



### *THE PINE TREE SHILLING*

**I**N THE LIVING ROOM OF AN OLD COLONIAL house in Boston, an elderly gentleman was seated comfortably before the fire. At his feet a small boy was stretched out on the rug, toying happily with a curious collection of coins. It was a wintry evening, and the fire was crackling merrily. The old gentleman was puffing reminiscently at his pipe. After some moments, he stirred slightly.

“Well, Bobby,” he said, “you seem to know a lot about those coins in your collection. You’ll be quite a historian before long.”

The boy looked up into his grandfather's face with an eager smile.

"You know, Grandpa," he said, "I used to hate history, but I like it now."

"Yes, history is interesting," the old gentleman said, nodding, "when you can see it lying right there on the rug in front of you."

The boy picked up a coin from the rug and held it in his fingers.

"See this Spanish dubloon, Grandpa?" he said, "maybe it came to Boston in a pirate ship."

"Either that, or some Dutch merchant sold a big cheese to a Spanish grandee, got paid in that kind of money, and then passed it on to some New England woodman."

"I like the pirate idea better," said Bobby, laughing.

"Where did you get the dubloon, Bobby?"

"Jimmy Jackson found it in their attic—in an old trunk. I gave him four rides on my bicycle for it."

The old gentleman chuckled. His face warmed with the memory of pleasant boyhood barter. Then, tapping his pipe on the sole of his shoe, he rose stiffly from his chair and went to an old Governor Winthrop desk. He rummaged for a moment through the drawers. Presently he returned to his chair, holding an old tarnished coin in the palm of his hand. He held it out to the boy, who grasped it quickly and rubbed it between his fingers.

"Why, Grandpa!" the boy cried. "It's a Pine Tree Shilling! I recognize it from my coin book. Where did you get it?"

"I was feeding a squirrel on the common one day, and followed him to see where he hid his peanuts. As he was scratching around, I noticed something that looked like money. I dug it up, and found that it was this old shilling."

"Gee—it's really old, isn't it, Grandpa? Sixteen fifty-two. Do you mean I can have it?"

"Of course you can have it, Bobby. And it's a remarkable piece of money, too. It's more interesting to me than all the rest of your collection put together. It's the first American coinage. One of the things that made us a real country—not just a colony depending on England. A country, you know, lives or dies by its trade, and without money, trading becomes difficult."

"Trade? You mean buying things from other countries, Grandpa?"

"Yes. And not only that, Bobby, there was a time when the colonists couldn't even buy things from each other. They made everything they needed—every man had a craft or business in those days—but they had a difficult time swapping things around so that every man had just what he wanted. You see, they didn't have any money of their own—just coins from here and there—a few English shillings, some Dutch guilders and a scattering of dubloons and

pieces-of-eight. These coins kept changing their value, and were more trouble than they were worth. It took a lot of argument to decide values because most of the time, the colonists just swapped with each other—as you and Jimmy do with your stamp and coin collections.”

“Gee, they must have had a lot of fights, Grandpa!”

“They did,” the old gentleman chuckled.

“And this is really the coin they made?”

“Yes, would you like to hear how it all came about?”

“Would I!” the boy cried.

The old gentleman settled back in his chair. The boy stretched out on the rug before the crackling fire, his chin cupped in his hands and his eyes sparkling with eager anticipation.

“Well, Bobby,” said the old gentleman, hitching one leg over the other, “let’s go back to about 1650, almost three hundred years ago, and we’ll see what set people to thinking about the Pine Tree Shilling.”

Then, as the old gentleman began to tell his story, the boy, who was stretched out on the rug, kept his eyes fixed on the crackling fire. He seemed to see in the dancing flames Christopher Stanley the tailor, William Church the baker, Jonathan Green the carpenter, and the young apprentice, Samuel. Jonathan Green and Samuel were in the workshop sawing boards. The boy could almost hear the sound of the saw. . . .

JONATHAN GREEN: Hold the plank steady, Samuel, else I can’t saw it right and square.

SAMUEL: I’m sitting on it hard as I can, master.

JONATHAN GREEN: You need more weight, lad. You must eat more.

SAMUEL: Yes, master.

JONATHAN GREEN: Another two years and you’ll be master in your own right—with an apprentice of your own.

SAMUEL: I look forward to that day, Master Green.

JONATHAN GREEN: Dissatisfied with the way you’re treated, eh?

SAMUEL: Oh no, Master Green! You’ve been as good a master as any apprenticed lad could want. But a lad does have dreams.

JONATHAN GREEN: I know what you mean. Here’s sixpence for ye, lad. An English sixpence.

SAMUEL: For me—a sixpence? Oh, thank you, Master Green.

JONATHAN GREEN: Drop it in the plate o’ church on Sunday.

SAMUEL: That I will, sir. Up to this time, a dozen eggs from my geese is all I could offer his reverence.

JONATHAN GREEN: Wait till Miss Betsy Hull turns her head your way—then flip the sixpence into the plate with a good cheery clink. That’ll make her sit up and take notice.

SAMUEL: Why—master—how did you—

JONATHAN GREEN: It's all right, my lad. I was young once myself, and I know all the tricks.

SAMUEL: It's right grateful I am, sir—

JONATHAN GREEN: Welcome, my lad. Now—quick! Let's get to work. I see Master Christopher Stanley, the tailor, coming up the road. We must be busy, Samuel.

SAMUEL: Yes, master.

JONATHAN GREEN: At first, don't notice him. There's a rumor he wants a new shop built, and I must get the best price I can for my work.

SAMUEL: I see, sir. But what of the law just passed in the magistrate's court? A carpenter to earn no more than two shillings for each day's work?

JONATHAN GREEN: It's not the shillings, lad. It's the kind of shilling I'm thinking about. Master Stanley will not wish to pay me in the hard money I like. Only Captain John Hull has paid me in metal. I'll wager a dubloon to your English sixpence that Master Stanley will offer me instead of good hard money, a number of suits, half the value of the work. Keep busy, lad. Here he is now.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: Good day, Master Green. Good day, lad.

SAMUEL: Ahem, master—

JONATHAN GREEN: What do you mean—ahem? Oh! 'Tis Master Stanley! Good day, to you, neighbor. I was so busy I didn't see you.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: I'll tell you what I'm here for, if you're not too busy to listen.

JONATHAN GREEN: I can spare a moment.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: It'll be worth your time. I need a new building for my work. I've two new apprentices, and the house is much too small to work in. Each day my wife threatens to sweep us out with the cinders from the hearth. I want a new building, twenty foot square, with a roof sloping to the east, and a large window with glass in it at the north, and one at the west. When could you do the work, and what would the cost be?

JONATHAN GREEN: You say your business prospers these days?

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: That's not what I said. I asked you the cost.

JONATHAN GREEN: You'll pay in good English silver?

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: You know I can do no such thing. My business is good, 'tis true, but my customers are mostly men of the soil, and artizans like yourself. Master Thomas Beal made me a great oaken barrel, and I made him some woolen breeches. Farmer Pollard filled the barrel with apples, and I made him another pair of breeches with a double seat. To you, I offer a fair number of woolen suits, of the best cloth and the best cut, sewed with the greatest care. . . .

JONATHAN GREEN: Toss me the sixpence, Samuel.

SAMUEL: Yes, master.

JONATHAN GREEN: Thankee, lad. Master Stanley, 'tis hard money like this I take for my work. I want none of your suits, be they of the best or the worst.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: Am I to understand you're not needing new clothes? No offense, neighbor, but as a plain fact, spoken by a plain man, you're as shabby a sight as I've seen in many a day, and in my opinion. . . .

JONATHAN GREEN: No offense, neighbor, but will you keep your opinions to yourself?

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: As you wish. But I should think you'd like the value of professional counsel.

MISTRESS GREEN: Jonathan! Jonathan!

SAMUEL: 'Tis Mistress Green calling, master.

JONATHAN GREEN: Think you I'm deaf, lad? I can hear her.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: Ask your wife what she thinks about your need of clothes.

MISTRESS GREEN: Jonathan! Jonathan, I say!

JONATHAN GREEN: I'm here, wife. What is it you want?

MISTRESS GREEN: Master Church is here. I owe him for the week's bread. Shall I pay him with the doubloons or with the shillings?

JONATHAN GREEN: Get rid of the Spanish gilt, if you can make him take it. You never can tell when a shipload will be dumped upon us, and take from the value of the stuff we have on hand.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: And yet you want me to pay you in coin. Mistress Green, tell me if I'm wrong. I want your husband to build me a new house, and I've offered to pay him with the equivalent in clothes.

JONATHAN GREEN: How many suits do you think I want? I'll take one suit and the rest in silver.

MISTRESS GREEN: Take two suits, Jonathan.

JONATHAN GREEN: All right—two. But not a buttonhole more. What do you take me for—a London stage player who needs a different waistcoat each time he prances in view of the rabble? Two suits it is, and the rest in silver.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: I can't do it, Master Green. I haven't the money. I told you—my customers pay me in kind.

MISTRESS GREEN: Jonathan, why don't you build the shop for Master Stanley, and let him supply you with cloaks and suits for the next ten years—or up to the value of your labor?

JONATHAN GREEN: And me not knowing if he'll die of the plague before the week is out! And furthermore, how would we pay Master Church, the baker, if the next four weeks of my labor goes for clothes?

MISTRESS GREEN: I never thought of that. And

paid he must be, for here he comes, wondering what has become of me.

WILLIAM CHURCH: Your pardon, Mistress Green, but I have my rounds to make. Ah, Master Green.

JONATHAN GREEN: Good day to you, Master Church.

WILLIAM CHURCH: And Master Stanley—just the man I've been meaning to see. I think you'll agree I'm much in need of new clothes—almost in rags for a fact. Now if I could strike up a trade with you—let us say clothes for a year, in return for bread.

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: My wife bakes all the bread my family consumes. But I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll supply Master Green here with bread for the year to come, I'll furnish your need in apparel—up to two suits, a cloak, and an extra pair of breeches.

WILLIAM CHURCH: 'Tis none of my affair, but since when did you take to paying for your neighbor's bread?

CHRISTOPHER STANLEY: Don't worry about that. 'Twill be a fair exchange all around. I get the shop. Green gets his bread, and you both get your clothes.

JONATHAN GREEN: What good is hard money in this barbarous place? They've forgotten the very use of money here. Here you are, Samuel. Here's your sixpence back.

And so it was for two more years. The English government knew very well that once the colonists could take care of themselves, a desire for independence would spring to life. Therefore, the coinage of money was expressly forbidden. But these early settlers were an independent lot. One day, in the town of Boston in the year 1652, a meeting was called. Master Thomas Beal proposed that Captain John Hull's plan for converting silverware into coins be carried out. His proposal was greeted with lusty acclaim, and the plan was immediately accepted. Captain Hull was authorized to end the confusion of English sixpence, shillings, guineas, Spanish doubloons, and pieces-of-eight. He was also authorized to put up his own shop and to construct his own mint and it was agreed that, for his services, Captain Hull was to receive one out of every twenty shillings coined; for the colonists well knew that Captain Hull offered his services to the colony at the risk of his own life.

So Captain John Hull, the goldsmith, proceeded to stamp out the first money ever coined in America.

It was a strange collection of silver that was brought to be melted down—old family pieces, silver tankards, goblets, knives and spoons, and all manner of silverware possessed by the early settlers. From morning to night Captain Hull's little shop was a busy place. One morning, Captain Hull and his part-

ner, Robert Sanderson, were waiting for a visit from Mistress Green. . . .

ROBERT SANDERSON: What is this thing I have here, do you think, Captain Hull?

CAPTAIN HULL: It is beyond me, Robert. More strange objects come into the shop of late than I've seen in *my* lifetime.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Well, into the melting pot it goes.

CAPTAIN HULL: Aye, in she goes.

ROBERT SANDERSON: 'Tis good to watch—the molten silver.

CAPTAIN HULL: I like better the clink of the coins. 'Tis a sound we've long waited for. Do I hear someone at the door?

ROBERT SANDERSON: Aye, Captain Hull. 'Twill be Mistress Green. She was coming in this morning.

CAPTAIN HULL: Come in, Mistress Green! And good morrow to you.

MISTRESS GREEN: Good day to you, Captain Hull—and to you, Master Sanderson.

CAPTAIN HULL: I trust your good husband, the carpenter, is well.

MISTRESS GREEN: Quite well, thank you, Captain Hull. And how is your wife and Mistress Betsy, your daughter?

CAPTAIN HULL: Very well, thank you.

MISTRESS GREEN: I have heard that young Sam-

uel Sewell, who used to be my husband's apprentice, is quite a caller here these days.

CAPTAIN HULL: A likely young man. Well, Mistress Green, how may we serve you? Surely you didn't come to speak of Betsy and Samuel.

MISTRESS GREEN: No, Captain. I've brought this silver tankard. Do you think it might be melted?

CAPTAIN HULL: Let's look at it.

ROBERT SANDERSON: A bit battered, to say the least.

MISTRESS GREEN: Oh, it's seen rough times. It's been a drinking vessel in the Green family these many generations—so I've been told. For myself, I'm glad to be rid of it. Will you transform it by your magic into bright new shillings—with the pretty picture of the tree?

CAPTAIN HULL: Let's see it. Hm—

MISTRESS GREEN: By careful cutting, how many shillings do you think you can make out of it?

CAPTAIN HULL: If that isn't just like a woman! By careful cutting! 'Tis not a bit of timber like your husband uses, that we deal with here. Weigh the tankard, Robert.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Aye, sir. I'll put it in the scales.

CAPTAIN HULL: It's so many coins to an ounce of the metal, Mistress Green.

MISTRESS GREEN: Oh—is that the way you do it?

CAPTAIN HULL: Also we have to test the purity of the silver. But that's a simple matter.

MISTRESS GREEN: It's a heavy tankard, Captain Hull.

CAPTAIN HULL: We figure one hundred shillings for every fifteen ounces of silver. This should make you a neat pile of shillings, Mistress Green. Perhaps you'd like to watch the way we work.

MISTRESS GREEN: I would indeed.

CAPTAIN HULL: Watch Sanderson. First he takes the exact volume of the object. See him drop it in this tub of water? Notice the tub's full up to the spout where it can run out? The water that runs out is caught in this measuring vessel. What says it, Robert? I haven't my spectacles.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Ten cubits, sir.

CAPTAIN HULL: And the weight of the tankard?

ROBERT SANDERSON: I have written it down.

CAPTAIN HULL: Hm—that's heavy for ten cubits in volume. That means, Mistress Green, that it's nearly pure—not much other metal in it. That's why it's so battered. Pure silver is soft you know. The coins themselves are not as pure as this tankard. They contain much copper.

MISTRESS GREEN: You mean I'll get more coins than the tankard? I mean—if I dropped the shillings in the tub, more water would run out than when you dropped the tankard in?

CAPTAIN HULL: That's right.

MISTRESS GREEN: Is that all the magic there is to it? Why there's more to baking a cake than this.

CAPTAIN HULL: I'll not believe it. Sanderson, how many shillings do you figure out?

ROBERT SANDERSON: As I reckon it, sir, sixty shillings.

MISTRESS GREEN: I get sixty shillings?

CAPTAIN HULL: Minus three. One out of each twenty is ours.

MISTRESS GREEN: I know the ruling. What next?

CAPTAIN HULL: Drop the tankard into the "stew," Sanderson.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Aye, sir.

MISTRESS GREEN: Do I get no receipt for the tankard?

CAPTAIN HULL: You want the shillings now, don't you?

MISTRESS GREEN: Why yes, but don't I have to wait?

CAPTAIN HULL: Nay. Master Sanderson is already taking them from yonder barrel and counting them out.

MISTRESS GREEN: But I thought I got the same shillings—I mean made from my tankard—I didn't understand.

CAPTAIN HULL: The shillings he is counting out for you from the barrel have had all shapes and forms—old sword hilts, buckles, broken spoons and silver buttons—aye, and I'll warrant raw bullion



taken from Spanish galleons by buccaneers. These pirates put into port here, you know, and give the stuff in return for ship's provisions. The tradesmen who serve them bring it in here to be coined.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine—sixty—minus three for our commission.

CAPTAIN HULL: Drop our three in the box Robert, and here you are, Mistress Green—fifty-seven shillings.

MISTRESS GREEN: Thank ye, sirs. And good day to you. May you prosper in your business. It's a service you're doing the country. I bring an old tankard into the shop, and go away with a purseful of shining shillings. It's a fine country we're living in. Good day to you.

CAPTAIN HULL: Good day to you.

ROBERT SANDERSON: It's a fine fortune you're making, Captain, with one of every twenty shillings for yourself.

CAPTAIN HULL: Aye, but 'tis a fair bargain, I'm thinking.

And it was a fair bargain. Captain Hull's fortune was well earned. Hawthorne in his "Twice Told Tales" tells the story of how Captain Hull gave away a great many of his shillings. Many people say the story is a legend rather than the truth. However, it has come down through the years, and is typical of his generous spirit. It was the occasion of his daugh-

ter Betsy's wedding to young Samuel Sewell, Jonathan Green's apprentice, the same young Samuel who received the sixpence for the collection plate, together with some advice on how to win the favor of Captain Hull's daughter. The wedding was a gay and festive event. After the ceremony, Captain Hull received the congratulations of his guests but the big surprise was yet to come.

JONATHAN GREEN: Well, well, did I ever think to see the day when young John Hull would be marrying off a full grown daughter!

MISTRESS GREEN: Just look at Mistress Hull—there across the room. Isn't she radiant? She's so happy about her daughter.

JONATHAN GREEN: Looks to me as if she's weeping.

MISTRESS GREEN: Of course she's weeping! She's happy. It's a fine young man Betsy's marrying. Young Sewell's not been known to miss church nor prayer meeting since the day he was old enough to toddle. And he's handsome too.

JONATHAN GREEN: Yes, and he's going to be the best master carpenter in the colony. I taught him myself.

MISTRESS PEABODY: Good evening, Mistress Green.

MISTRESS GREEN: Why, Hope Peabody, I didn't see you! Isn't it a lovely wedding?

MISTRESS PEABODY: Lovely enough.

MISTRESS GREEN: And what a beautiful bride.

MISTRESS PEABODY: Pretty—but rather large.

MISTRESS GREEN: Large?

MISTRESS PEABODY: Buxom, I suppose you'd call it. The young men have such strange taste today. I understand she set her cap for him.

MISTRESS GREEN: No one but Betsy ever had a chance to win Samuel. It's a real love match. Betsy told me herself that he never so much as mentioned a dowry.

MISTRESS PEABODY: Isn't that romantic! Now, if Betsy would only curb her taste for sweetmeats!

MISTRESS GREEN: I'm sure Samuel loves her just as she is.

JONATHAN GREEN: Yes, Hope, and if you ever marry I hope you make as good a wife as Betsy will. Samuel says he's the luckiest man in the world.

MISTRESS GREEN: John—look what the servants are bringing in!

MISTRESS PEABODY: It looks like a huge pair of scales.

MISTRESS GREEN: Why, that's what it is!

JONATHAN GREEN: Odd things at a wedding! Large aren't they? Large enough for weighing grain or fish.

MISTRESS GREEN: Sh! Captain Hull is going to speak.

CAPTAIN HULL: One moment, my friends. I have a surprise for you! Betsy, get into the scales!

BETSY: Yes, father.

MISTRESS PEABODY: What is he going to do? Make Samuel pay for the bride?

The radiant bride stepped into the great scales. Captain Hull called for a heavy box to be unlocked. Then, as the guests watched with eager curiosity, the box was opened and the assembled colonists saw that it was full of Pine Tree Shillings. Captain Hull's merry voice rang out to the far corners of the house.

CAPTAIN HULL: Weigh the girl down! Put in the shillings till you weigh her right off the floor!

MISTRESS PEABODY: It will take more than a handful of shillings to do that.

CAPTAIN HULL: There! They weigh about even now, I should judge.

ROBERT SANDERSON: Aye, they weigh about even now, Captain.

CAPTAIN HULL: And there we are, friends! Lucky for me that young people in love eat so sparingly. A pretty pile of shillings it'll cost me at that. Here, Samuel, take her. And the shillings as well. Use the girl kindly, my son, and count yourself lucky. It isn't every wife that's worth her weight in silver!

As the old gentleman finished his story, the fire was dying to glowing embers. But the face of the boy was still shining with excitement. The Pine Tree

Shilling was still clasped tightly in his hand.

"And did he really give away all those shillings, Grandpa?" the boy asked incredulously.

"Yes, Bobby. Captain Hull gave his daughter for her dowry, her weight in silver shillings."

"Just like this shilling, Grandpa?"

"Just like that one, Bobby," the old gentleman replied. "With 'Massachusetts' written on one side and '1652' and 'New England' on the other. You know, Bobby, these shillings really did a lot for this country. They made trade easier in the colonies. People could sell the articles they made—they didn't have to exchange them—and they could keep the money they received until they wanted to spend it."

"That must have made them work harder, didn't it?"

"It did, Bobby. It encouraged them to be industrious. And the more that industry developed, the better able the colonists were to take care of themselves—the more independent they felt—and you know what that feeling of independence finally led to."

"Sure, I know!" the boy exclaimed proudly. "The Declaration of Independence that we celebrate on the Fourth of July."

"You're right, son, and you take good care of that Pine Tree Shilling. You'll never find a piece of money anywhere that played a bigger part in the history of your country."