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**THE WOODLAWN SERIES.**

**Bertie's Home:**

**OR,  
THE WAY TO BE HAPPY.**

**BY MRS. MADELINE LESLIE.**

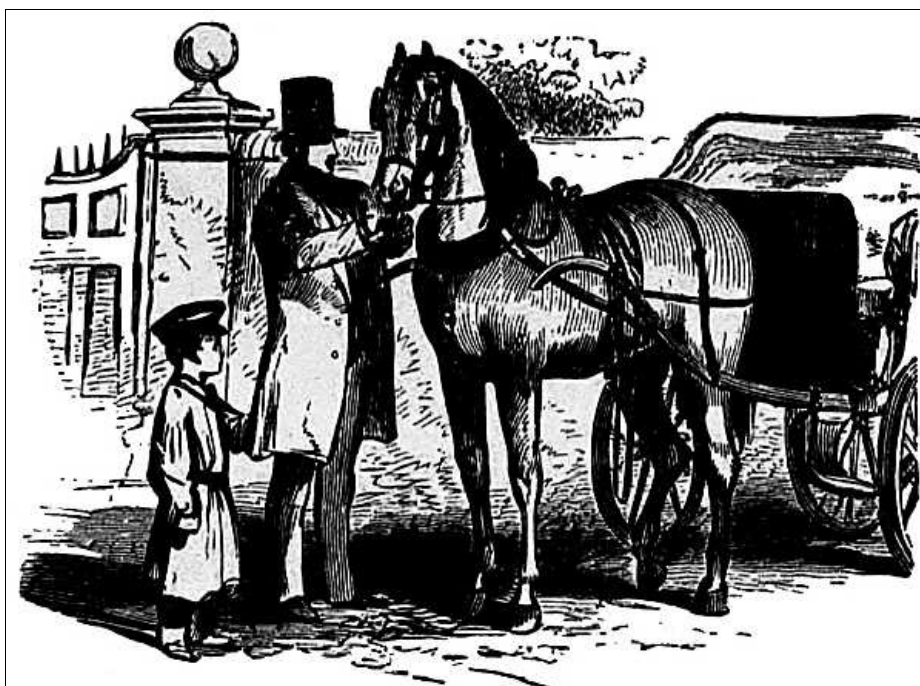
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[Mr. Curtis tying Duke.](#)  
[Vol. I., p. 93.](#)

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**BERTIE; OR, THE WOODLAWN SERIES.**

BY MRS. MADELINE LESLIE.

16mo. 6 vols., Illustrated.

- I. BERTIE'S HOME.
  - II. BERTIE AND THE CARPENTERS.
  - III. BERTIE AND THE MASONS.
  - IV. BERTIE AND THE PLUMBERS.
  - V. BERTIE AND THE PAINTERS.
  - VI. BERTIE AND THE GARDENERS.
- 

TO

**HARRY, NELLIE, AND WILLIE SAMPSON;**

ALSO,

To the Memory of their Deceased Brothers and Sister,

**BERTIE, FRANKEY AND EMMA,**

**THESE LITTLE BOOKS ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.**

If the perusal prompt them and other readers to imitate the virtues of our hero in his efforts to *be* good, and to *do* good, the wishes of the author will be realized.

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## Bertie's Home.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE RIDE.



When I was a child I used to glance at the first sentence in a new book to see whether it looked interesting. If it began, "There was once a boy, who lived in a fine house," I was encouraged to go on.

Now I wish to make these little books very interesting to my young readers. I want to have the words so simple that they can be read and not skipped over, and at the same time my object is to give you useful information. As you will learn, I am to tell you in these six volumes many things about building a house, and to explain the different kinds of labor or trades which are necessary for such a purpose; but first I shall introduce you to the family of Mr. Curtis, a gentleman who loves children and whom I am sure you will love before the book is finished.

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Quite a number of years ago, a carriage drawn by two dapple-gray horses was passing slowly through the main street of a beautiful village, which I shall call Oxford.

There were five persons in it. On the front seat was a gentleman whose keen, sparkling eye and laughing mouth always made people wish to learn more of him. By his side were two children, Herbert and Winifred, or, as they were usually called, Bertie and Winnie.

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The back seat was occupied by Mrs. Curtis and her nurse. The lady was just recovering from a long and painful illness, and still looked very pale. She was supported by cushions, and sometimes as the carriage rolled slowly over the smooth gravelled road she fell asleep. But now Mrs. Curtis was wide awake, her eyes gazing through the large glass in the side of the carriage at the beautiful prospect before them.

"Oh, look at that lake!" she exclaimed; "isn't it lovely? See the wooded banks, and that pretty green slope. I've dreamed of a home in just such a spot." [Pg 15]

Mr. Curtis stopped the horses, and leaning from the carriage, gazed all about him. It was indeed a lovely view. The village of Oxford was situated in a valley sheltered on three sides by hills; and here in a little cleft between them a small lake lay nestled, almost shut from view by the thick trees which grew down close to the banks. [Pg 16]

As the gentleman gazed right and left, his eye at last rested on a slight elevation where the ground was more open, and from which it ran down with a gentle slope to the water. The green here and there was dotted with a fine spreading elm, or a huge oak, which looked as if they might have weathered the storms of a hundred years.

"What are you stopping so long for, papa?" asked Bertie, wondering at his father's unusual silence. [Pg 17]

He did not seem to hear the question, for he presently turned to his wife and asked, smiling,—

"Would you like a house on that hill, Cecilia? There, just beyond the cluster of chestnut trees, is the spot I should choose."

"Oh, Lawrence! everything seems so quiet and peaceful in this neat village, a home there would be almost a paradise."

After one more glance at the fresh greensward, where the summer sun was casting such pleasant shadows under the grand old trees, Mr. Curtis spoke to the horses to go on, the road winding round the lake so that except for the trees they could have seen it for half a mile. [Pg 18]

Presently he stopped a man at the side of the road, and asked,—

"Is there a tavern in this village?"

"No, sir," was the smiling reply; "there's little need of a tavern here, so far away from the world."

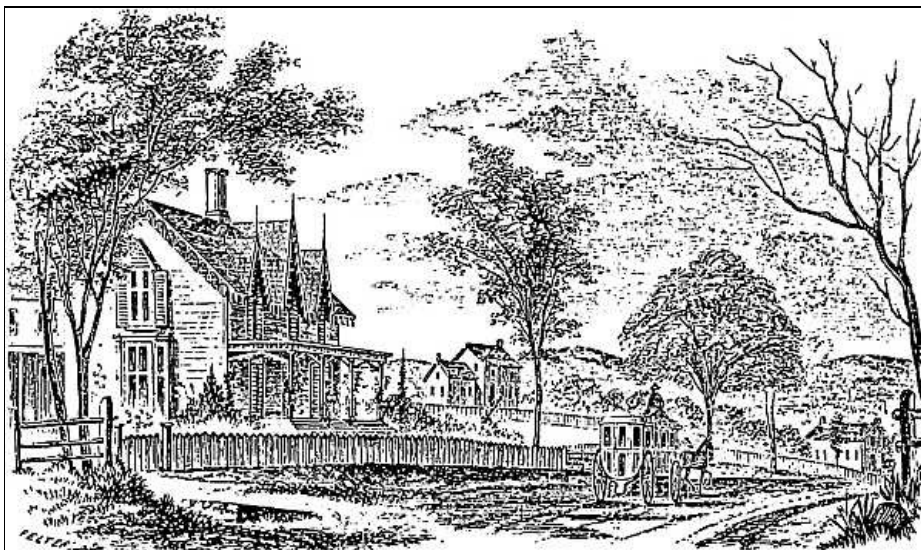
"Is there any place where I could bait my horses and get a dinner for my family?" [Pg 19]

"Yes, sir; there's a farm-house a quarter of a mile back, where travellers sometimes stop. If they're not through dinner, they'll give you some and welcome."

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Curtis, "we couldn't think of intruding unless they would allow us to pay them."

The man walked on, after describing the house, laughing to himself.

The house stood on the main street leading to the city, the villagers finding ready access thereto by a stage-coach running twice a day. Everything about the farm looked neat and thriving. It was almost the only house in the village which exhibited any pretensions to elegance. It had a bow window on the south side, and three Luthern windows in the roof. There was a garden filled with flowers, and at the side a road or avenue leading to the immense barns in the rear. [Pg 20]



**Mr. Taylor's Farm-house.**  
**Vol. I., p. 20.**

In answer to Mr. Curtis' knock, a young girl opened the door, and presently called her mother to answer the question whether they could put up there for an hour. [Pg 21]

"Walk right in," she answered, cordially; "dinner will be ready in a few minutes. If you'll please, sir, to drive the horses round to the barn, one of our men will take care of them."

Mrs. Curtis was soon resting on a sofa in a cool, pleasant parlor, inhaling the fragrance of the June roses, which came through the open window; the children were running about the farm-yard, almost wild with delight, and nurse was following them, nearly as much pleased as they were.

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE PURCHASE.



fter dinner, which nurse brought from the table on a tray, Mrs. Curtis enjoyed an hour of refreshing sleep. When she awoke she found the blinds carefully closed to exclude the light; but she could hear the sound of many voices outside, and at last a tiny head, covered with auburn curls, peeped into the room.

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"Mamma, see what Winnie dot," exclaimed a happy voice as she saw mamma was awake. "See pooty bird!"

"It's a goslin," said mamma, taking the little yellow, downy ball from her daughter's hand, "a darling little goslin; but it is crying 'peep, peep,' because it wants to be back with its mother. Where are papa and Bertie?"

"Papa done off with man. Dere Bertie," as his voice shouted "Winnie," at the door.

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It was almost four o'clock before Mr. Curtis made his appearance, and his wife, who had been chatting with Mrs. Taylor, the farmer's wife, had begun to wonder where he could be.

"You're nice and cool here," he said, laying his hat on the table and wiping the drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"You look very tired, Lawrence," she said, anxiously.

He only laughed.

"Isn't it time to start?" the lady asked.

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"The horses will be round directly; but, Cecilia, I want to ask you a question. Were you in earnest when you said you should like to live here in this quiet village?"

She sighed. "Yes, Lawrence, I really meant that I should enjoy a home away from the bustle and confusion of a city; and that lovely lake is exactly what I have always connected with my visions of a country home. But why do you look so eager?"

"Because, my dear, I have ascertained that I can purchase that spot on reasonable terms. In fact, everything is settled on condition that when you have taken a nearer view you like it."

[Pg 27]

Mrs. Curtis clasped her hands as she exclaimed,—

"Oh, Lawrence! what a kind husband you are!"

"I have ascertained," he went on, smiling, "that the village is so healthy no physician can be supported. There is one church and good schools; though there is no hotel and not one dram-shop. I think we shall like it; and if you say you will try to be contented, I shall conclude the bargain at once and turn farmer."

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"Why, Lawrence, what do you know about such business?"

"You forget, my dear, that I was born and brought up in the country."

The next morning, when they left the farm-house, Mr. Curtis had agreed to buy sixty acres of land adjoining the lake, with a right to the use of the water for boating or fishing, or whatever else he pleased. He had also engaged board for the rest of the summer with the farmer's family, and promised to return in a fortnight. In the meantime, he intended to look up the titles to his new land, and if it was all right, as he expected, to proceed at once to build a new house.

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Mr. Curtis, ever since his marriage, had done business as a merchant in a large city. He owned ships which he sent out to foreign lands, and in this way he had become very rich. After his wife's sickness, the physician who attended her, told him that if she could live in some quiet, healthy,

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country village, her life would probably be lengthened for years.

Mr. Curtis loved his wife so well that he would gladly give all his ships, his money lying at interest in the banks, and his warehouses filled with goods, to keep her well; and this was what made him so ready to buy a place in the country.

He was sure, too, that it would be much better for Bertie and Winifred to grow up surrounded by the beauties of nature; and he was also sure that if he and his wife had hearts to do good, they could find abundant opportunities for it in this beautiful village. On every account, then, he was pleased with his purchase, and drove away from Oxford with the happiest anticipations of a long and useful life passed within its limits. [Pg 31]



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## CHAPTER III.

[Pg 32]

### WOODLAWN.



few weeks under the care of good Mrs. Taylor, with Esther, the rosy-cheeked daughter, to lead Bertie to and from the school which she taught, did a great deal toward restoring vigor to the invalid. Every morning she rode with her husband around the road by the lake, and from thence through the bars across the fields to the site of their new house. [Pg 33]

They had named their place Woodlawn, on account of the beautiful old trees standing here and there on the greensward; and Mr. Curtis already had men at work making a solid road over which they could haul the lumber with their strong ox teams.

After they had decided where the house should stand, the first thing to be done was to make a plan of the building. Mr. Curtis sent to the city for an architect to come to Oxford and bring his book of plans with him. [Pg 34]

Perhaps you don't know what an architect is, and I will explain the work that he does. He is a man who draws upon paper a sketch of a house, or cottage, or church, or any kind of building.

First, he shows how the outside will look, and where the windows and doors will be placed. If there is to be a portico, or a wing, or a bay-window, the picture shows you just how it will look and what the proportions will be. [Pg 35]

Then the architect draws a picture or plan of the first, second, and third floors, if there are so many. He puts down the size of the parlors, and the halls, and the dining-room, and the kitchen. He places closets wherever he can find room for them, and plans for all the conveniences that you wish.

Then he goes to the chambers, and arranges for the bath-room, and the dressing-rooms; or, if it is to be a plain, cheap house, he plans every inch of room to the very best advantage. [Pg 36]

When all this is done, the architect begins to draw what is called a framing plan; that is, a plan for the carpenters to work from. This has a picture of every stick of timber in the building; so that a good builder can tell beforehand just how much the lumber will cost.

But this is not all the architect has to do. It is his business to write down what are called specifications.

As this is a long word, I don't suppose Jamie, nor Josie, nor Catherine can understand it any better than Herbert and Winnie did. If you were going to have a doll-house, and your papa should allow you to tell the carpenter just how you would like it made, I suppose you would say:— [Pg 37]

"I want a window here and a door there; and I want a little mite of a bell that the dollies who come to the front door can ring. And, oh, I must have a little sink for my doll to wash her dishes! and of course there must be a pump to bring water with."

While you were talking, the carpenter would take his pencil and write this all down, and describe the materials to be used in the work, for fear he would forget some of the directions; and these would be specifications, or the basis of your bargain with him. [Pg 38]

The architect for whom Mr. Curtis sent was Mr. Rand. He reached the farm-house the second day after the letter was sent. When he came Mr. and Mrs. Curtis were ready at the depot with the carriage to take him to Woodlawn. [Pg 39]

"I am going to build a little nest for my birds," Mr. Curtis said, laughing, "and can't quite decide what shape will be best on this land. I want the house to look pretty from the village, for I intend to have it set high where it can be seen through the trees. But the back part must be pretty, too, for I shall have it look out upon a nice little grassy hill, with plants and shrubs in variety growing over it."

"We shall see," answered the architect.

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Just as he spoke there was a turn in the road, and then they came in sight of the beautiful lake.

"Oh, how delightful!" the stranger exclaimed, "what an enchanting view. It reminds me of a picture I've seen somewhere of an English landscape."

"That's what my wife says," answered Mr. Curtis, glancing in her face with a smile.

The architect said no more; but his companions saw that his keen eye noticed everything.

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Presently they alighted from the carriage, and Mr. Curtis, giving his wife his arm, began to explain where he intended his house to stand.

"I settled upon another place at first," he said. "There you will see the little stakes I drove into the ground, but my wife thought this better; and as I yield to her in matters of taste I changed to this spot."

"This gives you a much better view," the architect remarked quietly.

They walked here and there, two or three times. Mr. Rand took a rule from his pocket and measured the ground. Then he ran off by himself to the top of the little hill, and stood looking over the lake. All this time he had scarcely answered Mr. Curtis' questions. He was thinking. At last his face lighted up with a smile, and he exclaimed,—

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"I have it; just the thing. How would you like a stone house? You have plenty of material on your land."

"A stone house is too damp," answered Mr. Curtis, shaking his head. "No, I prefer a well-made wooden house with back plaster and tarred paper to keep out the wind. I can use all my stone in building walls around my farm."

[Pg 43]

"How much land is there?"

"Sixty acres in this piece; and I have just purchased twenty more of wood; for I mean to keep warm."



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## CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 44]

### THE PLAN.



It was now nearly time for dinner; and Mr. Curtis helped his wife into the carriage; and they all rode away to Mr. Taylor's farm, where they found a nice dinner of roast lamb and fresh vegetables awaiting them. For dessert there was plenty of strawberries and sweet, thick cream, which the grown people as well as the children enjoyed very much.

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After dinner Mr. Rand opened a large book which Bertie thought looked like a big atlas; and then the stranger and papa and mamma gathered around the table to look at the plans of houses Mr. Rand had brought with him.

First, there was a picture of a pretty cottage with a verandah running around it. Then came the plan of a barn, very pretty and picturesque; but Mr. Rand tumbled these over without any ceremony, saying,—

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"You must have something better than that;" and presently he came to the picture of a large house with turrets and towers, which looked very imposing.

"There it is. That's the plan for you," the gentleman exclaimed, in an exultant tone.

"What's the cost of that?" asked Mr. Curtis.

"Pshaw! the cost of a building is nothing to you," Mr. Rand answered, laughing. "The thing to be

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considered is whether you like it."

"What do you say, Cecilia?"

"It does not look home-like. The ground is high enough without mounting to the towers to see the prospect. I have an idea in my own mind if I could explain it to you."

"Try, if you please, Mrs. Curtis."

"I want, first of all," the lady began, "to have the room in which we shall live, in the most pleasant part of the house. It ought to be eighteen feet by twenty-five, the front finished with a large bay-window, and also a window on each side looking out on a piazza. This room should project from the main house about twelve feet, the space on each side filled with a piazza. On one side of the main building I would have a large parlor for state occasions; on the other, the dining-room and library, and back of the large sitting-room on the other side of the spacious hall, which occupies the middle of the house, and well lighted from above, will be the kitchen. Below, in a basement, I would have a room fitted with tubs, boilers, etc., for a wash-room, and out of it the laundry. The chambers, well provided with closets, must be for after consideration."

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"A capital plan!" exclaimed the architect. "You have given me a very good general idea; now if you will particularize or express in detail what kind of finish suits your taste, I will draw you a plan that I think you will accept; but wouldn't it be an addition to run up a tower at one corner? It would be very imposing."

"That is my principal objection. We are intending to settle in this quiet village. We hope to pass the rest of our lives here. We mean to be one of the people. If our house is too grand it may not be so easy for our neighbors to approach us, or for us to gain access to their humble cottages. Besides, if we are not extravagant, and too far above them, they will try to imitate us. Instead of the square, upright, though neat houses they have now, they will see how much expression a little porch or portico will give to their dwellings."

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Mr. Rand folded his portfolio together without another word, while Mr. Curtis laughingly remarked,—

"You see, my wife has set her heart on doing good here. She already has made friends with all the workmen at Woodlawn, and acts in the capacity of Doctress to their families."

This was Wednesday; and Saturday Mr. Rand came again, gayly announced by Bertie, who cried out,—

"Mamma, here's the architect."

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The plan was examined and highly approved. The whole party rode to the lake, where Mr. Rand helped Mr. Curtis measure off the land ready for the cellar, the architect having agreed to erect the whole building, hire masons and carpenters, and painters and plumbers, and whoever else was necessary, as soon as the underpinning was ready to set the house upon.

When Mr. Curtis went away he left the large portfolio, which mamma told Bertie, contained not only the picture of the house which he admired so much, but a written account of every room, closet, hall, window and door to be put in it. "These," she said, "are Mr. Rand's specifications; that is, he specifies exactly what kind of doorknobs we shall have, or the cost and finish of the silver faucets connected with the bowls in the chambers."

[Pg 53]

Bertie clapped his hands, dancing up and down. "I know, mamma," he exclaimed, "I do know, and when I'm a man I shall ask Mr. Rand to write specifications for me."



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## CHAPTER V.

[Pg 54]

### THE DONKEY.

efore Mr. Curtis had engaged men to dig his cellar, Miss Susan Taylor closed her school for the season.

"I'm afraid Bertie will be wild with excitement," mamma said one day to her husband, "I wish he had some regular employment."

"I've been thinking of that, my dear," he answered.

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"There is a great deal of knowledge to be gained beside that in books. Our son is inquisitive and





eager, and will learn a great deal by being allowed to watch the operations as they proceed. When he sees the work of the different trades, and what belongs to a mason, or carpenter, he will remember it much better than if he read it in his book."

"But, Lawrence, I'm afraid he will learn bad words from some men you will employ; or if not, he may be in their way." [Pg 56]

Mr. Curtis smiled. "As to the first," he said, "we must train our children so well at home that they will know better than to imitate rude manners or rough expressions. So far, I am happy to say that I have never seen men more free from profanity than those I have met in this quiet village.

"As to your second objection, an occasional caution will be all that is necessary for Herbert. And if he should cause a little delay by his questions, I will see that the men are no losers." [Pg 57]

"But how will he get back and forth so many times in a day?"

"That question will be solved to-morrow, Cecilia; next to the hope of benefiting your health, my object in removing to this place is to educate our children for usefulness. A few dollars more or less, to accomplish that end, will never be regretted by either of us."

"If Bertie ever makes as good a man as his father, I shall be content," remarked the lady, smiling. [Pg 58]

"And if Winnie learns to imitate one half her mother's virtues, I shall be a happy father," he returned, bowing with an arch glance in her face.

After dinner the next day, Nancy, the nurse, was giving the children a bath, preparatory to a walk around the farm, when a man drove into the yard with the queerest little carriage you ever saw. The carriage was drawn by a funny-looking animal, with long ears and awkward-shaped legs. [Pg 59]

"Papa, mamma!" shouted Bertie, "look, see what has come; see what a queer horse."

Mr. Curtis went to the door and his wife followed him.

"I've brought you a donkey at last," said the man, jumping briskly from the carriage.

"Is he docile?" asked papa.

"He's as tame as an old sheep. He's five years old. A gentleman bought him for his children; and they've made a plaything of him. The little girl cried when I drove him away. I couldn't have bought him at any price until I gave my word he should have the best of care. The young gentleman himself can harness and unharness him, and for the matter of that he can drive all over the country with him." [Pg 60]

All this while Bertie had been palling grass and feeding the patient creature; but now he sprang a foot from the ground, exclaiming, with a flush of joy,—

"Papa, papa, did you buy the donkey for me? is it mine? my own?" [Pg 61]

"Yes," answered papa. "It is your's; and I shall ask Mr. Taylor to give you a stall in the barn, where you can feed it and groom it yourself."

"Oh, papa! I'm going to be a real good boy, I'm so very much obliged to you; may I ride a little now?"

"He ought to have some oats before he's used much," said the man who brought him. "He's travelled twenty-five miles this morning."

"I'll give him some, right away." [Pg 62]

"Jump in then, and drive him to the barn," said papa. "I see Mr. Taylor, and I'll talk with him about entertaining your donkey. That was one more than he agreed to board."

Bertie knew by his papa's mouth that he was joking, and, more happy than I can tell you, he jumped into the funny carriage and began to pull at the reins. But the donkey had begun to nibble the sweet, fresh grass and did not like to move.

"Go along," shouted the boy, "go along," and then the animal pricked up his ears, and trotted off to his new home in Mr. Taylor's great barn. [Pg 63]



## DRAGGING STONES.



he next morning the donkey was as good as new, farmer Taylor said, as he taught Herbert how to harness him into his wagon. "Hold your reins up taut, like this, my boy. Hurrah! I never did see a sight like that before. Such a turn-out will astonish the natives."

Bertie drove up to the door and then called out,—

[Pg 65]

"Mamma, mamma, can't Winnie go too. I'll bring her home safe in time for her nap."

"Not to-day, dear. Wait till you have learned a little how to manage."

When Bertie turned into the field, he saw that business had commenced in earnest. There were two men, each with a pair of oxen and a flat piece of wood attached to them by a heavy iron chain. The men were hawing and geeing when he drove near; but they stopped short and stared when they saw him.

[Pg 66]

"What kind of a critter do you call that now?" one man asked, after squirting a whole mouthful of tobacco-juice from his mouth.

"It's a donkey, sir."

Bertie's mamma had taught him to be polite to every one.

Both the men came up to the creature, patted him, felt of his ears, and one began to pull his mouth open.

"Please, sir, don't hurt him," urged Bertie, twitching the reins. But, then, looking at the patient oxen, he said,— "Will you please tell me why you don't have a cart instead of that flat board?"

[Pg 67]

"'Tisn't a board; it's a heavy piece of plank; and it's called a drag. If you're over at the place presently, you'll see what it's for. Come, Bright," he shouted, touching the ox nearest him. "Gee up."

The other man followed, though he often looked back, laughing to see the donkey carriage and the little boy driver.

"There's a good bit of things in the world that we never see," he said to his companion. "The Squire's son is a pert little chap, isn't he now?"

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"He's the politest young un I ever see," was Tom's answer.

Bertie, meanwhile, drove through the field,—there was quite a good road now,—and on by the lake to Woodlawn. His father was standing near a company of men who were digging with spades, throwing the dirt out behind them.

Bertie jumped from his wagon and threw the reins upon Whitefoot's back, and instantly the tame creature began to taste the grass.

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"I'm going to stay here till dinner, papa; what shall I do with my donkey?"

"Take off his harness, and let him feed; I don't think he'll stray away. At any rate you can try him. You must begin to teach him to come to you when you call."

The little fellow drove the wagon under the shade of a tree; and very soon Whitefoot, finding himself at liberty, walked slowly off toward the lake, nibbling grass as he went.

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"Now," said papa, "you may walk about wherever you please. You are old enough to keep out of danger. When the men come with the oxen you will see them unload."

"What are all those men doing, papa?"

"They are Irishmen whom I hire by the day to dig the cellar to our new house. Do you see these sticks driven into the ground?"

"Yes, papa, and the string tied to them. What is it for?"

[Pg 71]

"It is to mark out exactly the line where the cellar is to be. See, this is the front of the house; and I have measured twenty feet. Your mother wishes the room to be eighteen feet wide; and it is necessary to allow one foot each side for the thickness of the walls, the plastering, etc."

"But, papa, here is another stick only a little way off. Wont mamma's room be larger than this?"

"Yes, it extends back into what is called the main building. Don't you remember in Mr. Rand's plan how this room projects, or comes out, beyond the rest?"

[Pg 72]

"Oh, yes, papa; I understand now, and right here where I stand, the piazza will be. Wont it be very pretty?"

"I think so; but we must thank mamma for the plan. It was her taste suggested it to the architect."

"Mr. Taylor says mamma is the most wonderful woman he ever saw," replied the boy earnestly.

"Mr. Taylor is a wise man," said papa. "I entirely agree with him."

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"Oh, see how hard the oxen are pulling! Wont that wood break their necks?"

"That is a yoke, and they are used to it. They are dragging stones for the cellar."

"Why don't they put the stones in a cart, papa?"

"Because, though it would be rather easier for the oxen to draw them, it would be harder for the men to load and unload."

"Are stones very heavy indeed?"

[Pg 74]

"You can try to lift one."

"I can't move it one mite, papa. I don't see what good they will do in the cellar."

"No, I suppose not; but you will learn."

"Haw, Bright! Come up, Buck!" shouted Tom.

Both the oxen pulled with all their strength; but the ground was soft and rising. Bertie could not see that the drag moved an inch.

Tom lashed and lashed the patient creatures, shouting with all his might. When he found this did no good he began to swear.

[Pg 75]

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Bertie, shrinking behind his father.

"Stop!" said Mr. Curtis, in a firm, clear voice. "You must throw off part of your load; and I want to say one thing now. I'll do all the swearing that's done on the place."

Tom's face grew very red; but he did not speak. For one instant he stood, and looked into his master's eye. He knew then, as well as he did a year afterward, that the Squire meant exactly what he said.

[Pg 76]

Two large stones were thrown off; Buck and Bright pulled again, and soon the heap on the drag was lying by the side of the other stones.

Before the oxen went away for another load, Bertie had found out that the names of the other pair were Star and Spot, from some white marks on their forehead. He had learned, too, why drags were better than carts to draw large stones with.



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## CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 77]

### THE BOY TEACHER.



While he was following his father about, Bertie forgot to watch his donkey. When it was near dinner time, Mr. Curtis said,—

"Don't go off till I see you, Herbert, I want to ride to the blacksmith's; and you may drive me there."

The boy started and began to look in every direction, hoping to see Whitefoot quietly feeding on the lawn.

[Pg 78]

But neither on the hill, nor behind the chestnut grove could he be seen. Bertie's lip quivered, and then the tears filled his eyes.

"He's gone, papa; my pretty donkey is lost."

"Don't cry, my son," said Mr. Curtis, in a cheerful tone. "Crying for a donkey never brought one back, that I ever heard of. Take a handful of corn from Tom's pail, and run toward the lake. Call him by name and perhaps he will come."

[Pg 79]

Bertie hesitated, his cheeks growing very red. At last, when papa wondered what made him delay, the little fellow asked,—

"Can't I wait till Tom comes back? I'm almost sure he'll give me some of his corn; but mamma told me never to touch anything that belongs to the men, without asking their leave."

"Mamma was right, my son, as she always is; and I'm greatly pleased that you remember her instructions. There is Tom coming with a load, now, you may run and ask him to give you a handful of corn to call your donkey with. Perhaps he has seen the creature somewhere." [Pg 80]

Bertie was off like a dart that has been shot from a bow; and his father could see him gesturing away as he walked back at Tom's side.

"Did you come all this way to ask for a few kernels of corn?" asked the man, staring at the child in wonder. "Why, you might have taken a pint, and neither I nor the oxen would ever have known it." [Pg 81]

"But God sees everything we do," said the boy. "I knew 'twas yours, 'cause I saw you turn it out of a bag; and I couldn't touch it without your leave, you know."

"Well, now, I must say you're the honestest little shaver I ever did see," answered Tom, regarding the child almost with awe. "If it had been my boy, he'd snatched up the corn and run off with it, and never have thought another breath about it." [Pg 82]

"Mamma teaches me how wicked it is to steal," Bertie went on. "Perhaps your boy," gazing anxiously in the man's face, "hasn't any mother to teach him."

Tom's mouth worked convulsively; and presently he wiped his eyes with his dirty shirt sleeve.

"No, he hasn't," he answered. "She's dead this six months."

They were now almost back to the cellar, and after a moment's silence, Tom added,— [Pg 83]

"If the corn was mine, you'd be welcome to as much as you want of it; but it's in the agreement that the Squire shall give the oxen their feed at noon. So I bring along the corn from the store; and he pays the bill."

"Oh, I'm glad, I'm real glad," shouted Bertie, bounding away.

"Whitefoot, Whitefoot!" he called, at the top of his voice; "Whitefoot! come."

"There's your donkey," shouted Jim, "coming up the hill with Star and Spot. There, just behind that big oak by the lake." [Pg 84]

So Bertie called again, "Whitefoot—Whitefoot!" and presently the donkey gave a little neigh in reply. I suppose he wanted to say, "I hear you, my young master, and I'll go as quick as I can;" for he started off at once into a brisk trot. Very soon, to Bertie's great delight, the lost donkey was eating the corn out of his hand.

When the men walked side by side on their way to the old wall which they were pulling down for stone, Tom repeated to his companion what had passed between him and Bertie. [Pg 85]

"That's the kind o' religion I believe in," he exclaimed, making a furious gesture with his brawny arm. "The Squire isn't one of your sot-up men who thinks working-folks are made of different stuff, and haven't any more souls than a beast. He lives his religion right straight through the week instead o' keeping it bottled up for Sunday use, like some long-faced men I could name." [Pg 86]

"Jes so," answered Jim, with an approving nod.

"Do you suppose I'd ever cheat him out of the valley of a cent arter such a lesson as that boy give me? No, not for my right arm. I know when I'm treated like a man."

"You got a pretty hard hit this morning, then," muttered Jim, glancing sideways in his companion's face.

"Wall, I deserved it, I'll own up to that. I'd no business to talk such stuff before the Squire, letting alone the boy. I'll let him do the swearing in futer, as he's agreed to." [Pg 87]



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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE UNDERPINNING.

[Pg 88]

hat are you going to the blacksmith's for?" inquired Bertie, as he took the reins, proud to show



his father how well he could drive.

"I'm going to engage him to mend the tools that the men break. It's very convenient to have a blacksmith so near. In the town where my parents lived, there was no blacksmith within three miles. My father was obliged to go all that distance to get his horse shod."

[Pg 89]

Mr. Hunt, the man they wished to see, had left his shop before they reached it, and was sitting in an open room at the back of his house eating his dinner. His red flannel shirt sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, showing his coarse, sinewy arms; and his hair was all in a tangle; but the moment Mr. Curtis saw him, he stepped forward, and shook hands as cordially as if they had been acquainted for years.

[Pg 90]

"I suppose you want your horse shod, Squire?" the man asked, looking well pleased at the cordial greeting. "I'll leave my dinner and go right to the shop with you."

"No, indeed. Sit down; and if your wife will allow me, I'll do my business here. I see you know me."

"Yes, sir, I've seen you at church; and I'm thankful that a man in your station has a heart to go there."

"And I listened to you teaching your Sabbath School class," added Mr. Curtis, laughing. "After that we couldn't be strangers long. You remember your text, 'If ye love me keep my commandments.' But now to business! I'm going to build a house and barn; and my men tell me you're the one to mend all my tools, shoe my horses, a kind of general Jack at all trades. I want to engage you to do all my business, and send me your bill the first day in every month. Is that satisfactory?"

[Pg 91]

"Yes, sir; and I thank you, too. As you're a church-going man I'll make free to tell you, Squire, you've taken a load off my mind. I've got a little girl sick these eighteen months; and I've only been waiting for the means to send her to a great doctor in the city. Now your promise makes my way clear."

[Pg 92]

"I'm glad you told me, Mr. Hunt. Mrs. Curtis will call and see your wife. I dare say between them they will contrive some plan to restore the child, with God's blessing. Come, Bertie, we will go."

Mr. Hunt and his wife followed to the gate, very much amused at the sight of the donkey and his carriage.

[Pg 93]

The next morning, Mr. Curtis asked his wife,—

"How would you like to ride with me to the granite quarry? I am going to buy underpinning for the house."

"If it isn't too far, I should enjoy it exceedingly."

"The drive there and back would be twenty miles; but you could lie down at the hotel and rest, if you choose, while I am at the quarry."

"I will get ready at once then. Shall we take the children?"

[Pg 94]

"Yes, if Bertie can leave his cares at Woodlawn."

The gentleman glanced archly at his son as he said this, and Bertie answered, laughing,—

"I think I can trust Tom and Jim till I get back; but I don't understand what underpinnings are."

"You will learn that by and by. Now run and ask Nurse to dress Winnie, for I see Mike has the carriage out."

When they reached the quarry, they found it so difficult to drive the carriage near to the rough building where they were told the owner could be found, that papa turned back and drove through one street to a fine hotel. He called for a private parlor, and left mamma resting on the sofa with Winnie to keep her company, while he took Herbert to the large quarry, tied Duke, and went to see the huge blocks of granite that were being cut out.

[Pg 95]

It was about an hour before they were seated in the carriage again with their faces toward home.

[Pg 96]

"I wish you could have gone with me, Cecilia," papa began, "it is worth seeing. I found some blocks of granite exactly the size I want."

"Are they already hewn, Lawrence?"

"No, dear! but they will be ready and on the ground before we want to use them."

"What is *hewn*?" inquired Bertie.

"Don't you remember the rough pieces I selected, and those others so smooth and polished next them?"

[Pg 97]

"Yes, sir."

"And didn't you see those men at work on a long shaft or pillar? They are called stone-cutters,

and they were hewing them. They have a sharp instrument with which they continually chop, chop, or strike; and this hews off the rough places, making the whole smooth. I engaged my posts, too, for the gates, Cecilia; and a curb-stone to lay on the top of the wall nearest the house. That makes a handsome finish."

[Pg 98]

"You did a great deal of business for so short a time, Lawrence."

He laughed. "I only spent about fourteen hundred dollars. It doesn't take long to do that. I fancy the owner thought he had done a good morning's work. He had heard of my purchase, and was coming to see me to engage the job. Oh, I forgot to tell you! I bought the steps, too. Three flights, very handsome ones."



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## CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 99]

### THE CELLAR.



ne pleasant morning Bertie drove his father over to Woodlawn, and, after tying Whitefoot to a tree, ran as fast as he could go to the cellar. The day before it had been quite damp; and mamma didn't think it best for him to go out. So he stayed at the farm and amused Winnie by playing at dolls' visits with her till it was time for her daily nap, and then went to see Mrs. Taylor in the kitchen. Esther was shelling peas for dinner; and he helped her till they were all done.

[Pg 100]

Now he was very anxious to see how much the men had dug. He had but a little time to stay, for at ten he was to be at the farm to drive mamma to the blacksmith's house.

He thought as he went toward the cellar that the men had all gone, for he could see nothing of them. But when he reached the place, there they were down so deep as to be out of sight from the new road.

[Pg 101]

They had dug a path all around the edge of the cellar, close to the line his papa had marked out. The path was four feet from the ground which was as deep as it was to go. Now they did not try to throw out their shovelful upon the bank, they threw them on the great pile in the centre.

Bertie stood still and watched them for some time, wondering what it could mean. He did not suppose this great pile was to remain in the middle of the cellar; and yet he did not see how it could be taken out.

[Pg 102]

The men were so busy he didn't like to interrupt them. Besides he didn't feel so well acquainted with them as he did with Tom and Jim. A good many times he had jumped on the drag, and the oxen had drawn him to the other part of the farm where the old stone wall was being pulled down.

At last one of the Irishmen looked up to the bank and said pleasantly,—

"There's the little master come to see us."

[Pg 103]

"I thought you were lost," answered Bertie, laughing. "Will you please to tell me what you are going to do with all that ground in the middle of the cellar?"

"The oxen are going to draw it out. You will see them presently."

"But how can the oxen get down there?" asked the boy, greatly surprised.

"Run round to the bulkhead, and you will see."

Bertie had no idea what a bulkhead was, or where it could be found; but as the man pointed to the other side of the cellar, away he ran to find it.

[Pg 104]

Now the mystery was explained. Just under the place where his father had told him the kitchen was to be, there was a kind of road leading down into the cellar, and while Bertie was waiting, he heard Tom's voice calling to Buck to "gee, back, back, sir."

There was no place to turn around in the cellar so the oxen had to back the cart with its wide wheels down the steep road. As soon as they were in the right place, the Irishmen came and helped Tom load the cart full, which was very quickly done; and then Buck and Bright pulled away with all their strength till they were out on the level ground. This time they did not carry

[Pg 105]

the gravel far, and so were ready to back down again in a very few minutes.

"What makes this dirt look so different from that?" inquired Bertie, pointing to a pile of rich black loam. [Pg 106]

"The top of the ground is always richer earth," answered Jim, who was just going by, driving Star and Spot. "Underneath it is only gravel."

"What is gravel good for?"

"It will do very well to put on roads, or to fill up with. I heard your father say he was going to make avenues and terraces with this."

"What are avenues?"

"Roads, drive-ways."

"What are terraces?"

Jim laughed aloud.

[Pg 107]

"I guess," he said, "if you don't get to be a Squire yourself some day 'twont be for want of asking questions."

By this time the oxen were ready to be backed down the cellar, and Bertie was obliged to wait until another time to find out what terraces were.

He waited till Jim came up and tipped his load of gravel upon the heap, and then he said,—

"I must go and find papa. I'm afraid it's almost ten o'clock."

"I can tell you what time it is," said Jim, looking up at the sun.

[Pg 108]

"How can you tell that way?" the boy asked, wondering.

"It's half past nine, ex-actly," remarked Jim, drawling out the last word.

Bertie looked up at the sky, but could tell nothing about the time.

"It takes experience to do it," said the man, laughing at his perplexed look. "I've had thirty-eight years to learn."

Bertie resolved to ask his father to explain how the sun could be made to tell the time, and then not seeing him anywhere about, untied Whitefoot, who had pulled away to the length of the rein, and was trying to snatch a few mouthfuls of grass, and rode away to the farm. [Pg 109]



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## CHAPTER X.

[Pg 110]

### BERTIE AND WINNIE.



ne morning, about a week after the ride to the quarry, Bertie took his sister Winnie in his donkey carriage and drove her to Woodlawn. It was a pretty sight, and many of the villagers stopped with a smile to gaze after them. Herbert with his clear blue eyes so like his father's, his chestnut hair waving off his forehead, his bright, healthy complexion and pleasant smile: Winnie with her close auburn curls, her laughing brown eyes and cherry lips, formed a picture not often seen. Each of them wore a straw hat to shade their eyes from the sun, and the voice of Winnie sounded like the warbling of a bird, as she gayly echoed her brother's laugh. [Pg 111]

"Mamma say I may dive Whitefoot drass," lisped the child, not yet having learned to articulate the letter g. "Whitefoot not bite me, no."

"Whitefoot is a good donkey. He never bites," answered Herbert, decidedly. "Now, Winnie, you must keep hold of my hand, and not run away as you do at the farm. I sha'n't have time to chase after you as Nancy does." [Pg 112]

"I'm doin' to be dood dirl, Bertie, mamma say so. Winnie not doin' to make mamma cry any more."

"Here we are; and there's papa on the hill. See all the men and the oxen!"

Winnie laughed, and clapped her hands.

They drove along till they came to the tree where Bertie sometimes tied his donkey, and then he carefully lifted his sister to the ground. [Pg 113]

"Wait a minute," he said, "and I'll lead you to the big cellar."

But the little girl couldn't stand still. She was as full of life as a squirrel; and, when once upon her feet, ran to pull some grass for Whitefoot.

The donkey did not think much of the little spears she brought him, and put one by one into his mouth. He preferred to pull a whole mouthful at once with his strong teeth; but he loved the children who were so kind to him; and so he stood very patiently taking her present of grass, very careful not to bite the tiny fingers in which she held it up for his use. [Pg 114]

I am glad to say that Bertie waited patiently for his sister to feed Whitefoot, though he was in a great hurry to see what Jim and Tom were doing at the cellar.

Presently she grew tired, and taking her brother's hand, went with him across the smooth grass to the site of the new house. [Pg 115]

Bertie always bowed to the men and spoke very kindly to them; now he said,—

"I've brought my sister Winifred to see you work to-day."

Tom stopped his oxen a moment to gaze at the delicate little creature, and then said, laughing,—

"I suppose she's too small to ride on the drag. I'm going after a load of stone; and I could take you both as well as not."

Bertie was sorely tempted. He liked very much to go with Tom, who since the time the child asked for the corn, had been quite guarded in his words; but mamma had told him to be very careful of his sister; and if any accident should happen to her, he would feel so sorry. He glanced wistfully from Tom to Winnie, but then said, suddenly,— [Pg 116]

"Thank you, sir, I'd like it, ever so much, but I'm afraid for Winnie. She's so little, and mamma trusted her with me."

"That's right," said a cheerful voice close behind them. [Pg 117]

Mr. Curtis had come down from the hill, and was near enough to see all that had passed. When Bertie's face flushed with a desire to go, he felt inclined to step forward and remonstrate; but when he saw that his son yielded to the suggestions of conscience, his heart swelled with love and gratitude to the good Spirit who was leading Bertie into the path of peace.

"Oh, papa! Winnie had dood ride," exclaimed the little girl, running to take his hand. [Pg 118]

"And what do you think about the new house, pet?" asked papa, taking her in his arms.

"Winnie don't want to do down there," she said, pointing her tiny finger to the deep cellar.

At this moment there was a great noise, which made the child cling closely to her father's neck. Jim had backed his oxen to the very edge of the bank, and pitched a load of stones down to the bottom of the cellar.

As Bertie looked over, he saw that all the gravel had been carried out; and now some men whom he had not seen before, were busy laying up the stones which Tom and Jim brought, in a nice, smooth wall. [Pg 119]

"Have the diggers gone away, papa?" he asked.

"They have done their work here; and now they are digging a trench for an avenue."

"What is a trench, papa?"

"If you will come this afternoon I will show you. You may ride down by the lake on Tom's drag; he will be at work there by that time." [Pg 120]

"Oh, thank you, papa!"

He looked in his father's eyes, and what do you think he saw there? It was a look which made him feel very glad he had tried to do right, and it also made him resolve to ask God's help to be a good boy all the time.

When Tom came back with a load, he pitched the stones down into the cellar a little way beyond the place where Jim had put his.

"I guess, Squire," the man said, "a few loads more'll be all the mason can use to-day." [Pg 121]

"I should think so, Jim. I'll talk with him about it, and let you know exactly what he wants. Are there many more stones in the old wall?"

"There's enough for this and your barn cellar, and all the stuff you'll want in your road, or I'll lose my guess, Squire," the man answered, laughing. "It does hold out wonderful. I s'pose you'll want



us to make clean work as far as we go."

"Yes, everything must be made smooth; I'm going to throw those two mowing lots into one. There's a great deal of time lost every year in mowing up close to the walls, and they seldom look neat even then. The fewer boundaries the better, was my father's motto." [Pg 122]

"Did you ever live in the country, Squire?"

"Yes, I was born and brought up on a farm."

"Cause it's been a wonder to all the Oxford people," continued Jim, "where you picked up such a heap of farming knowledge. Folks say you could keep a school and larn farmers a sight more'n they know now." [Pg 123]

"I'm much obliged to Oxford for its good opinion," answered Mr. Curtis, with a merry laugh.



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## CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 124]

### THE KIND BOY.



It does workmen good to hear a genuine, hearty laugh from their master. Even the stone-masons, who were straining every nerve to lift a large stone into its place, looked up with a smile, as Mr. Curtis' "ha! ha! ha!" echoed from the hill.

The gentleman walked along the edge of the bank leading Winnie, while Bertie, more cautious, kept at a respectful distance from the precipice. They came at last to the bulkhead where the road had been made to the cellar, and the gentleman, after a glance at Winnie's thin slippers laced so nicely over the ankles, lifted the child again and walked down where the masons were at work. [Pg 125]

"May I go too, papa?" asked Bertie.

"Certainly. Come, and I'll ask the workmen to show you how to make a stone wall." [Pg 126]

"And will you please tell me what a bulkhead is?"

"Do you remember the door where Mr. Taylor rolled down a barrel of ice into his cellar this morning?"

"Yes, sir. I didn't know there was any door there. Winnie and I used to sit on those boards and eat our lunch."

"Well, that is called a bulkhead. I don't know why that name should be used, for the real meaning of the word is a partition in a ship which makes separate apartments. Perhaps it is so called, because articles of considerable bulk are put down through it, and stored in the cellar. When the stonemason comes to that part of the cellar, you will see how he builds up a place each side of that road; and then the carpenter will make doors to fit down upon it. When we want to put coal or wood, or anything heavy into the house, instead of carrying them through the carpeted halls and down the nice stairs, we only have to open the trap-doors and carry them down the steps, or put on a plank board and roll them down, as farmer Taylor does." [Pg 127]

Bertie now was standing near the stone-masons and watched closely every movement. One man was preparing a place for a large stone, while the other was chipping off the front edge with a sharp instrument called a cold chisel.

When he thought it smooth enough they took hold together and tipped it over and over; sometimes using their hands, or iron bars, and sometimes pieces of strong wood to put it into place, until at last they had it fitted into the wall. [Pg 129]

Bertie noticed that they chinked or filled in all the little holes with the small stones so as to make the wall as compact as possible. His father told him that after the whole was done, they would fill every hole with cement, which, after a few days, would become so very hard that not even the tiniest mouse could creep in. This, the mason informed him, was called "pointing the cellar wall." [Pg 130]

While Bertie stood down in the cellar talking with his father and the men, he happened to remember his promise to mamma, to bring Winnie home in time for her morning nap.

"O, papa!" he exclaimed. "Will you please look at your watch, and tell me what time it is? I'm afraid it's too late for me to go home."

"It's a quarter past ten," answered papa.

"I'll go then, as quick as I can, and come back this afternoon; mamma is going to read me a story when Winnie is asleep." [Pg 131]

Papa carried the little girl and put her in the carriage. Bertie took up the reins and drove off with a good-by bow, which the gentleman returned with a loving smile.

Just as he reached the gate he overtook Tom, who had a boy seated on his empty drag.

"Is that your Jerry, that you told me about?" Bertie asked, stopping his donkey.

"Yes, it's my Jerry." [Pg 132]

"Will he be over there this afternoon?" pointing to Woodlawn.

"I think it's likely."

"I'm going to be there then. Papa is going to show me what a trench is; and if your boy would like it, I'll give him a ride in my donkey carriage."

Jerry's face fairly shone with delight. His father had told him about Whitefoot; and he hoped he should see the funny looking creature; but to take a ride in the little carriage, was more than he had ever dreamed of.

"Thank you, Master Bertie. I expect Jerry would be tickled enough; but 'tisn't just the thing for you to be carrying the likes of him." [Pg 133]

"You've carried me on your drag," Herbert answered, laughing. "Mamma says when anybody does us a kindness, we ought to try and return it. I'll be there right after dinner."

When they drove up to the farm, mamma was looking from the window watching for them. She told Bertie to come up to her with his sister, for Nancy was busy on the back porch washing out some clothes for her little charge. [Pg 134]

Winnie's lunch of bread and milk was all ready for her; but she was so sleepy she could scarcely keep awake to eat it; and when mamma had laid her on her crib, she was asleep in a minute.

Bertie ran out to the barn to put his donkey up, and then listened to mamma's story for the rest of the forenoon.



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## CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 135]

### THE CROSS WORKMAN.



It was Mr. Curtis' intention to have two avenues to his house. One of them wound around by the lake past the spot which he had marked out for a boat-house, and then through the chestnut grove, where it met the other avenue.

The other or main avenue, entered the grounds just between two immense elm-trees which almost seemed to have been stationed there for guards, so exactly did they suit their position. Underneath the branches which met and embraced, the handsome granite posts with a heavy iron gate, were to mark the main entrance to Woodlawn. The wall which was to enclose the grounds was to be built of gray pudding-stone, tightly cemented, with a hewn granite curb-stone. The road, which was to be nicely trenched and gravelled, wound through a variety of shade-trees to the highest point of land, where the view of the house, lawn and lake burst upon the eye of the visitor. [Pg 136] [Pg 137]

When Mr. Curtis was, in after years, complimented by his friends for the taste and artistic skill with which he had laid out his grounds, he always pointed to his wife, saying,—

"There is the artist. I only followed her suggestions."

It was true that though the lady was opposed to building a house that would be grand and imposing, she was desirous of improving to the utmost the natural beauties which surrounded them. She drew a plan for the boat-house, which was not only useful, but extremely picturesque. The hennery too, and the conservatory, were highly ornamental, distributed as they were about the grounds;—but it is too early to speak of these, which were not finished till another year. [Pg 138]

I must go back and tell you about Bertie's visit to Woodlawn, and how he learned to make trenches.

Directly after family prayers, which Mr. Curtis always attended with the farmer's family, Bertie read a chapter in his small Bible with his mamma; and she explained the meaning to him in such simple words that even little Winnie could learn something of God's will. Sometimes they sung a hymn; and then the little fellow started off with his donkey for the new house. [Pg 139]

If he were going to be there several hours, he used to take the harness from Whitefoot and turn him into a field where he could find plenty of sweet, tender grass. But when he expected to return in an hour or two, he left the creature standing under the shade of a tree. [Pg 140]

When he drove through the field on this pleasant afternoon, he did not forget that he had promised Jerry a ride. He jumped out of the carriage, and looked about; but the boy was nowhere to be seen. He tied Whitefoot to the tree and ran to the cellar. The stone-masons were at their work. One side of the wall was nearly completed, and at this moment they were hammering away to get a large stone ready to fit into its place. [Pg 141]

"Do you know where my papa is?" he asked one of the masons.

"He's gone off to the lake with Tom Grant."

"Is Tom coming back with his oxen?"

"Yes, I heard him driving them by a few minutes ago. He'll be back presently."

"Thank you, sir. May I go there and see you work till he comes?"

"Yes, I'm willing. The Squire is the owner here." [Pg 142]

Bertie ran around by the bulkhead and soon was standing by the stonelayer in the cellar. He didn't speak until they had finished lifting the heavy stone into its place. He stood and watched them, wondering whether he should ever be strong enough to lift so much.

"I don't think I should like to be a stone-mason," he said, in a sympathizing tone.

"Well, you may have to come to it for all that," the man answered, speaking very cross. [Pg 143]

"Don't snap up the boy so; he meant no harm," urged the other. "Here, my little fellow, will you take a quid of tobacco?" at the same time putting a piece in his own mouth.

"Thank you, sir, but I never eat any tobacco. Mamma says it makes people crave drink; and then they become drunkards."

The cross mason uttered a shocking oath, in connection with the name of Mrs. Curtis, and started forward with his trowel as if he were about to strike the boy. [Pg 144]

Bertie uttered a cry as though he had been shot. The awful words were the most dreadful he had ever heard. He, tried to run away, but he staggered, and looked so pale the man who had offered him the tobacco, thought he would fall.

"Don't mind him," Alick said to Bertie, "he's been to his bottle too often, and didn't know what he was talking of."

About fifteen minutes later, Mr. Curtis found his son, sitting on a stone near the cellar, crying and sobbing as if his heart would break. [Pg 145]

It was a very unusual thing for Bertie to cry; and of course his papa was greatly pained to see him in such distress. He tried to soothe the child and find out what had troubled him. But Bertie could scarcely speak at all for his sobs. He could only point to the cellar, and say, in broken words—"Wicked—man—I'm—afraid—God—wont—let—him—live."

Mr. Curtis left him and walked toward the cellar, where he saw a sight which explained his son's grief. [Pg 146]

One of the masons was just in the act of stooping down for a black bottle which he held to his mouth, when his companion saw him.

"Hold there," he said, throwing down his hammer. "You've been at it too often already."

The drunkard threw the empty bottle right in the other mason's face, uttering the most terrible oaths.

"You'd better be careful; or you'll lose the best job you ever had," urged the sober man. "You frightened the Squire's little boy till I thought he would faint. If he tells his father how you cursed his mother, you'll be done for. So you'd better quit drinking till this job is over." [Pg 147]



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he sound of Tom's loud talk to his oxen, started Bertie; and he tried to stop crying and see whether Jerry was walking by the side of the drag.

Mr. Curtis motioned to the man to stop, and Tom wondered not a little to see how stern the Squire's face had grown. Bertie's eyes, too, were red and swollen with crying. What could it mean?

[Pg 149]

"Mr. Grant," began Mr. Curtis, "can you tell me whether the head mason down there is a habitual drunkard?"

"He has the name of it, Squire, I'm sorry to say," answered Tom, greatly confused.

"Wait a moment, I may need you;" and Mr. Curtis walked quickly down the bulkhead into the cellar.

The mason who had been drinking was sitting on a stone, holding his hand to his head. The other one kept on with his work though he could do nothing to advantage alone.

[Pg 150]

Mr. Curtis picked up the bottle, and, holding it in his fingers, said to the sober man,—

"Do you use this vile stuff?"

"No, sir; not a drop. I see too much of it to want to put myself in the power of any kind of liquor."

"Do you live with Jerrold?"

"Yes, sir, he's a second cousin to my father. He could be a rich man, sir, if he'd let drink alone."

"He has done his last day's work for me. I *will not* employ a man who swears or makes a beast of himself with liquor. If you have a mind to work and can comply with my conditions, you may get an assistant and take Jerrold's place. I shall know in a few days whether you are capable of carrying on the whole job."

[Pg 151]

"I thank you, sir, all the same; but it'll be a terrible disappointment to Jerrold. His wife is a good woman; and she'll take it to heart terribly. He was overcome with liquor, and didn't know what he said to the boy."

[Pg 152]

"My son has told me nothing," explained Mr. Curtis. "I saw him throw the bottle in your face; and I heard what you said to him. I should wish your answer at once, whether you would choose to go on with the work."

"Yes, sir, I'll take it and do the best I can, and much obleeged for the chance."

Tom, all this time, had stood on the top of the bank where he could hear every word. His face looked very sober as he turned back to his oxen, and he said to himself,—

[Pg 153]

"There's a lesson for you, Tom Grant. You may thank your old mother that you haven't tasted a drop of spirits for a year."

"Now, Bertie; jump on the drag," said Mr. Curtis, in a cheerful tone. "Jerry is waiting by the lake for you; and I'll show you what a trench is."

Bertie obeyed; but his father saw it was hard for him to keep back his tears. The gentleman walked along with Tom, talking about the work as if nothing unpleasant had occurred; but it was evident that the man was thinking of something else.

[Pg 154]

At last, just as they had reached the lake, he turned to his master and said, earnestly,—

"Squire, one year ago I was as great a drunkard as Jerrold. I was going right straight to ruin, when my old mother came to live with me. She begged and begged me to take a pledge never to taste spirits again; and at last I yielded to her, and since that I've ained enough to support my family and buy these oxen.

[Pg 155]

"Now, Squire, I didn't think of religion till I see how it worked with you. If I didn't think your religion was the out-and-out Bible kind, I'd never ask you the question I'm going to now.

"If mother can persuade Jerrold to take the pledge as I did, and knock off drinkin' and swearin', will you take him back?"

"With all my heart, Tom; and any help I or my wife can give your mother in such a good work, we'll do it with the greatest pleasure."

[Pg 156]

"Come up, Bright, gee;" began Tom, wiping his eye with his shirt sleeve, when he suddenly turned round again, and said, fervently,—

"There's a good many Oxford people, Squire Curtis, are praying that your wife's life and yours may be spared to us, to be a blessing to the whole town."

Tom drew his load of small stones and rubbish close to the edge of a ditch about twenty-two feet wide and two feet deep, when he stopped the oxen and threw the stones in. [Pg 157]

The Irishmen who had dug the cellar, were working away; and the two men with the oxen had as much as they could do to fill the trench as fast as it was dug.

Jerry came forward looking so clean and neat Bertie scarcely knew him.

"I've brought my donkey," he said; "but if you don't mind I should like to ask papa about the trench before we go to ride."

Jerry looked quite satisfied but did not dare to speak. So his father answered for him,— [Pg 158]

"He's in no hurry, I'm sure, Master Bertie. But he's too shamefaced to talk much before strangers. If he takes you to see his tame squirrels, or the mice he's taught to eat out of his hand, his tongue will move fast enough, I reckon."

"I don't see, papa," said Bertie, "what is the use of digging out the earth and filling it right up again."

"I am filling it with stones, my dear, so that the water, when it rains, will drain through and keep the walk dry." [Pg 159]

"But, papa, horses can't walk on those rough stones."

"Of course not. I intend to cover them with coarse gravel, and then on the top put a dressing of broken oyster shells mixed with small stones from the beach. These will gradually work down till the avenue is as hard as a brick."

"I understand now, papa, what a trench is."

"And how to make a cellar?" added papa, laughing. [Pg 160]

"Yes, sir; I know the earth has to be dug out and carried off, and a wall made, and pointed with cement, which grows very hard, so that the underpinning which you bought can lie on the top of it; but I don't know how the wood is fastened on."

"That is the carpenter's job," answered his father; "we shall come to that by and by."



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