

Little Joe's Thank Offering.

You might have called him poor, but Joe considered himself a rich boy, or at least very comfortably well off. He had a home, and lots of boys that he knew slept in boxes, or under stairways, wherever they could manage to keep out of sight of the police. And he had a mother, who took the best care she could of him and his little sister, though she had not much time when she was busy all day long over the wash-tubs. Three days in the week Polly had to be sent to the day-nursery. He had no father, but Joe's observation of life led him to conclude that fathers were sometimes rather a doubtful blessing, and mothers on the whole more reliable. He always had enough to eat, and both he and Polly fell heir to many comfortable garments from the homes where their mother worked.

The red sweater came to him in that way, and the red sweater was Joe's pride and delight. He could scarcely believe his eyes, when his mother unrolled it from her washing apron, and slipped the beautiful thing over his towsled head. Since then he had never willingly been parted from it, and though the weather had grown warm enough for bare feet, Joe stuck to his sweater, and insisted it kept him cool!

Joe had gone into business. The day he was eight years old his mother had given him a quarter to invest in newspapers, and though the big boys kept him on a very poor "beat," his pleasant voice and cheery face helped him to find customers. His mother called him "the man of the house," and said she would soon have no need to go out to wash, but could stay at home like a lady. His money was put in a pink mug with "For a Good Boy" across the front, and every night before Joe went to bed he used to count it.

There was a church on Joe's beat and one afternoon he noticed that the doors were open, and people were going in—men and women and lots of children. He stood by the stone steps to watch them, and followed them up to the door. The people inside began to sing, and he stepped a little closer, for he loved singing.

"Come in, if you want to," said a young woman, pleasantly, and Joe slipped into an empty seat just inside the door, and looked about him in wonder. Half the seats were filled with children, and on a high platform, all gay with flags and banners and strange pictures, a troop of little girls, in pretty white dresses, were standing in a row and singing. Over their heads, in big gilt letters, were these words: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?"

"It's a kind of a Christmas tree," decided Joe.

He couldn't read all the words, but he thought it was splendid, and wished Polly were there to see it.

They sang and sang, and then a woman began to talk to the children, and it seemed to Joe as if all the time she was looking straight at him.

She talked about the happy children in this country, and what good times they had, and then she took a long stick and pointed on the map to a country she called India, that she said was away beyond the ocean, where nobody was glad when a little girl was born, but instead of loving her, and taking care of her, she might be thrown out in the forest, or into the river, or left to starve and die.

"My," thought Joe, "spos'n that was Polly!"

She told them how the people tortured themselves, and went long journeys on their knees to try to please their cruel gods, and how, when a little child was sick, they thought a wicked spirit had come to live in it, and carried it away into the forest and left it there. And she told many more pitiful things

about children in China and Africa, and other countries, and everywhere the trouble seemed to be that the people had never learned to know and love and serve the true God, and so because we were glad and thankful for ourselves, and sorry for the other people, we should bring our money to help send them the good news.

Then the children began to go up to the platform, and put their money in a silver dish. Almost all of them had earned it themselves. Their teachers told how they had done it, and people laughed and sometimes cried to hear it. Then some girls went up and own the aisles with baskets, and almost everybody put some money in.

Joe wanted to help a little, but he couldn't give the money in his pocket—that was to pay the rent and it belonged to his mother. He watched the collectors rather sadly, but no one even thought of passing the basket to him, so he did not have to say no. All at once a happy thought came into his busy little brain.

"Say," he whispered, pulling the sleeve of a young man who sat in front of him taking notes of the meeting, "I'll send 'em my red sweater."

The young man looked around, and his eyes were full of fun.

"Hand it over," he said, and Joe pulled the sweater over his head, and was starting for the door.

"Wait till I come back," said the young man, giving Joe his pad and pencil to hold, and walking right up to the front.

"Friends," he said, "there's a little newsboy back yonder who has given this red sweater; all he had to give. I'll buy it myself unless somebody else wants it."

"Bring the boy up," called some one, and presently Joe was standing by his friend, the reporter, and all over the house people were calling out:

"One dollar! Two dollars! Two-fifty!" and so it went on until a man in the gallery bid "ten dollars," and came forward to get the sweater.

"Tain't big enough for you," said Joe, looking at him disapprovingly.

"It's just the size for the boy I bought it for," said the man, slipping it over Joe's head. "You just keep on wearing it till I call for it."

Joe laughed, but then his face grew sober.

"Then I don't give anything for them kids—"

"Oh yes, you do," said the man; "you give what I paid for the sweater. See, here it goes into the basket."

Joe didn't really understand, but there was the money in the basket, and there was the sweater still on his plump little body, so he wisely concluded to go out and sell the rest of his papers.

His mother understood better when he told her the story, and all he could remember of the talk about India and China and Africa.

She hugged Joe and Polly, and there were tears in her eyes as she said:

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