



*The Little Gold Miners of the
Sierras and Other Stories*

Joaquin Miller

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THE LITTLE GOLD MINERS OF THE SIERRAS AND
OTHER STORIES ***



"COLOR! TWO COLORS! THREE, FOUR, FIVE—A
DOZEN!"

THE LITTLE GOLD MINERS OF THE SIERRAS

BY

JOAQUIN MILLER

AND OTHER STORIES

FULLY ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON
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THE LITTLE GOLD MINERS OF THE SIERRAS.

Their mother had died crossing the plains, and their father had had a leg broken by a wagon wheel passing over it as they descended the Sierras, and he was for a long time after reaching the mines miserable, lame and poor.

The eldest boy, Jim Keene, as I remember him, was a bright little fellow, but wild as an Indian and full of mischief. The next eldest child, Madge, was a girl of ten, her father's favorite, and she was wild enough too. The youngest was Stumps. Poor, timid, starved Little Stumps! I never knew his real name. But he was the baby, and hardly yet out of petticoats. And he was very short in the legs, very short in the body, very short in the arms and neck; and so he was called Stumps because he looked it. In fact he seemed to have stopped growing entirely. Oh, you don't know how hard the old Plains were on everybody, when we crossed them in ox-wagons, and it took more than half a year to make the journey. The little children, those that did not die, turned brown like the Indians, in that long, dreadful journey of seven months, and stopped growing for a time.

For the first month or two after reaching the Sierras, old Mr. Keene limped about among the mines trying to learn the mystery of finding gold, and the art of digging. But at last, having grown strong enough, he went to work for wages, to get bread for his half-wild little ones, for they were destitute indeed.

Things seemed to move on well, then. Madge cooked

the simple meals, and Little Stumps clung to her dress with his little pinched brown hand wherever she went, while Jim whooped it over the hills and chased jack-rabbits as if he were a greyhound. He would climb trees, too, like a squirrel. And, oh!—it was deplorable—but how he could swear!

At length some of the miners, seeing the boy must come to some bad end if not taken care of, put their heads and their pockets together and sent the children to school. This school was a mile away over the beautiful brown hills, a long, pleasant walk under the green California oaks.

Well, Jim would take the little tin dinner bucket, and his slate, and all their books under his arm and go booming ahead about half a mile in advance, while Madge with brown Little Stumps clinging to her side like a burr, would come stepping along the trail under the oak-trees as fast as she could after him.

But if a jack-rabbit, or a deer, or a fox crossed Jim's path, no matter how late it was, or how the teacher had threatened him, he would drop books, lunch, slate and all, and spitting on his hands and rolling up his sleeves, would bound away after it, yelling like a wild Indian. And some days, so fascinating was the chase, Jim did not appear at the schoolhouse at all; and of course Madge and Stumps played truant too. Sometimes a week together would pass and the Keene children would not be seen at the schoolhouse. Visits from the schoolmaster produced no lasting effect. The children would come for a day or two, then be seen no more. The schoolmaster and their father at last had a serious talk about the matter.

"What *can* I do with him?" said Mr. Keene.

"You'll have to put him to work," said the schoolmaster. "Set him to hunting nuggets instead of bird's-nests. I guess what the boy wants is some honest means of using his strength. He's a good boy, Mr. Keene; don't despair of him. Jim would be proud to be an 'honest miner.' Jim's a good boy, Mr. Keene."

"Well, then, thank you, Schoolmaster," said Mr. Keene. "Jim's a good boy; and Madge is good, Mr. Schoolmaster; and poor starved and stunted motherless Little Stumps, he is good as gold, Mr. Schoolmaster. And I want to be a mother to 'em—I want to be father and mother to 'em all, Mr. Schoolmaster. And I'll follow your advice. I'll put 'em all to work a-huntin' for gold."

The next day away up on the hillside under a pleasant oak, where the air was sweet and cool, and the ground soft and dotted over with flowers, the tender-hearted old man that wanted to be "father and mother both," "located" a claim. The flowers were kept fresh by a little stream of waste water from the ditch that girded the brow of the hill above. Here he set a sluice-box and put his three little miners at work with pick, pan and shovel. There he left them and limped back to his own place in the mine below.

And how they did work! And how pleasant it was here under the broad boughs of the oak, with the water rippling through the sluice on the soft, loose soil which they shoveled into the long sluice-box. They could see the mule-trains going and coming, and the clouds of dust far below which told them the stage was whirling up the valley. But Jim kept steadily on at his work day after day. Even though jack-rabbits and squirrels appeared on the very scene, he would not leave till, like the rest of the

honest miners, he could shoulder his pick and pan and go down home with the setting sun.

Sometimes the men who had tried to keep the children at school, would come that way, and with a shy smile, talk very wisely about whether or not the new miners would "strike it" under the cool oak among the flowers on the hill. But Jim never stopped to talk much. He dug and wrestled away, day after day, now up to his waist in the pit.

One Saturday evening the old man limped up the hillside to help the young miners "clean up."

He sat down at the head of the sluice-box and gave directions how they should turn off the most of the water, wash down the "toilings" very low, lift up the "riffle," brush down the "apron," and finally set the pan in the lower end of the "sluice-toil" and pour in the quicksilver to gather up and hold the gold.

"What for you put your hand in de water for, papa?" queried Little Stumps, who had left off his work, which consisted mainly of pulling flowers and putting them in the sluice-box to see them float away. He was sitting by his father's side, and he looked up in his face as he spoke.

"Hush, child," said the old man softly, as he again dipped his thumb and finger in his vest pocket as if about to take snuff. But he did not take snuff. Again his hand was reached down to the rippling water at the head of the sluice-box. And this time curious but obedient Little Stumps was silent.

Suddenly there was a shout, such a shout from Jim as the hills had not heard since he was a schoolboy.

He had found the "color." "Two colors! three, four,

five—a dozen!" The boy shouted like a Modoc, threw down the brush and scraper, and kissed his little sister over and over, and cried as he did so; then he whispered softly to her as he again took up his brush and scraper, that it was "for papa; all for poor papa; that he did not care for himself, but he did want to help poor, tired, and crippled papa." But papa did not seem to be excited so very much.

The little miners were now continually wild with excitement. They were up and at work Monday morning at dawn. The men who were in the father's tender secret, congratulated the children heartily and made them presents of several small nuggets to add to their little horde.

In this way they kept steadily at work for half the summer. All the gold was given to papa to keep. Papa weighed it each week, and I suppose secretly congratulated himself that he was getting back about as much as he put in.

Before quite the end of the third month, Jim struck a thin bed of blue gravel. The miners who had been happily chuckling and laughing among themselves to think how they had managed to keep Jim out of mischief, began to look at each other and wonder how in the world blue gravel ever got up there on the hill. And in a few days more there was a well-defined bed of blue gravel, too; and not one of the miners could make it out.

One Saturday evening shortly after, as the old man weighed their gold he caught his breath, started, and stood up straight; straighter than he had stood since he crossed the Plains. Then he hastily left the cabin. He went up the hill to the children's claim almost without limping. Then he took a pencil and an old

piece of a letter, and wrote out a notice and tacked it up on the big oak-tree, claiming those mining claims according to miners' law, for the three children. A couple of miners laughed as they went by in the twilight, to see what he was doing; and he laughed with them. But as he limped on down the hill he smiled.

That night as they sat at supper, he told the children that as they had been such faithful and industrious miners, he was going to give them each a present, besides a little gold to spend as they pleased.

So he went up to the store and bought Jim a red shirt, long black and bright gum boots, a broad-brimmed hat, and a belt. He also bought each of the other children some pretty trappings, and gave each a dollar's worth of gold dust. Madge and Stumps handed their gold back to "poor papa." But Jim was crazy with excitement. He put on his new clothes and went forth to spend his dollar. And what do you suppose he bought? I hesitate to tell you. But what he bought was a pipe and a paper of tobacco!

That red shirt, that belt and broad-brimmed hat, together with the shiny top boots, had been too much for Jim's balance. How could a man—he spoke of himself as a man now—how could a man be an "honest miner" and not smoke a pipe?

And now with his manly clothes and his manly pipe he was to be so happy! He had all that went to make up "the honest miner." True, he did not let his father know about the pipe. He hid it under his pillow at night. He meant to have his first smoke at the sluice-box, as a miner should.

Monday morning he was up with the sun and ready

for his work. His father, who worked down the Gulch, had already gone before the children had finished their breakfast. So now Jim filled his brand-new pipe very leisurely; and with as much calm unconcern as if he had been smoking for forty years, he stopped to scratch a match on the door as he went out.

From under his broad hat he saw his little sister watching him, and he fairly swelled with importance as Stumps looked up at him with childish wonder. Leaving Madge to wash the few tin dishes and follow as she could with Little Stumps, he started on up the hill, pipe in mouth.

He met several miners, but he puffed away like a tug-boat against the tide, and went on. His bright new boots whetted and creaked together, the warm wind lifted the broad brim of his *sombrero*, and his bright new red shirt was really beautiful, with the green grass and oaks for a background—and so this brave young man climbed the hill to his mine. Ah, he was so happy!



HE TOOK THE LIMP YOUNG MINER IN HIS ARMS.

Suddenly, as he approached the claim, his knees began to smite together, and he felt so weak he could

hardly drag one foot after the other. He threw down his pick; he began to tremble and spin around. The world seemed to be turning over and over, and he trying in vain to hold on to it. He jerked the pipe from his teeth, and throwing it down on the bank, he tumbled down too, and clutching at the grass with both hands tried hard, oh! so hard, to hold the world from slipping from under him.

"O, Jim, you are white as snow," cried Madge as she came up.

"White as 'er sunshine, an' blue, an' green too, sisser. Look at brurrer 'all colors," piped Little Stumps pitifully.

"O, Jim, Jim—brother Jim, what is the matter?" sobbed Madge.

"Sunstroke," murmured the young man, smiling grimly, like a true Californian. "No; it is not sunstroke, it's—it's cholera," he added in dismay over his falsehood.

Poor boy! he was sorry for this second lie too. He fairly groaned in agony of body and soul.

Oh, how he did hate that pipe! How he did want to get up and jump on it and smash it into a thousand pieces! But he could not get up or turn around or move at all without betraying his unmanly secret.

A couple of miners came up, but Jim feebly begged them to go.

"Sunstroke," whispered the sister.

"No; tolera," piped poor Little Stumps.

"Get out! Leave me!" groaned the young red-shirted

miner of the Sierras.

The biggest of the two miners bent over him a moment.

"Yas; it's both," he muttered. "Cholera-nicotine-fantum!" Then he looked at his partner and winked wickedly. Without a word, he took the limp young miner up in his arms and bore him down the hill to his father's cabin, while Stumps and Madge ran along at either side, and tenderly and all the time kept asking what was good for "cholera."

The other old "honest miner" lingered behind to pick up the baleful pipe which he knew was somewhere there; and when the little party was far enough down the hill, he took it up and buried it in his own capacious pocket with a half-sorrowful laugh. "Poor little miner," he sighed.

"Don't ever swear any more, Windy," pleaded the boy to the miner who had carried him down the hill, as he leaned over him, "and don't never lie. I am going to die, Windy, and I should like to be good. Windy, it *ain't* sunstroke, it's"—

"Hush yer mouth," growled Windy. "I know what 'tis! We've left it on the hill."

The boy turned his face to the wall. The conviction was strong upon him that he was going to die. The world spun round now very, very fast indeed. Finally, half-rising in bed, he called Little Stumps to his side:

"Stumps, dear, good Little Stumps, if I die don't you never, never try for to smoke; for that's what's the matter with me. No, Stumps—dear little brother Stumps—don't you never try for to go the whole of

the 'honest miner,' for it can't be did by a boy! We're nothing but boys, you and I, Stumps—Little Stumps."

He sank back in bed and Little Stumps and his sister cried and cried, and kissed him and kissed him.

The miners who had gathered around loved him now, every one, for daring to tell the truth and take the shame of his folly so bravely.

"I'm going to die, Windy," groaned the boy.

Windy could stand no more of it. He took Jim's hand with a cheery laugh. "Git well in half an hour," said he, "now that you've out with the truth."

And so he did. By the time his father came home he was sitting up; and he ate breakfast the next morning as if nothing had happened. But he never tried to smoke any more as long as he lived. And he never lied, and he never swore any more.

Oh, no! this Jim that I have been telling you of is "Moral Jim," of the Sierras. The mine? Oh! I almost forgot. Well, that blue dirt was the old bed of the stream, and it was ten times richer than where the miners were all at work below. Struck it! I should say so! Ask any of the old Sierras miners about "The Children's Claim," if you want to hear just how rich they struck it.

A MODERN HERO

It was a very humble house. Only a flat of three

rooms on the third floor of a tall tenement-house in a back street near the river. A bedroom, a tiny parlor and a kitchen, which was also an eating-room, made up the suite. The Briggses did all their daylight living in the last-named apartment. The floor was painted yellow; the walls were whitewashed; the furniture was homely, substantial and well-kept.

Everything was shining clean, and both windows were full of plants, many of them in flower. Mrs. Briggs was fully persuaded in her own mind that no other woman in the city had such a tale of daily mercies as herself. Among them were the southern exposure of those windows and the circumstance that a gap in the buildings back of them let in the sunshine freely. Her nasturtiums blossomed there all winter; from a pot she had suspended by strings from the top of the casing, sweet alyseum flowed downward like a fountain of soft green waters tipped with white; scarlet geraniums shot up rank shoots that had to be pruned into reasonableness, and as to Christmas roses—"But there!" the worthy soul would assure her acquaintances, "*they* do beat everything!"

This winter the calla was about to bloom. A kind lady had given the bulb to Mrs. Briggs's son, and there was no telling the store he set by it.

Topcliffe Briggs—alias, Top, Senior—was an engineer on the great North, East, West and South Railway. He sat at the tea-table with his wife and son at five-thirty one cloudy February afternoon. His next train went out at six-forty-five. He had run "Her" into the station at four, and his house was but two blocks away. Mrs. Briggs could see from those unparalleled kitchen-windows the bridge by which the track crossed the river separating the town from the

marshes, and could calculate to a minute when the familiar step would be heard on the stairs.

"You see we live by railroad time," was her modest boast. "And my husband always comes straight home." She did not emphasize the "my," knowing in her compassionate heart what other husbands were prone to lag by the way until they came home late and crookedly.

Top, Senior, was on time to-day. "I ken trust Her with Bartlett, you see," he remarked to his wife. "He won't leave tel she's all trig an' tidy for the next trip. I wisht I could be as sure o' Stokes!"

Mrs. Briggs looked up inquiringly.

"Stokes is a clever fellow," pursued Top Senior regretfully, slicing vigorously into the cold corned beef, for he was hungry. "Smart as a steel trap, and onderstan's his business. I never see a fireman what hed a better chance o' risin' to an ingineer. He knows Her pretty nigh's well ez I do. I've took real comfort in learning him all I could. But I'm afeerd, sometimes, he's on a down-grade and the brakes don't work."

"You mean that he drinks, don't you, father?" asked the sharp-eyed boy at his elbow.

"*There*, father!" interjected the mother. "You might 'a' known he'd onderstan', no matter how you put it!"

"I ain't afeered o' my boy blabbin'!" The brawny hand stroked the thin light hair of his only child. "An' I want he should learn to hate the stuff. It's the devil's best drivin' wheel—liquor is. I'd ruther lay you with my own han's 'cross the rails this very night, an' drive Her right over you, than to know that you'd grow up

a drunkard. Never do you forget them words, Junior! I *mean* every one o' them!"

The boy started at the earnestness of the exhortation, winked hard to keep his eyes dry, and changed the subject. "Hev you noticed my lily to-day, mother? I guess it'll be wide open by the time you get in to-night, father."

They all turned to look at the tall stem, crowned by the unfolding calyx. "Junior's goin' to be a master-hand with flowers," observed the mother. "He saves me pretty nigh all the trouble o' takin' keer of 'em. I've been thinkin' *that* might be a good business for him when he grows up."

She was always forecasting his future with more anxiety than generally enters into maternal hopes and fears. When but a year old, he had fallen from the arms of a neighbor who had caught him up from the floor in a fit of tipsy fondness. The child's back and hip were severely injured. He had not walked a step until he was five years of age, and would be lame always. He was now twelve—a dwarf in statue, hump-backed, weazen-faced and shrill-voiced, unsightly in all eyes but those of his parents. To them he was a miracle of precocity and beauty. His mother took in fine ironing to pay for his private tuition from a public school-teacher who lived in the neighborhood. He learned fast and eagerly. His father, at the teacher's suggestion, subscribed to a circulating library and the same kind friend selected books for the cripple's reading. There was a hundred dollars in the savings bank, against the name of "Topliffe Briggs, Junior," deposited, dollar by dollar, and representing countless acts of self-denial on the part of the industrious couple, and his possible

profession was a favorite theme of family converse.

"For that matter, there's lot o' things a scholar'd like him ken do," rejoined Top, Senior, with affectionate confidence in his heir's talents and acquirements. "'Tain't like 'twould be with a feller like me whose arms an' legs is his hull stock in trade. Why, I min' seein' a leetle rat of a man come on board one time 'scorted by a dozen 'o the biggest bugs in the city, an' people a-stretchin' their necks out o' j'int to ketch a look of him. Sech a mealy-faced, weak-lookin' atomy he was! But millions o' people was a-readin' that very day a big speech he'd made in Washin'ton, an' he'd saved the country from trouble more 'n once. He mought 'a' been President ef he had chose to run. That's the good o' hevin' a tiptop head-piece."

"I've made up my mind!" said Top, Junior, with an air. "I'm goin' to be a Hero! Like Julius Cæsar an' Alexander an' William Tell an' Captain John Smith, an' other men I've read about. I wish *you* would be a Hero, father! It's ever so much nicer than runnin' an engine. Won't you—please! You are strong enough and good enough for anything, an' you know a great deal about things!"

The blue eyes were bright and wistful, his hand stole up to the bushy whiskers, ginger-colored from exposure to the air and boiler-heat.

"*Me*, a hero! Haw! haw!" roared the engineer, letting fall his knife and fork in his merriment. "*I'd* cut a figger at the head of an army, or speakin' in Congress, or a-setten' on a gold throne, wouldn't I? No! no! my man!" sobering down suddenly, into a sort of sad dignity. "Yer father ain't got the brains nor the eddication for nothin' of that kind! All he ken do is to live clean an' honest in the sight o' the Lord, an'

to run his ingine 'cordin' to the best o' his lights."

"The Lord's too reasonable to expect more of you'n to do your duty in the place where's He's put you," said the wife gently.

"I hope he is, Mother! Ef he looked for more—or for any big thing 's fur as that goes, the chances are He'd be disapp'inted. I hev plenty o' time fur thinkin' while we're scootin' 'cross the level country an' creepin' up steep grades, an' I've worked it out to my own satisfaction that somethin' else I've got to be thankful fur, is that my way in life's been marked down so plain. 'Seems if I he'd been sot onto rails pretty much's She is, an' 's long ez I do my level best on that 'ar line, why, it's all I *ken* do. That's the hull of it! I ain't no speechifier, you see, Junior"—with an embarrassed laugh at the boy's evident discontent—"I'll hev to depen' on you fur to say it—or maybe, write done ship-shape, some o' these notions o' mine, some day. I'd git better holt o' them myself ef I was to hear somebody what knowed how to put things go over 'em. Mother! eddication wouldn't learn no woman how to make better bread'n yourn. Fact is, there's nothin' eal to home, an' home-vittles an' home-folks! With such a livin' ez I've took in, I sha'n't need a bite at the Agapolis deepo. We're half an hour there, but I hate the very smell o' them eatin' houses! An' please GOD! I'll bring Her in at twelve—sharp!"

He pulled on his overcoat and felt in the pocket for his gloves. "I'm main proud o' them fellers!" he said, fitting one to a hand half the size of a leg-of-mutton and not unlike it in shape.

He had said the same thing every time he put them on since Christmas. They were a holiday gift from the conductors on the line between the two cities

which was his semi-daily beat.

"I take a world o' comfort in them, this freezin' weather. Fact is, Mother, this world's been pretty full o' comfort, all the way through, for us—a nice easy grade—ef yer father *ain't* a Hero, Junior! Six-twenty! I mus' be off! I like to be there in time to see thet Stokes is on han' an' all right. Ef you don't min', Mother, we'll hev him to dinner nex' Sunday. I want to do somethin' t'wards savin' Stokes. 'Specially ez he's on *my* line!"

At six-fifty, Top, Junior, from his post at the calla-window, saw the long line of cars, spaced by dots of murkey red, the luminous plume of smoke trailing, comet-wise, above them, slowly pass over the bridge. It was a cloudy evening and the marsh-mists swallowed up the blinking windows as soon as the train gained the other shore. Junior loved his mother, but his father seemed to take most of the life and cheer out of the room when he went. Existence stagnated for the boy who had no mates of his own age.

"I wish he didn't hev to run in bad weather and nights!" he said, fretfully.

"It's his business, child, an' your father ain't one to dodge his duty."

"I hate the word!" retorted the petted cripple. "When I'm a man I'll be my own master, and switch Duty off the track."

The obnoxious word came up again in the course of the evening. In reading aloud to his teacher they happened upon this definition of "a hero," given by one of the characters in the story under his eyes:

"One who, in a noble work or enterprise, does more than his duty."

Junior looked up disappointed. "Is *that* the meaning of hero?" he said, intensely chagrined.

"That is one way of stating it. I doubt, myself, if we can do more than our duty. What do you think, Mrs. Briggs?" asked the young woman. She esteemed the honest couple for their sterling worth and sense, and liked to draw them out.

"A person ken undertake more, I 'spose. Ef they don't carry it through, it's a sign 'twas meant fur them to go jest that fur, an' no further. 'Twon't do fur us to be skeery 'bout layin' holt of the handle the Good Lord puts nighest to us, fur fear it's too big a thing fur us to manage. That's what my husband says. An' if ever a man lived up to it, he does."

Top, Junior, looked sober and mortified. The heroism of common life does not commend itself to the youthful imagination. When his lesson was finished it was time for him to go to bed. "Wake me when father comes in!" was the formula without which he never closed his eyes.

His mother never failed to do it, but he wanted to make sure of it. She put on a lump of coal, just enough to keep the fire "in," and sat down to the weekly mending. At eleven-forty, she would open the draughts and cook the sausages ready-laid in the pan on the table. Top, Senior, liked "something hot and hearty," after his midnight run, and this dispatched, smoked the nightcap pipe of peace, Junior, rolled in a shawl, on his knee. The wife's face and heart were calm with thankful content as the hours moved on. She was rosy and plump, with pleasant blue eyes and

brown hair, a wholesome presence at the hearthstone, in her gown of clean chocolate calico with her linen collar and scarlet cravat. Top, Senior, had noticed and praised the new red ribbon. He comprehended that it was put on to please him and Junior, both of whom liked to see "Mother fixed up." In this life, they were her all, and she accounted that life full and rich.

As she served, she heard the slow patter of February rain on the shelf outside of the window, where her flowers stood in summer. The great city was sinking into such half-sleep as it took between midnight and dawn; the shriek and rush of incoming and outgoing trains grew less frequent. She did not fret over the disagreeable weather. Top, Senior, had often said that such made home and fire and supper more welcome.

At Junior's bed-time, he was eighty miles away, walking up and down the muddy platform of the principal station of Agapolis, stamping his feet at each turn in his promenade to restore the circulation. His was a fast Express train, and he stood during most of the run, on the alert to guard against accident. There was no more careful engineer on the road. Fireman and brakeman were off for supper in or near the station. He slouched as he walked, his hands thrust deep into his pockets; his overcoat was heavy and too loose even for his bulky figure. He had "taken it off the hands" of an engineer's widow whose husband was dragged from under a wrecked train one night last summer. "Mother" used to look grave when Top, Senior, began to wear it, but she was not a mite notional—Mother wasn't, and she was glad now that poor Mrs. Wilson had the money and he had the beaver-cloth coat. His face was begrimed

with smoke, his beard clogged with cinders and vapor. A lady, travelling alone, hesitated visibly before she asked a question, looked surprised when he touched his hat and turned to go half the length of the platform that he might point out the parlor-car. He observed and interpreted hesitation and surprise, and was good-humoredly amused.

"I s'pose I don't look much like what Junior calls 'a hero,'" he meditated with a broader gleam. "What a cute young one he is! Please GOD! he'll make a better figure in the world 'n his father hes done. I hope that lily-flower o' hisn will be open in the mornin'. 'Seems if I got softer-hearted 'bout hev'n thet boy disapp'inted every day I live. Come summer, he shell hev a run or two on Her every week. Mother 'n me hes got to make up to him for what he loses in not bein' strong an' like other chillren. Mother—she's disposed to spile him jest a leetle. But dear me! what a frustrate fault that is in a woman! She did look good in that ere red neck-tie, to-night, an' she was always pretty."

The rain was fine and close, like a slanting mist that pierced the pores, when the Express drew out of the station, and as it fell, it froze. Stokes growled that "the track would be one glare of ice before they got Her in." He was inclined to be surly to-night, an uncommon circumstance with the young fellow, and after several attempts to enliven him, Top, Senior, let him alone. He was not in a talkative mood himself. The tea-table chat ran in his head and set him to dreaming and calculating. In five years Junior would be seventeen—old enough, even for a lad who was "not strong," to earn his living. If all went well, there ought to be a hundred and fifty dollars in the bank by then. There might be something in Mother's idea

of setting him up as a florist. And Mother could help with the flowers.

"Hello! ole feller! look out!"

Stokes had stumbled over the fuel in the tender, in replenishing the boiler-fires. He recovered himself with an oath at the "slippery rubbish." Something had upset his temper, but he neither spoke nor looked like a man who had been drinking. The teasing, chilling drizzle continued. The headlight of the locomotive glanced sharply from glazed rails and embankments; the long barrel-back of the engine shone as with fresh varnish.

"D'ye know that on a night like this She beats out the tune o' *Home, Sweet Home*, 's plain as ever you heerd a band play it?" said Top, Senior, cheerily out of the thickening damps. "It makes me see Mother 'n the boy clear 's ken be. It's a great thing fur a man to hev a comfortable home, 'n a good woman in it!"

Stokes burst out vehemently at that: "This is worse than a dog's life! We—you 'n me—are no more to them selfish creturs in there"—nodding backwards at the passenger cars—"then the ingine that draws 'em. I'm sick o' freezin' an' slavin' an' bein' despised by men no better 'n I be! How a man of any sperrit 'n' ambition ken stan' it fur twenty years as you hev, beats my onderstandin'."

He will always remember the pause that prefaced the reply, and how Top, Senior, patted the polished lever under his hand as he spoke: "She's a pretty respectable cretur, take Her all in all. When you 'n I run into the las' dark deepo that's waitin' fur us at the end, I hope we'll be able to show's good stiffikits as hern. Here's the bridge! Will be soon home, now."

It was a long bridge, built far out to be above high tides. As they touched it the furnace-door flew open. Some said, afterwards, that the door was not properly secured, others spoke of a "back-draught," others suspected that the fire was over-fed. The volume of flame that leaped out licked the very faces of the two men. They recoiled with a bound and made a simultaneous rush for the air-brake in the forward passenger-car to stop the train and check the backward sweep of the blaze. The passengers, seeing the flash and hearing the whistle and shouts of "Down brakes!" pressed against the front windows and a dense living mass blocked the door against which Topcliffe Briggs flung all his weight.



HE HELD FAST!

"Git in ef you ken," he said to the fireman. "I'll try Her!" He fastened the shaggy great-coat up to his chin as he faced the pursuing fires, walked forward

to the stand where lapped and curled the fiercest flames, laid hold of steam-brake and the lever by which he "drove" the engine. His fur-lined gauntlets scorched and shrivelled as he grasped the bar; the fire seized upon his hair and garments with an exultant roar. He held fast. He must get the passengers off the floorless bridge that might ignite at any moment. He must check the engine as soon as he cleared the last pier, or the cars would take fire before they could be uncoupled. He shut his eyes from the maddening heat and glare, and drove straight on. Not so fast as to hurry the greedy flames that were doing their worst upon him, but at a rate that ran them over the river and upon solid earth as the fuel in the tender burst into a blaze and the forward car began to crackle and smoke in the hot draught. At that point steam and air-brakes did their work in effecting a safe halt.

"The fireman was badly scorched," reported the press next day, "but train and passengers were saved by the heroism of the engineer."

The words flashed along the wires over land and ocean; were set up in startling type in hundreds of newspaper offices while he who did not know heroism by name was breathing his last on a mattress laid on the yellow-painted floor of the room he had seen so "clear" when the engine-throb and piston-beat played *Home, Sweet Home*. The sunshine that had followed the rain touched the white cheek of the opened lily before falling on his sightless eyes and charred right hand.

When they brought him in he knew whose silent tears dropped so fast upon his face, and the poor burned lips moved in a husky whisper. The wife put

her ear close to his mouth not to lose his dying words:

"I was afraid you'd see that we was a-fire. From the winder. I hope you—didn't—wake Junior!" The boy who had begged his father to be a hero!

BENNY'S WIGWAM.

"Now, Pettikins," said Benny Briggs, on the first day of vacation, "come along if you want to see the old Witch."

Pettikins got her little straw hat, and holding Benny's hand with a desperate clutch, trotted along beside him, giving frequent glances at his heroic face to keep up her courage. Her heart beat hard as they took their way across to the island. The island is really no island at all, but a lonely, lovely portion of Still Harbor, between Benny's home and Grandma Potter's, which by means of a small inlet and a little creek, and one watery thing and another, is so nearly surrounded by water as to feel justified in calling itself an island. They crossed over the little bridge that took them to this would-be island, and following an almost imperceptible wood path, came within sight of the Witch's hut. It was a deserted, useless, wood-chopper's hut, which the mysterious creature whom the children called a witch had taken possession of not long before. Here Fanny drew back. "O Benny, I *am* afraid," said she.

"Humph! she can't hurt you in the *daytime*," said

Benny. "She ain't no different in the daytime from any other old woman. It's only nights she is a witch."

Fanny allowed herself to be led a few steps further, and then drew back again. "O Benny," said she, "there's her broomstick! there it is, right outside o' the door—and O Benny, Benny, there's her old black cat!"

"Wal, what on it, hey? What on it?" creaked a dreadful voice close behind them. Then, indeed, Fanny shrieked and tried to run, but Benny's hand held her fast. She hid her face against Benny's arm and sobbed.

It was the old Witch her very self. She looked at them out of her glittering eyes—O how she did look at them!—with her head drooped until her chin rested on her chest. This seemed to bring the arrows of her eyes to bear upon the enemy with greater force and precision.

"There ain't any law ag'in my having a *cat* and a *broomstick*, is there?" she asked in a voice like the cawing of a crow, bringing her staff down with a thump at the words "cat" and "broomstick." "What are you skeered of?"

"Why, you're queer, you know," said Benny desperately.

"Queer, *queer*?" piped the Witch; and then she laughed, or had a dreadful convulsion, Benny couldn't tell which, ending in a long, gurgling "Hoo-oo-oo!" on a very high key. "Now, s'pose you tell me what is 't makes me queer," said she, sitting down on a log and extracting from the rags on her bosom a pipe, which she prepared to smoke.

"Whew!" whistled Benny, "'twould take me from now till Christmas; I'd rather you'd tell me."

The crone lighted her pipe. The match flaring upon her wrinkled, copper-colored face and its gaunt features made her hideous. Poor little Fanny, who ventured to peep out at this moment, sobbed louder, and begged to go to her mother. The old woman puffed away at her pipe, fixing her gaze upon the children.

"Got a mother, hey?" said she.

"Yes."

"And a father?"

"Yes."

"Um-m-m."

She puffed and gazed.

"You wouldn't like to see 'em shot?"

At this Benny stood speechless, and Fanny set up such a cry to go home that Benny was afraid he should have to take her away—that is, if the Witch would let him. He began to consider his chances. Still the more terrible the old Witch seemed, the more Benny wanted to see and hear her. He whispered to Fanny:

"*She* won't hurt you, Pettikins—she *can't*; I won't let her. Hush a minute, and see what I'm going to say to her!"

Fanny hushed a little, and Benny fixed an audacious gaze upon the Witch—or a gaze which he meant should be audacious. "What is the matter with you?"

said he.

The old woman removed her pipe and sat holding it with her forefinger lapped over it like a hook.

"They call it 'exterminated,'" said she, pushing back the broad-brimmed, high-crowned man's hat that she wore, and showing her gray, ragged locks. "I'm exterminated. You don't know what that is, I s'pose?"

"Exterminated, ex-*ter*-min-ated," said Benny, scratching his head, "why, to—to—drive out—to—ah—to—put an end to—to—to—destroy utterly."

"I don't know what your book meaning is. I didn't get mine from books. I got it all the way along—began to get it when I wasn't much bigger'n that little gell," said the Witch, pointing at Fanny with her pipe. "I didn't know what it meant when I first heard it, but I know now. Hoo-oo-oo-oo!"

"I wish you'd tell us about it," said Benny. "Tell us about beginning to learn it when you wa'n't much bigger'n Pettikins."

"That's when the colonel said we must move west'ard," said the witch, laying her pipe down on the log, leaning her elbows on her knees, and resting her bony jaws in the palms of her hands. "Injuns, before they're exterminated, stick to their homes like other folks."



THEY ENCOUNTER THE WITCH.

"You ain't an *Injun*, be you!" gasped Benny, with a look and tone which expressed volumes of consternation and disappointment at her utter failure to come up to his ideal Indian. Why, she wasn't the least bit like the pictures! She wasn't like the magnificent figures he had seen in front of the cigar stores in New Haven. Where were all her feathers and things—her red and yellow tunic, her gorgeous moccasins, her earrings and noserings and bracelets and armlets and beads? Why, she was ju-u-u-ust as ragged and dirty!

All this and more Benny's tone expressed when he said: "Why, you ain't an *Injun*, be you?"

"Well, I *was*. I ain't nothing at all now. I ain't even a squaw, and they *said* they was going to make a Christian on me. I *was* a Chetonquin."

"Oh, yes," said Benny, looking at her now with the interest attaching to one who *had* worn the feathers, and beads, and moccasins, and rings. "Well, what did you do when the colonel told you to go West?"

"We had a fight."

That was satisfactory to Benny. "Which whipped?" he asked, with his own native briskness, as if this, now, was common ground, and he was ready to talk at his ease.

"Which a'most always whips? It was a hard fight. I hid behind a big tree and watched it. When I saw my father shot I started to go to him and a shot struck me. See there!" said she, pushing up her coarse gray locks and showing a deeper, wider seam than the creases and wrinkles on her face. "A bullet grazed me hard and I was stunned and blinded with the blood, and couldn't run, but my people had to. They didn't any on 'em see or know about me, I s'pose, and I laid there and sorter went to sleep. Colonel Hammerton took a notion to pick me up when he rode over the ground he had soaked with the blood of my people—ground that *belonged to my people*," shrieked the woman, straightening herself up and shaking her fists in the air.

Benny liked that. Even Fanny gazed at the strange creature with fascination. And when the Indian's excitement abated and she ceased to mutter and chatter to herself and sunk her face into her palms again, gazing absently on the ground, Fanny pulled Benny's sleeve and whispered, "Ask her what he did then, after he picked her up."

"What did he do with you then?" ventured Benny.

The old woman started, and gazed at them curiously, as if she had forgotten all about them, and had to recall them out of the distant past. "What did who do?" said she.

"What did Colonel Hammerton do with you when he picked you up?"

"Oh, I didn't know who picked me up—thought 'twas some of my people, I s'pose. Colonel Hammerton carried me off to the fort, and then took me to Washington: said he was going to make a Christian on me. I had to stay in houses—*sleep* in houses!—like being nailed up in a box. Ugh! what a misery 'tis to be made a Christian on! Hoo-oo-oo-oo-oo! You wouldn't want to know all the racks and miseries and fights and grinds on it. I guess they got sick on it themselves, for after I'd tried a many times to get away from houses, and been brought back, I tried again and they let me go, and I've been a-going ever since. I asked for my people, and they told me they was *exterminated*, every one on 'em. Yes, I've been a-going ever since, but I can't go any more. I hope they'll let me stay in these forests 'till the Great Spirit takes me away to my people. He can't find me in the houses, but if I keep out in the forest, I hope he'll find me soon. It's been a weary, long time."

"Are you two hundred years old?" asked Benny softly. "That's what folks say."

"Two hunderd? Hoo-oo-oo-oo! *two* hunderd? I'm *ten* hunderd, if I'm a day," said the poor old creature. "But don't be afeard on me—I hope there won't be anybody afeard on me *here*, for then they'd be driving on me off, or shutting me up again somewhere where the Great Spirit can't find me. Tell your people not to be skeered on me—ask 'em to let

me stay here."

The sad old eyes looked wistfully at Benny, whose generous heart took up the poor Indian's cause at once.

"You can stay here fast enough," said he. "I know who these woods belong to—some o' my relations. There won't anybody be afraid of you. Me 'n 'Bijah'll take care of you."

"O, *bless* you!" said she. "I *thought* I'd got to the right place when I got here—it looked like it—it felt like it. It seemed a'most as if I most expected to see wigwams. A-h-h-h-h, if I could sleep in a wigwam!"

Benny felt that he could sympathize with her in that. He and the boys had played Indians and 'Bijah had built wigwams for them in the wood, and he had greatly wished and entreated to be allowed to sleep all night in one. But he could not guess at the longing of the aged to go back to the things dear and familiar to them in childhood; he did not know that all the old Indian's days were spent in dreaming of those things, and that she often wandered all night in the woods, fancying herself surrounded by the wigwams of her people—searching anxiously for that of her father. Though Benny could understand nothing of the pathetic sadness, he felt a strong desire to offer consolation and cheer, and he said, "I can build wigwams. Me 'n 'Bijah'll make you a wigwam!"

But the aged Chetonquin muttered to herself in a tuneless quaver, and shook her head doubtingly.

"*What!* She don't *believe* it!" Benny exclaimed to himself. "Don't believe that '*Bijah* can make *wigwams*!"

We'll show her!"

And he was so eager to be about it that he took leave directly of his strange acquaintance, who seemed lost in reverie, and to have forgotten him entirely.

When Mr. and Mrs. Briggs heard Benny's story of the poor Indian woman, their excellent hearts were at once filled with compassion for so forlorn a creature. Mr. Briggs had very radical theories about equal mercy and justice for each member of the human race.

"It isn't likely," he often said, "that some have a right to be in this world and others haven't;" and he immediately set himself to illustrate his theories in the case of the Chetonquin.

Mrs. Briggs said there could be not doubt that she needed other things besides wigwams, which conjecture was found to be sadly true upon investigation. An attempt was made to put this last of the Chetonquins into more comfortable quarters, but she received the suggestion with dismay, and prayed so earnestly to be left on the spot she seemed to think was like her own native forest, that it was decided to make her as comfortable as possible there, since it was early summer and no harm could come from exposure. When the weather was cold again, she would be glad to be sheltered elsewhere. So Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, Grandma Potter and 'Bijah, took care that she needed nothing, and left her to be happy in her own way.

Her shattered mind, little by little, let go of everything save the memories of her childhood. All the people of the neighboring region, old and young, came to understand and respect the sorrows of the

poor creature they had talked of as a witch. But the most friendly people seemed to disturb her—to break in upon her dreams—and children, especially, were not allowed to visit her.

Benny could not forego, however, the pleasure he had promised himself, of getting 'Bijah to help him make a fine wigwam in the woods, and saying to old Winneenis—as she called herself—"There! what d'ye call *that*? *There's* a wigwam for ye, 'n me 'n 'Bijah *made* it, too!"

Benny might make as many wigwams as he pleased, Mr. Briggs said, "but he was not to go near or disturb old Winneenis."

One extremity of the island was in the vicinity of Grandma Potter's, and Benny passed a good many days of his vacation at Grandma's. One day Benny said to 'Bijah, "Now you can make that wigwam, can't you, 'Bijah? You said you would when the hay was all in, and it *is* all in, ain't it? Le's make it to-day over there in the woods, on the island. The boys are coming over to-morrow, and I want to have it done before they get here. Say, will you, 'Bijah?"

"Wal, I'd know but I can," said 'Bijah.

"I want a *real* one," said Benny, "life-size, just like them you saw when you was out there to Dakota—none o' your baby-houses."

'Bijah went up-stairs into the barn chamber, humming *The Sweet By and By*, and Benny accompanied him in doing both. 'Bijah opened an enormous chest and pulled out a lot of old buffalo and other robes, the worn-out and moth-eaten accumulation of years, not to say generations, and

sitting down, took out his jack-knife and ripped the ragged linings out of several that were pretty well divested of their fur, and making a pile of skins, old horse blankets and lap rugs, he said, "Now, then, sir, we'll have a wigwam fit for old Black Hawk himself."

And you may be sure 'Bijah was as good as his word. He got out old Tom and the wagon, and he and Benny and the skins and blankets all got in and drove over to the woods on the island, and there 'Bijah cut poles and made the finest wigwam ever seen this side of the Rocky Mountains—or the other side either, for that matter. They spread blankets on the ground inside, and Benny declared it wanted nothing but a few Indians and tomahawks and bows and arrows lying round to make it look just like the picture in his g'ography.

Benny's last thought was of his wigwam that night as he slid off into the delicious sleep that only rosy-cheeked, tired boys know. He dreamed he was the chief of a powerful tribe, and that he found old Winneenis, not old any longer, but a little girl like Fanny, crying in the forest because she couldn't find her way to her people, and that he took her by the hand and led her home. Her shout of rapture when she found herself once more with her people, wakened Benny, and he saw it was morning, and the shout he had heard instead of being that of little Winneenis, was grandma's voice calling him to get up. He was rather disappointed to find he wasn't a powerful chief, but he consoled himself with the thought of his uncommonly fine wigwam, and hurried down stairs to see what time it was, for the boys were to come on the early train, and he meant to go right over to the woods with them.

He had scarcely finished his breakfast when the boys arrived, and they all started for the woods in great glee.

On the way, Benny told them the story of old Winneenis, and the boys were full of wonder, interest, and curiosity to see her.

Upon reaching the wigwam, they admired its outside, agreed that nothing in that style of architecture *could* surpass it.

"And now," said Benny, "see how nice 'tis inside," and he took a peep in himself. "Why," whispered he, drawing back, "she's *here*—she's here in the wigwam, sound asleep, and she looks awful glad. Sh-sh"—with a warning shake of his finger—"we mustn't disturb her; father said I mustn't. Le's go away and wait till she wakes up."

They each took a peep at the old Indian woman and went away softly.

They remained in sight of the wigwam, exhausting every device for wearing away the time, and Joe's watch was frequently consulted. Time and patience wore away together.

"There," said Charlie, at last, "we've waited long enough; we ought to wake her up now."

"It might make her crazy again to see such a lot of us, and I—I don't like to," said Benny. "I'll go 'n ask 'Bijah what to do."

They went and brought 'Bijah, who said he should think likely she *would* want to sleep a spell, she must be pretty well beat out, pokin' around all night. He'd heard her making them queer noises o' hern—

something like a hoarse kind o' Phœbe bird, it sounded, in the distance.

"I shouldn't be surprised," he began, in a low tone, stooping and peering in at the wigwam; but, contrary to his words, he did look very much surprised indeed.

He stepped into the wigwam and touched the sleeper gently. Then he shook his head at the boys and motioned them away, and when he came out, they understood from his look, that old Winneenis was dead.

Wandering, as was her wont at night, she had come upon Benny's wigwam, standing in the clear moonlight, and to her longing, bewildered mind it had probably seemed the wigwam of her father. Who can ever know the joy, the feeling of peace, and rest, and relief, with which she laid her tired bones down in it, and fell asleep, a care-free child once more, and thus passed from its door into the happy hunting-grounds? And Benny always felt glad the wigwam had been built.

BENNY'S DISAPPEARANCE.

Every year a few of the blest among the boys of Still Harbor were taken to New Haven or New London to see the Greatest Show on Earth, while the unlucky remainder were obliged to content themselves with what imagination could do for them. But one memorable year Mr. P. T. Barnum landed and

magnified himself on our own fences. His magnanimity ran over and flamed into Still Harbor, bringing all his miracles and monsters to our very doors, as it were, and we had no more miserable boys. But we had plenty of boys who aspired to be miracles and monsters, or boys who essayed the trapeze, the tight rope, the flying leap and all sorts of possible and impossible acrobatic contortions and distortions.

Eminent among these was Benny Briggs, for if you looked high enough, you could see him any day with a balancing pole in his hand, walking on the ridge-poles and fences, or making of himself all sorts of peduncles and pendulums; bringing about in his own individual person the most astonishing inversions, subversions and retroversions, and the most remarkable twists and lurches and topsey-turveys and topplings-over.

But there was one opportunity that Benny's soaring ambition had not embraced. His active mind had never yet discovered the possibility of a real tight rope. For a real tight rope he languished, on a tight rope he yearned to walk. The clothes line was a little too slender; his sister Fanny's skipping rope was not only too slender, but too short; and these were the only ropes of his acquaintance. The ridge-poles and fences only mocked at his ideal. He wanted something that hung unsupported; something airy; something worthy of the acrobatic art, upon which he could walk with credit and grace, and, reaching the end, bow and kiss his hand to the spectators, before returning. For this he searched by day, and of this he dreamed by night. And one day he found it.

"Benny," said his mother on the morning of that day,

"your grandmother Potter has sent for you to come over. She's going to have uncle John's and uncle Calvin's boys there. You'll like that, won't you?"

"Hi!" shouted Benny, throwing up his new straw hat, the sign and seal of pleasant summer weather, "I'd like to see the fellow that wouldn't!"

At nine o'clock that morning—at exactly nine o'clock—Benny started. His mother remembered it well, for she looked up at the clock and said:

"Now, don't hurry, Benny; go along easily and you'll get there before ten," for grandmother Potter's was scarcely two miles back in the country, and Benny thought nothing of stepping over there, especially when inducements were offered.

He called his dog Sandy, and marched off with a light step and a light heart; but his hands remained at home, that is to say, his hands were nowhere so much at home as in his trousers pockets, and there they reposed, while Benny paced along, whistling "Not for Joseph, not if I knows it," and Sandy nosing it all the way. His mother watched him with pride as usual; the neighbors saw him go by and said, "There goes Benny Briggs; he hain't broken his neck yet, but I presume to say that'll be the next thing he does."

Uncle John's and uncle Calvin's boys from New Haven, arrived early at grandmother Potter's, a place which seemed to them to contain all the pleasures of all the spheres, for grandmother's weakness was for boys, and nothing suited her better than getting all her grandsons together and giving them "full swing," as Abijah called it, and Abijah was made by nature to help grandmother out in her benevolent plans. He instituted jolly measures, and contrived possibilities

of riot and revel that no mortal ever thought of before. As circuses were the fashion in urchin society, on that particular day, Abijah, like a wizard, had called up out of the farm resources, and out of certain mysterious resources of his own, that were so plainly of unearthly origin that it was of no use in the world to try to look into or understand them, such a circus as would have made not only P. T. Barnum, but the ancient Romans themselves perfectly miserable with envy. There was the trapeze, the tight rope, the—well, alas, I don't know the names of them all, having had a limited education in such matters, but there they all were, whatever they are called—those things that make a perfect, finished, spal-en-did, be-yeu-ti-ful circus. There were hoops with tissue paper pasted over them, to be jumped through by the most wonderful bareback riders on earth, and old Tom, grandmother's own horse, was perfectly safe as a trained Arabian steed, when 'Bijah was there to see how the thing was managed. Everything was safe and sure and delightful when 'Bijah had charge of it. Nothing ever went wrong, or upset, or came to a sorry end with him or his plans. He knew what he was about, and ends with him were even more brilliant and satisfactory than beginnings and means. I shouldn't dare to fully tell you what good times the boys had at grandmother Potter's, especially on Fourth of Julys, Thanksgivings, Christmases and birthdays, for fear of making all the boys who couldn't go there, discontented and low spirited for the rest of their lives. I'm sorry for those boys, but at the same time I may as well go on and tell them about Benny Briggs. *He* was preparing to be very discontented and low spirited just at the moment when Joe and Will and Harry and Rob and Charlie and Morris and Cad were

shouting their exultation at the only wonderful circus on earth. They all decided that the performances were not to begin, however, until Benny Briggs arrived. There could be no circus without Ben. No, indeed! There were stars of the arena among them, of various magnitudes, but Benny was the comet that outshone and outstripped them all.

"Why don't he come along?" said Charlie, dancing a double-shuffle on the barn floor to let off his impatience.

"Let's go and look for him," said Joe, and they all shuffled off down to the gate, thinking to see Benny with his nose pointed straight for that gate, or as straight as could be expected, considering its faithfulness in another direction. But no Benny was to be seen.

"He can't be far off," said Joe, seizing an opportunity to look at his new silver watch, "for it's half-past ten now, and Ben is always here before ten—always *was*, I mean."

"Let's go up to the top of the hill and meet him," proposed Will; "we can see him from there anyhow."

So Charlie and Joe and Morris and Will and Cad started for the top of the hill, while Harry and Rob, who were a good deal inclined to wait for things to come to them, remained to swing on the gate.

The five spies soon returned and reported that Benny was nowhere to be seen. Impatience now seized them all, and they flocked into the house to put it to grandma whether it wasn't mighty queer that Ben Briggs hadn't come.

"He *hasn't come?*" exclaimed grandma, looking up

over her glasses at the clock. "Why, what can be the matter? It's almost eleven o'clock!"

"It's one minute and a quarter past," said Joe, appealing to his watch. "Your clock's 'leven minutes slow."

"O, get out!" said Charlie, with a contemptuous sniff. "All the clocks are either fast or slow, according to that turnip."

Here would have ensued a good deal of pro and con about watches, but grandma held them to the subject of Benny Briggs. She drew from them that they had been to the very top of the hill and couldn't see him coming.

Grandma was surprised and disappointed. "It's incomprehensible," said she.

"O, I say, grandma," groaned Charlie, flopping into a chair and fanning himself, with his hat, "*what* a big word! In-com-pre-hen-si-ble! And the other day you said Prist-by-te-ri-an-ism! O my!"

"P-p-p-p-pooh!" stuttered Morris, who was always a little ahead of everybody, except in conversation; "I know a l-l-l-l-longer word."

"Let's hear you say it, then," shouted the rest of the boys.

"Takes you to make long words," said Charlie.

"I-i-i-i-i-i"—began Morris, embarrassed by the evident want of confidence in his ability.

"Go it!" said Charlie.

"Fire away!" said Joe.

"In-co-co-co-co-co" proceeded Morris.

"Spell it!" suggested Harry.

"I-n, in, c-o-m-e, come," spelled Morris with great fluency, and then stopped short.

"*Income!*" exclaimed two or three voices disdainfully. "Call *that* a long word? Ho-ho!"

"N-n-no; wa-wa-wa-wait a minute," implored Morris, tugging at a button on his jacket, and fixing a studious, inquiring gaze on the kitchen floor.

"Write it," said Will.

"I c-c-c-c-can't," said poor Morris gloomily.

"Give it up, then," recommended Joe.

"No *sir*," said Charlie, putting his feet up in a second chair and making himself comfortable, "I don't give it up, sir; I'm going to know what this bumper of a word is."

"Well, how are we ever going to know if Morris can't say it nor spell it nor write it?" demanded Joe.

"Mebby he can thing it," said little Cad.

"Good for you, Caddy!" said Charlie. "You've hit it; Morris can sing fast enough. Now, Morris, we'll sing, 'I love to go to Sunday-school,' and you sing your word instead of those. Begin, boys! Sing loud, Morris."

So the boys all sang softly—

I love, I love, I love, I love,
I love to go to Sunday-school—

except Morris, who sang with a triumphant shout

I love, I love, I love, I love,
In-com-pre-hen-si-bil-i-ty!

and the boys gave him three cheers.

At that moment grandma purposely left the pantry door open, and there, disclosed to view, was a land of promise; a row of delicious little cakes, with chocolate frosting, smiling on the pantry shelf. The boys instantly crossed over to this inviting land and took possession, while grandma, who was sometimes rather unwise in her loving kindness, looked greatly pleased.

"I do wish Benny was here," said she. "Boys," she added, as if a new thought had come to her, "go and tell 'Bijah I want to speak to him."

The boys clattered out—a stampede of young colts, it seemed—and soon returned, each doing his part in bringing 'Bijah, for every separate boy had hold of him somewhere, as if at the least laxity on their part there was danger of his escape. 'Bijah grinned broadly and bore it bravely.

"'Bijah," said grandma Potter, "I must have Benny here to dinner; I can't have his place vacant. What can have kept him away?" she added, as if to herself. "I hope he hasn't been doing anything he ought not to—he's such a little rogue."

"Wal, I d' know's I should be for goin' so fur's to say *that*, Mis' Potter, but Benny *is* curis, and mebbby he *has* slipped over to Spain or France before comin' round here," said 'Bijah.

"O dear!" groaned grandmother, the names of these

far-away regions giving her a sense of exposure and danger, "I hope nothing has happened to my Benny. 'Bijah, you must harness up and go over and see what's the matter."

"Yes'm," said 'Bijah, turning to obey, and every boy set up a petition that he should go in the long wagon and let them go too. So in the long wagon they went, shouting and whistling and singing along, with their eyes wide open to catch a sight of Benny, if by chance he should be coming, loitering on his way. But not one of them looked in the right direction.

In spite of Benny's frequent little derelictions from the path he might have been expected to walk in, his mother was greatly surprised and troubled to hear that he had not arrived at his grandmother's, and, furthermore, that he had not been seen on the road.

"Why, nothing could have tempted him to stay away from grandma's," said she. "Still," she added after a moment's reflection, "he *may* have gone by the Brook road and met Johnny Barstow. If he has, and then stopped to do a little fishing, he would never think how the time was flying. I never saw a boy who had so little idea of time as Benny."

"Wal," said 'Bijah, "we'll go down the brook road way 'n see 'f we c'n ketch this young trout."

So they returned by the Brook, but found no Benny, and Johnny Barstow hadn't seen him.

Every ray of the calm smile which usually shone in grandma Potter's face faded when she saw 'Bijah and the boys come back without Benny and heard of their fruitless search. She sat silently down in her rocking-chair, and her dear, sweet old face was pale.

"'Bijah," said she at length, "you must take the colt and the light buggy and go—go somewhere—anywhere—everywhere, until you find him. No, boys, you can't go. 'Bijah mustn't be hindered."

'Bijah was at a loss where to go, but he obeyed directions, and went somewhere, anywhere, and it seemed as if he had been everywhere, and inquired at every house in and about Still Harbor, along the shore, in the woods and through the fields, but nobody had seen Benny since about nine o'clock that morning.

At last he went again to see if Benny, perhaps, had got home.

"What!" cried Mrs. Briggs, when she saw 'Bijah come the second time, "he hasn't come? You haven't found him? O, my boy, my boy!"

"O, now, Mis' Briggs, don't you go to worry about Benny," said 'Bijah. "I never see a boy 't knew how to take care of himself better'n Benny. He'll turn up all right, you'll see."

But in spite of his apparent cheerfulness, 'Bijah was a good deal troubled himself. Where *could* Benny be, unless at the bottom of the Sound?

'Bijah in his search had already been to Mr. Briggs' store to inquire for Benny, and in starting to go there again, he met Mr. Briggs coming home. He and 'Bijah discussed the possibilities and probabilities of Benny's case, and Mr. Briggs agreed to send word over to grandma Potter if Benny came home, and 'Bijah agreed to come directly over and tell his father and mother if Benny should reach his grandmother's at the eleventh hour.

The eleventh hour arrived, however, and still no Benny. The boys sat in the barn door and wondered in voices hushed almost to whispers, where Benny could be.

"Where is Benny?" asked little Fanny again and again. "O, where is Benny?" moaned his poor mother; and the question sank like lead into his father's heart. Grandma raised her gentle eyes and asked it of Heaven itself, and you, my children, by this time are asking it of me. I feel bound to tell you this much: Benny was—I shudder to say it—Benny was enduring the fate once proposed for Mr. Jefferson Davis.

The sun was getting low, the shadows were long on the grass, and Benny's pitiful shadow as it lengthened, stretched nearer and nearer home. Ah, would he ever get there himself again?

It was milking time. 'Bijah sat milking the cows in the barnyard, when in bounced Sandy. He hadn't come on Benny's account, that was plain. He was thirsty, and begged for milk, which he had frequently had from the hand of 'Bijah. He was no story-book dog—only quite a commonplace fellow, who hadn't the faintest idea that he ought to have arrived here hours ago, and won fame for himself by showing the way to Benny. However, you'll see presently that he wasn't to blame for that.



THEY START IN SEARCH OF BENNY.

'Bijah stopped milking and sprang to his feet.

"Hello!" said he, "Sandy, I vum! That means 't Benny ain't fur off. You don't ketch that feller to stir a peg from Benny 'f he c'n help himself."

'Bijah gave Sandy some milk, feeling sure that if Benny was on earth, Sandy would go straight back again to where he had left him. Benny was not on earth, but Sandy, having finished his refreshment, without even waiting to return thanks, trotted off across lots at a great pace, 'Bijah following in hot pursuit. Away they splashed through the marshy meadows; jump, they went over the stone walls. "Land!" said 'Bijah. "Where *be* you a-goin'?" as Sandy leaped across a ditch into the great Kingsbury orchard. Mr. Kingsbury had died a year before. His wife had closed the old homestead and gone to live

with her daughter, and the farm had been for sale ever since. 'Bijah sprang over the ditch and came sprawling into the orchard.

When he had picked himself up, Sandy was nowhere to be seen. The loneliness of the deserted farm and the soberness of approaching evening were all about him.

"Hello!" he shouted, and he thought he heard a response. "Hello!" he repeated, and he was sure of a faint, faint cry, towards which he bounded, shouting, "Benny, Benny!" and presently directly over his head he heard a voice which seemed to come from Heaven, saying:

"'Bijah, O 'Bijah, here, up here!"

'Bijah looked toward the sky, and behold, dangling from one of the topmost branches of a famous big sour apple-tree, a pair of sturdy boy's legs! And there was Sandy, lying on the ground beneath them.

"Jericho!" said 'Bijah; and he hadn't much more than said it before he was scrambling up the tree like a great ourang-outang. With some difficulty he unhooked Benny and brought him to earth, and his great warm heart swelled with tender pity as he returned home with the poor boy in his arms; and his shoulder was as wet with Benny's tears when he reached there, as if he had been out in a thunder storm.

I dare say you will partly guess the story of Benny's misfortune, but for the sake of those who are not good guessers, I shall tell you that he had taken a fancy to cut across a corner of the Kingsbury farm that morning, to make the distance to his

grandmother's shorter, in his unwise fashion, never considering that climbing walls and fences, paddling through the marshy meadows and contriving to get over the ditch would more than overbalance the few steps he saved.

When he reached the Kingsbury orchard, where all the apple boughs were trained in horizontal lines, with a view to making them bear well, his head seemed to swim with suggestions of tight ropes. Around and above the air was filled with golden opportunities as near to tight ropes as Paradise is near to Heaven itself. These precious opportunities whispered to Benny, the charming visions beckoned, and Benny felt that if it cost him two and sixpence, he *must* have a walk on some of those enchanting boughs.

Everything was just as it had been left when Mr. Kingsbury died. Against one of the trees stood a ladder, and scattered all about under the trees were the limbs that had been lopped off, under his direction, the very day when he fell with apoplexy. Here and there they had been gathered up in bristling piles.

Benny ascended into one after another of these blissful trees. At first he walked on the lowest boughs, but gradually went higher and higher, until he promenaded fearlessly on the very topmost. He bowed, he kissed his hand, he turned and returned, he was happy and time sped swiftly by. He was so absorbed in his delight, that he heard, as one who hears not, a wagon go rattling along the road, and the shouting, whistling and singing of boys. It was past noon before he recalled the object with which he had left home that morning. He sat upon the very

pinnacle of achievement—that is to say, he sat upon the very highest point in the orchard, his head up, his spirits up, with such a decidedly upward tendency that it was hard for him to make up his mind to descend to the plane of common life. However, he thought it must be something past ten o'clock, so he slipped himself off his pinnacle, or was in the act of doing so, when he missed his hold and went off with a sudden jerk. Something scraped the whole length of his back, and seemed to hold him in a relentless grip. It was the stump of a small branch, which had caught him by the bottom of his loose jacket, and slipped up under it quicker than a wink, as Benny slid down. It was one of those things of which we say, "You couldn't do it again to save your life."

And there Benny, exalted, hung. The tips of his toes just touched a bough below; with the tips of his fingers and thumb he could reach and pick at the end of a branch above. He tried to throw his legs up and catch on some salient point. He struggled to reach his elbows up and pull himself back. He would have unbuttoned his jacket, and, slipping his arms out, dropped to the ground, but it looked a long way, and directly below him was a pile of the lopped-off branches, with their sharp ends sticking up towards him like the spikes of cruel *chevaux-de-frise*, and he didn't fancy dropping on those. He shouted for help, but there was no one to hear him on the deserted farm, and the few farmers who rattled by in their wagons paid no heed to a boy's shout. Boys are always shouting, and the more hideous the noises they make the more it is like them. Sandy, who had remained asleep in the grass while Benny performed his manœuvres, thought no more of this one than he had thought of the others. He supposed it was a part

of the fun—the very best part of it—as he opened one eye and saw those legs dancing in air; and Benny's yells were the things to be expected of Benny. But when Benny shouted, "Go, Sandy, go home!" and various other commands to Sandy, hoping the dog might go and bring some one to his rescue, as dogs always do in stories, Sandy sat upon his hind legs and looked at Benny in amazement. These were remarks that had never been made to him before, and he couldn't guess for his life what they meant. *Never* had he been sent home. He had stuck to Benny through thick and thin, during all his eventful life, and he meant to do it now. So there he did stick, until he saw by the shadows that it was about milking time, and being thirsty, to say nothing of hungry, and observing that Benny was still engaged in dancing and tilting on the tips of his toes, Sandy excused himself, went after his milk, and brought back deliverance to Benny, as we have seen.

Poor, poor Benny! The joy of his return called out more tears than smiles. Worn and faint and nervous, he was put to bed at grandma Potter's, and it was many days before he was the same old Benny Briggs again. In one respect he was never quite the same. His views in respect to tight ropes had met with a radical change.

P. S. If any of you boys should say as Charlie Potter did, "Pooh! if *I'd* been Benny Briggs *I* could have got down out of that tree," I'll say to you as Benny said to him:

"Humph! I'd like to see you try it!"

HOW TWO SCHOOLBOYS KILLED A BEAR.

It was an unpleasant day. The gray clouds looked cold and dark, and the wind was blowing a gale as the stage left the little village of Lowton on its daily trip to the Summit. The weather prophets said it was the equinoctial, although it was ten days too early if the almanac was right; and every one predicted a storm, a northeaster that would set all the streams boiling, and probably carry away all the bridges between Lowton and the Summit.

But little for northeasters cared Leon and Sam Bearer, as they settled themselves cosily inside. They each carried a shot-gun, and under the care of their elder brother, Herbert, they were going on a two weeks' hunt among the well stocked forests on the mountains back of the Summit.

At noon they stopped at the Half-Way House, a little hotel built just at the rise of the mountain, where they were served with fresh venison in a dining-room hung with great antlers from the deer killed by the landlord, and his son, who was only fourteen years old—no older than Sam. The boys became very much excited listening to their hunting stories; and after dinner nothing but Herbert's decided command prevented their loading the guns to be ready for any game they might see on the road. The landlord and the driver said that they never saw any deer driving along the road; but the boys thought it might be that they would, and after they started a strict watch was

kept, which resulted in seeing forty-one squirrels but nothing larger.

They had not driven many miles up the mountain before it cleared off, and the sun came out. The forest road, lined with ferns and banks of moss, was very picturesque, and Leon and Sam enjoyed the ride as only happy schoolboys can, in the pleasantest spot that boys can be—a forest peopled with deer and squirrels. And when they reached the Summit House they were in as good spirits as jolly boys could be who expected a glorious chase the next day.

The hotel was a large, pleasant one, and on every side were the trophies of game that so delight a boy's heart. The office and dining-room were hung with antlers, and the hat rack in the hall was made from them. Then there was a couch and some seats covered with bear skins and supported by great branching antlers with so many prongs that Leon tired of counting them, although he knew each one represented a year, and that he could compute the deer's age by them. In the sitting-room there were a stuffed deer, a fox, a number of similar animals, a partridge, some pigeons and many small birds; and in the office were two large panthers that looked very fierce and natural, their glass eyes glaring as if watching a victim, their feet placed as if ready for a leap. But the boys enjoyed most the deer in the large park back of the hotel. There were four old deer and two pretty young fawns with glossy, spotted coats, that Sam and Leon thought were the most beautiful animals they had ever seen, as they ran and played together like lambs, jumping and capering with a perfect grace that only deer possess.

After a nice venison supper the boys went to bed,

and in a few minutes both were dreaming of deer, and bears, panthers and hounds, and all the excitements of the chase among the game-covered mountains.

Early in the morning, and long before Herbert was up, Sam and Leon were out again watching the deer in the park, and examining again the terrible panthers whose changeless eyes looked just as fierce as the night before. Their guns were loaded, and when they had eaten breakfast and the men were ready to start, the boys were off ahead ready for the expected game. All the way up the mountain path to the runways they kept the lead, occasionally stopping to rest in the shade of some great pine where chattering squirrels were quarrelling over their breakfast. Often, too, they would leave the path and plunge off in search of "track," which they failed to find, so that by the time the runways were reached they were well tired.

The landlord stationed Sam and Leon on the lower runway, while he and Herbert went to those higher up the mountain. There was a long time to wait before any game could be expected, as the man who was to start the hounds had a good distance to make before sending them off, and he was only a half-hour ahead of the watchers.

Leon laid down to rest after making sure that his gun was in good order; but Sam wandered around, looking for squirrels and "signs of game," until suddenly he heard, away back on the mountain, the bay of a hound. This was a signal that the chase had begun, and he hurried back to the watching-place to be ready for the deer, should the deer come. For nearly an hour the boys stood with guns ready, every

minute hoping to see a deer. A squirrel running through the brush would bring their guns to their faces, and at the slightest rustle of the bushes they would start and listen. Meanwhile the hounds were surely coming nearer and nearer, their excited barking proclaiming that they were close upon the game; and at last Sam was sure they were down on the lower runway and, turning to Leon in great excitement, he said, "Let's keep cool and we can kill this deer! Then won't Herb be sorry he went further up?" Both boys felt sure there must be a deer coming, although they had been told that the hounds often came in without anything.

At last they could hear the brush crackling—yes, the hounds were surely down on their runway; and in a minute the dogs and game did come in sight together. But what a surprised pair of huntsmen they were when they saw what the game was! Leon was frightened, while even Sam felt a little uneasy. The hounds had not started a deer at all. Instead they were pursuing an old bear, and two young cubs about the size of a large dog. The old bear was very large and fierce, and whenever the hounds came up with the cubs, that could not run very fast, she would turn around and fight until the cubs ran on a few rods and then she would run again.

Just as the bear and cubs reached the watching place there was a fight, and the great creature caught one of the hounds and hugged him in her arms till he was breathless, all the time sitting up on her hind legs and looking as tall as a man. While she was in this position Sam took aim at her head and fired, and a moment later Leon fired too. Then the bear started to run, and they both fired the other barrel of their shot-guns, though without taking much aim, but a

moment after they saw her lying on the ground, surrounded by the pack.

By this time Herbert and the landlord had come down in hot haste to see what the shooting was for, and in great surprise they gathered around the huge creature which the boys had secured. Leon and Sam had really killed a bear, a genuine black bear, a large one too—the landlord said the largest he had seen that year; and there were never two prouder fellows than these two schoolboys, as they surveyed their noble game.

But this was not all. The hounds were sent after the cubs, and in a few minutes they were caught alive. They were taken to the hotel and caged. Very quiet animals they were; in a few days they would eat from the boys' hands, as tame as the fawns in the park, never trying to bite or showing any crossness. With these pets and with their fine bear skin to show, it is no wonder that the boys thought there was never a pleasanter place than the hotel in the mountains; and it is not at all strange that they hated to leave it when their two weeks were up. But they had a new, strong cage made for the baby bears, and took them home to keep in the little yard near the barn, where every boy, and nearly every man in town came to see them, and to hear the story of their capture, and take the dimensions of the handsome black bear skin. At school certainly nothing else was talked of that term, and I fear the boys really believed they were the best hunters in the State. How long their mamma will allow them to keep their pets they do not know, but they hope it will be as long as the two bears live and behave.

PETE'S PRINTING PRESS.

"What do you want for Christmas?" asked Mrs. Downs, in a kindly manner.

"I don't know, mother," replied Pete slowly. "Last year it was a paint-box, bicycle, foils, and you said I could use Dick's foils—and that you couldn't afford bicycles after the new carpet, so it got down to a paint-box and that wasn't much of a Christmas."

"That's the comfort in regularly having Christmases; in time you get what you want," answered his mother.

"That isn't always so. I think it depends on what a fellow wants; and I've made a strike this year. I'm not going to say thank you for what I don't want; only I don't exactly know what I do want. It must be either—either—a—bicycle—or a printing press—or Indian clubs; and if it is a bicycle, it must be the real kind—wooden ones are not allowed in processions; and if it is clubs, I shall knock my head off; so it better be a printing press. It doesn't make any difference to you this year, does it, as we have not got to buy a new carpet? I have decided; it shall be a printing press, and I shall get orders enough to pay for new curtains."

"Not quite so fast, I don't know about the orders, and I do know printing presses cost, and that Indian clubs are cheap."

"Oh! you can't put me off till another Christmas; it is like Alice in Wonderland having jam to-morrow. And when to-morrow comes, it isn't to-morrow. I am

going to have it, and you can all club together and buy it instead of giving me separately, sleeve buttons and scarf pins and cologne and paper and pocket scissors. A fellow wants real things that he can do something with. Printing press, now, you remember." And off rushed Pete as Dick gave a low war-whoop, the signal for an incursion of boys into the shed.

This shed was filled with relics of former joys, with the débris of unsuccessful inventions, with tool-boxes whose tools were missing, with oil cans without oil, with boards full of nails, with the wheels of broken carts, and with strings, ropes and clothes lines of various lengths; yet to a new-comer it was always an El Dorado of enjoyment. Into this now sprang, tumbled, the cronies, Dick, Jack, Phil and Shel, which latter name was a contraction for General Sheridan.

"I say," exclaimed Phil, "I am getting tired of your shed; haven't had an idea in it for months—same old contrivances—get up something new."

"You just wait," said Pete, the proprietor.

"O come along, boys, if it is 'wait,' don't let us wait here," said Shel, and off they started on a raid for fun. Pete returned from the excursion to dream all night of what might and of what might not be. His wishes became so thoroughly mixed that he fancied he had told his mother he wanted nothing, not even Christmas itself; but the horror of such a mistake effectually roused him.

The next morning there was no indication of forthcoming glories, except that they had less than usual for breakfast; a kind of atonement to which Mrs. Downs sometimes treated her family. Pete

sighed. The greetings for a merry Christmas were of doubtful value to him. He was of a foreboding nature and experience had taught him to be prepared for disappointment in the matter of presents. He went to church and noticed carefully the style of type in the hymn books; he came home and took down all his books from their shelves for the same purpose of investigation. Even dinner itself failed to bring forgetfulness; for he thought, if he could print bills-of-fare for such lengthy repasts he might make money; though he felt he could never spell the queer French names of dishes. At last the meal was ended, and the big parlor doors were thrown open, displaying horizontal rows of evergreen, with various knick-knacks fastened to these mysterious lines, which on inspection proved to be the bars of an old-fashioned clotheshorse. It made one think of sums in addition put down in agreeable shapes; one green line of gifts and then another and another, which suddenly changed into a sum in long division. Brown-looking packages lay about the feet of the clotheshorse, and on them Pete fastened his eyes, for printing presses cannot hang.

His name was called several times and he received the very things he did not want; sleeve buttons, scarfpins, cologne, and paper. He says, "thank you," each time more faintly, whilst his mother's eyes twinkle. At last Santa Claus tried to lift a big bundle; he puffed and panted and called Pete to help him. Pete comes slowly forward, bends down to help, felt something cold and hard beneath the wrapper, fumbled over it, clasped it round, excitedly tried to lift it, whispered awestruck, "It is, it is a self-inker;" bends further down, lifted it up awkwardly, and dropped it on his little slippered foot, with a big bang and a painful, "oh!" The scene was too funny for

sympathy and the general laugh increased the ache in the right-hand corner of the big toe on the left foot. Pete limped out of the room and was soon forgotten in the universal excitement; but when all were busy with their ice cream, he crept back to his beloved bundle, unwrapped it, and lying flat down on his stomach hugged himself to it, and gazed at it again. It was growing late. He knew that as soon as the guests were gone he must do his share in putting things to rights, restoring furniture to its place, and worse than all, in smoothing out the wrapping paper and tying it up in little bundles, and in unravelling all the knotted strings; for his mother was accustomed to take off the edge of too great Christmas enjoyment, by enforcement of this economical rule. That night he dreamed of Franklin, of editors, of type setting, and of sensible mothers, who knew what fellows want.

The next morning he woke with a sense of much to do, and soon began his future career by sorting the type. This was a long job, for he had several kinds; capitals and small letters, heavy face and light face type, besides commas, hyphens and periods, and somehow everything was mixed up. Now and then he stopped to admire his new gift and his own energy, or to call some one to help him.

At last his task was done. Pete was a methodical boy and always finished one job before he began another. "Now," said he, "what shall I do first? set the type or ink the tablet? I'll ink the tablet and then print my name, it is so short."

He began the inking process just as Dick announced himself by his war-whoop, and called out,

"At it, are you! Got any orders! Shel has a big job—

whole lots of placards from his father, flaming ones to print, takes all kinds of type; makes money on it; so busy he can't speak to a fellow, so I came along here, for I'm one of the kind don't believe in orders for boys. Learn by looking on, is my way—have all of the fun and—none of the ink guess I'll say, seeing how your hands are. That isn't the way—your mother will have something to say to that."

"You keep still and let me alone," answered Pete. "I'll come out all right. I am going to set the type for Pete Downs, Centreville, Illinois, U. S.," and he carefully began to insert the letters on the left hand of the chase. He placed the chase in the body of the press, put some paper on the pressure and began to work the handle up and down till the type was well inked; he next marked out the size of his card on the pressure, inserted his gauge pins, placed his card upon them, took hold of the handle and pushed it up and down, thus bringing the card on the pressure against the inked type; he pushed with all his might and lifted up his work with a conqueror's air. Dick, who had been maliciously watching, burst into peals of laughter. The name read thus:

PETEDOWN, ne . S

"You've forgotten the quads," said Dick, "and you haven't enough ink. You must put on spectacles to read it."

"That's nothing" replied Pete, growing red as he began to separate the words and rub more ink on the tablet. Again he pressed down the handle, lifted it up and gazed again. This time the name ran:

PETEDOW
(ce rville, Ill)

The rest was so smutchy that not a letter was legible.

"Better go into partnership," said Dick; "you are not smart enough for an apprentice, but on account of your capital you might be worth something as a partner."

Pete cleaned the tablet with half the turpentine and benzine in the bottle and began afresh. This time came out in watery lines:

PETE DOWNS
centreville,
Illinois
U. S.

"Why, what's the matter now?"

"Forgotten enough leads and a capital," replied Dick. "What is the use in trying alone; go in with some boy who knows, and you'll get on."

"Perhaps. But I'll clear up first."

His mother had provided him with overalls for just such occasions; but Pete was confident that printing was neater work than carpentering and had avoided thinking of them. The ink was so imbedded in one corner of the tablet and so scanty in another, that he tried to even the amount, and then wash off the whole. Soon his finger-tips were coal black and sticky; to remove this difficulty, he put finger by finger into the turpentine, rendering that muddy and spreading five distinct streaks on the back of his right hand. Then he poured benzine into the left hand to rub on the back of the right hand. This operation sent ink and benzine up his coat-sleeve, and all ten fingers became so useless that in order to use them more freely he rubbed off their contents on

his—jacket. Seeing what he had done, his increasing fears brought tears; to check which, he stuck his fingers into his eyes; which hurting, sent more tears mingling with ink down his cheeks, just at the moment that his mother appeared and that Dick's instinct led him to disappear out of the window or door, he never knew which.

"My son, for shame!" said she; "how could you forget the overalls?"

"Oh! I don't know—wish I hadn't. I am going to take a partner and then it won't happen again."

He cried, and was so funny-looking that there was nothing for his mother to do but to laugh and advise speedy partnership.

"What boy would you have," asked he. "Dick has been here tormenting me, I don't want him. I might try Shel; it need not be for life, you know. He had a press last year and has got used to it."

"Very well," answered his mother. "I expected as much. Change your suit, go ask him, and tell him I approve because his mother makes him wear overalls."

Pete had not anticipated such a speedy ending of his troubles, and hastened away to do his mother's bidding. But whilst dressing, he reflected that Shel knew too much and would snub him, and that Clarence was the kind of boy who could get jobs easily. So he went to Clarence's and proposed partnership.

"What terms?" demanded Clarence in a business-like manner, hands in his pockets. "I'm pretty particular about the contract. Are you a greenhorn? That's got

to be taken into account."

"Well, yes, suppose I am now; but I need not be long if you keep your bargain, besides my press is new and that counts for me."

"Well, yes, it does. Self-inker? lots of type?"

"Well, not so very much; self-inker though. Or come, you just go in and try it for a month and we'll make terms afterwards."

"Pretty dangerous plan; but I'll try it, seeing it is a new press. I'll come to your house right after dinner; and we have dinner right after breakfast, so the kitchen work can be all done up. One gets hungry between dinner and supper; and it's always a cold supper, so it needn't be any work."

"Agreed," said Pete. "I know those tricks on meals, too."

The boys parted till half-past twelve, when Clarence appeared and set to work in a vigorous manner to properly clean and ink the tablet. Pete, with overalls on, watched every motion. His name was printed and came out clear, beautiful:

PETE DOWNS
CENTREVILLE, ILLINOIS
U. S.

Quads, leads, capitals, spelling all right. Pete felt as if he had done it himself.

"Now you try," said Clarence; and success again came in a dozen cards. Then his name became an old story.

"I'll go and ask the cook," declared Pete, "if she don't

want her name printed," and off he ran.

"Certainly" was her obliging answer; she added slowly, "Only I haven't a name good enough to print; you call me 'Hannah!' but if you put that on a card it looks common; and if you say 'Ora,' no one will know it is me; and if you only put my last name, they'll think the whole family has called. You better take the nurse's name, 'Mehitable Jones,' you can't get round that."

Hardly waiting till she had finished, Pete went to Mehitable, who kindly consented to believe that she needed a dozen cards, and to write down her name that it might be printed correctly. This looked like business. The cards were quickly printed, and delivered, and the package was marked on the wrapper "C. O. D."

"That is not my name," exclaimed Mehitable.

"Of course, that isn't your name," explained the boys; "cards are inside. That means you must pay us right off, just what you please; we didn't say anything about it first, because we trusted you—but we can't afford to work for nothing."

"Well," said Mehitable, "here is five cents."

Pete's first money earned by honest hard labor; two and a half cents apiece. "That's an unfortunate price for us," said Clarence, "though it be convenient for the buyer. Let's keep all uneven sums as capital towards other type, and all even sums we'll divide."

This was rather a shock at first to Pete; but with a partner who was such a superior business man he would not dispute.

"The first great trouble," stated Clarence, "is to get orders; the second, to execute them. You be the travelling agent and I'll be the office man."

"Now," said Pete, "I won't. I want to print as well as you. I'll be travelling agent in your family, and you in mine, and then we'll get more out of each."

"That's an idea," replied Clarence; and the partnership, which to judge by the angry looks of the past second seemed on the point of dissolution, still remained unbroken.

That afternoon's success was marked, and afterwards when business called Clarence away (for if the truth must be told), he was partner in two other firms on strict terms of secrecy, Pete did not prosper. It was always too much or too little ink; quads were not even and a sufficient number of leads were seldom inserted. He often set the type the wrong way so that it printed backwards, and worse than all he did not know how to spell; and as he before had had occasion to accuse his mother of moral reasons for her gifts, he now declared that she had only given him the press, to teach him how to spell. One day she particularly distressed both his memory and conscience by wishing him to print for the nursery the motto, "Fidelity is a virtue;" and it came out,

"Fiddility is a virtu."

Notwithstanding this, the firm had made one dollar; and in the course of the next two months Pete had acquired enough skill to feel himself an expert.

A change had also come over Clarence; his spirit was too aspiring to be bound by rules of constant neatness, and he grew jealous of Pete's increasing

ability. So he proposed a partnership on new terms; namely, that the cash on hand should be devoted to the purchase of some new fonts, and that afterwards the earnings should be divided; but that as he would always ink the tablet, and as the workshop of the firm had been transferred to his shed, he should have two thirds of the profits. Pete objected, and insisted that until the business was on a better foundation, all the profits should be turned in for the improvement of their stock in trade.

"No," said Clarence, "I can't print all day and every day and not feel any cents in my pocket. I want peanuts and candy and I want to give the boys a treat, too, now and then. That's what I am going to print for, after we have got these new fonts."

"Well, you can do as you please, I sha'n't try such things. I shall keep my money for type and cards. We needn't quarrel yet till we have more money."

Clarence did not feel easy. Pete had shown more energy, patience and neatness than he thought was right under the circumstances, though what the circumstances were, he confessed to himself he did not know; and he summed up the whole offence, when he was speaking of the affairs of the concern to other boys, by saying, "O, Pete's getting too proud."

After the new type was bought, the following order was received for twenty-five postal card notices:

The

Q. F. U.

will hold its tenth peripatetic occasion at 42 degrees
25 seconds North Latitude 65 degrees 15 minutes 20

seconds West Longitude on the 10th instant.

This was a very important order, requiring great care, received from an older boy, a member of a secret society. Most obscure it seemed to the firm. Clarence insisted on printing it in plain English and on setting up in type: "A Walking match will take place, etc. etc." Pete thought they had no right to argue about the matter, simply to do what was ordered.

"I should not mind it so much if they would not have such long words; and we shall have to buy special marks for degrees, minutes, and seconds—charge extra on that. But peripatetic—I didn't agree to print such nonsense," said Clarence. "If we are going to do it I am going to be quick about it and set it all up except the marks and see how it looks."

He was in such a hurry that he set the type wrong three times. At last "peripatetic" was right, but no space was left for the right number of leads. Rejecting Pete's help, he lifted a row of type to make room, did not hold it tight enough, the middle sank down, fell out and the line went to pieces.

"I say now," he exclaimed, "I didn't do that—you did it—it did itself. I never made 'a pie' in all my life, and see here, I won't have it said that I made one now."

"I have made them lots of times," calmly said Pete.

"You! O yes! I dare say you have. But I never did, and that's why the other boys want me in their business."

"What business? I would not get so excited just because of this pie."

"You would if your reputation depended on it."

"Why, I won't tell."

"But the other firms will have to know it; our honor is pledged to tell whenever such a thing happens to any one of us."

"Are you in other business? Shel said you were, when he wanted us to take him in, and I said you were *not*. That's the end of it. If you are any one's else partner, you can't be mine, pie or no pie."

"Very well. Just as you please, you can take Shel. You always put on too much ink and that wastes capital."

"Well, then, you put on too little ink, and blurred work don't bring orders. I am done with you."

"And I with you."

"I shall bring up my cart to-morrow and take my things away."

"What are you going to do about those new fonts?"

"I would rather you would have them all than be partner with a boy who invests in bogus firms."

"Bogus or not, I never mix accounts. You can have the first half and I the second; only as 'x' and 'z' don't count I ought to have two more letters in my half than you in yours."

"I should call that mixing halves, if you don't call it mixing accounts," said Pete, who was so hurt by this unexpected closeness that he instantly went off to get his cart. Meeting Shel on the way, he retailed his wrongs and met with such hearty sympathy that he

formed a copartnership with him on the spot. Shel advised him to wait till to-morrow before taking action and give Clarence time to think over the matter and see if it would not be better for his pecuniary interests to remain a silent partner.

"You know," urged he, "that he has got a good deal of type, and though he works too quickly to admit him as active partner, he might do very well as a retired one, and thus keep the peace. Then it is always a good plan to have three partners; one of them, or all together—they somehow act as judge. I must be off now." And the boys separated.

That afternoon it rained, and Pete had to stay at home. Early the next day he drew his cart up the hill to Clarence's house with very forgiving feelings, but found he had left word with the hired man that he had gone off and wasn't going to have any more to do with him. Of course, honor and justice then compelled him to take what belonged to him, especially as the man told him that Clarence had expected him with his cart.

So Pete sadly entered the shed, looked at the forms, thought everything was mixed up, and did what he always did when longing to speak right out, but afraid to do so; he took hold of his lower lip with thumb and forefinger and twirled it back and forth turning it over and under. Clarence's little sister appeared whilst he was thus engaged, and seeing the sadness of his eyes and the perplexity of his mouth and fingers, she ventured to say, "It is too bad, and Clarence said it was, and that he did not mean to upset the type, but that you got him so provoked he could not help it, and that you could come and pick it out if you choose, 'cause it was yours; but he—"

and she stopped frightened.

"That's just what I shall do. You tell him it is a mighty mean trick; that I have left him fifteen letters—you remember fifteen, not thirteen," said Pete.

He had a hard time sorting the type; part of it was smashed, part of it very dirty. His cart at last laden, he sorrowfully bore home his press and its appendages, only to spend still more time in cleaning and "getting it to rights." "I must finish that order," thought he, "for orders are business; even if a firm is dissolved, the remaining partner is bound to complete the work." So he manfully invested some capital in the type for degrees, minutes and seconds, closed the contract and received extra pay for his neatness and quickness.

But he grew tired and longed for companionship, so that when Shel appeared, he found Pete quite dejected, willing to listen to terms of partnership, but utterly unwilling to have anything more to do with Clarence.

"Very well," said Shel, "I'll give him up if you'll give up some one else, and then we'll start even."

"Why, I never thought of any one."

"Never mind," was the reply, "make believe you did; just like politics—each of us gives up his best man and takes an unknown third man. We must agree on one who has a self-inker larger than this and lots of type. I want to extend the business."

"Why can't we begin at once as Jones, Downs & Co., and when we find the right kind of boy let him be Co."

"Agreed, we'll get out hand-bills at once."

That evening the large trees on the road down to the village post-office, the doors of the grocery, the dry goods, the apothecary and provision stores—even the depot itself—bore large placards with the following announcement:

JONES, DOWNS & CO.,

Job Printers,

Orders promptly executed.

Many a tired man stopped his horse that night and through the next week to read those staring notices. The schoolboys made fun of the new concern, wondered how long it would last and tried to rouse distrust of each other in the minds of the two partners, who saw that if they could only obtain orders they could boast that they understood the tricks of the trade and knew the use of advertisements; and so it proved.

For, the city music-teacher coming to the village was so amused by these white patches on the trees that she sought their shop and gave them an order to print her bill; and when the young townspeople received, instead of a written bill, one printed in due form by those at whom they had laughed, they became strangely silent. Soon came an order for some tags for a large family with an endless amount of baggage, all to be marked alike, as easier to read. An actual stranger sent an order for work. The village calling increased so fast that it was difficult to meet the demands for visiting cards. At last came an

order from a church fair for hand-bills, but of too large a size for their press. They had often reflected upon the "Co." but had delayed action, which now became imperative and necessitated partnership with the boy who would have the biggest press, and this was Dick.

He was interviewed but proved refractory on a point of honor. "For," said he, "no one will know I am 'Co.' and if you are such a great firm, I want the public honor of belonging to you."

What was to be done? the fair could not be delayed until matters were settled; nor could the boys give up their job as being beyond their power.

"I'll tell you my terms," said Dick finally. "I'll put my press and all its fixings into the concern if you'll let me have two thirds of the profits on this job and on all the rest of the work you do this week. I am 'hard up' and I know you have got orders ahead."

These were hard terms, but on the other hand, as Dick could command custom, and was a good, clean printer, they acceded to his conditions and printed the bills in startling type, using one or two kinds in the same word, so as to make through the eye a vivid impression of the meaning of the Fair.

From this time they had so much work to do in bill heads, tickets, envelopes, etc., that they led a calm life of unbroken industry, laying aside one quarter of their earnings each week as a fund for future stock and dividing the other three quarters equally between them.

AUNT ELIZABETH'S FENCE.

The little village of H—— is a sort of double-header, having a centre at each end, so to speak. The end nearest the railroad is known as "The Three Corners," on account of a certain arrangement of the roads meeting at that point, while the farther assemblage of houses bears a similar appellation, "The Four Corners," for a similar reason. The two parts of the town are in reality two distinct villages, although existing as one corporate body, and are banded together like the Siamese twins by a road leading directly from the heart of one to that of the other. On each side of this rural street, at neighborly distances, stand pretty white cottages, a story and a half high, nestling behind white fences under shading maples. Midway between the two Centres these dwellings stand further apart and are more evidently farmhouses; and just beyond a peaceful green meadow one's attention is suddenly arrested by a queer house—an architectural oddity, having an insignificant main part, and numerous additions, of different heights, jutting forth in every direction without any seeming plan, but looking as if they might have crept together some cold winter's day for mutual warmth, or as if the middle house was a bantam trying to shield an overgrown brood, a solitary tower having the effect of a chicken on the mother hen's back.

It was in one of the rooms of this odd residence that our young hero, Jem French, was born. His father, like his house, is decidedly odd. Mr. Joseph French was a man of ideas, not a farmer as you might suppose from his living in such a locality, but a Jack-at-all-trades, and in spite of the proverb, good at *all*.

Therein lays the secret of his queer-shaped house. One of the little extensions is a tin shop where he mends the pots and pans of the neighborhood, or creates any new vessels desired. Another projection is devoted to carpenter work, and in a third addition he makes boots and shoes for his own family and cobbles for others. In the room above, with the big glass window, the rustic beaux and belles sit like statuary, while he preserves their pictures in ambrotypes. Each part of the building seems to be devoted to some specialty. But in one part the door is always found to be locked and the window carefully curtained, and even the children are forbidden to enter. In this room Mr. French still spends hours and hours, sometimes days and weeks, inventing, nobody knows what as yet.

Jem early bid fair to become another such man as his father, though evidently that would not be to his pecuniary benefit, for the entire surplus earnings of his parent had thus far been spent in obtaining materials for further experimenting. Still Jem inherited the inventive talent. He was envied and admired by schoolfellows and playmates. Not even the richest among them could boast of owning such unique toys as Jem was constantly making. The little stream that ran through the meadow was spanned by miniature bridges of which he was sole architect. His sailing craft, of all kinds, and fully rigged, swam in the placid water. Dams were placed here and there, and sluice-ways conducted the water to its work of turning sundry over-shot wheels which in their turn operated little pumps or moved the machinery of a mill. He made his sisters various mechanical figures which moved to the swinging of a pendulum. Cardboard images were made to saw wood, fiddle, or dance for hours together, the motive power being

obtained from sand running through an inverted cone. As for carving, he had ornamented the walls of the house with a profusion of brackets, wall-pockets, and the like, taking his designs of birds or flowers from nature's own pattern. He was, in fact, a veritable young Yankee with his jack-knife, and few were the things he could not fashion with it, and few the principles of physics studied at school which he did not seek to embody or illustrate; and he had advanced beyond the range of studies in a country school when he was withdrawn by his father to assist in "doing the chores." Then having little society except his own thoughts he gradually became discontented.

One day the mail-wagon stopped at his father's gate. "A letter for Mr. French," said the carrier.

Even such a commonplace occurrence had an interest for the listless Jem and he ran to pick it up. "It didn't come very far, I guess, for here is the village postmark," said he to his mother who came to the door and extended her hand for the epistle.

"It's from aunt Elizabeth," said she, looking at the superscription.

Jem puckered his lips to a whistle, for aunt Elizabeth was not on good terms with her brother and had little intercourse with the family. What news could his aunt have to impart, thus to break her usual silence? The more he thought about it the stronger grew his curiosity. Nevertheless it remained ungratified until his father made his appearance at the supper-table and broke the seal.

If chirography gives any clew to the character of a writer, the person who penned that letter was

certainly plain, hard, and angular, while the composition of the epistle indicated the author was in the habit of bluntly freeing her mind. She began by telling her brother he was shiftless, progressed by referring to the great number of mouths he had to fill, and ended by offering to take the care of one of the children off his hands, and requesting Jem should be sent to her house at the Four Corners.

"O father, *do* let me go," said Jem.

"Write to your aunt, and tell her to expect you next Thursday," said he, at last.

The time that intervened seemed to drag slowly to Jem, but the supreme moment finally came, and he stood at the gate with his best suit on.

"Be a good boy, and try to be useful to your aunt Elizabeth," were his mother's parting words.

"Good-by, good-by," merrily shouted Jem, and waving a farewell salute with his handkerchief he started away with a quick, elastic step that would soon bring him to his destination only two miles away.

Miss Elizabeth French lived at the old homestead. She was a maiden lady and had lived alone ever since the death of her father. Once a year she made a bargain with the man who tilled the farm on shares and occasionally asked him a few questions relative to the crops.

Further than that she had little to do with the outside world. One consequence was that her house and its surroundings showed the urgent need of a caring hand. Stones were missing from the chimney, and shingles from the roof. The frame was out of repair

and there were only traces left of former coats of paint. Of the picket fence which had once bounded her possessions in front, not even a post remained. Years before, the slats had begun to decay, until the dilapidation became an eyesore to even Miss Elizabeth herself. But when the cow-boys in search of their charges that always pastured along the sides of the road, rattled their sticks over its surface, it became a nuisance she could no longer stand. So one morning after having been awakened unusually early by her noisy tormentors, she had every vestige removed, and the post-holes filled, leaving the yard as open and unprotected as the street itself.

It may have been the need of some one to help her put her outside world to rights, and her knowledge of Jem's peculiar talents, that inspired the unexpected invitation. However that might be, she stood at the window watching as Jem, red-faced and dusty from his walk, came up the path.

"So ye've come, hev ye?" said she as she let him in and relieved him of his satchel. "Ye look kind o' tuckered out. S'pose the folks must all be well, or ye wouldn't hev come. Yer father ain't doin' nothin' yet, I take it, 'cept shettin' himself up, same as ever, and leavin' his family to shift for themselves? Hungry too, ain't ye? That 'minds me."

But first she took him to a little room he was to occupy, that he might bathe his hands and face. The apartment was neat and cosey, for however slack she may have been with the outside of her mansion, Miss French was a good housekeeper. And by the time he had washed and looked over a little pile of books that lay upon the old-fashioned bureau, his aunt was calling him down to dinner.

"Well, Jem," said Miss Elizabeth, as they sat facing each other at the little table, "it seems good to see somebody a-sittin' here an' eatin' besides myself. Hope ye won't git lonesome."

"No danger of that, auntie, if you only give me something to do," was the cheerful response.

"If that's all ye want, the land knows there's enough to be done," said his aunt with a laugh.

"Well, then, what first?"

"Wal, what bothers me most jest now are them cattle walkin' round the yard. T'want only yisterday Squire Mullins'es cow hed to eat up the top of my pennyroyal geranium and trod down my eardrops and lady-slippers, and now they ain't anything left but bachelor's-buttons that's worth looking at. Ye might set somethin' alongside of the road, jest enough to keep out the critters. Don't s'pose ye could build a fence, could ye?"

"Well, aunty," said Jem, "I never did build one, but I think I could. What shall it be made of?"

"That's a question. I burned up all there was left of the old fence, for kindlin' wood. You might find somethin' out in the old workshop nex' to the barn. Father always use' to be tinkerin' around, an' there's lots of rubbish up under the roof."

"What kind of a fence would you like?"

"Oh, anything. Anything to keep out the critters. Ef ye could think of anything to git the best o' them cow-boys 'twould suit pretty well. Them boys are gettin' to be a reg'lar nuisance. They go 'long drawin' of their sticks on people's fences jist as if there was

solid comfort in that eternal rattle, rattle, rattle. What makes boys think they can't never enjoy themselves unless they're a-makin' a noise? But I've had the best of them for two or three years. They *had* to stop in front of my place. But now the cows is gittin' to be wus than the racket, an' ef ye could think of any way to kill two birds with one stun, jest do it. I'll leave you to plan it your own way. Ye might look 'round this arternoon an' see what there is to do with."

So when dinner was over Jem began to "look 'round." In the old workshop were some sticks of timber that might serve for posts, but there were few boards and not half enough for pickets. Knowing that his aunt would be indisposed to lay out any money he looked very thoroughly through sheds and barn. In the latter place he moved a pile of rubbish in hopes of finding something beneath. The heap consisted mostly of half-inch iron rods of various sizes, and he was about to go elsewhere when he stumbled against a short piece and set it rolling to the middle of the floor. Picking it up he threw it back into the corner, where it clanged with a noise that sent a hen cackling from her nest in a remote part of the mow.

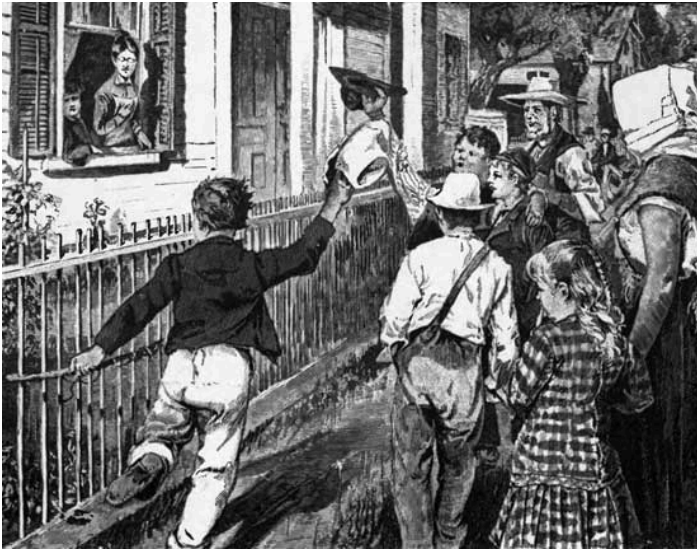
"Perhaps I could use these rods," mused he, "but then the boys could make more noise than ever and that would hardly do."

Just then his face seemed to be illuminated by an inspiration. His eyes twinkled with fun. But his reflections were interrupted by a call to supper. Tea time was occupied in the discussion of family matters and his aunt related bits of private history that kept his attention well occupied until eight o'clock, at which time Miss Elizabeth usually retired for the

night. Jem was tired too, and was soon up-stairs and fast asleep.

It seemed hardly anytime at all ere Jem was in the barn again ready to begin work on the fence. He had now a clear idea regarding it and, smiling often, he worked with a will. First, he sorted the pieces of rod into piles according to length. It took some little time to accomplish this part of his task. Then, humming to himself as he worked, he would, both listening and humming as he did it, strike each piece with a stick to determine its suitability. If so, it was placed on some one of eight piles which he had labelled with brown paper as "A," "B," and so on. If not it was thrown back to the corner.

The next thing he did was to set two posts at each end of the proposed line, with fifteen others at regular intervals between. Across the tops he secured his principal rail, with another to correspond a few inches from the ground. Boring holes through these cross rails he inserted one of the iron bars, letting it project six inches at the top and resting the bottom on a stake driven into the ground directly beneath it. The next bar was shorter than the first and a longer stake had to be driven in order that the top should be on a level with the first. As he went on, the rods were inserted without any seeming regularity of spacing. Passers-by stopped to gaze at the singular construction and made various comments concerning it.



**THE NEIGHBORS LOOKED ON IN
BEWILDERMENT.**

"That's a kinder queer pattern for a fence, ain't it?" queried a lad who came along. "Here's a mistake, anyhow," said he, pointing to a space between the fourteenth and fifteenth bars, which was twice as great as any interval before. "Left one out, here. Or be ye going to leave this cat hole for dogs to git through?"

"That's to make boys ask questions," was the only reply vouchsafed.

One old farmer advised him to "put all the bars of one length together. Ye'll find it a good deal easier." Jem thanked him respectfully for the advice but neglected to follow it. His aunt also came to the front door occasionally to watch his progress, but shook

her head as if doubtful of either the ornament or utility of his work.

But Jem went on steadily with the undertaking until he reached the end of his line, having just enough bars to finish, as it happened, or perhaps as he had planned. At the bottom he then boarded the fence to cover the stakes and the irregularity of the iron bars, and then he announced the completion of the work to his aunt.

"'Tain't jest sech a fence as I had been thinking of, but I s'pose it'll answer, only it won't be twenty-four hours before them everlastin' boys 'll be drawin' of their sticks on it. But jest let me ketch 'em at it an' I'll—I'll"—In fact his aunt seemed more troubled than pleased with her new fence, but Jem only smiled at her apprehensions.

Our young fence-builder was up before the sun next morning, and down-stairs peeping through the front blinds. At length he hears the sound of tramping hoofs and a cow comes lazily down the road, cropping a mouthful of grass here and there. On a distant fence he hears the old familiar rattling. Will it be kept up when the new fence is reached? Ah! there is the cow-boy. He is stopping to examine the new construction. Now he is satisfied, swings the butt end of his whip against the first rod, and starts along. Jem listens eagerly. A sound fills the air as of some one playing a gigantic harp. The cow-boy stops in amazement at the effect he has produced. Recovering from his astonishment he goes a little further and again comes the sound of—a tune which seems to grow familiar to the dazed performer. Finally he starts off on a run to the very end of the fence, when the tune is finished.

At this point Jem is conscious of the presence of his aunt, craning her neck through the window for a look. "Where's the music a-playin'?" said she.

Jem, laughing, pointed to the boy who had gone back to the starting point and was about to repeat the performance.

"Here, you young rascal!" screamed Miss Elizabeth.

But the lad had started the tune again, and was not to be deterred by threats, and Miss Elizabeth stared surprised and speechless as the note vibrated with great resonance. As the air was finished the second time, the boy acted as if suddenly made crazy. He shouted, he threw his cap in the air and himself on the ground, screaming and laughing as he rolled over and over on the grass. Suddenly he scrambled to his feet and ran towards home leaving the cow to take care of herself.

"Mercy!" said Miss Elizabeth, "ef that don't beat anythin' I ever heard on! A fence that'll play a tune! A 'Yankee Doodle' fence! What ever got into your head to git up such a thing as that? You're your father's own son!"

By this time the cow-boy had returned with half a dozen companions, all as excited as himself.

Miss French was now as eager for the boys to draw their sticks on her fence as she had been unwilling before. The patriotic tune rung out again and again. The neighbors came to the scene and looked on in bewilderment.

"I knew that chap was up to sunthin'," Jem could hear the farmer say who had proffered the advice on the day previous. "He's old Joe French's boy, you

know."

"You might a-known then he was smarter 'n lightnin'," said another.

"Guess I'll get him to build *me* a musical fence," remarked a third, "only I'll hav' 'Home, Sweet Home,' cuz that's Samantha's favorite tune."

"He might fence in the meetin'-house with 'Old Hundred,'" suggested Deacon Mullen.

But the novelty soon wore away and Miss French began to tire of the ceaseless repetition. Besides the boys were too impatient to have their turns in playing to allow their predecessors to finish ere they commenced. To cap the climax, one boy, having concluded, turned about and ran the other way playing the tune backwards to the great disgust of both the builder and proprietress. Miss Elizabeth rushed out.

"See here," cried she, "I guess you've played that fence long enough for one morning. Now you'd better go home. Go home, I say!"

But the boys were not to be deprived of such an amusement, and they hammered away furiously wherever they could get a chance. Unable to make any impression upon them Miss Elizabeth turned fiercely upon poor Jem and said in a voice that admitted no compromise, "Take it down, I can't abide it no longer! It's wus than the cows!" and with that she seized one of the bars, while Jem, alarmed for his marvellous fence, gave a great leap and sprang—out of bed, broad awake.

THE BUTTON BOY.

The wind blew as it never had blown before.

I think it blew that boy straight through the gate, up the path, through the door, and into the back parlor where the family sat. He stopped there, gave a little puff of spent breath and sat down. He had a box under his arm. It was flat and wide, a pasteboard box, and when he put it down all the family dropped their books and looked at it attentively. They were a very literary family and read so much that it was a great compliment to any box to have them put down their books when they had once taken them up.

"You haven't opened it yet?" asked the Mother.

"No," said the Boy scornfully; all the family had long ago agreed he had a high caste of countenance which this manner suited remarkably well—but he was not in the least conscious of it himself. "No, what's the hurry? plenty of time to look in it when I get home."

"It's a suit, a suit of clothes," calmly said the Sister, picking up her book again. Every one stared at the Sister who could see through a pasteboard box. "Somebody has made a hole in the bottom of the box and I see a button, a brass button," she explained.

True; there was a hole in the bottom of the box.

"He said, if I put the contents of this box to their proper use," said the Boy, "every day as long as they would bear it, I would not only learn something, but I should be his heir; so I might as well open the lid and see what is inside. I thought books, for Uncle knows I always put books to their proper use."

"Of course," said the Father; "it is books, no doubt."

"But," said the Sister, turning a page and reading all the time, "nobody puts brass buttons on books."

"I think you might as well open the box," said the Mother, "I think we are all curious"—

"Curious!" exclaimed the family indignantly.

"Curious-ly affected by your Uncle's making such a strange and trifling condition after our Boy's visit to him," went on the Mother. "But he is certainly very odd—I should really like to know why?"

"Don't take time to untie the knot," said the Father.

"Here's my knife," said the Elder Brother.

The Boy cut the string, the Sharp-eyed Sister looked over the top of her book, the Father put on his glasses, and the lid was lifted. Yes, it was a suit. A blue cloth suit, quite bright in color but of very fine material and good make. It consisted of a pair of knickerbockers and a tight jacket, and it was most extraordinary how the tailor had ever been able to put on so many buttons. The jacket was double-breasted and there were three rows down the front, a dozen in each, the size of a copper penny. There were some fancy slits in the back; buttons to the number of nine ornamented these. There were four on each sleeve; there were three on each pocket of the breeches, and four again appeared on the outside above the knee on each leg.

For a moment the family was silent.

"The buttons must have cost a great deal," said the Mother, finally, "I should really like to know the price a dozen."

"You couldn't have made a hole anywhere in that box without striking a button," said the Sharp-eyed Sister. She gave one a little knock, adding, "Perhaps they are gold."

"I think," said the Father, taking off his glasses and wiping them, "I think I would have a few removed."

"I have never observed anything like this in my Uncle's own dress," remarked the Elder Brother, "he certainly has peculiar taste in boy's clothing. I think I'll drop in on him and ask him a few leading questions as to his object."

"You will have 'to drop' after a special journey of twenty-five miles by rail," said the Sharp-eyed Sister, "and he won't appreciate your thirst for knowledge."

During this time the Boy had said nothing, but the scornful caste had entirely vanished from his countenance, for he had discovered a note in one of the pockets and had been reading it. The family now saw this, and, although they were not in the least hurry to hear its contents, they ceased their remarks at once to kindly give him a chance to tell them what he read. It was this: The suit was to be worn upon all occasions until it should be outgrown or worn out, no risk of damage was ever to be run with it, no allusion of any sort was ever to be made to it by the Boy or the family, and no alterations of any description to be made in it, unless to sew on a button when it should happen to come off.

"Wear that!" burst out the Boy scornfully, "does he think me an idiot? Why, I'd be the laughing-stock of the town. I should think he saw enough of me to know I have at least as much intelligence as most boys of my age."

"Very much more," said the Mother.

"I never saw such cloth," said the Sharp-eyed Sister, "it will never wear out, and you are not growing very fast either."

"I would not like to wear it myself; I don't even know as I would like to be in its society," observed the Elder Brother; "but neither would I like to lose fifty thousand dollars."

"Well now," said the Mother with her mild smile, "there aren't so very many; there aren't seven dozen, quite. They must be hollow for the suit isn't so heavy."

"They are," said the Sister. "I've been sounding them. Put on the thing and wear it. Don't be so silly as to throw away all that money. You can't wear it more than two years."

"Two years!" said the Boy, turning red.

"People will get accustomed to you by that time," urged the Father.

"It is very extraordinary," said all the family with a wondering air, and then they all fell to reading for a half-hour with their books upside down.

The Boy decided to wear the suit, and follow the conditions and wrote so to his Uncle.

His first appearance in the street in his new attire was greeted by a lady who stopped short and exclaimed, "Good gracious! what singular parents that child must have, and he actually looks proud of his dress too!"

"It's my caste of countenance," thought the Boy; but

as he was quite unaccustomed to have it connected with his dress, and disgusted, beside, that he should be thought vulgar, he tried to alter the caste, though he turned very red when people looked at him. For some time it went on this same way; he caught glances and overheard remarks such as he had once applied to other people but which he never dreamed could enter people's minds in regard to him. Even his own family did not spare him. A dozen times he was on the point of casting off the glittering suit and renouncing the money it represented, but just as many times he thought he would try it yet another day. But to do this he learned he must be quiet and prefer the background and silence to the attention he was once so eager to receive.

One day he sat in the sunlight with a book trying to read and wishing very much to run outdoors and play with the rest of the boys, but kept back by an uncomfortable recollection of a great deal of badgering. The Sharp-eyed Sister was reading in the same room too, and every once in a while she would blink, and wink, and frown, and look about; finally she looked straight at him.

"You tiresome object," she cried, "do get out of the sun. I wondered what it was dazzling my eyes like the reflection of seven dozen looking glasses, and there it is your odious buttons."

The Boy got out of the sun without a reply; feeling a little restless he moved now and then.

"Dear me," said the Mother starting from her nap with a jerk, "you do jingle so."

After this the Boy concluded to go out. When his playfellows saw him they all set up a shout but he

said to himself, "If I don't think about myself perhaps they won't think of me either," and he met them running with an answering shout. He had never worked so hard at forgetting himself before, and it answered so well that in the ardor of play, by and by, he forgot the buttons too. They began a game of leap-frog, and whether the fault of the back given him or whether his own fault, the Boy missed twice jumping and hurt his temper. He began to dispute about it with the Back, and presently they grew personal.

"Look here," cried the Boy angrily, "it *was* your fault, I say. If I were in fault don't you suppose I'd own it?"

"No," said the Back, shortly.

The Boy smiled scornfully. "'Cause *you* don't understand such a thing as owning up when you're in the wrong, eh? You act so. But all fellows aren't made on your pattern, I'd have you know!"

"Nor all clothes on yours, Buttons, I'd have you know," said the Back coolly.

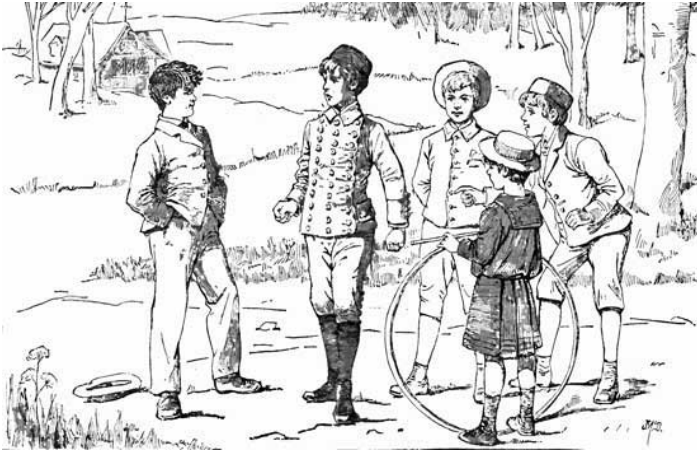
The Boy glared at him and began to stutter, "You let my clothes alone, d'ye hear?"

"Well," said the Back, "you say I don't know how to give a back; I say, if I was buttoned up like you are, I wouldn't know how to take one. I put it to vote—all in favor please say, aye, contrary, no."

"Aye!" shouted the boys.

"Ayes have it," said the Back. "Now, you know, everybody knows you within ten miles by the name of the Button Boy, and I wouldn't seek any more notoriety if I was you—I'd be content to come in

second best on leap-frog and say no more about it."



THE BOY GLARED AT HIM. "YOU LET MY CLOTHES ALONE!" SAID HE.

All the boys began to hoot and laugh—none of them sympathized with him in his moments of superiority, and his scornful air failed to impress them as of old.

The Button Boy choked by anger and mortification could not reply. But after a moment, "All right for you; I'll be even with you," he said, with a nod to the chief laugher, and went away.

It was some time before he had his chance, and during that time things went from bad to worse with his conspicuous dress, forcing him to be unostentatious, exact—for his goings and comings could be seen for a mile—even retiring. He found now that he began to think of some acts and some speeches of his, in the time when he was not a Button Boy, with as much mortification as the buttons often gave him; and he often checked himself

when half-way into some piece of conceited folly. Yet he never forgot that he owed the Back "one," nor that it was he who had given him the worst smart of this miserable period.

At last an event occurred in the family; the Uncle arrived unexpectedly and stated his intention of spending the night. "That is," he said, "if you will give me something better for my supper than a lot of quotations and rules of grammar. I can't eat them, you know."

The family thought this a very odd speech and a very grumpy old gentleman—but they didn't tell him so. He put on his spectacles and looked at the Button Boy very attentively, but the Boy didn't mind; he was too conscious of fulfilling faithfully for six months his part of the contract, and, beside, he stood before the designer of the Buttons.

But when he took the glasses off and said, "Well, you must be pretty fond of money. I don't think double the sum could hire me to make such a show of myself," the Boy minded it exceedingly. He sat down for half an hour and considered whether he wasn't doing a sort of mean thing after all, and he became exceedingly miserable in the conclusion that he was not at all the noble pattern of a boy he used to think he was.

In the morning the Uncle declared his intention of taking a walk and invited his nephew to go with him. Very sure that the peculiar disposition of the old gentleman was capable of bringing him into plenty of unpleasant situations before they reached home again, the Boy found himself almost indifferent to them. A feeling had been growing on him that anything short of meanness or wrongdoing was not

worth being mortified about; he felt calm even at a public exhibition of the buttons, he was so disturbed by the discovery of the unworthy motive which had supported him in making a show of himself.

But the Uncle made himself such delightful company on their walk—they left the town—that at last he forgot himself, forgot himself until they saw before them a boy running. He knew him; it was the Back. He stumbled, pitched, fell, picked himself up slowly, limped painfully to the roadside and sat down there holding on to his ankle. The Boy and the Uncle soon came up.

"Humph; sprained your ankle," said the Uncle.

"I think so," replied the Back, looking very white.

The Uncle took out his handkerchief, tore it in two, and dipping it in the cold waters of the brook, tied it tightly about his limb.

"Thank you, sir," said the Back, almost groaning, "I guess I can't walk just yet, I'll stay here till something comes along to take me in. The trouble is—the trouble is, I ought to be going on, I ought not to lose a moment."

"Humph!" said the Uncle. "You might better have thought of that before you fell."

"What time is it, if you please?" asked the Back anxiously.

"Twenty minutes of eleven," replied the Uncle.

"Oh, dear," sighed the Back, "only hard running would do it now. I left my sketch at home this morning, I took up another by mistake; it is to try for the prize sketch, and the Master said, if I would get it

into the studio by eleven he would accept it, but he couldn't later, because the rule is, any coming after that hour can't compete. I've worked so hard at it, and I thought I had a good chance—oh, dear!"

"Let me see," considered the Uncle, turning to the Boy; "you stopped with yours this morning and we saw a number there. Yours was undoubtedly very good. Now open your portfolio and let me see yours," he added to the Back.

The Back hesitated, glanced at the Button Boy, then yielded.

"Humph!" observed the Uncle, and put on his glasses. "Well, I declare, whom have we here? 'The Arrogant Page'; eh? well, I declare; look at this, nephew—here you are with your buttons and your most scornful expression—disdaining to pick up the little Prince's hat! Where did you learn to draw like this, you rascal?"

"I had plenty of chances with the model," said the Back slyly; then he sighed. "If I had got the prize I would have been sent to the Academy; I can't go without. And I'm sure it is very original!"

"Tie up your portfolio, quick!" said the Button Boy. His face was working. His eyes shone! They outshone his buttons seven dozen times.

"What are you going to do, you foolish fellow," cried the Uncle, "run with it? It will take the prize from under your very nose and make a show of you, too."

"Will you trust me?" asked the Button Boy of the Back, not minding his Uncle. "You know I've often said I owed you one, but I don't mean it."

"O Buttons!" cried the Back, "will you? will you really do it?"

"There, Uncle," cried the Button Boy stripping off his jacket, "I can't run in that tight thing. And if you choose to count this, you may. I give up the money, sir."

In vain the Uncle shouted after him, "You young rascal! I'll be done with you; what an exhibition you'll make now;" away he ran, fleet as a deer. Then the Uncle clapped his hands vociferously, burst out with—"I *knew* there was something in that lad!" chuckled till he was purple in the face, and finally sat down by the Back and blew his nose very hard.

"Look here," said the Uncle to the Button Boy that evening, "I had a purpose in putting you in this livery. You may guess, if you like, what it was and I think it hasn't been a failure. Now, if you will go home with me for the rest of the year we will hold to the contract and suspend the buttons."

"Really," said the Mother, with her mild smile, "already, Brother, I don't recognize my Boy; and I should like to ask you—"

"I am very much afraid," interrupted the Father, busily, "you will let his mind vegetate; he is certainly not as thoroughly intellectual as before he wore those buttons. I should like to ask you—"

"My dear Uncle," broke in the Sharp-eyed Sister, "if you will please invent some kind of head-gear for the brains as good as this for the heart, I—"

"Yes," said the Elder Brother hastily, "I should like to ask you—"

But the Uncle was seized with such a severe sneezing fit that no one could ask him after all.

DAN HARDY'S CRIPPY.

Among the flock of geese that toddled in and out of Farmer Hardy's barnyard last winter, hissing in protest at the ice which covered the pond so that there was no chance of a swimming match, was one remarkable neither for its beauty, nor its grace. This particular goose was gray, and was looked upon with no especial favor by Mrs. Hardy, who had great pride in all the flock but the gray one.

When it was a little, fluffy, drab-colored gosling, one of the sheep had stepped on it, crushing out its life so nearly that Mrs. Hardy had no idea it would ever recover, but Dan begged for its life. He felt sure he could set the broken leg, and he pleaded so hard that his mother finally allowed him to make the attempt.

And he did succeed. The gosling was naturally a strong little thing, and, thanks to Dan's nursing, was soon able to limp around the shed that had been converted into an hospital. One of its legs was nearly a quarter of an inch shorter than the other; but the little fellow increased in strength as rapidly as he did in size, and seemed to consider Dan as his owner and especial protector.

Like Mary's lamb, it followed Dan about whenever the opportunity offered, until "Crippy"—which was the name Dan had given it—was known in the

village quite as well as the boy was.

Many were the long walks, confidential chats, when the boy talked and the goose cackled, that Dan and Crippy had, and when the preparations for the Thanksgiving festival were begun, the gray goose was decidedly the fattest in the flock. Dan had always given Crippy a share of his luncheon, or had supplied for him a separate and private allowance of corn, and by this very care of his pet did he get into serious trouble.

"Dan's goose is the largest and the fattest, and I think we had better kill him for the Thanksgiving dinner," Dan heard his father say three days before Thanksgiving; and Mrs. Hardy replied:

"I had thought of that; gray feathers never bring as much money as white ones, and the goose is terribly in the way; he is always in the house, and always directly under foot."

Dan could hardly believe his own ears. The thought of killing and eating Crippy seemed wicked. Why, he would as soon have thought his parents would serve him up for dinner, as Crippy, and as for eating any of his pet, it would, to his mind, be little short of cannibalism.

"You wouldn't be so wicked as to kill Crippy, would you, mother?" he asked, while the big tears came into his eyes, almost spilling over the lashes.

"Why not?" Mrs. Hardy was so busily engaged in her work of making mince pies that she did not notice the sorrow on Dan's face. "Why not? He's only a goose, and gray. We've got to have one, and Crip is the fattest."

"But mother, I couldn't have poor Crippy killed. He an' I do love each other so much."

"Now don't be foolish about a goose, Danny. Come help me stem these raisins."

Dan said nothing more, for he knew by the way she had spoken that his mother had fully made up her mind and that it would be useless to try to induce her to change her cruel plans. He stemmed the raisins as she had requested; but he worked as quickly as possible, and when the task was done he ran out to the barn.

When the gray goose toddled toward him immediately he opened the barn-door, cackling and hissing with delight at seeing his young master, the tears which Dan had managed to keep back, came at last, and, with the goose in his arms, he seated himself on the barn floor with a feeling in his heart that he and Crippy were the two most unhappy and abused fellows in the world.

"O Crippy! they say they're goin' to kill you, an' I'd a heap sooner they'd kill me! What shall we do, Crippy?"

The goose made no reply; he was perfectly content to nestle down in Dan's arms, and, so far as he could see, he and his master were in remarkably comfortable quarters.

Much as the goose had been petted by Dan, the affection bestowed upon him just then seemed to surprise him, and while the boy was still crying over him, he struggled until he got away, when he limped over to the corn-bin as a gentle reminder that grain would please him far better than tears.

During that day and the next Dan spent his time alternately begging for Crippy's life and petting him; but all to no purpose, so far as inducing his mother to change her mind was concerned. On the following morning the gray goose was to be killed, and Dan could see no way to save him.

That afternoon he spent the greater portion of his time with the doomed Crippy, crying and talking until all the fowls must have wondered what the matter was, for, there being no almanac in the barn, of course they could have no idea Thanksgiving was so near. Suddenly Dan thought of a plan by which Crippy might be saved. It was a desperate one, and almost frightened him as he thought it over; but with his pet's life in the balance he could not hesitate at anything.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Crippy," he said as he succeeded in making the goose remain quietly in his arms by feeding him with corn. "Uncle Robert lives in New York, an' he's awful good. I know if we could find him he could save you. Now I'll get up in the night, an' come out here for you. It's only seven miles, an' I'm most sure we could walk there in a day. Then if he won't come out here to see mother, Thanksgiving will be gone, an' they can't have you for dinner."

Crippy swallowed the corn greedily, and Dan looked upon this as a sign that he not only understood what had been said, but was eating an unusually hearty meal by way of preparation for the journey.

Under any less desperate circumstances Dan could not have been persuaded to go away from home for an hour without asking his mother's permission, and even as he was situated then, he felt that he was

about to do something which was almost wicked. But since he could save Crippy's life in no other way, what could he do? He almost felt as if by taking the goose away he was preventing his parents from committing a crime, for it could hardly be less than one to kill so intelligent and loving a creature.

But though he tried to persuade himself that what he was doing was, under the circumstances, a favor to his parents, there was a big lump in his throat as he did his work that night, and realized that in a few hours neither his father nor his mother would know where he was. He was more than usually careful about the kindling-wood and the water, and when his mother spoke to him so kindly, he had the greatest difficulty in keeping his secret.

It was only the thought that he was by no means "running away," that prevented him from telling his mother what he intended to do. He argued with himself that he was only going to uncle Robert's on business, and that he should return the day after he arrived there; that would be entirely different from running away.

During the evening Dan worked hard at a message which he was to leave for his parents, feeling obliged to take every precaution lest they should see what he was about, and, after the most painful efforts he succeeded in printing this note:

**CRIP & ME HAVE GORNE TO UNKLE
ROBERTS
TO GET HIM TO COME UP HERE TO KOAX
YOU NOT TO KILL CRIP. WE WILL COME
RIGHT BACK.**

DANIEL K. HARDY.

Dan had six cents which he had earned carrying milk, and his preparations for the journey consisted simply in putting these in his pocket, together with some corn for Crippy, and in placing the little clock and some matches by the side of his bed, so that he might be able to tell when the proper time had come for him to start.

Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Hardy were surprised by Dan's unusually affectionate manner when he bade them good-night; but if they were, nothing was said about it, and the inmates of the Hardy farmhouse retired on the night before the proposed execution of poor Crippy at the usual early hour of nine o'clock.

Dan's idea was to lie awake until three in the morning, then steal cautiously out of the house, get Crippy, and start. But it was much harder work to remain awake than he had fancied, and before he had been in bed an hour he was sleeping soundly.

But even though his eyes persisted in closing despite his will, Dan did not sleep very long at a time. He was awake at least every half-hour, and his small stock of matches was exhausted as early as two o'clock. With no means of procuring a light, it would be impossible for him to know when the time had come, and, since he did not dare to go to sleep again, he concluded it would be better to set out at once than run the risk of delaying until his father should awaken.

During the time he was making very awkward attempts to dress himself in the darkness, his fingers trembling violently both from fear and the cold, he fancied each moment that he could hear his parents

moving around, as if they had suspected his purpose, and were on the alert to prevent him from carrying it into execution. It seemed too, as if each particular board in the floor creaked in protest at what he was doing, and to give the alarm.

The note which was to inform his parents of where he had gone, was placed conspicuously on the chair by the bed, where his mother could not fail to see it when she came to awaken him, and when that was done his journey seemed more like some demand of business, and less like disobedience to what he knew his parents' commands would be.

He did finally succeed in dressing himself, although his jacket was buttoned in a very curious fashion; and then, with his shoes and mittens in his hands, he started down stairs. If the boards of the floor had tried to arouse his parents, the stairs appeared bent on awakening the entire household—although he did his best to put as little weight as possible upon them, they creaked and screamed in a most alarming fashion.

It seemed strange to him that his parents could sleep while so much noise was being made; but when he finally succeeded in closing the outside door behind him, there had been no sign made to show that his departure was known.

Dan was so nervous and excited that he hardly felt the frost when he stepped with stockinged feet upon the snow; but instinct prompted him to put on his boots and mittens, and it only remained to get Crippie and start.

He almost expected that the goose would be waiting for him at the stable door when he opened it; but,

since he knew he should find his pet in the warm box he had made for him, he was not greatly disappointed at not seeing him ready for the journey. Besides, he had come an hour before he told Crippy he would be there, which was sufficient reason why the goose was not ready and anxious to start.

After groping his way around the barn to the corner in which was Crippy's sleeping apartment, Dan was considerably surprised because the goose was so very careless, both in regard to his safety, and the possibility of arousing the household. He cackled and hissed when Dan took him from the box, as if he preferred to be killed and served up for the Thanksgiving dinner rather than go out of doors so early on a cold morning.

Dan whispered that he knew it was hard to be obliged to start so early, but that they must do so, and the more he explained matters the harder the goose struggled, until it seemed much as if the attempt to save Crippy's life would be a dismal failure.

"I'm doin' this so's you won't have to be killed, Crippy," whispered Dan as he held the goose tightly clasped in his arms, "an' it does seem's if you might help a feller instead of tryin' to wake up father an' mother."

Perhaps Crippy was weary with struggling—Dan thought he began to realize his position—for he ceased all protests after his master's last appeal, and, with his head tucked under Dan's coat, submitted quietly to the rescue.

If he had not repeated to himself so many times that he was not running away from home, but simply

going to uncle Robert's to save poor Crippy's life, Dan would have felt that he was doing something wrong because of the warning cries uttered by everything around. The stable door, when he tried to close it softly, shut with a spiteful clatter, and even the snow gave forth a sharp, crunching sound such as he had never heard before. But he must keep on, for to remain would be to see the plump, brown body of poor Crippy on the Thanksgiving dinner table, while to go on would be, at the worst, but a few hours' discomfort, with Crip's life as the reward.

Once they were out of doors Crippy behaved much as if he had suddenly realized how important it was for him to get away from the Hardy farm, and Dan had no trouble with him while he was passing the house.

There seemed to be an unnatural stillness everywhere, amid which the crunching of the dry snow sounded with a distinctness that almost frightened the boy who was simply going to his uncle Robert's to spend a day or two. But finally Dan was on the main road, where the snow was frozen so hard that his footsteps could not be heard as distinctly, and where the two tracks worn smooth by the runners of the sleighs, lay spread out before him, looking like two satin ribbons on white broadcloth.



ON THE WAY.

Dan trudged slowly on, his heart growing lighter as the moments went by and he knew he had actually gotten away without arousing any one; but after he had walked some distance he began to realize how heavy Crippy was. He had thought he could carry his pet almost any length of time; but at the very commencement of his journey his arms began to ache.

"It's no use, Crippy, you'll have to walk some of the way," he said as he put the goose on the snow, and then started off to show him he must follow. Now a moonlight promenade on the snow, in the morning, with the thermometer several degrees below zero, was not at all to Crip's liking, and he scolded most furiously in his goose dialect, but he took good care to run after his master at the same time.

As Mrs. Hardy had said, Crippy was very fat, and when he toddled on at full speed he could only get along about half as fast as his master, so that Dan's

journey was made up with alternately trudging over the frozen road, and waiting for his pet to overtake him.

And soon it was necessary to make a change even in this slow way of travelling, for before Crippy had been half an hour on the road he began to evince the most decided aversion to walking, and it became necessary for Dan to take him in his arms again. On he walked, carrying Crippy the greater portion of the time, and coaxing him along when it became absolutely necessary for him to give his aching arms a little relief, until the sun came up over the hills, and he could see the great city but a short distance ahead of him.

During all this time he had not stopped once to rest; but now, since he was so near his destination, at such an early hour in the morning, he sat down in the snow and began to arrange with the discontented Crippy as to how they might best find uncle Robert, for Dan had not the slightest idea of where his relative lived.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Crip," he said as he gave the goose a handful of corn, contenting himself with half a biscuit he had taken from the supper-table the night previous. "We'll walk right along till we see uncle Robert, or some of the folks. It's the day before Thanksgiving, you know, an' some of 'em will be sure to be out buyin' things."

Crippy had finished eating the corn as his master ceased speaking, and he looked up sideways into Dan's face much as if he doubted the success of their plan if carried out in that manner.

"Well, if we don't find him that way, we'll ask some

of the boys, an' they'll be sure to know," said Dan, replying as earnestly to Crippy's look as if his pet had spoken.

Then the weary journey was resumed, much to Crippy's displeasure, even though he was carried comfortably in Dan's arms, and it was not until the outskirts of the city were reached that the goose was requested to walk. There the pavements were free from snow, and Crippy could move along much faster than on the icy road; but yet his progress was far from satisfactory.

The great number of people, all of whom regarded the boy and the goose curiously, bewildered both the travellers. More than once, when Dan was sure Crippy was close at his heels, on looking around he would see the goose standing on one foot near the curbstone, looking sideways at the street much as if trying to decide whether he would continue to follow his master, or toddle back home as fast as his legs of unequal length would carry him.

"O come on, Crippy," Dan said in a tone that showed plainly how tired and discouraged he was. "We sha'n't ever find uncle Robert this way, an' if a strange dog comes along where will you be?"

It seemed very much as if Crippy had not realized that he might chance to meet a dog, until Dan spoke of it, for then he ran hurriedly on as if he fully understood the danger that might come to him by loitering on the way.

But there were other enemies besides dogs, which Crippy was to meet with, as he and Dan learned when they reached the more densely populated portions of the city, and those enemies were boys.

Dan was walking slowly on, looking first at the houses in the hope of seeing some of his uncle's family, and then at Crippy, to make sure he was following, when half a dozen boys, who had been watching the singular pair from the opposite side of the street, made a sudden dash at the goose.

The first intimation Dan had that his pet was in danger, was when he heard the shouts of the boys, followed by Crippy's angry hiss, and the flapping of his wings. Quickly turning, Dan saw the goose closely pressed by the boys, all of whom were trying to catch him, and some of whom already had one or more feathers as trophies.

It did not take Dan many moments to catch his pet up in his arms, and then he stood ready to do battle for the goose, while the city boys advanced towards him threateningly.

There could have been but one result to such a battle, where six boys attacked one who was hampered in his movements by the goose, and some serious injury might have been done to both Dan and Crippy, had not a policeman come from around the corner just at that instant. Dan's assailants fled at the sight of the officer, and the country boy with his heavy, noisy burden continued on his journey.

There was no further interruption for nearly an hour; for when Dan carried the goose in his arms he was by no means the object of curiosity he was with Crippy following him. At the expiration of that time it dawned upon him that in a place as large as New York it was useless for him to walk around in the hope of meeting his uncle, or any of his family.

"I declare, I don't know what to do, Crippy," he said

as he seated himself on a doorstep with the goose by his side, and looked mournfully up and down the street. "I shouldn't wonder if we hadn't been more'n half-way round the city in all this time, an' yet we hain't seen any of uncle Robert's folks. What shall we do?"

Crippy made no reply to the question; but a boy about Dan's size, who was looking wonderingly at the goose as he stood on his shortest leg in a mournful way spoke:

"Wot is it yer don't know wot ter do?"

"I don't know how to find my uncle Robert. Crippy an' me come down to see him, an' now we can't find his house."

"Do you call him Crippy?" asked the boy as he nodded toward the goose.

"Yas, he's Crippy Hardy. Mother was goin' to kill him for dinner to-morrer, so we come down here to get uncle Robert to go up an' see about it."

"How far have you come?"

"Seven miles."

"Did you walk?"

"Every step."

"Well," said the boy as he looked at Crippy in a critical way, "it seems to me that's a mighty mean kind of a goose ter walk so far fur. He hain't handsome no ways, an' I think he'd look a good deal better on ther table roasted, than he does out here on ther street."

Up to that moment Dan had been disposed to trust this boy who was so friendly; but when he spoke so slightly of Crippy, he was disappointed in him.

"You don't know Crippy, or you wouldn't say that," replied Dan gravely. "I would walk seventeen times as far if it would keep him from gettin' killed."

"Well, I tell yer wot it is," and the boy spoke like one thoroughly conversant with geese and their ways, "he's got ter be a good deal better'n he looks ter 'mount to anything."

"An' he is," replied Dan; and then he gave the stranger a full account of Crippy's sagacity and wisdom, with such success that when he had finished the goose evidently stood high in the city boy's estimation.

"He's prob'ly a mighty nice kind of a goose," said the boy; "but it seems to me if I had a pet I'd want one that could sleep with me, an' you know you couldn't take this goose to bed."

"I could if mother would let me, an' I don't see why she won't, for I know Crippy would just snuggle right down as good as anybody could."

For some time the two discussed the question of pets in general, and Crippy in particular, then the city boy remembered his mother sent him on an errand which should have been done an hour before.

Dan felt more lonely than ever after this new-made friend had gone, and, with Crippy in his arms, he started wearily out in search of uncle Robert, hardly knowing where he was going. In his bewilderment he had walked entirely around the same block four times, and an observant policeman asked him where

he was going.

Under the circumstances Dan did not require much urging to induce him to tell the man his story.

"Do you know your uncle's name?" asked the officer.

"Uncle Robert Hardy."

"What is his business—I mean, what kind of work does he do?"

"He keeps store."

The officer led Dan to the nearest drug store, and there, after consulting the directory, told him there were several Robert Hardys mentioned, at the same time giving him a list of the names.

Dan took the paper with the written directions upon it, feeling more completely at a loss to know how to proceed than he had before, and it was in a dazed way that he listened to the instructions as to how he should find the nearest Hardy.

But he started bravely off, still carrying Crippy, who seemed to have doubled in weight, and when he had walked half an hour in the direction pointed out by the policeman, he appeared to be no nearer his destination than when he started.

"What can we do, Crippy?" he cried, as again he took refuge on a doorstep, weary, hungry and foot-sore. He had seen no opportunity to buy a breakfast with his six cents; it was then long past his usual time for dinner, and his hunger did not tend to make him more cheerful.

The goose was as unable to answer this question as he had been the ones Dan had previously asked, and

the only reply he made was a loud cackling, which, in his language, signified that he thought it quite time that he had some dinner.

By this time, and Dan had not been on the doorstep more than five minutes, a crowd of boys gathered around, all disposed to make sport of the goose, and to annoy the boy.

"Say, country, why don't you sell your goose?"

"Where did the bird find you?"

"Does yer mother know you're so far away from home?"

These and other equally annoying questions Dan listened to until he could no longer control himself, and he cried to his tormentors:

"See here, boys, if you had somethin' you thought a good deal of, an' it was goin' to be killed an' roasted for dinner, what would you do?"

The boys were too much surprised by the question to reply, and Dan continued earnestly:

"This goose is Crippy, an' I've had him ever since he was a baby, an' got his leg broke. We come in here to find uncle Robert so's he could tell mother not to kill poor Crip, an' now we can't find him, an'—an'—well, we're jest two as lonesome fellers as you ever saw, an' if you knew jest how we did feel you wouldn't stand there pokin' fun at us."

For a moment none of Dan's tormentors spoke, and then the tallest one said sympathetically, as he seated himself by the country boy's side to show that he took both the boy and the goose under his protecting arm:

"They sha'n't plague you any more, an' ef I'd 'a' known how you was feelin' I wouldn't 'a' said a word. Now tell us all about it."

Dan was in that frame of mind where he needed sympathy, and he told the whole story, while the entire party stood around, interrupting him now and then by exclamations of surprise that his parents should have been so cruel as to even think of killing that faithful Crippy.

This consolation, even though it did Dan no material good, was very sweet to him, and he would have continued to sing the praise of his pet, had not one of the boys proposed that an effort be made to find uncle Robert's house. Then each one had a different plan to propose, none of them thinking that at that hour—four o'clock in the afternoon—it might be an act of charity first to give Dan and Crippy something to eat.

It surely seemed as if this discussion as to how the search should be begun would continue until it would be too late to do anything, and while each one was stoutly maintaining that his plan was the best, an old-fashioned sleigh drawn by a clumsy-looking horse, stopped directly opposite where the boys were holding their conference.

"Why, father!" cried Dan as he saw the occupant of the sleigh, and at the same time he hugged Crippy close to him as if he believed his father had come for the goose.

"Well, Dan, you did find your uncle Robert after all, didn't you?" asked Mr. Hardy as he alighted, covered old Dobbin carefully with the robe, and then went to where Dan was sitting, already deserted by his new-

made friends, who feared Mr. Hardy was about to inflict some signal punishment.

"No sir, I didn't find him," faltered Dan, wondering what his father would do to him and Crippy.

"Why, haven't you been in yet?"

"In where?" asked Dan in surprise.

"In here, of course; this is where your uncle Robert lives," and Mr. Hardy pointed to the house on the steps of which Dan had been sitting.

To his great surprise Dan learned that he had followed the policeman's directions exactly; but, not knowing it, had neglected to look on the house-doors for his uncle's name.

In a few moments more he and his father were in the house, while Crippy was in the kitchen actually gorging himself with food.

When Mr. Hardy found the note Dan had left, he was not at all worried about his son's safety; but when, later in the day, he had leisure, he started to the city for the travellers, and, driving directly to his brother's house, found them as has been seen.

It is easy to understand that after all this labor on Dan's part to save his pet, Mr. Hardy readily promised that Crippy should be allowed to die of old age, instead of being killed and roasted, and Dan, with Crippy hugged very close to him, started for home with his father, sure that no boy in all the wide world would spend a merrier Thanksgiving than he.

Crippy was also happy on that day, if food could make him so, and it is safe to say that, if he survives the wonderfully big dinner Dan proposes to give him

this year, he will live to a green old age.

HIS THREE TRIALS.

I.

AS CARPENTER AND CHEMIST.

For three years Hal had been trying to decide what should be his business in life; and now at the age of fifteen, and in his last school year, he was as far as ever from any fixed plan. A profession, he argued, required too much study; a trade meant ten hours a day of hard labor; he was too old for an office-boy; and he had no capital to put into business. Well, if he could only even find out now for what he was fitted, it would save time in the end.

"How do people ever sit still and think!" he exclaimed aloud. "I'll go over and consult Ned."

Ned was two years his senior. He had started in life with the idea of being a doctor, and had kept to it. Consequently he had little sympathy with Hal's vagaries, and often chided him for his lack of definite purpose. But as Hal's well-known war-whoop sounded under the window, he came out on his steps.

"What's up?" he asked. "You look as black as a thunder cloud."

"Father says I've got to make up my mind what to do,

and that if I don't he'll do it for me," answered Hal laconically, "and that might not suit, you know."

"I told you it would come to that if you did not look sharp," answered Ned. "Take my advice now. A boy like you better begin with a trade and work up to be boss mechanic; then when you are rich, buy a library and turn scholar. There's a swell carpenter's school just started down at the Institute, box and tools included in the tuition, so you'll have some property at the end of the term, if you haven't ideas."

"I had thought of being a physicist, or chemist," replied Hal; "but carpentering is really more in my line; might try it at least. Suppose I talk it over at home."

"You better," said Ned, "than keep me out here bareheaded; good-by!"

"Much obliged and good-by," called out Hal, as he turned homewards.

It did not take long to obtain his parents' consent, as they hoped they saw in this definite wish an earnest of practical ability which would help them and him to decide the question of what he had better do. He had owned one or two carpenter's chests and had broken several tools, so that he knew something about their use which would count in the beginning.

Hal's pride suffered, however, when at the Institute he had to learn how to strike square blows, and to practise the wrist, elbow and shoulder movement, in striking with light tools. Then, too, he had to submit to be taught how to drive nails just so many inches apart, exactly as if he had never hammered before. He was as indignant, also, at being told to neither

split nor cut towards himself, as if he had never hurt his jacket.

At last he was permitted to begin to make a picture frame. Its four sides had to be glued and dovetailed together, and the fitting required careful measurements. As Hal was too anxious to go ahead to attend to details, it is not surprising that the sides would not meet. The more he planed and chiselled, the worse it grew, till in despair he took it home for kindling wood.

Next he started on a bevelled-edge frame, and still despising exact measurements, he made the inner curve too deep, thus injuring the effect of his design.

Weary of mathematical carpentering, he turned to the ordinary, rough work of making a miniature house frame. His previous mistakes had helped him so much that here he soon went ahead of the other boys; but when he reached the staircase he began to fail. The steps were not alike in depth, nor were they placed at the right angles; he used up four blocks of wood, succeeding on the fifth, though the stairs were still rather steep.

His frame completed, he discovered that his acquaintances at the Institute had advanced to the turning-lathe. Too vexed and proud to go on and take up what they were leaving, he went into the moulding room. All went well at first; the frame was evenly placed, put together and inserted in the sand-box; but when he came back two days later and lifted the upper half, the sand all fell out and spoilt his mould; for he had paid very little attention to getting it into the completely proper condition for receiving an impression.

This final failure at the Institute convinced him that nature had not fitted him for a carpenter, which knowledge he bore calmly; for, as he said, it was a saving of time to find out what he could *not* be. In his need, he turned again to Ned, whom he had ignored during this two months at the Institute. Ned looked as if he had expected him, but could only learn that "carpentering had gone up," and that Hal would now like to try his first idea and enter the chemical business, provided that Ned would become a partner and put in some stock.

Ned demurred at first, but finally concluded it might be helping himself, as a doctor, especially as the stock he had on hand and the use of his laundry, could be considered an offset for Hal's capital.

"My laundry would do just as well," said Hal; "you ought to put in money."

"Oh, you had better take my laundry," replied Ned. "My mother does not object to smells, for she thinks chemistry is going to revolutionize perfumery. I've got some scales and a spirit-lamp, and we can get bottles and tumblers enough."

"Yes, but you know we must have a round-bottomed receiver, a measuring glass, crucibles, retorts and test-tubes."

"As you seem to know all about it," replied Ned carelessly, "you buy them and come here to-morrow." Hal assented and they separated to meet the next afternoon, when they began with a manual of chemistry as their guide. They first distilled water; and then they analyzed it by boiling it.

But all this was too safe, they wished to venture

upon something dangerous; so they put three drops of nitric acid on a copper cent and wrote out the result thus:

(1). 1 copper cent.
3 drops Nitric acid.

Result: A greenish liquid—nitrate of copper.

This formula was so pleasing that they continued to note down their work somewhat as follows:

(2). 1 Shell.
6 drops nitric acid.

Result: Shell dissolved.

(3). Solution muriate of lime.
"Solution Carbonate of potassium.

Result: Solid.

From these simple but important discoveries they proceeded to move difficult analyses and syntheses. They made ammonia water; they combined weights; they experimented in acids, bases and salts; they produced explosions; they almost set the house on fire with their experiments in hydrogen; they tested iodine and chlorine.

The greatest hindrance to their advancement was the amount of care required. They had burnt holes in their clothes; the laundry had become an inconvenient refuge for the cats and dogs of the house; the younger children could no longer play there, but broken glass should injure them; and the maids dreaded entering a place where unlooked-for events were always happening.

A crisis was at last developed by the gift of a friend who sent them some lumps of "Sulphuret Potass" which the boys heated, when a strange and still stranger odor arose. Absorbed in their experiments, they heard neither approaching footsteps nor voices; the door was even opened, but quickly shut. At last Ned's mother courageously rushed up to them holding her handkerchief tight over her face, and insisted with unmistakable gestures upon their leaving the laundry. The odor had penetrated every nook and corner of the house, a committee meeting had vanished, and windows were all thrown open.

"This is an end to your chemistry," she declared in injured tones; "you have discovered nothing except how to make yourselves sick, have injured your coats and trousers, and I won't have any more of it, do you understand?"

"Yes," said both boys meekly. Perhaps they were rather glad than otherwise of any expression of authority which could plausibly end what they were secretly longing to give up. As partners they had been faithful to each other's interests; but did it pay to give up base-ball, week after week, just to carry out an idea! Hal's money was gone, and both boys had done a large amount of "trading" of books and curiosities for some other boys' half-used chemical stock. Ned was sure he knew enough to aid him in his profession; and Hal valued failure as an exponent in indicating, negatively, his future career.

"Glad of it;" Ned ventured to assert at last when the family had dispersed and windows were closed. "We must clean up, and we might as well sell out the whole concern, take account of stock, and divide the profits."

"Don't flatter yourself," replied Hal, "that there'll be much profit. If there is I ought to have two thirds of it as I put in the most capital."

"Yes, as far as cash goes, but brains count too, and I think you will admit that the ideas have been furnished by me chiefly; besides my trousers were burned more than yours. But I don't care—divide things as you like. I am agreed."

II.

AS OFFICE BOY.

When all was definitely settled between Ned and himself, and the assets of the firm disposed of, Hal felt, for some days, as if he had been to a funeral. He wandered around the house disconsolately, and then, suddenly, a new influence crossed his path which promised tangible and immediate rewards in other fields of labor. Money prizes were offered to graduates of the High Schools for the best two essays which should be written, one on the Colonial Policy towards Quakers; the other on the Value of Republican Government. The money was not considerable, but the work looked toward political journalism, perhaps on to a career like Motley's or Bancroft's. Hal had always been an attentive loungee around newspaper offices on election nights, and in the Representatives Hall of the State House when any interesting bill was being debated. This he considered as proof of his love of history; history was the one study, too, in which he invariably gained the highest marks at school. These "indications" greatly encouraged him now. He felt impelled to write the essays, even if they should be failures, because he

was really interested in the subjects and had often talked with his father about them both.

The closing day of school soon came. The boys marched, sang, received their diplomas and then threw up their hats, when free and in the street. Very early the next morning Hal visited three libraries and took down the titles of innumerable books and sketched two plans for he intended, as I have before said, to write two essays, each in different style thus to increase his chance of success. He selected "Nisus Sum" and "America," as signatures. He furnished himself with a quart bottle of ink, a box of pens, two dozens of lead pencils and two reams of paper, and greatly enjoyed these preliminaries.

Thus equipped, he began with no depressing circumstances, except his mother's words, that if by the first of September he had not decided what he should like to do, she should decide for him. He went out of town, as usual, in the hot weeks; he fished, and climbed hills, and got lost, as usual; but through it all, he thought and read of the Colonial Policy, and wondered whether he should have fallen in love with a Quaker girl, and whether the troubles between England and Ireland arose from a need of Republican government. In spite of his ramblings, and in spite of some discouraged moods, some unexamined idea always urged him on, and the result was that in two months he had prepared rough sketches of his work, and his parents were, this time, convinced of his earnestness.

Coming home the very evening of the first day of September, the day and the hour he had dreaded as the last of his liberty, because as he had not made up his mind, it was to be made up for him, he saw two

men lifting his father out of a carriage. He stopped and looked at them. He had no power to speak or help. He saw them carry his father up-stairs and lay him on the bed. Then, at a word from his mother, he went for a doctor. He never could recall the manner of his errand, but the physician came; at last some one said to him:

"It is a slight shock of paralysis. If another does not follow, he will soon get well." This was like saying to him, "If your father does not die, he'll live."

How long was he to wait for that knowledge! An hour would be a year and a year would be a century. He helped in all things as he was told to do; but his fingers were like thumbs and his feet like clubs. He felt a singular and confusing sense of identity with his father, as though the paralysis had included him.

By and by, the room grew quiet. He and his mother were left alone; he would have given anything if he had dared to speak or touch her. Nothing was near him. Had he ever been a boy? Was there a prize essay? Were there only three people in the world—his father, his mother and himself?

Later came his uncle. His mother then called him by name for the first time in those terrible hours, and bade him bid his father good-night. As he went mechanically to do so, his father seemed to keep Hal's hand in his own numb fingers, and to look most imploringly, the mother's hand on to Harry's. The mother, as the hands met, said, "Hal will take care of me, dear," and Hal exclaimed, "I will." Then they knew they were right in their interpretation as the sick face brightened and the eyelids slowly closed in weariness.

Hal went up-stairs to his own room. The thinking he did that night made a man of him. He was sure his father would live, but also that his salary would cease, and that he himself must help to support the family. "And so help me God, I'll do it," said he, "but I'll win the prizes too." The growing strength of his purpose soon overcame him and he fell asleep to dream of Olympic games and wreaths of victory.

When the physician's visit was over the next day, the world did not look quite so dark. Uncle Joe was to live with them awhile, and the father was conscious and quiet.

"Good-by, mother," said Hal.

"Good-by," she answered.

The front door closed, and Hal went down town to the office of Newton & Bryce, old friends of his father's. He walked up to the senior partner, and said, very like a mechanical toy unwinding:

"My father has had a stroke of paralysis. He can't do anything for months. I heard you say once that if you could get an office-boy who could keep accounts you would make it worth while for him to stay with you. I can."

"Stop, stop," said Mr. Bryce. "I had just heard of your father's illness and am very sorry. But you talk so fast I don't understand you. What is it you want? Who sent you?"

"No one. I suppose I did rattle on, but I had been saying over to myself on the way down what I meant to say to you, like points in an essay."

"Points in an essay! The boy is a daft one."

"I'm all right, sir, or will be, if you take me. How much wages can you pay?"

The senior partner smiled. "Three dollars a week at first, and more by and by—is that what you want?"

"I need my evenings, sir," said Hal. "I forgot to mention that."

"You can have them—but why?" As Hal made no reply, Mr. Bryce added kindly: "Never mind. The boy I have goes to-night. I was to tell him to-day whether I would take his brother, or make an arrangement with the janitor. I have no opinion of office-boys I'll confess to you, young sir. But for your father's sake, I am going to try you. Be here to-morrow at eight o'clock, put the office in order, get the mail, and have my table ready for me at half-past eight."

"Much obliged, thank you. For my father's sake, I'll furnish you with an opinion of office-boys presently," said Hal. He started and got as far as the door, when he turned back. "I really do thank you," said he.

"That's a new sort of boy, anyway—one consolation," said Mr. Bryce. "But it will cost something to teach him. Bother the change!"

"Mother," said Hal on reaching home, "I've been and gone and done it. I am an office-boy at three dollars a week now; more in prospect."

"You blessed child!" she exclaimed; and then she and Hal had a good old-fashioned cry together which saved much talking, explanation, and advice.

Hal's work was promptly done the next morning. Mr. Bryce's table was ready at half-past eight, in ideal order. Yet though he went to the bank, wrote, and

added figures, he still had much idle time on his hands. Therefore, the following day, when there was really nothing more for him to do, he felt at liberty to seat himself at a table and begin to write. Mr. Bryce, noticing him thus occupied, walked leisurely by and beheld out of the corner of his eye two rolls of manuscript; but if the boy could be silent, so could his master.

Still the master's curiosity was excited. This "new kind of office-boy" piqued his interest. "I'll call him off, and see how he'll take it," reasoned Mr. Bryce; and he whistled. Hal came at once, alert, attentive, and did the errands assigned. Mr. Bryce could not detect any sign of a preoccupied mind.

Thus passed the week. Hal bore home his first earnings, Saturday night, and laid the bills on his father's bed with a deeper and more pleasurable feeling of having done something worth doing than he had ever felt or dreamt of before. Yet if any one had spoken a word of appreciation to him, he could not have borne it.

That first week was the type of weeks to come. His office-work was not heavy, though he was more and more trusted. At times he had to bite his lips, as his brain came to a sudden stop in its work when the whistle sounded for him in the midst of his own personal copying or reading. But as the evenings grew longer and his father better, he had more time at home to work on his essays. He had however, decided to give up trying for two prizes, and he also had become very doubtful about the certainty of receiving even one; as his ideal of an essay grew and perfected itself, and as he realized how much hard work was required in both reading and reflection and

even in any truly logical arrangement of his ideas. He had made several rough drafts of his essay. He had wholly rewritten it twice. But the hard work of form, development and finish remained. Still when he considered his previous failures as carpenter and as chemist, he was determined to be patient with himself and try his utmost with this plan. In this painstaking mood the essay was completed. He sent it in on the last hour of the last day assigned.

III.

AS HISTORIAN.

Now that Hal had sent in his essay he felt weary, for the excitement of composition and of haste had ceased; and he tormented himself, too, by recalling sentence after sentence which he wished he could remodel. Also memory brought back his past failures; he had not succeeded as chemist or carpenter and all the boys knew it. What would they say when his name would be posted on the bulletin, down town, as a Rejected Essayist? Presently too, it was announced that the bestowal of the Old South Prizes must be deferred as an unexpectedly large number of essays had been presented! Hal whistled, shrugged his shoulders, refused to endure the suspense, cast aside his interest in the matter, and resolved to settle down into an office-boy.

He cleaned the office more vigorously than ever, and as he began a catalogue of his employer's library, there arose the faint glimpse of a new hope, in the thought that his present pursuit might eventuate in his being a lawyer. But with it there came a hot flush of shame as he remembered his many visions of the

future; and to get rid of them he would run to the bank on an errand with such fury that his haste suggested a panic. But in spite of all his changes of intention he was growing manly; making character, developing mental fibre and muscle; his mother trusted him with her hopes and fears, and his father talked to him with a respect that was very consoling to his wounded spirit. Also the boys ceased to come for him in the evening; if they met him on the street, they called him "a dig" and asked him what new hobby made him so serious.

Some months had thus passed, when one day, Hal, who had almost forgotten his history in his law, thought Mr. Bryce's whistle for him had a peculiar sound. "Get your hat," said the lawyer, "and follow me. I want you to go to the Court House."

Hal's active imagination instantly saw himself seated there as Judge. Yes, law was his vocation. But when there, he was almost pushed into a corner, while Mr. Bryce pointed him out to the clerk of the court. This rather frightened Hal, but he felt reassured at the command to stay where he was until the clerk should bid him go for Mr. Bryce, for the latter could not afford to spend the morning in court waiting for his case to come up.

It was a new world to Hal and his astonishment and interest was increased as he recognized an old playmate in the one who was being examined. An officer had removed the boy's jacket and was calling the attention of the Judge to long, deep welts on the boy's back, the result of lashes inflicted by his father, because his son earned but little. The contents of a dirty paper-bag were also exhibited, as being the only dinner allowed the boy, who, with his mouldy

crust, walked three miles each day to the shop where he worked. That very morning he had been so dull, that some one, suspecting the truth, had told "the boss" of his condition, and through an officer of the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," his case had been brought into court.

Poor Hal! perhaps he was born to be a philanthropist after all. He resolved to interest himself in the S. P. C. C. Visions of "cases" hunted out and brought before the officers, thrilled his soul. How he ached for this particular boy! and how he contrived to make that boy feel he was there and to tuck some lozenges into his hand, as his former companion passed by him under the kind guardianship of the Secretary of the Society; and then the clerk ordered him to find Mr. Bryce.

The next day, when he was summoned to Mr. Bryce's inner office, from dreams of himself as the eminent legal adviser and prosecutor for the S. P. C. C., that gentleman asked him rather quizzically how he liked "court business." Hal replied that he did not know surely, but guessed he might come to prefer it to office work and cataloguing.

"Well," said Mr. Bryce, "I am rather sorry to hear that, for I had thought of raising your wages. However, I am doubtful about employing essayists as office-boys. It might work badly."

"Has it, sir?" he asked; then in an embarrassed manner, "I am not certain what you mean."

The lawyer made no reply, and Hal turned away crestfallen.

"O come back here, boy," called out Mr. Bryce then.

"And by the way, can you tell me who is Nisus Sum?"

Harry wriggled with conflicting sensations until he could scarcely stand. At last he burst out: "What is that to you?"

"O not much!" replied Mr. Bryce, with an amused look, "only I hold an essay to return to him."

Hal grew so white that his employer pitied him, and forebore.

"You did not know I was chairman of the committee on the Old South Prizes, did you?" he added in a different tone.

"No, sir, I did not;" exclaimed Hal, flushing to his very temples.

"And I did not know that you were 'Nisus Sum' until ten minutes ago."

"Well, this may be fun to you, sir, but it isn't to me," said Hal, almost with a sob.

"Look here, my boy, listen. You knew Mr. Akers died; well, he was one of the judges, and I was asked to take his place, and I consented, because I saw that I had an office-boy who would attend to his work."

Hal put his hand out vaguely towards the table as if to lean on it for support. Mr. Bryce's tone involuntarily softened as he continued: "I have been comparing the estimates sent in by the other judges, and I see that we agree that the first prize for 'Colonial Policy' is taken by 'Nisus Sum.'"

"Nisus Sum," said the boy dreamily, "first prize." Then suddenly, as if beside himself, he twirled Mr. Bryce's chair round and round with the poor man in

it until the lawyer had to exert his strength to stop him.

"That'll do," exclaimed he. "Don't get frantic, but it was really very risky for you to try to do my work and yours too. There was danger of doing neither satisfactorily."

"Did I neglect anything, sir? you know I didn't. I began to read up for the essay before father was taken sick, and then when that came, I was bound I would do something at last."

"Well, well, you succeeded, didn't you? Go home now and tell them; only, remember this," and Mr. Bryce grew stern, "don't think because you have succeeded now that you always are to win. Stick to your daily work. Be a good clerk first, that you may be a good historian later."

"Trust me," said Hal gravely, who felt the awe of success stealing over him. He felt queer, yet happy and humble; and bowing low, he left the room. It took but a few moments for him to rush home; and if his father had not gained in strength he certainly would have suffered, for Hal bounded into the room, upsetting the chairs and a table and spinning his mother round in circles somewhat as he had treated Mr. Bryce, he exclaimed:

"I have won! I have won! first prize! Now you can be sick, father, as long as you please."

Then followed explanation and a quiet talk which made Harry always look back upon that evening as the happiest one of his boyhood.

It only remains to add that he was as good as his word; he was an able clerk first, and an historian

only as a middle-aged man.

IN THE SECOND DORMITORY.

Ramon Valdez was an acquisition. He was a Cuban. Father had picked him up at Havana, where he was looking out for somebody who could teach him English instead of the queer jabber that he learned, second-hand, from a wizened little French adventurer, who had set up as a teacher of languages, and had nearly forgotten even his own. I did get sold in the most ridiculous way over father's telegram that announced his coming! But that's all over—they have about forgotten it.

He was real fun after we got acquainted; he didn't seem to know anything about base-ball, and couldn't catch a fly worth a cent! guess it is too hot in Havana to play ball. He couldn't fish either, but it wasn't the season for that, so we didn't care. But he could ride! He mounted the colt one day, bareback, and went around the lot five times before he fell off, and not one of us boys could stay on a rod. We respected him some after that.

But he was queer! The first thing mother did was to buy him a lung protector, as he wasn't acclimated yet, she said. Jack, the six-year-old, got hold of it and put it on outside of his frock, and then came galloping around with it on in that way. Well, Ramon came down to breakfast the next morning with that protector on just as Jack had fixed it! Then he wanted some "john-bread." Where he got it, I don't

know, but what he meant was "johnny-cake."

I heard him reciting some poetry to Mollie one night—that was father's way in teaching languages, to make us commit poetry and recite to each other—and this was what he made of it!

Zoze zevening bells,
Zoze zevening bells!
How may-nay tales zheir moozic tells
Of yuz an' home an' zat sweet time
W'en first I heard zheir queezing chime.

"Their what, Ramon?" cried Mollie.

"Zheir queezing chime," he repeated innocently, staring at her.

"Soothing, Ramon, soothing!" He laughed away too, like a good fellow, and didn't get mad in the least. I suppose our Spanish was as funny to him. He never laughed at us, though; I presume he was too polite.

But he just got into the ways of us boys about as quickly as any new boy that ever came to the Highland School, and before he had been there two weeks he was in a scrape!

It's dreadfully dull to be the teacher's son. You have to do just so, you know, "to set a good example," and it isn't any fun. Father never asked me to tell what was going on, no matter what was up; but he put me "upon honor" not to go in myself, so of course I had to keep out. But the fellows understood, and used to tell me all about it afterward, and as somehow they always came to grief, I felt a little more contented than I might have done.

One night we *could* not get to sleep.

The long moonbeams came down athwart the dormitory through the great windows, and lay in broad parallelograms, bisected and quartered, upon the floor. We got our geometry lesson out of the figures, and reeled off a whole section of theorems, without the least effect. That ought, by rights, to be enough to set a whole houseful of boys journeying into the Land of Nod, but it didn't us.

Father heard us jabbering and came up to see what the matter was, but our sudden interest in the science of planes and prisms so amused him that he laughed all the way down-stairs; for Charlie Brown crept to the door and heard him.

At last Frank Hapgood—"Happy-go-lucky"—sat up in desperation, flung his pillow on the floor, got out of bed deliberately and sat down on it. Nine other pillows, nine other white-robed figures solemnly followed suit. Said Harry Eveleth, "Fellows, I've tried to do my duty and go to sleep, and I can't. We *must* do something!"

A silence, broken by a sigh from Ramon. "Ah! on nights like zis I have gone to ze—ze zoogar houses to sleep some time, in Habana!"



**THE OLD HORSE WAS SLEEPY ... BUT THEY
WERE READY AT LAST.**

Frank "Happy" gave a start, looked at the circle intently, then gave a little nod, and winked.

Eight others of the owl committee gave a simultaneous start in answer, as though they had been unconsciously fooling around a galvanic battery. The gentleman from Havana alone was quiet; he did not yet understand, but the others did, and he was ready to follow. Texan herders say that a drove of ten thousand cattle will sometimes at night leap to their feet like a flash, without apparent cause or warning. There will be a roar of thundering hoofs, a distant rumble, and that herd will have vanished like smoke from the camp-fire, "on the stampede!" Our boys had "stampeded."

Ten or fifteen minutes later a certain wakeful teacher was pleasantly made aware of the fact that a cataract

of boys, each with one of the nice white blankets belonging to *Mrs.* Teacher, tied across his shoulders, was streaming down the lightning-rod by his window; and stepping lightly thither, he caught a disconnected word or two about "old Brown's sugar-house."

"How shall we get her out?"

"Tie up her feet in straw!"

"But the carriage will make such a racket!"

"Well"—after a moment's thought—"we can take the cart; that's been newly greased."

There was a rumble, a slow sque-e-ak, and the cart was out without much noise. Two boys at the thills and two more pushing behind, they softly trundled it down the yard, stopping at every unusually loud squeak. It was almost as light as day; only in the yard the trees cast a slight shadow of tangled branches, leafless as they were.

There was a suppressed sense of excitement, a strained thrill of the nerves that made thumbly work of their handling the buckles. The old horse was sleepy, and wouldn't "stand round" to order, and they had to push her into place; but they were ready at last, and Happy-go-Lucky whispered "Pile in!"

They piled in literally one above the other, and lay down upon the hay in the bottom of the cart. There might yet be some stray wanderer to meet and run the gauntlet of his cross-questioning. The wheel struck a stone, and there was a jounce; the bottom fellows wriggled out, what was left of them, and sat up, gasping. They had rather run the risk than try that again. But they met no one.



THE RETURN OF THE VALIANT STAMPEDERS.

It was a night when there is no sound. The insects are dead, the birds have gone South with the other

members of the higher circles of society; there was only the rattle of the heavy cart, springless and jolty, along the dusty road that wound like a great horseshoe around the long slope of the ridge that shot up suddenly into "Paradise Hill." Beyond the river a dog barked, a mile away, and ended in a melancholy howl. Ramon shivered, and drew his blanket around him; he had a superstitious fear of that sound.

The mountains in the North never seemed so high and dark before. Then they saw that it was a cloud, black, sullen-looking—great masses of vapor heaped in billowy folds, blackening the slopes with shadow, and barely touched above with silver-gilt.

"Looks a little like a storm to-morrow," said Harry.

No one answered him. The chatter had somehow died away, and they were more intent on keeping warm than talking. It wasn't all their fancy painted it—this clear, cold moonlight; it was icy.

"Never mind, boys!" cried Charlie Brown cheerfully, as they drew up at an old hop-house by the side of the road, and got out stiffly, "we can howl now if we like, and nobody to hear."

But nobody wanted to howl. They did want to get up the slope to the edge of the woods, where the sugar-house was, and putting horse and cart together in the shed, they scaled the fence and started up the hill at a lumbering trot. Now that their beds were so far away they were sleepy enough.

As it happened, just as they struck the fence, a brisk, elderly gentleman, with iron-gray hair, and spectacles, and a queer twinkle in his eye as he

glanced up at the mass of clouds piling up in the mountains, walked hurriedly down a narrow sheep-path through the leafless woods, and entered the sugar-camp. It was dark in there,—dark as Erebus; only in two or three places a ray of light streamed down through the holes in the roof.

The gentleman in spectacles glanced around serenely; as though it was quite the thing for him to be wandering around in the woods at that unearthly hour; poked at the roof here and there with his cane, knocked up a few shingles that let more light in on the subject of his investigations, and came out again hastily as he heard the boys approach, and disappeared in a clump of spruces. Five or ten minutes afterward, he suddenly appeared at the bottom of the hill, backed the horse out of the shed, put on the bridle, and removed his blanket, sedately got in and drove quietly home.

Charlie Brown was the first up the hill, and heralded the sight of the camp with a cheer. "Now then, lively! Out with your jack-knives and off with a lot of spruce boughs!"

Then followed a great hacking of dull knives and cracking of limbs, with the occasional swish of an armful into the camp. The boys worked like beavers for a while, and got thoroughly warmed again, and the air within was filled with resinous fragrance. That done and arranged to their experienced leader's satisfaction, they wrapped themselves like Indians in their blankets and tumbled down upon the heap of boughs; the air trembled with a chorus of strange sounds as one by one they dropped off into a drowsy sleep, with an occasional wriggle as a knot, or the end of a limb, made itself felt through the many-

folded blanket, and engraved a distinct dent upon the sleeper's back; while overhead, the giant cloud crept upward slowly, slowly toward the zenith, spreading east and west without a break. One half of the valley had vanished in the blackest shadow, and still the gilded edge swung steadily on, with the slow, resistless sweep of misty legions upon legions, armed in ebon mail; vast billows of night that drowned the scattered stars that met them, one by one. Then it struck the full moon and blotted it from sight. The world of the little valley dropped into night, and all was dark as Erebus. A breath of wind whispered through the forest, and died away, sighing, in the pines.

Ramon awoke suddenly.

Straight from the centre of that sea of blackness, like the plummet of an engineer, like the lead of a storm-tossed sailor, shot a drop of rain. Down it came with unerring swiftness, right through one of the spectacled gentleman's improvised "sky-lights" in the roof, and splashed in the Cuban's face. Half-dreaming still, he sleepily rolled over out of range; he had been awakened before in that way, and was used to it.

There was a slope now in the pile of boughs, and Harry Eveleth slid down into the vacated place unconsciously. Splash! and the raindrop covered his cheek with water. Dimly through his dormant brain the idea crept that he was back in the dormitory, and some one was trying the old trick of hanging a saturated sponge above his head; he had done it himself, once, and this was retribution. With a smothered grunt of discontent he gave Ramon a shove that sent him further, and rolled over into his place. Frank Hapgood began to slide—began to

dream that he was falling down through a frightful place that had no bottom! The air whistled shrilly past his head. The black walls of the pit shot upward swiftly and he could see the faint light far up at the mouth of the shaft growing dimmer until it too went out! He tried to scream, but the wind caught the sound and carried it away with a rush of mocking laughter; he tried to reach out and grasp the walls but his hands were bound! Then he felt that he was drawing near the end; he had fallen miles!—and now his speed was slackening, and he was falling so softly, so lightly, till at last, like a downy feather he floated on the air, as a spirit from another world. He had reached the centre of the earth!

Splash! came the rain upon his face, and the cold breath of the night and storm.

"Great Cæsar! boys, it's raining!"

There wasn't much doubt of that fact. And as stream after stream began to pour through the roof there was a sudden resurrection among the white mummies stretched upon the spruce boughs. Frank glanced around, and then made another equally wise observation:

"This old shanty's mighty leaky!"

As the ground covered by the mansion thus disrespectfully alluded to was about eight feet by twelve, and there were at that particular moment sixteen different streams of water pouring down upon their heads, the rest had already discovered the fact, and there was a hasty consultation.

"Can't we stop up the holes?"

"Nothing to do it with!" said Harry Eveleth

mournfully. "And I've been sitting in a puddle for the last two minutes!"

Ramon jumped. A waterspout had shot down the back of his neck. "We mus' go out of zis! We soon shall be wetter; we can run to ze horse's house!"

"Good for you, Havana! your head's solid!" sang out Charlie Brown heartily. "Now for it! Put your blankets over your heads, woman-fashion, and travel like a blue streak; and—Jupiter Pluvius! how cold this rain is!" His words ended in an involuntary chatter.

There was a momentary hesitation; then with a sigh they ducked under the blankets and dashed out into the darkness and the rain which fell hissing through the tossing limbs of the trees, and, stumbling over the fence with a crash of breaking rails, they ran violently down a steep place without the least idea of the direction, till they all brought up in a heap in the bottom of a ditch, with some six inches of water for company! However, within a few rods was the "horse's house." They scrambled out and ran for it, their once white blankets streaming with muddy water, chilled through and through with the cutting wind. They reached it, crowded in, felt blindly around in the dark, and then came a cry of dismay:

"The horse is gone!"

They looked at each other in silence. It was too dark in there to distinguish a single feature, so they did not get much comfort from that. For a full minute not a word was spoken. Then Frank Hapgood drew a long breath and then ejaculated:

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"So ze horse is stole by ze ladrones," remarked Ramon philosophically. "How we shall pay!"

"Pay! no; the beast untied the knot and walked home, which is what we shall have to do—and it's raining brickbats!" snapped Harry, as a gust of hail crashed upon the roof. "He did that once before."

Somehow their spirits rose a little at that; the indefiniteness of the animal's fate had alarmed some of them, and pocket money was scanty. They even cracked a feeble joke or two, in a half-hearted way, but the steady splash and spatter of the rain chilled the fun all out of it, and wet as they were, they huddled together among a lot of straw and blankets until they were quite comfortably warm. They were even dozing when Charlie Brown suddenly pointed to the doorway with a husky hurrah. It was the gray light of a cold November dawn.

Father had some peculiar ideas when he built our house, and the dining-room juts out from the rest like a great bay-window—a room with three sides of glass. We were at breakfast, discussing buckwheats diligently, when father glanced down the roadway and began to laugh.

We turned, looked, and then rushed to the great windows in a crowd. Up the drive with slow and solemn tread, swaying under the gale, pelted with rain, came the valiant stampeders, a procession of blanket-mantled figures in dingy white, the water dripping from their coverings in streams, squashing and churning in their boots as they splashed indifferently onward through mud or grass alike;

such miserable-looking rats!

Frank looked up with a wan attempt at a smile as he passed under the windows and saw the rows of grinning faces looking down, but the rest kept their eyes fixed upon the ground.

Father went out upon the piazza. "Good-morning, boys! out for a constitutional? nothing better to get up an appetite," he said with a cheerful smile.

Frank laughed; he really couldn't help it, although a moment before he had been mad with himself, the horse, the rain, and the world in general. As they looked at each other sheepishly out of the corner of their eyes the rest took it in, and began to grin at the ludicrous sight of themselves, and for a few minutes very great was the hilarity.

"That's right; that's right. A hearty laugh is good medicine! but you will need something more, so in with you, quick!"

And before they knew it, they were running the gauntlet of the rest of us, and scudding for the dormitory, from whence came presently a sound as of mighty rubbing, and the flavor of Jamaica ginger. But they had to stay in bed all day, to their great disgust, and "ginger" was a dangerous word to mention for weeks after; and for two whole terms not one of those boys were in any of the scrapes that were going on. "They had been there!" they said, with a rueful smile, which we could appreciate. As father used to say, "There's nothing like learning the logical sequence of consequences!" And they had a big washing bill that week.

THE DOUGHNUT BAIT.

A schoolboy a few weeks since told me of an amusing encounter that he and his brother had just had with a bear. It was at Thanksgiving time, and they were enjoying the few days' vacation in hunting in the Maine woods. The locality, to be exact, was the north side of Roach River, about half-way from the first pond to where the stream empties into Moosehead Lake.

Near a deserted log hut, known as "McPheter's Camp," they had discovered signs of a bear—his tracks, and the spot where he had lain down among the tall dead grasses.

"Let's stay here all night and watch for him," said Willie—Willie was the one who related the adventure to me.

"That wouldn't be right; for they're looking for us at home," replied his brother Dick to this somewhat tempting invitation. "Besides there might not come a bear here again for a week."

"Well, let's rest here a few minutes anyway," said Willie.

Opposite the door of the hut was its one window, the glass so covered with cobwebs that very little light came through. It was dark enough in there for a bear's den—he might, in fact, be in there. But flinging the door wide open, the boys ventured in. There was a visible movement at the window, but it proved to be only three or four great, gray spiders hurrying to their coverts from the unwonted light.

"What's this, Dick?" and Will kicked a tangled mass of iron from a corner into the sunshine.

Dick eyed it a moment. "Aha—it's a bear trap," said he.

"Well, we *will* catch him, now," said Will triumphantly.

"The old thing's too rusty and weak," Dick pronounced finally, after examining it. "'Twouldn't hold a bear."

"Oh, let's just set it, anyhow, and *try*," coaxed Will.

After repeated efforts, in which Will got caught himself—or, rather, his boot—they got the huge iron jaws wide open, and the trencher in place.

"Next thing we must shoot something for bait," said Will.

"I really think we haven't time, not to-night, Will," said Dick. "See! it's almost sunset, and we are two miles from home through the woods."

"Well, then, I've got two doughnuts left. Let's put them on."

"Very well," laughed Dick, good-naturedly, "if you can wait for your supper."

So the trap, with a doughnut tied to the trencher, was placed a few feet just outside the cabin where any one within could plainly see it from the window. The chain was made fast, and the other doughnut broken to bits, and scattered about.

The next morning the boys were early on the tramp, in order to visit a shallow pond some three miles

eastward, where they expected to find moose. After tiptoeing about and impatiently watching the shores till afternoon, they did see a moose; but before they were within range, he turned to run.

"Fire, Will!" shouted Dick.

The report of two guns echoed from the woods about, while the moose with a sudden bound or two, disappeared among the trees. They could hear the great creature crashing through the woods, and they hurried on in pursuit. After going about a mile they lost track of him, and they gave it up as neither had detected any token that the animal was hurt.

The chase had led them near a trail that passed the McPheter's camp; and they jokingly turned that way to see if anything had happened there.

"If that doughnut isn't gone, I'm going to eat it," murmured Will. "I'm awful hungry."

"I doubt that the birds and squirrels have left any till this time," said Dick.

"A large bird, or a gray squirrel would get caught, if they touched it, wouldn't they?" questioned Will hopefully.

"Perhaps—if the old trap wasn't so rusty—but hush—there's the camp. Supposing we keep behind it and go in until we see if there's anything in the trap."

They opened the door softly, and moved lightly in and toward the window. The first glance gave them a start. There was a big bear sitting bolt upright, with his forepaws hanging, right before the window. He had evidently heard the sound of their approach, and was looking around for them. Dick gave one long,

but weary look. Then he shouted:

"All right, Will. He's caught! The doughnut did it!"

For a moment the boys stood looking out of the window, and the bear sat looking in. It was too much for Bruin—that gaze of exultant victory. He struggled a moment with the trap, then, with one vigorous leap, he cleared himself and went head and shoulders into that window.

Dick sprang for a hole in the low roof, and Will dashed out of the door. He had just time to shut it behind him before the bear came bumping against it.

It were hard to say who was hunter and who was hunted just then. Will was outside, but virtually the bear's captive, as he stood braced back against the door. Dick was creeping about on the rotten, creaking roof. The bear was inside, vigorously snuffing about for his enemies. He repeatedly tried the door, but it failed to open. He growled up the hole in the roof at Dick, but couldn't reach him. There they were, three very uncomfortable parties.

At last the boys heard the sound of rattling glass again; evidently the bear was going to try the hunt outside. Will made a frantic endeavor to open the door, but he had pushed so hard that now it stuck. He got it open at last, and peeped in, just at the instant when the bear came round the corner.

This was the situation now: Will was looking in after the bear, the bear had come round after Will, and Dick, on the roof, was trying to get a good sight at the bear without slipping off. By holding to the hole in the roof with his foot, he found himself able to peep over the eaves; and when the bear turned the

corner, he with lucky aim, and plucky quickness put a moose-charge into the back of the creature's head.

Will turned and was putting his gun out to fire, just as Dick dropped down through the roof. But the bear lay still. Dick's shot had finished him.

There was, of course, great rejoicing between the two young hunters. They started a fire, then took off Bruin's skin; and soon some most delicious bearsteaks were broiling on the coals.

"I don't miss that doughnut at all, somehow," said Will as they sat at dinner.

A REAL HAPPENING.

Old Beppo and Nina, his wife, with their two boys, lived in one of those little excavations which everybody who has visited Naples will remember. I hardly know what to call them, for they certainly do not deserve the name of dwellings. They are little holes dug in the sandy hillsides just outside the busy city, where the poor people crawl in at night, and where they keep their little belongings by day. The poor of Naples live out of doors, as indeed the poor people all through Southern Italy do; and it does not seem half as hard to be poor in Italy as elsewhere. The beautiful, clear, blue sky overhead, and the soft, warm earth to sit and lie upon, with the delicious air to breathe, and the great Duomos always open to them where they can go at any hour of the day and feel that they have just as much right as kings and

princes—who wonders that they are contented, lazy and dreamy? Give a Neapolitan beggar macaroni and sunshine, and he will sit and dream away the hours with no thought or care of what will come tomorrow. He has just energy to whine—"Poverino Signorina"—and it matters little whether his extended hand is filled with *centismi* or not; according as it may be, he calls upon the "*Sanctissimi Virgina*" to bless or curse you and sinks away into dreamy content till the next stranger approaches. Not so with Old Beppo; he tugged all day grinding out dolorous tunes from his old organ, and whether people paid him for grinding, or paid him to stop grinding, all the same Old Beppo thought he was earning an honest living.

Everybody in the little neighborhood of Lazzaroni knew and loved Old Beppo—why he was always called *Old Beppo*, I never knew, unless it was because his home-life had given him a subdued, downcast look, and his shoulders were more rounded and bent than even his heavy organ would have made them if he could have had a little comfort and cheer in the poor place he called home. Nina was a peevish, querulous wife—always finding fault, and never satisfied with Beppo's earnings; true, it was little enough he brought at night after trudging all day with his hand-organ, and as he approached the little rookery at the end of the day his steps grew languid and heavy, for he knew his only welcome would be Nina's grumbling, fretful greeting; and poor Old Beppo, after unstrapping his burden and eating his poor meal of macaroni, found rest, not on the little seat outside his own door with his wife and children, but on the sand-bank, or on a neighbor's doorseat where he could smoke his pipe in peace beyond the sound of Nina's croaking, scolding voice. The two boys were like their mother, and Beppo found little

comfort in them, so it must be confessed that when in the summer of 1860 Nina was called away to a country where Old Beppo hoped she would not find so much to scold about, his grief was not inconsolable, and a year later he found a more congenial companion in a trim, pretty little widow whose husband was taken off by the same scourge that carried Nina away. Italia had one little boy who was, like his mother, amiable and pretty, with the beautiful great black eyes of a true Italian, and all the fascinating ways of a pretty child of nature. He might have been used for a model of Italian child-beauty.

Old Beppo spent two peaceful and happy years with Italia, and then came again the summer pestilence and poor Italia was one of the victims. Little Dino was heartbroken at the loss of his mother, and Old Beppo, after trying in vain to console the little boy, decided to take him, with the two half-brothers, to America, as much perhaps to change the scene for little Dino as to better his condition in our land of hope and promise. Dino played the violin and accompanied Old Beppo in his wanderings over the country for a time, until the old man became restless and unhappy and longed for his native air. Dino had recovered his childish spirits, and was happy in the freedom of our free sunny summer weather where he had plenty to eat, and was petted and pampered because of his pretty little ways and his bright black eyes. But Old Beppo could not live away from his "beautiful Italy," and as soon as he gathered pennies enough, he took passage for Naples and left the three boys in America.

The two older boys were to look after little Dino and to give him such care as he needed. True to their

coarse nature and instincts, they began, as soon as their father had left, to send Dino out with his violin to earn not only his own bread but theirs; for they knew that his attractive little face and winsome manners would win for them more pennies than they could for themselves. This was true, but sometimes the pennies failed, and the days were dull, and people did not care for Dino's music; and then the brothers beat him and ill-treated him until he could endure it no longer.

The summer was passing; the days were becoming cool, and the nights damp and chilly, and oftentimes little Dino, rather than go to his brothers where he was sure to meet with cruel treatment, would creep under an old cart or under some door-steps and spend the night. This he did not complain of until the nights grew frosty, and the poor little fellow found himself stiff and cold when morning came; and then with the tears streaming down his cheeks he longed for "My Italy. I 'fraid I freeze to death, I want my mother," he said pitifully.

His brothers kept track of him and lost no opportunity to illtreat him, and he resolved to run away from Boston and go to some place where they could not find him. Accordingly one rainy, chilly night in November, he took the cars and started to go—he knew not where, but anywhere beyond the knowledge of the brothers who had whipped him until he bore the marks all over his little body. Crouched down in a corner of the cars, Dino was counting his pennies when the conductor found him and asked in not the pleasantest tones where he wished to go.

Of course he had no idea how much money it took to

ride in the cars even a short distance; so he gave the conductor all the pennies he had, and said, "I want to go so far."



LITTLE DINO AT THE FAIR.

It was on this dismal, chilly November night that little Dino found himself in one of the suburban towns of Boston, where some young ladies were holding a little sale for the benefit of a Home for Orphan Children in their neighborhood. The day being so unpropitious, visitors had been few and sales very slow. The young people, with rueful faces, were talking in the twilight of their disappointed hopes, and wondering if the evening would bring customers for the little articles they had spent all their leisure summer hours upon, in the hope of adding a large sum to the depleted treasury of the town, when suddenly a child's voice was heard at the door, "Me want to play me fiddle for some supper."

No one who saw that tiny boy with his pleading eyes, and his rich, soft voice and his broken foreign accent, as he stood half clad in the chill of that November night, can ever forget the picture. They were at a loss to know what to do. They said, "But we don't want to hear your fiddle. Where did you come from, and what is your name, and where are you going? It is night and where will you sleep?"

"Me come from Naple," he said; and holding out his little brown hands he displayed the scratches and said, "Me big brothers beat me, and scratch me, and me run away."

"But where did you come from?" a half a dozen eager girls asked all at once.

"Me don't know. Me sleep under cart and me very cold. Can't me play me fiddle for some supper?"

The tears began to start not only in the eyes of the little waif, but handkerchiefs were in demand among all who stood listening to the story, forgetful of sales

or profits for the moment, and intent only upon feeding the little orphan who stood before them.

"Come," they said, "and you shall have some supper; but where will you stay to-night?"

"Me don't know. Me mother die, me father go back to Naple, and me cry."

The interest grew with every word he uttered, and the excitement ran high among the enthusiastic young girls, each of whom fed and petted him till the little fellow's countenance beamed with happiness. He had never fallen into such hands before, and his sorrows, like all childish sorrows, melted away under the first rays of loving kindness. He was placed on the flower-stand, and there among the flowers, in the warm, cheerful hall, he was reminded of his own beautiful Italy, the land of flowers; and the notes of his little fiddle attracted the visitors so that as the evening wore on, Dino found his friends increasing and his pockets filling with pennies, and his eyes overflowing with joy. Pointing to one of the ladies, he said in a plaintive tone, "Nobody love me, nobody smile on me but her—and my mother die and I cry."

But the evening was wearing away. The flowers were fading, the people were leaving one by one, and the hall would soon be deserted. What then would become of poor Dino? It was decided at length, after much consultation, to place him in the Orphans' Home.

The morning dawned and brought one of those clear, crisp November days which are common in our New England after a rain, and Dino was taken to his new home. This Home for Orphan Boys is a cosey, cheerful house, and when Dino was introduced to the

kind man who has charge and told if he would be a good boy he should have a home there, have dinners and suppers, have a place to sleep like other little boys, he gave a sigh of relief, took a deliberate look around the sunny room, and then thrust his little brown chubby hand into the pocket of his torn, dilapidated trousers, and drew forth the pennies that were snugly tucked away in their depths, and with a grateful smile, his black eyes fairly dancing for joy, he handed them to the superintendent, saying, "You give me home, I give you my pennies. I was so 'fraid I freeze to death."

It was touching to see how Dino clung to his little old fiddle. It seemed to be the one connecting link between the days in Italy where he had lived an easy, happy life with his mother whom he seemed to love so dearly, and the new home which promised to give him shelter. His little old fiddle was a source of much amusement to the children, whose tunes he readily caught, and he soon became a great favorite. The visitors who came to the Home always asked first for Dino, the Italian boy, and seldom went away without leaving something for the little fellow.

As the days and weeks wore away, Dino constantly improved in mind and manners, and developed all the sweetness of heart and disposition that he promised on that November morning when he gave "his pennies for a home." At the end of five years he left the Home and sought a place where he could earn his own living.

Years passed and the memory of little Dino was fading out of the hearts of those who had befriended him, when the Sabbath stillness of a midsummer afternoon was broken by the sound of approaching

footsteps, as the family sat on the broad piazza of a pleasant country house. A young gentleman was seen coming up the shady avenue, and the question went around, "Who can the stranger be?"

The bell rang and the message came: "Say to the lady, Dino would like to see her. I think she will remember the name."

As the lady approached—she of whom he had said on that dreary night in November, "Nobody love me, nobody smile on me but her"—she recognized the Italian eyes, and the old, sweet, musical accent with which she had been familiar years before.

With a graceful bow, he said, as if to assure himself of a welcome, "Madam, I should not have ventured in your presence if I had not been informed by my friends at the Home, upon whom I have called, that you would be glad to see me; for I felt that by my long silence I had forfeited all claim to your friendship."

Of course he was most cordially welcomed, and invited to tell the story of his long absence. He said, "I was earning an honest living in a grocer's establishment as job-boy after I left the Home, when the idea took possession of me that I must have more education, and I knew the only way I could get it was to go into the country and work for my board where I could go to school. I found a kind old farmer who gave me board and lodging for what I could do out of schoolhours on the farm, and here I remained for some years, Then came over me the old longing for music. I had kept the little music I knew during my stay at the farm, for I had led the Sabbath choir and the Sunday-school singing, and had never missed a Sabbath while I was there. But I longed for some

knowledge of music. I felt that I could not live without it, and though the kind old farmer offered me good wages if I would remain with him, and a generous sum when I should become of age, I said, 'I cannot live without music,' and so I bade adieu to my pleasant home, and went to a city where I could hear music—my heart's great desire—and take lessons as soon as I could earn money enough to pay for them. I soon found occupation, and now I am earning an honest living." He then modestly added: "Perhaps, madam, you will be gratified to learn that I have never tasted intoxicating drink, nor spoken a profane word since I left the Home. I have never forgotten the first passages of Scripture I learned from the little Bible you gave me: '*There is not a word in my tongue but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.*'"

The little Italian beggar now has a wife and a pretty little boy in a comfortable home of his own, and his testimony is, "If I had not been cared for and instructed in that Christian Home, I should be a beggar now as I was when I entered it."

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