

No and Other Stories Compiled by Uncle Humphrey eBook

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PREFACE.

This little book has been prepared for the instruction and amusement of my dear young friends, and it is hoped that they will be profited by its perusal. It will show them their duty, and lead them to perform it.

The little word *No* is of great importance, although composed of but two letters. It will be of great service in keeping us from the path of sin and misery, and of inducing us to walk in "wisdom's ways, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace."

Exercise charity to the destitute, as did little Willy.

Be good sons and daughters, and you will be a comfort to your parents, in sickness or in health. "Forgiveness is an attribute of Heaven."

A guilty conscience gives us no peace.

Which of you have a place of resort that is like Aunt Lissa's Acorn Hollow?

Be industrious, and learn to make yourselves useful, if you would be respected and beloved.

Beware of envy, for it begetteth hatred.

In short, I hope the reader who is now looking at this preface will carefully read every word in the following pages; and not only *read*, but *remember*, the lessons there taught, and thereby become wiser and better.

And when you have read this book so much and so carefully as to be able to tell me what it is all about, when I come to your houses, another little volume will be prepared for the young friends of

Uncle Humphrey.

Lynn, January, 1851.

STORY ABOUT THE WORD NO.

By T. S. Arthur.

"There is a word, my son, a very little word, in the English language, the right use of which it is all important that you should learn," Mr. Howland said to his son Thomas,

who was about leaving the paternal roof for a residence in a neighboring city, never again, perchance, to make one of the little circle that had so long gathered in the family homestead.

“And what word is that, father?” Thomas asked.

“It is the little word *No*, my son.”

“And why does so much importance attach to that word, father?”

“Perhaps I can make you understand the reason much better if I relate an incident that occurred when I was a boy. I remember it as distinctly as if it had taken place but yesterday, although thirty years have since passed. There was a neighbor of my father’s, who was very fond of gunning and fishing. On several occasions I had accompanied him, and had enjoyed myself very much. One day my father said to me,

“‘William, I do not wish you to go into the woods or on the water again with Mr. Jones.’

“‘Why not, father?’ I asked, for I had become so fond of going with him, that to be denied the pleasure was a real privation.

“‘I have good reasons for not wishing you to go, William,’ my father replied, ‘but do not want to give them now. I hope it is all-sufficient for you, that your father desires you not to accompany Mr. Jones again.’

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"I could not understand why my father laid upon me this prohibition; and, as I desired very much to go, I did not feel satisfied in my obedience. On the next day, as I was walking along the road, I met Mr. Jones with his fishing rod on his shoulder, and his basket in his hand.

"Ah, William! you are the very one that I wish to see,' said Mr. Jones smiling. 'I am going out this morning, and want company. We shall have a beautiful day.'

"But my father told me yesterday,' I replied, 'that he did not wish me to go out with you.'

"And why not, pray?' asked Mr. Jones.

"I am sure that I do not know,' I said, 'but indeed, I should like to go very much.'

"O, never mind; come along,' he said, 'Your father will never know it.'

"Yes, but I am afraid that he will,' I replied, thinking more of my father's displeasure than of the evil of disobedience.

"There is no danger at all of that. We will be home again long before dinner-time.'

"I hesitated, and he urged; and finally, I moved the way that he was going, and had proceeded a few hundred yards, when I stopped, and said:

"I don't like to go, Mr. Jones.'

"Nonsense, William! There is no harm in fishing, I am sure. I have often been out with your father, myself.'

"Much as I felt inclined to go, still I hesitated; for I could not fully make up my mind to disobey my father.—At length he said—

"I can't wait here for you, William. Come along, or go back. Say yes or no.'

"This was the decisive moment. I was to make up my mind, and fix my determination in one way or the other. I was to say *yes* or *no*."

"Come, I can't stay here all day,' Mr. Jones remarked, rather harshly, seeing that I hesitated. At the same moment the image of my father rose distinctly before my mind, and I saw his eyes fixed steadily and reprovably upon me. With one desperate resolution I uttered the word, 'No!' and then turning, ran away as fast as my feet would carry me. I cannot tell you how relieved I felt when I was far beyond the reach of temptation.

“On the next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I was startled and surprised to learn that Mr. Jones had been drowned on the day before. Instead of returning in a few hours, as he had stated to me that he would, he remained out all the day. A sudden storm arose; his boat was capsized, and he drowned. I shuddered when I heard this sad and fatal accident related.—That little word *no*, had, in all probability, saved my life.”

“‘I will now tell you, William,’ my father said, turning to me, ‘why I did not wish you to go with Mr. Jones.—Of late, he had taken to drinking; and I had learned within a few days, that whenever he went out on a fishing or gunning excursion he took his bottle of spirits with him, and usually returned a good deal intoxicated. I could not trust you with such a man. I did not think it necessary to state this to you, for I was sure that I had only to express my wish that you would not accompany him, to insure your implicit obedience.’

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"I felt keenly rebuked at this, and resolved never again to permit even the thought of disobedience to find a place in my mind. From that time, I have felt the value of the word *no*, and have generally, ever since, been able to use it on all right occasions.—It has saved me from many troubles. Often and often in life have I been urged to do things that my judgment told me were wrong: on such occasions I always remembered my first temptation, and resolutely said—

"*No!*"

"And now, my son," continued Mr. Howland, do you understand the importance of the word *No*?"

"I think I do, father," Thomas replied. "But is there not danger of my using it too often and thus becoming selfish in all my feelings, and consequently unwilling to render benefits to others?"

"Certainly there is, Thomas. The legitimate use of this word is to resist evil. To refuse to do a good action is wrong." "If any one asks me, then, to do him a favor or kindness, I should not, on any account, say, no."

"That will depend, Thomas, in what manner you are to render him a kindness. If you can do so without really injuring yourself or others, then it is a duty which you owe to all men, to be kind, and render favors."

"But the difficulty, I feel, will be for me to discriminate. When I am urged to do something by one whom I esteem, my regard for him, or my desire to render him an obligation, will be so strong as to obscure my judgment."

"A consciousness of this weakness in your character, Thomas, should put you upon your guard."

"That is very true, father. But I cannot help fearing myself. Still, I shall never forget what you have said, and I will try my best to act from a conviction of right."

"Do so, my son. And ever bear in mind, that a wrong action is *a/ways* followed by pain of mind, and too frequently by evil consequences. If you would avoid these, ever act from a consciousness that you are doing right, without regard to others. If another asks you, from a selfish desire to benefit or gratify himself, to do that which your judgment tells you is wrong, surely you should have no hesitation in refusing."

The precept of his father, enforced when they were about parting, and at a time when his affections for that father were active and intense, lingered in the mind of Thomas Howland. He saw and felt its force, and resolved to act in obedience to it, if ever tempted to do wrong.



On leaving the paternal roof, he went to a neighboring town, and entered the store of a merchant, where were several young men nearly of his own age, that is, between eighteen and twenty. With one of these, named Boyd, he soon formed an intimate acquaintance. But, unfortunately, the moral character of this young man was far from being pure, or his principles from resting upon the firm basis of truth and honor.

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His growing influence over Thomas Howland was apparent in inducing him to stay away from church on the sabbath-day, and pass the time that had heretofore been spent in the place of worship, in roaming about the wharves of the city, or in excursions into the country. This influence was slightly resisted, Thomas being ashamed or reluctant to use the word “No,” on what seemed to all the young men around him a matter of so little importance. Still, his own heart condemned him, for he felt that it would pain his father and mother exceedingly if they knew that he neglected to attend church at least once on the sabbath-day; and he was, besides, self-convicted of wrong in what seemed to him a violation of the precept, *Remember the sabbath-day*, &c. as he had been taught to regard that precept. But once having given way, he felt almost powerless to resist the influence that now bore upon him.

The next violation of what seemed to him a right course for a young man to pursue, was in suffering himself to be persuaded to visit frequently the theatre; although his father had expressly desired that he would avoid a place where lurked for the young and inexperienced so many dangers. He was next easily persuaded to visit a favorite eating-house, in which many hours were spent during the evenings of each week, with Boyd and others, in eating, drinking, and smoking.

Sometimes dominos and backgammon were introduced, and at length were played for a slight stake. To participate in this Thomas refused, on the plea that he did not know enough of the games to risk anything. He had not the moral courage to declare that he considered it wrong to gamble.

All these departures from what he had been taught by his father to consider a right course, were attended by much uneasiness and pain of mind.—But he had yielded to the tempter, and he could not find the power within him to resist his influence successfully.

It happened about six months after his introduction to such an entirely new course of life that he was invited one evening by his companion Boyd, to call on a friend with him. He had, on that day, received from his father forty dollars, with which to buy him a new suit of clothes and a few other necessary articles. He went, of course, and was introduced to a very affable, gentlemanly young man, in his room at one of the hotels. In a few minutes, wine and cigars were ordered, and the three spent an hour or so, in drinking, smoking, and chit-chat of no elevating or refined character.

“Come, let us have a game of cards,” the friend at last remarked, during a pause in the conversation; at the same time going to his trunk and producing a pack of cards.

“No objection,” responded Boyd.

“You’ll take a hand, of course?” the new friend said, looking at Thomas Howland.

But Thomas said that he knew nothing of cards.

“O that’s no matter! You can learn in two minutes,” responded the friend of Boyd.

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Young Howland felt reluctant, but he could not resist the influence that was around him, and so he consented to finger the cards with the rest. As they gathered around the table, a half-dollar was laid down by each of the young men, who looked towards Thomas as they did so.

"I cannot play for money," he said, coloring; for he felt really ashamed to acknowledge his scruples.

"And why not?" asked the friend of Boyd, looking him steadily in the face.

"Because I think it wrong," stammered out Howland, coloring still more deeply.

"Nonsense! Isn't your money your own? And pray what harm is there in your doing with your own as you please?" urged the tempter.

"But I do not know enough of the game to risk my money."

"You don't think we would take advantage of your ignorance?" Boyd said. "The stake is only to give interest to the game. I would not give a copper for a game of cards without a stake. Come, put down your half-dollar, and we'll promise to pay you back all you loose, if you wish it, until you acquire some skill."

But Thomas felt reluctant, and hesitated. Nevertheless, he was debating the matter in his mind seriously, and every moment that reluctance was growing weaker.

"Will you play?" Boyd asked in a decided tone, breaking in upon his debate.

"I had rather not," Thomas replied, attempting to smile, so as to conciliate his false friends.

"You're afraid of your money," said Boyd, in a half-sneering tone.

"It is not that, Boyd."

"Then what is it, pray?"

"I am afraid it is not right."

This was answered by a loud laugh from his two friends, which touched Thomas a good deal, and made him feel more ashamed of the scruples that held him back from entering into the temptation.

"Come down with your stake, Howland," Boyd said, after he had finished his laugh.

The hand of Thomas was in his pocket, and his fingers had grasped the silver coin, yet still he hesitated.

“Will you play, or not?” the friend of Boyd now said, with something of impatience in his tone. “Say yes, or no.”

For a moment the mind of Thomas became confused—then the perception came upon him as clear as a sunbeam, that it was wrong to gamble. He remembered, too, vividly his father’s parting injunction.

“No,” he said, firmly and decidedly.

Both of his companions looked disappointed and angry.

“What did you bring him for?” he heard Boyd’s companion say to him in an under tone, while a frown darkened upon his brow.

The reply did not reach his ear, but he felt that his company was no longer pleasant, and rising, he bade them a formal good-evening, and hurriedly retired. That little word *no* had saved him. The scheme was, to win from him his forty dollars, and then involve him in “debts of honor,” as they are falsely called, which would compel him to draw upon his father for more money, or abstract it from his employer, a system which had been pursued by Boyd, and which was discovered only a week subsequent, when the young man was discharged in disgrace. It then came out, that he had been for months in secret association with a gambler, and that the two shared together the spoils and peculations.

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This incident roused Thomas Howland to a distinct consciousness of the danger that lurked in his path, as a young man, in a large city. He felt, as he had not felt while simply listening to his father's precept, the value of the word *no*; and resolved that hereafter he would utter that little word, and that, too, decidedly, whenever urged to do what his judgment did not approve.

"I will be free!" he said, pacing his chamber backward and forward. "I will be free, hereafter! No one shall persuade me or drive me to do what I feel to be wrong."

That conclusion was his safeguard ever after. When tempted, and he was tempted frequently, his "*No*" decided the matter at once. There was a power in it that was all-sufficient in resisting evil.

WILLY AND THE BEGGAR GIRL.

"An apple, dear mother!"
Cried Willy one day,
Coming in, with his cheeks
Glowing bright, from his play.
"I want a nice apple,
A large one, and red."
"For whom do you want it?"
His kind mother said.

"You know a big apple
I gave you at noon;
And now for another,
My boy, it's too soon."
"There's a poor little girl
At the door, mother dear,"
Said Will, while within
His mild eye shone a tear.

"She says, since last evening
She's eaten no bread;
Her feet are all naked
And bare is her head.
Like me, she's no mother
To love her, I'm sure,
Or she'd not look so hungry,
And ragged, and poor.



“Let me give her an apple;
She wants one, I know;
A nice, large, red apple—
O! do not say no.”
First a kiss to the lips
Of her generous boy,
Mamma gave with a feeling
Of exquisite joy—

For goodness, whene’er
In a child it is seen,
Gives joy to the heart
Of a mother, I ween—
And then led her out, where,
Still stood by the door,
A poor little beggar-girl,
Ragged all o’er.

“Please ma’am, I am hungry,”
The little thing said,
“Will you give me to eat
A small piece of bread?”
“Yes, child, you shall have it;
But who sends you out
From dwelling to dwelling
To wander about?”

A pair of mild eyes
To the lady were raised;
“My mother’s been sick
For a great many days
So sick she don’t know me.”
Sobs stifled the rest
And heaved with young sorrow
That innocent breast.

Just then from the store-room—
Where wee Willy run,
As his mother to question
The poor child begun—
Came forth the sweet boy,
With a large loaf of bread,
Held tight in his tiny hands
High o’er his head.

“Here’s bread, and a plenty!
Eat, little girl, eat!”



He cried, as he laid
The great loaf at her feet.
The mother smiled gently,
Then, quick through the door
Drew the sad little stranger,
So hungry and poor.



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With words kindly spoken
She gave her nice food,
And clothed her with garments
All clean, warm and good.
This done, she was leading
Her out, when she heard
Willy coming down stairs,
Like a fluttering bird.

A newly bought leghorn,
With green bow and band.
And an old, worn out beaver
He held in his hand.
“Here! give her my new hat,”
He cried; “I can wear
My black one all summer—
It’s good—you won’t care—

“Say! will you, dear mother?”
First out through the door,
She passed the girl kindly;
Then quick from the floor
Caught up the dear fellow,
Kissed and kissed him again,
While her glad tears fell freely
O’er his sweet face like rain.

THE GOOD SON.

Little Martin went to a peasant and endeavored to procure employment, by which he might be able to earn some money.

“Yes,” said the peasant, “I will take you for a herds-boy, and if you are industrious, will give you your board and ten dollars for the whole summer.”

“I will be very industrious,” said Martin, “but I beg you to pay me my wages every week, for I have a poor father at home to whom I wish to carry all I earn.”

The peasant, who was pleased beyond measure at this filial love, not only willingly consented, but also raised his wages much higher. Every Saturday the son carefully carried his money, and as much bread and butter as he could spare from his own mouth, to his father.



Children, love and gratitude
Always please the wise and good,
But contempt and hate from all,
On the thankless child will fall.

THE SICK MOTHER.

A mother once lay very sick, and suffered great and constant pain. Her children were all very sad and melancholy, and the large ones often kneeled down together, and prayed that God would restore their mother to health once more.

The youngest child would stand all day by the bed of her mother, and with tearful eyes, anxiously inquire when she would be well and get up again. One day this little child observed a glass filled with some dark fluid standing by the sick bed, and asked, "Mother, what is this?" The mother answered, "My dear child, it is something very bitter; but I must drink it, that I may get well again." "Mother," said the good child, "if it is so bitter, I will drink it for you; then you will be well again."

[Illustration]

And the sick mother, in all her pains, had the comfort and consolation of seeing how dearly all her children loved her.

Parents, joy and comfort find
In a child that is good and kind;
But their hearts are very sad,
When the child they love is bad.

CORNELIA'S PRAYER.

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Cornelia was the joy and pride of her parents, for she was a slender, graceful little creature, darting about like a young fawn, and her cheeks were as fresh and blooming as the young rose when it first opens to receive the dew. Added to this, she was blessed with a temper as sweet and serene as a spring morning when it dawns upon the blooming valleys, announcing a fair and delightful day.

Cornelia had never in her life known what it is to experience trouble and anxiety, for her youth had been all brightness and sunshine. But such freedom from all trials does not generally continue for a long time uninterrupted. And so it was with Cornelia. She was one day very much delighted at being shown a little brother with which her mother had presented her, but her joy was soon clouded by the severe illness of that mother. She lay many long days without noticing or appearing to know her little Cornelia, for her fever was strong, and her senses were continually wandering.

Cornelia was almost heart-broken at this, and they could scarcely persuade her to leave the bedside of her dear mother, for a single moment. She would entreat and implore until she won their consent that she should remain in the sick room; and then all night long would the affectionate little girl watch by her mother's bed, and attentively study her every want, wetting her parched lips and moving around her with the lightest and most anxious footsteps.

On the seventh day of her sickness the fever approached its crisis and there was deep silence in the little chamber, and stifled weeping, for every one thought that death was near.

But with the night came long absent slumber, and revived the almost dying mother, and seemed to give her back to life. What a season for Cornelia! Through the whole night she sat by the bed listening to her now soft and regular breathing, while hope and fear were struggling together in her bosom. When daylight appeared the mother opened her eyes, and turning them upon the anxious Cornelia, knew her. "I am better, my child," said she in a clear, but feeble voice, "I am better, and shall get well!" They then gave her drink and nourishment, and she went to sleep again.

What joy was this for the affectionate little girl! Her heart was too full for utterance, and she stole softly out of the chamber, and skipped out into the field, and ascended a hill near by, just as the sun was dawning. Here she stood her hands clasped together, and her bosom swelling with many contending emotions of pain and hope. Presently the sun arose and streamed over her face, and Cornelia thought of the new life of her mother after her reviving sleep, and the anguish of her own feelings. But she could not long shut up the flood of feeling within her own heart, and she knelt down upon blooming flowers with which the hill was covered, and bowing her face to the fragrant sod, her tears were mingled with the dew of heaven.

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After a few minutes silence, she lifted up her head, and rising from the ground, returned to her home, and the chamber of her mother. Never before had there been so sweet and calm a loveliness on the face of Cornelia. It was a reflection of the peace and tranquility of her soul, for she had held communion with her God!

FORGIVENESS.

A friend with whom I was conversing a few weeks since, told me of a beautiful example of this Christian grace, even in a little child. It has often dwelt in my memory since, and perhaps some of my little readers may be induced to cultivate the same spirit, if I repeat it to them.

Little Sarah was a sweet child of six summers. Gentle and affectionate in disposition, she soon won a large portion of that love which few hearts can withhold from the happy spirit of infancy. It has been said, "Childhood is ever lovely," and I would add, childhood is ever loved. Sarah was an attentive and careful reader of the word of God, at a very early age. There it was that she found the Divine promise, "Forgive, and thou shalt be forgiven." And she not only read this precept, but showed by her life of gentle forgiveness, that she had engraven it upon her heart.

[Illustration]

She attended a small school which was kept near her home; and I am sorry that all who were her schoolmates had not the same kind spirit. There were some who were very rude and unkind and Sarah soon found many trials to encounter. Often would the gentle child return to her sweet home in tears to forget her sorrow in a mother's love. Yet every harsh and ungentle tone was forgiven by her, for she knew that forgiveness was of Heaven.

One day when her mother had given her some plums she observed that Sarah did not eat them, but put them all into her little workbag to carry them to school.

"Why do you do so?" said she; "you do not eat the plums which I have given you."

"No, mother," said Sarah "I will carry them to the little children who do not love me. Perhaps they will love me better if I am kind to them."

Here was the true secret of human love. The power of kindness—there is none other that will reach every heart. There is none other that can influence them for good. It can lead the sinner from his evil way, for none are too sinful to love, and where love is, there is power. We are all frail and erring beings, whose hourly prayer should be for pardon, and shall we not forgive?

THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

A mother one day returned home very sorrowful, and lamented bitterly to her husband that she had heard that one of their sons had beaten a poor child.

“This,” said she, “must have certainly been done by our naughty Caspar, but he will deny it if I put the question to him.”

“I will answer for it,” said the prudent father, “that I will put the question to him in a way in which he cannot answer with a lie; and thereby come at the truth.”

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They soon after went to the supper table, and Caspar was very still and quiet: he ate little, and spoke still less. He seldom looked at his parents, who were very grave and serious, and then only with stolen glances.

The sons soon after went to bed.—They all slept in separate beds, but in the same room.

About half an hour after, when they were gone to sleep, their father entered the chamber, and took pains to make a great noise in shutting the door. Caspar instantly sprang out of bed, and full of fear cried out, “What is it? What is the matter?”

“Nothing,” answered the father, “I was only wishing to see who among you was asleep.” The two other brothers were sleeping softly and sweetly, and did not awake until they were aroused by Caspar’s cry. The father then went out again.

The next day the father called Caspar to him, and, before his mother and all the children, said to him, “You beat a poor child, yesterday, did you?” Caspar, who thought that it had all come out, began to excuse himself.—“He struck me too, and—” His father would not suffer him to proceed any farther. “Caspar!” said he “why do you make us so much trouble and sorrow? Yesterday, we heard that one of our sons had beaten a poor child, but we did not then know who had done it. But when I saw you eating in so much fear and trouble, and still more, when you could not sleep from uneasiness and your *guilty conscience* drove you from your bed as soon as I opened the door, I was convinced that you were the guilty one. See, how miserable wickedness can make us. You have been sufficiently punished by your anxiety and fear, but you must now endeavor to do some good to the poor child, and make atonement for your faults. What will you do?”

Caspar acknowledged his fault, and promised to do every thing that his father commanded him.

He who does wrong is always sure to repent of it, for he is punished by his own conscience, if in no other way.

ACORN HOLLOW.

“Oh, Aunt Elissa! stay with us and spend the evening, why can’t you!” exclaimed Janie, Nelly, and Thanny, as the before-mentioned aunt entered their cheerful little parlor one evening, after being absent some time.

“Stay and spend the evening! Bless your dear souls! no. Haven’t I got to go to the post office, and besides that, a hundred and one other errands to do?”

“Never mind the post office, Aunt Lissa. Where’s my hat? I’ll run there and back again in two minutes, and that will save you the trouble of going. And never mind the errands either; you can come over in the morning and do them; besides that we don’t like to have our aunt going about these dark evenings—she might get lost, or something might catch her and carry her off, and then—”

“What then?”

“Why she wouldn’t tell us any more stories.”

“Away with you, you selfish things! that’s as much as you care for me. Now I’ll go right home.”

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“Oh don’t, don’t! Run Thanny and shut the door, while I hold her, and Nelly unties her bonnet. I don’t care if she does scold.”

“Go away! you wild birds. Haven’t you been taught any better manners than this? Strange your mother will let you act so! but there she sits, sewing away as busily as ever, only looking up now and then, to smile, as if she didn’t care at all. Fie! for shame! There goes my bonnet and shawl. Now Nelly, if you hide them, I’ll never go over the hills with you again. I have a great mind not to speak a word to one of you.”

“Oh don’t stop talking, for we want you to tell us a story.” “A story! why dear children, I can’t begin with the first thought of a story to-night; I feel so stupid and dull that it will be quite as much as I can do to keep myself awake.”

“Oh well, then we will have a dance, and that will wake you up. Here! Away we go!”

“Stop! stop you merry elves! Oh my foot! Oh my hand! I would rather tell you all the stories in the Arabian Nights, than go through one such dance as this. Sit down now and be quiet, for if I have really got it to do, I want to begin as soon as possible. Well, what shall I tell you about, Janie?”

“Oh, anything you please.”

[Illustration]

“There, now, that isn’t any sort of an answer at all. What shall I tell you about, Thanny?”

“Oh, tell us about a sailor boy, who wore a tarpaulin hat and a blue jacket with a collar to it—and how he went to sea, and got shipwrecked on an uninhabited, desert island, and *almost* got drowned, but didn’t quite—and then, after a great many years, he came home one snow-stormy night, and knocked at the door, with a bag full of dollars and a bunch of cocoa nuts, and his old father and mother almost died of joy to see him.”

“Well done! But now that you know the whole of the story, it won’t be of any use for me to tell it over again. What shall I tell you about, Nelly?”

“Tell us about something you used to do when you was a little girl.”

“When I was a little girl? Ah yes: do you know that I used to be a wild and careless creature, and did many things which I am sorry for now? I would often act upon the impulse of the moment, therefore I said many vain and foolish words, and though I did not intend evil, yet I often committed thoughtless acts, which were, in themselves, very wrong. I did not restrain that spirit as I ought to, so it grew upon me, until it almost became a part of my nature, and now that I have grown up to be a woman, and people expect better things of me—a word, a thought, or look will call forth those feelings once more, even at times of the most serious reflection; and then many call me light-minded



and trifling. I do not blame them, but in my heart I do not feel so. Take care of yourselves in time, that you may not have these sorrowful fruits to repent of. But I do not mean to preach you a sermon, instead of telling a story. And now that you have reminded me of my earlier days, I will tell you about a place called Acorn Hollow, for of all the spots that I love to remember, this is one of the dearest to me."

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“Where is it, Aunt Lissa?”

“It is about two miles from your grandfather’s house, in the woods, at the south part of the town. I have visited it at all times and seasons of the year, but the first time I ever saw it was in the dead of winter.”

“Why, how happened that?”

“It was the 22d of December—the anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, and there was to be a grand entertainment in the evening, to which my older sisters were invited. They wanted some of the curly ground pine, which keeps green all winter, to put with the flowers they wore in their hair; and as brother Alfred was always famous for knowing the whereabouts of all strange plants and wild flowers, he promised to get them some. In the afternoon, Freddy Lucas, his friend and almost constant companion, came, and as it was an uncommonly mild and pleasant day for that season of the year, they asked me to go with them. I was right glad to do so, and after adding one more to our party, Susan Edwards, a dark-eyed, merry-hearted girl, we were soon scampering away over the hills. There had been some very heavy rains, by which the sand had been washed away from the hill-side, leaving deep and wide furrows at the foot, which required all our skill to jump over, but we determined not to be outdone by Alfred, who acted as pioneer; so we continued to follow our leader, with many a laugh and tumble, until it seemed we were going a great way, to get nowhere.

“At length we came to a little pond, far down among the hills, with shrubs and rushes growing all around and into it. Alfred said this was Turtle pond, where the boys often came Saturday afternoons to roast potatoes and apples, and have a real frolic. He said, too, it would do one’s heart good to look upon these hills in the early spring time, for then they were fairly blushing with the beautiful May flowers, which the boys and girls who are working for the anti-slavery cause, take so much pains to gather, and send to the Boston market. I asked him if this was Acorn Hollow. ‘Oh no,’ said he, ‘we must go through this pasture, and the next one beyond it; then we shall see a cedar tree growing by the fence, and soon we shall come to a place where two roads go round a hill, and then we shall be close by there.’

“So we went, and went, till he stopped suddenly, and said, ‘here it is.’ And sure enough, there was the beautiful hollow, close by the road-side. The sides were so steep that it was by no means safe to run down into it, and the great oak trees and the small ones, with the pine, the walnut, and the silvery birch, grew thick and close all around, save that one small opening from the road, a little archway among the overhanging boughs and dwarf alders.

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“Just below this opening there was one of the most lordly looking oak trees that I ever saw. It was taller than any of the other trees, and the trunk was so large, that when two of us children stood, one on each side, and reached our arms around it we could only touch the tips of each other’s fingers. We had to hurry and get our ground pine, for the days were very short, and it grew dark fast. There was plenty of it growing under the trees with another strange-looking evergreen, which ran close to the ground, in long vines with little soft narrow leaves, which felt like fur. The boys called it bear’s grass. I don’t think that was the right name, but I never knew any other. After we had trimmed up our caps and bonnets with the early leaves of pine, and made ourselves tippets of the bear’s grass, we hastened back again; but the stars were in the sky, and the Gurnet lights were beaming brightly over the waters, long before we reached our homes.

“After this we went there a great many times, for we were fond of rambling in the woods, and almost everything which is usually found on hilltop or valley, seemed to grow there. There were May flowers, violets and anemonies, in spring time; box, whortle, and black berries, in summer, and acorns and walnuts in autumn.

“One fourth of July, when soldiers were marching about the streets—boys were firing crackers—dogs barking, and every body seemed just ready to run crazy, Alfred, and Charlie, who was but a ‘wee bit’ of a boy, then, with sister Una and myself, determined to make our escape from this scene of confusion. We took a little basket of provision, with a hatchet and a jug of water, and started for our favorite hollow. Often, in the long winter evenings, we brothers and sisters would sit round the fire, and tell what we would do when we grew up to be men and women. But there was one thing which we always agreed upon, and it was this: that we would all live together, in a little cottage in the woods, where we could have plenty of room to move about in, and do just as we pleased. Now we thought we had dreamed of this long enough and we determined to have a little of the reality; so, as soon as we reached the hollow, we began to build a bower with the branches which we cut from the trees with our hatchet. We worked away very busily, for a long time, toiling and sweating, yet all the time feeling never so happy. Oh, I do wish that all you children, and a great many more beside, could have been there with us, to see what a nice, pretty place it was, when it was finished. Hiram of Tyre, in his stately palace of cedar, fir, and algum wood, could not have felt prouder or happier than we did, in our little sylvan bower.

“We spread a shawl on the ground, and laid our provisions upon it. Here we sat and sung, and told stories, till we saw a great dark shadow coming down the hill-side; and what do you suppose it was, Thanny?” “Well I don’t know, unless it was a great black bear, coming down to get some of his grass for supper.”

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“Oh fie! No. What do you think it was, Nelly?”

“Wasn’t it old Pan and Sylvanus, who were astonished to hear such a noise in their woods?”

“No, you haven’t got it right either. What do you say, Janie?”

“Well, I guess it was the shadows of evening, coming down the hill-side.”

“That’s it—and we were very much surprised to find it so, for the time had passed very quickly and pleasantly. We gathered up our things, and started for home. But first we stopped under the old acorn-tree, and sung ‘a song to the oak, the brave old oak.’ We didn’t know the right tune, and so we sung it to the air of ‘there is nae luck about the house.’ It wasn’t the music we cared so much about, as the beautiful words, they were so pretty and appropriate.

“Well, we did not go into the woods much, after this, for we had a great many other things to take up our minds. Charlie and I went to school, and father needed Alfred to help him all the time.

“I have told you how we found the hollow and how much we enjoyed ourselves there; now I will tell you what became of it.”

“What became of it! Why! did it catch afire and burn up?”

“No.”

“Did it blow away in a strong north wind?”

“No.”

“Did it get filled up with dust and dry leaves, or did you forget the way there, and never find it again? What *did* become of it?”

“Well, let me tell you. It was one of those beautiful spring days—when we feel that we cannot possibly stay at home, and our feet will run away with us, in spite of ourselves—that the old spirit and desire for rambling came over us once more, and away we started for the woods. ‘Which way will you go?’ said Alfred as we stopped at a place where two roads led in different directions. ‘Acorn Hollow,’ was the answer of all; and accordingly we went that way. But oh, wonder of wonders! How we stood by the once loved spot, and stared at each other, and rubbed our eyes, and looked again and again. Where were the beautiful trees that grew so closely side by side, intermingling their foliage, and locking their arms together like loving brothers and sisters? Where was the ‘brave old oak,’ that had stood there with his broad green arms outstretched, and shook his myriad leaves whenever we came, as if he loved us children, and welcomed us to a resting-



place in his shadow. And where was the soft green carpet of moss and tender grass that was spread out so beautifully at the bottom of the hollow? It was all changed, as if the breath of an evil spirit had blown upon it. 'Isn't it too bad!' we all exclaimed; and after we had given expression to our feelings by these few words, we proceeded to a closer examination. All the trees along the hill-side had been cut down, and little piles of wood were put up, to carry away. The May flowers were all dried up in the sun, and the ground pine and bear's grass were as sere and yellow as the autumn leaves.

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Down in the bottom of the hollow, the turf had been cut up and carried off, and there lay the bones of an old horse bleaching in the sun. There was only a little stump left of the acorn tree, with a few withered branches. 'Isn't it a sin, and a shame!' said Alfred, indignantly. 'I never want to come here again,' murmured Charlie; and I sat down on the stump and cried. If all the world had been looking at me I couldn't have helped it.

"Then I thought how strangely everything was changing around me. Nothing appeared the same to me, save the sun and stars and the broad blue sea. Father and mother, brothers and sisters, and the great world itself, were all changing. I too was changed. Time and study, with daily trial, were making me an altogether different being from what I had been, and I knew that the finger of the Almighty was writing lessons upon my heart, which I could never forget; no, not through all eternity. I wept; and then a truth—a great and a good one—rose in my heart, like the morning star, for I knew, at that moment, that all these changes were but the lessons which the angel teachers are giving us, to fit us for higher duties in the world to come. The memory of that beautiful spot is as fresh and fair in my heart as ever, and the lesson which I learned there has had a blessed influence upon my life; for now, when I feel sad and disheartened, I strive to keep my eye fixed on the great point to which we all tend, forgetting the little sorrows that lie between. And I hear the calm sweet voice of him who died on Calvary, saying, 'fear not; I am thy friend and brother. I too have dwelt in the flesh and know its conflicts and trials; trust in me, for I am the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever.'

"Hark! don't I hear the clock strike?—eight, nine, ten. O, naughty children! when I only came in here to stop ten minutes; and now you have kept me here till ten o'clock! Only think how dark it is, and what a long way over to the green. I guess you will be sorry, if you should hear, in the morning, that I had walked off the bridge into the mill-brook, or fallen into the cistern on the Green."

"Oh aunt Lissa! as if there wasn't any fence to the bridge, and a cover on the cistern, with a stone on it. You needn't try to frighten us in that way."

"Well then, let me go, lest grandmother should feel frightened; but first you must pay me for telling you a story."

"Well, how much do you ask?"

"Oh, not much; only a kiss from each of you."

"That you may have and welcome, and as many as you please."

"Good night."

INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS.

The necessity of cultivating industrious habits in early youth was never more fully exemplified than in the case of two girls, daughters of the same mother, who were born in a village about forty miles from the city of Boston.

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Mary and Sophia had the advantage of a mother who was herself full of enterprise and energy, and who having been left a widow, and knowing that the success of her children depended mainly on their own conduct, strove to bring them up to habits of industry. Sophia, the younger of the two sisters, inherited much of her mother's tact and vivacity. When the elder persons of the family were engaged in any domestic employment, she delighted to watch their movements; and they, being pleased with this mark of early promise, never failed to instruct her in the duties of a housewife. She learned rapidly under their tuition, and as she never thought she knew too much to learn, she thrived greatly; so that when she became old enough to be married, she was fully acquainted with all the branches of domestic business. She knew what implements to use, and she had a dexterous way of using them, which not only helped to forward the business of the day, but also gave much pleasure to those persons who saw with what grace and ease she performed her labor. She married a worthy young man, who never ceased to admire her, because his house was always in order, his meals were on the table at the exact hour, and her dress was always arranged with a regard to neatness and to beauty, and the most perfect cleanliness reigned from one end of the house to the other.

With regard to her sister Mary, I regret that I have too much reason to speak otherwise. Although Mary knew very well that her fortune, for good or for evil, depended wholly upon herself, yet she thought it unnecessary to take any pains to acquire industrious habits, or to learn the business of housekeeping. While she was yet a very little girl, she was obstinate and self-willed, and thought herself too good to work, or to learn any useful art. While the rest of the family were engaged in necessary labor, she was amusing herself; and if called upon to do the least thing, she complained bitterly as if some great injury had been done to her. She thought it very much beneath her to learn to sew or to make bread, or to milk one of the cows, and could talk half an hour and make very fine excuses in order to get rid of any such little exercise. When she was twelve years old, she supposed that she was born to be a lady, and she took this notion into her head, merely because she did not know how to do a single useful thing. If her mother or sisters said anything to her about her dress, which was never put on as it should be, or about her hair, which was never done up neatly, she flouted at them with disdain, and said that clothes did not make the woman; which was very true of itself, but nevertheless, neatness in dress is always required to make a respectable woman. One may be ever so poor and may have ever so little clothing, but one can always tell by a girl's appearance, what is to be laid to the account of poverty, and what is to be laid to the account of sluttishness.

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Mary grew up in this way, and as she did not improve herself by useful occupation, she found other employments which did her no good. She read every foolish and extravagant story and novel which give false ideas of life, and which poison the mind by unreasonable views of love and of married life. She now thought that she was becoming very accomplished, but no young man who knew her history desired to unite himself with such a partner. At last, however, a stranger who entirely misapprehended her character offered her his hand, and she professed to love him very much. But her professions were all frothy and vain; for she had read so many extravagant fictions, and knew so little of real life, that she did not know her own mind, and supposed that she was very much in love, when she did not even know how to form a serious attachment. The man whom she married was very respectable and well disposed, and if he had married a smart and industrious woman would have succeeded well in the world. But Mary had never been either smart or industrious, and she seemed to suppose that now she was married there was no necessity for doing anything. When her husband complained that it was hard to live, she only smiled, and said that she knew if she were a man she could get along well enough, and that every man ought to expect, as a matter of course, to support his family. Such talk as this did not comfort him, as he was daily laboring very hard to maintain his family, for his wife had one daughter, and he thought that his companion ought to take an interest in his misfortunes. But she had no regard for the cares and troubles of her husband. She thought that it was bad enough for her to be debarred from riding in a coach, and putting on rich clothing, and she often complained that she could not lead the life of a lady. As their family increased, her husband found that she possessed no tact at all. He would have hired a housekeeper had he been able, in order that his wife might lounge about and read novels all day: he would also have employed some person to dress her, as her clothing was always put on in so negligent a manner that he was ashamed to invite a friend to his house. But Mary imagined that she had a very hard time, because she could not be a lady, and she associated with some idle, gossiping women, who encouraged her to find fault with her husband, because he could not put her into a palace. Her husband never could have his meals ready betimes, and when he went home to his dinner, the breakfast dishes were found still unwashed upon the table. Mary's children were pretty and healthy, but having been always allowed to go dirty and ragged, they were treated with contempt by all decent children. These things wore upon her husband's mind more and more, until he left his family in despair, and never returned to them again. Mary is now in the poor house; for, being too idle to work, and never having learned how to support herself, it could not be expected that she should provide honestly for her family. Nobody pities her, and there are many who ask her how she likes being a lady, and who joke her about riding in her coach. Such is the fatal effect of forming idle habits early in life.

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ENVY.

I once knew two little girls who attended the same school and occupied the same bench, yet who were entirely unlike each other in disposition, so that while Martha was beloved by all who knew her, Mary was as generally disliked. Martha was gentle, kind and affectionate; but Mary was of a very different spirit. Her chief fault was *envy*, and so much did she indulge this base passion that she was unhappy whenever she heard one of her little school-mates praised. She was very unkind to Martha, for she envied her the ease with which her lessons were committed to memory, and more than all else she envied her the love of her kind teacher. Therefore she wished to injure Martha, and to take away that love.

One day Mary, being, according to her usual custom, idle, amused herself with tearing and defacing her books. After spending some time in this manner, she took them to her teacher, and with many loud complaints, told her that Martha had thus injured them. She hoped that Martha would have been punished, and that her school-mates would not love her so well, but would believe that she had done so wrong an action.

But it was not so. The teacher did not believe Mary's complaint, and when Martha said she was innocent, she knew that it was so, for truth was in her heart. Then one of the little girls said that she had seen Mary herself injuring the books, and the wicked child was defeated in the plan that she had formed.

After this, none of the children would talk or play with Mary, and she soon left the school. None regretted her absence, for all said, "What a pity that so sweet a name should be accompanied by so ungentle a spirit."

Now this little girl had many faults, but I think that the one wherein she most erred was envy. We have seen how this fault led her to commit many sins. It led her to unkindness, falsehood, and disgrace. And however trivial the circumstance I have related may appear, yet it early stamped upon my mind a lesson which after years have not effaced. May it bear to some young hearts the same lesson—*beware of envy*.

CONCLUSION.

And now, my dear readers, we have come to the last page in this little volume; and that its precepts may abide in all your hearts, is the sincere desire of your friend,

UNCLE HUMPHREY.

[Illustration]