

have his salary raised that very night. A little matter of business had detained Mr. John Bentley, the head of the firm, in his office, so that he would be sure to find him on returning thither.

Mr. Bentley was seated in his office glancing over some papers. He was a large, portly man, a little pompous in manner; and a glance from his grey eyes always confused the worthy bookkeeper, who, long as he had known him, had never got to feel quite at ease in his company. Job had an indistinct idea that his employer was immensely superior to him in every way, and looked up to him with distant reverence.

John Bentley lifted his eyebrows in surprise as Job shuffled in at the door, his hat under his arm, with an air of nervous trepidation which the consciousness of his errand inspired.

'Have you forgotten anything, Warner?' demanded Mr. Bentley, in a clear, commanding tone.

'No, sir, Mr. Bentley; or rather I should say yes,' stammered the bookkeeper. 'There was a little matter which I wished to speak to you about. But I should not wish to take up your time if you are busy, sir, and I will wait till some other occasion.'

'If you can say what you have to say in five minutes, Warner, go on,' returned his employer.

'It was about an increase of salary, Mr. Bentley,' said he, plunging into his subject and talking fast to keep his courage up. 'Prices have been rising of late so much that I find it very difficult to maintain a wife and four children on seven hundred dollars a year. I do, indeed, sir. If you would be kind enough to add a hundred, or even fifty, I would thank you gratefully, sir.'

'An increase of salary, eh, Warner? Seven hundred dollars used to be considered a fair salary. Of course, some get much more. But you know, Warner, that you are not a first-class man of business. You do your work very satisfactorily, but—'

'I know what you would say, Mr. Bentley,' interrupted Job, humbly. 'I know my abilities are small, but I try to be faithful. I hope I have always been faithful to the best of my poor abilities.'

'Yes, Warner, you have. Don't think I have any complaint to make; but as to an increase of salary, that requires consideration. Probably the high prices will not always last, and in the meantime you can be more economical.'

More economical! And this to Job, who had been a close economist all his life. However, he did not venture to reply, but, bowing humbly, withdrew. A minute later his employer, who had got through with the business which detained him, put on his overcoat and followed. On his way back Job paused again before the window, which had so great an attraction for him. Again he thought how much little Effie would like it. But he felt satisfied from Mr. Bentley's manner that there was little hope of an increase of income, and without that such an outlay would be unpardonable extravagance.

'No,' he half sighed, 'I must give up the idea of buying it, and little Effie must be content with something less expensive.'

Mr. John Bentley was close behind, and heard this speech. 'So he wanted to buy that piece of finery,' thought he. 'No, wonder he demanded an increase of salary.'

The two men continued to walk in the same direction, Job, of course, unconscious of Mr. Bentley's proximity. Suddenly from the darkness of a side street emerged a little girl, a very picture of wretchedness, with ragged dress, pinched and famished features, and feet almost bare, notwithstanding the inclement season. She looked up piteously in the face of Job Warner.

'I am very cold and hungry,' she murmured.

'Poor child! poor child!' ejaculated Job, compassionately. 'Have you no home?'

'No; mother died last week, and since then I have lived in the streets.'

'Have you had anything to eat to-day?'

'Yes, sir, a cracker.'

'Only a cracker!' repeated Job, pitifully. 'And where do you expect to pass the night?'

'I don't know, sir.'

'Where did you sleep last night?'

'In a doorway; but they drove me off this morning. I wish mother were alive again.' The poor child burst into tears, sobbing convulsively.

'Don't cry,' my dear, said Job soothingly. 'Don't cry. You shall come home with me, and I will let you sleep in a warm bed and give you something to eat. I am poor, my child, but not so poor as you, thank God! I had intended to buy some little presents for my children, but they will be better pleased if I spend the money in making you comfortable. Take my hand and we shall soon be at home.'

During this colloquy John Bentley withdrew into a doorway. He had felt some curiosity to learn how his bookkeeper would deal with this claim upon his bounty. There was something in the straightforward simplicity and kind heart of Job that touched him, and made him feel not a little compunction for his own bearing in the interview which had just taken place between them.

'He is about to deprive his children of their Christmas presents for the sake of succoring that poor little outcast,' said John Bentley to himself. 'He has a noble heart, poor fellow! And he shall be no loser by it. After all, seven hundred dollars must be quite insufficient in these times. I will see what I can do for him.'

It was the merchant's better nature that spoke. He was not naturally a selfish man, only inconsiderate. Now that his benevolent impulses were excited, he would not rest until they were embodied in action. Honest Job, never hast thou done a better night's work than this. Thy kindness to the little outcast shall be richly recompensed.

With the little girl's hand firmly clasped in his, Job paused before the door of a small wooden tenement and, turning the knob, softly entered.

'Why, Job, how late you are!' said a kind, motherly woman, advancing to meet him. 'And, merciful goodness! who have you there?'

'A poor child, Mary, without father or mother, who was wandering hungry through the streets. I couldn't help bringing her home, could I? Think if it had been little Effie!'

'You did quite right, Job. Poor little thing! How thin she is. Are you hungry, little girl?'

'Oh, so hungry and cold! May I warm myself by your fire, ma'am?'

'Bless me, child, I ought to have thought of it before. Yes, go and sit down on the cricket, and I will bring you some bread and milk.'

While the little girl's wants were being satisfied Mrs. Warner said: 'Well, Job, what have you got for the children?'

'I didn't get anything, Mary. I was just going to get some little things when this poor child came up. I thought maybe we might be willing to keep her for a week or so and fit her out with some better clothes, and I am afraid we can't afford to do that and buy presents for the children too. Do you think they would be willing to do without them for this year?'

'I am sure they will. But all have hung up their stockings; I must tell them to-night so that they need not be disappointed in the morning.'

The considerate mother went upstairs and acquainted the children that their father had brought home a poor little girl who had no father nor mother, and asked if for her sake they would be willing to give up their Christmas presents. This appeal went to the children's hearts. They were also delighted with the idea of a new playfellow, and in bright anticipations of the morrow lost sight entirely of the stockings that were destined to remain unfilled.

'What did the children say?' asked Job, a little uncasily.

'Dear children!' said Mrs. Warner, wiping her eyes with motherly affection and pride. 'They took it like little angels. They are very anxious to see the little girl. I do believe they will regard her as the best Christmas present they could have.'

'I wish we could do something more than keep her for a few days,' said Job, thoughtfully.

'So do I. If you only had a little larger salary, Job, it might be done. Why don't you ask for more?'

'I did to-night, Mary.'

'And what did Mr. Bentley say?' inquired Mrs. Warner, eagerly.

'He advised me to economise.'

'As if you hadn't been doing it all your life,' exclaimed his wife, indignantly. 'Little he knows what economy is.'

'Hush, Mary,' said Job, half frightened. 'Of course, he can't understand how hard a time we have to get along.'

'No, but he ought to inquire. What harm would it do him to give you an extra hundred dollars?'

'I suppose he could afford it,' said John; 'but perhaps he doesn't think I am worth any more. As he said, seven hundred dollars used to be considered a fair salary.'

'So he refused your application.'

'Well, no, not exactly. He said he would take it into consideration. But I am sure from his tone that I have nothing to expect. We must get along as well as we can through the hard times, and perhaps things will improve by and bye.'

'What a thoroughly good man you are, Job!' said Mrs. Warner, looking affectionately at her husband, who was dear to her in spite of his shabby coat.

'Of course, I have got a good wife,' he answered cheer-