falling.

"We'll pray as soon as we get home, son. Meanwhile, thank God for His faithfulness in showing you your heart. Carnality is just so much like your tooth. When one gets saved from sin his life is indeed beautiful and changed; yet within the heart there remains the root of sin -- the thing which caused one to sin in the first place; now when you're saved you're forgiven from all the sins you've ever committed, but that thing that made you sin must be taken out just like your tooth. So God, the Holy Ghost, must burn it all out root and all."

"Oh, Mother! It's so plain and clear to me and I'm so hungry for Holiness of heart. I want the Comforter to abide forever in my heart," and Sammy was running down the path to the living room door.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled," and Mother and son knelt by the big rocking chair in the sunny kitchen. The rays of a warm sunshine filtered warmly through the crisp organdy curtains and kissed the cheeks of a radiant young boy as he grabbed Mother by her neck and hugged her tightly.

"He's come! He's come, Mother! I know I'm clean and pure. Praise the Lord!" A little sparrow lighted on a branch outside the window and began twittering happily, as though in praise to God.

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Story 3

THE GARDEN

"Mother I Mother!" Paula Kay Cried, running across the lawn and up the few steps onto the porch and then the kitchen. "Oh, Mother! Come and see!" she exclaimed, breathless. "Leon's done it again. Our onions are almost all uprooted," and she buried her face in her hands and cried.

"Now, now, honey!" Mother soothed. "Maybe it's not as bad as you think it is. Things always look worse when we're upset."

"But, Mother he's an old meany. I wish he'd never moved next door to us 1" and she sobbed loudly.

"Why Paula Kay!" Mother said, exasperated. "You never used to feel like this. You must pray more."

"But, Mother, no one else likes them either. Glenda said Leon deliberately made Rags, that awful looking mongrel of a dog, run over her gladiolus."

"A mongrel, you say, Paula Kay?" Mother asked. "Suppose you tell me what Tackey is!" "Well ... she's, that is . . ." "She's just like old Rags--a plain old mongrel," Mother said in sweet reprimand. "Now you run into, the bedroom and ask Jesus to forgive you for your wrong attitude and feeling."

"But Mother..." the dark haired girl said.

"Run on, dear. Let's have a real soul searching time, just Jesus and you. Your attitudes are all wrong. Let the Lord show you what to do to help the situation."

"Where's Paula?" It was Glenda.

"Come in, dear," Mrs. White said, opening the screen door to the fair complexioned, blonde haired girl who was Paula Kay's bosom friend. "Paula's in the bedroom praying. She has a bad feeling about the new neighbors."

"But they are horrid."

"Perhaps they don't feel accepted."

"Wh...What...do you mean?"

"Did you ever feel when someone didn't exactly like you and yet pretended to?" Mrs. White asked.

"You...think...maybe...?" Glenda hesitated. "Oh, I see what you mean! Could I join Paula Kay, please?"

Quietly Mother opened her daughter's bedroom door and admitted the young friend. Sometime later the two girls came silently into the kitchen.

"Mother, I want you to forgive me. I am to blame. The Lord forgave me and I mean to begin working at this problem. I've been professing to know Jesus, but haven't done anything to try to help the situation. But I'm beginning today," Paula Kay said tearfully.

"I haven't even lived up to Matthew 5. 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.' 'Almost... almost we were troublemakers. Oh I'm so ashamed of myself!'"

"Where did you put the seeds we had left over from our garden planting?" Paula asked.

"Do you mean the flower or the vegetable seeds?" Mother asked.

"Both, dear Mother. I believe we'll be using them all," and a heavenly smile played across her forgiven face.

"Leon! Katie!" she called to the new neighbors as she saw them racing across the garden. Come here, can you?" The melody in the tone of voice made both children stop and looked at each other for a second; then, reluctantly and half frightened, they approached the neat bungalow.

"Do come in," Mrs. White said sweetly, opening the door. "I just baked hot cinnamon rolls. Join the girls in a mid-afternoon lunch," and she laughed happily as she seated the frightened children.

"How would you like a garden all your own?" Paula ventured sweetly, looking deep into the eyes of the naughty children.

"Do...you...? Oh, no, you can't mean it!" and the boy looked at his sister, his eyes all aglow with enthusiasm. "For real? Ours?" he hesitated.

"For real!" the girls said together, as Mother brought out the seeds.

All four raced outside and surveyed Leon and Katie's own yard carefully then selected the place most suitable.

"I...I...don't have a hoe, nor a shovel, " Leon said with bowed head

"We have everything," Glenda said, racing to the shed where the garden tools were kept. "We'll all work together and each of us will have our own garden."

"This is the most wonderful place I've ever lived in!" Katie exclaimed as they planted. "I thought everybody hated us--like they always have wherever we have lived---and Leon and I have been dreadfully hateful to everybody, but I'm truly sorry and I want you to forgive me. You girls are so...so...well, different," and a tear fell to the good earth as she said it.

"Me, too," Leon said, "I don't deserve this but I'm going to be different. I'll be extra careful and not let Rags run through the gardens, and..."

"That's all right," Paula said sweetly. We'll all help each other through the week, then go to Sunday School and church on Sunday- together," she added softly.

"Could we...I mean...would you take us. .really?" Katie asked, excited.

"We surely will!" the girls exclaimed simultaneously. "We'll sit together in church, too."

Katie sighed a deep, long sigh of happy relief as she added dreamily, "It's wonderful to have friends and to be friends!"

For the first time the girls noticed that Katie was really pretty. The sun made her freckled nose cuter than ever and the hard work made blushing roses to bloom all over her fair young face. Even her eyes were beautiful and looked like a blue sky on a clear day in June and her face wore an expression of contentment and inner joy. "Perhaps it is because she feels accepted," Glenda mused inwardly as she watched the industrious girl and her brother. Rags must have felt it, too--he lay beneath a small bush close by and looked innocently at the working group.

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Story 4

THE ROBIN'S NEST

Melanie, Susan Priscilla, and small Camilla Evangeline played contentedly beneath the big maple tree beside the house.

"Now you be a good girl," Melanie scolded, tucking Melissa, the flimsy, wobbly rag doll under the blanket in the baby buggy. "You're a bad girl today -- kicking the covers off! You must take your nap, then you may get up and play."

Susan, who was baking imaginary cookies, turned to her sister. "My Jennifer's bad, too. She hates to take her nap." Then, gently and lovingly taking her beloved, much worn Jennifer in her small arms, she folded her to her tenderly. "There now, you'll soon be asleep. Take your bottle and hush-a-bye," and she crooned softly to the doll. "Seems like every time I get busy baking or washing, she gets fussy," and she laughed softly, the way Mother did when Jamie was fussy and needed attention. High on the branches of the maple tree a robin sang: softly.

"Oh, Susie, look! The robin's building a house in our maple tree," and Melanie pointed to the almost finished nest.

"Now Jennifer can see what a bird's nest looks like," and Susan held Jennifer up to have a peek at the nest.

"Birdie's nest! Birdie's nest!" Evangeline exclaimed excitedly, running to the kitchen where Mother was ironing.

"What, honey?" Mother asked, not fully understanding whereupon the child took her mother's hand and, leading the way, was soon back by the maple tree.

"See, Mama? Birdie's nest!" and she stooped down sweetly and peeked through the many leaves to the nest.

"She's trying to show you the robin's nest," Melanie explained, pointing to the branch where the robin was working industriously.

"I see it," Mother said, in almost a whisper. "We shall have to watch this closely without frightening the mother and father bird. Soon we shall have a wonderful family in the maple tree," and she laughed softly.

"Jennifer is all excited about it," Susan said happily, looking adoringly into her doll's eyes.

"So is Melissa," Melanie said. "Why she just laughed out loud. She's getting to be a big girl," and she patted the flimsy body of the bedraggled looking Melissa.

For days the children watched as the robins came and went about their business, always singing joyously as they worked. Then, one fine day the children proudly proclaimed the birth and arrival of the tiny babies.

"I know they're here," Susan cried happily, "For I saw three wobbly heads as Mother Robin flew to the nest with a worm."

"There's four babies," Melanie exclaimed with authority, "for I saw four heads."

Again there came that wonderful and exciting period of watching and waiting..., when the tiny creatures would be big enough to really see.

"Oh, look!" Melanie exclaimed in great excitement one day. "All the birds have pretty speckled breasts but one. He's so funny looking from the other birds; and ... and... Daddy, he doesn't even act like the three other robins. What's the matter?"

"I'm glad you've noticed the difference, honey," Daddy said. "For days I've noticed the difference. Another bird laid her egg in the robin's nest. The robin hatched out a cowbird along with her own family."

"But, Daddy, will she love that poor little bird?" Susan Priscilla asked tearfully. "Why, it's almost an . . . an . . . orphan," and she looked lovingly at the odd looking bird

"Oh, yes, honey. She already loves the bird that's not her own. The robins have fed and cared for the baby cowbird this far and they'll care for it along with the three young robins until they're able to be on their own and take care of themselves; but that cowbird's different in so many ways."

"Different?" the children asked. "How, besides looking so different?"

"In the first place," Daddy began, "that poor little bird will never be able to sing like the robin, for it is a cowbird and has no sweet robin's song. Then, too, it will always be a... a... kind of impostor."

"Impostor?" Melanie asked. Daddy laughed as he answered, "It will always lay its eggs in some other bird's nest if it is a little female bird. They're just not industrious enough to build their own nest. They find some nest already built and lay their eggs in them, then leave the eggs for the other birds to hatch out and care for."

"But, Daddy," Susan began, "this little birdie will be different because it had a robin for its mother, and robins are happy birds and... and... good birds."

"That makes no difference, honey. You see, the bird was raised by robins but by nature it is still a cowbird and will act according to its nature. It just can't help it -- it's a cowbird through and through. It's just like this, remember when you got so angry with Camilla Evangeline yesterday?"

The child hung her head in shame and said timidly, "Yes."

"Well, honey, you couldn't help that because you still have carnality in your heart; but you don't need to be like that -- ever again. You can let Jesus sanctify you and take out that nature that's an enemy to God. The bird can't change its bird nature but Jesus can change your carnal heart into one of perfect soul rest. You asked Jesus to forgive you yesterday after you got so cross, and He did; but are you ready to let Him sanctify you and give you a sweet sanctified nature?"

"Daddy, I . . . I . . . do want to be happy all the time, like the robins; and I'd like Jesus to sanctify me now," and the tears began flowing.

"He'll do it for you, honey, if you'll ask Him."

The lovely, golden haired child was on her knees, praying softly.

Suddenly, with the robins singing softly in the tree overhead, she clapped her small hands for joy. "Oh, thank you, Jesus. I know you sanctified me just now," and her face shone like the noonday sun as the robins burst out singing joyously.

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Story 5

WHICH SHALL IT BE?

Robbie sat down on the floor and emptied the head of Porky, the piggy bank, onto the carpet of his bedroom floor. Carefully he piled the coins in their respective heaps nickels with nickels, dimes with dimes, quarters with quarters and pennies with pennies. He noted, as he counted, that he had more pennies than anything else and less quarters and fifty cent pieces than anything; to be exact, he had three half dollars and eight quarters . . . this alone made three dollars and fifty cents. He jotted the figure down on a bit of school paper and resumed the joyful duty of counting, adding the total of each and getting a grand total of nine dollars and eighty-six cents.

"What do you know, Pierre!" he exclaimed to the sleepy-eyed dog by his side, "I'm going to give four dollars and ninety-three cents of this to foreign missions. Isn't that grand? Half of my piggy bank!" and he sighed a happy, contented sigh.

Pierre opened his eyes wide and wagged his curly little tail as if to let his master know just how really grand it all was.

"You can't give that much, Robbie," a voice seemed to say just then. "Aunt Elvie's birthday's almost here and so is Evelyn's -- she'll be two, then, and you know how badly you wanted to buy her that pale blue dress in Millson's Tiny Tot Dress Shoppe."

Robbie suddenly became very still, very, very still. He stretched his nine year old legs out straight and leaned up against the side of the bed to figure. Pierre came over by him and laid his round little curly head on his legs and looked for all the world like he, too, was doing figuring -- mischievous figuring.

"Let's see," Robbie said aloud, "that dress was two dollars and ninety eight cents and Aunt Elvie's purse was three dollars and forty nine cents. Hm-m. Guess I can't give that much."

As he said it a strange feeling possessed him. Quickly he knelt by the bed and asked the Lord what to do.

"God loveth a cheerful giver," a soft, sweet voice whispered to him. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, Robbie, and all these things shall be added unto you," the sweet consoling voice continued.

"I'll give it, Lord," the boy said, much relieved. "Evelyn can wait for her present and Aunt Elvie won't mind if I'm a wee bit late with hers, either."

"But what about those school shoes you told your mother you'd try to buy for yourself, Robbie?" and the tempter's voice was back. "You can't give that, Robbie! You know you can't!"

"Mr. Devil," Robbie said, standing straight and tall, "You don't run my life--God does! To show you that you don't dictate to me I'm going to put all nine dollars and eighty six cents in--the whole instead of the half." He quickly gathered the money together and took it to the kitchen, a smile of victory on his innocent, honest face.

"Here, Mother," he said, "Keep this until Sunday. I'm giving all the money in my piggy bank for foreign missions. The devil told me I couldn't give even half of it--that Evelyn and Aunt Elvie's birthday would soon be here -- but I want him to know that God directs the affairs of my life. Oh, Mother. I feel so good!"

"And the reason you do, Robbie, is because you are an overcomer -- a victor over Satan. Then, too, you have obeyed the Lord; this always brings a feeling of great joy and satisfaction. Sit down, Robbie, I want to talk to you."

Obediently Robbie settled himself on a kitchen chair close to his mother. Pierre curled his little body in a small, furry heap at his master's feet.

"The devil didn't tell you that Black Biddy would soon have a big brood of fuzzy yellow chicks for you, Robbie, did he?"

"Why, no. I had forgotten all about Black Biddy, Mother," and his eyes brightened.

"There's loud pecking going on inside those twelve shells, Robbie. I was out this morning to check. One little red bill is already through, with the others soon to follow. Then, instead of one hen producing eggs for you to sell, there will be no telling how many more. Then, too, there's Speckles. He's just about ready for the beef market, plus the fact that you will soon have a birthday and..."

"Oh, Mother!" the boy interrupted happily, "I'm glad I hadn't thought of all that when the devil tried to tell me what I could or couldn't do. It makes my victory seem greater this way. I want to go and thank dear Jesus for helping me decide which part to give." And he hurried to the bedroom, singing, "Faith is the Victory," with Pierre trotting faithfully by his side.

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Story 6
ONLY A BOOK

"See what I bought with my dime, mother?" Richard said as he stepped to where mother was planting the beans in a long, straight row down the garden.

"A tablet," she said softly. "That's a nice little book kind of tablet."

"I like it, mother. It fits into my shirt pocket," and Richard slipped it gently down inside his plaid shirt pocket where it was totally concealed, "Now I can write your grocery list every week for you," he said proudly.

"That's a fine boy, Richard. We'll begin right now while I'm thinking of something I need," and mother stood upright, her hands covered with rich-looking black soil as she breathed deeply of the good, fresh country air. "I need sugar and more beans for planting; some Jell-O and flour and...."

"Not too fast," Richard began. "I'm lost at Jell-O." And they laughed together.

"I'll change into my old work clothes, then begin the chores," the lad said as he started down the garden pathway, through the gate toward the big farm house. "Anything good to eat before supper?" he called over his shoulder.

"Yes," mother said as she lifted her bonneted head and looked toward the house. "I baked fresh cookies for you and Peter today and made gingerbread for the girls. Only six cookies, Richard, or you'll not be wanting any supper. That should tide you over till daddy and Pete get in from the fields." She laughed a contented, melodic laugh that rippled gaily through the petunia bed.

"I have the best mom in the whole wide world," Richard called to her as he entered the kitchen, with its tantalizing odors of freshly baked walnut cookies and spicy gingerbread cooling on the big kitchen cabinet. Then, obediently, he took only six cookies and sat down at the big sturdy oak kitchen table with a glass of rich jersey milk. Never had anything tasted better! On the sink he saw a large bowl of tender, freshly washed lettuce leaves. Mother must be planning German style wilted lettuce for supper. He licked his lips in hunger. Already he could taste the pieces of crisp, crumbled bacon and finely diced onion through it!

Peter and father were just coming in from the field when mother finished her last set of colored clothes and, as she began hanging them on the line with Suzanne and Lois helping her, Richard heard a loud moan and groan from Suzanne.

"Oh, Mother, look!" and she held her beautiful new navy cotton dress up for mother to view. "It's ruined! I know it is! It's all covered with something white. It was my very favorite dress, too," and another wail and moan escaped her pretty lips.

"Why Suzanne," mother began, a perplexed look stealing across her face. "I can't imagine what happened. I never place anything white with my colored clothes and vice versa. "Then, quite suddenly she brightened up as she searched for Richard's plaid shirt. Reaching far down into the wet pocket she found it -- a flat heavy mass of wet paper. "How careless of me!" she chided, "I failed to go through the shirt pockets as I usually do, and, because of my haste we have all this mess." Thoughtfully she mused to herself, "Richard's little tablet. That's all."

"But my dress, it's ruined! So is Lois' jumper, and . . . and . . . your pretty apron and sunbonnet grandma gave you last Christmas," the girl said brokenly.

"It's not ruined, honey, not really," mother said sweetly. "There's just a lot of unnecessary work." Then getting the vinegar jug from the pantry shelf she poured a generous amount into the big wash tub with a small amount of water and began her rinsing, wringing and re-rinsing process -- over and over, again and again.

"Oh, my pretty dress!" Suzanne began again. "I hate that smelly vinegar. My dress won't smell fit to wear."

"Relax Suzanne! We'll wash everything over again and it will be good as new," mother said. After a long time of vinegar rinsings and rewashing, mother said gently to the children, "This has a wonderful lesson in it for us all. That little book of Richard's is like hidden sin in the heart: the people around you aren't aware that it's there. After awhile it breaks out in such a bad and horrible manner that it defiles not only the one who has harbored it, but many others as well. It wrecks and ruins the individual's life as well as influencing many others on the same downward.

way. It leaves its mark all over the person's life like Richard's book did our clothes. Nothing in this world can cure it but Jesus' blood. Just as I rinsed your clothes in the vinegar water, so we must go through the bitter part of repentance and restitution before Jesus will forgive and save us. It's bitter and awful at the time, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, salvation and holiness. Yes, it was only a little ten cent tablet, but it left its mark on everything. One sin will mar, mark and ruin a life as the little book did our clothes. Whenever sin presents itself, run from it and resist it, steadfast in the faith. God will help you to overcome evil only as you help yourself, too, and rely upon Jesus for strength and help," mother said as all eyes were focused on the navy dress on the clothesline.

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Story 7

THE RUNAWAY

Johnny sat down by the big old well to think --and to sulk. He was getting tired of being bossed around and told what to do all the time! Wasn't he old enough to be without bossing! He was ten. Quite a young man by this time! Well, he knew what he'd do. Yes, sir! His mind was all made up. He'd make his family really sorry for the way they were treating him.

He walked resolutely up the path to the kitchen. In a very important tone of voice, with his two size six and one-half feet set squarely on the kitchen floor, he said, "I'm leaving home, Mother."

He expected her to run to him with wide open arms and beg him tearfully to stay. Instead, she kept herself busy frying the chicken to a rich golden brown as she said calmly:

"You are, Johnny! Well, that's too bad! I'm sorry to hear you don't like your family any more," and she kept working away.

'Johnny, she had called him!' The thought was revolting! He was not Johnny! Maybe when he was a little boy "Johnny" was all right, but from here on out he'd be called John, like father!

He stomped noisily up the winding stairway to his neat, clean bedroom. On a small marble topped table he spied his prized rock collection. For a moment he forgot about leaving. He picked up a shiny piece of agate and polished it until it shone. Then, remembering what he had come upstairs for, he tucked the smooth stone deep down in his right pocket.

The sun was slowly descending the far western horizon and playing 'shadows' with the big maple trees in the yard when he came downstairs, his clothes tied in a neat little bundle on the end of his big hickory walking stick, which was balanced over his left shoulder by his ten year old left hand. Mother turned from the oven where she was just taking fresh hot cinnamon rolls out of the pan and looked at her boy who thought he was older than his years.

"You do look like you're going to be traveling, Johnny."

"I'm not Johnny," the boy said crossly. "I'm ten now and I demand to be called John."

"Oh! Really, Johnny. Well, you may be ten but you'll always be Johnny," and mother smiled sweetly as she continued. "Now, before you leave I want you to go upstairs as quietly as you went up noisily before. Go now, Johnny."

The boy obeyed orders without a word of comment. As he started for the big front kitchen door mother stopped him.

"I've packed you a lunch, Johnny. Thought you might get hungry if you're going very far. A few dimes and quarters don't last too long when one has to buy his food, you know." Then, kissing him on his freckled nose she said sweetly, "Bye, Johnny. Have a good time and, anytime you get tired of traveling, come home. Don't forget to pray before you go to bed tonight and thank God tomorrow morning for the rest He gave you through the night. Ask His guidance for your life tomorrow and for all the tomorrows to come," and she went back to her preparation of supper.

Johnny's pride was terribly wounded and hurt! Why hadn't mother called father from the barn, for surely, surely, father would not have wanted him to leave!

He walked down the dusty west lane that led for miles through the dense forest. He knew it would be cool and shady this way. He was tired of farm work, and the new job of milking Ralph's four cows was just intolerable!

"He'll soon be able to be on his feet again," Father had said, "but until he's strong enough you shall have to milk the four cows he's been milking. You're old enough to do a lot more work now."

That was when Johnny decided he was old enough to run away. He'd find him an easy job where he'd earn big money! On and on he traveled, so absorbed in selfish thinking that he didn't notice how dark it was until he stubbed his toe on a jagged rock.

He sat on the ground, clutching the aching, throbbing toe in his hands while the deep night shadows enshrouded the woods in total darkness.

He became suddenly aware that he was alone in a big, dark forest. Never had he thought the forest was creepy and scary in the bright sunlight of day, but tonight well! It was different! It didn't hurt if a fellow cried a little especially when he had stubbed his toe! The tears suddenly came freely until even the warm cinnamon rolls and hot chicken mother had packed didn't seem at all appetizing nor desired. Strange how a little bit of a thing like a banged up toe could make one suddenly feel so bad all over!

"Mother! Mother!" he cried softly as he buried his head on the damp leaves.

From nearby overhead, a wide awake hoot owl asked in a deep, deep voice, "Who? Who? Who? Who?"

"Mother!" again Johnny said, sobbing bitterly. Why had he forgotten his big red handkerchief! 'It would have come in handy for the toe,' he thought silently, taking his shirt sleeve and wiping the tears away.

In the stillness of the night a shrilly screech owl began its weird calling, shrieking and screeching. The cold chills ran up and down Johnny's spine and he wondered why he had ever decided to run away. "Mother!" he wailed so loudly until the forest became suddenly still and silent again. Every living creature strained to hear what the foreign noise had been.

Johnny, meanwhile, forgetting that ever such a thing as selfish pride had existed in his breast, headed in the homeward direction, weeping and screaming as he went. "Oh! If only someone would hear me! Can't you hear me, Mother?" he wailed. "I'll newer run away again and: I'll milk Ralph's cows forever and ever," he cried as he prayed out loud.

Strange, how all at once the stubbed toe didn't hurt! His feet seemed to have wings as he sped homeward and in through the same big kitchen door.

"Why, Johnny!" mother said, rising from the big rocker where she always sat for family Bible reading and devotions. "You didn't stay long."

Johnny ran into her big open arms and, unashamedly wept until he had no more tears.

"For . . . For . . . Forgive . . . me," he said brokenly, sobbing big, long, hard sobs as he went from mother to father. "I... I'm... sorry. I . . . 'U never . . . run... (sob) ... away... (sob) again."

"Are you ready to pray?" father asked. Johnny nodded.

'Johnny!' Mother and father had both called him Johnny! 'How nice it sounded and how, . . . well, how . . . homey, and . . and . . . natural!'

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Story 8

TWO OF ME

"Melissa, whatever are you doing?" Mother asked in astonishment as she came into the bedroom where Melissa stood over baby Stevie's crib pinching him and making ugly faces at him.

"I . . . I . . ." and that's as far as the guilty child got, then, ever so sweetly she ran to mother and put her arms lovingly about her and with a beguiling smile she said softly, "Mother, I love you."

For a long time mother stood speechless, looking first at baby Stevie, then the innocent looking Melissa Ann. After she had comforted and soothed the hurting, sobbing baby and he had gone sweetly back to slumberland she led the speechless girl to the kitchen.

"So," she began, "that's what has been happening every day since you're home from school. I see now why Stevie's nap always ends up in hurtful tears. This explains Stevie's bruised marks that were perplexing me. We shall have to punish you, dear, for that's been very bad. You may even have injured your darling brother for life. Wouldn't that be too bad?" mother asked in an astonished voice.

"Yes, Mother," the brown haired girl said meekly. "But . . . but Mother, I couldn't help it!"

"Why Melissa, what do you mean, 'You couldn't help it?' You knew you were hurting Stevie and making him cry. This should have been enough to make you not want to do anything so naughty. Do you remember when Helen was here and she came hurrying to tell me that you had knocked her cupcake out of her hand to the ground? What makes you do such things, dear? You can be ever so loving and sweet, but when you do such things as these I just can't understand you," and mother looked away towards the fields as big salty tears began rolling down her cheeks.

"I . . . I'm . . . sorry, Mother. Don't cry! I don't want to make you cry; I really don't. I love you, Mother," and Melissa was crying softly as she continued brokenly, "I . . . I . . . can't help myself; you see, Mother, there's two of me. The one me wants to always do good and right and the other me is forever trying to get me to do wrong things. That's why I pinch Stevie," and she let out a mournful wail as she continued, "Oh, Mother, this second me inside my being is terrible and I hate it. I do want to be good -- always."

"Didn't the Lord Jesus save you two weeks ago in our Sunday night service?" mother asked.

"Oh, yes! I know He saved me," Melissa answered brokenly, "but Mother, there's another me, too."

"Yes, yes, dear child, I know. You are saying exactly what the Apostle Paul said in Romans the 7th chapter:

" 'For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

" 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that do I.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

" 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

" 'But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

" 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

" 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

"That other nature within you, Melissa, is the carnal nature; and only through Christ can it be taken out. Paul says it is the 'old man,' and it /s indeed terrible. Now honey, God has permitted you to see how dreadful it is, and made you to hate and loathe yourself because of this 'other you,' as you term it, but only the blessed Holy Ghost coming into your heart and burning it out and cleansing it can get rid of it for you. When once He has purged your heart through the burning, cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost, He'll possess your heart and life entirely and you'll have only one nature -- a heart patterned after Jesus Himself; pure, clean and full of the fruit of Holiness."

"Oh, Mother! please let's do something about it right now. I do want to be like Jesus and not have these two 'me's struggling inside of me," the weeping girl begged.

"We certainly will, honey," mother said brokenly. "But first, let's ask the Lord Jesus to forgive us for being so bad to Helen and Stevie, shall we?"

"Yes. Yes," the beautiful Melissa said as she sobbed aloud for the Lord to forgive her.

It wasn't long until all her hateful self was emptied out before the Saviour and, after she had been forgiven for pinching Stevie and knocking Helen's cupcake to the ground, she prayed fervently for the Holy Spirit to sanctify her heart and He was there to meet her need and fill her hungering soul with the abiding presence of the Comforter.

"He's come, Mother! He's here in my heart! I have such peace deep within me -- and such a rest!" and a glorious light shone through her young face. Mother knew there was only one of her daughter left -- that was the real Melissa God had intended for her to be. Baby Stevie must have sensed something wonderful too or else he was playing among the buttercups and dandelions and chasing butterflies in the meadow, for mother and Melissa heard soft, ripply, baby laughter come from the crib as if the angels made him rejoice with them.

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Story 9

GREAT GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK

Ever since Tommy could remember, it had stood there. Day and night it had ticked endlessly away. Sometimes it had seemed like the best thing any little boy could want for

company, especially when Tommy had lain sick in bed with a high fever and the nights seemed never to end. Then it was, the dear old clock seemed to be his constant companion and dearest friend -- outside of Mother, of course.

"Your great grandfather gave the dear old clock to your daddy," Mother explained on one of those restless, sleepless nights.

"It's like a a...well," and Tommy paused briefly before he concluded emphatically, "I do believe it's my very best friend, beside you, Mother," and he had thrown his feverish arms around her body.

"Jesus is your best friend, Tommy," Mother whispered softly in his ear in the stillness of the night.

And He had been, indeed, But somehow, the clock was very close and dear to Tommy in those days.

"Get well! Get up! Get well! Get up!" it seemed to encourage day and night. Tommy had accepted its friendly challenge and was soon up, trying to walk again and, with the old clock smiling on him, each day he improved until he was "fit as a fiddle," Dr. Jones had said.

But that was when Tommy was a "little" boy. He was "big" now -- or so he thought! Any new twelve year old should be allowed to make one decision without being hollered at. Hollered at? Well, not exactly: But, somehow, the once dear old clock had seemed to become an enemy.

"Hurry, Tom! Hurry, Tom! You're late! You're late! Hurry, now! Hurry, now!"

"Be still, will you?" Tom said crossly to the clock. "You seem to see everything I do," and maybe it did! From its vantage point at the top of the stairs, the old clock seemed to have the household in full command.

Mother came to the foot of the stairs just then, and, looking at the hands of the big clock, she called softly, "Tommy, it's time to get up. Great Grandfather's clock says it's quarter 'til eight. Breakfast's almost ready and then to church."

"See what I mean!" Tommy exclaimed, looking crossly at the big walnut clock and starting for the bathroom to wash his face. "I'm twelve today and that bed certainly felt good. Why can't you stop like other clocks do once in awhile! It wouldn't hurt for us to be late for church just this once," and he slammed the door.

Out in the hallway, the big clock seemed to be laughing as it ticked loudly away. "Don't be late! Hurry up! Nice day! Church today."

"Thomas Brown!" and Daddy stood in the bathroom doorway. "I want you to close this door softly and silently, then go down the hallway and apologize to the clock."

"The clock!" Tommy exclaimed with crestfallen countenance. "The clock," Father said firmly. "But, Daddy that's only wood and...and..."

"Apologize!" Daddy commanded as Tommy silently closed the bathroom door.

"You see, son," Father said, "that clock is merely wood and metal, but your attitude and harsh, unkind words may someday be wounding humanity -- and they have feelings, Son, you're going to have to change your ways around this house. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir. But, Dad, that clock seems to always be screaming something at me."

"It didn't always seem like this; did it, Tommy" and Father looked squarely at his boy. "No, sir."

"You used to like it, Tommy. In fact, you felt it was your very best friend. Didn't you?"

"You've changed -- not that dear old clock. You see, when your heart was good and right with God, the old clock seemed to be saying good and encouraging things to you: things that so encouraged you until your own frail strength was challenged and you accepted that challenge and was soon well and walking -- to the utter surprise of the doctor. The Lord heard our prayers and used the old clock to help challenge you. That was quite some years ago when your heart was right with God. Those were the years you knew God and prayed a lot, Tommy. Remember?"

Tommy nodded, tearfully. "Something's happened to you, Tommy -- in your heart. You no longer pray like in those days and Jesus isn't real to you now as He was then." By now Tommy was crying.

"Let's go back to your room and pray, shall we?"

Tommy took Daddy's hand and led the way to his bedroom. The big clock in the hallway seemed to be saying, "Pray through! Welcome back! Pray through! Welcome back!"

Tommy confessed his sins and prayed through to glorious victory.

Great Grandfather's clock in the same spot at the top of the stairway, suddenly seemed to be natural again to Tommy -- in fact, more natural than ever as it ticked loudly away, "Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

"Oh, Dad, Jesus saves me! The old clock is even shouting it. Can't you hear it?" Then, rising from his knees and throwing his arms around his father's neck, he said, "It was I, not the dock. I love the dear old grandfather's clock again. But, Dad, let's hurry. We'll be late for Sunday School and church unless we rush," and, as he hurried down the hallway, the old walnut clock seemed to be laughing and shouting with him, "Tommy's back! Tommy's back! Bless the Lord! Tommy's back!"

Tommy paused long enough to pat its smooth sides and, looking up into its big round face, he said lovingly, "I love you. You're like I always want to stay honest, right and open-faced. There's nothing hidden about you. I love you!"

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Story 10
PLAYING POSSUM

"Danny. Danny!" Mother called sweetly up the stairway. "Get up. It's time to get up. Breakfast's almost ready. Hurry." She stood at the bottom of the steps and waited awhile, then called again, "Danny, get up! Today's the day we pick more apples."

Danny rolled over between his clean warm sheets and let out a loud yawn, but said nothing. The chilly, frosty mornings made him cuddle down deeply between his covers and his back ached like toothache from yesterday's picking. "It's because you're using muscles you haven't been using much, or often," mother had said when he and daddy returned from the orchard. "Would those same muscles ever feel differently?" Danny wondered as he felt a warm drowsiness overtake him. Suddenly he was dreaming -- he and Tufty were romping in the orchard together, chasing rabbits and just playing, not picking apples, when mother's hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder. She was shaking him just as Tufty holed a furry cottontail.

"Get up, Danny. Daddy's already gone to the orchard. You 'shall have to walk as part of your punishment for playing possum."

"Playing possum?" Danny said, sitting on the edge of the bed and rubbing his eyes.

"You did hear me the first time, didn't you?"

"Yes, ma'am," Danny said Sheepishly.

"And you pretended you didn't hear," mother said sweetly. "Well, dear, you must learn that we don't play possum around here. Now run on and I'll straighten your room up while you wash and dress."

After breakfast and prayer, Danny started toward the big orchard a mile away. How he missed Tufty! But he was already in the orchard with Daddy and Mike. Danny hurried and soon he smelled the fragrance of apples. This was really nice after all, even if one's back ached! Tufty smelled his master coming and bounded out of the orchard to greet him.

All day they picked apples red ones, yellow ones and a greenish colored one. He wasn't too hungry for supper and his back ached! After family prayer, he bathed and went to bed. He must have fallen asleep, for when he was suddenly awakened by Tuffy's loud, animated barking, the clear harvest moon was almost midway across the heavens and was peeking in his room, looking

in the mirror on his dresser. Danny went to the window and looked up in the old apple tree that grew in a crooked, pretty way just outside. He saw Tufty jumping high toward a limb on the tree. Reaching for his flashlight he shined the bright rays all over the tree, when suddenly he saw two beady-looking eyes staring down the tree.

"Daddy, Daddy," he called loudly, running down the hallway to his room. "Come quick! Tuffy's got something up the apple tree."

"May as well get up and get dressed," daddy said, sleepy eyed. "I'll have no rest until we help Tufty. He'll keep us awake all night."

They rushed outside and, with the bright rays of the flashlight, they found the two beady eyes.

"Turn the light off, Danny," daddy said. "My eyes will soon be adjusted to the light of the moon and I can tell what it is then. I think it's a possum. Better get me the broom or a rake or hoe," and Danny was off to the shed where the garden tools were kept.

"I brought a broom and a rake. I may need to help you, Dad," he said.

Tufty became more excited than ever and, as daddy climbed cautiously up the tree, the animal jumped. "Look out, son!" he called.

Danny ran a short distance away, but Tufty, smelling the animal, started running along the side of the house and jumping high into the air.

"I see it, Dad. I see it! He's on the house roof," whereupon daddy climbed higher into the tree and out on one of the limbs and let himself down on the roof. Back and forth the chase went -- from one side of the roof to the other --. until finally daddy hit it with his rake and it dropped to the porch roof and then to the ground. Tufty met it with gusto and, taking it in his mouth, shook its pale blue body violently.

"That's enough," daddy ordered when he came down off the roof. Tufty obeyed, but lay a short distance away and playfully watched his catch.

"I guess he's dead," Danny said. "Tufty sure shook him up."

"Let's watch from the porch," daddy suggested wisely.

For a long while they stood watching. Not a movement came from the opossum. "He must be dead," Danny said.

"Be real quiet and just watch," Daddy cautioned in a whisper.

Tufty, lying in the same spot on the grass acted like he was watching the moon and most unconcerned when, suddenly, shrewdly, and almost stealthily the possum began to move -- a little

at a time; then, just as he felt he could make a perfect getaway, Tufty was on him, shaking him and growling fiercely.

"He's a possum, son, and he was 'playing possum.' He's far from dead! We shall have to kill him for real or he'll kill some of the chickens," and daddy finally put an end to his life. "There!" he said. "He'll never bother us again. He's dead -- really dead."

"I feel so badly," Danny said.: "Badly? Why, Danny?" "I . . . I... played possum' with mother this morning. I pretended I didn't hear when she called me to get up. Will you pray with me, Daddy. I need to be forgiven."

In the corn row, by the grave of Mr. Opossum, Danny confessed his sin and found a wonderful peace in his heart. The early harvest moon seemed to have a full face and big smile as Danny prayed through: Tuffy, not knowing why his little master had been crying, nuzzled his cold nose in Danny's hand and licked his cheek.

"I'm all right, pal," Danny said joyfully. "In fact, I've just now begun to be all right. After I confess to mother, I'll be extra all right. No more playing possum for me. That's what hypocrites are made of -- possum material."

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Story 11

THE OFFERING PLATES

Johnny filed in the pew between mother and father. Susan and Richard sat side by side next to mother, while Bobby and Debbie sat by Father. Mother looked down at Johnny and brushed a bit of lint from the right shoulder of his dark blue suit. "You look so nice;" she whispered in his ear. "Are you all ready to say your Scripture?"

"Yes, ma'am," Johnny said politely as he took hold of mother's warm hand.

After the song service and prayer, Brother Whittingham rose to his feet and, looking Johnny's Way, he said, "And now we shall have something extra special by Johnny. Come up to the front, son."

Johnny rose and walked down the aisle to the platform. He felt new all over. He had just been saved the week before so he knew he had a new heart; then, too, the suit he was wearing was new. Oh, well, maybe not exactly brand new! It had been one an older cousin had outgrown and given to him, but it was, none-the-less, new to Johnny; and the little black bow tie mother bought in the dime store just set everything off -- so far as Johnny was concerned.

"Are you going to sing for us?" Rev. Whittingham asked.

"Not today, sir. I have Scripture to give," Johnny said manishly, straightening his five year old body up as straight and tall as he could possibly stretch it.

"Go right ahead," Brother Whittingham said, smiling sweetly.

"I got saved last Sunday night," Johnny testified, "and I am now a tither -- a strict one," he said emphatically as he drew his tithe envelope from his pocket. "Grandfather gave me a quarter this week and I'm giving the Lord all of it. You see, I feel I need to pay up for the dimes and nickels I got in weeks gone by, so the dear Lord Jesus shall have all of this."

Mother had no idea Johnny would say such a thing, but she beamed proudly at him and wept softly. "Train up a child in the way he shall go when he is young...." the Lord seemed to be whispering to her happy heart.

"And now for my Scripture!" Johnny announced like a little preacher. "Malachi 3:8-12 -- Will a man rob God?" he paused and looked over the congregation, then slowly, distinctly he continued, pointing his finger toward the pews, "Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may: be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

As Johnny walked to his seat Rev. Whittingham arose and, wiping the tears from his eyes, he said humbly, brokenly, "Let us all pray for Johnny. God needs him in His whitened harvest fields a little later on. Even now He is using his tender life. Brethren, come forward. We shall receive your tithes and offerings at this time."

As the ushers carried the offering plates to the little office off the nursery where they counted the monies received, they were astonished at the amount that came in.

"Look here!" Brother Wright said, praising the Lord loudly. "Mr. Jacobs' check!" "Seven hundred and eighty six dollars!" Bill Brooks exclaimed, rejoicing. " 'Back tithe' -- it says on the check," he added, joyfully.

Just then the silver offering plate decided to rejoice with the ushers. It dropped off the desk and went rolling happily across the tiled floor. "If only they knew how happy I am!" it seemed to

be saying as it rolled into the corner and fell upright, exhausted, as Brother Brooks and Brother Wright retrieved the: bills, checks and coins from the clean floor.

"I wish I could talk!" the other Shiny offering plate seemed to be saying. "Mrs. Swiftmore is as tight as the bark on a tree. Tithe? Her? Tithe? Never! She hears these blessed truths and is never moved. Why, just a few minutes ago -- while Johnny was testifying -- she clutched her purse tightly to her bosom and gritted her teeth. I know! I saw her from my place on the little table at the rear. No wonder she's not being blessed ever! Hm-m! That may be why the lightning struck her chicken house and burned it to the ground. I often wondered, as I heard these folks testify, why some of them had such hard times. Now I know!" And, if he could have, he: would have let out a long, hard moan and groan.

"Two pennies from Jackie this morning," Brother Brooks said as he opened the envelope. 'More later,' the little hand wrote on the bottom of the envelope. Again the ushers rejoiced.

"Looks like Johnny's Scripture and his testimony are paying big dividends," Brother Wright said happily.

"Brother Whittingham will shout for joy when he hears the good news. He's been praying for a long time for some of these people," Brother Brooks said as they counted another large sized 'back tithe' check.

"And a little child shall lead them," Brother Wright said, rejoicing.

Over in the corner, the collection plate felt it couldn't contain itself for joy.

"If only I could shout!" the plate on the desk seemed to say. "The tithe is the Lord's! The tithe is the Lord's!" it wanted to shout so loud that the world could hear.

If only an offering plate could talk! What tales it would reveal!

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Story 12

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Jacob and Joseph huddled close to the ground, their long shepherd's staffs held tightly in their hands. The night was clear and peaceful and the stars twinkled and shimmered like orbiting diamonds in the vast. expanse of purple blue sky.

"Do you feel what I feel?" Jacob asked his ruddy faced younger brother. "I . . . I can't explain it, but I feel it."

"All evening I have been sensing it, Jacob," the lad answered. "The very atmosphere we breathe seems pregnant with it. Doesn't it?"

"But what is it?" Jacob asked reverently. "It's so strange!"

"Feels to me like something wonderful's going to take place," Joseph said. "Even the stars seem to be trying to whisper something to us. See! Over in the western horizon! Has a star so magnificent ever before appeared?"

"We have been shepherding Father's sheep for a long time," Jacob said thoughtfully, "but I can never remember any feeling so wonderful as this."

"Could it be the promised Messiah has finally come to us!" Joseph exclaimed reverently.

"Who knows! The prophets have told us that 'a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a child; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; and of His kingdom and government there shall be no end.' Could be, Joseph. Even Deborah, our beautiful and holy sister, has been praying that the Messiah may come through her."

"I wonder why He tarries so long," Joseph said, tearfully. "Father longs for His coming. This taxation and severe oppression by King Herod is becoming unbearable and intolerable. Oh! Why does He not come!" and a sigh escaped his youthful lips.

For a long time neither spoke. too absorbed in meditation and thought. Joseph, wrapping his loose flowing shepherd's robe more tightly about his slender body, gazed intently into the heavens, then began singing a psalm. This always seemed to soothe and comfort, not only his own soul, but the sheep when they were restless. He could tell by the soft rhythmic breathing that the sheep were resting, so he sang softly, as though singing only to Jehovah and himself. The mesquite and scrub cottonwoods trembled lightly as the breezes skipped, played and danced among them, and somewhere on a distant hill a coyote bayed and barked to the moon. Far, far away came the plaintive, melancholy cry of another. The night had a thousand eyes and almost as many sounds, but the boys loved it, In times such as this God drew unusually near and much time was spent in deep meditation. How they wished they were privileged to have a personal copy of the Scroll from which the Rabbi read each Sabbath day! This was impossible, however, as that Sacred Writing was kept for the Temple or Synagogue alone. Hence, the Word was exceedingly precious to every listener.

Their thoughts were not for long, however, for suddenly the sky was illuminated with a light brighter than any noonday sun and the heavens were filled with music and loud singing. The boys jumped to their feet, but at the brilliance of the light fell prostrate upon the ground, covering their eyes with their hands. The sheep began bleating softly, then, as quickly as they were overcome with fear, they became calm, as an angel spoke the glorious pronouncement, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

"And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

"He has come, Joseph! He's here! Glory to God! and the brothers began shouting and weeping for joy.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Just as quickly as they had come, the heavenly host disappeared.

"Oh! Oh!" Joseph exclaimed, rubbing himself to see whether he was awake or if he was dreaming. "It is true, Jacob. Is it not? Oh it must be true!"

"Yes, yes, brother. 'Tis all true, every bit of it! But come, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

"But the sheep!" Joseph said, looking at the resting flock.

"Have no fear, brother. The Lord, our God, will take care of them. Let us make haste. He has come! The Messiah has come!"

"Alleluia! Bless Jehovah!" Joseph shouted as they hastened toward Bethlehem.

"The stable!" Jacob said hoarsely, as Joseph faltered near the Inn.

"The angel said He would be 'lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes.' 'Tis down here. See the star! Not the one we saw in the western horizon, but 'tis an Eastern star. Oh, how magnificent it is and how brightly it shines! See! 'Tis hanging just above the humble stable," and the boys ran faster.

Coming to the doorway they heard the soft lowing of cattle and felt the warmth of their breath, and the fragrant scent of hay and straw was everywhere. In a crude, humble, wooden manger lay a heavenly looking Babe; right by Him was a calm faced, sweet looking mother and near her stood the man, Joseph.

"He has come at last! Alleluia! Alleluia!" Jacob said reverently.

" 'Tis all a reality, then," Joseph cried, looking at the Infant lying in a manger. "He has come! Our Messiah has come as the Prophets foretold He would! Blessed be the Lord God Jehovah forever and ever," and the shepherds fell down at His feet and worshipped Him.

" 'Tis too wonderful to be true!" Jacob half whispered as they started back to the resting sheep.

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