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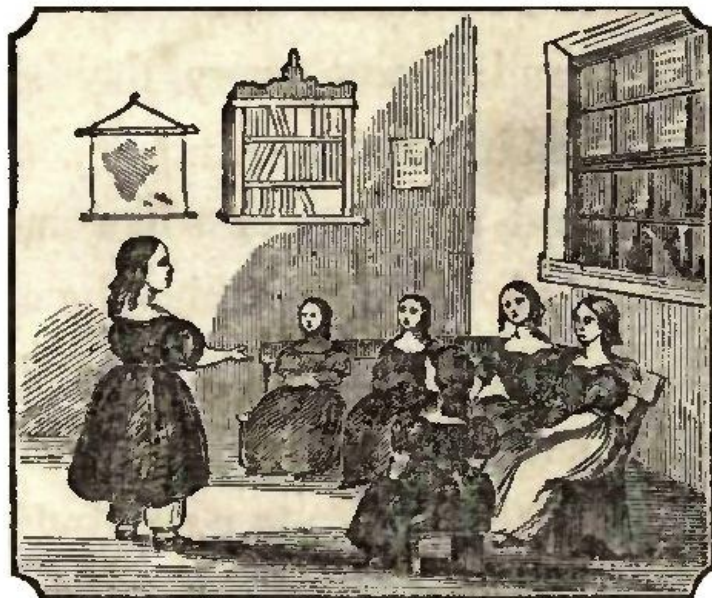
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SELF-DENIAL; OR, ALICE WOOD, AND HER MISSIONARY SOCIETY ***

SELF-DENIAL;
OR,
ALICE WOOD, AND HER
MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

[1]



THE village school-house was situated on a pretty green, and surrounded by old elm-trees, and at a short distance and in full sight was a candy-shop, kept by an old woman, whom the children called Mother Grimes. Mother Grimes knew how to make the very best candies and cakes that ever were eaten, and almost every day she displayed in her shop-window some new kind of cake, or some new variety of candy, to excite the curiosity or tempt the palates of her little customers, who found it a very difficult matter to pass Mother Grimes's shop on their way from school.

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One day, just after the school-bell rang to give notice of the recess, a pretty little girl, by the name of Alice Wood, was seen very busily running about among the school-girls and whispering to one and another. Her object was to induce them to remain a little while after the school, as she had something to propose to them. Alice was a great favourite, as she was always willing to put herself to any inconvenience for the sake of giving any one else pleasure. So they all readily consented to stay, if it were only to please her.

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After school was out and the teacher had left, Alice collected the girls together and told them her plan. "Girls," said she, "last night I went to the missionary meeting, and some of you were

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there too. We heard a missionary speak, who has just come back from India, and he told us of the millions of poor degraded and ignorant people there, who have never heard of God or the Bible, and who worship idol gods of wood and stone, and sacrifice their children and themselves to these dumb idols; and he told us of millions in other countries who are just as ignorant and degraded, besides the multitudes in our own land who know nothing of the Bible or the way of salvation. I knew all this before, to be sure, for I have often heard it; but I never *felt* it as I did last night; and when the missionary called upon us children and told us that we could do something to save these immortal souls, I felt, for the first time in my life, that it was my duty, by denying myself some gratifications and by trying to save money in other ways, to do all that I could to send the word of God to those who are perishing. Girls," said she, with earnestness, "I could hardly sleep last night, for I was all the time going over in my mind the different ways in which I might earn or save something, and I thought if all our school were to feel as I did, and join me in this, we might collect a great many dollars a year."

Here some of the older girls began to whisper to each other that they had no money to spare, and that their parents could not give them money every day to send to the heathen.

"Now stop a little while, girls, if you please," said Alice, "till I just tell you what I want to have done. In the first place, I think it will be so pleasant to form a sewing Society, to meet on Saturday afternoons, and make bags and needle-cases and collars and many other things to sell; and I know my father will be delighted to have us put a box, with these things, in his store. Then, while we sew, I propose that one reads aloud from some interesting book or paper about missions and benevolent societies, and thus we shall all become interested in the intelligence, and be more willing to work and save to help the needy." Alice then, with a great deal of tact, proposed the names of those who should be President, Secretary, and Treasurer of their Society, selecting the very ones who had been opposed to her plan. One large girl was still dissatisfied, and declared she would not join them, till Alice moved that she should be appointed reader. This delighted her very much, as she read remarkably well; and now all were pleased, and Alice went on with her plan.

"Now, about our laying up money, girls," said she. "I believe our parents are none of them very rich, and yet we contrive to get a great many pennies, in one way or another, to spend for our own gratification. How many pennies do you think go, in a year, from our school into Mother Grimes's pocket? Why enough to send a great many Bibles to the destitute. Perhaps enough to support a missionary, or educate a heathen child, or give a library or two to a poor Sunday-school. Just think of it, girls! Now I, for one, spend certainly a penny a day for candy. How many will that be in a year, Susy?"

"Three hundred and sixty-five," answered little Susy Barnes.

"Yes; three dollars and sixty-five cents will buy a great many Bibles and good books," said Alice; "and then my father gives me a penny a week for slate pencils. Now I am going to ask him to continue the penny a week; and then I am going to see how long I can keep a pencil, for I have been very careless in losing them. And in these, and other ways, I hope I can save quite a sum of money in a year. Now, girls, will you all think, between this time and tomorrow noon, how much you can save, and then we will put it all down together, and see how much we can hope to collect in a year?"

The girls readily promised, and then, as they had stayed a long time, they all set off in haste for their homes, full of the new project of the Missionary Society.

PART II.

THE next day, as soon as school was out, the little girls, of their own accord, crowded around Alice, who stood with a pencil and piece of paper in her hand, ready to put down their names, and the sums they each thought she could save. Several of them thought they could save a penny a day, instead of giving it to Mother Grimes; some a penny a week, and some a penny a month. Alice told them, that if some of them could only give a penny a year, she would gladly take that; and then, that they might not be ashamed of giving so little, she read to them the story of the "widow's mite." And when the girls laughed, because one little girl, whose mother was very poor, said, "She would bring a penny *if she could ever get one*," Alice kissed her, and said,

"Perhaps, Kitty, your penny will be as acceptable, and do more good, than hundreds of dollars from some very rich man who does not miss it at all. At any rate you shall come into our Society and help us sew."

Rachel Brown said "she was sure *she* did not spend much money for candy."

"No! and why not, Miss Sugar-tooth?" said little Susy Barnes; "because you always keep close to Alice Wood, as you go home from school, and you know that the one that is nearest to her will always have half of her candy."

"Hush, Susy," said Alice, "I can tell you that no one will have half of my candy after this, as I do not intend to buy any; and I am sure Rachel can save a good deal if she chooses, for our Society."

Clara Hall said, her father had promised her a quarter of a dollar if she would have an ugly

double tooth drawn, that had ached for some time.

"But," said Clara, "the provoking thing aches the worst at night, and then I think I will certainly have it out in the morning, but when the morning comes it is sure to stop aching." Once or twice she said she had gone to the dentist's door, but her courage failed. "But," said she, "Alice, the very next time it aches as hard in the day as it does sometimes in the night, I shall come with the tooth in one hand, and the quarter of a dollar in the other, for the Society." [16]

Sally Bright said, their next neighbour had cut her hand very badly, and had promised her a penny a day, for milking her cow for her, as long as her hand continued lame; and those pennies should all come to Alice.

Charlotte Green said, her father had promised her half a dollar if she would leave off biting her nails. "And now," said she, "I mean to try in earnest to break myself of this habit, that I may have something too to give." [17]

"Well, girls," said Jane Prime, "my father, you know, keeps a large nursery, and he gives me three cents a quart for peach stones and plum stones; and he says he will pay that for as many as are brought to him. So here is a fine way for any of you that choose to make money, as long as fruit lasts."

Alice Wood now reckoned up the promised sums, and said,

"I think, girls, if we all keep the resolutions we have formed, that by only saving the money that we should spend in other ways, and giving it to the society, we can pledge ourselves to give altogether fifty dollars a year; and with our Sewing Society, and the many other ways that have been mentioned of earning a little money, I should not be surprised if we should raise it to one hundred dollars a year. Just think what a sum that would be, and how much good it may do, if we give it in a right spirit, and with prayers for the blessing of God to accompany it. For you know the missionary said the other evening, that we might give a great deal of money, merely for the sake of having it published, or from some other improper motive, and if it should do good to others, it would not do any to ourselves; but that even a little given from a right motive, and with fervent prayer for the Divine blessing, might accomplish great things, and would return in mercy upon the head of the giver. For, said he, (and these words are from the Bible,) 'He that hath pity upon the poor, *lendeth* unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, *will he pay him again.*' And, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall *himself be watered.*'" [18]

As the girls went home, they all kept on the side of the road opposite to Mother Grimes's shop; for the old woman had a bad temper, and a very loud voice, and they were all afraid of hearing from her if they passed her shop without stopping to buy something.

"What on earth is the matter with the children?" said old Mother Grimes to herself. "Here, these two or three days past, hardly a soul of them has been near the shop, and my candies are getting quite old." And Mother Grimes went to work, and cracked nuts, and boiled new molasses, and made nicer candies than ever; but all to no purpose. [19]

Rachel Brown did say to Alice Wood one day, "See, Alice, what beautiful candy Mother Grimes has put in her shop-window to day." But Alice only said, "Rachel, we have now a better use for our money; let us waste nothing, but save all we can, so that we shall not feel, when we meet our fellow-creatures at the last day, that any of them have perished through our neglect, or because we were so selfish that we could not deny ourselves a small gratification for the sake of supplying their need." [20]

One day a knot of little girls were so bold as to pass directly by the candy shop. The old woman stood in the door, and called out to them as they passed, and asked them why they never stopped now. "See," said she, "all my nice candies melting in the sun; and nobody but the flies to eat them."

"We have found something better to do with our pennies, Mother Grimes," answered little Susy Barnes, who was the leader of the party, "than to spend them in getting the tooth-ache, and making ourselves sick; and we have all made up our minds that we will not buy any more candy." The old woman flew into a passion, and talked so loud, that some of the little girls were for running off, but Susy stood her ground undaunted. [21]

"I'll tell you what, Mother Grimes," said she, "if you will give up selling candy, and keep slates, and pencils, and pens, and sponges, and all such useful things for sale, we shall all be much more likely to stop here, than to go all the way round to the booksellers." [22]

But Mother Grimes's wrath only increased the more, and as she showed some signs of coming out after them, Susy was glad to join the retreating party; and they all darted off without looking behind them, and did not consider themselves perfectly safe, till they were seated at their desks in the schoolroom. Mother Grimes soon found that it was useless to try to tempt the little school-children any more, so she determined to move off to some other place, "where," as she said, "the children had no such foolish notions in their heads." [23]

And now the Sewing Society was started; and such a cutting and fixing, and bustle as there was, till enough work was prepared to give them all something to do! And then, when the one appointed began to read to them the interesting accounts from the papers, even those that at first felt no interest, but joined merely for the sake of being made officers in the Society, became so much interested, that they too were willing to practise great self-denial for the sake of aiding [24]

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in sending the gospel to the destitute. And now who can estimate the good that one such little Society may accomplish? It is like casting a little pebble into the smooth water; at first small circles are formed about the spot, but they widen and increase, till we cannot see where the influence of that little pebble upon the water ends. So it may be with this little Society, but we shall never know, till the secrets of the last great day are disclosed, how much good such an association may have accomplished; how many souls the Bibles thus sent forth may have converted; and then, too, how much good these converts may have done in teaching the way of life to others, and these again to hundreds and thousands more!

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Children, is it not worth while to try and see if you cannot yourselves do something, and induce others to join you, and see how much money you can save, and make in the coming year? Do not ask your parents for money just to throw into a box, but give that which you would have spent in some other way. And then see if you have not ingenuity enough to find out some plan of earning money for the sake of doing good with it. Depend upon it, your interest in benevolent objects will increase from the very moment that you deny yourself for the sake of giving to others. Think what it would be to have even *one soul* saved from among the poor benighted heathen, to rise up in the last great day, and call you, yes *you*, my little reader, blessed. Try it, and with daily prayers for the blessing of God upon your efforts, see what you can do for the heathen; remembering, that "he that converteth a *single* sinner from the error of his way, shall save a *soul from death*, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

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Good Resolutions.

THOUGH I'm now in younger days,
Nor can tell what shall befall me,
I'll prepare for every place
Where my growing age shall call me.

Should I e'er be rich or great,
Others shall partake my goodness:
I'll supply the poor with meat,
Never showing scorn nor rudeness.

Where I see the blind or lame,
Deaf or dumb, I'll kindly treat them;
I deserve to feel the same,
If I mock, or hurt, or cheat them.

If I meet with railing tongues,
Why should I return them railing?
Since I best revenge my wrongs
By my patience never failing.

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When I hear them telling lies,
Talking foolish, cursing, swearing,
First I'll try to make them wise
Or I'll soon go out of hearing.

What though I be low and mean,
I'll engage the rich to love me;
While I'm modest, neat, and clean,

And submit when they reprove me.

If I should be poor and sick,
I shall meet, I hope, with pity;
Since I love to help the weak,
Though they're neither fair nor witty.

I'll not willingly offend,
Nor be easily offended;
What's amiss I'll strive to mend,
And endure what can't be mended.

May I be so watchful still
O'er my humours and my passion,
As to speak, and do no ill,
Though it should be all the fashion.

Wicked fashions lead to hell,
Ne'er may I be found complying
But in life behave so well,
Not to be afraid of dying.



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Transcriber's Note:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

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