VARIOUS

NO AND OTHER STORIES COMPILED BY UNCLE HUMPHREY

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Содержание

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PREFACE

This little book has been prepared for the instruction and amusement of my dear young friends, and it is hoped that they will be profited by its perusal. It will show them their duty, and lead them to perform it.

The little word *No* is of great importance, although composed of but two letters. It will be of great service in keeping us from the path of sin and misery, and of inducing us to walk in "wisdom's ways, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace."

Exercise charity to the destitute, as did little Willy.

Be good sons and daughters, and you will be a comfort to your parents, in sickness or in health. "Forgiveness is an attribute of Heaven."

A guilty conscience gives us no peace.

Which of you have a place of resort that is like Aunt Lissa's Acorn Hollow?

Be industrious, and learn to make yourselves useful, if you would be respected and beloved.

Beware of envy, for it begetteth hatred.

In short, I hope the reader who is now looking at this preface will carefully read every word in the following pages; and not only *read*, but *remember*, the lessons there taught, and thereby become wiser and better.

And when you have read this book so much and so carefully as to be able to tell me what it is all about, when I come to your houses, another little volume will be prepared for the young friends of

UNCLE HUMPHREY.

LYNN, January, 1851.

STORY ABOUT THE WORD NO

BY T. S. ARTHUR

"There is a word, my son, a very little word, in the English language, the right use of which it is all important that you should learn," Mr. Howland said to his son Thomas, who was about leaving the paternal roof for a residence in a neighboring city, never again, perchance, to make one of the little circle that had so long gathered in the family homestead.

"And what word is that, father?" Thomas asked.

"It is the little word *No*, my son."

"And why does so much importance attach to that word, father?"

"Perhaps I can make you understand the reason much better if I relate an incident that occurred when I was a boy. I remember it as distinctly as if it had taken place but yesterday, although thirty years have since passed. There was a neighbor of my father's, who was very fond of gunning and fishing. On several occasions I had accompanied him, and had enjoyed myself very much. One day my father said to me,

"'William, I do not wish you to go into the woods or on the water again with Mr. Jones.'

"'Why not, father?' I asked, for I had become so fond of going with him, that to be denied the pleasure was a real privation.

"'I have good reasons for not wishing you to go, William,' my father replied, 'but do not want to give them now. I hope it is all-sufficient for you, that your father desires you not to accompany Mr. Jones again.'

"I could not understand why my father laid upon me this prohibition; and, as I desired very much to go, I did not feel satisfied in my obedience. On the next day, as I was walking along the road, I met Mr. Jones with his fishing rod on his shoulder, and his basket in his hand.

"'Ah, William! you are the very one that I wish to see,' said Mr. Jones smiling. 'I am going out this morning, and want company. We shall have a beautiful day.'

"'But my father told me yesterday,' I replied, 'that he did not wish me to go out with you.'

"'And why not, pray?' asked Mr. Jones.

"'I am sure that I do not know,' I said, 'but indeed, I should like to go very much.'

"'O, never mind; come along,' he said, 'Your father will never know it.'

"'Yes, but I am afraid that he will,' I replied, thinking more of my father's displeasure than of the evil of disobedience.

"'There is no danger at all of that. We will be home again long before dinner-time.'

"I hesitated, and he urged; and finally, I moved the way that he was going, and had proceeded a few hundred yards, when I stopped, and said:

"'I don't like to go, Mr. Jones.'

"'Nonsense, William! There is no harm in fishing, I am sure. I have often been out with your father, myself.'

"Much as I felt inclined to go, still I hesitated; for I could not fully make up my mind to disobey my father.—At length he said—

"'I can't wait here for you, William. Come along, or go back. Say yes or no.'

"This was the decisive moment. I was to make up my mind, and fix my determination in one way or the other. I was to say *yes* or NO."

"'Come, I can't stay here all day,' Mr. Jones remarked, rather harshly, seeing that I hesitated. At the same moment the image of my father rose distinctly before my mind, and I saw his eyes fixed

steadily and reprovingly upon me. With one desperate resolution I uttered the word, 'No!' and then turning, ran away as fast as my feet would carry me. I cannot tell you how relieved I felt when I was far beyond the reach of temptation.

"On the next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I was startled and surprised to learn that Mr. Jones had been drowned on the day before. Instead of returning in a few hours, as he had stated to me that he would, he remained out all the day. A sudden storm arose; his boat was capsized, and he drowned. I shuddered when I heard this sad and fatal accident related.—That little word NO, had, in all probability, saved my life."

"'I will now tell you, William,' my father said, turning to me, 'why I did not wish you to go with Mr. Jones.—Of late, he had taken to drinking; and I had learned within a few days, that whenever he went out on a fishing or gunning excursion he took his bottle of spirits with him, and usually returned a good deal intoxicated. I could not trust you with such a man. I did not think it necessary to state this to you, for I was sure that I had only to express my wish that you would not accompany him, to insure your implicit obedience.'

"I felt keenly rebuked at this, and resolved never again to permit even the thought of disobedience to find a place in my mind. From that time, I have felt the value of the word NO, and have generally, ever since, been able to use it on all right occasions.—It has saved me from many troubles. Often and often in life have I been urged to do things that my judgment told me were wrong: on such occasions I always remembered my first temptation, and resolutely said—

"'NO!'

"And now, my son," continued Mr. Howland, do you understand the importance of the word *No*?"

"I think I do, father," Thomas replied. "But is there not danger of my using it too often and thus becoming selfish in all my feelings, and consequently unwilling to render benefits to others?"

"Certainly there is, Thomas. The legitimate use of this word is to resist evil. To refuse to do a good action is wrong." "If any one asks me, then, to do him a favor or kindness, I should not, on any account, say, no."

"That will depend, Thomas, in what manner you are to render him a kindness. If you can do so without really injuring yourself or others, then it is a duty which you owe to all men, to be kind, and render favors."

"But the difficulty, I feel, will be for me to discriminate. When I am urged to do something by one whom I esteem, my regard for him, or my desire to render him an obligation, will be so strong as to obscure my judgment."

"A consciousness of this weakness in your character, Thomas, should put you upon your guard."

"That is very true, father. But I cannot help fearing myself. Still, I shall never forget what you have said, and I will try my best to act from a conviction of right."

"Do so, my son. And ever bear in mind, that a wrong action is *always* followed by pain of mind, and too frequently by evil consequences. If you would avoid these, ever act from a consciousness that you are doing right, without regard to others. If another asks you, from a selfish desire to benefit or gratify himself, to do that which your judgment tells you is wrong, surely you should have no hesitation in refusing."

The precept of his father, enforced when they were about parting, and at a time when his affections for that father were active and intense, lingered in the mind of Thomas Howland. He saw and felt its force, and resolved to act in obedience to it, if ever tempted to do wrong.

On leaving the paternal roof, he went to a neighboring town, and entered the store of a merchant, where were several young men nearly of his own age, that is, between eighteen and twenty. With one of these, named Boyd, he soon formed an intimate acquaintance. But, unfortunately, the moral character of this young man was far from being pure, or his principles from resting upon the firm basis of truth and honor.

His growing influence over Thomas Howland was apparent in inducing him to stay away from church on the sabbath-day, and pass the time that had heretofore been spent in the place of worship, in roaming about the wharves of the city, or in excursions into the country. This influence was slightly resisted, Thomas being ashamed or reluctant to use the word "*No*," on what seemed to all the young men around him a matter of so little importance. Still, his own heart condemned him, for he felt that it would pain his father and mother exceedingly if they knew that he neglected to attend church at least once on the sabbath-day; and he was, besides, self-convicted of wrong in what seemed to him a violation of the precept, *Remember the sabbath-day*, &c. as he had been taught to regard that precept. But once having given way, he felt almost powerless to resist the influence that now bore upon him.

The next violation of what seemed to him a right course for a young man to pursue, was in suffering himself to be persuaded to visit frequently the theatre; although his father had expressly desired that he would avoid a place where lurked for the young and inexperienced so many dangers. He was next easily persuaded to visit a favorite eating-house, in which many hours were spent during the evenings of each week, with Boyd and others, in eating, drinking, and smoking.

Sometimes dominos and backgammon were introduced, and at length were played for a slight stake. To participate in this Thomas refused, on the plea that he did not know enough of the games to risk anything. He had not the moral courage to declare that he considered it wrong to gamble.

All these departures from what he had been taught by his father to consider a right course, were attended by much uneasiness and pain of mind.—But he had yielded to the tempter, and he could not find the power within him to resist his influence successfully.

It happened about six months after his introduction to such an entirely new course of life that he was invited one evening by his companion Boyd, to call on a friend with him. He had, on that day, received from his father forty dollars, with which to buy him a new suit of clothes and a few other necessary articles. He went, of course, and was introduced to a very affable, gentlemanly young man, in his room at one of the hotels. In a few minutes, wine and cigars were ordered, and the three spent an hour or so, in drinking, smoking, and chit-chat of no elevating or refined character.

"Come, let us have a game of cards," the friend at last remarked, during a pause in the conversation; at the same time going to his trunk and producing a pack of cards.

"No objection," responded Boyd.

"You'll take a hand, of course?" the new friend said, looking at Thomas Howland.

But Thomas said that he knew nothing of cards.

"O that's no matter! You can learn in two minutes," responded the friend of Boyd.

Young Howland felt reluctant, but he could not resist the influence that was around him, and so he consented to finger the cards with the rest. As they gathered around the table, a half-dollar was laid down by each of the young men, who looked towards Thomas as they did so.

"I cannot play for money," he said, coloring; for he felt really ashamed to acknowledge his scruples.

"And why not?" asked the friend of Boyd, looking him steadily in the face.

"Because I think it wrong," stammered out Howland, coloring still more deeply.

"Nonsense! Isn't your money your own? And pray what harm is there in your doing with your own as you please?" urged the tempter.

"But I do not know enough of the game to risk my money."

"You don't think we would take advantage of your ignorance?" Boyd said. "The stake is only to give interest to the game. I would not give a copper for a game of cards without a stake. Come, put down your half-dollar, and we'll promise to pay you back all you loose, if you wish it, until you acquire some skill."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.