

fully. 'I won't call myself poor as long as I have you, Mary.'

There were few happier or more thankful hearts than those of the shabby bookkeeper and his good wife, despite their enforced self-denial and numerous privations. Their souls were filled with a calm and serene trust that the same kind Providence which had guarded and guided them hitherto would continue its beneficent care and protection. Mrs. Warner took up her knitting, and Job proceeded to adjust his spectacles, preparatory to reading, when he was interrupted by a quick, sharp, decisive knock on the outer door.

Taking a tallow candle from the table, Job went to the door and opened it. The wind caused his candle to flicker, so that he did not at first recognise the visitor. When he did his heart gave a sudden bound, and in his surprise he nearly let fall the light.

It was his employer, Mr. John Bentley, who stood before him.

'Well, Warner, may I come in?' inquired the merchant with an unwonted kindness in his tone.

'To be sure, Mr. Bentley, sir; I shall be most happy if you will condescend to enter my poor dwelling. It isn't suitable for such a visitor, but you are heartily welcome, sir. This way, if you please.'

Mrs. Warner looked up as her husband re-entered the room. Her surprise was little less than his when Mr. Bentley was introduced.

'Mary, this is Mr. Bentley, my respected employer, who has condescended to honor us with a visit. I am sorry we have no better place to receive him in.'

'No apologies, Warner,' said Mr. Bentley, pleasantly, throwing aside his usual pompous manner. 'I didn't expect you could live like a prince on seven hundred dollars. Mrs. Warner, I am glad to make your acquaintance. Your husband has served our house long and faithfully, and I trust will continue long in our employ. I am glad he has so much to make his home pleasant.'

No one knew better how to pay a compliment gracefully than John Bentley, and Mrs. Warner bowed in gratification, reiterating the assurance of their pleasure in receiving him. The allusion to her husband's continued services dissipated an apprehension to which Mr. Bentley's unexpected visit had given rise, that he might be about to lose his situation.

'I have called, Warner, on a little business,' proceeded Mr. Bentley. 'You spoke to me to-night about having your salary raised.'

'Yes, sir,' said Job, humbly. 'I thought afterwards that I might be a little presumptuous in supposing my services to be worth more than seven hundred dollars; but, indeed, sir, it requires a great deal of economy to make both ends meet. I was thinking more of that than of my own qualifications, I suppose. As you said, sir—'

'Never mind what I said, Warner,' interrupted the merchant, smiling. 'Your application was made unexpectedly. I have thought over what you said, and decided that your application was just and proper. Prices have advanced considerably, as a little investigation has satisfied me. Therefore, I have concluded to grant your request. What increase of salary do you ask?'

'I thought of asking you for a hundred dollars more,' said Job, timidly; 'but if you think that is too much, I should be satisfied and grateful if you could let me have fifty.'

'Do you think you could get along on fifty?' asked Mr. Bentley.

'Yes, sir—with economy, of course. I always expect to practise economy, and I have a good wife who knows how to make the most of a little.'

'That I can readily believe,' said the merchant, politely. 'You may consider your salary raised, then, Warner,' he proceeded. 'And as you have been able to get along on seven hundred dollars, I hope you will be able to afford yourself some additional comforts on a thousand.'

'A thousand!' repeated Job and his wife simultaneously.

'Yes, my good friends,' said Mr. Bentley; 'I have decided that my assistant bookkeeper is fully worth that sum to the firm, and it is my wish to pay those whom I employ what they are justly entitled to.'

'How can I ever thank you, sir?' exclaimed Job, rising and seizing his employer's hand. 'I shall consider myself rich with such an income. Mary, did you understand? I am to have a thousand dollars.'

'Sir, you are very kind,' said Mary, simply. 'I need not thank you. Your own heart will tell you how much happiness you have conferred upon us.'

'I understand and appreciate what you say,' said Mr. Bentley, kindly. 'But, Warner,' he continued, 'there is another matter about which I wish to speak to you. There is a young girl in whom I feel an interest, who is unfortunate enough to stand alone in the world, without

father or mother. I have thought that if you and Mrs. Warner would be willing to receive her as one of your family, and bring her up in the same careful manner as your own children, it would be an excellent arrangement for her, while I would take care that you lost nothing by your kindness.'

'We shall be most happy to oblige you, sir,' said Mrs. Warner. 'But would our plain style of living suit the young lady? We shall, to be sure, be able now to afford a better house.'

'I don't think the young lady will find any fault with your housekeeping, Mrs. Warner,' said the merchant, especially as she has probably never been accustomed to living as well as she would with you.'

Mrs. Warner looked mystified.

Mr. Bentley smiled.

'The young lady is already in your house,' he explained. 'In fact, it is the friendless little orphan whom your husband encountered to-night and brought home.'

Mrs. Warner's face lighted up with pleasure.

'We will undertake the charge gladly,' she answered; 'and would have done so if you had not spoken of it. Is it not so, Job?'

'Yes, Mary, it occurred to me as soon as Mr. Bentley spoke of raising my salary.'

'And you would really have undertaken such a charge at your own expense?' said Mr. Bentley, wonderingly. 'Would it have been just to your own children to diminish their comforts for the sake of doing a charitable action?'

'We shall not be able to leave our children money,' said Mrs. Warner, simply, 'but we hope to train them up to deeds of kindness. There's a great deal of suffering in the world, sir. We ought to do our part toward relieving it.'

'I honor you, Mrs. Warner, for your unselfish benevolence,' returned Mr. Bentley, warmly; 'but in this case I shall claim to do my part. I shall allow you two hundred dollars a year for taking care of this child. You will, of course, require a larger and more commodious house, and will, I hope, be enabled to afford your children such advantages as they may require to prepare them to act their parts in the world.'

'Two hundred dollars!' exclaimed Job, scarcely crediting the testimony of his ears. 'Why, that will make twelve hundred. Mr. Bentley, sir, I hope you will believe me to be grateful. You have so laden me with benefits that I don't know how to thank you.'

'And I am under obligations to you, Warner, also,' said Mr. Bentley. 'Prosperity had begun to harden my heart. At any rate, it had made me thoughtless of the multitudes who are struggling with ills which my wealth could alleviate. To night I was an unseen witness of your kindness to the poor girl who crossed your path. I felt rebuked by the contrast between your conduct and mine, and I resolved, God helping me, to become hereafter a better steward of His bounty.'

'Indeed, Mr. Bentley, you think too much of the little I did,' said Job, modestly.

'Let me keep my own opinion as to that, Warner. By the way, it may be well for me to pay the first quarter of our little charge in advance. Here are fifty dollars. At the expiration of six months you may draw upon me for a similar amount. Before I leave you let me take the liberty to suggest that you still have an opportunity of providing Christmas gifts for your children.'

'So I shall. Thank you, Mr. Bentley, for kindly reminding me. Effie shall have her doll after all. Such a doll!' he explained, eagerly turning toward his wife. 'She is as fine as a royal princess. But not too good for Effie.'

'By all means let Effie have her doll,' said Mr. Bentley, smiling. 'I must bid you good night, Mrs. Warner. But when you have moved I will look you up again, and shall hope to make the acquaintance of Effie and her doll.'

Job Warner was absent an hour. When he returned he was fairly loaded down with gifts. I cannot undertake to enumerate them. Enough that prominent among them was Effie's stately present. Can the friendly reader imagine the delight of the children the next morning? Seldom has Christmas dawned on a happier household. Effie was in a perfect ecstasy of delight. Nor was the little outcast forgotten. When her rags were stripped off and she was attired in thick, warm clothing, she seemed suddenly to have been lifted into Paradise.

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