AUNT 'LIZA'S HERO

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON

COSY CORNER SERIES

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L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
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"AT FIRST HE ALWAYS BROUGHT SOME BOY

WITH HIM"

Cosy Corner Series

AUNT 'LIZA'S HERO

AND OTHER STORIES

By

Annie Fellows Johnston

Author of "The Little Colonel Series," "Big Brother," "The Story of Dago," "Ole Mammy's Torment," etc.

Illustrated by
W. L. Taylor and others

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AUNT 'LIZA'S HERO

Aunt 'Liza Barnes leaned over the front gate at the end of the garden path, and pulled her black sunbonnet farther over her wrinkled face to shade her dim eyes from the glare of the morning sun. Something unusual was happening down the street, judging from the rapidly approaching noise and dust.

Aunt 'Liza had been weeding her little vegetable garden at the back of the house when she first heard the confused shouting of many voices. She thought it was a runaway, and hurried to the gate as fast as her rheumatic joints would allow.

Runaway teams had often startled the sleepy streets of this little Indiana village, but never before had such a wild procession raced through its thoroughfares. Two well-grown calves dashed past, dragging behind them an overturned, home-made cart, to which they were harnessed by

pieces of clothes-lines and rusty trace-chains.

Behind them came a breathless crowd of shouting boys and barking dogs. They were gasping in the heat and the clouds of yellow dust their feet had kicked up. Aunt 'Liza's black sunbonnet leaned farther over the gate as she called shrilly to the boy who brought up the rear, "What's the matter, Ben?"

The boy dropped out of the race and came back and leaned against the fence, still grinning.

"Running isn't much in my line," he panted, as he wiped his fat, freckled face on his shirtsleeve. "But it was too funny to see them calves kick up their heels and light out. One is Joe Meadows's and one is Jeff Whitman's. They're broke in to work single, and pull all right that way. But the boys took a notion to make 'em work double. This is the first time they've tried it. Put bits in their mouths, too, and drive 'em with reins like horses. My! But didn't they go lickety-split!"

Aunt 'Liza chuckled. Seventy-five years had made her bent and feeble, but her sense of fun

and her sympathies were still fresh and quick. Every boy in the place felt that she was his friend.

In her tumble-down cottage on the outskirts of the town she lived alone, excepting when her drunken, thriftless son Henry came back to be taken care of awhile. She supported herself by selling vegetables, chickens, and eggs.

Most people had forgotten that she had once lived in much better circumstances. Whatever longings she may have had for the prosperity of her early days, no one knew about them. Perhaps it was because she never talked of herself, and was so ready to listen to the complaints of others, that everybody went to her with their troubles.

The racing calves soon came to a halt. In a few minutes the procession came back, and halted quietly in front of the little garden gate. Jeff was leading the calves, which looked around with mild, reproachful eyes, as if wondering at the disturbance.

"Aunt 'Liza," said Jeff, "can you lend me a strap or something? The reins broke. That's how

they happened to get away from me."

"You can take the rope hanging up in the well-shed if you'll bring it back before night."

"All right, Aunt 'Liza. I'll do as much for you some day. Just look at Daisy and Bolivar! We're going to take them to the fair next fall, and enter them as the fastest trotting calves on record."

"Boys are such harum-scarum creatures," said the old woman, as she bent painfully over her weeding again. "Likely enough Jeff'll never think of that rope another time."

But after dinner, as she sat out on a bench by the back door, smoking her cob-pipe, Jeff came around the house with the rope on his arm.

"Sit down and rest a spell," insisted the old woman. "I get powerful lonesome day in and day out, with scarcely anybody to pass a word with."

"Where's Henry?" Jeff asked.

"Off on another spree," she answered, bitterly. "I tell you, Jeff, it's a hard thing for a mother to

have to say about a son, but many and many's the time I've wished the Lord had a-taken him when he was a baby."

"Maybe he'll come all right yet, Aunt 'Liza," said Jeff.

"Not he. Not an honest day's work has he done since he left the army," she went on. "He was steady enough before the war, but camp life seemed to upset him like. He was just a boy, you see, and he fell in with a rough lot that started him to drinking and gambling. He's never been the same since. Pity the war took my poor Mac instead. *He* never would 'a' left his old mother to drudge and slave to keep soul and body together."

Jeff listened in amazement to this sudden burst of confidence. He had never heard her complain before, and scarcely knew how to answer her.

"Why, Aunt 'Liza, I never knew before that you had two sons!" he said.

"No, I suppose not," answered the old

woman, sadly. "I suppose everybody's forgotten him but me. My Mac never had his dues. He never had justice done him. No, he never had justice done him." She kept repeating the words.

"He ought to have come home a captain, with a sword, for he was a brave boy, my Mac was. His picture is in the front room, if you've a mind to step in and look at it, and his cap and his canteen are hanging on the peg where he left them. Dear, dear! what a long time that's been!"

Jeff had all a boy's admiration for a hero. He took the faded cap reverently from its peg to examine the bullet-hole in the crown. He turned the battered canteen over and over, wishing he knew how it came by all its dents and bruises. The face that looked out from the old ambrotype with such steadfast eyes showed honesty in every line.

"Doesn't look much like old Henry," thought Jeff.

"Won't you tell me about him, Aunt 'Liza?" he asked, as he seated himself on the door-step

again. "I always did love to hear about the war."

It was not often she had such an attentive listener. He questioned her eagerly, and she took a childish delight in recalling every detail connected with her "soldier-boy." It had been so many, many years since she had spoken of him to any one.

"Yes, he was wounded twice," she told him, "and lay for weeks in a hospital. Then he was six months in a Southern prison, and escaped and joined the army again. He had risked his own life, too, to save his colonel. Nobody had shown more courage and daring than he. Everybody told me that, but other men were promoted and sent home with titles. My boy came home to die, with only scars and a wasting fever."

Thrilled by her story, Jeff entered so fully into the spirit of the recital that he, too, forgot that McIntyre Barnes was only one among many thousands of heroes who were never raised above the rank of private. Mother-love transfigured simple patriotism into more than heroism.

As age came on she brooded over the thought more and more. Even the loss of one son and the neglect by the other did not cause her now such sorrow as that her country failed to recognize in her Mac the hero whom she all but worshipped.

Jeff found himself repeating the old woman's words as he went toward home late in the afternoon:

"No, Mac never had justice done him—he never had his dues."

Several days after that Jeff and Joe stopped at the house again to borrow a pail.

"We forgot to water the calves this morning," Jeff explained, "and they've had a pretty tough time hauling brush. They pull together splendidly now. We've been clearing out Mr. Spalding's orchard."

"Look around and help yourselves," Aunt 'Liza answered, briskly. "When once I get down on my knees to weed I'm too stiff to get up again in a hurry. You'll find how it is, maybe, when you get

into your seventies."

"Have you heard the news?" asked Joe, as he held the pail for Daisy to drink.

"No. What, boys?"

"You know Decoration Day comes next week, and for once Stone Bluff is going to celebrate. A brass band is coming over from Riggsville, and they've sent to Indianapolis for some big speaker. There's going to be a procession, and a lot of girls will march around, all dressed in white, to decorate the graves."

Aunt 'Liza raised herself up painfully from the roll of carpet on which she had been kneeling. A bunch of weeds was still clasped in her stiff old fingers.

"Is it really so, Jeff?" she asked, tremulously, as he started to the well for another pail of water. "Are they going to do all that?"

"Yes, Aunt 'Liza."

"If I cut down all my roses, won't you boys

take 'em out to the graveyard for me? I'm afraid nobody'll remember my poor Mac."

"Why, of course we will," they answered, heartily. "But why can't you go yourself, Aunt 'Liza? Everybody's going."

Aunt 'Liza pushed back the big sunbonnet, and looked wistfully across the meadows to a distant grove of cedar-trees that were outlined against the clear May sky.

"It's been six years since I was out there. I'm too old and stiff ever to walk that far again, but nobody knows how I long to go sometimes. I s'pose I must wait now until I'm carried there; but then it'll be too late to do anything for *him*."

Jeff looked at Joe, then at the hopeless expression of the wrinkled face.

"I'll tell you what we can do, Aunt 'Liza," he said, eagerly. "If you don't mind riding in such an outlandish rig, the cart is big enough to hold you comfortably, and we'll make the calves pull you out there. Will you go that way?"

Two tears that were rolling slowly down the furrows of her cheek dropped off suddenly as she laughed aloud.

"Why, bless your heart, sonny," she exclaimed, pleased as a child. "I'd ride behind a sheep to get there. What a fine picture we'll make, to be sure! They'll put us in a comic almanac."

Then she added, solemnly, "I'll thank you to my dying day, boys; and mark my words, the Lord will surely bless you for your kindness to a lonely old woman."

When they were out of sight of the house Joe lay down on the grass and rolled over and over in a fit of laughter.

"My eyes! what a figure we'll cut!" he gasped. "We'll have to go early, or we'll have a crowd at our heels."

"Don't you suppose," said Jeff, "that the grave will be in pretty bad shape, if she hasn't been out there for six years? If it is, she'll feel worse than if she had stayed at home."

"There's a lot of 'em all grown up with weeds and briers, with nothing but 'Unknown' marked on the headboards," answered Joe. "Let's get a cartload of sod, and fix them all up this afternoon."

A little while later the rickety gate of the neglected burying-ground opened to admit two boys shouldering spades and driving a team of calves.

"Get up, Bolivar!" called Jeff; "you're working for your country now."

That Decoration Day was a memorable one in Stone Bluff. The earliest sunshine that streaked the chimney-tops and gilded the broad Ohio, flowing past the little town, found Aunt 'Liza Barnes in her garden. She had stripped her bushes of early roses, and her borders of all their gay old-fashioned flowers, to twist into wreaths to carry with her.

When the morning train came puffing in from Indianapolis a large crowd had assembled at the station to catch a glimpse of Colonel Wake, the

orator of the day. Jeff Whitman was there, painfully conscious of being dressed in his best, and of having a dreaded duty to perform.

He watched the colonel step into Judge Brown's carriage, and as it disappeared from view he walked slowly down the street in the direction it had gone.

All the morning Jeff hung around Judge Brown's house, trying to make up his mind to carry out his plan. At last he set his teeth together, and resolutely opened the gate. He felt ready to sink into the ground when the judge himself opened the door. Jeff's voice sounded far away and unnatural when he asked permission to speak to Colonel Wake.

In another moment the boy was in the dreaded presence, nervously fingering his hat, and trying to recall his carefully prepared speech. Then at sight of the colonel's smiling face his embarrassment vanished.

Before he realized it he had poured out the whole story of Aunt 'Liza's hero.

"We are going to take her out there this afternoon," he said, in conclusion. "She hasn't been for six years, and maybe she won't live to go another year. She says people always praise Captain Bowles, who's buried there, and Corporal Reed, and even the little drummer boy, but they never say anything about her Mac. And —and—well, I thought if you knew what a splendid soldier he was, and the brave things he did, maybe you'd just mention him, too. It would please the old lady so much."

The colonel promised, and gave Jeff a hearty handshake, saying he wanted to be introduced to Mrs. Barnes, and would depend on Jeff to point her out to him.

Nearly every one walked out to Cedar Ridge. The way was not long, and by-paths led through shady lanes, where blackberry vines and wild roses trailed over the fence-corners.

Colonel Wake and the judge drove in a carriage. The flower girls were drawn in a gaily decorated moving car, and carried flags and flowers. No one saw Aunt 'Liza in her strange

conveyance, for she had gone long before the procession started.

"How nice and green it is," she said, fondly stroking the smooth sod. "I needn't have worried all this time, thinking it wasn't looked after. Somebody has been kind to my Mac. I was going to give every single one of these flowers to him, but now I want you boys to take some of them and put a wreath on every one of those six graves marked 'Unknown.'"

When the procession came up she was sitting on the same old folded quilt that had done duty in the cart as a seat. She leaned contentedly against the wooden headboard, marked simply, "McIntyre Barnes," with the number of his company and regiment. People looked at her in surprise, wondering how she came there.

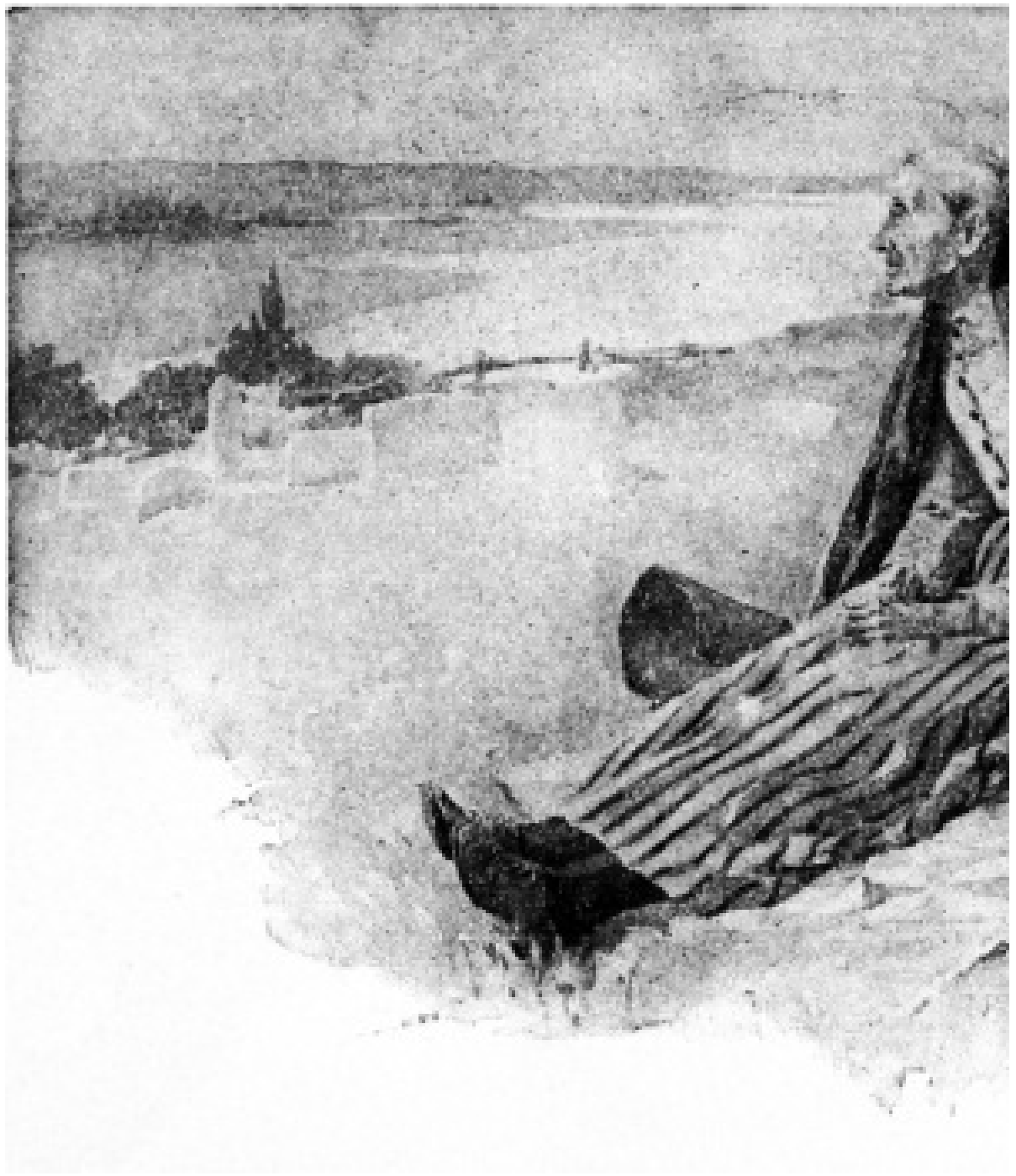
The boys had hitched the calves out of sight, on the other side of the hill; for being boys, they could not bear to be laughed at.

Overhead the spicy cedar boughs waved softly in the May breeze. Below the bluff the

waters of the Ohio sparkled in the sun. During all the ceremonies that preceded Colonel Wake's speech Aunt 'Liza sat with her dim eyes fixed on the Kentucky shore across the shining of the river.

While the band played and the choir sang she never turned her gaze from it. Then the clapping of hands that announced the speaker seemed to arouse her. She listened intently, expectantly.

Colonel Wake was a true orator. He swayed the listening crowd at his will, first to laughter and then to tears.



"SHE LISTENED INTENTLY, EXPECTANTLY."

The boy's story that morning had greatly interested him. At the close, after referring tenderly to the unknown dead, and offering his passing tribute to the others, he told the story of McIntyre Barnes's heroic life.

He told it as only an old soldier and an eloquent speaker could tell it. The old woman, sitting on her folded quilt on her son's grave, threw off the black bonnet to catch every tone, every gesture, and smiled up into his face with proud, grateful eyes.

She felt like a queen coming into a long-deferred kingdom. That was her Mac he was talking about! This great soldier knew him and honoured him.

Somebody called for three cheers for McIntyre Barnes. As the lusty voices rang up through the cedar boughs and echoed across the water she bowed her head on the sod, and her happy tears fell like rain. Perhaps it was the speech that moved them. Perhaps it was the sight of that wrinkled, tear-wet face; for when the flower girls finished strewing their garlands every grave had been decorated, but McIntyre Barnes's had received more than all. It was completely covered with fragrant bloom.

The people who stood near could not help

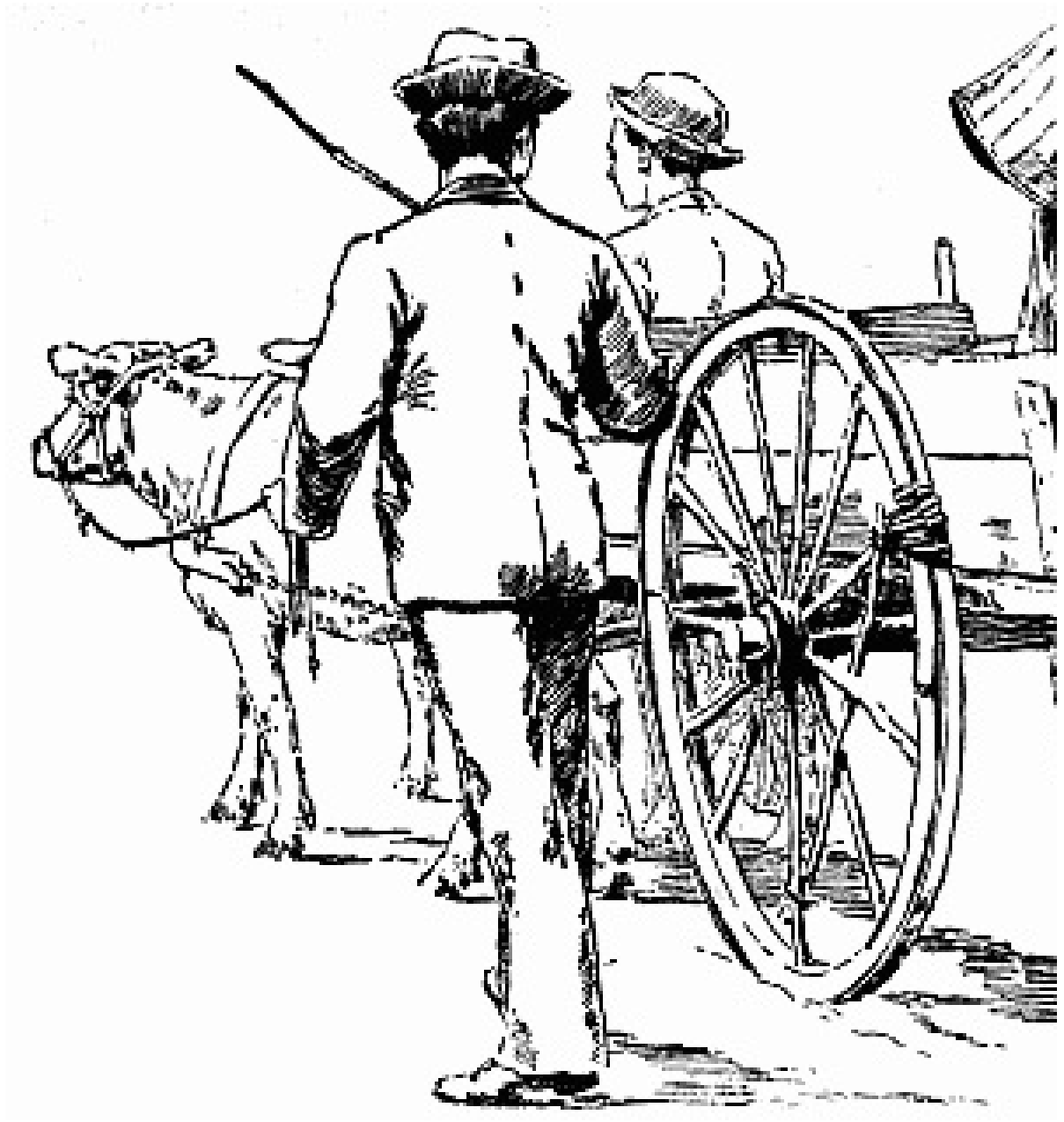
smiling when the boys drove up with the little cart to which the frisky calves were hitched. But Aunt 'Liza was in such an uplifted frame of mind that she would not have noticed had they laughed aloud.

The colonel came and shook her hands, saying he was proud to know the mother of such a son. After that everybody else came crowding around to speak to her.

The band started back toward town, playing a lively quickstep, and the crowd soon dispersed. The boys did not talk much as they walked homeward in the sunset beside Bolivar and Daisy.

As for Aunt 'Liza, she sat smiling happily in the depths of the black sunbonnet, and saying over and over:

"My Mac has had his dues at last. It was a long time, but he's had justice done him at last!"



"SHE SAT SMILING HAPPILY IN THE DEPTHS OF THE BLACK SUNBONNET."

THE CAPTAIN'S CELEBRATION

"Is there anything I can do for you, captain?" Doctor Morris had made the rounds of the hospital and was standing beside the bed in a narrow little room at the end of the hall. He took the old man's feeble hand in one of his firm ones, and with the other gently stroked the white hair back from his wrinkled forehead. This seemed to smooth away some pain, too, for the faded blue eyes looked up at him with a grateful smile.

"Yes," he answered, "there is. I don't like to trouble you, doctor, but I do want a piece of an old broomstick, and if I could have it early in the morning, I'd be very much obliged to you, sir."

"A broomstick!" repeated the doctor, in amazement, wondering if the old man's mind was beginning to wander. "What under the sun could you do with it?"

A faint smile crossed the captain's face. Then a spell of coughing delayed the answer for a moment.

"I want to carve something," he panted, "and broom-handle wood is easy to cut. The nurse has been like an angel to me all these weeks that I have been in the hospital. Ever since they moved me into this room by myself, I've known that I haven't much longer to live, and I want to leave her something to show that I appreciate her kindness, and was grateful for it."

The doctor pressed the old man's hand as he went on: "I've been thinking I would like to make her a little chain. My grandfather taught me to carve such things when I was a lad. He was a Swiss, you know, and followed my mother over to this country soon after I was born. He was so old that all he could do was just to sit under the trees and carve little toys to amuse the children. I have his pocket-knife yet," he added, with a smile of childish satisfaction that made the old face pathetic.

He looked down at his right hand, so twisted

out of shape that it was nearly useless. "I can't do as good work as I used to do thirty years ago, before that Minie ball crippled me," he said. "But Miss Mary will make allowances; she will know that I remembered and was grateful, don't you think?" he asked, anxiously.

"Most certainly," answered the doctor, stooping to arrange the patient's pillows more comfortably about him. "But, captain, I am afraid that I can't allow you to undertake anything that will be a tax on your strength. You haven't any to spare."

So deep a shade of disappointment crept into the old man's wistful eyes that the doctor felt an ache in his throat, and drove it away with a little laugh. "Pshaw!" he said, hastily. "You shall have a mile of broomsticks if you want them. I'll send my son Max up with one inside the next hour."

The gong had just struck the signal for dismissal in the third-ward school building, when the busy physician drove up to the curbstone in his sleigh to get his boy. "Max will be down in a minute, Doctor Morris!" called a boy, as he ran

past the sleigh with his skates slung over his shoulder. "Miss Clay kept some of 'em to see about celebrating Washington's Birthday."

"Thank you, Ned," answered the doctor. He drew the robes closer about him as he walked the horse up and down, for there was a keen wind blowing this cold February afternoon. Presently a group of boys loitered by and stood on the corner, waiting for the rest of Miss Clay's pupils to join them.

"I'm glad Miss Clay isn't my teacher!" one of them exclaimed, in a loud voice. "Skating's too good now to waste time learning to spout pieces."

"Well, I think it's about time to give George Washington a rest," said the largest boy in the group. "He's a back number, and I'll tell her so, too, if she asks me to say any of her old pieces."

"That's a pretty way to talk about the Father of your Country!" piped up a little fellow in spectacles, who was sliding on the ice in the gutter. "Back number! I just dare you to say that to Miss Clay!"

The doctor overheard this, but he did not hear the quarrel that followed, for Max came running down just then, and climbed into the sleigh.

"You're late to-day, my boy. What's the trouble?"

"Oh, Miss Clay kept us to arrange a programme for Washington's Birthday, and nobody wanted to take part. We're all tired of the same old thing year after year—just songs and recitations and dialogues about the same old fellow!"

"A fine lot of patriots this next generation is going to turn out!" said the doctor, so sternly that Max gave him a quick glance of surprise, and then flushed at his evident disapproval. The grim look crept into the man's eyes that was always there when he was absorbed in a critical case.

"O papa, are we going home?" cried Max, in a disappointed tone, as the horse turned in that direction.

"For a few minutes," answered Doctor Morris.

"I want you to take something to one of my patients at the hospital. I'll leave you with him while I go on to the Berridge place."

Max, who had expected a long sleigh-ride, forgot his disappointment when he found that Captain Wilshire was an old soldier, who bore the scars of more than one battle. An internal wound, received at Shiloh, still troubled him at times, and exposure during the last year of the war had brought on the consumption that was now slowly taking his life away.

"He is one of the truest patriots it has ever been my honour to meet," said the doctor. "I have known many statesmen in my time, several generals and two Presidents. Any one of them might well be proud to take off his hat to Joe Wilshire. When you see the old hero lying alone, Max, in that cheerless little room in the hospital, I want you to think of the reason why I so greatly respect him. It is not simply because he was brave in battle, or because his heroic cheerfulness kept him alive through half a year in Libby Prison, or because he came home with the seeds of disease

planted in his system and his good right hand crippled and useless. Many a man has encountered these tests, and yet has lost his zeal for his country as soon as the cannon smoke cleared away and the martial music was done."

"Then why is it, papa?" asked Max, for they had reached the house, and the doctor was looking in the bottom of the sleigh for the hitching-strap.

"Well, when he came home, he was of course poor. He made a meagre living for his wife and baby with only a few acres of land and of fruit-trees with which to do it. Several times his old comrades suggested to him that he ought to apply for some fat government office, but he always said, 'Boys, I know that you mean well, and that you and my friends could probably get me in on the score of my being a disabled soldier; but I know and you know that I am not competent to fill such an office. If I could fill an office, and at the same time serve my country by doing so, I'd unhesitatingly take one. But I'd only be serving myself by filling my pockets at the government's

expense. No, I'm obliged to you, boys, but I can't feel that it would be exactly honourable.'

"Now that's patriotism, Max, of the highest type, showing unselfish loyalty and love of country!" exclaimed the doctor, as he sprang out of the sleigh. "I was disturbed and hurt just now, when I heard the boys talking about Washington being a 'back number.' It hurt because there is some truth in it. Wars call out such generals, but there are too few men in these times of peace who step into office with Washington's high, unselfish motives. And I fear the number is few of men who will deliberately give up the honour and emolument of office because they believe some one else can render better service, or because principle pulls harder than public purse-strings. Yes, such patriotism is getting to be a 'back number'—so far back that it has grown burdensome for some people to honour it, even once a year."

Max had seldom heard his father speak so indignantly before, and looked at him in surprise as he gave a final fierce tug at the knot he had tied

in the halter.

An hour later, when Doctor Morris called at the hospital, Max came running down-stairs with his eyes shining and an old battered canteen under his arm. "The captain gave it to me!" he said. "He has ever so many old relics in his chest, and there is a splendid story about each one. O papa, isn't he just the lovablest old man? He asked me to come often and bring some of the boys. He says he gets so lonesome!"

Nobody but the nurse knew how many times Max climbed the hospital stairs during the next two weeks. At first he always brought some boy with him to listen to the captain's stories, and carry away some relic as a treasured keepsake from the chest beside his bed; but later, the captain coughed too frequently to talk much. Then Max came alone, with bunches of hothouse flowers and little paper bags full of tempting fruit.

No matter when the boy came, he always found the captain busy with his carving. Day by day the old broomstick was slowly approaching a wonderful transformation. It would soon be

turned into a long, slender chain, with each tiny, separate link perfectly fashioned. Sometimes, the nurse, not knowing that it was intended for her, and wondering at the old man's childish impatience to finish it, would gently insist on taking it out of his feverish fingers.

"Wait till to-morrow, when you are stronger," she would urge. He would then reluctantly give it up, but the thought of his work stayed with him. Even in his sleep his poor crippled hand bent as if to grasp it, and the left one feebly repeated the motions of wielding a knife.

"I have set my heart on having it done by Washington's Birthday," he whispered one day to Max. "Oh, if I can only hold out to finish it!" he added, as he sank back wearily. The nurse put the unfinished work aside, but the next morning he begged so imploringly for it that she had not the heart to refuse.

When the twenty-second of February came, Miss Clay's schoolroom was in gala dress for the occasion. She had been untiring in her efforts to make the ceremonies a success, but

unconsciously to himself the old captain had done far more than she to arouse an interest in the programme.

Max came first with his old canteen, and repeated the story that the captain had told him, of the brave comrade who had carried it. Then one of the boys brought an old army cape of faded blue, and another a broken spur. Simple tales were told of love and loyalty that had never found their way into print, but they stirred the hearts of the hearers in the schoolroom with a pathetic tenderness for these unknown men who had been so bravely true.

Doctor Morris came into the room just in time to see the big fellow stand up who had declared the Father of his Country a "back number." He, too, had been with the captain, for he carried an old blood-stained, bullet-torn flag. He told its history so well that the tears came to his eyes in his earnestness, and the audience sympathized with the feeling and applauded him when he had finished.

"I see that we have a member of the school

board with us," said Miss Clay, bowing to Doctor Morris. "We want to hear from him before we have our last song."

This was the opportunity the doctor was waiting for. He took a little package from his pocket. It was the captain's finished chain, from which hung a tiny anchor, beautifully carved and polished. "The nurse showed this to me a little while ago," he said, "and I asked her to let me bring it here for you to see."

The speech that followed was very much like the one he had made to Max in the sleigh—all afire with admiration for the man who, with crippled hand and with empty pockets, had turned his back on office, for love of country, for conscience' sake.

"But of all the noble lessons of this old man's life," he said, in conclusion, "none is more beautiful in spirit than this last act; this expression of gratitude to his faithful nurse. What is so commonplace, so soon forgotten as a bit of old broom-handle? But look at this." Again he held up the chain. "See the transforming power of a noble

purpose! He has made of it an anchor, and fastened to her heart, with every link, the memory of his great gratitude.

"I don't want to preach," he went on, "but I must say that you young people, I fear, miss the spirit with which the nation should honour this day, if you do not see that the success of its celebration depends entirely on this same transforming power. A heartfelt gratitude to the heroes who won and kept our liberty can make beautiful the most commonplace act of commemoration."

Later, when the February afternoon was nearing twilight, there was a muffled sound of fife and drum on the hospital stairs. The many feet stepped lightly, but with a measured tramp, tramp as Miss Clay's school marched down the long corridor, four abreast.

The captain had been delirious at intervals all the afternoon. Now he opened his eyes with a puzzled expression, for the martial music made him forget his surroundings.

"It's just the young people from the school," explained the nurse, opening the door wider, that he might see the long rows of bright-faced boys and girls in the hall.

Max came in and took the old soldier's hand, stroking it affectionately while he talked. "They're going to sing 'Hail Columbia,' captain. You know how it goes:

"Let independence be our boast,
Ever mindful what it cost,
Ever grateful for the prize!"

"You see we never were really 'mindful what it cost' until we knew you, captain," Max went on, "so we never thought about being especially grateful to anybody before. This is a sort of thank-offering to such men as Washington—and you."

The captain tried to raise himself from the pillows—tried to speak some word of greeting to the young people who were watching him, but sank back exhausted.

"I can't!" he said to the nurse in a voice that trembled pitifully. "You tell them how glad—how proud—" Then speech failed him. The next moment the boys and girls began to sing.

A happy light came into the dim old eyes, as the sweet voices were lifted up in the inspiring airs that he loved so well.

They marched out softly when the songs were done, waving good-bye to him with their handkerchiefs. Down the street the music of fife and drum sounded fainter and fainter. The room was growing dark.

Max, who lingered behind, saw the white head turn on the pillow and heard a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction: "The dear children! God help 'em to keep the old flag flying!" And that was the captain's last audible prayer.

JODE'S CIRCUS MONEY

It was nearly school-time, but Jode didn't seem to be at all in a hurry. He sat on the wood-pile with the empty chip-basket beside him, slowly untying his shoes. The old gobbler strutted around the corner of the kitchen, and halted suddenly with one foot drawn up, as he caught sight of the red stockings.

"Quit! quit!" he cried, stretching his neck with an angry gobble.

Aunt Jane had come to the door to shake the table-cloth. She stood a moment, sniffing the warm spring air, and peering up at the pink peach-tree buds through her spectacles.

"Quit! quit!" cried the turkey again, and his angry voice attracted her attention.

"Well, Mary Ann," she exclaimed, "I just wish

you'd see what that boy's a-doin'! It isn't for me to say, but if he was *mine*, he'd not go around barefoot this kind of weather. Next thing will be croup. You'd better 'tend to him."

"Meddlesome old thing!" muttered Jode, disrespectfully, throwing a chip at the gobbler. "Both of you had to go and tell."

The table-cloth whisked into the kitchen, followed by the complaining voice, and soon after his mother came to the door and called him.

"Have you fed the calves, Joseph?"

"Yes'm."

"And filled the chip-basket?"

"Almost."

"Then hurry, my son; it is nearly school-time."

"I say, ma," he began, "can't I go barefooted? It's plenty warm, and lots of the boys do."

"Why, no, child," she answered. "I told you the other day not to think of such a thing for another

month at least. Put on your shoes immediately, and don't let me hear another word about it. It's of no use to tease."

Jode knew that, perfectly. In all the ten years of his varied experiences, it never had been of any use. Now, although the feet that slipped back into the red stockings and stout shoes were very loath to go, they went slowly but surely in.

"Wish't I was an Indian," he said, as he went through the orchard, balancing his geography on his head and swinging his lunch-basket, while the dog frisked around him. He had a queer way of talking to himself. "I could stay out-doors all the time then, and never have to go to school. Indians have a better time than anybody, 'thout it's dogs. O Penny, ain't you glad you're a dog?"

The first bell was just beginning to ring when he went through the gate at the end of the lane, so he had plenty of time to stop when he reached Squire Hooper's barn, and look at the flaming show-bills with which it was covered.

Johnny Harris was there ahead of him, and he

noticed, with a pang of envy, that his feet were bare, and that his stubby toes were digging up the soft earth, as he stood looking at the pictures.

"*I'm* goin' to the show," announced Jode, proudly. "Our hired man said he'd take me if I'd pay. Pa always pays me every spring for dropping corn, so I'll have more than enough."

Johnny did not say anything, for his father was the drunken shoemaker of the little settlement, and the cross-road tavern took all their spare pennies. He stood and looked with longing eyes at the pictures of the animals. He knew what a stir there would be circus-day. How the wagons would begin to rattle along the roads at daylight from all directions; and how the band would play in town; and the frightened country horses would prance, and the crowds of people would block the streets to see the long, gay procession. But it would be six miles away, and he would miss it all.

While they looked at the side-show pictures, —the fat woman and the two-headed man and the African giant,—the second bell began to ring and away they raced to the schoolhouse. In his

haste Jode left his geography on the gate-post by Squire Hooper's barn, and never thought of it again until after the noon-hour, when they came tramping in from the playground.

"You are very careless, Joseph," said the teacher. "Sit with Harris to study, and don't let it happen again, sir."

The boys put their heads together behind the map of the New England States, and began studying their boundaries.

"Let's begin with the littlest," whispered Jode. "And don't you talk to me, old fellow; I don't want to be kept in again after school. Rhode Island is bounded on the north by Massachusetts, on the east by—"

"Oh, say," interrupted Johnny, "I've got some field-mice in a box at home. I was going to bring them to-day, but was afraid the teacher would take 'em away. They're the cunningest little things! Come over after school and I'll show 'em to you."

"All right," whispered Jode, with one eye on

the teacher. "On the north by Massachusetts, on the east by Massachusetts and Atlantic Ocean, on the south by—"

"Oh gracious! look there!" interrupted Johnny again. "Look at Boney Woods! What's he a-doin'?"

Boney had his book propped up in front of him. His head was bowed studiously over his lesson, but his lesson was farthest from his thoughts. He had cut a piece of leather from the top of his boot-leg, and was making a pair of spectacles.

"Oh, never mind him. Come on, and let's learn this. I've got through half the day all right, and don't want to spoil it all now. Rhode Island is bounded on the north by Massachusetts, on the east by Massachusetts and Atlantic Ocean, on the south by Atlantic—"

"I say, Jode," interrupted his seat-mate, "I can pick up three marbles at a time with my toes."

"So could I," answered Jode, "if I didn't have

my shoes on."

"Bet you couldn't!"

"Bet I could!"

"Take 'em off and try," coaxed Johnny.

"Well, I'll just show you," retorted Jode.

There was a class in algebra at the board, and the teacher was very busy explaining some problem. "Let *x* equal the length of the fish," he was saying. Jode raised his foot carefully and began to untie his shoe.

"And let *y* equal the length of its tail," continued the teacher, completely absorbed in the problem.

In a moment the shoe slipped off noiselessly, and Johnny put three of his largest marbles in a row on a crack in the floor.

"Aw, that ain't fair," said Jode. "You can't pick up that big Pompey yourself. Put down three little grays."

Johnny grumbled, but made the change, and Jode triumphantly picked them up with his toes.

"There," said he. "What did I tell you?" Just then one of the marbles began to slip. He tried to regain his hold, and all three of them dropped noisily, and went rolling across the floor.

The teacher turned quickly, and his eyes fell, not on Johnny and Jode, but on Boney Woods, who had finished the spectacles and put them on, and was now lolling out his tongue, and making hideous faces at the smaller children.

So intent was he on this, that he did not know he was being watched, until the awful stillness that had settled over the noisy room warned him that something was the matter. Then he faced around in his seat in great haste, to make the discovery that he was the centre of attraction.

"Are you quite through with your little exhibition, Bonaparte?" asked the teacher. "Come here! Just as you are—don't take them off."

Poor Boney went up with fear and trembling.

"I'll settle with you after school, sir. Take a seat on the platform and study your lesson."

Boney stumbled to his place, and sat looking at his book, with hot, briny tears stealing down under the huge spectacles. From past experiences he had learned too well what that meant. The school settled down into almost breathless silence, and the guilty couple began to study violently.

"I can't get my shoe laced up without his seeing me," whispered Jode, presently.

"Oh, leave it off," begged Johnny, "and slip the other one off, too. It feels awful good to get rid of shoes." He stretched out his ten little brown toes, and surveyed them with a satisfied air. "See them feet?" he asked. 'Them old feet don't care for nothing but glass. They can stand rocks or anything. Why, in summer, I can tramp down the thorniest kind of bushes, blackberryin', and never mind the briars a bit."

"Aw, I wouldn't be such a brag," responded Jode. Nevertheless, he silenced the inward voice that reminded him of his mother's command, and

followed his little friend's example.

It was soon time for the afternoon recess, and they all went trooping out into the warm sunshine, all but Boney, doomed to solitude and the leather spectacles.

Half a dozen boys crossed the playground, and went to the blacksmith shop on the other side of the road. Jode followed slowly, for the sticks and stones hurt his bare feet, and his conscience hurt him more, as he remembered his mother's parting instructions.

As usual the good-natured blacksmith was busy at his anvil, and paid no attention to the crowd of boys making themselves at home in his smithy. A seedy-looking stranger on a mule rode up to the door to have a loose shoe fastened in place.

"Be keerful, young 'uns," he drawled, "this 'ere mewel's heels is loaded."

The boys shoved back a little to give the newcomer more room, and then kept on shoving

each other in play. The end boy fell against Johnny, and Johnny fell against Jode, and Jode took another step backward. This time his little bare foot came down on the piece of hot iron that the blacksmith had thrown aside when he went to wait on his new customer.

Jode never distinctly remembered what happened after that, he was so nearly crazed with the fierce pain. He knew that the blacksmith lifted him in his strong arms, and carried him, screaming, to the house. He felt some woman bandage his foot with something cool and soothing, and wash his hot, flushed face. Then two of the big boys carried him home, and laid him on the sitting-room lounge, and went off, forgetting to close the door.

He sat up and called his mother. No one answered. Everything was so still about the house that his own voice sounded strange when he called. Then he remembered that she had gone to a quilting that afternoon, and that Aunt Jane had built a fire away down by the ash-hopper and was making soap. So it was useless to call.

Three or four chickens, seeing the door open, seized that opportunity to venture in, and walked around pecking at the carpet, and looking inquiringly at the disconsolate figure on the lounge.

"Shoo!" he cried, savagely, "you tormentin' old things!" Then he hopped across the room and banged the door after them, and hopped back.

The throbbing pain in his foot, and the deserted appearance of the house, brought the tears to his eyes. Then he remembered the show, and that his foot would not be well enough for him to earn the money dropping corn. He would have to miss it. Throwing himself on the lounge again, he cried softly to himself with great sobs that nearly choked him.

When his mother came home, she found him fast asleep with cheeks and lashes wet, and sobbing at intervals in his sleep.

Aunt Jane undertook to lecture him next day about his disobedience and what it led to, but he began to cry again, and she relented.

"Well, Joseph," she said, looking over her square-bowed spectacles, "I guess you've had a hard lesson, and one you won't forget in a hurry. As long as your heart's set on goin' to that show, if you'll learn to sew carpet-rags I'll pay you by the pound, and you can earn the money that way."

So Jode went patiently to work with thread and needle, and all those long April days sat in the house with his foot on a pillow, and sewed yards and yards of carpet-rags.

The pounds grew slowly, but the day came at last when he rolled his balls into the sack with Aunt Jane's, and two new silver dimes and a nickel jingled in his pockets.

Johnny Harris came every day to ask about the foot, and see the size of the balls. He looked enviously at the shining coins when Jode proudly displayed them.

"Gracious! Ain't she pretty?" he exclaimed, spinning one of the dimes around on the table. Then he balanced it on his thumb-nail, and tried its edge with his teeth, and finally put it in his mouth,

while he watched Aunt Jane get out the steelyards, to weigh the warp for the new carpet.

Presently he turned to Jode with a white, scared face. "Oh, I've done swallered it!"

"You mean old thing," cried Jode. "I worked days and days to earn that dime. O Johnny! what *did* you do it for?"

"I didn't mean to," protested Johnny, eagerly. "It just slipped down as easy—this way." Suiting the action to the word, he took up the other dime, and popped it into his mouth.

"I was rolling it 'round with my tongue this way, and I sort o' choked, and it just slipped—ker-che-ew!"

Unlucky Johnny! This dime slipped also, for a mighty sneeze seized him, and sent the money rolling across the floor. Both boys darted after it with outstretched hands, but it bounced through the open door, and slipped out of sight behind the old stone steps. It was useless to attempt to move them. The toys of half a century had found a

hiding-place in that crack, and Aunt Jane herself had, years ago, seen it swallow up the cherished treasure of her childish affection—a string of amber beads.

Johnny stood in open-mouthed horror at what he had done, while Jode's gaze wandered from the steps to Johnny, as if he saw the whole menagerie, animals, tent and all, disappearing down that gaping crack and the little red throat. It was more than he could bear.

"It's all *your* fault, Johnny Harris; if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have burnt my foot in the first place. I just can't bear to do it all over again, and besides, there isn't time anyway."

He lifted his hand angrily, and slapped Johnny's fat, freckled face. Then both the boys began to cry.

Aunt Jane disappeared in the closet for something, and stood there a moment, shaking with inaudible laughter, till the square-bowed spectacles slid down her nose. She looked very stern, though, when she came out and said,

"There! there! boys, that's enough. It's no use to cry over spilled milk or swallowed money, either."

"Oh, please, ma'am, Miss Jane," begged Johnny, "won't you teach me to sew carpet-rags? I'll pay him back sure if you'll let me."

Aunt Jane looked at the clumsy little hands, brown, dirty, and covered with warts, and shook her head. It seemed a hopeless task. But the earnest look on the face and in the anxious eyes made her relent, and she gave a reluctant promise.

The rag-sewing commenced again. This time two boys sat on the door-step, longing to be out in the spring wind and sunshine, and one nursed his lame foot, and one wrestled manfully with thread that would snarl, and needles that would stick into his clumsy fingers.

As they sewed they talked, and the subject that came up oftenest was the circus. How Johnny longed to go! After awhile a hope whispered to him, that maybe he could pay his debt to Jode in time to earn enough money to go himself.

Although Aunt Jane sorted the rags so that most of the short ones fell to her lot, and the long ones to Johnny's, and contributed many a yard on the sly, Jode's foot was well before Johnny proudly paid over the two dimes, and only a long, red scar remained, to remind Jode of his disobedience and punishment.

"Wisht I was goin', too," sighed Johnny, when the last pound was weighed and delivered.

Then, regardless of ceremony, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and started home on the run. He did not go all the way. Aunt Jane spied him when she went to the barn for eggs. He was lying on the hay with his face in his arms.

She stood and looked at him a moment, thinking what an honest little heart it was, beating under the patched, faded jacket,—thinking of his drunken father and his miserable home,—of how much he wanted to go with the other boys, and how keenly he felt his poverty.

Then she took the eggs to the house, and tying her sunbonnet tighter, started resolutely down the

lane to the big road in the direction of Johnny's home. The hand under her gingham apron gripped firmly an old leather purse.

That evening as Jode sat in the twilight, just inside the door, listening to the frogs croaking in the meadow-pond, a dusky little figure came running down the path. It was Johnny.

"Hi! Jode," he cried, "I'm a-goin', too! I'm a-goin', too! I'm too glad to hold still. The money jest rained down like the manna on ole Moses! I don't know who left it, but it was left at our house, and it was left fer me!"

Then, throwing himself on the ground, he turned one somersault after another down the path into the dewy darkness of the warm April night.

JIMMY'S ERRAND

"Well, I declare if Abe isn't the most forgetful boy I ever saw!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, as she emptied the contents of a large market-basket upon the kitchen table. "This makes the second time he's been to town and back this week, and he's forgotten that soda both times. Jimmy!" she called out to a freckle-faced boy who was making the old dog walk around the kitchen floor on its hind feet, "climb up to the top pantry shelf and see if there's any spice left in those tin boxes."

"What are you going to make, ma?" languidly inquired a pale girl who sat by the stove shaking with a chill.

"Why, I intended to make a cake for the new preacher's donation-party," answered Mrs. Perkins. "That's what the committee asked for—marble-cake and biscuits. Did you find anything, Jimmy?"

"No'm. They're all empty." The boy jumped

down and went back to the patient old dog, which he now converted into a wheelbarrow and trundled around on its clumsy fore paws.

"What shall I do!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, in despair. "There's not a speck of spice or soda in the house."

This was before the days of baking-powder, and it was eight miles to the nearest town.

"I'll tell you," answered Maria, with her teeth chattering. "Let Abe saddle old Blaze and go up to Doctor Spinner's. He always keeps such things on hand, and we can send for some more quinine at the same time."

"And be about as likely to get soap and knitting-needles as anything else!" replied her mother, with a frown. "It's a pity a boy as old as Abe is can't be trusted to remember anything!"

"Let Jimmy go," suggested Maria. "It's only three miles, and he can easily get back by dinner-time."

"Yes," said Mrs. Perkins, "I don't know of any

reason why he shouldn't be trusted with the horse, and he can be depended on to do the errand a sight better than Abe."

Jimmy's freckled face beamed with delight. He had expected to spend the morning hoeing in the garden. He had been waiting the last half-hour for his father to call him and set him at work; but it was not the prospect of escaping a disagreeable task or of cantering along the road on the old blaze-faced horse that pleased him most. It was the fact that his mother and Maria regarded him as more trustworthy than Abe, and Abe was nearly grown.

He had never before so completely appreciated his true worth nor felt such a sense of his own importance as when his mother entrusted him with the errand, and gave him a message for the doctor's wife. Maria's words of praise were still in his ears when he ran down the path, hitching up a broken suspender as he went.

"What are you up to now?" inquired Abe, as Jimmy walked into the barn in a lordly way and took down the saddle.

"Up to takin' a ride," answered Jimmy, in a way that nettled his older brother.

"Not on that saddle, you ain't!" retorted Abe. "I'm goin' to mill."

"Then you'll have to ride bareback," was the cool reply. "I'm goin' on an errand for mother, and, what's more, I'm goin' to have the saddle. Can't I, pa?" he asked, as his father came in.

"No, Jimmy," answered his father, when both boys had stated the case. "Abe is bigger, and he's got the farthest to go."

Abe laughed provokingly. "I don't care!" muttered Jimmy. "*You* couldn't be trusted to do the errand. Mother said so. So you needn't laugh."

Abe's face flushed. He knew his failing, and did not like to be reminded of it.

"You can take Maria's side-saddle!" called Mr. Perkins, as he went on out to the corn-crib.

"Better not," remarked Abe. "It's brand-new,

and she'd feel awful bad if anything should happen to it. It might get spoiled."

Jimmy did not want to take it, and had not intended to do so, but the spirit of contrariness seemed to have possession of him. That remark settled the matter. "You might spoil it," he said, "but I guess Maria'll trust me to bring it home safe, if I am ever so much smaller than you!"

Presently, seated astride the new side-saddle, Jimmy rode up to the kitchen door.

"You don't care if I take it, do you?" he called to Maria. She wrapped herself more closely in the heavy shawl, and came out into the warm sunshine, her teeth still chattering.

"No, I guess not," she said, putting out her shaking hand to feel the soft plush of the cushioned seat. "Isn't that a pretty shade of red? It's the handsomest one in the township. Oh, don't forget, Jimmy; mother said to ask Doctor Spinner to put up another bottle of tonic like that he gave me last spring."

"All right!" said Jimmy, impatient to be off.

Digging his heels in old Blaze's sides, he started down the road on a gallop. This was too lively a gait for the old horse to sustain long, and she soon settled down to a steady walk.

For the first half-mile Jimmy sat very erect, with a growing sense of his own importance and superiority over his brother Abe. Then he yielded to the gracious influence of the sweet spring morning, and, throwing one foot over the pommel of the saddle, began to whistle in answer to a redbird's call.

Presently he tired of riding sidewise, and by the time he reached the field where the Fishback boys were dropping corn he was up on his knees. Inspired by spectators, he urged his horse to go faster and faster, and scrambling to his feet as he came up with them, passed them with a cheer. They stopped their work long enough to look after him and wave their hats until he disappeared around a bend in the road.

"It's a mighty nice thing," he thought,

complacently, "to be able to ride around the country this way, when everybody else has to work."

By this time he had reached the bridge across Pigeon Creek. It was shallow enough to ford at this place, and he concluded to try it. Clattering down the bank, he rode into the water with a splash. Overhead the great branches of the sycamore-trees leaned across the stream and met each other. It was cool and shady, and so still that the only sound he could hear was the gurgling noise old Blaze made as she bent her head to drink.

Suddenly a shrill whistle made him start so violently that he almost lost his balance, and clutched at the loosened bridle to save himself from falling. Looking in the direction of the whistle, he saw two big bare feet dangling from a sycamore limb that hung half-way across the stream. Glancing up, he saw the owner of the feet. It was Coon Mills, the laziest, most "trifling" fellow in that part of the country—so everybody said.

There was no need to ask him what he was

doing, when the white blossoms of the dog-wood-trees had been proclaiming for a week, from every hill and hollow, that the fishing season had begun. His luck as a fisherman was as proverbial as his laziness.

"What have you got?" called Jimmy. For answer Coon held up a string of catfish, so large that Jimmy gave a long whistle.

"I've jes' been a-pullin' 'em out as fast as I could throw in my line," he said. "Thar hain't been nothin' like it sence ole Noah's time."

"My! You must be a-seein' fun," said Jimmy, watching him enviously as he baited his hook and tossed it into the water. "Wouldn't I like to try it, though!"

"Come on, if yer want ter," answered Coon. "Thar's another line in my basket, and you kin cut a pole from the sprouts agin that stump down yender."

"I ought to be a-goin'. I've got an errand to do," answered Jimmy. "But I would like to haul in

just one."

"Oh, come on!" insisted Coon. "You can spare ten minutes, can't you?"

There was an attractiveness about this overgrown, good-natured fellow that all the smaller boys found irresistible. Jimmy could have said "no" to any of his younger companions, but he was flattered by Coon's notice, and an invitation from him was a temptation beyond his strength to resist.

A few minutes later old Blaze was tied to a sapling. Another pair of feet dangled from the sycamore limb, another line dipped into the water, and unbroken silence reigned again along the shady river.

A quarter of an hour passed, but Jimmy, with his eyes intent on the bobbing cork, took no notice of the flight of time. Then a thrill went through him as he felt a pull on his line, and in his excitement he almost fell off his perch into the water.

"It's the biggest fish of the season!" Coon declared, as he helped haul it in. "You're in luck, Jim; you'd better try it agin."

Old Blaze gnawed the bark off the sapling as far as she could reach, and then stamped and whinnied in vain. Still Jimmy sat on the sycamore limb, confident of success after his first great triumph, and unable to tear himself away without one more trophy.

Coon drew up his line at intervals, and each time Jimmy's determination to catch one more increased. The minutes slipped by, but he did not notice them, nor did he realize that the sun was nearly overhead.

Suddenly, the unmistakable notes of a dinner-horn echoed through the woods. Startled into the consciousness that he had idled away the whole morning, Jimmy started for the bank in such haste that his feet slipped on the smooth bark, and he fell across the limb. He scrambled desperately around, and managed to draw himself up again, but in doing so lost his hold on the fish. He saw it go tumbling into the water.

A hearty laugh from Coon followed him down the bank and along the road, as he galloped furiously away.

Mrs. Spinner thought somebody must be dying or dead when she saw Jimmy come dashing up to the house in such haste, and hurried out to ask the news.

"The doctor's just gone," she said, after he had told his errand, and delivered his mother's message. "He had a call down to old Mr. Wakeley's, and left in the middle of his dinner. Law me, it's too bad! You'd better wait, though. He'll likely not be gone very long. Come in and have something to eat, won't you?"

Jimmy's inclination was to refuse, but his hunger overcame his bashfulness, and he followed Mrs. Spinner into the kitchen.

She had already eaten her dinner, and kept on with her work, pausing often, in her busy going back and forth, to give him some dish, or hospitably urge him to help himself.

"You'd better go into the office to wait," she said, as he pushed his chair back from the table. "The doctor'll surely be along pretty soon."

The little room, standing by itself in the front yard, did double duty as office and drug-store. Jimmy sat down on the bench beside the door, and studied the odd assortment of bottles on the opposite shelves. He counted them and read all the labels. Then he saw a case of dentist's instruments lying on the table. He examined these curiously, fitting the forceps on each of his teeth, and then looked around for other sources of amusement.

Several books with leather bindings lay on the desk, and he sat down to look at them. Books were few in the Perkins household, and the first one he opened proved very entertaining. It was an illustrated work on anatomy, and he was soon completely absorbed in the interesting pictures of bones and muscles.

The afternoon was sultry and still. A few flies buzzed on the window-pane. Just outside the door an old hen clucked and scratched for her

downy yellow brood. Jimmy could look out and see some one ploughing in a distant field, and hear a lusty voice at intervals, calling, "Gee! Haw! W'-o-a!" to the yoke of oxen.

After a long while, when sitting so still had made him drowsy, he went to the door and looked up and down the road. No one was in sight. Even the sun had gone behind a cloud. He began to grow uneasy, as he thought of his mother waiting impatiently for the soda to begin her baking.

"If the doctor isn't here by the time I finish looking at the books," he said to himself, "I'll go anyway, without waiting for Maria's medicine."

He went back to his chair and turned to the pictures again. Presently he began to yawn. Then his eyelids drooped, and his head nodded so low that it rested on the open book upon the table. He knew nothing more until he felt Mrs. Spinner shaking him by the shoulder. He started up to find the little office nearly dark.

"I plumb forgot all about you," Mrs. Spinner

said, "until the doctor sent word he couldn't come home to-night. Old Mr. Wakeley's a-dying. You'd better hurry away, for there's a heavy thunder-storm coming up."

She weighed out the soda and spices, wrapping each package separately, and then tied them together in one bundle. It was about the middle of the afternoon when Jimmy had gone to sleep. Now the sun had set. The sky was black with clouds, and as he hurriedly mounted his horse and tied the bundle to the horn of the saddle he heard a distant rumble of thunder. Old Blaze was as anxious to get home as her rider, and needed little urging to make her travel her fastest.

They were going directly toward the storm. By the time they had travelled a mile and a half its full force was upon them. The wind blew furiously and whirled the dust along the road in blinding columns. It twisted and tossed the tall trees as easily as if they had been bushes. Great limbs swayed wildly, and now and then one crashed to the ground. Once, when she was a colt, old Blaze had been hit by a falling branch in a thunder-

storm, and had never forgotten the terror of it. Now, as a vivid glare of lightning blinded her, she reared, plunged forward, and then stood trembling, with dilated eyes and quivering nostrils.

They were in the midst of a thick wood. No amount of urging would induce the mare to go on, and Jimmy got down to lead her. Something of the horse's fear seemed to be communicated to the boy. He was naturally brave, but the ferocious power of the storm awed him into utter fear.

The rain poured harder and harder. Jimmy was wet to the skin, and the water ran down in streams from his hat brim. He pushed ahead for a long time, wondering why he did not come to the creek. Instead of reaching open country, he seemed to be getting deeper into the woods. Then he remembered that two bridle-paths led into the main road—one directly into it, the other around the base of the hill. He had taken the wrong path and was travelling in a circle.

By the time he reached his starting-point again the storm had abated. The wind did not blow so hard, and the thunder had gone growling away

toward the eastern hills. He led the horse up to a stump, climbed into the saddle, and this time started on the right path homeward.

As he rode down the lane a lantern glimmered in the dooryard and moved toward the barn. "Well, you *air* a purty fellow!" called Abe's voice. "Mother's mighty nigh wild about you. She jest now sent me down to git a horse to go out and hunt you."

Jimmy slid from the saddle without saying anything. When Abe saw how pale and wet he was, he added, in a kinder tone, "I'll put the horse up. You take your things and strike for the house."

He lifted the lantern in order to see to untie the package, and then gave an exclamation of astonishment.

"Well, I wisht you'd look! The rain has melted every bit of that soda. There's nothin' left but the bag. And the spice is all sp'iled, too. My gracious!" he added, after another look, "it's run down all over the saddle, and taken the colour

out. My! Won't Maria be mad? It's eternally ruined! Well, I must say I like your way of doin' errands!"

It was a very penitent, humble boy who crept into the kitchen and gave a shamefaced account of the day's doings. Maria, who had sat with her face hidden in her apron during the storm, shuddering at the thought that he might be out in it alone, ran to get him some dry clothes, without a word of reproach about the saddle.

"I'll save enough out of the garden truck to get it re-cushioned," he promised. "Sure I will, Maria."

But Maria gave him a little squeeze. "Don't you worry about that, Jimmy," she said, "so long as you got home safe. It don't make so much difference about the soda, either, for we got word this afternoon that the donation-party has been put off."

His self-respect was restored by such a warm reception, and his spirits rose until he began to think he was something of a hero, after all. As he

ate the supper his mother had been keeping hot for him, she and Maria listened sympathetically to his account of the storm.

Abe, who had come in from the barn and was drying his boots by the fire, said nothing, but his quizzical smile was more provoking than words. It reminded Jimmy of the boastful speech he had made that morning.

He grew red in the face, stopped talking, and soon made an excuse to slip away to bed. As he lay listening to the rain on the roof, he said to himself, "I wisht I hadn't bragged so about doin' errands better than Abe! He'll never be done a-hinting to me about soda and side-saddles!"

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY AT HARDYVILLE

"Blame that pig-headed Schmidt!"

Squire Hardy was in the sitting-room talking to his wife. "To think of his kickin' just because the little schoolma'am is bound to celebrate the day! Her askin' for nothing except leave to use the schoolhouse! Confound him! The rest of the Germans'd be patriotic enough—they are all 'round these parts—if Schmidt wa'n't so everlastingly down on us, and used his influence with the rest!"

"He's a well-meaning, peaceable neighbour, Hiram," said the squire's wife, placidly.

"So's horses and cows. Gimme folks that's got some public spirit in 'em. Think of the men that took up the land all round these parts when we

come in—all full of Fourth of July. I wisht they hadn't been so keen to sell out at a profit—that's the worst of us Americans. When they sold out, of course the Germans come in,—couldn't blame 'em a mite,—an' Schmidt he come fust, an' he bejuggled all the rest. An' he's pretty nigh bejuggled the Gateses and two or three other American families like 'em, that's gettin' more like Schmidt year by year. Why, there ain't been a mite of public improvement done this ten year back."

"Oh, now, Hiram, we've got the post-office."

"Yes—much thanks to the rest of 'em! It was me worked and kicked and badgered till I got them a tri-weekly mail, and much use they make of it!"

The squire gazed at the post-office as he spoke. It consisted of an ash "seketary" in one corner of the sitting-room, and was much more than commodious enough for the few letters and newspapers that came to Hardyville three times a week, brought from the county town, eight miles away, by a carrier with a gig. The squire was

delivering his opinions as usual while waiting for the carrier to appear.

"I don't rec'lect much public improvements ever bein' in Hardyville," said Mrs. Hardy, drily.

"There would 'a' been," said her husband, testily. "There would 'a' been if the Americans had kept on. To think of them beginning to sell out and move furder west—just as they were gettin' their land into shape for havin' some time to themselves to improve things! Thank goodness, they *did* put up the church and schoolhouse—I guess we'd never have had neither if it wasn't for the American spirit here when this settlement begun."

"Sho, Hiram? You can't say but what the German folks keeps the church and schoolhouse going."

"Going—yes, going to rack and ruin all the same! Schoolhouse leakin' like sixty—and catch 'em taxin' themselves for a new roof! I wonder Miss Atworth can stay in the place—her and the children mirin' shoe-mouth deep in mud to get to school in the winter! Nary a rod of corduroy will

they lay to give their own young ones a decent walk. But they keep their cattle comfortable enough—that means money in their pockets. All they care about is having their corn and stock turn out well. They don't care if the hull township, and the hull Union, too, for that matter, was to go to the dogs. Hello! here comes Jack with the mail-bag!"

A little while later Squire Hardy was in the act of distributing the bag's small contents, when two farmers walked in without even stopping to stamp the mud off their cowhide boots. Mrs. Hardy kept on placidly knitting beyond the fireplace; she was used to such invasions of the sitting-room, from which she had removed the carpet soon after the post-office was granted to the sleepy settlement.

"Draw up to the fire, Mr. Gates," she said, hospitably. "Take that rocker, Mr. Schmidt."

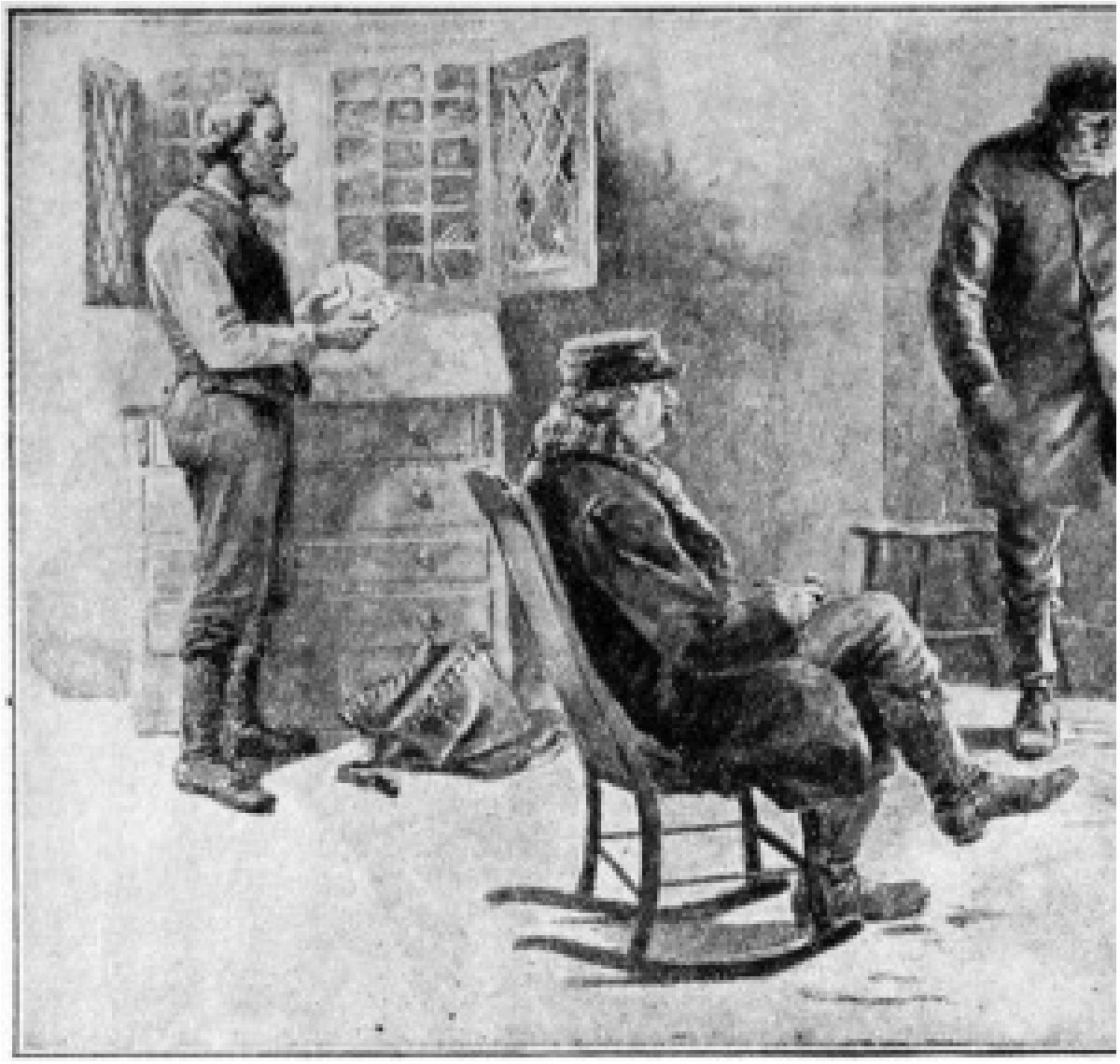
Mr. Gates kicked his feet against the andirons to rid them of clay and snow.

"Cold day," he remarked, settling his coon-skin cap more firmly on his head. "What's this I

hear about the new teacher?"

"Well, what?" snapped the squire, looking around.

"Some say she's dead sot on gettin' up them doin's on Washington's Birthday."



"MR. GATES KICKED HIS FEET AGAINST THE ANDIRONS"

"Well, s'pose she is?" said the squire. "She

ain't askin' nothin' but the schoolhouse for an evening, and I've got power to let her have that. I'm school agent, ain't I?"

"I don't say the contrary. But to my way of thinkin', she's just a-wastin' time over a lot of foolishness. Hey, Schmidt?"

"Yah, das ist so!" assented the man in the rocking-chair, as he took his pipe from his mouth. "I tolt mein poy I shust dook him oudt of school and put him to voork ven I hear some more of dose grazy idees."

"Crazy? Nothing crazy about it!" interrupted the old squire, hotly. "I'll just tell you, gentlemen, it was a mighty good deed old Abel Dawson quit teaching here. He'd run along in the same old rut for the last ten year, till things had just about dried up. I made a visit to 'em last fall. I put some questions to the scholars, too. There wa'n't but four out of the hull of 'em that was exactly sure who the President of these United States was. Nary one could name the Vice-President!"

"Dey lairn goot vot vos in de book," said

Schmidt.

"Yes!" roared the squire. "Abel stood over them with a rod, and frightened the spelling-book into 'em till they could say it off, back'ards or forrards. But they was like a lot of skeered parrots that didn't understand what they *was* saying."

"Dot vos more goot as learn 'em yoost foolishness—badriodism und der flag und all dot plab 'bout der country und der Union."

"Look out, now, Schmidt! I ain't goin' to set still and hear you calling patriotism 'blab.' I tell you in only nine weeks Miss Atworth's got the poor little souls waked up. They never knew before that they *had* a country. History and geography mean something to them now. She'll make intelligent citizens out of 'em if you'll keep your hands off. I'm out in my guess if she don't give this whole township a shakin' up before this thing is over, and teach 'em some public sperit."

Mr. Gates gave a sniff. "They say she's had a piano hauled out from the city, too," he said.

"Hope she don't intend to levy on the parents to pay for it. She'll get nothing out of me. I'll tell her that right now."

"Shucks!" cried the squire, as he handed Schmidt his *Zeitung*. "Neither of *you* needn't worry. She's too smart to expect to get blood out of turnips."

"Vell, all I haf to say," was Schmidt's parting remark, as he wound his blue woollen muffler about his neck, "if she keeps on mit dose voolishness, I dake mein Karl oudt of school, right avay alretty. Dot vos better dot he voork as to vaste his time so."

"Poor little Miss Atworth!" sighed Mrs. Hardy, as she watched the two men tramp off together. "I'm powerful glad she's boarding with us. The whole neighbourhood is down on her new-fangled ways. I'm going right out now and make something extry nice and hot for supper. It's pretty near sundown, and she'll come in soon all wore out with her day's work."

The little teacher did need the good cheer and

"extry nice" supper that awaited her in the cosy kitchen, for she had felt much discouraged as she trudged homeward through the falling snow. Her pupils had nearly all been telling her the same thing that day. It was that their parents scouted the idea of helping her to celebrate Washington's Birthday.

She had come from a distant town to teach the Hardyville school in hope to lay up enough money to complete her art course; but now it seemed to her that something more important than art demanded her services and the small sum she had saved. The dull, colourless lives of the children appealed irresistibly to her sympathies, and she was often amazed at the utter absence of any spirit of patriotism.

"How could the poor children learn patriotism?" said Mrs. Hardy. "Their parents don't feel it, except for their Vaterland. And certainly nothing has been done by the public round here to make the children love this country. Such lives! The parents get up before daylight, and dig till dark. They usually force the boys and girls to live like overworked horses. All they think of is

making money. That big room up-stairs in the schoolhouse was built for a public hall. It has not been opened for fifteen years for any kind of an entertainment, not even a magic lantern show. It is the same old treadmill existence year in and year out. The children don't get their lives brightened—no public holidays are celebrated here, not even the Fourth of July. How can they love the country?"

"I shall certainly give them something better," Miss Atworth had said, and the upshot was her determination to celebrate Washington's Birthday. The indifference or hostility of the parents had but roused her American spirit, even to the resolve that she would bear the entire expense herself, if none would contribute from their plenty.

"Ten dollars," she reflected, "will buy decorations and material for costumes and stage curtains. Another ten will rent a piano. Most of the children have never even seen one. All my spare time must go to getting up the entertainment, and all my savings, too. Well, I'm glad—I guess I can give up so much for my country. It will be

worth while if I can make its 'Father's' birthday the greatest gala day these poor little souls have ever known."

Not a particle of encouragement did she get from any of the parents except Peter Dowling, a one-armed veteran of the Civil War, and he was much more discouraging than he meant to be.

"Go on, I wish you luck, young lady," he would observe. "You can count on me for anything a one-armed man can do. But what's the use? I've tried and tried to get some 'Merican sentiment into these youngsters. 'Tain't no go—and never will be. But you can count on me to hooray for you all the same. I'll be thar if nobody else is."

"Maybe you tried to scold them into patriotism, as the squire does," said the little teacher. "I don't think that's the best way."

"It didn't work, anyhow," said the veteran, and walked away.

Miss Atworth's programme, besides the

decoration of the schoolhouse, comprised tableaux and the recitation of patriotic poems and addresses by her larger pupils. But most of the children soon received strict orders to hurry home at four o'clock, to attend to the milking and evening chores. They were also kept at work till the last possible minute in the morning. But with only noon-time and recess for practising their parts, her enthusiasm worked wonders.

"It ought to be a grand success," said Miss Atworth, as she took a final approving survey of the decorations the afternoon of the twenty-first. "Only it's a little too warlike. I wish I had an old-fashioned pruning-hook to hang across that sword between the windows."

"Mr. Schmidt has one," volunteered Sarah Gates. "But he's so mad about our wasting so much time, as he calls it, that it's as much as a fellow's head is worth to ask him for it. I heard him tell pa he was going to keep Karl at home to-morrow night. Isn't that mean?"

"Keep Karl at home!" cried Miss Atworth, in dismay. "He couldn't be so mean as that!"

Karl was the brightest pupil in her room—a big, manly boy of sixteen. He was kept at home every spring and fall to help with the work, although his father was not poor. She had taken an especial interest in him from the first, had drilled him carefully in his declamation, and counted on him as the star of the entertainment.

"Pa wasn't going to let me come, either," continued Sarah, "till ma told him you'd picked me out of all the school to be the Goddess of Liberty, and that I was going to have a gold crown on, and gold stars spangled over my dress. Ma's awful proud because I was chosen to be a goddess."

The little teacher smiled. She was not without worldly wisdom, and had given Sarah such a prominent part in the hope that it might conciliate the whole Gates family. Fortunately nothing was required of the goddess but long hair and a pretty face—about all Sarah had to boast of. She simply could not learn.

Miss Atworth locked the door and started rapidly homeward. What should she do if Karl must be left out of the performance? A quarter of

a mile brought her to the lane leading from the pike to the Schmidt place, and there she stopped with sudden resolve.

"I'll beard that old lion in his den, and ask him for his pruning-hook. That will be an excuse for going, and will give me an opportunity to plead Karl's cause."

It was nearly dark when Miss Atworth ran up the squire's front walk, and danced through the house into the kitchen.

"Oh, such luck!" she cried, gaily. "I went to see Mr. Schmidt, and some good angel prompted me to speak to him in German. It was such bad German—perhaps that's what pleased him. Anyway it thawed him right out. He lent me his pruning-hook, and showed me over his big barn. Of course I admired his fine cattle, and then, as he got more and more pleased at my showing such an astonishing lot of sense, I praised Karl so highly that he made a complete surrender. He is coming to-morrow night to bring the whole Schmidt family, from the old *grossmutter*, to the baby. Hurrah for Washington's Birthday!"

Never had the old public hall held such an astonished and delighted audience as the one that crowded into it that memorable night. Gay festoons of bunting, countless little flags, and wreaths of evergreen transformed the dingy old place completely.

A large picture of Washington placidly beamed from its place of honour. Over and around it, reaching almost across the stage, was draped a great silken flag, borrowed for the occasion.

Peter Dowling, in his old blue army clothes, with one sleeve pinned across his breast, sat far back, looking bewildered by the wonders the little teacher had accomplished.

Miss Atworth had arranged the programme with great tact. Each child felt prominent, and those who, she secretly knew, would be failures in anything else, were honoured beyond measure when she skilfully grouped them into a series of effective historical tableaux.

"It's enough to make even a graven image feel

patriotic," whispered Squire Hardy to his wife, as the children's sweet voices made the room ring with the grand old national airs.

Declamations followed each other in rapid succession. Then came a scene, with recitations, in which Uncle Sam and all the States of the Union took part. The very air seemed charged with the little teacher's electrical spirit of patriotic enthusiasm.

It was at its height when Karl came forward to give the famous speech of Patrick Henry. His delivery was so much better than the rehearsals had led her to expect that even Miss Atworth was surprised. He seemed to find an inspiration in the crowd. A storm of applause followed the "Give me liberty or give me death."

"What shall we do?" she whispered in dismay as the persistent clapping of many hands called him back. "I wish you had prepared for an encore."

"Oh, I know!" said Karl, and in another instant was on the stage again.

In the deep hush that followed, his clear, musical voice rose in German. He was reciting "*Mein Vaterland*." Old grandmothers who knew but a few words of English rocked themselves back and forth in excited delight; Mr. Schmidt beamed with vast smiles; many an eye grew dim, thinking of the old beloved home across the seas. But the boy was thinking of his own native country. There was no mistaking his meaning, as he turned in closing, to wave his hand toward the portrait and the flag:

"My Fatherland!" he cried with true feeling, and then, after a moment of general surprise, deafening applause broke out.

As it subsided Miss Atworth stepped forward to announce the last song, but Peter Dowling, his face aflame with new delight and old memories, rose, stalked up the aisle as if unconscious of all the eyes fixed on him, and swung himself up on the high platform with one long step.

"Friends," he began, "I've been livin' kind of dead among ye for many's the year. Now I want to say a word or two. I ain't no great at

speechifyin', but these old songs and pieces we've been a-listenin' to have spirited me up like the trumpet doos an old war-horse."

As he spoke he waved the stump of his right arm so vigorously that the empty sleeve was torn from its pinning across his breast and flapped pathetically.

"I want to say," he went on, "that I fit for that old flag, and yet, livin' here so long, and never a celebration for young or old, I'd half forgot my patriotism. It's our school-teacher has woke me up to seeing the truth. Now that we hev beat our swords into pruning-hooks, and peace has pitched her tent alongside ours to stay, I can't help thinking there's danger in settlin' down too comfortable and off gyard like.

"This country," he raised his voice higher, "ain't teaching its children enough of the feelin' of patriotism. It takes the same kind of principle to make a good citizen that it doos a good soldier. It ought to be the very bone and sinew of every school in this whole land. I could talk all night on that subject, now I've got started. But what I want

to say is this:

"I propose that we all get out our pocket-books, and throw in to get a handsome flag to fly over this schoolhouse. Take an old soldier's word for it, there ain't no greater inspiration anywhere, to make a fellow put in his best licks, and come out on top. Now, Miss Teacher, I'll just get the sense of this meeting."

He paused a moment, then turned to the audience: "All who want to express their thanks for this evening's entertainment, and are willing a collection should be took, say aye!"

Such a storm of ayes followed, that Peter caught up his slouched hat and began to pass it around, with his only arm. Dimes and quarters clinked into it, while an occasional dollar showed how deeply selfish hearts had been stirred by the uplifting influences of the hour.

Miss Atworth seated herself at the piano, and beckoned to the bewildered Goddess of Liberty to lead the States again across the stage. Some of the smaller ones straggled sadly out of line, but as

Karl, at a nod from his teacher, caught the great flag from its place and stood with it in the midst of them, every voice rang out full and true on the chorus:

"Yes, we'll rally round the flag, boys,
We'll rally once again,
Shouting the battle-cry of freedom!"

People seemed loath to go when it was all over. They came up to the teacher with awkward expressions of pleasure and appreciation.

"I'll never forget this night," drawled one faded, overworked woman, to whose eyes the rich colours and tinsel of the stage decorations had seemed a part of fairyland. 'That music was so sweet, and my little Meta looked like a picture with her hair curled, and that beautiful dress on you made her. I really didn't know she was so pretty. I'm going to fix her up and get her a lot of nice things after this."

"Well, it was worth while," said the little

teacher, as she dropped into a chair at home, too tired to take off her wraps.

"Indeed it was," answered the squire. "Jake Schneider's new patriotism rose so he said he'd put a walk on each side of the school for half a mile, even if nobody'd help him. Then a lot of 'em began to talk it over. The upshot was that old Schmidt is going to give the logs, and they're all going to work to-morrow to hew them off and stake them down."

The next Monday morning Karl stopped at Miss Atworth's desk to say joyfully, "O teacher! father was so pleased. He is going to hire another hand and let me keep on till the end of the term."

"Then I need never regret my sacrifice," thought the happy girl.

That celebration was the beginning of better times in Hardyville. When the doors were barred for vacation, and the grass grew rank on the bare playground, the new flag still floated from the schoolhouse belfry.

Many a boy catching sight of the glorious flag as he plodded through the furrows behind his plough, felt himself lifted beyond the bounds of his little horizon, to some great plane of endeavour where all great things were possible. Still those beckoning folds teach a silent lesson of loftier ideals, and a broader humanity to people whom the little teacher thrilled with her enthusiastic spirit.

AN OLD DAGUERREOTYPE

Caleb Speed pushed back his chair from the dinner-table with anger and disgust in his face. The door had just banged behind a big, hearty boy of seventeen, whom he could still see through the narrow window trudging off toward the barn.

The lively whistle that sounded through the closed windows seemed to aggravate the man's ill-temper. He walked over to the fireplace, and kicked the smouldering logs with his heavy boot.

"If there's any one thing that riles me all over," he exclaimed, angrily, "it's having that boy always setting himself up to be in the right, and everybody else in the wrong!"

"Well, he 'most generally is in the right," answered Caleb's wife, clearing the table. "It's remarkable what a memory Jerry has, 'specially for dates. At the quilting here last week the

women folks were trying to settle when 'twas old Mis' Lockett died, and Jerry knew to the day. He said 'twas two days after Deacon Stone's cows were killed by lightning, and that happened on the thirteenth of September, just a hundred years to the very day after Wolfe captured Quebec. You can't trip Jerry up in history."

"Well," answered her husband, impatiently, "he needn't be so sassy about it. We had a dispute over them same cows. I was telling the new minister about the storm, and I happened to say they was standing under a pine-tree. He chipped in, 'Why, no, it wasn't, uncle; it was an oak.' 'It was a pine!' says I. 'No, it wasn't; it was an oak,' says he.

"Just then Hiram Stone came by, and Jerry yelled to know which 'twas. Hiram said, 'Oak.' Then Jerry grinned as malicious, and said, 'I told you so! I knew I was right!' If he hadn't been my dead sister's only child and the minister looking on —" Caleb stopped in anger.

Mrs. Speed made no comment. She was fond of her husband's nephew. He had grown to be

almost like a son in the five years he had lived with them. They were not old—not many years older than Jerry; for Caleb's sister had been older than he.

Mrs. Speed only laughed at the patronizing manners which he sometimes assumed, to the great annoyance of his young uncle. But Caleb Speed was too dogmatic himself to tolerate such a spirit in any one else.

"He sha'n't sit up and contradict me at my own table!" Caleb declared. "I'll thrash him first! He's got to show me proper respect. He needn't think because I've given him advantages that I couldn't have myself, that he knows it all, and I don't know anything!"

"Now, Caleb, what's the use? It's only Jerry's way," said Mrs. Speed, soothingly.

"Dear me!" she sighed, as Caleb went to his work. "It's a pity they can't get along as they used to. Caleb's so touchy he can't stand anything. I must tell Jerry to be more careful."

But when Jerry came in to supper and began his lively joking, she forgot the little lecture she had planned.

"The Spencers are going to move West next week," remarked Mr. Speed. "Land's cheap, and I guess they need more elbow-room for such a big family. Greenville is a mighty thriving place, they say."

"You mean Grandville, don't you, uncle?" suggested Jerry.

"I generally say what I mean, young man!" was the curt reply.

"Well, it's Grandville, anyway!" persisted Jerry, feeling in his pockets. "Jack Spencer is out there now. I got a letter from him yesterday begging me to go out there to him. Oh, here it is! Look at the postmark. It *is* Grandville! I knew I was right about it."

Nettled by the tone and his own mistake, Mr. Speed finished his supper in moody silence. The boy had no idea how his habit had grown, or how

sensitive his uncle had become in regard to it. "Why, Aunt Lucy," he insisted, when she remonstrated with him, "I never contradict people unless I know positively that they are wrong!"

"Maybe," she answered. "But what real difference does it make whether the weasels killed five chickens or six, or that it was the black pig and not the spotted one that rooted up the garden? Those are such little things to bicker about, just for the satisfaction of saying, 'I told you so!'"

She imitated Jerry's tone and manner so well that he laughed a little sheepishly.

"Well, I'll turn over a new leaf," he promised, "just to please you."

Caleb Speed's farm was in southern Maine, near the coast. Jerry had grown up with the sound of the sea in his ears. It had long sung only a meaningless monotone to the boy, but it had begun to fill him with something of its own restless spirit. And about this time the Spencer boys were urging him to go West.

"No," he answered; "I owe it to Uncle Caleb to stay here. He was too good to me when I was a little shaver for me to leave him now when he needs me. He shall have the best service I can give him until I am twenty-one; then I'll be free to follow you."

But there came a crisis. Uncle Caleb gave Jerry a sum of money to pay a bill in town. There was a five-dollar piece in a roll of bills, and the gold-piece had disappeared.

Jerry insisted that he could not have had the money. "I *know*, Aunt Lucy. Uncle Cale handed me the roll of bills, and I put it down in this pocket, and never touched it till I got to town. When I took it out there were the bills just as he had handed them to me, and not a thing more."

"Maybe there's a hole in your pocket," she suggested.

She turned it wrong side out, but found no place where a coin could have slipped through.

"Well, it's a mystery where it went," she said.

"I can't understand it."

"Pooh! It's no mystery," answered Jerry, contemptuously. "Uncle simply didn't give it to me. He thought he had rolled it up in the bills, but was mistaken. That's all!"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Caleb, jumping up white with anger. "I tell you it *was* wrapped up in the bills, and if you can't account for it, you've either lost it or spent it!"

Jerry bounded up-stairs to his room, stuffed his best suit of clothes into a little brown carpet-bag, and then poured out the contents of an old, long-necked blue vase. He had thirty dollars saved toward buying a horse of his own. Then he marched defiantly down-stairs to his uncle.

"I never saw or touched your gold-piece," he declared, "but I'll not go away leaving you to say that I took any of your money!"

He threw down a five-dollar bill and started to the door. As he turned the knob, he looked back at the woman by the fireplace, with her face in her

apron.

"Good-bye, Aunt Lucy," he said, with a choke in his voice. "You've been awful good to me—I'll never forget that!"

Then he shut the door abruptly, and went out into the night. It lacked only five minutes of train-time when he reached the station, determined to go to a cousin of his father's who lived in Vermont, and write from there to Jack Spencer that he would work his way out West as soon as he could.

Tingling with the recollection of his uncle's reproaches, the boy sat up very straight and wide-awake in the train for a long time. Then his tension relaxed, and for lack of something else to do, he felt in his pocket for Jack Spencer's letter. As he pulled it from its envelope something else fell into his hand. It was a gold-piece.

He could scarcely believe his eyes as he sat dropping it from one hand into another. How had the coin got into the letter. For a time he could not guess; then the truth suddenly became clear to

him.

The letter had been in his breast-pocket when he stuffed the roll of bills into it, and the coin must have slipped into the open end of the envelope as he pushed the bills down. When he began to search for the money he had changed the letter to another pocket, never dreaming that it contained anything except Jack's glowing description of prairie-life.

Jerry had been keeping his anger warm all the way by telling himself that his uncle had been harsh and unjust. He had even pictured to himself with grim satisfaction how shamefaced Caleb would look sometime when he should come across the coin among his own possessions. And now he had to think of himself as the blunderer and the unjust, foolish person.

But now no apology could be too humble. He would get off at the next station and take the first train home. The case called for an immediate reconciliation.

Then he reasoned that as he had paid for his

ticket, he might as well go on to his journey's end and have a short visit. It would be easier, perhaps, to write than to speak his apology.

Jerry soon found his elderly cousin, Tim Bailey, who happened to be working just then in a new store—a combination of a book-store and an old-fashioned daguerreotype gallery; not old-fashioned then, for it was before the photograph had penetrated to the rural regions. Tim's rigorous cross-questioning soon drew the whole story from the boy.

"Well, that's easily settled," said Tim. "Just you write to 'em and own up, and say you're going to stop with me over Christmas, but that you'll be along about New Year to turn over a new leaf. They'll bring out the fatted calf when you get back. I know Caleb like a book. He can't hold spite."

Jerry settled himself to write the letter. But he found himself hard to please, and tore up several drafts. Writing apologies was not such easy work, after all! Then Tim put his grizzled head in at the door, with a beaming smile.

"Look here, boy, I've got an idee! The picture business is dull this morning. Go up and get yours took. You can send it along for a Christmas gift. Sha'n't cost you a cent, either. I get all my work done gratis, for sending him so much trade."

Three days after, Jerry dropped into the post-office a little package addressed to his uncle, containing, besides a letter, an excellent likeness of himself. Jerry made in the letter a straightforward acknowledgment of his mistake, and accompanied this manly apology with an earnest request to be allowed to return home.

He had grown so homesick for a sight of the old place that he could scarcely see the lines on his paper. And Aunt Lucy—well, he almost broke down at the thought of all her motherly kindness to him.

"Now I'll surely get an answer by Wednesday," he thought, but Wednesday went by, and another week passed, and although he called regularly at the post-office, no word came.

"Well, I've done all I could," he said. "It's plain

they don't want me back."

Tim's sympathetic old heart ached for the boy's distress. He even offered to go up to the farm and intercede in his behalf.

"No indeed!" Jerry answered, defiantly. "I'll never beg my way back. I'm not the kind to go where I'm not wanted."

"Maybe they never got your letter."

Jerry hooted at the idea. "No, they don't want to make up. That's the long and the short of it."

When he finally started West, Tim Bailey went with him. Out on the far Western prairies, Jerry struck deep root in the favourable soil, and as the years passed on, became as much of a fixture as the new town that bore his name. Year after year he worked on, widening his fields, improving his buildings, working early and late, solely for the pleasure of accumulating.

Tim Bailey had grown old and rheumatic, almost childish, but he still assumed a sort of guardianship over Jerry. One day he put down his

newspaper, wiped his spectacles, and scanned the rough, burly-looking man on the other side of the stove, as if he had been a stranger.

"Look here, Jerry," he said presently, "you're getting to look old, and your hair's all a-turning gray. Now you've got to quit pegging away so hard and take a holiday, before you get like me, so stiff and rheumatic you can't get away. Why don't you go to the World's Fair? It 'ud be a burning shame for the richest man in Trigg County to miss such a show."

Thus it came about that one day Jerry rubbed his eyes in a bewildered way to find himself in the midst of a surging crowd that thronged the entrances of the Fair.

He plodded along the Midway Plaisance, his umbrella under his arm and his hands in his pockets; he walked and stared till late in the afternoon. It was late in May, the spring ploughing had been a good preparation in pedestrianism, but the long furrows, enlivened only by the pipe of a quail or the cry of a catbird, had never brought such weariness as Jerry felt now.

He did not realize he was so tired until he dropped into a seat in one of the gondolas on the lagoon, and remarked confidentially to the gondolier that he was "clean beat out."

It was the first time Jerry had spoken since he entered the grounds. The man made no reply.

He studied the fellow keenly a moment, and then turned to the crowds, surging along the banks in every direction. Not a soul in all that multitude even knew his name.

A feeling of utter loneliness crept over him, and when the boat landed he was saying to himself that he would give the finest colt in his pastures for the sight of a familiar face.

A few steps farther, and he saw one. It was in the government building, where an amused crowd was exclaiming over the Dead Letter Exhibit. Jerry edged along in front of the case, wondering at the variety of shipwrecked cargoes that had drifted into this government haven.

A vague pity stirred in him for all the hopes

that had gone into the grave of the dead letter office—rings that had never found the fingers they were to have clasped, gifts that might have unlocked long silences, tokens of friendship that were never received, never acknowledged—all caught in this snarled web that no human skill could possibly unravel.

Then he saw the familiar face. It smiled out at him from the case of an old daguerreotype, till his heart began to beat so hard that he glanced guiltily around, to see if any one else heard it. The blood rushed to his head, and he felt dizzy.

It was that picture of himself, taken so long ago up in Vermont! He was not likely to be mistaken in it—the only picture he had ever had taken in his life.

He chuckled as he recalled the anxious oiling he had given the curly hair to make it lie flat, the harrowing hesitation over his necktie, the borrowing of the watch-chain that stood out in such bold relief against his brocaded vest. How quaint and old-fashioned it looked!

He passed his hand over his grizzled beard with a sigh, for the smooth, boyish face was not all he saw. It brought back the whole faded past so overwhelmingly that for awhile he forgot where he was.

Thirty-three years since he had dropped that little package in the office! He did not question why the letter had gone astray. He had lost his boyish faith in his own infallibility. He had probably mailed it with only half the address, perhaps none.

Now he was a boy again, back in Maine. Aunt Lucy's knitting-needles clicked in the firelight. Uncle Caleb was making him a sled. How warm and comfortable the kitchen felt, and how good Aunt Lucy's doughnuts tasted!

The crowds jostled him. He stood as if grown to the spot, until a sharp-nosed woman elbowed her way in front of him, to see what interested him. She looked inquisitively from the picture to the weather-beaten face above her, and passed on, none the wiser. There was little likeness between the two.

Her penetrating glances aroused him. He came to himself with a start, looked hastily around, and then set out from the building, heedless of direction. A keen, raw wind struck him as he strode along the lake shore. He shivered and turned up his coat collar.

A drizzling mist of rain began to fall. People going by with their umbrellas up looked at him curiously as he plodded along with his own umbrella under his arm.

Soon a heavy dash of rain aroused him to the necessity of finding immediate shelter. A group of State buildings was just ahead. Glancing up he saw the name of his native State on one, and hurried in.

A great log heap blazed and crackled in the huge fireplace, filling the room with a glowing comfort that warmed him, soul and body. He drew a chair close up to it, and spread his chilly fingers to the flames.

The sticks against the forelog burnt to embers and fell into the ashes. The crane seemed to swing

backward like a great finger, pointing to the past, as he sat and stared into the fire.

People passing through the room saw only a rough old farmer, his clumsy boots stretched out on the hearth. They never dreamed of the scenes that passed before him in the fire. There were glimpses of snow-covered pine woods, of sparkling trout-streams gurgling in the June sunshine, of long stretches of level sea-sands where the tide crawled in.

The old homesickness waked again. What had they thought of him through all these silent years? He wondered how they would receive his long-delayed apology. He must write as soon as he got back to the hotel.

The rain had stopped. He stood up and shook himself, then went out-doors again, pulling his beard meditatively, as he walked toward the gate. It seemed a week since he had entered it.

Outside, while he waited for a car, he kept poking the end of his umbrella savagely into a crack in the pavement. As he swung himself to the

platform of a passing car, he turned back for another look at the domes and towers inside the gates.

It was his last look. He had seen enough. He was going back to Uncle Caleb and Aunt Lucy.

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