

a community called ...

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THE CLIPPED COIN.

“ I GUESS ’twill pass.”

It was Sabbath morning, clear and bright and beautiful, as Sabbath days are so often in our thought and memory.

John Basil stood on the steps of his home—a nice, good-looking, brown-stone house up town. His shining black hat had evidently been brushed with care, his necktie was irreproachable, no spots of the city’s dust rested on his comfortable overcoat, and his shoes had received a polish which required no further attention from the little bootblack on the corner. His outward appearance was evidently satisfactory to himself and would be approved by others. The bells were already tolling, and he knew that he was late. The church which he was accustomed to attend was many blocks away, but the cars of the elevated road would carry him swiftly to his destination, and

he said that a few minutes would make no difference.

The time was to him apparently unimportant, but he twirled a piece of money in his hand and questioned a little its acceptance as a full legal-tender by the custodian of the gate. It was a half-dollar from which some one had abstracted a small quantity of the metal by punching a hole in it, and then had sought to conceal the loss by pounding up the edges to fill the vacancy. How he had come by it John Basil could not tell, but in changing his clothes for the Sabbath his purse had been left behind, and this was now his only coin.

“I guess ’twill pass,” he said, the second time, and walked briskly to the station. There was a little trepidation in his heart, though he would not have confessed it. He knew that he was late for the church service, and possibly after all the piece of money would be refused at the station ; but if it would pass, all would be well.

The money was presented, the ticket and
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the change were already in the hands of the agent, when his eye caught sight of the defect in the piece. Hastily drawing them back, he exclaimed: "Can't take that; 't isn't good."

A rather mortified remonstrance was of no avail. Pointing to a card which hung conspicuously in the office, and which read, "Foreign or mutilated coins not received," the ticket dealer remained impassive. There would have been no remedy; going to church that morning without a long walk would have been an impossibility had not a friend come in at that moment and supplied the deficiency.

The service at the church had commenced punctually at the time appointed. The minister said, and said truly, that the hour was consecrated to God, and he had no right to postpone or abbreviate it. It was now nearly half concluded. There had been the song of praise and the word of consolation from the Old Testament and the New. Those present had been permitted to unite with the minister in thanksgiving to God for mercies received, and in prayers for health and strength in time to

come. It had been good for them thus to unite in reverential worship before the Most High God, and in answer to their petitions they had known the presence of the divine power to be in the midst of them. With hurried step and heart unattuned to this high eminence, John Basil entered the door as the closing notes of the anthem died away and the proper officers came forward to collect the thank-offerings of the people.

Side by side with the young man as he entered the church came a poor woman, leading a little child by the hand. Her dress, although of common material, was clean and decent. On her face was the calm look of one who had found, possibly amid many tribulations, the peace of God. She lived in an apartment in one of the cross-streets near the river. The fire had been lighted that morning, the family breakfast made up from the scanty materials at hand, the children carefully washed and dressed in their best, and the room put decently in order. The husband had consented to stay at home with the

younger children, and then, taking the oldest with her, she had hastened to the church. They must needs walk, for the one little coin that she had was consecrated to the Lord.

She knew that it was late, but there had scarcely been a moment that morning when the sense of the Sabbath worship had not been in her mind; and as the bells tolled with their solemn invitation, she had gone up in her heart to the house of prayer and united in the service. Circumstances had compelled her against her will to be late in appearance, but the Lord knew that she had been one of the earliest in his presence, and her heart, filled with sacred harmonies, was prepared to unite in full communion as she entered the door. The little piece of money which she dropped into the plate was a full-rounded offering of thanksgiving and of praise.

“I guess ’twill pass here,” he said, again, as with a dexterous movement John slid the rejected half-dollar under some other pieces of money, and then boldly took his seat in the main aisle.

There was an uncomfortable feeling, however, underneath the outward calm. He had come to church, indeed, and would be recognized by his friends when he came out, but he had not joined in the service. He had made his contribution, but it was in coin that would not pass in daily life. He was conscious of this, but tried to console himself with the thought that after all it was not much out of the way, and settled himself composedly in his seat to listen to the sermon.

The lesson of the day was from the fifth chapter of the Book of Acts, and the text of the minister was taken from the fourth verse: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

With terrible acuteness the minister analyzed the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. "While it remained, was it not thine own? Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?" The lesson is always a startling one, but this morning the words seemed winged with unusual power, and the young man listened with a solemn awe. He

had sold no land. He had not come to the apostles bringing part of the price, but he had heard the call of the Lord Jesus himself bidding him in his heart to come up and worship before him. He had come, but it was half an hour late. He had made a contribution to the church-service, but it had been done in clipped coin. Was it in kind the same thing and only differing in degree?

The text was applied in various ways. "God is not mocked." No one can deceive his far-reaching intelligence. That which "a man soweth, that shall he also reap," however smooth the surface may have been rolled over the seed. Every thing which seems and is not, is an abomination to the Lord. Do we appear outwardly respectable among men, and yet are our hearts filled with uncleanness? Are we liberal when our liberality can be seen, and yet covetous in our inner life? Do we go to church apparently for worship, and inwardly criticise the service? Do we come late and so manifest our disrespect for him to whose honor the hour has been consecrated?

Do we put into his treasury any half-hearted service, any clipped coin, and think it will pass his all-seeing eye?

The sermon was over, the closing prayer was offered for all those who might be tempted thus to despise the majesty of God and their own opportunities for grace, the closing hymn was sung, and the young man wended his way homeward. The clipped half-dollar had been an object lesson, and for years afterward the hour of the opening prayer found him in his seat, a composed and quiet, earnest worshiper.

HUNT & EATON, Fifth Avenue cor. 20th St., New York.
No. 246.

