

THE

THREE SISTERS

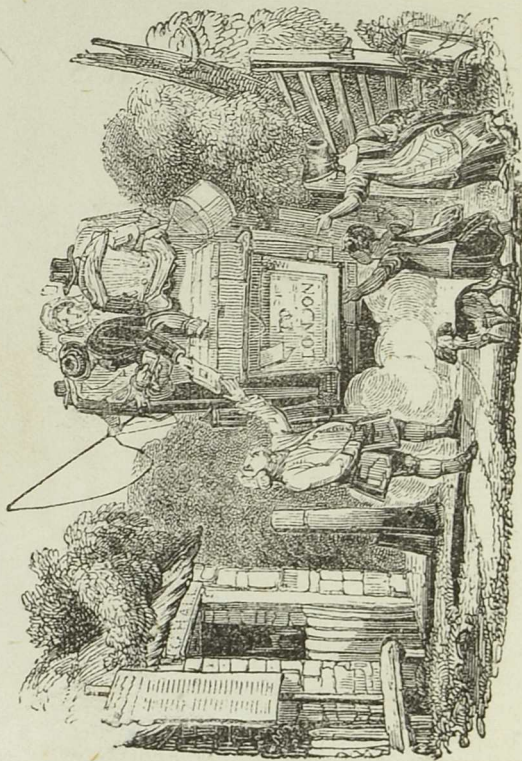
AND

THEIR THREE PENNIES.

LONDON :

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;
56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND
65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

355.



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Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
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AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

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THREE PENNIES.



COME, my girls and boys! if you wish to hear a pleasant tale, and to profit by it, listen with attention to what I have written: read it slowly; think while you read; and if, when you get to the end of

it, you have neither been pleased nor instructed, why, then, I will confess that I have made a bad use of my time. But, mind, read slowly, and give to it all your attention.

When we look around on the things that God has made; when we notice the sun, moon, and stars; when we regard the day and night, and reflect on spring,



summer, autumn, and winter, we cannot but admire the wisdom of that Almighty

Being who has so well fitted them to act their part for the benefit of his creatures. But while we acknowledge his wisdom in these things, we should remember that he made us, and sent us into the world to show forth his glory also. And we may be sure that he has given us, as well as them, qualities of one sort or other to enable us to do what he intended we should perform.

Now, I believe we shall find, in passing through this wide world, that it does not so much matter whether we have much or little, as it does whether we make a good use of that which we have. We may have a penny or a pound, but if we do no good with either of them, the pound will be as useless as the penny.

It is just the same with any thing else that we have, whether it be time or talents; for if we make a bad use of our time, and misuse our talents, we should be quite as well off, or rather better, without them. Every child can understand this, but as it often happens that we require to be told of things well known to us, two or three times over, so there can be no harm in my trying to

make this lesson more plain to you than it has ever been, and this I will do by telling you a story of three sisters, and their three pennies.

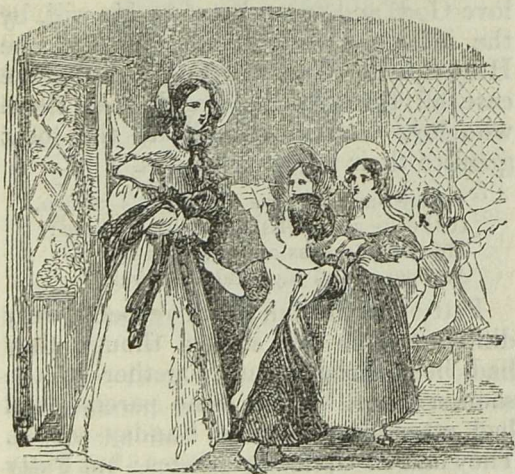
Sometimes a pleasant story conveys no useful lesson of instruction; and oftentimes when it does convey one, the story is remembered and the lesson of instruction is forgotten: how foolish it is to keep that which is worthless, and to throw away that which is useful! But to my story.

Polly, Peggy, and Patty were sisters, and lived together, with their parents, in the same cottage. Polly, the eldest, was very selfish, and so stingy that she would neither part with a farthing nor with any thing else, if she could help it, even when she might do a great deal of good.

Peggy was of a different temper; for she was so thoughtless and extravagant, that she could not keep any thing many days together; and as to money, it was gone as soon as she had an opportunity of spending it.

Patty, the youngest, was neither selfish nor extravagant, but was always disposed to make the best use of every thing she

possessed, and to do as much good with it as she could. Now, the reason why Patty was more anxious than her sisters to do good was this—Patty loved God more than her sisters did. She had



learned from her teacher at the Sunday school, that her heart was evil, and inclined to do what was wrong. She knew that she deserved nothing from God but punishment. She therefore felt thankful

that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, one with his Father, had come down from heaven to die for sinners, that they whose hearts were at enmity with God, being inclined to do wicked works, might be forgiven, and have their hearts turned to love God, and to seek to do his will, by the influence and guidance of God the Holy Spirit. You will find it to be the case all through the world, that those who love God most, will do the most good to their fellow-creatures.

“ Where once the love of Christ is known,
It breaks and melts the heart of stone :
There tenderness and mercy dwell,
And peace and joy, and all is well.”

Patty was indeed, in all respects, very different from her sisters, though they had been brought up together in the same cottage, by the same parents, and had attended the same Sunday school. They had all equal advantages ; but Patty had made the best use of them.

It happened that Polly, Peggy, and Patty had a holiday, and they had leave to go and see a relation, who lived at some miles distance : a penny was given to each of them, and they were told to

try which could lay out her penny to the best advantage.



Away they went with happy hearts and cheerful faces. Polly was happy because she had another penny to add to the little hoard of money she had saved; this already amounted to more than half-a-crown. Peggy was happy because she had a penny to spend; for she was determined to spend it the first moment any thing nice or pretty could be got. And little Patty was happy because her

sisters were so, and because she had a penny to do some good with, if an opportunity should offer.

We ought never to trust a moment in our own strength; for we can never look about us long without having a temptation to do evil, or an opportunity of doing good; and unless God the Holy Spirit directs and guides us, we shall choose that which is evil. Let us therefore pray for his Divine grace and help.

The three sisters had skipped along the fields, passed the turnstile, picked up some of the red berries that had fallen from the old yew-tree at the end of the lane, (but they did not eat them, for they knew they were poison,) and were just entering the village, when Peggy spied an old woman sitting at a little stall, selling pastry. "Here they are!" cried the old woman, "tarts and pies for girls and boys!" Away ran Peggy across the road, and laid down her penny on the stall. First she took up one tart and then another, not knowing which was the best; at last, she chose one that appeared quite full of syrup, and in a little time she had eaten her tart.

Neither Polly nor Patty approved of the way in which Peggy had spent her



penny. Polly thought that she should have put it by, and saved it; and Patty thought that it might have been put to a better purpose, than that to which it had been applied; but Peggy was very well satisfied.

As they passed on, a little boy who had a porringer of milk in his hand, caught his toe against a stone, tumbled down, and broke his porringer all to

pieces. The poor little fellow burst into tears, and cried out, "What shall I do?"

Peggy would have given him a penny, and welcome, to buy himself another porringer with, for she was neither a hard-hearted nor an ill-natured girl; but then she had no penny to give, having parted with hers to the old woman at the stall. Polly would not have given away



her penny if all the porringers in the village had been broken. So poor little

Patty was the only one who was likely to buy the poor boy another porringer. At first she proposed to her sister Polly that they should put a halfpenny each; but, no! Polly would not part with a single farthing. Patty then gave her penny, and though her sister Polly called her a simpleton, yet she felt very happy when she saw the little boy dry up his tears.

Ay! ay! thought Polly in her own selfish heart, I am the only one, after all, to be trusted with a penny; for I have got mine safe, though my sisters have not got a farthing.

“Stop a moment!” cried a voice, as the three sisters were going away; “stop a moment, my little girl; for I wish to speak with you.”

Patty looked up, and saw that it was a lady, who had noticed what took place. She called Patty to her, and told her that she had seen and heard all about the porringer. “I shall give you one penny,” said she, “for that which you gave to the little boy, and another for your good-nature. A little girl who lays out her penny so well, ought never to be without one. The Scripture says, ‘My little

children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.' And, also, 'Be kindly affectionate one to another.' I am glad to see that you act so agreeably to the word of God."

Patty thanked the lady for her kindness, and was not a little pleased to find herself richer than she was before she bought the porringer for the little boy; for she had not in the least expected it. Those who are influenced by the love of Christ never think about what they shall get if they do a good action, like some selfish people. Peggy was vexed at being so foolish as to have spent her penny in pastry; and Polly declared that if she had known the lady would have acted as she had done, she would have given her penny to the little boy in a minute.

Soon after they had passed through the village, they saw a little girl, poorly clad, gathering rushes. She was at work very hard, and Peggy promised that when she came back she would help her. Polly was as selfish in her time as she was in her money, and did not offer the least assistance, but contented herself with saying, that no doubt the little girl was

an idle thing. This was not the case; for though poor, she was a good girl, and went regularly to a Sunday school, in which she was reckoned one of the best of the scholars.

When the ill-natured and selfish refuse to act kindly to others, they never fail to find some idle excuse to justify their unkindness.

Patty talked kindly to the little girl, and when she heard how many bundles of rushes she had to gather, she set to work directly to help her. "Come, sisters," said she, "our time is our own, let us help the little girl while we can, for we know not what may hinder us when we get to our aunt's." Peggy and Patty worked hard for half an hour, and made up a great bundle of rushes, while Polly amused herself in plaiting a few rushes together by the road side.

While the little girl was at work, she sung part of a hymn, for she had learned many hymns; and Patty was quite happy in working for a little girl who did not forget God in her poverty.

It is a pleasant thing to render assistance to any one, but especially to those

who fear the Lord. This is acting according to the word of God, and is what we should do on all occasions where we have the opportunity.

Patty had a good memory, and, what was better still, she used it to a good purpose, and seldom forgot the verses of Scripture which she learned on Sundays. The words, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," were present to her mind when she helped to gather rushes for the little girl.

Young people should remember, that God requires them to act kindly to those who love him. The words of Jesus, who showed his love to us by dying to save us, were, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. Oh how kind we ought then to be, like the blessed Jesus!

When the three sisters hastened on towards their aunt's, a swarthy-looking woman with black hair, wearing a dirty red cloak, and carrying a young child on her back, overtook them, and asked if she should tell them their fortunes. "I see,"

said the woman, looking at Polly, "that you are lucky, and will be as rich as a Jew."

The sisters all knew that the woman was a gipsy, and Peggy was so silly as to want sadly to know her fortune, but then she had no penny to give, and she felt quite sure that the gipsy would not tell it to her for nothing.

Polly was so pleased with what the woman had said about her being rich, that she had half a mind to part with her penny; this was, however, only the thought of the moment; for she soon made up her mind to keep her money.

"Come, my pretty maid!" said the gipsy to Patty, "I am sure you are a very good little girl, and your fortune will be very lucky; plenty of golden guineas you will have, I warrant you; shall I tell you how rich and how happy you will be?"

Now Patty had been taught to believe that it was not right to pretend to tell fortunes, and that those who did so were wicked and deceiving people: so she told the gipsy that it was wrong to tell her she was good; for that the Scriptures

said, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one," Rom. iii. 12; "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," ver. 23; and that she did not want to know more of her fortune than it pleased God to tell her. "Besides," added she, "we ought not to wish to become rich, but to remember the beautiful prayer of Agur, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain,'" Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

As soon as the gipsy heard Patty talk in that manner, she sat down by the milestone on the side of the road to wait for somebody more likely to suit her purpose, having no hope, after what Patty had said, that she would give her any thing for telling her fortune.

The three children soon arrived at their aunt's, and after spending some pleasant hours, and gathering some beautiful flowers in the fields, they set off home again, The sun was in the west, and the sky was

adorned with some of the brightest clouds they had ever seen.



“If thus the sky, that God has spread
So gloriously above our head,
In floods of living light excels;
What must the heaven be where He dwells!”

“See!” cried out Patty, who was walking a little way before her sisters, “see! what I have found! A ring, and a very beautiful one too! look, here is a pretty

round piece of glass in it that sparkles so finely!"

Polly and Peggy ran to their sister, and much admired the ring. "It is a very lucky thing to find a ring!" cried Polly. "Yes!" said her sister Patty; "but it must be a very unlucky thing to lose one; and so we must try if we can find out the owner."

"Nonsense!" replied Polly: "we have found it, and, whoever lost it, it is ours now, so let us sell it. I dare say it is worth a shilling. It would be foolish to make a fuss in finding out the owner of such a little thing."

"It is a little thing, I know, sister," said Patty, seriously; "but it will be dishonest to keep it, if we can find out to whom it belongs. Remember the verse that we learned last Sunday morning, 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much,'" Luke xvi. 10.

"Have any of you picked up a ring?" said a voice close behind them. The sisters turned round, and saw the gipsy

who had wanted them in the morning to have their fortune told.

This artful woman, when on the opposite side of the hedge, heard the children speak of the ring they had found, and followed them with the hope of making them believe that it belonged to her.

“Have you picked up a ring, my honest little girls?” said the cunning woman.

Patty was the first to speak, so she cried out, “What kind of ring is it that you have lost?” “Oh! It is a ring with a round glass in it,” said the cunning gipsy; for she had heard them describe it before.

“But how do we know that the ring belongs to you?” asked Polly, who held it in her hand.

“That is the very ring!” said the gipsy, looking at it; and I am very glad that it was picked up by such honest persons. Some people would have tried to cheat me out of it: here, my pretty miss, I must give you a sixpence, and I will thank you not to name the ring to any one; for if my husband knew that I had lost it, he would beat me sadly.”

The gipsy would not have given sixpence, but when she saw the ring, she knew it to be very valuable, and she wanted to get it directly, lest the owner should send some one to look for it.

Peggy and Patty were rather inclined to think that it was the gipsy's ring; Polly, however, did not think so; but no



sooner did the gipsy hold out the sixpence, than Polly took it, and gave up the ring.

When the gipsy had gained her end,

she was soon out of sight, and then Peggy and Patty both believed that she was not the owner of the ring.

“I suppose that I must part the money between us,” said Polly, “though the gipsy gave it all to me.”

“To be sure you must,” replied Peggy; “for it was not you who found the ring, but Patty, and surely she ought to have as much as you.”

Here Patty told her sisters that she did not think the money honest money, and, therefore, she would not touch it. This pleased Polly very much; for had it been in her power, she would have kept the whole sixpence to herself. “Whoever is the real owner of the ring,” said she, “nobody will ever know that we picked it up, unless we tell them.”

“God knows it already,” said Patty, “and will not fail to punish us if we act dishonestly.” She then told her sisters about a tract she once picked up that was thrown by a gentleman from behind a coach, the title of which was “*Honesty is the best policy.*” However, her sisters did not pay much attention to what she said.

There is no error into which sinners fall, more common than that of thinking no one sees them in their transgressions; and that no one will know of their sins: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 24, and "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," Prov. xv. 3.

Remember, reader! that the most secret sin thou canst commit in the depth of the darkest night, is as plain in the eyes of God, as though it were done with the sun shining upon thee in the middle of the day.

It was in vain that Patty talked about the sixpence not being honest money; for Polly changed it at the grocer's shop, and gave Peggy two pence as her share, telling Patty that if she did not like to take her part, it belonged to herself: thus selfish Polly contrived to get the greater part of the money, and thought how much wiser she was than her sisters.

They had not gone far before Peggy had spent her two pence; for though she did not think the money honestly be-

longed to her, yet the temptation of some nice gingerbread nuts overcame her.

Those who do not earnestly and continually pray, for Christ's sake, to be delivered from their besetting sins, will, with every temptation, be led astray from God and from their own peace.

Just as they arrived at a turn in the lane, they saw a large dog asleep under a bush, and a boy who was passing at the time, threw a stone at him: the dog sprung up and laid hold of the person nearest to him, who happened to be Polly. Peggy ran away, and Polly tried to do so too; but Patty stood firm, knowing that she could not outrun a large dog.

Patty lived in full confidence that God, for Christ's sake, would take care of her; and it is wonderful what self-possession such a confidence gives, not only in great afflictions, but in the common dangers and trials of life.

There is little doubt but the dog would have bitten Polly sadly, had not the little girl, whom they left gathering rushes in the morning, ran forward and laid hold of him. The dog belonged to the girl's father, and was very obedient when he

heard the voice of the little girl. The children now saw the value of their attention in gathering the rushes, and Polly was ashamed that she had behaved so ill to one who had rendered her such a service, but she did not offer to reward her.

Patty gave a penny to the little girl, who could hardly be prevailed upon to take it, as she said they had been so kind to her in the morning.

No sooner were the three sisters arrived at home than they were told that there was quite a disturbance up at Fairfield hall, for that the squire's lady had lost a diamond ring; but whether it had dropped off her finger, or had been stolen from her dressing-room, she could not tell: one of the servants was suspected of having stolen it; so that the squire's house was all in confusion.

Polly turned as white as a sheet at this account, and Peggy's teeth chattered in her head; but Patty was as collected as before.

Oh the unspeakable advantage of living a life of faith in Christ, and in humble obedience to the Divine commandments!

It is worth more than all the diamond rings that ever glittered on human fingers; or all the gold that has ever been counted by human hands. When the wicked tremble in the midst of their ungodly gains, the humble follower of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ shall be at peace.

Polly held up her hand to Patty that she might say nothing about the ring; but, though Patty was sorry for her sisters, and for the part which they had acted, still she durst not withhold the truth; so she told her mother that they had found a ring, and that it had been owned by a gipsy who had given them sixpence for finding it.

Patty's mother thought it right to go with Patty directly up to the hall, that the servant who had been suspected of stealing the ring might be clear in her character, and also that the gipsy might be inquired after before she had parted with the ring.

Away went Patty and her mother, and left Polly and Peggy half frightened out of their senses, lest they should be sent to jail with the gipsy.

What made the matter worse was, that

the grocer called to complain that Polly had changed a bad sixpence at his shop, and demanded another in its place. Peggy had no money, and poor stingy Polly was not only thought ill of for passing bad money, but was obliged to pay the whole sum herself.

The squire's lady was pleased to hear of her ring, and two or three persons were despatched with all speed after the gipsy, so that in two hours' time Polly, Peggy, and Patty, with their mother and the gipsy, were standing before the squire to be examined about the ring.

Oh what a difference there was between the sisters! Polly and Peggy pale and trembling, clinging to their mother; and Patty standing by herself with a calm countenance. It is a blessed thing to have a conscience void of offence!

The ring was found in possession of the gipsy, who, hardened in crime, boldly declared that the children sold it to her for sixpence.

This appeared so improbable, and the account given by Patty was so clear, and so well confirmed by her sisters, that the squire had no doubt about the truth:

he was determined therefore to proceed against the gipsy, who bore a very bad character on account of a large sum of bad money found in her possession.

The squire's lady afterwards talked to the three sisters, and was not satisfied until she knew all about the manner in which they had spent the day. Polly and Peggy held down their heads while she told them they were not fit to be trusted with a penny, until they had given proofs of better conduct than they had practised that day; "but as for you, Patty!" said she, "I give you this crown piece, not only as a reward for good conduct, and regard to truth, but also to remind you that if ever you need a friend, while you continue to be a good girl, you will always find one by walking up to Fairfield hall."

The crown piece was but the beginning of the attention that Patty received from the squire's lady, for one kindness followed another, and while Patty's sisters were lightly esteemed, she herself lived to become an ornament to her family, a credit to the Sunday school, and a blessing to the neighbourhood.

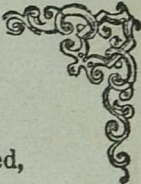
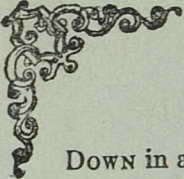
These three sisters had Δ the same

advantages; but little Patty made the best use of them: the fear of God kept her from evil, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ sunk deep into her heart. No wonder, then, that she should be innocent when they were guilty; that she should be at peace when they were in trouble; and that she should be happy when they were miserable.

Reader! There are many benefits that arise from attending to Divine truths; but the great object of religious instruction is, after all, that you may be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved; without this benefit all will be in vain, and with it you cannot fail to become useful in the world that now is, and happy in that which is to come. Think then of the advantages you possess; think of the best way in which you can use them; and thus learn some good lessons from the "Three Sisters and their Three Pennies."

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THE VIOLET.

Down in a green and shady bed,
A modest violet grew,
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head,
As if to hide from view.

And yet it was a lovely flower,
Its colours bright and fair ;
It might have grac'd a rosy bower
Instead of hiding there.

Yet there it was content to bloom
In modest tints array'd.
And there diffus'd a sweet perfume
Within the silent shade.

Then let me to the valley go,
This pretty flower to see ;
That I may also learn to grow
In sweet humility.

